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A Bibliometric Analysis on Social Media Engagement: Current State and Future Research Directions

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A B S T R A C T

Purpose—This study aims to critically examine the historical evolution of the notion of customer social media engagement using bibliometric techniques. Based on Scopus databases records from 2004-2022, we quantified the field's growth and synthesized its intellectual structure.

Study Design/methodology/approach— We examined the Scopus database and found 158 articles from 2004-2022 after carefully assessing the requirements. We used Bibliophagy to report indicators, annual growth = 23.85%, average citations per article = 27.91, and international co-authorship = 26.75%, as well as performance analysis (sources, authors, nations) and science mapping (keyword dynamics, theme mapping). We explored geographical distribution, growth trajectory, the number of studies on social media engagement, the primary themes covered, and the most prominent authors. We then manually evaluated articles to identify determinants of customer social media engagement.

Findings—The literature demonstrates significant post-COVID acceleration and service sector domination. Active and passive behaviors are frequently explained by six driver families: motivational, user engagement, personal, brand, social, and community. We combine these into an integrated SME Driver Architecture, defining mediating mechanisms (e.g., psychological ownership, perceived value) and boundary conditions (e.g., context, culture).

Practical Implications—For managers, the framework connects content, platform capabilities, and community design to measurable engagement outcomes; for academics, it provides testable hypotheses and a defined agenda for longitudinal and cross-industry research.

Originality/value—This study presents a multi-level SME Driver Architecture that describes the mechanisms and boundary conditions that connect six driver families to active and passive participation. The approach generates testable ideas and a plan for cross-industry generalization.

Keywords: Social media engagement, Bibliometric, Customer engagement, social media, Digital marketing.

JEL Classification Codes: M31, M37, C80, C83

1 | INTRODUCTION

Throughout the past few decades, the marketing industry has seen substantial change due to rapid technological improvements. These developments have made it possible for marketers to improve their approaches and tailor their answers to the demands of customers (Teepapal, 2025). The term "social media"

is used to describe a group of technologies that have transformed traditional one-way forms of communication into two-way, two-part conversations facilitated by platforms such as the World Wide Web and mobile devices. Engagement denotes a relationship between two people and is predicated on interaction. The party may be an individual, group, or community. This is not a casual partnership but a long-term interdependence in which both sides actively participate (Dessart et al., 2016). A strong psychological connection is established when people are actively involved with a brand. This connection results in repeat purchases and a long-term relationship with the brand. The marketing literature typically defines customer engagement as customers' involvement with the brand on an affective, cognitive, and behavioural level (Hollebeek, 2013; Rather et al., 2022). Managers monitor the level of engagement on social media posts to assess customer response to brand material. Consumers can interact with postings by "liking" or "favoriting" them, commenting, or sharing them. These practices are known as social media engagement (Liadeli et al., 2023). Social Media Engagement Behaviour (SMEB) is how people interact with brand-generated and peer-generated material on social media sites like Facebook and YouTube (Cao et al., 2021). This study focuses on how consumers interact with social media marketing content.

From a practical viewpoint, social media platforms provide engaging content about their brands and goods to promote brand awareness and enhance the effectiveness of brand development and client acquisition to turn media investments into customer engagement (Yost et al., 2021). Companies such as Lay's first employed social media marketing. For an effective campaign, the company has used Facebook, Twitter, and SMS. The initiative lets people develop a new chip taste. Lay's received many tastes during this campaign and narrowed them down to the top 25, which were manufactured and tested before deciding on the top three. These tastes were sold in tallies in 2013 and voted on via Facebook, Twitter, and SMS. One taste won the vote. This campaign was a success for the company (Sert & Köse, 2014). Coca-Cola's Open Happiness Programme includes the Happiness Machine. Happiness Machine uses hidden cameras on Coca-Cola vending machines. This will show how customers react to surprises like extra offers or unexpected products if they bought Coke. This customized machine encourages customers. To get extras, customers must sing a song, dance with someone else, or embrace the machine. Then, Coca-Cola will put these videos on YouTube, making everyone happy (Chen et al., 2022).

Existing research has proven that customer engagement in the online environment has a favourable impact on a variety of brand- and customer-related outcomes including, loyalty (Fernandes & Inverneiro, 2020), brand trust (Osei-Frimpong, McLean, Islam, & Otoo, 2022), Financial performance (Lee & Park, 2022) customer purchase intentions, (Lim & Rasul, 2022) and satisfaction (Leckie et al., 2021). Such as businesses can use various types of social media messaging to interact and engage with their customers more favourably (Yost et al., 2021).

Social media engagement is a nascent field of study; more research is needed to define new situations and research objectives (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020; Osei-Frimpong, McLean, Islam, & Otoo, 2022). In addition, Trunfio and Rossi (2021) conducted a literature review and asserted that, considering the expanding relevance of social media, more research is needed. They used the keyword 'social media engagement metrics' and called for more research with more keywords. In addition, Lim and Rasul (2022) recommend that future research that seeks to enhance the understanding of concepts related to CE on social media consider conducting

systematic reviews utilizing alternative review methods such as bibliometric and meta-systematic methods guided by rigorous review protocols, a pathway that should yield more systematic and rigorous conceptual insights. Further, marketing researchers have stressed the importance of understanding social media engagement aspects. Marketers and scholars must understand social media marketing's key components (Song et al., 2021). Social media engagement is still in its early stages and is rapidly evolving; many more influential publications will drive future study of the topic. Future academics should focus on conducting bibliometric evaluations of social media activity every five to seven years (Kaur et al., 2023).

Although social media engagement research has grown quickly, previous bibliometric studies include flaws that hinder overall advancement. Many methods rely on descriptive counts without using scientific mapping to triangulate performance analysis (centrality–density for theme maturity and dominance, bibliographic coupling for research fronts, and co-citation for intellectual base). SME domain contours are obscured by a number of syntheses that conflate disparate settings or truncate coverage before the most recent rise. Rather than being operationalized through controlled co-word techniques that place them inside thematic clusters, conceptual antecedent notions are frequently presented narratively. This study uses an integrated procedure to solve these limitations. It maps author and source influence and their connections to topics, measures field growth and geography, finds dominating and emergent themes, and extracts/locates SME drivers in thematic structure.

1.1 | Research Questions

Therefore, we frame the following testable bibliometric research questions:

RQ1: What is the geographical distribution and growth trajectory of SME research, and how many studies make up the field?

RQ2: Which themes dominate SME research, and how mature are they? Who are the most significant authors, and how do authors relate to specific themes?

RQ3: What are predictors of social media engagement?

The purpose of this analysis is to examine trends in social media engagement research over the last 18 years to provide an overview of past, current, and future research directions in social media interaction. The present evaluation employed all 158 Scopus-indexed articles on social media interaction published between 2004 and 2022.

