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# The influence of social media and digital marketing on online consumer behavior: A literature review

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## Abstract

The current literature review is a critical analysis of how social media and digital marketing affect online consumer behavior by synthesizing the results of scholarly articles, industry reports, and bibliometric analyses published in the last ten years. The review outlines that the area of business and management is the largest area of research with input on business science, management, social sciences, computer science, economics and decision sciences and hence the interdisciplinary nature of the area. The publication trends analysis shows that after 2020, the number of articles about the topic increased drastically, which is due to the accelerated digital transformation of the shift going on at a very high pace due to technological progress and the COVID-19 pandemic. On the country level, the production is higher in China and the United States, and others are increasingly becoming engaged. The co-authorship and density visualization indicate that the research networks are fragmented based on small clusters in which collaboration across the world was limited, whereas citation mapping reveals that Dwivedi (2021) [11], Felix (2017) [4], and Jacobson (2020) [6] are significant works that anchor the discourse. The concept of the key-word co-occurrence analysis shows two prevailing research directions: technology-driven marketing activities (e.g., artificial intelligence, content marketing, SEO), and consumer-based behavioral reactions (e.g., engagement, trust, purchase intention). The review finds that the digital marketing techniques like influencer marketing and personalized advertising can successfully influence the perceptions of the consumers; however, the area needs more incorporation of the behavioral, technological, and ethical points of view. Future studies must concentrate on interdisciplinary co-operation, longitudinal studies, and other previously under-examined challenges like sustainability, privacy and health. To practitioners, the results highlight the need to focus on personalization, influencer collaboration, AI-supported analytics, and nimble response to platform changes to maintain competitive edges in a fast-moving digital market environment.

**Keywords:** Social media, digital marketing, online consumer behavior, influencer marketing, personalized advertising, consumer engagement, artificial intelligence, bibliometric analysis, collaboration networks, purchase intention

## Introduction

Over the past few years, the social media development and digital marketing have tremendously changed the consumer behavior. As digital technologies became more popular and as the use of social media platforms is on the rise, businesses have shifted their marketing strategies to utilize the power of the digital tools. Social media that was originally intended to be used as a social interaction medium has continued to play a critical role in allowing businesses to contact consumers to market products and create brand loyalty (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) [7]. At the same time, digital marketing has become one of the potent tools, offering the chances of advertising with a high level of precision, customer experience, and feedback (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019) [2]. The two forces coming together have resulted in great transformations in terms of consumer buying choices, interaction with brands, and perception of products in online space.

With the ever-growing digital platform, comprehending how social media and digital marketing impact consumer behavior have gained precedence in the quest to ensure that a business retains its competitive edge. Studies have revealed that consumers currently depend greatly on the social media to provide them with recommendations and reviews about the products and even the brands themselves (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010) <sup>[5]</sup>. The transformation has changed the models of consumer behavior since online platforms allow making the purchasing experience more interactive and customized

(Nadararajan and Chan, 2018). Moreover, online marketing tactics, including influencer marketing, retargeted advertising, and content marketing have shown to be effective in strengthening brand awareness, engagement, and consumer trust (Ki *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[17]</sup>. It is therefore important to learn how these digital tools affect consumer behavior in order to create effective marketing tactics and enhance customer satisfaction.

Although the literature on the topic has been increasing, the dynamic nature of the social media platforms and other digital marketing strategies poses a challenge to researchers striving to ensure that they have the complete picture with regards to their effects on online consumer behavior. Research has tended to specialize in a platform, the type of consumer, or marketing strategies, and falls short in filling in the gaps on whether these digital tools have a larger influence on consumer decision-making processes. This literature review will seek to fill this gap by reviewing the available literature, which focuses on the impact of social media and digital marketing on online consumer behavior to give an understanding of major trends, strategies, and results noted in different studies.

The methodologies and results of the past studies in this area will be discussed in the further sections with special reference to the role of social media in consumer attitude formation, the effectiveness of digital marketing in promoting consumer behavior, and psychological aspects retelling online buying behavior.

