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Bibliometric Analysis of Social Media Marketing Research (2015-2025): Key Contributors, Intellectual Structure, and Thematic Evolution

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Abstract: The rapid growth of social media marketing (SMM) research has created a vast and complex academic landscape. This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to map this landscape, identify its key contributors, delineate its intellectual structure, and trace its thematic evolution from 2015 to 2025. Employing the PRISMA framework, this research analyzes a final sample of 843 articles from Scopus-indexed (Q1/Q2) journals using performance analysis and VOSviewer-based science mapping. Findings reveal that SMM research is a dynamic and highly collaborative field, with influential authors, journals, and countries shaping its development. Its intellectual structure is characterized by five primary thematic clusters, with engagement and influencer advertising emerging as the most central conceptual cornerstones. Furthermore, the evolution analysis highlights a clear trajectory from foundational topics toward emerging research trends, particularly artificial intelligence and sustainability. This study contributes a systematic, data-driven map of the current state of SMM research, serving as a valuable guide for scholars to navigate the literature and identify promising avenues for future inquiry.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Bibliometric Analysis, VOSviewer, Science Mapping, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

In this ever-evolving digital age, social media marketing has become a key element in global business strategies. Digital technology has transformed social media into a primary platform for interaction between companies and consumers, providing brands with the opportunity to communicate directly with diverse customer segments (He et al., 2022). Effective use of social information has even been shown to improve companies' ability to forecast sales, which ultimately contributes to improved business performance (Hotkar et al., 2023). The significant impact of social media marketing on consumer behavior, such as increased consumer engagement and loyalty (Farzin et al., 2021), has triggered a significant increase in the number of academic publications in the field of social media marketing.

This increase in the number of publications, while indicative of high research activity, creates a complex and diverse landscape. Without a systematic review, there is a risk of overlapping research and missing important future research directions. Several previous review

studies have contributed, but often with too broad a scope (Gao et al., 2021) or too specific on certain subtopics (Abhishek & Srivastava, 2021; Veloutsou & Mafé, 2020). Therefore, there is an urgent need to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to map and synthesize existing knowledge in the field of *social media marketing*.

To fill this gap and respond to this urgency, this study aims to present a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of social media marketing literature published from 2015 to 2025. Specifically, this study is designed to answer four main research questions:

1. RQ1: What are the general characteristics and growth trends of scientific literature on *social media marketing*?
2. RQ2: Who are the most productive and influential contributors (authors, institutions, and countries) in *social media marketing* research?
3. RQ3: What are the main research themes and fundamental documents in *social media marketing* research?
4. RQ4: How have social media marketing research themes developed over the past decade, and what new research trends are emerging?

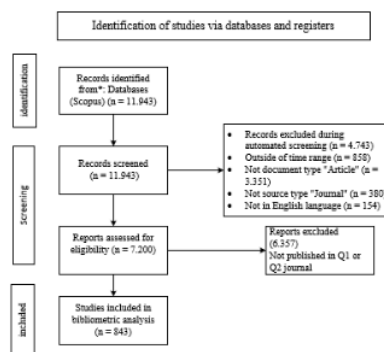
METHOD

This research applies the bibliometric analysis method, a systematic and objective quantitative approach to mapping the research landscape of a field (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2014). To ensure a transparent and replicable data collection and selection process, this study adopted a framework PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Page et Al., 2021). Data retrieval was conducted on July 4, 2025, from the Scopus database, which was selected for its extensive coverage of global scientific literature. A comprehensive search strategy was used, targeting keywords, titles, and abstracts, to capture literature relevant to the broad topic of social media marketing.