2 | METHODOLOGY & DESIGN

We examined 158 papers for descriptive viewpoints that included the following elements: growth trajectory, the most important authors and their locations, and the theory applied in the study. The location contains the first author's country and continent, the corresponding author's country and continent, and the study site. Furthermore, because the study was conducted in more than one country, it is divided into global categories. Then, we reviewed separately the predictors, mechanisms, and boundary conditions highlighted in the studies. The author used well-defined concepts from previous bibliometric research to classify the publications, such as research context, methodology, and theoretical framework (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020).

Before the process, a standardized coding protocol was created to guarantee uniformity and minimize subjectivity. The lack of a second independent coder made it difficult to evaluate inter-coder reliability; however, specific rules, iterative checking, and frequent verification of coding judgments were used to improve accuracy. Each coding round was re-evaluated after a one-week gap to confirm intra-coder dependability, using the quality-assurance approach outlined by (Zupic & Čater, 2015).

An intra-coder test–retest process was used to guarantee coding stability when a second coder was not present. At each step (title/abstract screening, full-text eligibility, theme assignment), a stratified 20% subsample was re-coded seven to fourteen days later, with a 10% late subsample to account for drift. Cohen's κ was used to evaluate agreement for binary screening judgments, while Krippendorff's α was used to evaluate nominal thematic categories; values of ≥.70 were considered acceptable, ≥.80 as good, and ≥.90 as exceptional. Before final coding, the decision log and codebook underwent targeted improvements based on the discrepancies. In Table 1, summary data are shown.

Table 1

Single Coder Reliability Test

Phase	Sample (n)	Delay (days)	Metric	Value	Decision	Notes
Title/abstract screening	96	7–14	Cohen's κ	0.77	Acceptable	20% of records screened at title/abstract.
Full-text eligibility	55	7–14	Cohen's κ	0.82	Good	20% of full texts assessed.
Thematic coding (nominal)	32	7–14	Krippendorff's α	0.81	Good	20% of included studies.
Drift check (late subsample)	16	≥14	Cohen's κ	0.90	Excellent	10% of included studies, coded near the end.

Note. *κ/α ≥ 0.70 acceptable; ≥ 0.80 good; ≥ 0.90 excellent. Cohen's κ was used for binary screening/eligibility; Krippendorff's α (nominal) for thematic categories.*

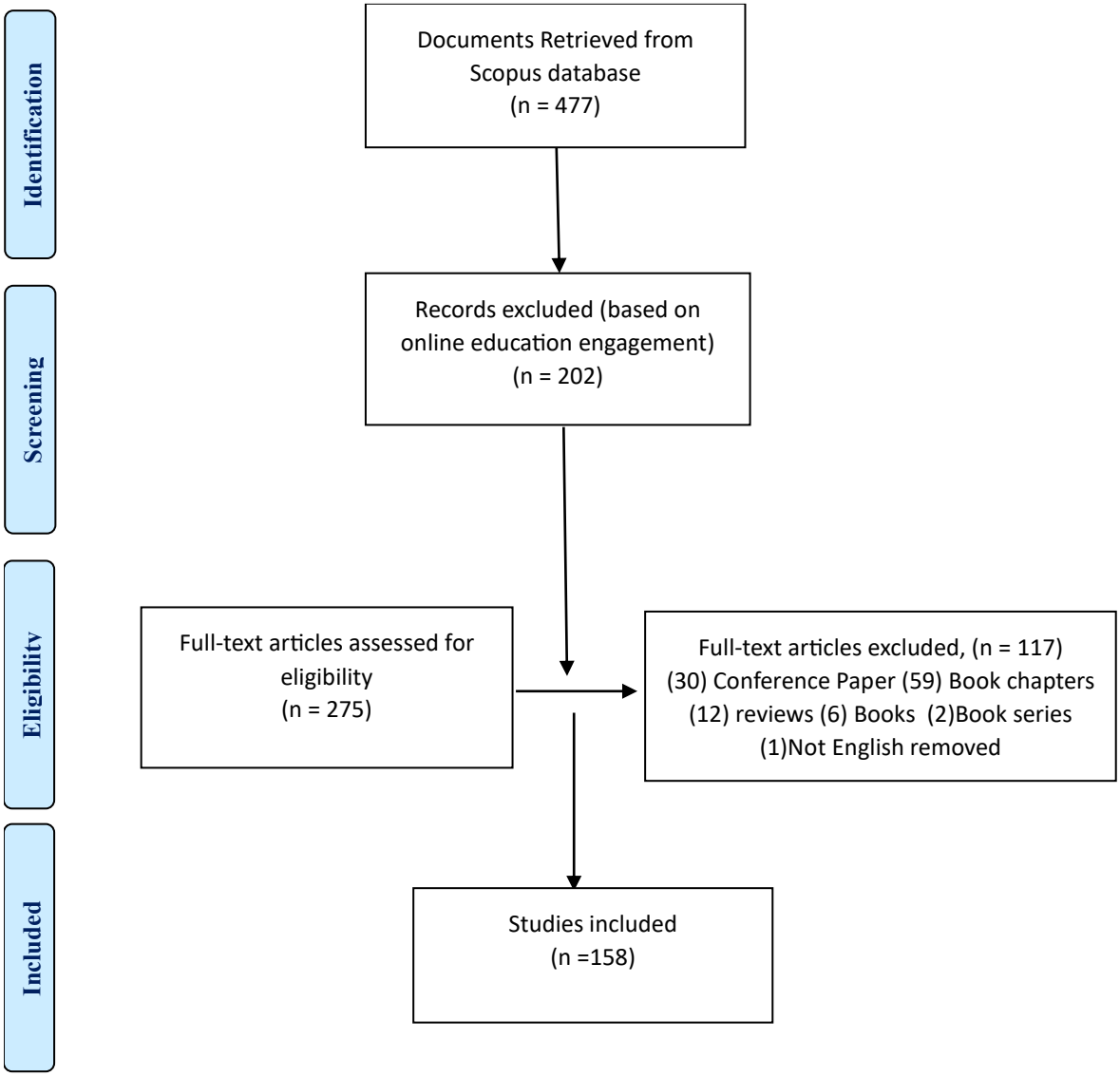
We utilized the Scopus database. The search was conducted using the terms TITLE-ABS-KEY((("Online engagement " OR "Social media brand engagement " OR "Active social media engagement" OR "Passive social media engagement" OR "User engagement on social media" OR "Social media engagement behavior" OR "Media engagement" OR "Customer engagement in social media" OR "Customer engagement with branded social media" OR "Public engagement in social media" OR "Consumer engagement in social media" OR "Consumer behavioral engagement on social media" OR "Fan page engagement on social media"))) AND PUBYEAR > 2010 AND PUBYEAR < 2023 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Social Media")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) in the database's ". Search date: 26 October 2022.

