COLLABORATIVE TRENDS IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND CONSUMER BRAND ATTITUDE: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF CO-AUTHORSHIP NETWORKS

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the collaborative trends in the research domain of social media marketing (SMM) and consumer brand attitude by conducting a bibliometric analysis of co-authorship networks. It examines how the volume of research has evolved over time and identifies key contributors—authors, institutions, and countries—shaping the field. The study adopts a systematic bibliometric approach using the Scopus database. An initial search yielded 352 records, which were filtered down to 265 peer-reviewed journal articles based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The analysis involves temporal mapping of publications and co-authorship network analysis at three levels: authors, organizations, and countries. The PRISMA protocol was followed to ensure transparency in data selection, and VOSviewer software was used for network visualization. Additionally, a modified TCCM framework was applied to identify theoretical and methodological trends and future research directions. The study shows a steady rise in research on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude, with publication peaks in 2024. Author-level analysis reveals limited collaboration, with key contributors like Kim Mikyoung and Choi Yung Kyun forming small clusters. At the organizational level, institutions such as the Department of Information Systems, University of Gloucestershire, and Edith Cowan University demonstrate active co-authorship networks. Country-level analysis highlights the United States, India, China, and the United Kingdom as central to international collaboration, forming nine distinct global clusters.

The study is limited to documents indexed in the Scopus database and written in English, which may exclude relevant research published in other languages or indexed elsewhere. Additionally, only final-stage journal articles were considered, excluding conference proceedings and early access papers. The study provides valuable insights for academics and practitioners seeking to identify potential research collaborators, emerging hubs of knowledge, and under-researched areas. It also guides institutions and policymakers in fostering global and interdisciplinary collaborations in SMM research. This paper contributes to the literature by offering one of the first comprehensive co-authorship analyses in the field of social media marketing and consumer brand attitude. It maps the intellectual and collaborative structure of the field and provides a forward-looking research agenda based on empirical network evidence and thematic synthesis.

Keywords: Social media marketing, Consumer brand attitude, Co-authorship analysis, Bibliometric study, VOSviewer, Collaborative networks, TCCM framework, Scopus, Influencer marketing, Research trends

1. Introduction

The digital era has brought the marketing industry to a paradigmatic shift because social media have become the heart of the relationships between brand and consumer (De Veirman et al., 2017). With the decline in the power of traditional advertising techniques, influencer marketing has become yet another formidable force that has completely changed the way brands interact with their audience (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019). Such a change has led scholars to introduce the term Product Placement 2.0, explaining that there is a growing lacks of distinction between organic material and paid endorsements (Jin et al., 2019). This transformation is all about consumer brand attitude which is a psychological feature that can be described as the most generalized review of a brand that is in the mind of an individual (Schivinski& Dabrowski, 2016). Learning the extent to which the strategies of social media marketing (SMM) rely and affect these attitudes has become critical both to the academics and practitioners.The proliferation of such platforms as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok has made content creation democratized, granting the possessors of such power, influencers, the power not seen before in terms of their ability to dictate consumer behavior (Boerman & van Reijmersdal, 2020). Investigations also claim there are ways to make global celebrities worthwhile in that lower-profile micro-influencers can create a better level of interaction and confidence about their promotions owing to their presumed genuineness (Lee & Eastin, 2020). The success of influencer marketing- however, depends on several factors, which include compatibility between the persona of the influencer and the brand, making it difficult to state the effectiveness of influencer marketing as the Cheng and Bijik country actors found out (Shan et al., 2020),

and the lack of transparency of sponsorship disclosure (De Veirman& Hudders, 2020). These complications emphasize the requirement to carry out a thorough analysis of the impact of various forms of social media content (including sponsored posts or user-generated content (UGC)) on consumer perceptions about brands (Muller & Christandl 2019).

Over the past years, the literature concerned with this topic has exploded, but it is still incomplete and dispersed among other fields such as marketing, psychology, and communication studies (Wang et al., 2019). Though the investigation of specific parts of SMM and brand attitude is thoroughly characterized, it is high time to have a comprehensive synthesis that would plot the development of that stream of research (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). One of the most effective strategies to do so is to use bibliometric analysis since this allows scholars to establish the main trends in the area, the most influential publications, and cooperation trends (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Through such method, we can effectively use the identified critical gaps in the literature and give a valuable idea of research directions.

Despite the growing interest in this area, so far, no effort has Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication been made to provide a thorough mapping of the existing literature. This study aims to address this gap by comprehensively analysing existing literature and setting directions for future research to guide scholars and practitioners. Considering the diverse evidence in the literature and the contemporariness of the subject, this study attempted to address the following research questions:

RQ1.How has the volume of research on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude evolved over time?

RQ2.What are the key patterns of co-authorship among individual authors in the field of social media marketing and consumer brand attitude?

RQ3.Which institutions are most active in publishing research on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude, and how are they interconnected through co-authorship?

RQ4.Which countries have contributed most to the literature on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude, and what are the major international collaboration patterns?

We use a hybrid approach to map and review the literature. First, we used the modified Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, PRISMA henceforth, protocol to select relevant articles, as it reduces the bias in the selection of studies (Moher et al., 2009; Tranfield et al., 2003). Further, bibliometric analysis of the existing literature is done to map the patterns, which gives us insight into the current trends and future opportunities in the area (Muhuri et al., 2019; Donthu et al., 2021). Several Relevant matrices such as Theory, Context, Characteristics, Method (TCCM), performance analysis and scientific mapping were employed to investigate the research direction (Baker et al., 2021; Donthu et al., 2021; Paul et al., 2018).

By addressing these research questions, this study makes two significant contributions. It begins by critically analysing and synthesising the social media marketing and brand attitude research. The remaining part of this paper is as follows: Section 2 covers the detailed literature review. Section 3 describes the methodology. Section 4 discusses the bibliometric Section 5 discusses the research gaps and sets the agenda for future research. Section 6 discusses the practical implications of the research. Finally, we conclude the study in section 7.

