A Bibliometric Analysis of Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Tourism: A Review and Identification of Future Research Themes

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ABSTRACT

Manuscript type: Research paper

Research aims: The study aims to analyse the bibliometric method to identify the most influential authors, popular research themes, emerging research themes, and keyword groups that have been heavily utilised in previous studies on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the field of tourism. This study also suggests appropriate themes for future research.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study gathered data from Scopus using the keywords 'electronic word of mouth', 'eWOM', 'tourist', 'traveller', and 'visitor.' A total of 672 articles was collected initially. After filtering out articles that were identical or unrelated to the research topic, 331 articles remained in the data. The study uses a bibliometric method, employing three primary techniques: co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and co-word.

Research findings: The findings reveal three clusters using the co-citation technique, five clusters using the bibliographic coupling technique, and six clusters using the co-word technique. Based on the themes and the keywords used in the analysis techniques, the researchers propose three future research directions, including visual cues, algorithmic word of mouth (aWOM), and eWOM in medical tourism.

Practical Implications: This study contains great practical value since the findings reflect the popularity of the research themes and provide potential avenues for further inquiry. Future researchers can use this result to tailor their research topics accordingly.

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JEL classification: M10, M19, M31

1. Introduction

Consumers today tend to have less trust in information from marketers, and instead trust information from other users who have experience with products and services (Ayeh et al., 2013). With the rapid development of Internet technology, users can create their own information. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has emerged as a powerful force in shaping consumer behaviour, particularly within the tourism industry. Tourism services, unlike physical products, are intangible and cannot undergo evaluation before consumption (Litvin et al., 2008). As a result, travellers depend heavily on the shared experiences of others via online reviews, travel blogs, social media posts, and ratings platforms to reduce uncertainty and make informed decisions (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). The credibility and authenticity perceived in peer-generated content makes eWOM a vital tool for influencing travel planning, destination choice, accommodation selection, and activity participation (Gretzel et al., 2007). Given this reliance, understanding how eWOM interactions shape perceptions and behaviours is crucial for tourism stakeholders aiming to enhance customer engagement and satisfaction (Mohammed Abubakar, 2016; Rahimizhian et al., 2020).

Several past studies use bibliometric and literature review methods to examine eWOM in the fields of tourism, restaurants, hotels, and business (e.g., Chen & Law, 2016; Kumar et al., 2023; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2023; Osorio-Andrade et al., 2023). Chen and Law's (2016) study on eWOM in the field of hospitality and tourism management indicates that future research should focus on the following aspects of eWOM: the inclusion of non-verbal eWOM data, such as images and videos; cultural exploration in eWOM; and the utilisation of eWOM to extract data from managers or businesses, rather than customers. The limitation of that study is that it only uses data from 2008 to 2014 and a sample of 60 articles, which is too small for a bibliometric analysis. In addition, the study uses the keyword sets 'eWOM', 'hospitality', and 'tourism'. The sample data of the present study, meanwhile, consists of 672 articles and is projected to 2024. This shows that the analysis of the data here is more general and the emerging research directions for the years after 2014 are better illustrated. Furthermore, our research employs the synonyms 'eWOM' and 'tourist' or 'traveller'; our focus is primarily

on tourists rather than the tourism and hospitality sector. We believe that different pairs of keywords will unearth different data, leading to different research results. The most significant difference between Chen and Law (2016) and the present study is the research method. The former uses a systematic review, while the present study uses a bibliometric method.

Mukhopadhyay et al. (2023) compare eWOM in the hospitality/tourism and business/management sectors. The study shows, through a co-citation method, that the hospitality/tourism sector has three themes: eWOM and behaviour; eWOM and social media; and eWOM as a marketing tool. Similarly, the business/management field consists of three topics: eWOM and sales; quality and attributes of eWOM; and eWOM, information, and consumers. Also, Mukhopadhyay et al. (2023) show that the co-word method should focus on the eWOM recommendation system and business-to-business (B2B) eWOM applications. Their study uses the methods of citation, co-citation, and co-word, and does not combine the bibliographic coupling method with the co-keyword method, which could potentially guide future research directions. In addition, the study by Mukhopadhyay et al. (2023) does not focus solely on the tourism/hospitality sector, but also encompasses the business/management sector. The keyword pairs used in their study are synonyms for 'eWOM' and 'user-generated content (UGC)'. Additionally, the database used by Mukhopadhyay et al. (2023) is older, which collects articles from 2003 to March 2021.

A recent study by Osorio-Andrade et al. (2023) mentions eWOM in the tourism sector. This study suggests five areas for future research: features that enhance the effect of eWOM; how the traits of tourism organisations affect eWOM; what influences the creation and quality of eWOM; changes in eWOM behaviour; and managing and assessing online businesses. Osorio-Andrade et al. (2023) also point to many new research directions that need to be focused on in the coming years. Their study has a pair of synonymous keywords, 'eWOM' and 'travel', while the present study uses the synonymous keywords 'eWOM' and 'traveller'. Furthermore, the study by Osorio-Andrade et al. (2023) uses data collected from 2008 to 2021. However, the number of eWOM articles has increased significantly between 2022 to 2024, meaning that new emerging research directions will appear. The present study also uses different keywords and is expected to yield new insights. Therefore, our research will fill the research gap in the field of eWOM until 2024.

