A Bibliometric Review of Social media Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

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Abstract

Social media influencer marketing has developed as an effective marketing strategy in recent times. The study aims to gather previous literature on social media influencer marketing and its impact on consumer behaviour by conducting a bibliometric analysis of 568 articles collected from Dimensions database. The data was analysed by using VOSviewer software and bibliometric tools like citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, bibliographic coupling and co-citation analysis. Citation analysis revealed prominent articles, authors and journals and co-authorship analysis found out the collaboration relationships among authors and countries. Bibliographic coupling and co-citation analysis discovered intellectual structure of the research domain with the help of thematic clusters obtained from network maps. The research provides an overview of the topics studied so far under social media influencer marketing (characteristics of social media influencers, parasocial relationships, sponsorship disclosure) and their effect on consumer behaviour (consumer attitude and purchase intention).

Keywords: influencer marketing, social media influencer marketing, social media influencers, consumer behaviour, consumer attitude, purchase intention

1. Introduction

The popularity of social media platforms has created a whole new arena for companies and brands, forcing them to seek new interactive ways of reaching and engaging with their target consumers. Social media has altered the way marketers communicate with the consumers. Nowadays consumers are not just passive recipients of traditional advertisements on television or print media but an active part of online marketing on social media platforms as it provides them an opportunity to share their thoughts and feedback about a product or service with other users. Consumers also help in promoting the brand they like by sharing a video or reel on YouTube or a story on Instagram. Due to the sheer scalability of social media, some users of social media develop a mass audience, attract followers and also advise them, thus, becoming a social media influencer (SMI). These SMIs share content in the form of pictures or videos on these social media platforms, resulting in activities like sharing, liking or subscribing which helps them in gaining popularity among their followers. This engagement of SMI with their followers have also encouraged companies to collaborate with these SMIs in order to reach a broader audience on these social media platforms (Martínez-López et al., 2020). Brands have realised that consumer behaviour (awareness, perception, intention, purchase, repurchase and recommend) can be influenced through these SMIs. This has resulted into a new form of marketing called influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is

a type of social media marketing that involves collaborating with influencers to promote products or services. The fusion of social media and influencer marketing has given rise to a new concept in marketing, known as social media influencer marketing which involves the use of social media influencers (SMI) to endorse brand's product and services in the form of pictures, texts or videos on various social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook etc (Vrontis et al., 2021).

The research domain of social media influencer marketing has gained academic interests in recent years mainly focussing on exploring the concept, its development and effectiveness. Researches have also studied the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer behaviour (perception, attitude and intention). This new marketing strategy has garnered a lot of attention of academia as well as the industry, producing research articles and literature reviews. Previous literature reviews and bibliometric analysis papers have studied influencer marketing or social media influencer marketing as a separate topic, and not with consumer behaviour, the present study aims for a comprehensive bibliometric analysis on the subject of social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. The present study will help in understanding the concept of social media influencer marketing and its impact on consumer behaviour through tabulation and visualisation techniques.

Bibliometric analysis is a method for exploring and evaluating large volumes of scientific data (Donthu et al., 2021). It includes quantitative analysis of bibliometric data using various techniques like citation analysis, author collaboration, bibliographical coupling, co-citation analysis and keyword co-occurrences. This systematic collection and examining of bibliographic data will guide the researchers to comprehend about the research domain in a detailed manner by knowing the most cited research papers, authors and their collaborations, highly cited sources and organization and thematic clusters of the topic for future research work on social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour.

The research questions that the study aims to address are:

RQ1- What are the year wise publication trends and areas of research covered in previous studies?

RQ2- What are the most cited articles and productive journals in the research domain?

RQ3- What are the most significant countries that have contributed to the research domain?

RQ4- What are the major themes that emerge after co-authorship analysis and bibliographic coupling?

The bibliometric analysis will be able to provide an overview of concepts, trends and visualisation networks on social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. The study will act as a reference for further research and provide insights for development of the research domain.

