

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM): A Bibliometric Mapping of Scientific Literature

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ABSTRACT

With the rise of importance of digital platform use, social media interaction and online consumer activities in decision-making and brand perception processes, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) becomes one of the active fields for scholarly investigations. In order to study the intellectual structure, research development and trends in e-WOM literature, the present study used a bibliometric analysis method. The data was gathered from academic database entries of scientific publications and were analyzed using bibliometric methods, such as citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, keyword co-occurrence analysis, thematic mapping and trends analysis. It was found out that the research on e-WOM was gradually shifting from the issues of consumer motivation, online reviews, and credibility of information towards more general issues like social media, user generated content, purchase intention, brand image and digital consumer behavior. Citation analysis allows identifying fundamental research papers that shaped this field to a great extent, especially in terms of e-WOM adoption, credibility and consumer involvement in it. The cooperation analysis shows that despite the global development of e-WOM research, the fragmentation of authorship, institutional and inter-country collaboration still exists. Additionally, the thematic evolution proves that modern researches in the area of e-WOM is gradually shifting towards the issues of digital platforms, social media marketing, sentiment analysis and data-driven consumer insights. The present study provides a comprehensive look into the evolution and knowledge base of e-WOM research and defines the possible directions of future research related to artificial intelligence, influencer communication, recommendation algorithms and digital trust.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The fast-paced development of digital technologies has resulted in a significant change in how consumers acquire information, evaluate products, and

ultimately make purchases. The rise of such innovations as social media, review websites, and digital communities has led to the move of consumers' communications from face-to-face to networked interactions supported by

digital technologies [1], [2]. Against this backdrop, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has turned out to be one of the most powerful types of consumer communication, as it allows individuals to express opinions, experience, recommendations, and evaluations regarding the products, services, and brands via the Internet [3]. While traditional WOM is usually confined to geographical and social limitations, e-WOM has such features as accessibility, persistence, scalability, and fast dissemination, and hence consumer opinions can get to a large number of people within a short period [4]. As a result, e-WOM has become an important area for research in the field of marketing, consumer behavior, information systems, and digital business [5].

The importance of e-WOM is directly related to the growing reliance of consumers on online sources of information in the process of making decisions. In most cases, consumers turn to the information available in online reviews, ratings, opinions, and suggestions because they consider it to be more genuine and reliable than promotional content created by firms [6]. The authenticity of e-WOM comes from the nature of user-generated information when consumers perceive peers' experience as an independent assessment rather than commercial communication. Researchers in the past have shown how e-WOM impacts different consumer outcomes such as purchase intentions, brand attitude, trust formation, customer engagement, and product quality perceptions [7], [8]. Thus, it is important for researchers and practitioners to understand the process and features of e-WOM research development [9].

From a theoretical standpoint, the research on e-WOM has evolved as a consequence of cross-disciplinary contributions, and different concepts and analytical frameworks have been introduced in the studies related to this phenomenon. In this regard, e-WOM has been studied based on the theories including information adoption theory, social influence theory, technology acceptance theories, trust theory, and signaling theory. Information adoption

theory illustrates how people assess the usefulness and credibility of the information available on the Internet prior to integrating it in their decision-making process [10], [11]. Social influence theories focus on the impact of online communities and interpersonal relationships on consumers' opinions and behavior.

The increasing scholarly interest in the study of e-WOM has led to a significant increase in the number of scientific articles written by researchers from various disciplines. There have been many studies about the different aspects of e-WOM such as antecedents of online reviews, reviewers' traits, message traits, mechanisms on different platforms, consumer trust, social media usage, and behavior outcomes. This indicates that the significance of this area of research is related to the need for knowledge of how digital communication of consumers impacts the markets and organizational efficiency. At the same time, the fast development of this area poses many questions with respect to the structure of the area, its intellectual development and trends in the development of e-WOM studies.