The practical implications of this research are equally significant. As brands continue to allocate substantial portions of their marketing budgets to social media campaigns (Kim & Ko, 2019), understanding what strategies effectively shape consumer attitudes becomes paramount. Our findings will offer actionable insights for marketers seeking to optimize their influencer partnerships and content strategies. Moreover, by identifying geographical and institutional research trends, we shed light on potential disparities in knowledge production and opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration in SMM research.

2. Review of Literature

The formation of consumer brand attitude in the environment of social media is based on a few well-researched theoretical frames. Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) offers a rather productive perspective on the way customers receive information about the brand on social platforms (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). The attitude towards brands can be developed along central or peripheral routes as stated by ELM based on the level of involvement of the consumer. One more theory useful in high-involvement contexts is focused on the perception of message content, whereas in a low-involvement situation, the factor valued more by consumers is represented by the peripheral cues such as the attractiveness of the influencer or the decrease/ increase in likes a brand gains (Lee & Eastin, 2020).Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) can also be employed with regard to the discussion of why people can form strong associations with the brands promoted by the people they identify with. Consumers become more susceptible to carry over positive emotions to the brand being endorsed when they sense some form of correspondence between themselves and the image of an influencer (Shan et al., 2020). It is most notable in the case of luxury brand community where consumers have tendency of engaging the brands to indicate social status (Kim et al., 2019). PSRs concept has attracted significant coverage in the contemporary SMM literature (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The one-sided emotional bonds that followers establish with the influencers may greatly promote brand attitude build-up (Munnukka et al., 2019). The studies have demonstrated that when influencers maintain an active engagement with their audience by providing personalized content, the PSRs will be stronger and, thus, lead to the success of their brand promotion (Torres et al., 2019).

The nature of the content that the consumers access in the social media is critical towards determining brand attitudes. The fact that user-generated content (UGC) is perceived as authentic has been proven to be especially influential (Wang et al., 2019). This is because once they see real individuals use and recommend products, they feel safer to buy the same products (Langaro et al., 2018). Such an impact is enhanced when UGC is exhibited by non-celebrity sources because consumers are likely to read peer recommendations as more reliable than professional advertisements (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). A different case applies to sponsored content. Although brands continue to trust interpersonal relationships with influencers, the success of such cooperation lies mainly in disclosure practices (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). Studies demonstrate that clear and conspicuous disclosures (e.g., #ad or #sponsored) can actually enhance brand credibility by increasing transparency (Stubb & Colliander, 2019). However, when disclosures are ambiguous or hidden, they can trigger reactance and damage brand perceptions (Boerman & van Reijmersdal, 2020). Interactive content represents another important dimension of SMM. Features like polls, quizzes, and augmented reality filters encourage active participation, which can strengthen brand engagement and positive attitudes (Belanche et al., 2017). Such interactive elements will only be successful as long as they relate to the brand and the target market (Colliander & Marder, 2018). The effectiveness of brand endorsements greatly depends on the qualities of the influencers themselves. The source credibility theory implies that the more the influencer is seen to be trusted, knowledgeable and desirable, the more persuasive he/she is (Ohanian, 1990). Nevertheless, the relativity of such dimension's changes with products. In high-involvement purchases, such as electronics or financial services, the expertise is of primary importance and so is the focus on physical attractiveness in case of fashion or beauty products (Chetioui et al., 2020). The size of an influencer's following also affects endorsement outcomes. While mega-influencers (those with millions of followers) offer extensive reach, micro-influencers (typically with 10,000-100,000 followers) often generate higher engagement rates and more positive brand attitudes (De Veirman et al., 2017). This phenomenon, known as the "nano-influencer effect," stems from micro-influencers being perceived as more authentic and relatable (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019).

These relationships are also moderated by factors of culture. The consumers in such countries as China or South Korea, where the concepts of group harmony and social proof are more valued, will particularly respond to the influencer endorsements because they belong to collectivist cultures (Chu & Chen, 2019). The attitude toward a brand is attributed to the personal relevance and uniqueness more frequently in individualistic cultures (Trivedi & Sama, 2020). There are some promising trends transforming the SMM environment and research on which scholars should concentrate. The emergence of a new form of influencer virtual ones, computer-based characters that have a human-like appearance and personalities, not only spells opportunities but also challenges to the brands (Kong et al., 2021). While these digital entities offer complete control over messaging and never-age faces, questions remain about their ability to forge genuine emotional connections with consumers. The growing importance of short-form video content on platforms like TikTok represents another significant development (Yang, 2022). The unique algorithmic distribution and creative possibilities of these platforms may require new theoretical frameworks to fully understand their impact on brand attitudes. Ethical concerns surrounding influencer marketing also demand greater research attention. Issues like undisclosed sponsorships, fake followers, and the psychological impact of idealized content on vulnerable populations (particularly adolescents) require rigorous investigation (Zarouali et al., 2018). Developing ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks for influencer marketing should be a priority for both researchers and industry practitioners. Methodologically, future studies could benefit from more longitudinal designs to track how brand attitudes evolve over extended influencer partnerships (John et al., 2017). Additionally, incorporating neuroscientific methods like eye-tracking or fMRI could provide deeper insights into the subconscious processes underlying brand attitude formation in social media contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Search Strategy

To facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social media marketing and consumer brand attitude, we begin our review with a 5W (What, Why, When, Where, and Who) analysis. This is the most prominent methodology used in journalism literature. However, Callahan (2014) and Goodell et al. (2023) adopted these techniques in business and management literature. This analysis helps us to identify the relevant keywords for our area. Further, we identify relevant research articles from the Scopus database utilising the terms identified through 5W analysis (Tandon et al., 2020; Vedula and Agrawal, 2023). The Scopus database is more comprehensive than other databases (Vedula and Agrawal, 2023). It covers more than 34000 peer-reviewed journals with over 5000 publishers worldwide in different areas of study; therefore, it is helpful to cover a sizeable portion of peer-reviewed papers (Vedula and Agrawal, 2023; Donthu et al., 2021; Bartol et al., 2014). We conclude our initial search process by utilising the terms as follows: "social media" OR "Twitter" OR "YouTube" OR "Facebook" OR "Instagram" OR "Snapchat" OR "LinkedIn" OR "Threads" OR "Digital campaigns" OR "Content marketing" OR "Social Media Marketing" OR "Influencer marketing" OR "SMM" AND "consumer brand attitude" OR "brand attitude" OR "consumer attitude toward brands". The initial search gives us 352 records. These publications' sources included books, journals, conferences, and research papers from various academic field. Table 1 shows the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Document Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference papers, book chapters, editorials, reviews, notes, and other non-article types
Language	English	Non-English language documents
Publication Stage	Final stage publications	Articles in press or early access/preprints
Subject Area	Business, Management and Accounting (BUSI); Social Sciences (SOCI); Economics (ECON); Psychology (PSYC); Computer Science (COMP); Decision Sciences (DECI)	All other subject areas such as Medicine, Environmental Science, Engineering, etc.
Keywords (Title/Abstract/Keywords)	Articles that mention terms like: "social media", "Twitter", "Facebook", "Instagram", "Influencer marketing", "consumer brand attitude", etc.	Articles not related to social media marketing or brand attitude
Time Period	Not restricted (includes all years up to date of search)	None (you may choose to restrict this later if needed)

