

The Era of Social Media Influencers: A Bibliometric Review

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Social media influencers have gained significance and popularity in last few years. The study aims to explore the current state of research into Social Media Influencers.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study uses the bibliometric review using VOSviewer to analyse the data retrieved from scopus database. Co-citation analysis, Bibliographic coupling, co-occurrence analysis and co-authorship analysis are performed.

Findings: The study found that US and UK are most productive countries. International Journal of Advertising is the most prominent journal. Hudders L. is the most impactful as well as most productive author. Six clusters were found using bibliographic coupling. Thematic trends using keywords Co-occurrence and Co-authorship among authors is also discussed.

Originality/Value: This analysis provided a basis for conceptualizing publications on Influencer marketing. Business firms can engage with social media influencers for promoting their brand and products.

Paper Type: Review of Literature.

KEYWORDS: Bibliometric Review | VOSviewer | Influencer Marketing | Social Media Influencers

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Introduction

With a sharp rise in the social media, there has emerged a new type of celebrities commonly known as micro celebrities or social media influencers (SMIs). They are the individuals who have established a significant following on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook. They have the ability to influence the opinions, behaviors, and purchasing decisions of their followers due to their expertise, credibility, or popularity in specific niches or industries. Social media influencers can be found in various fields such as fashion, beauty, fitness, travel, lifestyle, gaming, technology, and more. These influencers often create and share content that resonates with their audience, including posts, videos, stories, and live streams. They collaborate with brands, promote products or services, provide reviews, share personal experiences, offer advice, and engage with their followers through comments, direct messages, and live interactions. This process is often referred as Influencer marketing. Their influence and reach can range from a few thousand followers to millions, and they play a significant role in shaping trends, raising awareness, and driving consumer behavior in the digital age.

Influencer marketing is an emerging area of research and has gained significance in last few years. This study tries to consolidate the fragmented literature and identify the prominent studies, authors, countries, journals and themes in this research domain. Bibliometric literatures available in this domain do not include studies form the recent years (Ye et al., 2021).

The study has the following objectives:

1. To analyze the year-to-year progression of research in the field of Influencer Marketing.
2. To identify the prominent authors, countries and journals in the area.
3. To find the most influential articles (MIA) in this research domain.
4. To recognize themain themes prevailing in the area.

Research Methodology

Table 1 discusses the Bibliographic data retrieval process. Search was conducted on 1st October 2023 on Scopus database. Scopus is a well-known abstract and citation database featuring major articles from prestigious journals with high impact factors and research experts. Search terms include “Influencer Marketing” OR “Social Media Influencers”. The search was limited to “Business, Management and Accounting”, “Social Sciences”, “Economics, Econometric and Finance”, “Arts and Humanities” and “Multidisciplinary” subject area and only English language Articles, Review and Conference Papers were included. After refining the errors, 803 publications were considered for bibliometric review.

Table 1: Bibliographic data retrieval process

Database	Scopus	
	Exclude	Include
Search Date 1 October 2023		
Search term “Influencer Marketing” OR “Social Media Influencers”		1293
Subject area: “Business, Management and Accounting”, “Social Sciences”, “Economics, Econometric and Finance”, “Arts and Humanities” and “Multidisciplinary”	344	949
Document type: Articles, Review and Conference Papers	127	822
Language: English	11	811
Erroneous record refinement	08	803

The data was examined using VOSviewer. Co-citation analysis, Bibliographic coupling, co-occurrence analysis and co-authorship analysis are performed.

Findings and Discussion

Performance Analysis

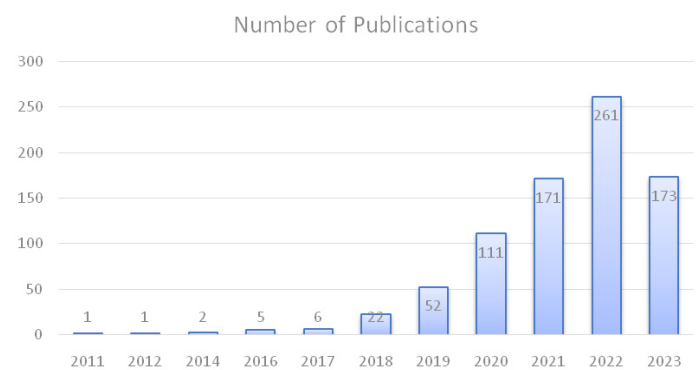


Figure 1: Publication Trend

Figure 1 represents the publication trend in the area of Influencer Marketing. There has been a steady rise in the publications. It is worth noticing that almost 90% of the studies are published after 2019. 2022 was the most productive year with 261 publications. Data is gathered in October, till December 2023 the current year with cross the figures of 2022 too.

