

Influencer Marketing and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) in Hospitality: A Bibliometric Review

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates the intellectual and thematic evolution of influencer marketing in the hospitality sector from 2008 to 22 January 2025, with the aim of identifying leading contributors, dominant research themes, and emerging gaps across this rapidly expanding field.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A bibliometric analysis was conducted on 900 Scopus-indexed journal articles. Using Bibliometrix (R-package) and VOSviewer, the study applied performance analysis, co-occurrence mapping, co-citation networks, and thematic clustering to examine publication trends and the conceptual development of influencer marketing research in hospitality.

Findings: The results reveal four major thematic clusters: (1) eWOM and influencer roles in hospitality, (2) tourism insights derived from influencer-generated content, (3) influencer marketing and travel decision-making, and (4) UGC-driven tourism promotion. Keyword co-occurrence further highlights core themes such as social media, user-generated content, destination image, and consumer perception. Although research on trust, engagement, and content credibility is well established, emerging areas including AI-generated content, influencer transparency, algorithmic visibility, and cross-cultural perspectives remain underdeveloped.

Originality/Value: By synthesizing a fragmented body of literature, this review offers a structured and comprehensive knowledge base for scholars and practitioners. It also presents a forward-looking research agenda that supports more credible, data-driven, and culturally relevant influencer strategies in the digital hospitality environment.

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Introduction

The hospitality industry has experienced a profound digital shift over the last two decades, with social media, influencer marketing, and user-generated content (UGC) emerging as powerful forces shaping consumer behavior. Among these, influencer marketing has become a cornerstone of digital branding and consumer engagement strategies. Unlike traditional marketing, which often lacks personalization, influencer-driven campaigns leverage authenticity, emotional appeal, and parasocial relationships to influence consumer decision-making in experiential sectors like hospitality and tourism (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Ye et al., 2011). As travelers increasingly turn to digital platforms for destination inspiration and hotel reviews, influencers serve as intermediaries between brands and audiences, offering relatable and credible endorsements.

Academic interest in this area has grown rapidly, resulting in a diverse yet fragmented body of literature. Researchers have explored a wide range of topics including the role of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), influencer trustworthiness, destination image formation, and the mechanics of social media engagement (Ayeh et al., 2013; Z. Liu & Park, 2015). Methodologically, the field spans content analysis, survey-based SEM, and qualitative approaches, often grounded in theories like the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Source Credibility, and Parasocial Interaction Theory. However, existing studies tend to be localized, platform-specific, or focused on a limited set of constructs. There remains a lack of integrative synthesis that traces the intellectual, thematic, and methodological development of the field over time.

To address this gap, this study conducts a comprehensive bibliometric review of influencer marketing in hospitality from 2008 to 2025 using the Bibliometrix R-package and VOSviewer. A dataset of 900 Scopus-indexed articles was analyzed to uncover high-impact authors, journals, and institutions, along with keyword co-occurrences, co-citation networks, and thematic cluster formation. The aim is not only to map scholarly influence but also to identify underexplored areas and suggest future research directions based on both quantitative patterns and thematic interpretations.

Accordingly, the following research questions guide this study:

RQ1. How has the academic literature on influencer marketing in the hospitality sector evolved between 2008 and 2025 in terms of key contributors, citation patterns, and publication trends?

RQ2. What are the major thematic clusters and intellectual structures that define influencer marketing research in hospitality, as revealed through bibliographic coupling and co-citation analysis?

RQ3. What are the most frequently studied keywords and conceptual trends in influencer marketing within hospitality, and how do they reflect evolving research priorities?

In line with these questions, the study aims to achieve the following research objectives:

RO1: To map the publication trends, citation metrics, and leading contributors (authors, journals, institutions, and countries) in influencer marketing within the hospitality sector.

RO2: To identify core intellectual clusters and thematic linkages through co-citation and bibliographic coupling analyses.

RO3: To analyze keyword co-occurrence networks to detect trending concepts and shifts in research priorities.

RO4: To synthesize findings into a research agenda that advances both academic inquiry and digital marketing strategy in hospitality contexts.

By offering a structured, data-driven synthesis, this study contributes to the consolidation and advancement of influencer marketing literature in the hospitality domain and provides a valuable reference for researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a structured bibliometric approach to explore the intellectual landscape of influencer marketing within the hospitality sector between 2008 and 2025. The purpose of this methodology is to systematically identify, analyze, and map the development of key themes, influential contributions, and emerging trends in the domain. Bibliographic coupling was adopted as the core analytical technique to reveal thematic proximity among articles that share common cited references (See table 1).