Bibliometric analysis offers an effective methodological tool for studying large numbers of scientific papers and analyzing patterns in a research area. While traditional literature review studies employ qualitative methods of analysis, bibliometric studies use quantitative methods to analyze publication patterns, citation structures, collaboration networks, influential authors, important journals, and emerging research topics [12]. With the help of methods like citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, co-occurrence analysis, and science mapping, bibliometric studies can offer a systematic overview of the knowledge advancement in the given field. The value of bibliometric mapping in relation to e-WOM studies lies in the fact that it can highlight the intellectual roots of the field, important themes, methodological trends, and possible future developments.

Despite the popularity and intense study of e-WOM, the current body of research literature on this phenomenon appears to be

rather scattered owing to the diversity of the theoretical and methodological frameworks applied. Prior research literature has shed light on the effects of and theories behind the concept of e-WOM, yet an adequate understanding of the intellectual structure and evolution of the e-WOM literature is lacking. It becomes increasingly difficult to understand the influence, trends, and key research areas within the literature without the aid of systematic mapping because of the constantly growing number of publications.

The purpose of this paper is to carry out the bibliometric mapping of scientific publications associated with electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). In doing so, the focus of this study will be on the analysis of the trends of publication, important publications in the area, intellectual structures, collaboration, and other research areas that are emerging in this field. Using the bibliometric approach, this research will seek to shed light on the evolution of the field of e-WOM and future areas for academic research.

2. METHODS

For the purpose of this research, the bibliometric analysis technique will be used in order to conduct a systematic review of the development of the scientific publications on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), as well as its intellectual structure and trends of research. The bibliometric analysis is a quantitative research technique that allows researchers to analyze great volumes of academic literature using methods such as publication performance analysis, citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, and keyword mapping [12]. This research technique was chosen due to the fact that

there have been significant developments in research related to e-WOM in multiple fields of science.

The process of data collection has been performed by means of Scopus database as the main source of scientific literature because of its broad coverage of peer-reviewed journals and applicability for bibliometric analysis. In order to create a search query, relevant keywords have been used in relation to electronic word-of-mouth, including the term “electronic word-of-mouth” as well as its variations, “e-WOM” and “online word-of-mouth.” The search query has been performed on the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the articles in order to collect relevant publications for the study. The retrieved sources have been selected based on predefined inclusion criteria such as relevancy of publications, type of document, language, and completeness of bibliographic data.

The bibliographical data was subjected to analyses through the use of the software VOSviewer to map the relationships between publications, authors, countries, institutions, and keywords. Several bibliometrical methods were employed; these include citation analysis to find the most cited works, co-authorship analysis to look into collaborations among scholars, and keyword co-occurrence analysis to discover the research themes [13]. The visualizations produced through VOSviewer offer a map of the intellectual structure and development of the research on e-WOM through showing the connections between different aspects of the research. It is through such methodology that the paper offers a map of existing knowledge in science and future research directions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Co-Authorship Analysis

