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RECENT TRENDS IN SOCIAL MEDIA IN DESTINATION MARKETING: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Karthick V¹ and Ilankumaran G²

¹Research Scholar, Alagappa Institute of Management, Alagappa University,
Karaikudi – 630003, Tamil Nadu, India,
Ph: 9655005539 E-Mail ID: karthickvphd@alagappauniversity.ac.in
Orchid: 0009 0005 6917 2921

²Professor, Alagappa Institute of Management, Alagappa University,
Karaikudi – 630003, Tamil Nadu, India,
Ph: 9600371511 E-Mail ID: ilankumarang@alagappauniversity.ac.in
Orchid: 0009 0005 6917 2921

*Corresponding Author: karthickvphd@alagappauniversity.ac.in

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ABSTRACT

Social media is currently emerging as a simple way to easily connect, significantly reduce work off to determine one's destinations, and this has changed the way information is passed and how tourists make decisions. Although its involvement has been increasing, the incorporation of the recent trends of social media in destination marketing is not fully integrated. So, in the current research is based on the gap in synthesis of current research because the recent studies have failed to synthesize their findings on changing social media practices in destination marketing. Google scholar was used to obtain data used to conduct a systematic literature review of studies published between 2016 and 2025. Totally 43 articles were chosen using a rigorous screening process and analyzed using NVivo 15 to derive thematic information in social media in destination marketing outcomes in the tourism industry. The most widely used platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube, where the main focus is on user-carbonated content, influencer marketing, and sophisticated analytics. The strategies enhance the destination familiarity, create emotional attachment and enhance the loyalty and behavior intention of the tourists. The findings provide valuable suggestions to destination marketing agencies and tourism managers on adopting dynamic and technology-oriented practices.

KEYWORDS: Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube, User-carbonate content, influencer marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

This is because social media has over the last ten years proved to be an important media platform

through which mass news can be shared as well as instantaneous information obtained. It has become one of the most effective promotion instruments of target destinations and tourism development. Social media assists prospective tourists in planning the visits as the platforms provide them with valuable information and create interest in visiting the destination, which makes the destinations more popular. The tourism boards, newspapers, newsletters, and other traditional media are all used to pass information to potential travelers about tourist destinations. But in the modern globalized world, social media is important in shaping the choice of destination by tourists. It has overtaken the travel industry very fast by altering the way information is generated, distributed, and consumed. The information sharing has been made dynamic and easier through content that includes videos, images, blog posts, podcasts, infographics, and other forms of social media. Consequently, the information disseminating modes in tourism have changed tremendously. The increased usage of social media has helped too in the attraction of international tourists. The recent trends in tourism marketing are the increasing use of social media platforms to market popular attractions by destinations. Table 1 below, shows how social media has played and continues to play a major role and impact in destination marketing. It confirms the way in which social media has been viewed and stipulated through generations, developments of its applications, growth in sophistication, and incorporation of advanced technologies.

Table 1: Level of Evolution Trend Source: Author

Trend Generation	Primary Digital Input	Citation
1st Generation: Informational Presence	Official social media pages, static digital content, blogs	<i>Leung [1]</i>
2nd Generation: Interactive Engagement	User comments, shares, reviews, e-WOM interactions	<i>Mariani [2]</i>
3rd Generation: Co-Creation & Influencer Phase	user comments and shares and reviews and e-wom intercourse.	<i>Ong [3]</i>
4th Generation: Data-Driven & Smart Marketing	Recommender systems, chatbots, big data analytics, AI algorithms, and location-based data.	<i>Blanco-Moreno [4]</i>
5th Generation: Immersive & Short-Form Experience (Emerging)	Short videos, AR/VR applications, live TV channels, interactive filters.	<i>Gan [5, 6]</i>

The available body of knowledge on the topic of social media in destination marketing suggests that numerous researchers can explain the increased efficiency of destination promotion by the widening role of social media platforms in the perceptions and decision-making process of tourists [7]. According to researchers, the digital engagement process and user-generated content has become a key destination competitiveness ingredient, as tourists depend more and more on peer-generated data and forsake traditional promotion methods [2]. This is in line with the perception that social media is



transforming organization-controlled communication of destination marketing into interactive and co-creative paradigms of tourists as the active participants in the branding process [8].

