

A bibliometric analysis of social media advertising and authenticity research using VOSviewer

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ABSTRACT

Digital media, media consumption habits, and digital technology have transformed advertising in the previous two decades. Search engine advertising and banner ads were once the dominant forms of advertising in digital media. The tremendous growth of social media users has led to the creation of new advertising strategy known as social media advertising. However, marketers have noted a decline in consumer trust in contemporary advertising methods, and this shift indicates a growing scepticism among consumers regarding new advertising formats, especially considering the increasing incidence of online fraud and counterfeit product reviews. This necessitates researchers and practitioners to carefully study social media advertising and authenticity in the digital world. Considering the aforementioned points, a bibliometric analysis of social media advertising and authenticity research has been explored aiming to uncover emerging patterns within the research themes. The analysis gathers the scholarly works on social media advertising and authenticity by retrieving information from Scopus databases. Using bibliometric analysis and the VOSviewer tool, this research looked at 394 publications that were published between 2013 and 2025 and focused on the topic of social media advertising and authenticity. The analysis revealed that the existing literature on social media advertising and authenticity is comprehensive, concentrating on various aspects and highlights the nations that make significant contributions pertaining to this subject matter, the metrics such as co-authorship, co-occurrence, bibliographic coupling and the most prominent journals have been explored. The findings indicate the leading and key documents, journals, and nation-states selected based on the number of references shared with other documents, journals, and nation-states, serving as a valuable resource for generating further insights for various stakeholders including researchers, institutions, and policymakers, influencing the future direction of this evolving field and ensuring its sustained relevance and global impact through comprehensive research on the theme.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, social media, social media advertising, authenticity, advertising, social media marketing, VOSviewer

1. Introduction

Social media has emerged as an affordable platform for information transmission, widely available to individuals, corporations, organisations, governments, and other entities. It facilitates learning, education, sharing, building, marketing and advertising (Dwivedi et al., 2015). Over the course of the past few years, we have also observed remarkable changes in advertising and communication (Anubha et al., 2024). The advertising discipline has experienced significant transformations over the last two decades, due to the rise of digital media and evolving media consumption patterns, as well as advancements in digital technologies. Although search engine advertising and banner ads had previously been the most prominent forms of advertising in digital media, is now experiencing significant year-over-year growth of social media (Taylor & Carlson, 2021), and the swift increase in social media users has led to the emergence of a new advertising strategy for businesses, referred to as social media advertising (K V et al., 2021). The marketing landscape is undeniably influenced by social media advertising in the digital age (Nitika & Chaudhary, 2024). Marketers are also increasingly turning to social media advertising to enhance the promotion of their products and services (Zhang & Mao, 2016). More specifically, advertisers are determined to employ social media within their strategies for advertising to improve digital interaction (Voorveld et al., 2018).

Given the widespread popularity and accessibility of social media platforms for everyday communication, it is recommended that marketers dedicate a significant portion of their advertising budget to social media ads and customer engagement. This

strategy aims to foster a favorable perception of the advertised brand among users of social networking sites (Mukherjee & Banerjee, 2019). Expenditures on social media advertisements reached 234.24 billion USD globally, with a user base of 5.17 billion individuals on various social networks (Statista, 2024). By 2025, digital advertising is anticipated to surpass an 80% share of overall advertising expenditure for the first time, indicating substantial growth in billions of USD in digital ad expenditure from 2022 to 2028 (eMarketer, 2024). The annual advertising revenue that social networking sites (SNS) earn is in the billions of dollars.

Similarly, researchers in the fields of marketing communication are increasingly devoting their research efforts to the examination of advertising within social media platforms (Knoll, 2016). However, marketers have recently observed a decline in consumer trust towards modern advertising methods, with many individuals seeking alternative sources to assess a brand's products or services. This shift suggests that consumers are increasingly skeptical of new advertising formats, particularly in light of the rising prevalence of online fraud and counterfeit product reviews (Brinson & Lemon, 2023). Consequently, firms must prioritize authenticity in their marketing communications and uphold integrity in their communication practices to enhance consumer engagement and support (Trinh, 2024). Because authenticity has been acknowledged as a vital factor in contemporary advertising and marketing that fosters trust (Anderberg & Morris, 2006). As digital communication dominates society, authenticity is a topic of contention not only for brands and professional communicators, but also for social media users (Balaban & Szabolcs, 2022). And empirical evidence have also demonstrated that authenticity is crucial for the effectiveness of both conventional and native advertising (Becker et al., 2019). Social media has increased the importance of this because it allows businesses to build a sense of belonging, loyalty, and trust with their audience through more informal and authentic communication (Parallel Path, 2024). Additionally, emerging technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence are expected to make an increasingly prominent impact on advertising in the coming decades (Taylor & Carlson, 2021). Hence, this urges scholars and practitioners to meticulously investigate the significance of authenticity in social media advertising and its relationship with consumers' digital media experiences.

