








“Social media and consumer engagement: A bibliometric analysis and future research directions”

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Abstract

As digital platforms reshape consumer-brand interactions, social media has become a critical driver of multidimensional consumer engagement. This bibliometric analysis synthesizes 245 peer-reviewed articles published between 2011 and 2024 to map the intellectual and thematic evolution of research on social media and consumer engagement. Through co-citation, co-authorship, and keyword co-occurrence analyses using VOSviewer, the study identifies six major thematic clusters, including consumer engagement and brand interaction in social media, brand loyalty and consumer behavior, social media marketing & tourism, digital marketing and engagement trends, demographic and content analysis in online advertising, and consumer behavior and social media marketing. Quantitatively, the results show a continuous annual increase in publications and highlight major contributions from the United States, the United Kingdom, and China. Notably, there has been a marked shift from surface-level interaction metrics toward more holistic engagement concepts that emphasize trust, emotional connection, and community co-creation. These insights offer theoretical advancements by expanding engagement frameworks and highlighting practical implications for marketers aiming to design authentic, resonant brand experiences. The study concludes with a set of actionable research directions to guide future exploration and support practitioners in navigating the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Keywords

social media, consumer engagement, digital marketing, consumer behavior

JEL Classification

M30, M31, M37

INTRODUCTION

In the modern digital landscape, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have fundamentally transformed brand-consumer interactions and redefined communication dynamics (Wang, 2021; Muhammad et al., 2021). Consumers are actively involved in the co-creation of value through content sharing, real-time feedback, and participatory narrative, as these platforms have transformed into dynamic ecosystems (Nicoli et al., 2022). This transition has transformed marketing influence from a brand-centric, one-way perspective to a multidimensional, community-driven model that emphasizes the significance of authentic and emotionally resonant experiences in influencing consumer loyalty and purchase decisions (Lopes & Casais, 2022; Brodie et al., 2011). The affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of consumer engagement in digital contexts are inherently complex (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Calder et al., 2016). It encompasses a range of activities, including inert content consumption, active participation in brand communities, and narrative co-creation (Dessart et al., 2015). These interactive and iterative engagements

not only foster stronger psychological connections between consumers and brands but also influence broader community perceptions, thereby blurring traditional boundaries between producers and consumers (Pongsakornrunsilp & Schroeder, 2011; Jenkins, 2006).

The majority of studies have predominantly concentrated on isolated aspects of social media engagement, often emphasizing transactional metrics such as likes, shares, and comments, despite the increasing academic interest. Recent literature suggests a critical need to move beyond surface-level analytics toward a more holistic understanding that integrates emotional resonance, co-creation, and trust-based relationships (Kozinets, 2020; Plangger et al., 2022).

Moreover, with the increasing adoption of algorithmic personalization and AI-driven content curation, questions surrounding ethical engagement practices, authenticity, and long-term brand equity have become more pressing (Stephen, 2021; Bashar et al., 2024). While previous bibliometric and meta-analytic studies have offered valuable insights into specific marketing subfields, comprehensive integrative syntheses focusing explicitly on social media and consumer engagement remain scarce. Existing reviews often lack a combined perspective that simultaneously addresses intellectual structures, thematic trends, and global collaboration patterns within this rapidly evolving domain. Consequently, further scholarly efforts are needed to unify these diverse perspectives on consumer engagement in digital contexts.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of consumer engagement has garnered substantial academic attention as a result of the proliferation of social media platforms and the increasing complexity of digital consumer behavior. In an effort to obtain a more thorough comprehension of the dynamics of engagement in social media environments, research has shifted from conceptual exploration to systematic synthesis in recent years, particularly through the use of bibliometric and meta-analytic methodologies. This perspective is also consistent with the findings of Gupta and Kumar (2022), who emphasized the significant impact of social media advertisements on consumer purchase behavior, particularly in emerging markets. In a similar vein, Chintalapati and Pandey (2022) engaged in a thorough examination of the applications of artificial intelligence in marketing, which illustrated the growing integration of algorithmic targeting, content delivery, and personalization with consumer engagement mechanisms.

In their respective meta-reviews, Plangger et al. (2022) and Kozinets (2022) have emphasized the importance of methodological diversification in digital marketing research. Li et al. (2021) made a further contribution by proposing a comprehensive taxonomy of social media marketing strategies, which underscores the interplay between stra-

tegic objectives and consumer behaviors. Stephen (2016) offered fundamental insights into the impact of digital marketing and social media on consumer engagement and behavior. Furthermore, Lim and Rasul (2022) conducted a reevaluation of customer engagement frameworks to incorporate the latest insights from historical empirical evidence. In contrast, Kozinets (2022) contributed to the development of the netnographic approach by offering interpretive tools that could be used to understand participatory behavior in online communities. These contributions underscore the increasing significance of cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement dimensions in a diverse array of digital platforms. Despite the presence of this thematic richness, there are relatively few bibliometric studies that provide a comprehensive overview that simultaneously maps research output, authorial impact, thematic co-occurrence, and geographical collaboration. It is crucial to acknowledge that there is a scarcity of comprehensive bibliometric evaluations that encompass marketing, consumer engagement, and social media within a single analytical framework.

