



## Inbound marketing in the hospitality industry: A systematic review of the last 12 years

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to analyse and investigate the evolution of digital marketing tools and strategies used by inbound marketing in the main journals related to this term and topics linked to the hospitality industry. The results obtained show a progressive increase in the number of publications analysing inbound marketing tools in recent years (2010-2021) and point to the construction of a paradigm based on a Marketing 5.0. A high rotation of topics has also been detected, describing a dynamic and fluctuating research field. It is recommended that more research be carried out on inbound marketing (as a strategic model of structured marketing) to allow for an integrative vision of technologies, which until now have been analysed without a definite link to the hotel business.*

### KEYWORDS

*Inbound marketing; marketing digital; bibliometric analysis; scientific mapping; hotel industry; marketing 5.0*

### RESUMEN

*Este trabajo tiene como objetivo analizar e investigar la evolución de las herramientas y estrategias de marketing digital utilizadas por el inbound marketing en las principales revistas relacionadas con este término y temáticas vinculadas a la industria hotelera. Los resultados obtenidos muestran un aumento progresivo del número de publicaciones que analizan las herramientas del inbound marketing en los últimos años (2010-2021) y apuntan a la construcción de un paradigma basado en un Marketing 5.0. También se ha detectado una alta rotación de temas, lo que describe un campo de investigación dinámico y fluctuante. Se recomienda profundizar en la investigación del inbound marketing (como modelo estratégico de marketing estructurado) para permitir una visión integradora de las tecnologías, que hasta ahora se han analizado sin una vinculación definida con el negocio hotelero.*

### PALABRAS CLAVE

*Inbound marketing; marketing digital; análisis bibliométrico; cartografía científica; industria hotelera; marketing 5.0*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The classic definition of marketing as "activity, discipline or set of processes for communicating and exchanging offers of value to the market" (American Marketing Association, 2021) continues to evolve today, mainly due to technological advances in electronic and digital media. As identified by Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (2021), digital marketing needs to be analysed from a new paradigm, as a technological tool

that has the ability to create, communicate, deliver and enhance value throughout the customer journey. This evolution in marketing techniques and methods used by companies implies a change of model that optimises traditional marketing through inbound marketing. This is what is known as Marketing 4.0 (Lies, 2019) and Marketing 5.0 (Kotler et al., 2021), a new concept using technology to leverage the influence that customers have on purchasing processes.

Faced with such an open technological landscape, due to the high rate of devices and resources, inbound marketing proposes the articulation of a methodology that allows the alignment of the different processes between which the different market players are interrelated. It ensures communications relate to customer needs across time, platforms and devices (Hubspot, 2021). Technology has transformed communication between companies and customers, increasing its potential both in terms of profitability and satisfaction, and maximising the results of any business or institution that makes use of it (Figuerola et al., 2015).

The hotel industry has not simply sat on the sidelines with different technological changes. On the contrary, it has been innovative and pioneering, with technology playing an increasingly important role in the traveller's decision making (Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier, 2015). The advantage of using smart technology favours global reach, immediacy, accessibility and the versatility of interactions between different market players. Hotel companies can therefore optimise their resources, improving their online presence and revenues at a lower cost (Dwivedi. et al., 2021). Growing interest in the development of digital marketing and the design of online strategies for the hotel industry necessitate research into the inbound marketing methodology and its relationship with the concept of Marketing 5.0.

Inbound marketing, as a relatively new phenomenon, needs to be analysed to determine how the evolution of strategic design in digital marketing is being understood and to predict how it will develop. To this end, the bibliometric analysis developed in this work will provide scholars with a review of the development in the research of these tools – on those that are the main topics of interest, on those that are no longer of interest, and on those that are shown to be emerging – as well as to analyse the authorship and co-authorship relationships highlighted in the research field. Understanding that the future and evolution of a research field depend on a deeper knowledge of previous studies (Köseoglu et al., 2019), its advancement requires

analysis of the conceptual structure, evolution, lines of research and recurrent patterns, all from a historical perspective (Diaz et al., 2021).

The present research has employed a bibliometric methodology combining performance analysis and scientific mapping in order to visualise and detect conceptual domains and subdomains. In order to study the evolution of the research field in the publications, the last 12 years (from 2010 to 2021) were chosen, as it was at the end of 2009 (Hubspot, 2021) when inbound marketing was first presented as a developed methodology (Halligan and Dharmesh, 2009). Thus, the analysis shows a conceptual evolution of how digital marketing makes use of inbound marketing tools.

The main objective is to describe the evolution of trends in digital marketing research on inbound marketing tools applied to the hotel industry, in order to understand the outlook on the issues and areas of interest that point towards the construction of a Marketing 5.0 paradigm. To this end, the following specific objectives are proposed:

1. Describe the main areas of interest in inbound marketing research in the hotel industry in the last 12 years.
2. To identify inbound marketing as an integrative methodology of digital marketing in the hotel industry through the analysis of co-citations and joint words.
3. Describe the main author and co-author relationships in inbound marketing research in hotel industry in the last 12 years.
4. Reveal the trend of inbound marketing and the evolution towards a Marketing 5.0 in the hotel industry from the findings.

The document is structured as follows. First, it presents a brief theoretical discussion of the origin and evolution of digital marketing, pointing out the trend of placing the consumer as the backbone of the Marketing 5.0 model, and how in this model the concept of inbound marketing has a place in the hotel industry as a methodology that combines techniques and actions to reach the consumer.

In the methodology section, the approach used for the analysis is detailed, followed by a discussion of the results, where they are contrasted with what is proposed in the theory.

Finally, we report the results, revealing a significant increase in the number of publications on concepts and tools used in inbound marketing, which appears to be associated with the market's interest in digital marketing strategies in businesses and

projects related to the hotel industry and tourism. In addition, we identified incipiently the presence of research specialised in inbound marketing methodology. The development of topics related to working under Customer Centric models (Niininen, Buhalis and March, 2007) focuses on the use of new digital technologies, in a way that shows an evolution of the theoretical development towards the construction of an ecosystem based on Marketing 5.0 (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2021).

## **2. LITERATURA REVIEW**

### **2.1) *OUTBOUND AND INBOUND MARKETING: TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MARKETING 5.0***

Working on the development and evolution of applied digital marketing requires understanding the changes it has undergone at the level of technological tools and, above all, from the use of the Internet. In this sense, digital marketing is defined as the analysis, planning and implementation of marketing with the help of information technology, with which there has been an increase in web-based applications (Prabhaker, Sheehan and Coppett, 1997).

The concept of digital marketing has been evolving as the development of technology and social use of the Internet have become more popular. In recent years, there has been a commitment to the use of technological tools that facilitate the flow of content and the generation of customer data, basing strategic decision making on information that promotes obtaining better results (Kannan and Li, 2017).

An important moment in the theoretical development and research on digital marketing for our study has been the incorporation of the concept of micromarketing, which states that consumers do not form a mass, but that there are preferences and particularities, arising from a fragmented society and saturated markets (Hapoienu, 1990). This development has allowed understanding the need to incorporate social engineering processes "where trust is exchanged for reputation" (Lies, 2019, p. 136) and becomes a digital version known as reputation marketing or online recommendation. Digital techniques and social actions as a whole are being incorporated into digital marketing strategies.

This has undergone a transformation in terms of consumer participation (Krombholz et al., 2015), which has enabled the evolution of traditional marketing (Marketing 1.0, 2.0, 3.0) to one based on an inbound model (Marketing 4.0, 5.0) that seeks, in a natural

way, to engage in communication with customers based on their interests, preferences and needs (Lies, 2019; Kotler et al., 2021).

The term inbound marketing was coined by the founder of the American company Hubspot (Halligan and Dharmesh, 2009), Brian Halligan, and was born out of the need for a holistic approach arising from the fact that the marketing tactics used successfully in the past were no longer producing the desired results: "people didn't want to be interrupted by marketers or harassed by salespeople. They wanted to be helped" (Halligan and Dharmesh, 2014, p. 18). We are faced with a methodology that combines all those techniques and communicative actions that aim to reach the consumer in a non-intrusive way, discarding actions that annoy the user and cause an unwanted interruption of their activity, specifically their browsing in digital environments (Castelló Martínez, 2013).