1. Research Methodology

2.1 Data collection
Data collection is the first step of the bibliometric analysis. The search was conducted on September 14, 2024 in Dimensions database. Dimension database was used for data extraction as it is one of the largest research resources to extract high quality research articles with 144 million publications. The access to Dimensions database is free in comparison to other such research databases. Data from the research database includes title, authors, abstract, publication year, source, country of research organization, citations received and cited references. A total of 564 journal articles were collected from research database after placing the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

2.2 Data Extraction
After selecting the research database, various search criteria were applied. The keywords used in the search were ("social media influencer marketing" OR "influencer marketing" OR "social media influencers") AND ("consumer behaviour" OR "buyer behaviour" OR "purchase intention" OR "consumer attitude" OR "consumer perception"). After keyword search, 831 documents were obtained. The search was limited to English language journal articles and marketing (3506) as the field of research, this yielded 564 documents at the end of placing inclusion criteria. Table 2 provides a tabular representation of the extraction process.

2.3 Methods

The present study has used VOSviewer to conduct bibliometric analysis. VOSviewer is a software tool created by (Van Eck & Waltman, 2018). It is used for constructing and visualizing bibliometric data in the form of network diagrams based on various techniques like citation analysis, co-authorship relations, bibliographic coupling and co-citation analysis. A network diagram consists of nodes and networks, which represent relatedness and strength of the links (Van Eck & Waltman, 2018).

The techniques of VOSviewer have been used to find out the most cited articles, journals and to carry out geographical analysis of publications. The visual maps have been used to understand co-authorship analysis and bibliographic coupling has been used to understand thematic clusters of the research domain of social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour.

Database	Dimensions	
Criteria	Exclude	Include
Search Date- 14 September 2024 Search term- (social media influencer marketing OR influencer marketing OR social media influencers) AND (consumer behaviour OR buyer behaviour OR purchase intention OR consumer attitude OR consumer perception)		831
Publication type- Articles	174	657
Language- English	10	647
Fields of Research- Marketing (3506)	77	570
Removal of erroneous documents	2	568

Table 1. Bibliographic data extraction process

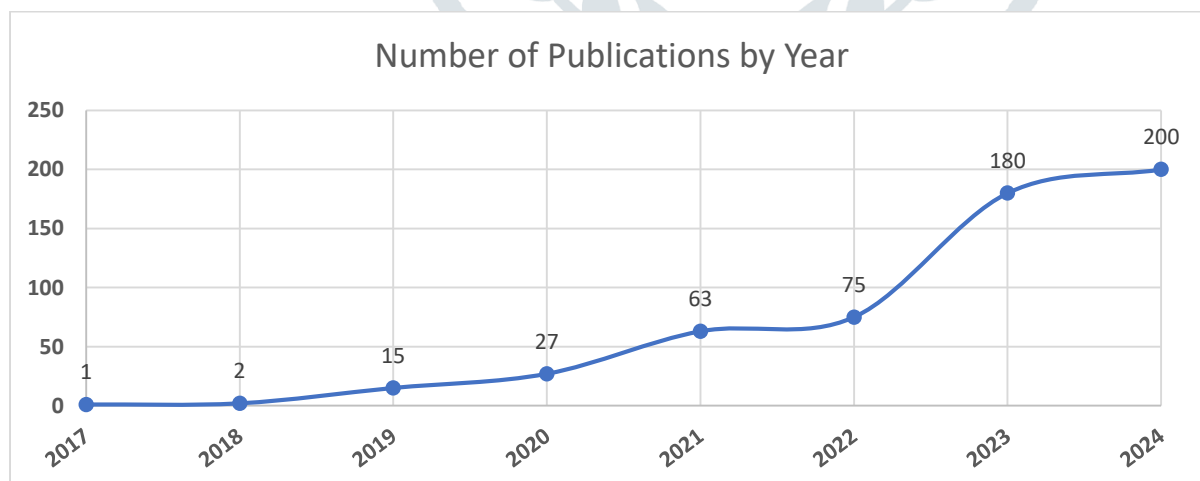## 2. Results

3.1 Year-wise Publication Output

Figure 1. Year-wise Publication

Data collection process had retrieved 568 articles written by 1360 authors and published by 365 journals. Figure 1 provides number of articles published in a given year, it is observed that articles about social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour have grown steadily over the years, with the highest in 2023-24. This shows that the research domain is being studied extensively in recent years.

