



The Intellectual Structure of Social Media Marketing Research: A Bibliometric Analysis and Future Research Agenda

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital technologies and online platforms has significantly transformed marketing practices, leading to the increasing importance of social media marketing in contemporary business strategies. As scholarly interest in this field continues to expand, it becomes essential to understand the intellectual structure and thematic development of social media marketing research. This study aims to map the knowledge structure and identify key research themes within the social media marketing literature through a bibliometric analysis. Using data retrieved from the Scopus database, this research applies bibliographic coupling and network visualization techniques with the assistance of VOSviewer to analyze relationships among publications and identify major thematic clusters within the field. The findings reveal several interconnected research streams that highlight the role of social media in shaping digital marketing strategies, consumer engagement, brand relationships, and consumer decision-making processes. The results also demonstrate that social media marketing research is inherently multidisciplinary, integrating perspectives from marketing, digital communication, and business management. By mapping the intellectual structure of the field, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolution of social media marketing research and provides a foundation for identifying emerging research directions and future research opportunities in digital marketing.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing; Bibliometric Analysis; Digital Marketing; Consumer Engagement; Bibliographic Coupling; VOSviewer

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and online platforms has profoundly transformed contemporary marketing practices, leading to the emergence of social media marketing as a dominant paradigm in digital communication and consumer engagement. Organizations increasingly rely on social media platforms to interact with consumers, disseminate brand narratives, and build long-term relationships within dynamic digital ecosystems. Unlike traditional marketing channels, social media enables real-time interaction, participatory communication, and user-generated content, allowing firms to co-create value with consumers while simultaneously expanding their market reach. As digital connectivity continues to expand

globally, businesses are integrating social media marketing strategies to enhance brand visibility, strengthen customer relationships, and influence consumer decision-making processes in highly competitive digital markets. Recent studies highlight that social media marketing plays a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions, brand trust, and online engagement behaviors across multiple digital platforms (Cao et al., 2024; Cotroneo et al., 2026; Nagvanshi & Kumar, 2026; Rhizlane et al., 2026).

The increasing importance of social media in marketing strategies has generated significant scholarly interest across disciplines such as marketing, communication studies, information systems, and digital business. Researchers have explored how interactive communication, digital engagement, and algorithm-driven content distribution influence consumer behavior and brand performance in online environments. Empirical research demonstrates that social media marketing activities, including influencer collaborations, electronic word-of-mouth, and interactive content strategies, significantly enhance consumer engagement and brand loyalty in digital communities (Goel & Singla, 2026; Kukreja et al., 2026; Lee et al., 2026; T. Liu et al., 2026; X. Wang et al., 2024). Similarly, emerging studies suggest that organizations are increasingly adopting sophisticated digital strategies, such as influencer partnerships and community-based marketing campaigns, to foster stronger relationships with online audiences and encourage consumer participation in brand-related activities (Ali et al., 2025; Sasidharan, 2026; Tomás-Miquel et al., 2026; Zandi Nasab et al., 2026). These developments indicate that social media marketing has evolved beyond a simple promotional tool into a strategic mechanism for building digital brand ecosystems and facilitating continuous interactions between firms and consumers.

Technological advancements have further intensified the strategic relevance of social media marketing by enabling organizations to leverage data analytics, artificial intelligence, and personalized content delivery to optimize marketing performance. Through advanced analytics and machine learning algorithms, firms can analyze consumer behavior patterns, identify emerging trends, and design targeted marketing campaigns that resonate with specific audience segments. Recent research highlights that the integration of artificial intelligence and data-driven analytics into social media marketing allows companies to enhance campaign effectiveness while improving customer experience through personalized content recommendations (Abbas et al., 2025; Laingoen et al., 2026; S. Li et al., 2026; Qadeer & Bouri, 2026). In addition, digital marketing strategies increasingly incorporate social commerce functionalities, enabling consumers to discover, evaluate, and purchase products directly within social media platforms. These innovations are reshaping the digital marketing landscape by blurring the boundaries between social interaction, information sharing, and online purchasing behaviors (Andersen et al., 2026; Ma & Zhu, 2025; Y. Wang et al., 2025; Zaidi & Chandra, 2024).

The growing complexity of social media marketing ecosystems has also encouraged scholars to investigate broader conceptual issues related to digital engagement, consumer trust, and online community dynamics. For instance, recent studies emphasize the importance of user-generated content and peer-to-peer communication in shaping brand perceptions and consumer attitudes within social media environments (Koçak & Akçalı, 2025; Sassu, 2025; Valdiviezo Sir et al., 2024). Other research highlights the strategic role of social media platforms in facilitating collaborative knowledge exchange between consumers and organizations, thereby strengthening brand relationships and promoting long-term customer loyalty (Leković et al., 2024; Satrevis et al., 2025). Furthermore, the rise of digital communities and participatory culture has transformed consumers from passive recipients of marketing messages into active contributors who influence brand narratives through reviews, recommendations, and social interactions (Nanjundappa & Naganna, 2024). These developments underscore the increasingly multidimensional nature of social media marketing and its implications for both academic research and managerial practice.

Despite the rapid growth of social media marketing scholarship, the expanding body of literature has become highly fragmented across various research streams and thematic domains. Scholars have examined diverse topics such as influencer marketing, digital engagement, online brand communities, social commerce adoption, and consumer trust in social media environments. While these studies provide valuable insights into specific aspects of social media marketing, the proliferation of research across multiple disciplines has created challenges in understanding the overall intellectual structure of the field. Recent research indicates that the interdisciplinary nature of digital marketing research often results in dispersed theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches, making it difficult to synthesize the accumulated knowledge within a coherent conceptual structure (Faraoni et al., 2025). As a result, scholars face increasing difficulties in identifying dominant research themes, influential publications, and emerging research trends within the rapidly evolving domain of social media marketing.

Another challenge arises from the methodological limitations of traditional literature review approaches, which often rely on narrative or systematic review methods that may not fully capture the complex citation networks and thematic relationships present within large volumes of academic publications. Although such approaches provide valuable qualitative insights, they may lack the quantitative rigor required to systematically map the intellectual landscape of a rapidly expanding research field. Recent methodological studies emphasize that bibliometric analysis offers a powerful analytical framework for examining scientific knowledge structures, as it allows researchers to analyze citation patterns, collaboration networks, and keyword relationships across extensive datasets (Nam et al., 2025). By applying quantitative techniques such as citation analysis, co-word analysis, and bibliographic coupling, bibliometric studies can reveal hidden patterns within scholarly literature and identify the conceptual foundations that shape the evolution of research fields.

In the context of social media marketing research, bibliometric analysis provides an effective approach for addressing the challenges associated with fragmented literature and dispersed research streams. By systematically analyzing publication trends, citation networks, and thematic clusters, bibliometric mapping enables researchers to identify influential studies, leading scholars, and emerging research topics within the field. Recent bibliometric investigations in related digital marketing domains demonstrate that knowledge mapping techniques can reveal important insights into the development of research themes and the interdisciplinary relationships that characterize contemporary marketing scholarship (Alshahrani et al., 2025). Moreover, bibliometric approaches facilitate the identification of intellectual linkages between different research streams, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the conceptual evolution of digital marketing research (Raman et al., 2025).

Although previous studies have explored specific dimensions of social media marketing, several research gaps remain in understanding the broader intellectual structure and thematic evolution of this rapidly developing field. First, much of the existing research focuses on empirical analyses of consumer behavior, digital engagement, or marketing performance without synthesizing the underlying conceptual relationships that connect these research areas. Second, limited studies have systematically examined the intellectual foundations of social media marketing scholarship using large-scale bibliometric datasets. Third, there remains a lack of comprehensive investigations that integrate multiple bibliometric techniques to identify dominant research clusters and emerging thematic directions within the field. Furthermore, the increasing integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, social commerce, and data analytics into social media marketing strategies has created new research frontiers that require systematic exploration and conceptual clarification (T. Liu et al., 2026).

Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing the theoretical development of social media marketing research and for guiding future scholarly inquiry within this dynamic domain. As the

field continues to expand across multiple disciplines, a systematic mapping of its intellectual structure becomes increasingly important for identifying key research trajectories and emerging areas of investigation. Bibliometric analysis offers a valuable methodological approach for synthesizing existing knowledge and uncovering the structural relationships that shape the evolution of research fields. By examining citation patterns, thematic clusters, and collaboration networks within the literature, bibliometric studies can provide a comprehensive overview of the scientific landscape and reveal the dominant paradigms that influence academic discourse (Cassart et al., 2025).

In response to these challenges, the present study aims to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to explore the intellectual structure of social media marketing research. The novelty of this study lies in its systematic integration of bibliometric mapping techniques to identify influential publications, dominant research clusters, and emerging thematic trends within the field. By providing a quantitative overview of the knowledge structure of social media marketing scholarship, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how the field has evolved and how different research streams are interconnected.