More recent bibliometric studies have further refined our comprehension of consumer engagement and social media. In order to identify six thematic clusters and emphasize critical drivers of consumer influence and content persuasiveness, Sherief et al. (2025) conducted an exhaustive review of 474

articles on social media persuasiveness and influence from 2010 to 2023. They employed co-citation techniques in VOSviewer. Furthermore, Bashar et al. (2024) conducted a retrospective bibliometric and text mining analysis of the social media marketing literature from 2007 to 2022, which identified significant trends in influencer dynamics, data-driven content strategies, and emergent thematic structures. Collectively, these recent studies have served to emphasize the increasing complexity of consumer engagement research and the necessity of an integrative synthesis that investigates the structural, methodological, and contextual aspects of social media engagement scholarship.

Bu et al. (2022) and Cheung et al. (2022) identified influencer marketing, user-generated content, and brand loyalty as recurring areas of focus in social media engagement literature to illustrate broader thematic patterns. Liu et al. (2024) also emphasize the significance of brand post characteristics and content design in influencing engagement outcomes across platforms. Furthermore, Hajdas and Kłeczek (2021) stressed the importance of purpose-driven branding and sustainability as essential strategies for cultivating more profound consumer engagement. This is consistent with the observations of Mishra and Mund (2024), who underscored the importance of social exchange theory in elucidating the dynamics of trust and the creation of reciprocal value in consumer-brand relationships. These topics frequently manifest as distinct clusters in keyword co-occurrence networks, underscoring the scholarly interest in platform-driven dynamics, trust-building, and co-creation. The visualization of such themes is becoming more prevalent through the use of bibliometric tools such as VOSviewer, which facilitate the identification of intellectual structures and the mapping of keyword networks.

Additionally, the most recent literature underscores a transition from fundamental keyword enumeration to more sophisticated methodologies, including overlay mapping, bibliographic coupling, and co-citation analysis. These techniques enable the development of sophisticated interpretations of the manner in which scholastic knowledge is disseminated across regions, disciplines, and time periods (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020; Küster & Vila,

2023). Additionally, Mohammad Saif and Islam (2024) have examined how emerging technologies, including blockchain, are transforming trust mechanisms and improving transparency in digital consumer engagement ecosystems. In addition, they provide valuable insights into thematic gaps, collaborative networks, and underexplored intersections, particularly in the context of cross-platform digital engagement.

Collectively, these investigations illustrate the fragmentation and breadth of research in this field. While there are numerous foundational contributions, only a small number of works synthesize the structural, temporal, and geographical dynamics of consumer engagement within a unified bibliometric framework. Additionally, the impact of evolving technologies and the cross-platform character of digital interaction have been neglected in a number of prior evaluations. A more integrative synthesis is required, one that not only maps intellectual structures but also reveals emergent patterns and underexplored intersections that have emerged over time within consumer engagement scholarship.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study employs quantitative bibliometric analysis to examine innovation and management journals across multiple decades. It can outline the field's structure and descriptive analyses to investigate the characteristics of studies, the progression of articles, and the distribution of publications by country and journal to enhance comprehension of the research landscape.

2.1. Data processing

To ensure data integrity, this study focuses on the importance of sound data quality during measurement and data collection, the employed research technique, and the selection of relevant publications. It emphasizes the necessity of utilizing reputable sources to enhance the bibliometric study's validity, as Kumar et al. (2024) proposed. Scopus is a leading database for bibliometric analysis in business and marketing due to its extensive reach, citation metrics, volume of published materials, and analytical capabilities (Medias et al., 2024).

Table 1. Search strategy and protocol used in the bibliometric analysis

Step	Protocol	Parameters/Details
Step 1 Definition of the topic	Search Protocol	“Social Media,” “Consumer Engagement,” “Marketing”
Step 2 Database selection		Scopus
Step 3 Research Criteria	Parameter 1 Keywords = social media + consumer engagement + marketing	n = 247
	Parameter 2 Limit to the English language	n = 245
Step 4 Data encoding and processing	Scopus Performance Analysis	VOSviewer scientific mapping analysis
Step 5 Data analysis	Processing and Analysis of the Result	

The search strategy and selection procedure for the bibliometric analysis are delineated in Table 1. In order to guarantee a comprehensive and concentrated dataset, the investigation implemented a combination of general and specific keywords, such as “marketing,” “consumer engagement,” and “social media,” that were linked together using logical operators (AND, OR). The Scopus database was searched, and the results were filtered to include peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2011 and August 2024. A total of 245 relevant articles were identified. The selection of 2011 as the starting point is indicative of a significant change in the academic discourse, as evidenced by foundational publications such as Hanna et al.’s (2011) research on the social media ecosystem, which redefined consumer–brand interactions in digital contexts. In accordance with the recommendations of Küster and Vila (2023), dataset integrity tests were implemented prior to analysis to guarantee consistency and precision. VOSviewer was employed to efficiently identify intellectual structures and thematic patterns through bibliometric mapping and visualization. A robust foundation for the interpretation of evolving trends and conceptual developments in social media engagement research is provided by this rigorous approach.