Next, a series of inclusion criteria were applied in a stepwise fashion to refine the initial search results. The dataset was filtered to include publications within the 2015–2025 timeframe, all articles, published in English-language journals. As a final quality assurance step, the data were further filtered to retain only articles published in highly reputable journals ranked in Quartile 1 (Q1) or Quartile 2 (Q2) according to the Scopus classification. These stringent filtering criteria were deliberately applied to ensure that the analysis was built on a foundation of the highest-quality and highest-impact literature. By focusing on publications from top-tier journals, this study aimed to enhance the validity and relevance of the findings by analyzing the most significant scholarly conversations in the field. This selection process, summarized in the PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1), resulted in a final dataset of 843 articles.

Data analysis was performed using a combination of software. R-Studio (Biblioshiny) was used for performance analysis and descriptive statistics. Meanwhile, scientific mapping and network visualization, such as co-authorship and keyword co-occurrence analysis, were performed using VOSviewer software. (van Eck & Waltman, 2009)

The systematic workflow of this data selection process is summarized in the PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1 below



Gambar 1. Diagram PRISMA

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Data Description

The initial stage of this bibliometric research is to conduct a descriptive statistical analysis of the curated dataset. This analysis is a fundamental step, aiming to provide an overview of the key characteristics of the research landscape under study. The goal is to quantify the volume of literature, map its growth trends over time, and identify key metrics related to academic impact and collaboration structures. By presenting the following baseline data, this research builds a strong contextual foundation before moving on to more complex science mapping analysis. A summary of the key statistical metrics from the analyzed data is presented in Table 1.

Based on Table 1, a total of 843 documents were identified within the publication period from 2015 to 2025, spread across 24 scientific sources. Trend analysis shows a significant annual growth rate of 14.51%, indicating that this research field is a rapidly developing area and attracts researchers' interest. In terms of citation impact, each document in this dataset received an average of 48.64 citations (Average citations per document), with an average document age of 3.71 years. Overall, these 843 documents refer to a total of 55,371 references. For content analysis, 1,392 Keywords Plus (ID) and 2,536 Author's Keywords (DE) were identified which will serve as the basis for mapping the conceptual structure of this field.

Table 1. Key Descriptive Statistics of the Research Dataset

Description	Results	Description	Results
<i>Main Information About Data</i>		<i>Authors</i>	2429
<i>Timespan</i>	2015:2025	<i>Authors Of Single-Authored Docs</i>	73
<i>Sources (Journals, Books, Etc)</i>	24	<i>Authors Collaboration</i>	
<i>Documents</i>	843	<i>Single-Authored Docs</i>	74
<i>Annual Growth Rate %</i>	14,51	<i>Co-Authors Per Doc</i>	3,33
<i>Document Average Age</i>	3,71	<i>International Co-Authorships %</i>	33,21
<i>Average Citations Per Doc</i>	48,64	<i>Document Types</i>	
<i>References</i>	55371	<i>Article</i>	843
<i>Document Contents</i>			
<i>Keywords Plus (Id)</i>	1392		
<i>Author's Keywords (De)</i>	2536		

Source: Processed data (2025)

Author-level analysis shows that this literature is the result of contributions from 2,429 authors. The pattern of research collaboration is very prominent, evidenced by an average of 3.33 authors per document (Co-Authors per Doc) and a high percentage of international collaborations (International co-authorships), reaching 33.21%. Conversely, research conducted individually is relatively minimal, with only 74 documents written by a single author. It should be noted that all documents analyzed in this study are journal articles.

Core Source Analysis

To identify the most influential journals that serve as primary publication platforms for social media marketing research, this study applies Bradford's Law. This analysis classifies publication sources into three concentric zones based on their productivity, with the core zone (Zone 1) representing the most productive journals. The results of the source distribution analysis are presented in detail in Table 2 below:

Tabel 2. Hukum Bradford (Bradford's Law)

