Research Article

Mapping the Landscape of Influencer Credibility in Social Media: A Bibliometric Analysis

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The purpose of this study was to rigorously explore research related to influencer credibility published in the Web of Science database. This study conducted a bibliometric analysis using bibliometric tools, such as Biblioshiny. A bibliometric review of 229 articles was conducted, after removing irrelevant articles published from 2012 to 2024. The findings of this research indicate that the number of articles and citations is modest, but is on the rise. The Journal of Business Research emerged as the most significant journal with the highest citation count. Filieri R and Jin SV were identified as the most influential authors, with the maximum articles and H-index. The USA had the highest output in terms of citations and publications. The research revealed that most joint efforts were between authors from the USA and China. The study was based solely on a single database, leaving out papers from other databases, which might affect the outcomes. Future researchers in this field may use these results as a reference point. This study is unusual because it is the first bibliometric investigation of influencer credibility in influencer marketing. This idea was consolidated for the first time in this investigation. **Keywords:** Social media influencer, Credibility, Influencer marketing, Bibliometric analysis, Social Media.

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, are crucial for global human contact in the digital age. Social media and instantaneous messaging applications have made it easier for people to establish relationships (Kartajaya et al., 2016). Because of these user-to-user relationships, some users become social media influencers (SMIs) by gaining a considerable following, growing audience, and beginning to counsel their followers on what to buy. According to Schiffman et al. (2010), customers often rely on casual sources when making purchases because they believe that these sources, unlike professionals, seek nothing in return for a recommendation. Considering the effect of Internet-based influencers on social media, analogous marketing is becoming less significant as a communication medium between brand managers and the target market (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021)(Kumar et al., 2023). Information gleaned from official or anonymous sources can be compelling, depending on the credibility of a conduit (Schiffman et al., 2010). According to Sun et al. (2021), users with substantial following and established credibility in particular fields are considered to be influencers. Collaboration between brand managers and SMIs is a modern marketing trend (Kanwar & Huang, 2022)(Pankaj et al., 2023). This type of collaboration is referred to as influencer marketing.

Since 2019, the worldwide influencer marketing market grew more than three-fold, reaching a value of 21.1 billion U.S. dollars in 2023 (Dencheva, 2023; Lou & Yuan, 2019). By 2023, over 80 percent of brand marketers have allocated resources to influencer marketing (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024). Messages from sources that trustworthy and dependable are typically viewed as suspicious and rejected (Schiffman et al., 2010). One of the most critical issues in influencer marketing is the SMIs' reputation, as there are numerous instances where influencers make false claims causing them to lose credibility (Nafees et al., 2021). Because social media advertising originates from friends on social media, social media consumers find it more credible than conventional advertisements (Weismueller et al., 2020)(Kumar et al., 2023). Credibility is crucial to increasing the significance of SMIs in social media networks (Sesar et al., 2022). A message will be more positively received and accepted by the public if delivered by someone seen as more approachable and credible compared to an analogous prominent individual (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2023; Kim & Kim, 2021). Nonetheless, a more credible source is more persuasive than a less credible one (Budshra et al., 2024)(Schiffman et al., 2010).

As a relatively new and developing field of study, 229 research publications on the credibility of SMIs were made available in the Web of Science database in 2024. Thus, according to the expanding body of research in this area, SMI credibility plays a vital role in the anomalies in influencer marketing (Chopra et al., 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Studying how to process knowledge at the beginning of its evolution and using bibliometric techniques to interpret it to obtain more precise and unbiased insights have become feasible owing to the expansion of research publications (Marco-Lajara et al., 2022). A widely used technique for evaluating and examining extensive amounts of scientific information is bibliometric analysis (Kumar et al., 2024)(Donthu et al., 2021). Thus, the goal of the current study was to provide a broad assessment of the state of research on the credibility of SMIs.

Therefore, this study attempts to present useful research material linked to the concerned topic to facilitate access to this field while also considering influencers' credibility and the significance of bibliometric studies. To the best of the author's knowledge, no bibliometric analysis has been conducted on influencers' credibility. The researchers plan to employ bibliometric analysis to examine and summarize the literature using relevant search terms, prominent authors, and the most influential journals, institutions, and nations, as well as potential avenues for future scholarly investigation related to the topic, as identified in the Web of Science database.