Source: Author's analysis

3.2. Screening and eligibility assessment

　　　　We carefully reviewed the results of the search strategy phase by applying a few boundary conditions (Donthu et al., 2021; Dhingra, 2024; Verma and Mukhtaruddin, 2023). We narrowed these records based on subject area, document type, publication stage, source type and language **(Figure 1)**. It would help us to comprehend the study, which reduced the list's length to 274 articles. All the relevant information, such as title, abstract, source, authors' details and other bibliographic information, was extracted in Excel. Further, we screened the records based on the articles' relevance to the research objective; at the end of this step, we had 265 relevant articles for quantitative bibliometric analysis. To comprehend our discussion using qualitative technique, we used thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Ray et al., 2024).

3.3. Structure of the Review

　　　　We adapted the PRISMA protocol to ensure reliability and minimise bias in the study selection (Moher et al., 2009; Martiny et al., 2024). Further, we used a hybrid approach to map the scientific evidence (Rosado-Serrano et al., 2018; Dabić et al., 2020) **(Figure 2)**. Firstly, bibliometric analysis is done to map out the anatomy of knowledge in the area (Donthu et al., 2021). Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative technique that efficiently deals with a large volume of literature using keywords to map research trends, co-citation and cooccurrence analyses (Zamore et al., 2018). Bibliometric analysis is frequently used in managerial research to explain the contributions and connections between the various research components with minimum subjective bias (Xu et al., 2018; Donthu et al., 2021). Vosviewer are used for bibliometric analysis.

　　　　Further scientific mapping is done to carve out a broader image of the topic (Donthu et al., 2021). Moreover, we present our analysis using the modified version of the TCCM framework (Paul et al., 2021; Paul and Benito, 2018). Figure 2 presents the approaches used for different research objectives.
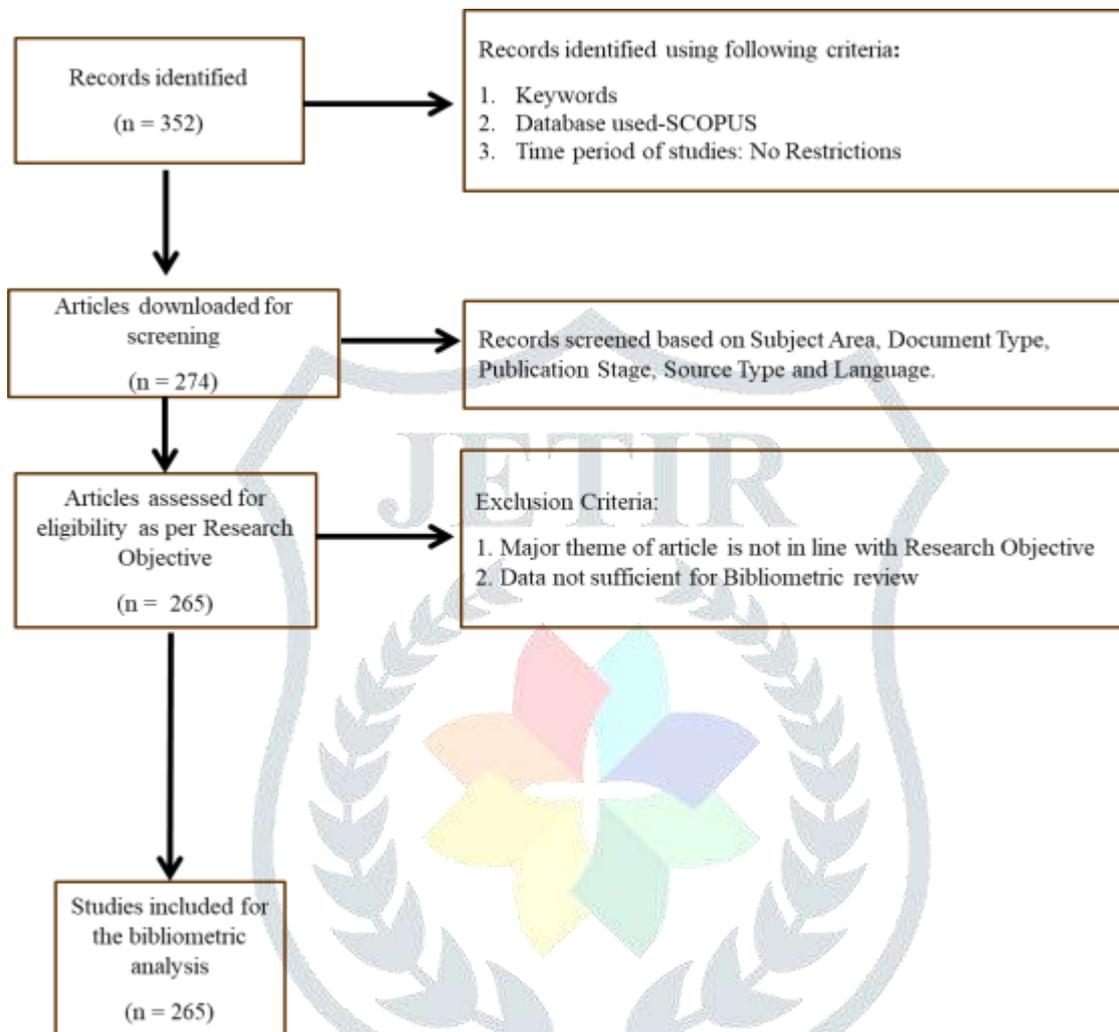
Figure 1: PRISMA Framework, adapted from Moher et al. (2009)
Source: Author's analysis

Research Questions

RQ1. How has the volume of research on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude evolved over time?
RQ2. What are the key patterns of co-authorship among individual authors in the field of social media marketing and consumer brand attitude?
RQ3. Which institutions are most active in publishing research on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude, and how are they interconnected through co-authorship?
RQ4. Which countries have contributed most to the literature on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude, and what are the major international collaboration patterns?