The document was searched using the article title and abstract. The entire amount of 477 articles from 2004 and 2022 was obtained. Then, 202 articles about online engagement, particularly in education, were

eliminated. Because we are focusing on online social media interaction, and those publications were not about social media. In the following stage, the articles' eligibility was determined. Then, 117 publications were removed based on eligibility criteria; 30 were conference papers, 59 were book chapters, 12 were reviews, 6 were books, 2 were book series, and 1 was not in the English language. So, we had 158 final papers.

Figure 1

Prisma Flow



3 | FINDINGS

Table 1

Main Data about Papers

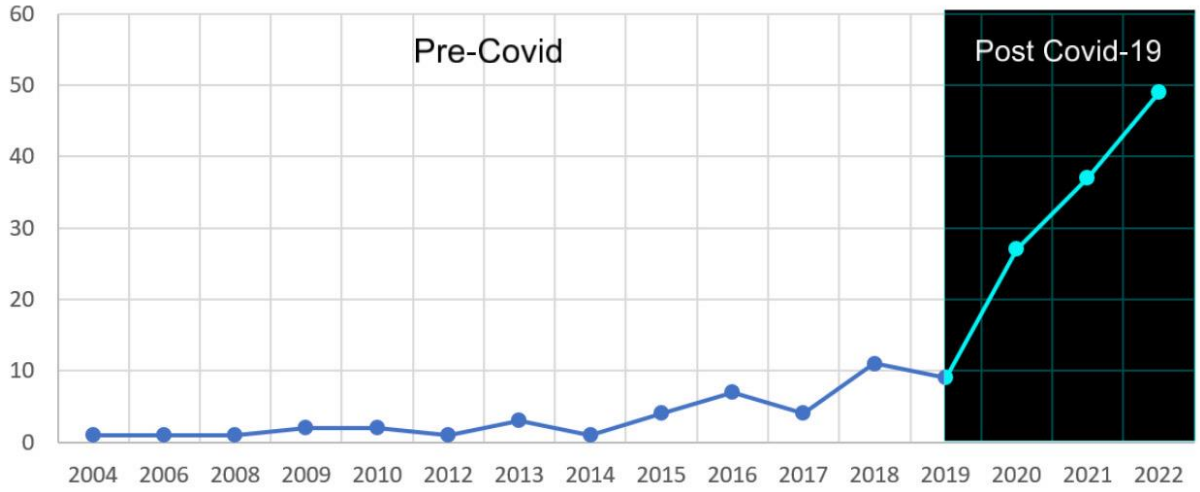
Description	Results
Main Information About Data	
Timespan	2004:2022
Journals	120
Articles	157
Annual Growth Rate %	23.85
Article Average Age	2.5
Average Citations Per Article	27.91
References	9908
Document Contents	
Author's Keywords	529
Authors	
Authors	447
Authors Of a Single-Authored Article	17
Authors Collaboration	
Single-Authored Article	17
Co-Authors Per Article	3.03
International Co-Authorships %	26.75

3.1 | Growth Trajectory/Annual Scientific Production

The geographic distribution of publications during the past 18 years of literature is mentioned in Figure 2. During these years, the authors from all over the world, including Asia, Europe, the United States, Australia, and Oceania, have taken an interest in SME. Throughout the 18-year study period, a clear upward tendency has emerged (Figure 2). The scientific output from 2004 to 2022 (see Table 2) reaches a peak between 2019 and 2022, indicating increased interest and growth in the research after COVID-19. Before COVID-19, the number of articles published remained less than 10. Social media's significant role in disseminating COVID-19 information, from news updates to public health guidelines, as well as changes in social media use patterns during the pandemic, may have driven researchers' interest in exploring how people used social media to stay connected and informed during this time (Azer et al., 2021; Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020).

Figure 2

Growth Trajectory of Articles (Pre-COVID and Post-COVID) on Social Media Engagement (N 158; Scopus 2004-2022)



Note: *Data source is Scopus, and analysis conducted using Biblioshiny.*

3.2 | Sources (Journals)

In terms of the sources, the journals exhibit a production level that ranges from three to four papers (see Table 3). The results indicate that Journal of Product and Brand Management, Journal of research in Interactive Marketing, and Online Information Review are the most relevant sources, with 4 papers each. Next, Journal of Business Research, Computers in Human Behavior, and Journal of Interactive Marketing represent the most cited journals with 3 papers each. The parameter we used was 10 sources.

Table 3

Most Relevant sources (N=158)

Sr.	Sources	Pre-Covid (Articles)	Post-Covid	Grand Total (Articles)	TC	TC/Y
1	Journal of Product and Brand Management	1	3	4	122	20.33
2	Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	2	2	4	197	21.89
3	Online Information Review	2	2	4	204	29.14
4	Computers in Human Behavior	2	1	3	105	35.00
5	Frontiers in Psychology	0	3	3	119	59.50
6	Industrial Marketing Management	2	1	3	258	43.00
7	Information Communication and Society	2	1	3	31	2.58
8	Journal of Business Research	0	3	3	52	52.00
9	Journal of Global Information Management	0	3	3	8	8.00
10	Journal of Travel Research	0	3	3	30	15.00
11	Others	36	89	125	3279	182.17
12	Total	47	111	158	4405	244.72[a]

Note: *Total citations per year were calculated by dividing the total citations in the years between 2004-2022, analysis conducted using Biblioshiny.*

3.3 | Authors and Study Locations

The first and corresponding author's location was investigated. According to the findings (see Table 4), Europe (48 articles, 30.38%) had the greatest number of scholars who appeared as first authors. Asia (45 articles, 28.48%) and North America (40 articles, 25.32%), Oceania (14 articles, 8.86%), Latin America (4 articles, 2.53%), and Africa (7 articles, 4.43%) followed. Aside from the majority of the corresponding authors being from Europe (52 articles, 33%), Asia (44 articles, 28 %), and North America (41 articles, 26%), Oceania (13 articles, 8%), Latin America (3 articles, 2 %), and Africa (5 articles, 3%). The parameter we used was 10 countries.

