



The Evolution of Maritime Tourism Marketing from Marketing 1.0 to 6.0: A Longitudinal Text-Mining and Structural Topic Model Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Maritime tourism is among the fastest-growing segments of the blue economy, yet the evolution of its marketing philosophy has not been examined systematically. This study applies Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan's Marketing 1.0 to 6.0 framework to a corpus of 17,335 scholarly works on maritime tourism retrieved from OpenAlex (2000 to 2024). A theory-derived dictionary was operationalised in the quanted R package, and a structural topic model (STM, $K = 8$) with publication year as a prevalence covariate was estimated to recover latent thematic trajectories. The Values era (Marketing 3.0) dominates the corpus throughout, holding 26 to 29 per cent of era-specific vocabulary and reflecting the sector's dependence on heritage, authenticity and coastal community. The Consumer era (2.0) rose from 19.2 to 23.0 per cent and the Digital era (4.0) more than doubled from 8.1 to 17.8 per cent. The Technology era (5.0) reached only 4.4 per cent and the Immersive era (6.0) just 2.0 per cent by 2024, a structural lag of roughly one marketing generation behind the broader hospitality literature. The findings define an urgent eras 5.0 and 6.0 agenda for destination managers, cruise operators and researchers.

1. Introduction.

Maritime tourism covers cruise tourism, coastal leisure travel, nautical recreation and marine heritage experiences, and together these activities form one of the fastest-growing parts of the global blue economy. The European Commission's Blue Economy Report put coastal and maritime tourism at roughly 183 billion euros in gross value added and more than 3.2 million jobs across the EU (European Commission, 2023), and international cruise passenger volumes passed 31 million in 2023, a full recovery from the pandemic contraction (Cruise Lines International Association, 2024). For all that economic weight, scholarship on how maritime tourism organisations conceptualise marketing, and on how that conceptualisation has changed over time, remains fragmented.

The thematic development of blue tourism research has drawn growing bibliometric attention; Sharafuddin and Madhavan (2024) analysed 986 Scopus-indexed articles on coastal, marine and maritime tourism published between 2000 and 2019 and identified four developmental stages through a hybrid scientometric and systematic review. They showed that the field diversified sharply after about 2012, moving from early dominance by sustainability, community development and heritage authenticity toward digital platforms, visitor experience quality and blue economy governance. Their framework, however, was descriptive: it mapped what the field studied without asking what marketing philosophy governed how those topics were framed. That gap motivates the present study.

The Marketing 1.0 to 6.0 framework, set out by Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan across four books (Kotler et al., 2010, 2017, 2021, 2024), offers a normative periodisation of marketing practice. The eras move from a product-centred logic, through consumer satisfaction and loyalty, societal values and

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authenticity, digital channel integration, technology-enabled personalisation, and finally an emergent phygital and immersive paradigm built on co-creation. Each transition marks a shift in the primary unit of value, the dominant mode of consumer engagement, and the capabilities a firm needs to compete. The framework has been used to trace marketing evolution in hospitality (Romero Montero et al., 2023) and experiential tourism (Aarabe et al., 2026), but maritime tourism as a coherent scholarly field has not been examined through it. Given the sector's distinctive features, its capital-intensive physical infrastructure, its deep heritage narratives, and a stakeholder ecology spanning ports, fishing communities, conservation bodies and cruise lines, there is no reason to assume its marketing evolution mirrors land-based hospitality.

This paper addresses that gap. We analyse 17,335 works on maritime tourism from OpenAlex (2000 to 2024) with two complementary methods. First, we operationalise the Kotler framework as a quanteda dictionary and compute the share of era-specific vocabulary per document, aggregated by year. Second, we estimate a structural topic model (Roberts et al., 2019) with publication year as a prevalence covariate, recovering eight latent themes and tracking how their prevalence shifts. Three findings emerge. The Values era (3.0) is persistently dominant, at 26 to 29 per cent of era vocabulary, which we read as constitutive of maritime tourism rather than a passing trend. The Consumer era (2.0) and Digital era (4.0) grow steadily. The Technology era (5.0) and Immersive era (6.0) together account for only 6.4 per cent of era vocabulary in 2024, a lag of about one marketing generation behind the broader hospitality literature.

