

Bibliometric Analysis of global research trends on social media influencers on purchase intention using R-tool

Análise bibliométrica de tendências globais de pesquisa sobre influenciadores de mídia social na intenção de compra usando a ferramenta R

Análisis bibliométrico de las tendencias globales de investigación sobre influenciadores de redes sociales en la intención de compra mediante la herramienta R

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Abstract

With the rapid growth of social commerce, understanding the impact of social media influencers (SMIs) on customer purchase intention has become increasingly critical. This research seeks to present a thorough analysis of the existing scholarly landscape and evolving developments within this domain, delivering meaningful insights for both academics and industry professionals. The study conducted a bibliometric analysis on 195 relevant papers identified through the PRISMA method. The analysis utilised the Bibliometrix package in R to examine key themes, influential authors, productive institutions, and collaborative networks within the research domain. It revealed that credibility, parasocial relationships, and trust are central themes in the research on SMIs and customer purchase intention. Sokolova emerged as the most cited author in the field, and the University System of Georgia was identified as the most productive institution. The United States was highlighted as the most prolific, influential, and collaborative country in this domain. This study provides a macro-level perspective on the research landscape of SMIs and customer purchase intention, highlighting critical factors and global contributions. It offers a valuable reference for scholars by synthesising existing knowledge and identifying trends that shape the future direction of research in this area.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, Social Media Influencer, Purchase Intention, R-tool

Resumo

Com o rápido crescimento do comércio social, entender o impacto dos influenciadores de mídia social (SMIs) na intenção de compra do cliente tornou-se cada vez mais crítico. Esta pesquisa busca apresentar uma análise completa do cenário acadêmico existente e dos desenvolvimentos em evolução dentro deste domínio, fornecendo insights significativos para acadêmicos e profissionais da indústria. O estudo conduziu uma análise bibliométrica em 195 artigos relevantes identificados através do método PRISMA. A análise utilizou o pacote Bibliometrix em R para examinar temas-chave, autores influentes, instituições produtivas e redes colaborativas dentro do domínio de pesquisa. Revelou que credibilidade, relacionamentos parassociais e confiança são temas centrais na pesquisa sobre SMIs e intenção de compra do cliente. Sokolova surgiu como o autor mais citado no campo, e o Sistema Universitário da Geórgia foi identificado como a instituição mais produtiva. Os Estados Unidos foram destacados como o país mais prolífico, influente e colaborativo neste domínio. Este estudo fornece uma perspectiva de nível macro sobre o cenário de pesquisa de SMIs e intenção de compra do cliente, destacando fatores críticos e contribuições globais. Oferece uma referência valiosa para os acadêmicos ao sintetizar o conhecimento existente e identificar tendências que moldam a direção futura da pesquisa nesta área.

Palavras- chave: Análise Bibliométrica, Influenciador de Mídias Sociais, Intenção de Compra, R-tool

Resumen

Con el rápido crecimiento del comercio social, comprender el impacto de los influencers de redes sociales (SMI) en la intención de compra del cliente se ha vuelto cada vez más crucial. Esta investigación busca presentar un análisis exhaustivo del panorama académico existente y los avances en este ámbito, brindando información valiosa tanto a académicos como a profesionales del sector. El estudio realizó un análisis bibliométrico de 195 artículos relevantes identificados mediante el método PRISMA. El análisis utilizó el paquete Bibliometrix en R para examinar temas clave, autores influyentes, instituciones productivas y redes de colaboración dentro del ámbito de investigación. Reveló que la credibilidad, las relaciones parasociales y la confianza son temas centrales en la investigación sobre SMI y la intención de compra del cliente. Sokolova se destacó como el autor más citado en el campo, y el Sistema Universitario de Georgia fue identificado como la institución más productiva. Estados Unidos se destacó como el país más prolífico, influyente y colaborativo en este ámbito. Este estudio proporciona una perspectiva macroeconómica sobre el panorama de la investigación sobre SMI y la intención de compra del cliente, destacando factores críticos y contribuciones globales. Ofrece una valiosa referencia para los académicos al sintetizar el conocimiento existente e identificar tendencias que dan forma a la dirección futura de la investigación en esta área.

Palabras clave: Análisis bibliométrico, influenciadores en redes sociales, intención de compra, R-tool.

1. Introduction

The number of social media influencers (SMIs) has been continuously increasing as a result of the rapid development of global social e-commerce (Shah et al., 2023; Halim et al., 2020). Social media influencers are becoming increasingly significant in the decision-making process of customers (Ao et al., 2023; Ciornea et al., 2022). Researchers from various fields and countries have delved into the importance of social media influencers (Alkan and Ulas, 2023; Alyahya, 2021). Their research typically focuses on the personal traits of social media influencers, psychological factors, social factors, and content factors (Li et al., 2023; Kay et al., 2020). Among these, the study of the impact of social media influencers on customers' purchase intentions is gaining prominence (Dwidienawati et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2023; Jansom and Pongsakornrungru, 2021; Magano et al., 2022). Numerous studies indicate that individuals are becoming more inclined to trust the purchasing recommendations of social media influencers than traditional advertisements (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Farivar and Wang, 2022). People perceive the advice from social media influencers as more objective and authentic (Lee,

2024). This perception often leads customers to develop purchase intentions subsequent to communication or interaction with them (Taher et al., 2022; Shoenberger and Kim, 2023). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the existing literature on social media influencers and customers' purchase intentions to gain a deeper understanding of the research trends in this area.

Keeping pace with all published content is progressively challenging due to the rapid increase in the number of academic publications (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017). A methodological approach known as bibliometrics employs statistical techniques to analyse articles and other publications over time (Wallin, 2005; Srivastava, 2021; Chang et al., 2020). All disciplines now use bibliometrics extensively, particularly in fields such as marketing (Tanwar, 2022; Ye et al., 2021). However, existing literature lacks comprehensive bibliometric studies on social media influencers and customers' purchase intentions. Therefore, this study aims to address the following questions:

RQ1: What is the current state of research in the field of SMIs and purchase intention?

RQ2: What are the widely used keywords in the field of SMIs and purchase intention?

RQ3: What are the most productive authors, countries, and affiliations in the field of SMIs and purchase intention?

RQ4: What are the most cited authors and articles in the field of SMIs and purchase intention?