Research Methodology

Defining Search Terms

Search String: "social media" OR "Twitter" OR "YouTube" OR "Facebook" OR "Instagram" OR "Snapchat" OR "LinkedIn" OR "Threads" OR "Digital campaigns" OR "Content marketing" OR "Social Media Marketing" OR "Influencer marketing" OR "SMM" AND "consumer brand attitude" OR "brand attitude" OR "consumer attitude toward brands"

Data Curation

Confined to:
1. Document Type: Article
2. Publication Stage: Final
3. Language: English
4. Revant subject area

Data Analysis

Bibliometric analysis
- Temporal Analysis
- Co-authorship Analysis – Author Level
- Co-authorship Analysis – Organizational Level
- Co-authorship Analysis – Country Level

Research Findings

1. Publication trend
2. Most collaborative authors
3. Most collaborative organizations
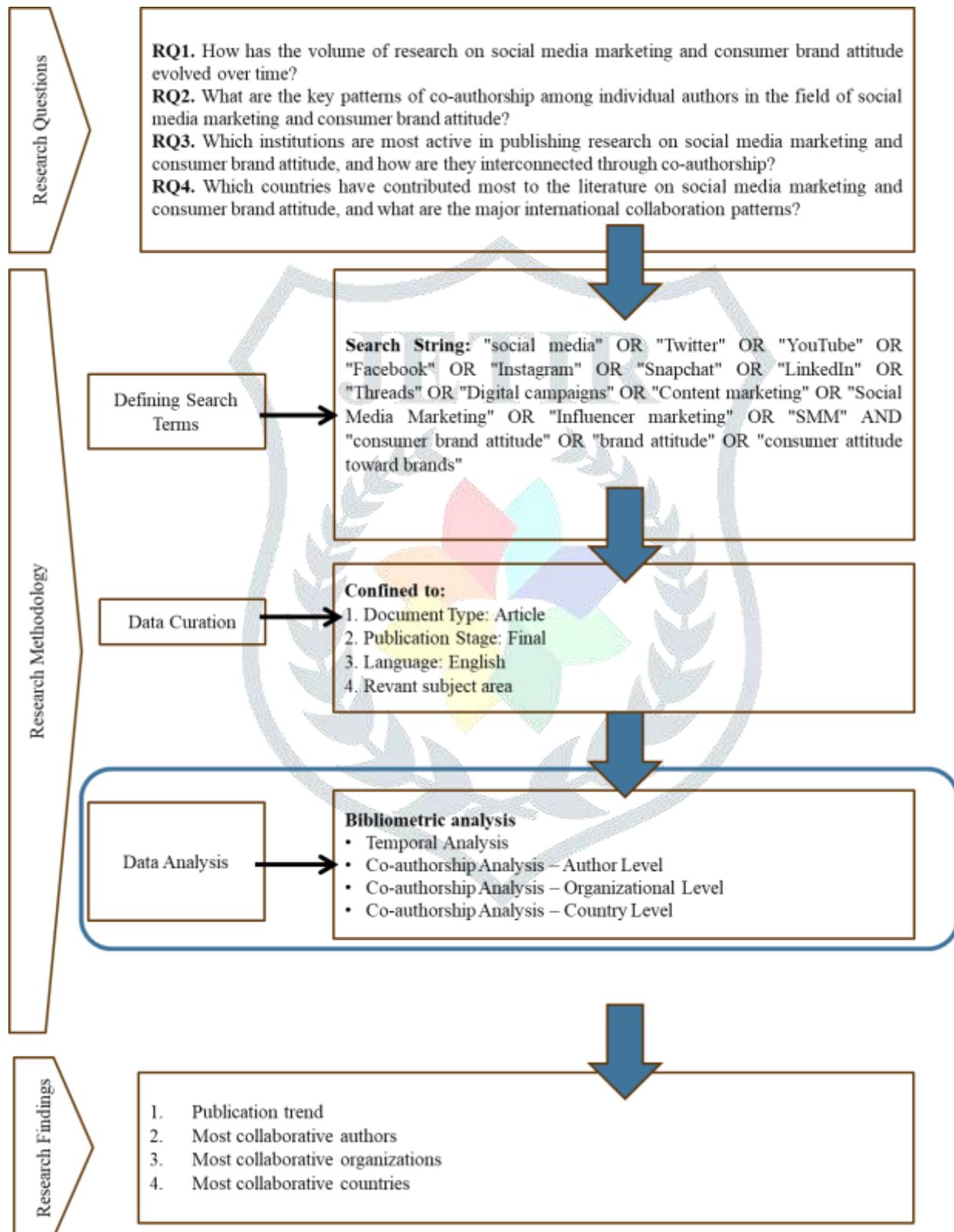4. Most collaborative countries

Figure 2: Research Design

4. Findings and discussions

4.1 Temporal Analysis

The evolution of research on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude over the years reflects a steadily growing academic interest in the topic, particularly from 2015 onward. Between 2010 and 2014, scholarly output was minimal, with only two documents published per year, indicating limited attention during the early phase of digital marketing development.

A modest rise begins in 2015, gradually increasing to nine documents in 2016, and then nearly doubling to 18 publications in 2017. Although there's a slight dip in 2018 with 14 documents, the field quickly gained momentum, seeing a substantial surge to 29 papers in 2019 and peaking at 34 in 2020. This growth likely aligns with the rapid expansion of digital platforms and heightened interest in online consumer behavior.