During the initial years (2017-19), the studies focussed on understanding whether influencer marketing can affect purchase intention (Jean Lim et al., 2017), brand reputation, consumer trust (Lou & Yuan, 2019), influencers' marketing credibility(Xiao et al., 2018), brand attitude (De Veirman et al., 2017) and consumer brand admiration (Trivedi & Sama, 2020). The researches also explored the difference between celebrities versus social media influencers endorsement and their advertising effectiveness (Jin et al., 2019).

The years from 2020 to 2022 saw the development of research domain further by examining the characteristics of social media influencers that impact consumer behaviour, namely credibility (includes trustworthiness and expertise) (Chetioui et al., 2020; Duh & Thabethe, 2021; Schouten et al., 2020), attractiveness (Daimi & Tolunay, 2021; Koay et al., 2022), authenticity (Agnihotri et al., 2023), homophily (Kim & Kim, 2021; Masuda et al., 2022) and content related attributes of social media influencer ((Chloe) Ki et al., 2022) and influencer-product congruency (von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021). The studies in the period also focussed on understanding the psychological aspects of social media influencer marketing (Pick, 2021), specifically parasocial interactions of social media influencers with the consumers and how it affects consumer buying behaviour (Agnihotri et al., 2023; Aw & Chuah, 2021; Reinikainen et al., 2020).

In the years 2023-24, an exponential rise in the research articles is observed in the research domain, this can be attributed to further advancement of the field of social media influencer marketing into areas like sponsorship disclosure and its effect on consumer purchase intention (Koay et al., 2023). The researches in this period have delved with mediating and moderating variables like brand attitude (Zniva et al., 2023), emotional attachment between credibility of influencers and consumer purchase decision (Shoukat et al., 2023), parasocial interaction between influencer authenticity and consumer purchase behaviour (Agnihotri et al., 2023), credibility of influencer's post between trust on social media influencer and online purchase intention (Khan et al., 2024). Moreover, the studies of the period have also examined the effects of social media influencer marketing on consumer behaviour across different consumer groups like millennials and Generation Z (Hazari & Sethna, 2023; Mahmood et al., 2023; Rizomyliotis et al., 2024), various countries and segments like fashion and beauty (Nagvanshi et al., 2023; Tiwari et al., 2024).

Analysis of the year-wise publication of articles has helped in understanding the evolution of the research domain; from studying cause and effect of social media influencer marketing on consumer behaviour, further studies focussed on other aspects like parasocial interactions, congruency, sponsorship disclosures and later studies made the research area more broad based by examining it across consumer groups, segments and different geographical setting.

3.2 Citation Analysis

1) Most cited Articles and Authors

The analysis was carried out with the help of VOSviewer software to identify the prominent articles, organizations and countries that have carried out research on the topic and their associations. In 566 articles and 1360 authors, the top 10 articles with maximum citations are provided in Table 2.

Rank	Title	Authors	Citations
1.	Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on social media	Lou, Chen; Yuan, Shupei	1255
2.	Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit	Schouten, Alexander P.; Janssen, Loes; Verspaget, Maegan	788
3.	Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda	Vrontis, Demetris; Makrides, Anna; Christofi, Michael; Thrassou, Alkis	528

4.	The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers desire to mimic	Ki, Chung Wha Chloe; Kim, Youn Kyung	348
5.	Factors affecting YouTube influencer marketing credibility: a heuristic-systematic model	Xiao, Min; Wang, Rang; Chan-Olmsted, Sylvia	312
6.	The impact of social media influencers on travel decisions: the role of trust in consumer decision journey	Pop, Rebeka-Anna; Saplacan, Zsuzsa; Dabija, Dan-Cristian; Alt, Mnika-Anetta	304
7.	˜You really are a great big sister "parasocial relationships, credibility, and the moderating role of audience comments in influencer marketing	Reinikainen, Hanna; Munnukka, Juha; Maity, Devdeep; Luoma-aho, Vilma	284
8.	When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers disclosure	Kay, Samantha; Mulcahy, Rory; Parkinson, Joy	276
9.	The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention and the Mediation Effect of Customer Attitude	Lim, Xin Jean; Mohd Radzol, Aifa Rozaini bt; Cheah, Jun-Hwa (Jacky); Wong, Mun Wai	249
10.	Influencer Endorsements: How Advertising Disclosure and Source Credibility Affect Consumer Purchase Intention on social media	Weismueller, Jason; Harrigan, Paul; Wang, Shasha; Soutar, Geoffrey N	242

