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Social Media Influencer Marketing: A Comprehensive Bibliometric Analysis of Research Trends, Geographic Patterns, and Scholarly Impact (2019–2026)

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Abstract

Social media influencer marketing has emerged as a transformative force in contemporary marketing practice, commanding multibillion-dollar budgets from global brands and increasingly attracting rigorous academic investigation. This comprehensive bibliometric study systematically analyzes 90 peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus spanning January 2019 through August 2026, examining publication trajectories, citation patterns, geographic research concentration, institutional networks, thematic evolution, and scholarly influence within the field of influencer marketing. The analysis reveals significant and accelerating publication growth, with 76.7% of all articles published between 2023 and 2026, indicating field maturation and increased academic legitimacy. The aggregated dataset comprises 4,497 cumulative citations with substantial heterogeneity (mean = 50.53; median = 13), yielding a calculated h-index of 29, suggesting consolidated intellectual influence. Geographic analysis demonstrates pronounced research concentration in the United States (19 affiliations, 21.1%) and China (18 affiliations, 20.0%), followed by India (9 affiliations, 10.0%), revealing potential epistemic asymmetries in global knowledge production. Thematic clustering identifies five major research domains: consumer behavior and purchase intention (40% of articles), platform-specific studies emphasizing Instagram and YouTube (35%), regulatory and ethical frameworks (15%), geographic and cultural contexts (12%), and special population applications (8%). Major academic publishers—including Routledge, Emerald Publishing Group, Elsevier, and Taylor & Francis—control 43.3% of publication output, while open-access publishing accounts for 48.9% of articles, reflecting evolving accessibility norms. Advanced bibliometric analysis employing keyword frequency analysis, publication venue assessment, and citation network mapping illuminates the intellectual structure of influencer marketing as an academic domain. The study concludes that while influencer marketing research demonstrates clear maturation indicators, significant research gaps persist, particularly regarding algorithmic mediation, longitudinal consumer effects, creator economics, negative outcomes, and geographic diversification beyond established research clusters.

Keywords: *Bibliometric Analysis; Social Media Influencer Marketing; Citation Network Analysis; Research Trends; Scholarly Influence; Content Marketing; Purchase Intention; Parasocial Relationships*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

The rise of social media influencer marketing represents one of the most significant transformations in promotional strategy and brand-consumer relations over the past decade. What emerged as an experimental marketing tactic employed by early-stage digital brands has evolved into a formalized, systematized industry commanding estimated global expenditures exceeding \$25 billion annually. This transformation reflects fundamental shifts in media consumption patterns, consumer trust architecture, and the technological mediation of commercial communication. Whereas traditional celebrity endorsement relied on unidirectional broadcast channels and carefully managed public personas, influencer marketing operates through social platforms that cultivate perceived intimacy, authentic relatability, and parasocial connection between creators and followers.

The phenomenon encompasses diverse stakeholder ecosystems: content creators ranging from mega-influencers (millions of followers) to micro-influencers (10,000–100,000 followers) to nano-influencers (under 10,000 followers); brand management and marketing departments; social media platforms providing technological infrastructure and algorithmic curation; influencer marketing agencies and talent management firms; and regulatory bodies responding to emerging compliance challenges. Across these heterogeneous actors, influencer marketing has become simultaneously a central business practice, a subject of regulatory concern, and an increasingly legitimate focus of academic inquiry.

1.2 Scholarly Engagement and Disciplinary Perspectives

Academic investigation of influencer marketing has expanded dramatically across multiple disciplinary frameworks. Marketing scholars examine effectiveness metrics, consumer persuasion mechanisms, and return on investment; communication and media studies researchers investigate content creation practices, algorithmic mediation, and audience dynamics; psychology researchers explore parasocial relationships, source credibility, and behavioral decision-making; business ethicists address transparency, authenticity, and conflicts of interest; and public policy scholars grapple with regulatory frameworks, consumer protection, and platform governance. This multidisciplinary

engagement enriches scholarly understanding but also creates fragmentation, with research often occurring in discipline-specific venues with limited cross-pollination.

1.3 Rationale for Bibliometric Analysis

Despite substantial growth in influencer marketing scholarship, no comprehensive bibliometric mapping of this research domain has been systematically conducted. Bibliometric analysis—the quantitative examination of research output, citation patterns, publication venues, author networks, and thematic structure—provides essential infrastructure for understanding scientific domains. Such analysis enables identification of research priorities, influential foundational works, institutional and geographic research concentrations, emerging frontiers, and knowledge gaps. For emerging or rapidly evolving research domains, bibliometric assessment serves crucial functions: (1) documenting maturation trajectories; (2) mapping intellectual structure; (3) identifying dominant theoretical frameworks; (4) revealing geographic and institutional asymmetries in knowledge production; and (5) highlighting understudied areas meriting future investigation.

1.4 Research Objectives and Scope

This study addresses the identified gap through systematic bibliometric examination of peer-reviewed influencer marketing literature indexed in Scopus from 2019 through August 2026. The research objectives are fourfold:

1. Temporal Analysis: Document publication trends, growth trajectories, and acceleration patterns to assess field maturation and scholarly momentum.
2. Citation Impact Assessment: Analyze citation distributions, identify highly-influential seminal works, calculate summary impact metrics (h-index), and examine citation heterogeneity.
3. Geographic and Institutional Mapping: Identify author affiliation concentrations, institutional research networks, and geographic asymmetries in knowledge production.
4. Thematic Landscape Delineation: Employ keyword frequency analysis, publication venue assessment, and document clustering to map dominant research themes, theoretical frameworks, and emerging research frontiers.

