SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL
OXTON SCIENCE JOURNAL
ISSN 3086-0881 · Open access · Peer reviewed

Vol. 1, No. 2, Jan.–Jun. 2026 https://oxtonscience.com ORI: https://oriregistry.org/10001/2026.0006

REVIEW ARTICLE

DIGITAL MARKETING IN TOURISM: *COMMUNICATION CHANNELS, CONSUMER JOURNEY AND DEMAND SEASONALITY*

Wagner Zanon[1], **Vitor Machado de Paiva**[1], **Eder Moreira de Freitas**[2*]

[1]Undergraduate Business Administration students, Universidade Paulista (UNIP), Brazil.
[2]Master in Business Administration, Universidade da Amazônia (UNAMA); faculty member at Universidade Paulista (UNIP), Campinas, Brazil. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7048-0175
***Corresponding author:** Prof. Me. Eder Moreira de Freitas (eder.freitas3@docente.unip.br), UNIP, Campinas, Brazil.

Article Information

HISTORY

Received: 20/10/2026
Accepted: 30/10/2026
Published: 10/11/2026

KEYWORDS

Digital marketing
Tourism
Customer journey
Tourism seasonality
Digital communication

HOW TO CITE

Zanon, W., Paiva, V. M., & Freitas, E. M. (2026). Digital marketing in tourism: Communication channels, consumer journey and demand seasonality. Oxton Science Journal, 1(1), 00–00.

LICENSE

Article published under a Creative Commons CC BY 4.0 license.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: digital communication and demand seasonality shape tourism marketing but are usually studied separately. **Objective:** to analyze what the literature supports about the functions of digital channels along the tourist's customer journey and about demand seasonality, and to propose the communication window as an integrating framework. **Methods:** two-phase integrative review (Crossref queries on 10/28/2026, 60 records screened, 8 included, and a directed search of 19 works), with 27 works analyzed through thematic synthesis and an evidence map. **Results:** the multi-touchpoint journey and multicausal seasonality have consistent support; channel functions, consistent with caveats; commercial effects and the articulation of channels, journey and seasonality, limited. **Conclusion:** distinguishing purchase date from travel date allows communication to be planned in the interval between them, which requires testing with booking data. The study is bibliographic.

1 INTRODUCTION

Planning a trip is rarely a one-day decision. Consumers draw inspiration from a destination, look for information, compare itineraries, check what other travelers have written, ask an agent questions and only then purchase the service, often months before departure. Each of these stages may take place in a different channel, and the marketing literature describes this path as an experience formed by multiple touchpoints, distributed before, during and after the purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). For tourism services, whose quality is hard to evaluate before consumption (Zeithaml et al., 1985), the information available at these touchpoints weighs particularly on the decision.

There is a second phenomenon, of a different nature, that runs through communication in the sector: seasonality. Butler (2001) treats it as a recurrent temporal imbalance, which shows up in the number of visitors, in spending and in other activities associated with tourism, and later literature describes it as the product of natural, institutional and economic factors, with effects on the economy, employment and society (Zvaigzne et al., 2022). When demand is concentrated in certain periods, the question facing those who plan communication

changes: it is not enough to know through which channels to speak; one must know when, with what message and to which segment.

The two discussions, however, tend to run in parallel. Research on social media, advertising and online reviews in tourism is well represented in reviews (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Sotiriadis, 2017; Chu et al., 2020; Tran & Rudolf, 2022), and research on seasonality has syntheses and measurement studies (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005; Ferrante et al., 2018; Vatsa, 2021). Rarely, however, do the two appear together. A manager who wants to know when to start promoting a high-season itinerary finds, on one side, descriptions of the functions of channels and, on the other, measures of how demand is distributed over the year, with no framework that connects them. This gap is the starting point of this article.

The study takes a company in the sector, Renova Turismo (n.d.), as a thematic reference, that is, as an example of the type of organization to which the discussion applies. It should be made clear from the outset that this is not an empirical case study: there was no collection of internal data, no interviews, no systematic observation of channels and no analysis of the company's sales indicators. The conclusions therefore refer to what the literature allows us to claim and not to the specific performance of any organization.

The research problem is: what does the scientific literature allow us to claim about the functions of digital channels along the tourist's customer journey and about demand seasonality, and to what extent have these two dimensions been examined in an integrated way? The general objective is to analyze this evidence through an integrative review and to propose a conceptual framework, the communication window, that relates channels, journey stages and the demand calendar. The specific objectives are:

a) to map the evidence on the customer journey in tourism and the functions of channels at each stage;
b) to map the evidence on social media, paid and owned media, messaging and e-mail, and online reviews;
c) to map the factors, measures and marketing implications of tourism seasonality; and
d) to examine the extent to which channels, journey and seasonality have been studied together, formulate the communication window and indicate the data needed to test it.

The contribution is conceptual and practical. Conceptually, the article organizes a scattered literature into an evidence map and delimits what is established and what depends on further research. In practical terms, it offers managers and researchers a roadmap of the minimum data needed to study the relationship between communication and the demand calendar. Section 2 describes the procedures; Section 3, the framework and propositions; Section 4, the results; and Sections 5 and 6, the discussion and final considerations.

2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

2.1 Research design

This is a qualitative integrative review, which gathers and analyzes studies of different designs to reach a broad understanding of the phenomenon (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005; Souza et al., 2010) and which approximates, in the typology of Grant and Booth (2009), a critical review with narrative synthesis and an evidence map (Torraco, 2005). It is not a systematic review: PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021) was used as a transparency guide to describe identification, screening and inclusion, and not as a protocol to be fully complied with. The question was structured according to the population, concept and context scheme: tourism consumers and organizations (population); digital channels, customer journey and demand seasonality (concept); tourism marketing and communication (context). Table 1 summarizes the protocol.