Table 2. Most cited articles

2) Most cited Journals

Rank	Journals by document	Documents	Journals by citation	Citations
1.	Journal of Retailing and Consumer services	14	International Journal of Advertising	1425
2.	Journal of Business Research	12	Journal of Interactive Advertising	1316
3.	International Journal of Advertising	11	Journal of Marketing Management	653
4.	Sustainability	11	Journal of Business Research	638
5.	Psychology and Marketing	8	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	609
6.	Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	7	International Journal of Consumer Studies	597
7.	Journal of Product & Brand Management	6	Psychology and Marketing	453
8.	Journal of Promotion Management	6	Journal of Product & Brand Management	415
9.	International journal of Internet Marketing	6	Current Issues in Tourism	304
10.	International Journal of Consumer Studies	5	Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management	264

Table 3. Journals by documents and citations

3.3 Geographical Analysis of Publications

Analysis was conducted to find out the prominent countries in terms of number of documents published by the authors and highest number of citations from specific geographical regions. Table provides the geographical analysis of publications.

Rank	Countries by document	Documents	Countries by citation	Citations
1.	USA	65	USA	4391
2.	China	34	Singapore	1442
3.	Indonesia	32	South Korea	944
4.	India	25	Australia	935
5.	Malaysia	20	Netherlands	792
6.	United Kingdom	18	China	776
7.	South Korea	17	United Kingdom	737
8.	Australia	16	Germany	533
9.	Germany	11	Cyprus	528
10.	Taiwan	9	India	475

Table 4. Countries by documents and citations

The country with maximum number of research articles is USA (65) followed by China (34), Indonesia (32) and India (25). According to the number of citations, USA topped the list with 4391, followed by Singapore (1442), South Korea (944) and Australia (935). USA comes out as the most productive country in terms of both number of articles and citations.
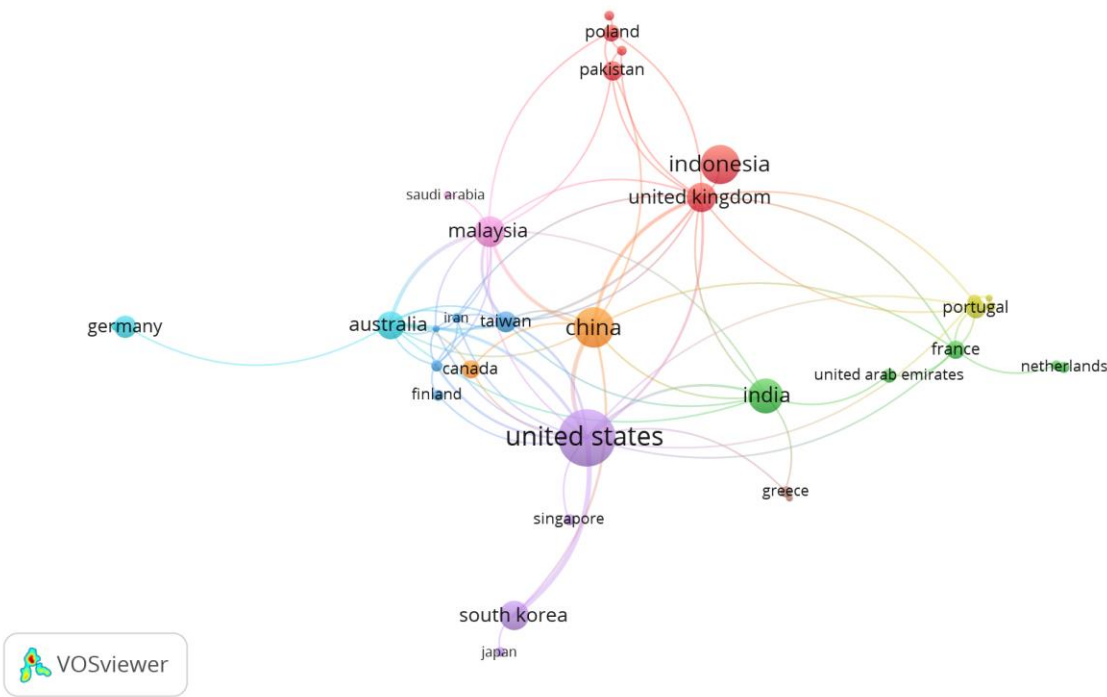