1.1 Conceptual Framework

Definitions

Influencer credibility

Freberg et al. (2011) defined SMIs as "a new type of independent third-party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media" (p. 90). Influencers are significant social media users. Influencers work with brands to review and promote products because of their immense following (Bansal et al., 2024). One of the most crucial factors in choosing or adhering to influencers is influencer credibility. A person or entity is considered credible if it is perceived to be dependable and plausible (Kumar et al., 2023)(AlFarraj et al., 2021). According to Ohanian (1990), source credibility "is a term commonly used to imply a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message" (p. 41). Social media influencers receive credibility from their followers only when their suggestions are verifiable, objective, and honest. The more an influencer embodies these qualities, the more likely their messages are accepted by followers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Based on the source credibility model that was first devised by Ohanian (1990) and later supported by (Hovland et al., 1982) an influencer must meet three criteria in order to be considered credible: attractiveness, competence, and trustworthiness (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021). Later, (Munnukka et al., 2016) included similarity as an additional dimension of source credibility. As social media influencers increasingly become a vital part of brand strategies, influencers have a direct impact on their followers' inclinations to buy the things they recommend; therefore, it is crucial to investigate the credibility of these individuals (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020)(Pankaj et al., 2023).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study questions were addressed by the authors through bibliometric analysis. Bibliometric analysis of data has become more popular in recent years because of its ability to provide a comprehensive objective snapshot of the corpus of scientific literature spanning a wide range of social science areas (Pham et al., 2021). The bibliometric search review process consisted of four primary steps: database search, scholarly filtration, language filtration, and bibliometric review (Donthu et al., 2021). For science mapping, the researcher adhered to the five stages recommended by (Zupic & Čater, 2015). This method has been used by many authors for bibliometric analyses (Rathee & Mittal, 2024; Solanki et al., 2023). This research utilized the five scientific mapping techniques outlined by Zupic and Cater. The initial phase involved constructing the study framework by selecting appropriate data sources, search terms, and research questions. Bibliographic information was gathered from specific databases during the second phase. The data analysis process entered its third stage, which focused on choosing suitable software and refining the data to remove errors and duplications. Data analysis software was selected to facilitate the extraction of data representations. Finally, conclusions were drawn from the data interpretation and extraction of results.

2.1 Database selection

According to Vera-Baceta et al. (2019), the Web of Science is a more rigorous and robust bibliographic database than Scopus, and bibliometric research has mostly relied on it. Although Fauzi et al. (2024), Rejeb et al. (2022), and Vila-López et al. (2023)(Kumar et al., 2023) utilized this database for their bibliometric studies, the current study selected the Web of Science database because of its excellent quality and extensive coverage.

2.2 Data Analysis Software

A plethora of tools is available for bibliometric analysis, including R Studio's Biblioshiny package, Gephi, VOSviewer, Leximancer, CiteSpace, and SciMat. The present research selected R (Bibliometric R package). The acquired data were processed in R Studio and transformed into a bibliometric file. The researcher utilized the bibliometric library and the Biblioshiny platform within RStudio for the analysis (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

2.3 Research questions

RQ1. What are the most recent publication trends in the field of influencer credibility?

RQ2. Who are the top contributors (nations, organizations, and journals)?

RQ3. Which authors and papers within the field demonstrate the highest levels of productivity and citation impact?

RQ4. What keywords have been employed by authors in the analyzed field to investigate their topics?

RQ5. What areas warrant further exploration in future research?

2.4 Search parameters

The data for this study were obtained from the Web of Science database. The search phrases "influencer marketing" OR "social media influencer" AND "influencer credibility" OR "source credibility" were employed in the current study, together with a Boolean operator, and set limits to "topics, abstract, author keywords and, keyword plus" on September 25, 2024. All articles published up to 2024 were included in this study. The consequence was the production of 2,260 papers from which two documents with a final publication year of 2025 were excluded. As shown in Figure 1, the authors restricted the search to articles to eliminate other materials, including chapters from books, conference proceedings, dissertations, and theses. This resulted in 2,081 articles. Subsequently, the search was limited to the business, communication, management, sociology, and psychology categories of Web of Science. No other subject-related documents were included. Only 1,055 documents remained relevant after 1,026 documents were eliminated. Restricting the articles to those written in English was another inclusion criterion. Five publications written in languages other than English were excluded from the analysis. In the final stage, the authors read the titles and abstracts of 1050 documents. In this step, 821 irrelevant articles were removed. Information on documents that satisfied the requirements included citations, bibliographies, abstracts, keywords, and references for all papers. Ultimately, the authors created a plain-text file containing the data of 229 articles collected from the Web of Science database.