Table 1 — Review protocol

Element	Specification
Phase 1: documented queries	Crossref index (public API), on October 28, 2026, with three title-field queries: "tourism seasonality"; "customer journey tourism"; "social media tourism review." Filters: journal article, published since 2015; the first 20 records of each query, by relevance. An attempt to sort by number of citations was discarded because it returned records unrelated to the topic.
Phase 2: directed search	Manual search for seminal and conceptually supporting works on seasonality, foundations of services and relationship marketing, social media and communication, online reviews and Brazilian studies, with metadata checked in at least one source besides the initial record.

Element	Specification
Inclusion	Works with identifiable authorship, in a journal, book or chapter, addressing the customer journey, digital communication channels (social media, paid and owned media, messaging, e-mail, online reviews) or tourism demand seasonality, in Portuguese or English, with metadata and abstract confirmed in a second source.
Exclusion	Descriptive studies of a single locality, region or segment, or centered on another outcome; topics outside the scope; entries, editorials, preprints and videos; short reviews or those published in outlets whose review policy was not verified; records without identifiable authorship; relevant records without confirmation in a second source.
Screening	In two stages, by title and metadata and then by confirmation in a second source (publisher page, institutional repository or secondary database), by a single reviewer, with the support of an artificial intelligence tool and without independent double-checking.
Extraction	Matrix with authorship, year, type of work, context, channel or factor examined, central result and limitation, based on abstracts and metadata.
Evidence weighting	Support for each proposition classified as consistent, moderate or limited (Section 2.4).
Synthesis	Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with a priori axes (journey, channels, seasonality) and inductive categories for channel functions and seasonality factors; no meta-analysis.

Source: prepared by the authors (2026).

2.2 Two-phase search

The search took place in two phases, and it is important to state clearly what each one allows us to claim. The first was fully documented. On October 28, 2026, the three queries in Table 1 were run in the Crossref index and the first 20 records of each, ordered by relevance, were screened, resulting in 60 records. Because the index reports only per-query totals that depend on the relevance algorithm, these totals are not presented as a measure of scientific output; what is recorded is the number of records actually examined. The choice of title-field queries favored precision over breadth, which is acknowledged as a limitation in Section 5.3.

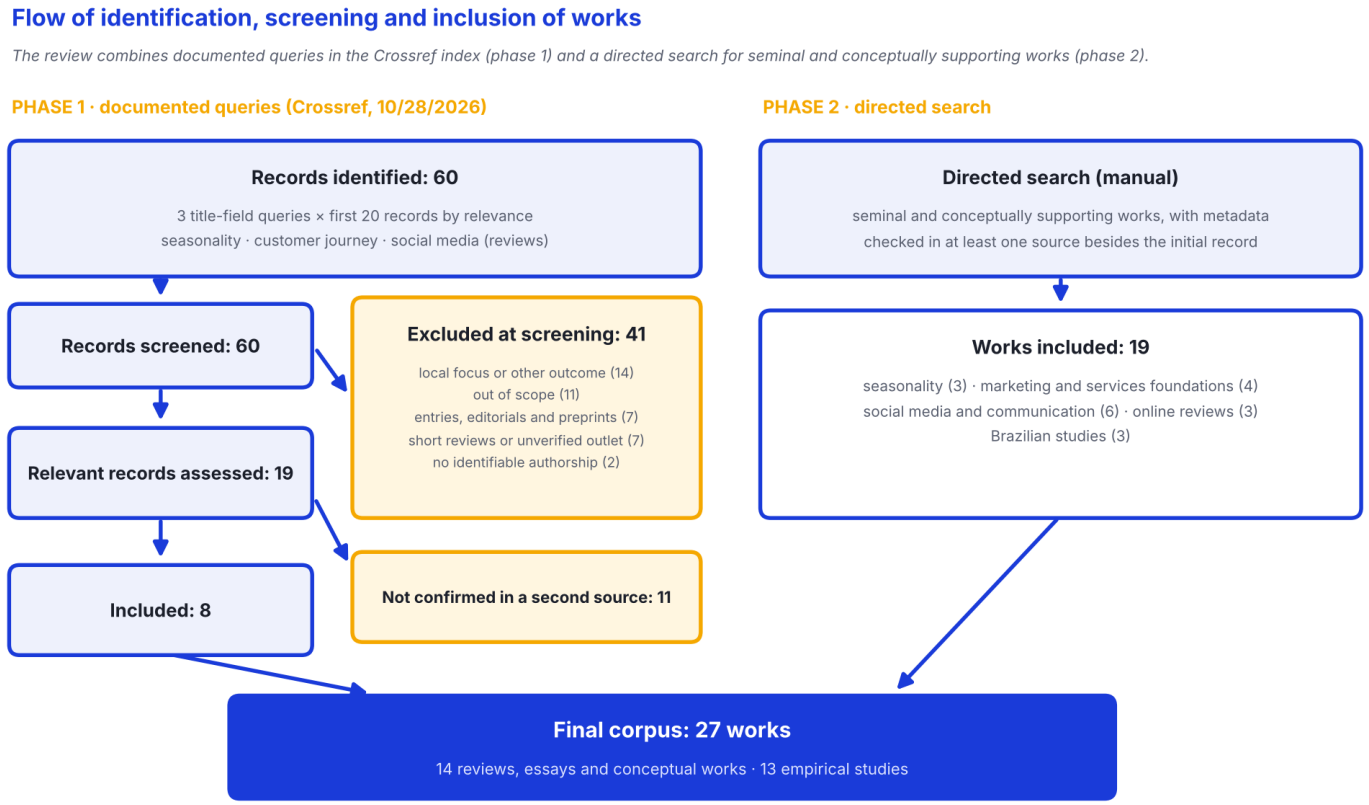
The second phase filled a gap in the first. Title queries do not always retrieve seminal works, whose titles may not contain the terms used, nor national studies. For this reason, the authors manually selected 19 conceptually supporting works in five groups: seasonality (3), foundations of services and relationship marketing (4), social media and communication (6), online reviews (3) and Brazilian studies (3). The selection was made by relevance, and not by a search protocol, and the metadata of each work were checked in at least one source besides the initial record (publisher page, institutional repository or indexing database).