Data Source and Search Strategy

The Scopus database was selected as the sole source for data collection due to its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals in business, marketing, tourism, and related disciplines. A targeted search was conducted on 22 January 2025 using an advanced Boolean query in the TITLE-ABS-KEY fields. The search strategy included a wide range of influencer-related keywords such as “influencer marketing,” “content creator,” “brand ambassador,” and “social media strategy,” as well as hospitality-specific terms like “hotel,” “resort,” “tourism marketing,” and “destination marketing.” This search yielded an initial dataset of 1,572 documents (See table 1).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

A systematic screening protocol was implemented to ensure the quality and relevance of the selected literature. Only documents published between 2008 and 22nd January 2025 were included. The subject areas were limited to Business, Management and Accounting; Social Sciences; Economics, Econometrics and Finance; and Arts and Humanities. Only peer-reviewed journal articles and review papers were retained, excluding conference papers, editorials, and non-scholarly publications. The language filter was set to English only, and only documents in the final publication stage with complete author information were accepted. Following this multi-layered filtering process, the final dataset comprised 900 journal articles, as detailed in Table 1.

Data Analysis Procedure

The bibliometric data were exported in csv format and analyzed using Bibliometrix (an R-package) and VOSviewer software. Bibliographic coupling was applied to identify thematic clusters based on shared reference patterns among documents. This technique enables the detection of conceptual linkages and research communities within the field. The resulting clusters were analyzed and interpreted thematically to uncover dominant research areas such as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), influencer credibility, user-generated content (UGC), and destination branding. In addition, descriptive bibliometric indicators such as annual publication growth, citation impact, and top contributing authors were used to contextualize the evolution of scholarship in influencer marketing and hospitality.

Table 1: Document Search and Inclusion Criteria

SEARCH CRITERIA AND ARTICLE SELECTION		
FILTERING CRITERIA	EXCLUDE	INCLUDE
SEARCH CRITERIA		
SEARCH DATE: 22 January 2025		
DATABASE: SCOPUS		
Period of Publications: 2008-2025		
SEARCH TERM : TITLE-ABS-KEY (“influencer marketing” OR “social media influencer” OR “travel influencer” OR “travel blogger” OR “digital influencer” OR “content creator” OR “brand ambassador” OR “influencer endorsement” OR “influencer collaboration” OR “Instagram marketing” OR “YouTube influencer” OR “TikTok influencer” OR “celebrity endorsement” OR “social media marketing” OR “user-generated content” OR “online celebrity” OR “hashtag marketing” OR “social media strategy”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“hospitality” OR “hotel*” OR “resort*” OR “lodging” OR “accommodation” OR “tourism” OR “travel industry” OR “destination marketing” OR “travel behavior” OR “tourist attraction*” OR “travel decision*” OR “tourism marketing” OR “experience marketing”)		1572
Period of Publications: 2008-2025	28	1544
SUBJECT AREA: Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Arts and Humanities	303	1241
PUBLICATION TYPE: Article, Review	266	975
ARTICLE SELECTION		
LANGUAGE SCREENING: include documents published in English only	26	949
SOURCE TYPE: JOURNAL	3	946
Publication stage: Final	43	903
Erroneous records screening: Include documents with valid author information only	3	900

Source: Author’s Compilation



Analysis and Findings

Citation Analysis

- **Top author, institution, country**

To evaluate the scholarly influence within the domain of consumer trust in online reviews, we analyzed the most cited authors, institutions, and countries from our dataset. This citation-based assessment offers a robust indicator of research visibility and intellectual leadership. The table below highlights the top contributors who have significantly shaped the theoretical and empirical landscape. By identifying these high-impact entities, we aim to contextualize the evolution of research efforts across regions and institutions.

Top Authors

Rob Law leads the scholarly impact in the domain with 2,293 total citations across 15 publications, making him a foundational figure in online reviews and hospitality research. His work consistently appears in top-tier journals and sets benchmarks in digital marketing analytics. Following him, Anil Bilgihan has amassed 1,331 citations across 5 papers, focusing on technology acceptance and consumer behavior. Dimitrios Buhalis, a pioneer in e-tourism, holds 1,225 citations from 4 papers, often blending theoretical and practical insights. These top authors have significantly shaped the academic discourse, offering robust empirical models and conceptual clarity on consumer trust and digital engagement (See table 2).

Top Institutions

The University of Central Florida (USA) leads with 946 citations from 7 papers. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University follows closely with 884 citations, renowned for its cutting-edge research in online travel and hospitality systems. The University of California (USA), also with 884 citations, adds technological rigor and cross-disciplinary depth. These institutions have shaped how researchers and practitioners understand user behavior in digital platforms, influencing both academia and industry across global hospitality and tourism management domains (See table 2).

