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FROM EMERGENCE TO EXPANSION: A BIBLIOMETRIC MAPPING OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING RESEARCH

Muhammad Thalib PK [1] & T Mohamed Nishad [2]

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Author Details: [1] Research Scholar, P.G. and Research Department of Commerce, Farook College (Autonomous), University of Calicut, Kozhikode, Kerala, India; &
[2] Professor, P.G. and Research Department of Commerce, Farook College (Autonomous), University of Calicut, Kozhikode, Kerala, India

Corresponding Author:
Muhammad Thalib PK

Abstract

Social media marketing (SMM) has become a prominent area of scholarly and practical interest in the digital era. This study presents a bibliometric analysis of 1488 publications on SMM indexed in Scopus from 2008 – 2025. The aim is to map the evolution of SMM research and provide a comprehensive overview of its intellectual structure. Using bibliometric techniques, the analysis identifies publication trends over time and pinpoints the most prolific contributors (leading authors, journals, and countries) in the field. It also highlights the most highly cited articles that have shaped the knowledge base. Furthermore, co-authorship network analysis reveals patterns of collaboration among countries, while keyword co-occurrence analysis uncovers key thematic areas in SMM literature. Finally, bibliographic coupling is employed to detect clusters of related research, indicating major thematic streams. The findings offer an integrated perspective on how SMM scholarship has grown and evolved, identifying influential research themes and collaboration networks. This study contributes by synthesizing a large body of SMM research, which can inform researchers and practitioners about the current state of the field and guide future research directions.

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Introduction

Social media has fundamentally transformed the marketing landscape by changing how consumers and firms interact (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Billions of people worldwide use social media platforms, making them essential channels for businesses to reach and engage customers (Appel et al., 2020). As a result, social media marketing (SMM) is becoming an essential part of modern business strategy (Felix et al., 2017). At the same time, leveraging social media presents challenges (e.g., managing electronic word-of-mouth) that have drawn increased scrutiny from marketers and researchers (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

In keeping with its practical significance, SMM has also emerged as a vibrant domain of academic research. Over the past decade, an extensive body of literature has accumulated, covering topics such as electronic word-of-mouth, customer engagement, and brand communities. Scholarly publications on SMM have grown significantly over this time due to practitioners' extensive use of social media (Appel et al., 2020; Kamboj et al., 2018). However, early studies noted that SMM research was fragmented across isolated issues and lacked a unifying framework (Felix et al., 2017). Researchers have created comprehensive frameworks and carried out in-depth literature assessments to synthesise the body of knowledge in order to overcome this fragmentation (Felix et al., 2017; Kapoor et al., 2018). Such efforts have begun to organize the knowledge base and highlight major themes in SMM research.

The SMM field is still developing rapidly in spite of these advancements, so it is necessary to conduct frequent assessments in order to record any new improvements. In order to uncover new themes and gaps in the discipline, researchers have urged for updated analyses of the digital and social media marketing landscape (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Therefore, a bibliometric research is appropriate since it maps publishing trends and intellectual relationships in the growing SMM literature statistically. Bibliometric methods systematically reveal trends and linkages in the literature, offering objective insights into how the field has unfolded and where it is heading.

This study uses bibliometric analysis to provide a comprehensive overview of SMM research from 2008 to early 2025 (1488 Scopus-indexed publications). The analysis addresses the following objectives:

- **Map publication trends:** Chart the annual growth of SMM publications from 2008 through 2025.
- **Identify top contributors:** Determine the most prolific authors, leading journals, and top contributing countries in SMM.

- **Highlight influential works:** Identify the highest cited articles that have shaped the SMM literature.
- **Analyse collaboration networks:** Examine co-authorship patterns, particularly collaboration among countries.
- **Reveal key themes:** Use keyword co-occurrence to identify prominent research themes in SMM.
- **Discover thematic clusters:** Apply bibliographic coupling to uncover clusters of related studies (major research streams).

By fulfilling these objectives, this study maps the intellectual structure of SMM researches and demonstrates how the field has grown and diversified. The findings illuminate which topics and collaborative networks have been central in SMM's development and point to emerging areas warranting further inquiry. In sum, this bibliometric analysis offers a timely synthesis of the SMM literature, providing a clearer understanding of the field's evolution and a foundation for future research.