The findings of this study are expected to offer several important contributions. From an academic perspective, the study provides a comprehensive synthesis of the intellectual landscape of social media marketing research, enabling scholars to identify major research themes, influential authors, and emerging research directions. From a practical standpoint, the results may assist marketing practitioners and policymakers in understanding the evolving role of social media platforms in shaping digital marketing strategies and consumer engagement practices. Ultimately, this study pursues two primary research objectives. First, it seeks to identify the intellectual structure of social media marketing research through bibliometric mapping techniques. Second, it aims to analyze emerging research themes and future research directions using co-word analysis and bibliographic coupling approaches. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section describes the research methodology and bibliometric procedures employed in the study. This is followed by the presentation of the bibliometric results and thematic mapping. Finally, the discussion and conclusion sections summarize the key findings and outline potential avenues for future research.

The rapid expansion of social media has reshaped marketing communication through data-driven strategies (Cao et al., 2024) and value co-creation (T. Wang et al., 2024), where digital engagement mechanisms (Valdiviezo Sir et al., 2024) and collaborative content creation (Leković et al., 2024) foster consumer trust and brand loyalty. This evolution is further driven by influencer marketing's impact on purchase intentions (Ali et al., 2025), the role of eWOM in building digital trust (Nanjundappa & Naganna, 2024), and the integration of AI and big data to personalize consumer experiences (Abbas et al., 2024) alongside social commerce functionalities (Zaidi & Chandra, 2024). Strategically, integrated social media initiatives are vital for sustainable competitive advantage (Faraoni et al., 2025) and connecting diverse stakeholders within digital ecosystems (Nam et al., 2025), grounded in theoretical frameworks such as relationship marketing (Alshahrani et al., 2025) and social influence theory (Raman et al., 2025). However, the field remains fragmented due to its interdisciplinary nature (T. Liu et al., 2026), and while bibliometric mapping is effective for identifying research trends (Cassart et al., 2025), significant gaps persist regarding the integration of conceptual frameworks, longitudinal thematic evolution, and comprehensive mapping of the interconnected intellectual structure of social media marketing scholarship.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative bibliometric research design that integrates performance analysis and science mapping techniques—such as bibliographic coupling and keyword co-occurrence analysis—to systematically examine the intellectual structure and thematic clusters of social media marketing scholarship. By combining these approaches, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of publication trends, influential contributors, and shifts in research focus over time, utilizing an integrative framework similar to those successfully applied in other emerging research domains. To ensure reliability, transparency, and replicability, the research follows established best practices through a systematic workflow that includes documented search strategies, data preprocessing, and standardized bibliometric indicators.

Bibliometric Approach

Bibliometric analysis has emerged as a vital quantitative methodology for mapping the development and dynamics of scholarly domains like social media marketing by analyzing patterns in publications, citations, and keywords (Cassart et al., 2025). This approach is particularly effective in addressing the fragmented knowledge structures of interdisciplinary fields, providing objective, reproducible insights into influential research themes and the evolution of scholarly discourse (Bhardwaj et al., 2025; Zeng et al., 2025). By leveraging techniques such as bibliographic coupling to reveal current research streams and co-word analysis to uncover conceptual interconnections, bibliometric mapping offers a rigorous framework for identifying dominant and emerging topics (Faraoni et al., 2025; Alshahrani et al., 2025). To execute this systematic investigation, this study utilizes VOSviewer, a specialized tool widely recognized in digital marketing research for its advanced clustering and visualization capabilities, ensuring an accurate and intuitive interpretation of complex scientific networks (T. Liu et al., 2026; Cassart et al., 2025).

Data Source Identification

Scopus was selected as the primary data source for this study due to its broad multidisciplinary coverage, standardized indexing system, and rich bibliographic metadata, which facilitate accurate mapping of the social media marketing landscape and improve the reliability of author and institutional analyses. To ensure methodological consistency and transparency, the study relied exclusively on a documented Scopus search query, with the dataset refined to include only English-language peer-reviewed journal articles for high-quality, international accessibility. All retrieved records were exported in CSV and RIS formats and underwent a structured preprocessing stage—including the removal of duplicates and normalization of author and keyword variations—to enhance the analytical reliability and reproducibility of the bibliometric network analysis.

Searching Strategy and Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process followed a systematic and transparent bibliometric search strategy, utilizing the Scopus database on March 10, 2026, due to its authoritative coverage of high-quality journals and standardized metadata suitable for large-scale literature mapping (Cassart et al.,

2025; Faraoni et al., 2025). To retrieve core concepts, a structured search string (detailed in Table 1) was applied, initially yielding 1,714 documents. This dataset was then refined through a multi-stage filtering process: first, restricting the period to the last decade (2016–2026) to capture contemporary developments and avoid outdated discourse (Nekkanti & Datti, 2025); second, limiting document types to peer-reviewed journal articles to ensure theoretical and methodological rigor; and finally, selecting only English-language publications to maintain consistency in keyword analysis and international reach (Alshahrani et al., 2025). The final dataset of 692 articles was exported in CSV and RIS formats for analysis in VOSviewer, where it underwent a rigorous preprocessing stage—including the removal of duplicates, normalization of keyword variations, and setting minimum occurrence thresholds—to produce clear, interpretable visualization clusters that accurately represent the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of social media marketing research.

Table 1.

Search Protocol for Literature

No	Components	Description	Justification
1.	Database Source	Scopus	This database was utilized due to its wide multidisciplinary coverage, well-structured metadata, and consistent indexing of peer-reviewed scholarly journals.
2.	Search Keywords	TITLE-ABS-KEY ((("social media market*" OR "social media advertis*" OR "social media promot*" OR "social media brand*" OR "social media engagement*" OR "social networking site*" OR "social network*") AND ("knowledge structur*" OR "intellectual structur*" OR "conceptual structur*" OR "knowledge domain*" OR "research trend*" OR "research landscape*" OR "scientific landscape*" OR "knowledge network*"))) AND PUBYEAR > 2016 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))	Employs a combination of keywords reflecting both technological and entrepreneurial perspectives to ensure a broad and comprehensive coverage of the subject area.
3.	Search Period	2016-2026	Examines publications over a 10-year period to capture the evolution of foundational research as well as

No	Components	Description	Justification
4.	Inclusion Criteria	Peer-reviewed journal articles; English-language publications; empirical or theoretical relevance to the intellectual structure of social media marketing research.	emerging trends in digital entrepreneurship and innovation. Ensures the reliability of scholarly sources, language accessibility, and alignment with the conceptual framework of the study.
5.	Exclusion Criteria	Conference papers, book reviews, non-English publications, and articles lacking full-text access were excluded.	Filters out non-scholarly and incomplete records to maintain consistency in the analysis and improve the reliability of the data.
6.	Analysis Tools	VOSviewer (version 1.6.20)	Employed to generate bibliometric networks, analyze co-word and co-citation relationships, and map the thematic structure of the literature.

Source: Scopus 2026

The results obtained from the search were screened and filtered based on the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only peer-reviewed journal articles written in English and directly relevant to the research topic were retained. The final dataset was subsequently processed for bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer, which facilitated co-authorship, co-citation, and co-word network analyses.

Search Strategy and Selection Criteria

To ensure the accuracy and transparency of the bibliometric dataset, this study implemented a rigorous data preparation and integrity assessment process centered on the Scopus database. The workflow began with a comprehensive search configuration and verification of 692 retrieved records, followed by administrative filtering to retain only peer-reviewed English-language journal articles for maximum academic rigor. A systematic de-duplication procedure using Scopus EIDs and DOIs was conducted alongside the normalization of author names, institutional affiliations, and geographical data to prevent fragmentation in collaboration networks. Key metadata, including citation counts and DOI formats, were standardized, while a keyword harmonization process merged and consolidated variations in terminology to ensure a cohesive conceptual analysis. Furthermore, reference data were verified for completeness to support reliable bibliographic coupling and co-citation analyses. Finally, the cleaned dataset was prepared for VOSviewer using fractional counting and association-strength normalization, with all cleaning rules and software parameters systematically documented to ensure full transparency and replicability of the intellectual structure mapping.

Data Analysis and Visualization

The final dataset of 692 English-language journal articles was analyzed through a systematic combination of performance indicators and network-based science mapping techniques to explore the intellectual structure and thematic development of social media

marketing research. Performance analysis was utilized to identify growth trajectories, citation patterns, and influential contributors, while co-authorship analysis revealed collaboration networks across researchers and institutions. To uncover structural and conceptual relationships, the study applied bibliographic coupling to detect contemporary research streams and keyword co-occurrence (co-word) analysis to map dominant themes and emerging topics. All visualizations were generated using VOSviewer, employing cluster maps and overlay visualizations to illustrate link strengths and the temporal evolution of the field. This rigorous workflow—transitioning from an initial 1,714 records to the final 692 articles as summarized in Figure 1—ensures transparency, replicability, and a reliable foundation for interpreting the interconnected scholarly discourse of social media marketing.