Top Countries

The United States dominates this research domain with 11,260 total citations from 157 papers, reflecting its leadership in digital marketing, consumer analytics, and hospitality research. China ranks second with 6,756 citations from 150 papers, emphasizing technological innovation, AI applications, and platform trust. The United Kingdom comes third with 5,321 citations across 69 papers, contributing heavily to service quality, customer experience, and sentiment analysis. These top countries demonstrate the global relevance of online review research, with the USA emphasizing behavioral insights, China focusing on technological models, and the UK contributing methodological diversity and practical frameworks (See table 2).

Table 2: Top Author, Institution, Country

TC	Author	TP	TC	Institution	TP	TC	Country	TP
2293	law, rob	15	946	university of central florida, united states	7	11260	united states	157
1331	bilgihan, anil	5	884	hong kong polytechnic university, hong kong	1	6756	china	150
1225	buhalis, dimitrios	4	884	university of california, united states	1	5321	united kingdom	69
1173	stepchenkova, svetlana	5	884	university of texas at austin, united states	1	4121	australia	75
1152	munar, ana maria	3	884	harbin institute of technology, china	1	3458	hong kong	38
1008	jacobsen, jens kr. steen	2	806	university of stavanger, norway	1	3454	spain	98
947	ye, qiang	2	806	copenhagen business school, denmark	1	2549	italy	48
888	chen, wei	2	797	beijing blasacapital ltd, china	1	1636	denmark	11
884	gu, bin	1	797	university of surrey, united kingdom	1	1407	portugal	37
835	park, sangwon	2	682	g adventure, london, united kingdom	1	1332	south korea	35

Source: Author’s Compilation (through Vosviewer)

The citation patterns clearly illustrate that academic leadership in this domain is concentrated among a few prolific scholars and globally renowned institutions. While the United States remains the epicenter of influential research, emerging contributions from China and the UK are shaping methodological and contextual innovations. These insights can guide future scholars in identifying collaboration opportunities and benchmarking their research impact within the field of digital consumer trust.

• **Top articles**

Over the past seventeen years, influencer marketing in the hospitality sector has gained growing academic attention. This bibliometric review traces its development from 2008 to 2025, spotlighting key studies that have shaped the field. (Ye et al., 2011) highlighted how user-generated content significantly influences travelers' booking decisions, emphasizing the power of e-word-of-mouth. (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014) explored motivations behind sharing tourism experiences, revealing the emotional and social factors driving content creation. (Z. Liu & Park, 2015) identified the attributes that make online reviews useful, particularly in building consumer trust. Additionally, (Hays et al., 2013) examined how national tourism organizations utilize social media as a strategic marketing tool. Collectively, these works underscore critical themes such as digital trust, peer influence, and content credibility in hospitality marketing.

As influencer marketing becomes increasingly data-driven and platform-centric, recent scholarship reflects a growing focus on authenticity, engagement, and trust as key drivers of consumer behavior in the digital hospitality ecosystem (See table 3).

• **Top Journals**

The landscape of research on consumer trust in online reviews is largely shaped by a core set of influential journals. Tourism Management leads in total citations (5,280) from 34 papers, reflecting its long-standing reputation for publishing high-impact work in hospitality and tourism. The International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management surpasses all others in total publications (39), with a notable surge in the 2020–2025 period. The Journal of Travel Research and Current Issues in Tourism also demonstrate sustained relevance with high citation counts. Notably, Sustainability (Switzerland) emerged as a recent publication hub with 43 papers since 2020 alone (See table 4).

Table 4: Top Journals

Journal	TP	TC	2008-2013	2014-2019	2020-2025
tourism management	34	5280	3	18	13
international journal of contemporary hospitality management	39	2859	1	15	23
journal of travel research	22	2254	3	5	14
current issues in tourism	30	2142	2	4	24
journal of hospitality marketing and management	17	1940	2	9	6
journal of travel and tourism marketing	21	1611	5	10	6
sustainability (switzerland)	50	1512	0	7	43
journal of destination marketing and management	16	1335	0	5	11
computers in human behavior	4	1145	1	2	1
journal of hospitality and tourism technology	25	1137	2	9	14

Source: Author's Compilation (through Vosviewer)