Prominent Authors and Countries

Table 2: Influential Authors and Countries

TC	Author	TP	TC	Country	TP
1247	Hudders L.	13	5554	US	237
1116	De Veirman M.	5	1398	Australia	50
880	Lou C.	8	1304	UK	69
788	Cauberghe V.	2	1273	Belgium	21
731	Yuan S.	2	1128	Singapore	17
544	Ang L.	1	1052	Netherlands	19
544	Khamis S.	1	903	South Korea	41
544	Welling R.	1	801	Germany	49
488	Jin S.V.	6	675	Hong Kong	24
474	Freberg K.	3	591	India	49

Hudders L. is the most impactful as well as most productive author with 1247 citations and 13 publications. De Veirman M. is the second most impactful author followed by Lou C. having 1116 and 880 citations respectively. Lou C. is the second most productive author followed by Jin S.V. having 8 and 6 publications respectively.

Similarly, US is the most impactful as well as most productive country with 5554 citations and 237 publications. Australia is the second most impactful country followed by UK having 1398 and 1304 citations respectively. UK is the second most productive country followed by Australia having 69 and 50 publications respectively.

Most influential journals for Influencer marketing research

Table 3: Influential Journals

Source	TC	TP
“International Journal of Advertising”	1899	31
“Journal of Interactive Advertising”	999	21
“Journal of Retailing And Consumer Services”	885	19
“Public Relations Review”	717	13
“Journal of Business Research”	653	23
“Celebrity Studies”	544	1
“Journal of Marketing Management”	512	12
“Computers In Human Behavior”	477	10
“Journal of Advertising”	372	11
“Psychology And Marketing”	358	9

Table represents the most influential sources of researches on Influencer Marketing or Social Media Influencers. The most influential journal in the Influencer Marketing research is International Journal of Advertising with 1899 citations and 31 publications.

Most influential documents on Influencer Marketing research

Table 4: Influential Articles

Document	Title	TC
De Veirman et al., 2017	“Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude”	729
Lou & Yuan, 2019	“Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media”	629
Khamis et al., 2016	“Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of Social Media Influencers”	544
Freberg et al., 2011	“Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality”	474
Schouten et al., 2019	“Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit”	440
Audrezet et al., 2020	“Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation”	240
Jin et al., 2019	“Instafamous and social media influencer marketing”	239
Arora et al., 2019	“Measuring social media influencer index- insights from Facebook, Twitter and Instagram”	227
Hughes et al., 2019	“Driving Brand Engagement Through Online Social Influencers: An Empirical Investigation of Sponsored Blogging Campaigns”	207
Vrontis et al., 2021	“Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda”	181

Table indicates the most cited and impactful articles in the area of Influencer Marketing. With 729 citations article titled “Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude” by (De Veirman et al., 2017) is on the top of the

list. The study is based on two experiments in US aims to explore the impact of influencers' number of followers on attitude formation. It is revealed that Influencers who have large followers are more likeable because of their popularity. Moreover, it would not be the best option with the companies to choose the influencers with large follower base as it may reduce the brand's perceived uniqueness and consequently brand attitudes. The second most influential study is by (Lou & Yuan, 2019) titled "Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media". Through a survey method this research made an attempt to analyse the mechanism by which influencer marketing affects consumers via social media. The third study on the list is titled "Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of Social Media Influencers" (Khamis et al., 2016). It talks about the concept of self-branding, how it has become so popular and reason for the same.

Figure 2 depicts the co-citation map of the references mentioned by the articles in review corpus. It basically explains the pattern of referencing of works. How common papers are cited together. Red nodes include the studies like (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Enke & Borchers, 2019; Freberg et al., 2011). Green nodes include the studies like (De Veirman et al., 2017; Hughes et al., 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Blue nodes include the studies like (De Jans et al., 2018; Evans et al., 2017; Friestad & Wright, 1994)

Thematic clusters through Bibliographic Coupling

Through Bibliographic coupling, 6 theme clusters are identified in the Influencer marketing literature as shown in the Table 5.

