# Mapping the Research Journey : A Bibliometric Analysis of Consumer Perspective on Online Travel Agencies

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─────────────── ABSTRACT ───────────────

In the current period of technological advancements, online travel agencies (OTAs) have emerged as substantial participants in the travel and tourism sector. In order to delineate the intellectual and social framework and investigate prevailing trends and patterns, this article conducts an exhaustive bibliometric review of the consumer stance regarding OTAs. The present investigation has implemented the systematic performance analysis and review technique (SPAR-4). By employing a predetermined search query, 399 academic papers spanning the years 2000 to 2024 were extracted from the Scopus database. RStudio and VOSviewer were utilized to implement a variety of performance analysis and science mapping techniques in order to gain an understanding of the field's body of knowledge. The results indicate that both the quantity and impact of OTA studies (from the consumer's perspective) have increased over the decades. From the consumer's standpoint, the current retrospective is insufficient, despite the growing body of research dedicated to OTAs. This study presents novel insights into the consumer perspective regarding the intellectual and social structure of OTAs, which are of great value to practitioners, academics, and future researchers.

**Keywords :** Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), Consumer Perspective, Performance Analysis, Science Mapping, SPAR-4.

## Introduction

Internet travel booking services have revolutionized travel booking during the past two decades. Unlike traditional travel services, online travel booking services use the internet to provide travelers with information on a wide range of travel products and services. Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) let customers book flights, hotels, cars, cruises, and excursions online. Expedia, Booking.com, Priceline, Airbnb, TripAdvisor, Kayak, and Agoda are major OTAs. Technology and internet use have helped Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) grow rapidly, making them crucial to the travel industry (Buhalis & Law, 2008). When the internet became popular in India in the early 2000s, OTAs were introduced. OTAs first focused on streamlining ticket

bookings, providing a simple platform to compare costs and book flights online. MakingMyTrip, Cleartrip, and Yatra were early innovators in online flight, hotel, and vacation booking. Technological advances and customer behavior have accelerated OTA growth in India. OTAs have gained a large share of the global travel business by offering all-inclusive holiday bargains in addition to flight bookings (Fotis et al., 2019). Explaining the factors behind OTA adoption requires understanding customer perspective.

Online travel research and reservations are becoming more popular, according to studies. According to Fotis et al. (2019) and Buhalis & Foerste (2015), passengers are increasingly using online travel agencies (OTAs) due to their convenience, user-friendliness, and inexpensive prices. Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) attract travelers with their extensive range of travel information, specialized advice, and reward programs. Gretzel & Yoo (2008) and Law et al. (2019) also note that trust, security, and social impact are driving the use of Online Trip Agencies (OTAs) for trip planning and booking. Research shows that website design, information accessibility, and perceived dependability influence consumers' travel OTA selections (Fesenmaier, 2006). Online travel agencies (OTAs) offer convenience, efficiency, and savings. By aggregating travel options from multiple vendors, online travel agencies (OTAs) help consumers compare rates, read reviews, and make informed decisions. The value proposition of online travel agencies (OTAs) is increased via reward programs, discounts, and targeted suggestions, which encourage users to use the service again and build brand loyalty. Travel suppliers and clients benefit from online travel agencies (OTAs). Bibliometric analysis is used in this study to better understand consumer perceptions of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and the research field's knowledge base.

## Rationale of the Study

Rapid internet connectivity and smartphone use have transformed travel and tourism. Online travel agents (OTAs) are essential for travel transactions and experiences. Customers are increasingly using OTAs to plan and book their vacation, so it's important to understand their opinions, preferences, and activities. Gretzel and Yoo (2008) used bibliometrics to examine how internet travel reviews affect customer behavior and decision-making while using OTAs to plan and book vacations. A bibliometric analysis by Gretzel et al. (2015) examined the evolution of tourism and hospitality research on online travel agents (OTAs). Buhalis and Leung (2018) examined OTAs' role in smart hospitality using bibliometrics. They studied research articles to learn how OTAs interact and integrate tourism ecosystem components. Garcia et al. (2022) used bibliometrics to systematically review online travel agency evolution, themes, authors, and methods. Hernández et al. (2023) used bibliometric analysis to examine traditional travel businesses' online collaboration and its effects on consumer perception and cybersecurity. Previous bibliometric analyses focus on tourism and hospitality management literature. Comprehensive bibliometric reviews of consumer opinions of online travel agents (OTAs) are lacking. Thus, this study uses bibliometrics to examine academic discussions on client views on Online Travel Agencies (OTAs). We use bibliometric analysis to identify trends and technologies that are affecting customer opinions of OTAs. The study aims to investigate the customer viewpoint about OTAs by addressing a set of research inquiries:

Q1. What is the yearly publication trend and citation structure of consumer perspective towards Online travel agencies?