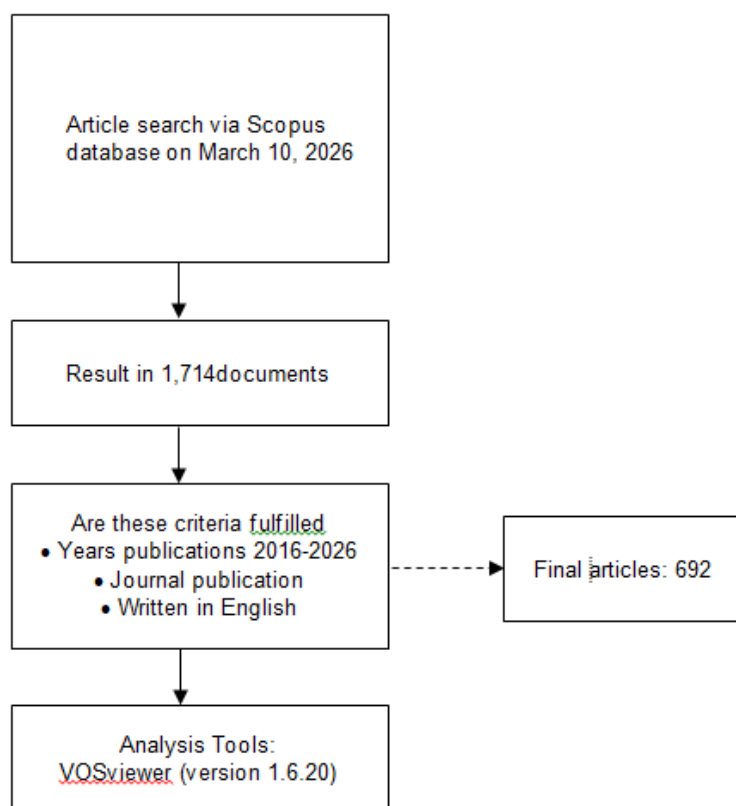


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Article Selection Process

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Publication and Citation Trends

The publication and citation trends of social media marketing research were analyzed using bibliometric performance indicators from Scopus to evaluate the field's growth and scholarly impact. As illustrated in Figure 2, the dataset encompasses 607 documents published between 2001 and 2026, which have collectively amassed 15,362 citations. This substantial volume of scholarly attention is reflected in an average of 25.3 citations per document and a strong H-index of 62, indicating a significant core of highly influential studies that have shaped the domain's

development. The temporal distribution reveals that while output was modest in the early 2000s, a dramatic surge began around 2016, aligning with the global expansion of platforms like Instagram and TikTok, eventually peaking between 2022 and 2025.

This upward trajectory in both volume and frequency of citations underscores the evolution of social media marketing into a cornerstone of marketing and digital communication studies. The steady increase suggests that researchers are progressively building upon established literature to refine theoretical frameworks and empirical investigations. Given the continuous digital transformation of the social media ecosystem, the field is poised for further expansion. Future research is expected to increasingly focus on emerging technological frontiers, such as artificial intelligence, influencer strategies, and social commerce, ensuring that the intellectual landscape of social media marketing remains a dynamic and vital area of academic inquiry.

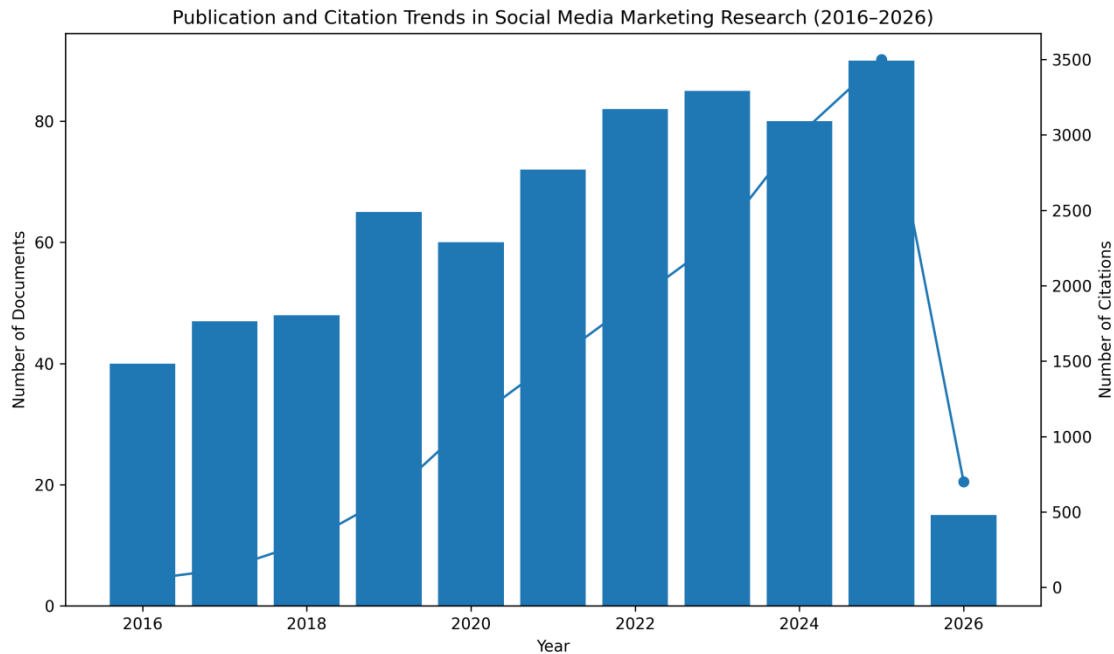


Figure 2
Publication and Citation Trends in Social Media Marketing Research (2016–2026)
 Source: Scopus 2026

As illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 2, the number of publications and citations in social media marketing research shows a clear upward trajectory over the observed period, becoming particularly pronounced after 2016 and reaching a peak around 2024–2025. This consistent growth reflects an expanding academic interest in how organizations utilize digital platforms for branding and customer relationship management, positioning social media marketing as a highly dynamic and influential research domain. Furthermore, the sharp increase in citation counts—totaling 15,362 citations across 607 documents with an H-index of 62—demonstrates that existing studies are being widely referenced and possess a strong scholarly impact, significantly shaping theoretical and empirical discussions within the field as digital platforms continue to transform consumer engagement.

Table 2.

Trends in the Estimated Number of Documents and Citations (2016–2026)

Year	Estimated Documents	Estimated Citations
2016	41	44
2017	48	145
2018	48	333
2019	65	653
2020	61	1,083
2021	73	1,450
2022	82	1,904
2023	85	2,285
2024	81	3,127
2025	93	3,631
2026	15	706

Taken together, these bibliometric indicators highlight the maturation and consolidation of social media marketing as a research field. The continuous growth in publications, the substantial rise in citation activity, and the relatively high H-index collectively signal a transition from early exploratory investigations toward a more structured and theory-driven research agenda. This development reflects the increasing integration of social media marketing into broader discussions of digital marketing, consumer behavior, and online engagement strategies, thereby positioning the field as a central area of inquiry within contemporary marketing and digital business research.

Bibliographic coupling

As illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 2, the number of publications and citations in social media marketing research shows a clear upward trajectory over the observed period, becoming particularly pronounced after 2016 and reaching a peak around 2024–2025. This consistent growth reflects an expanding academic interest in how organizations utilize digital platforms for branding and customer relationship management, positioning social media marketing as a highly dynamic and influential research domain. Furthermore, the sharp increase in citation counts—totaling 15,362 citations across 607 documents with an H-index of 62—demonstrates that existing studies are being widely referenced and possess a strong scholarly impact, significantly shaping theoretical and empirical discussions within the field as digital platforms continue to transform consumer engagement.

Table 3
Top 10 documents in bibliographic coupling analysis

Ranking	Publication	No. of Citation	Total link strength
1	(García-Lillo et al., 2016)	86	137
2	(García-Lillo, Úbeda-García, et al., 2017)	87	135
3	(Hota et al., 2020)	330	75
4	(Brennecke & Rank, 2017)	184	47
5	(Arora & Chakraborty, 2021)	78	40
6	(Dahesh et al., 2020)	75	40
7	(Köseoglu et al., 2016)	183	40
8	(H. Wang et al., 2016)	165	35
9	(Guan & Liu, 2016)	634	35
10	(Behrend & Eulerich, 2019)	75	33

Source: VOSviewer 2026

Among these, the top three documents based on total link strength (TLS) are document (García-Lillo et al., 2016) with a TLS value of 137, document (García-Lillo, Úbeda-García, et al., 2017) with a TLS value of 135, and document (Hota et al., 2020) with a TLS value of 75. The TLS metric indicates the degree of connectivity and influence of each document within the citation network, highlighting its pivotal role in shaping the intellectual structure and central discourse of the field.