Top references for Influencer marketing research. (Co-citations)

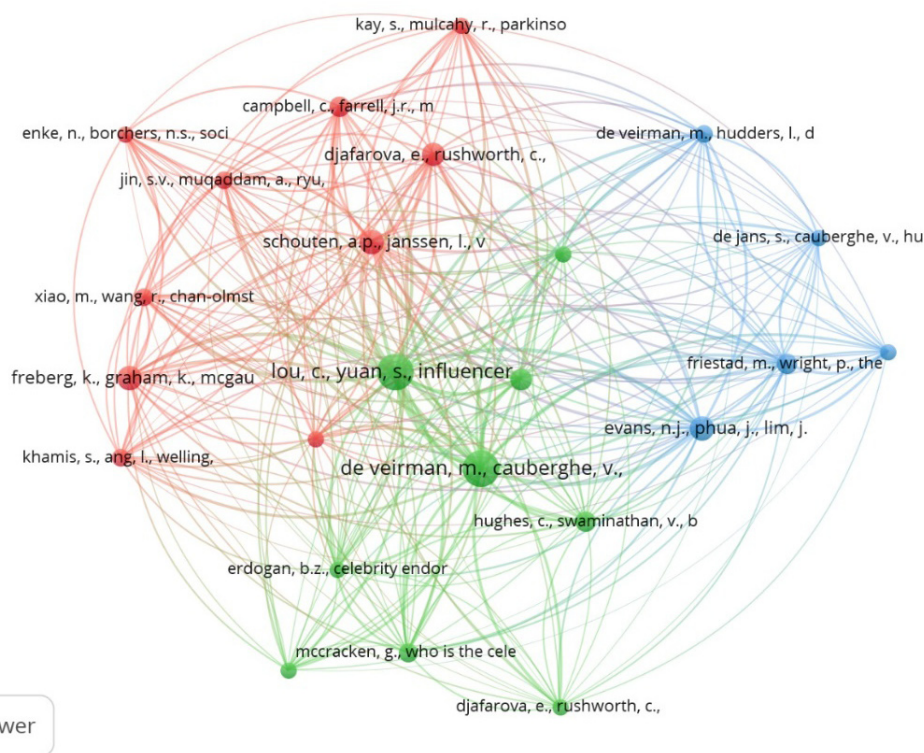


Figure 2: Top references for Influencer Marketing Research (Co-citations)

Table 5: Thematic Clusters through Bibliometric Coupling

Theme	Authors	Title	TC
Persuasiveness of SMIs	(Ki & Kim, 2019)	“The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers’ desire to mimic”	160
	(Park et al., 2021)	“David and Goliath: When and Why Micro-Influencers Are More Persuasive Than Mega-Influencers”	33
	(Ki et al., 2020)	“Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs”	155
Influencer Marketing and Consumer behaviour	(Chopra et al., 2020)	“Influencer Marketing: An Exploratory Study to Identify Antecedents of Consumer Behavior of Millennial”	26
	(Pop et al., 2021)	“The impact of social media influencers on travel decisions: the role of trust in consumer decision journey”	141
	(Muda & Hamzah, 2021)	“Should I suggest this YouTube clip? The impact of UGC source credibility on eWOM and purchase intention”	40
Authenticity of SMIs	(Audrezet et al., 2020)	“Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation”	240
	(Pöyry et al., 2019)	“A Call for Authenticity: Audience Responses to Social Media Influencer Endorsements in Strategic Communication”	65
	(Wellman et al., 2020)	“Ethics of Authenticity: Social Media Influencers and the Production of Sponsored Content”	54
Analysing Sponsorship Disclosure	(Boerman, 2020)	“The effects of the standardized Instagram disclosure for micro- and meso-influencers”	153
	(De Jans et al., 2020)	“#Sponsored! How the recognition of sponsoring on Instagram posts affects adolescents’ brand evaluations through source evaluations”	47
	(Stubb & Colliander, 2019)	“This is not sponsored content” – The effects of impartiality disclosure and e-commerce landing pages on consumer responses to social media influencer posts”	83
Parasocial relationship and Trust	(Farivar et al., 2021)	“Opinion leadership vs. para-social relationship: Key factors in influencer marketing”	56
	(Sokolova & Perez, 2021)	“You follow fitness influencers on YouTube. But do you actually exercise? How parasocial relationships, and watching fitness influencers, relate to intentions to exercise”	63
	(Reinikainen et al., 2020)	““You really are a great big sister’–parasocial relationships, credibility, and the moderating role of audience comments in influencer marketing”	126
Understanding Influencers’ Followers	(Lee et al., 2021)	“Why are consumers following social media influencers on Instagram? Exploration of consumers’ motives for following influencers and the role of materialism”	31
	(Taillon et al., 2020)	“Understanding the relationships between social media influencers and their followers: the moderating role of closeness”	62
	(Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021)	“How social media influencers affect behavioural intentions towards recommended brands: the role of emotional attachment and information value”	26