Inbound marketing builds its mechanics mainly on permission marketing and on the relationship established with the customer (Godin, 2001), as the messages are focused on a target audience that has previously given approval to communicate with it (Rancati, Codignola and Capatina, 2015). To achieve the best results, the simultaneous use of all digital channels, the continuous strengthening of the website, the development of effective content, and the implementation of measurement tools are needed (Fishkin and Høgenhaven, 2013). In this way, a harmonious ecosystem is built in which an organic and bidirectional communication is projected towards the market with which to capture the attention and attract the customer in the achievement of the company's objectives. It is a matter of changing the role of the advertiser to that of socialiser and that the attention of a potential customer is captured by meaningful content for them and not by indiscriminate advertisements (Del Santo and Alvarez, 2012).

When focusing on the communicative actions, the four pillars of inbound marketing should be considered as a working methodology: traffic attraction, conversion, closing and loyalty, bearing in mind that it is not only oriented to get end customers, but to keep them satisfied and transform them into prescribers (Guadalupe, 2015). In this way, the new power that consumers have leads to the establishment of a relationship of trust and respect between the company and its market (Godin, 2019).

## **2.2) INBOUND MARKETING IN THE TOURISM SECTOR**

The Internet has been a turning point in the marketing and distribution of tourism products and services (Wöber, 2006; Werthner and Klein, 1999). The accessibility of new technologies in a new digital context has changed the way new tourists consume and the way they communicate in increasingly interactive contexts (Jacobsen and Munar, 2012). The new consumer models are committed to collaboration and co-creation of value through the exchange of resources and information (Lusch and Vargo, 2009; McKenna, 1995). In addition, Steenburgh, Avery and Dahod (2011) specifically address the notion of push versus pull marketing and propose that digital marketing, based on what is called Web 2.0 (Kyung-Hyan and Gretzel, 2016), should focus on attracting consumers to the brand through the use of applications that promote two-way communication (such as blogs and social networks), which are so important in the decision-making process of the new digital traveller (Opreana and Vinerean, 2015; Colton, 2018).

The evolution of digital marketing in its most touristic aspect is developed on a greater empowerment of the traveller (O'Connor, 2008), as well as by the contribution of value of the contents generated by the users themselves outside the usual narrative of tourism marketing (Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan, 2008). The inbound marketing strategy requires a much more complex conception of digital marketing, based on getting the attention of consumers, using tools such as social networks, blogs, forums and podcasts, among others (Barna, Hlinenko and Daynovsky, 2020; Colton, 2018, Sin, K-Y. et al., 2020). Its application as a methodology in tourism companies raises the need to implement different actions, such as presence on social networks, improving the SEO of web content or personalised email marketing actions (Barna, Hlinenko and Daynovskyy, 2020b; Jacobsen and Munar, 2012; Kouchesfahani, Jalili and Noraei, 2019).

The analysed literature agrees on four key aspects when designing inbound marketing strategies in tourism-related businesses:

- Create content to drive traffic to the website by creating original, relevant and interesting messages for the consumer. It can be in text format (blog), but it must be enriched with graphic formats (images, photos, infographics) and multimedia objects (video, podcasts), which are having an increasing impact. One of the key factors in relation to such content is visibility through organic positioning in search engines, the most popular in Europe being Google. For

this purpose, keywords that define the object as well as the target audience to which they are addressed are needed. At the same time, the different technical factors that will facilitate its positioning need to be taken into account (Chotikitpat, Nilsook and Sodsee, 2015).

- Attend to interactions that occur freely among customers on the Internet networks or forums. Companies need to actively listen to their customers' messages if they want to know what they like and dislike, what opinions or complaints they have about them, or if their opinions negatively affect their brand image (Kriplean et al., 2007).
- Building community to establish an emotional bond between the customer and the brand is one of the main ideas of inbound marketing to build a solid relationship network with customers (Habibi, Laroche and Richard, 2014). In this sense, social networks or virtual communities provide personalised treatment and constitute a way of building collective meaning, the aim of which is to strengthen the emotional relationship with customers (Phelan, Chen and Haney, 2013).
- Promoting sustainable tourism development through online presence is a determining factor in promoting the visibility of a destination or tourism business (Teodorov et al., 2020). The component of sustainability and efficiency in the use of resources allows the connection with the customer through an exercise of honesty (Mostaghel and Chirumalla, 2021; Chin C-H. et al.,2022), which in turn facilitates the emotional relationship materialised in traveller loyalty (Campón-Cerro, Hernández-Mogollón and Alves, 2017 ; Alzaubi H.M. et al.,2021) and therefore, in more competitive products and services.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1) BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS**

The research employs bibliometric analysis and a longitudinal design by periods, handles quantitative data and performs a descriptive investigation of the most prominent topics present in scientific articles referring to digital marketing, hosted in the Scopus database in the years between 2010 and 2021. Through bibliometrics, a real picture of the intellectual production of this field of study was obtained

(Benckendorff and Zehrer, 2013; De Bellis, 2009; Cobo et al., 2011; Donthu et al., 2021; Tapada et al., 2021).

The analysis followed the bibliometric methodology proposed by Donthu et al. (2021) and Cobo et al. (2011), and the data was analysed with SciMat and VOSviewer software. Using the aspects proposed by the bibliometric methodology, we focused on developing a scientific mapping system (Noyons, Moed and Luwel, 1999) to see the relationships between articles, disciplines, specialties and authors and to account for the cognitive structure and development of the research field (Noyons, Moed and Luwel, 1999; Van Raan, 2005).

When scientific mapping, we applied the most widely used techniques: co-citation of documents or co-citations and co-word analysis or co-words. For this, we followed the analysis methodology proposed by Cobo et al. (2011), which allows us to delimit the research field and to quantify and visualise the detected subfields, i.e., particular topics and general thematic areas that, at the same time, make it possible to quantify and visualise the evolution of the research field. Doing so, it is possible to understand the development of digital marketing research in the hotel industry and its evolution towards topics related to inbound marketing and Marketing 5.0.

The data collection met the criteria defined by Krishen et al. (2021): bibliometric analysis referring to digital marketing through a Boolean search. This search was complemented with words specific to inbound marketing, limited to the years of publication from 2010 to 2021 and filtered by articles whose language was English. Finally, we limited the search only to articles with the words tourism and hotel industry in order to focus the publications in the area of interest.

Boolean words referring to inbound marketing: "inbound marketing" or "e-CRM" or "buyer persona" or "buyer journey" or "call-to-action" or "content marketing" or "engagement" or "e-commerce" or "loyalty" or "funnel" or "lead" or "keyword" or "KPI" or "landing" or "lead nurturing" or "lead scoring" or "link building" or "workflow".

A preliminary search of the Scopus database yielded a total of 635 articles. We opted for the Scopus database since it has been used previously as a comprehensive database in the tourism industry in other research publications (Booth et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2016; Becken, 2013). In turn, we have taken into account the research conducted by (Gavel and Iselid, 2008), who analysed the overlap of journal coverage between Scopus and WoS based on data from 2006, showing that, at that time, 54%



of the titles active in Scopus were also in WoS and that 84% of the titles active in WoS were also indexed in Scopus. Once the data was obtained, the corpus was cleaned, as recommended by Donthu et al. (2021), correcting typographical errors in titles and article names and eliminating duplications. After correction, a total of 607 articles remained, making up the final sample studied.

To perform the analysis of intellectual interactions, and decipher the structural connections between the different topics of interest and manifestations in the publications, we analysed the co-occurrence of words during three consecutive periods: 2010 to 2013, 2014 to 2017, and 2018 to 2021, this being a valid time frame because, as recommended by Cobo et al. (2011), it allows you "to analyse and follow the evolution of a field of research over consecutive periods of time".

The study and comparison of co-occurring words through a period analysis allows us to see the evolution of the topics of interest that exist in publications referring to inbound marketing and its relationship with digital marketing. For this, the analysis of co-occurrence of words allowed us to detect and group terms that were closely related or had an underlying relationship, and from this we created clusters, which represented reference groups that ended up developing the intellectual basis of the different and most important subfields of research.

To achieve this, the following analysis criteria were established, using SciMat software and following the steps to create a scientific map as proposed by Cobo et al. (2011):

Based on the periods of analysis, we defined the unit of analysis: words selected by the author: Author Words, and words defined by the Scopus database: Sources Words and Added Words.

1. For the reduction of the data in relation to the number of occurrences, we chose two as the minimum frequency threshold of data that could be in relation, and considered the units of analysis with a frequency greater than or equal (in a given period) to the selected threshold.
2. For the type of network, we chose the co-occurrence option, establishing a bibliometric network of joint words. By means of this filter, through a normalisation process and using a similarity measure, the network keeps only the most representative elements.

