



A Meta-Analysis on Destination Branding, 2015 -19: What is on offer?

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Abstract

In today's globally competitive market, destination marketing has been identified as a major catalyst in the growth of tourism destinations and sustainability. This paper aims at exploring the advances made in the studies on "destination branding" by a thorough analysis of various scientific articles in this field with the help of text-mining. All the major research databases were searched for the term "destination branding" and the resulting articles were segregated based on the title, abstract and keywords provided. The resulting articles related to the topic were then subjected to text-mining process. Davis-Bouldain Index was used for identifying the clusters. The clusters formed have been created around topics such as Sustainability and Eco-Tourism, Applications of Big Data and Web 2.0, Destination Management Organisations (DMO) and their activities, Destination Imagery/Perception and Destination management. The study reveals that the researcher's focus is shifting from conventional destination branding to activities of DMO's and their policies, applications of user generated content to unravel new insights.

Keywords: Destination Branding, Text-mining, Destination Management Organisations, User Generated Content.

1. Introduction

"Destination branding can be defined as a way to communicate a destination's unique identity by differentiating a destination from its competitors" (Amin, Yousaf, & Gupta, 2016). The revenue receipts generated in the tourism sector as per the latest UNWTO (2018) report is USD 1,462 billion and is set to increase year by year. There is a definite shift in tourism towards the management of destinations. Kaplan & Haenlin(2010) defines social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". Tourists are treating reviews from fellow consumers and depend on them for their travel decisions(Burgess, Sellitto, Cox, & Bultjens, 2015).An extensive literature survey of the domain till 2015 was done by Ávila-Robinson and Wakabayashi (2018). The technologies above mentioned opens several new avenues to approach destination branding and adoption of User Generated Content. Hence an examination of the recent literature (2015-2019) will further bring avenues of uncharted areas in this domain.