Cluster 1 is concerned with **Persuasiveness of Social Media influencers**. 34 articles are identified in this particular cluster. Study titled “The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers”(Ki & Kim, 2019)produced the most significant study in this cluster. They investigated the mechanism that persuades the followers of SMIs in adopting brands. Findings revealed that SMI’s attractiveness, prestige, expertise and Instagram content’s informativeness positively impact the attitude of the consumers through desire to mimic SMIs.(Park et al., 2021)explained how micro influencer are more persuasive than mega influencers. (Ki et al., 2020)argued that SMI’s persona and content attribute act as motivator in persuading people to acquire products or brands that are endorsed by SMIs.

Cluster 2 is related to **Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behaviour**. In a very significant study, using the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Social learning theory (Chopra et al., 2020)focused on how Influencer marketing drive consumer behaviour at four levels i.e., by raising the brand awareness, subject matter expertise, brand preference, and preference. Similarly (Pop et al., 2021) utilized consumer journey theory for investigating the impact of SMI trust on customer travel decision-making. On a study on generation Y, (Muda & Hamzah, 2021) made an attempt to inspect the effects of consumers’ perceived source credibility of UGC in YouTube videos on their attitudes and behavioral intentions.

Cluster 3 pertains to **Authenticity of SMIs**. There always lies a doubt about the authenticity of SMIs as they promote brands or products in return for some rewards. Through a qualitative analysis (Audrezet et al., 2020)found two authenticity management strategies i.e., passionate and transparent authenticity. Similarly,(Pöyry et al., 2019) revealed through their study that even perceived authenticity and attractiveness of SMIs both have positive relation with photo attitudes, but only authenticity significantly impacted the purchase intention. This implies that companies should check authentic matches between their message and SMI and there must be a congruency between the message and style of the SMI. (Wellman et al., 2020)found that many people believe that influencer marketing operates without an ethical framework, which raises ethical concerns in the media. However, the ethical standards that guide the creation of sponsored material are not fully understood. Influencers in the travel and tourist media sector employ authenticity as an ethical framework, concentrating on being genuine to oneself, one’s brand, and one’s audience. This strategy benefits both companies and destinations by promoting their brand identity.

Cluster 4 deals with **Analyzing Sponsorship Disclosure**. (Boerman, 2020)produced the most significant study in this cluster. The study sought to ascertain if disclosure raises ad awareness and influences consumer responses to messages,

influencers, and brands. The findings revealed that disclosure had a significant positive effect on brand recall and engagement intentions, but not on parasocial interaction. Another research by (De Jans et al., 2020)investigated the role of source of sponsored content on advertising effectiveness and found that influencer posts lead to higher brand liking, whereas brand posts lead to higher brand awareness. Similarly,(Stubb & Colliander, 2019)conducted two experiments to investigate the effect of disclosure type and landing page type on brand attitude and purchase intentions. According to the findings, impartiality product postings were less likely to be regarded as advertisement, resulting in increased source and message trust. Furthermore, when exposed to an impartiality declaration, participants’ brand attitude and purchase intention were lowered when led to a product page.

Cluster 5 pertains to **Parasocial relationship with the SMIs**. Through empirical research on Instagram accounts (Farivar et al., 2021)found that parasocial relationship have more important role than opinion leadership in affecting followers’ purchase intention. (Reinikainen et al., 2020) also revealed that parasocial relationship with the influencer increases the influencer’s perceived credibility, but comments from other audience members moderate the impact. Influencer credibility has a significant positive impact on brand trust and buy intent. Similarly, (Sokolova & Perez, 2021)also investigated how parasocial interaction and intentions to watch fitness are related to intentions to exercise.