Figure 2.Country Co-authorship Network

Figure 1 presents the country co-authorship network of social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour with nine clusters. The large nodes represent the influential countries that have actively collaborated with each other in the research domain. The network lines between the nodes represent the cooperative relationships among countries. Thickness of network lines show the level of cooperation between the countries. Out of 57 countries, with minimum of one document and ten citations, 33 countries were linked with each other in nine clusters. The prominent cluster was red with six countries led by United Kingdom. The highest link strength (8) was observed between USA and South Korea, followed by USA and China (6) and China and United Kingdom (4), implying that a greater number of authors of these countries collaborated with each other on the

research domain. The largest node is of USA with the highest number of links (17), followed by United Kingdom (14), Malaysia (14), Australia (11), China (10) and India (8), indicating the authors of these countries have worked together the most in the research area.

3.4 Author Collaboration Analysis

Figure 3 shows the collaboration map among the authors who have published on social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. The size of the node represents the number of articles published by the author and the network lines represent the cooperation between the authors. Out of 1360 authors that have been included in the bibliometric analysis, only 12 authors have co-authored research articles. Two authors Kian Yeik Koay and Weng Marc Lim have published four articles each and collaborated with each other as well as other authors. Koay and Lim together have worked on congruence effects of social media influencer marketing and social media influencer's self-disclosure on purchase intentions. The analysis also shows that very few authors have collaborated in this research domain and there is a need for authors to engage more in this research area for its further development.