The contribution is threefold. Empirically, we extend the scientometric mapping of Sharafuddin and Madhavan (2024) to a far larger corpus (17,335 versus 986 works) over a longer window (to 2024), and shift the analytical frame from what the field studies to what marketing logic it adopts. Methodologically, we set out a fully open-source and replicable pipeline using the OpenAlex API, quanteda and stm. Practically, we frame the eras 5.0 and 6.0 deficit as a concrete agenda and offer differentiated recommendations for destination management organisations, cruise operators and policy makers. The paper reviews the framework and literature, describes the data and methods, presents results, discusses implications, and concludes.

2. Literature Review.

2.1. The Marketing 1.0 to 6.0 Framework.

The Marketing 1.0 to 6.0 periodisation has been adopted widely as a device for reviewing marketing evolution. Each era corresponds to a dominant logic of value creation and a particular way of engaging consumers, and the progression is neither strictly linear nor synchronised across industries. Sectors have absorbed successive eras at different rates, and that heterogeneity makes maritime tourism a useful comparative case.

In the *Product era* (1.0), the product is the primary unit of value, and firms compete on functional attributes, price and distribution reach (Kotler et al., 2010). In maritime tourism this

shows up in work that foregrounds infrastructure: ship specifications, port facilities, route networks and timetables, treating marketing largely as a problem of communicating the quality of physical assets. The *Consumer era* (2.0) shifted attention to the individual consumer, bringing satisfaction, loyalty, service quality and experiential value into the core vocabulary. In maritime tourism this paradigm is most visible in the large body of research on cruise passenger satisfaction, onboard service quality and revisit intention, and in the spread of structural equation modelling with SERVQUAL-derived instruments from the 1990s onward.

The *Values era* (3.0) reaches beyond the transactional toward social purpose, cultural meaning and community (Kotler et al., 2010). In maritime and coastal tourism it appears in research on heritage and authenticity, community-based coastal development, blue economy governance and the sustainability discourse that intensified after the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 14. That Values-era vocabulary holds 26 to 29 per cent of era-specific terms throughout 2000 to 2024, neither rising nor falling sharply, suggests this paradigm is embedded in the field rather than fashionable. The *Digital era* (4.0) follows the rise of social media, user-generated content and online booking, and reframes marketing as a continuous, multi-directional conversation across channels (Kotler et al., 2017). In maritime tourism it is represented by research on online destination image, review dynamics, cruise-line social media and influencer promotion. Sharafuddin et al. (2024) show, in a coastal tourism setting, that digital marketing effectiveness shapes perceived service quality and sustainability quality, and that both mediate satisfaction and behavioural intention; the appearance of a sustainability-quality pathway alongside service quality suggests era 4.0 marketing is already being judged against criteria more typical of eras 5.0 and 6.0.

The *Technology era* (5.0) is defined by artificial intelligence, machine learning, the Internet of Things and big-data analytics enabling personalised experiences at scale (Kotler et al., 2021). In maritime tourism, engagement with these tools has been led by the engineering and logistics literature, automatic identification system analytics, smart-port management, algorithmic demand forecasting, rather than by marketing scholars, and consumer-facing personalisation research is scarce. The *Immersive era* (6.0) describes a phygital paradigm fusing physical and digital experience through augmented and virtual reality, the metaverse and gamification (Kotler et al., 2024). Applications in maritime tourism remain largely conceptual: study of phygital shore excursions, virtual cruise previews or gamified port experiences is, as yet, sparse. The framework therefore describes a shift in the locus of value from the product, to consumer experience, to social meaning, to digital interaction, to data-driven personalisation, and finally to immersive co-creation, a progression not previously measured longitudinally for maritime tourism.

2.2. Maritime Tourism Marketing.

The closest precedent to this study is the scientometric analysis of blue tourism by Sharafuddin and Madhavan (2024), which mapped 986 Scopus articles across 2000 to 2019 and found four

developmental stages: a thin preliminary phase, two transversal stages of broadening, and a growth stage from 2016 in which smart destination management and blue economy governance emerged as new fronts. We build on that work in three ways: we extend the window to 2024, capturing the post-pandemic acceleration of digital and technology adoption; we expand the corpus from 986 Scopus articles to 17,335 OpenAlex works, taking in open-access and non-English literature; and we impose a normative frame, the Kotler periodisation, to read the marketing philosophy the field implicitly endorses.