Numerous studies have explored social media advertising and the existing research reveals that several informative reviews have been conducted in the realm of social media advertising (Garima & Sheokand, 2024; Knoll, 2016; Nitika & Chaudhary, 2024; Taylor & Carlson, 2021; Voorveld, 2019) that indicates social media advertising have garnered attention from both researchers and practitioners over the past decades. Nevertheless, certain perspectives remain unexplored, particularly regarding authenticity and the implications of social media advertising, which could hinder the full adoption and effective use of these platforms for advertising purpose. Similarly, there is also lacking research addressing bibliometric analysis through the mapping process utilizing VOSviewer on social media advertising and authenticity. As a result, a comprehensive study is required that may be utilized to help and facilitate future researchers in conducting studies related to social media advertising and authenticity. So that future research might explore social media advertising and authenticity, which are still not frequently examined. Consequently, this has led us to formulate a research question that drives this work, which is: what do we already know about authenticity and social media advertising?

2. Research Methodology

In order to gather information for our analysis, we performed our search criterion through Scopus database. "Scopus is an abstract and citation database of peer reviewed literature including scientific journals, books and conference proceedings. Scopus provides a comprehensive overview of worldwide research output in the fields of science, technology, medicine, social sciences, arts and humanities". Scopus provides tools to researchers that allow for the specification of search terms through the application of Boolean logic in the form of strings, enabling the inclusion or exclusion of specific terms and the selection of particular journals for study. We employed the string search technique by compiling a string consisting of different keywords. Finally, the subsequent string was chosen to establish a database using Scopus: "Social Media Advertising" AND "Authenticity" AND PUBYEAR > 2013 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "BUSI")). We identified 394 documents using the specified string, which serve as the database for bibliometric analysis in this study. Finally, A CSV file containing a database of 394 documents pertinent to the chosen string was downloaded.

3. Data Analysis

We used VOSviewer to investigate and perform a bibliography analysis of the data acquired from Scopus. VOSviewer is a software application that is extremely effective and efficient, and it may assist in the generation of maps by utilising network data. Additionally, it can allow for the visualisation and analysis of such maps in greater depth. Utilising VOSviewer offers a plethora of benefits, one of which is its capability to generate, inspect, and analyse maps that encompass various items. These items pertain to subjects of interest for scholars, including publications and researchers' contributions (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014). A link can exist between any pair of items. A link is a term that is used in bibliometric analysis to describe a relationship

between two items. Some of the frequent relationships that researchers want to investigate include the coupling links which occur between academic outputs, like research articles, and the co-authorship links that develops amongst academic experts. A map generally contains only one kind of link. A positive numerical value represents the strength of the link that exists between two links; a larger value indicates that the link is stronger. An illustration of link strength can be seen in bibliographic coupling analysis, where documents serve as the unit of analysis. Here, the strength of the link is measured by the number of references that are shared between documents that are different from one another. In addition, we took into account instances of citation analysis by taking the author as a unit of analysis. The strength of the analysis is decided by the number of times that one author referenced the other author; hence, items and connections together make a network (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

VOSviewer additionally organises items into clusters. A cluster refers to a group of elements represented on a map. Distinct colours have been allocated to different clusters so that each network can be identified from the others. The weight that an item carries on a map is a reflection of the significance of that specific item. For instance, an item with a greater weight holds more significance than one with a lesser weight. In the map visualisation, items that have greater weights are displayed in a more prominent manner than those that have lower weights (van Eck & Waltman, 2023).

In the present study we have conducted the Co-authorship analysis and Bibliographic coupling analysis using VOSviewer. A brief description is provided below about the types of analysis performed using VOSviewer:

1. Co-authorship analysis: This examination investigated relationships among authors, institutions, and nations based on the criteria of articles produced through co-authorship.
2. Co-occurrence analysis: This analysis was used to investigate the relationships that existed between various terms, including specific keywords, author keywords, and index keywords, by determining the frequency with which these related terms occurred simultaneously.
3. Bibliographic coupling: This analysis examined relationships among documents, sources, authors, organisations, and nations based on the amount of references that they share with one another (van Eck & Waltman, 2023).

