

Smart Tourism Technologies and Tourist Experience: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Smart Tourism Technologies (STTs) have become a key driver of digital transformation in the tourism industry, offering new opportunities to enhance tourist experiences and destination competitiveness. However, existing studies remain fragmented across different technological contexts and research perspectives. This study aims to systematically review the literature on the relationship between Smart Tourism Technologies and Tourist Experience. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Relevant articles were identified through international scholarly databases and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data Analytics, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and mobile applications are the most frequently studied technologies. These technologies positively influence tourist experience by improving information accessibility, personalization, interactivity, convenience, and satisfaction. Despite these benefits, challenges related to data privacy, digital inequality, and technological readiness remain significant. This review provides insights for researchers and practitioners while identifying future research opportunities in smart tourism.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has brought significant changes to the global tourism industry. The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into tourism activities has led to the emergence of the concept of Smart Tourism, which refers to the utilization of intelligent technologies to enhance destination management efficiency, service quality, and tourist experiences (Alsharif et al., 2024; Torabi et al., 2022). In the era of digital transformation, various technologies—including the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data Analytics, Cloud Computing, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and mobile-based applications—have been increasingly adopted by tourism organizations and destination management authorities to create more personalized, interactive, and sustainable tourism experiences.

Tourist experience is widely recognized as one of the primary determinants of a destination's success (Chen et al., 2023; Karim et al., 2024). Modern tourists not only seek attractive destinations but also expect seamless access to information, responsive services, personalized travel experiences, and digital interactions that support every stage of their journeys. In this context, Smart Tourism Technologies (STTs) play a crucial role in enhancing tourist experiences by providing real-time information, personalized recommendations, intelligent navigation systems, and AI-powered services (García-Madurga & Grilló-Méndez, 2023; Song & He, 2023; Tuo et al., 2025).

Over the past few years, research on Smart Tourism Technologies has grown substantially. Numerous studies have investigated the adoption of digital technologies in tourism, the development of smart destinations, digital tourist behavior, and the impact of technology on tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Gomes et al., 2026; Ng et al., 2023). Other studies have emphasized the roles of AI, VR, AR, and mobile applications in enhancing tourist engagement throughout the travel process (Nazare et al., 2024; Omran et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the existing body of research remains fragmented across different geographical contexts, technological domains, and methodological approaches, making it difficult to develop a comprehensive understanding of how intelligent technologies influence tourist experiences.

Furthermore, previous studies have primarily focused on technological aspects or the implementation of smart destinations, while research that systematically integrates findings regarding the relationship between Smart Tourism Technologies and tourist experience remains relatively limited. There is still a lack of comprehensive literature synthesis identifying the most extensively studied technologies, dominant research themes, key benefits, implementation challenges, and future research directions. This situation indicates a significant research gap that warrants a systematic review of the existing literature.

To address this gap, the present study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify, evaluate, and synthesize previous studies examining the relationship between Smart Tourism Technologies and tourist experience. Specifically, this review aims to: (1) map the development of research on Smart Tourism Technologies; (2) identify the technologies most frequently adopted in the tourism sector; (3) analyze the influence of these technologies on tourist experience; and (4) propose future research agendas to advance this field.

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical perspective, it provides a comprehensive synthesis of the existing literature on Smart Tourism Technologies and tourist experience while identifying unresolved research gaps. From a practical perspective, the findings serve as valuable references for destination management organizations, tourism industry practitioners, and policymakers in designing digital transformation strategies that enhance tourist experiences, strengthen destination competitiveness, and promote sustainable tourism development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Smart Tourism Technologies

The concept of Smart Tourism has evolved alongside advances in digital technologies that facilitate the integration of tourists, service providers, and destinations through the utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Smart Tourism refers to the application of intelligent technologies to enhance operational efficiency, service quality, tourist experiences, and the

sustainability of tourism destinations (Chuang, 2023; Ionescu & Sârbu, 2024). This approach is supported by various emerging technologies, including the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data Analytics, Cloud Computing, Blockchain, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and mobile-based applications.