To achieve these objectives, this study employs two bibliometric methods: performance analysis and science mapping analysis. Performance analysis encompasses total annual citations, scientific output of articles, globally most cited documents, most prolific authors, most cited countries, most relevant keywords, most relevant keywords, and most relevant authors. A science mapping analysis is performed utilizing R software, encompassing keyword co-occurrence analysis, bibliographic coupling, thematic mapping, and the examination of collaborative networks among authors and countries. Finally, this paper discusses the significance of the research, its limitations, potential directions for future research, and conclusions.

2. Methods

This study employs a rigorous methodology, utilising bibliometric analysis (performance analysis and science mapping analysis) to analyse the data. Bibliometric analysis is a computational method that identifies important research and author contributions within a particular field or topic, along with their interrelationships (Donthu et al., 2021; Choudhri et al., 2015). The adopted methodology is comprehensive and stringent in terms of the analytical techniques used and the search strategies employed. PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) was used for literature selection to exclude those not relevant to the research topic and to determine the final literature for the next step of analysis.

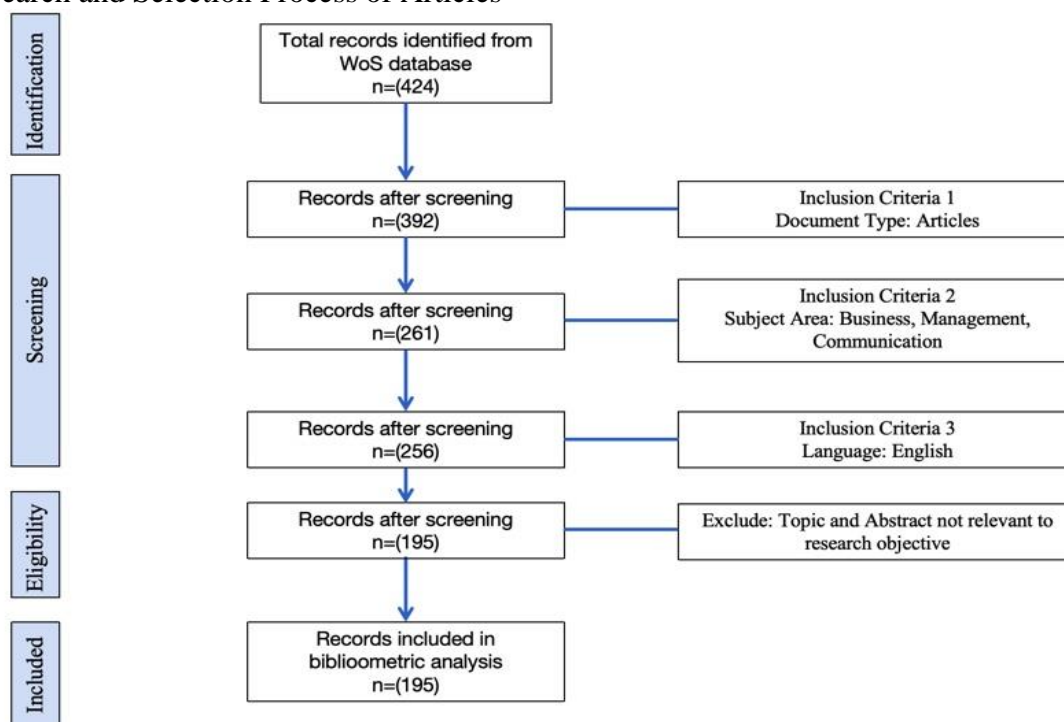
2.1. Data Collection

This study uses Web of Science (WoS) as the bibliographic database for bibliometric analysis. In comparison to Scopus, Web of Science (WoS) exhibits a greater degree of rigor and includes approximately 99.11% of the journals that are also indexed in Scopus (Singh et al., 2021). Therefore, a collection of published papers on social media influencers and purchase intention from 2012-2024 (the first paper was published in 2012) was collected from the WoS core collection.

PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) is an open-source ORM (Object-Relational Mapping) tool that simplifies database access and manipulation in application development (Takkouche and Norman, 2011). It consists of four parts: identification, screening, eligibility, and included. The identification phase in the PRISMA flow chart is the initial step in the systematic review process, aimed at finding potentially relevant studies (Page et al., 2021). This phase focuses on a comprehensive search for relevant studies from a variety of sources to ensure that the review is exhaustive and unbiased (Moher et al., 2010). The following keywords were used in the search: “social media influencer” or “influencer” or “digital influencer” or “Facebook influencer” or “Instagram influencer” or “TikTok influencer” or “Twitter influencer” or “blogger influencer” or “vlogger influencer” or “online influencer” and “purchase intention” or “buying intention” or “willingness to buy”. The total number of articles after identification is 424.

The screening step consists of three stages. The first stage screened the document type. The document type only included articles. The second stage screened the subject area. Since this study focuses on the field of commerce and marketing, the records only included the subject areas of business, management, and communication. Only English articles made it through the final stage of language screening. For eligibility, the articles had to be fully relevant to SMIs and purchase intention, even if it was part of a wider study. Articles with topics and abstracts unrelated to SMIs and purchase intention were excluded. This process ultimately resulted in the inclusion of 195 articles, encompassing records up to July, 2024. Figure 1 illustrates the search and selection process.

Figure 1
Search and Selection Process of Articles



Source: Author's own work

2.2. Data Analysis

This study employed performance analysis and scientific mapping as methods for data analysis. Performance analysis conducted a detailed analysis of the most cited articles, the most cited countries, the most cited authors, and the author keywords. RStudio software was used to analyse scientific mapping on SMIs and purchase intention. In the existing quantitative analysis