Background of the Study

Social media marketing (SMM) has rapidly evolved as an essential area of marketing researches due to its significant impact on consumer-brand interactions and marketing strategies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Initially, researchers attention centered on understanding social media's integration into existing marketing frameworks and exploring its distinct characteristics, such as interactivity and user-generated content (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Early foundational studies, such as (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) classification of social media platforms and (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) conceptualization of social media as a hybrid promotional tool, set the stage for subsequent research. (Kietzmann et al., 2011) further developed the theoretical understanding by introducing the "honeycomb" model, illustrating core functionalities like identity, sharing, and reputation, essential for marketers aiming to leverage social media effectively.

Over the following years, research themes diversified significantly, branching into studies on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), online consumer engagement, brand communities, influencer marketing, and social customer relationship management (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Brodie et al., 2013; Kim & Ko, 2012). Empirical evidence increasingly underscored the strategic importance of social media in strengthening consumer relationships and enhancing brand loyalty (Kim & Ko, 2012). Scholars emphasized the impact of influencer marketing, demonstrating how influencers affect consumer decision-making and brand perceptions, contributing substantially to literature exploring authenticity, credibility, and consumer trust in social media contexts (Veirman et al., 2017).

Despite considerable growth, the rapid thematic expansion and interdisciplinary nature of SMM have resulted in fragmented scholarly contributions, highlighting the need for systematic bibliometric assessments (Bashar et al., 2024). Previous reviews typically concentrated on specific subdomains or shorter timelines, leaving a gap for comprehensive quantitative analyses covering broader periods. Addressing this gap, the current bibliometric study seeks to map research trends comprehensively, analyze thematic clusters, and identify key contributions within the extensive literature from 2008 to early 2025, providing critical insights and clarity on the evolution and future directions of social media marketing research.

Methodology: In order to determine the intellectual content of social media marketing, the study looks at the bibliometric structure that summarises the publication patterns of articles, journals, authors, and countries.

a) Techniques for analysis: The research trend in social media marketing is examined in the article using a variety of bibliometric analytic methodologies. Apart from its ability to manage enormous data, bibliometric analysis may also detect publication patterns, progressive subjects, and thematic evolution visualisations, which facilitates the planning of both past and future research directions (Goodell et al., 2021). Co-occurrence analysis reveals the authors' most focused subjects, bibliographic coupling explains the themes in the body of knowledge, and citation analysis shows the most cited authors, publications, organisations, and even nations. These three bibliometric analysis methods were applied in this work.

b) Data collection: The data is acquired from Scopus, as it is a database that offers the widest coverage of peer-reviewed research in social media marketing. A detailed, systematic procedure for obtaining the data is given in Table 1. After being filtered using the following criteria, 1488 items were selected from the data, which covers the years 2008–2025.

Table 1: Search Criteria

Filtering Criteria	Reject	Accept
Data Source: Scopus Search date: 19-March-2025 Search term: "Social Media Marketing" From 2008 - 2025		3230
Limited to Subject area: Business, Management and Accounting	976	2254
Limited to Document type: Article	647	1607
Limited to Language: English only	19	1588
Limited to Source: Journal	12	1576
Publication stage: final	88	1488

Results And Discussion

a) Publication Trend:

Based on the publication trend analysis in social media marketing research, Figure 1 illustrates the steady rise in the number of publications over the years, reflecting the growing academic interest in this field. The highest publishing volume was recorded in 2024, with 241 publications, indicating peak research activity.

Considering only years with significant publication counts (from 2016 onward) and excluding incomplete data for 2025, the year 2016 had the highest growth rate at 48.84%, marking a notable increase in research output. In contrast, 2023 recorded the lowest growth rate, showing a decline of -12.18% compared to the previous year. This indicates a temporary drop in research momentum before rebounding in 2024.