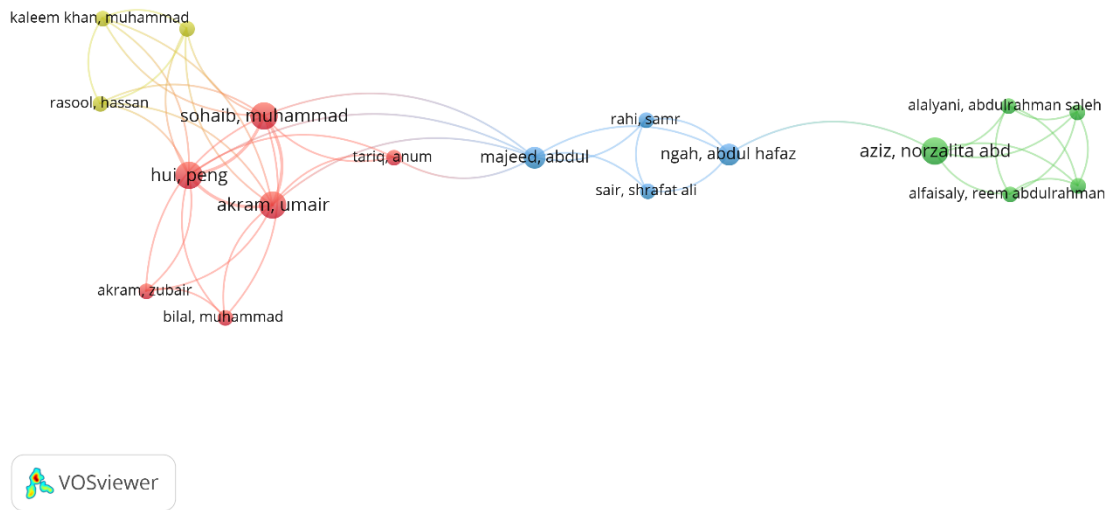


Figure 1. Author Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

As depicted in Figure 1, the cooperation network of researchers in the literature of electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) is segregated into a number of clusters that are denoted by different colors, showing separate sets of authors who tend to cooperate among themselves. The red cluster depicts the largest cooperative network comprising of authors including Sohail, Muhammad; Hui, Peng; Akram, Umair; and Tariq, Anum. This implies that this group has contributed significantly by conducting cooperative research in e-WOM related issues. The yellow cluster includes authors such as Kaleem Khan, Muhammad; Rasul, Hassan; and Bilal, Muhammad. This depicts a relatively smaller but cooperating group of researchers. Another group of researchers that cooperated independently in e-WOM issues was the green cluster comprising authors such as

Aziz, Norzalita Abd; Alayni, Abdulrahman Saleh; and Al-Faisaly, Reem Abdulrahman.

From the visualization, it can also be noted that there are few relationships amongst several groups of authors, showing that research on e-WOM is still fragmented in different academic circles. The blue group, including authors like Rahi, Samar; Ngah, Abdul Hafaz; and Sair, Shrafat Ali, forms a bridging network bringing together several groups by virtue of collaboration with other authors such as Majeed, Abdul. Nevertheless, the network density is still quite low, indicating that international collaboration in the field of e-WOM research has not yet been developed into a cohesive research community. Such trends may present opportunities for future research to promote greater collaboration across different countries and disciplines.

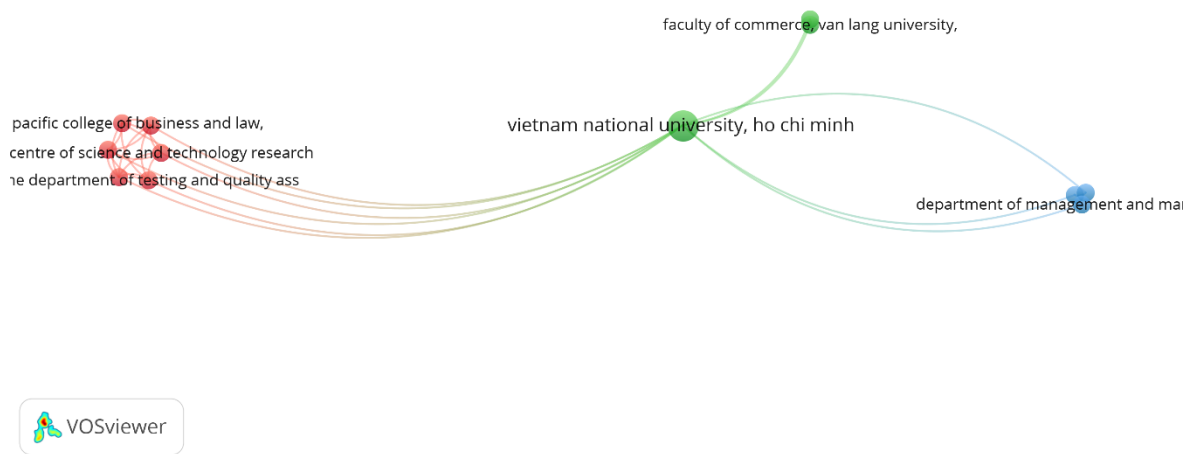


Figure 2. Institution Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

It can be seen from Figure 2 that there is clustering of academic collaborations among a few specific academic communities in case of research about e-WOM, and among these clusters Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City stands out as the central node with high connectivity. It is seen that this institution has collaboration ties with different institutions, including Faculty of Commerce, Van Lang University, Department

of Management and Marketing, and different research centers, which indicates its importance in conducting e-WOM research. Other institutions like Pacific College of Business and Law, Centre of Science and Technology Research, and Department of Testing and Quality Assurance also make up one such cluster with low connectivity to others.