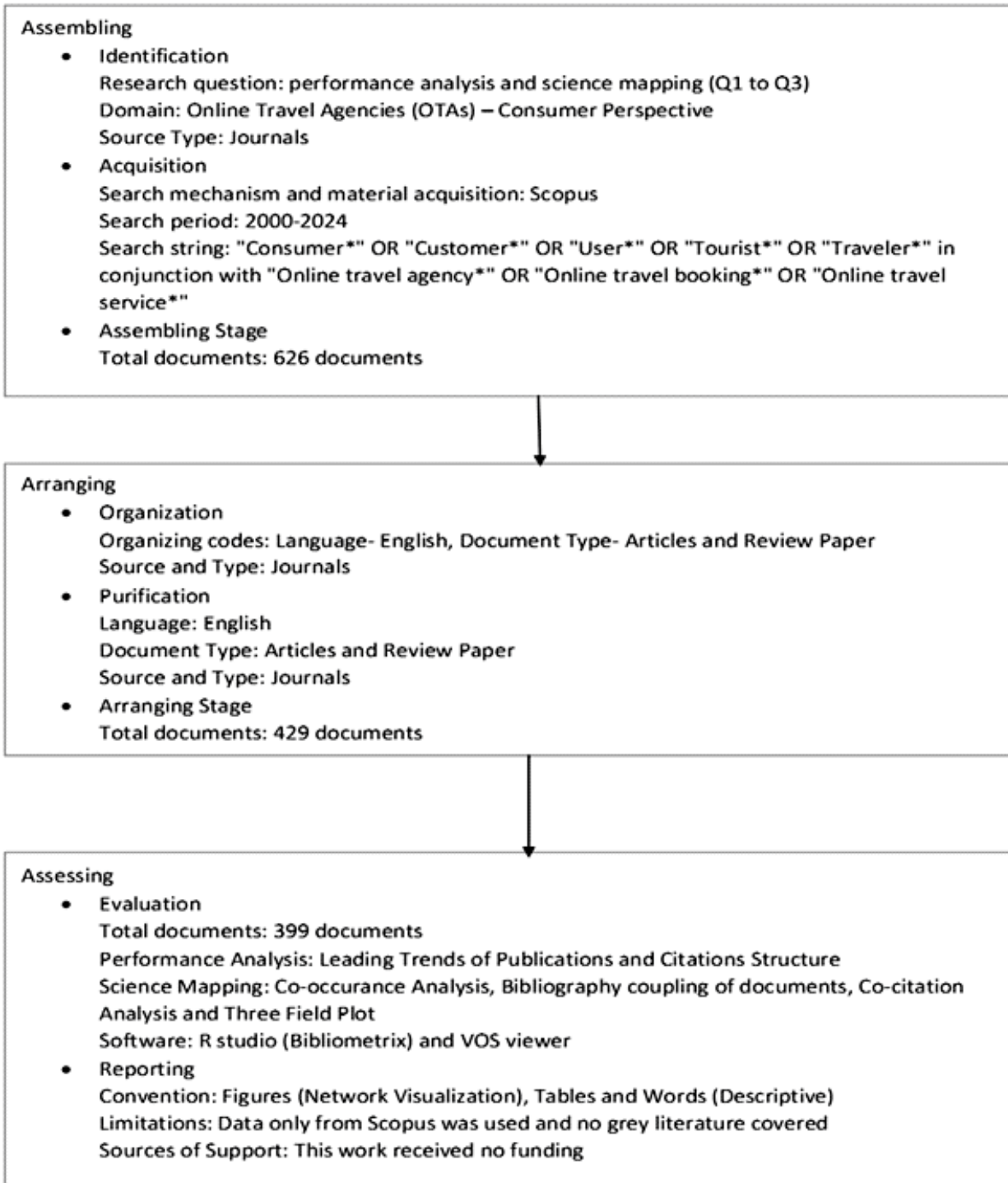Q2. In the realm of online travel agencies, which studies are the most impactful?

Q3. What is the intellectual and social structure of the field?

## Methodology

According to Zupic and Čater (2015), bibliometric analysis examines the temporal development of various areas based on their intellectual, conceptual, and social frameworks. Figure 1 shows the SPAR-4-SLR method, a three-stage systematic literature review method established by Paul et al. (2021).