The maritime and coastal tourism marketing literature falls into five streams. The most extensive is consumer satisfaction and loyalty (era 2.0), examining cruise passenger satisfaction, onboard service quality and destination loyalty, typically with SEM and SERVQUAL. Sharafuddin et al. (2022) extend this tradition with an integrated model of island destination service quality that introduces co-creation of destination e-image as a mediator, positioning the consumer as an active participant in constructing the destination's digital identity and so bridging eras 2.0 and 4.0. A second stream, community-based development and geotourism (era 3.0), is strong in the Southeast Asian context and frames rural coastal communities, geoparks and marine ecotourism through sustainable development and empowerment. A third, also era 3.0, addresses cultural heritage and maritime identity, including historic port cities, fishing heritage and museum interpretation in destination branding; this stream has declined in relative prevalence since about 2010 in our model, possibly as the sustainability discourse absorbed heritage into a broader values vocabulary.

A fourth stream, blue economy and coastal governance, covers fisheries, climate adaptation, marine protected areas and the institutional governance of coastal tourism resources. It is philosophically aligned with era 3.0 but operates at the policy level rather than at consumer engagement, and its vocabulary sits at the boundary of tourism, environmental science and political economy. The fifth and fastest-growing stream, digital innovation and smart technology (eras 4.0 and 5.0), spans maritime digitalisation reviews, algorithmic demand forecasting and emerging-technology surveys; it is the most steeply positive topic in our model. What is notably absent is any established literature on Marketing 6.0 in maritime tourism: era 6.0 vocabulary accounts for only 2.0 per cent of era-specific terms in the 2024 corpus, confirming that phygital and immersive experience design remains conceptually emergent rather than empirically studied. This lag is the central puzzle the present study documents and explains.

3. Methods.

3.1. Data Source.

Bibliometric data were retrieved from OpenAlex (Priem et al., 2022) using the *openalexR* package in R (Aria, 2023). OpenAlex was preferred over Scopus or Web of Science for three reasons: it is fully open-access and requires no subscription; it indexes more than 250 million works, giving broader coverage of open-access and non-English literature; and it exposes structured metadata, titles, abstracts, authorship, venue and citations,

through a documented API. *openalexR* reconstructs abstracts from the OpenAlex inverted index, giving effectively complete abstract coverage without additional scraping.

The search targeted works containing at least one of “maritime tourism,” “coastal tourism,” “cruise tourism,” “marine tourism,” “port tourism,” “nautical tourism,” “island tourism” or “beach tourism” in the title or abstract. We deliberately did not intersect the query with “marketing”: restricting to works that self-identify as marketing studies would exclude a large body of research that implicitly adopts marketing logic, for example studies of service quality, visitor experience or destination image. Works were limited to journal articles published between 1990 and 2024. After deduplication by OpenAlex identifier the corpus comprised 17,335 documents in more than 800 journals, with *Sustainability* (n = 1,185), *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites* (n = 171), *Frontiers in Marine Science* (n = 143) and *IEEE Access* (n = 134) most frequent. The open-access share was 89.8 per cent. The corpus retains some non-English abstracts; *quanteda*'s lowercasing and stopword removal handle but do not eliminate them, and an English-only check is flagged as a robustness extension.

3.2. Marketing Era Dictionary.

A six-era dictionary was built from the definitional vocabulary in Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (Kotler et al., 2010, 2017, 2021) and adapted to maritime tourism. Each era is a closed list of unigrams and bigrams capturing its core logic. The dictionary was applied in *quanteda* (Benoit et al., 2018) using *dfm_lookup()* on a document-feature matrix pre-processed by lowercasing, removing punctuation, symbols and English stopwords, and suppressing a set of ubiquitous domain terms (tourism, tourist, coastal, maritime, marine, destination) that would otherwise dilute the signal. The era score for a document is the share of dictionary-matched tokens among its non-stopword tokens, which standardises for length, and scores are averaged by year and decade.