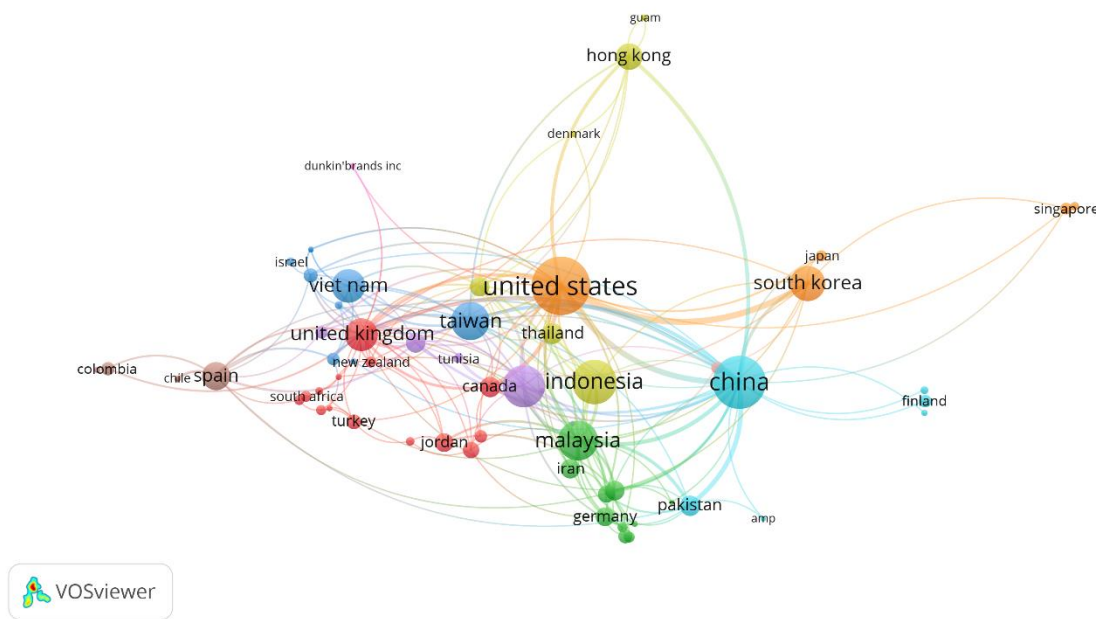


Figure 3. Country Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

The Figure 3 below shows the global distribution and collaboration trends in the study of e-WOM research. The network presents some of the most notable countries, which include the United States, China, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, and United Kingdom, denoted by the large node size as well as their many interconnections with other countries. The United States is portrayed as a network hub with a lot of collaborations across the world, and this reveals the important role and influence of the country in e-WOM research. Likewise, China features highly in the network with many connections to several countries, such as Indonesia, South Korea, Singapore and Asian countries.

The graph also highlights some collaboration clusters of regions. The green

cluster highlights cooperation between countries in Asia and the Middle East, like Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Iran, whereas the red cluster highlights collaboration by countries like UK, Spain, South Africa, Turkey, and Jordan. The existence of multiple clusters indicates that the study of e-WOM has now emerged as a global research field in which many geographical regions have become involved. Nonetheless, the level of collaboration is uneven, and many countries appear to be peripheral nodes without any international links. It is therefore clear that the future e-WOM research can greatly benefit from cross-country collaborations, especially those involving developing nations.