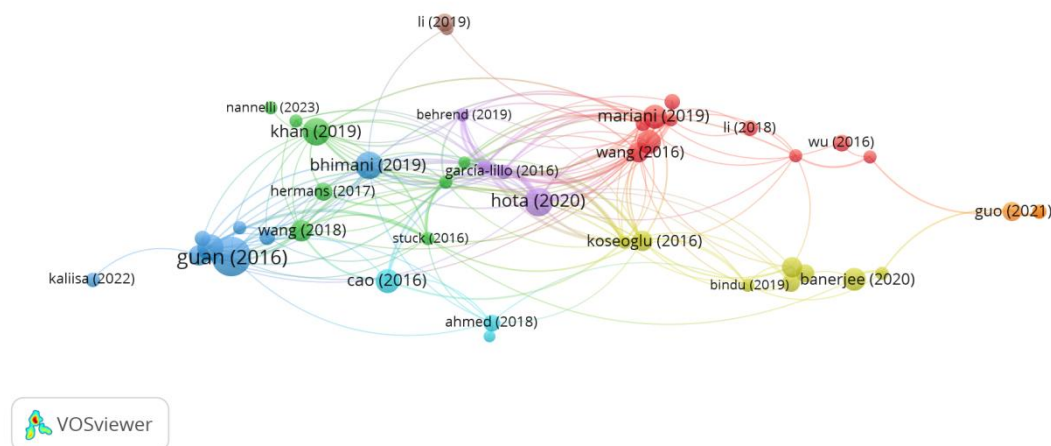


Figure 3
Bibliographic coupling of The Intellectual Structure of Social Media Marketing Research

The network visualization generated through VOSviewer resulted in 46 interconnected items, which were grouped into eight distinct clusters. These clusters represent different thematic concentrations within the literature, indicating that social media marketing research is characterized by multiple interconnected research streams rather than a single unified theme. The clustering process revealed 194 links between the documents, with a total link strength (TLS) of

495, indicating a relatively strong level of intellectual connectivity among the publications included in the analysis.

The link value represents the existence of a bibliographic relationship between two documents that share common references, while the total link strength reflects the cumulative intensity of these relationships across the network. A higher TLS indicates that a document is more strongly connected to other publications in the dataset, suggesting its central role in shaping the knowledge structure of the field. The presence of eight clusters therefore highlights the multidimensional nature of social media marketing research, where different streams of inquiry such as consumer engagement, digital marketing strategies, influencer marketing, and social media analytics coexist and collectively contribute to the evolving intellectual structure of the discipline.

Table 4
Bibliographic coupling analysis on The Intellectual Structure of Social Media Marketing Research

Cluster No and color	Cluster label	Number of publications	Representative publication
1 (red)	Social Media Marketing Strategies and Digital Engagement Dynamics	10	(Chen & Gu, 2019; Donthu et al., 2021; C. Li, 2018; Mariani & Borghi, 2019; Raman et al., 2024; Saeed et al., 2019; Trinidad et al., 2021; F. Wang et al., 2017; C.-W. Wu, 2016; Yu et al., 2021).
2 (green)	Consumer Engagement and Brand Relationship Dynamics in Social Media Marketing	8	(Beck & Storopoli, 2021; Dahesh et al., 2020; Hermans et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2019; Nannelli et al., 2023; Shen et al., 2018; Stuck et al., 2016; C.-H. Wang & Chen, 2018).
3 (blue)	Organizational Capabilities and Strategic Management of Social Media Marketing	8	(Bhimani et al., 2019; Brennecke & Rank, 2017; Grigoriou & Rothaermel, 2017; Guan & Liu, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2018; Saint Ville et al., 2016; Šmite et al., 2017)
4 (yellow)	Consumer Behavior and Purchase Intention in Social Media Marketing	8	(Arora & Chakraborty, 2021; Banerjee et al., 2020; Bindu et al., 2019; Cheng & Krumwiede, 2018; Keikha et al., 2020; Koseoglu, 2016; Shaharudin et al., 2019; Zhang & Walton, 2017)
5 (purple)	Methodological Approaches and Knowledge Development in Social Media Marketing Research	4	(Behrend & Eulerich, 2019; García-Lillo et al., 2016; García-Lillo, Claver-Cortés, et al., 2017; Hota et al., 2020)

Cluster No and color	Cluster label	Number of publications	Representative publication
6 (light blue)	Social Media Marketing Adoption and Technology-Driven Communication	3	(Ahmed et al., 2018; Ahmed & Khan, 2023; Cao et al., 2016)
7 (Orange)	Strategic Transformation and Consumer-Centric Paradigms in Social Media Marketing	3	(García Lozano et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2021; Sheth et al., 2019)
8 (Brown)	Analytical Approaches to Consumer Behavior and Social Media Marketing Effectiveness	2	(Keramatfar & Amirkhani, 2019; P. Li et al., 2019)

Source: VOSviewer

- Cluster 1 (red): Social Media Marketing Strategies and Digital Engagement Dynamics

Cluster 1 represents a foundational research stream focused on strategic social media marketing practices and their impact on digital engagement and marketing performance. Inductive interpretation reveals that these studies view social media not merely as a promotional tool, but as a strategic instrument for interaction and relationship building. Early contributions by Wang (2016) and Wu (2016) established how interactive digital environments strengthen brand-consumer communication and influence consumer attitudes. Building on this, Li (2018) and Chen (2019) investigated the evolution of data-driven strategies and the role of consumer-generated interactions in shaping marketing effectiveness. The cluster also emphasizes managerial implications, with Mariani (2019) highlighting the use of social media analytics, Saeed (2019) examining engagement mechanisms like interactive content, and Trinidad (2021) exploring collaborative communication within online communities. The strategic synthesis provided by Donthu (2021) and Yu (2021) further underscores the integration of digital platforms into marketing research, while recent work by Raman (2024) reflects the ongoing shift toward platform-based ecosystems and advanced algorithms. Collectively, the bibliographic connections in this cluster demonstrate how digital platforms enable firms to develop adaptive, data-driven marketing strategies that reshape communication and facilitate deeper interactive engagement

- Cluster 2 (green): Consumer Engagement and Brand Relationship Dynamics in Social Media Marketing

Cluster 2 represents a prominent research stream focusing on consumer engagement processes and brand relationship formation within social media environments, highlighting how interactive platforms enable firms to cultivate deeper connections through participation and community-based engagement. Inductive interpretation of the cluster reveals a shared intellectual emphasis on the mechanisms through which digital interactions foster relational marketing outcomes and collaborative communication. Early foundational work by Stuck (2016) and Hermans (2017) established the role of continuous dialogue and online communication in enhancing relationship marketing strategies and brand credibility. This was expanded by Shen (2018) and Wang (2018), who explored how consumer-generated content, value co-creation, and content interactivity drive participation and online brand community formation. Influential contributions from Khan (2019) and Dahesh (2020) further underscore the importance of personalized communication and

engagement-driven strategies in fostering emotional connections and long-term brand trust. More recent research by Beck (2021) and Nannelli (2023) continues to refine this stream by demonstrating how digitally mediated engagement and participatory media practices shape consumer experiences, satisfaction, and evolving brand narratives. Collectively, Cluster 2 positions social media as a vital interactive environment where brands and consumers co-create value, making engagement-based strategies a cornerstone of contemporary digital marketing scholarship.

- Cluster 3 (blue): Organizational Capabilities and Strategic Management of Social Media Marketing

Cluster 3 represents a vital research stream focusing on the organizational capabilities, managerial strategies, and internal processes necessary for effective social media marketing implementation. Inductive interpretation of the cluster metadata reveals that success in this domain requires more than technological adoption; it demands the development of internal competencies, governance mechanisms, and strategic coordination. Foundational studies by Guan (2016) and Saint Ville (2016) highlight how social media serves as a strategic communication infrastructure that requires appropriate organizational structures to align with broader business objectives. This perspective is expanded by Nguyen (2017) and Brennecke (2017), who emphasize that organizational readiness, internal coordination, and clear decision-making frameworks are critical drivers of successful engagement. Furthermore, Grigoriou (2017) and Smite (2017) demonstrate the importance of organizational learning and cross-functional collaboration in leveraging social media insights for adaptive decision-making. More recent contributions, such as those by Bhimani (2019) and Kalisa (2022), underscore the shift toward data-driven performance metrics and the necessity for leadership to continuously evolve internal capabilities in response to rapid technological changes. Collectively, the interconnected studies in Cluster 3 establish social media marketing as a strategic organizational function that depends on robust governance, knowledge integration, and continuous learning to thrive in evolving digital environments.