In summary, the Product era (1.0) is captured by infrastructure terms (facility, fleet, harbour, berth, terminal, route, timetable); the Consumer era (2.0) by experience and relationship terms (satisfaction, loyalty, expectation, perception, motivation, attitude); the Values era (3.0) by ethics and community terms (authenticity, heritage, identity, social responsibility, stakeholder, wellbeing, co-creation); the Digital era (4.0) by platform terms (social media, mobile, e-tourism, user-generated content, e-commerce, ICT); the Technology era (5.0) by data and AI terms (analytics, personalisation, machine learning, artificial intelligence, algorithm, IoT, blockchain, chatbot); and the Immersive era (6.0) by phygital terms (immersive, metaverse, augmented reality, virtual reality, gamification, co-design, embodied, multisensory). The full term lists are in the replication repository.

3.3. Structural Topic Model

To recover the latent thematic structure and trace how themes shift over time we estimated a structural topic model (Roberts et al., 2019) with the *stm* package. The STM extends latent

Dirichlet allocation by letting document metadata inform topic prevalence, and we specified publication year as a linear prevalence covariate; an approximately linear trend in the dictionary proportions made a spline unnecessary. The matrix was trimmed to terms appearing at least five times overall and in at least three documents, giving a 17,335 by 18,738 matrix, and was converted to STM input with `quanteda's convert()` preserving document metadata. The number of topics K was set to 8 after inspecting semantic coherence and held-out likelihood across K in {6, 8, 10}. Estimation used spectral initialisation with seed 2024 and converged at iteration 93. Year trends were estimated with `estimateEffect()` using global uncertainty, giving a year coefficient and standard error per topic.

3.4. Validity Checks

Three checks were run. Face validity was assessed by inspecting the most-cited works per dominant-era category, which showed that a few high-citation works from outside tourism enter each era list through shared vocabulary, so the era lists need manual curation. Robustness to K was assessed by re-estimating at $K = 6$ and $K = 10$: the main trends were stable, with consumer-behaviour topics positive and significant at $K = 6$ ($\beta = +0.007$) and $K = 10$ ($\beta = +0.005$), digital topics positive at both, and heritage and product topics negative at all three values. Temporal face validity was checked by comparing the dictionary trajectories against known milestones, the rise of social media research after 2008 and of blockchain applications after 2017, both clearly visible in the era 4.0 and 5.0 series.

4. Results

4.1. Corpus Description

The corpus spans 1990 to 2024, with only 244 works (1.4 per cent) before 2000, reflecting the youth of the field. Annual output grew from 79 works in 2000 to 598 in 2015 and peaked at 2,140 in 2023; the lower 2024 figure is an indexing artefact, since OpenAlex had not yet captured all 2024 work at retrieval. As Figure 1 shows, the 2020s already hold the largest decade-level share (8,809 works), ahead of the 2010s (6,796), with the 2000s contributing 1,486 and the 1990s 174. The open-access share is 89.8 per cent.

The journal profile is itself a finding. The prominence of *Sustainability* and *Frontiers in Marine Science* reflects the corpus's Values-era orientation, while *IEEE Access* signals a growing engineering-technology stream tied to eras 5.0 and 6.0. The dominant-era distribution confirms this: of the 17,265 documents with an identifiable dominant era, 4,796 (27.8 per cent) fall under the Values era (3.0), 4,330 (25.1 per cent) under the Consumer era (2.0), 2,761 (16.0 per cent) under the Product era (1.0) and 1,843 (10.7 per cent) under the Digital era (4.0). Technology-era documents number only 403 (2.3 per cent) and Immersive-era documents 128 (0.7 per cent).

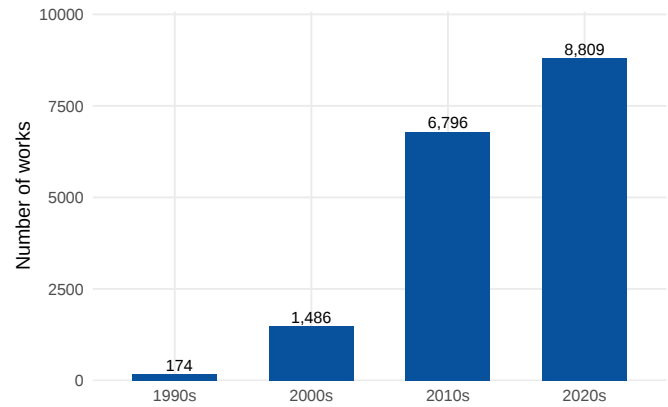


Figure 1: Maritime tourism works by decade, OpenAlex corpus.
Source: Authors.