3.2 Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

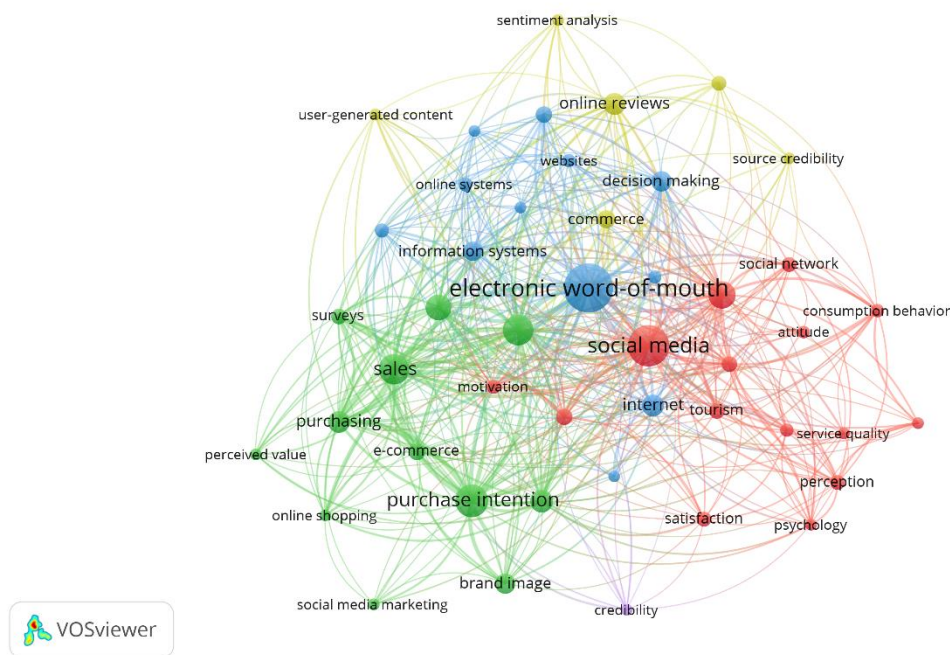


Figure 4. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 4 presents the conceptual network as well as the main topics in the field of electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) research. The network shows a highly connected network structure, reflecting that the research in this field has been carried out from many disciplinary perspectives including marketing, consumer behavior, information systems, and digital communication. The central position of “electronic word-of-mouth” having the biggest node size reflects that it is the main research focus and also acts as the connecting concept among many research streams. This also reflects that its strong connections to the keywords like social media, purchase intention, online reviews, social networks, and consumer behavior show the use of e-WOM as a tool for decision making of consumers.

The cluster in red is concerned with the stream of consumer behavior and marketing. The keywords found in this cluster include social media, consumption behavior, attitude, satisfaction, perception, service quality, psychology, and credibility. Based on the relationships between these keywords, it

can be concluded that most studies in this cluster involve how e-WOM influences the consumers’ psychological reactions and attitudes, and behavior. Research carried out in this cluster normally involves how recommendations and interactions in the social media affect consumer trust and credibility, their satisfaction, and purchase intentions in particular situations.

This green group shows that the research on e-WOM covers the dimension of the behavioral and commercial impact of the research topic, and such key words as purchase intention, purchasing, sales, e-commerce, online shopping, perceived value, brand image, and social media marketing can be found among those of high frequency. It shows that there is quite an amount of literature discussing the e-WOM as a marketing tool that may help engage consumers and improve business performance. The correlation between e-WOM, purchase intention, and brand image reveals the importance of digital communication in affecting market results.

The blue cluster stands for the technological and information management

perspective in the study of e-WOM. Terms like online reviews, user generated content, information systems, online systems, websites, decision-making, and commerce show that the focus is on digital tools and information systems that allow communication of e-WOM. The blue cluster implies that the researchers are becoming more interested in consumer evaluation and processing of the online information. Source credibility and sentiment analysis are some of the factors that are becoming increasingly important in the analysis of e-WOM.

The thematic structure shows that the development of e-WOM research is from a

start with a narrow research scope on online reviews and information exchange to an extended scope of study covering social media ecosystem, consumer psychology, digital marketing, and more sophisticated analysis techniques. The high level of connectivity between the clusters demonstrates that e-WOM is a multi-disciplinary field of research with connections between technology and consumer decision making processes. Possible future research directions may come from the inclusion of issues like AI generated reviews, influencer-based e-WOM, and algorithm-based recommendations.