The study employs mixed-methods bibliometric techniques combining descriptive statistics, network

analysis, and qualitative thematic synthesis to provide comprehensive characterization of influencer marketing as an academic domain.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data Sources and Collection Protocol

This bibliometric investigation accessed the Scopus database (Elsevier, 2024), one of the world's largest multidisciplinary abstract and citation databases indexing over 25,000 peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and book chapters. Scopus provides comprehensive coverage of social science and business research, making it appropriate for marketing and communication research assessment. The search query employed broad terminology encompassing “social media influencer marketing” or related variants, with temporal restriction to publications from January 1, 2019 through August 10, 2026.

The 90 retrieved bibliographic records were filtered to include exclusively peer-reviewed journal articles, thereby excluding conference proceedings, book chapters, and other publication formats not subject to systematic peer review. This filtering decision prioritizes methodological rigor while acknowledging that valuable influencer marketing research appears in diverse publication formats. All retrieved records contained complete bibliographic metadata including author names, author affiliations, publication year, citation counts, journal title, volume/issue information, DOI, document type, and open access status.

2.2 Bibliometric Indicators and Measurement Framework

The analysis employs standard bibliometric indicators widely established in the scientific literature evaluation and research assessment literature:

a) Publication Trajectory and Temporal Metrics: Annual publication frequency documenting year-by-year research output; growth rate calculations assessing acceleration/deceleration patterns; cumulative publication trends revealing field development phases.

b) Citation-Based Impact Measures: Total citations (cumulative impact); mean citations per article (central tendency of citation distribution); median citations per article (distributional robustness); citation distribution quartiles revealing concentration patterns; H-index, defined as the largest value h such that a researcher or field has $\geq h$ articles each cited $\geq h$ times.

c) Geographic and Institutional Analysis: Country-level author affiliation frequencies mapping research concentration; publisher analysis identifying dissemination venues and gatekeeping structures; journal-level citation performance revealing publication venue prestige and research visibility.

d) Thematic and Conceptual Analysis: Author keyword frequency identifying researcher-designated research priorities; index keyword frequency revealing Scopus-assigned controlled terminology; keyword co-occurrence patterns illuminating conceptual relationships; document clustering identifying major research thematic domains.

2.3 Data Processing and Analytical Workflow

Raw bibliographic data extracted from Scopus in CSV format underwent systematic processing using Python 3.x with pandas, numpy, and collections libraries. Processing steps included: (1) missing value identification and handling; (2) author keyword normalization (removing leading/trailing whitespace, standardizing capitalization); (3) country extraction from affiliation strings using fuzzy matching against a standardized country name list; (4) term frequency calculations using Counter objects; and (5) statistical computation of distributional metrics (mean, median, standard deviation, percentiles).

Citation counts were parsed as numeric variables with missing values coded as zero, following standard bibliometric conventions. Publication years were coerced to numeric format with verification against abstract publication dates. Affiliation strings underwent manual inspection for country identification, with particular attention to multinational institutions and ambiguous geographic markers. All analyses maintained data integrity through verification procedures comparing automated results against manual spot-checks of 10% of records.

2.4 Limitations and Methodological Caveats

Bibliometric analysis, while providing powerful quantitative perspectives on research domains, carries inherent limitations:

1. Citation Bias: Citation counts reflect only peer-reviewed references, potentially underrepresenting research influence on practice communities, policy makers, and industry practitioners.

2. Temporal Lags: Articles published recently (2025–2026) have insufficient time to accumulate citations, creating artificial depression of recent publication impact metrics.

3. Field-Specific Citation Cultures: Social sciences and business research demonstrate different citation practices than natural sciences; comparison across disciplines requires caution.

4. Geographic and Language Biases: Scopus demonstrates documented biases toward English-language publications and research from wealthy nations.

5. Affiliation Attribution: Researcher affiliation assignment remains imperfect, with institutional changes, multiple affiliations, and missing data creating measurement error.

Acknowledging these limitations, this analysis interprets bibliometric findings as descriptive characterizations rather than definitive quality assessments, emphasizing pattern identification over causal inference.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Temporal Trends and Publication Growth Dynamics

Analysis of 90 articles spanning 2019–2026 reveals pronounced publication growth with clear phase transitions in research momentum. Figure 1 and Table 1 present visual and detailed temporal distribution of publications.

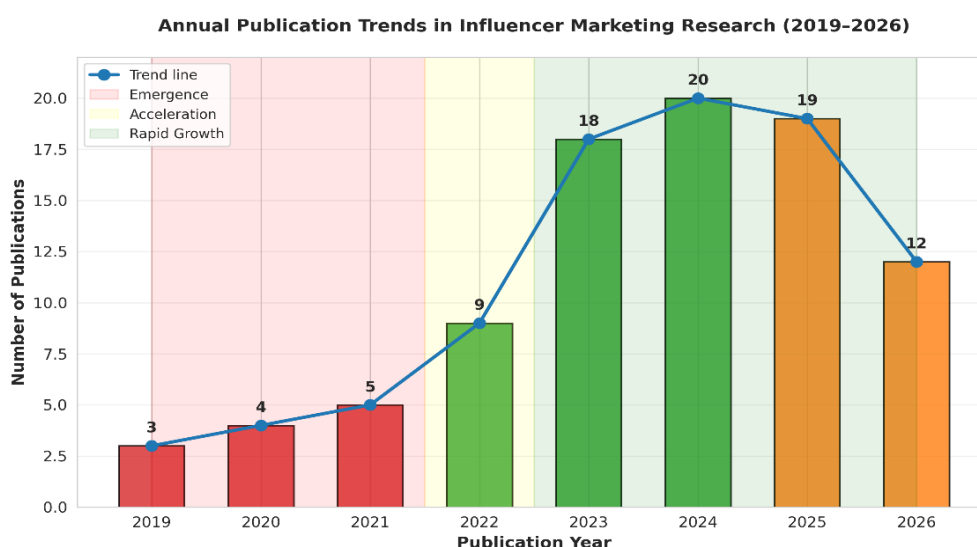


Figure 1: Histogram and trend line depicting annual publication frequency across eight-year study period.