Table 3: Top articles

Author	Year	Title	TC
Ye et al. (2011)	2011	"The influence of user-generated content on traveler behavior: An empirical investigation on the effects of e-word-of-mouth to hotel online bookings"	884
Munar & Jacobsen (2014)	2014	"Motivations for sharing tourism experiences through social media"	806
Liu & Park (2015)	2015	"What makes a useful online review? Implication for travel product websites"	797
Hays et al. (2013)	2013	"Social media as a destination marketing tool: Its use by national tourism organisations"	682
Ayeh et al. (2013)	2013	"Do We Believe in TripAdvisor?" Examining Credibility Perceptions and Online Travelers' Attitude toward Using User-Generated Content"	609
Berezina et al. (2016)	2016	"Understanding Satisfied and Dissatisfied Hotel Customers: Text Mining of Online Hotel Reviews"	464
Ghose et al. (2012)	2012	"Designing ranking systems for hotels on travel search engines by mining user-generated and crowdsourced content"	454
Buhalis & Foerste (2015)	2015	"SoCoMo marketing for travel and tourism: Empowering co-creation of value"	440
Pop et al. (2022)	2022	"The impact of social media influencers on travel decisions: the role of trust in consumer decision journey"	440
Kandampully et al. (2015)	2015	"Customer loyalty: A review and future directions with a special focus on the hospitality industry"	408

Source: Author's Compilation (through Vosviewer)



The dominance of journals such as *Tourism Management* and *IJCHM* underscores the interdisciplinary nature and evolving focus of research in digital trust and consumer decision-making. The sharp increase in publications from 2020–2025 also highlights the growing academic interest in post-pandemic digital behaviors. These trends suggest that future contributions to this domain are likely to find fertile ground in both hospitality-focused and cross-disciplinary journals (See table 4).

Co-citation analysis

To trace the intellectual foundations of influencer marketing within the hospitality domain, a co-citation analysis of cited references was conducted. This approach identifies influential works that are frequently cited together, revealing deeper theoretical and methodological connections across the literature. The resulting clusters reflect distinct yet interrelated themes ranging from trust formation and structural modeling to destination image construction and the evolving role of social media in travel-related decision-making. These clusters provide valuable insight into how foundational studies continue to shape contemporary research trajectories.

together for establishing the conceptual and methodological groundwork in studies exploring digital influence, consumer decision-making, and review-based trust mechanisms. Their enduring relevance makes this cluster a cornerstone in co-citation networks related to online reviews and influencer strategies in tourism and hospitality research (Figure 1).

Cluster 2 comprises highly co-cited references that form the methodological and conceptual foundation for analyzing influencer marketing through structural models. Seminal works by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) are widely cited for advancing the evaluation of structural equation models (SEM), especially when dealing with latent constructs and measurement error. These studies provide critical guidelines for model fit, reliability, and validity, becoming methodological cornerstones in digital marketing research. (Lou & Yuan, 2019), often co-cited alongside these methodological texts, built on this foundation by empirically testing how message value and source credibility affect consumer trust in influencer-generated branded content. Using PLS-SEM, they demonstrated how trust in influencers mediates the relationship between content attributes and brand-related outcomes. This cluster reflects the intersection of rigorous model evaluation and emerging influencer

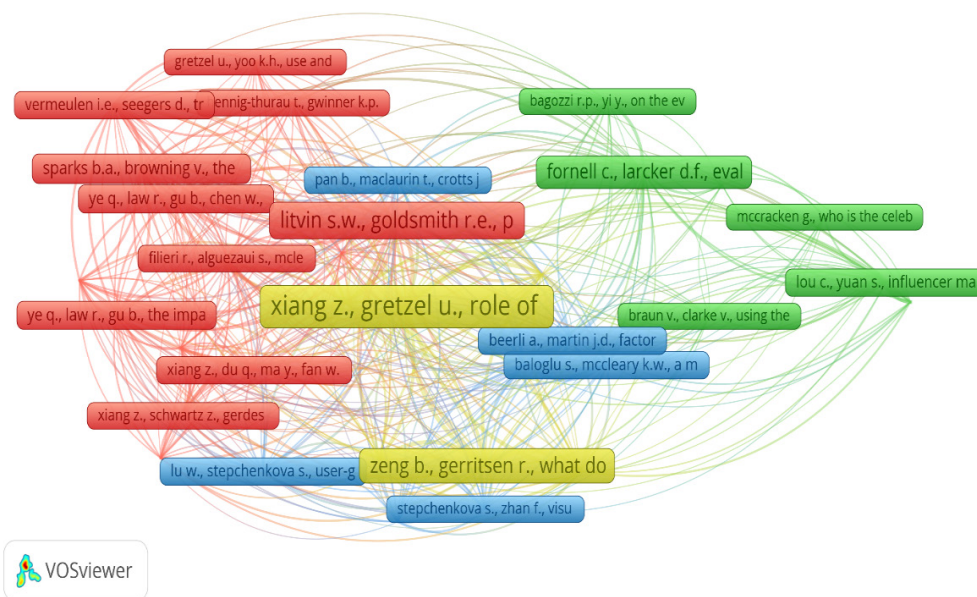


Figure 1: Co-Citation Analysis (Source: Vosviewer)