2.3 Selection

Of the 60 records in phase 1, 41 were excluded at screening by title and metadata: 14 because they addressed a specific locality, region or segment, or another outcome, such as satisfaction or human resources; 11 because they were outside the scope, with topics such as sustainability, education, identity, data analysis, the metaverse or consumer journeys unrelated to tourism; seven because they were entries, editorials, preprints or collection videos; seven because they were short reviews or had been published in outlets whose review policy was not verified; and two because they had no identifiable authorship.

The 19 relevant records were then submitted to confirmation in a second source: eight were confirmed and included, and 11 could not be confirmed and were excluded, among them recent studies of direct interest, such as a review of the customer journey in tourism published in 2026 and a review of social media strategies in tourism from 2025. It was preferred to exclude what could not be checked rather than cite what was not verified. Added to the 19 works from phase 2, the eight works from phase 1 form a corpus of 27 works, outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1 — Flow of identification, screening and inclusion of works



Source: prepared by the authors (2026). The phase 1 figures correspond to the queries of 10/28/2026.

2.4 Extraction, weighting and synthesis

The data were extracted into a comparable matrix and the works were classified into four axes: journey, seasonality, channels and theoretical foundations. Extraction was based on abstracts and metadata and, in the case of classic and widely known works, on the authors' prior knowledge; full texts were not read systematically. There was no exclusion for methodological quality, but the weighting was explicit: support for each proposition was classified as consistent when four or more works, including at least one empirical study in tourism, converged in the same direction; moderate when two or three works did so, or when the evidence depended on very specific contexts; and limited when there was one work or none, or only conceptual inference.

The synthesis followed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with the three substantive axes as deductive categories and inductive categories for the functions of channels and for seasonality factors. Because the works differ in design, scale and context, no aggregate effect was estimated, and the findings are treated as evidence of association or of described function, without attribution of causality. The authors' own interpretations are flagged as such throughout the text.

3 FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSITIONS

3.1 Customer journey and digital marketing

The customer journey is the set of stages and interactions that may occur before, during and after purchase. According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), the experience is built through several touchpoints, some controlled by the company, others tied to partners or to the expressions of other consumers. In the digital environment, these contacts include ads, posts, websites, messages, e-mails and reviews. Kannan and Li (2017) treat digital marketing as an adaptive, technology-enabled process in which firms collaborate with customers and partners to co-create, communicate and deliver value, and highlight measurement as a distinctive trait of the digital environment. The e-tourism literature has for decades followed how information technology reorganizes distribution, communication and the relationship with the customer (Buhalis & Law, 2008).

In tourism, the journey may begin with inspiration for a destination, move through information search and itinerary comparison, proceed to purchase and preparation, and continue during and after the trip. The stages are not necessarily linear, since the consumer may return to search and compare before deciding. Because the quality of services is hard to evaluate before consumption (Zeithaml et al., 1985), trust takes on a central role, and commitment–trust theory identifies communication between the parties among the antecedents of that trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

3.2 Tourism demand seasonality

Seasonality is understood as a temporal imbalance in tourism activity, expressed in variations in the number of visitors, spending, transport and other associated activities (Butler, 2001). The review by Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2005) systematized the state of research, and that by Zvaigzne et al. (2022) organizes the causes into natural and human factors tied to the destination's geography, plus institutional and economic factors, and the effects into four groups: economic, employment, sociocultural and ecological. The authors also record that researchers disagree about the importance of the phenomenon. Measurement has advanced: Ferrante et al. (2018) measure seasonality in European countries, Vatsa (2021) revisits the analysis of seasonality and cycles in demand, and Fernández-Morales et al. (2016) decompose seasonal concentration by origin and travel motivation, with explicit marketing implications.

3.3 The communication window and the propositions

Two concepts need to be distinguished in order to join the two literatures. High season refers to the period in which the destination receives the most visitors, that is, to the distribution of demand by travel date. An organization's sales peak, in turn, refers to the distribution of purchases by purchase date, which may precede departure by weeks or months. The difference between the two dates, which may vary by product, destination and segment, delimits an interval in which communication needs to act. The term communication window is used here for the interval from the consumer's first contact with the offer to departure, in which the pre-trip stages of the journey are distributed. The notion is an analytical proposal by the authors, derived from the articulation between Lemon and Verhoef (2016) and the seasonality literature; it is neither an established concept nor, as far as the review reaches, a construct that has already been tested. Five propositions are formulated, to be assessed in light of the evidence:

- **P1** the consumption experience in tourism unfolds across multiple touchpoints over stages before, during and after the trip.
- **P2** social media, paid media, owned channels, messaging, e-mail and online reviews perform distinct and complementary functions along the journey.
- **P3** the commercial effects of these channels, measured in bookings, sales or revenue, are still insufficiently documented.
- **P4** seasonality results from natural, institutional and economic factors and differs across segments, which requires disaggregated analysis.
- **P5** the articulation of channels, journey and seasonality in a single research design, that is, the communication window, has not yet been tested.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Characterization of the corpus

The corpus comprises 27 works, of which 14 are reviews, essays or conceptual works and 13 are empirical studies. By axis, four address the journey, six seasonality, 13 channels and four theoretical foundations. Seven works predate 2010, 12 were published between 2010 and 2019 and eight from 2020 onward, which combines consolidated foundations and recent output. Three studies are Brazilian (Flores et al., 2012; Avelino et al., 2020; Viana et al., 2020), and the rest address international contexts, such as England (Fernández-Morales et al., 2016), Sweden (Yachin, 2018) and Puerto Rico (Rodríguez-Negrón et al., 2025), or are reviews without geographic focus. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the corpus.