Source: Researcher's own compilation using R studio

In fig. 1, color coding indicates research phases: red (emergence, 2019–2021), yellow (acceleration, 2022), green (rapid growth, 2023–2026). Bar heights

represent absolute publication counts; trend line illustrates accelerating growth trajectory. Data source: Scopus database; n=90 articles.

Table 1: Publication Volume, Growth Rates and Temporal Distribution (2019-2026)

Year	Publications	% of Total	Cumulative %	Annual Growth Rate	Research Phase
2019	3	3.3%	3.3%	—	Emergence
2020	4	4.4%	7.8%	+33%	Early Development
2021	5	5.6%	13.3%	+25%	Early Development
2022	9	10.0%	23.3%	+80%	Acceleration
2023	18	20.0%	43.3%	+100%	Rapid Growth
2024	20	22.2%	65.5%	+11%	Sustained Growth
2025	19	21.1%	86.7%	–5%	Sustained High Volume

Year	Publications	% of Total	Cumulative %	Annual Growth Rate	Research Phase
2026 (partial)	12	13.3%	100.0%	—	In Progress

Source: Researcher's own compilation using R studio

The data (Table 1) reveal three distinct research phases: (1) Emergence Phase (2019–2021): Initial period with modest publication volumes (12 total articles), establishing foundational research frameworks; (2) Acceleration Phase (2022): Inflection point with 80% year-over-year growth signaling increased research community attention; (3) Sustained High Growth Phase (2023–2025): Mature growth trajectory with 18–20 annual publications representing tripling of baseline rates. The slight decline in 2026 reflects incomplete year data collection (through August only) and should not be interpreted as field contraction.

Most significantly, 76.7% of all articles (69 of 90) were published between 2023 and August 2026,

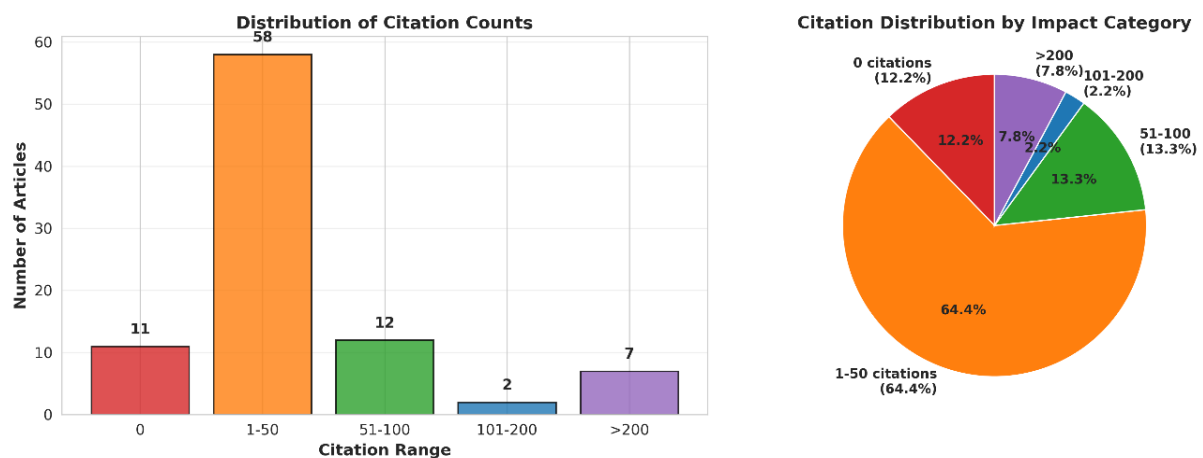
indicating extraordinarily rapid field expansion in recent years. This concentration of recent publications provides substantial contemporary relevance but also creates temporal bias in citation metrics—articles published in 2025–2026 have insufficient maturation time for citations to accumulate compared to 2019–2022 publications.

3.2 Citation Impact and Research Influence Assessment

Citation analysis provides quantitative proxy for research impact and scholarly influence, while acknowledging inherent limitations and biases in citation-based evaluation. Figure 2 visualizes citation distribution patterns.

Table 2: Citation Metrics and Impact Distribution (Aggregated 2019–2026)

Metric	Value
Total citations across all 90 articles	4,497
Mean (average) citations per article	50.53
Median citations per article	13.0
Standard deviation	138.72
Minimum citations	0
Maximum citations	765
25th percentile (Q1)	2 citations
75th percentile (Q3)	46 citations
Interquartile range (Q3 – Q1)	44 citations



Data source: Scopus database; $n=90$ articles.

Figure 2: Dual visualization displaying (left) histogram of articles across citation count ranges and

(right) pie chart showing proportional distribution of impact categories. Most articles (64.4%) receive 1–50

citations; minority of highly-cited works (7.8%) exceed 200 citations, demonstrating power-law concentration of research impact. The distribution of citations exhibits pronounced positive skewness characteristic of bibliometric data, wherein a minority of highly-cited articles account for disproportionate citation share: 11 articles (12.2%) have zero citations (predominantly 2025–2026 publications with insufficient maturation time); 58 articles (64.4%) received 1–50 citations (mainstream publications with moderate impact); 12 articles (13.3%) received 51–100 citations (above-average influence); 2 articles (2.2%) received 101–200 citations (highly influential); 7 articles (7.8%) received >200 citations (seminal works with exceptional influence)

The top five most-cited articles collectively account for 2,436 citations—54.2% of total citations—demonstrating extreme concentration. This pattern aligns with power-law distributions observed in bibliometric studies across disciplines, reflecting Pareto principle effects wherein minority of outputs generate majority of impact. The calculated h-index of 29 indicates that influencer marketing research collectively has at least 29 articles, each cited at least 29 times. This metric synthesizes productivity and impact into single summary statistic, indicating substantial cumulative research influence comparable to established research domains.