Cluster 1 brings together foundational studies that are frequently co-cited for their shared emphasis on trust formation and the behavioral influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in hospitality contexts. (Sparks & Browning, 2011) explored how review framing, valence, and numerical cues shape consumer trust and booking intentions, offering early insights into review design effects. (Litvin et al., 2008) conceptualized eWOM as a transformative force in hospitality marketing, highlighting its persuasive power and ethical challenges in the digital age. (Ye et al., 2009) added empirical depth by linking online reviews to actual hotel room sales, using econometric modeling. These works are often cited

trust frameworks, often serving as the analytical backbone for studies investigating trust, engagement, and consumer behavior on social media platforms (Figure 1).

Cluster 3 reflects a strong intellectual alignment around destination image formation and the evolving role of user-generated content (UGC) in tourism marketing. Frequently co-cited works like (Beerli & Martín, 2004) laid the conceptual groundwork by modeling how tourists form post-visit destination images, shaped by motivations, socio demographics, and both primary and secondary information sources. (Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013) advanced this stream

by contrasting official destination marketing content with UGC imagery, showing how traveler-uploaded photos more accurately represent perceived visual destination identity. Complementing these perspectives, (Pan et al., 2007) explored the role of travel blogs in capturing authentic visitor experiences, emphasizing their potential as low-cost tools for understanding tourist perceptions. This cluster is foundational for research on visual influence, perceived authenticity, and experience-driven destination branding, illustrating how tourists increasingly rely on peer-shared narratives and visuals over official campaigns to evaluate and imagine travel experiences (Figure 1).

Cluster 4 comprises co-cited foundational works that explore the strategic role of social media in online travel planning, brand engagement, and tourism marketing. (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) provide early empirical evidence that social media platforms significantly shape travel information search behaviors, often dominating search engine results and surpassing traditional content providers. (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014) further synthesize the growing body of literature on social media in tourism, emphasizing its influence on consumer decision-making, destination branding, and the urgent need for more comprehensive research in this space. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012), though centered on celebrity branding, offer a compelling case of how integrated use of Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook can amplify digital

presence insights that parallel tourism promotion strategies. Collectively, these studies highlight how social media has transformed from a communication channel into a powerful marketing and engagement ecosystem, shaping both individual travel choices and broader destination branding strategies (Figure 1).

Collectively, the four clusters offer a nuanced understanding of the scholarly discourse underpinning influencer marketing in hospitality. Their frequent co-citation underscores their enduring relevance in guiding research on digital trust, content credibility, consumer engagement, and platform-based marketing strategies. As the field continues to evolve, these seminal works remain central to both theoretical development and empirical application, serving as a robust foundation for future inquiry.

Bibliographic coupling

Bibliographic coupling is a robust technique that highlights the intellectual structure of a research domain by linking documents that share common references. Through VOS-viewer's analysis of 900 documents filtered to include only those cited over 200 times we identified 37 key works grouped into four major thematic clusters. Each cluster reflects a unique scholarly conversation on influencer marketing and electronic word-of-mouth (e WOM) within the hospitality and tourism context.

Table 5: Thematic Cluster through Bibliographic Coupling

Theme	Author(s)	Title	Cited by
eWOM and Influencer Role in Hospitality	Ye et al. (2011)	"The influence of user-generated content on traveler behavior: An empirical investigation on the effects of e-word-of-mouth to hotel online bookings"	884
	Liu & Park (2015)	"What makes a useful online review? Implication for travel product websites"	797
	Berezina et al. (2016)	"Understanding Satisfied and Dissatisfied Hotel Customers: Text Mining of Online Hotel Reviews"	464
Tourism Insights via Influencer Content	Stepchenkova & Zhan (2013)	"Visual destination images of Peru: Comparative content analysis of DMO and user-generated photography"	377
	Lu & Stepchenkova (2015)	"User-Generated Content as a Research Mode in Tourism and Hospitality Applications: Topics, Methods, and Software"	347
	Akehurst (2009)	"User generated content: The use of blogs for tourism organisations and tourism consumers"	333
Influencer Marketing and Travel Decision	Pop et al. (2022)	"The impact of social media influencers on travel decisions: the role of trust in consumer decision journey"	440
	Liu et al. (2019)	"Social Media Envy: How Experience Sharing on Social Networking Sites Drives Millennials' Aspirational Tourism Consumption"	303
	Xu (Rinka) & Pratt (2018)	"Social media influencers as endorsers to promote travel destinations: an application of self-congruence theory to the Chinese Generation Y"	295
UGC and Influencer Tourism Promotion	Munar & Jacobsen (2014)	"Motivations for sharing tourism experiences through social media"	806
	Hays et al. (2013)	"Social media as a destination marketing tool: Its use by national tourism organisations"	682
	Ayeh et al (2013)	"Do We Believe in TripAdvisor?" Examining Credibility Perceptions and Online Travelers' Attitude toward Using User-Generated Content"	609