3. To define the groupings or subnetworks, the Simple Centre Algorithm was chosen, which determines the maximum and minimum number of elements grouped in the nodes. The number of nodes shown in the network was 12 as the maximum number and 2 as the minimum number.
4. We selected the Core Mapper and the Secondary Mapper. These maps show a basic coupling where each element of the cluster forms a document.
5. For the Quality Measure, measures that allow us to identify the density of the graph, i.e., the size of the bubbles, we selected the H. Index, Average Citation and Sum Citation as the set of bibliometric performance measures for each set.
6. Finally, in relation to the longitudinal analysis, we chose the method recommended by Cobo et al. (2011) - Inclusion Index and Jaccard Index - to identify the conceptual, social or intellectual evolution of the field.

### **3.2) THEMATIC NETWORK AND KEYWORD ANALYSIS**

According to Cobo et al. (2011), in word analysis we must detect the interconnection that exists through two parameters: density (measures the internal relationship between all keywords that describe the research topic) and centrality (measures the strength of external links with other topics). These are plotted in four groups represented spatially in a two-dimensional graph called a strategic diagram, which allows us to analyse the situation of the topics according to where they are located in the quadrant:

- The topics in the upper right quadrant are considered well developed and important for the research field. Cobo et al. (2011) define them as driving themes of the specialty, as they present strong centrality and high density.
- Themes in the upper left quadrant have well-developed internal linkages but unimportant external linkages. They are therefore of marginal importance to the field. These themes are highly specialised and peripheral in nature.
- Themes in the lower left quadrant are poorly developed and marginal.
- Themes in the lower right quadrant are important to a research field, but are undeveloped.

Topics referring to digital marketing, the hotel industry and its relationship with inbound marketing will be reflected in the results as well as how they are positioned according to the quadrant.

### 3.3) CITATION ANALYSIS AND CO-AUTHORSHIP

The analysis of citations and co-authorship makes it possible to create a map of the situation of the research field. In this study, proposed by Small (1973), documents that have been commonly cited are related, thus, "allowing the discovery of knowledge communities, working under the assumption that citations reflect intellectual links between publications that are formed when one cites the other" (Donthu et al., 2021).

This study focused on investigating co-authorship relationships in order to detect interactions between academics within the research field of digital marketing and the hotel industry. Based on the principle that co-authorship is a form of intellectual collaboration between academics (Acedo et al., 2006), we have sought to detect the forms of relationship that allow us to create a map of the research field (density of research groups, authors with the highest number of articles, relationships of joint articles) and to observe the evolution and the way in which the research network has been consolidating in the period indicated.

The VOSviewer software was used for the analysis of the authors and the relationship between cited publications. Through this analysis, large volumes of information are reduced, and it is efficient for the visual representation of the data, which allows an orderly projection of a set of data observed from different perspectives, establishing different relationships for subsequent interpretation (Donthu et al., 2021).

## 4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### 4.1) EVOLUTION OF THE PERIODS AND TOPICS OF INTEREST

In order to respond to the first objective – which seeks to describe the main areas of interest in inbound marketing research – and to detect the evolution of the topics, we analysed the keywords longitudinally, taking into account the three defined periods, obtaining the following results (Figure 1):

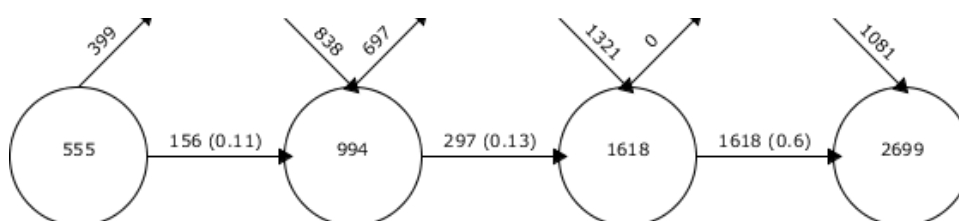


Figure 1: Overlapping fractions (incoming and outgoing keywords between successive subperiods).

Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

In the first period (from 2010 to 2013) there were a total of 555 keywords, of which 156 are retained and carried over to the next period and 399 are dropped as words defining a thematic field of interest. This period also examines both recurrent and main themes (driving and basic themes), defined by the concentration of citations (Figure 2 in Annex 1). In this period, a total of 12 themes stands out, of which loyalty, e-commerce, tourism development, sustainability and tourism behaviour have higher concentrations and relationships.

The second period (from 2014 to 2017) groups a total of 994 keywords, of which 838 are new and 697 are no longer used. The number of words that leaves a period and the ratio of the number of new ones that enter marks a trend that shows a high turnover of key topics of interest to the scientific community, related to digital marketing and the hotel industry. There is an increase, from one period to another, of keywords concerning the topics of interest, indicating that there is a growth in the volume of research on the topic. The increase in keywords reflects, in turn, the number of topics worked on during the period, which in concentrated form translates into a total of 21 topics, of which social media, loyalty, customer engagement and tourism development stand out due to their high concentrations and centrality.

In the third and final period (comprising 2018 to 2021) a total of 1618 words are added, of which 297 belong to the previous period and 1321 come in new. The concentration of keywords also shows how the topics increase significantly: in total 30 different topics are worked on (Figure 2). However, although they increase in number and diversity, they are less concentrated. In this period, we can highlight the following topics: customer engagement, tourism market, social media and sustainability. Among the new topics with high concentration and centrality that emerge in this last period, we can highlight: *tourism behaviour* and *customer*, related to branding.

The graph (figure 1) shows a total of four periods, of which the first three group the years that establish the timeframe for the analysis; the last period plotted is a synthesis of all the others. In the graph shown in Figure 2 (in Annex 1), the last column establishes the summary of the main themes, arranged in descending order according to the centrality and density of the themes. The analysis of the three periods as a whole (see Figure 2) shows how the themes with high density and centrality establish connections that point the evolution of themes that show a high impact on theoretical

construction, as they shed light on the route in which research is directed and indicate where there is greater conceptual development.

It is important to point out the evolution of some of the themes that stand out for their centrality and concentration: loyalty, as shown in the first and second periods, ends up being connected to customer engagement. The market shows us the interest in establishing lasting relationships with the customer through such human values as trust and commitment. These relationships cohere both in the part associated with the consumption of the service and in feeling identified by the brands in a participatory way, even becoming prescribers of the service (Fernandes and Esteves, 2016; Siaw et al., 2015; So et al., 2016).

*E-commerce* also connects and evolves, relating to issues linked to social media. This reflects the relationship established between the marketing of hotel products and the use of social networks. The technology associated with social networks encourages bidirectional communication between companies and users. These interactive channels, in addition to working to improve the customer experience, enhance positive attitudes, promote eWOM and become ways to reinforce direct bookings (Veríssimo and Menezes, 2015; Kaushik and Khanna, 2017; Leung, Bai and Stahura, 2015).

The third theme to highlight is tourism development, which evolves and connects with tourism market, whose centrality is related to themes such as internet and tourism management. The evolution of the tourism market and the management of processes through the Internet have led to a paradigm shift in the value chain of tourism products. The different agents involved in the travel experience centralise their activity on the internet, synchronising in real time the actions they carry out and thus generating more efficient management processes (Praveen, 2014; Batinić, 2013; Babu and Subramoniam, 2016; Tzioras, 2018).

#### **4.2) RESULTS OF THEMATIC NETWORKS AND KEYWORDS**

In order to respond to the second research objective, each of the periods was studied through the analysis of the strategic diagram. One of the purposes of inbound marketing is customer recurrence through loyalty, and this is precisely one of the issues that stands out among the results of research interest in the field of digital marketing (Figure 3). This happens in the period from 2010 to 2013. Thus, in the first period, the issue of tourist loyalty represents one of the main areas of interest, a

consequence of the importance given to the retention of tourist customers in highly competitive environments (Baranchenko et al., 2019).