**Methodology:** The purpose of this literature review was to synthesize the available research about how social media and digital marketing affect the online consumer behavior. In order to achieve the quality and rigor of the study, the review was conducted with the help of a thorough analysis of peer-reviewed articles to the Scopus index. Scopus is a well-known and reputable academic publication portal in numerous areas of research and provides a massive database of quality scholarly research (Elsevier, 2020) [3]. The choice of this database was a strategic one in order to make sure that the most recent and topical works were included in the research with regard to articles published in the most credible journals. Articles were searched using the keywords of digital marketing and social media marketing because they were the most appropriate since they were directly related to the object of the study that is online consumer behavior.

The search criteria that were used to include the literature review were studies published in the recent past, i.e. between 2010 and 2020 to ensure that the literature review covered any developments in the digital marketing and social media platforms. Articles were evaluated based on the methodological rigor, topicality, and value to the topic and the influence of digital marketing strategies and social media on consumer decision making processes. The review was conducted using the thematic analysis method in which the studies were classified into major themes, including the effects of social media use in shaping consumer perceptions, suitability of targeted digital marketing strategies and the psychological factors contingent on online purchases. This method led to a thorough analysis of the various aspects that lead to consumer behavior during the digital era (Saldana, 2016) [10].

This study aims at providing an integrated insight into the effect of social media and digital marketing on the online

consumer behavior that can guide subsequent studies and business activities. The instruments employed in the review consist of qualitative analysis techniques like content analysis and thematic coding that enabled the detection of recurrent patterns and tendencies all through the chosen studies (Braun and Clarke, 2006) [1]. These methods were used to guarantee a strictly and methodological synthesis of the literature and also fill gaps of the existing body of knowledge. In examining the studies using these approaches, this review will seek to give an insight on how consumer behavior has changed in the view of the digital marketing strategy and how the social media has been used as a powerful tool in influencing consumer decisions.

## **Data Analysis**

This literature review was analyzed using a systematic synthesis of the available literature review on the effect of social media and digital marketing on consumer behavior online. Since the Scopus database yielded a wide variety of studies, a qualitative method was used in order to detect the recurring themes, trends and insights that were present in the chosen literature. The objectives that motivated the analysis process were to comprehend the impact of digital marketing strategies on consumer perceptions and choice, including targeted ads, influencer marketing, and content marketing. Also, the problem of how social media platforms influence consumer attitudes, behaviors, and the intention to purchase was analyzed in a detailed manner. This is the thematic analysis approach that enables the further investigation of those psychological and sociocultural factors mediating consumer behavior online (Braun and Clarke, 2006) [1]. Paying attention to these themes, the data analysis will seek to give a subtle view of how digital tools are changing consumer experiences with the brands in the digital era.

#### **Publication Trend**

The Fig-1, demonstrates that there is a definite upward trend in the amount of documents published on the issue of digital marketing and social media marketing with a large rise in recent years. A rather steep curve can be observed between 2011 and 2015, during which only a few publications per year were conducted, which implies that this field was not in the focus of scholarly interest yet. Since 2016, the pace of increase in the number of publications is observed to be faster and in particular the period between 2021 and 2025, the number of documents soars exponentially. Such an increase would imply that the subject matter has won a lot of academic attention and it has been a major subject of interest in the study of academic works.

The high increase in the number of publications since 2020 depicts the growing significance of digital marketing strategies and social media in business, which is probably based on the growing popularity of online channels and digital products in the process of contacting the consumer base. The trend is consistent with the trends in digital transformation and marketing innovations witnessed in the industry. The increasing number of articles published since 2020 also imply that the researchers tend to value the influence of digital marketing on consumer behavior more and discuss new methodologies, platforms, and consumer interactions.

This information also illustrates the growing topicality and development of the topic, the necessity of incessant

investigation of the role of digital marketing and social media in influencing consumer choices in the more and more digital and global market. This sharp rise in the number of documents on research after 2020 suggests an explosion of the topicality of this area, which could be explained by a steep increase in technological development and changes in the consumption patterns of people,

including the rise of e-commerce and online interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This tendency reflects the growing significance of the need to comprehend the impact of digital marketing that determines consumer behavior as well as marketing policies in different spheres.