Table 4

Most Relevant sources (N=158)

Sr.	Continent	First Author		Corresponding Author	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Europe	48	30%	52	33%
2	Asia	45	28%	44	28%
3	North America	40	25%	41	26%
4	Oceania	14	9%	13	8%
5	Latin America	4	3%	3	2%
6	Africa	7	4%	5	3%
Total		**158**	**100**	**158**	**100**

**Note: Data source: Scopus, N: 158, Performed by manually counting.*

3.4 | Research Context

Table 5

Study Context

Study Context	Count	Study Method	
Services	136	Qualitative	15
Manufacturing	11	Quantitative	129
Multi-Business	11	Mixed	14

**Note. Data source: Scopus, N: 158, Performed by manually counting*

In terms of the context of the study, we have done this manually by reading each paper to know in which sector social media engagement is studied. Most of the studies (136) were done in the service sector, while only 11 were located in the manufacturing sector. When studies were conducted in more than one business type, we designated it as multi-business, showing a number (11 articles). These results indicate that the service industry is of particular interest to the researchers who have been looking into SMEs (See table 5). The methodology used in the study is divided into qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, and review articles. We have done this manually by reading papers. Findings demonstrate that quantitative approaches are the most common (117 total papers), followed by qualitative approaches (15 total articles), mixed methods

research (14 total articles), and reviews (12 articles). Researchers from the US (23), India (10), and China (6) were particularly interested in quantitative methods (8).

The research was conducted in various countries around the world, including Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, Europe, Finland, France, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tanzania, Turkey, UAE, UK, USA, Vietnam, and Virginia. The study was conducted on various business types, including service, manufacturing, and multi-businesses. The results of this study provide insights into the research methodology and business type used in different countries.

3.5 | Theories used to Study SME (2004-2022)

Theories used in social media engagement were identified using manual reading. The most frequently occurring theory is Uses and Gratifications (Iqbal Khan & Ahmad, 2021; Kujur & Singh, 2020b; Osei-Frimpong, McLean, Islam, & Appiah Otoo, 2022; Santos et al., 2022), which appears 24 times. This theory suggests that people consume media to fulfill certain needs and desires and that the specific media they choose depends on those needs and desires. The second most common theory is Customer Engagement (Amani, 2022; Park & Ha, 2021b; Rahman et al., 2018), which appears 14 times. This theory suggests that customers who are engaged with a brand are more likely to be loyal, advocate for the brand, and make repeat purchases. Social Identity Theory (Park & Ha, 2020; Samad et al., 2020) appears 6 times and proposes that people derive part of their sense of self from the groups they belong to. Other theories that appear multiple times include Media Richness Theory (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021a), Technology Acceptance Model (Zhou & Qiu, 2020), Self Determination Theory (Park et al., 2021), the Three-Dimensional View (Chahal et al., 2019), Cognitive Theory (Kim & Kim, 2019), and CRM Theory (Šimović et al., 2022).

3.6 | Most Relevant Authors

Fernandes T was the author who had the greatest continued trajectory in the field, with three years of production when it came to examining productivity over time. The author's research tends to focus on how brands may engage consumers effectively through social media channels, particularly among younger demographics, and concerning high-end products and services. Table 6 provides details. Further, the parameters used for identification of the most relevant authors were: frequency of measures based on N. of documents and the number of authors 10

Then there is Dolan R with writings spanning three years, including some periods of inactivity. The author explores how the format and platform of social media material affect users' engagement behavior, providing insights into the variables that motivate users to participate in social media. The author then highlights the significance of knowing user motivation and behavior. Then, Behl A discusses more about online engagement through gamification. Every other author has presented their work that has been produced in the field for less than three years.

Table 6

Most Relevant Authors

Author	TC	NP	PY_start
Dolan R	485	3	2016
Fernandes T	42	3	2020
Behl A	14	2	2021
Caba-pérez C	34	2	2018
Calder Bj	693	2	2009
Chahal H	77	2	2017
Coelho PS	26	2	2021
Conduit J	423	2	2016
Dijkmans C	326	2	2015
Fahy J	423	2	2016

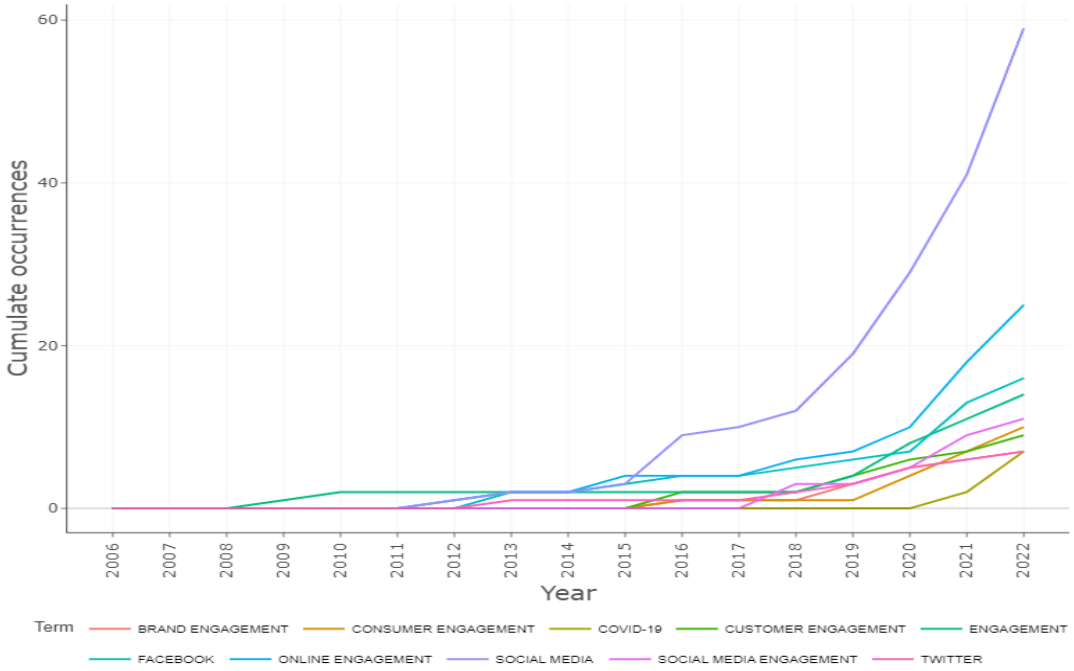
**Note: TC: The column "TC" stands for Total Citations, which is the total number of times that an author's work has been cited by other scholars in the same field. NP: The column "NP" represents the number of publications that the author has made in the field. PY_start: This column lists the year in which the author's first publication in the field was published. N:158, data source Scopus*

3.7 | Word Dynamics

The data provided shows the evolution of social media, online engagement, and consumer engagement over the years 2006 to 2022 (see Figure 3). In the early years, there was no significant social media or online engagement. However, as the years progressed, there has been a steady increase in social media usage and online engagement. Facebook emerged as the dominant social media platform with growing engagement from 2013 to 2015. From 2016, there was a gradual shift toward other platforms, as seen in the increased engagement on Twitter. Along with the growth of social media and online engagement, there was also an increase in consumer engagement, which became an important aspect of marketing strategies. The impact of COVID-19 on social media and consumer engagement is visible in the increased online activities, with notable spikes in engagement in 2020 and 2021. The parameter used for the identification of word dynamics was based on the author’s keywords.