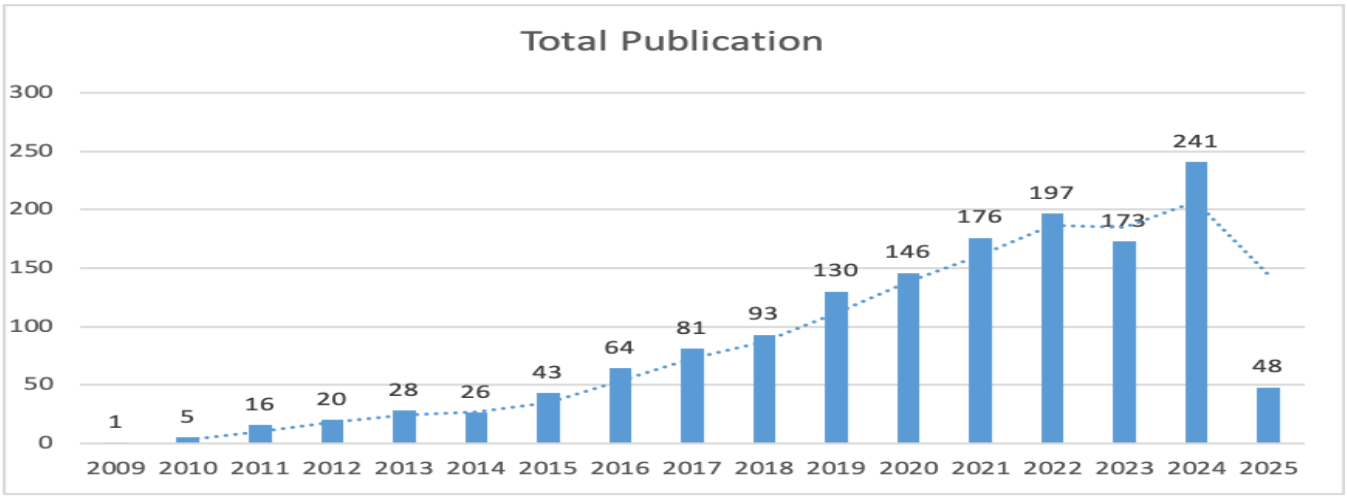

Fig 1. Publication Trend of Social media marketing

Table 2. Publication Trend of Social media marketing

Year	Total Publication	Growth rate (%)
2009	1	-
2010	5	400.00
2011	16	220.00
2012	20	25.00
2013	28	40.00
2014	26	-7.14
2015	43	65.38
2016	64	48.84
2017	81	26.56
2018	93	14.81
2019	130	39.78
2020	146	12.31
2021	176	20.55
2022	197	11.93
2023	173	-12.18
2024	241	39.31
2025*	48	-80.08

* The publication counts till 2025 march 10 only.

b) Top authors and countries in social media marketing research: The top researchers in the subject of social media marketing and the top nations in terms of the number of documents mentioned are shown in Tables 3 and 4, respectively. Angella Jiyoung Kim and Eunju Ko are the most cited authors in the subject of social media marketing, with 1853 citations. With 1412 citations, Robert V. Kozinets, Kristine De Valck, et al. rank second. The United States has contributed more

intellectually to social media marketing research than any other country, with 371 publications (Citations: 22767). India ranked second in terms of overall publications (174), whereas the UK ranked second in terms of citations (8376).

Table 3: Top Authors in Social media marketing Research

Author	Documents	Citations
Angella Jiyoung Kim and Eunju Ko	2	1853
Robert V. Kozinets, Kristine De Valck et al.	1	1412
Lisette de Vries, Sonja Gensler et al.	1	1407
Marijke De Veirman, Veroline Cauberghe et al.	1	1277
Yogesh K. Dwivedi, Elvira Ismagilova et al.	1	1084
Christy Ashley and Tracy Tuten	1	890
Bruno Godey A and Aikaterini Manthiou	1	804
Zhiwei Liu and Sangwon Park	1	770
Donna Hoffman and Marek Fodor	1	730
Andrew N. Smith, Eileen Fischer et al.	1	706
Nina Michaelidou, Nikoletta Theofania Siamagka et al.	1	662
Stephanie Hays, Stephen John Page et al.	1	656
Dokyun Lee, Kartik Hosanagar et al.	1	636
Edward C. Malthouse, Michael Haenlein et al.	1	590
Irena Pletikosa Cvijikj and Florian Michahelles	1	590
Reto Felix, Philipp A. Rauschnabel et al.	1	545
S. Venus Jin, Aziz Muqaddam et al.	1	520
Gunn Sara Enli, Eli Skogerbø.	1	500

Table 4: Top Countries in Social media marketing Research

Country	Documents	Citations
United States	371	22767
United Kingdom	115	8376
India	174	5626
France	24	5388
Canada	30	4724
Australia	71	4206
China	102	3928
Italy	38	3706
South Korea	39	3333
Germany	26	2861
Finland	26	2643
Hong Kong	32	2292
Taiwan	42	2138
Netherlands	7	1798
Malaysia	86	1770
Belgium	8	1439
Norway	14	1387

Spain	51	1311
Indonesia	99	1136

c) **Top journals in social media marketing Research:** The top journals that were published in social media marketing research are presented in Table 5. In terms of citations, the Journal of Business Research and Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing are the most influential journals with 4812 and 4101 citations, respectively. However, in terms of publications, Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing and Journal of Business Research are the most productive sources with 59 and 36 publications respectively.