Moreover, recent research highlights the fact that an appropriate use of social media positively affects destination image creation, trust, and visit intention and reinforced market penetration in very competitive tourism markets [9, 10]. Researchers indicate that today digital storytelling, influence marketing, and real-time communication have become indispensable parts of an effective destination marketing value chain [11]. In such a way, commercialization and visibility through social media are becoming recognized as some of the keys to destination marketing success, and the lack of strong digital presence can facilitate a loss of competitiveness and market failure [12, 13].

Past studies indicate the increasing significance of destination marketing on social media. Nonetheless, the results of different studies are diffused on different platforms and marketing dimensions. A distinct research gap is the lack of incorporation of recent trends and an overall picture of the influence of changing social media practices on marketing tourism destinations. The tourism marketing in China has been characterized by a study that is more geared towards international tourist attraction. A 2019-2022 study based on the data available in Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Scopus databases and adhering to PRISMA guidelines. According to the findings, the social media marketing has a strong impact on the decision-making process of tourists [14]. The other study observed the contribution of social media towards destination branding by considering important research themes in regard to social media marketing. The PRISMA framework was used to conduct a systematic literature review of 55 Scopus-indexed articles that had been published in the period between 2014 and 2024. The findings demonstrated that there were four significant themes: 1. Social media boosts brand value co-creation of destinations, 2. Social media marketing affects customer-based brand equity, 3. The destination brand identity is formed with the help of social media, and 4. The social media marketing influences brand involvement and loyalty in tourists [15]. Moreover, some studies, like the one on the new destination al-Ula were conducted to investigate the role of social media marketing activities in destination image, trust, tourist experience and intention to visit. The analysis appraised tourism settings and tourists target groups according to the earlier research frameworks, with the focus on the accruing relevance of social media to construct perceptions and behavioral intentions towards the emerging tourist destinations [16].

The original aim of the research became a narrow research question based on an extensive literature review. In the process, a number of research gaps were realized, which assisted in narrowing down and reinforcing the research question like RQ1 What are the recent trends in social media use as a destination marketing tool RQ2 How do the recent social media trends affect tourist engagement, destination image and visitation intentions RQ3 What theoretical framework, methods and gaps



characterize research on these social media trends in destination marketing. The analysis in particular focuses on the new trends in social media-based destination marketing where a lot of research has not been conducted yet despite the increasing significance of the same.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research will employ a Systematic literature review methodology to generalise on the current information about the changing role of social media as a destination marketing tool. It started with the collection of the data and a literature review regarding the social media in destination marketing. This professional research paper used data that is extracted and downloaded out of Google Scholar, which was chosen because of its multidisciplinary encompass of tourism, marketing and digital media research and then analysed with the NVivo 15. All journals, articles, review articles, and applicable publications were covered in the data collection.

2.1 Date Filtering

The search words were: allintitle: Social Media OR Digital Media OR Online Media AND Destination Promotion OR Destination Marketing. The matching method was predetermined as accurate and synonyms were well-verified. The initial search provided 65 records. Title screening was done on all records. In this step, out of the research articles that were acquired during the search process, 22 irrelevant literatures were eliminated manually. The appropriate studies and articles related to the subject were chosen (n=43); the number of articles includes the period between 2016 and 2025 (10 years) so that the swift development of social media technologies and their increasing role in the destination marketing are included.