3. DESCRIPTIVE OVERVIEW OF THE DATA

The authors retrieved information from the Web of Science. At the time of data extraction, the authors found 229 directly related documents by reading the title and abstract of 1,050 documents. The data were extracted from a plain text file obtained from the Web of Science on September 25, 2024. The documents were analyzed using R Studio and the Bibliometrix package. Therefore, the current study included 229 documents from 70 sources for analysis. The first article related to social media influencer credibility was published in 2012. Table 1 outlines the principal details of the study analyzed through Biblioshiny. The data cover the time frame of 2012-2024. A total of 601 authors from various organizations and nations worldwide published the 229 documents included in the analysis. The average number of citations per document is 41.16, and these documents contain 11,310 references, 537 keywords plus, and 691 author keywords.

Figure 1. Workflow of study
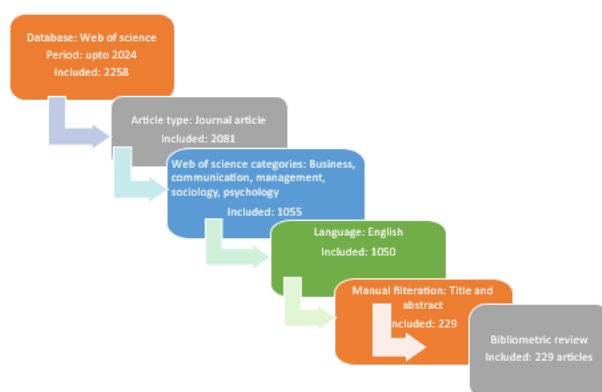
Source: The authors

This reflects a considerable volume, highlighting the extensive breadth of research in the area of "social media influencers credibility." A single author published only 13 documents with an average of 3.01 co-authors per document.

3.1 Annual scientific production trend

As shown in Figure 2, only a very small number of articles were published in 2012. Research on social media influencers' credibility began to increase in 2017; but the trend decreased in 2018, after which it followed a steady rise of publications in this domain starting in 2019, with an annual growth rate of 41.96% during the period of 2012–2024. The total number of publications in this period was 229. Since 2019, the credibility of influencers has gained popularity and continues to rise. The year 2024 saw the release of the most research documents, with 67 publications.

Table 1. The principal details of the study

Description	Results
Main information about data	
Timespan	2012:2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	70
Documents	229
Annual Growth Rate %	41.96
Document Average Age	2.06
Average citations per doc	41.16
References	11310
Document contents	
Keywords Plus (ID)	537
Author's Keywords (DE)	691
Authors	
Authors	601
Authors of single-authored docs	13
Authors collaboration	
Single-authored docs	13
Co-Authors per Doc	3.01
International co-authorships %	35.37
Document types	
article	201
article; early access	28

Source: Authors' Development

**Figure 2.** Annual scientific production
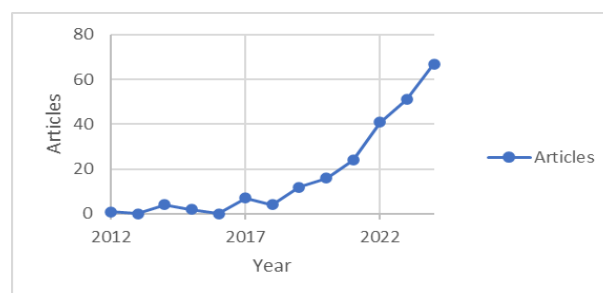
Source: Authors' Development

3.2 Citation pattern

Assuming that citations represent intellectual connections between publications, established when one article references another, citation analysis is a crucial method for scientific mapping (Appio et al., 2014). Figure 3 shows the mean citations per year for the period–2012-2024. The average number of citations increased noticeably annually between 2012 and 2015, peaking at 12.50 in 2015. The highest average number of citations occurred in 2020 (29.46). However, citations per year began to decrease drastically after 2020 and reach 3.45 by 2024. Compared to other periods, the timeframe from 1997 to 2015 exhibited a higher citation count, with efforts made to position the graph above the average threshold.

Figure 3. Average citations per year
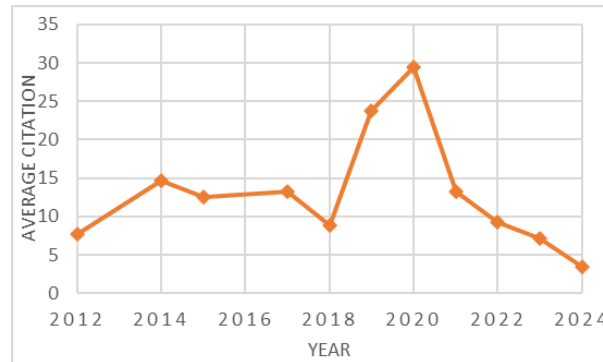
Source: The authors

Table 2. Top-10 research papers based on global citations.

