



## A Bibliometric Analysis of Influencer Marketing Research

Deepshikha Mahanta<sup>1\*</sup>, Uttam Kr. Baruah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Commerce, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam, India, <sup>2</sup>Kaliabor College, Kuwarital, Assam, India. \*Email: [deepshikhamahanta96@gmail.com](mailto:deepshikhamahanta96@gmail.com)

Received: 15 December 2025

Accepted: 21 March 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32479/irmm.23427>

### ABSTRACT

The growth of social media has contributed to the growth of influencer marketing, generating interest among scholars to conduct research on this topic. Thus, a bibliometric analysis was conducted to understand the trend of research in this field by reviewing the documents published in the Scopus database. After screening 2028 documents, 837 documents were identified. The analysis of documents was done by using VOS viewer software. The influencer marketing research peaked in 2020. The most contributing country in this field is the United States of America. Currently, the research in this area is mainly focusing on identifying the factors affecting its effectiveness as a marketing strategy. However, virtual influencer marketing is emerging as a focal point of discussion.

**Keywords:** Influencer Marketing, Social Media, Bibliometric Analysis, VOS Viewer

**JEL Classifications:** M31, M37

### 1. INTRODUCTION

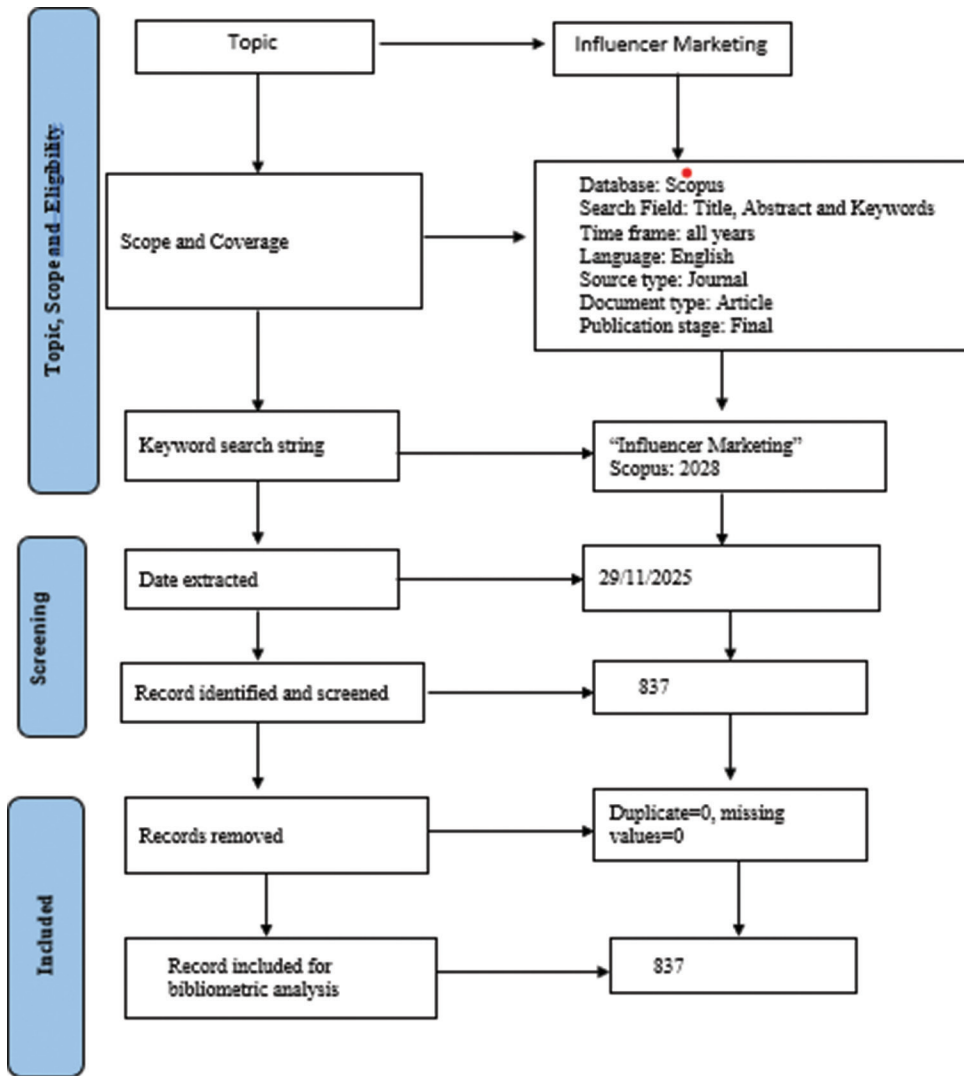
Influencer marketing is the strategy of asking influential users of social media platforms to spread brand messages (Sammis et al., 2016). According to Lou and Yuan (2019) influencers are individuals creating content on their area of expertise. Consumers today instead of using traditional communication forms, rely on these social networking sites to communicate, share and receive information. Influencers are viewed as one of them by the consumers, thus leading to formation of para-social relationship resulting in emotional attachment with them (Ki et al., 2020). Influencer generated contents are believed to be more authentic and organic than brand generated advertisements due to their relatability (Talavera, 2015). Therefore, companies from a variety of industries are overspending on content created by influencers. According to the industry report global influencer marketing value was 10 billion U.S dollar in 2020 and is estimated to reach over 30 billion in 2025 (Guttman, 2025).