**Figure 1 SPAR-4 Structure**

Assembling
- Identification
  Research question: performance analysis and science mapping (Q1 to Q3)
  Domain: Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) – Consumer Perspective
  Source Type: Journals
- Acquisition
  Search mechanism and material acquisition: Scopus
  Search period: 2000-2024
  Search string: "Consumer*" OR "Customer*" OR "User*" OR "Tourist*" OR "Traveler*" in conjunction with "Online travel agency*" OR "Online travel booking*" OR "Online travel service*"
- Assembling Stage
  Total documents: 626 documents

Arranging
- Organization
  Organizing codes: Language- English, Document Type- Articles and Review Paper
  Source and Type: Journals
- Purification
  Language: English
  Document Type: Articles and Review Paper
  Source and Type: Journals
- Arranging Stage
  Total documents: 429 documents

Assessing
- Evaluation
  Total documents: 399 documents
  Performance Analysis: Leading Trends of Publications and Citations Structure
  Science Mapping: Co-occurance Analysis, Bibliography coupling of documents, Co-citation Analysis and Three Field Plot
  Software: R studio (Bibliometrix) and VOS viewer
- Reporting
  Convention: Figures (Network Visualization), Tables and Words (Descriptive)
  Limitations: Data only from Scopus was used and no grey literature covered
  Sources of Support: This work received no funding

Assembly begins with finding and buying publications for review. Our data came from Scopus, a popular bibliometric database. This database was chosen because it has a large collection of abstracts and citations (Mugomeri et al., 2017), can manage data and correct errors (Aznar-Sánchez et al., 2019), and refreshes quickly (Borrett et al., 2018). Bibliometric analysis requires a concise, consistent, and reproducible literature search question (Khatib et al., 2021). We found 626 documents by searching the database for "Consumer*" OR "Customer*" OR "User*" OR "Tourist*" OR "Traveler*" and "Online travel agency*" OR "Online travel booking*" OR "Online travel service*" in the "Article title, Abstract, and Keywords" field. This study examines articles from 2000 to 2024, starting with the first influential work on this topic. This review also eliminated book chapters, conference papers, and other grey literature to maintain its integrity. Only scholarly journal articles and critical reviews were included. The search yielded 429 English-language items after applying the study's constraints. The next level of organization grouped the articles, filtered the data file, and deleted six articles. We carefully reviewed the abstract, whole text, titles, and keywords after screening. After careful consideration, we excluded academic research that did not focus solely on customer perceptions of online travel providers. This left 399 papers for bibliometric analysis. An extensive review and report are completed at the end of the assessment procedure. In Figure 1, the SPAR-4-SLR technique provides academics with important recommendations to support review results (Ramya & Alur, 2023). The interactive mapping features of VOSviewer and the R application Biblioshiny are well-known and used in bibliometric investigations (Goel et al., 2022).

## Results and Discussion

### Performance Analysis

It examined the many actors and elements influencing a research field. Many well-known bibliometric metrics are used to measure performance over time. These measures include TC, TP, and citation-based thresholds.

### Publication Trend & Citation Structure

Figure 2 shows annual trends for online travel agents (Q1). Elevation of blue 'circles' in this picture correlates with 399 texts. Table 1 shows the citation structure of online travel providers to understand their influence. Strong italics highlight the greatest bibliometric results in Table 1. With an average citation rate of 1533.03, this corpus generated 11,030 citations. The findings suggest that online travel agency research will continue to have a major impact.

## Figure 2. Growth of Online Travel Agencies
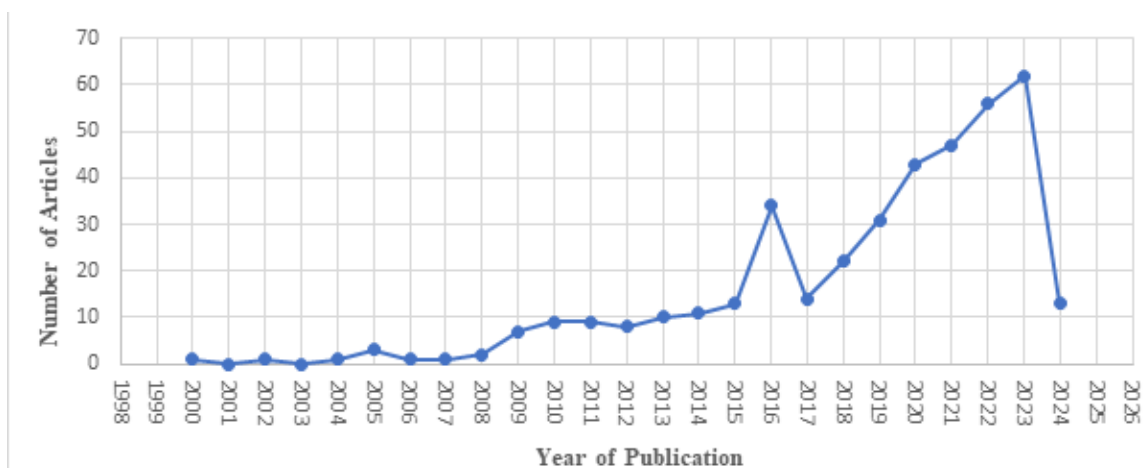
| Year | TP | TC | AC | ≥100 | ≥50 | ≥25 | ≥10 | ≥5 | ≥1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2000 | 1 | 240 | 240 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2001 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2002 | 1 | 320 | **320** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2003 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2004 | 1 | 36 | 36 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2005 | 3 | 232 | 77.3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 2006 | 1 | 15 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2007 | 1 | 129 | 129 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2008 | 2 | 138 | 69 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 2009 | 7 | 193 | 27.5 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| 2010 | 9 | 479 | 53.2 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| 2011 | 9 | 1147 | 127.4 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 9 |
| 2012 | 8 | 633 | 79.1 | **4** | 4 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 8 |
| 2013 | 10 | 434 | 43.4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| 2014 | 11 | 1064 | 96.7 | **4** | **6** | 8 | 9 | 9 | 11 |
| 2015 | 13 | 744 | 57.2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 12 | 13 |
| 2016 | 34 | **1453** | 42.7 | 3 | **6** | **15** | **27** | **33** | 34 |
| 2017 | 14 | 313 | 22.3 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 12 | 13 |
| 2018 | 22 | 673 | 30.5 | 1 | 4 | 12 | 13 | 16 | 21 |
| 2019 | 31 | 570 | 18.3 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 15 | 19 | 28 |
| 2020 | 43 | 1063 | 24.7 | **4** | **6** | 9 | 24 | 31 | 39 |
| 2021 | 47 | 642 | 13.6 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 22 | **33** | 44 |
| 2022 | 56 | 386 | 6.89 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 13 | 25 | **45** |
| 2023 | **62** | 115 | 1.85 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 31 |
| 2024 | 13 | 11 | 0.84 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 399 | 11030 | 1533.03 | 30 | 56 | 101 | 186 | 250 | 334 |