### 1<sup>st</sup> Period (2010-2013)

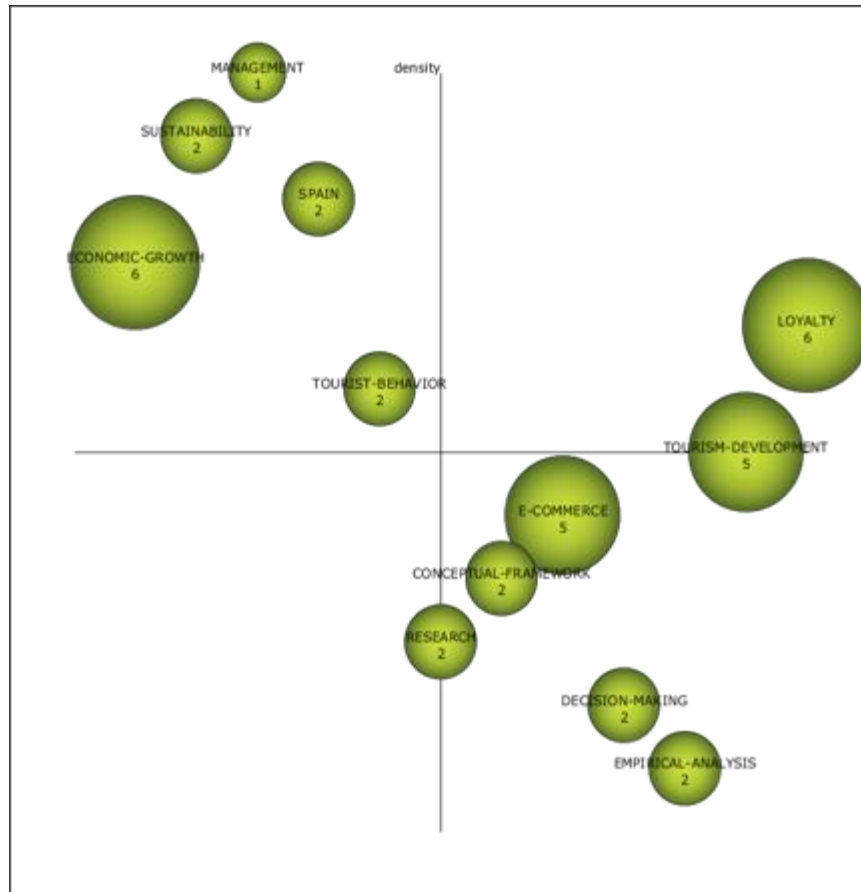


Figure 3: Strategic diagram based on the number keyword for the first period from 2010 to 2013. Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

Within the group of words, we can generate a map of the thematic network, which reflects the connections established between the main themes with high density and centrality, which in turn, are related to other sub-themes. The total number of words with the highest centrality and density in this period is 12 (Figure 3).

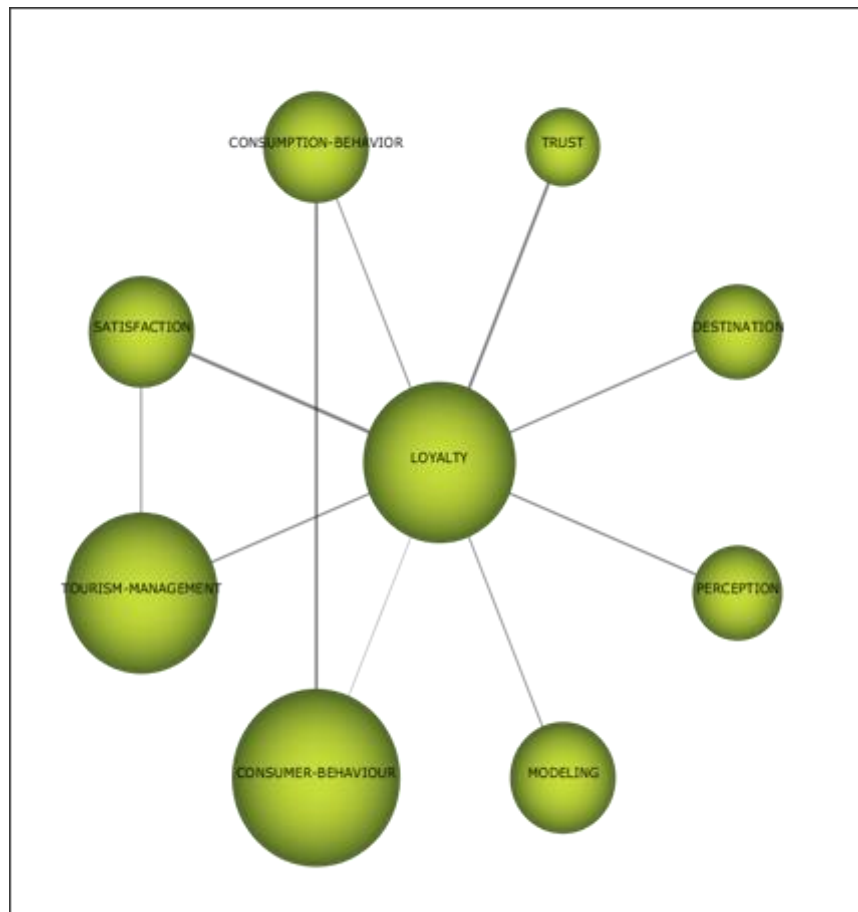


Figure 4: Cluster Network associated with “Loyalty” in period 1, from 2010 to 2013.  
Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

In the case of the loyalty cluster (Figure 4), we observe that a thematic network of high centrality is established between consumer behaviour and trust. Another relevant cluster refers to e-commerce, which is central to marketing, travel, internet and e-tourism.

Within inbound marketing, one of the fundamental pillars is marketing and the link with technological development (Bezhovski, 2015; Opreana and Vinerean, 2015). We note, then, that these are topics that are related and linked. There is a need on the part of tourism agents to enhance marketing based on certain technological tools, a key factor also associated with inbound marketing, and they need the right digital marketing tools to remain competitive (Chamboko-Mpotaringa and Tichaawa, 2021).

## 2nd Period (2014-2017)

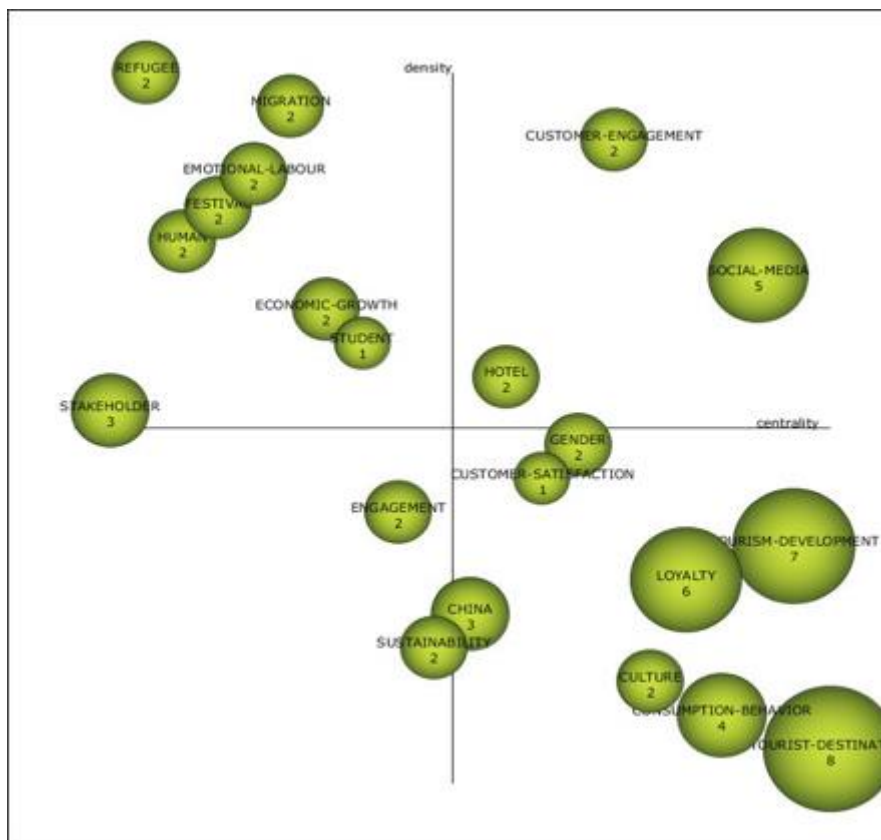


Figure 5: Strategic diagram based on the number of keywords in Period 2, 2014 to 2017. Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

In the period 2014-2017 we see how new topics emerge, classified as important because they are located in the upper right box. We also observe the evolution of loyalty, which goes from being a relevant topic in the previous period to being a basic, transversal and general topic in this one, by being located in the lower right quadrant. A new theme is Hotel industry, with less density but still located in the quadrant that establishes an impact relationship. The total number of words with greater centrality and density in this period is 21 (Figure 5).