S.NO.	Title	Author(s)	Journal	Citation
1	"Following Celebrities' Tweets About Brands: The Impact of Twitter-Based Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Consumers' Source Credibility Perception, Buying Intention, and Social Identification with Celebrities"	Jin & Phua (2014)	Journal of Advertising	384
2	"Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation"	Audrezet et al. (2020)	Journal of Business Research	358
3	"Instafamous and social media influencer marketing"	Jin et al. (2019)	Marketing Intelligence & Planning	321
4	"Driving Brand Engagement Through Online Social Influencers: An Empirical Investigation of Sponsored Blogging Campaigns"	Hughes et al. (2019)	Journal of Marketing	283
5	"'This Post Is Sponsored" Effects of Sponsorship Disclosure on Persuasion Knowledge and Electronic Word of Mouth in the Context of Facebook'	Boerman et al. (2017)	Journal of Interactive Marketing	265
6	"The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers' desire to mimic"	Ki & Kim (2019)	Psychology & Marketing	260
7	"YouTube vloggers' popularity and influence: The roles of homophily, emotional attachment, and expertise"	Ladhari et al. (2020)	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	233
8	"Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs"	Ki et al. (2020)	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	226
9	"The effect of characteristics of source credibility on consumer behaviour: A meta-analysis"	Ismagilova et al. (2020)	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	218
10	"The Perceived Fit between Instagram Influencers and the Endorsed Brand: How Influencer–Brand Fit Affects Source Credibility and Persuasive Effectiveness"	Breves et al. (2019)	Journal of Advertising Research	213

Source: Compiled by authors

This section highlights leading articles on the credibility of influencer marketing sources. Table 2 provides a list of the top ten papers that have garnered global interest. Based on the citations, the most significant research papers were published between 2014 and 2020. The document titled "Following Celebrities' Tweets About

Brands: The Impact of Twitter-Based Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Consumers' Source Credibility Perception, Buying Intention, and Social Identification with Celebrities", published by Jin and Phua (2014), has the highest number of citations at 384. It was succeeded by an article titled "Authenticity Under Threat: When Social Media Influencers Need to Go Beyond Self-Presentation," written by Audrezet et al. (2020) with 358 citations. Similarly, Jin et al. (2019) cited 321 times.

Table 3 shows the top 10 research papers based on local citations. Local citation indicates the number of times an article has cited other research publications within the current dataset. The article titled "Authenticity under Threat: When Social Media Influencers Need to Go Beyond Self-presentation" by Audrezet et al. (2020) received the greatest number of local citations, totalling 50. In contrast the article titled "The Perceived Fit between Instagram Influencers and the Endorsed Brand: How Influencer–Brand Fit Affects Source Credibility and Persuasive Effectiveness" by Breves et al. (2019) came in second with 46 local citations.

3.3 Top Contributing Journals

Figure 4 shows the ten most prolific sources of publications. Based on the source analysis, only three journals published more than 10 documents. With 25 documents, the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services has the highest number of publications, followed by the International Journal of Advertising and Journal of Business Research, with 17 and 16 documents, respectively. The Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing and Psychology and Marketing published the same number of documents, 10. As shown in Figure 5, source citation analysis revealed that only five sources were cited more than 500 times. Journal of Business Research exhibits the greatest citation count (825), followed by Computers in Human Behavior, the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, and the Journal of Advertising, with 730, 650, and 629 citations, respectively. It was also noted that until 2016, only the Journal of Business Research published documents, and in 2017, the International Journal of Advertising and Psychology & Marketing also started publishing documents on influencers' credibility. As shown in Figure 6, most journals began publishing in 2019.