Interestingly, 2021 records a slight decline to 23 publications, which may reflect temporary disruptions such as shifting research priorities or pandemic-related academic delays. However, this dip was short-lived, as output stabilized again in 2022 and 2023 with 33 and 34 documents, respectively. The highest point is observed in 2024, with 37 publications, showing the topic's sustained relevance. The apparent drop to 20 in 2025 may simply reflect the partial nature of the year's data at the time of analysis.
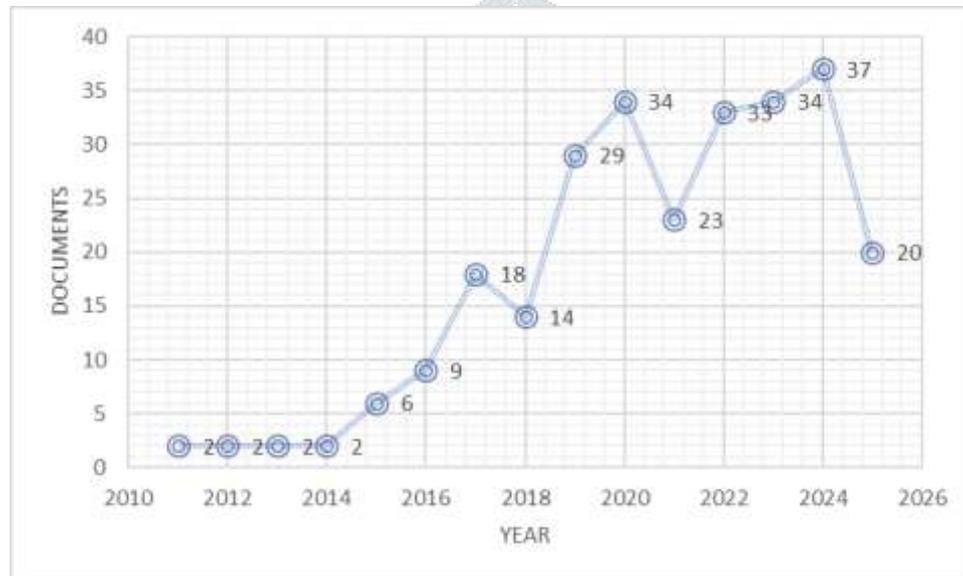

Figure 3: Temporal growth in literature
Source: Author's Analysis

4.2 Co-authorship Analysis – Author Level

The co-authorship network at the author level reveals a relatively limited but emerging structure of collaboration within the field of social media marketing and consumer brand attitude. Out of a total of 675 authors identified in the dataset, only 15 formed the largest connected network, indicating that the overall collaboration among researchers in this area remains fragmented.

The analysis yielded five distinct clusters, each representing groups of authors who frequently collaborate with each other. Within these clusters, a few central figures stand out. Kim Mikyoung appears as the most prominent node, suggesting her influential role in the field and frequent collaboration with authors such as Lee Mira, Lee Jin Kyun, and Zhu Haiyun. Another central figure is Choi Yung Kyun, who bridges different clusters and collaborates closely with Han Dain Danny and Seo Yuri, serving as a potential link between otherwise separate author groups. Yoon Sukki also plays a notable role in another cluster, working alongside Rialti Riccardo, Zollo Lamberto, and Kim Kacy, indicating a different research stream or regional collaboration pattern. These authors seem to operate within tightly-knit groups, which is common in specialized or emerging academic domains.

The network's relatively low number of inter-cluster links (23 links across 15 nodes) suggests that collaborative efforts across different author groups remain limited. This fragmentation points to a need for more cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary partnerships to enhance knowledge sharing and foster innovation in this growing research area.
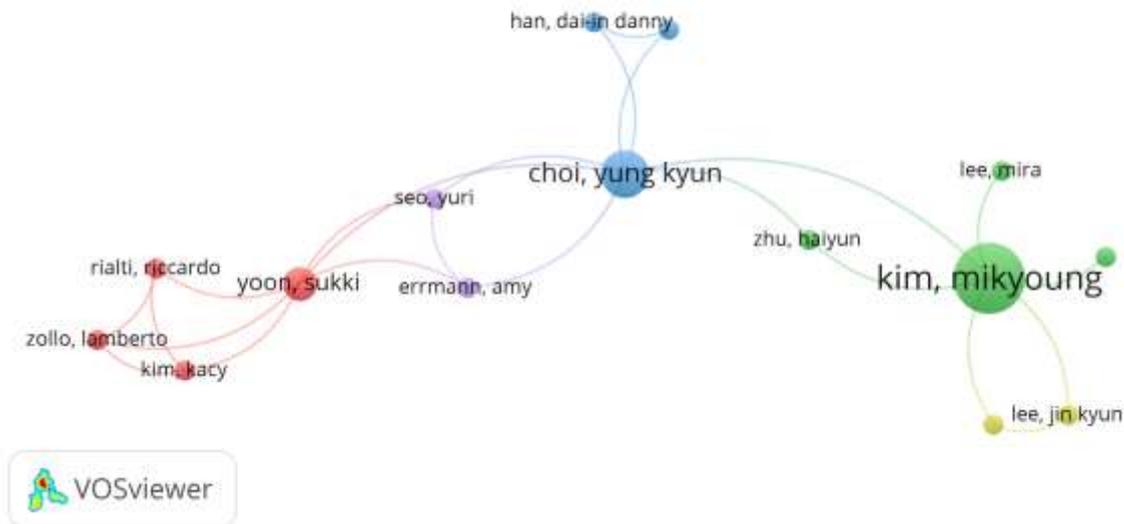
Figure 4: Network Visualization of Authors
Source: Author's Analysis

The overlay visualization adds a temporal layer to the co-authorship network, where node colors represent the average year of publication. Blue and purple hues indicate earlier research activity (closer to 2018), while green and yellow highlight more recent contributions (up to 2024). Kim Mikyoung appears as a central figure in the network but with a bluish-purple node, indicating that her most active publishing phase occurred around 2018. Her collaborations with Lee Mira and Lee Jin Kyun likely contributed to early foundational work in the field.