Table 5: Top Journals in Social media marketing Research

Source	Documents	Citations
Journal of Business Research	36	4812
Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	59	4101
Journal of Interactive Marketing	9	3353
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	25	1978
Psychology And Marketing	12	1613
International Journal of Information Management	10	1596
Journal of Marketing	2	1592
Industrial Marketing Management	16	1572
International Journal of Advertising	12	1568
Business Horizons	7	1225
Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	19	1115
Sustainability (Switzerland)	34	995
Marketing Intelligence and Planning	12	975
Current Issues in Tourism	6	964
MIT Sloan Management Review	2	913
Journal of Global Fashion Marketing	11	880
Tourism Management	3	827
Information Systems Research	4	709
Technological Forecasting and Social Change	8	663
Management Science	1	636
Social Network Analysis and Mining	4	634
Journal of Promotion Management	15	585
International Journal of Data and Network Science	41	583
Journal of Marketing for Higher Education	10	575
Decision Support Systems	4	567
Cogent Business and Management	28	559
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	4	558
Online Information Review	7	555
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	9	501
Information Communication and Society	1	500

d) **Top articles on social media marketing Research:** The top cited articles in the field of social media marketing are presented in Table 6. The article entitled "Networked narratives: Understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities" by Robert V. Kozinets, Kristine De Valck et al. and the article "Do social media marketing activities enhance

customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand" by Angella J Kim and Eunju Ko are the most impactful and influential article with the highest number of citations 1412 for both articles. And the article entitled "Popularity of Brand Posts on Brand Fan Pages: An Investigation of the Effects of Social Media Marketing" by Lisette de Vries, Sonja Gensler et al. with 1407 citations ranked as the third.

Table 6: Top articles in social media marketing Research

Article	Author	Citations
Networked narratives: Understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities	Robert V. Kozinets, Kristine De Valck et al.	1412
Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand	Angella J Kim and Eunju Ko	1412
Popularity of Brand Posts on Brand Fan Pages: An Investigation of the Effects of Social Media Marketing	Lisette de Vries, Sonja Gensler et al.	1407
Marketing through instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude	Marijke De Veirman, Veroline Cauberghe et al.	1277
Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions	Yogesh K. Dwivedi, Elvira Ismagilova et al.	1084
Creative Strategies in Social Media Marketing: An Exploratory Study of Branded Social Content and Consumer Engagement	Christy Ashley and Tracy Tuten	890
Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior	Bruno Godey, Aikaterini Manthiou et al.	804
What makes a useful online review? Implication for travel product websites	Zhiwei Liu, Sangwon Park	770
Can you measure the ROI of your social media marketing?	Donna L. Hoffman and Marek Fodor	730
How Does Brand-related User-generated Content Differ across YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter?	Andrew N. Smith, Eileen Fischer et al.	706
Usage, barriers and measurement of social media marketing: An exploratory investigation of small and medium B2B brands	Nina Michaelidou, Nikoletta Theofania Siamagka et al.	662
Social media as a destination marketing tool: Its use by national tourism organisations	Stephanie Hays, Stephen John Page et al.	656
Advertising content and consumer engagement on social media: Evidence from Facebook	Dokyun Lee, Kartik Hosanagar et al.	636
Managing customer relationships in the social media era: Introducing the social CRM house	Malthouse E.C., Haenlein M. et al	590
Online engagement factors on Facebook brand pages	Pletikosa Cvijikj I.; Michahelles F.	590
Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic framework	Felix R.; Rauschnabel P.A., et al	545
Instafamous and social media influencer marketing	Jin S.V.; Muqaddam A.; Ryu E.	520
Personalized campaigns in party-centred politics: Twitter and Facebook as arenas for political communication	Enli G.S.; Skogerbø E.	500

e) Co-authorship analysis of social media marketing research among countries: Table 7 below shows the co-authorship among authors in different countries. Co-authorship is one of the most tangible and well-documented forms of scientific collaboration. Researchers are no longer independent players but members of teams that bring together complementary skills and multidisciplinary approaches around common goals. This approach is a useful tool for determining main sources and evaluating collaboration trends (Páramo-Fonseca et al., 2019). Which is why this paper intends to look at the co-authorship analysis. United States have 118 Link strengths, which means, the US authors have collaborated with other nations' authors more than any of other countries. United Kingdom has 76 Link strength, positioned second in the list and The Indian authors have 42 link strength, which positioned 3rd in the list.