Figure 4. Top ten journals by publication

Source: Authors' Development

Figure 5. Top ten journals based on citations
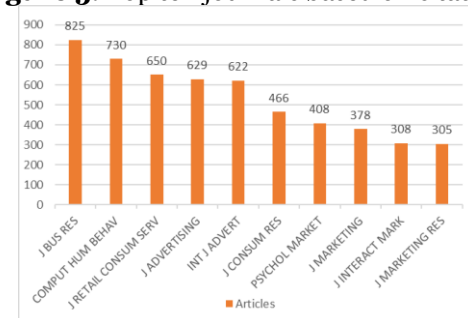
Source: Authors' Development

Table 3. Top-10 research papers based on local citations

S.NO.	Title	Author(s)	Journal	Citation
1	"Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation"	Audrezet et al. (2020)	Journal of Business Research	50
2	"The Perceived Fit between Instagram Influencers and the Endorsed Brand: How Influencer–Brand Fit Affects Source Credibility and Persuasive Effectiveness"	Breves et al. (2019)	Journal of Advertising Research	46
3	"The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers' desire to mimic"	Ki & Kim (2019)	Psychology & Marketing	38
4	"Instafamous and social media influencer marketing"	Jin et al. (2019)	Marketing Intelligence & Planning	37
5	"'You really are a great big sister' – parasocial relationships, credibility, and the moderating role of audience comments in influencer marketing"	Reinikainen et al. (2020)	Journal of Marketing Management	36
6	"'This Post Is Sponsored' Effects of Sponsorship Disclosure on Persuasion Knowledge and Electronic Word of Mouth in the Context of Facebook'	Boerman et al. (2017)	Journal of Interactive Marketing	35
7	"Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs"	Ki et al. (2020)	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	33
8	"YouTube vloggers' popularity and influence: The roles of homophily, emotional attachment, and expertise"	Ladhari et al. (2020)	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	27
9	"Trust me, trust me not: A nuanced view of influencer marketing on social media"	(Kim & Kim 2021)	Journal of Business Research	27

Source: Authors' Development

Figure 6. Sources' production over time
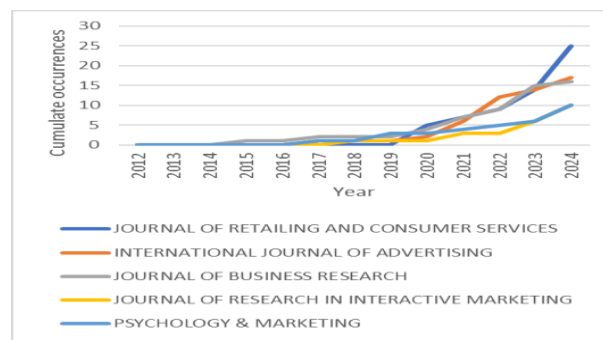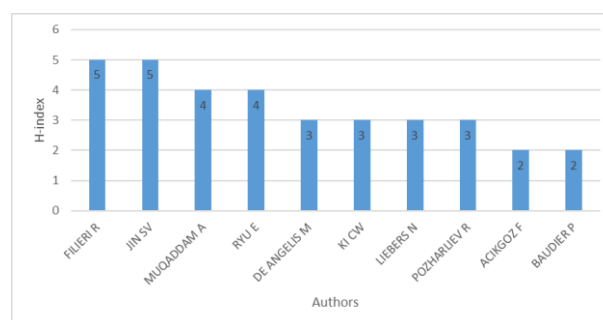

Source: Authors' Development.

3.4 Author analysis

The authors used the h-index and the number of publications to identify the top authors. Table 4 shows a list of the top 15 authors who provided more than three research articles in the domain of influencers' credibility. Figure 7 shows the top ten authors based on their h-index. Filieri R and Jin SV were the top contributing authors in both lists with 5 publications and 5 h-index. Only two authors have an h-index of five and five documents, this is a concerning figure, as it indicates a limited body of researchers engaged in the field of influencer credibility. Nevertheless, these numbers highlight the need for further growth in the field.

Table 4. Top 15 most relevant authors

Rating	Authors	No. of Articles	Rating	Authors	No. of Articles
1	FILIERI R	5	9	HINNANT A	3
2	JIN SV	5	10	ISLAM T	3
3	DE ANGELIS M	4	11	KI CW	3
4	HUDDERS L	4	12	KIM H	3
5	MUQADDAM A	4	13	KIRKPATRICK CE	3
6	POZHARLIEV R	4	14	LIEBERS N	3
7	RYU E	4	15	XIE-CARSON L	3
8	BENCKENDORFF P	3			

Source: Authors' Development.

**Figure 7.** Top 10 authors based on their h-index

Source: Authors' Development.

3.5 Affiliations

Numerous authors from various institutions have significantly contributed to the credibility of influencers. Figure 8 shows the top 10 institutions published more than four articles. The authors found that the Pennsylvania Commonwealth System of Higher Education contributed the most to the seven research articles. This was followed by the Indian Institute of Management, and the State University System of Florida, which had six articles each. One interesting finding is that the top 10 universities are from only three countries: the USA, India, and Belgium. Among these, the USA makes a significant contribution to this domain. Table 5 lists the countries affiliated with the primary authors. The USA is at the top of the list with 47 documents, of which 37

were single-nation publications, and 10 were multi-national publications. This is followed by China with a total of 45, of which 26 are single-nation and 19 are multi-national publications.