On the other hand, Zollo Lamberto, Kim Kacy and Yoon Sukki are represented with yellow-tinted nodes, pointing to more recent engagement, especially in the period between 2022 and 2024. This suggests that these authors are currently active in expanding research on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude. Choi Yung Kyun holds a strategically central position with a green-colored node, indicating a consistent presence around 2020–2021. His collaborations span both earlier and more recent contributors, marking him as a potential knowledge bridge between clusters.
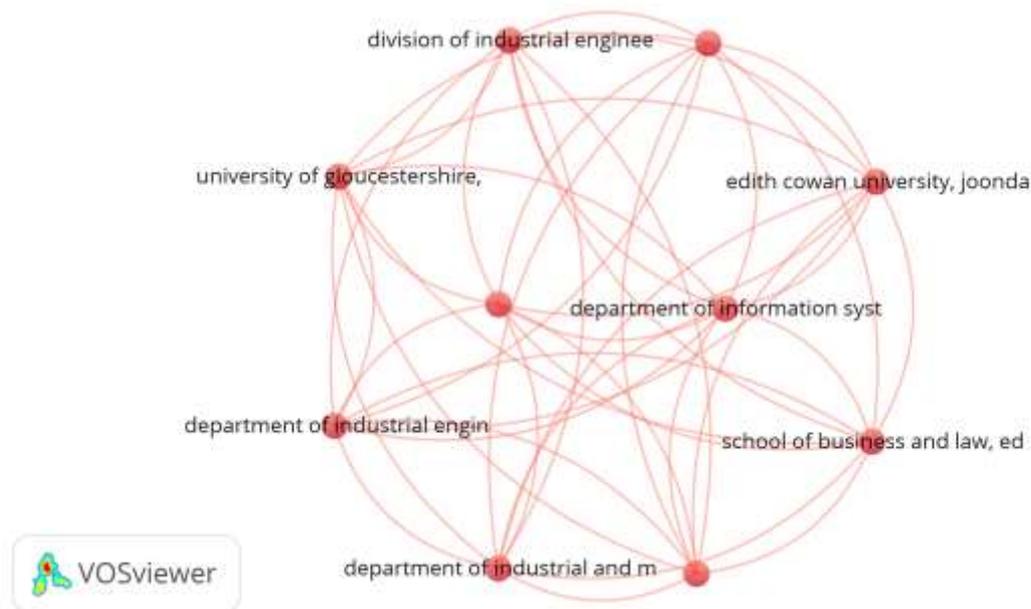

Figure 5: Overlay Visualization of Authors
Source: Author's Analysis

4.3 Co-authorship Analysis – Organizational Level

The organizational-level co-authorship analysis visualized through VOSviewer offers insights into collaborative patterns among institutions involved in research on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude. Based on the applied thresholds—where even a single document and zero citations qualified an organization for inclusion—the analysis identifies 10 interconnected institutions forming the largest cluster in the dataset. This dense and tightly-knit network, comprising one unified cluster with 45 co-authorship links, suggests a significant degree of collaboration among these organizations. Central to this network is the "department of information syst," which appears to act as a collaborative hub, establishing strong links with nearly all other institutions in the group. Other frequently collaborating nodes include the "department of industrial and m," "university of gloucestershire," and "edith cowan university, joonda," all of which show multiple connection lines,

indicating active scholarly engagement across institutional boundaries. The presence of a single dominant cluster highlights a focused group of institutions that are not only prolific in publishing but also demonstrate a preference for cross-institutional teamwork. This suggests an emerging or existing research community that shares common interests in the domain and benefits from mutual collaboration to enhance knowledge exchange and research output.
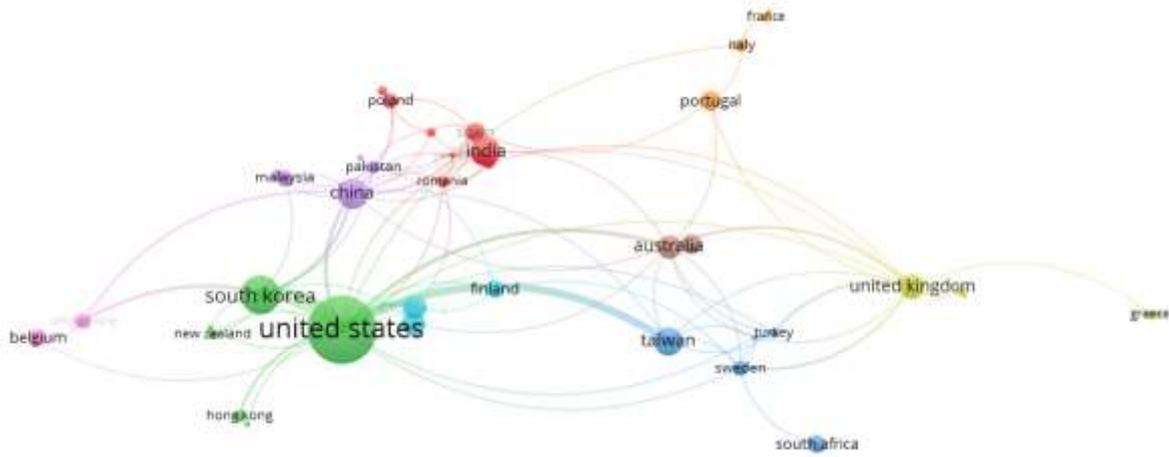

Figure 6: Network Visualization of Organizations
Source: Author's Analysis

4.4 Co-authorship Analysis – Country Level

The country-level co-authorship analysis reveals a detailed overview of international research collaborations in the field of social media marketing and consumer brand attitude. Based on the criteria set—at least one publication and zero citation minimum—59 countries qualified for inclusion. However, not all countries are connected to one another, with the largest network consisting of 46 interlinked countries, suggesting a substantial but not entirely cohesive global research landscape.