Table 2 — Works on the customer journey and tourism seasonality

Work	Type and context	Central contribution
Lemon and Verhoef (2016)	Conceptual essay and review	Conceives the customer experience as the result of touchpoints across the entire purchase journey, before, during and after consumption.
Yachin (2018)	Qualitative case study; Swedish tourism microenterprise	Explores encounters between company and customers along the journey as learning opportunities; user-generated content reveals perceived value.
Rodríguez-Negrón et al. (2025)	Survey (n = 278), PLS-SEM; Puerto Rico	Examines how the experience environment affects the pre-visit, visit and post-visit phases, with effects on value co-creation, engagement, satisfaction and memorability; limited to one geographic context.
Santos et al. (2026)	Conceptual framework with systematic review	Proposes a journey management model and a measurement instrument that integrates cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions in the pre-, during and post-consumption stages.
Butler (2001)	Conceptual chapter	Defines seasonality as a temporal imbalance in tourism activity, expressed in visitors, spending, transport and other dimensions.
Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2005)	State-of-the-art review*	Systematizes research on tourism seasonality.
Fernández-Morales et al. (2016)	Empirical study; regions of England	Decomposes seasonal concentration by origin and motivation, and shows that patterns differ when segments are analyzed in a disaggregated way, with implications for counter-seasonal marketing.
Ferrante et al. (2018)	Empirical study; European countries*	Measures tourism seasonality in European countries.
Vatsa (2021)	Empirical study*	Revisits the analysis of seasonality and cycles in tourism demand.
Zvaigzne et al. (2022)	Literature review	Organizes natural, human, institutional and economic causes and four groups of effects; records disagreement about the importance of the phenomenon.

Source: prepared by the authors (2026), from abstracts and metadata. * Extraction limited to the title and metadata.

Table 3 — Works on communication channels and theoretical foundations

Work	Channel or foundation	Type and central contribution
Zeithaml et al. (1985)	Services	Conceptual: intangibility and difficulty of evaluating attributes before consumption.
Morgan and Hunt (1994)	Relationship	Theory with empirical test: commitment and trust as the basis of lasting relationships; communication between the parties is among the antecedents.
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	Online reviews	Survey: consumers' motivations for posting opinions on platforms.
Buhalis and Law (2008)	E-tourism	Review: information technology and the reorganization of distribution and of the relationship with the customer.
Litvin et al. (2008)	Online reviews	Review: electronic word of mouth and its implications for hospitality and tourism management.
Xiang and Gretzel (2010)	Social media	Empirical study: social media occupy a significant share of travel information search results.
Kietzmann et al. (2011)	Social media	Conceptual: seven functional building blocks (identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups).
Sparks and Browning (2011)	Online reviews	Experiment: the content of hotel reviews affects booking intentions and perceived trust.
Flores et al. (2012)	E-mail, telephone and social media	Survey of agencies in Balneário Camboriú (Brazil): e-mail used as much as the telephone; social media stand out in customer relations.
Hays et al. (2013)	Destination social media	Empirical study: use of social media by national tourism organizations as a promotion tool.
Zeng and Gerritsen (2014)	Social media	Review: maps what is known about social media in tourism.
Kannan and Li (2017)	Digital marketing	Review and framework: digital marketing as an adaptive process, with an emphasis on measurement.
Sotiriadis (2017)	Social media and reviews	Review of 146 articles (2009–2016): factors that motivate tourists, influence of reviews and their impact on businesses; suggestions are indicative.
Avelino et al. (2020)	Instagram of tourism bodies	Data mining of 11 profiles (Brazil): posts with influencers had better engagement, with the exception of one state.
Chu et al. (2020)	Social media advertising	Review of 192 articles (2004–2019): three areas, namely use by consumers, use by organizations and effects; proposes a theoretical framework and agenda.
Viana et al. (2020)	TripAdvisor reviews	Content analysis of 371 reviews by Brazilians: reviews generally positive, motivated by social benefits and the desire to help, with criticism of prices.
Tran and Rudolf (2022)	Social media and destination brand	Systematic review of 114 articles through 2021: five themes, including brand strategy and user-generated content.

Source: prepared by the authors (2026), from abstracts, metadata and cited works.

Two aspects of the characterization deserve emphasis. The first is the asymmetry among the axes: channels account for almost half of the corpus, and reviews on social media are numerous, whereas the journey has few empirical studies in tourism and seasonality has measurement studies that rarely address communication. The second is the scarcity of national studies: only three, each devoted to one channel or one type of actor, with none relating channels to each other or to demand.

4.2 Journey and functions of channels

Convergence around P1 is clear, although the contexts differ. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) provide the general framework, and the works on tourism apply it to specific situations: Yachin (2018) examines the encounters between a microenterprise and its customers along the journey and shows that they are learning opportunities for the company; Rodríguez-Negrón et al. (2025) associate the experience environment with outcomes in the pre-visit, visit and post-visit phases; and Santos et al. (2026) propose a model and a measurement instrument for journey management. In common, these works treat the journey as a process, and not as an event, and attribute diverse functions to different touchpoints, from information to loyalty.