4. Results and discussion

Here, we present and illustrates the findings from our analysis conducted using VOSviewer, which we compiled. The pertinent tables and diverse visualisation maps are presented along with their corresponding analyses and interpretations, detailed as follows:

4.1 Co-authorship Analysis:

There are 68 countries in total that represent their documents on these topics of social media advertising and authenticity and, 394 articles across distinct journals within the Scopus database. In order to gather more significant insights, we focused exclusively on countries that had released a minimum of 10 studies. On the threshold limit of at least 10 published documents, 12 countries meet this threshold limit and top ten are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Top Ten Countries Co-authored Documents

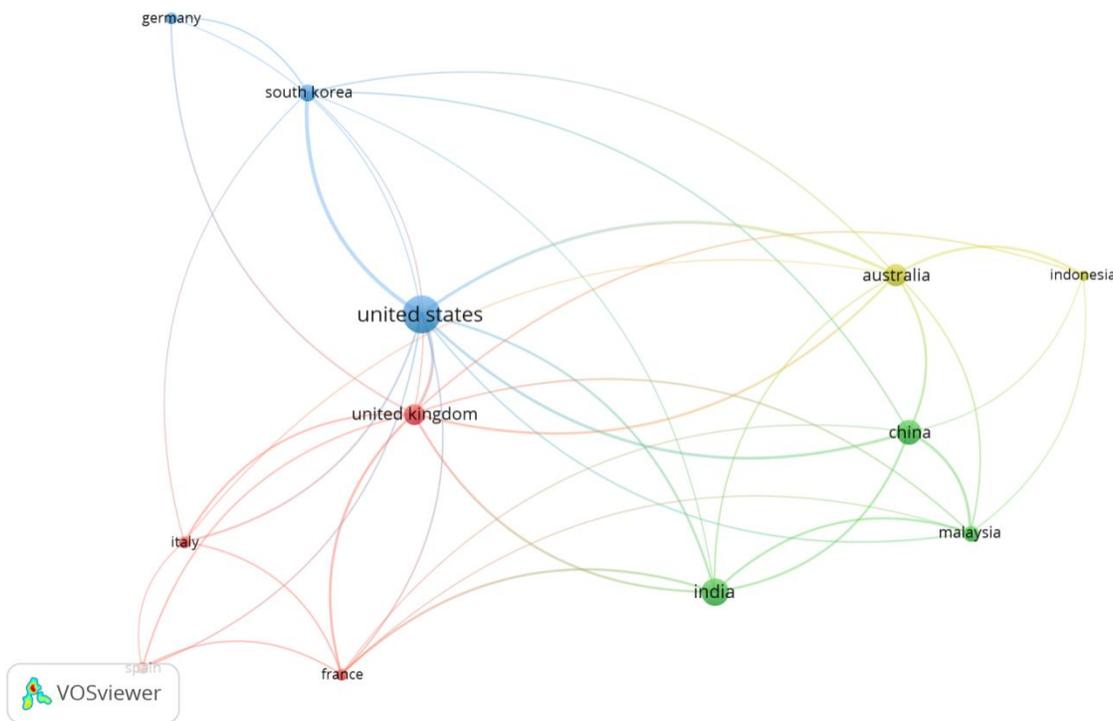
Sr. No	Countries	No. of Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
1.	United States	111	3831	45
2.	United Kingdom	38	1416	32
3	Australia	41	1148	27
4.	China	49	545	24
5.	India	60	1216	23
6.	South Korea	24	645	20
7.	Malaysia	21	508	18
8.	France	13	177	17
9.	Italy	12	158	11
10.	Indonesia	10	87	9

Source:

Table 1 highlights top ten countries that co-authored documents with other countries. 'United States' with co-authored maximum number of documents i.e. 111 with highest citations of 3831 followed by United Kingdom, Australia, China and India. India stands at second position in terms of publication after United States on the topic of social media advertising and authenticity. This highlights that researcher can search for more documents published in these two countries on the social media advertising

and authenticity. Figure 1 reflects formation of categorization of countries in to four clusters. Each cluster represents some unique sort of similarities among the cluster countries like India, China and Malaysia represents the part of Asian studies while cluster 1 constitute of countries like united kingdom, France, Italy and Spain represents part of European studies. Their closeness and allocation to one respective cluster reflects that their studies are co-authored mostly with each other and researcher can explore these countries’ documents in order to acquire idea regarding Asian and European consumer mindset.