The objectives of the present study are to identify influential

research streams and future research directions. In this regard, using the directory metrology method for discovery is reasonable and reliable (Donthu et al., 2021; Tan Luc et al., 2020). The bibliometric analysis method uses co-citation, co-word, citation, and bibliographic coupling, based on different data fields (Leung et al., 2017; Tan Luc et al., 2020). However, the methods used in our study are co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and co-word. The co-citation analysis tools are used to find similar study directions previously focused on by multiple researchers. The bibliographic coupling technique aims to identify emerging research directions, which serve as the basis for determining future directions. The co-word technique complements the bibliographic coupling technique for identifying emerging research directions based on keywords in different stages.

2. Literature Review

2.1 eWOM in Tourism

Traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) plays an important role in marketing products or services and brand image. With the development of the Internet, WOM does not stop at one consumer exchanging reviews of a product or service with another consumer, but can be exchanged with many people at the same time online. This led to the emergence of the concept of eWOM. eWOM refers to communication between reviewers, non-commercial reviewers, and recipients about a brand, product, or service (Chan & Ngai, 2011). According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), eWOM refers to any comment based on good, neutral, or bad experiences of potential customers who use or have used a product, service, or brand made available to many persons and organisations over the Internet, such as websites, social networks, instant messaging, forums. eWOM is also defined as any degree or mix of good, negative, or neutral remarks, suggestions, or other assertions regarding a company, brand, product, or service discussed or exchanged between customers in numerical form (Rodgers & Wang, 2011). In summary, eWOM encompasses the positive, neutral, or negative experiences of customers who have used a product, service, brand, or company, and it spreads to numerous individuals and organisations through the Internet and digitisation protocols. eWOM utilises various tools, including blogs, web, forums, Facebook, Zalo, and other electronic devices such as computers, tablets, and phones, to exchange information.

eWOM has emerged as a key driver of customer behaviour in the tourism business. Unlike conventional word-of-mouth, eWOM

enables travellers to share their experiences and opinions with a global audience via online platforms, including review websites, social media, and travel forums (Litvin et al., 2008). This type of communication is extremely effective since potential tourists frequently rely on peer user-generated content when making travel selections, considering them as more trustworthy and unbiased than traditional advertising (Filieri et al., 2015). Furthermore, eWOM has a considerable impact on destination image and brand impression, which influences tourist destination selections (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Positive eWOM can boost a destination's reputation, while unfavourable reviews can put off potential visitors (Papadimitriou et al., 2018). Furthermore, the interactive aspect of eWOM enables tourism businesses to communicate with customers, respond to criticism, and establish long-term partnerships (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013). As a result, maintaining and monitoring eWOM has become critical for tourist marketers seeking to influence customer decisions and preserve a competitive edge in the digital age.

2.2 Bibliometric Analysis

The bibliometric analysis method was first introduced as a statistical and mathematical method (Pritchard, 1969). Indeed, discussions about this method date back a long way. However, in recent years, many authors have used research in the fields of business, management, finance, and social sciences through data from Scopus or Web of Science with the necessary keywords (Donthu et al., 2021). The bibliometric analysis method is a quantitative approach based on published materials (Binh Nguyen et al., 2023; Osareh, 1996). This method is very effective for identifying future research topics (Leung et al., 2017). According to Binh Nguyen et al. (2023), the quantitative approach of the bibliometric method enables authors to clearly and methodically define and assess scientific information, improving the quality of evaluations.

Scientific mapping techniques often combine with bibliographic analysis to visualise the intellectual structure of a particular field of study (Leung et al., 2017). Therefore, the bibliographic method is a powerful help for review evaluators. In order to prevent subjective bias and provide a thorough image of the research map, the researchers focus on the most important scientific publications (Binh Nguyen et al., 2023). Bibliographic measurement methods employ a variety of techniques, including co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, co-authorship, and co-word analysis (Binh Nguyen et al., 2023; Donthu et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2017; Van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

The present study applies three main analytical techniques: co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and co-word. Co-citation analysis, a widely used method in scientific mapping, identifies intellectual relationships between publications based on shared citations, enabling the discovery of influential authors and thematic clusters, though it remains limited in analysing the content of citations (Donthu et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2017). Bibliographic coupling is a scientific mapping method that links publications with shared references to form thematic clusters, offering visibility to recent or niche studies and providing an up-to-date representation of research trends (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). While co-citation and bibliographic coupling analyse relationships between publications, the co-word technique uniquely examines document content by analysing keyword co-occurrences to map conceptual structures over time; however, its effectiveness is limited by issues such as ambiguous, generic, or missing keywords, making it most reliable when used alongside other methods (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