Table 7: Co-authorship among different countries regarding research in social media marketing

Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
United States	371	22767	118
United Kingdom	115	8376	76
India	174	5626	42
France	24	5388	35

Canada	30	4724	31
Australia	71	4206	52
China	102	3928	63
Italy	38	3706	24
South Korea	39	3333	25
Germany	26	2861	25
Finland	26	2643	21
Hong Kong	32	2292	36
Taiwan	42	2138	23
Netherlands	7	1798	8
Malaysia	86	1770	31
Belgium	8	1439	6
Norway	14	1387	9
Spain	51	1311	22
Indonesia	99	1136	15

f) Thematic trends of social media marketing research through co-occurrence analysis: Co-occurrence analysis is conducted based on keywords. The analysis of keywords in the publications used by the authors gives an idea of the concepts that are being focused on in these studies of social media marketing as shown in Fig 2. Social media marketing research through co-occurrence analysis reveals its significant impact on consumer behavior, particularly in building trust and loyalty. Social media marketing is essential in establishing consumer trust and brand loyalty by promoting direct communication between brands and consumers. Marketers establish trust and enduring relationships through personalized communication, interactive content, and real-time customer service. Purchase decisions are greatly influenced by brand recognition and engagement since customers are more inclined to purchase from companies, they are familiar with and regularly engage with. Additionally, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and influencer marketing amplify brand messages, with recommendations from trusted influencers enhancing consumer confidence. As a result, social media marketing not only drives brand visibility but also strengthens customer loyalty and purchasing behavior.

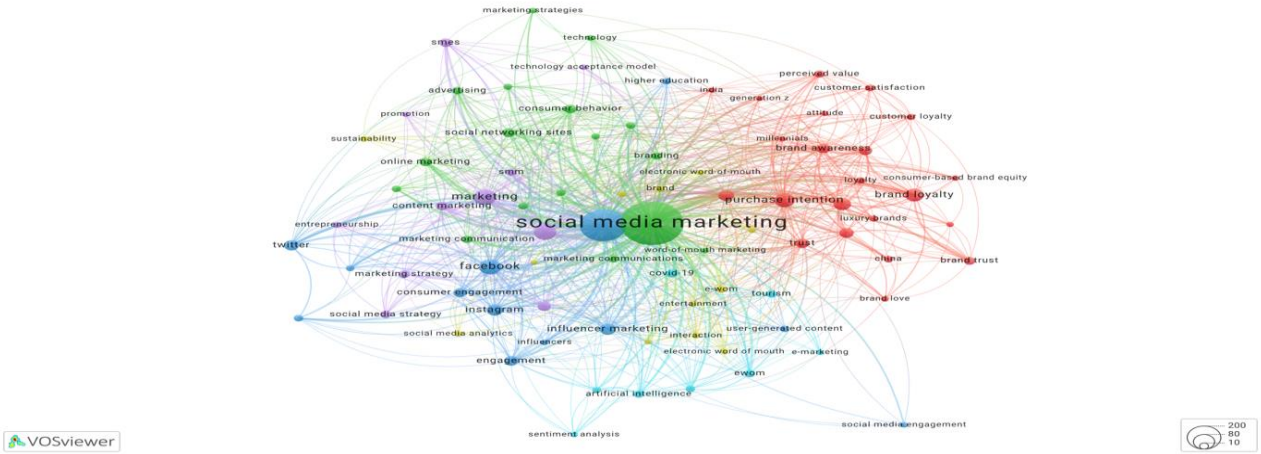

Fig 2. Trends of Social media marketing Research through co-occurrence analysis

g) Thematic clusters of social media marketing research through bibliographic coupling: Bibliographic coupling relies on citing publications to explain the extant knowledge in the field. A bibliographic coupling captures recent, specialised, and foundational knowledge. When two works make reference to a shared third work, this is known as coupling. This suggests that there is a chance that the two pieces address a similar topic. There are five thematic clusters revealed through bibliographic coupling as shown in Fig. 3.