Worth highlighting is the tourism destination theme, located in the lower right quadrant, which links to important but little developed themes: the cluster (figure 6) is connected to those centred on understanding the client, such as tourist behaviour and travel behaviour, which involves identifying a design and innovation mechanics in tourism destinations based on analysis of consumer or traveller behaviour. These results show special attention being paid to concepts focused on consumer knowledge, which is in line with the Marketing 5.0 trend, a model advocates for the presence of a tourism business built from the knowledge of the target audience and executed through strategies based on inbound marketing.



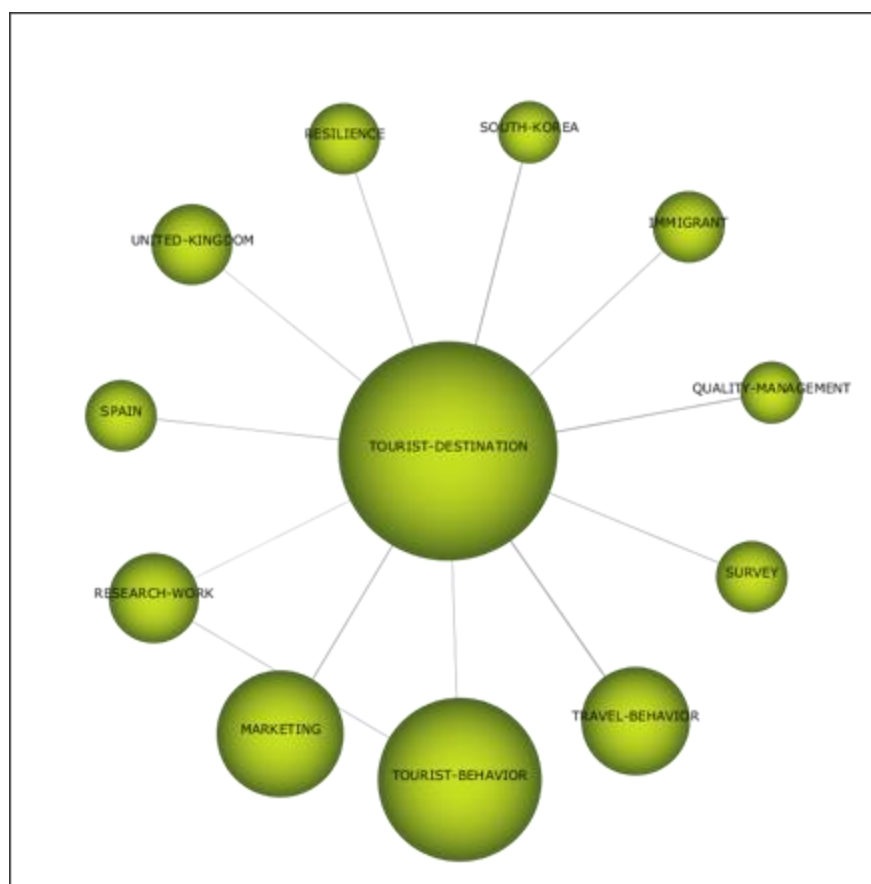


Figure 6: Cluster Network associated with “Tourist-Destination” in period 2, from 2014 to 2017.  
Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

In the results referring to the thematic network of the 2014-2017 period, social media has greater importance, giving value to technological aspects. In turn, it agglutinates a high centrality on topics such as internet and e-commerce (Figure 7). This last topic ceases to have relevance in this period, but being linked to social media, in some way, its centrality and density shows that social media monopolise the research topics linked to marketing and digital marketing in the area of tourism. Social media, in turn, is a determinant tool in the development of inbound marketing strategies and plays a connector role both from an operational and emotional point of view between customers and hotels, as mentioned in the literature review (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2015; Bezhovski, 2015; Zatori, Smith and Puczko, 2018).

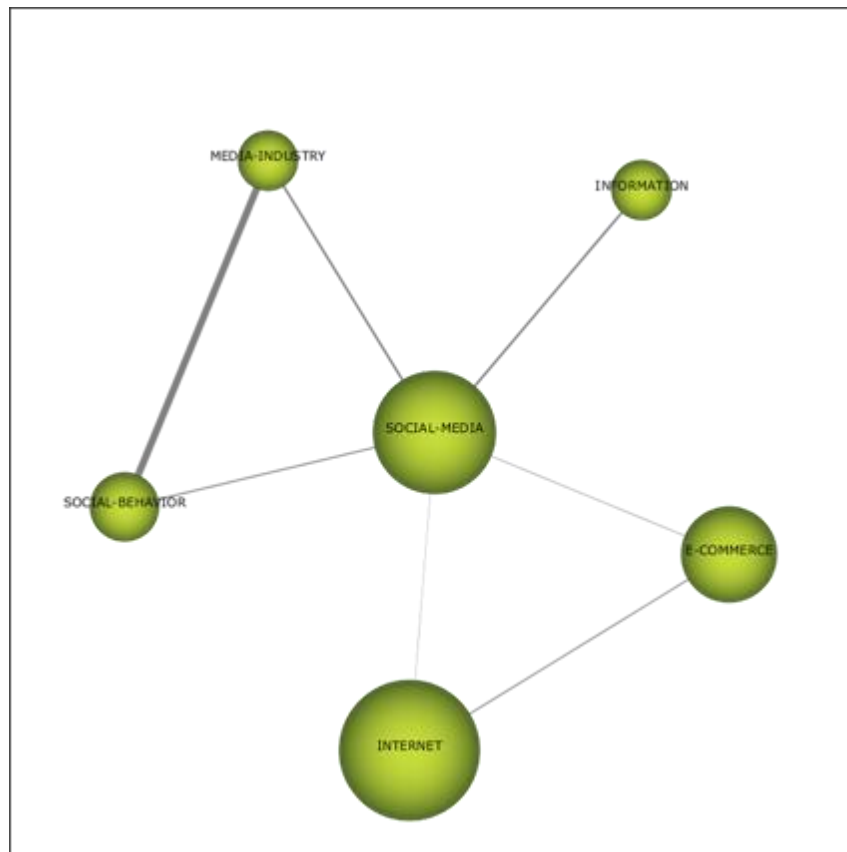


Figure 7: Cluster Network associated with “Social Media” in period 2 2014 to 2017.  
Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

Within the evolution of the keyword loyalty, we observe that it continues to maintain relevance, but loses strength due to not being sufficiently developed and because it does not connect with other nodes of the thematic network. However, it continues to be a topic of interest that relates to more general topics related to service quality and satisfaction, leaving aside other more specialised topics, such as tourism management and consumer behaviour.

**3rd Period (2018-2021)**

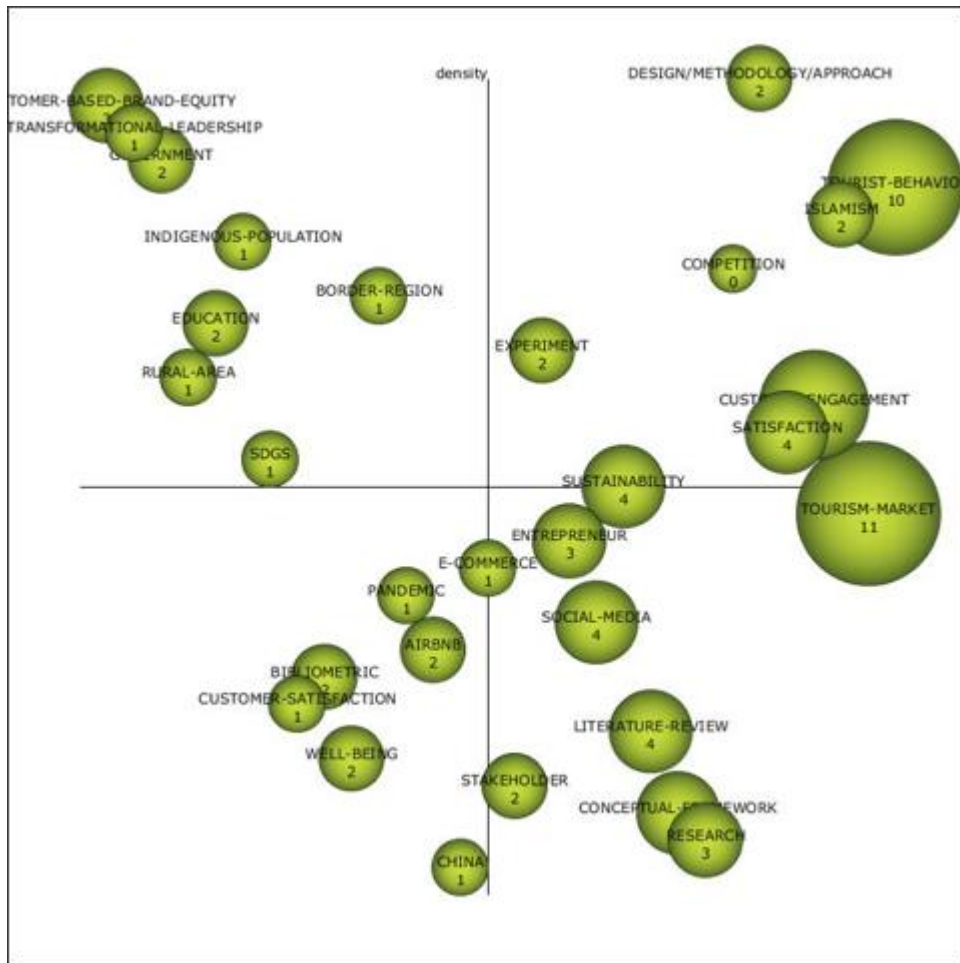


Figure 8: Strategic diagram based on the number of keywords in Period 3, 2018 to 2021. Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