Note: TP stands for Total publication, AC stands for Average citations, TC stands for Total citations, ≥ stands for Number of articles referenced over a threshold level. The top bibliometric scores are bold.

## Most Influential Works in Online Travel Agencies

Regarding Online Travel Agencies, which studies have had the greatest influence (Q2)? To address this inquiry, the quantification of overall citations functions as a metric for identifying the most influential research publications. We have compiled the ten most-cited studies on online travel agencies in Table 2. Ye et al. (2011) discovered in their most-cited article (TC: 807) that traveler reviews significantly affect online sales; a five percent increase in traveler review ratings results in over a five percent increase in online bookings. The authors also emphasized the significance of online user-generated reviews to tourism business performance. According to

Xiang et al. (2015), whose research is the second most cited (TC:429), there has been a saturation in the adoption of the Internet regarding travel planning. Traditional channels, including online travel agencies (OTAs), are still dominant in this regard. Clemons et al. (2002) identified the existence of product differentiation and price dispersion in the online travel industry. Their article garnered 320 citations in total. According to the findings of Gu et al. (2014), the fourth article on the list, online management responses are exceptionally effective with regard to customers who are dissatisfied but have little impact on other customers. Another article included in the list is one by Ozturk et al. (2016) which examines the functions of perceived convenience, compatibility, self-efficacy, and simplicity of use.

According to Hsu et al. (2012), the quality of a website has an impact on the perceived playfulness and flow of customers, which subsequently effects their satisfaction and intention to make a purchase. Kaynama (2000) made an additional significant contribution to the field of online travel agency research by developing E-QUAL, a tool utilized to assess the service quality of electronic commerce enterprises as perceived by their customers. Ozturk et al. (2016) examine the factors that influence consumers' intentions to continue using mobile hotel booking (MHB) technology. The eighth article on the list investigates these intentions and finds that both utilitarian and hedonic value have substantial effects on users' intentions to continue using MHB technology. Additional research was conducted by Gao and Bai (2014), which employed a stimulus-organism-response (SOR) framework as its theoretical foundation. The authors investigated the influence of consumer perceptions regarding atmospheric cues on websites (namely, informativeness, effectiveness, and entertainment) on the emergence of flow, which in turn affected purchase intention and satisfaction. Ali (2016), who analyzed the relationships among perceived flow, purchase intentions, customer satisfaction, and hotel website quality, concluded in his tenth and final article that hotel website quality affects customers' perceived flow, which subsequently affects their purchase intention and satisfaction. Upon conducting a comparative analysis of the total citations recorded in columns 7 (TC), 8 (CGS), and 9 (CWoS) of Table 2, it became evident that Google Scholar provides a comprehensive compilation of citations generated by scholarly papers, in contrast to Web of Science and Scopus.

