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# Applications of Operations Research in Social Commerce

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**ABSTRACT:** Social commerce has emerged as an important area of digital commerce, integrating social media interactions with commercial activities to influence consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions. This study examines the development of social commerce research, identifies major research themes, and explores existing research gaps and future directions. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR), supported by bibliometric analysis and qualitative synthesis, was conducted using Scopus-indexed publications from 2018 to 2026. The analysis identified 1,171 publications across 731 sources, highlighting the growing academic interest in the field and increasing international collaboration. Major research themes include social media analytics, consumer behaviour, online reviews, electronic word-of-mouth, user-generated content, consumer trust, customer engagement, and influencer marketing. Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, also feature in the literature. However, the findings indicate that existing studies often examine individual aspects of social commerce rather than integrating social interactions, commercial activities, and technological components into a comprehensive framework. In particular, further research is needed to understand how trust, social influence, user-generated content, influencers, and platform features interact to shape consumer behaviour. This study provides a structured overview of the field and identifies opportunities for more integrated future research.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Commerce; Bibliometric Analysis; Systematic Literature Review; Consumer Behaviour; Social Media Analytics.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social commerce has become an important area of study because social media platforms are no longer used only for communication and promotion. They are increasingly connected with e-commerce activities and consumer decision-making (Semenda et al., 2024). The research methodology defines social commerce as the combination of social media activities and commercial transactions. It supports purchasing and selling activities through social networks, online communities, consumer reviews, electronic word-of-mouth, social recommendations and user-generated content. The literature describes it as an important area of digital commerce in which social-media interaction, user-generated content and consumer behaviour are closely connected (Arzy et al., 2021; Abkenar et al., 2024). Research on social commerce is relatively recent and has developed alongside the growth of social media platforms, digital marketing and online consumer interactions (Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018). In recent years the field has gained further momentum, as platforms have added commercial functions such as influencer marketing, personalised recommendations and short-form video commerce (Liang et al., 2025). Research activity around social media marketing, e-commerce and social commerce platforms has also increased, particularly from 2021 onwards (Khraiwish & Alsharif, 2024). For businesses, understanding consumer opinions, engagement and behaviour on social platforms is therefore important for improving their social-commerce strategies (Yadav et al., 2022).

A large body of research has already examined how users behave on social commerce platforms (Arzy et al., 2021). Much of this work pays particular attention to social media analytics, online reviews and customer-generated content (Abkenar et al., 2024). Online customer reviews and user-generated content have been shown to provide important information about consumer experiences and purchasing decisions (Jia et al., 2024). Reviews, electronic word-of-mouth and other forms of consumer-generated content can also influence how consumers evaluate products and make

purchasing-related decisions (Nalluri et al., 2025). Social media analytics has been used to understand consumer opinions and improve marketing decisions (Yadav et al., 2022), and many researchers have applied text analytics to social media data to identify patterns in user behaviour (Arzy et al., 2021). More recent studies have considered the effects of artificial intelligence, influencer marketing, big data analytics and personalisation on social media marketing and consumer engagement (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025). Systematic and bibliometric reviews of social media marketing have also been carried out to examine how the field has developed (Khraiwish & Alsharif, 2024). Overall, the evidence suggests that consumer behaviour in social commerce is influenced by several interconnected factors, including social influence, online information, reviews, engagement and marketing communication (Arzy et al., 2021). However, much of the earlier research has been exploratory, partly because social commerce platforms and their business models continue to develop and change (Abkenar et al., 2024).

Despite this progress, the literature review concludes that such studies remain narrow in focus. They deal mainly with particular aspects, such as social media analytics, online reviews, influencers or individual social commerce platforms, rather than examining the entire social-commerce process together. There is also a relatively small body of literature on integrating social interactions, commercial activities and technological components within social commerce platforms (Abkenar et al., 2024). Relatively little is known about how trust, social influence, user-generated content, influencers and platform features interact to shape consumer behaviour across different social-commerce environments. The research methodology adds that social commerce has been explored from many angles, including consumer behaviour, trust, adoption, customer engagement, business performance and social interaction. It therefore treats a Systematic Literature Review as a suitable way of bringing this fragmented literature together (Lin et al., 2017; Busalim & Hussin, 2016). The present research follows this approach. It combines a Systematic Literature Review with bibliometric analysis and qualitative synthesis to examine how social commerce research has developed, which themes and contributors are most visible, and where gaps remain. The paragraphs that follow review the research methodology, the data analysis and the literature review in turn, and then propose three research questions.

The research methodology is built around a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), a method used to gather, analyse, organise and synthesise existing studies in a field, assess its progress, identify key research trends and highlight gaps for further research. In this study, the SLR was used to evaluate the academic literature on social commerce, including its main research trends, consumer aspects, technological developments and further research avenues. The methodology argues that an SLR is appropriate because social commerce has been explored from many different angles and the literature is fragmented (Lin et al., 2017; Busalim & Hussin, 2016). Five objectives are set out: to identify growth and publication trends; to review the main themes and sub-themes; to identify key authors, journals, institutions and nations; to understand the theories, research methodologies and variables used; and to identify research gaps and future directions. The search was carried out in the Web of Science database for the period 2018 to 2027. It used keywords such as “social commerce,” “social shopping,” “social media commerce” and “social commerce platforms,” combined with Boolean operators. The initial search found 2,905 records. The time-span criterion removed 430 records, leaving 2,475. The document type criterion, which kept only articles and reviews, removed 1,261, leaving 1,214. The language criterion, which kept only English records, removed 32, leaving 1,182. The journal/source criterion removed none, so 1,182 studies formed the final dataset. This process is shown in a PRISMA flow diagram, which makes the path from identification to inclusion transparent (Page et al., 2021). Studies were included if they were published in 2018–2027, were written in English, were journal articles or review papers, and focused on social commerce or related topics. These topics include social commerce adoption, consumer purchase intention, trust, customer engagement, electronic word-of-mouth, online reviews, social influence, social shopping, social media platforms, customer experience and business performance. Studies outside the time period, in other languages, of other document types, or unrelated to social commerce were excluded. The methodology then describes two ways of analysing the 1,182 studies. Bibliometric analysis can show publication trends, prominent contributors, collaboration patterns, keywords and relationships among research themes, using bibliographic data exported from Web of Science. The methodology says Bibliometrix and Biblioshiny in RStudio could be used for this (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), with Microsoft Excel as a possible aid. The analyses it lists are annual scientific output, top productive authors and journals, most cited papers, contributions by countries and institutions, collaboration networks, keyword co-occurrence, citation and co-citation analysis, and the evolution of thematic areas. It also names trust, purchase intention, customer engagement, social influence, electronic word-of-mouth and consumer behaviour as top terms in keyword co-occurrence. A qualitative synthesis can be added to make sense of the findings

and group them into themes: consumer behaviour, technology and platform factors, social influence, relationships and trust, and marketing results and business performance. The synthesis would also check which theories were used, such as the Technology Acceptance Model, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Social Influence Theory, the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework and trust-based models. It would compare research methods such as surveys, structural equation modelling, interviews, experiments, bibliometric analysis and conceptual reviews, and it would note gaps, methodological limits and ideas for future work. Together, the two parts give a numeric picture of the field and a narrative view of the main issues in social commerce. It should be noted that the methodology states that the SLR was performed but describes the bibliometric analysis and qualitative synthesis in terms of what could or can be done. The Web of Science search and the figures above belong to the methodology file only; the data analysis file reports a different database and different numbers, as explained next.