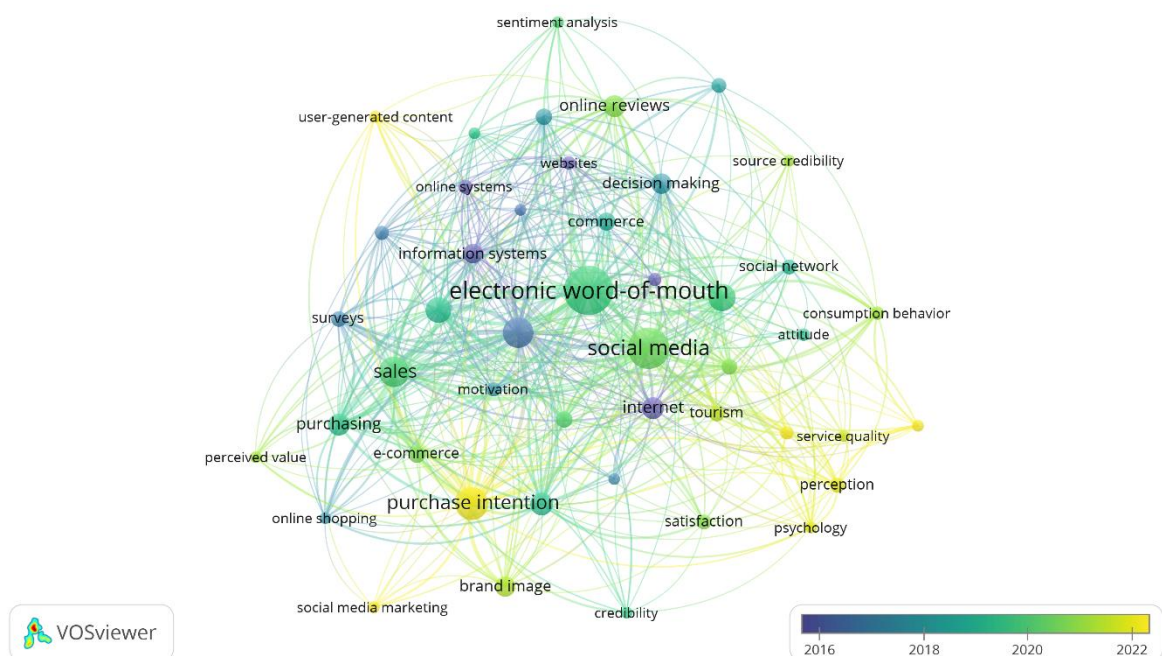


Figure 5. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis.

Figure 5 demonstrates the development timeline of research topics in e-WOM according to keyword appearances between 2016 and 2022. The coloring scale highlights the average publishing year of keywords, with darker blue colors indicating older research topics and yellow colors indicating newer topics. It can be seen that electronic word-of-mouth is a key and constantly developing research topic which is highly correlated with such important concepts as social media, online reviews,

purchase intention, social networks, and consumer behavior. This means that the area of research under consideration has retained its significance and developed through time.

The research themes of the past, characterized by the use of blue-colored keywords, mainly refer to the foundational elements of e-WOM such as information systems, online systems, websites, online reviews, and user-generated content. This is because at that point in time, academics were concerned with comprehending the

mechanisms through which information can be exchanged digitally, the nature of online platforms, and how consumers can access and assess electronic information. At this time, researchers mostly concentrated on the credibility of online information and the impact of digital reviews.

Some more recent trends in the e-WOM research domain, which are reflected in the presence of green to yellow keywords, point at a trend in terms of consumer and strategic marketing focus. Some new concepts that are discussed in current literature, including purchase intention, social media

marketing, service quality, perception, satisfaction, brand image, and consumption behavior, imply that the e-WOM research is becoming more focused on effects associated with consumers' attitudes and performances in business. The presence of such new research trends, which relate to social media and marketing issues, means that the development of e-WOM research is shifting from analyzing information exchange systems towards studying the effects of digital interactions in terms of brands and businesses.