2.2. Data analysis

The final dataset was exported from Scopus in CSV format and analyzed using VOSviewer (version 1.6.19), a commonly recognized tool for network visualization and bibliometric mapping. The analysis concentrated on the identification of thematic patterns, intellectual structures, and col-

laborative networks in the context of social media and consumer engagement. VOSviewer enabled the extraction and visualization of co-occurrence relationships among keywords, titles, and abstracts through its advanced distance-based algorithm (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020), providing clear insights into conceptual linkages and research trends. Descriptive and performance indicators, such as publication trends, citation counts, and collaboration metrics, were systematically examined. Furthermore, quantitative metrics, including total publications (TP), total citations (TC), and the citation-to-publication ratio (TC/TP), were utilized to evaluate author productivity and impact comprehensively. This integrative approach offers a robust foundation for uncovering both established and emerging themes in the evolving landscape of social media engagement research.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Publication trends and global insights

This study explores the evolution of publication trends, citation networks, and collaborative activities surrounding social media and consumer engagement within the marketing field. From an initial pool of 113,960 papers, 245 peer-reviewed articles published between 2011 and 2024 were systematically selected for in-depth bibliometric analysis. By mapping the most impactful articles, key thematic clusters, and intellectual structures, this paper uncovers critical patterns and suggests future research pathways.

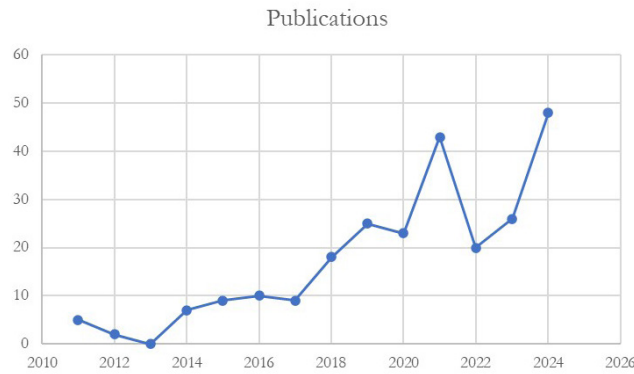


Figure 1. Growth trajectory of publications on social media and consumer engagement (2011–2024)

Specifically, the analysis addresses the question of how contemporary marketing scholarship conceptualizes social media and consumer engagement, offering strategic insights and integrative perspectives to guide both academic inquiry and managerial practice.

As illustrated in Figure 1, research output on social media and consumer engagement has grown steadily over the past decade, with a marked surge beginning around 2018. This acceleration highlights a strategic shift among scholars toward examining participatory and co-creative dynamics rather than focusing

solely on transactional metrics. While the early years saw a relatively modest level of academic interest, the post-2018 period reflects the field’s maturation and its increasing relevance to both marketing theory and practice. The recent stabilization in publication volume suggests a transition from exploratory investigations to more focused, integrative analyses addressing emotional, behavioral, and community-driven aspects of engagement. Overall, this upward trajectory underscores the critical role social media plays in shaping contemporary consumer–brand relationships and sets the stage for deeper theoretical and practical explorations.

Table 2. Top 10 most cited papers

Authors	Title	Year	Cited	Source Title/IF	Q
Hanna et al. (2011)	We are all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem	2011	1032	Business Horizons (3.0)	1
Ashley and Tuten (2015)	Creative Strategies in Social Media Marketing: An Exploratory Study of Branded Social Content and Consumer Engagement	2015	819	Psychology and Marketing (7.61)	1
Dessart et al. (2015)	Consumer engagement in online brand communities: A social media perspective	2015	766	Journal of Product and Brand Management (6.99)	2
Lee et al. (2018)	Advertising content and consumer engagement on social media: Evidence from Facebook	2018	552	Management Science (4.5)	1
Fournier and Avery (2011)	The uninvited brand	2011	505	Business Horizons (3.0)	1
Buhalis and Sinarta (2019)	Real-time co-creation and nowness service: lessons from tourism and hospitality	2019	408	Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing (3.39)	2
Sabate et al. (2014)	Factors influencing the popularity of branded content on Facebook fan pages	2014	386	European Management Journal (3.87)	1
Dijkmans et al. (2015)	A stage to engage: Social media use and corporate reputation	2015	348	Tourism Management (9.68)	1
Harrigan et al. (2018)	Customer engagement and the relationship between involvement, engagement, self-brand connection, and brand usage intent	2018	336	Journal of Business Research (5.34)	1
Scholz and Smith (2016)	Augmented reality: Designing immersive experiences that maximize consumer engagement	2016	314	Business Horizons (3.0)	1

Note: IF = impact factor 2023, Q = Scopus quartiles in 2022 (percentile). The quartiles are quartile 1 (Q1): serial titles in the 99th-75th percentiles; quartile 2 (Q2): serial titles in the 74th-50th percentiles; quartile 3 (Q3): serial titles in the 49th-25th percentiles; and quartile 4 (Q4): serial titles in the 24th-0th percentiles.

The top 10 most cited articles were analyzed to determine the intellectual foundations and most influential contributions that have influenced this research domain. Table 2 offers a comprehensive summary of these seminal works, emphasizing the key papers that have made a substantial contribution to the comprehension of consumer engagement and social media.

As summarized in Table 2, an analysis of the most highly cited articles underscores the intellectual foundations and thematic diversity shaping social media and consumer engagement research. Influential works such as Hanna et al. (2011) and Ashley and Tuten (2015) demonstrate the strategic importance of creative content and interconnected social ecosystems. Meanwhile, contributions by Dessart et al. (2015) and Brodie et al. (2011) underscore the critical role of online brand communities and data-driven strategies in fostering more participatory, co-creative, and emotionally resonant consumer engagement paradigms.