The data analysis file reports what was actually done with the collection. Using the Main Information dashboard in Biblioshiny (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and following the science mapping practice recommended by Zupic and Čater (2015), the authors started from an initial database excerpt from Scopus of 1,173 papers over a nominal timespan from 2018 to 2027. The year 2027 contained only two advance, early-access papers. Comparing these with 51 publications in 2018 produced a distorted negative annual growth rate of minus 30.22 percent, because the software calculates growth from the dates used to select the documents (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2026). To remove this end-period truncation bias, the authors excluded 2027. This left a complete nine-year span from 2018 to 2026 with 1,171 peer-reviewed publications and a positive annual growth rate of 18.1 percent. The main information plot shows that these documents came from 731 sources. The authors took this as a sign that the field is interdisciplinary, extending into computer science, business management, communication and healthcare. There were 4,420 authors, with
4.21 co-authors per document, and only 90 authors had written single-authored documents. International co-authorship was 27.92 percent, so over one in four papers involved cross-border partnerships, and the authors concluded that team science dominates the field. The collection contained 3,835 unique author keywords, an average document age of 3.15 years and an average of 20.12 citations per document. The reference count was zero because cited reference strings were omitted during export. The annual scientific production figures show that output rose from 51 articles in 2018 to 87 in 2019, 111 in 2020 and 135 in 2021. Growth then slowed in 2022, before
output reached 155 in 2023, fell to 144 in 2024, peaked at 202 in 2025 and stood at 193 in 2026. An exponential trendline gave the formula $y = 59.326e^{(0.1418x)}$ with $R^2 = 0.8227$, which the authors read as average growth of about 14.2 percent per year, with over 82 percent of the variance explained by exponential growth. The three-field plot, linking countries, authors and keywords, showed regionally organised research groups. These were a Swedish group (Laurell C., Sandstrom C., Geissinger A. and Oberg C.), a group from the US and China (Srinivasa R.N., Zhang Y., Liu X., Li J., Li W. and Wang Y.), and an Indian group (Kar A.K., Kumar S., Sharma R., Kumar V. and Nanda P.). Australia was represented by one researcher, Yigitcanlar T., and Turkey by one, Kayakus M. Authors of computational methods (Zhang Y., Wang Y., Liu X. and Li J.) tended to use algorithm-related keywords such as machine learning, deep learning, data mining and natural language processing. The Swedish group and Kar A.K. mainly used business-related keywords such as social media analytics, online social networks, big data and decision support. Atanasov
A.G. and Srinivasa R.N. were mainly linked to human-related keywords such as humans, human and COVID-19. The choropleth map showed the United States with the greatest number of publications, followed by India, with China, Canada and Australia in third place. Western Europe, the United Kingdom and Northern Europe had moderate activity. Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia stood out in Asia and the Middle East, Brazil in Latin America, and South Africa, Egypt and Nigeria in Africa. Large parts of the map, including Central Africa, Central Asia and parts of South America, showed no indexed documents. In the co-word analysis in VOSviewer, 7058 keywords were detected and a threshold of 12 left 136 keywords in four clusters. Cluster 1 (red, 72 items) centres on computational data science, machine learning and business decision-making, with keywords such as social networking (online), big data, data analytics, deep learning, natural language processing, predictive analytics, behavioral research and decision-making. Cluster 2 (green, 58 items) focuses on human behaviour, communication and public health, with keywords such as social media, human, humans, twitter, covid-19, procedures, adult, mental health and public health. Cluster 3 (blue, five items) relates to digital information integrity (algorithm, disinformation, misinformation, visual analytics and visualization). Cluster 4 contains one keyword, risk assessment, which relates to legal, ethical and compliant data science. From these results the authors concluded that social media and social media analytics are the central concepts, that combining machine learning algorithms with social media data can address real-life issues in various fields, and that the research

field can be split into two areas: data science and public health research. The keywords the methodology lists as top terms (trust, purchase intention and so on) are not among those named in this keyword analysis.

The literature review groups previous work around several connected themes. The first is consumer behaviour on social commerce platforms, which has largely been studied through empirical, data-driven approaches (Arzy et al., 2021; Semenda et al., 2024). Studies have linked it to variables such as consumer opinions, engagement, trust and purchasing-related behaviour, which suggests that several forms of social-media and user-generated data should be analysed rather than a single consumer variable (Nalluri et al., 2025). The second theme is social media analytics. Social-media data have been used to understand customer opinions, product perception and consumer behaviour (Yadav et al., 2022; Benslama & Jallouli, 2022). They have also been used to produce business intelligence from consumer-, employee- and firm-generated content (Hu et al., 2019), to evaluate consumer engagement and marketing performance through metrics (Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018), and to improve e-commerce marketing strategies (Semenda et al., 2024). Systematic reviews support the growing consensus that social media analytics is an important component of digital marketing and consumer research (Madila et al., 2021). The third theme is online reviews and customer-generated content. Online customer reviews and user-generated content give important information about consumer experiences and purchasing decisions, and large volumes of reviews can be analysed to identify customer satisfaction and experience (Jia et al., 2024). Social-media data can also support product recommendations and consumer decision-making (Nasrabadi et al., 2024). The fourth theme is technology and marketing. Artificial intelligence, machine learning and big data analytics have allowed researchers and marketers to analyse larger amounts of social media information and examine its implications for consumer engagement and digital marketing (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025). Only in recent years have studies of social commerce directly addressed how artificial intelligence, influencer marketing, personalisation and platform-specific features can shape digital marketing and commerce (Liang et al., 2025). Bibliometric evidence also shows growing attention to influencers, social-media marketing and digital consumer engagement (Khraiwish & Alsharif, 2024). The review also discusses the relationship between social interaction and commercial activity. Several studies point to a convergence between social media and e-commerce, as platforms combine consumer interaction, product information and commercial activities, and integrating social interaction with commercial activity can create new opportunities for businesses to engage consumers and support online purchasing (Abkenar et al., 2024). Together, the reviewed studies point to a role for trust, consumer engagement, social influence and digital content in explaining how consumers interact with social-commerce platforms. The review then identifies its gap. The studies remain narrow in focus, dealing mainly with particular aspects such as social media analytics, online reviews, influencers or individual social-commerce platforms, rather than examining the entire social-commerce process together. The review also notes that there is a relatively small body of literature on integrating social interactions, commercial activities and technological components within social commerce platforms (Abkenar et al., 2024). It therefore suggests that social commerce should be studied as a combination of social interaction and commercial activity rather than simply as another form of online shopping. It adds that relatively little is known about how trust, social influence, user-generated content, influencers and platform features interact to shape consumer behaviour across different social-commerce environments.

1. How has social commerce research developed over time, as shown by annual scientific production and publication growth trends in the bibliometric analysis?

2. Which major research themes, countries, authors and keywords stand out in social commerce research, according to the bibliometric analysis (three-field plot, country scientific production and keyword co-occurrence network)?

3. What major areas of focus, gaps and future directions emerge from the literature review of social commerce research, particularly in the distinction between studies of individual aspects of social commerce and studies of the social-commerce process as a whole?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on social commerce has highlighted several important themes. (Liang et al., 2025) Different theories exist in the literature regarding social commerce and the behaviour of users on social commerce platforms.(Abkenar et al., 2024) More recent attention has focused on the provision of AI-driven personalisation, influencer strategies and data analytics in social commerce.(Liang et al.,

2025) A large and growing body of literature has investigated the behaviour of users on social commerce platforms.(Arzy et al., 2021) Much of the current literature on social commerce pays particular attention to social media analytics, online reviews and customer-generated content.(Abkenar et al., 2024) There is a large volume of published studies describing the role of artificial intelligence, machine learning and big data analytics in social media and digital commerce.(Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025)

The existing literature on social commerce is extensive and focuses particularly on social media platforms, consumer behaviour, marketing strategies and user engagement.(Liang et al., 2025) There is a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with integrating social interactions, commercial activities and technological components within social commerce platforms.(Abkenar et al., 2024) A considerable amount of literature has been published on social media analytics and customer opinions. These studies examine how online reviews and social media data can be analysed to understand consumer preferences and behaviour.(Yadav et al., 2022) The academic literature on social commerce has revealed the emergence of several contrasting themes.(Abkenar et al., 2024) Research into social commerce is relatively recent, developing alongside the growth of social media platforms, digital marketing and online consumer interactions. (Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018) Over the past decade, most research in social commerce has emphasised the use of social media analytics, consumer-generated information and digital platforms to understand consumer behaviour and marketing outcomes.