3. Methodology

The aim of the present study is to outline scientific maps and conduct research on eWOM within the tourism sector. We use bibliometric analysis to map structures, examine the evolution of subjects, and identify themes that piqued interest in the past, and to then identify themes that will be of interest in the future. To examine the relationship between research constituents, the study uses scientific mapping (Donthu et al., 2021). Scientific mapping comprises a broad range of technical studies, including co-authorship, co-citation, bibliographical coupling, co-word, and citation analysis. When combined with network analysis, these techniques are essential for illuminating the intellectual and bibliometric structures of the field of study (Donthu et al., 2021).

3.1 Data Collection

Firstly, keywords that suit the research field were chosen (Molina-Collado et al., 2022). Some keywords used in this study include 'electronic word of mouth' and 'tourist'; 'electronic word of mouth' and 'traveller'; 'electronic word of mouth' and 'visitor'; 'eWOM' and 'tourist'; 'eWOM' and 'traveller'; 'eWOM' and 'visitor'. The study uses many keyword combinations with the same meaning. Simply relying on a single pair of keywords for data retrieval on the Scopus

system risks missing articles not identified by search algorithms. The data was downloaded from Scopus.com. Although the bibliometric method can use Web of Science and other databases, Scopus generally indexes a larger number of journals and conference proceedings than Web of Science (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). This makes it especially useful in interdisciplinary or emerging fields where literature may appear in a wider variety of sources. This study used several criteria for data collection. We collected all papers based on several criteria, such as 'search within: article title, abstract, keywords'; 'document type: article, conference paper, review, conference review'; 'language: English'; and 'time span of papers: from 2009 to July 2024'.

3.2 Data Analysis

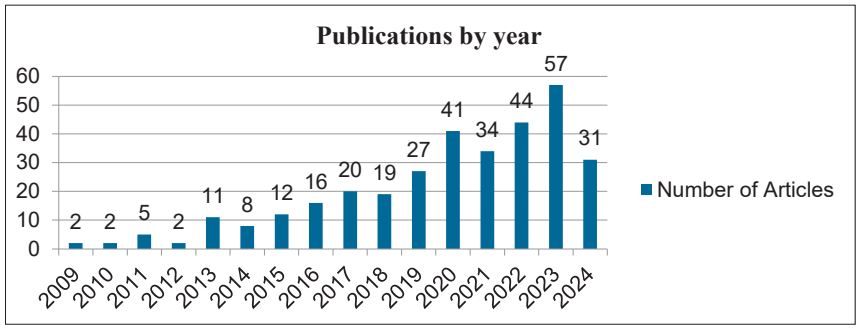
The data analysis involved four steps. Firstly, descriptive statistical techniques were utilised to depict the general findings of the citation study (Binh Nguyen et al., 2023; Leung et al., 2017), as the study aims to see the increase of research over time. Second, networks of co-citation were mapped for the research field, with clusters established to study the theoretical underpinning of tourism eWOM research (Leung et al., 2017; Rey-Martí et al., 2016). This technical analysis identifies strong influence studies and mass research trends. Thirdly, the study used bibliographic coupling and thematic analysis to gain insight into the knowledge structure of eWOM on tourism, identify trends in research themes, and suggest future research directions. Finally, the authors examine the development of research topics and trends over time, separating the study period into two sub-periods: 2020 to 2024 and 2009 to 2019. In order to determine study trends, we used content analysis to classify the keywords of all the chosen articles (Binh Nguyen et al., 2023; Donthu et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2017).

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics provide an overview of the situation of previous research on eWOM in the tourism sector. Before bibliometric analysis was conducted, the authors analysed the statistical number of articles for each year. Figure 1 demonstrates that the number of publications in 2009 to 2015 was still minimal. From 2016 to 2019, the number of publications began to increase, and increased significantly from 2020 to 2024. This suggests that scholars are becoming interested in the topic of tourism eWOM.