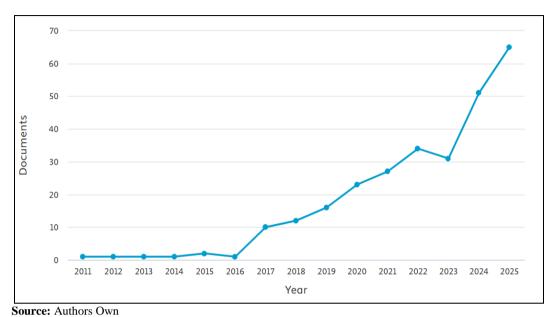


Fig 1: Number of Research Documents Since 2011 To 2025

Table 1: Publication Trend of Articles

Years	Number of Research Documents
2025	65
2024	51
2023	31
2022	34
2021	27
2020	23
2019	16
2018	12
2017	10
2016	1
2015	2
2014	1
2013	1
2012	1
2011	1

Source: Authors Own

## **Countries contribution in research**

The second chart (Fig-2) shows a count of the documents by country/teritory, marking out the top countries producing the greatest number of publications on the topic of digital marketing and social media marketing.

Based on the chart, it is clear that India tops the list of the documents published on this topic with a much higher number than that of other countries. That indicates that India now is an influential centre of research in digital marketing and social media, perhaps because of the increased use of digital technologies, a developing e-commerce industry, and a now more tech-savvy society.

The United States ranks second after it, and it also has significant amounts of publications. It is possible to explain the large amount of documents published in the United

States by the fact that it was one of the first countries to develop technologies and platforms in digital marketing and has major technological giants of the world in Facebook, Google, and Twitter that have been forming marketing trends over the world.

The other countries that exhibit high representation include Indonesia, Malaysia, United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia with a large number of studies being contributed by each. The inclusion of these nations further shows that the world is interested in digital marketing, as these approaches have been embraced in the different markets.

The comparative disparities of the top nations to the others (such as China, Jordan, Australia, and Canada) give an indication that though these nations are involved in the research, they might not be as productive or active in the digital marketing and social media as India or the United States. Nonetheless, the fact that the countries represent different parts of the world proves that the topic of digital marketing is relevant all over the world and is not exclusive to several major markets.

Overall, the statistics show that there is a worldwide acknowledgment that the digital marketing and social media research are important, as the leading countries in the sphere in India and the US are obvious, and other emerging and developed markets follow. The distribution indicates that the international discourse of digital marketing is varied and expanding.

## Research contributions by countries

The Fig-3, illustrates the number of documents published by specific authors, showcasing the leading contributors in the field of digital marketing and social media marketing research.

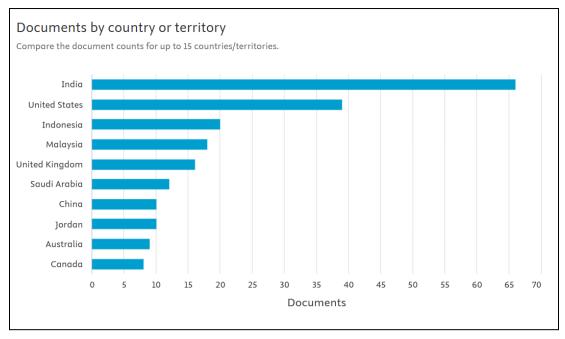


Fig 2: Number of Documents by Country

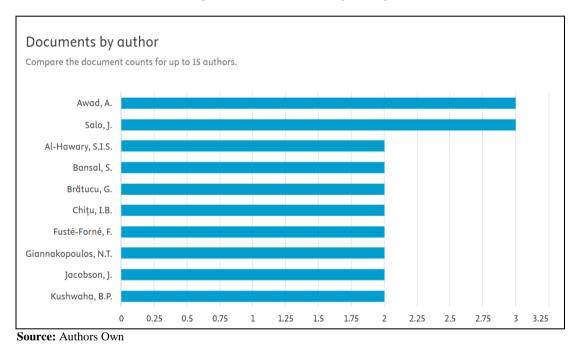


Fig 3: Number of Documents Published by Specific Authors

The Fig-3, shows that the author Awad, A. has published the most papers on this issue and far exceeds all other researchers. This superiority indicates that Awad, A. could be a figurehead or a very active researcher in the area with numerous reports on the academic discussion of the digital marketing and social media marketing. In the same vein, "Solo, J., has a high number of publications too, but not as numerous as Awad, A., which suggests it has a great presence in the discipline with fewer contributions than the former one.