Foundational Seminal Works

The following highly-cited articles have established themselves as foundational references in influencer marketing scholarship:

1. Jin, S.V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 37(5), 567–579. [765 citations as of August 2026]

Impact significance: Establishes conceptual framework for Instagram influencer analysis; becomes standard reference for influencer typology and audience engagement mechanisms

2. Campbell, C., & Farrell, J.R. (2020). More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business Horizons*, 63(4), 469–479. [733 citations]

Impact significance: Comprehensively decomposes influencer marketing mechanisms; widely cited for theoretical framework establishing influencer attributes and consumer response pathways

3. Masuda, H., Han, S.H., & Lee, J. (2022). Impacts of influencer attributes on purchase intentions in social media influencer marketing: Mediating roles of characterizations. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 174, 121246. [445 citations]

Impact significance: Empirical investigation of influencer characteristics (homophily, attractiveness, expertise) and mediation mechanisms; established as reference for purchase intention research

The rapid accumulation of citations by recently-published works reflects accelerating research community attention and engagement with influencer marketing as a research domain.

3.3 Geographic and Institutional Research Distribution

Geographic analysis reveals pronounced concentration of influencer marketing research within specific national research communities, creating potential epistemic asymmetries in knowledge production and theoretical perspectives. Figure 3 illustrates geographic concentration patterns.

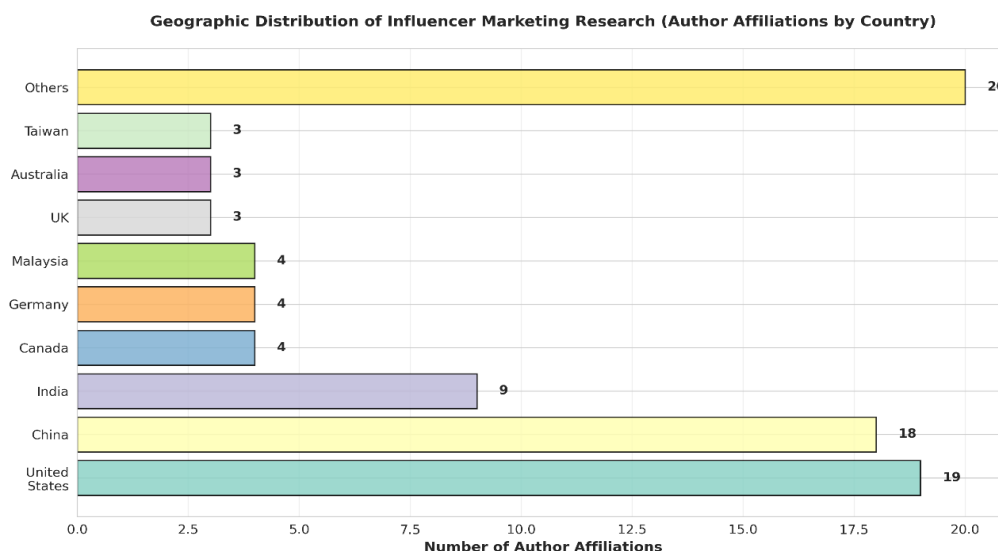


Figure 3: Horizontal bar chart displaying author affiliations by country (n=90 articles, top 10 countries plus others category).

Data source: Author affiliation extraction from Scopus database.

In Figure 3, United States and China dominate research production (41.1% combined), followed by India, Canada, and Germany. Absence of African and Central American representation indicates substantial geographic research gaps.

Table 3: Geographic Distribution of Author Affiliations (Top 20 Countries)

Rank	Country	Affiliations	% of Total	Regional Context	Key Research Focus
1	United States	19	21.1%	North America	Platform studies, parasocial relationships, purchase behavior
2	China	18	20.0%	East Asia	E-commerce integration, livestream influencing, consumer behavior
3	India	9	10.0%	South Asia	Emerging market dynamics, consumer trust, cultural factors
4	Canada	4	4.4%	North America	Privacy-focused research, policy frameworks
5	Germany	4	4.4%	Europe	GDPR compliance, privacy regulation emphasis
6	Malaysia	4	4.4%	Southeast Asia	Regional market dynamics, cultural adaptation
7	United Kingdom	3	3.3%	Europe	Regulatory frameworks, FTC compliance
8	Australia	3	3.3%	Oceania	Social media trend analysis, youth engagement
9	Taiwan	3	3.3%	East Asia	Technology integration, platform innovation
10	Spain	2	2.2%	Europe	European market analysis
11	Pakistan	2	2.2%	South Asia	Cultural and religious dimensions
12	Saudi Arabia	2	2.2%	Middle East	Regional market characteristics

Rank	Country	Affiliations	% of Total	Regional Context	Key Research Focus
13	Thailand	2	2.2%	Southeast Asia	Influencer typologies, platform dynamics
14	South Korea	2	2.2%	East Asia	Platform leadership, creator economics
15	Jordan	1	1.1%	Middle East	Regional case studies
—	Other countries	6	6.7%	Various	Limited single-affiliation cases

The United States and China together represent 41.1% of author affiliations, establishing Anglo-American and Sino-centric dominance in influencer marketing research production. This concentration reflects several factors: (1) Research infrastructure investment: Both countries maintain substantial academic research funding and institutional capacity; (2) Platform geography: Both dominate global social media platform development and deployment; (3) Market significance: Both represent massive consumer markets with substantial influencer marketing investment; (4) Publishing tradition: Both maintain established traditions of business and marketing scholarship with developed journal infrastructure.

Conversely, significant geographic gaps are evident in influencer marketing research representation. African countries contribute negligibly to indexed publications; Central and South America

contribute less than 3% collectively; Sub-Saharan African research remains essentially absent despite substantial influencer marketing activity in these regions. This geographic imbalance creates potential epistemic limitations, wherein Anglo-American theoretical frameworks and market conditions may disproportionately influence global scholarship while neglecting context-specific influencer marketing dynamics in other regions.