During this period, we could see an increase in the number of keywords cited with greater density and centrality, a total of 30. In relation to e-commerce, we can see that it has come to be within an axis of density between the lower right and left quadrant, which leads us to interpret that it is a topic losing relevance. At the same time, other topics are gaining interest, such as customer engagement and tourism behaviour, which are located in the upper right quadrant (topics with greater relevance and connection between the thematic nodes). Tourism market appears between a consolidated topic and a driving topic. Lastly, we highlight social media, which is no longer strong and is now placed as a basic theme.

Tourism market is a term with great centrality, but very generic, which brings together key elements for the development of inbound marketing, such as internet, technology adoption, perception, tourism economy and marketing. In a way, it

manifests an interest in investigating generic topics in an interconnected way, allowing to have a general vision and control over the economic and development aspects of tourism.

Customer engagement, as a highly central theme, presents a network of connections with terms that continue to evolve and are present, such as loyalty, a term that has a high density (Figure 9). Brand loyalty, customer experience and co-creation are themes connected to the need to generate customer trust. These terms and the relationships established between them show how user participation, through co-creation processes in the customer experience, enhance and significantly affect satisfaction, trust and brand loyalty (Shrivastava, 2016; Kamali et al., 2021).

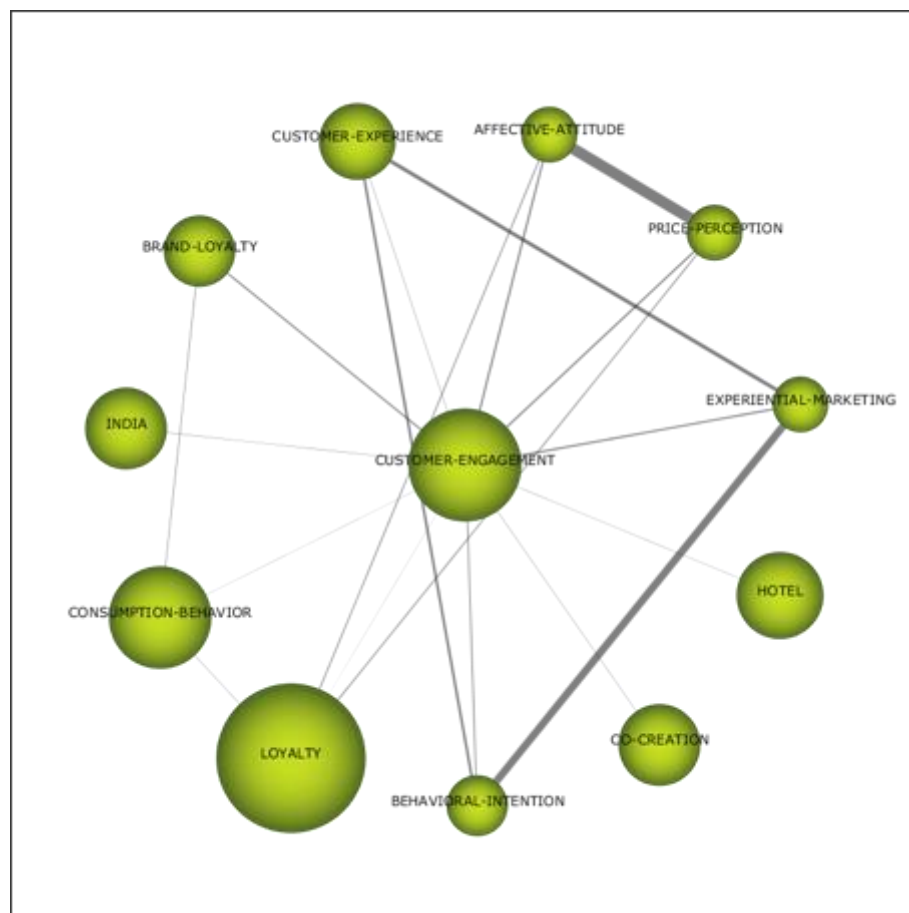


Figure 9: Cluster Network associated with "Customer-Engagement" in period 3, from 2018 to 2021.  
Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

The social media topic monopolises the digital area at this stage of the study, largely due to it being related to digital marketing issues in a generic way and tending to cover all tools used on social media. It is also directly related to Twitter, Facebook and

engagement: we interpret this relationship as the need to address trust and engagement materialised through the tools used in social media. The use of social networks by tourist accommodation forms an interactive communication channel that, properly worked, allows relationships of loyalty and trust to be built between brands and customers. This relationship has a direct impact on decision-making, influencing how users search, decide and book hotels (Tatar and Eren-Erdoğan, 2016; Varkaris and Neuhofer, 2017).

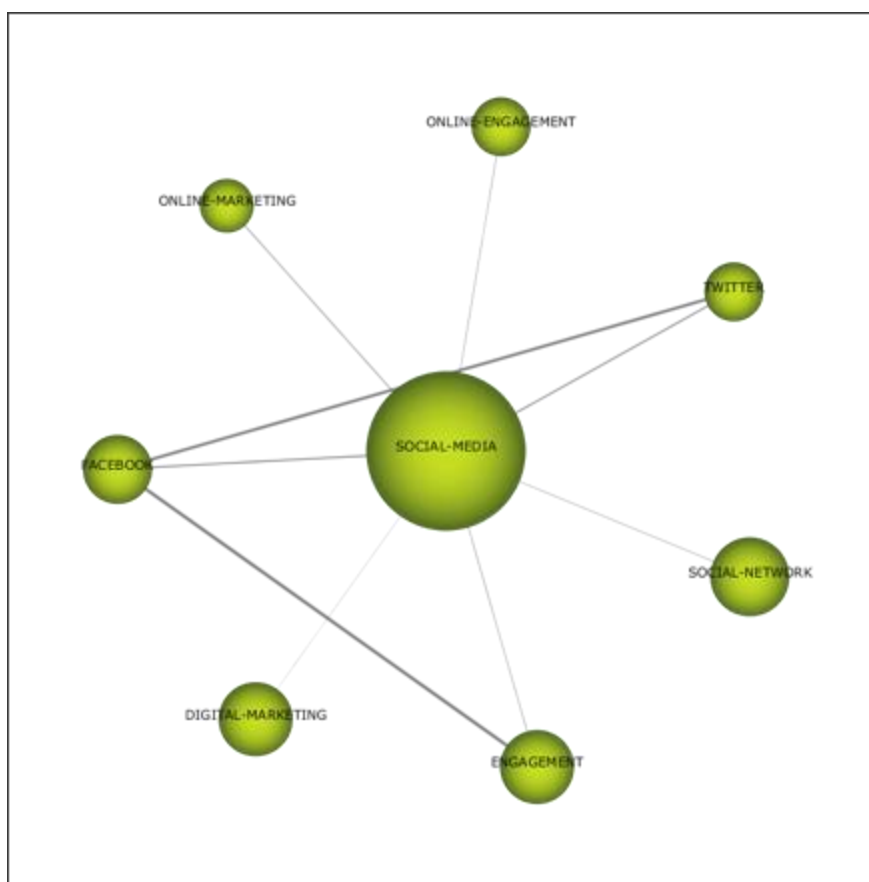


Figure 10: Cluster Network associated with “Social-Media” in period 3, from 2018 to 2021.  
Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08)

*Tourist behaviour* is another topic whose evolution marks the development of the themes. In this case, it goes from being linked to the tourist destination cluster of the period 2014-2017 (Figure 6) to gain centrality and take a position as a highly connected topic of great interest, being located in the upper right quadrant, linked to important topics in the scientific community.