(Benslama & Jallouli, 2022) In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on the use of social media for understanding customer opinions, product perception and consumer behaviour(Yadav et al., 2022) During the past decade, much more information has become available on social media users and their interactions through online reviews, social networking platforms and other forms of user-generated content(Hu et al., 2019) .Historically, research investigating social media and consumer behaviour has focused on the analysis of online interactions and the information generated by users on digital (Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018). Only in recent years have studies of social commerce directly addressed how artificial intelligence, influencer marketing, personalisation and platform-specific features can shape digital marketing and commerce. (Liang et al., 2025)

Over the past few years, major advances in artificial intelligence and big data analytics have allowed researchers and marketers to analyse increasingly large amounts of social media information and examine its implications for consumer engagement and digital marketing. (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025) .

In recent years, the study of social commerce has gained further momentum as social media platforms have increasingly incorporated commercial functions, including influencer marketing, personalised recommendations and short-form video commerce.(Liang et al., 2025) Most research on social commerce has been carried out in recent years, with the literature showing increasing research activity around social media marketing, e-commerce and social commerce platforms, particularly from 2021 onwards(Khraiwish & Alsharif, 2024) . Most researchers investigating social commerce have utilised social media data, text analytics and user-generated content to examine consumer behaviour and interactions on social commerce platforms (Arzy et al., 2021)
.Using this approach, researchers have been able to identify patterns in user behaviour and examine the different topics and themes associated with social commerce platforms(Abkenar et al., 2024) . Several systematic and bibliometric reviews of social media marketing have been undertaken to examine the development of the field, major research themes and emerging areas of research(Khraiwish & Alsharif, 2024) . The vast majority of studies on social commerce have used empirical and data-driven approaches to examine consumer behaviour, social media interactions and marketing activities(Semenda et al., 2024) .

What we know about social commerce is largely based on studies that analyse consumer interactions and information generated through social media and online platforms(Arzy et al., 2021) . There are a number of studies which suggest that social media analysis can provide useful insights for improving e-commerce marketing strategies and understanding customer behaviour(Semenda et al., 2024) . Much of the previous research on social commerce has been exploratory in nature, particularly because social commerce platforms and their business models continue to develop and change(Abkenar et al., 2024) . Much of the social commerce research has focused on identifying and evaluating the role

of social media marketing, influencers, consumer engagement and digital technologies in shaping online commercial activities(Liang et al., 2025) .

What we know about social commerce is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate user behaviour, consumer interactions and the information exchanged through social commerce platforms (Arzy et al., 2021) . Publications that concentrate on social commerce more frequently adopt a systematic, bibliometric or chronological approach to examine how social media marketing and social commerce have developed over time(Khraiwish & Alsharif, 2024) . To date, several studies have investigated social commerce and the factors influencing user behaviour and interactions on social commerce platforms (Arzy et al., 2021) . Several studies have begun to examine the role of social commerce mobile applications and how their business models can be enhanced through the analysis of user-generated data(Abkenar et al., 2024) . Various studies have assessed the efficacy of social media analysis in improving e-commerce marketing strategies and understanding customer behaviour (Semenda et al., 2024) . Researchers have attempted to evaluate the impact of social media marketing, influencer activity and emerging digital technologies on consumer engagement and commercial outcomes(Liang et al., 2025)

. A great deal of previous research into social commerce has focused on consumer behaviour, social media interactions, customer engagement and the use of digital platforms for commercial activities (Khraiwish & Alsharif, 2024) . Several studies have used data collected from social media platforms to examine consumer behaviour, user-generated content and the factors associated with interactions on social commerce platforms(Arzy et al., 2021) . Previous studies have explored the relationships between social media engagement, consumer behaviour, customer insights and purchasing-related activities in digital commerce(Semenda et al., 2024) . A number of authors have considered the effects of artificial intelligence, influencer marketing, big data analytics and personalisation on social media marketing and consumer engagement(Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025) . Numerous studies have attempted to explain how social media marketing has evolved and how emerging technologies and changing consumer behaviour are shaping the development of social commerce(Liang et al., 2025) ,(Khraiwish & Alsharif, 2024). Several lines of evidence suggest that social media analytics has become an important tool for understanding consumer opinions and improving marketing decisions, as social-media data provide businesses with valuable information about customers and brands(Yadav et al., 2022)

. Previous research has established that social media can generate useful business intelligence by analysing consumer-, employee-, and firm-generated content, helping organisations understand brand personality and consumer perceptions(Hu et al., 2019) . Data from several studies suggest that social-media metrics and analytics can be used to evaluate consumer engagement and marketing performance, demonstrating the growing importance of data-driven approaches in marketing research(Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018) . Recent evidence suggests that social-media analysis can improve e-commerce marketing strategies by helping businesses identify consumer preferences, market trends and customer responses(Semenda et al., 2024)

. It is now well established from a variety of studies that online customer reviews and user-generated content provide important information for understanding consumer experiences and purchasing decisions, with research demonstrating how large volumes of online reviews can be analysed to identify customer satisfaction and experience(Jia et al., 2024) . New findings amongst social-commerce users provide further evidence that consumer behaviour on social-commerce platforms can be examined through text analytics to identify patterns in user-generated content and platform behaviour(Arzy et al., 2021) . Several studies have postulated a convergence between social media and e-commerce, particularly as social platforms increasingly combine consumer interaction, product information and commercial activities(Abkenar et al., 2024) . Recently, considerable evidence has accumulated to show that influencer activity and social-media marketing have become important areas of marketing research, with bibliometric evidence demonstrating the growing research attention given to influencers, social-media marketing and digital consumer engagement(Khraiwish & Alsharif, 2024) .

Many recent studies have shown that social-media data can also support product recommendations and consumer decision-making, including research applying social-media analytics to shopping-marketplace analysis(Nasrabadi et al., 2024) . In previous studies on social commerce, different variables have been found to be related to consumer opinions, engagement, trust and purchasing-related behaviour, highlighting the importance of analysing multiple forms of social-media and user-generated data rather than relying on a single consumer variable(Nalluri et al., 2025) . There is a growing consensus among researchers that social-media analytics is becoming an important component of digital marketing and

consumer research, as demonstrated by systematic reviews examining its applications, methods and future research directions(Madila et al., 2021) .

Together, these studies indicate that social commerce has developed into an important area of digital commerce in which social-media interaction, user-generated content and consumer behaviour are closely connected (Arzy et al., 2021),(Abkenar et al., 2024) . Overall, these studies highlight the need for businesses to understand consumer opinions, engagement and behaviour on social platforms in order to improve their social-commerce strategies (Yadav et al., 2022) . Considering all of this evidence, it seems that social media is no longer used only for communication and promotion but is increasingly connected with e-commerce activities and consumer decision-making(Semenda et al., 2024) . Collectively, these studies outline a critical role for social-media analytics, as businesses can use consumer-generated data to identify preferences, opinions and patterns in customer behaviour(Hu et al., 2019) .