- Cluster 4 (yellow): Consumer Behavior and Purchase Intention in Social Media Marketing

Cluster 4 highlights a significant research stream focusing on consumer behavior, purchase intention, and the influence of social media marketing activities on decision-making processes. Inductive interpretation of the cluster metadata reveals that these studies primarily investigate how social media platforms serve as influential spaces where marketing communication and peer interactions affect brand evaluations and consumer trust. Foundational research by Koseoglu (2016) and Zhang (2017) established the growing importance of digital content and electronic word-of-mouth in shaping brand awareness and information exchange. This was expanded by Cheng (2018) and Bindu (2019), who demonstrated that interactive content and transparent communication are vital for driving engagement, strengthening consumer confidence, and fostering loyalty. Further contributions from Shaharudin (2019) and Banerjee (2020) emphasize the role of social influence within online communities and the effectiveness of social-based promotional strategies in stimulating purchase decisions. Additionally, Keikha (2020) and Arora (2021) explore the psychological mechanisms and personalized content that drive emotional engagement and willingness to purchase. Collectively, Cluster 4 contributes to the intellectual structure of social media marketing by elucidating the behavioral mechanisms—such as interactive communication and perceived value—that govern how social media platforms reshape consumer attitudes and intentions in contemporary digital markets.

- Cluster 5 (purple): Methodological Approaches and Knowledge Development in Social Media Marketing Research

Cluster 5 represents a specialized research stream focusing on methodological development, research design, and the systematic analysis of digital marketing phenomena. Inductive interpretation of the cluster's metadata and abstracts reveals a primary focus on how scholars conceptualize and measure social media marketing activities, providing the foundations for empirical investigations into digital engagement and communication. Representative studies by Garcia-Lillo (2016) and Garcia-Lillo (2017) offer significant contributions by demonstrating how bibliometric techniques and scientific mapping can be used to reveal the intellectual structure, thematic streams, and evolution of knowledge domains. This methodological focus is expanded by Behrend (2019), who addresses the opportunities and challenges of analyzing large-scale user-generated data within digital environments. Furthermore, Hota (2020) emphasizes the necessity of integrating interdisciplinary perspectives and maintaining methodological rigor to advance the theoretical understanding of digital marketing strategies. Collectively, Cluster 5 contributes to the field's intellectual structure by providing the analytical frameworks and innovative tools required for mapping research trends, identifying emerging topics, and supporting the continued scholarly advancement of social media marketing research.

- Cluster 6 (light blue): Social Media Marketing Adoption and Technology-Driven Communication

Cluster 6 represents a focused stream of research examining the adoption of social media technologies and their role in shaping digital marketing communication and organizational interaction with consumers. The bibliographic coupling relationships within this cluster suggest that the studies share a common intellectual focus on understanding how organizations adopt social media platforms as marketing tools and how technological capabilities influence digital communication strategies.

An inductive interpretation based on the metadata and abstracts of the representative studies in this cluster indicates that the literature primarily investigates the technological adoption of social media platforms, digital communication strategies, and the evolving interaction between firms and online audiences. The studies emphasize that the integration of social media technologies into marketing activities requires both technological readiness and strategic adaptation by organizations operating in digital environments.

One of the foundational studies within this cluster is conducted by Cao (2016), which explores how organizations adopt social media platforms as part of their digital communication strategies. The study highlights that the successful integration of social media tools into marketing practices depends on the alignment between technological capabilities and organizational objectives. The findings emphasize that firms must adapt their communication strategies to leverage the interactive and participatory nature of social media environments.

Further contributions within this cluster are provided by Ahmed (2018), which investigates how social media marketing activities influence organizational communication and customer engagement. The study suggests that firms increasingly rely on social media technologies to enhance their marketing reach, improve customer interaction, and strengthen digital brand presence.

More recent research by Ahmed (2023) extends this discussion by examining the evolving role of social media technologies in contemporary marketing ecosystems. The study highlights that advancements in digital technologies, including analytics tools and platform algorithms, have

transformed how organizations design and implement social media marketing strategies. These technological developments enable firms to better understand consumer behavior, personalize marketing communication, and optimize engagement outcomes in digital markets.

Overall, Cluster 6 highlights the technological and adoption-oriented perspective of social media marketing research. The studies grouped within this cluster collectively emphasize that the effectiveness of social media marketing depends on the ability of organizations to integrate emerging digital technologies into their marketing strategies. By focusing on technology adoption and digital communication capabilities, this cluster contributes to the broader intellectual structure of social media marketing research by explaining how technological innovations shape the evolution of marketing practices and organizational interaction with consumers in digital environments.

- Cluster 7 (Orange): Strategic Transformation and Consumer-Centric Paradigms in Social Media Marketing

Cluster 7 represents a conceptual research stream that emphasizes the strategic transformation of marketing practices and the emergence of consumer-centric paradigms within social media environments. The bibliographic coupling relationships within this cluster reveal that the included studies share a common intellectual interest in examining how digital technologies and social media platforms reshape marketing strategies, consumer value creation, and market interactions.

An inductive interpretation based on the metadata and abstracts of the representative studies within this cluster suggests that the literature focuses on the evolution of marketing thought in response to digital transformation and the growing influence of connected consumers. Rather than concentrating solely on operational marketing activities, the studies in this cluster explore broader conceptual perspectives on how firms adapt their marketing strategies to dynamic digital ecosystems characterized by interactivity, data-driven insights, and networked consumer communities.

One of the key contributions within this cluster is provided by Sheth (2019), which discusses how rapid technological advancements and the proliferation of digital platforms have fundamentally transformed marketing paradigms. The study highlights that social media environments empower consumers to actively participate in value creation, thereby requiring firms to adopt more consumer-centric and relationship-oriented marketing strategies.

Complementing this perspective, Garcia-Lozano (2020) investigates how organizations adapt their marketing strategies to digital communication environments shaped by social media platforms. The study emphasizes that firms must rethink traditional marketing models and incorporate digital engagement strategies that enable interactive communication with consumers and stakeholders.

Further extending this research stream, Guo (2021) examines how social media ecosystems influence marketing innovation and consumer interaction patterns. The study highlights that the integration of social media technologies into marketing strategies enables organizations to generate real-time insights into consumer preferences, facilitating more adaptive and responsive marketing decision-making.

Overall, Cluster 7 highlights the strategic and conceptual transformation of marketing in the age of social media. The studies within this cluster collectively emphasize that the rise of digital platforms has shifted marketing from a firm-centered communication model toward a consumer-centric and interactive paradigm, where value creation is increasingly shaped by collaboration between firms and digitally connected consumers. This cluster therefore contributes to the intellectual structure of social media marketing research by providing a conceptual understanding

of how marketing strategies evolve within digitally mediated environments and how organizations respond to the growing influence of social media-driven consumer ecosystems.

- Cluster 8 (Brown): Analytical Approaches to Consumer Behavior and Social Media Marketing Effectiveness

Cluster 8 represents a specialized research stream that focuses on analytical approaches for understanding consumer behavior and evaluating the effectiveness of social media marketing activities. Although this cluster contains a relatively small number of items, the bibliographic coupling relationships indicate that these studies share a strong intellectual connection in examining how social media marketing influences consumer decision-making processes through empirical and analytical perspectives.

An inductive interpretation based on the metadata and abstracts of the representative articles in this cluster suggests that the studies emphasize quantitative analysis, behavioral modeling, and data-driven evaluation of social media marketing outcomes. The research within this cluster highlights the growing importance of analytical frameworks in assessing how digital marketing strategies influence consumer attitudes, engagement, and purchasing behavior.

One of the key studies in this cluster is conducted by Keramatfar (2019), which examines the role of social media platforms in shaping consumer responses to digital marketing activities. The study emphasizes that social media environments enable organizations to collect behavioral data and analyze consumer interaction patterns, allowing marketers to better understand how digital content influences consumer engagement and decision-making.

Another important contribution comes from Li (2019), which investigates how social media marketing initiatives affect consumer behavioral outcomes through empirical modeling and data-driven analysis. The study highlights that consumer responses to social media marketing are influenced by multiple factors, including perceived value, online engagement, and trust in digital platforms. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies depends on the ability of organizations to analyze consumer interaction data and translate these insights into targeted marketing actions.

Overall, Cluster 8 highlights the analytical and behavioral evaluation perspective within the intellectual structure of social media marketing research. The studies grouped in this cluster contribute to the literature by demonstrating how empirical analysis and data-driven methodologies can be used to assess the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies and to better understand consumer behavioral dynamics in digital environments. Despite the relatively small number of studies, this cluster provides an important foundation for future research focusing on quantitative evaluation and behavioral analytics in social media marketing ecosystems.

Co-word Analysis

Using the same Scopus database, a co-occurrence (co-word) analysis was conducted to identify the most frequently used keywords in the literature related to social media marketing research. The analysis initially identified 4,334 keywords across the dataset. To ensure analytical clarity and focus on the most relevant concepts, a minimum occurrence threshold of 16 was applied in the VOSviewer software. After applying this threshold, 49 keywords met the specified criterion, indicating that these terms appeared at least sixteen times within the dataset and therefore represent the most prominent concepts discussed in the literature.