The geographical distribution of research outputs offers critical insights into global scholarly engagement with social media and consumer engagement topics. Table 3 summarizes the number of publications by researchers' institutional affiliations, highlighting the countries driving this academic discourse.

Geographically, the analysis shows a strong dominance by scholars affiliated with institutions in the United States, followed by significant contributions from India, China, and other emerging research hubs such as the United Kingdom and Australia. This distribution reflects a broadening global interest in understanding how social media reshapes consumer-brand relationships and signals oppor-

tunities for more cross-cultural comparative studies in the future.

To understand the publication landscape and the influence of different journals in shaping this research domain, the top 20 journals were analyzed based on total citations and citation-per-publication ratios. Table 4 provides an overview of these key publication sources, illustrating the breadth and depth of scholarly contributions in this field.

Table 4. Top 20 journals in citation and distribution

Source Title	TC	TP	TC/TP
Business Horizons	2027	5	405.40
Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	1053	12	87.75
Journal of Business Research	1039	11	94.45
Journal of Product and Brand Management	1020	8	127.50
Psychology and Marketing	949	2	474.50
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	436	2	218.00
Tourism Management	374	2	187.00
Internet Research	302	3	100.67
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	253	6	42.17
Journal of Marketing Communications	234	2	117.00
Journal of Consumer Marketing	224	7	32.00
International Journal of Information Management	219	2	109.50
Computers in Human Behavior	207	4	51.75
Journal of Interactive Marketing	178	3	59.33
Journal of Global Fashion Marketing	142	3	47.33
Marketing Intelligence and Planning	134	5	26.80
Online Information Review	119	2	59.50
Journal of Social Marketing	104	2	52.00
Journal of Marketing Management	87	3	29.00
European Journal of Marketing	77	3	25.67

Note: TC = Total Citation, TP = Total Publications, TC/TP = citation per documents.

The analysis of top journals, summarized in Table 4, reveals the significant roles these outlets play in consolidating and advancing research on social media and consumer engagement. Journals

Table 3. Number of publications by researchers' institutional affiliation by country

Country	Documents	%	Country	Documents	%
China	30	10.83	South Korea	10	3.61
The United States	64	23.10	Portugal	6	2.17
The United Kingdom	20	7.22	Norway	6	2.17
India	35	12.64	Spain	7	2.53
Australia	24	8.66	Brazil	7	2.53
Pakistan	7	2.53	Japan	5	1.81
Saudi Arabia	6	2.17	Canada	7	2.53
Malaysia	14	5.05	Taiwan	5	1.81
Hong Kong	7	2.53	Greece	5	1.81
The United Arab Emirates	7	2.53	Israel	5	1.81

Table 5. Top 15 most cited authors

Aut hor	Citations	Affiliation	h-index
Hollebeek L.D.	402	Sunway University, Vilnius University, TalTech, Umea University, Lund University, University of Johannesburg	61
Brodie R.J.	206	University of Auckland	67
Juric B.	137	University of Ljubljana	29
Ilic A.	130	Meta Inc	25
Malthouse E.C.	107	Northwestern University	60
Verhoef P.C	98	University of Groningen	85
Kumar V.	95	Indian School of Business	106
Gensler S.	88	Marketing Center Münster	25
Rahman Z.	79	Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee	80
Mittal V.	77	Rice University	58
Lemon K.N.	77	Boston College	48
Hair J.F.	77	University of South Alabama	133
Glynn M.S.	76	Auckland University of Technology	16
Veloutsou C.	74	University of Glasgow	46
Van Doorn J.	74	University of Groningen	28

such as Business Horizons and Psychology and Marketing exhibit exceptionally high citation-per-publication ratios, emphasizing their influence in shaping theoretical and managerial perspectives in digital marketing (Stephen, 2021). High-impact journals like the Journal of Business Research and Journal of Product and Brand Management underscore the centrality of interactive marketing and consumer behavior themes (Kozinets, 2020). Meanwhile, tourism-focused outlets, including Tourism Management and Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, highlight the growing integration of engagement concepts in service and experiential sectors. Collectively, these citation patterns reflect a strong scholarly momentum toward participatory, trust-based, and emotionally driven engagement paradigms (Fournier & Avery, 2011).

The analysis of top-cited authors (Table 5) reveals a strong focus on digital consumer engagement, relationship marketing, and customer experience as foundational pillars of this research field. Thought leaders such as Hollebeek, Brodie, and Kumar have significantly advanced theoretical frameworks related to engagement and loyalty, while scholars like Verhoef and Malthouse have contributed to our understanding of customer trust and multimedia analytics. Others have deepened insights into brand management, online consumer behavior, and predictive analytics, collectively shaping a comprehensive and dynamic intellectual structure. This concentration of expertise highlights the critical interplay between digital transformation, emotional connection, and strategic value creation in contemporary marketing research.