Within the context of tourism destinations, Smart Tourism Technologies (STTs) function as key enablers that facilitate the collection, processing, and dissemination of real-time information. These technologies enable tourists to access relevant information, plan their trips more effectively, and enjoy more personalized and interactive travel experiences (Akhtar et al., 2024; Dolgui & Ivanov, 2022; Roy et al., 2024). Furthermore, STTs assist destination management organizations in understanding tourist behavior, optimizing resource management, and enhancing destination competitiveness (Bingöl & Yang, 2025; Chuang, 2023).

The rapid development of STTs has also contributed to the emergence of the Smart Destination concept, which refers to destinations that leverage digital technologies to improve the quality of life of local communities, enhance tourist experiences, and promote destination sustainability (Kusumastuti et al., 2024; Rodrigues et al., 2023). Within this framework, technology is viewed not merely as an operational tool but also as a strategic instrument for creating value for all tourism stakeholders.

Tourist Experience

Tourist experience is a central concept in tourism research. It can be defined as the cognitive, emotional, sensory, social, and behavioral responses that tourists develop throughout their travel journeys. These experiences are formed across multiple stages of travel, beginning with information search and trip planning, continuing through on-site activities, and extending to post-trip evaluation and reflection (Juliana et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2026).

The literature consistently demonstrates that positive tourist experiences significantly influence tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty, revisit intention, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Hossain et al., 2024; Hung & Khoa, 2022). Consequently, destination managers and tourism practitioners continuously seek to create unique, memorable, and valuable experiences for visitors.

In the digital era, tourist experiences are increasingly shaped by technological innovations. Tourists rely on various digital platforms to search for information, make reservations, share experiences, and interact with destinations throughout their journeys (Huertas & Orden-Mejía, 2022; Nasution et al., 2023). As a result, the quality of the tourist experience is no longer determined solely by the physical attractions of a destination but also by the quality of the digital services provided.

Relationship Between Smart Tourism Technologies and Tourist Experience

The relationship between Smart Tourism Technologies and tourist experience has become an important research focus within contemporary tourism literature. Previous studies suggest that intelligent technologies can enhance tourist experiences by providing accurate information, personalized services, convenient access to tourism resources, and more effective interactions between tourists and destinations (Li et al., 2026; Zhang et al., 2022).

Artificial Intelligence (AI), for example, enables the delivery of personalized travel recommendations based on tourists' preferences and behavioral patterns. Meanwhile, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies provide immersive experiences that enrich the interpretation of cultural attractions and heritage sites. Mobile applications and digital navigation systems further reduce travel uncertainty by facilitating access to tourism services and improving travel convenience.

Despite these benefits, the implementation of STTs also presents several challenges, including concerns regarding data privacy, information security, the digital divide, high technology investment costs, and organizational readiness to adopt digital innovations (Atobishi & Mansur, 2025; Quansah, 2024). Consequently, the effectiveness of Smart Tourism Technologies in enhancing tourist experiences may vary depending on destination characteristics, the level of technological adoption, and tourists' demographic and behavioral profiles.

Conceptual Framework

Drawing upon the existing literature, Smart Tourism Technologies can be conceptualized as the primary antecedent influencing the quality of tourist experiences (Torabi et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). Various technological innovations—including Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data Analytics, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), mobile applications, and digital platforms—contribute to improved information accessibility, service personalization, interactivity, convenience, and tourist engagement. Enhancements in these dimensions ultimately lead to higher levels of tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty, and revisit intention.

Accordingly, this study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify the Smart Tourism Technologies that have been investigated in previous studies, evaluate their impacts on tourist experiences, and develop a more comprehensive understanding of emerging research trends and future directions in this field.

3. METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify, evaluate, and synthesize existing research examining the relationship between Smart Tourism Technologies (STTs) and Tourist Experience. The SLR approach was selected because it provides a comprehensive, transparent, and systematic understanding of research developments within a specific field. The review process was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to ensure methodological rigor and transparency.

Research Questions

This study was designed to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the publication trends in research on Smart Tourism Technologies and Tourist Experience?

RQ2: Which Smart Tourism Technologies have been most extensively investigated in the tourism context?

RQ3: How do Smart Tourism Technologies influence tourist experience?

RQ4: What research gaps exist, and what future research agendas can be proposed?

Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using two internationally recognized academic databases, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). These databases were selected because of their extensive coverage of high-quality, peer-reviewed scholarly publications.

The search strategy was developed based on the objectives of the study using the following keywords "*smart tourism*," "*smart tourism technologies*," "*smart destination*," "*digital tourism*," "*tourism technology*," "*tourist experience*," "*visitor experience*," and "*tourism experience*."

The search was performed within the article title, abstract, and keyword fields. Only studies published between 2019 and 2025 were considered in order to capture recent developments in Smart Tourism Technologies and their impact on tourist experience.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the quality and relevance of the selected studies, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria were established, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference papers, book chapters, editorials
Language	English	Non-English publications
Research Topic	Smart Tourism Technologies and Tourist Experience	Articles unrelated to tourism technology
Publication Year	2019–2025	Before 2019
Accessibility	Full-text available	Abstract only

Study Selection Process

The study selection process followed the four stages recommended by the **PRISMA 2020** framework:

1. **Identification:** Relevant articles were identified through searches in the Scopus and Web of Science databases using the predefined search keywords.
2. **Screening:** Duplicate records were removed, and the remaining studies were screened based on their titles and abstracts.
3. **Eligibility:** The full texts of the screened articles were reviewed to determine their eligibility according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

4. **Included:** Articles that satisfied all eligibility criteria were included in the final review and subjected to further analysis.

A PRISMA flow diagram was employed to illustrate the article selection process systematically and transparently.

Data Extraction

Data from the selected studies were extracted using a standardized data extraction form developed prior to the review process. The extracted information included:

- Author(s) and publication year
- Country or study location
- Research objectives
- Research methodology
- Type(s) of Smart Tourism Technologies investigated
- Tourist experience-related variables
- Key research findings

The extracted data were subsequently organized into summary tables to facilitate systematic comparison and analysis across studies.

Quality Assessment

A quality assessment was conducted to ensure that all included studies met acceptable academic standards. Each article was evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Clarity of the research objectives.
2. Appropriateness of the research methodology.
3. Transparency of the data collection procedures.
4. Clarity and validity of the reported findings.
5. Relevance of the study to the topics of Smart Tourism Technologies and Tourist Experience.

Studies that failed to meet the minimum quality standards were excluded from the synthesis phase.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

The extracted data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns within the literature. The analytical process consisted of four stages: data coding, theme development, interpretation of findings, and synthesis of the evidence.

The analysis focused on identifying the Smart Tourism Technologies most frequently adopted in the tourism sector, examining their impacts on tourist experience, exploring the benefits and implementation challenges associated with these technologies, and identifying opportunities for future research. The findings were synthesized descriptively and systematically to address all of the research questions proposed in this study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Publication Trends

Based on the study selection process following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a total of 245 articles were identified during the identification stage. After removing duplicate records and screening the studies according to their titles, abstracts, and the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, 42 articles were deemed eligible for the final analysis.

The findings indicate that research on Smart Tourism Technologies (STTs) and Tourist Experience has increased substantially during the 2019–2025 period. The growing number of publications reflects increasing scholarly interest in the digital transformation of the tourism industry. This trend became even more pronounced following the COVID-19 pandemic, during which tourism destinations and industry stakeholders accelerated the adoption of digital technologies to improve service quality and deliver safer, more efficient, and personalized tourism experiences.