Figure 1: Co-authorship Map by Countries



4.2 Co-occurrence Analysis

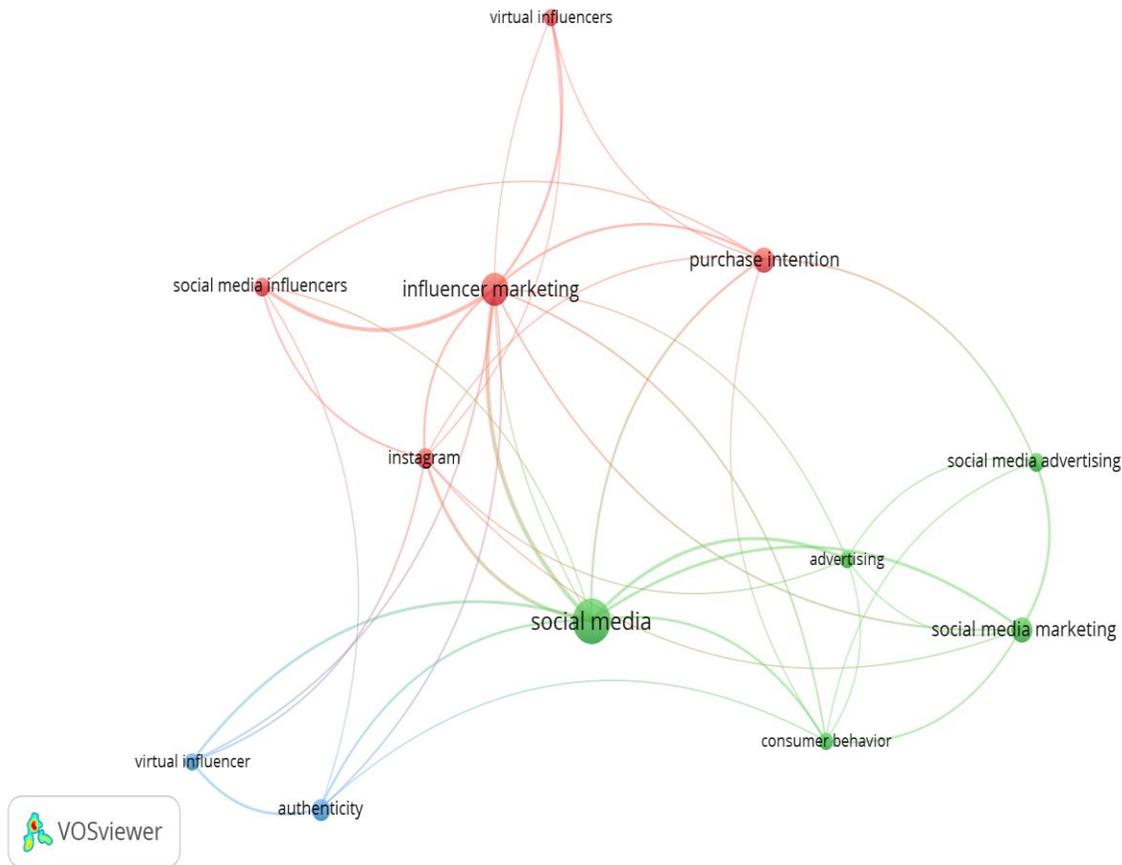
Co-occurrence analysis has been conducted with author keywords as a unit of analysis. Threshold limit applied for this analysis is minimum number of occurrence of an author keyword should not be less than 10. Out of 1220 author keywords searched, 12 author keywords meet with the given threshold limit and get available for this analysis. Table 2 highlights the top 10 author keywords occur among 394 documents. Social media is the most occurring author keyword followed by influence marketing, Instagram and social media marketing. Figure 2 depicts the co-occurrence mapping of twelve most occurring word. All these twelve author keywords are further categorized in to three clusters. Cluster 1 that is represented through red colored circles constitutes ‘influence marketing’ as an author keyword that is occurred together most with other keywords. Cluster 2 is illustrated through green colored circles and consists of ‘social media’ as an author keyword which is occurred most with other keywords. Cluster 3 represented by blue colored circles consist of authenticity as an author keyword that has occurred mostly with other author keywords. This emphasises that researchers can find more relevant articles related to Social media advertising and Authenticity by consistently including the search keys comprised of these terms to examine the literature for their new studies.

Table 2: Co-occurrence analysis of Top Ten Author Keywords

Sr. No.	Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength
1.	Social Media	69	40
2.	Influence Marketing	36	36
3.	Instagram	14	17
4.	Social Media Marketing	22	12
5.	Purchase Intention	22	12
6.	Social Media Influencer	13	12
7.	Virtual Influencer	10	12

8.	Authenticity	17	11
9.	Consumer Behaviour	10	11
10.	Advertising	11	10
11.	Social Media Advertising	12	8
12.	Virtual Influences	10	7