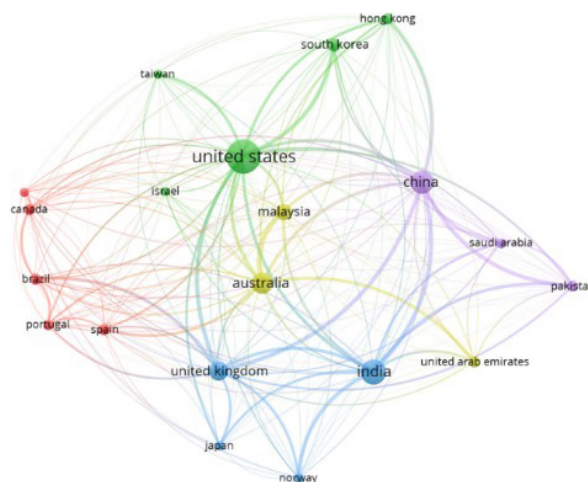


Figure 2a. Co-occurrence by countries

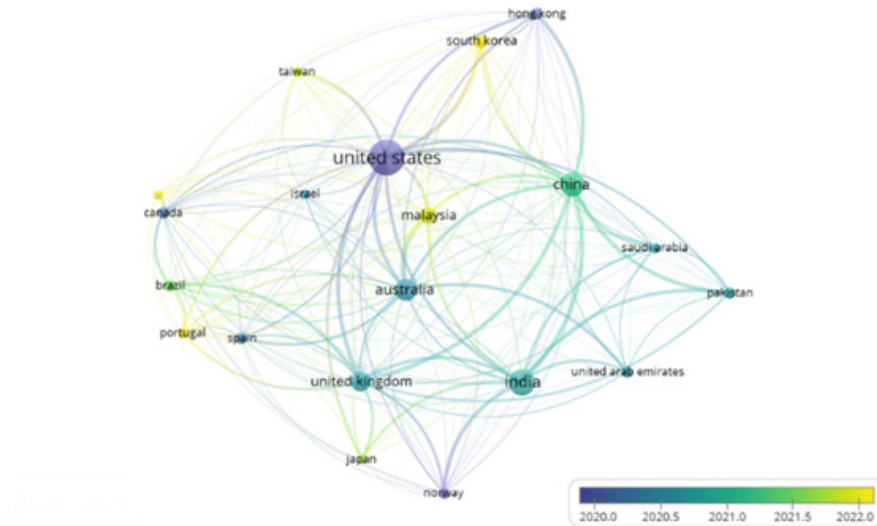


Figure 2b. Overlay visualization in co-occurrence by countries

In addition to author-level intellectual contributions, examining country-level research linkages provides further insight into global knowledge dissemination and collaborative dynamics. The study found that bibliography coupling in 62 countries (with a 20-document threshold) helps identify international research collaborations, track global research trends, and understand knowledge transfer linkages, as shown through this visualization.

Figure 2a depicts global research collaboration patterns derived from co-occurrence analysis across 62 countries, revealing five distinct clusters. The green cluster, anchored by the United States (which demonstrates the highest total link strength (TLS: 1,526.25) and the largest number of publications ($n = 64$)), also integrates Taiwan, South Korea, Israel, and Hong Kong, reflecting a robust East-West collaborative dynamic. The blue cluster centers on India (TLS: 1,279.69; $n = 35$), alongside the United Kingdom, Japan, and Norway, highlighting a strong transnational academic network with diverse regional contributions. The red cluster, connecting Brazil, Portugal, Spain, and Canada, indicates active regional collaborations primarily within Europe and Latin America. The purple cluster, comprising China (TLS: 1,450.25; $n = 30$), Malaysia, Australia, the UAE, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, underscores China's expanding influence and leadership in cross-border marketing research initiatives. Finally, the olive cluster illustrates additional regional connections formed through shared thematic and disciplinary interests, further emphasizing the global complexity of marketing research collaborations.

Figure 2b presents the same co-occurrence network with an overlay based on average publication year, ranging from 2020 to 2022. Recent contributions, represented in yellow and green hues, highlight a growing participation from countries like India, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates, particularly in emerging topics such as influencer marketing, digital consumer behavior, and e-commerce. This trend points to a diversification of scholarly voices and the globalization of consumer engagement research in the digital era.

3.2. Intellectual and thematic landscape

The intellectual and thematic landscape of social media and consumer engagement research has undergone a rapid transformation in the past decade, indicating a transition from transactional and metric-driven approaches to more participatory, experiential, and trust-based frameworks. This study identifies dominant research clusters, emergent thematic intersections, and conceptual shifts that have influenced scholarly discourse in this field through keyword co-occurrence analysis and co-citation mapping.

To better understand conceptual trends, this paper examines keyword clusters and thematic emphases identified through co-word analysis across different time periods. As illustrated in Figure 3, the keyword co-occurrence networks visually represent these thematic shifts, highlighting the transition from broad, interdisciplinary applications

er-generated content, and content marketing dynamics. Complementing these, the fourth cluster (olive green) reflects digital marketing trends and engagement strategies, incorporating themes such as eWOM, e-commerce, and brand engagement to illustrate technology-driven relationship building. The fifth cluster (purple) examines social media marketing within tourism contexts, addressing how platforms like Instagram and Twitter shape experiential consumption and promotional strategies. Finally, the sixth cluster (teal) focuses on brand loyalty and consumption behavior, emphasizing psychological and behavioral outcomes associated with sustained engagement efforts. Collectively, these clusters reflect a strategic shift from transactional metrics to immersive, emotionally resonant, and community-oriented approaches, underscoring the evolving complexity of consumer engagement research.