Figure 3

Word dynamics



**Note. Data source: Scopus; Analysis Conducted via Biblioshiny*

Figure 4

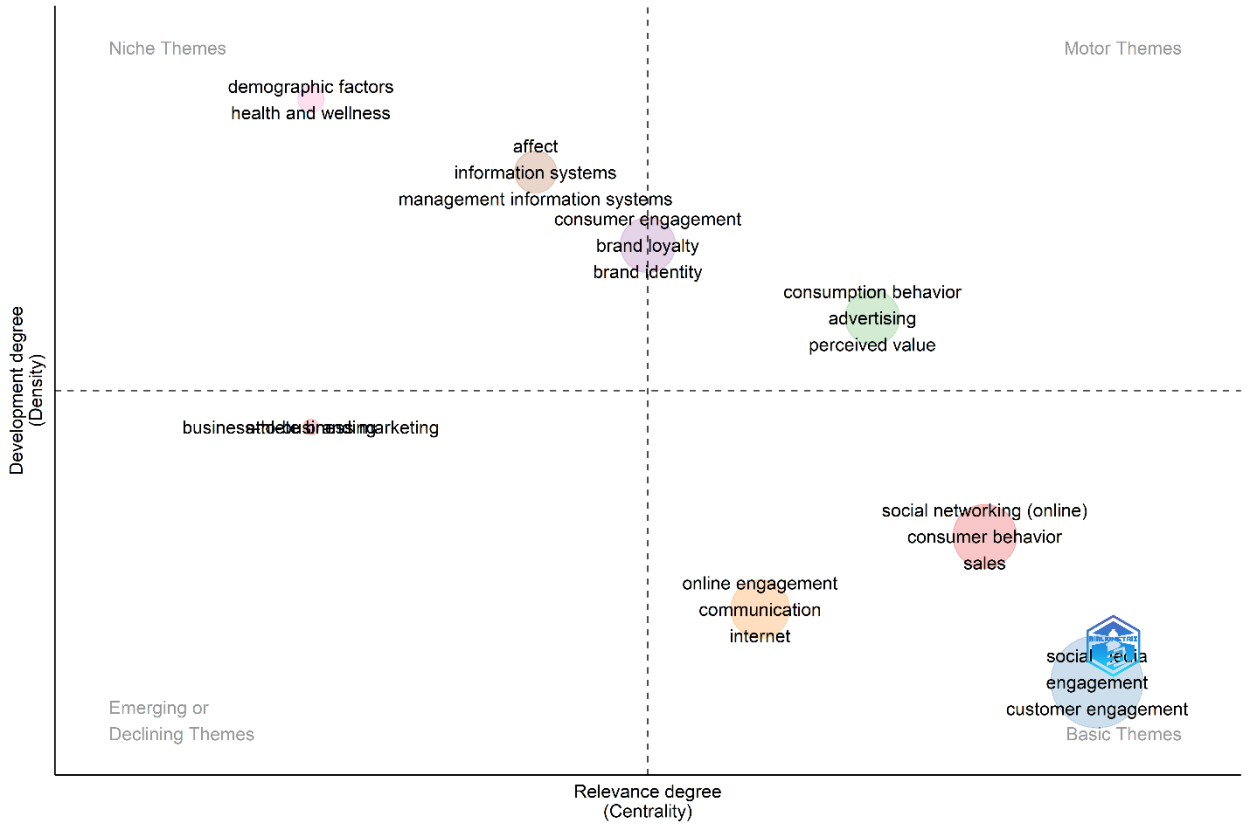
Word Cloud

***Note**. Word cloud based on the Author's keyword; analysis conducted using Biblioshiny (Data source: Scopus; N: 158; Number of words for analysis: 30)*

The word cloud created from the authors' keywords displays the prominent topics and focal regions in the reviewed literature. The most often used term, "social media" (181 occurrences), shows that this notion is the primary focus of research on the topic. This core theme is surrounded by related high-frequency keywords such as "engagement", "customer engagement", "social networking (online)", and platform-specific terms like "Facebook", "Twitter", and "Instagram", emphasising the importance of studies investigating user interaction and brand-consumer relationships in digital environments. The inclusion of keywords like "marketing," "digital marketing," "brand engagement," and "brand loyalty" illustrates the strategic and commercial features of social media research, in which companies try to translate online interaction into measurable business consequences. Meanwhile, phrases like "consumer behaviour," "perceived value," and "communication" suggest a strong behavioural and psychological orientation, with researchers looking into how users perceive, interact with, and are impacted by digital platforms. Emerging or context-specific terms like "COVID-19", "health and wellness", and "sentiment analysis" point to an ever-changing research agenda shaped by societal and technological changes. These keywords reflect a growing interest in understanding digital participation in new global and analytical contexts.