Figure 2: Co-occurrence Map of Top Twelve Author Keywords

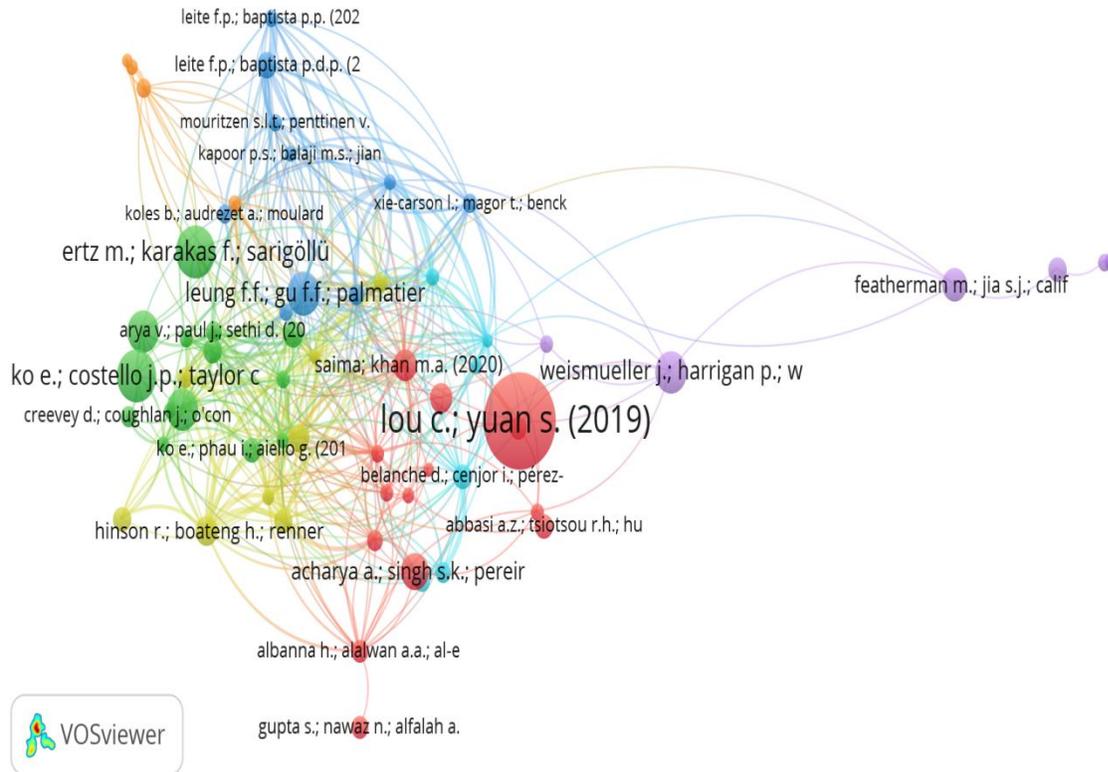


4.3 Bibliographic Analysis

Table 3: Top Ten documents Shared maximum Number of References

Sr. No.	Source	Citations	Total Link Strength
1.	pradhan b.; kishore k.; gokhale n. (2023)	50	93
2.	myers s.; sen s.; syrdal h.; woodroof p. (2022)	31	75
3.	leite f.p.; baptista p.p. (2022)	94	69
4.	hinson r.; boateng h.; renner a.; kosiba j.p.b. (2019)	120	67
5.	yang j.; chuenterawong p.; lee h.; chock t.m. (2023)	36	66
6.	farmaki a.; olya h.; taheri b. (2021)	36	64
7.	herrando c.; martin-de hoyos m.j. (2022)	30	61
8.	alfarraj o.; alalwan a.a.; obeidat z.m.; baabdullah a.; aldmour r.; al-haddad s. (2021)	101	60
9.	florenthal b. (2019)	88	58
10.	saima; khan m.a. (2020)	127	53