Figure 1: Number of articles change over time



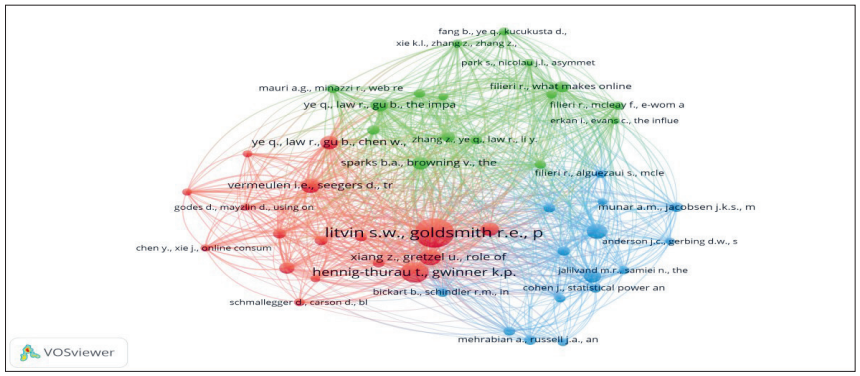
4.2 Co-citation

Co-citation is a scientific mapping technique based on publications quoted in other publications. It is suitable for the intellectual exploration of a particular field of study. This study uses co-citation to explore the eWOM theme of visitors. The results of the analysis are based on data from 331 articles. In this approach, we employ the units of analysis as cited references, with each reference having at least 10 citations (Binh Nguyen et al., 2023; Leung et al., 2017). The number of cited references selected was 48. The co-citation analysis findings reveal three clusters detected by VOSviewer, following which the authors examined the works of representative writers to accurately ascertain the cluster names. Previous studies on eWOM in tourism exhibit variability; nonetheless, many studies concentrate on the platform, the motivations for generating eWOM, and the elements of eWOM influencing travellers' hotel selections. The findings from the co-citation method in cluster 3 indicate that the majority of studies employ structural equation modelling (SEM).

Table 1: Identification of names of clusters

Cluster name	Representative citations
Cluster 1: The role of eWOM, its platforms, and the motivations behind tourists' use of eWOM	Litvin et al. (2008), Hennig et al. (2004), Xiang and Gretzel (2010), Vermeulen and Seegers (2009), Bronner and De Hoog (2011)
Cluster 2: The factors of user reviews that influence a customer's hotel choice	Cantallops and Salvi (2014), Filieri (2015), Ladhari and Michaud (2015), Mauri and Minazzi (2013), Ye et al. (2009)
Cluster 3: The influence factors of eWOM and SEM	Baloglu and McCleary (1999), Filieri et al. (2015), Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), Jeong and Jang (2011), Litvin et al. (2018)

Figure 2: Co-citation network



4.3 Bibliographic Coupling

Bibliographical coupling is also a scientific mapping tool. It is based on the premise that two articles that have common references are likewise comparable in content (Donthu et al., 2021). This method focuses on categorising articles into thematic clusters according to the references that are shared and utilised within a given time frame (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). The clusters are constructed on the basis of cited articles, so that current and suitable articles can be apparent from bibliographic coupling (Donthu et al., 2021). This study used an original sample of 331 articles. Bibliographic coupling was used for publications with at least 20 citations (Luc, 2022). There were 117 articles suitable for this step. According to the analysis results, VOSviewer constructed five clusters.

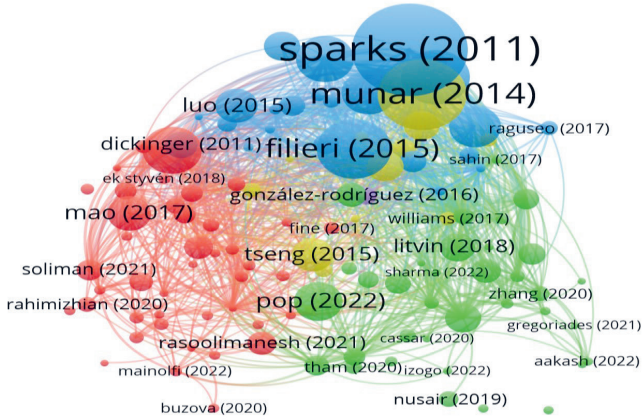
Table 2: Bibliographic coupling analysis results

Cluster	Theme	Representative articles
Cluster 1: User motivations that lead eWOM intention, and theories that examine the relationships between eWOM and other factors	Theme 1: Using theories (technology acceptance model, TAM; stimulus-organism-response, SOR; elaboration likelihood model, ELM) in eWOM	Stojanovic et al. (2018); Rahimizhian et al. (2020); Pandey and Sahu (2020); Clark et al. (2023); Chong et al. (2018); Abbasi et al. (2023); Zainal et al. (2017); P. Wang (2015); Styvén and Foster (2018); Kim and Hwang (2022); Semrad and Rivera (2018)
	Theme 2: Examining the relationship between eWOM, attitude, destination image, destination intention	Jalilvand et al. (2012); Doosti et al. (2016); Soliman (2021); Ran et al. (2021); Farrukh et al. (2022); Jalilvand and Heidari (2017); Assaker and O'Connor (2021)