In all the studies reviewed here, social interaction and user-generated content are recognised as important sources of information for understanding consumers and their experiences in digital environments(Jia et al., 2024) . The evidence presented in this section suggests that reviews, electronic word-of-mouth and other forms of consumer-generated content can influence how consumers evaluate products and make purchasing-related decisions(Nalluri et al., 2025) . The studies presented thus far provide evidence that influencers and social-media marketing have also become important components of the developing social-commerce environment(Khraiwish & Alsharif, 2024) . Taken together, these studies support the notion that the integration of social interaction with commercial activities can create new opportunities for businesses to engage consumers and support online purchasing(Abkenar et al., 2024) .

Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that consumer behaviour in social commerce is influenced by several interconnected factors, including social influence, online information, reviews, engagement and marketing communication(Arzy et al., 2021) . Together these studies provide important insights into the changing relationship between consumers, social-media platforms and online businesses. Two important themes emerge from the studies discussed so far: first, the growing importance of consumer-generated content and social interaction, and second, the increasing use of analytics and digital marketing techniques to understand and influence consumer behaviour (Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018) ,(Madila et al., 2021) .

However, such studies remain narrow in focus, dealing mainly with particular aspects such as social-media analytics, online reviews, influencers or individual social-commerce platforms rather than examining the entire social-commerce process together. The evidence reviewed here seems to suggest a pertinent role for trust, consumer engagement, social influence and digital content in explaining how consumers interact with social-commerce platforms. These studies clearly indicate that there is a relationship between social-media activity, consumer-generated information and consumer decision-making in digital commerce (Semenda et al., 2024) (Jia et al., 2024) . In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that social commerce should be studied as a combination of social interaction and commercial activity rather than simply as another form of online shopping. There remain several aspects of social commerce about which relatively little is known, particularly how different factors such as trust, social influence, user-generated content, influencers and platform features interact to shape consumer behaviour across different social-commerce environments.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *Systematic Literature Review*

Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a type of research methodology, which helps to gather, analyze, organize and synthesize information regarding the existing studies in a certain research field. SLR assists researchers in assessing the progress made in a field, identifying key research trends in a field and highlighting gaps that need to be addressed by conducting further research. In the current research, a Systematic Literature Review was performed to evaluate the existing academic literature about social commerce, the main research trends, consumer aspects, technological developments and further research avenues. Social commerce can be defined as the combination of social media activities and commercial transactions. It involves the use of social networks, online communities, consumer reviews, electronic word-of-mouth, social recommendations, and user generated content in supporting purchasing and selling activities.
Social commerce has been explored by the researchers from a number of different angles, such as consumer behavior,

trust, adoption, customer engagement, business performance and social interaction. Thus, SLR is an appropriate method of synthesizing the fragmented literature and obtaining a comprehensive overview of the field (Lin et al., 2017; Busalim & Hussin, 2016). The review process was presented using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach. PRISMA is used to ensure the selection, evaluation, eligibility and inclusion of scholarly articles in a systematic review are clear (Page et al., 2021).

***Research Objectives***

The study is dedicated to the systematic analysis of the development and current trends in research on social commerce. Specific objectives are: - 1. To identify growth and publication trends in social commerce research. 2. Review of main themes and sub-themes relevant to social commerce. 3. The identification of key authors, journals, institutions and nations who have contributed to this area of research. 4. The understanding of theories, research methodologies and variables utilized in research into social commerce. 5. The identification of research gaps and future directions for research.

***Article Selection and Search Strategy***

The literature search was carried out on the Web of Science database as it contains scholarly publications in areas of business, management, marketing, information systems and other similar fields of study. The aim of the search was to find researches that are connected with social commerce. The search was executed through use of key words, such as "social commerce," "social shopping," "social media commerce," "social commerce platforms" and so on. Boolean operators were used for combination of the key words and the improvement of the retrieved records' relevance. The search covered the studies published between 2018 and 2027. As a result of the initial search there were 2,905 records found in the Web of Science database. As the first filtering criterion, the time-span was applied, after which 430 records outside the set period were eliminated, thus leaving 2,475 records. Then, the document type criterion was applied and 1,261 records were eliminated as only articles and reviews were needed. Therefore, 1,214 records remained. Then, the language criterion was applied, so only English records were left. Thus, 32 records were excluded and 1,182 records remained. Finally, the journal/source criterion was applied, but no records were excluded in this case. This resulted in 1,182 studies that were part of the data set and used for analysis. The complete methodology of selecting articles is illustrated using PRISMA flow chart. This flow chart shows the path of records moving from identification to inclusion and gives transparency to the selection process.

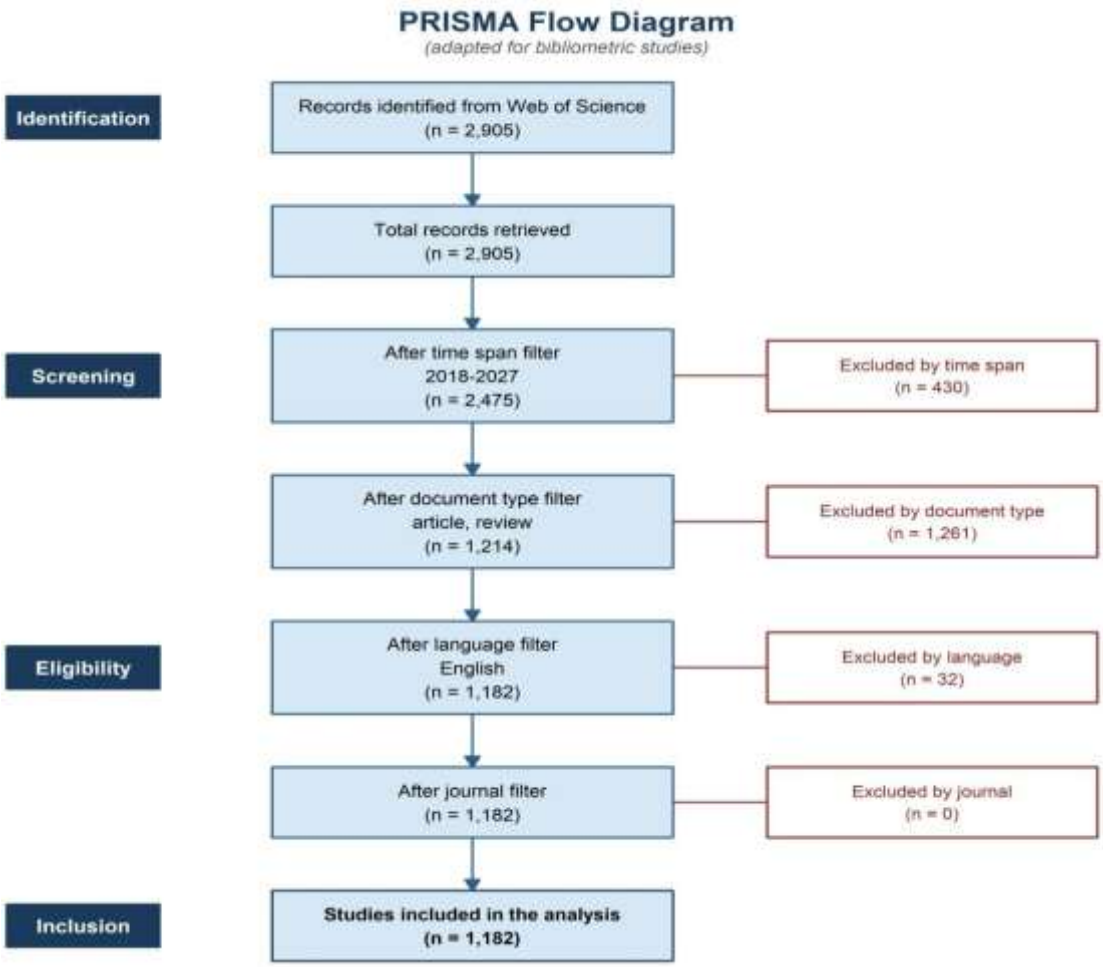



*Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram for the selection of studies on social commerce*

***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

These inclusion and exclusion criteria helped in keeping consistency and relevancy in the dataset used for the study. Studies were included if they met the following criteria: published in the time period of 2018-2027; published in the English language; were available as journal articles or review papers; and focused on social commerce or the related topics. This review covers the studies based on social commerce adoption, consumer purchase intention, trust, customer engagement, electronic word-of-mouth, online reviews, social influence, social shopping, social media platforms, customer experience and business performance. Studies were excluded if they were published in a time period other than the one specified; published in any language other than English; and if they were not journal articles or review papers. The studies that had no relation to social commerce were excluded from the analysis.