SO	Rank	Freq	cumFreq	Zone
<i>Sustainability (Switzerland)</i>	1	97	97	Zone 1
<i>Journal Of Research In Interactive Marketing</i>	2	79	176	Zone 1
<i>Journal Of Business Research</i>	3	78	254	Zone 1
<i>Computers In Human Behavior</i>	4	60	314	Zone 1
<i>International Journal Of Data And Network Science</i>	5	60	374	Zone 2
<i>Cogent Business And Management</i>	6	53	427	Zone 2
<i>Journal Of Retailing And Consumer Services</i>	7	48	475	Zone 2
<i>Social Media And Society</i>	8	36	511	Zone 2
<i>Asia Pacific Journal Of Marketing And Logistics</i>	9	34	545	Zone 2
<i>Industrial Marketing Management</i>	10	34	579	Zone 2
<i>Journal Of Marketing Communications</i>	11	28	607	Zone 3
<i>International Journal Of Information Management</i>	12	27	634	Zone 3
<i>Internet Research</i>	13	24	658	Zone 3
<i>Technological Forecasting And Social Change</i>	14	24	682	Zone 3
<i>Telematics And Informatics</i>	15	24	706	Zone 3
<i>Journal Of Product And Brand Management</i>	16	23	729	Zone 3
<i>Young Consumers</i>	17	22	751	Zone 3
<i>Journal Of Business And Industrial Marketing</i>	18	18	769	Zone 3
<i>Current Issues In Tourism</i>	19	17	786	Zone 3
<i>Journal Of Consumer Behaviour</i>	20	17	803	Zone 3

Source: Processed data (2025)

The analysis results based on the findings from Table 2 indicate that a very high concentration of literature is in Zone 1, which consists of the four most productive journals. The Journal of Sustainability (Switzerland) occupies the top position (Rank 1) with a contribution of 97 articles. This position is followed by the Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing (Rank 2) with 79 articles, the Journal of Business Research (Rank 3) with 78 articles, and Computers in Human Behavior (Rank 4) with 60 articles. Cumulatively, these four core journals alone have published 314 articles, representing 37.2% of the total literature analyzed (843 articles), which confirms the validity of Bradford's Law in the context of this study.

Journals in Zone 2 serve as important secondary sources for expanding the discussion. For example, Cogent Business and Management (Rank 6, 53 articles) and the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (Rank 7, 48 articles) demonstrate the relevance of this topic within the broader context of general business and consumer services. Meanwhile, Zone 3 comprises a large number of journals with more scattered but often specialized contributions. For example, the International Journal of Information Management (Rank 12, 27 articles) and Industrial Marketing

Management (Rank 10, 34 articles) bring the topic of social media marketing into the domain of information management and business-to-business (B2B) marketing.

Table 3. Journal Impact Analysis (Source Impact)

Element	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
<i>Computers in human behavior</i>	38	60	3.455	5658	60	2015
<i>Journal of research in interactive marketing</i>	38	66	3.455	4493	79	2015
<i>Journal of business research</i>	37	74	3.364	5485	78	2015
<i>Journal of retailing and consumer services</i>	26	48	3.250	2815	48	2018
<i>Industrial marketing management</i>	24	34	2.400	2475	34	2016
<i>Sustainability (switzerland)</i>	24	39	3.000	1798	97	2018
<i>International journal of information management</i>	21	27	1.909	4171	27	2015
<i>Social media and society</i>	18	32	1.636	1039	36	2015
<i>Telematics and informatics</i>	17	24	1.700	1050	24	2016
<i>Journal of product and brand management</i>	16	23	1.600	1143	23	2016

Source: Processed data (2025)

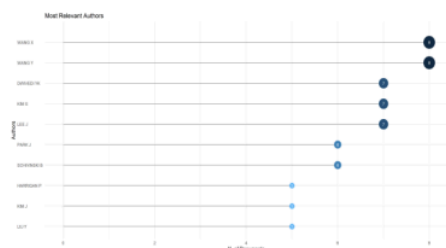
The results of the citation impact analysis in Table 3 show important findings that complement the previous productivity analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior* shows its status as the most influential journal in the scope of this study. The journal has the highest h-index (h-index = 38) and the highest Total Citations (TC = 5658). This finding is significant because despite being ranked fourth in terms of number of publications (NP = 60), its average citation impact per article is proven to be the highest, indicating that its works serve as fundamental references for other researchers.