Influencer marketing's exponential rise has sparked interest among academics and the academic community, as seen by the growing

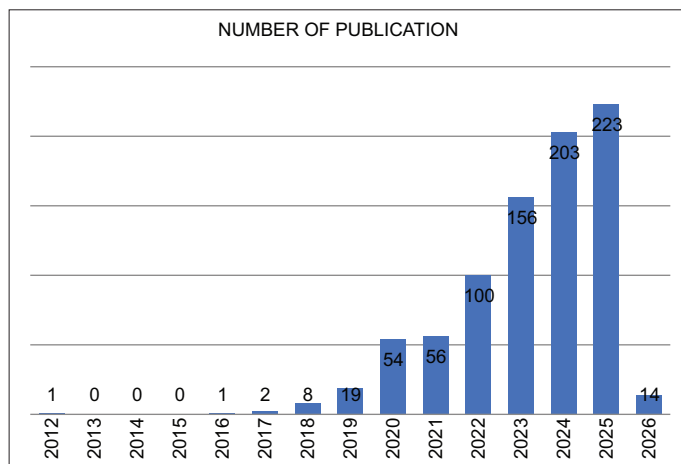
body of work on the topic. The goal of this study to analyse the literatures available in the area of influencer marketing to understand the current research themes, collaboration between countries and authors, and underlying intellectual structure with the help of bibliometric analysis. To achieve the objectives, following research questions have been put forward:

1. What is the trend in the publication output in the influencer marketing research?
2. Who is the top performing author in the influencer marketing research?
3. Which is top performing journal in the influencer marketing research?
4. Which is the top performing country in the influencer marketing research?
5. What are the interrelationships among countries in the influencer marketing research?
6. What are the existing and future relationships among the research themes in the influencer marketing research?
7. What are the foundational themes in the influencer marketing research?

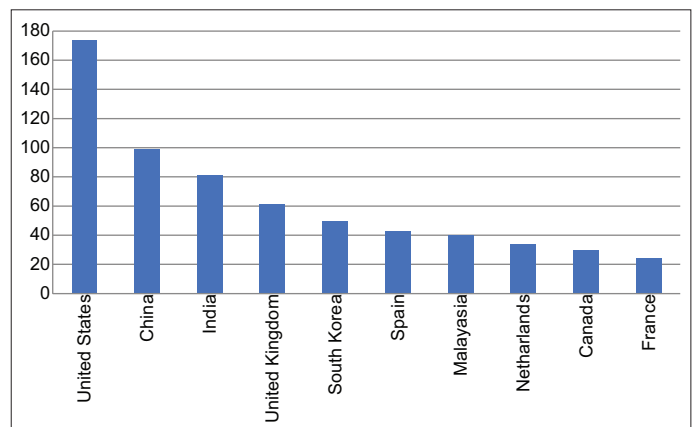
**Figure 1:** Prisma flow diagram of article searching strategy (Adapted from Zakaria et al., 2021)