## Table 2. Top Papers

| R | Title | Year | Author(s) | Journal | N | TC | CGS | CWoS | CD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | "The influence of user -generated content on traveler behavior: An empirical investigation on the effects of e -word-of-mouth to hotel online bookings" | 2011 | Ye, Q., Law, R., Gu, B., Chen, W. | CHB | 4 | **807** | **1756** | **691** | **57.64** |
| 2 | "Information technology and consumer behavior in travel and tourism: Insights from travel planning using the internet" | 2015 | Xiang, Z., Magnini, V.P. , Fesenmaier, D.R. | JRC | 3 | 429 | 964 | 346 | 42.90 |
| 3 | "Price dispersion and differentiation in online travel: An empirical investigation" | 2002 | Clemons, E.K., Hann, I.-H., Hitt, L.M. | MS | 3 | 320 | 703 | 246 | 13.91 |
| 4 | "First st ep in social media: Measuring the influence of online management responses on customer satisfaction" | 2014 | Gu, B., Ye, Q. | POM | 2 | 297 | 514 | 234 | 27.00 |
| 5 | "What keeps the mobile hotel booking users loyal? Investigating the roles of self-efficacy, compatibility, perceived ease of use, and perceived convenience" | 2016 | Ozturk, A. B., Bilgihan, A., Nusair, K., & Okumus, F. | IJIM | 4 | 281 | 582 | 227 | 31.22 |
| 6 | "The impact of website quality on customer satisfaction and purchase intention: Perceived playfulness and perceived flow as mediators" | 2012 | Hsu,C.L., Chang, K.C., Chen, M.C. Kaynama, | ISEBM | 3 | 252 | 617 | 200 | 19.38 |

| 7 | "A proposal to assess the service quality of online travel agencies: An exploratory study" | 2000 | S.A., Black, C.I. Ozturk, | JPSM | 2 | 240 | 670 | NA | 9.6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | "The role of utilitarian and hedonic values on users' continued usage intention in a mobile hotel booking environment" | 2016 | A.B., Nusair, K., Okumus, F., Hua, N. | IJHM | 4 | 208 | 373 | 178 | 23.11 |
| 9 | "Online consumer behaviour and its relationship to website atmospheric induced flow: Insights into online travel agencies in China" | 2014 | Gao, L., Bai, X. | JRCS | 2 | 191 | 399 | NA | 36.27 |
| 10 | "Hotel website     quality, perceived flow, customer satisfaction and purchase intention" | 2016 | Ali, F. | JHTT | 1 | 177 | 454 | 138 | 19.66 |

**Note:** CHB stands for "Computers in Human Behavior," Published in the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (JRC), Managing Successfully Management of Production and Operations (POM) The abbreviations "ISEBM" and "International Journal of Information Management" are used interchangeably. An acronym for "Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services," "International Journal of Hospitality Management," and "Journal of Professional Services Marketing" The acronym JHTT stands for the Journal of Hotel and Tourism Technology. Count of Authors (N) Measured as total citations (TC) divided by the number of years after the document was published, the citation density (CD) The best bibliometric results are marked in bold. CGS stands for Citation Count on Google Scholar, and CWoS for Citation Count on Web of Science.

## Science Mapping

A visual representation of the relationships between scientific domains, subfields, and works or authors is called "science mapping" (Small, 1999). This study focuses on research element linkage and intellectual interchange (Donthu et al., 2021). Science mapping uses co-occurance, co-authorship, co-citation analysis, and bibliographic coupling.

## Co-occurrence Analysis

From 399 publications, 1863 keywords were found. Of them, 84 appeared over five times. Nodes increase in size as keyword frequency increases. Table 3 lists the top 20 keywords. The map in Figure 3 clusters keywords into five. The 27-item First Cluster (red) links 'internet,' 'travel behaviour,' tourist market, world wide web, and 'consumption behaviour'. Second cluster (green): internet travel agencies. It has 18 links with 172 strength. Figure 2 illustrates that the third cluster (blue color) of travel agencies has 15 items and a strong association between keywords such consumer behavior, hotels, travel services, etc. The words tourism and Ota constitute the fourth (yellow) and fifth (purple) clusters with 108 and 32 links, respectively.

### Table 3. Most frequent keywords

| Keywords | Occurrence |
|---|---|
| Online Travel Agency | 56 |
| Online Travel Agencies | 39 |
| Internet | 39 |
| Tourism | 32 |
| Travel Agency | 31 |
| Hotels | 28 |
| Travel Behaviour | 23 |
| Electronic Commerce | 23 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 21 |
| Sales | 21 |
| World Wide Web | 19 |
| Tourism Market | 16 |
| Consumption Behaviour | 15 |
| Perception | 14 |
| Hotel Industry | 16 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 10 |
| Marketing | 13 |
| Tourism Industry | 12 |
| Tourist Behaviour | 10 |
| Tourism Economics | 10 |