Cluster 6 is related with **Understanding Influencers’ Followers**. (Lee et al., 2021)found that people follow Instagram influencers because of authenticity, consumerism, creative inspiration, and envy. (Taillon et al., 2020)made an attempt to understand the significance of closeness and relationship between followers and SMI. Attitude towards the influencer was predicted by attractiveness and likeability. (Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021)investigated the impact of emotional connection and perceived information value on followers’ behaviour towards influencer-endorsed brands. Both characteristics predict positive word-of-mouth (WOM) regarding suggested brands and purchase intent, according to the findings.

Thematic trends of Influencer marketing research

Extending on the underpinnings and topics provided by co-citation analysis and bibliographic coupling, we analyse thematic tendencies in Influencer marketing studies using co-occurrence analysis. Authors’ keywords are used for co-occurrence analysis. Here we are interested in knowing highly used keywords. Size of the bubble shows the frequency of occurrence of keywords.

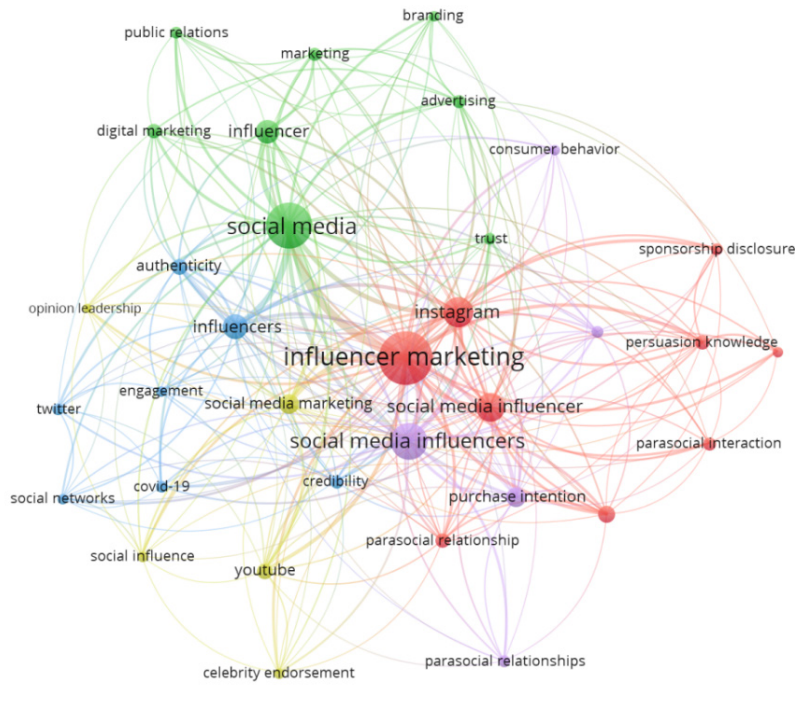


Figure 3: Thematic Trends Using Co-occurrence of Keywords

The largest bubbles ‘Influencer marketing’, ‘Social media’ and ‘Social media influencers’ occurred 274 times, 204 times and 133 times respectively. Red nodes basically relate to Influencer marketing, persuasion and Instagram. Blue nodes deal with authenticity, social networks and engagement. Purple nodes pertain to social media influencers and parasocial relationship. Green nodes are concerned with social media, influencer and branding. Lastly yellow nodes relate to social media marketing, social influence and opinion leadership.

Co- authorship

It explains how authors are collaborating and writing papers.

5 clusters are found here. Purple nodes include authors chen y.-r.r., cheng y. and hung-baesecke c.-j.f. Blue nodes include authors sun j., wang y., chan k. and li y. Red cluster consists authors chan-olmsted s., wang r., sun y., chen h., and lee s. s. Green nodes include authors shoemberger h., kim e., kim y., and pakk h. Lastly, Yellow cluster has authors jiang y., balajim.s. and Kapoor p.s.