In this case (Figure 11), the cluster shows how tourist behaviour is closely related to the development of tourist destinations. There is also a link between these themes

and the need to establish trust and lasting relationships through destination loyalty. Building a strong brand image to capture traveller attention through awareness is essential for tourism stakeholders involved in the traveller experience (Hashim et al., 2018; Afshardoost and Eshaghi, 2020). Another of the issues involved in the cluster is the role of technological tools, in this case referring to the Internet (World-Wide-Web), and its importance in building traveller awareness in digital environments (Castañeda, Frías and Rodríguez, 2007).

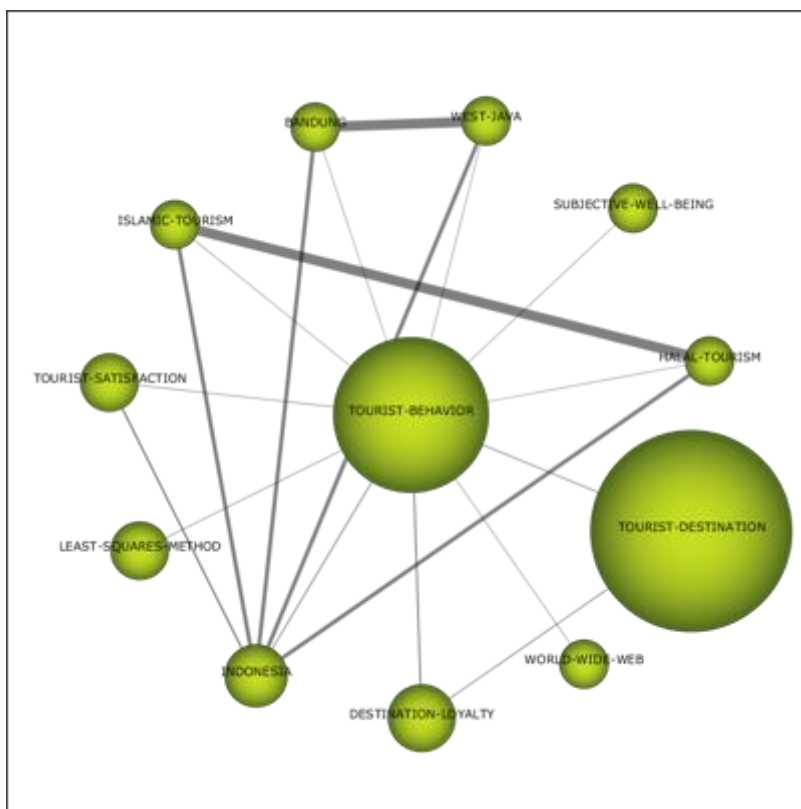


Figure 11: Cluster Network associated with “Tourist-Behaviour” in period 3, from 2018 to 2021. Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

### 4.3) CO-CITATION AND AUTHOR NETWORK RELATIONSHIP RESULTS

To achieve the third objective, the analysis was carried out with VOSviewer, where we could see the evolution of the authors and the relationship with the research carried out in different periods. With this we can see how the research field has progressed and the co-authorship relationships that are established. This type of analysis reveals the consistency of the research field: the more relationship networks, the stronger the field of study (Cobo et al., 2011).

An analysis of 1465 authors was carried out, with a minimum of 2 documents for each one, and 110 authors were obtained that fulfilled this relationship. Of the 110

authors that meet the 2-publication requirement, only 11 are closely related, forming 4 groups of close authorship, within which there is an impact relationship (Figure 12).

The author with the highest number of published articles is Dolnicar, with a total of 5 articles, looking at methodological work in market research and the search for data on hospitality and tourism. The second author with the second highest number of relations is Buhalis, with a total of four articles, focused on service and quality studies in hospitality. The rest of the authors have 3 or 2 publications and are related to the two previous topics. However, we can see that Viglia is a neuralgic network point that links the references of Dolnicar and Neuhofer to the hotel industry service. The results show that there is a little close link between authors, co-authorship work and collaboration between researchers in the fields of tourism, the hotel industry and digital marketing (Figure 14).

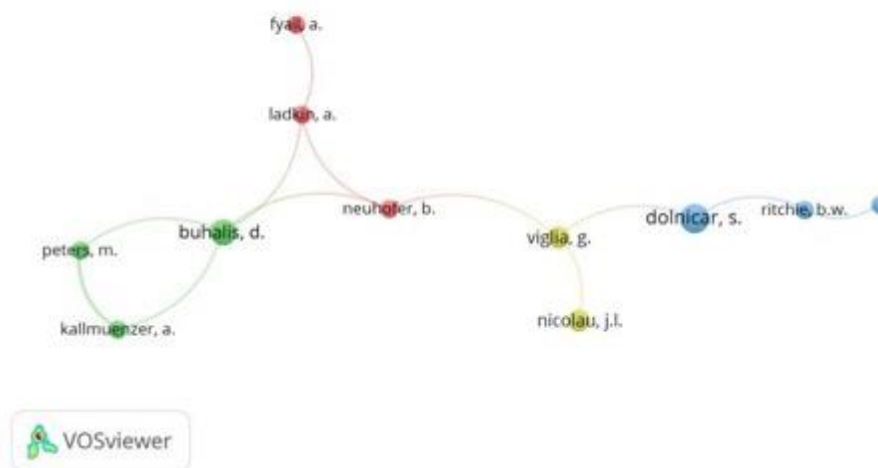


Figure 12: List of authors with the highest ratio of co-citations.  
Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

In Figure 13, we see the longitudinal analysis and periods. The most recent articles feature authors with few publications, such as Peters and Kallmuenzer, who focus on the economic relationship and hotels in publications made in 2019. Authors with the highest number of publications are those with older and continuing work, such as Buhalis and Dolnicar.

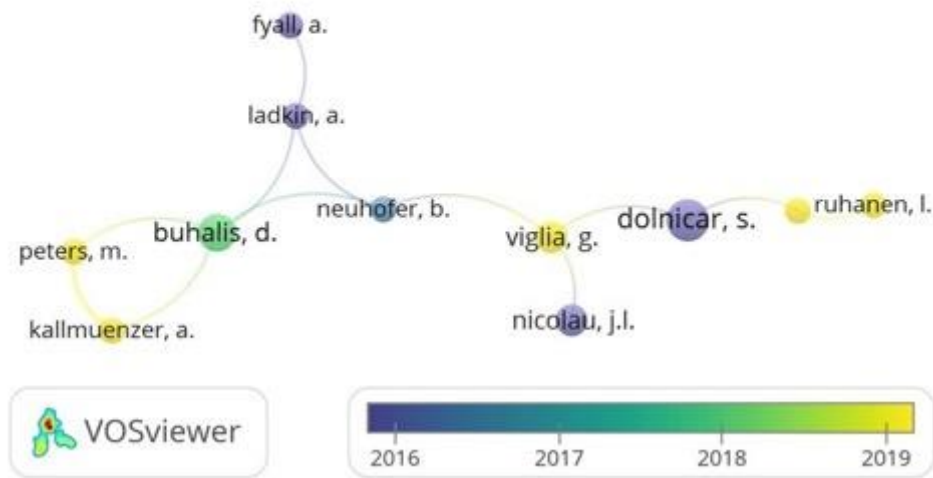


Figure 13: List of most cited authors in periods.  
Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

A total of 110 authors have at least 2 publications, with their closed groups plotted on Figure 14. A link is maintained between small research groups, but they do not relate or cite among other works, which shows an incipient and developing community and research area and shows a need to strengthen the relationships of authorship and co-authorship (Figure 14).