**Figure 2:** Publication per year



**Figure 3:** Document by country

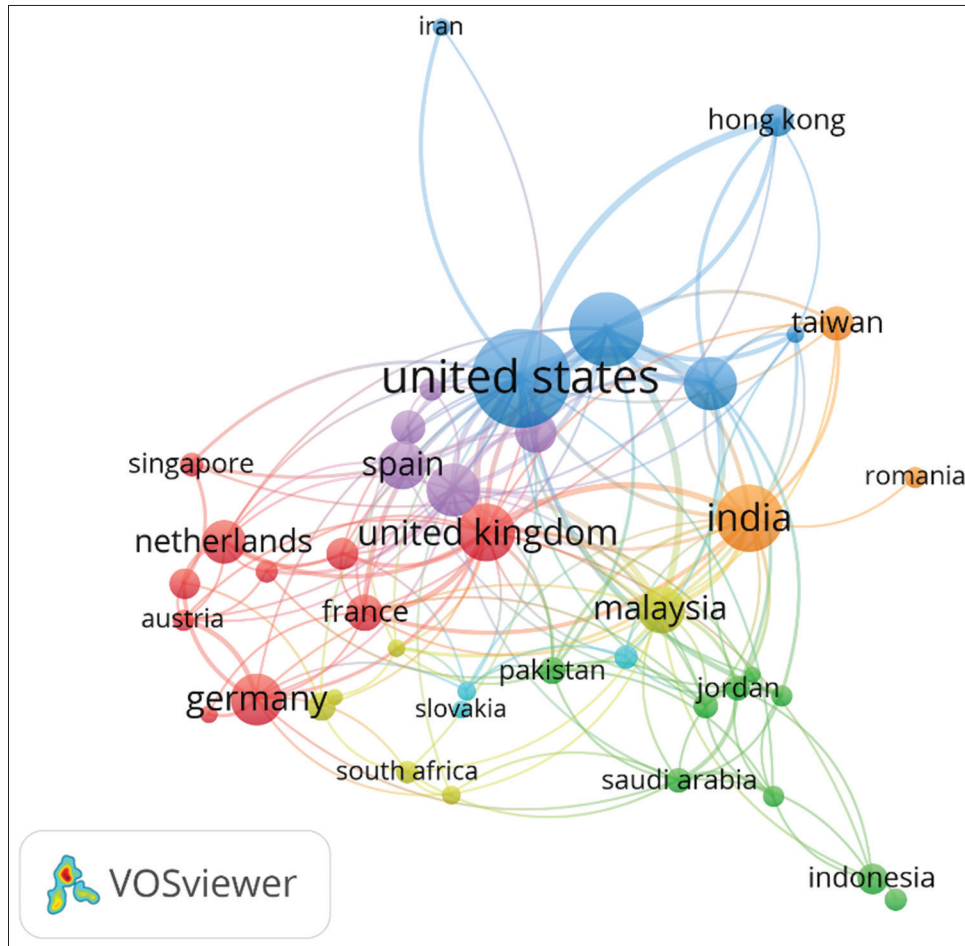


## 2. METHODOLOGY

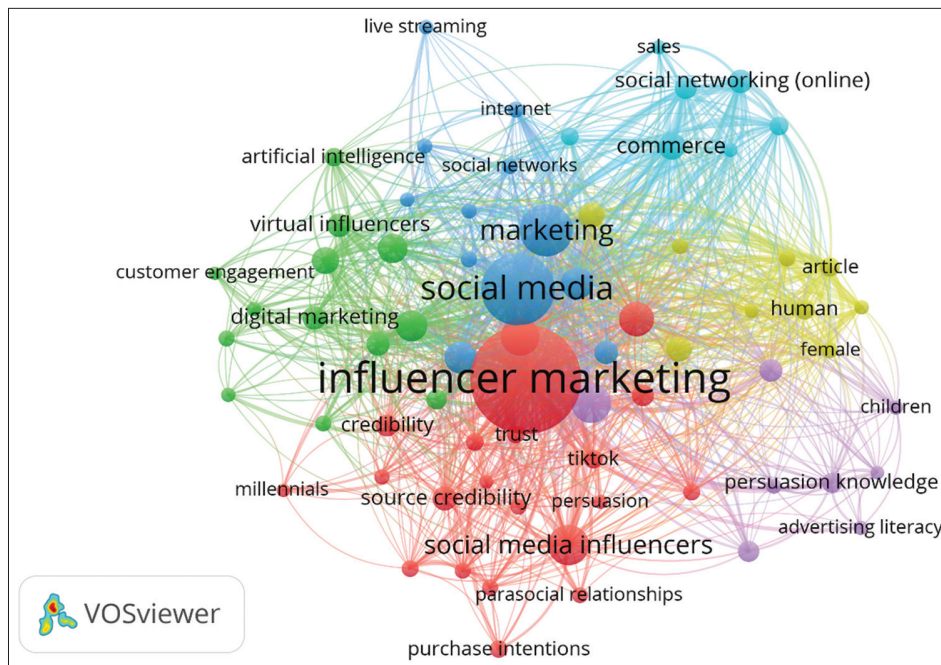
In the recent years, bibliometric analysis has gained immense popularity specially in business research as it can be used for various reasons such as to uncover trend in research, journal

performance, collaboration pattern, and intellectual structure of the research