Other authors like "Al-Hawary, S.I.S.," S. and Bansal, S and Bratucu, G have also contributed significantly with equal number of publications. Their continuous inclusion in the scholarly literature demonstrates that they are still engaged in research in digital marketing and social media, which could be in the form of collaborative studies or research agendas.

The ideas of other authors, such as "Chitu, I.B.," "Fuste-Forné, F.," "Giannakopoulos, N.T.," "Jacobson, J.," and "Kushwaha, B.P.," have less publications, yet their work was also very important in the whole research. The fact that these top authors have the highest number of documents contributes to the most important figures in the field who are continuously researching on different areas concerning digital marketing and the changes it brings to consumer behavior and the new trends.

Overall, the author distribution of publications indicates that some researchers are at the forefront of the research with numerous works, but there exists a large audience of researchers that is beneficially impacting the science of digital marketing and social media marketing in general. Such scholars presumably influence the further evolution of digital marketing theories, methods and practices in various markets and industries.

## **Research Contribution by Subject Areas**

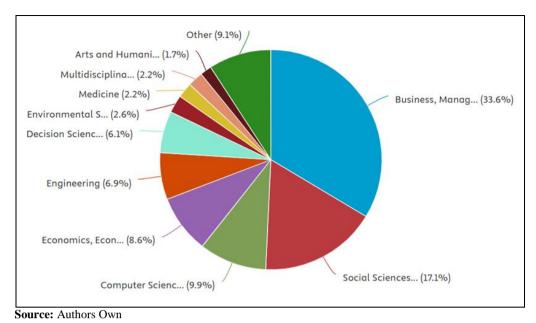


Fig 4: Research Contribution by Subject Areas

The distribution of documents in terms of subject matter demonstrates a high degree of concentration in business and management which constitute 33.6% of the examined literature. The hegemony of this leads to the critical position of business and management scholarship in analyzing how social media and digital marketing affect the behavior of consumers. The popularity of the topic area indicates its direct level of relevancy to organizational strategies, digital marketing practices and consumer engagement models.

The second-largest category is social sciences making 17.1% of documents. Such a significant figure indicates the interdisciplinary character of consumer behavior studies, which puts a strong focus on the psychological, sociological, and cultural aspects of how people react to the stimuli of social media and digital marketing. This abundance of social sciences literature implies that, in addition to commercial factors, the attitude, motivation and behavior of consumers needed theoretical and empirical support based on behavioral and social research.

Other significant contributors include computer science (9.9%) and economics (8.6 percent). The scope of computer science writing is probably related to the computational marketing, data mining, use of machine learning, as well as the operations of online platforms, which form the basis of customized and targeted marketing techniques. Economics-related research seems to focus on consumer decision making, market structures and the economics of digital commerce ecosystems.

The literature shows a methodological and systems-based orientation with engineering (6.9) and decision sciences (6.1). Both engineering input and decision science research would be relevant to online marketing platform-related technological innovations, as well as models of choice behavior, decision-making under uncertainty, and optimization of online marketing campaigns.

Smaller percentages are provided by environmental sciences (2.6%), medicine (2.2%), multidisciplinary studies (2.2%), and arts and humanities (1.7%). Although underrepresented, these areas expand the area of inquiry by including peripheral yet potentially significant issues, such as ethical

concerns, the health implications of digital marketing on the wider population, and the cultural effects of consumer behaviour. The category other (9.1) also highlights the broad, cross-disciplinary approach to the subject.

The co-authorship network shown in the Figure-5, indicates the trends of academic collaboration in the field of social media, digital marketing and research of consumer behavior. The network is made of a few very small groups of authors, each of which is a localized collaboration, with little interconnectivity between the groups. This fragmentation indicates that research in this field is alive but it is dispersed and there are few large scale collaborative networks.