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2. Review Methodology

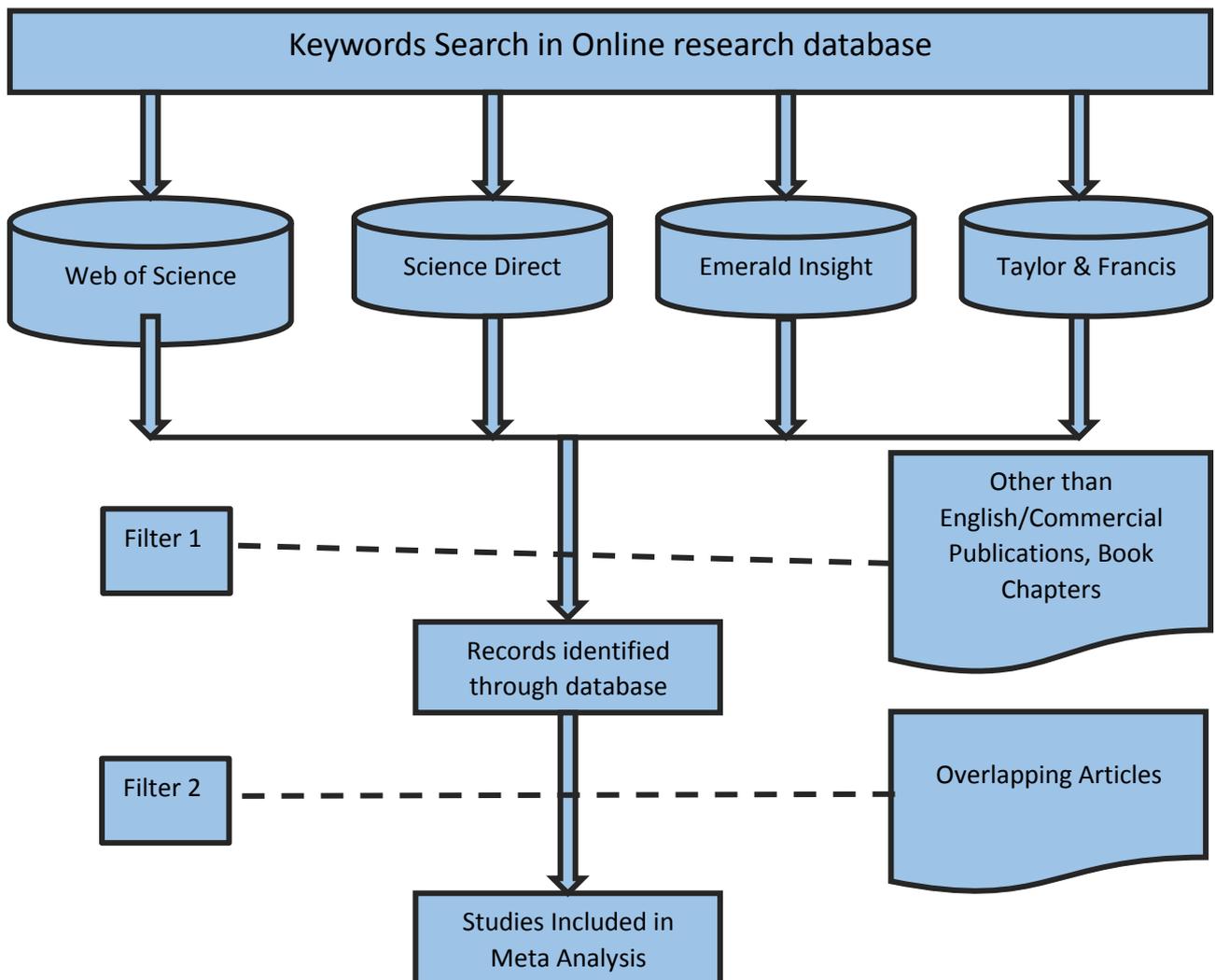


Fig: Flowchart showing selection of articles for Meta Analysis

The methodology of meta-analysis used by Shahriari et. al(2019) was adapted for this study. Methods of text-mining and clustering and multi-step decision were used. Articles that appear in major research databases like Web of Science, Science Direct, Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis Online with the keyword “destination branding” from the years 2015 to 2019 were searched upon. Then further screening of the articles through the review of the title, abstracts and the keywords is performed. Overlapping articles from the databases were identified and removed. The remaining articles were subjected to text mining after the pre-processing of data. Tokenisation, converting cases, stop words and stemming procedures were executed. Subsequently, K means Clustering was used to find optimum clusters according to Davis-Bouldin’s index. Total occurrence, Occurrence in document, Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency, and Simple Additive Weighting (SAW) technique were used to rank and find out the most important roots in each cluster. A decision matrix was formed and the ranking of roots completed.

3. Organizing Framework

The text-mining method used here is based on the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA)(Blei, Ng, & Jordan, 2003) which is a hierarchical Bayesian model. The various theories identified to have been used in the destination branding area by this study are Theory of Reasoned Action, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Technology Acceptance Model, Flow theory, Component Display Theory, Source Credibility Theory, Online Social Network (OSN) Theory, Social Identity Theory, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Motivation-Opportunities-Abilities Model, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology.

4. Review Discussion

The publications span over several areas of interests and the main trends in destination branding identified are in the broad sectors of Sustainability and Ecotourism, Social media Impacts and User Generated Content (UGC), Culinary experiences, Health and Medicine. Sustainability studies take up issues of protection of several manmade and natural resources like the Great Barrier Reef in Australia (Pendleton et al., 2019) and other pressing issues like e-waste and waste management (Ismail & Hanafiah, 2019). More studies have started focusing on the impact of Carbon Foot Print (Becken & Shuker, 2019). The discussions in the culinary experiences showcase the culinary identities of different cities and countries as well (Lai, Khoo-Lattimore, & Wang, 2018) as well as the Halal concept (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Several researches have been conducted around cities and the attractions they offer. Studies in the Health sector speaks about vaccinations for travelers and other medical destinations. (Ganguli & Ebrahim, 2017). Some of the studies are on Destination Management Organisations and their activities especially in social media (Uşaklı, Koç, & Sönmez, 2017). Studies reveal that online third party advice is accepted as reliable information source by travellers (Tsao, Hsieh, Shih, & Lin, 2015). The studies on user-generated content are predominantly quantitative in nature and there is a marked increase in qualitative studies. (Ukpabi & Karjaluto, 2018).

5. Directions for Future Research & Implications

Most of the studies are focussing on sustainability, ecotourism and millennium development goals and these studies can be replicated in developing countries. Even though the studies around Destination Management Organisations have increased, there is much more room to explore their activities especially with the advent of web 2.0 and the availability of user-generated content. There is ample scope for researchers to adopt cross-cultural studies. Researchers can also explore and contrast the destination branding practices between the developed and developing countries. Researchers in developing countries can explore qualitative studies based on tourist imagery. Future research can use demographics and gender information as moderation and mediation factors and focus on data that provides spatio-temporal informations.

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