The bibliometric coupling analysis of social media marketing research identifies five distinct thematic clusters, each representing a core research focus in the field. Cluster 1 (Red) consist of 16 articles centers on consumer engagement and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), exploring how social media interactions, brand engagement, and influencer marketing contribute to consumer trust and loyalty (Kozinets et al., 2010). The Cluster 2 (Yellow) consist of 8 article focuses on digital marketing strategies and business applications, examining the effectiveness of content marketing, AI-driven personalization, and social media advertising in improving customer targeting and brand performance (Vries et al., 2012). The Cluster 3 (Blue) consist of 10 articles emphasizes technological innovation and AI in social media marketing, with research on chatbots, recommendation algorithms, and sentiment analysis enhancing automated marketing and consumer interaction (Felix et al., 2017). The Cluster 4 (Purple) consist of 7 articles delves into the theoretical foundations of social media marketing, applying frameworks such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory to study digital consumer behavior and marketing effectiveness (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Lastly, the cluster 5 (Green) consist of 10 articles represents emerging and evolving research areas, including gamification, immersive marketing (AR/VR), metaverse applications, and cross-cultural consumer behavior studies (Algharabat et al., 2017). The relative isolation of this cluster from the others suggests that these topics are still developing within the mainstream literature, indicating promising directions for future research in social media marketing.

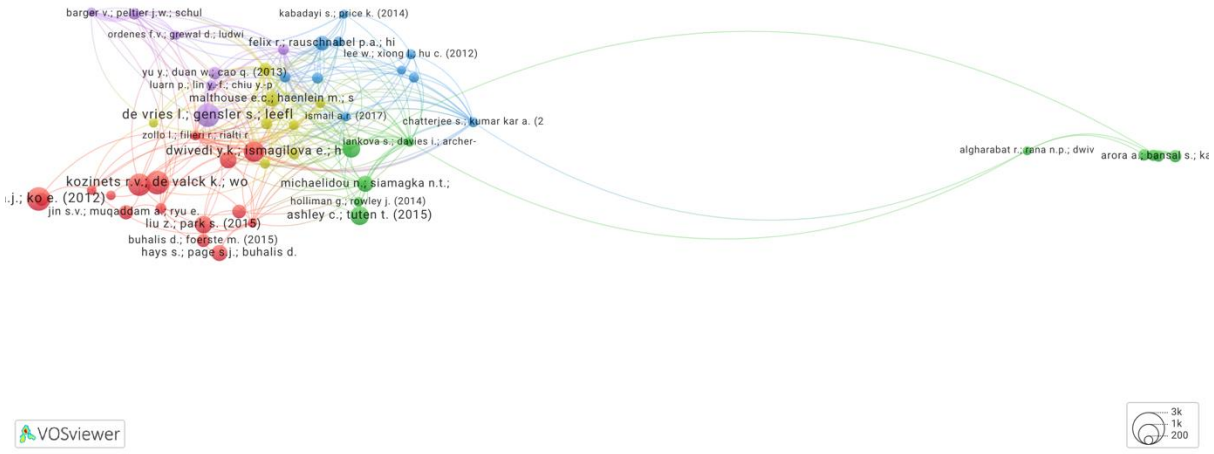

Fig 3. Clusters of Social media marketing Research through bibliographic coupling

Conclusion

This bibliometric study analyzed 1488 Scopus-indexed publications, comprehensively mapping the scholarly evolution and thematic structure of social media marketing research. By identifying influential authors, journals, and collaborative networks, the analysis provided valuable insights into the field's academic landscape. Keyword co-occurrence analysis highlighted major themes such as consumer engagement, branding co-creation, electronic word-of-mouth, and digital innovation, underscoring the interdisciplinary nature and diversification within this domain. Furthermore, bibliographic coupling identified distinct thematic clusters, revealing interconnected research streams and guiding future research directions. This study contributes significantly to the current understanding by synthesizing extensive academic literature, clarifying intellectual trends, and highlighting emerging research areas. As social media marketing continues to evolve alongside technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviors, ongoing scholarly investigation remains crucial. Future researchers are encouraged to explore identified knowledge gaps and emerging trends, supporting both theoretical developments and practical strategies within the rapidly changing landscape of social media marketing.

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Competing Interest: No

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