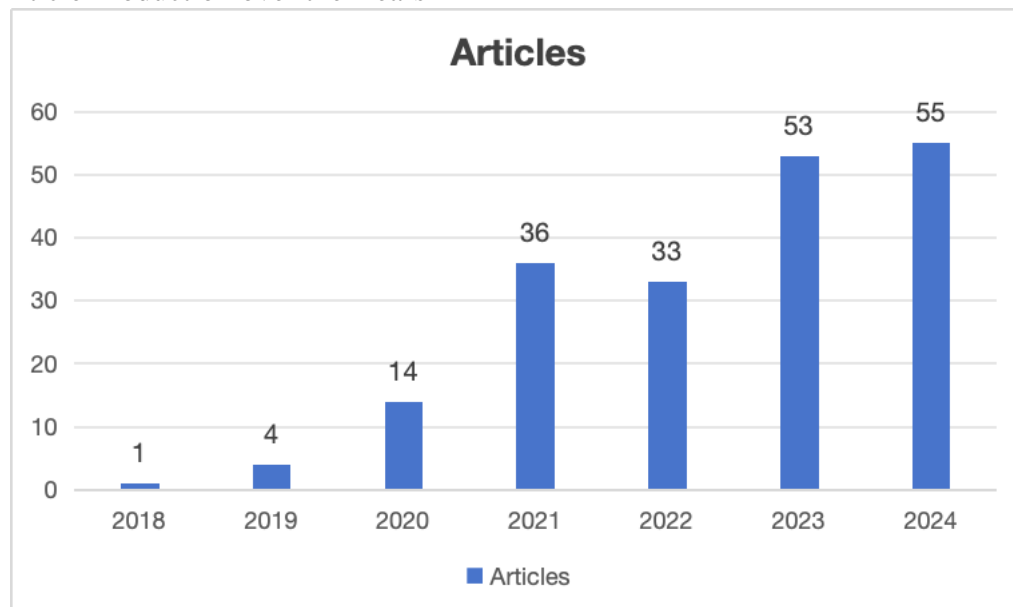
literature, there are many other quantitative tools, such as CiteSpace, VOSviewer, etc. However, compared with other tools, R-tool provides a “bibliometrix” package that offers a comprehensive set of bibliometric and scientometric indicators, including citation analysis, co-citation analysis, and collaboration networks. Moreover, the bibliometrix package includes powerful visualisation tools that can generate high-quality graphs and pictures. Users can also adjust different configurations of graphs and pictures according to their own parameter requirements to customise them to meet their own needs (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Analysis of Annual Publications and Citations

The annual publication and citation of social media influencers and purchase intention can provide a clear understanding of changing trends in this field of research. Figure 2 depicts that the first publication in this field occurred in 2018. This shows that the research on SMIs and purchase intention is relatively new. It is worth noting that since 2021, there has been a gradual increase in the number of articles in this field. Each year, the number of articles published has consistently exceeded 30, with 2023 and 2024 surpassing 50. The main reason for the increase in related literature may be that a large number of social media influencers (SMIs) have appeared on social platforms in recent years, significantly impacting consumers in various countries. Studies indicate that consumers are increasingly willing to trust information disseminated by SMIs above traditional advertisements. Similarly, Table 1 shows that the annual citations of SMIs and purchase intention reached a peak in 2020, with an average annual citation of 32.9. The rapid development of social commerce in various countries during the epidemic may have prompted researchers to focus on related fields. In summary, the growing number of related studies shows the increasing significance of the research on SMIs and purchase intentions.

Figure 2
Article Production over the Years



Source: Author's own work

Table 1
Average Citations per Year

Year	Mean TC per Art	N	Mean TC per Year	Citable Years
2018	26	1	3.71	7
2019	132	4	22	6
2020	164.57	14	32.91	5
2021	41.56	36	10.39	4
2022	23.91	33	7.97	3
2023	8.55	53	4.28	2
2024	2.25	55	2.25	1

MeanTCperArt: mean total citations per article, *N*: number of total articles, *MeanTCperYear*: mean total citations per year.

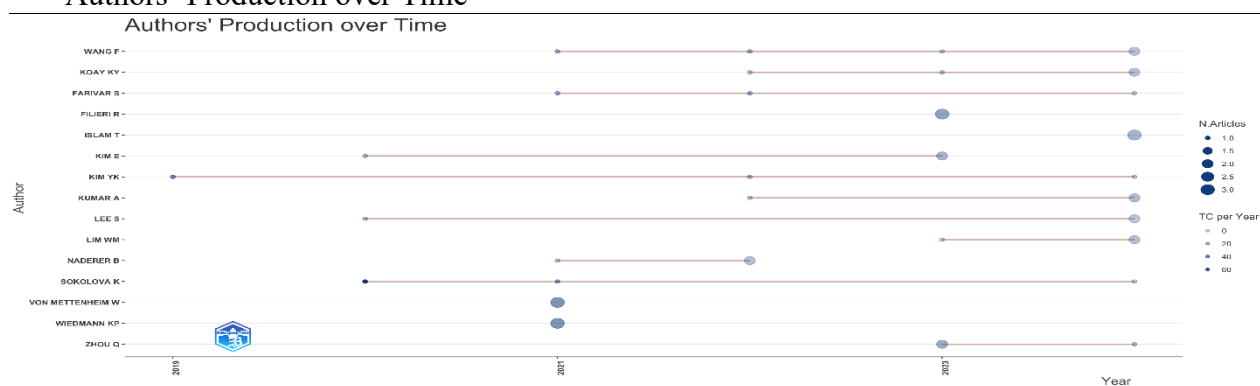
Source: Author's own work

3.2. Analysis of Authors, Affiliations and Countries

Figure 3 lists the top 15 authors in the study of SMIs and purchase intention. The thickness of the node represents the authors' output. Among them, Wang from Wilfrid Laurier University is the most prolific author, followed by Koay from Sunway University with four

related articles. The remaining 13 authors have published three articles on SMIs and purchase intention. Table 2 shows that among the top ten most cited authors, Sokolova stands out with 588 citations, followed by a jointly published article by Janssen, Schouten, and Verspaget, which has received 569 citations. Despite Janssen having published only one article in the relevant field, the high citation rate shows that this article has significant research results. Similarly, Kefi has published just one article in this field, but it has reached 469 citations, indicating the high research significance of its results. All the remaining authors have received at least 200 citations. By looking at the overlap between the most prolific and most cited authors, we find that both Sokolova and Kim are on the list, demonstrating their importance in the study of SMIs and purchase intention.