Cluster	Theme	Representative articles
	Theme 3: Examining the motivations of active prosumers to engage in eWOM and share eWOM for hotels	Fine et al. (2017); Zhou et al. (2020); Uslu (2020); Moliner-Velázquez et al. (2019); Chiang (2018); Bigne et al. (2020); Chiang et al. (2017); Kotoua and Ilkan (2017); Majeed et al. (2020)
	Theme 4: Examining the relationship between tourist experience, image destination, satisfaction, and behaviour intention using qualitative methodology based on the eWOM of blogs	Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021); Lai et al. (2021); Buzova et al. (2020); Mainolfi et al. (2022); Sanz-Blas and Buzova (2016)
	Theme 5: Analysing personality and need for self-enhancement that leads to eWOM intention	Chu et al. (2019); Al-Htibat and Garanti (2019); Quoquab et al. (2021); Chopra et al. (2022); Akhtar et al. (2019)
Cluster 2: Qualitative methods to analyse eWOM data from Tripadvisor and customer behaviour in the travel and hotel fields	Theme 1: Analysing tourist sentiments through eWOM data on platforms using qualitative methods	Yan et al. (2018); Toral et al. (2018); González-Rodríguez et al. (2016); Sharma et al. (2022); Chiu et al. (2015); Chiu et al. (2015); M. Nilashi et al. (2021); Berezan et al. (2015); Pop et al. (2021); Tham et al. (2020); Becken et al. (2019)
	Theme 2: Analysing customers' eWOM from Tripadvisor, using machine learning to analyse big data for hotels	Liu et al. (2013); Gregoriades et al. (2021); Mariani and Borghi (2021); Mehrbakhsh Nilashi et al. (2021); Zhang et al. (2020); Aakash and Gupta Aggarwal (2022)
	Theme 3: Exploring tourists' hotel satisfaction through eWOM from Tripadvisor using qualitative research methods	Zhang and Vásquez (2014); Litvin et al. (2018); Mate et al. (2019); Alrawadieh and Law (2019); Cassar et al. (2020); Sahin et al. (2017)
	Theme 4: Examining how eWOM impacts customers' travel behaviour	Bigné et al. (2016); Filieri, Acikgoz, et al. (2021); Filieri, Lin, et al. (2021); Nieto-García et al. (2017); Izogo et al. (2022); Pourfakhimi et al. (2020)
Cluster 3: Overall valence of a set of reviews (positive or negative) and the perspective of egos and whole networks	Theme 1: Examining the relationship between eWOM, image brand, theory of planned behaviour (TPB), and customer behaviour	Filieri et al. (2015); Jalilvand and Samiei (2012); Sotiriadis and van Zyl (2013); Duffy (2015); Nieto et al. (2014); Raguseo and Vitari (2017)
	Theme 2: Analysing the elements that drive eWOM, and that establish eWOM credibility	Arsal et al. (2009); Bronner and de Hoog (2010); Chang and Wang (2019); Dickinger (2010); Kim et al. (2011); Liang et al. (2013); Racherla et al. (2013); Y.-C. Wang (2015)

Cluster	Theme	Representative articles
	Theme 3: Overall valence of a set of reviews (positive or negative)	Mauri and Minazzi (2013); Melián-González et al. (2013); Reyes-Menendez et al. (2019); Ring et al. (2014); Sparks and Browning (2011); Velázquez et al. (2015); Zhu and Lai (2009)
	Theme 4: Examining single customer reviews and aggregate review scores; the perspective of both egos and whole networks	Luo and Zhong (2015); Ziegele and Weber (2014)
Cluster 4: The impact of eWOM in the destination using qualitative research methods, eWOM characteristics, and algorithmic WOM (aWOM) in the future	Theme 1: Analysing the impact of eWOM in the destination and aWOM in the future	Hernández-Méndez et al. (2013); Tseng et al. (2015); Williams et al. (2019); Zaman et al. (2016)
	Theme 2: Examining the characteristics and factors of eWOM	Bu et al. (2020); Hua et al. (2017); Nusair et al. (2017); Munar and Jacobsen (2013); Munar and Jacobsen (2014); Tham et al. (2013); Williams et al. (2017)
Cluster 5: eWOM influencing trust in the destination and medical travel intention		Mohammed Abubakar (2016)

Figure 3: Bibliographic coupling network (units of analysis)



Five main clusters were identified through a technical analysis of bibliographic coupling. Based on the documentation of each cluster, the authors meticulously identified each topic and cluster (Table 1). Cluster 1 is a group of studies that focus on the relationship of eWOM with other factors, and motivation for eWOM intention. Studies within cluster 2 focus on analysing eWOMs on social networking sites using qualitative analytical research. Cluster 3 studies focus on comparing positive and negative eWOM, or evaluating the influence of personal views compared to overall views on social networks. Cluster 4 contains studies on characteristics of eWOM and aWOM in the future. Cluster 5 has a single study that delves into the topic of destination confidence in medical tourism.

From the above clusters, the authors believe that there are three future research directions that will emerge. Firstly, the direction of eWOM research pertains to specific and individual tourism sectors. This argument is based on cluster 5, which emerged from the bibliographic coupling analysis. Second, future studies will focus on aWOM (using artificial intelligence for eWOM). This argument is based on cluster 4. Third, future researchers can concentrate on examining the characteristics of eWOM, such as visual cues. Clusters 1, 2, and 3 define this argument. Previous studies extensively discuss the factors that influence the usefulness of eWOM. However, upon closer examination, few address the topic of visual cues. On the other hand, modern technology enables tourists to review their experience with images and videos on websites with ease. These signals will provide tourists with a high level of reliability for reference.