Conversely, this analysis highlights differences in profiles across journals. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, the most productive journal (NP = 97), has a relatively lower h-index (h-index = 24) and Total Citations (TC = 1798) compared to the top three journals. This phenomenon reflects the characteristics of journals with very high publication volumes and broad multidisciplinary coverage, where citation impact tends to be more distributed. Thus, it can be concluded that while social media marketing research productivity is spread across several major publication sources, its scientific influence is more concentrated in a small number of journals focused on interdisciplinary fields combining human behavior, technology, and business.

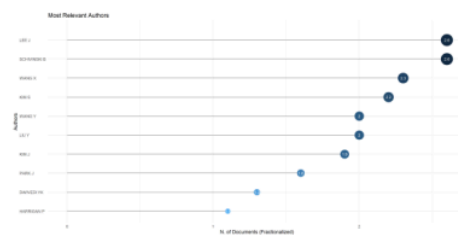
Analysis of the Most Prolific and Influential Writers

Author-level analysis was conducted to identify key individuals who have made the most significant contributions to the development of social media marketing research. Evaluation was

conducted from two primary perspectives: productivity (quantity of publications) and impact (quality of citations)



Grafik 1. Author Productivity Based on Number of Documents



Grafik 2. Author Productivity Based on Fractional Number of Documents

Productivity analysis, measured through the total and fractional number of publications (as shown in Graph 1 and Graph 2) highlights several authors as very active contributors. Based on the total number of publications, Wang X and Wang Y lead with 8 articles each, followed by Dwivedi YK, Kim S, and Lee J with 7 articles. When proportional (fractional) contributions are taken into account, Lee J and Schivinski B show the highest scores, indicating a more dominant role in their publications. Table 4 presents local impact metrics, including h-index and Total Citations (TC), calculated based on the 843 documents in this dataset.

Table 4. Authors' Local Impact

Element	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
Dwivedi Yk	7	7	0.875	2048	7	2018
Kim S	6	7	0.545	334	7	2015
Lee J	6	7	0.600	569	7	2016
Park J	6	6	0.600	288	6	2016
Wang X	6	8	1.200	106	8	2021
Wang Y	6	8	0.600	1523	8	2016
Harrigan P	5	5	0.714	253	5	2019
Schivinski B	5	6	0.455	909	6	2015
Yang J	5	5	0.500	368	5	2016
Baek Th	4	4	1.000	123	4	2022
Filieri R	4	4	0.667	1523	4	2020
Jacobson J	4	4	0.667	1469	4	2020
Jr	4	4	0.364	499	4	2015
Karjaluoto H	4	4	0.364	1381	4	2015
Kim J	4	5	0.364	240	5	2015
Aljuhmani Hy	3	3	0.500	151	3	2020

Source: Processed data (2025)

These findings become more profound when comparing productivity and impact. For example, Wang X, who is one of the most prolific authors (NP=8), has a relatively lower Total Citations (TC=106). In contrast, authors such as Filieri R (NP=4, TC=1523), Jacobson J (NP=4, TC=1469), and Karjaluoto H (NP=4, TC=1381) show a different profile: despite having fewer publications, their works have accumulated very high citation counts. Other authors such as Wang Y (NP=8, TC=1523) and Schivinski B (NP=6, TC=909) show a balanced profile of high productivity and strong citation impact. Overall, this analysis identifies Dwivedi YK as the author with the most comprehensive contributions (both prolific and influential).

Analysis of Affiliates and Most Productive Countries

To map research hubs in social media marketing, analyses were conducted at the affiliate (institution) and country levels. This analysis aimed to identify which institutions are the most productive and which countries have the greatest scientific impact in this field.

Most Productive Affiliate Analysis

Productivity analysis at the affiliate level shows that social media marketing research is not concentrated in one region but is distributed globally. Table 5 presents the 20 most productive institutions.