Figure 5

Thematic Map

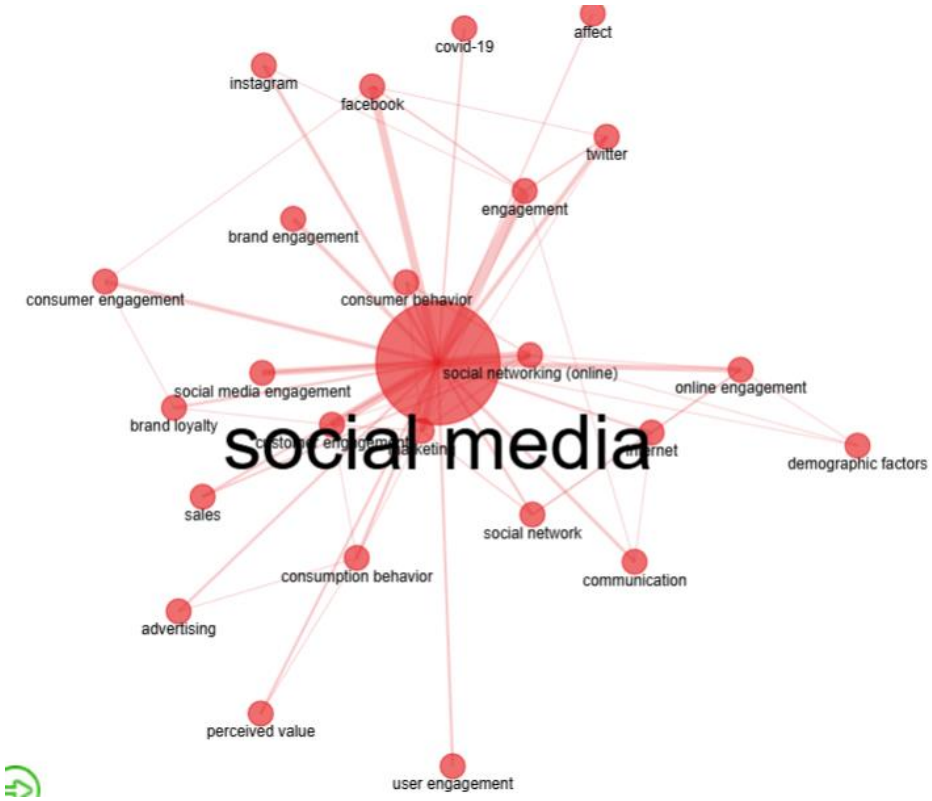


***Note:** Thematic based on Author's keyword (Data source: Scopus; N: 158; Number of words for analysis: 75)*

The thematic map depicts the structural and conceptual grouping of research themes based on author keywords. Each cluster is a collection of closely linked concepts determined by co-occurrence and network centrality. The Basic Themes (bottom-right quadrant), which include social media, interaction, and consumer engagement, are extremely important but underdeveloped. These are the basic sections of the field, reflecting the predominant emphasis on online engagement and digital client interactions. The Motor Themes (top-right quadrant), which include consuming behaviour, advertising, and perceived value, are both important and well-developed. These are mature areas driving the research profession, connecting consumer responses to marketing and digital engagement results. Niche Themes (top-left quadrant), which include demographic characteristics and health and wellness, are well-developed but less central, indicating specific research streams with little broader impact. Finally, Emerging or Declining Themes (bottom-left quadrant), such as business-to-business marketing and athlete branding, have low centrality and density, indicating that they are either emerging or losing importance in current scholarship.

Figure 6

Co-word Analysis



**Note. Co-word analysis based on the Author's keyword (Data source: Scopus; N: 158; Number of nodes for analysis: 25)*

Co-word analysis shows a single, closely related cluster where platforms, key interaction elements, and results are all located together instead of being divided into smaller themes. This structure uses social media as the global center (highest betweenness and PageRank), facilitating connections between platform labels

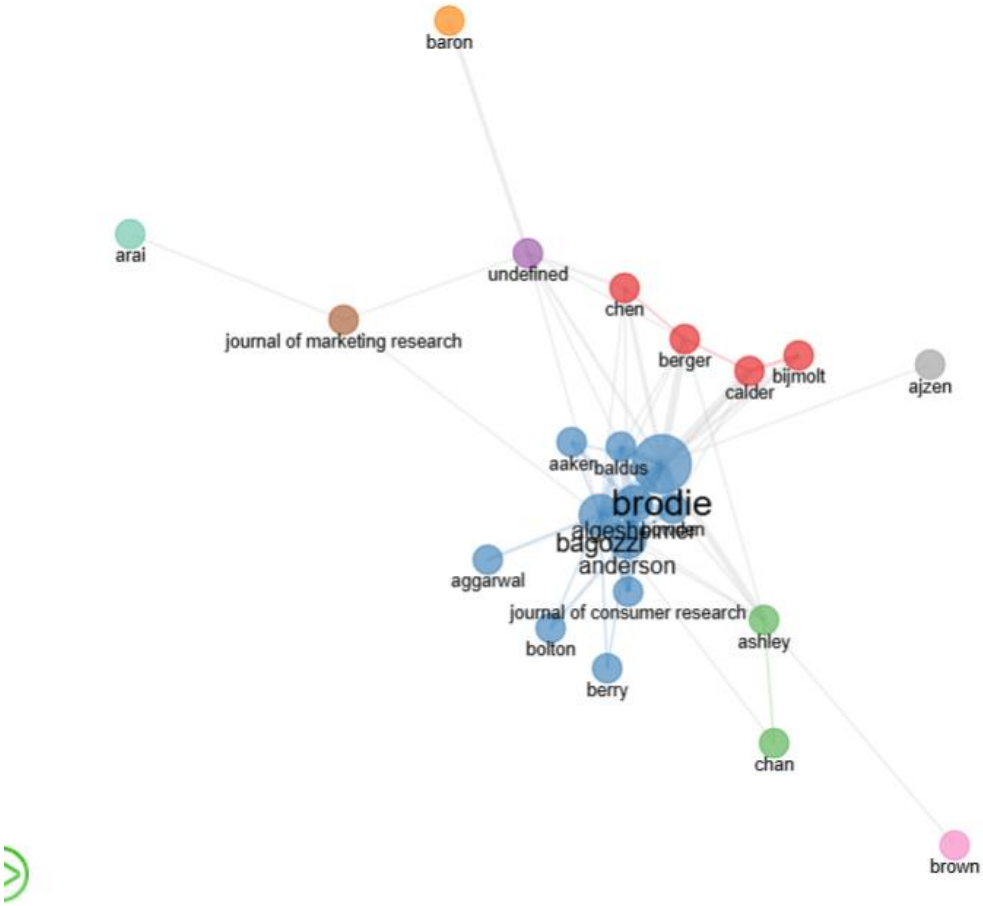
(Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), outcome/antecedent terms (brand loyalty, sales, perceived value, advertising, COVID-19, affect, demographic factors), and behavioral terms (engagement, customer engagement, online engagement, etc.). While online social networking serves as a minor bridge between definitional language and platform-specific terminology, mid-tier centrality for marketing and customer interaction demonstrates that the management stream connects platform activity to performance outcomes. One cohesive subject where "social platform engagement" leads to "marketing outcomes," with platform names functioning as satellites around a central idea rather than creating separate communities.

3.8 | Co-citation Network Analysis

The co-citation map focuses on Cluster 2, where Bagozzi and Brodie have the highest betweenness and PageRank, indicating a strong intellectual core around relationship/engagement theory (with Algesheimer and Anderson supporting this prestige). Cluster 1 (e.g., Berger, Calder, Chen) appears to channel ideas from virality, consumer experience, and digital persuasion into that core, as demonstrated by their modest bridging responsibilities, but Cluster 3 (particularly Ashley) connects social-media brand engagement to the same center through significant brokerage. The existence of journal nodes (e.g., Journal of Marketing Research) next to author nodes implies mixed units of analysis; this can obscure interpretation, as can the bogus "undefined" node, which inflates bridging metrics and should be eliminated.

Figure 7

Co-citation Network Analysis



***Note.** Co-citation network analysis based on Author (Data source: Scopus; N: 158; Number of nodes for analysis: 25)*

The observed shift from motivational to brand-community themes reflects the maturation of social media engagement research and is consistent with Customer Engagement Theory, which views motivation as an antecedent and brand-community as an advanced engagement state. Similarly, the significant increase in SME digital marketing themes around 2020 may be explained using Innovation Diffusion Theory, as exogenous shocks such as COVID-19 boosted adoption among resource-constrained enterprises.