**Figure 3. Intellectual structure based on Co-occurrence of keywords network using VOSViewer software.**
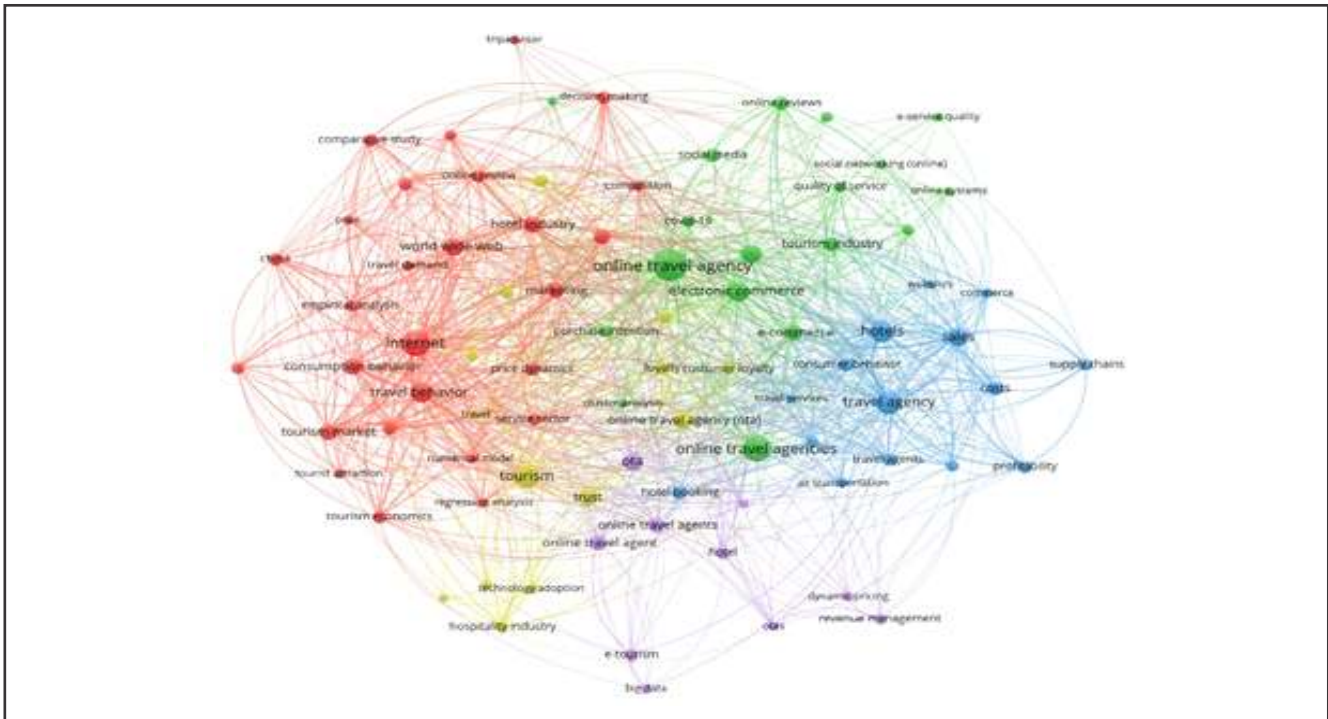


## Bibliographic Coupling of Documents

Similar scholarly references in online travel agency articles are another problem (RQ 3). A third document is cited by two research publications in bibliographic coupling. Document bibliographic coupling shows these ties. Figure 4 shows a bibliographic coupling map with 11 colored clusters, 1275 linkages, and 1893 total link strength. The map includes 189 documents with at least ten citations. Nodes represent documents and edges couple them. Ye et al. (2011) found the largest node with 807 citations. Reference patterns in online travel agency publications show that different locations are related.
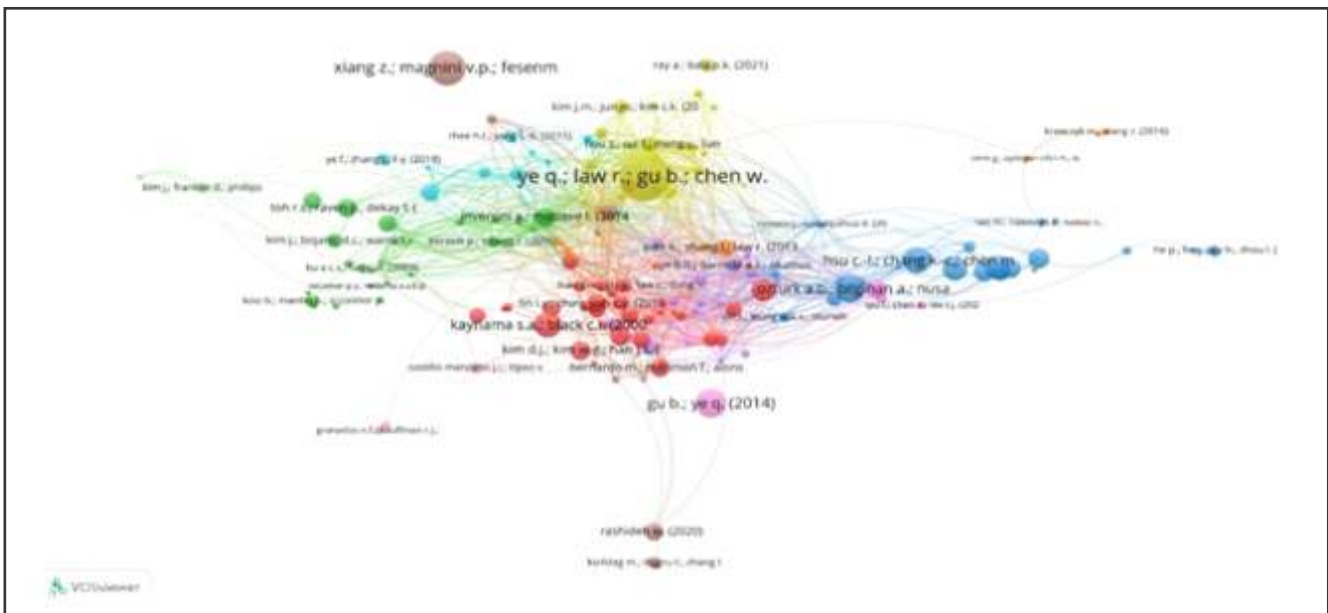
## Co-citation Analysis