4.2. Marketing Era Prevalence over Time

The dictionary analysis shows a coherent pattern of evolution (Figure 2). The Values era (3.0) is dominant in every year from 2000 to 2024, holding 26 to 29 per cent throughout. This stability is itself substantive: unlike the other eras the Values paradigm neither grows nor declines but holds a structurally elevated share, which suggests it is constitutive of maritime tourism discourse. The Consumer era (2.0) rose from 19.2 per cent in 2000 to 23.0 per cent in 2024, most of the growth after 2010 and consistent with the spread of SEM-based satisfaction research. The Digital era (4.0) shows the sharpest proportional rise, more than doubling from 8.1 to 17.8 per cent, with acceleration after 2015 as social media and online reputation management matured as research priorities. The Technology era (5.0) grew from effectively zero to 4.4 per cent, with visible momentum after 2018, and the Immersive era (6.0) reached only 2.0 per cent, growth beginning around 2020. Both confirm that these paradigms are emergent rather than established in the field.

4.3. Topic Analysis

Table 1 summarises the eight STM topics, their top FREX words, the marketing era to which each maps, and their year coefficients; Figure 3 orders the topics by that coefficient. Topic 8 (Digital Innovation and Sustainability) has the steepest positive year trend, followed by Topic 2 (Consumer Behaviour). Topics 4 (Cultural Heritage) and 3 (Market Economics) decline most. The pattern matches a field-level shift away from static product and heritage framings toward consumer engagement and digital innovation.

Topic 7 warrants a note. Its top FREX words include non-English tokens (*de*, *el*) and marine-biology terms (*whale*, *ballast*, *invasive*), so the cluster captures a mixture of non-English documents and ecological science rather than a coherent marketing stream. It should be read as a corpus-quality artefact, and an English-only re-run is an appropriate extension. The dominant-era counts reinforce the picture: Values-era documents lead (4,796), then Consumer (4,330) and Product (2,761), with Digital (1,843) growing and Technology (403) and Immersive (128) still a small minority.