The thematic evolution of consumer engagement in the context of social media, as summarized in Table 6, demonstrates a progressive transition from foundational engagement metrics toward a multidimensional, value-driven model. During the early period (2010–2017), the literature predominantly emphasized basic forms of engagement (likes, shares, and comments) while concurrently exploring peer-to-peer influence, user-generated content (UGC), and the emergence of analytics as tools for quantifying interaction. These initial themes reflect the exploratory nature of early re-

search in digital engagement, where studies were largely conceptual or descriptive in nature.

Between 2018 and 2021, the focus of scholarly inquiry expanded significantly. The integration of AI technologies facilitated a rise in personalized content delivery, while cross-platform engagement strategies gained momentum due to the proliferation of multiple social media channels. In parallel, concerns over algorithmic influence and transparency emerged, prompting scholars to investigate how platform architectures affect user trust and brand visibility. This period also witnessed a notable expansion in influencer marketing studies, shifting attention from organic to paid social influence models.

Consumer expectations for comprehensive, sustainable, and ethical digital experiences have been increasingly reflected in the literature since 2021. Sustainable engagement, purpose-driven branding, and emotional retention have become the primary research directions. This change is consistent with the broader societal concerns regarding environmental and ethical responsibility, and it underscores the increasing demand for genuine brand-consumer relationships. The incorporation of metrics such as loyalty, retention, and emotional resonance indicates a methodological maturation in engagement research, as it transitions from superficial indicators to more comprehensive frameworks.

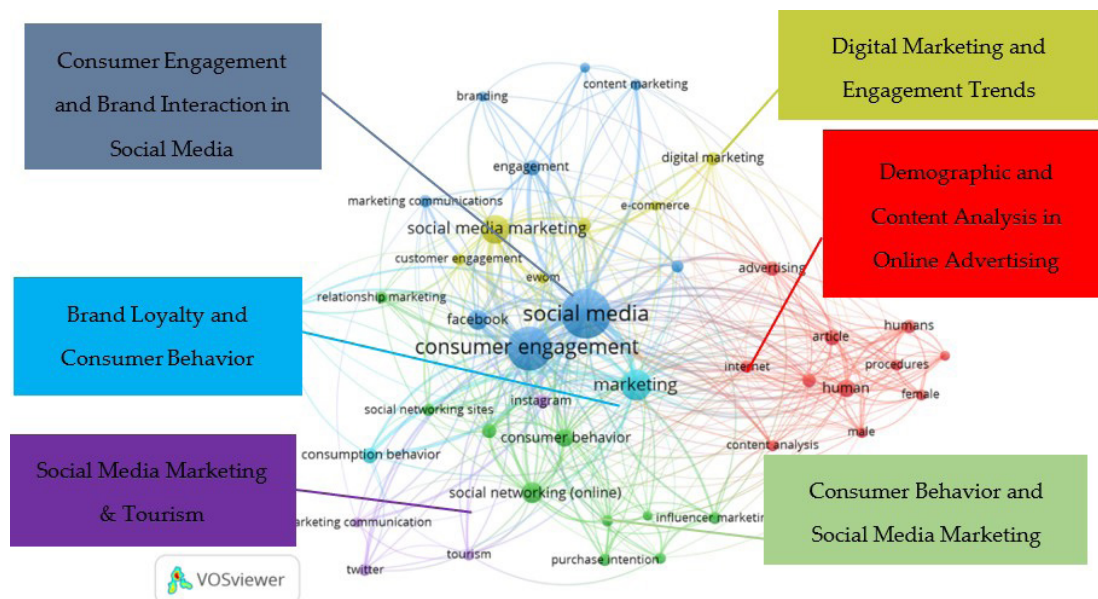


Figure 4. All keywords visualization (43 threshold)

Table 6. Evolution of key themes across three periods

Period	Cluster/Theme	Description	Year
2010–2017	User Engagement	Focused on basic engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments), reflecting early-stage studies on user interaction with social media content.	Liu et al. (2024), Shang et al. (2022), Huang (2023)
	Social Influence	Initial studies on peer networks and influencers’ impact, focusing on organic influence rather than paid sponsorships.	Sinha and Srivastava (2023), Bastrygina et al. (2024), Al-Hasan (2024), Drossos et al. (2024)
	User-Generated Content (UGC)	Explored user motivations for creating content and its impact on brand image.	Sharma (2024), Davcik (2022), Ibrahim (2022), Feddema (2021)
	Engagement Metrics and Analytics	Engagement metrics and analytics gained attention as researchers sought to quantify engagement.	Ju et al. (2024), Harrison and Kwon (2023), Gkikas et al. (2022), Soares et al. (2022), Semenda et al. (2024), Fan et al. (2023), Luangrath et al. (2023), Holiday et al. (2023)
	Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR)	AR and VR’s accessibility led to studies on their impact on user experience and emotional engagement.	Scholz and Smith (2016)
	Ethics and Privacy Concerns	Privacy concerns, particularly regarding AI and data usage, emphasized ethical data handling practices in engagement research.	Woodcock et al. (2011), Rader et al. (2014)
2018–2021	AI-Driven Personalization	The integration of AI influenced engagement through tailored content recommendations and personalization of the user experience.	Lawry and Bhappu (2021), Subramaniyan and Muthuraman (2023)
	Cross-Platform Engagement	Research on engagement across multiple social media platforms gained momentum, with brands seeking cohesive strategies.	Garton et al. (2022), Bowden and Mirzaei (2021)
	Algorithmic Influence and Transparency	Algorithmic visibility and its role in shaping user behavior and trust became a significant study area.	Moran et al. (2020), Yang et al. (2021), Wei et al. (2023)
2021–Present	Sustainable and Purpose-Driven Engagement	Brands’ social and environmental stances emerged as influential factors, reflecting user interest in sustainability and ethics.	Machado et al. (2020), Akhtar (2024), Munaro et al. (2024)
	User Engagement Evolution	User engagement evolved to include loyalty metrics, retention, and deeper emotional connections driven by personalized, immersive experiences.	Liu et al. (2024), Hafyana and Alzubi (2024), Testa et al. (2020)
			Shahzad et al. (2019), Bitakou et al. (2024)