Co-citation is how often two units are cited (Small, 1973). It assumes that frequently referenced items have a significant connection. Figure 5 shows the association strength-based co-citation network of references to examine the intellectual structure of online travel companies (Q3). Only 120 of 21,546 cited references match the 5-citation criteria for this network. Figure 5 shows a network with five clusters, 1832 links, and 2474 link strengths.

**Figure 5. Co-citations of cited references**
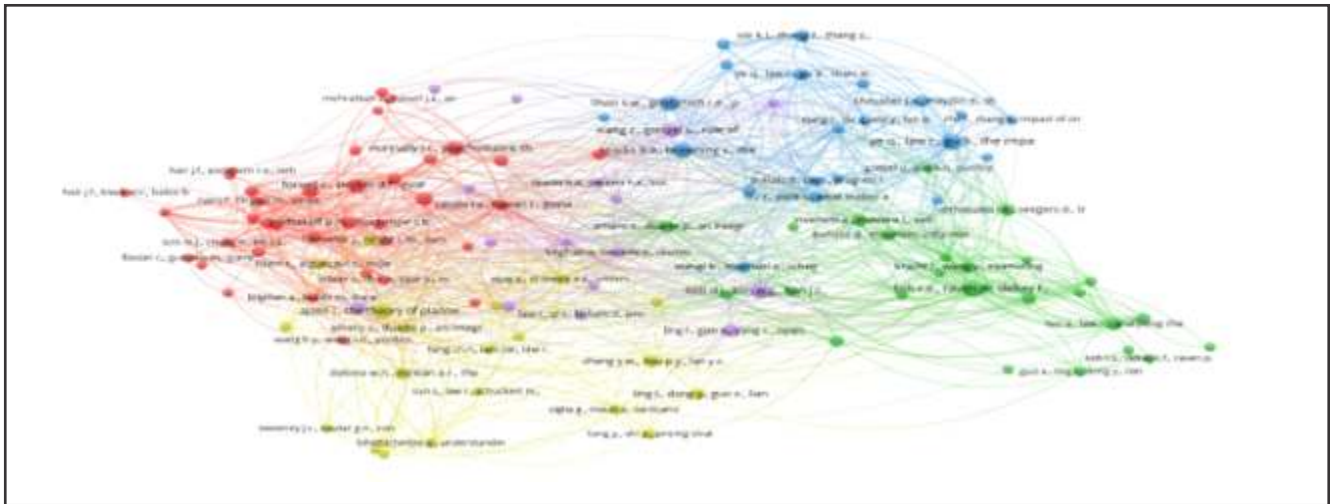


## Three Field Plot

Figure 6 lists comprehensive internet travel agency keywords, authors, and nations. The graphic shows a three-field map of online travel agency articles based on writer, country, and keyword frequency. Top online travel agency terms are listed in the right column. The left column shows the countries with the most authors, while the middle column lists authors from different nations. Taller boxes and thicker connecting lines provide more field work. As seen in Figure 6, China has the highest author affiliation rate, followed by UK and Hong Kong. According to the thickness of the line connecting the two nations, law r and li h are the most active writers, while online travel agency and Ota are the most popular keywords.
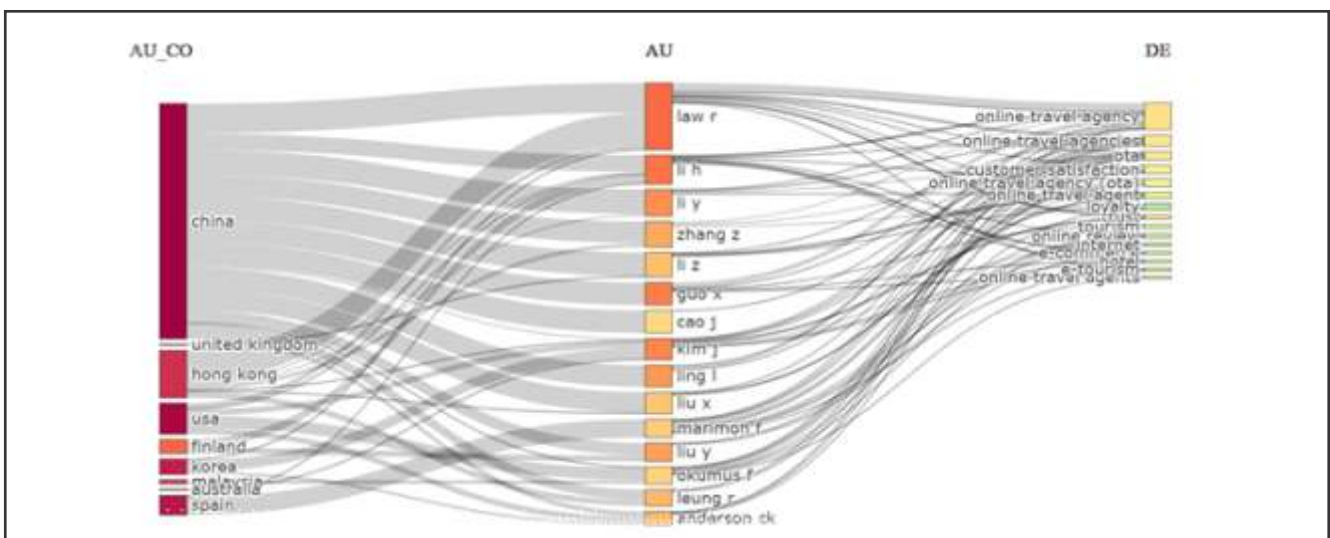
## Findings and Conclusion

OTAs are the main providers of online travel services, but no bibliometric study has been done on them from a consumer perspective. Previous studies have shown that consumers are switching from offline to online travel due to many benefits. Thus, the study's importance lies in its deconstruction of past online travel agency research advances and its predictions for the future. Bibliometrics analyzes literature in a systematic and impartial manner due to its interdisciplinarity. Studying the research domain's intellectual and social structure yielded a comprehensive framework. This study used Scopus to find consumer-focused online travel agency publications from 2000 to 2024. The final dataset has 399 publications and 11,030 citations. Annual publications have increased multifold from one in 2000 to 62 in 2023 and 14 in the first two months of 2024, and citations have increased considerably. The data shows that 2023 was the most productive year and 2018 was the most influential in increasing production in the same domain. We then used a co-citation technique to analyze the