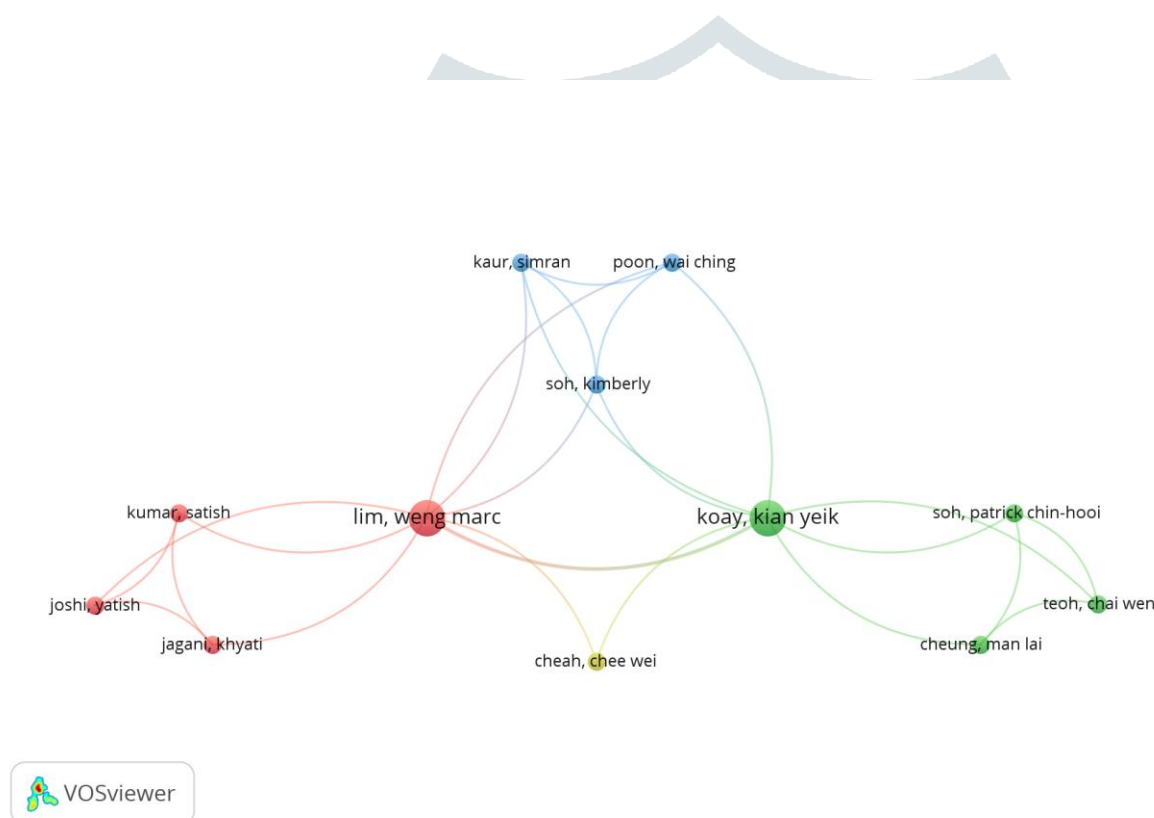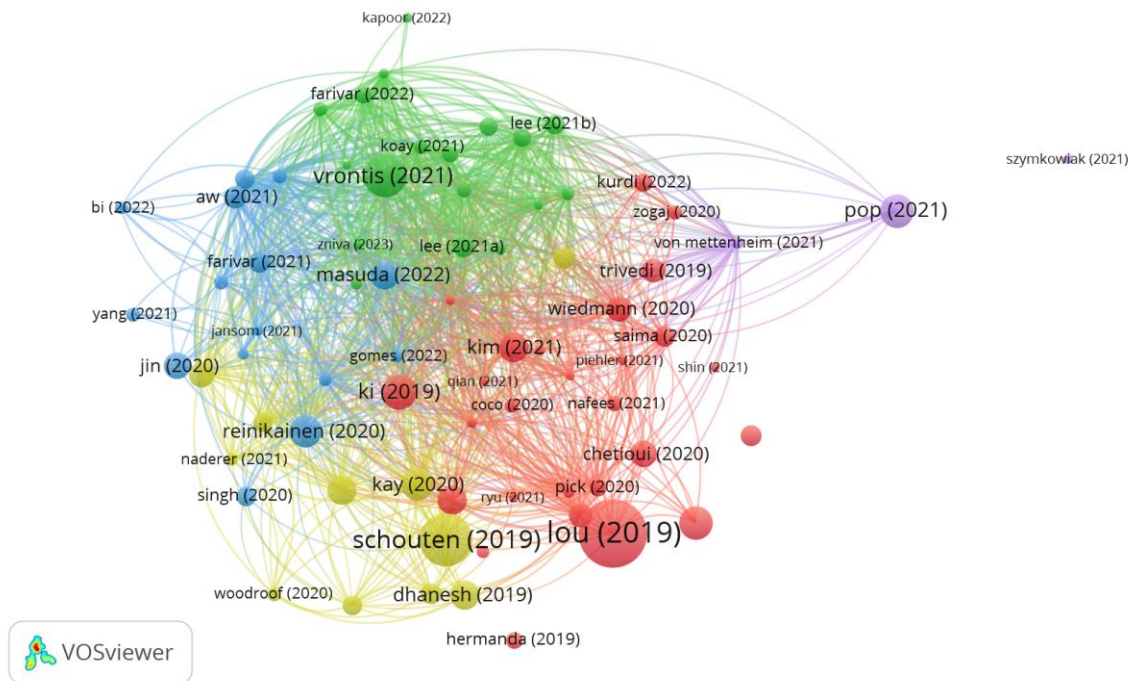

Figure 3. Co-Authorship Analysis

Figure 4. Bibliographic Coupling

3.5 Bibliographic Coupling

Bibliographic coupling is a metric of bibliographic analysis used to find thematic similarities in the bibliographic data. Two articles are bibliographically coupled if they share a common reference, the more the references are shared, higher is the bibliographic coupling. Figure 4 depicts the bibliographic network where the size of the nodes represents the number of citations received by the article and the network lines represent relationship links between the articles. The link strength shows the number of references that the articles share with each other. Out of 568 articles, 82 articles met the inclusion criteria of at least 20 citations and 74 articles were connected with each other. The network diagram with 74 articles were divided into five clusters based on bibliographic coupling. The theme clusters identified through bibliographic coupling are:

1. Cluster 1 in red colour is the largest of all clusters with 27 articles. It is mostly concerned with **characteristics of influencers and the effect of these characteristics on consumer purchase behaviour** (attitude, intention) and consumer trust. The most prominent article in the cluster is (Lou & Yuan, 2019) which focuses on the effect of influencer credibility and message value on consumer trust. Other prominent studies like (Chetioui et al., 2020) examined the characteristics of fashion influencers that contributed to consumers' purchase intention, (Ki & Kim, 2019) observed how social media influencer's influence attempts (attractive, showcasing, expertise, informative and interactive content) affect consumers purchase intention and positive word of mouth, (Kim & Kim, 2021) assessed whether influencers characteristics (expertise, physical attractiveness, authenticity and homophily) affected consumer attitude and purchase intention and (Trivedi & Sama, 2020) studied the effects of influencer marketing on online purchase intention.