***Bibliometric Analysis***

Following the final compilation of 1,182 studies, bibliometric analysis was applied to the study structure and development of social commerce research. In bibliometric analysis, researchers will be able to identify publication trends, prominent contributors, collaboration patterns, commonly used keywords, as well as relationships among research themes. The bibliographic information of the selected literature may be exported from the Web of Science database and organized for bibliometric analysis. The bibliographic information could include the year of publication, title of the paper, authorship, journal name, affiliation, countries, citations and author keywords. The bibliometric

analysis could be performed using Bibliometrix and Biblioshiny tools within the RStudio framework, as these software is specifically developed for science mapping and bibliometric analysis (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). It would also be possible to use Microsoft Excel to organize data, calculate publication frequencies, and create tables/descriptive analyses. The bibliometric analysis could include: • Annual scientific output. • Top productive authors and journals. • The most cited papers. • Contribution by countries and institutions. • Author and country collaboration network analysis. • Analysis of keyword co-occurrences. • Analysis of citations and co-citations. • Evolution of thematic areas in social commerce research. Keyword co-occurrence checks can show which ideas get studied again and again. In this case, the top terms include trust, purchase intention, customer engagement, social influence, electronic word-of-mouth, and consumer behaviour. These results may also clarify how social commerce research topics have shifted from year to year.

***Qualitative Synthesis***

A qualitative synthesis can be done in addition to the bibliometric work. This part aims to make sense of what the studies found. It also helps group those results into clear research topics. The papers can be sorted into wide themes. One set covers consumer behaviour. Another set looks at technology and platform factors. Some work centers on social influence. Other studies focus on building relationships and trust. You can also find themes on marketing results and wider business performance. For social influence, the focus often falls on recommendations, ratings and reviews, peer interaction, and electronic word of mouth. It is also useful to check which theories the authors used. Common choices include the Technology Acceptance Model, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Social Influence Theory, the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework, and trust-based models. The review can compare what methods were used too.
Examples include surveys, structural equation modelling, interviews, experiments, bibliometric analysis, and conceptual reviews. After that, the results from the chosen studies can be pulled together. The goal is to spot gaps in what has not been studied much, note limits in the methods, and point to ideas for future work. With this mixed strategy, you get a numeric picture of the field and a narrative view of the main issues that shape social commerce

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS




Figure 1 : Main information plot chart or Main bibliographic overview of the collection

***MAIN INFORMATION PLOT***

To establish a general impression of the research field, the authors analyzed the collection's basic descriptors using the Main Information dashboard in Biblioshiny (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Aria & Cuccurullo, 2026). Following standard scientific mapping practice recommended by Zupic and Čater (2015), an initial database excerpt from Scopus generated 1,173 papers distributed over a nominal timespan from 2018 to 2027.

Interpreting this timespan, however, the authors noted a significant statistical distortion in their calculation of the annual growth rate. Bibliometric software products apply a compound annual growth rate calculation in order to determine the rate of growth across the given timespan, relying strictly on the dates that were used to select documents for inclusion in the analysis (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2026). Thus, the prospective year 2027 only included two advance, early-access papers in Scopus, and contrasting these two records against the baseline amount of 51 publications in 2018 resulted in a distorted negative growth rate of minus 30.22 percent. To exclude this end-period truncation bias and preserve the integrity of the data analysis, the authors excluded the incomplete year 2027 from further consideration. Their refined analysis therefore encompassed a complete, nine-year span from 2018 to 2026 comprising 1,171 peer-reviewed publications. Covering this complete span provided an adequate perspective on the recent literature. Applying the corrected calculation yielded a positive 18.1 percent growth rate annually, and the scholarly domain under study was growing vigorously.

The 1,171 documents were distributed over 731 separate publication sources, indicating that the research field under study was interdisciplinary in nature and extended into computer science, business management, communication, and healthcare. The literature incorporated 3,835 unique author keywords, suggesting a high topic diversity and a broad variety of research interests in this field. As for authors, 4,420 researchers cooperated in authoring the corpus, averaging 4.21 co-authors per publication. In turn, only 90 authors had published single-author documents, and team science markedly dominated the field under study. International cooperation among authors reached 27.92 percent, and over one out of every four papers involved cross-border institutional partnerships. The reference count of zero indicated that, in the process of database export, cited reference strings had been omitted from this particular field. Finally, having an average document age of 3.15 years and an average citation rate of 20.12 citations per article, the authors concluded that their collection represented a timely, highly visible, and actively cited body of research.

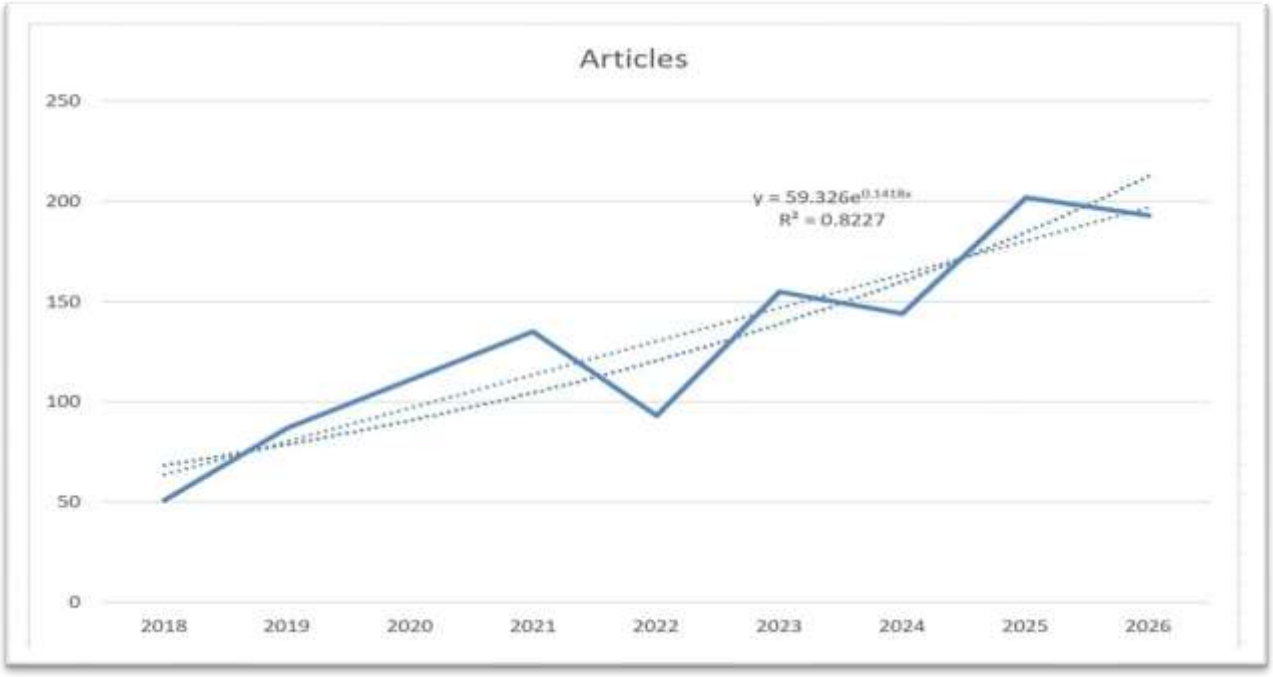



Figure 2: Yearly publication output and exponential growth trendline

### *ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION AND EXPONENTIAL GROWTH MODEL*

To assess development trends in research on this topic, the authors analyzed the annual publication output from 2018 to 2026. Studying the yearly growth patterns can shed light on if a newly-emerging field is approaching the take-off point or maturity stage. Like in the previous section, the authors excluded the last, clearly incomplete year (2027), with only two preprints, so as not to distort the picture.

