

# Chapter 14

## A Bibliometric Investigation of Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Tourism and Hospitality Research

**Mahmut Bakır**

*Samsun University, Turkey*

**Ali Emre Sarılgan**

*Eskisehir Technical University, Turkey*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Today, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has a substantial impact on consumers' decisions to purchase tourism and travel services. Therefore, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of eWOM in tourism and hospitality research. The chapter aims to conduct a comprehensive examination of the existing body of knowledge pertaining to eWOM communication within the domain of tourism and hospitality. To this end, bibliometric data was obtained from the Web of Science database, utilizing the Bibliometrix R package. The PRISMA flowchart was employed to ensure a systematic examination, which included a total of 515 scholarly documents published between 2008 and 2021. The utilization of a word cloud facilitated the identification of the most prevalent terms within the field, while a thematic map was employed to reveal the themes that guide the existing body of knowledge. Furthermore, co-occurrence analysis was utilized to discern four distinct research themes that have emerged as particularly prominent within the field.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Internet-based technologies and platforms have had a significant influence on marketing. Using digital platforms, organizations can engage customers directly and receive quick feedback through likes, clicks, and comments. On online portals such as e-commerce websites, social media platforms, weblogs, and

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peer-to-peer networking sites, users can voice their opinions regarding acquired items and services. The customer's feedback and opinion about a product or service are called as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM; Donthu et al., 2021). eWOM can be represented in many different forms, such as likes, comments, ratings, reviews, video testimonials, and tweets (Nam et al., 2020). eWOM is regarded as more reliable and convincing than traditional media, given that consumers are exposed to many advertising stimuli daily. Customers increasingly rely on online reviews day by day, a form of eWOM, before making their final purchasing decisions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

The importance of eWOM on consumer behavior has also been established in the context of tourism and hospitality services (Litvin et al., 2008; Sparks & Browning, 2011; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). Customers are making booking or purchase selections largely after reading reviews on famous sites like TripAdvisor, Twitter, and Google (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021). One of the main reasons for this is the risk aversion effort by using the past experiences of others, as travel and accommodation services are high-risk purchasing decisions (Huang et al., 2010).

Numerous research (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Ran et al., 2021; Sparks & Browning, 2011) have addressed the role of eWOM in the tourist and hospitality industries. Furthermore, retrospective analyses have also been carried out to delineate the boundaries and structure of the body of knowledge and illustrate its evolution (Chen & Law, 2016; Hlee et al., 2018; Litvin et al., 2018; Pourfakhimi et al., 2020; Sotiriadis, 2017). Retrospective literature analyses can be performed through systematic literature review, meta-analysis, and bibliometric analysis. However, a systematic literature review can handle few studies on a particular topic and lacks quantitative metrics, making it prone to researcher bias (Gölgeci et al., 2022). On the other hand, although meta-analysis is a powerful technique, it is limited to a certain field and is susceptible to publication bias (Donthu et al., 2021). In light of these challenges, tracing the growth of the existing literature requires a rise in bibliometric research that can evaluate a vast number of works and have analytical rigor (Gölgeci et al., 2022). Nonetheless, there is a paucity of investigations that examines the theoretical and conceptual structure of eWOM research in the tourism and hospitality fields (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2022). To bridge this gap, this chapter aims to examine the evolution of the eWOM literature in the field of tourism and hospitality and to increase understanding of its theoretical and conceptual structure. In doing so, it conducts bibliometric analysis using the R package Bibliometrix.

The organization of the remainder of the chapter is as follows. Section 2 presents a comprehensive overview of the concept of eWOM in general and in the field of tourism and hospitality. The research methodology, inclusive of data collection procedures, is outlined in Section 3. In Section 4, bibliometric analysis findings are presented and discussed in detail. Section 5 outlines potential directions for future research. The final section concludes the chapter by highlighting the managerial implications, theoretical contributions, and limitations of the research.

## **BACKGROUND**

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is one of the oldest forms of information sharing between individuals (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Although marketing research on WOM began in the 1960s, the definition of WOM has evolved over time (Litvin et al., 2008). Initially, WOM was defined as face-to-face communication based on sharing product and service evaluations between private parties but was later used as all kinds of informal communication (Chen & Law, 2016). Very early, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1966) defined WOM as the exchange of marketing information with a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior and chang-

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