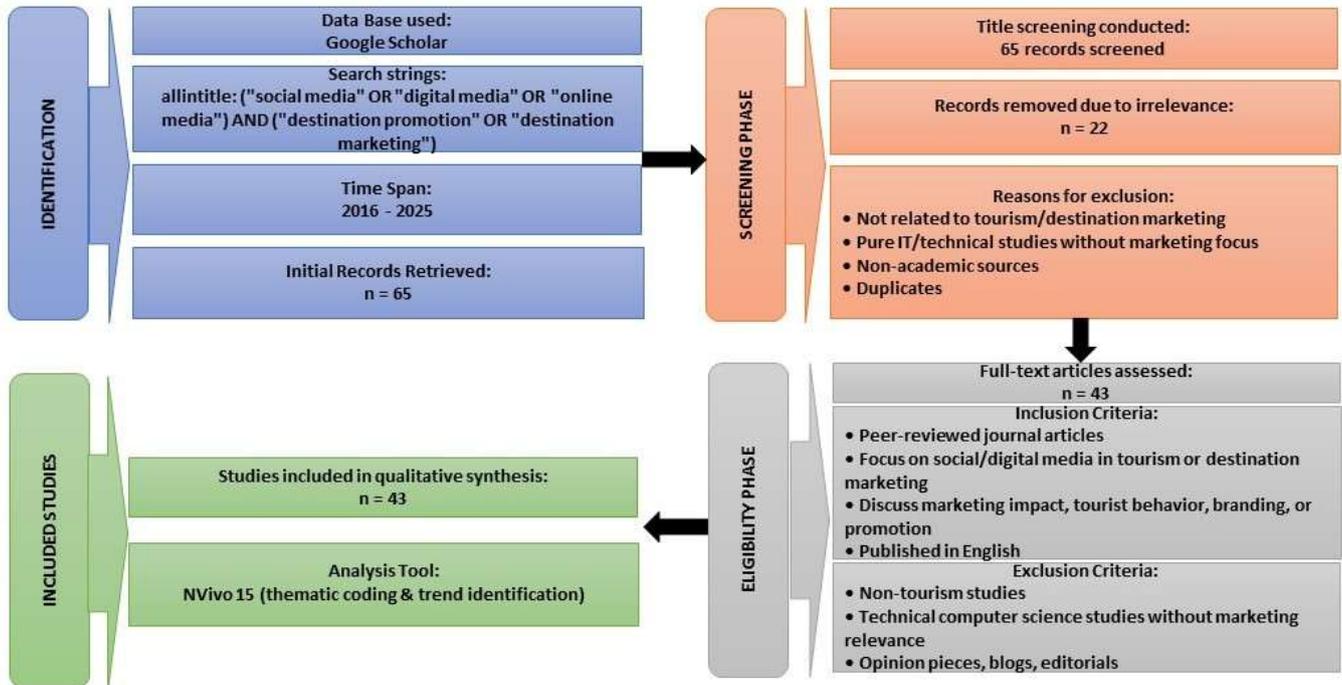


Figure 1: Prisma Flow Diagram-Based Study Selection Process Source: Author

3. RESULTS

The summary of some of the main findings of the collected data are illustrated in the Table 1 below which shows some significant studies that are needed to comprehend the significant contribution in the area of social media in destination marketing. Social Media Innovation Trend, Platform / Technology, Marketing Focus, Tourist Outcome, Method Used, Study Context / Region and Author(s) are individually introduced in the table in a concept map.

Table 2: Status of scholarly work on social media in destination marketing Source: Author

Social Media Innovation / Trend	Platform / Technology	Marketing Focus	Tourist Outcome	Method Used	Study Context / Region	Author(s)
Social media as a destination marketing tool	Social networking platforms	Destination promotion and awareness	Greater visibility and tourist information access	Review / conceptual discussion	Tourism destinations	Hays [17]