The evidence, however, is contextual. A Swedish case study and a survey in Puerto Rico do not allow generalizing the stages or the weight of each channel, and none of the works relates the journey to booking data or to the demand calendar. Information search, the best-documented stage, appears in the study by Xiang and Gretzel (2010), who show the relevance of social media in the results travelers find when searching. The journey is therefore well described conceptually but little measured in temporal terms.

4.3 Communication channels

- **Social media.** These are the most studied channel. Kietzmann et al. (2011) offer a model of seven functional blocks that makes it possible to examine what each platform privileges, and the reviews by Zeng and Gerritsen (2014), Sotiriadis (2017), Chu et al. (2020) and Tran and Rudolf (2022) cover, together, an extensive body of output; that of Chu et al. (2020), for example, organizes it around use by consumers, use by organizations and effects. Hays et al. (2013) show that national tourism organizations adopt social media as a promotion tool, and Avelino et al. (2020) find, on the Instagram of Brazilian state tourism bodies, that posts with influencers obtained greater engagement, with the exception of one state. Engagement, however, is not equivalent to visitation or sales, and the studies themselves treat it as an indicator of interaction.
- **Paid media and owned media.** The evidence is indirect. Kannan and Li (2017) emphasize the measurability of the digital environment, which supports evaluating campaigns by indicators consistent with their objectives, and the review by Chu et al. (2020) deals specifically with social media advertising in tourism and hospitality. There is no study in the corpus that compares paid and owned media in tourism in terms of cost, reach or result, so it cannot be claimed that one is more efficient than the other.
- **Messaging and e-mail.** Flores et al. (2012) found, in agencies in Balneário Camboriú, that e-mail was used as much as the telephone, and that social media stood out only in customer relations, but the data are from 2012 and from a single city. No work in the corpus examines messaging applications, such as WhatsApp, in tourism, which is a relevant gap given the current use of these applications in customer service. In light of commitment–trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), timely and relevant communication tends to sustain trust, but this is a theoretical link, and not evidence on the effectiveness of a specific channel.
- **Online reviews.** This is the topic with the most varied support. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) examine the motivations for posting opinions, Litvin et al. (2008) discuss electronic word of mouth in hospitality and tourism, Sparks and Browning (2011) show, in an experiment, that the content of hotel reviews affects booking intentions and perceived trust, and Sotiriadis (2017) reviews the influence of reviews on consumers and businesses. In Brazil, Viana et al. (2020) analyzed 371 hotel reviews and observed reviews that were generally positive, motivated by social benefits and the desire to help, with criticism of prices perceived as unfair. Because the quality of services is hard to evaluate before consumption (Zeithaml et al., 1985), third-party information takes on relevance, which makes the management of reviews and responses part of the relationship.

4.4 Seasonality: factors and implications for communication

Seasonality studies converge on three points. First, the phenomenon has multiple causes, natural, institutional and economic (Butler, 2001; Zvaigzne et al., 2022). Second, it has effects that go beyond occupancy, reaching employment, society and the environment (Zvaigzne et al., 2022). Third, it is heterogeneous: Fernández-Morales et al. (2016) show that the seasonal pattern varies across origin and motivation segments and that aggregate analysis may hide less seasonal segments, potentially receptive to counter-seasonal campaigns. Measurement is the object of specific studies (Ferrante et al., 2018; Vatsa, 2021), but, in the works of the corpus, it describes the temporal distribution of demand, and not that of communication or purchasing.

Table 4 relates seasonality factors to implications for communication. The implications column is an **inference by the authors**, derived from the articulation between the seasonality literature and the journey literature, and not an established result; the last column indicates the data that would allow testing it.

Table 4 — Seasonality factors and implications for communication planning

Factor	Nature	Implication for communication (authors' inference)	Data needed to test
Climate and natural attributes of the destination	Natural	Anticipate inspiration and comparison relative to the favorable season; reserve preparation content for the proximity of departure.	Monthly series of bookings by destination, by month of purchase and of departure
School holidays and public holidays	Institutional	Plan communication phases from the departure date, of known calendar, and from purchase history.	School and holiday calendar matched with bookings
Local events and programming	Institutional	Communicate dates, availability and conditions precisely, since demand may concentrate around specific dates.	Event calendar matched with bookings and contacts
Income and financial availability	Economic	Make price and payment conditions explicit; evaluate offers in periods of lower demand.	Bookings by price range and payment method
Traveler origin and motivation	Segment	Target messages at less seasonal segments to mitigate concentration (Fernández-Morales et al., 2016).	Bookings disaggregated by origin and type of itinerary
Operational and service capacity	Effects	Align communication with actual availability and with response capacity at peaks.	Response time, availability and cancellations by period

Source: prepared by the authors (2026), based on Butler (2001), Zvaigzne et al. (2022) and Fernández-Morales et al. (2016); the implications column is the authors' interpretation.