Figure 3
Authors' Production over Time



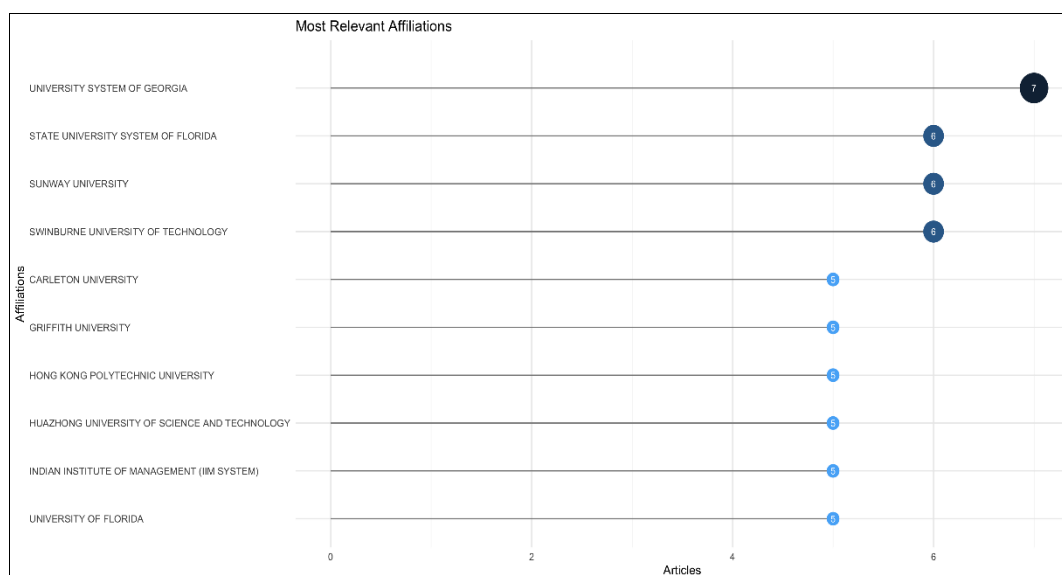
Source: Author's own work

Table 2
Most top 10 Cited Authors

Rank	Most Cited Authors	Articles	TC	PY_start
1	Sokolova K	3	588	2020
2	Janssen L	1	569	2020
3	Schouten AP	1	569	2020
4	Verspaget M	1	569	2020
5	Kefi H	1	469	2020
6	Kim YK	3	276	2019
7	Ki CW	2	273	2019
8	Parkinson J	2	247	2020
9	Luoma-Aho V	2	212	2020
10	Reinikainen H	2	212	2020

Source: Author's own work

Figure 4 illustrates the top 10 affiliations with the most research results on SMIs and purchase intention. Among them, the University System of Georgia contributed the most related research, with a total of seven articles. Secondly, the State University System of Florida, Sunway University, and Swinburne University of Technology also made important contributions, each of which contributed six related papers. The remaining well-known institutions, such as Carleton University and Griffith University, have contributed five articles each.



Source: Author's own work

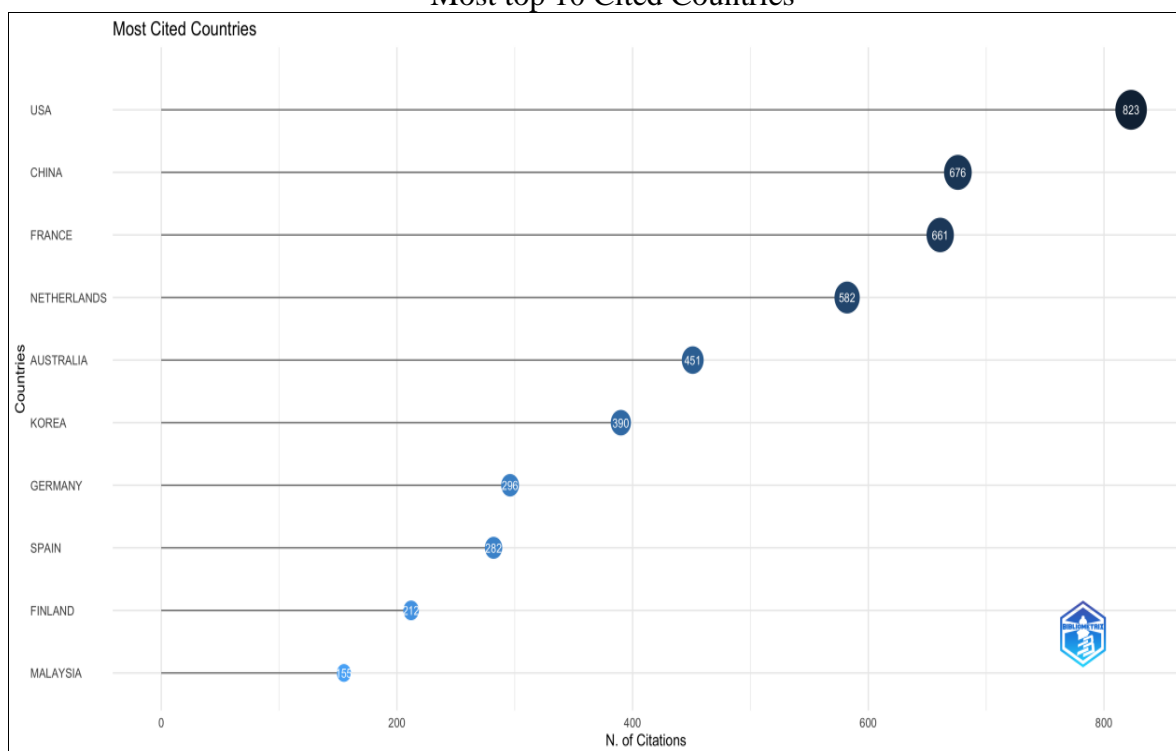
FIGURE 4: Most Top 10 Relevant Affiliations

Figure 5 lists the top 10 countries with the most cited research results on SMIs and purchase intention. With 823 citations, the United States is the most cited country, averaging 11.43 citations per article. China, France, and the Netherlands follow, receiving citations 676 times, 661 times, and 582 times, respectively. The citations of the remaining countries did not exceed 500 times. Figure 6 provides a map of cooperation between countries, showing the frequency of cooperation in related fields between different countries. The United States and China have more than 20 connections, which shows that both countries are highly active in international cooperation and academic exchanges in related fields. In addition, the analysis of the frequency