The study found that academic production rose consistently for the whole period under review. Specifically, the number of articles in 2018 was 51, and it grew to 87, 111, and 135 in the subsequent years. The growth slowed down in 2022,

only to spike to 155 in 2023 and 144 in 2024. Finally, scientific production peaked at 202 publications in 2025 and amounted to 193 articles in 2026. This trend can be seen as a sign of the increasing interest from academic researchers worldwide. To find out if this growth follows an exponential trend, the authors visualized an exponential trendline in a chart. It produced the following regression formula: y = 59.326e^(0.1418x) . Here, x indicates the progression of years since the period's start (2018), while y estimates the number of articles published for a given x. The positive value of 0.1418 suggests that the number of publications increases by approximately 14.2 percent per year on average. Moreover, the goodness-of-fit metric, R^2, equals 0.8227. The value of R^2 suggests that over 82 percent of variance in annual academic production can be explained by exponential growth. Accordingly, this field's growth is better approximated by an exponential function, which means that it obeys the non-linear pattern of change

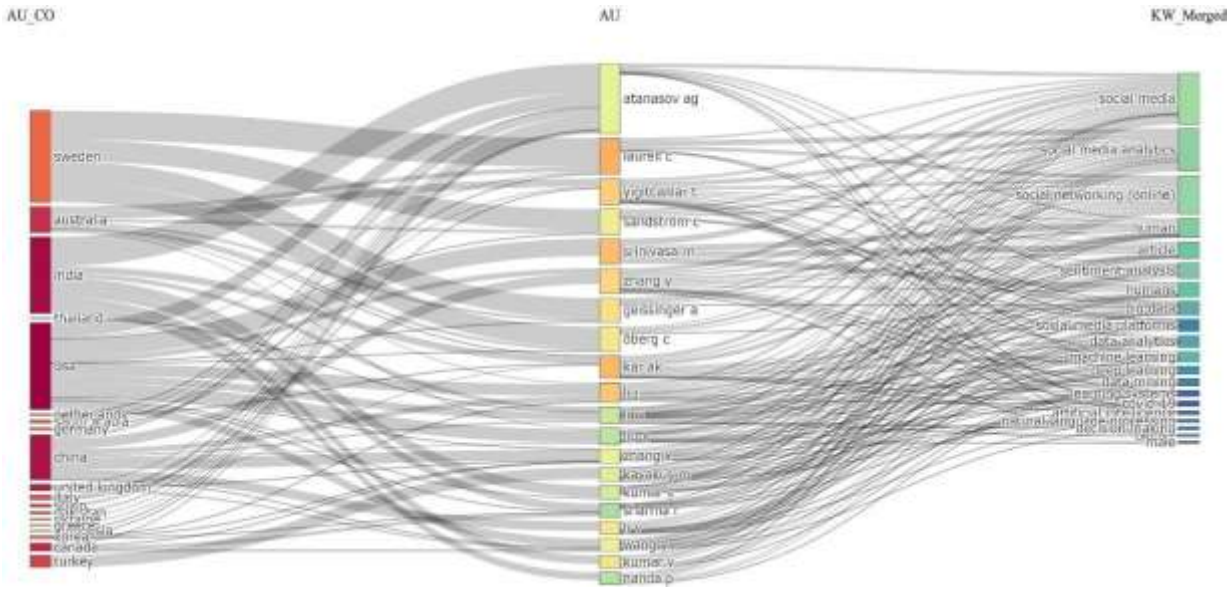



Figure 3 : Three-Field Plot mapping countries, authors, and merged keywords

***THREE-FIELD PLOT ANALYSIS (COUNTRIES, AUTHORS, AND KEYWORDS)***

To explore research countries, authors, and keywords, the authors analyzed the three-field plot generated in Biblioshiny. This plot visualized the connections between these three fields of research. On the left side of the plot, the authors identified author countries (AU_CO), on the middle – authors (AU), and on the right – merged keywords (KW_Merged). The authors found that the height of each rectangular bar indicated the number of publications, while the width of flow lines presented the extent of connections between countries, authors, and keywords. First, the authors examined the relationship between the left and middle bars, which demonstrated the connection between countries and authors. In particular, the authors identified several research groups that were organized regionally. For example, one European group was formed by Swedish authors, Laurell C., Sandstrom C., Geissinger A., and Oberg C. Another group included authors from the US and China, such as Srinivasa R.N., Zhang Y., Liu X., Li J., Li W., and Wang
Y. The authors also identified an Indian group formed by Kar A.K., Kumar S., Sharma R.,

Kumar V., and Nanda P. Finally, the authors found that Australia was represented by one researcher, Yigitcanlar T., while Turkey was represented by one researcher, Kayakus M.

Next, the authors explored the connections between the middle and right bars, which demonstrated the relationship between authors and keywords. The authors found that the authors of computational methods, Zhang Y., Wang Y., Liu X., and Li J. tended to use algorithm-related keywords, including machine learning, deep learning, data mining, and natural language processing. In contrast, the Swedish group, along with Kar A.K., primarily used business-related keywords, such as social media analytics, online social networks, big data, and decision support. Finally, the authors found that Atanasov A.G. and Srinivasa R.N. were primarily interested in human-related keywords, including humans, human, and COVID-19. Thus, the authors concluded that social media and social media analytics were the central

concepts in this research area since most studies utilized these keywords to address business, health, and social media analytics-related issues. In particular, the authors found that the combination of machine learning algorithms and social media data could address real-life issues in various fields.