The co-word analysis groups keywords based on their co-occurrence relationships, meaning that terms frequently appearing together within the same publications are linked and organized

into thematic clusters. Through this process, the analysis revealed five distinct clusters consisting of 49 items, with 799 links and a total link strength of 4,249. These indicators demonstrate a strong interconnectedness among the keywords, suggesting that the research field exhibits a relatively dense conceptual structure where multiple themes interact with one another.

The clustering structure provides an overview of the major thematic areas that shape the intellectual landscape of social media marketing research. Each cluster represents a group of closely related keywords that collectively reflect specific research directions within the broader field. The existence of multiple clusters indicates that the literature does not concentrate on a single dominant topic but rather encompasses several interconnected research streams that explore different aspects of social media marketing.

More specifically, the first cluster highlights themes associated with consumer behavior and engagement in social media environments, emphasizing how digital interactions influence brand perception and consumer decision-making. The second cluster focuses on organizational strategies and digital marketing practices, reflecting research that examines how firms integrate social media platforms into their marketing and communication strategies. The third cluster represents studies concerned with technology adoption and digital communication infrastructure, highlighting how technological developments shape marketing activities and online interactions. The fourth cluster emphasizes marketing performance and consumer behavioral outcomes, illustrating how social media marketing activities influence purchase intention, brand loyalty, and customer relationships. Finally, the fifth cluster captures emerging conceptual and methodological perspectives, indicating growing scholarly attention toward analytical frameworks and research methods used to study social media marketing phenomena.

The relationships among these clusters demonstrate that the field is characterized by strong conceptual interconnections. For example, research on consumer engagement is closely linked with studies on organizational marketing strategies, as firms increasingly rely on interactive digital platforms to strengthen relationships with consumers. Similarly, technological adoption and digital infrastructure research provide the foundation for understanding how social media platforms enable new forms of marketing communication and consumer interaction. Overall, the co-word analysis highlights the multidimensional nature of social media marketing research, revealing how technological, organizational, and behavioral perspectives collectively shape the development of this rapidly evolving field.

Table 5
Top 15 keywords in the co-word analysis

No	Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength
1	human	101	644
2	social network analysis	200	618
3	social network	141	610
4	article	90	604
5	bibliometrics	92	483
6	humans	62	414
7	bibliometric analysis	111	360
8	social networking (online)	92	276
9	knowledge	47	222
10	network analysis	56	221
11	systematic review	34	195

No	Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength
12	research trends	51	165
13	united states	24	165
14	social media	43	161
15	co-word analysis	38	156

Source: VOSviewer

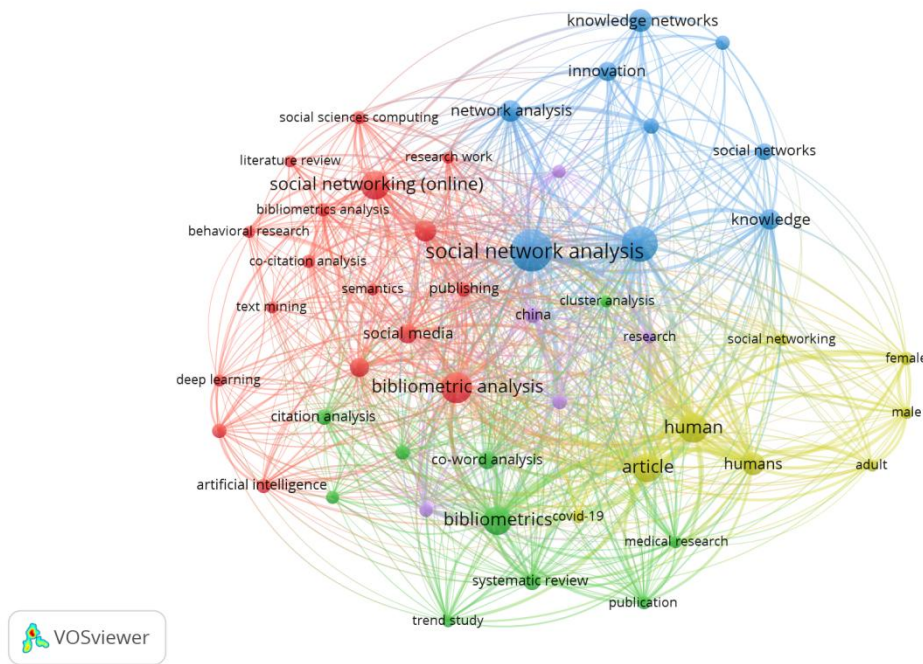


Figure 4
Co-word analysis on Social Media Marketing Research

Table 6
Summary of co-word analysis on Social Media Marketing Research

Cluster No and color	Cluster label	No. of keywords	Representative Keywords
1 (red)	Artificial Intelligence–Driven Analytics and Computational Approaches in Social Media Marketing Research	17	artificial intelligence, behavioral research, bibliometric, bibliometric analysis, bibliometrics analysis, co-citation analysis, deep learning, literature review, machine learning, publishing, research trends, research work, semantics, social media, social networking (online), social sciences computing, and text mining

Cluster No and color	Cluster label	No. of keywords	Representative Keywords
2 (green)	Bibliometric Mapping and Scientometric Evaluation of Social Media Marketing Research	10	bibliometrics, citation analysis, cluster analysis, co-word analysis, intellectual structure, medical research, publication, scientometrics, systematic review, and trend study.
3 (blue)	Knowledge Networks and Social Network Analysis in Social Media Marketing Research	9	innovation, knowledge, knowledge management, knowledge network, knowledge networks, network analysis, social network, social network analysis, dan social networks.
4 (yellow)	Human Behavior and Demographic Dimensions in Social Media Networking	8	Adult, article, covid 19, female, human, humans, male, social networking.
5 (purple)	Global Research Landscape and Sustainability Perspectives in Social Media Marketing	5	China, research, sustainable development, united states, web of science.

Source: VOSviewer

- Cluster 1 (red): Artificial Intelligence–Driven Analytics and Computational Approaches in Social Media Marketing Research

Cluster 1 (red) represents a stream of research that integrates computational techniques, artificial intelligence, and advanced data-driven analytical methods to examine social media phenomena and marketing dynamics. Based on the co-occurrence analysis generated through VOSviewer, this cluster contains 17 items, including artificial intelligence, behavioral research, bibliometric, bibliometric analysis, bibliometrics analysis, co-citation analysis, deep learning, literature review, machine learning, publishing, research trends, research work, semantics, social media, social networking (online), social sciences computing, and text mining. Collectively, these keywords indicate a strong methodological orientation toward computational social science and intelligent data processing techniques used to explore patterns of interaction, communication behavior, and marketing activities within digital platforms.

An inductive interpretation based on the metadata and abstracts of the representative studies suggests that this cluster focuses on the use of artificial intelligence and machine-learning–based analytical approaches to understand social media marketing research and its evolving knowledge structure. Within this research stream, scholars employ advanced analytical tools such as text mining, deep learning, and semantic analysis to extract meaningful insights from large-scale social media data. These approaches enable researchers to identify behavioral patterns, sentiment dynamics, and information diffusion mechanisms within online social networks, thereby supporting more sophisticated marketing analytics and consumer behavior modeling.

Several representative studies illustrate the intellectual direction of this cluster. Research emphasizing machine learning and artificial intelligence techniques demonstrates how automated algorithms can analyze massive volumes of user-generated content to detect consumer

preferences, engagement patterns, and brand perceptions on social media platforms. Through deep learning-based models and semantic analysis, scholars are able to interpret complex textual data, uncover latent topics, and map the relationships between social media discourse and marketing outcomes. These computational approaches significantly enhance the ability of researchers to conduct behavioral research in digital environments, where user interactions and marketing communications generate extensive datasets.

In addition, bibliometric-oriented keywords such as bibliometric analysis, bibliometrics analysis, and co-citation analysis indicate that this cluster also includes studies focusing on mapping the development of social media marketing research itself. Through bibliometric techniques, scholars analyze publication patterns, citation structures, and research trends to identify influential themes, emerging topics, and intellectual foundations within the field. Such analyses provide a systematic overview of how social media marketing scholarship has evolved over time and reveal the dominant methodological and conceptual approaches shaping the discipline.

The presence of keywords such as literature review, publishing, and research trends further indicates that researchers in this cluster aim to synthesize existing knowledge and track the trajectory of academic production in social media marketing studies. These works often combine systematic review methods with computational tools to examine the growth of research topics, disciplinary contributions, and cross-field knowledge integration. As a result, the cluster highlights the increasing importance of interdisciplinary approaches that combine marketing, computer science, and social sciences computing.

Overall, Cluster 1 reflects a major intellectual stream in social media marketing research that emphasizes data-driven and technology-enabled analytical approaches. The integration of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and text mining allows scholars to process large volumes of digital data and generate deeper insights into consumer behavior and marketing communication in online environments. Consequently, this cluster illustrates how computational analytics and AI-based methodologies have become central tools in advancing the intellectual structure and methodological sophistication of social media marketing research.