Figure 8. Top 10 affiliations based on publication
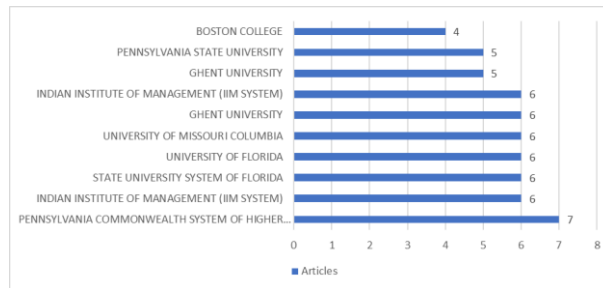
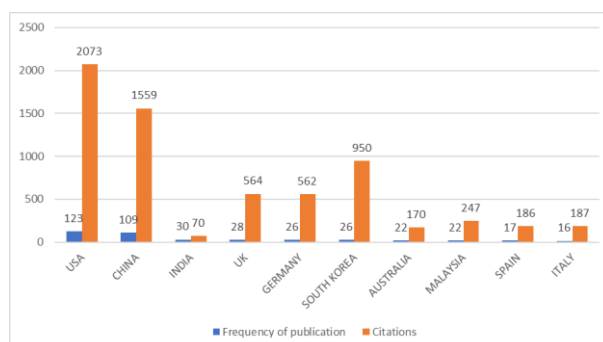Source: Authors' Development.

Table 5. Corresponding author's countries

Country	Articles	SCP	MCP	Frequency	MCP_Ratio
USA	47	37	10	0.205	0.213
CHINA	45	26	19	0.197	0.422
GERMANY	14	10	4	0.061	0.286
KOREA	13	4	9	0.057	0.692
AUSTRALIA	9	8	1	0.039	0.111
INDIA	9	8	1	0.039	0.111
UNITED KINGDOM	9	4	5	0.039	0.556
ITALY	8	5	3	0.035	0.375
SPAIN	8	6	2	0.035	0.25
BELGIUM	7	4	3	0.031	0.429

Source: Authors' Development.

3.6 Countries

Articles from 35 countries were included in this bibliometric analysis. Figure 9 highlights the top countries based on the number of articles and total citations. Figure 9 shows that the USA ranks first in both the number of articles and total citations. The USA has published 123 articles on the topic of influencers' credibility and has achieved the highest citation score of 2,073, followed by China, with 109 documents and 1,559 citations. India was ranked third in terms of publications with 30 articles but does not appear in the top 10 countries in terms of total citations. Thus, it is evident from the graph that there is a need to conduct more research in all countries, except the USA and China.

Figure 9. Top 10 countries

Source: Authors' Development.

3.7 Keyword analysis

Figure 10 shows a tree map of keyword plus from 2012 to 2024. Keywords can provide valuable insights from the analyzed articles. It is evident from the figure that the most dominant terms are "impact", "word-of-mouth", "social media", and "source credibility". Figure 11 shows the words production over time. In 2012, the production of keywords was very slow. It was found that a minor increase in keywords occurred in 2013, reflecting a steady upward trend in keyword usage from 2018 to 2024.

This tree map illustrates the diverse perspectives explored regarding influencer credibility, including its influence on consumer behavior, its connection to social media and word-of-mouth, and its integration into more general theories of source credibility and communication. According to the research, although more conventional components such as celebrities are still present, attention is now focused on comprehending the digital influencer landscape and the complex ways in which influencers engage with and impact their audiences.