2. Cluster 2 in green colour with 18 articles relates **to conceptual and deeper understanding of the research domain** of social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. (Vrontis et al., 2021) (Joshi et al., 2023) studied the concept of social media influencer marketing, trends and its future research agenda. (Farivar & Wang, 2022) examines the effect of opinion leadership of influencer and follower's social identity on consumer purchase intention. (Fakhreddin & Foroudi, 2022) observes that originality, quality and quantity are the main elements that make a social media user into an opinion leader capable of affecting consumer purchase decision. (Koay et al., 2022) studied the moderating role of materialism between social media influencer characteristics and consumer purchase intention.

3. Cluster 3 in blue colour with 15 articles relates **to influencer marketing and parasocial relationships**. (Masuda et al., 2022) noted that out of all the characterizations and personal attributes of social media influencers, parasocial relationships came out to be the one which significantly positively impacted purchase intention. (Aw & Chuah, 2021) examines the antecedents and outcomes of follower's parasocial relationships with social media influencers. (Reinikainen et al., 2020) observed that parasocial relationship with the influencer builds the perceived credibility of the influencer and this in turn positively affects brand trust and purchase intention.

4. Cluster 4 in yellow colour with 11 articles pertains to **influencer marketing and sponsorship disclosure**. (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019) studied that consumers awareness of paid sponsorship by social media influencers leads to advertisement recognition which is related to word of mouth and purchase intention. (Kay et al., 2020) examined the impact of endorsement disclosure by macro and micro influencers on consumer evaluation and purchase intention. (Woodroof et al., 2020) studied the impact of disclosure type of social media influencer on consumer perception of influencer transparency, product efficacy and purchase intention.

5. Cluster 5 in purple colour deals with three articles, (von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021) studies the **impact of congruency** (actual self-congruence, ideal self-congruence and brand congruence) on brand trust and purchase intention. Other two studies relate to tourism and hospitality industry. (Pop et al., 2022) examined the impact of social media influencers on travel decisions and role of trust on consumer decision making process.
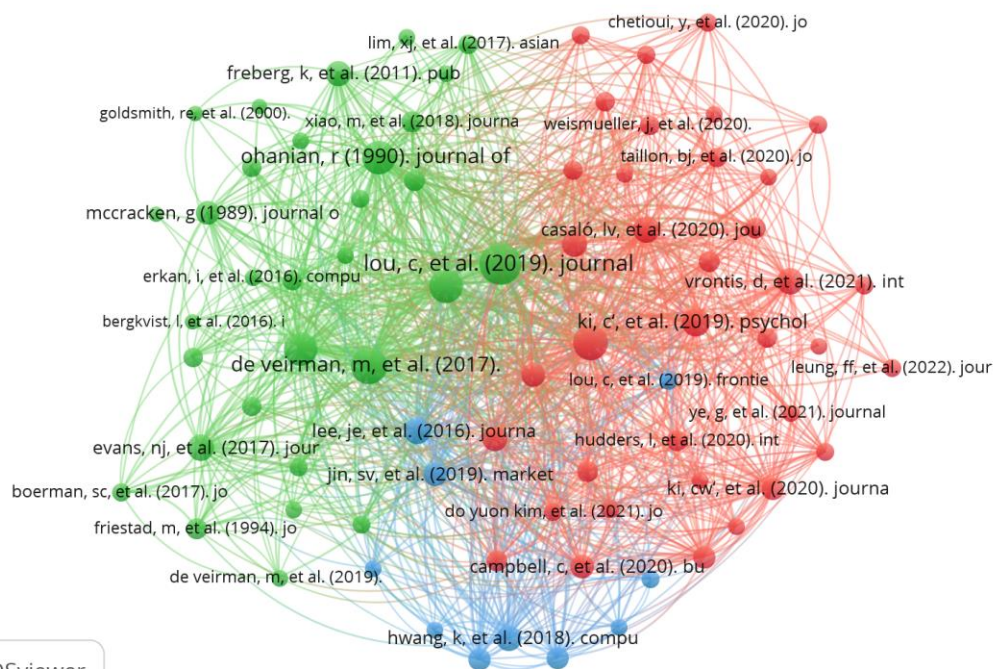
3.6 Co-citation Analysis