Conclusion

Although influencer marketing has become a prominent company marketing approach, academic research on its impact on consumers has only just caught up. This study employs bibliometric and thematic content analysis to present a comprehensive overview of influencer marketing research,

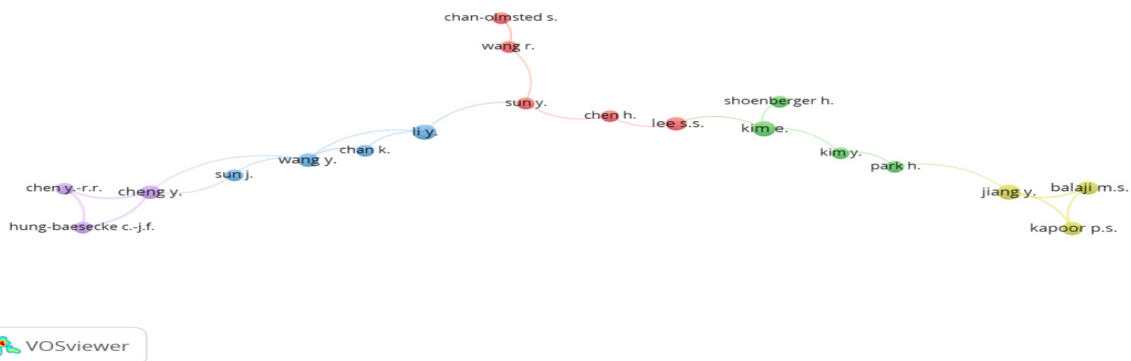


Figure 4: Co-authorship



allowing researchers to follow the evolution of significant authors and nations. Brands should spend in identifying acceptable influencers, cultivating meaningful connections, and doing ethical influencer marketing. The research area is still evolving, and the findings of this bibliometric study are only an attempt to give insight into this quickly changing topic.

This research, like many others, faces a few limitations. The bibliometric study collects data from Scopus as a single source, which may have resulted in the exclusion of articles from other databases. This might have resulted in certain biases. Future research might use several datasets to avoid this bias.

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Annexure 16.1.9

Submission Date	Submission Id	Word Count	Character Count
21-Jan-2024	1711011 (DrillBit)	2875	19540

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5.3 RoL3_Shailza_GJEIS Jan to Mar 2024.docx	shailza509@gmail.com	Shailza	10%

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 C-Poor (41-60%)
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5	esource.dbs.ie	2	Publication
6	thejsms.org	<1	Internet Data
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8	gbsge.com	1	Publication
9	www.nature.com	1	Internet Data
10	You really are a great big sister parasocial relationships, by Reimikainen-2020	1	Publication
11	Using big data analytics to synthesize research domains and identify emerging fi by Huo-2020	1	Publication
12	www.frontiersin.org	1	Internet Data
13	www.nature.com	<1	Internet Data
17	studenttheses.cbs.dk	1	Internet Data

Reviewers Memorandum



Reviewer's Comment 1: Influencer marketing is the new buzz word and an emerging area of research which has gained significance in last few years. The study beautifully consolidates the fragmented literature and identify the prominent studies, authors, countries, journals and themes in this research domain. This analysis provided a basis for conceptualizing publications on Influencer marketing. Business firms can engage with social media influencers for promoting their brand and products.

Reviewer's Comment 2: The paper is organised meritoriously with well-defined sections, clear tables, attractive pictures and strong review of literature. It is having one limitation that only one database i.e., Scopus is used for searching the articles. For making the study more robust, the authors could have extracted literature from more than one source.

Reviewer's Comment 3: This review used the bibliometric analysis which is a systematic and quantitative approach to analyzing and understanding the scholarly landscape of a specific research field, offering valuable insights into the intellectual structure, trends, and impact of the field. It provides a pile of evidence from different studies into a single document.



Shailza and Madhulika P. Sarkar
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Conflict of Interest: Author of a Paper had no conflict neither financially nor academically.

Editorial Excerpt



The article has 10% of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the authors (Shailza & Madhulika), and accordingly, all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are noticeably related to the theme "**The Era of Social Media Influencers: A Bibliometric Review**" both subject-wise and research-wise. Influencer marketing is an emerging area of research and has gained significance in last few years. This study conducts a Bibliometric review and tries to consolidate the fragmented literature and identify the prominent studies, authors, countries, journals and themes in this research domain. After comprehensive reviews and the editorial board's remarks, the manuscript has been categorized and decided to publish under the "**Review of Literature**" category.

Acknowledgement



The acknowledgement section is an essential component of academic research papers, as it provides due recognition to all those who contributed their hard work and effort towards the writing of the paper. The author/s (Shailza & Madhulika) express their sincere gratitude to all those who assisted in the research process and made this paper a possibility. Lastly, the reviewers and editors of GJEIS deserve recognition for their pivotal role in publishing this issue, without whom the dissemination of this valuable research would not have been possible.

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