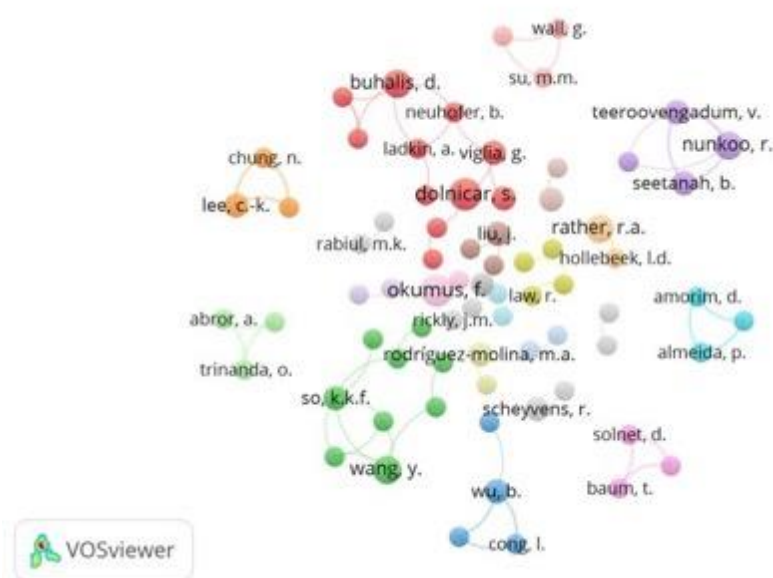


Figure 14: List of all authors with more than two published papers.  
Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).



There is a list of more recent publications in which some authors are related to each other. For example, Rather, in 2020, referring to experiential marketing, and Nunkoo, with recent publications referring to customer satisfaction. As can be seen, networks between authors and small research communities have been created, however, the number of publications, as well as continuity in research, is weak (Figure 15).

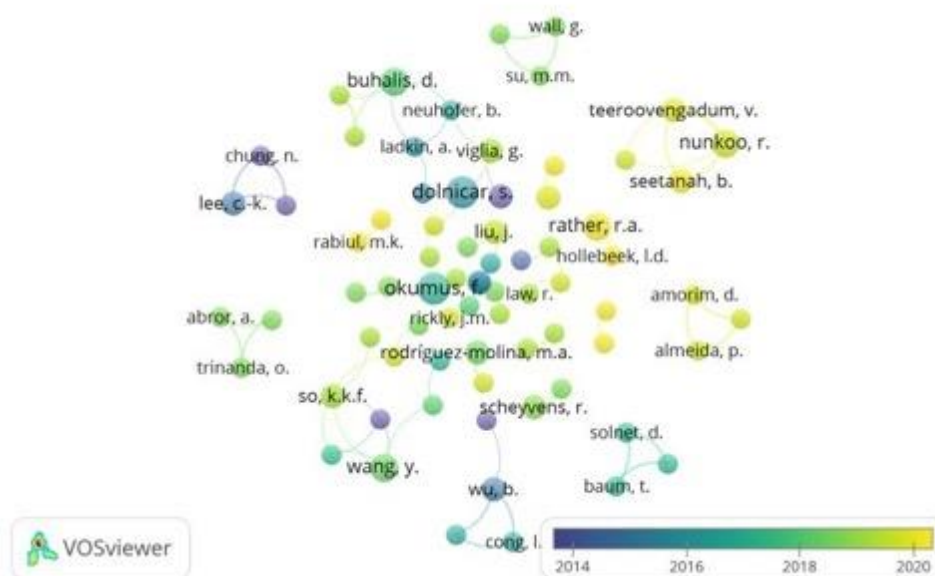


Figure 15: Years of publication with more than two publications.  
Source: Own elaboration based on Scopus Database. (2021/08).

The development centred on the work of the researchers is related to the way in which the research topics presented in sections 4.1 and 4.2 of this article have evolved. A growth both in the number of researchers as well as in the topics they work on can be observed. By 2016, research is shown to be incipient and diversified. By 2020, the network grows and a greater number of relationships are established, as well as new centralised foci of intellectual production. However, in the same year, the network is dispersed, as is the number of topics being worked on (Figure 15). It is important to mention that the focus in the later era – around 2020 – is related to the development of experiential marketing and customer service, both linked to knowing how to establish permanent links with customers. The tourism market focuses on specialisation, as well as on improving the customer experience, and it can be perceived throughout the entire value chain (Dieguez and Conceição, 2021; Rahmiati et al., 2020).

## **5.CONCLUSIONS**

The study of the evolution of digital marketing research trends, through the use of inbound marketing tools applied to the hotel industry and tourism, has allowed us to obtain an overview of the areas of interest in digital marketing that point towards the construction of a Marketing 5.0 paradigm. The basic contribution in this study is the use of various methods of analysis and dissimilar software to explore the state of the art of inbound marketing research in hospitality and tourism. Through the search in Scopus and the use of SciMat and VOSviewer software, we have managed to synthesise the data according to the Boolean search proposed, allowing us to get closer to the interest of this study.

The results obtained allow us to detect a progressive increase in the number of publications analysing inbound marketing tools over the last few years (2010-2021), which shows a theoretical growth in the field of research. These results are due, in part, to the increasing popularity of inbound marketing tools in the management of tourism companies, while at the same time, there has been a lack of research related to the integrative approach of digital tourism marketing tools. In this sense, it is interesting to note how inbound marketing research does not take shape directly as a discipline in itself, but is mentioned indirectly through different terms and concepts. Associated with this methodology, we identify the interest in factors such as loyalty, the contribution of value through sustainable tourism development or the need to connect emotionally with the traveller, making clear the evolution and paradigm shift towards a Marketing 5.0.

On the analysis of thematic networks and keywords carried out through the Scimat tool, the main areas of research are identified. We can point out six clusters around the analysis of joint words extracted from the analysed documents: tourism destination, loyalty, customer engagement, tourism development, marketing, sustainability and tourism research. These sets of terms have been the most mentioned and worked on, meaning they can be considered key pillars in the construction of the term "inbound marketing" in the tourism sector. At the same time, it is important to understand that these clusters are directly related to the important aspects of forming an inbound marketing strategy, mentioned in the previous section.

In order of importance, the tourism destination cluster generates the most connections with issues related to inbound marketing, and we therefore consider it a

leading tourism agent in the construction of the term. The second cluster focuses on the terms loyalty and customer engagement to shape a methodology based on inbound marketing. As mentioned, this model seeks to guarantee recurring customer business through emotional bonding. Thirdly, we identified the tourism development cluster, which takes advantage of inbound marketing to provide value to the traveller through content.

The fourth cluster is associated with the term marketing as a thematic discipline, as well as the different technological elements that help to shape what would be inbound marketing as a model. In fifth and sixth place are terms related to sustainability and tourism research, respectively. Both terms are identified with clusters of words that bet on the natural positioning strategy of brands. As can be seen, these clusters identify the different centres of interest on which the concept of inbound marketing is based, ranging from the field of destination management to more current concepts such as sustainability. In this regard, it is worth remembering that inbound marketing tools are not only useful for tourism companies, but also for destination management organisations (DMOs) as an effective tool for attracting tourists.

We also observed, in the analysis of citations and co-authorship performed through the VosViewer tool, that the results obtained in the research community do not have networks strengthened by co-citations and co-authorship relationships. Few researchers establish a close and continuous relationship that strengthens and deepens the topics. However, we appreciate that there is a sustained growth in the network of researchers, which is related to the diversity of topics worked on in the lines of research. We also detected a growth in researchers working on client-centred topics. The results reveal the opportunity for research synergy, and the advantages that can be gained from it, through the creation of networks between different authors and/or research centres.

Future trends seem to be oriented towards social engineering: that technology helps to understand, manage and improve online interactions between brands and users to enable a better customer experience. The speed of information consumption and user and brand interaction must be understood and interpreted according to the needs of each customer and in real time so that personalised approaches can be implemented. This processing capacity is only possible through technology such as artificial intelligence tourism applications, which facilitate better understanding of the markets

and in turn aid the development of Marketing 5.0 strategies with methodologies based on inbound marketing.

### **5.1) LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The results of this work show that inbound marketing as an integrative methodology of digital marketing in the hotel industry lacks a holistic concept, since, although many of its tools are investigated, their application is not analysed in a systematic way and inbound marketing is not identified as a topic of interest. Given that these management tools are commonly used at the business level, we consider that future research in tourism has here a priority and unpublished line and area of interest that would allow the development of inbound marketing around strategies based on Marketing 5.0.

Finally, it is possible that the search results do not cover all studies related to inbound marketing, since we only considered the Scopus database. Therefore, we propose a future study using other databases, such as Web of Science or Google Scholar. A bibliometric analysis using different data sources could be useful for a more complete overview of the situation of inbound marketing in the hospitality industry.

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## Appendix 1:

**Figure 2.** Evolution of topics in the periods 2010-2013; 2014-2017; 2018-2021 (from the h-index).

PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3	SUMMARY
2010-2013	2014-2017	2018-2021	