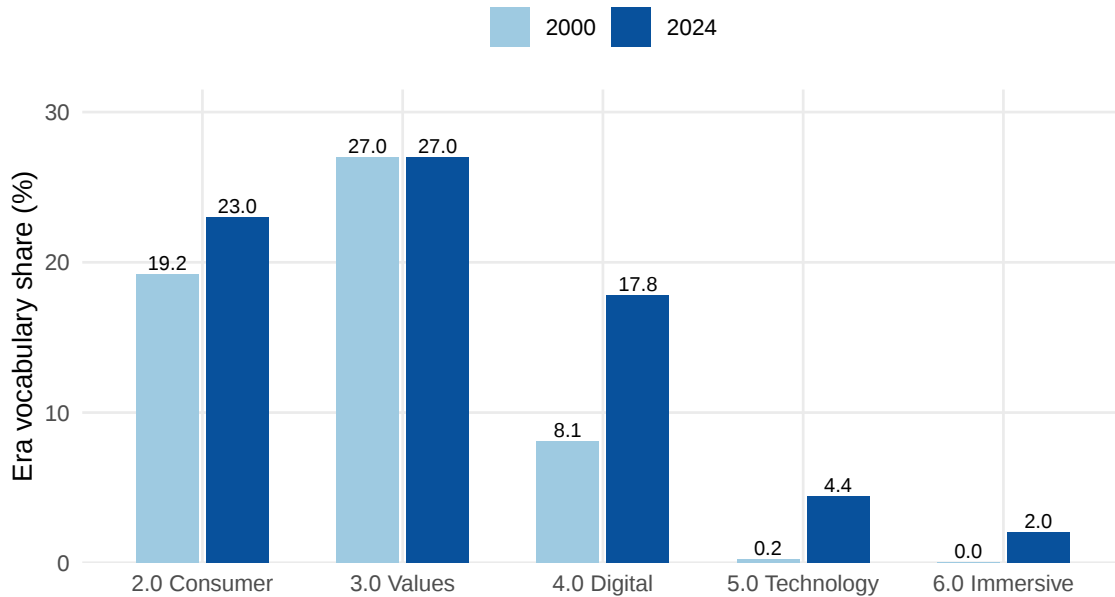


Figure 2: Marketing-era vocabulary share in the maritime tourism corpus, 2000 versus 2024. The Values era (3.0) holds a stable 26 to 29 per cent across the period and is shown at its representative level.

Source: Authors.

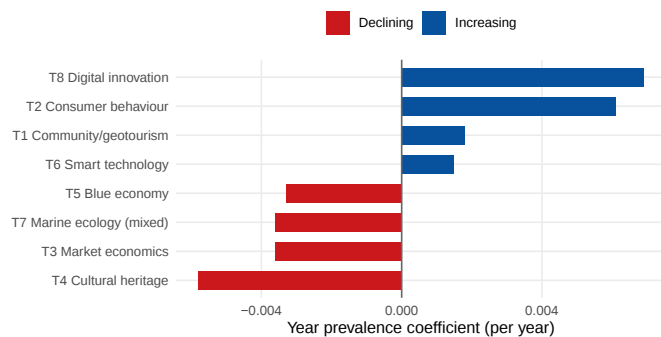


Figure 3: STM topic prevalence trends over time (year coefficient per topic).

Source: Authors.

4.4. Synthesis

The two analyses converge on three conclusions. First, maritime tourism scholarship is structurally anchored in Marketing 3.0 values-era thinking, which neither the dictionary proportions nor the topic trajectories contradict. Second, the Consumer and Digital eras (2.0 and 4.0) are growing robustly, so the field is actively assimilating these paradigms rather than paying them lip service. Third, the Technology and Immersive eras (5.0 and 6.0) together account for only 6.4 per cent of era vocabulary in 2024, well below what tracking the broader hospitality literature would imply (Romero Montero et al., 2023).

5. Discussion

5.1. Why Maritime Tourism Lags in Eras 5.0 and 6.0

Capital intensity offers the most structural explanation. Cruise ships and port infrastructure run on 20 to 30-year investment cycles, and marketing innovation in asset-heavy sectors tracks technology adoption more slowly than in service-light ones, because the physical product cannot be reconfigured quickly. Researchers study what practitioners do, and practitioners are constrained by assets that predate the era 5.0 paradigm. The regulatory environment reinforces this conservatism: safety regulation, port-authority protocols and customs and immigration requirements limit the room for the kind of experiential innovation era 6.0 envisages. Audience demographics add a third factor, since cruise tourism has historically drawn an older traveller profile whose demand for immersive and metaverse experiences may be weaker than in urban experiential hospitality, and weak demand signals leave marketing scholars less to study. A fourth, disciplinary explanation is that maritime tourism researchers are concentrated in nautical science, marine geography and environmental management, where the priorities lean toward resource management and sustainability governance rather than marketing philosophy.

5.2. Why the Values Era Is Persistently Dominant

The persistence of era 3.0 vocabulary is the most distinctive feature of the corpus. Unlike land-based hospitality, where the values era was a time-bounded shift in the 2000s, maritime tourism appears to have made values-era language a permanent feature of its discourse. Three overlapping reasons are plausible. Maritime and coastal settings are inherently meaning-laden: the sea, fishing communities, historic ports and marine

Table 1: Structural topic model: topics, top FREX words, assigned marketing era and year coefficient.