4.5 Evidence map, communication window and status of the propositions

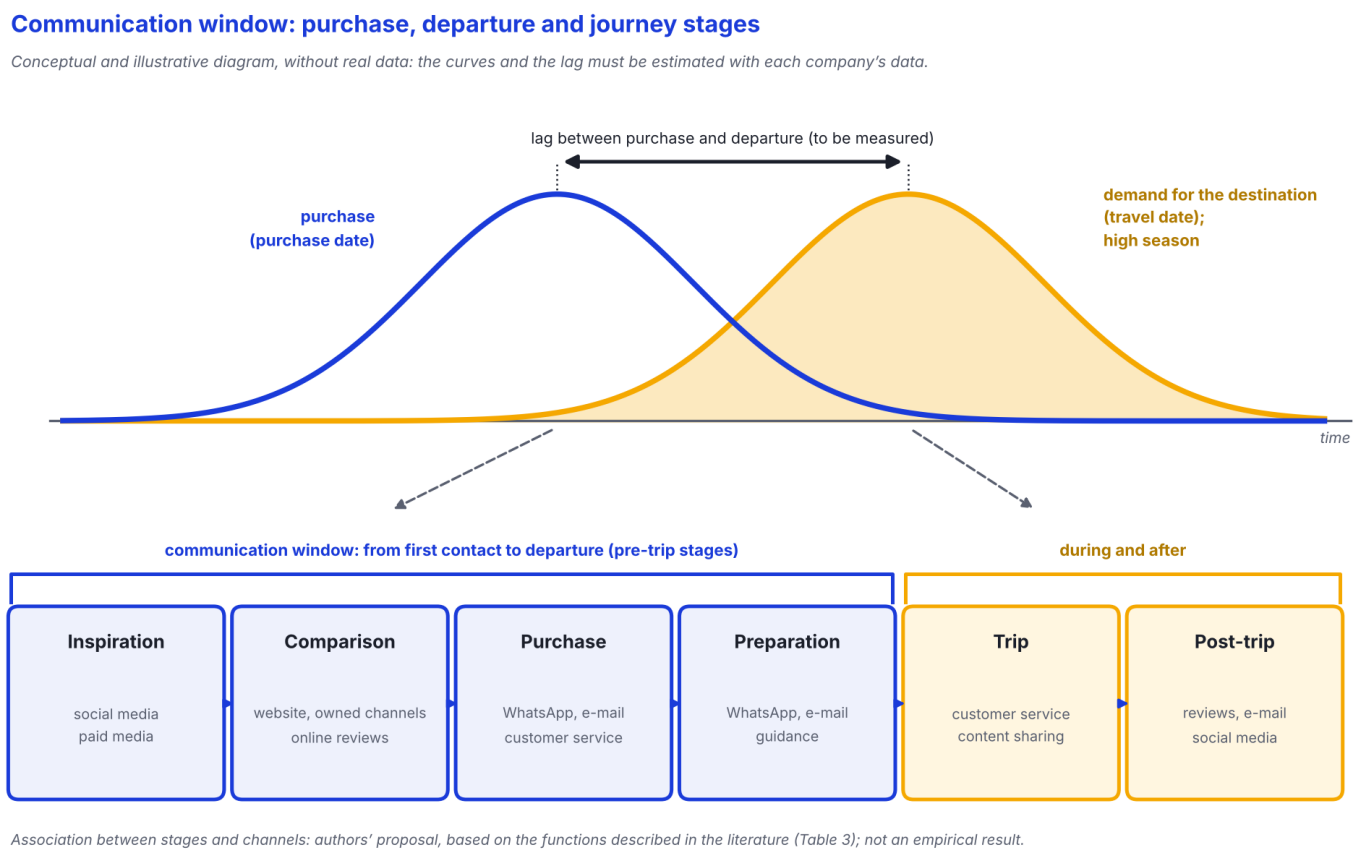
Table 5 presents the evidence map, and Figure 2, the communication window, which represents in a single diagram the purchase calendar, the demand calendar and the stages of the journey. The classification applies the criteria of Section 2.4.

Table 5 — Evidence map and status of the propositions

Proposition	Supporting works	Direction and caveats	Support
P1: journey with multiple touchpoints	Lemon and Verhoef (2016); Yachin (2018); Rodríguez-Negrón et al. (2025); Santos et al. (2026); Xiang and Gretzel (2010)	Convergence on stages and touchpoints; empirical evidence in specific contexts; no work uses booking data.	Consistent
P2: complementary functions of channels	Table 3 (13 works on channels)	Social media and reviews well documented; paid media, owned media, e-mail and messaging little studied; WhatsApp absent.	Consistent, with caveats
P3: commercial effects poorly documented	Sparks and Browning (2011); Avelino et al. (2020); Kannan and Li (2017)	There are effects on booking intention (experiment) and engagement; bookings, sales and revenue are not measured.	Limited
P4: multicausal and heterogeneous seasonality	Butler (2001); Koenig-Lewis and Bischoff (2005); Zvaigzne et al. (2022); Fernández-Morales et al. (2016); Ferrante et al. (2018); Vatsa (2021)	Natural, institutional and economic causes; distinct patterns across segments; disagreement about the importance of the phenomenon.	Consistent
P5: articulation of channels, journey and seasonality	Fernández-Morales et al. (2016), only as to marketing implications	No work integrates channels, journey and the demand calendar in a single design.	Limited

Source: prepared by the authors (2026), based on Tables 2 and 3 and on the criteria of Section 2.4.

Figure 2 — Communication window: purchase calendar, demand calendar and journey stages



Source: prepared by the authors (2026). Conceptual and illustrative diagram, without real data; the association between stages and channels is the authors' proposal.

As for objective (d), the comparison shows that journey, channels and seasonality each have their own reasonably consistent literature, but that there is no study in the corpus that unites them. The work that comes closest is that of Fernández-Morales et al. (2016), which translates seasonality analysis into marketing implications, without addressing channels or the journey. The communication window therefore occupies a space that is still untested, and propositions P3 and P5 define the agenda.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 What the results indicate

The first reading is that digital marketing in tourism should be understood as a set of touchpoints articulated over time, and not as isolated actions. The convergence of the works on the journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Yachin, 2018; Santos et al., 2026) and the variety of functions attributed to channels suggest that the post that arouses interest, the page consulted for details, the conversation with an agent and the review found on a platform may take part in the same decision. Complementarity, however, does not imply that channels have the same weight: the importance of each depends on the objective, the audience and the stage, and the corpus offers no basis for ranking them.