3.3. Conceptual advances and future research directions

The author co-citation analysis, illustrated in Figure 5, reveals four primary intellectual clusters that shape the foundation of social media and consumer engagement research. The green cluster (42 items), led by scholars such as Brodie, Hollebeek, and Kumar, emphasizes relationship marketing and consumer engagement frameworks, highlighting the shift toward participatory and co-creative approaches. The blue cluster (33 items), including Rahman and Veloutsou, focuses on consumer behavior and social media marketing strategies, underscoring the importance of understanding psychological drivers and online interaction patterns. The red cluster (51 items), anchored by authors like Gensler, Berger, and Swani, reflects research on digital marketing, brand management, and con-

tent strategies, indicating the integration of technological tools into brand-consumer relationships. Finally, the olive-green cluster (20 items), featuring Hair and Sarstedt, centers on methodological advancements, particularly structural equation modeling (SEM), reinforcing the methodological rigor in this field.

Together, these clusters highlight the diverse theoretical orientations and methodological preferences shaping the discourse on consumer engagement. They reveal an ongoing evolution from transactional and metric-focused views toward more holistic, trust-based, and emotionally resonant conceptualizations, providing a robust intellectual base for future research and practical applications.

This co-citation network highlights how foundational theories in consumer engagement have de-

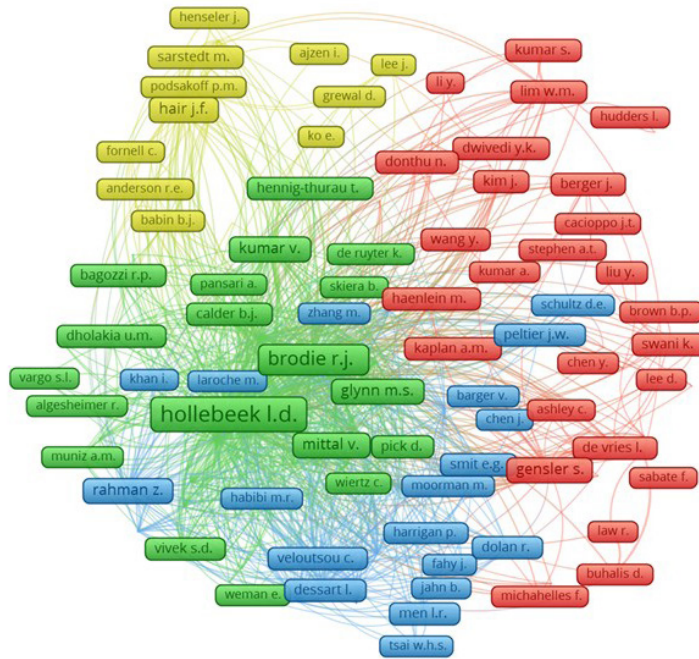


Figure 5. Author co-citations, 146 thresholds (18,949 authors)

veloped through the intellectual contributions of key scholars. Central figures such as Brodie, Hollebeek, and Kozinets represent a strong stream of conceptual development around service-dominant logic and cultural engagement theory. In contrast, authors such as Hair, Sarstedt, and Fornell indicate the dominance of quantitative, model-driven approaches such as SEM. The clustering pattern reflects two dominant orientations in the field (interpretive theory versus structural modeling), both of which shape how engagement is studied in social media environments today.

Table 7 combines the main sub-themes that were identified through co-word and co-citation analyses and suggests actionable future research directions. Through the translation of intricate theoretical insights into practical enquiries, Table 7 functions as a conduit between managerial application and academic exploration. For instance, research on emotional engagement could be used to develop strategies for creating emotionally resonant campaigns that enhance brand loyalty. In the same vein, brands can optimize content virality by conducting investigations into content sharing and amplification mechanisms, while simultaneously balancing algorithmic imperatives and authenticity.

4. DISCUSSION

This study offers an integrative synthesis of the intellectual and thematic evolution of social media consumer engagement, revealing a marked shift from surface-level, metric-focused approaches to more holistic constructs that emphasize emotional resonance, co-creation, and trust-based relationships (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Dessart et al., 2015). This transition underscores the transformation of digital platforms from transactional communication tools to participatory ecosystems where consumers actively shape brand narratives and community identities (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011; Kozinets, 2022).