Source: Author's Compilation (through Vosviewer)

Bibliographic coupling analysis grouped 35 frequently cited articles into four thematic clusters based on shared reference patterns, indicating aligned research focus and conceptual overlap. These clusters reflect evolving themes around influencer marketing and consumer behavior in hospitality and tourism contexts.

Cluster 1 (e-WOM and Influencer Role in Hospitality):

This cluster has 10 items with total 4246 citations, captures seminal works exploring the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and influencer dynamics in shaping consumer trust and decision-making in the hospitality sector. (Ye et al., 2011) remains one of the most cited articles, offering empirical evidence on how user-generated reviews affect hotel booking behavior (Cited by: 884). (Z. Liu & Park, 2015) examined what makes reviews useful, stressing the importance of content quality and review structure (Cited by: 797). (Berezina et al., 2016) added a text-mining perspective, analyzing sentiments in online hotel reviews to differentiate between satisfied and dissatisfied customers (Cited by: 464). Collectively, this cluster establishes the foundation for understanding how online reviews, trust cues, and influencer-type content drive consumer choices in service encounters (See Table 5, Figure 2).

Cluster 2 (Tourism Insights via Influencer Content):

This cluster has 10 items with total 2782 citations, centered on user-generated visual content and blog-based storytelling in shaping destination perception. (Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013) provided comparative insights into visual imagery created by users versus official destination marketing organizations (DMOs), underlining the authenticity advantage of consumer content (Cited by: 377). (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015) further examined UGC as a methodological tool in tourism research, analyzing dominant software, themes, and data sources (Cited by: 347). (Akehurst, 2009) demonstrated how blogs serve as both a platform for tourism marketing and a channel for consumer expression (Cited by: 333). This

cluster highlights how visual narratives and content sharing reshape consumer impressions, offering destinations new opportunities for engagement beyond traditional campaigns (See Table 5, Figure 2).

Cluster 3 (Influencer Marketing and Travel Decision):

This cluster has 8 items with total 2199 citations, focuses on the behavioral and psychological mechanisms through which influencers impact travel decision-making, especially among digitally native generations. (Pop et al., 2022) explored how influencer trust shapes consumer decisions throughout the travel planning journey (Cited by: 440). (H. Liu et al., 2019) introduced the concept of social media envy, illustrating how aspirational travel content affects millennials' consumption desires (Cited by: 303). (Xu (Rinka) & Pratt, 2018) applied self-congruence theory to assess how Generation Y travelers in China respond to influencer endorsements (Cited by: 295). Together, these works advance understanding of how identity alignment, trust, and social comparisons drive destination choice in an influencer-saturated digital environment (See Table 5, Figure 2).

Cluster 4 (UGC and Influencer Tourism Promotion):

Cluster 4 has 7 items with total 3615 citations, highlights how UGC and influencer strategies are integrated into destination marketing and brand-building. (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014) explored motivations behind sharing tourism experiences, emphasizing social and emotional gratification (Cited by: 806). (Hays et al., 2013) analyzed how national tourism organizations leverage social media as a marketing tool (Cited by: 682), while (Ayeh et al., 2013) investigated the credibility of UGC, particularly on platforms like TripAdvisor, and how it shapes traveler attitudes (Cited by: 609). This cluster emphasizes the dual role of consumers as both content creators and brand co-promoters, influencing travel intentions through perceived authenticity and peer validation (See Table 5, Figure 2).