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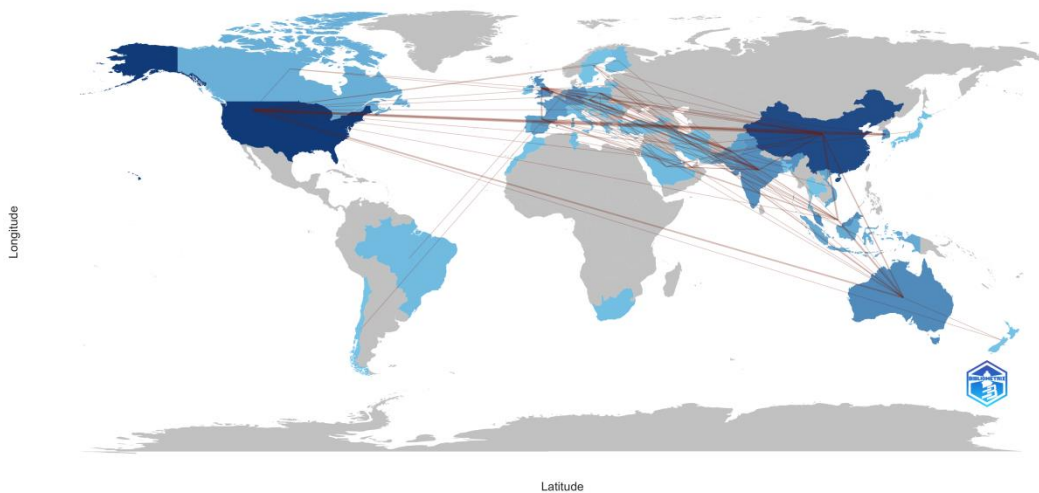
of cooperation shows that the United States cooperates most frequently with China and South Korea. This shows the continued lack of international cooperation among European countries in the field of SMIs and purchase intention research. In order to make the research in this field more comprehensive, it is also essential to strengthen cooperation between countries.

Figure 5
Most top 10 Cited Countries



Source: Author's own work

Figure 6
Country Collaboration Map



Source: Author's own work

3.3. Analysis of Top Journals and Most Cited Journals

Table 3 lists the top ten journals and the journals with the most citations in the field of SMIs and purchase intention. The Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services leads in publications, with a total of 23 articles on SMIs and purchase intention. The International Journal of Advertising, Psychology & Marketing, and the Journal of Business Research follow with 11, 9, and 8 papers published, respectively. These journals have become important platforms for research related to SMIs and purchase intention. The Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services has emerged as the most influential journal in terms of citation frequency, boasting 1,111 citations. The International Journal of Advertising, with 973 citations, Psychology & Marketing, with 463 citations, and the Journal of Business Research, with 460 citations, follow closely behind. These highly cited journals indicate that they have become important reference standards in the field of SMIs and purchase intention research, and the related articles published on these platforms have important performance results and research significance. The elevated publication and citation rates of these journals may be ascribed to several contributing factors.

First, all of these journals are of high quality. The WoS classification shows that their rankings are all Q1 and Q2, which indicates that they maintain a high degree of academic rigour in the publication of papers. Secondly, they are likely to place greater emphasis on research innovation when disseminating scholarly work, contributing pioneering findings to advancements in related disciplines. In addition, they may cover mixed research in different fields, thus attracting a wider range of researchers.

The significance of this research result is that it provides certain guidance for subsequent researchers, allowing them to intuitively understand which journals have rich research results and important influence in the study of SMIs and purchase intention. In future research, researchers should focus more on these journals, whether they are studying or publishing, as this can enhance certain visibility and influence. Secondly, the high publication rates and citation rates of these journals also mean that they have a higher possibility of cooperation. This encourages researchers to have more academic exchanges and cooperation with these journals so as to publish more high-quality articles. In summary, this analysis identifies renowned journals that significantly impact the study of SMIs and purchase intention. The analysis of publication rate and citation rate can allow researchers to clearly understand the dynamics of related research. This helps researchers realize the importance of journals, thereby enhancing academic cooperation and communication and making greater long-term contributions to subsequent research.

Table 3
The Top 10 Journals and Most Cited Journals

Rank	Journal	Publications	Cited Journals	Citations	WoS Quartiles
1	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	23	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	1111	Q1
2	International Journal of Advertising	11	International Journal of Advertising	973	Q1
3	Psychology & Marketing	9	Psychology & Marketing	463	Q1
4	Journal of Business Research	8	Journal of Business Research	460	Q1

5	International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising	7	Journal of Marketing Management	429	Q2
6	Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	7	Journal of Product and Brand Management	261	Q1
7	Innovate Marketing	6	Technological Forecasting and Social Change	205	Q1
8	Journal of Product and Brand Management	6	Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	198	Q1
9	International Journal of Consumer Studies	5	Public Relations Review	165	Q2
10	Journal of Consumer Behavior	4	Australasian Marketing Journal	138	Q2

Source: Author's own work

3.4. Analysis of Most Global Cited Documents

Table 4 lists the ten most cited papers on SMIs and purchase intention. These papers have had a significant impact on research in this field. Schouten et al. authored the most cited paper, garnering 569 citations (Schouten and Janssen, 2021). This paper aims to investigate the effects of celebrity endorsements and influencer endorsements on advertising effectiveness (attitudes toward ads and products and purchase intentions) and to explore the moderating role of product-endorser fit on this effect. In addition, the study examines two potential mediating factors: identification (perceived similarity and aspirational identification) and credibility (credibility and expertise). Two experiments (N=131, N=446) examined the endorsement of beauty, fitness, food, and fashion products by celebrities and influencers. Overall, the results showed that participants were more likely to identify with influencers, felt more similar to them, and trusted them more than celebrities. Similarity, aspirational identification, and trust served as mediating factors in the relationship between endorsement type and advertising effectiveness. However, the alignment between the product and the endorser did not account for the connection between endorsement type and any of the mediating or dependent variables. Therefore, the results showed that influencer endorsements have higher added value than celebrity endorsements, and similarity, identification, and trust play an important role in this process. The second most cited paper is by Sokolova and Kefi (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). This article aims to examine the persuasiveness of beauty and fashion influencers on YouTube and Instagram when promoting

products. The authors investigated how parasocial interaction (PSI) between viewers and influencers and the influencer's credibility affect purchase intention. The study was based on an analysis of four well-known French beauty influencers, controlling for participants' age and influencer factors. The findings revealed a positive correlation between attitudinal homogeneity and PSI, whereas physical attractiveness exhibited either a negative or no correlation. Purchase intention had a significant and positive correlation with both the influencer's credibility and PSI. The article highlights the importance of understanding the influencer phenomenon and leveraging its influence in marketing strategies. The third most cited article from Ki and Kim explores the mechanisms of how social media influencers influence consumers, especially the role of consumers' desire to imitate in this process (Ki and Kim, 2019). Based on the influence framework, this article proposes and empirically tests the influence mechanism of influencers, dividing it into four main stages: (a) the influencer's influence attempt; (b) the target consumer's attitudinal response to the influence attempt; (c) the consumer's desire to comply (i.e., desire to imitate); and (d) positive behavioural outcomes. The study analyzed survey data from 395 respondents using structural equation modelling and verified the positive impact of the influencer's content on consumer attitudes and behaviours. It also discusses the significance of this result for academia and practice.