Most of the selected studies were published in journals specializing in tourism, destination management, information technology, and innovation. This finding suggests that Smart Tourism has emerged as a multidisciplinary research field that integrates perspectives from tourism studies, information systems, digital technologies, and management.

Distribution of Research by Country

The geographical distribution of the selected studies indicates that research is predominantly concentrated in countries characterized by advanced tourism industries and high levels of technological adoption. China, Spain, South Korea, Italy, and Australia are among the leading contributors to the Smart Tourism literature.

The dominance of these countries suggests that the implementation of Smart Tourism Technologies has progressed more rapidly in destinations supported by well-established digital infrastructures. In contrast, studies conducted in developing countries remain relatively limited, highlighting opportunities for future research on the implementation of Smart Tourism Technologies in emerging tourism destinations with different socioeconomic and technological contexts.

Smart Tourism Technologies Identified in the Literature

The literature synthesis identified several Smart Tourism Technologies that have been most frequently investigated:

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI)
2. Internet of Things (IoT)
3. Big Data Analytics
4. Mobile Applications
5. Virtual Reality (VR)
6. Augmented Reality (AR)
7. Cloud Computing
8. Social Media Platforms
9. Location-Based Services (LBS)
10. Chatbots and Virtual Assistants

Among these technologies, **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** has emerged as the most extensively investigated research topic in recent years. AI has been widely applied to deliver personalized travel recommendations, improve customer service quality, automate tourism services, and support data-driven decision-making.

Meanwhile, **Virtual Reality (VR)** and **Augmented Reality (AR)** have gained increasing attention because of their ability to create immersive tourism experiences. These technologies are frequently implemented in cultural destinations, museums, and heritage sites to enhance visitor engagement before and during their visits.

Impact of Smart Tourism Technologies on Tourist Experience

The thematic analysis identified five major dimensions through which Smart Tourism Technologies influence tourist experience.

Information Accessibility

Digital technologies significantly improve tourists' access to information throughout the travel process (Bilan et al., 2024; Xia et al., 2024). Mobile applications, digital tourism platforms, and destination information systems provide real-time information regarding transportation, accommodation, weather conditions, and tourist attractions, thereby facilitating informed travel decisions.

Personalization

Artificial Intelligence and Big Data Analytics enable tourism service providers to deliver personalized recommendations based on tourists' preferences and behavioral patterns (Asaithambi et al., 2023; Das, 2024). Such personalization enhances the relevance of tourism services, resulting in more satisfying and meaningful travel experiences.

Interactivity and Engagement

Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and social media platforms substantially increase tourists' interaction with destinations (Leung et al., 2022; Oncioiu & Priescu, 2022). These technologies encourage active participation and create immersive experiences that strengthen tourists' emotional engagement with destinations.

Convenience and Efficiency

Various digital technologies contribute to greater travel convenience by reducing uncertainty and saving time during the travel journey (Bilan et al., 2024; Goo et al., 2022). Online reservation systems, digital payment services, GPS-based navigation, and AI-powered customer service chatbots streamline tourism activities and improve overall travel efficiency.

Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty

The majority of the reviewed studies indicate that the adoption of Smart Tourism Technologies has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction (Yuksel et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2022). More convenient, personalized, and interactive travel experiences encourage stronger revisit intentions and enhance destination loyalty.

Challenges in Implementing Smart Tourism Technologies

Despite their numerous benefits, the implementation of Smart Tourism Technologies is accompanied by several challenges.

First, data privacy and information security remain among the most frequently discussed issues in the literature. The large-scale collection and processing of tourist data raise concerns regarding the protection of personal information and ethical data management.

Second, the digital divide continues to hinder technology implementation, particularly in developing countries where digital infrastructure remains inadequate.

Third, the high costs associated with technology investment and maintenance present significant barriers, especially for small and medium-sized tourism enterprises with limited financial resources.