4 | ANTECEDENTS OF CUSTOMER SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

We manually read articles and identified predictors used in the social media engagement study. Table 8 delineates 70 predictors of social media engagement (SME) established in previous research. Based on these predictors, it can be divided into six major categories: motivational factors, use engagement, personal factors, brand factors, social factors, and community factors. Based on a manual review of papers, we proposed a framework highlighting what are the current trends in customer social media engagement.

Table 8

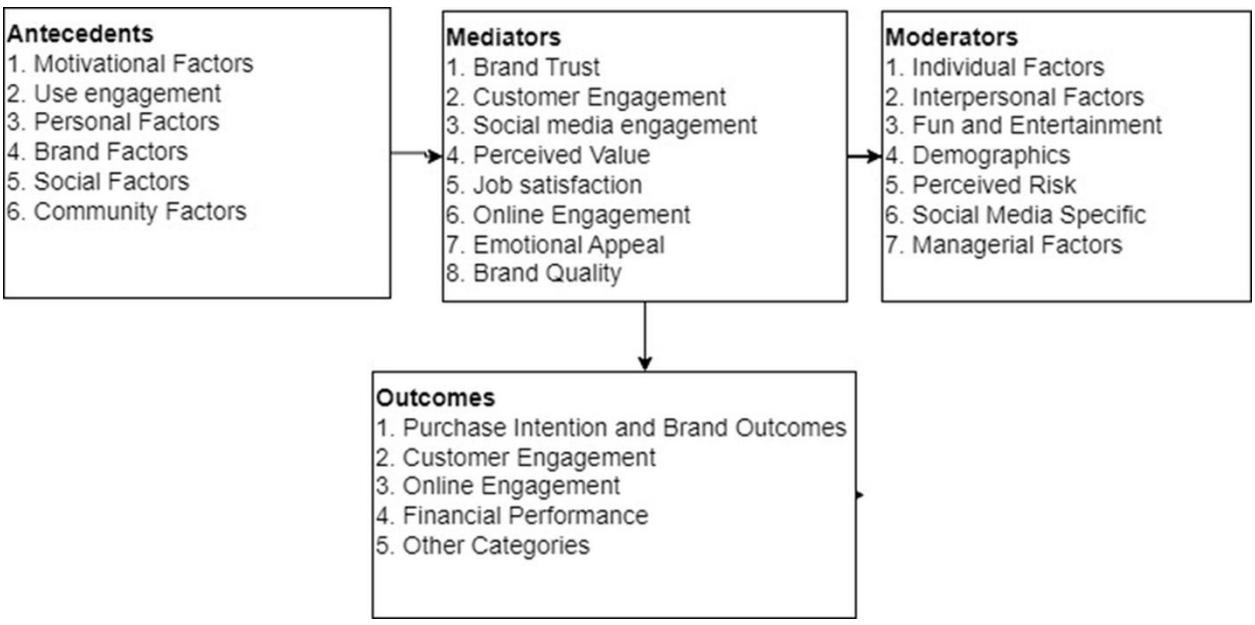
Antecedents Based on the Available Studies

Sr.	Antecedents	Source	Sr.	Antecedents	Source
1	Socio-psychological gratification variables	(Osei-Frimpong, McLean, Islam, & Appiah Otoo, 2022)	36	Entertainment	(Chen & Chiu, 2021)
2	Extension of self	(Naude, 2022)	37	Social and promotional values	(Chen & Chiu, 2021)
3	Social media brand engagement	(Amani, 2022)	38	Brand Involvement	(Park & Ha, 2021a)
4	Identification	(Amani, 2022)	39	Product Involvement	(Park & Ha, 2021a)
5	Enthusiasm	(Amani, 2022)	40	Types of affordances	(Chen et al., 2021)
6	Interaction	(Amani, 2022)	41	Personal engagement	(Bai et al., 2020)
7	Consumer Motivation	(van Heerden & Wiese, 2021)	42	User interactive engagement	(Bai et al., 2020)
8	Entertainment	(van Heerden & Wiese, 2021)	43	Fan interactive engagement	(Bai et al., 2020)
9	Brand likeability	(van Heerden & Wiese, 2021)	44	Social factors	(Chahal et al., 2020)
10	Convenience	(van Heerden & Wiese, 2021)	45	Perceived values	(Park & Ha, 2020)
11	Remuneration	(van Heerden & Wiese, 2021)	46	Social identification	(Park & Ha, 2020)
12	Information	(van Heerden & Wiese, 2021)	47	Communication style	(Wu et al., 2019)
13	Interpersonal utility	(van Heerden & Wiese, 2021)	48	Communication Function	(Wu et al., 2019)
14	Connectedness	(Hussein et al., 2021)	49	Consumer involvement	(Leong et al., 2019)
15	Social media participation	(Hussein et al., 2021)	50	Emotions Based contents	(Bronstein et al., 2018)
16	Text Mining	(Hassan et al., 2022)	51	Social Capital	(Jayasingh & Venkatesh, 2016)
17	Gamification Experience	(Srivastava & Fernandes, 2022)	52	Experience Value	(Shin & Perdue, 2022a)

18	Emotional Expression	(Chen et al., 2022)	53	Brand self-expressiveness	(Oliveira & Fernandes, 2022)
19	Social factors	(Santos et al., 2022)	54	Clout	(Duncan et al., 2019)
20	Personal factors	(Santos et al., 2022)	55	Authenticity,	(Duncan et al., 2019)
21	Mass communication factors	(Santos et al., 2022)	56	Emotional tone	(Duncan et al., 2019)
22	Community factors	(Santos et al., 2022)	57	Interactive feature	(Bilro et al., 2018)
23	Brand factors	(Santos et al., 2022)	58	Visual Appeal	(Bilro et al., 2018)
24	Brand Equity	(Lee & Park, 2022)	59	Personality traits	(Marbach et al., 2016)
25	Non-transactional value	(Shin & Perdue, 2022b)	60	Consumer's intensity of social media use	(Dijkmans et al., 2015)
26	Relational value	(Shin & Perdue, 2022b)	61	Messenger's credibility	(Eslami et al., 2022)
27	Functional value.	(Shin & Perdue, 2022b)	62	Message credibility	(Eslami et al., 2022)
28	Perceived Knowledge	(Pandey & Hassan, 2021)	63	Active and Passive Social Media Engagement	(Gainous et al., 2021)
29	Cognitive Awareness	(Pandey & Hassan, 2021)	64	CSR activity	(Kim & Stepchenkova, 2021)
30	Interactivity	(Pandey & Hassan, 2021)	65	Affective social media engagement	(Hogue & Mills, 2019)
31	Online reviews	(Shankar et al., 2021)	66	Social imaginaries	(Lupton, 2021)
32	Lower search cost	(Shankar et al., 2021)	67	Media Richness	(Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021b)
33	Sales-staff assistance	(Shankar et al., 2021)	68	Functional Brand Image	(Schivinski et al., 2020)
34	Immediate possession motives	(Shankar et al., 2021)	69	Hedonic brand image	(Schivinski et al., 2020)
35	Information	(Chen & Chiu, 2021)	70	Word of mouth	(Samad et al., 2020)