Figure 5. Co-citation Analysis

Co-citation is a metric of bibliographic analysis which measures the frequency with which two articles are cited together, helping to understand the contextual and thematic similarities based on topic, theory and methodology of the articles (Small, 1973). Co-citation analysis aids in understanding the intellectual structure of the research domain and relationships among cited references. Figure 5 depicts the network map of co-citation analysis based on cited references, the nodes represent cited references' author, publication year and journal. The size of the node illustrates the number of times the reference is cited by other articles and the thickness of the network lines

represent the co-citation frequency. 568 articles were collected for the study, 8895 cited references were examined in VOSviewer. The minimum number of citations of the cited reference was kept as 20, 77 references were selected for the co-citation analysis. The clusters obtained were-

1. Cluster 1 in red colour is the largest of all clusters with 36 articles. The articles in the cluster focus on studying the **characteristics of social media influencers** like credibility (trustworthiness, expertise), attractiveness, similarity, authenticity that affect brand engagement, brand admiration and consumer purchase intention. Another area of study is the congruence between product, influencer and consumer which positively affects consumer purchase intention (Belanche et al., 2021).

2. Cluster 2 in green colour with 31 articles focus on the **theoretical development** of the domain, mainly the theories used for studying the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer behaviour. The articles in the cluster were preliminary and exploratory studies that aimed at utilizing existing theories like Source credibility theory of (Ohanian, 1990), Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 2011), Meaning transfer model of McCracken (1989) to examine the research domain as well as development of new models like social media influencer value (SMIV) model by (Lou & Yuan, 2019). California Q-sort analysis was used by (Freberg et al., 2011) to understand the perception towards social media influencers. (De Veirman et al., 2017) used the (Ohanian, 1990) theory as well as naïve theory of exclusivity and popularity to understand the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude.

3. Cluster 3 in blue colour with 10 articles focus on studying the **impact of social media influencers paid endorsement** on electronic-Word of Mouth (e-WOM) and purchase intention (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). (Chung et al., 2023) examined the effect of three types of sponsorship disclosure (implicit, explicit and no disclosure) on engagement, attitude and purchase intention. The effect of parasocial relationships of social media influencers on followers' purchase and electronic word-of-mouth is examined by (Hwang & Zhang, 2018).

Conclusion

The bibliometric study has covered the research domain of social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour from 2017 to 2024 with 568 articles from Dimensions database. The year-wise publication output revealed a steady rise in the published articles during the period (2017-24) and evolution of the topic of study from understanding the effect of social media influencer marketing on consumer behaviour to examining areas like characteristics of social media influencers, parasocial interactions, sponsorship disclosure and their impact on consumer behaviour. Citation analysis shows the highly cited papers, most influential authors and productive countries that have contributed to the development of the research area. Geographical analysis of publication revealed that earlier the studies were focussed on certain countries like USA, UK in which influencer marketing as a marketing strategy was very successful but later it became popular in other countries like China, Indonesia, India, South Korea and others.

Co-authorship analysis shows the collaboration network based on countries and authors, bringing to notice that more collaboration should be encouraged in the research domain. Bibliographic coupling and co-citation analysis on the data discovered themes established by examining the clusters obtained from the network maps, it helped in identification of the subjects which have been studied earlier in the research area of social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour.

The shortcomings of the research include the scope of the study which is limited to articles from only one database, that is Dimensions. Secondly, the search terms comprise of limited number of keywords. Dimensions database does not gather keywords used by the published articles which reduces the range of articles to be studied. The VOSviewer software used in the study also has certain constraints, the large network of maps is sometimes difficult to understand. The present study examines the bibliometric analysis of the research domain in detail providing stable and reliable results.

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