## **Key Clusters**

- A powerful dyadic cluster formed by Ali Zakariya and Al-Hawary, Suleiman Ibraheem S. suggests repeated joint authorship, and even shared institutional or thematic interest.
- Prasanna Kumar, D., and Parida, Dillip Kumar also are an example of coherent collaboration implying the specificity of sub-domain of the literature.
- In another set, marketing oriented or consumer behavior research Sharma, Amit and Mittal, Sanjiv are the pair.
- Smaller dyad as Chitu, Ioana Bianca and Bratucu, Gabriel, Sharma, R. and Sharma, Animesh Kumar, Giannakopoulos, Nikolaos Th. together with Sakas, Damianos P. also exhibit localized but steady partnerships.

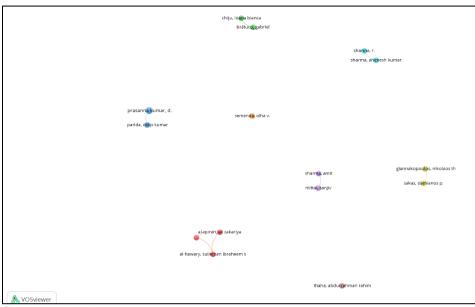
It can be seen that the study of the effects of social media and digital marketing on consumer behavior is marked by fissures of collaboration as opposed to an author network that is completely global. The preeminence of small clusters indicates thematic or institutional concentration of studies, which are typically defined by specific territories or academic circles. The lack of large, interlinked hubs implies that the field is yet to establish a common global research network and knowledge production is in parallel streams.

There are two implications of this scattered pattern of cooperation. First, it shows the possibility of future

consolidation and cross-regional collaborations that may be used to strengthen theoretical integration and methodological pluralism. Second, by having many separated authors or small groups, the necessity to enhance academic networking and interdisciplinary cooperation to create cumulative knowledge is emphasized. Increasing the

interconnections between research teams may help to hasten the creation of full-scale frameworks of the online consumer behavior in the framework of digital marketing.

## Co-Authorship Analysis

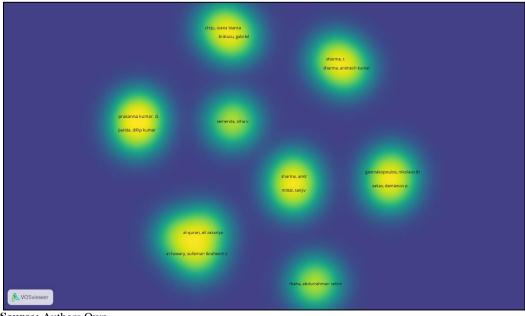


Source: Authors Own

Fig 5: Co-Authorship Analysis

The heatmap graph in Fig-6, shows the intensity of the coauthorship activity whereby brighter areas represent stronger collaborative relationships and darker areas show weaker or non-existing relationships. The map reveals that the research on the area of social media, digital marketing, and consumer behavior is concentrated in a few mini, localized groups, including Prasanna Kumar and Parida, Al-Qura n and Al-Hawary, and Sharma and Mittal, all of them indicating recurring collaborations in particular institutional or regional settings. Active but contained actively collaboration is also exhibited by others such as Chitu and

Bratucu, Sharma R. and Sharma Animesh Kumar and Giannakopoulos and Sakas. Contrastingly, the authors such as Semenda, Thaha and others seem to be more isolated, indicating a lack of involvement in wider research. The lack of interlinked clusters underlines the disjointed character of the academic activity in the given area, indicating that, though there are some fruitful cooperation, there are not many cross-group synergies, thereby limiting the establishment of a unified and globally interconnected research system.