Figure 8

Social Media Engagement Behavior (2004-2022)



Source (Author)

5 | DISCUSSION

This study provides unique insights into the key contributors to social media participation and highlights the most prominent studies, journals, and organizations that have driven this subject. Furthermore, the analysis reveals the field's gradual expansion over time and adds to the notion by identifying the key research concerns that emerge in the social media engagement literature. Our study seeks to provide a clear overview of social media engagement from a management perspective, allowing managers to have a thorough understanding of social media engagement as a marketing tool before implementing it into their organizations' strategic plans. This study would also help managers identify resources (articles, authors, journals, countries, and institutions) that can provide them with useful practical insights into this area. The study enables scholars to easily find the most influential publications, authors, and journals that have contributed to this subject. Co-word and thematic mapping reveal a consolidated but still evolving field: a single cohesive cluster with' social platform interaction → marketing results' structure, basic themes still underdeveloped, and motor themes focused on perceived/experiential value. Growth is strong after 2020, although topic breadth is uneven and over-indexed to service settings." (Grounding: Figure 6, Figure 5, Figure 2, and Table 5). Three gaps appear. (1) Theoretical focus: Mechanisms tested at scale and boundary conditions (culture, setting) are not well integrated; multi-level theorizing is still scarce. Uses & Gratifications and Customer Engagement predominate. (2) Method bias: cross-sectional, quantitative designs are more common than longitudinal, experimental, and cross-industry comparisons. (3) Coverage bias: regional skew and service-sector dominance limit generalizability, especially outside collectivist environments. (Grounding: Tables 4, 5, and 7).

The bibliometric maturity of the SME research domain can be described as moving from an emergent to a convergent phase. Earlier studies focused on motivational factors and platform-centric measurements, whereas subsequent research incorporates brand, social, and community views, indicating theoretical convergence. This maturity mapping is consistent with the paradigm given by Cobo et al. (2011) and indicates the field's progress toward conceptual refinement.

This review builds on the main antecedent categories revealed in Table 7 and thematic clusters in Figure 5 to advance the SME Driver Architecture. SME-DA and propositions P1–P3 directly address these deficiencies by (i) establishing boundary conditions (crisis intensity, sector, culture) and (ii) emphasizing testable routes for mediating factors (psychological ownership, social attachment, perceived value). SME Driver Architecture (SME-DA), a multi-level, mechanism-centered framework that connects six driver families to active and passive involvement under defined moderators. Drawing on the Uses and Gratifications Theory. SME-DA shows how users' intrinsic and extrinsic motives influence engagement behaviours in various social media situations (Amani, 2023; Iqbal Khan & Ahmad, 2022; Kujur & Singh, 2020a). The paradigm builds on Customer Engagement Theory by defining mediating mechanisms, psychological ownership, social affiliation, and perceived value, that translate motivational factors into behavioural results.

Based on these data, the paper proposes numerous testable assertions.

P1: External shocks (e.g., pandemics) enhance motivational and social drivers of social media involvement, boosting online dependency and information-seeking—consistent with the post-2020 surge in COVID-related SME studies.

P2: Service-dominant contexts evoke higher levels of emotive and relational engagement, reflecting the field's focus on experiential/perceived value. (Grounding: service sector 136/158; theme clusters on perceived/experienced value.)

P3: Cultural collectivism influences the link between social identity and active participation practices.

These propositions build on the SME Driver Architecture by identifying contextual elements as boundary constraints that influence the strength and character of engagement mechanisms. In accordance with high regional output from collectivist countries (Table 4, Asia clusters).

The discovered clusters and temporal patterns also reveal unresolved theoretical gaps, notably in cross-platform engagement dynamics and non-Western SME environments. Managerial consequences of these bibliometric trends include crisis planning, digital adaptation, and cultural alignment as significant strategic concerns for practitioners.

This study also provides implications for the managers in three ways. Crisis preparation (P1): Create formats that meet increased information-seeking and community demands during shocks; emphasize clarity, credibility, and social support elements during crisis peaks. (Figure 2). Service playbooks (P2): In service environments, emphasize sensory signals and community co-creation to increase affective/relational engagement; track perceived-value metrics alongside clicks. Table 5 shows theme groups based on perceived/experienced value. Cultural tailoring (P3): In collectivist markets, rely on identity-affirming cues (ingroup language, norms, and community recognition) to transform social identification into active behaviors. (Table 4, cluster evidence). Therefore, the field of social media engagement is rapidly expanding but only partially mature; SME-DA and P1-P3 turn that map into a program for mechanism testing across crises, sectors, and cultures, connecting what researchers measure to what managers can use.

6 | CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper reflected on the history of constructs and research questions on the drivers of social media engagement. The paper reviewed the geographical distribution, growth trajectory, and the number of studies on social media engagement. The main topics studied and the most important authors were also highlighted, and the connections between topics and authors were established. Moreover, the paper identified the predictors of social media engagement and suggested future research directions that can advance knowledge, improve representation, and make the research more rigorous. These conceptual findings emerged from topic clusters, co-word analysis, and our bibliometric mapping, which revealed the dominance of motivational, social, and brand-related forces. This study also presents management implications addressed in the preceding section, highlighting how SMEs can utilize the discovered engagement drivers across crises, service contexts, and cultural situations. The three propositions (P1-P3) are based on bibliometric data. P1 is derived from the crisis-related theme clusters and post-2020 surge indicated in Figure 2; P2 from the concentration of service-sector studies and experience value clusters in Tables 4 and 5; and P3 from the regional and cultural bias observed in collectivist Asia clusters (Table 4). Together, these propositions transform known bibliometric trends into testable theoretical mechanisms within the SME Driver Architecture.

6.1 | Limitations

Despite a comprehensive analysis of social media engagement, this study has some limitations. First, this utilized only one database, Scopus. Future research can be conducted to utilize other databases, that as Web of Science. Second, there are a number of bibliometric analysis techniques. This study utilized a few techniques, so future research could utilize other techniques, such as cluster analysis and network analysis. Third, this study acknowledges that there was only one coder. Future research might be conducted with multiple coders.

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Plagiarism Statement: This article was scanned by the plagiarism program. No plagiarism was detected.

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