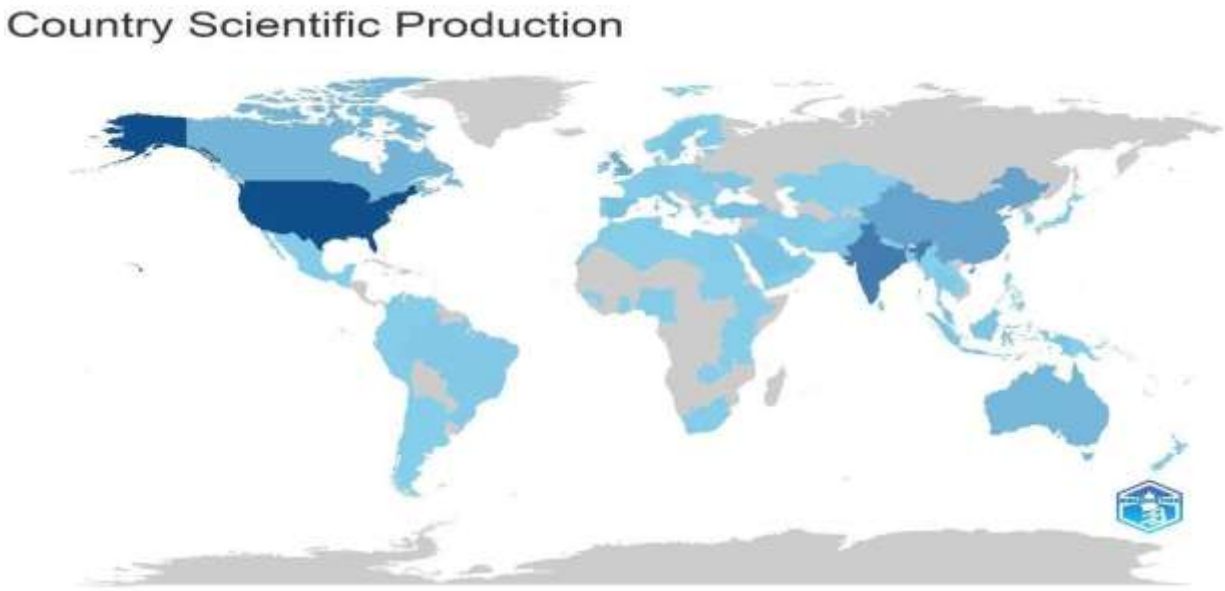



Figure 4 : World map of country scientific production

***Geographical Distribution of Scientific Output***

The choropleth map below represents the geographical distribution of scientific production in the studied field. The colors indicate the amount of research work in each country: the most saturated blue color means the greatest number of publications, light blue – moderate or low, and gray – the absence of indexed documents in the database.

Primary Contributing Nations : The United States contributes the greatest number of scientific production in the analyzed field, which is reflected in the dark blue color of the choropleth map on the territory of North America. India has the second place in terms of quantity of research works, which is reflected in the light blue color. China, Canada, and Australia have the third place, also presenting a considerable number of documents in the chosen area of research, which is reflected in their coloring in medium blue. Other countries have a lesser contribution to the studied area of scientific activity.

Regional Patterns and Emerging Contributions : Research activities in the analyzed area are represented in different countries with varying degrees of involvement. In particular:

Europe: Western Europe and the United Kingdom, as well as Northern Europe, have moderate levels of research activity, reflected in the light blue color.

Asia and the Middle East: The number of publications is mostly concentrated in countries outside India and China, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Latin America: Latin America is predominantly represented in research activities by Brazil, while other countries, such as Chile and Colombia, have a low level of involvement.

Africa: Africa is mainly represented in research activities by South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria.

Global Research Disparities : A considerable part of the world map is gray, indicating a lack of research in these countries. In particular, Central Africa, Central Asia, and South America are characterized by a lack of research works in the selected area. At the same time, North America, South Asia, and East Asia are represented by a considerable number of publications, indicating a much greater research base and involvement in research in this area.

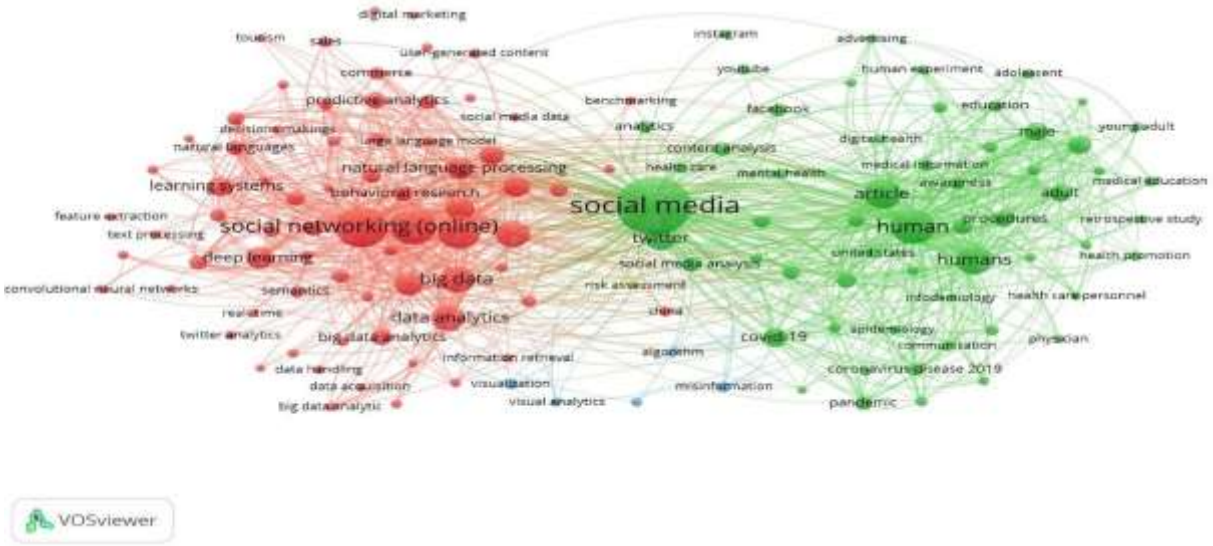



Figure 5 : Co-occurrence network of author keywords

***CO-WORD ANALYSIS (KEYWORD CO-OCCURRENCE NETWORK)***

To identify the conceptual structure and major research themes in this field, the authors performed a co-word analysis using VOSviewer. This method examines the actual content of academic publications by visualizing keywords' co-occurrence. Overall, 7058 keywords were detected, and the authors used the threshold of 12 to reduce the number of keywords and obtained 136 keywords. In the visualization, each keyword is presented with a circle, with its size representing the frequency of occurrence, connections indicating co-occurrence, and colors indicating different clusters.

The authors identified four clusters in the visualization below. The biggest one is Cluster 1 (red) comprising 72 items, which centers around computational data science, machine learning, and business decision-making. This cluster includes such words as social networking (online), big data, data analytics, deep learning, natural language processing, predictive analytics, behavioral research, and decision-making. The authors found that this cluster reflects the research field's

main areas, representing the ways of collecting, processing, and analyzing big data sets extracted from online sources for commercial and operational purposes.

Other clusters have less in common.

For example, Cluster 2 (green) comprises 58 items and focuses on human behavior, communication means, and public health. The most frequent keywords are social media, human, humans, twitter, covid-19, procedures, adult, mental health, and public health.
According to the authors, this cluster reflects the role of online platforms as objects of study, places where researchers can identify public opinion, community attitudes, and human behavior in response to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cluster 3 (blue) consists of only five items related to digital information integrity: algorithm, disinformation, misinformation, visual analytics, and visualization.

Finally, Cluster 4 contains one keyword, risk assessment, which relates to legal, ethical, and compliant data science questions. Thus, the authors concluded that the research field can be split into two areas: data science and public health research.

## 5. Future Research Agenda

The results of this study point towards a number of future investigation paths related to social commerce. Despite the existing literature covering topics like consumer behaviour, social media analytics, online reviews, influencer marketing, and modern technologies, a lot of studies focused on these areas separately. Therefore, the future studies should be

focused on the holistic investigation of social commerce. In particular, there should be a focus on how social interaction, commercial processes, and technological properties affect consumer behaviour. As Abkenar et al. (2024) point out, there is a lack of studies that combine these components of social commerce platforms. Filling this gap will help to create a more thorough understanding of the elements that influence consumer behaviour and buying choices.

***Integration of Consumer Behaviour Factors***

Future research projects should examine the combined effects of trust, social influence, user-generated content, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer endorsements and platform characteristics on consumer buying behaviour. The majority of available studies have proved the significance of all of these independent constructs, but their interrelations in various social commerce systems are still poorly understood. Researchers might want to find out whether consumer reviews and influencer recommendations enhance consumer trust, and whether this correlation is influenced by choice of product or platform. Such research might also show how trust and engagement together affect buying decisions and repurchases in social commerce. This helps to broaden the current body of knowledge from studying individual factors to understanding the process of consumer choice in social commerce in a more thorough way (Arzy et al., 2021; Nalluri et al., 2025).