The findings extend existing theoretical frameworks, notably service-dominant logic and cultural branding theories, by conceptualizing engagement as an ongoing relational and emotional process rather than a mere behavioral outcome (Calder et al., 2016; Plangger et al., 2022). The strong emergence of thematic clusters on user-generated content and algorithmic personalization further highlights the increasing complexity of consumer interactions, echoing calls for greater attention to co-creation and experiential value (Bashar et al., 2024; Muhammad et al., 2021).

Table 7. Sub-theme direction

Category	Subtheme	Future Research Directions	Example Research Questions
User Engagement	Online participation, loyalty, satisfaction	Examine how deeper user engagement drives brand loyalty and long-term value creation.	How can brands design engagement tactics that strengthen customer loyalty across digital touchpoints?
			What types of content or activities most effectively convert passive followers into active brand advocates?
Social Influence and Virality	Peer influence, trend spreading, influencer impact	Investigate strategies to leverage peer networks and influencers for greater content virality.	How can micro-influencer collaborations be optimized to drive viral brand campaigns?
			What role does social proof play in accelerating trend adoption among niche audiences?
Networks and Communities	Community building, trust, group cohesion	Explore how digital communities foster brand trust and co-create brand narratives.	How can brands cultivate online communities to reinforce trust and enhance customer lifetime value?
			What mechanisms within communities drive member advocacy and word-of-mouth marketing?
Emotional Engagement	Emotional connection, brand relationships	Analyze how emotional triggers in digital campaigns enhance user retention and brand attachment.	How can brands incorporate emotional storytelling to deepen consumer-brand relationships?
			Which emotions most effectively influence purchase intentions across cultural contexts?
Behavioral Engagement	Clicks, shares, comments, user activities	Identify behavioral patterns that signal readiness to purchase or engage deeper with the brand.	Which engagement metrics best predict conversion or repeat purchase behaviors?
			How can behavioral data inform personalized marketing strategies to increase ROI?
User-Generated Content (UGC)	Content creation by consumers, authenticity	Determine best practices for motivating and managing UGC to strengthen authenticity and trust.	How can brands design incentive programs to stimulate high-quality UGC?
			What strategies ensure that UGC aligns with brand positioning and messaging?
Engagement Metrics and Analytics	Measurement tools, data analysis	Develop advanced metrics that move beyond vanity indicators to capture real brand impact.	How can AI-driven analytics improve the accuracy of engagement measurement?
			Which new metrics can better capture emotional and relational engagement outcomes?
Content Sharing, Distribution, Algorithms	Content virality, cross-platform strategies	Evaluate how content design and distribution strategies can maximize reach and resonance.	What content characteristics increase shareability and cross-platform amplification?
			How can algorithmic insights be leveraged to improve content reach without sacrificing authenticity?
Content Sharing and Amplification	Content virality, cross-platform strategies	Evaluate how content design and distribution strategies can maximize reach and resonance.	What content characteristics increase shareability and cross-platform amplification?
			How can algorithmic insights be leveraged to improve content reach without sacrificing authenticity?
Platform Architecture and Technical Infrastructure	Design, usability, technical support	Investigate how platform design influences user engagement and satisfaction.	How can user interface design enhancements boost engagement and reduce churn?
			What technical features foster smoother brand interactions and seamless community participation?

From a managerial perspective, these results emphasize the strategic necessity of fostering authentic, emotionally rich connections rather than relying solely on quantitative reach or superficial engagement metrics (Stephen, 2016; Wang, 2021). Storytelling strategies that resonate with consumer identities and encourage participatory experiences are critical for cultivating brand loyalty and advocacy (Lopes & Casais, 2022; Nicoli et al., 2022). Furthermore, as algorithms play a growing role in shaping content visibility and engagement pathways, transparency and ethical content curation become vital for maintaining consumer trust and enhancing long-term brand credibility (Bashar et al., 2024; Kozinets, 2022).

This study also highlights the global diffusion of engagement research, with notable contributions from scholars affiliated with institutions in the United States, India, China, and the United Kingdom. This trend points to the need for more cross-cultural and comparative studies to account for diverse consumer behaviors and sociocultural dynamics across digital markets (Plangger et al., 2022; Hollebeek et al., 2019).

While valuable insights were gained, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations, such as the exclusive use of Scopus data and English-language publications. This may mean that some relevant regional and non-English scholarship was not included. Future research should incorporate longitudinal, cross-platform, and cross-cultural analyses to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of consumer engagement in more diverse contexts (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

CONCLUSION

This study provides an integrative bibliometric analysis that maps the intellectual, thematic, and geographical evolution of social media and consumer engagement research between 2011 and 2024. By shifting the focus from transactional, metric-based approaches to participatory, emotionally resonant, and trust-driven frameworks, the study highlights a significant conceptual transformation within the field. This evolution underscores consumer engagement as a dynamic, relational process deeply embedded in cultural and social contexts rather than merely a behavioral metric.

The findings offer valuable theoretical contributions by extending service-dominant logic and cultural branding theories, emphasizing the importance of co-creation and shared meaning in shaping brand-consumer relationships. In practical terms, the findings encourage marketers to prioritize authentic storytelling, encourage community co-creation, and guarantee algorithmic transparency in order to establish an enduring emotional connection and trust with consumers.

This study provides a comprehensive conceptual synthesis; however, further investigation in broader linguistic and cross-platform contexts is necessary. Ultimately, this study offers a consolidated synthesis of consumer engagement's evolution, providing strategic and theoretical guidance for future research and practice.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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