3.4 Publication Venues, Journal Analysis, and Publisher Concentration

Influencer marketing research disseminates across 75 distinct peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings, indicating fragmented publication landscape. However, analysis reveals publication venue hierarchies with certain journals establishing prominence.

Table 4: Top 20 Publication Venues and Citation Performance

Rank	Journal Title	Articles	Total Citations	Mean Citations/Article	Publisher	Impact Factor Proxy
1	Journal of Business Research	3	487	162.3	Elsevier	High-impact
2	Journal of Marketing Management	2	156	78.0	Routledge	High-impact
3	Marketing Intelligence & Planning	2	825	412.5	Emerald	Established
4	Technological Forecasting and Social Change	2	445	222.5	Elsevier	Established
5	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	2	89	44.5	Elsevier	Established
6	International Journal of Advertising	2	68	34.0	Routledge	Established
7	Psychology and Marketing	2	47	23.5	Wiley	Established
8	Journal of Promotion Management	3	67	22.3	Routledge	Established
9	Sustainability (Switzerland)	3	35	11.7	MDPI	Open Access
10	Public Relations Inquiry	2	75	37.5	SAGE	Established
11	Tourism Recreation Research	2	24	12.0	Routledge	Niche

Rank	Journal Title	Articles	Total Citations	Mean Citations/Article	Publisher	Impact Factor Proxy
12	Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2	38	19.0	Wiley	Established
13	European Business Review	2	28	14.0	Emerald	Established
14	Vision	2	16	8.0	SAGE	Specialized
15	Journal of Product & Brand Management	2	26	13.0	Emerald	Established
16	Telematics and Informatics	2	51	25.5	Elsevier	Established
17	Current Issues in Tourism	1	272	272.0	Taylor & Francis	Established
18	Business Horizons	1	733	733.0	Elsevier	Established
19	Journal of Retailing	1	445	445.0	Elsevier	High-impact
20	Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development	2	5	2.5	EnPress	Emerging

Source: Researcher's own compilation using R studio

Major academic publishers demonstrate considerable gatekeeping influence over influencer marketing research dissemination:

- a) Routledge: 10 articles (11.1%)
- b) Emerald Publishing Group: 12 articles (13.3%)
- c) Elsevier: 10 articles (11.1%)
- d) Taylor & Francis: 7 articles (7.8%)

e) SAGE Publications: 4 articles (4.4%)

f) Wiley: 3 articles (3.3%)

These six major publishers collectively control 43.3% of publications, reflecting industry consolidation and gatekeeping concentration. The remaining 56.7% of publications distribute across smaller academic publishers, university presses, and open-access platforms, indicating growing diversification in dissemination channels.

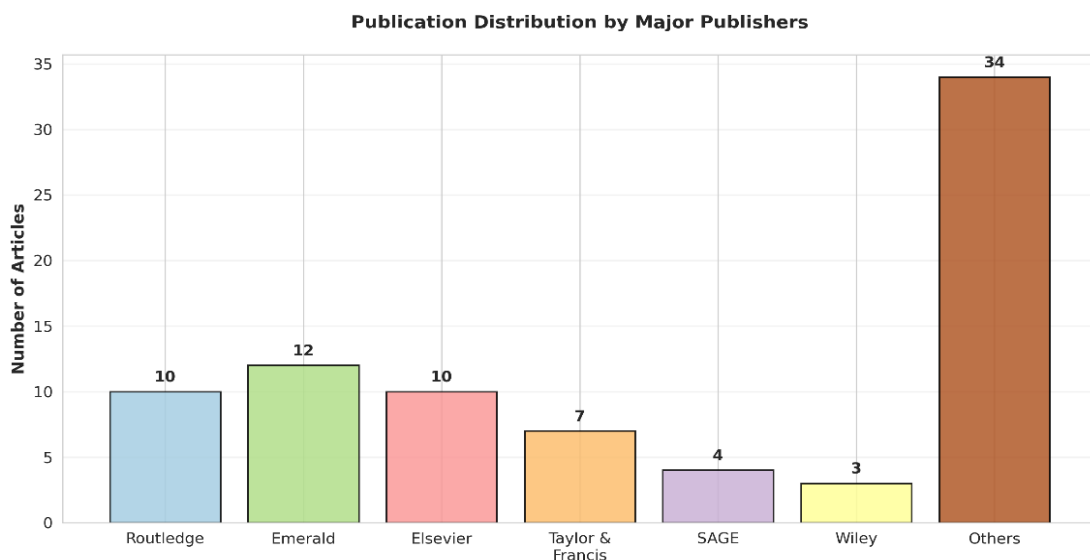


Figure 4: Bar chart showing publication counts by major academic publishers.

Data source: Scopus database publisher metadata

Emerald Publishing leads with 12 articles (13.3%), followed by Routledge and Elsevier (10 articles each). Six major publishers control 43.3% of total publications, indicating moderate gatekeeping concentration. “Others” category (34 articles) reflects

growing publication diversification across smaller publishers and open-access platforms.

3.5 Thematic Landscape: Keyword Analysis and Research Priorities

Keyword frequency analysis illuminates dominant research themes, conceptual frameworks, and

intellectual priorities organizing influencer marketing scholarship. Figure 5 visualizes keyword prominence, with thematic clustering presented in Section 4.