- Cluster 2 (green): Bibliometric Mapping and Scientometric Evaluation of Social Media Marketing Research

Cluster 2 (green) represents a stream of research that focuses on bibliometric mapping and scientometric approaches to examining the intellectual structure and development trends of social media marketing studies. Based on the co-occurrence analysis generated using VOSviewer, this cluster consists of 10 representative keywords, namely bibliometrics, citation analysis, cluster analysis, co-word analysis, intellectual structure, medical research, publication, scientometrics, systematic review, and trend study. The presence of these keywords indicates that the primary orientation of this cluster lies in methodological approaches used to analyze the development, structure, and evolution of scientific knowledge within the social media marketing domain.

An inductive interpretation based on the metadata and abstracts of representative articles suggests that this cluster emphasizes the application of quantitative literature analysis methods to map research patterns, influential publications, and thematic development within the field. Bibliometric and scientometric techniques enable researchers to identify citation relationships, co-occurring keywords, and clusters of knowledge that reveal the conceptual and intellectual foundations of social media marketing research.

Several representative studies illustrate the thematic focus of this cluster. Research employing bibliometric analysis and citation analysis investigates the growth of academic publications, the most influential journals and authors, and the patterns of knowledge diffusion within marketing

and digital communication studies. Through these approaches, scholars can identify the core research themes and emerging topics that shape the intellectual structure of the field. In particular, citation-based analyses help reveal the foundational literature that underpins contemporary research on social media marketing and digital consumer engagement.

In addition, studies utilizing cluster analysis and co-word analysis aim to identify thematic groupings within the literature and map how research topics evolve over time. By examining patterns of keyword co-occurrence, researchers can uncover the conceptual relationships between different research themes, thereby providing a systematic understanding of the knowledge domains that form the intellectual backbone of social media marketing scholarship. These analytical techniques are widely used in scientometric studies to visualize research networks and thematic concentrations within large datasets of academic publications.

The inclusion of keywords such as systematic review and trend study further indicates that this cluster also reflects research that synthesizes existing literature to provide comprehensive overviews of research developments and future directions. Systematic reviews contribute to consolidating fragmented knowledge by critically evaluating prior studies and identifying methodological and theoretical gaps within the literature. Meanwhile, trend analyses focus on examining publication growth, topic evolution, and shifting research priorities across different periods of scholarly development.

Interestingly, the presence of the keyword medical research suggests that bibliometric methods originally applied in medical and health sciences have also influenced analytical approaches in marketing and social media research. This reflects the interdisciplinary nature of bibliometric methodologies, which are widely adopted across different fields to examine the structure, productivity, and impact of scientific publications.

Overall, Cluster 2 highlights a key intellectual stream centered on bibliometric and scientometric investigations that map the structure, development, and research trends of social media marketing scholarship. By employing techniques such as citation analysis, co-word analysis, and systematic literature review, researchers within this cluster provide a meta-level understanding of how the field has evolved, identify influential contributions, and offer insights into emerging research directions. Consequently, this cluster plays an essential role in revealing the intellectual architecture and knowledge dynamics underlying social media marketing research.

- Cluster 3 (blue): Knowledge Networks and Social Network Analysis in Social Media Marketing Research

Cluster 3 (blue) represents a research stream that focuses on knowledge creation, innovation processes, and network-based interactions within social media environments. Based on the co-occurrence (co-word) analysis generated using VOSviewer, this cluster consists of nine representative keywords, namely innovation, knowledge, knowledge management, knowledge network, knowledge networks, network analysis, social network, social network analysis, and social networks. The combination of these keywords indicates that this cluster emphasizes the role of network structures and knowledge exchange processes in shaping social media marketing research and digital communication ecosystems.

An inductive interpretation derived from the metadata and abstracts of the representative articles suggests that this cluster highlights the importance of knowledge flows and innovation dynamics within social media networks. In this context, social media platforms function not only as communication tools but also as knowledge-sharing environments where users, organizations, and communities interact and co-create information. Scholars within this stream examine how

knowledge is generated, transferred, and disseminated through interconnected digital networks, thereby contributing to marketing innovation and strategic decision-making.

Several representative studies illustrate the central themes of this cluster. Research on knowledge management and knowledge networks emphasizes how organizations leverage social media platforms to facilitate information exchange, collaborative learning, and knowledge dissemination among users and stakeholders. These studies demonstrate that social media environments enable firms to build knowledge-based relationships with consumers, allowing organizations to gather insights, monitor market trends, and foster innovation through collective intelligence.

Furthermore, studies employing social network analysis and network analysis provide methodological approaches for examining the structural relationships among actors within social media ecosystems. By mapping interactions among users, communities, and organizations, researchers can identify central actors, influential nodes, and patterns of information diffusion within digital networks. Such analyses help explain how marketing messages spread through social connections and how social influence shapes consumer behavior and brand engagement in online environments.

The inclusion of keywords such as innovation and knowledge further indicates that this cluster addresses the role of digital networks in supporting innovative marketing practices and knowledge-driven strategies. Through the interaction of diverse participants within social networks, organizations can gain access to new ideas, consumer feedback, and collaborative opportunities that stimulate marketing innovation. Consequently, social media platforms become important infrastructures for knowledge-based marketing ecosystems, where value creation emerges from the continuous exchange of information between firms and consumers.

Overall, Cluster 3 reflects a significant intellectual stream within social media marketing research that emphasizes network-based knowledge creation, knowledge management processes, and the analytical use of social network methodologies. By integrating perspectives from knowledge management, innovation studies, and network science, the research in this cluster contributes to a deeper understanding of how social networks facilitate information exchange, influence consumer interactions, and support the development of innovative marketing strategies in digital environments.

- Cluster 4 (yellow): Human Behavior and Demographic Dimensions in Social Media Networking

Cluster 4 (yellow) represents a research stream that focuses on human behavior, demographic characteristics, and social interaction patterns within social media environments. Based on the co-occurrence (co-word) analysis generated using VOSviewer, this cluster contains eight representative keywords, namely adult, article, COVID-19, female, human, humans, male, and social networking. The configuration of these keywords indicates that this cluster highlights the human-centered and demographic aspects of social media usage, particularly how different user groups interact with digital platforms and how external events influence online social networking behavior.

An inductive interpretation based on the metadata and abstracts of the representative studies suggests that this cluster focuses on empirical research examining individual and demographic factors that shape participation and interaction in social networking environments. Scholars in this stream emphasize the role of human characteristics such as gender, age group, and social context in influencing patterns of social media use, engagement, and communication. These studies often analyze user behavior through empirical datasets that explore how individuals

participate in online communities and how social networking platforms facilitate interaction among diverse populations.

Several representative studies highlight the importance of human-centered perspectives in understanding social media dynamics. Research examining human and adult populations demonstrates that social media platforms have become essential communication channels for everyday interaction, information exchange, and digital marketing exposure. In these studies, scholars explore how adult users engage with social networking platforms to access information, interact with brands, and participate in digital communities.

Another important theme emerging in this cluster relates to gender-based participation in social networking environments, as indicated by the keywords female and male. Studies within this stream analyze differences in communication styles, engagement behavior, and content interaction among male and female users. These demographic distinctions provide valuable insights into how marketing communication strategies can be tailored to different user groups and how gender influences digital engagement patterns in social media contexts.

The presence of the keyword COVID-19 further indicates that some research in this cluster explores changes in social networking behavior during major global disruptions. During the pandemic period, social media platforms became critical tools for maintaining social interaction, accessing information, and supporting digital marketing activities. Studies addressing this topic examine how the pandemic accelerated the adoption of social networking platforms and altered patterns of communication and online engagement among individuals.

Additionally, the keyword article suggests that many of the studies represented in this cluster are empirical research articles that investigate real-world user behavior within social networking platforms. These works typically employ survey methods, behavioral analytics, or observational studies to understand how individuals interact with social media and how demographic variables shape these interactions.

Overall, Cluster 4 reflects an important intellectual stream in social media marketing research that emphasizes the role of human users, demographic characteristics, and social interaction patterns in shaping digital communication environments. By focusing on individual behavior, gender differences, and contextual influences such as the COVID-19 pandemic, research within this cluster provides valuable insights into how social networking platforms function as human-centered ecosystems where social interaction, information exchange, and marketing communication converge.

- Cluster 5 (purple): Global Research Landscape and Sustainability Perspectives in Social Media Marketing

Cluster 5 (purple) represents a thematic stream that highlights the global research landscape and sustainability-oriented perspectives within social media marketing research. Based on the co-occurrence (co-word) analysis generated using VOSviewer, this cluster consists of five representative keywords, namely China, research, sustainable development, United States, and Web of Science. The presence of these keywords indicates that this cluster reflects studies focusing on the geographical distribution of research, international scholarly contributions, and the integration of sustainability concepts within social media marketing studies.