4.4 Co-Word

There was a sharp increase in the number of articles during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. We divided all 331 articles into two datasets from 2009 to 2019 and from 2020 to 2024. The first group consists of 124 articles, and the other group 207 articles. Keyword analysis was performed with a cut-off point of five for both phases. This indicates that the keyword was present in the co-keyword network a minimum of five times. VOSviewer was used to analyse 124 articles in the initial period. The result yielded 583 keywords, of which 21 fit the cut-off point requirement. The co-keyword analysis in this stage yielded a total of six themes (Figure 4). This proves that there was a lack of research during this period. In the second stage, 207 articles were analysed by VOSviewer. The results indicate 1,008 keywords, of which 43 fit the cut-off point requirements. The co-

keyword analysis in this stage yielded a total of six themes (Figure 5). This proves that there was more research during this period.

Table 3: Co-word analysis results

Cluster	Keyword (frequency)	
	2009–2019	2020–2024
Cluster 1: Consumption behaviour and decision-making from online hotel reviews in Tripadvisor	eWOM (101), hotel industry (6), hotels (5), online review (13), perception (5), Tripadvisor (6)	Consumption behaviour (11), customer satisfaction (6), decision making (7), hospitality industry (5), hotel industry (6), hotels (7), online review (18), service quality (8), Tripadvisor (11)
Cluster 2: Tourist behaviour through UGC from websites to manager and the development of tourism destinations	Information (5), tourist behaviour (15), UGC (9), WOM (7), world wide web (7)	Ecotourism (6), psychology (7), tourism development (8), tourism management (5), tourist attraction (5), tourist behaviour (19), tourist destination (32), tourist satisfaction (9), perception (11)
Cluster 3: Internet and tourism marketing	Internet (13), marketing (8), tourism marketing (5), tourist destination (13)	Covid-19 (7), marketing (17), sustainability (7), tourism destination (5), tourism market (6)
Cluster 4: Wow effect and eWOM from social network UGC on tourism	Social media (22), social network (12), tourism (17)	Sentiment analysis (6), social media (36), social network (11), WOM (8), UGC (8)
Cluster 5: Relationship between trust, satisfaction, and behaviour intention in tourism	Decision making (10), ELM (5)	Behaviour intention (9), hospitality (5), purchase intention (5), satisfaction (10), tourism (27), trust (9)
Cluster 6: Factors of eWOM influencing destination image, travel intention, and retravel intention	Tourist intention (8)	Destination image (18), ELM (5), perceived risk (9), perceived value (6), eWOM (133), source credibility (5), TPB (5), travel intention (17), retravel intention (12)

Figure 4: Co-word network from 2009 to 2019 (units of analysis keyword)

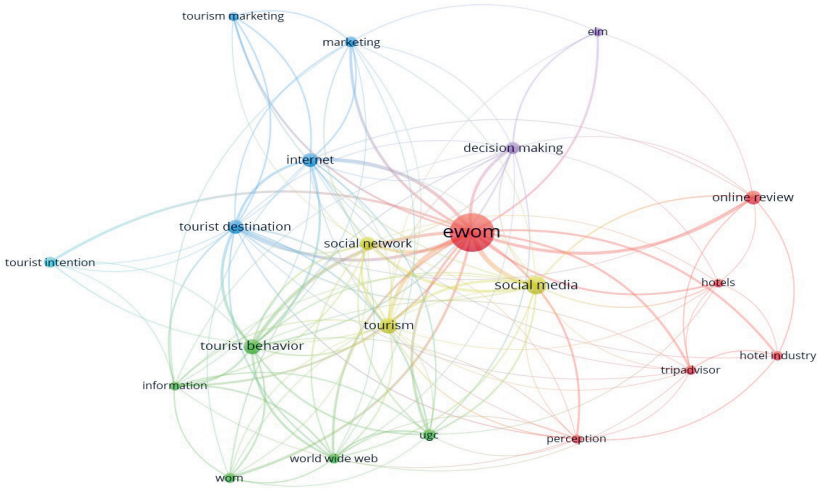
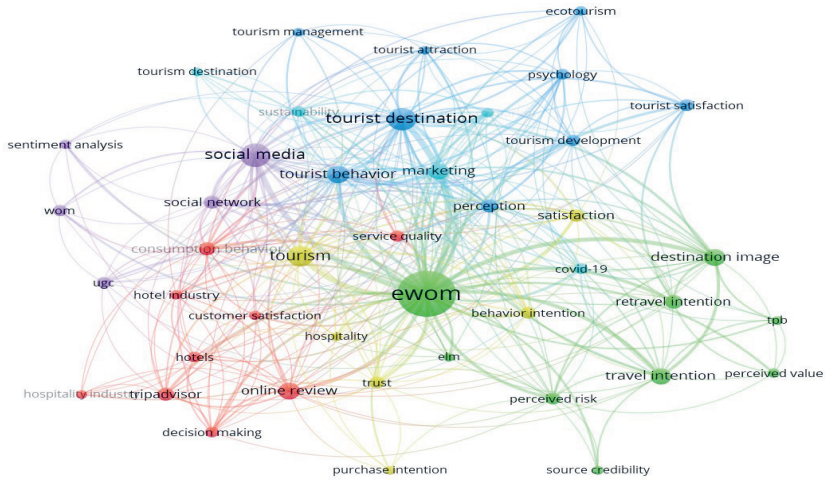