Figure 3: Bibliographic Coupling Map of documents Sharing Maximum references



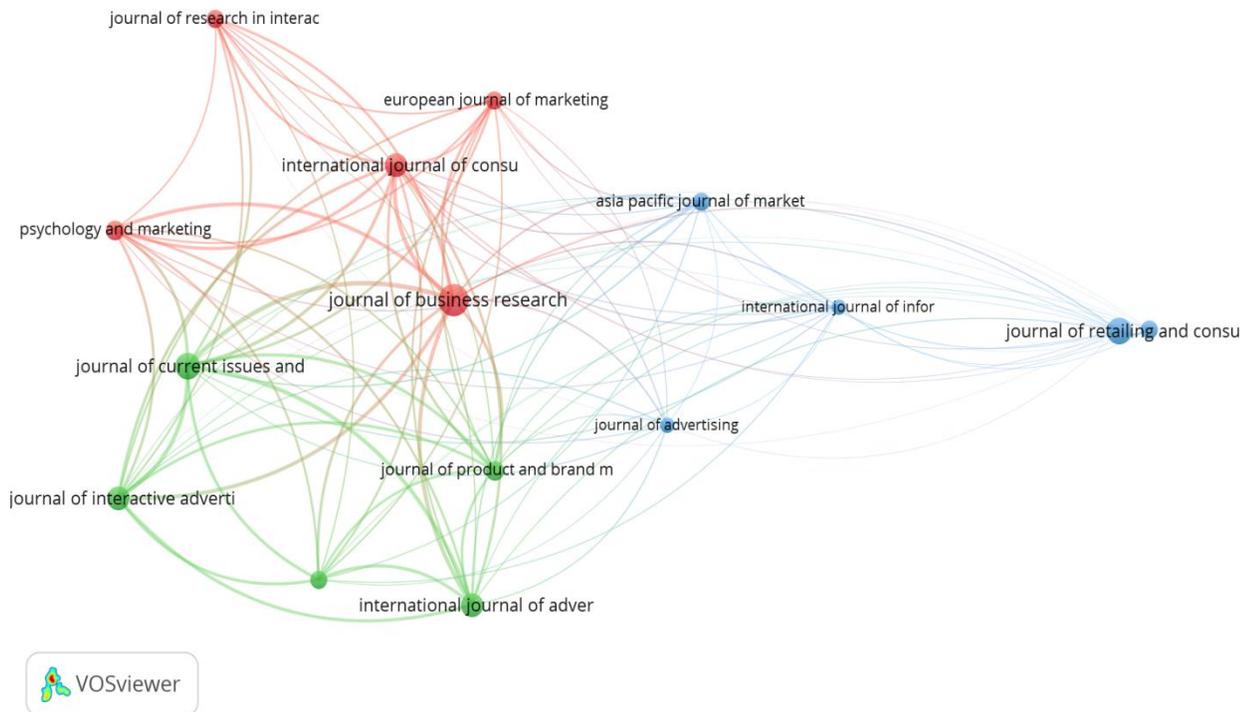
The bibliographic coupling analysis is carried out by considering documents as the analytical unit. Out of 394 documents only 63 documents get shortlisted for further analysis based on the threshold limit of minimum number of 30 citations of a document. Table 3 depicts that document written by pradhan b.; kishore k. & gokhale n. (2023) has shared maximum number of references with other documents with link strength of 93 and possessing 50 citations for this document. At second number documents written by myers s.; sen s.; syrdal h.; woodroof p. (2022) has shared maximum references with other documents. Figure 3 highlights the formation of categories of documents into seven clusters on the basis of some commonality in between them. Cluster 1 illustrated in red color comprises of 14 documents and among document written by authors lou c.; yuan s. (2019) has achieved highest citations number of 1193. This signifies that researchers can get better quality of information on the theme of social media advertising and authenticity by assessing this document. Cluster 2 is represented by green colored circles and under these cluster in document written by ko e.; costello j.p.; taylor c.r. (2019) has achieved highest citations of 371. Cluster 3 is represented by blue colored circles and document written by leung f.f.; gu f.f.; palmatier r.w. (2022) has achieved highest numbers of citations of 247. Cluster 4 is represented by yellow coloured circles and documents authored by hinson r.; boateng h.; renner a.; kosiba j.p.b. (2019) & alfarraj o.; alalwan a.a.; obeidat z.m.; baabdullah a.; aldmour r.; al-haddad s. (2021) have received highest number of citations of 120 & 101 respectively. Cluster 5 is highlighted by violet coloured circles and under this cluster document authored by weismueller j.; harrigan p.; wang s.; soutar g.n. (2020) has received highest nuber of citations of 238 followed by the document authored by featherman m.; jia s.j.; califf c.b.; hajli n. (2021) that have received total citations of 142. Cluster 6 is represented by light blue coloured circles and document authored by belanche d.; flavián c.; pérez-rueda a. (2020) has received highest citations of 57 under this cluster. And last cluster 7 is represented through orange coloured circles and under this cluster document authored by pittman m.; oeldorf-hirsch a.; brannan a. (2022) has received highest citation of 50 as shown in figure 3. Analysis of this bibliographic mapping highlighted that by focusing on documents that have received highest citations under each group can be explored by the researcher in order to find the out the gap for new studies in the said theme.

Table 4: Top Ten Journals shared maximum number of references

Sr. No.	Source/Journal	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
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1.	Journal of Business Research	23	1416	1367
2.	Journal of Current issues and research in advertising	16	230	1212
3.	International Journal of Consumer Studies	13	227	965
4.	Journal of Interactive Advertising	12	1322	954
5.	International Journal of Advertising	13	122	743
6.	Psychology and Marketing	9	88	693
7.	Journal of Marketing Communications	8	104	682
8.	Journal of Product and Brand Management	9	99	527
9.	European Journal of Marketing	7	81	441
10.	Journal of research in Interactive Marketing	7	43	212