Reinikainen et al. authored the fourth most cited paper (Reinikainen et al., 2020). This study examines the impact of social media influencers' brand endorsements on YouTube through two experimental studies, while also analyzing the moderating effect of audience comments in this process. The first experiment investigates how the quasi-social relationship (PSR) between audiences and influencers affects audience trust in influencers and brand trust. The results show that audience PSR with influencers significantly enhances trust in influencers, which in turn increases brand trust and purchase intention. The second experiment further explores the role of audience comments. The results show that although comments themselves have no direct effect on influencer trust, the interaction between comments and PSR is significant, indicating that the impact of PSR on trust is stronger after viewers see other people's comments. Based on these findings, the researchers conclude that the effective endorsement of

social media influencers depends not only on their number of fans and personal charm, but also on the active participation and comment interaction of the audience. These results offer significant practical implications for brands and marketers who use influencers for marketing on social media. The fifth most cited paper from Kay et al. analyzes in detail the impact of macro- and micro-social media influencers in advertising disclosure (Kay et al., 2020). The study uses an experimental method to explore the impact of influencer follower size (macro and micro) and advertising disclosure on consumers' product cognition and purchase intention. The results show that compared with macro influencers, micro influencers are more effective in improving consumers' product knowledge and purchase intention. Advertising disclosure simultaneously enhances consumers' attraction to products. The authors propose that advertising disclosure will make consumers perceive the authenticity of advertisements and reduce resistance to marketing content, thereby enhancing persuasiveness.

These findings have significant implications for theory, practice, and policy making, highlighting the importance of considering the number of influencers and disclosure transparency to improve marketing effectiveness and compliance when utilising social media influencers for marketing. The remaining five articles also had more than 100 citations. The results of these articles offers a significant contribution to comprehending the influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior. Collectively, these studies investigate various dimensions of influencer marketing, including the pseudo-social relationship (PSR) between influencers and their audiences, the moderating effect of audience comments, and the interplay among influencer credibility, brand trust, and purchase intention. These articles shed light on the effectiveness of influencer marketing in different contexts by contrasting various influencer types and audience interaction styles. Analyzing the commonalities and distinctions among these studies facilitates the identification of critical gaps in existing knowledge, enabling future research to offer more in-depth and holistic contributions to the academic literature.

Table 4

The Top Ten Most Cited Articles

Rank	Author(s)	Title	Journal	TC	TCpY
1	Shouten and Janssen, 2021	Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit	International Journal of Advertising	569	113.80
2	Slokolova and Kefi, 2020	Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	469	93.80
3	Ki and Kim, 2019	The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers' desire to mimic	Psychology & Marketing	236	39.33
4	Reinikainen et al., 2020	'You really are a great big sister' – parasocial relationships, credibility, and the moderating role of audience comments in influencer marketing	Journal of Marketing Management	182	36.40
5	Kay et al., 2020	When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers' disclosure	Journal of Marketing Management	176	35.20
6	Shan et al., 2020	When social media influencers endorse brands: the effects of self-influencer congruence, parasocial identification, and perceived endorser motive	International Journal of Advertising	157	31.40
7	Kim and Kim, 2021	Trust me, trust me not: A nuanced view of influencer marketing on social media	Journal of Business Research	157	39.25
8	Jin and Ryu, 2020	"I'll buy what she's #wearing": The roles of envy toward and parasocial interaction with influencers in Instagram celebrity-based brand endorsement and social commerce	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	139	27.80
9	Weismueller et al., 2020	Influencer Endorsements: How Advertising Disclosure and Source Credibility Affect Consumer Purchase Intention on Social Media	Australasian Marketing Journal	138	27.60
10	Dhanesh and Duthler, 2019	Relationship management through social media	Public Relations Review	137	22.83

influencers: Effects of
followers' awareness of paid
endorsement

TC: total citations, TCpY: Total Citations per Year.

Source: Author's own work

3.5. Analysis of Keywords

Keywords reflect the research objectives and core ideas of an article. The analysis of keywords can also reveal the main trends in research on SMIs and purchase intention. This study analyzed the most frequently appearing keywords in 195 documents. Figure 8 displays a word cloud diagram that illustrates the frequency distribution of these keywords. Among them, “social media influencer” is the most frequently appearing keyword, occurring 77 times. “Influencer marketing” comes in second with 65 occurrences, while “purchase intention” follows with 53. Other keywords that appear more than 10 times include “credibility”, “social media”, “Instagram”, “parasocial relationship”, “trust”, “consumer behaviour” and “word of mouth”.

Figure 7

Word Cloud Based on the Main Keywords



Source: Author's own work

In recent years, influencer marketing research has developed rapidly, covering many important areas such as influencer types and effects, pseudo-social relationships and audience interaction, content strategy and transparency, ethics and regulation, technology and data analysis, and cross-culture and globalization. Research not only focuses on the differences between mega-influencers and micro-influencers, but also explores the emerging position of virtual influencers in the market, revealing the unique marketing effects that different types of influencers can produce in specific situations. In addition, scholars have gradually realized that

high-quality interactions significantly contribute to enhancing brand loyalty and increasing purchase intentions (Kanwar and Huang, 2022; Fazli-Salehi et al., 2022). The authenticity and transparency of content, especially the openness of sponsored content, have become key factors affecting audience trust, promoting the development of storytelling marketing and emotional content strategies (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022; Pornsrimate and Khamwon, 2021; Guo et al., 2023; Mim et al., 2022; Rodinova et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the advancement of AI and big data technology has led to a widespread use of data analysis and algorithms for optimizing influencer identification, content matching, and marketing effect evaluation, thereby enhancing the accuracy and effectiveness of influencer marketing (Song et al., 2023). In the context of globalization, cross-cultural research has revealed the effectiveness of influencer marketing in different cultural backgrounds and emphasized the significant impact of cultural differences on content creation and audience response (Nosi et al., 2022). In summary, the research trends of influencer marketing reflect the complexity and diversity of this field. With the continuous evolution of social media and technology, research in this field will continue to deepen and provide more comprehensive theoretical support and guidance for practice.