**Figure 10.** Tree map of top 20 author keywords
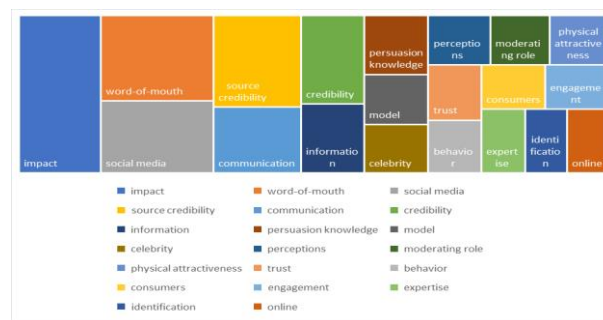
Source: Authors' Development.

## 3.8 Co-occurrence Network of Authors Keywords

A co-occurrence network refers to the simultaneous appearance of keywords within a dataset. There are four clusters, as shown in Figure 12, where different colors indicate dissimilar clusters. Cluster 1 (Red color): The keywords like celebrity endorsements and attractiveness dominate the red cluster. This cluster revolves around how celebrities' physical attractiveness and expertise impact their endorsement. Cluster 2 (Blue colour): Here keywords like persuasion knowledge, celebrity, media, and engagement dominate the blue colour cluster. Understanding persuasion knowledge and celebrity influence play a key role in engagement strategies. This cluster highlights how influencers, celebrities, and engagement affect persuasion and identification. Cluster 3 (Green colour): The keywords represented by this cluster are behavior, purchase, involvement, and followers. The keyword behaviors and intentions are shaped by influencer marketing and engagement. Cluster 4 (Violet colour): Keywords like word-of-mouth, source credibility, impact, and social media dominate the violet colour cluster. The keyword 'source credibility' was related to impact, social media, and purchase intention.

Figure 11. Words' frequency over time
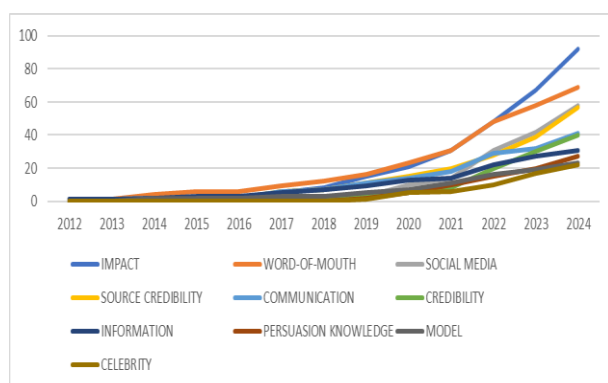
Source: Authors' Development.

**Figure 12.** Co-occurrence network of authors keywords
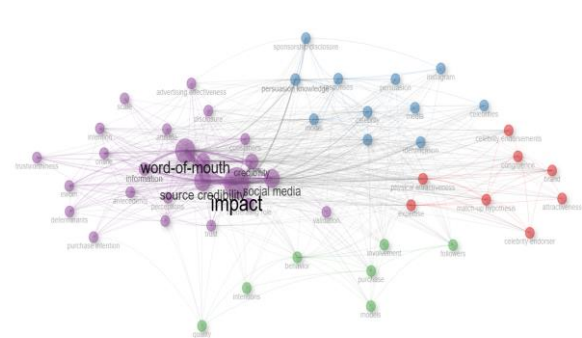
Source: Authors' Development.

3.9 Collaboration network

Figure 13 shows the collaboration networks of the authors. Different colors denote different clusters. A cluster represents the collective work of the authors. The purple cluster shows that Lee et al. co-authored an article in 2024 titled "Exploring the strategic use of TikTok for clinical trial recruitment: How audiences' prior short-form

video usage influences persuasive effects". Similarly, Jin et al. co-authored two studies. Their first paper was published in 2019 titled "Instafamous and Social Media Influencer Marketing" and this paper ranked third in terms of citation count. The second paper was published in 2021, titled "I trust what she's # endorsing on Instagram: Moderating effects of parasocial interaction and social presence in fashion influencer marketing".

**Figure 13.** Collaboration network among authors
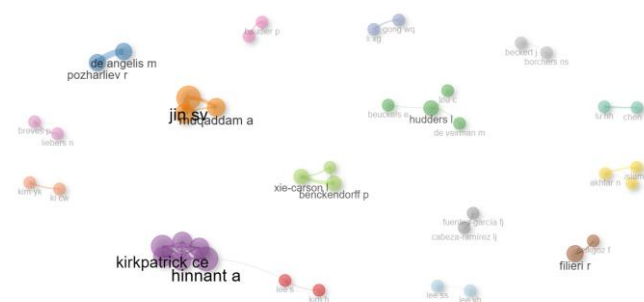
Source: Authors' Development.

3.10 Countries Collaboration World Map

Figure 14 illustrates the collaboration among authors from various countries. Research partnerships between different nations are represented in blue, while pink-bordered links signify collaborations among authors from specific countries. As can be seen, the USA and China are central players in global research, with significant collaborations across continents. Countries like Australia, Belgium, Germany, and Canada also engage in international collaborations, but with fewer partnerships compared to major players like the USA and China. The map clearly shows that researchers from different countries must collaborate on projects related to influencer credibility. This can be enhanced if nations increase funding for research and promote this field of study. The collaboration map among various nations could also aid in formulating collective policies that benefit all countries.