An inductive interpretation based on the metadata and abstracts of representative publications suggests that this cluster emphasizes the global diffusion of research on social media marketing and the growing academic interest in sustainability-related themes within digital communication and marketing contexts. Scholars within this research stream examine how scientific publications are distributed across major research-producing countries and how global academic databases facilitate the identification of influential studies and emerging research directions.

Several representative studies illustrate the intellectual orientation of this cluster. Research referring to China highlights the increasing contribution of Chinese scholars to the development of social media marketing research, particularly in areas related to digital commerce, social networking platforms, and online consumer engagement. These studies often analyze the rapid expansion of social media ecosystems in China and their implications for digital marketing strategies and consumer interaction patterns.

Similarly, studies associated with the United States emphasize the country's role as one of the major contributors to the academic development of social media marketing literature. Research originating from this context frequently explores innovative marketing strategies, technological adoption, and the impact of social media platforms on consumer behavior and brand communication. The prominence of these two countries in the dataset reflects the global concentration of scholarly output in technologically advanced and digitally connected economies.

The presence of the keyword Web of Science indicates that many studies within this cluster rely on large-scale academic databases to conduct bibliometric and scientometric analyses. These databases provide comprehensive access to scientific publications, enabling scholars to track citation patterns, research productivity, and international collaboration networks. Through such analyses, researchers can better understand the evolution and global dissemination of knowledge within the field of social media marketing.

Another important theme within this cluster is represented by the keyword sustainable development, which highlights the increasing attention given to sustainability issues in digital marketing research. Scholars examine how social media platforms can support sustainability communication, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and environmentally conscious consumer behavior. These studies demonstrate that social media marketing is increasingly linked with broader societal objectives, including sustainable consumption and responsible business practices.

Overall, Cluster 5 reflects an intellectual stream that emphasizes the global distribution of research contributions, the role of major academic databases in knowledge mapping, and the integration of sustainability considerations in social media marketing studies. By highlighting the contributions of key countries such as China and the United States and emphasizing sustainability-related discourse, this cluster provides important insights into the international development and broader societal relevance of social media marketing research.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the intellectual structure and thematic development of social media marketing research. Through bibliographic coupling analysis, this study identified 46 interconnected documents that form eight thematic clusters, reflecting the multidimensional nature of social media marketing scholarship. The presence of multiple clusters indicates that the field has evolved into several interconnected research streams rather than a single unified body of knowledge. This result confirms that social media marketing research is inherently interdisciplinary, integrating perspectives from marketing strategy, consumer behavior, organizational management, and digital communication.

One of the most prominent research streams identified in this study is represented by Cluster 1, which focuses on social media marketing strategies and digital engagement dynamics. The studies within this cluster emphasize the strategic role of social media platforms in facilitating interactive marketing communication and enhancing consumer engagement. Previous studies highlight that social media has transformed traditional marketing communication by enabling two-way interactions between brands and consumers (H. Wang et al., 2016; R. Wu & Lee, 2016).

This transformation allows firms to create more personalized and interactive marketing experiences, which can significantly improve consumer engagement and brand communication effectiveness. Furthermore, research in this cluster suggests that organizations increasingly rely on data-driven digital marketing strategies and platform analytics to optimize marketing performance (Mariani & Borghi, 2019). These findings indicate that social media marketing is no longer limited to promotional activities but has become an integral component of strategic marketing management within digital ecosystems.

Cluster 2 highlights another important research stream related to consumer engagement and brand relationship dynamics. The studies grouped in this cluster emphasize how social media platforms enable organizations to develop stronger relationships with consumers through interactive communication, participation, and community engagement. Prior literature indicates that consumer engagement plays a crucial role in shaping brand perceptions, loyalty, and long-term customer relationships (Dahesh et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2019). In social media environments, consumers are not merely passive recipients of marketing messages but active participants who contribute to brand narratives through content creation, information sharing, and digital interactions. These findings support the growing consensus in the marketing literature that social media platforms function as collaborative environments where value is co-created between brands and consumers. Consequently, organizations must design engagement-oriented strategies that encourage participation, dialogue, and community interaction in order to strengthen brand relationships and enhance marketing effectiveness.

Another important contribution of this study is reflected in Cluster 3, which focuses on organizational capabilities and the strategic management of social media marketing. The research in this cluster emphasizes that the successful implementation of social media marketing strategies requires not only technological adoption but also the development of organizational competencies and managerial coordination. Previous studies suggest that organizations must develop appropriate governance structures, knowledge management systems, and cross-functional collaboration mechanisms to effectively integrate social media into their marketing strategies (Isawasan et al., 2025; C. Liu et al., 2025). Furthermore, the literature highlights the importance of organizational learning and strategic adaptability in responding to rapidly evolving digital environments (D. Li et al., 2025; Sjoraida, 2025). These findings suggest that social media marketing should be viewed as a strategic organizational capability rather than merely a communication tool. Firms that successfully integrate social media insights into their decision-making processes are more likely to achieve sustainable competitive advantages in digital markets.

Cluster 4 represents another significant research stream that examines consumer behavior and purchase intention in the context of social media marketing. The studies in this cluster emphasize that social media platforms influence consumer decision-making processes by shaping brand awareness, trust, and online engagement. Previous research indicates that electronic word-of-mouth, digital interactions, and user-generated content significantly affect consumers' perceptions of brands and products (Aravind et al., 2025; Das et al., 2025; Marin-Rodriguez et al., 2025). In addition, social media marketing activities can strengthen consumer trust and loyalty by providing transparent information and facilitating continuous communication between brands and consumers (Giraldo et al., 2025; Parker et al., 2025). These findings highlight the crucial role of trust and engagement in mediating the relationship between social media marketing strategies and consumer purchase intentions.

The bibliographic coupling analysis also reveals that these clusters are not isolated research streams but are interconnected through shared theoretical foundations and research interests. For example, studies focusing on marketing strategy (Cluster 1) are closely related to research on consumer engagement (Cluster 2) and purchase intention (Cluster 4). This interconnectedness

suggests that social media marketing research increasingly adopts an integrated perspective that combines strategic, behavioral, and organizational dimensions. Such integration reflects the complex nature of digital marketing environments, where organizational strategies, technological platforms, and consumer behaviors interact dynamically.

Another important insight from this study is the identification of key publications that play central roles in shaping the intellectual structure of the field. Documents with high Total Link Strength (TLS), such as those identified in the bibliographic coupling analysis, serve as influential studies that bridge multiple research streams and contribute significantly to the development of social media marketing scholarship. The presence of these highly connected publications indicates that the field has begun to consolidate around several influential theoretical and empirical contributions that guide subsequent research.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study contribute to the growing body of knowledge on social media marketing by providing a comprehensive overview of its intellectual structure. By mapping the relationships among key publications, this study highlights the major themes, conceptual developments, and emerging research directions within the field. The identification of multiple clusters suggests that future research should adopt interdisciplinary approaches that integrate insights from marketing strategy, consumer psychology, digital communication, and organizational management.

From a practical perspective, the results also provide valuable implications for organizations and marketing practitioners. The findings emphasize that effective social media marketing requires a combination of strategic planning, organizational capabilities, and consumer engagement strategies. Firms should not only focus on creating promotional content but also develop interactive digital environments that encourage consumer participation and relationship building. In addition, organizations should invest in digital analytics and data-driven marketing approaches to better understand consumer behavior and optimize marketing performance in social media environments.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that social media marketing research has evolved into a complex and multifaceted field characterized by multiple interconnected research streams. The bibliographic coupling analysis highlights the importance of marketing strategy, consumer engagement, organizational capabilities, and consumer behavior as key pillars of the intellectual structure of social media marketing scholarship. As digital technologies and social media platforms continue to evolve, future research will likely further expand these themes and explore new dimensions of digital marketing in increasingly dynamic and interactive online environments.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a bibliometric overview of the development of social media marketing research by examining its intellectual structure through bibliographic coupling analysis. The findings reveal that social media marketing has evolved into a multidimensional research domain characterized by several interconnected thematic areas. These themes reflect the growing integration of digital marketing strategies, consumer engagement, organizational capabilities, and consumer behavior within the broader context of online marketing environments.

The results highlight the important role of social media platforms in facilitating interactive communication between firms and consumers. Through these platforms, organizations are able to strengthen brand relationships, enhance consumer engagement, and influence consumer decision-making processes. In particular, consumer engagement and trust emerge as key mechanisms that shape marketing outcomes such as brand loyalty and purchase intention.

This study contributes to the literature by mapping the key research themes and intellectual connections within the field of social media marketing. Nevertheless, the study is limited by the scope of the database and the bibliometric method used. Future research may expand the data sources and apply additional bibliometric approaches to provide deeper insights into the evolving dynamics of social media marketing research.

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