Credibility has consistently been the focus in the study of SMIs and purchase intention. Sokolova and Kefi carried out research to examine the impact of social media influencers' credibility on consumers' purchasing intentions. Their findings revealed a strong positive association between influencer credibility and consumers' likelihood of making a purchase. This suggests that consumers who tend to trust influencers as trustworthy and competent are more likely to buy products recommended by these influencers. The study also observed that the perception of influencers as honest and caring about their audience, in addition to their expertise and experience, significantly contributes to their credibility. These results suggest that the success of influencers in facilitating purchases on social media platforms depends largely on their credibility among their audience. Roy and Mehendale explored the impact of the credibility of health and fitness influencers on social media platforms on purchase intentions (Roy and Mehendale, 2021). Their study focused on the impact of these influencers on consumer purchase decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the study showed that influencer credibility largely affected consumer purchase intentions. Specifically, the study

found that the higher the expertise and credibility of the influencer, the more consumers tended to trust the products recommended by the influencer and make a purchase. The study also noted that factors that affect influencer credibility include their expertise, reliability, and similarity to the audience. In addition, the study found that while the physical attractiveness of influencers can attract the audience's attention, it is the influencer's credibility that really influences consumer decisions. These findings show that in social media marketing, enhancing the influencer's credibility plays an important role in influencing consumer behaviour.

Researchers have identified parasocial relationships as an important factor in the process by which SMIs influence purchase intention. Lou and Kim explored the role of social media influencer content, credibility, and parental mediation in adolescents' parasocial relationships, materialism, and purchase intentions (Lou and Kim, 2019). Using an online survey of 500 U.S. adolescents, they proposed a conceptual model to explain the appeal of influencers to adolescents. The results indicated a positive association between the entertainment value of content created by influencers, their expertise, credibility, and attractiveness, as well as fans' perceived resemblance to influencers, and the intensity of the parasocial relationship between adolescent followers and their preferred influencers. Furthermore, the study discovered a positive correlation between adolescents' parasocial relationships with influencers, their materialistic tendencies, and their purchase intentions for the products the influencers promote. These findings suggest that parasocial relationships play an important mediating role in the psychological impact of influencers on adolescent fans, and further emphasise the key role of entertainment content and credibility in establishing such relationships.

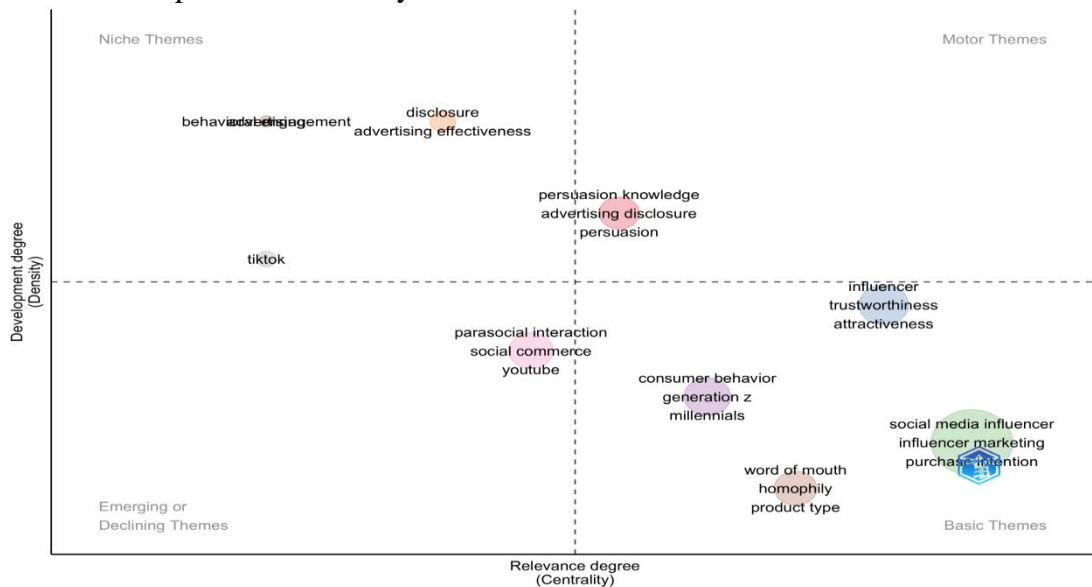
The literature has extensively studied other high-frequency keywords, including trustworthiness (Boonchutima and Sankosik, 2022; Suri et al., 2023), attractiveness (Masuda et al., 2022; Barbosa and Añaña, 2023), authenticity (Zniva et al., 2023; Rao and Qesja, 2022; Tseng and Wang, 2023), and homophily (Li and Peng, 2021; Wang et al., 2024; Muda and Hamzah, 2021). These keywords show the multidimensionality of the personal characteristics of social media influencers, provide different insights into the research on SMIs and purchase intention, and contribute to our understanding of the process and mechanism of how SMIs affect consumers' purchase intention. In summary, the analysis of frequency of keywords shows that an increasing number of studies have enriched the research results in related fields, allowing

researchers to understand the factors that affect the relationship between SMIs and purchase intention at a deeper level.