***Role of Emerging Technologies***

Another vital research avenue is the consideration of the impact of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, big data analytics, and personalised recommendations on the evolution of social commerce. Despite the already existing scientific papers observing the implementation of the mentioned technologies in social media marketing, it still remains unclear how the technologies in question influence consumer behaviour and communication. Future research can clarify whether personalised product recommendations strengthen customer commitment, purchase intention, and whether obligation-based recommendations have any effect on the information received by customers. Moreover, researchers are required to dive into such obstacles as data confidentiality, false information, and ethical use of data. This way, it will be possible to make a balanced judgement on the possibilities and limits of the technologies in the field of social commerce (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025; Liang et al., 2025).

***Cross-Platform and Geographical Research***

Insights from bibliometric analysis suggest that social commerce research is being carried out in various geographic locations and publication outlets, with the United States leading the pack in terms of publications, followed closely by India. Nevertheless, geographical distribution of research remains given that some countries are enjoying much more research on social commerce than others. Future research should aim at understanding consumer behavior in various geographic locations, different cultural contexts, and social commerce platforms to confirm whether findings had been achieved in various conditions. Comparative research on markets with different levels of digital adoption will help to understand the extent to which consumer preferences, culture, and social impact play a role in making decisions. Hence, researchers should also try and compare social commerce platforms with different characteristics, such as influencer marketing, reviews, and personalization in order to find out better the areas and situations when social commerce functions.

***Methodological Development***

Future research should merge quantitative as well as qualitative methods for attaining a more profound awareness of social commerce. For instance, the bibliometric approach may serve to identify trends in publication and affiliations among various themes of research. Whereas surveys, experiments and interviews help interpret consumer attitude and behaviour. It is also plausible to apply social networks' text analysis to examine consumer-generated content and online reviews. Longitudinal investigations are especially desirable owing to the fact they would allow researchers to create a picture of alterations or changes in consumer trust, engagement, and purchasing behaviour over time. Furthermore, forthcoming bibliometric investigations should specify the choice of databases, periods of publication and document export procedure very accurately in order to ensure that the findings of different studies can be compared and verified.

***Emerging Research Themes***

The analysis of keywords disclosed smaller areas of research relative to false information, false information, algorithms, visual analytics, and risk assessment. This presents opportunities for additional research on integrity in information and responsible use of data in social commerce. Future research can focus on how false reviews, modified user-generated content, or false influencer messages influence consumer trust and purchasing behavior. The assessment of the transparency of the recommendation systems should also be researched, as well as the evaluation process of the credibility of online information by consumers. Additionally, given that the bibliometric analysis suggested a prominent cluster of research related to public health, future research should make a clear distinction between research pertaining to social commerce from those that refer to broader social media issues. This will help clarify the conceptual framework of the field and outline more specific themes.

Overall, advanced studies on social commerce must take a more holistic, comparative and methodologically sound approach. Analyzing the interconnections between consumer behavior, social impact, trust, technological progress, and platform features can help overcome the fragmentation detected in the current research. By using a combination of bibliometric data with empirical research, further investigations can deepen our understanding of how social commerce is advancing and how various social commerce elements affect consumer choices and business results.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper adds to the existing body of knowledge on social commerce by bringing a large and varied body of research together in one structured review. Using a Systematic Literature Review supported by bibliometric analysis and qualitative synthesis, the paper looks at how social commerce research has developed as a whole instead of focusing on one topic at a time. The bibliometric analysis shows that publication output grew over the period studied, that the research is spread across 731 publication sources, and that many papers are written by teams, with over one in four involving international co-authorship. It also shows which countries, authors and keywords are most visible, and that the keywords fall into two broad areas, data science and public health research, with social media and social media analytics at the centre.

For researchers, these patterns give a clearer picture of how the field has developed and who is contributing to it. The literature review supports this picture from the qualitative side. It groups earlier work around consumer behaviour, social media analytics, user-generated content, online reviews, electronic word-of-mouth, trust, customer engagement, social influence and influencer marketing, together with artificial intelligence, machine learning and big data analytics. It also shows that studies of this kind tend to remain narrow in focus, dealing mainly with particular aspects of social commerce rather than examining the social-commerce process as a whole, and that only a relatively small body of literature integrates social interactions, commercial activities and technological components within social commerce platforms (Abkenar et al., 2024). Seeing this difference helps researchers place their own work within the existing literature.

The findings are also useful for managers, marketers and organisations involved in social commerce. The research does not set out a business strategy, but it gives a broader view of the factors that have been studied and that matter in social commerce. The literature review shows that consumer behaviour, customer engagement, online reviews, user-generated content, social influence and influencer marketing are closely connected with social-media activity and purchasing-related decisions. Reviews, electronic word-of-mouth and other forms of consumer-generated content can influence how consumers evaluate products (Nalluri et al., 2025), and social media analytics has been used to understand customer opinions and to improve marketing strategies (Yadav et al., 2022; Semenda et al., 2024). The keyword analysis points in the same direction, since its largest cluster centres on collecting, processing and analysing big data from online sources for commercial and operational purposes. Seeing how research has developed around these themes can help businesses think about their own social-commerce strategies in a wider context. In particular, the literature review notes that relatively little is known about how trust, social influence, user-generated content, influencers and platform features interact to shape consumer behaviour across different social-commerce environments, which suggests that it may be useful to consider these factors together rather than separately. Managers can therefore use this research as a starting point for understanding the issues that matter, while recognising that it does not test which approaches work best for any particular business.

The research also has wider social value because it helps explain what social commerce involves. The literature review suggests that social commerce should be studied as a combination of social interaction and commercial activity rather than simply as another form of online shopping.

Consumers do not only look at products; they also share and read information, opinions and experiences produced by other consumers. Online reviews and user-generated content give important information about consumer experiences and purchasing decisions (Jia et al., 2024), and reviews and electronic word-of-mouth can influence how consumers evaluate products (Nalluri et al., 2025). Consumer behaviour in social commerce has also been linked to several interconnected factors, including social influence, online information, reviews, engagement and marketing communication (Arzy et al., 2021). The data analysis adds another view, as its second keyword cluster shows social media being studied as a place where public opinion, community attitudes and human behaviour can be identified. Understanding these relationships between social interaction, user-generated content, social influence and purchasing-related behaviour can contribute to greater awareness of how consumers interact with social-commerce platforms and how information shared by other users can influence consumer decision-making. This research does not suggest that such influence is beneficial or harmful in itself; its value lies in making these interactions easier to understand.

The findings may also be relevant to policymakers and to organisations concerned with social-commerce platforms and digital commerce. The literature review identifies trust as one of the factors linked to consumer behaviour, and online reviews and user-generated content as important sources of information for consumers. The keyword analysis also identified a small cluster on digital information integrity, which includes algorithm, disinformation, misinformation, visual analytics and visualization, and a single keyword, risk assessment, which relates to legal, ethical and compliant data science. Although these clusters are small, they show that questions of information integrity and responsible data use appear in the research literature. These points may be useful in discussions about consumer information, consumer protection and the responsible use of digital platforms, although this research does not evaluate any specific law or policy, and its implications are therefore general. During the research process, we also faced practical challenges, particularly in becoming familiar with new research tools. Learning to use Mendeley for managing references and citations, VOSviewer for analysing and visualising keyword relationships and research themes, and R and RStudio for handling and analysing bibliometric information required time and practice. It was also necessary to understand how bibliometric analysis works, to read the different visualisations, and to interpret the information that the tools produced. Dealing with a large amount of academic literature, and keeping the data, literature selection and analysis consistent, were further challenges. However, working through these tasks improved our understanding of research methods and showed us how academic literature can be organised, analysed and presented.

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