Figure 5: Co-word network from 2020 to 2024



The keyword analysis reveals that there are six keyword phrases that appear in both stages. However, before including them in the same cluster, the researchers carefully examined the number of keywords from the two periods and found tendencies for the 2009 to 2019 period and the 2020 to 2024 period, such as research on tourist behaviour, online marketing, destination intent, user-

generated information, and eWOM-based user decisions. These two phases exhibit fundamentally different research directions. From 2009 to 2019, there were numerous studies on eWOM exploitation on Tripadvisor. These studies employ more qualitative research methods, utilising the same and different data filtering software used by eWOM customers. In contrast, the research direction for the period 2020 to 2024 focused on the relationships between eWOM, loyalty, destination image, customer trust, and travel intent. Therefore, this period mainly uses quantitative research methods.

The researchers conducted a thorough assessment of every cluster within the scrutinised keyword group. The authors found the following: in cluster 1, the keywords focus on the direction of behavioural and decision research in the hotel sector and qualitative data on Tripadvisor. In cluster 2, the keywords of this cluster indicated the direction of behavioural research in the travel field and the interest in UGC among users. In this cluster, the keywords of phase 1 focused on 'UGC' and 'tourist behaviour'; the keywords of phase 2 focused on destination management and development. In cluster 3, when evaluating keywords, the authors identified this cluster as representing research on travel marketing. Specifically, the keywords in this cluster are 'marketing', 'tourism marketing', 'tourist destination' and 'tourism market'.

In cluster 4, the authors argue that keywords focus on information generated by users on social media. Typical keywords for both phases are 'social media' and 'social network'. Phase 2 has the keyword 'UGC', but phase 1 does not. For cluster 5, the researchers believe that the main research direction of this cluster is to analyse the relationship between behaviour intention, purchase intention, satisfaction, and trust factors to make decisions about choosing hotels and tourist destinations. Some keywords in phase 2 include 'behaviour intention', 'hospitality', 'purchase intention', 'satisfaction', 'tourism', and 'trust'. The final cluster's keywords represent a research area that examines the interplay between various factors, including destination image, perceived risk, perceived value, eWOM, source credibility, TPB component, and travel/retravel intention. Specifically, these keywords belong to the research period from 2020 to 2024. Therefore, we can conclude that this group's focus is on studying the interplay between factors. Moreover, in phase 2, the keywords TPB and ELM appeared. This implies that the studies conducted by this group incorporate the TPB and ELM background theories.

5. Discussion

From 2009 to 2024, many studies on eWOM related to travellers were conducted. This indicates that eWOM significantly impacts the tourist industry. Over time, research on eWOM in the tourism sector has taken a variety of directions. Descriptive statistical data shows that the number of research papers in the field of eWOM related to tourists in the years from 2009 to 2015 is relatively small; from 2016 to 2019, it gradually increases, and begins to increase significantly from 2020 to 2024 (Figure 1).

The co-citation analysis technique, based on the results of the co-citation scientific network, identifies three distinct clusters. Cluster 1 studies focus on the role of eWOM, its platforms, and the motivations behind tourists' use of eWOM; cluster 2 studies focus on the factors of user reviews that influence a customer's hotel choice, and cluster 3 studies focus on the influence of eWOM factors and SEM. This shows that the previous research direction focused on the motivation for using eWOM, the factors affecting eWOM, the impact of eWOM on behaviour, and the use of SEM methods. Comparing these results to Mukhopadhyay et al. (2023) using the same method, the two are almost identical. The study by Mukhopadhyay et al. (2023) suggests that previous studies focused on eWOM attributes and the relationship between eWOM and behaviour. The present study also shows that past research indicates the basis, components, and effects of eWOM on choice intentions. Generally, although different interpretive words were used, the implications are almost the same.