This network forms 9 distinct clusters, indicating the presence of regional or thematic research communities. Among them, the United States stands out as the most central and influential country, with the highest number of connections and the strongest linkages to various nations, including South Korea, China, the United Kingdom, Australia, and others. The total link strength of 133 reflects the depth and frequency of these collaborative ties. Countries like India, China, Australia, and the United Kingdom also emerge as key contributors, forming active collaborative networks. India, for instance, is closely linked with countries across Asia and Europe, including China, Romania, and Portugal. Similarly, the United Kingdom connects strongly with European neighbors like Portugal, Italy, and Greece, as well as with global partners such as Australia and Sweden.Meanwhile, countries such as South Africa, Turkey, and Taiwan act as important nodes in smaller but vibrant clusters, reflecting growing engagement in this research area. The presence of European countries like France, Belgium, and Poland further emphasizes the geographic diversity of the field.

Figure 7: Network Visualization of Countries
Source: Author's Analysis

The overlay visualization provides a temporal dimension to the co-authorship landscape by highlighting the evolution of international collaborations in the domain of social media marketing and consumer brand attitude research. This figure uses a color gradient—ranging from dark blue (older publications, around 2020) to yellow (recent publications, closer to 2024)—to represent the average publication year of contributions from each country. The United States remains the most prominent and well-connected country in this network, depicted with a large node and dark blue hue, indicating its early and sustained involvement in this research area. Similarly, countries such as India, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Belgium, Singapore, and New Zealand also show earlier contributions, as reflected by their darker node colors. In contrast, countries likeAustralia and China are shaded in green, suggesting the engagement around 2023 in the field. Notably, theGreece and Romania appear toward the yellow end of the spectrum, indicating their research activity in this domain has become more prominent in the recent years, especially post-2023.
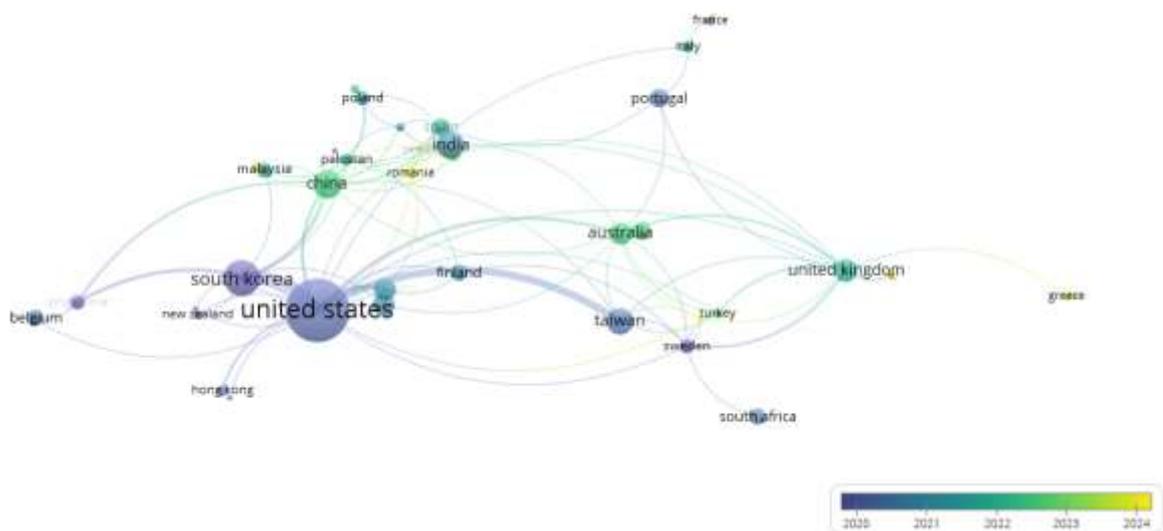
Figure 8: Overlay Visualization of Countries
Source: Author's Analysis

5. Future research agenda

Based on the insights drawn from the TCCM framework and the emerging research themes, several future research directions can be proposed to advance the field of social media marketing (SMM) and consumer brand attitude. First, from a theoretical standpoint, existing studies often rely on well-established frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, Source Credibility Theory, and Parasocial Interaction Theory. However, future studies could benefit from integrating multiple theoretical lenses or constructing hybrid models that account for the complexity of modern digital engagement. This approach would provide a more holistic understanding of how consumers form brand attitudes in rapidly evolving social media environments.

In terms of context, research has been predominantly centered on fashion, luxury, and beauty sectors within developed economies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and South Korea. There is significant room to explore

underrepresented industries like healthcare, education, and B2B services, as well as emerging markets where social media usage is expanding rapidly. Expanding the contextual focus would enhance the global applicability and relevance of existing theories and findings.

Regarding characteristics, prior work has extensively examined influencer attributes such as credibility, follower count, and congruence. However, there is a growing need to explore newer content formats like ephemeral stories, short-form videos, livestream shopping, and AI-generated content. The rise of brand activism and value-based marketing on platforms such as Threads and TikTok also warrants deeper investigation, particularly in how such content shapes consumer brand attitudes in culturally diverse settings.

Methodologically, the field has largely been dominated by surveys and experiments, with only a few studies employing bibliometric or qualitative techniques. Future research should incorporate mixed-method approaches, longitudinal studies to track attitudinal changes over time, and computational tools like big data analytics, machine learning, and text mining. These methods could reveal deeper patterns in consumer-brand interactions and provide richer insights into evolving behaviors.

On the topic of antecedents, while constructs like brand trust, social media engagement, and perceived influencer congruence have been explored, emotional and value-driven antecedents remain underdeveloped. Future work should examine how emotions such as envy, admiration, or moral alignment influence consumer-brand relationships. Additionally, the role of value co-creation and shared identity in shaping brand loyalty could be a fruitful avenue for study.

Lastly, future research should pay closer attention to emerging and underexplored themes such as the ethical implications of influencer marketing, including disclosure transparency, data privacy, and manipulative persuasion tactics. Comparative studies across platforms and cultures could also reveal how technological affordances and societal norms shape consumer perceptions differently. Moreover, with the rise of generative AI, the use of virtual influencers and chatbots in brand communications presents a timely and impactful direction for future investigations.