Social media as a core e-marketing tool in destination marketing	Social networks, blogs, photo/video sharing platforms, mobile applications	Information search, destination promotion, and tourist–destination interaction	Support for tourist decision-making and destination marketing organization (DMO) digital marketing strategy	Literature review combined with empirical tourism destination analysis	Croatian tourism destinations	Andrlic [18]
Social media as an information & trust source for destination choice	General social media applications (online communities, user-generated platforms)	Online destination promotion & communication strategy	Increased reliance on online/social media information before trip planning	Survey of 123 young tourists	Romania (young travelers)	Dina & Sabou, [19]
Context-dependent influence of social media on destination choice	Social media sites (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)	Destination choice decision support	Influence only under high social media engagement, novel destination, and complex planning	Qualitative interviews (39 decision-makers)	Australia	Tham [20]
Social media–based destination branding	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X	Brand identity building & emotional connection	Destination image formation, brand attachment	Systematic review	Global	Mandagi & Kainde [21]
Experience co-creation via social media	Interactive feedback systems	Participatory marketing	Emotional attachment, memorable experience	Literature review	Destination branding context	Castillo [22]
Conceptual framework of social media marketing	Social media marketing activities (entertainment, structured social	Building destination image through structured social	Improved destination image leading	Conceptual framework and model development	General destination marketing context	Jemin & Asyraff, [23]



activities influencing destination image	interaction, trendiness, customization, e-WOM)	media marketing activities (SMMA)	to stronger intention to visit			
Social media strategy development for destinations	Integrated social media strategy	Strategic digital destination marketing	Better brand positioning and engagement	Strategy development research	Tourism destinations	Kiráľová & Pavlíčka [24]
Short-form video storytelling	Instagram Stories, Reels, TikTok, YouTube Shorts	Visual destination promotion & experience simulation	Higher engagement, travel inspiration, visit intention	Conceptual review / trend analysis	Global digital destinations	Choudhury & Mohanty [25]
Social media storytelling in destination branding	Social networking platforms (brand stories shared online)	Co-creation of destination brand narratives	Brand engagement, story circulation, influence on perceptions	Netnography + conceptual framework	VisitDenmark DMO case (Denmark)	Lund [26]
Official social media photo-based destination promotion	Official national social media platforms (Home Turkey account)	Visual storytelling of iconic experiences, heritage, food, and natural attractions	Enhanced destination attractiveness through themed imagery	Content analysis of 1,300 official destination photographs	Turkey (national destination promotion)	Çelik [27]
DMO destination promotion through Facebook	Facebook (official DMO pages)	Visual promotion of culture, cuisine, scenic beauty, and destination attributes	Higher user engagement with visual and informative content	Content analysis of 6 months of Facebook posts (32 DMOs) + semi-structured interviews	India (State and Union Territory Destination Marketing Organisations)	Prem Kumar [28]
Influencer & user-generated content (UGC)	Instagram, YouTube, Travel blogs	Authentic promotion & peer influence	Trust, credibility, intention to visit	Review of empirical studies	Multiple destinations	Alves [29]



Firm-generated and user-generated social media content driving destination envy	Social media content (firm-generated posts + user-generated content)	Stimulating emotional desire (destination envy) through social media exposure	Destination envy leading to stronger behavioural intention to travel	Survey of 320 tourists + conceptual framework based on Social Cognitive Theory	Chinese tourists visiting Macao during the COVID-19 context	Zheng [30]
Influencer-driven and visual social media marketing	Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook	Emotional appeal, influencer credibility, and interactive promotional content	Increased interest, trust, and intention to travel to the destination	Qualitative in-depth interviews with 16 participants	Indonesian tourists' perceptions of Turkey	Dharmawan & Girginer [31]
Influencer content power beyond credibility	Influencer-generated social media content	Content quality, emotional appeal, and informativeness in destination promotion	Stronger travel desire and destination attractiveness	Empirical analysis of influencer content effects	Tourism social media users	P Kumar [32]
Influencer marketing driving destination choice	Instagram, YouTube, influencer platforms	Influencer attributes influencing destination decisions	Increased intention to visit and destination preference	Survey-based quantitative study	India	Jemin & Asyraff[23]
Digital engagement marketing	Interactive posts, comments, shares, live streams	Relationship marketing	Tourist engagement, e-WOM, loyalty	Conceptual + empirical synthesis	Smart/digital destinations	Surya[33]
Travel agent-mediated destination promotion via social media	Social media videos, images, digital content	Destination image promotion through credible, informative SM content	Improved perception of destination image among foreign tourists	Qualitative semi-structured interviews + thematic analysis	China (travel agents' perspective)	Yuan [34]
Data-driven destination promotion	Big data from social media	Market segmentation & targeting	Better campaign effectiveness	Review of tools & trends	Global destinations	Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa [35]