intellectual structure of online travel agency content, identifying the top 20 terms with 10 to 56 reputations. We also provided bibliographic coupling of documents demonstrating locations that have a referencing pattern in online travel agency publications. It shows 1275 links and 1893 overall link strength from 189 documents with at least ten citations. China has the highest author affiliation rate, followed by the UK and Hong Kong, law r and li h are the most active writers, and online travel agency, online travel agencies, and Ota are the most popular keywords.

## Implications

A detailed review of OTA scholarship shows a wide spectrum of theoretical ideas on customer perspective, marketing, and management. This section discusses OTA research's theoretical ramifications. First, the main theoretical feature is OTAs' developing character, recognizing temporal factors, technical progress, and changing client preferences and implementing online travel services. Second, recognizing experiential components increases and enriches study in this subject. A journey through the shifting OTA landscape gives practical tips that could boost OTAs. First, by combining features with target consumers' beliefs and interests, firms may create a unique image that stands out in competitive markets. Second, marketers can deliberately use OTAs to rationalize and satisfy consumers' monetary, social, informational, and trustworthiness needs. Finally, brands can build meaningful relationships with conscious consumers by being ethical and socially responsible on OTA platforms, making online travel services safe and easy to buy.

## Limitations and Future Directions

This research contains flaws. First, the bibliometric data source is problematic. This research relies only on Scopus, making it vulnerable to dataset errors. Retraction articles were removed during data cleansing. This may reduce errors, but source errors can still affect analysis. Custom databases and Dimensions and Web of Science coverage may help future scholars solve this challenge. Second, this study excluded conference articles, books, chapters, and dissertations. Future researchers can study all grey literature. This would help viewers understand new consumer/user attitudes toward online travel agencies. Finally, future studies may include technique or theory-based SLRs in addition to bibliometric evaluations.

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