Table 5. Most Productive Affiliates

Affiliation	Articles	Affiliation	Articles
Sungkyunkwan University	20	Udayana University	12
King Faisal University	16	University Of California	12
Texas Tech University	16	Applied Science Private University	11
Girne American University	15	City University Of Hong Kong	11
University Of Oxford	15	Notreported	11
Bina Nusantara University	13	Tampere University	11
Rmit University	13	The University Of Western Australia	11
Shanghai University	13	Cardiff University	10
Middle East University	12	Fpt University	10
Swansea University	12	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	10

Source: Processed data (2025)

Analysis of the Most Productive Countries

Country-level analysis provides a broader perspective on geographic influence, particularly in terms of citation impact. Table 6 presents the top 20 countries based on Total Citations (TC) and Average Citations per Article.

Table 6. Scientific Impact of Countries Based on Citations

Country	TC	Average Article Citations	Country	TC	Average Article Citations
USA	7997	49.70	Poland	826	118.00
China	3646	35.70	Indonesia	761	19.00
United Kingdom	2763	54.20	Germany	660	50.80

Korea	2407	63.30	Belgium	618	103.00
Finland	2278	151.90	Italy	601	37.60
India	2197	75.80	Canada	597	45.90
France	1906	112.10	Hong Kong	554	42.60
Australia	1058	35.30	South Africa	491	98.20
Spain	1028	42.80	Jordan	413	22.90
Malaysia	975	69.60	Netherlands	396	44.00

Source: Processed data (2025)

The Average Citations per Article metric offers a different perspective on the quality and efficiency of impact. Finland stands out with an average of 151.90 citations per article, far surpassing other countries. Poland (118.00), France (112.10), and Belgium (103.00) also rank highly. This finding indicates that while these countries may not produce as high a volume of publications as the US or China, their work is of very high quality and relevance, often serving as primary references.

The document-level analysis aims to identify the most influential individual publications that have shaped the conceptual foundations and research directions in social media marketing. Table 7 presents the top 10 documents based on various citation impact metrics.

Table 7. List of Most Influential Documents Based on Citations

Author	Title	Journal	Total Citations	TC per Year	Normalized TC
(Dwivedi et al., 2021)	Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and search propositions	International Journal of Information Management	1236	247.20	19.59
(Godey et al., 2016)	Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior	Journal of Business Research	848	84.80	5.93
(Khan, 2017)	Social media engagement: What motivates user participation and consumption on YouTube?	Computers in Human Behavior	830	92.22	7.33
(Felix et al., 2017)	Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic framework	Journal of Business Research	560	62.22	4.95
(Schivinski & Prowski, 2016)	The effect of social media communication on consumer perceptions of brands	Journal of Marketing Communications	518	51.80	3.62
(Alalwan, 2018)	Investigating the impact of social media advertising features on customer purchase intention	International Journal of Information Management	495	61.88	5.92

(Lee & Hong, 2016)	2 Predicting positive user responses to social media advertising: The roles of emotional appeal, informativeness, and creativity	9 International Journal of Information Management	464	46.40	3.24
(Hwang & Zhang, 2018)	3 Influence of parasocial relationship between digital celebrities and their followers' purchase and electronic word-of-mouth intentions, and persuasion knowledge	Computers in Human Behavior	422	52.75	5.05
(Arora et al., 2019)	5 Measuring social media influencer index- insights from facebook, Twitter and Instagram	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	402	57.43	4.65
(Bagozzi et al., 2016)	6 Social media and consumer engagement: A review and research agenda	Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	367	36.70	2.57

Source: Processed data (2025)

Thematically, this list highlights several core research areas. Topics regarding holistic marketing strategy (Felix et al., 2017) and the impact of brand communication on consumer perception (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016) is an important conceptual foundation. In addition, the evolution of research is reflected in the emergence of works that address newer phenomena such as parasocial relationships with digital celebrities (Hwang & Zhang, 2018) and social media influencer measurement (Arora et al., 2019). The presence of three articles from the International Journal of Information Management in this top 10 list also reconfirms its status as one of the core journals that publishes the most influential works in the field of social media marketing.