When comparing the results of our study and the results of the Osorio-Andrade and Arango Pastrana (2023), the authors have several assessments. The results of the analysis in these two studies have many similarities: the research direction focuses on exploring the motivations for creating and sharing eWOM on social media platforms and how they affect travel plans; the previous research direction focuses on the above text data on the Internet (data from Tripadvisor) to carry out qualitative studies to determine tourist behaviour; the previous research direction focuses on positive and negative eWOM; the research direction explores the correlation between eWOM, satisfaction, destination image, and travel intent; and finally, both discuss the characteristics of eWOM. In contrast, the present study finds specific research trends in small areas (such as medical tourism), which focus on aWOM. Thus, the data from 2021 to 2024 shows that research will focus on the eWOM of small segments and the role of AI on WOM. According to the bibliographic coupling analysis, there are three research themes for future development in

this field. Firstly, the direction of eWOM research pertains to specific and individual tourism sectors. Secondly, future studies will focus on aWOM. Thirdly, the researchers will concentrate on examining the characteristics of eWOM, such as visual cues. This direction of research coincides with suggestions for future research from (Osorio-Andrade & Arango Pastrana, 2023).

This study also uses co-words to identify keywords that have a significant impact and a common relationship. The results of the co-word network analysis reveal six clusters. Cluster 1 encompasses keywords related to consumption behaviour and decision-making from online hotel reviews on Tripadvisor; cluster 2 includes keywords related to tourist behaviour through UGC, from websites to managing and developing tourism destinations; cluster 3 contains keywords related to Internet and tourism marketing; cluster 4 contains keywords related to the comparison of wow effect and eWOM from social network UGC on tourism; cluster 5 encompasses keywords that pertain to the interaction between trust, satisfaction, and behaviour intention in tourism; and cluster 6 contains keywords related to the factors of eWOM that influence destination image, travel intention, and retravel intention. Overall, the keyword groups found in this study do not differ much from that of Mukhopadhyay et al. (2023). One note of interest is that the keywords aWOM and visual cues, or eWOM visuals, appear in the present study and not in Mukhopadhyay et al. (2023).

In summary, the three techniques of the bibliometric method indicate that certain topics have yet to be explored. The authors propose three new trend research areas: individual tourism sectors, aWOM and visual cues, as there are not many authors interested in new trend studies in bibliometric techniques. In addition, the co-word analysis technique also did not see these keywords appear. Therefore, the authors have reason to believe that three research trends are appropriate for the future.

6. Implications, Limitations and Future Directions

6.1 Research Implications

6.1.1 Implications to Management

The results of the study can bring significant benefits to tourism business managers and local managers. Tourism managers can consider the incentives for tourists to create and share eWOM (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Litvin et al., 2008). By understanding these incentives, managers can prepare everything needed to

encourage tourists to generate positive eWOM about businesses and destinations. The use of non-verbal eWOM will be a trend (Leung et al., 2013; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009), so managers are taking advantage of it in their social media work. In the future, tourists will use AI tools for social WOM, and managers should focus on learning and building an AI system that collects and analyses data from tourists (Gretzel et al., 2015; Mariani & Borghi, 2019), which will support attracting visitors and increasing the destination brand.

6.1.2 Academic Implications

This study employs various analytical methods, which yield comprehensive results. The co-citation analysis enables future researchers to identify prominent research directions and influential contributions in the field of eWOM, including motivations for generating eWOM, the relationship between eWOM and visitor behaviour, the components of eWOM, and the application of SEM (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Litvin et al., 2008). Bibliographic coupling analysis helps highlight emerging research trends such aWOM, visual cues, and specialised subfields of eWOM (Leung et al., 2013; Mariani & Borghi, 2021). Finally, the co-word analysis in this study confirms the growth and relevance of these emerging research areas.

6.2 Limitations and Future Directions

The bibliometric analysis is an effective method in quantitative literature review. However, this study also has many notable limitations. First, this study only uses data sources from Scopus, not including other sources, such as Web of Science, so the data does not cover all studies in the field of eWOM. After filtering out duplicates and papers unrelated to the topic, we limited the data we downloaded to only 331 papers. Therefore, it is possible that the analysis of this data will not cover all research topics. Secondly, because bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method, the results obtained from the VOSviewer software may not be entirely accurate. Third, naming clusters and themes is difficult and can be inaccurate. As for future research directions, the researchers suggest individual tourism sectors, aWOM, and visual cues. These areas are from the results of three research directions obtained from the bibliographic coupling analysis technique and careful consideration of topics and keywords from the co-word method.

7. Conclusion

This study aims to identify significant research streams in eWOM and emerging trends to predict future research trajectories. The primary analytical tools of the bibliometric method have identified three novel study directions: individual tourism sectors, aWOM, and visual cues. We recommend these research areas for future attention based on comparisons and discussions with prior findings. This study offers supplementary direction for future researchers. It assists travel managers and marketers in understanding the eWOM trend for attracting travellers. Due to research restrictions, we recommend that bibliometric studies incorporate more data sources to achieve a broader and more comprehensive dataset (e.g., Scopus, Web of Science, and additional sources). This methodology will yield a broader dataset encompassing additional research, thereby facilitating more dependable analytical outcomes.

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