Table 2: Proposed future research direction

Dimension	What Has Been Done	Identified Gaps	Future Research Directions
T – Theory	Studies frequently apply theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Social Identity Theory, Parasocial Interaction Theory, and Source Credibility Theory to explain consumer-brand relationships via social media.	Lack of integrated or comparative use of multiple theoretical perspectives in explaining dynamic consumer-brand engagement on evolving platforms (e.g., Threads, TikTok).	Future research can adopt multi-theoretical models or develop hybrid frameworks to better capture evolving consumer-brand dynamics.
C – Context	Most studies focus on sectors like fashion, beauty, retail, and luxury brands, with a geographic emphasis on developed markets like the US, UK, and South Korea.	Underrepresentation of sectors such as B2B services, sustainability-driven brands, and geographic gaps in emerging economies.	Examine SMM strategies in underexplored contexts like healthcare, education, and in developing countries to offer more globalized insights.
C – Characteristics	Influencer characteristics (e.g., credibility, follower count, congruence) and content traits (e.g., interactivity, disclosure, aesthetic) are widely studied.	Limited work on evolving content forms (e.g., ephemeral content, live streaming, AI-generated content) and the role of brand activism in influencing attitudes.	Future research could focus on the influence of short-form video, real-time interaction (e.g., livestream shopping), and AI-generated influencers.
M – Methodology	Dominated by quantitative methods, especially surveys and experiments; some content analysis and bibliometric studies like yours are emerging.	Lack of mixed-method approaches and longitudinal studies that track attitude shifts over time; minimal use of big data or AI in analyzing consumer sentiments.	Encourage mixed-methods, longitudinal designs, and the use of AI/text analytics tools for large-scale social media data interpretation.
Antecedents	Common antecedents include influencer credibility, social	Emotional antecedents (e.g., envy, admiration), social justice	Investigate the impact of emotions, social values,

Dimension	What Has Been Done	Identified Gaps	Future Research Directions
	media engagement, brand trust, perceived congruence, and interactivity.	alignment, and value co-creation have not been widely explored.	and co-created brand narratives on consumer brand attitude in the SMM context.
Research Themes	- Influencer marketing and para-social relationships		

Source: Author's analysis

6. Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the existing literature on social media marketing and consumer brand attitude by highlighting the evolving landscape of global scholarly collaboration through a bibliometric lens. The co-authorship analysis at the author, organizational, and country levels reveals not only the dominant contributors but also the emerging players in this domain, offering a clearer understanding of the field's intellectual structure. The findings suggest that while well-established theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, Source Credibility Theory, and Parasocial Interaction Theory remain relevant, they may not be sufficient on their own to fully capture the nuances of modern, digital brand-consumer interactions. Therefore, future theoretical development should consider integrating these with newer frameworks that account for emotional, social, and algorithm-driven dimensions of online engagement.

Additionally, the underrepresentation of certain contexts—such as emerging economies and non-traditional sectors—points to a gap in theory generalizability. Expanding the theoretical scope to accommodate these diverse contexts could help refine existing models or develop new ones that better reflect global consumer realities. This study also encourages scholars to explore cross-disciplinary theories, particularly those from communication studies, psychology, and data science, to deepen our understanding of how social media shapes brand attitudes over time.

6.2 Managerial Implications

From a practical standpoint, the insights derived from this study offer valuable guidance for brand managers, marketing strategists, and social media professionals. First, the identification of highly collaborative institutions and countries can help practitioners pinpoint potential academic or industry partners for research-driven campaigns or international market strategies. Recognizing where thought leadership is emerging allows businesses to stay informed of cutting-edge trends and best practices.

Second, the growing emphasis on influencer marketing and content congruence underscores the importance of selecting endorsers who align authentically with brand values. Managers should consider not only an influencer's popularity but also the perceived sincerity and fit between the influencer and the product. As the landscape evolves toward more ephemeral and interactive content formats—such as stories, livestreams, and short videos—brands should invest in agile and platform-specific strategies to maintain relevance.

Moreover, the findings signal a rising consumer sensitivity toward ethics, transparency, and social responsibility. Marketers must ensure that sponsored content is clearly disclosed and that campaigns are aligned with broader societal values, such as sustainability or inclusivity. Brands that engage in value-driven storytelling and foster two-way communication are more likely to build positive consumer brand attitudes and long-term loyalty.

Lastly, as AI-driven technologies such as chatbots and virtual influencers become more prominent, managers must carefully balance automation with authenticity. Investing in technologies that enhance user experience—without compromising trust—will be critical for sustaining meaningful consumer relationships in the digital age.

7. Conclusion

This study offers a comprehensive bibliometric exploration of collaborative trends in the domain of social media marketing (SMM) and consumer brand attitude, drawing from a refined sample of 265 peer-reviewed journal articles retrieved from the Scopus database. By employing co-authorship analysis across three levels—authors, organizations, and countries—alongside a temporal publication trend review, the research uncovers both structural and developmental insights into this rapidly growing academic field.

The temporal analysis clearly illustrates a sharp and sustained increase in scholarly interest since 2015, peaking in 2024, which underscores the expanding relevance of SMM in shaping consumer perceptions and brand engagement. The consistent growth in publication output reflects the increasing significance of digital platforms in marketing strategies and the academic community's response to these evolving dynamics. Co-authorship analysis at the author level revealed a fragmented research landscape, with only a small group of authors forming a connected network. This suggests that despite a growing body of literature, collaborative efforts among individual scholars remain limited and largely siloed within close-knit groups.

There is substantial potential for fostering broader collaboration to facilitate more interdisciplinary and global research perspectives. At the organizational level, the findings highlight a cohesive network of institutions actively contributing to the field, with the "Department of Information Systems" emerging as a central hub of academic collaboration. This level of institutional engagement suggests that while individual authors may not collaborate extensively, their affiliations often do, indicating the importance of institutional strategies in promoting joint research activities. The country-level analysis reveals a well-connected but uneven global network. The United States, United Kingdom, China, and India emerged as dominant contributors, frequently collaborating with other nations across Europe, Asia, and Oceania. However, the presence of distinct clusters also indicates regional collaborations that could benefit from more cross-cluster integration to enhance global research synergy. Further, this study not only maps the intellectual structure of the SMM and brand attitude research domain but also identifies clear opportunities for future inquiry. Increased collaboration among authors, broader cross-national partnerships, and the inclusion of underrepresented regions and contexts will be essential for the field's continued evolution. The findings also highlight the need for theoretical diversification, context-specific exploration, and methodological innovation.

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