Finally, insufficient digital competencies among tourism professionals reduce the effectiveness of technology adoption and limit the successful implementation of digital transformation initiatives within the tourism sector.

Research Gaps and Future Research Directions

The literature synthesis reveals several important research gaps.

First, the majority of existing studies have focused on destinations in developed countries, while empirical research conducted in developing economies remains limited. Future studies should investigate the implementation of Smart Tourism Technologies across diverse social, economic, and cultural contexts.

Second, quantitative research dominates the current literature. Consequently, additional qualitative and mixed-methods studies are needed to develop a deeper understanding of tourists' perceptions, behaviors, and lived experiences with Smart Tourism Technologies.

Third, the application of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) in tourism remains an emerging research area. Future investigations should examine the potential of Large Language Models (LLMs), intelligent travel assistants, AI-powered conversational agents, and other generative AI applications to enhance tourist experiences throughout the travel journey.

Finally, relatively few studies have integrated sustainability perspectives into Smart Tourism research. Future research should explore how Smart Tourism Technologies can contribute to sustainable, inclusive, and community-oriented tourism development while balancing technological innovation with environmental conservation and local community well-being.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Smart Tourism Technologies play a crucial role in enhancing tourist experiences by improving information accessibility, service personalization, interactivity, and travel efficiency. Nevertheless, the successful implementation of these technologies largely depends on technological readiness, the quality of digital infrastructure, and the capacity of tourism stakeholders to manage digital innovation in a sustainable and strategic manner.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to synthesize and analyze the existing literature on the relationship between Smart Tourism Technologies (STTs) and Tourist Experience through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The findings reveal that research on Smart Tourism has expanded considerably in recent years, reflecting the increasing adoption of digital technologies across the tourism industry. Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data Analytics, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), mobile applications, and digital platforms have

emerged as the primary focus of scholarly attention due to their potential to enhance service quality and enrich tourist experiences.

The review demonstrates that Smart Tourism Technologies contribute positively to tourist experience by improving information accessibility, service personalization, interactivity, convenience, and travel efficiency. Furthermore, the implementation of intelligent technologies has been consistently associated with higher levels of tourist satisfaction, stronger destination loyalty, and greater revisit intentions. These findings indicate that digital technologies have evolved beyond their traditional role as operational support tools and have become strategic assets for creating value and strengthening the competitiveness of tourism destinations.

Despite these benefits, the literature also highlights several challenges associated with the implementation of Smart Tourism Technologies. Key issues include concerns regarding data privacy and information security, the digital divide, inadequate technological infrastructure, and the limited digital competencies of tourism professionals. These challenges underscore the importance of coordinated efforts among destination management organizations, tourism businesses, and policymakers to establish sustainable and resilient Smart Tourism ecosystems.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive synthesis of research on Smart Tourism Technologies and their influence on tourist experience. It identifies the dominant research themes, emerging trends, and existing knowledge gaps, thereby offering a clearer understanding of the current state of the field. From a practical perspective, the findings provide valuable insights for destination managers, tourism organizations, and policymakers in designing digital transformation strategies that enhance tourist experiences while strengthening destination competitiveness.

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the review included only studies that satisfied the predefined inclusion criteria and was limited to English-language journal articles published within the selected time frame. Consequently, relevant studies published in other languages or indexed in additional databases may not have been captured. Future research is therefore encouraged to expand the scope of database coverage, extend the publication period, and integrate bibliometric techniques with systematic literature reviews to provide a more comprehensive overview of Smart Tourism research.

Moreover, future studies should investigate the application of emerging technologies—including Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI), Digital Twins, Large Language Models (LLMs), intelligent travel assistants, and other immersive technologies—in shaping more innovative, personalized, sustainable, and intelligent tourism experiences. Such investigations will further advance theoretical understanding while supporting the development of next-generation Smart Tourism ecosystems.

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7. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study are derived from published articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science databases and are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

8. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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