Figure 4: Bibliographic Coupling Map of Top Ten Journals



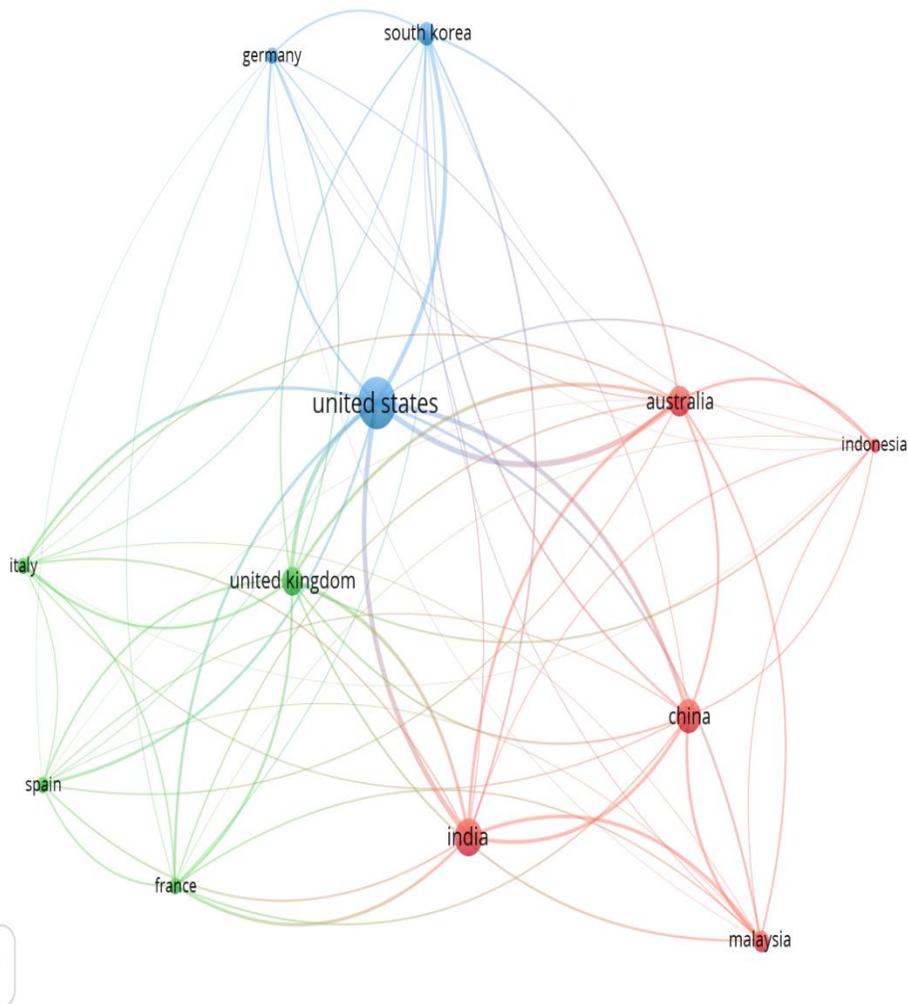
A Bibliographic coupling study is conducted using sources (journals) as the unit of analysis. For better understanding this analysis is performed by taking a threshold limit of a minimum of five documents and at least 30 citations per source have been taken and out of 172 sources, 15 sources meet this threshold. Analysis of total link strength depicts that the journal named ‘Journal of Business Research’ (1367) is the source which has shared maximum number of references with other source (journal) followed by “Journal of Current issues and research in advertising” (1212); “International Journal of Consumer Studies” (965); “Journal of Interactive Advertising” (954) and “International Journal of Advertising” (743). “Journal of Business Research” has received the highest citation number (1416); followed by “Journal of Interactive Advertising” (1322) and “Journal of Current issues and research in advertising” (230) as shown in table 4. Cluster 1 represented through red circles consist of five journals and among them ‘Journal of business research has share maximum references with other journals’. Cluster is also constituted of five journals that is represented by green colored circles. In cluster 2 ‘Journal of Current issues and research in advertising’ has shared maximum references with other journals. Cluster three is highlighted in blue colored circles and constitute of 5 journals and among them ‘Journal of retailing and consumer services has shared maximum reference with other journals as shown in figure 4. Analysis of bibliographic coupling of sources revealed that by exploring top rated journal of each cluster, researcher will be able to find out more relevant and authentic studies with respect to the theme of social media advertising and authenticity

Table 5: Top Ten Countries Shared Maximum References

Sr. No	Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
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1.	United States	111	3831	13734
2.	India	60	1216	8232
3.	United Kingdom	38	1416	6906
4.	Australia	41	1148	6786
5.	China	49	545	5730
6.	South Korea	24	645	4334
7.	Malaysia	21	508	3789
8.	France	13	177	3620
9.	Italy	12	158	2538
10.	Spain	13	243	2155