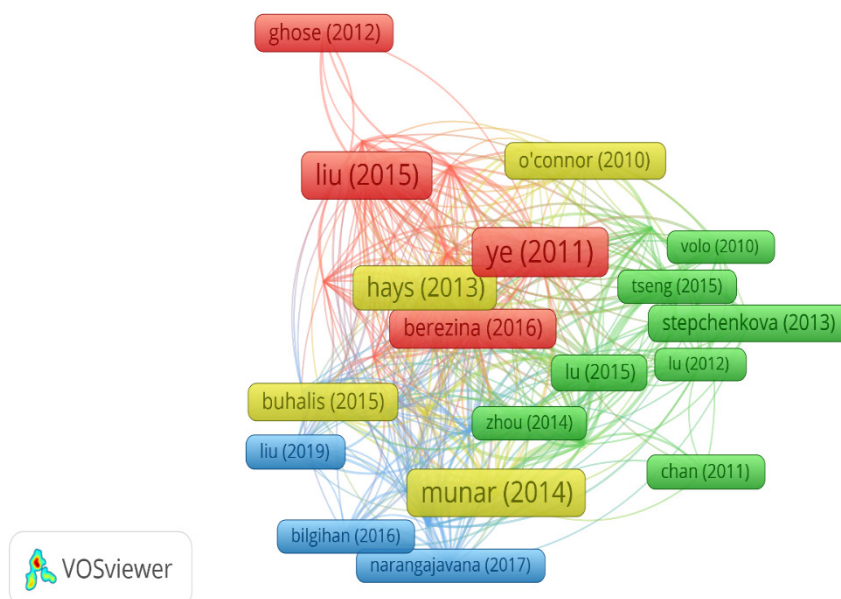


Figure 2: Bibliographic Coupling (Source: Vosviewer)

Collectively, the four thematic clusters reveal how the literature on influencer marketing in hospitality has evolved from foundational eWOM studies to complex models of trust, visual storytelling, and identity-driven engagement. These clusters not only highlight influential research streams but also underscore the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Together, they offer a robust conceptual base for future investigations into digital consumer behavior and strategic hospitality marketing.

3.4 Co-occurrence Analysis of Keywords Using Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix R-package)

To uncover prevailing research trends in influencer marketing within the hospitality sector, a co-occurrence analysis of author keywords was conducted using the Biblioshiny interface of the Bibliometrix R-package. The results revealed that “social media” was the most frequently occurring keyword (n = 268), emphasizing its foundational role in hospitality-focused influencer strategies (Leung et al., 2013; Xiang et al., 2017). Closely following were “user-generated content” (n = 221) and “tourism” (n = 112), reflecting a scholarly emphasis on content authenticity and its persuasive influence on travel-related decision-making (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Terms such as “tourist destination” (n = 108), “marketing” (n = 84), and “social media marketing” (n = 74) further illustrate the convergence of digital influence with strategic destination branding (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Keywords like “destination image,” “tourism market,” and “perception” signify the continued interest in how influencer-led content shapes consumer cognition and emotional evaluations. The concentration of such keywords reveals a consistent thematic alignment around experiential marketing, digital storytelling, and user trust key pillars that underpin modern hospitality marketing research. These patterns not only chart the evolution of influencer marketing discourse but also offer insight into future research directions anchored in digital consumer engagement (See Table 6, Figure 3).



Figure 3: Keyword Word Cloud.

Table 6. Most Frequently Used Author Keywords

Terms	Frequency
social media	268
user-generated content	221
tourism	112
tourist destination	108
marketing	84
social media marketing	74
destination image	57
tourism market	57
tourism management	53
perception	46

Source: Bibliometrix R



Figure 4: Tree Map of Abstract Keyword Frequency. Source: Bibliometrix R

The word tree-map visualization illustrates the most frequently used keywords in the influencer marketing and hospitality literature from 2008 to 2025. The most prominent term is “social media” with 268 occurrences (13%), followed by “user-generated content” at 221 (10%), “tourism” at 112 (5%), and “tourist destination” at 108 (5%). Other key themes include “marketing” (84, 4%), “social media marketing” (74, 3%), and “destination image” (57, 3%). These frequencies indicate a strong scholarly focus on digital engagement, authenticity, and branding strategies, with emerging interest in areas like “influencer marketing” (33, 2%) and “sentiment analysis” (33, 2%). The size and color of each block reflect the relative weight of each keyword, offering a visual summary of thematic priorities in the field (see figure 3, see figure 4).

Future Research

The findings of this bibliometric review uncover several promising directions for future research in influencer marketing within the hospitality sector. While trust and eWOM have been extensively studied (Z. Liu & Park, 2015;



Ye et al., 2011), newer themes such as AI-generated content, algorithmic curation, and the use of virtual influencers remain underexplored. Future studies could investigate how digital consumers respond to influencer content that is enhanced or even entirely created by algorithms (Pop et al., 2022). Moreover, while visual user-generated content (UGC) is widely acknowledged (Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013), its differentiated impact across market segments (luxury vs. budget hotels, solo vs. group travelers) presents a gap for empirical inquiry. Additionally, the perspective of influencers themselves regarding compensation fairness, authenticity pressures, and audience management remains relatively absent in tourism literature. Finally, cross-cultural differences in influencer effectiveness, particularly in developing markets with varying digital literacy levels, offer a rich avenue for comparative studies. Applying mixed methods and experimental designs could significantly deepen our understanding of engagement outcomes in this evolving landscape.