Topic	Label	Top FREX words	Era	β (year)
1	Community-based and geotourism	ecotourism, regency, geotourism, rural, village	3.0 Values	+0.0018*
2	Consumer behaviour and satisfaction	satisfaction, intention, loyalty, revisit, perceived	2.0 Consumer	+0.0061*
3	Market economics and demand	halal, exports, sales, fdi, pandemic	1.0 Product	−0.0036*
4	Cultural heritage and identity	film, museums, identities, archaeological, colonial	3.0 Values	−0.0058*
5	Blue economy and coastal governance	adaptation, livelihoods, fishers, blue, governance	3.0 Values	−0.0033*
6	Smart technology and maritime logistics	algorithm, machine, iot, ais, containers	5.0 Technology	+0.0015*
7	Marine ecology (non-English)	whale, invasive, ballast, de, el	Mixed	−0.0036*
8	Digital innovation and sustainability	bibliometric, digital, blockchain, circular, systematic	4.0 Digital	+0.0069*

* $p < 0.05$ for the year coefficient.

Source: Authors.

heritage carry cultural weight that airport and business hotels do not, so marketing here has always had to engage authenticity, heritage and community, the very resources the sector sells. The blue economy policy discourse reinforces this, as SDG 14 and the EU blue economy strategy have generated a large institutional literature on sustainability governance that shares era 3.0 vocabulary. And the community-based tourism tradition, strong in the Global South coastal literature, deploys values-era language as a normative development frame and has grown steadily over the period.

5.3. Implications for Practitioners

Destination management organisations in port cities face a distinctive opportunity: the values proposition is already strong, so what is needed is a digital and technology layer rather than a wholesale shift. Investing in AI-driven personalisation of heritage experiences (era 5.0) is likely to be more effective than trying to leap to phygital immersion (era 6.0), for which the consumer demand infrastructure does not yet exist at scale. Cruise operators are better placed to experiment with era 6.0 given their captive passenger environment and existing onboard entertainment technology; for them the move from loyalty-programme marketing (era 2.0) toward predictive personalisation (era 5.0) is already under way and is the most urgent near-term agenda. For heritage ports and historic coastal destinations the implication is more nuanced: the decline in cultural-heritage scholarship (Topic 4, $\beta = -0.0058$) suggests the traditional heritage frame is losing ground even within a values-dominated corpus, so these destinations may need to reframe heritage as a platform for digital and experiential innovation rather than as a static asset.

5.4. Limitations

Four limitations apply. OpenAlex's coverage of older journals is uneven, so the pre-2000 series and the era 1.0 and 2.0 estimates are lower bounds on their true historical prevalence. The dictionary captures co-occurrence of era vocabulary, not adoption of marketing practice: a high era 4.0 share means digital phenomena are central to the research question, not that

the organisation studied has gone digital. Non-English content introduces lexical noise only partly controlled by the current pipeline, as Topic 7 shows. And a single search strategy risks omitting work that discusses maritime tourism marketing under other terminology. Each points to a clear extension: English-language filtering, an expert-validated dictionary, and a cross-sectoral comparison with land-based hospitality.

6. Conclusion

This study mapped the evolution of marketing philosophy in maritime tourism scholarship using the Kotler 1.0 to 6.0 framework. Drawing on 17,335 OpenAlex works from 2000 to 2024, and combining a theory-derived dictionary with a structural topic model, we established three findings. The Values era (3.0) dominates structurally and persistently, reflecting the sector's reliance on heritage, authenticity and coastal community; unlike in land-based hospitality this paradigm has not been displaced but absorbed into the field's foundational vocabulary. The Consumer era (2.0) and Digital era (4.0) are growing robustly, and the rise of digital vocabulary from 8.1 to 17.8 per cent is the single most dramatic shift in the corpus. The Technology era (5.0) and Immersive era (6.0) remain structurally underdeveloped, together at 6.4 per cent in 2024, a lag of about one marketing generation behind the broader hospitality literature, driven by capital intensity, regulation, demographics and disciplinary positioning.

These findings extend the scientometric mapping of Sharafuddin and Madhavan (2024) by imposing a normative marketing frame on a larger and longer corpus, and they give destination managers and researchers a data-grounded picture of where the field stands relative to where the marketing paradigm has arrived. The replication pipeline, built entirely in open-source tools using the OpenAlex API, quanteda and stm, accompanies the article. Future work should add English-language filtering, an expert-validated dictionary expansion, and a cross-sectoral comparison that places maritime tourism's marketing evolution in explicit relation to land-based hospitality and coastal recreation scholarship.

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