3.2 Key word Hierarchy

The key terms that are associated with social media are linked to different concepts within the literature in the form of the word tree diagram. Key words such as social and media extend in such a way to demonstrate how they affect the issues of tourism destinations, engagement, marketing strategies, and tourist behavior. The tree reveals such key themes as the influence of social media in destination image creation, the effect of online reviews and strategic planning of social media campaign. It also indicates that it is in line with the research area of the impact of social media presence over tourist decision-making and destination marketing performance. Altogether, the word tree allows seeing an organized picture of the key concepts and their connection to each other in the literature about the social media tendencies in destination marketing, **Figure 3**.

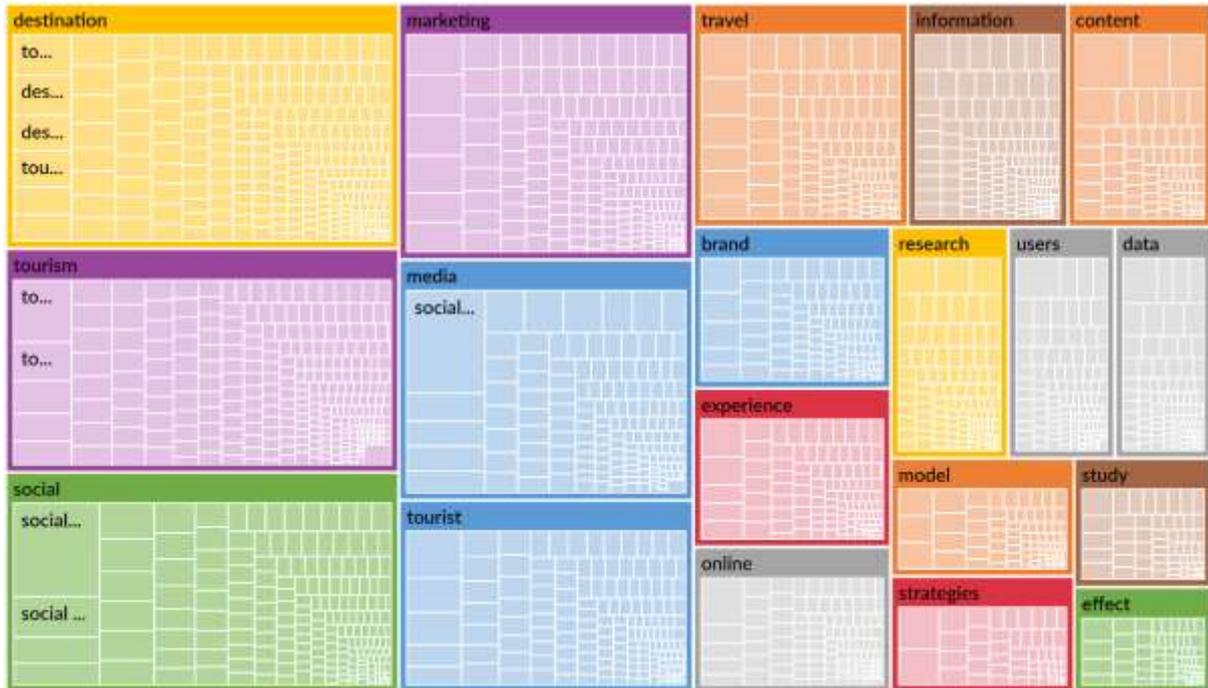


Figure 3: Tree structure of high word-frequency **Source:** Author

3.3 Literature Framework schema

The text search query visualization gives emphasis to the most common and significant words in the literature reviewed. There are dominant central words such as tourism, social, media and destination which reveal their importance in the research. Other important words like marketing, information, researches, travel and study give the emphasis on the interests of the influence of social media on destination marketing and sharing of information about tourism. Also, such terms as experience, technology, service, and online demonstrate the employment of online tools and interaction with the user. The words that refer to the analysis and the results (such as data, model, management, and behavior) denote the typical ways that are employed to research the influence of social media on tourism. This diagram is a visual representation of **Figure 4**, key themes linking social media, tourism marketing, and research methods in recent research.