The second reading concerns the difference between presence and performance. Having active profiles, posting frequently or accumulating likes describes activity, and the works in the corpus treat engagement as an indicator of interaction, and not as sales (Avelino et al., 2020). In the corpus, the only study that links a characteristic of communication to a booking intention is experimental and deals with hotel reviews (Sparks & Browning, 2011). This distance is what supports P3, and the practical consequence is that claims of the type "channel X generates more sales" require data on the origin of contacts, conversions and bookings, and do not follow from the literature.

The third reading, the most relevant to the argument of this article, concerns time. The seasonality literature describes the distribution of demand across the calendar (Butler, 2001; Ferrante et al., 2018), and the

communication literature describes functions without reference to a calendar. The distinction between travel date and purchase date, which gives shape to the communication window, is an interpretation by the authors, but it follows directly from this gap: if purchase precedes departure, the commercial communication for a high season tends to concentrate before it, and that for periods of lower demand may require targeted messages. The caveat is essential: the length of the lag varies by product and segment and can only be known with booking data. Consistent with this is the finding of Fernández-Morales et al. (2016) that disaggregated analysis reveals less seasonal segments, which points to segmentation as an instrument of counter-seasonal communication.

5.2 Implications

For research, the main gain is the map, which shows where the evidence is consistent, where it is conditional and where it is nonexistent, and which allows more precise hypotheses to be formulated. The communication window offers a possible design: studies that estimate, for one product and one segment, the distribution of purchases and departures, the lag between them and the relationship between communication actions at each stage and subsequent bookings. For management, the corpus suggests precautions that do not depend on commercial results: keeping information consistent across channels, up to date and compatible with actual availability, responding to reviews professionally (Viana et al., 2020) and respecting consent and personal data protection in messaging and e-mail communications, in compliance with the General Personal Data Protection Law (Brasil, 2018).

For an organization such as the one taken as thematic reference, the article works as a roadmap for a future case study. The minimum survey comprises bookings by month of purchase, trips by month of departure, destination and type of itinerary, number of passengers, cancellations and the origin of contacts, over more than one year, so as to distinguish recurrent patterns from exceptional events, with anonymized data. Without this survey, the analysis remains conceptual and cannot present a calendar of peaks as a verified result.

5.3 Limitations

This review has limitations that condition its reading. Phase 1 used title-field queries in a single index (Crossref) and examined only the first 20 records of each query, so it is not exhaustive and depends on the relevance algorithm; Scopus, Web of Science and Portuguese-language databases, such as SciELO and Spell, were not consulted in a documented manner, which may explain the presence of only three Brazilian studies. The criterion of confirmation in a second source excluded 11 relevant records, among them recent studies of direct interest, and may have produced bias in favor of journals whose pages are accessible. Screening was done by a single reviewer, with the support of an artificial intelligence tool, without independent double-checking. Extraction was based on abstracts and metadata and, for some classic works, on the authors' prior knowledge, and not on systematic reading of the full texts; no formal instrument for assessing methodological quality was applied. Finally, the communication window is an untested conceptual proposal, and the absence of data from the company taken as reference prevents any claim about its months of highest demand or the effectiveness of its channels.

5.4 Research agenda

Four paths follow from the gaps identified:

a) empirical studies that measure, for one product and one segment, the lag between purchase date and departure date and the distribution of journey stages in that interval;
b) research that relates actions in each channel, including paid media, e-mail and messaging applications, to bookings and revenue, and not only to engagement;
c) Brazilian studies that compare channels with each other and with the demand calendar, using data from national companies and destinations;
d) systematic reviews with searches in Scopus, Web of Science and Portuguese-language databases, a registered protocol and full-text extraction, which can expand and verify this map.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study analyzed, through an integrative review of 27 works, the functions of digital channels along the tourist's customer journey and demand seasonality, and examined the extent to which the two dimensions have been treated in an integrated way. Social media, paid media, owned channels, messaging, e-mail and online reviews perform different and potentially complementary functions, but the literature documents better the presence and informational influence of channels than their commercial effects. Seasonality, in turn, is a multicausal phenomenon that is heterogeneous across segments. As for the propositions, P1 and P4 received consistent support; P2, consistent with caveats; and P3 and P5, limited.

The main contribution is the evidence map and the proposal of the communication window, which distinguishes purchase date from travel date and invites planning communication in the interval between them. It is a conceptual framework, still untested, whose usefulness will depend on booking and communication data that this work, being bibliographic, does not have. The conclusions should be read in light of the limitations in Section 5.3, in particular the search in a single index, extraction at the abstract level and the absence of data from the company taken as reference. As a follow-up, an empirical study is suggested, with monthly data on contacts, sales and departures, that tests the communication window and allows a more precise understanding of the relationship between communication, seasonality and demand for trips.

DECLARATIONS

Acknowledgments: the authors thank Universidade Paulista (UNIP), Campinas, for the academic environment that made this work possible.

Funding: this research received no specific funding from funding agencies.

Conflicts of interest: the authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Author contributions (CRediT): Zanon and Paiva: conceptualization, literature search, analysis and writing of the original draft; Freitas: supervision, validation and final review.

Data availability: no primary data were generated and no internal data from any company were collected; the sources analyzed are listed in the References, and the criteria, queries and search figures are described in Section 2 and Figure 1.

Use of artificial intelligence: Claude (Anthropic) was used to restructure the text, to run and document the queries to the Crossref index (October 28, 2026), to screen and extract records, to produce Figures 1 and 2 and to write the text, based on the authors' draft. The authors reviewed the content and take full responsibility for it.