Figure 5: Bibliography Coupling Map of Countries Shared Maximum References



A Bibliographic coupling analysis is also performed by taking countries as a unit of analysis. For better understanding this analysis is performed by taking a threshold limit of a minimum of ten documents and at least 30 citations per country has been taken and out of 68 countries, 12 countries meet this threshold. Table 5 depicts the top ten countries which have shared maximum number of reference with other countries. Analysis of total link strength revealed that United States is the country that have shared maximum references with other countries (13734) followed by India (8232); United Kingdom (6906); Australia (6786) and China (5730). It is also revealed that United States is the country which has published highest number of documents (111) followed by India (60) and China (49). Documents published by United States has received highest citation (3831) followed by United Kingdom (1416) and India (1216). Figure 5 depicts that all the shortlisted countries are categorized in to three clusters. Cluster 1 is depicted in red colored circles which constituted of countries like India, Australia, China, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Cluster 2 shown in green colored circles and consists of countries like France, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom. Items of cluster 3 are highlighted in blue colored circles and consist of three countries: Germany, South Korea and United States. Analysis of Bibliometric analysis of countries revealed that top three countries of each cluster would be a rich source of publication for emerging researcher in the field of social media advertising and authenticity explore insights in the concerned field and proceeds towards journals of this country for publications as well as for good citation remarks.

5. Conclusions

The present study undertakes a bibliometric analysis about social media advertising and authenticity, focusing on the period from 2013 to 2025, utilizing data retrieved from the Scopus database to uncover emerging patterns within the research topic. The analysis was carried out using the software known as VOSviewer. This analysis has yielded valuable insights into the research dynamics and academic contributions in marketing, advertising, and interactive technologies from 2013 to 2025, specifically concerning social media advertising and authenticity. In summary the results of co-authorship analysis demonstrated that 68 countries provided content on these themes to various journals indexed in Scopus. The US has the most co-authored documents, followed by the UK, Australia, China, and India. While India is currently in second place in terms of number of publications on the theme of social media advertising and authenticity as per the analysis of total link strength, after the United States. The results of the co-occurrence analysis indicate that social media emerges as the most frequently occurring author keyword, followed by influencer marketing, Instagram, social media marketing, purchase intention, social media influencer, virtual influencer, authenticity, consumer behavior, and advertising on the theme of “social media advertising and authenticity”. according to the overlay network visualization, the term authenticity has primarily appeared alongside other terms such as social media, virtual influencer, social media influencer, consumer behavior, and influencer marketing as per the overlay network visualization. According to the findings of a bibliographic coupling analysis, the document authored by pradhan b.; kishore k.; gokhale n. (2023) is the one that has the highest total link strength of 93, making it the document with the highest number of references shared with other documents. This is followed by the documents authored by myers s.; sen s.; syrdal h.; woodroof p. (2022) and leite f.p.; baptista p.p. (2022) which have total link strengths of 75 and 69, respectively. The work authored by lou c.; yuan s. (2019) has obtained the maximum citation count of 1,193. In addition, the “Journal of Business Research” (1367) stands out as the source that shares the highest number of references with other publications. It is followed by the “Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising” (1212), “International Journal of Consumer Studies” (965), “Journal of Interactive Advertising” (954), “International Journal of Advertising” (743) and “Psychology and Marketing”. In the same way, the "Journal of Business Research" has the most citations (1,146) of all the papers that were chosen. Furthermore, as indicated by its leading total link strength, the United States is the country that has shared the highest number of references with other nations followed by countries such as India, the United Kingdom, Australia, and China. The data also indicates that the United States has published the highest number of documents, totaling 111, followed by India with 60 and China with 49. Documents published by the United States have received the highest citation count at 3,831, followed by the United Kingdom with 1,416 and India with 1,216.

6. Limitations and future research direction

Our study contributes to the bibliometric literature, it has one major constraint that it relies on the Scopus database as a critical data repository for the papers that are investigated and analyzed. As a result, the findings based on this study may not be completely representative of all of the extensive and updated work on the topic of Social media advertising and Authenticity that has been undertaken till date. Citation analysis of items like documents, sources, authors, organizations and countries were not performed due to missing of total link strength and links between these types of items of interest in their respective tables as well as in maps generated by VOSviewer. So, it was not able to retrieve any relevant information for the citation analysis of this data.

These findings indicate the leading and key documents, journals, and nation-states selected based on the number of references shared with other documents, journals, and nation-states, serving as a valuable resource for generating further insights for comprehensive research on the theme of “social media advertising and authenticity”. Out of 172 journals, only 6 journals are those who have contributed at least 10 papers on the theme of Social media advertising and Authenticity. These reflects the requirement of writing more studies in this field and this field can act as a potential area for exploring old as well as new researchers in order to contribute more papers towards the literature field of social media advertising and authenticity in order to improve writing and analytical skills. India is a country which has published maximum number (60) of documents after United States (111) on the theme of social media advertising and authenticity but have not developed strong research relations with other country. If this gap can be removed more literature collection can be formed for researchers to contribute towards Asian countries’ studies on the particular issue of social media advertising and authenticity. Thus, the findings will be incredibly beneficial and insightful for researchers doing new studies on these themes.

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