Source: Authors Own

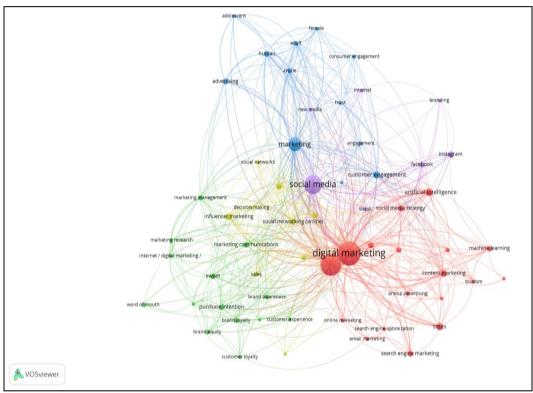
Fig 6: Density of Co-Authorship

#### Co-occurrence of keywords

The conceptual framework of the research on the topics of social media, digital marketing, and consumer behavior is shown in a keyword co-occurrence net (Fig-7). Two clusters also stand out as such around digital marketing and social media, with heavy cross-linkages showing that these are the themes that are central to the discourse. Its technological and strategic orientation can be traced to the digital marketing cluster which is closely linked to terms like content marketing, online advertising, email marketing, search engine optimization, and artificial intelligence. By contrast, the social media cluster relates to consumer engagement, trust, decision-making. and influencer behavioral. marketing, which implies seeking the psychological, and relational dimension of online interactions. Collectively, these groups demonstrate the dual focus of interest in the literature one is on technology-based

marketing activities and the other on consumer-based behavioral reactions.

Related yet distinct terms, branding, tourism, SMEs and purchase intention are also additional examples of how digital marketing strategies are used across different industries and the consumer setting. Interest in using marketing sophisticated technologies to enhance effectiveness is evidenced by the incorporation of such keywords as machine learning and artificial intelligence. Simultaneously, brand awareness, customer loyalty, and word of mouth are recurring partnerships that underline the continuity of the long-term consumer relationship building in digital environments. Comprehensively, the network shows that studies in the field are not only technologically innovative but also behaviorally based, and future prospects are at the nexus of the two dimensions.



Source: Authors Own

Fig 7: keyword co-occurrence

Analysis of citation network: Fig-8 citation network, identifies the most impactful articles and authors in the research of social media, digital marketing and online consumer behavior. As the central nodes, Dwivedi (2021) [11], Felix (2017) [4], Jacobson (2020) [6], and Dolega (2021) [12] seem to be most frequently cited and allow the researcher to bridge the gaps between various strands of literature. Specifically, Dwivedi (2021) [11] is the biggest node, which implies that it acts as a foundation of research in this sphere because it consolidates the work of previous research and leads to new studies. On the same note, Felix (2017) [4] is a pioneering work that remains a source of influence on the various research groups, especially those investigating the conceptual and strategic aspects of social media marketing.

It is possible to see several clusters around these central research studies which are specialized research streams. As

an example, the works by Liu (2019), Ho (2020), and Deb (2024) [13, 14] are placed in close contact with one another, as the sphere of digital interactions and consumer choices continues to change. Isolated yet pertinent contributions, including Langan (2019) or Beqiri (2021) [15, 16] are a sign of a niche subfield or a region-specific viewpoint. The existence of the new nodes such as Sharabat (2024), Basu (2025), and Roy (2025) proves the developmental character of the discussion as the new studies are supported by the previous ones. On the whole, the visualization demonstrates that there is a citation structure that is anchored through a small number of highly influential works, and within which increasing diversity of contributions expands the theoretical and empirical environment of digital marketing and consumer behaviour.