Figure 14. Countries collaboration world map
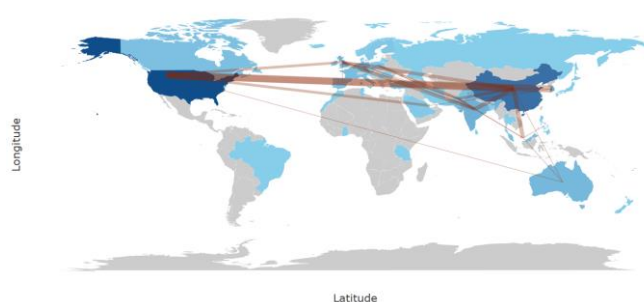
Source: Authors' Development.

4. CONCLUSION

Using bibliometric analysis, this study examined research trends in publications that assess influencers' reputations. In addition to highlighting notable researchers, nations, and elite universities, this study attempts to outline directions for future research. Data from 2012 to 2024 were included in this study. A total of 229 research publications published in the Web of Science database were examined. Contributions to the selected articles came from 601 writers across 70 journals, 423 institutions, and 49 countries. The concerned field had averaged 17.62 articles published annually, which is a moderate figure. These figures are not particularly impressive and require further improvement. Citation research revealed that, between 2022 and 2024, the average annual citation count was 3.45, which is poor and requires improvement. After conducting more source analysis, the authors discovered that the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services published the greatest number of articles in the field (25), while all other journals produced fewer than 20 articles. These worrying figures suggest that journals should prioritize studies that explore the legitimacy of influencers. Moreover, during the source expansion phase, we noted that most journals started publishing articles related to influencers' credibility in 2019. After conducting an author analysis, the author discovered that Jin SV and Filieri R achieved the highest H-index (five) and the greatest number of publications published (five). With seven publications published, the institution "Pennsylvania Commonwealth System of Higher Education" has the most publications overall. Institutions need to concentrate on increasing numbers, as the number of publications is not very high. To achieve this goal, institutions should encourage academics to publish in the influencer credibility field. Of all the countries, the United States of America has garnered the greatest number

of citations, that is, 2073, for its research on the credibility of influencers. Of the total publications, 123 papers (54 %) were published. Word occurrence graphs, tree maps, and other tools have informed us about the key topics that are addressed or offer the potential for further study. It was discovered that the fundamental themes are impact, word-of-mouth, social media, and source credibility. Although there are many studies on these topics, there is still more research on topics such as identification, online involvement, and engagement. These themes are open to further exploration. The results indicate that the United States and China are the two countries with the greatest amount of collaboration on the national collaboration map. According to these figures, international cooperation is necessary, and other nations should concentrate on publishing material on social media influencers' credibility.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Some limitations of this study point to potential areas for further investigation. First, only bibliometric analyses were included which depict the main ideas and study trends found in the literature. This may not be particularly useful to authorities and governing bodies as it is primarily relevant to academics. Furthermore, some publications from various databases may have been overlooked, as the authors solely extracted data from the Web of Science. Future research could incorporate data from different databases in subsequent studies. Moreover, this study offered an analysis that was dependent on articles written in English, which may have excluded works that were produced in other languages. This limitation could be addressed in the future by utilizing resources released in other languages. Finally, this study employed a restricted set of science-mapping instruments. The authors anticipate that other scholars will apply this strategy using a broader range of tools for specific types of research.

6. IMPLICATIONS

The authors provided four significant scholarly implications based on the findings of the analysis. First, the study results aid in understanding the scope and current boundaries of scholars' field research. Therefore, scholars may use the findings of this study to draw attention to new and unexplored areas of source credibility in influencer marketing. Second, by identifying the most productive authors and institutions in this sector, researchers can locate new partners and academic collaborators. Third, the study provides researchers with vital information on influential research papers that could be considered the cornerstones of this area of study. This information will be beneficial for future research. Finally, conducting empirical investigations based on this study may serve as a catalyst for advancing empirical knowledge in future research. Overall, the study's conclusions likely centre on strengthening the alignment between influencers' skill sets and marketing requirements, which increases influencers perceived overall credibility with consumers. Therefore, marketers should identify the key characteristics of influencers and strategically collaborate to enhance consumer purchase decisions.

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