Implications

This review offers valuable theoretical and practical implications. Thematically, the field is anchored in theories such as trust formation, source credibility, and destination image (Aye et al., 2013; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), which continue to explain how influencer content shapes travel decisions. Researchers are encouraged to explore emerging constructs such as parasocial interaction and algorithmic bias, which may better capture the evolving nature of influencer-consumer relationships (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). On the practical front, hospitality brands should focus on micro-influencers who offer greater relatability and engagement, rather than relying solely on celebrity endorsements (Pop et al., 2022). Brands must also prioritize content authenticity, transparency, and ethical disclosure, especially as consumers grow more aware of sponsored content dynamics. Destination marketers should leverage UGC and influencer collaborations not only to promote attractions but also to enhance perceived credibility and emotional connection with potential travelers (Hays et al., 2013). Overall, the review suggests a need for more strategic alignment between influencer selection, platform strategy, and consumer behavior insights.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric review of influencer marketing research within the hospitality sector from 2008 to 2025. By using co-citation and bibliographic coupling analyses, four major research clusters were identified: eWOM and trust, visual UGC and destination image, influencer psychology and consumer decision-making, and UGC-driven tourism promotion. Foundational studies such as (Z. Liu & Park, 2015; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014;

Ye et al., 2011) laid the groundwork for understanding the behavioral mechanisms underlying influencer impact. More recent studies (Pop et al., 2022; Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013) reveal a shift toward platform-specific strategies, content design, and audience segmentation. These insights indicate a maturing research field that is now addressing complex phenomena such as trust in AI-generated content, identity-driven engagement, and ethical branding. The findings not only consolidate the current state of scholarship but also offer a roadmap for future research and practice in digital hospitality marketing. As platforms evolve and consumer expectations shift, influencer marketing will remain central to both academic inquiry and strategic hospitality communication.

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Annexure 17.4.13

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**Reviewers
Memorandum**

Reviewer's Comment 1: The manuscript presents a comprehensive and timely bibliometric review of influencer marketing research within the hospitality and tourism domain. The use of established bibliometric techniques and visualization tools provides a clear mapping of the intellectual structure, key themes, and research trends in the field. The revised version demonstrates improved conceptual clarity by appropriately positioning influencer marketing within the broader UGC and eWOM literature, which strengthens the alignment between the title, objectives, and analysis. Overall, the study makes a meaningful contribution by offering a structured overview that will be valuable for both scholars and practitioners.

Reviewer Comment 2: The methodology is clearly described and follows a systematic approach, including transparent data selection, screening, and analysis procedures. The justification for using multiple bibliometric techniques (citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence) enhances the rigor of the study. The revision has also addressed earlier concerns regarding reference consistency, resulting in a clean and well-managed reference list. Minor improvements in wording and tighter integration of findings across sections could further enhance readability, but these do not detract from the overall quality of the manuscript.

Reviewer Comment 3: One of the key strengths of the paper lies in its detailed thematic and cluster-based analysis, which effectively captures the evolution of influencer marketing research in hospitality. The discussion of emerging themes and future research directions is relevant and forward-looking. In a few sections, particularly within the discussion, the narrative could be slightly streamlined to avoid repetition and maintain focus on influencer-centric insights. Nevertheless, the revisions have substantially improved coherence, and the manuscript is now well-positioned for publication as a bibliometric review.



Navneet Chandra and Rajeev Kumar Shukla
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had no conflict neither financially nor academically.

**Editorial
Excerpt**

The article has 10% of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the authors (Navneet and Rajeev), and accordingly, all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are closely aligned with the theme "Influencer Marketing and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry: A Bibliometric Review," both subject-wise and research-wise. The manuscript is well written, clearly structured, and demonstrates a strong command of bibliometric research methods and domain knowledge. The logical progression of arguments, systematic presentation of results, and comprehensive analysis of the literature significantly enhance the paper's readability and scholarly value. Based on the reviewers' comments and the editorial board's assessment, the manuscript has been satisfactorily revised and is deemed suitable for publication under the **Research Thought** category.

Acknowledgement

The acknowledgment section is an essential part of all academic research papers. It provides appropriate recognition to all contributors for their hard work and effort taken while writing a paper. The data presented and analyzed in this paper by (Navneet and Rajeev) were collected first handily and wherever it has been taken the proper acknowledgment and endorsement depicts. The authors are highly indebted to others who facilitated accomplishing the research. Last but not least, endorse all reviewers and editors of GJEIS in publishing in the present issue.

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