The thematic mapping of research keywords related to social media influencers (SMIs) and purchase intention (see Figure 8) is structured around four fundamental categories: niche themes, evolving themes, emerging or declining themes, and foundational themes. Basic topics are located in the lower right quadrant. These topics exhibit high centrality but low density, indicating that they are widely applicable and important in research, but the degree of in-depth research may not be sufficient. Apart from the main topics of "social media influencers", "influencer marketing", and "purchase intention", there are also basic topics such as word of mouth and customer behaviour. These topics form the basis of influencer marketing research, exploring how influencers influence consumer purchasing behavior. Further in-depth research may be needed to increase the density of these basic topics, which serve as the foundation for other research. Niche topics are located in the upper right quadrant. The high density and high centrality of these topics indicate their thorough development in research and their important position in the field. Such topics include "disclosure" and "advertising effectiveness", which focus on the transparency of advertising and its impact on audiences, especially in the context of influencer marketing. Specific academic research can delve into these topics in detail to understand the actual effectiveness of influencer marketing. Declining or emerging topics are located in the lower left quadrant. The low density and centrality of these topics suggest that they may be emerging research areas, either in decline or just beginning. "TikTok" is the main topic in this quadrant, reflecting researchers' interest in emerging platforms, especially in the context of the platform's rapid rise and the large number of young users it has attracted. As the platform develops, these topics may mature, or they may decline due to a shift in academic interest. Dominant topics are located in the upper right quadrant. These topics have both high density and high centrality, representing key topics in the field that are both widely used and deeply studied. "Persuasion knowledge", "advertising disclosure", and "persuasion" are the main themes in this quadrant, indicating that researchers are deeply exploring how to influence consumer behaviour through information disclosure and persuasion strategies. These themes

are of great significance in promoting the theoretical development and practical application of influencer marketing.

Figure 8
Thematic Map of Research Keywords

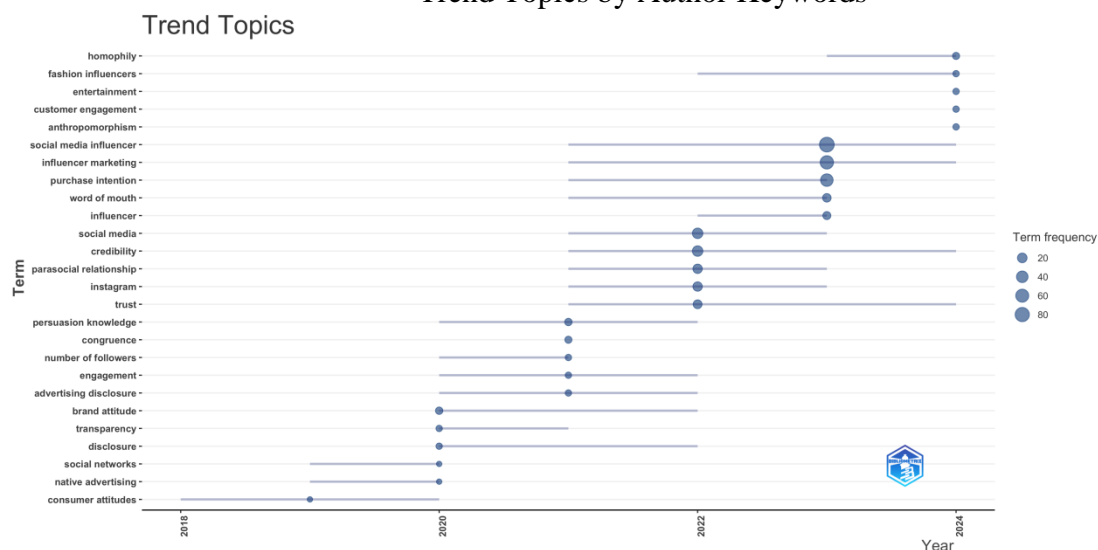


Source: Author's own work

Figure 9 illustrates the author keyword trend topics for SMIs and purchase intention research, highlighting the different focus topics of SMIs and purchase intention research over time. In addition to social media influencers and influencer marketing, researchers have consistently focused on credibility and trust over the past three years. Researchers continue to recognise the importance of credibility and trust in related fields. As evidenced by the literature, they prefer to use source credibility theory to study the mechanism of SMIs in influencing customer purchase intention. Researchers usually divide credibility into three attributes, which are expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, to study it. Some scholars effectively explained how the characteristics of influencers shape the credibility of their information and further affect consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intentions through source credibility theory (Le et al., 2021; Ghosh and Islam, 2023; Alfarraj et al., 2021). The application of this theoretical framework provides strong theoretical support for understanding the effects of influencer marketing, especially in evaluating how to enhance marketing effectiveness by improving the credibility of influencers. Leite and Baptista verified the crucial role of trust in

social media influencer marketing through empirical analysis, particularly its ability to boost consumers' purchase intentions by enhancing brand trust (Leite and Baptista, 2021). This study provides significant theoretical support and practical guidance for brands when selecting and using social media influencers for promotion, emphasising the importance of building and maintaining consumer trust.

Figure 9
Trend Topics by Author Keywords



Source: Author's own work

4. Conclusion

This study uses the bibliometrix bibliometric package in R to examine all 195 papers on SMIs and purchase intention. The results show that (1) the number of publications and citations indicates an increasing number of researchers working on SMIs and purchase intention; (2) Sokolova is the most cited author in the field of SMIs and purchase intention, and the University System of Georgia is the most productive institution, whereas the United States is the most productive, influential, and academically collaborative country in the field of SMIs and purchase intention; (3) credibility, parasocial relationships, and trust are key areas of research on SMIs and purchase intention; and (4) the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services is the most productive and influential journal on SMIs and purchase intention, with the highest number of papers published and cited.

This study has various implications. First, it provides a performance analysis of the literature on SMIs and purchase intention, which contributes to the intuitive understanding of the productivity of the literature in this field by other researchers. Second, other researchers can explore the possibility of future collaborations by looking at the collaborations between countries and authors in the study. Third, the study used the latest methods with enhanced scientific rigour, and the analytical results allow researchers to examine the research trends of SMIs and purchase intention from a more specific perspective.

This research utilizes the Web of Science (WoS) database, which undergoes continuous updates in response to fluctuations in the number of indexed journals. Therefore, the bibliometric analysis of specific topics will reveal certain changes in the future. Individual databases restrict the number of literature accessed, allowing future research to encompass additional databases such as Scopus. Another limitation of this study is that the bibliometric analysis was exclusively based on empirical research, omitting other sources such as review articles and books. Future studies could incorporate a broader range of sources, including journal articles, books, and conference proceedings.

In summary, the study of SMIs and purchase intention has become increasingly important as a result of the continuous development of social media. This research will assist a global researchers in comprehending the most recent academic advancements and practical insights across various dimensions of this field. The diverse topics and research trajectories examined in this study will offer valuable perspectives for scholars investigating influencer marketing.

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