domain in the existing literature (Donthu et al., 2021; Duan et al., 2022; Priya and Alur, 2023). The bibliometric analysis includes performance analysis and science mapping. Performance analysis involves analysis of different performance metrics performance of authors, countries, journals and institutions in the

**Figure 4:** Country co-authorship map



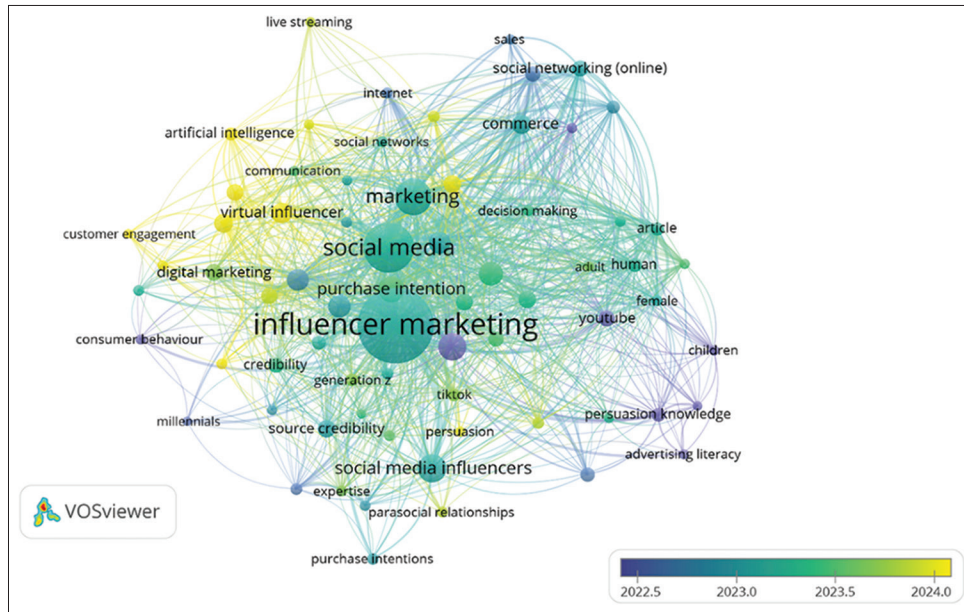
**Figure 5:** Network visualization of keywords