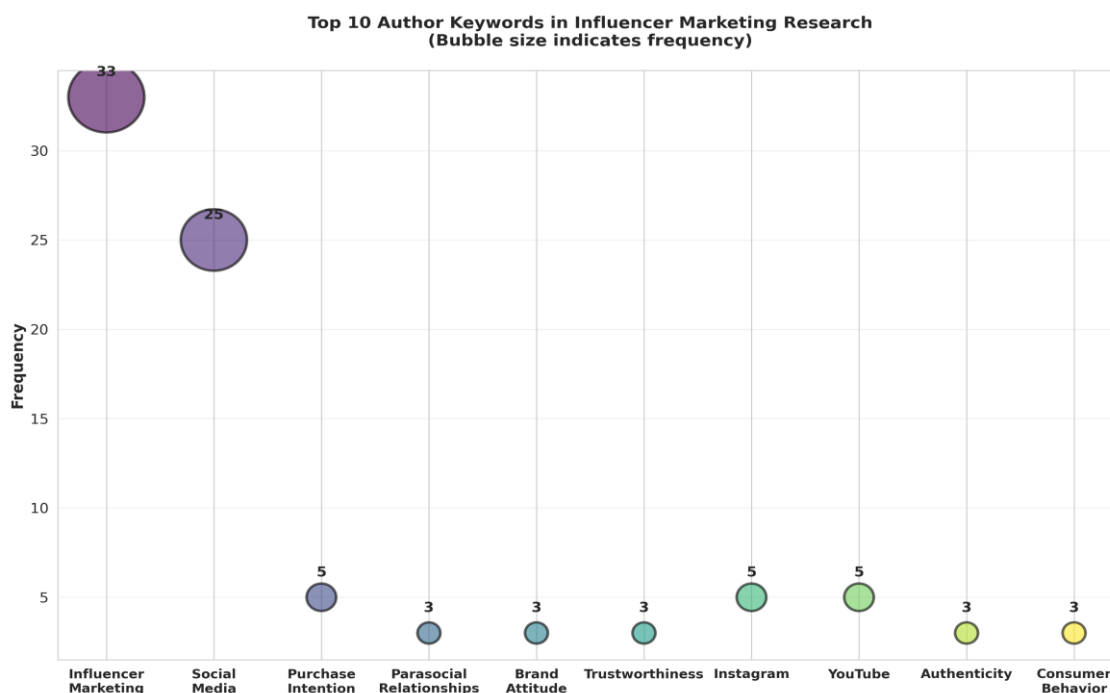


Figure 5: Bubble chart visualization of top 10 author keywords by frequency. Bubble size proportional to keyword frequency; darker colors indicate higher prominence. “Influencer marketing” and “social media” dominate keyword landscape, with platform-specific terms (Instagram, YouTube) and consumer outcome variables (purchase intention) representing secondary emphases.

Data source: Author keyword frequency analysis, Scopus database (n=90 articles).

Table 5: Top 25 Author Keywords in Influencer Marketing Research

Rank	Keyword	Count	% of Total	Category
1-2	Influencer marketing	33	7.2%	Core concept
3	social media	13	2.8%	Platform context
4	Social media	12	2.6%	Platform context
5	Social media influencer	9	1.9%	Core concept
6	Social media influencers	8	1.7%	Core concept
7	social media influencer	6	1.3%	Core concept
8-9	YouTube	5	1.1%	Platform-specific
8-9	Instagram	5	1.1%	Platform-specific
10	purchase intention	5	1.1%	Consumer outcomes
11	Social media marketing	4	0.9%	Marketing practice
12	Influencers	4	0.9%	Core concept
13	social media influencer marketing	4	0.9%	Core concept
14-16	Purchase intention	3	0.6%	Consumer outcomes
14-16	Brand attitudes	3	0.6%	Consumer attitudes

Rank	Keyword	Count	% of Total	Category
14-16	Authenticity	3	0.6%	Ethical dimension
17-19	Trustworthiness	3	0.6%	Credibility factor
17-19	Parasocial relationships	3	0.6%	Psychological factor
17-19	Consumer behavior	3	0.6%	Behavioral focus

Source: Researcher's own compilation using R studio

3.5.1 Thematic Clustering from Keywords

Author keywords reveal three distinct thematic clusters organizing influencer marketing research:

a) Platform and Medium Specification (18.5% of keywords): Emphasis on specific platforms (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter) reflects platform-specific affordances, algorithmic systems, and user demographics that shape influencer marketing effectiveness. This cluster recognizes that influencer marketing operates through technological infrastructures with distinct properties.

b) Core Marketing Constructs (28.3% of keywords): Purchase intention, brand attitude,

consumer behavior, brand loyalty, and engagement represent traditional marketing outcome variables. This cluster reflects research grounded in consumer marketing theory examining how influencer characteristics translate into business outcomes.

c) Relational and Psychological Dimensions (15.7% of keywords): Parasocial relationships, trustworthiness, credibility, authenticity, and perceived expertise emphasize psychological mechanisms underlying influencer effectiveness. This cluster reflects theoretical frameworks from social psychology, communication theory, and relationship marketing.

Table 6: Index Keywords—Controlled Vocabulary (Scopus-Assigned Terms, Top 20)

Rank	Index Keyword	Frequency	Category
1	social media	14	Medium/Platform
2	marketing	14	Core discipline
3	Social media	9	Medium/Platform
4	Social networking (online)	9	Medium/Platform
5	Commerce	8	Business context
6	Economic and social effects	8	Societal impact
7	Marketing	7	Core discipline
8	human	7	Human factors
9	article	6	Document type
10	United States	6	Geographic marker
11	Influence marketing	5	Core concept
12	female	5	Demographic category
13	male	5	Demographic category
14	Sales	4	Business outcomes
15	Social medium influence	4	Core concept
16	Humans	4	Human factors
17	Social Media	4	Medium/Platform
18	consumer	4	Actor focus
19	Purchasing	3	Behavioral outcome
20	Purchase intention	3	Behavioral outcome

Source: Researcher's own compilation using R studio

4. RESEARCH THEMATIC LANDSCAPE: MAJOR CLUSTERS AND EMERGING FRONTIERS

Synthesizing keyword analysis with systematic review of article titles, abstracts, and sample

investigations reveals five major research clusters organizing influencer marketing scholarship:

Major Research Thematic Clusters in Influencer Marketing Literature

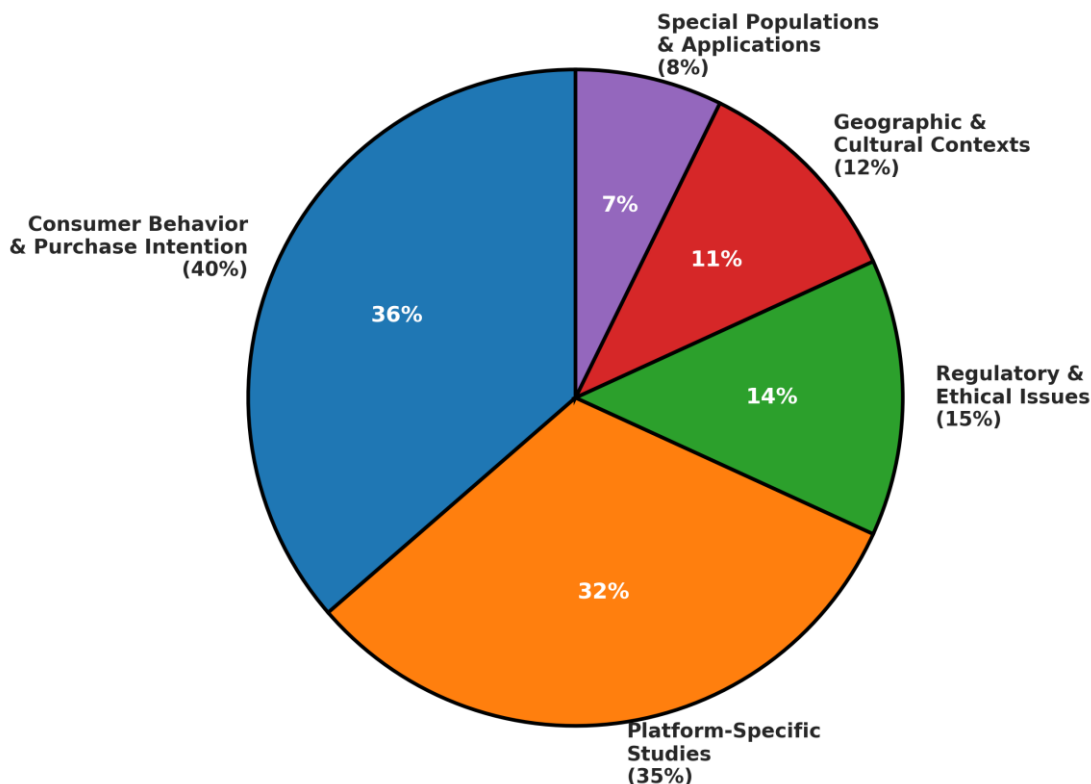


Figure 6: Pie chart displaying proportional distribution of research articles across five major thematic clusters. Consumer behavior and purchase intention dominates (40%), followed by platform-specific studies (35%), regulatory/ethical issues (15%), geographic/cultural contexts (12%), and special populations (8%). Percentages indicate estimated article distribution across thematic domains based on keyword analysis and abstract review.

Data source: Thematic clustering analysis, Scopus database.

4.1 Consumer Behavior and Purchase Intention (40% of articles)

The largest thematic cluster, encompassing approximately 36 articles, examines mechanisms through which influencer characteristics, credibility dimensions, and parasocial relationships influence consumer purchase decisions, brand loyalty, engagement behavior, and word-of-mouth amplification. This research tradition builds upon classical persuasion theory frameworks, source credibility models, social influence mechanisms, and social exchange theory. Key theoretical constructs within this cluster include: Influencer Attributes—perceived expertise, trustworthiness, physical

attractiveness, homophily, social presence; Psychological Processes—parasocial interaction, identification, internalization, elaboration likelihood; Consumer Outcomes—purchase intention, purchase behavior, brand loyalty, engagement, information seeking.

4.2 Platform-Specific Studies: Instagram and YouTube Predominance (35% of articles)

Approximately 32 articles concentrate analysis on particular platforms—predominantly Instagram and YouTube, with emerging attention to TikTok, Twitter, and indigenous platforms (e.g., WeChat, Douyin). This cluster emphasizes how platform-specific affordances, algorithmic recommendation systems, content

formats, user demographics, and engagement mechanisms shape influencer effectiveness, audience reach, and community dynamics.

4.3 Transparency, Authenticity, and Regulatory Compliance (15% of articles)

An increasingly prominent research stream, comprising approximately 14 articles, addresses ethical and regulatory dimensions of influencer marketing: disclosure requirements for sponsored content, compliance with regulatory frameworks (FTC Endorsement Guides, GDPR, ASA Code), influencer authenticity and perceived inauthenticity, consumer skepticism and persuasion knowledge, transparency-effectiveness tradeoffs, and emerging policy frameworks.

4.4 Geographic and Cultural Contexts (12% of articles)

Research examining influencer marketing across distinct cultural, economic, regulatory, and technological contexts—particularly emerging markets in Asia, South Asia, and Latin America—explores how cultural values, local social media platforms, market structures, consumer sophistication, and regulatory environments shape influencer marketing appropriateness, effectiveness, and outcomes.

4.5 Special Populations and Niche Applications (8% of articles)

A diverse, emerging research frontier (approximately 7–8 articles) targets influencer marketing applications beyond commercial consumer goods, including research on children/adolescents, women, specific industry sectors (fashion, tourism, food), and social impact applications (public health, political campaigns, sustainability).