REFERENCES

Avelino, M. R. M. M., Silva, A. S., & Leal, S. R. (2020). Deixe seu like! O engajamento nas publicações com digital influencers no Instagram das DMOs brasileiras [Like it! Engagement in posts with digital influencers on the Instagram of Brazilian DMOs]. *Revista Brasileira de Pesquisa em Turismo*, *14*(3), 50–67. https://doi.org/10.7784/rbtur.v14i3.1889

Brasil. (2018). *Lei nº 13.709, de 14 de agosto de 2018: Lei Geral de Proteção de Dados Pessoais (LGPD) [Law No. 13,709 of August 14, 2018: General Personal Data Protection Law (LGPD)]*. Diário Oficial da União. https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2018/lei/l13709.htm

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Buhalis, D., & Law, R. (2008). Progress in information technology and tourism management: 20 years on and 10 years after the Internet—The state of eTourism research. *Tourism Management*, *29*(4), 609–623. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.01.005

Butler, R. W. (2001). Seasonality in tourism: Issues and implications. In T. Baum & S. Lundtorp (Eds.), *Seasonality in tourism* (pp. 5–22). Pergamon.

Chu, S.-C., Deng, T., & Cheng, H. (2020). The role of social media advertising in hospitality, tourism and travel: A literature review and research agenda. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *32*(11), 3419–3438. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2020-0480

Fernández-Morales, A., Cisneros-Martínez, J. D., & McCabe, S. (2016). Seasonal concentration of tourism demand: Decomposition analysis and marketing implications. *Tourism Management*, *56*, 172–190. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.04.004

Ferrante, M., Lo Magno, G. L., & De Cantis, S. (2018). Measuring tourism seasonality across European countries. *Tourism Management*, *68*, 220–235. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.03.015

Flores, L. C. S., Cavalcante, L. S., & Raye, R. L. (2012). Marketing turístico: Estudo sobre o uso da tecnologia da informação e comunicação nas agências de viagens e turismo de Balneário Camboriú (SC, Brasil) [Tourism marketing: A study on the use of information and communication technology in travel and tourism agencies in Balneário Camboriú (SC, Brazil)]. *Revista Brasileira de Pesquisa em Turismo*, *6*(3), 322–339. https://doi.org/10.7784/rbtur.v6i3.487

Grant, M. J., & Booth, A. (2009). A typology of reviews: An analysis of 14 review types and associated methodologies. *Health Information & Libraries Journal*, *26*(2), 91–108. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00848.x

Hays, S., Page, S. J., & Buhalis, D. (2013). Social media as a destination marketing tool: Its use by national tourism organisations. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *16*(3), 211–239. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2012.662215

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet?. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *18*(1), 38–52. https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.10073

Kannan, P. K., & Li, H. A. (2017). Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *34*(1), 22–45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2016.11.006

Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*, *54*(3), 241–251. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005

Koenig-Lewis, N., & Bischoff, E. E. (2005). Seasonality research: The state of the art. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, *7*(4–5), 201–219. https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.531

Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2016). Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey. *Journal of Marketing*, *80*(6), 69–96. https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0420

Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*, *29*(3), 458–468. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.011

Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, *58*(3), 20–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299405800302

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., ... Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, *372*, n71. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

Rodríguez-Negrón, M. A., Sosa-Varela, J. C., Santiago-Font, Z., & Flecha-Ortiz, J. A. (2025). Customer journey perspective on tourism service experience. *Academia Revista Latinoamericana de Administración*, *38*(4), 600–625. https://doi.org/10.1108/ARLA-12-2024-0346

Santos, C. R., Blanco-Moreno, S., Ó hAnnracháin, C., & Bayram-Arlı, N. (2026). A holistic approach to customer journey management: Driving satisfaction and competitive advantage in tourism. *Tourism and Hospitality*, *7*(5), 126. https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp7050126

Sotiriadis, M. D. (2017). Sharing tourism experiences in social media: A literature review and a set of suggested business strategies. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *29*(1), 179–225. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2016-0300

Souza, M. T., Silva, M. D., & Carvalho, R. (2010). Revisão integrativa: o que é e como fazer [Integrative review: What it is and how to do it]. *Einstein (São Paulo)*, *8*(1), 102–106. https://doi.org/10.1590/S1679-45082010RW1134

Sparks, B. A., & Browning, V. (2011). The impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust. *Tourism Management*, *32*(6), 1310–1323. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.12.011

Torraco, R. J. (2005). Writing integrative literature reviews: Guidelines and examples. *Human Resource Development Review*, *4*(3), 356–367. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484305278283

Tran, N. L., & Rudolf, W. (2022). Social media and destination branding in tourism: A systematic review of the literature. *Sustainability*, *14*(20), 13528. https://doi.org/10.3390/su142013528

Vatsa, P. (2021). Seasonality and cycles in tourism demand—redux. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *90*, 103105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.103105

Viana, J. P., Mayer, V. F., & Souza Neto, V. R. (2020). Experience sharing about hotels on TripAdvisor: Motivation and preferences of Brazilian tourists. *Marketing & Tourism Review*, *5*(1). https://doi.org/10.29149/mtr.v5i1.5907

Whittemore, R., & Knafl, K. (2005). The integrative review: Updated methodology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *52*(5), 546–553. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2005.03621.x

Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, *31*(2), 179–188. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016

Yachin, J. M. (2018). The 'customer journey': Learning from customers in tourism experience encounters. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *28*, 201–210. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.09.002

Zeithaml, V. A., Parasuraman, A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). Problems and strategies in services marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, *49*(2), 33–46. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298504900203

Zeng, B., & Gerritsen, R. (2014). What do we know about social media in tourism? A review. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *10*, 27–36. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2014.01.001

Zvaigzne, A., Litavniece, L., & Dembovska, I. (2022). Tourism seasonality: The causes and effects. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, *14*(5), 421–430. https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-07-2022-0080