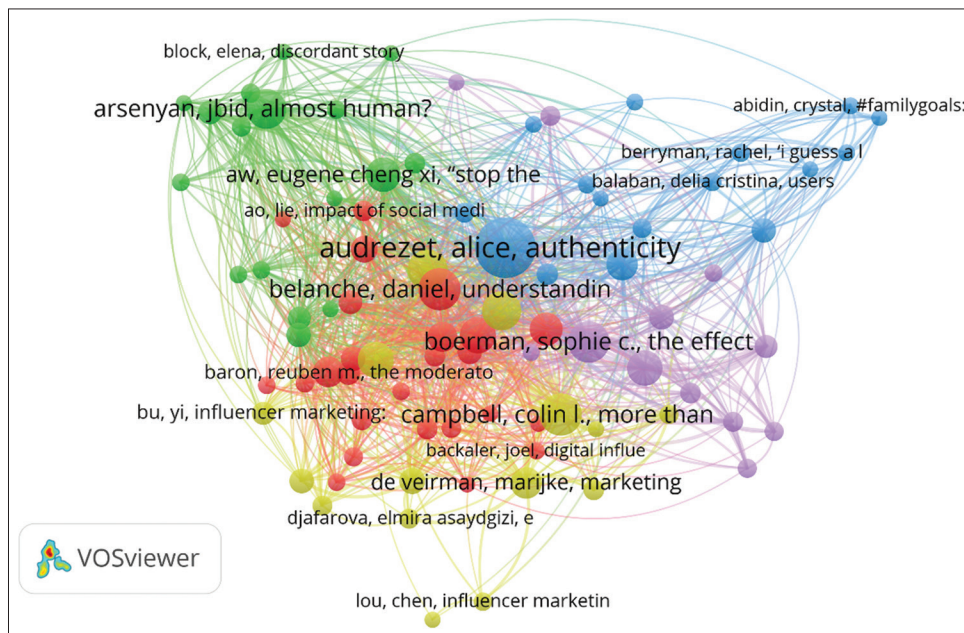
research field, whereas, science mapping analyses relationships between different research constituents (Donthu et al., 2021; Duan et al., 2022; Priya and Alur, 2023).

The term “influencer marketing” was searched on the TITLE-ABS-KEY section of the Scopus database. The initial search generated 2028 documents. On November 29, 2025, the search was carried

**Figure 6:** Overlay visualisation map



**Figure 7:** Co-citation map



out. The search result was delimited by applying inclusion and exclusion criteria. The subject area was limited to Business, Social Science, Economics and Psychology. The document type was limited to article. The language was limited to English and only final stage articles were included. 837 documents were found in the final search result after these exclusion rules were applied.

The VOSviewer, a freely available software was used to create bibliometric maps. The software can be used for keyword co-occurrence analysis to understand the underlying research themes, co-authorship analysis to understand author collaboration and country collaboration network, co-citation analysis to understand most influential work and author. Figure I shows the

article searching strategy used in the study and Table 1 shows the tools of analysis used for finding answers to each research question.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1. Publication Per Year

Figure 2 shows the trend in publication on the topic “Influencer Marketing”. The first research paper on “influencer marketing” was published in the year 2012. The paper is titled “Create a buzz around your business through influence marketing: Interview with Mark W. Schaefer, author of Return on Influence”. From 2013 and 2015, there was no publication on “influencer marketing”. From

2016 there can be seen an exponential growth in the quantity of publications with only 1 publication in 2016, 2 publications 2017, 8 publications in 2018, 19 publications in 2019, 54 publications 2020, 56 publications in 2021, 100 publications in 2022, 156 publications in 2023, 203 publications in 2024, 223 publications in 2025. As the data range was chosen as all years and the database was retrieved 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2025, the database includes papers for 2026 also. As the publications for the year 2026 has only started, 14 publications have been made so far.

### 3.2. Authors by Citations

Table 2 shows the top 10 authors in the research area by citation. For this analysis, minimum number of documents per author 5 and minimum number citations 10 was set as threshold. Out of 1967 authors, 16 fulfilled the criteria. Liselot Hudders is the top cited author in this research area with 2735 citations and also the top contributing author with 12 documents.