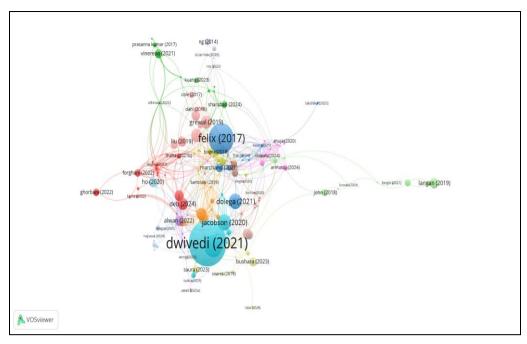


Fig 8: Citation Network

#### Conclusion

This review has been able to unify proof regarding the great impact of social media and online marketing in determining consumer behaviour online. The results obtained indicate social proof, peer recommendation, targeted advertising, and the experience with digital platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, have more and more impact on the consumers. Influencer marketing, personalized advertising, and content-driven engagement are among the digital marketing tactics that are particularly effective when it comes to brand recall, customer engagement, and brand commitment. The spread of research by subject matter reveals that business and management play a more central role as they represent more than 1/3 of the literature, which indicates a high orientation of this field towards the organizational strategy and practice. However, it is important to note that the input of social sciences, computer science, economics and decision sciences into the field underlines the interdisciplinary character of the topic, as behavioral, technological, and methodological knowledge together inform consumer studies. Both citation and coa disjointed authorship analyses reveal environment of localized clusters, dyadic collaborations and global fragmentation. The leading works by Dwivedi (2021) [11], Felix (2017) [4], and Jacobson (2020) [6] can be regarded as anchors; however, the lack of interconnections between scholars and locations poses that the best is yet to come in terms of attaining a more coherent scholarly network. All in all, the data indicate a dual focus of the literature one that is based on the technological innovation and strategic marketing and one that revolves around consumer psychology and behavioral reactions, which should be better integrated to adopt complexity involved in online consumer decision-making.

## **Future Research Directions**

The disjointed collaboration that is found in the coauthorship and citation networks shows that there is an immediate need to establish interdisciplinary and crossregional collaboration. Prospective research must seek to close the gaps between business and management research with the other perspectives of the complementary viewpoints on psychology, sociology, and computer science in order to come up with more comprehensive models of consumer behavior. With the growing intertwining between digital marketing and advanced technologies, studies will be needed to understand how artificial intelligence, big data analytics, chatbots, and machine learning can be used to increase targeting, personalization, and predictive modeling of what consumers seek. It would also be especially useful to conduct longitudinal studies to monitor consumer reactions as digital platforms evolve and as new types of interaction, like Tik Tok or influencer live streaming or immersive metaverse experience, move into the mainstream. Also, comparative research of developing and developed economies might show there is a difference in the adoption rates, cultural factors, and the trust of consumers in digital camps. Other areas which have not been sufficiently covered in future research should include issues of ethics (i.e. privacy, data mining and digital addiction), sustainability in marketing activities and the possible health or psychological consequences of the continuous exposure of consumers to marketing stimuli of digital marketing. These unexplored themes in digital marketing and social media offer scholars an opportunity to offer a more in-depth and globally applicable approach to the topic by diversifying methodologies and discussing the effect of digital marketing and social media on consumer behavior.

## **Practical Implications**

To practitioners, the results are explicit directions on how digital marketing practices can be optimized to meet the expectations of consumers in a competitive online world. The relevance of personalization should not be ignored by businesses since customized ads and suggestions will greatly increase consumer engagement and rates of conversion. Influencer marketing still remains a strong source of consumer trust and purchase intent which implies that companies ought to consider partnering with influencers who authentically appeal to their target consumer groups. In

addition to influencer collaboration, firms have to invest in the interactive and content-driven campaigns that will lead to the long-term brand loyalty as opposed to short-term conversion. Combining cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, and consumer data platforms, allows companies to increase the accuracy of targeting, provide real-time recommendations, and optimize consumer experiences. Nevertheless, practitioners must also keep consumer privacy issues and the increasing need of an ethical and transparent marketing approach in mind, as this may be as effective as the conventional engagement approaches.

Moreover, companies have to change approaches to varying local settings. Though markets such as India and United States are the main centers of digital marketing research and practice, emerging markets offer different opportunities that need context-sensitive approaches. This implies engagement of local cultural values, digital infrastructure and consumer preparedness in the campaigns and remaining globally similar in brand identity. Lastly, the marketers should be flexible and keep on changing their strategies with time based on the innovation of technology and changes in the expectations of the consumer. The changeable character of digital ecosystems, which is demonstrated by the emergence of new platforms and tools at a very high pace, entails continuous trial and error, as well as flexibility and adaptation. By balancing the technological savvy with the anthropocentric interaction, companies have a high probability of enjoying long-term benefits in consumer trust and loyalty and in long-term profitability.

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