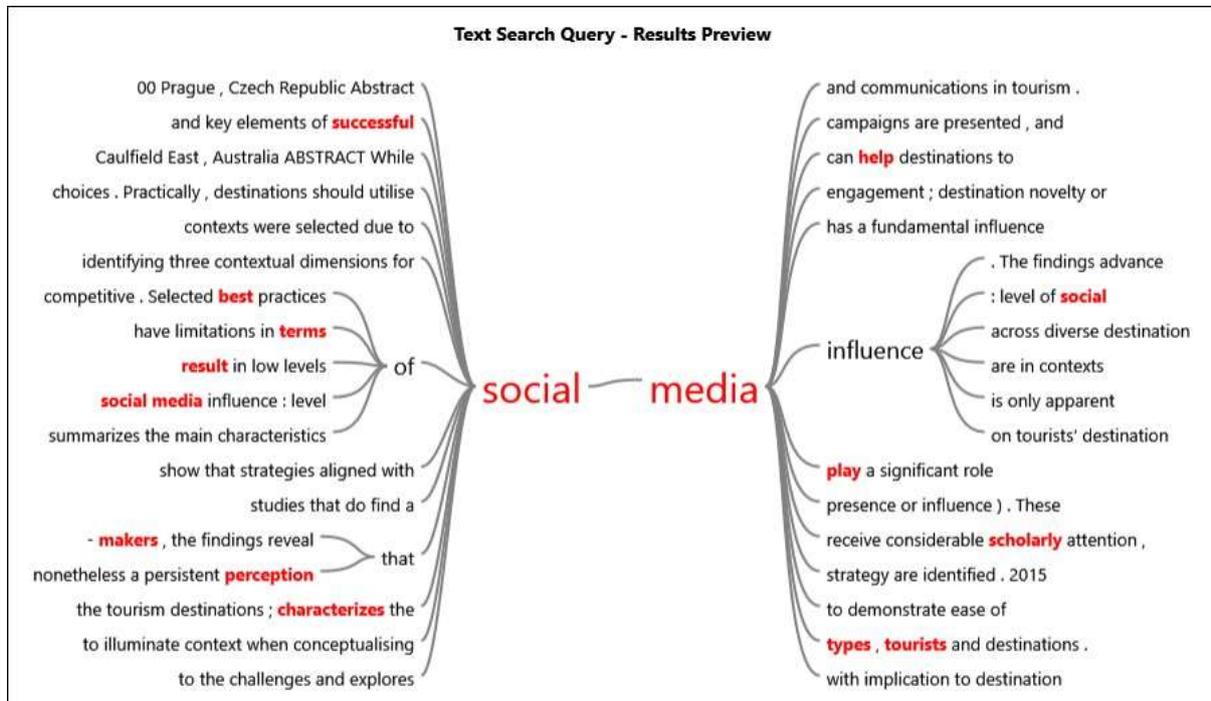


Figure 4: Visualization of Text search query Source: Author

4. DISCUSSION

The systematic review has established significant trends of social media that is shaping the destination marketing that comprise the transformation of informational presence to immersive and short experiences. The trendiest platforms include Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube, and marketing can be based on promoting destinations and creating a brand and on the production of high-quality content that is promoted by influencers and making decisions based on the data. These tendencies prove the ability of social media to boost the tourist interest, destination image, and the intention to visit using the approaches of interactivity, co-creation, and technological advancement. Empirical data explain that user-generated content, influencer marketing, and data analytics are useful in driving tourist and destination competitiveness behavior.