### 3.3. Documents by Country

Figure 3 shows the top 10 countries with highest number of documents. The top 3 contributing countries to this research area are United States, China and India with 174,99 and 81 publications

**Table 1: Tools of analysis**

Research Questions	Tools of analysis	Unit of analysis
RQ1	Performance analysis	Total publication per year
RQ2	Performance analysis	Number of cited publications
RQ3	Performance analysis	Number of cited publications
RQ4	Performance analysis	Total Publication by countries
RQ5	Co-authorship analysis	Country
RQ6	Keyword occurrence analysis	Title, abstract and author keywords
RQ7	Co-citation analysis	Cited references

**Table 2: Top 10 authors by citation**

Name of the author	Document	Citations
Liselot Hudders	12	2735
Chen Lou	7	1985
Seunga Venus Jin	5	1232
Chung -Wha (Chloe) Ki	5	1180
Daniel Belanche	5	963
Marta Flavián	5	963
Steffi De Jans	6	798
Sophie C. Boerman	5	590
Fang Wang	5	496
Eva Adriana van Reijmersdal	8	388

**Table 3: Document by journal**

Journal Name	Publication count	Publisher	SJR Score	H index
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	48	Elsevier Ltd.	3.439	167
Journal of Business Research	37	Elsevier Ltd.	3.499	292
International Journal of Advertising	34	Taylor and Francis Ltd.	2.914	86
Sustainability (Switzerland)	24	MDPI	0.688	207
Journal of Digital and Social Media Marketing	21	Henry Stewart Publications	0.152	8
Journal of Interactive Advertising	19	Taylor and Francis Ltd.	1.885	25
Psychology and Marketing	17	John Wiley and Sons	3.497	154
Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	15	Emerald Publishing	3.336	69
Journal of Promotion Management	13	Taylor and Francis Ltd.	0.849	45
International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising	12	Inderscience Enterprises Ltd.	0.454	26
Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research	12	MDPI	0.952	54

respectively.

Figure 4 is the country collaboration map generated by VOSviewer software. Minimum number of occurrences for countries was set at 5. 43 countries met the threshold, 42 linked items are shown in the map. There is total 7 clusters- Red, Green, Blue, Yellow, Purple, Soft blue cluster, and Orange cluster. The biggest node in the red cluster is represented by United Kingdom which is associated with other clusters with a link strength of 52 and 61 publications. United Kingdom acts as a bridge between all the clusters. It mostly consists of the Islamic Nations. The biggest node in the cluster is represented by Pakistan with 14 publications. The top contributing country in yellow cluster is Malayasia with 40 publications. In the Purple cluster, Australia is the largest node with 50 publications. Soft blue cluster is the least prominent cluster in the map. In the orange cluster, India is the top performing country having strongest link with United Kingdom.

### 3.4. Document by Journal

Table 3 lists the top 10 journals publishing on the topic “Influencer Marketing”. These journals make up to 30.99% (252 out of 837) of all the articles on influencer marketing that have been published so far. The top contributing journal in this research area is “Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services”, “Journal of Business Research”, and “International Journal of Advertising” with 28,37 and 34 publications.

### 3.5. Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

Out of 2652 keywords, 70 fulfilled the threshold. The threshold was set at minimum 10 occurrences. Table 4 shows the minimum occurrences of the top 10 keywords, their total link strength and the cluster that they belong to.

Figure 5 is the network visualisation map of the keywords. There is total 6 clusters.

1. Red cluster: Red cluster is the most prominent cluster in the entire keyword occurrence map. The red cluster includes some of the highest occurring keywords such as “influencer marketing”, “social media influencers”, “social media influencer” and “purchase intention”. The keyword that appears more frequently in the research area under study is “Influencer Marketing” with a total of 609 occurrences.

The keywords included in the red cluster points out to studies on effect of influencer marketing on purchase intention. Red cluster

**Table 4: Keyword co-occurrence analysis**

Keywords	Occurrences	Total link strength	Cluster
Influencer Marketing	609	1255	Red
Social media	268	933	Blue
Marketing	140	676	Blue
Social media influencers	85	211	Red
Instagram	81	235	Purple
Purchase intention	74	223	Red
Social media influencer	63	187	Red
Influencers	54	123	Blue
Influencer	53	138	Blue
Social media marketing	50	143	Green

also includes keywords such as “attractiveness”, “trustworthiness”, “source credibility”, “expertise”, “millennials” and “gen z” which are indicating researches on the effect of influencer characteristics on younger generations. The keyword “para social relationships” in the red cluster is linked to keywords “purchase intention”, “credibility” and “influencer credibility”, suggesting studies on how para-social relationships contributes to influencer credibility and the ultimate effect of para-social relationship on purchase intention.’