Collaborative Network Analysis

After identifying key contributors and documents, the analysis continued by mapping the network structure to visualize collaboration patterns. This analysis used VOSviewer to construct a network map based on co-authorship data. The goal was to identify interconnected research groups (clusters) and the contributors who serve as links between these groups. The analysis was conducted at the author and country levels.

Collaborative Network Between Writers

The collaborative network map between authors aims to identify the social structure within the social media marketing research community. The size of the nodes (circles) on this map represents the total citations received by an author, while the distance between nodes and the thickness of the connecting lines indicate the strength of the collaborative relationships.

The network map below shows several distinct collaborative clusters, indicating the formation of independent but interconnected research groups. Dwivedi, Yogesh K. (blue cluster)

emerges as the largest and most central node in the network. This position visually confirms the previous quantitative findings (Table 7), which ranked him as the most influential author based on total citations. He is connected to several other authors, including Raman, Ramakrishnan, and Aswani, Reema, who form the core of one of the main clusters.

The network map in Figure 3 shows the presence of several distinct collaborative clusters, indicating the formation of independent but interconnected research groups. Dwivedi, Yogesh K. (blue cluster) emerges as the largest and most central node in the network. This position visually confirms the previous quantitative findings (Table 7) that placed him as the most influential author based on total citations. He is connected to several other authors, such as Raman, Ramakrishnan, and Aswani, Reema, who form the core of one of the main clusters.

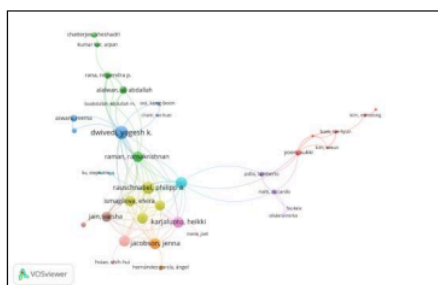


Figure 3. Map of Collaboration Network Between Authors

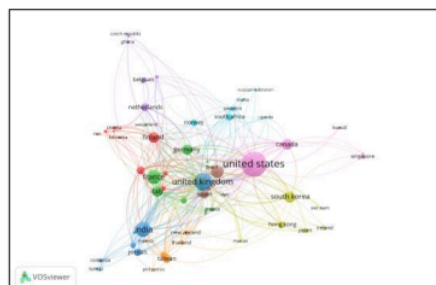


Figure 4. Map of the International Collaboration Network Between Countries

International Collaboration Network Between Countries

To understand the dynamics of research collaboration on a global scale, a network map of countries was also constructed. In this map, the size of the nodes represents the total citations received by a country, and the connecting lines indicate publications resulting from collaborations between countries. This visualization is presented in Figure 4 below.

Overall, this map confirms that although productivity and influence are concentrated in a few key countries, progress in this field is largely driven by a broad and dynamic international collaboration network.

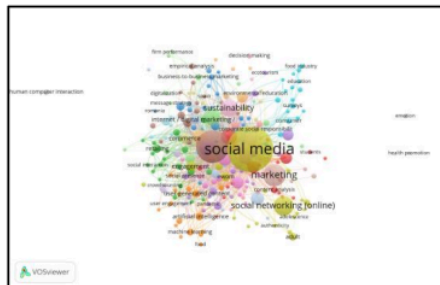
Conceptual Structure Analysis: Keyword Co-occurrence Map

The final stage of network analysis is mapping the conceptual structure of social media marketing research. For this purpose, keyword-based co-occurrence analysis is used. This method identifies thematic relationships between concepts based on their frequency of co-occurrence within a single document. Visualization of this network produces an intellectual map, where each node

represents a keyword, the node's size indicates its significance, and colored clusters represent key research domains.