These findings point to the disruptive nature of the social media in tourism marketing shifting the nature of promotion which was mainly founded on organizational control to active interaction. Other than offering a platform of information sharing, social media assists in the establishment of a sense of trust, emotional attachment, and loyalty among the tourists. Visitors are also enhanced by the use of innovative technologies AI, big data, and immersive media that facilitate the process of targeting and personalization to streamline the experience and decision making of the visitors. The trend is more



indicative of a bigger movement of intelligent, virtual destinations leveraging social media as a tool of strategy.

The results align with the previous literature which dwells upon the major part of digital communication and user-made content in destination marketing. Consistent with the earlier study, this review discloses that the activities of social media marketing actually have significant role in destination image creation and tourist intentions. It nevertheless adds to what was previously accomplished by categorizing recent innovation in a systematized manner like new tendencies including concise storytelling by means of video and deep technologies. Unlike past studies, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of different characteristics of social media when combined to determine the outcomes of tourism in various regions and settings.

The study identifies their implications in the tourism stakeholders and DMOs. The implementation of trends and technologies of the multi-generational social media would contribute to the enhancement of brand recognition, communication with the tourists, and competitive strategy. DMOs should concentrate on the interactive and co-creation content strategies by utilizing influencers and user-generated content to build authentic relationships. Furthermore, data-driven marketing tools will be used, which will enable a more effective application of the segmentation and campaign optimization. These lessons aid in creation of innovative, technology-flexible marketing models, which react to the shifting tourist tendencies and inclinations.

This review has a weakness of depending on the published literature that has been indexed in the chosen databases, which might be missing the new or non-English language research. The selection of the articles within the timeframe of 2016-2025 reflects new tendencies but can potentially ignore the principles of the previous periods. Moreover, the diversity of the approach and contexts of the studies included limits the generalization of certain results. The high rate of social media site and tools evolution also implies that the trends identified can change fast, and thus research needs to be conducted regularly to ensure that it is not outdated.

Research in the future must address the longitudinal effects of new social media technologies on tourist behavior and destination performance. Research on unexplored markets and other tourists would help expand knowledge about the worldwide impacts of social media. Empirical studies to determine the effectiveness of immersive and short-form content in real-world marketing campaigns are also needed. Combining qualitative information with big data analytics have the potential to offer more multi-dimensional views. Lastly, the creation of uniform systems on measuring the success of social media marketing will increase comparability and best practices in destination marketing.



5. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review is a synthesis of the current trends in the use of social media in destination marketing, and there is a strong indication of a progressive trend in the use of information contents to immersive interactive and data-driven marketing efforts. The social media channels now serve as the key to increasing the destination exposure, branding, and influencing tourists by providing user-created content and influencer marketing, as well as by improving analytics. The use of new technologies, including AI and immersive media, is transforming the relationships between destinations and their potential visitors, making them more trusting and emotionally involved and loyal. The evolving practices highlighted here the need to develop adaptive, technology informed marketing practices to the tourism stakeholders to continue being competitive in a fast-evolving digital world.

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7. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Karthick V is responsible for conceptualization, systematic literature review, data collection, and screening, thematic analysis using NVivo 15, interpretation of findings, as well as writing the manuscript. He was also the one that prepared the tables and visualizations (word cloud, hierarchy tree, and framework diagrams) as well as the reference compilation.

Dr. G. Ilankumaran supervise the overall research process, provide methodological advice, validated the research design and results, and assisted in critical appraisal, scholarly development, and editing of the manuscript.

Both authors went through, edited, and endorsed the final copy of the manuscript.

8. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest concerning the publication of this paper.

9. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The information used to present this study was acquired using scholarly sources that could be found online in Google Scholar as a part of a systematic literature review. A list of the chosen articles (n=43) was screened, coded, and thematically analyzed to produce a list of articles, which is provided by the authors to any reasonable request by academic purpose. The authors can also share processed materials such as the NVivo coding framework, extracted datasets, and generated visual outputs (e.g., word cloud,



hierarchy tree, and conceptual framework diagrams), in which case they can be used in research or learning.

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