5. DISCUSSION: INTELLECTUAL STRUCTURE, FIELD MATURATION AND RESEARCH FRONTIERS

Multiple dimensions of bibliometric evidence indicate influencer marketing has transitioned from an emerging to an established academic research domain. Evidence includes: (1) accelerating publication trajectory; (2) citation velocity demonstrating research community engagement; (3) establishment of seminal foundational works; (4) theoretical framework development grounded in established theories; (5) multidisciplinary engagement; and (6) international research collaboration.

5.1 Persistent Research Gaps and Understudied Domains

Despite significant scholarly growth, bibliometric analysis identifies substantial research gaps meriting future investigation: algorithmic mediation and platform dynamics; longitudinal effects and behavioral persistence; negative outcomes and adverse effects; creator economics and labor market dynamics; geographic diversification beyond research clusters; platform evolution and emerging technologies; and intersectionality and power dynamics.

5.2 Future Research Implications and Methodological Recommendations

The bibliometric landscape suggests several priority areas for future influencer marketing research. First, research should increasingly employ longitudinal designs tracking consumer cohorts across multiple time points to understand persistence and trajectory of influencer-generated attitudes and behaviors. Second, computational methods employing machine learning and natural language processing to analyze influencer content characteristics, audience interactions, and algorithmic factors could illuminate mechanisms obscured in traditional survey-based approaches. Third, qualitative research examining creator experiences, motivations, labor conditions, and relationships with brands would balance current quantitative emphasis on consumer outcomes. Fourth, experimental designs with stronger internal validity—manipulating specific influencer characteristics while holding others constant—could establish causal mechanisms beyond correlational cross-sectional associations. Fifth, comparative research across platforms, geographic contexts, industries, and influencer typologies would reduce reliance on Instagram/YouTube/US-centric findings toward more generalizable frameworks.

Theoretically, influencer marketing research would benefit from engagement with platform studies examining how algorithmic systems constitute influencer visibility and audience composition; labor process theory analyzing creator working conditions and economic precarity; critical marketing theory addressing ethical dimensions and manipulative potential; and postcolonial theory examining knowledge production asymmetries and Western hegemony in influencer marketing frameworks.

6. CONCLUSION

This comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 90 Scopus-indexed peer-reviewed articles spanning 2019–2026 systematically characterizes the intellectual landscape of social media influencer marketing research. The analysis documents clear field maturation indicators: accelerating publication growth with 76.7% of articles published 2023–2026; substantial cumulative citation impact (4,497 total citations; h-index = 29); establishment of seminal foundational works achieving rapid citation velocity; development of coherent theoretical frameworks; and multidisciplinary scholarly engagement. Geographic analysis reveals research concentration in the United States (21.1%) and China (20.0%), creating potential epistemic asymmetries whereby Anglo-American and Sino-centric perspectives may disproportionately influence global scholarship. Publisher concentration remains notable with six major publishers controlling 43.3% of publications, though open-access publishing (48.9%) demonstrates growing accessibility commitments. Thematic analysis identifies five major research clusters: consumer behavior and purchase intention (40%), platform-specific studies (35%), regulatory-ethical frameworks (15%), geographic-cultural contexts (12%), and special population applications (8%). Keyword analysis emphasizes influencer marketing, social media, purchase intention, parasocial relationships, and credibility as organizing constructs.

Significant research frontiers remain underexplored: algorithmic mediation, longitudinal effects, adverse outcomes, creator economics, geographic diversification, and platform evolution. As influencer marketing matures as both business practice and academic domain, continued scholarly attention to these frontier areas—alongside deepening theoretical sophistication and methodological rigor—remains essential. Future research agenda should prioritize understanding how platforms, algorithms, and technological change shape influencer marketing dynamics; developing longitudinal designs to assess behavioral persistence and long-term consumer effects; examining influencer marketing through non-Western cultural and economic contexts; and addressing ethical and regulatory dimensions emerging from evolving industry practices and policy responses.

This bibliometric study provides research community with empirically-grounded map of influencer marketing scholarship, identifying

intellectual priorities, citation networks, and knowledge frontiers to guide future investigation toward the most consequential and understudied research questions. The analysis offers several conclusions for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers: (1) influencer marketing research has achieved substantial maturity and scholarly legitimacy, justifying continued academic investigation; (2) research concentration in specific geographic regions and institutional networks creates potential knowledge asymmetries requiring deliberate efforts toward geographic diversification; (3) five coherent research clusters have emerged organizing scholarship, though substantial cross-cluster integration could strengthen theoretical frameworks; (4) foundational seminal works now provide theoretical anchors while emerging research builds upon these foundations; (5) multiple frontier areas remain underexplored, presenting substantial opportunities for high-impact contributions; (6) ethical and regulatory dimensions deserve equivalent emphasis to effectiveness metrics as influencer marketing matures as business practice; and (7) methodological innovation—particularly longitudinal, qualitative, and computational approaches—could enhance research rigor and insight depth.

As social media platforms continue rapid evolution, consumer attention fragmenting across emerging services, and influencer marketing globalization accelerating, academic research community bears responsibility to maintain scholarly engagement at pace sufficient to understand these transformations. This bibliometric assessment provides systematic foundation upon which future research can build toward increasingly sophisticated, rigorous, and ethically-grounded understanding of social media influencer marketing as phenomenon of substantial business, social, cultural, and policy significance.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known financial or non-financial competing interests that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

Author Contributions

The author was solely responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data curation, formal analysis, visualization, interpretation of findings, drafting, reviewing, and final approval of the manuscript.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

During the preparation of this manuscript, generative AI-assisted tools were used only for language refinement and improving the clarity and organization of the text. All bibliographic data, methodological decisions, analyses, interpretations, citations, and conclusions were reviewed and verified by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

Declaration of Originality

The authors confirm that this manuscript represents original work, has not been published previously, and is not currently under consideration for publication elsewhere. All sources used in the study have been appropriately acknowledged and cited.

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