- Green cluster: The highest occurring keyword included the green cluster is “social media marketing” which is strongly linked to the keyword “influencer marketing” in the red cluster and is also linked to keywords across clusters. The keywords in “artificial intelligence”, “virtual influencers”, and “virtual influencer” indicates emergence of ai personalities in arena of influencer marketing. The keywords “consumption behaviour”, “customer engagement” and “customer engagement” is strongly connected the keyword “influencer marketing” in the red cluster referring to studies on the effect of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour and user engagement. The keyword “tourism market” indicates increased use of influencers including both human and virtual influencers in the tourism industry.
- Blue cluster: The blue cluster includes one of the frequently occurring keywords in the map i.e. “social media”, which is linked to keywords of other clusters with total link strength of 933. The keywords included the blue cluster is suggesting researches on role of media in marketing.
- Yellow cluster: The words “virtual influencer” and “virtual influencers” of green cluster are highly related to the word “human” which is invidious from yellow cluster. This is an indication of the analysis of differences in efficiency between virtual influencers and human influencers.
- Purple cluster: Purple is composed of “advertising literacy” and “sponsorship disclosure.” These concepts are based on indications for studies that demonstrate when consumers’ attitudes to influencers and their decision-making is influenced by the identification of a paid-for message in influencer content. Also, the cluster contains “YouTube” and “Instagram”, suggesting platform-related investigation. The word “children” appears in the cluster, indicating research on the impact of exposing kids to commercial content on social media platforms.
- Soft blue cluster: The soft blue cluster consists keywords such as “social influence” and “economic and social effect”

which signifies studies on the effect of influencer marketing on ethical and responsible consumption behaviour of consumers

Figure 6 is the Overlay visualisation map. The overlay visualization map shows that some emerging keywords are “virtual influencer”, “virtual influencers”, “sustainability” and “customer engagement that has started appearing in the bibliometric landscape after 2024 and we can expect more studies around these themes.’

### 3.6. Co-Citation Analysis

Figure 7 is the Co-citation map generated using the VOSviewer software. Co-citation analysis helps us to understand the intellectual structure of a research field. In co-citation analysis. In co-citation analysis, references listed in the listed in the papers included in the database are studied (Leung et al., 2017; Donthu et al., 2021). As per co-citation analysis two publications which are cited together are considered conceptually related (Leung et al., 2017; Donthu et al., 2021). In the co-citation analysis, the minimum occurrences of cited reference were set at 10, out of 4289 cited references, 85 met the criteria. The biggest node in the blue cluster represents the publication “Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation” authored by Audrezet et al. (2020), which was cited 141 times. There is total five clusters as shown in the co-citation map-Green, blue, yellow, red and purple.

The research carried out by the red group focuses on what works in influencer marketing. It also recommends the theory of planned behavior in influencer marketing research by Ajzen and Icek. The red and yellow clusters consisting of studies focusing on the core mechanics of influencer marketing are very close to each other. Indeed, work in the blue cluster is also interested in why it seems that some influencers do succeed. The study examines strategies that social media influencers may use to maintain an authentic and transparent message when creating branded posts or content. Studies on the influence of persuasive strategies, advertising literacy, and sponsorship disclosure makes up the purple cluster. Green denotes research on the new topic of “virtual influencers”.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The study’s objective was to map the literature on influencer marketing scientifically. We looked at 837 papers in all that were pulled from the Scopus database. The results of the analysis show that interest in influencer marketing has grown since the pandemic. This quick growth can be attributed to the usual content-focused social media sites like Instagram and Tiktok (Joshi et al., 2025). Numerous subjects pertaining to influencer marketing have been studied over time. By examining trends and the evolution of research themes, the study can significantly advance the field of influencer marketing research. Investigated. Future research may use bibliometric analysis that takes into account several databases. However, the limitation of the study is that it is limited Scopus database only, other databases such as Web of Science were not explored. The future studies might carry out bibliometric analysis considering multiple databases.

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