Concept Identification Based on Occurrences and Total Link Strength

To gain a comprehensive understanding, keyword significance was measured using two VOSviewer metrics. Figure 5 visualizes the network based on occurrences, highlighting topics with the highest discussion volume. Meanwhile, Figure 6 visualizes the network based on total link strength, identifying the most central concepts that serve as links in the intellectual structure.



4
Figure 5. Keyword Co-occurrence Map
Keywords Based on Occurrences

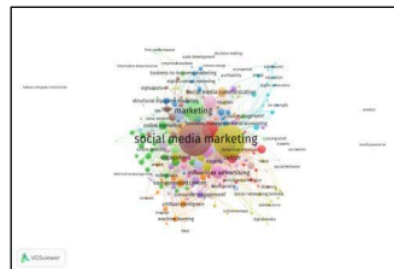


Figure 6. Keyword Co-occurrence Map Based
on Total Link Strength

This indicates that social media marketing is the most central core concept and serves as the primary link for almost all other research topics. Other concepts that also exhibit high total link strength are engagement, influencer advertising, consumer engagement, and user-generated content, indicating the crucial role these keywords play in connecting various research subtopics.

Thematic Cluster Analysis of Research

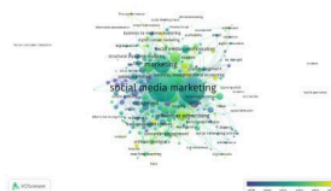
Based on the network analysis in Figure 6, five main thematic clusters were identified that represent the dominant research areas in social media marketing:

1. Cluster 1 (Red): Influencer Marketing and Behavioral Analytics
2. Cluster 2 (Green): Brand Strategy and Online Engagement
- 27
3. Cluster 3 (Blue): Corporate Communications and Management
4. Cluster 4 (Yellow): Consumer Perspectives and Experiences
5. Cluster 5 (Orange): New Technology Applications and Contexts

Overall, this conceptual map shows that social media marketing research is a mature field with a strong foundation in brand strategy and consumer behavior, which continues to evolve with technological developments and new phenomena such as the influencer economy.

Research Evolution and Trend Analysis (Overlay Visualization)

To gain a dynamic understanding of the evolution of this research field, a temporal overlay analysis was performed on the keyword co-occurrence map. This map (presented in Figure 7)



This overlay map analysis reveals three major waves in the evolution of social media marketing research:

1. Foundational Topics (Purple/Blue Nodes, ±2019-2020):
2. Core and Mature Topics (Green Nodes, ±2021-2022):
3. Future Research Directions and Emerging Trends (Yellow Nodes, ±2023-2024):

There are several clear future research directions:

- a) **Global Crisis Context:** The emergence of keywords like covid-19 and pandemic demonstrates how researchers are actively studying the role of social media during the global health crisis.
- b) **Advanced Technology Integration:** Topics like artificial intelligence and machine learning are clear new trends, signaling the adoption of advanced computational methods for analyzing social media data.
- c) **Social Issues and Sustainability:** The emergence of sustainability as a relatively new topic demonstrates increased interest in how social media marketing can be used for sustainability and social responsibility purposes.
- d) **New Platforms:** While not as large as Instagram, the emergence of new platform-related topics (such as TikTok, identified in the previous red cluster) is also part of this wave.

Overall, this evolution map visually confirms that social media marketing research is a highly dynamic field.

DISCUSSION

Growth Trends and Patterns of Research Collaboration (Answer to RQ1)

The analysis shows that social media marketing research has grown significantly, with an annual increase of 14.51% in publications. This rapid growth rate empirically confirms the importance of this topic in today's business and academic landscape. This finding aligns with

broader trends in digital marketing literature, which also shows significant publication growth over the past decade along with the widespread adoption of digital platforms by businesses and consumers (Lim et al., 2022). Moreover, research in this area has proven to be highly collaborative. The high rate of international collaboration (33.21%) and the number of authors per article confirm that understanding this complex topic requires collaboration across disciplines and countries, a characteristic also found in business and interactive marketing research in general. (Lim et al., 2022).

Key Contributors to the Research Landscape (Answer to RQ2)

An analysis of key contributors to social media marketing research identifies diverse patterns of influence. At the author level, figures like Dwivedi YK stand out as researchers with the highest citation impact, while others like Filieri R and Jacobson J demonstrate that scholarly influence can also be achieved through a smaller number of highly cited publications.

These patterns of influence can be further understood by analyzing the journals in which the research was published. Our previous finding, highlighting Computers in Human Behavior as one of the most influential sources, is relevant in this context. This aligns with a theoretical framework frequently used in the literature, where psychological and behavioral foundations such as engagement, trust, and parasocial interactions mediate the impact of social media marketing activities on consumer purchase intentions. (Cheung et al., 2020; L. Zhang et al., 2021). Thus, it can be concluded that the most influential researchers are those who have succeeded in integrating a deep understanding of human behavioral science into the context of marketing strategies using social media.

Knowledge Structure: Key Research Themes (Answer to RQ3)

The knowledge structure of social media marketing research has a clear foundation. Highly cited documents, such as the work of Dwivedi et al. (2021), serve as conceptual foundations that guide subsequent research. The keyword map generated by VOSviewer visually confirms the existence of five main, interconnected theme clusters. Among the various topics, the concepts of engagement and influencer marketing proved to be the most central, serving as a bridge that ties the various research areas into a coherent field of study.

This finding is consistent with previous literature reviews that also placed these two concepts at the center of their research. Engagement has long been identified as a core construct of many streams of social media marketing research (Barger et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2023). Similarly, influencer advertising has been recognized as a key mechanism for driving brand-consumer relationships and influencing purchasing decisions, as demonstrated by studies assessing the impact of influencer characteristics on consumer behavior. (Chen et al., 2021; Pereira et al., 2023). Therefore, the function of these two concepts as central links in the network

visualization produced by this study is a reflection of the fundamental position of these two concepts in the literature, where they often act as intermediaries between brand strategy and consumer response.

Research Development Direction: From Basics to Future Trends (Answer to RQ4)

The topic evolution analysis reveals a clear developmental trajectory in social media marketing research. Following a foundation phase focused on fundamental topics like brand management and a maturation phase delving into specific mechanisms like purchase intention, the current phase, marked by yellow topics, indicates significant future research trends. The emergence of topics like artificial intelligence, sustainability, and the COVID-19 context indicates that the research focus has expanded substantially.

¹⁹ These findings empirically confirm predictions from various recent literature reviews. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) has become a major trend in digital marketing strategies, enabling companies to create personalized content and conduct more accurate predictive analysis (Amin, 2025; Sánchez-Núñez et al., 2020). Similarly, the emergence of sustainability as a significant new topic aligns with the increasing emphasis on environmental and social value-based brand communications in digital marketing literature. ³⁰ (Herrada-Lores et al., 2024; Mim et al., 2022). Therefore, the evolution identified in our map is not a random shift, but rather a reflection of a broader transformation in which social media marketing research is moving beyond a purely commercial focus towards a field that is more integrated with technology and aware of social responsibility. (Wamba & Queiroz, 2021).

²⁴ CONCLUSION

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 843 social media marketing articles (2015-2025) from Scopus Q1/Q2 journals. Key findings reveal that social media marketing research is a dynamic, highly collaborative field with a diverse landscape of influence, featuring key contributors such as author Dwivedi YK and the journal Computers in Human Behavior. Structurally, research in this field is organized around central themes such as engagement and influencer advertising, and shows a clear evolution from foundational topics towards future research directions that integrate technologies such as artificial intelligence and social issues such as sustainability. Overall, this study contributes by providing a data-driven map that can guide researchers in understanding the current state of the field and identifying promising areas of research. ³¹ ³²

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