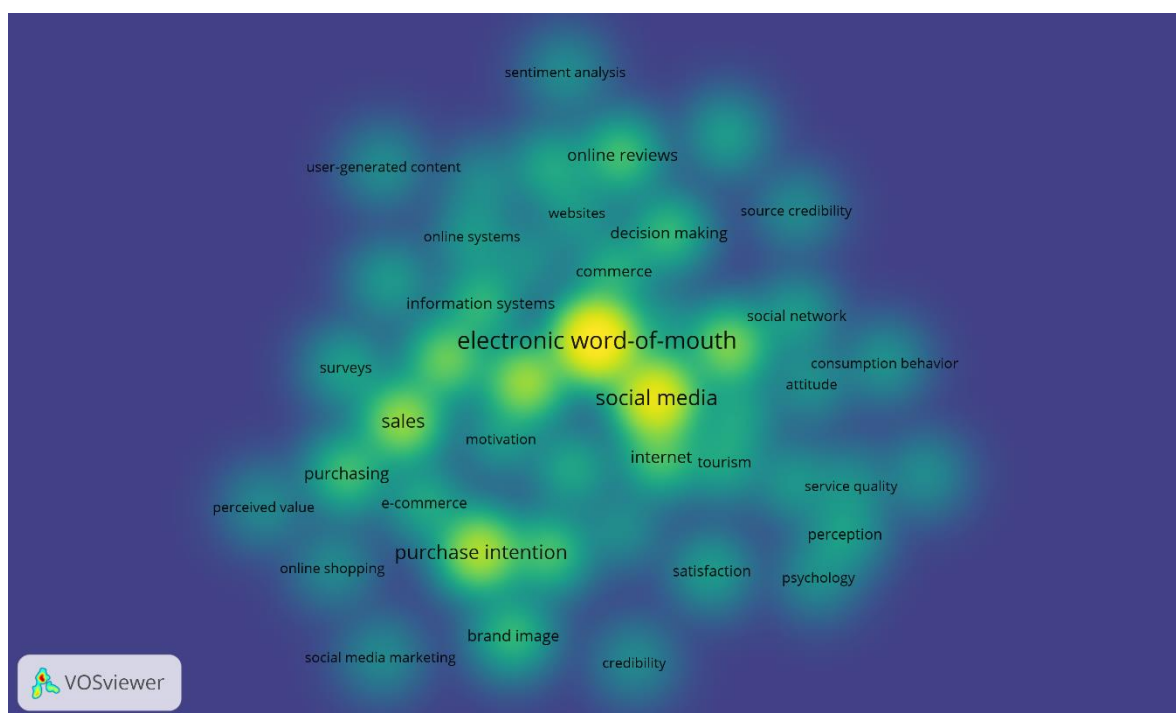


Figure 6. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

In Figure 6, one can observe the level of concentration and focus in different research topics related to electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM). In the colored sections, one can see the keywords which have had more attention from researchers, whereas in the darker sections, one can see the less focused keywords. The most concentrated research topics are those of “electronic word-of-mouth”, “social media”, and “purchase intention”. It is clearly seen that these topics define the most essential knowledge domains in e-WOM research.

In addition, the network indicates that there are other research areas which help to shed light on the process through which e-WOM works. These include online reviews, user-generated content, information systems, source credibility, brand image, satisfaction, service quality, and consumer behavior. They comprise of interrelated research domains that provide insights into the process of how e-WOM functions in terms of creation and dissemination of information, as well as evaluation and buying by consumers. The high level of interconnection with respect to

marketing-related concepts, such as purchase intention, sales, and social media marketing

shows that e-WOM research is more and more focused on its business strategic side.

3.3 Citation Analysis

Table 1. Top Cited Literature

Citations	Authors and Year	Title
4374	[14]	Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet?
2212	[15]	Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management
1688	[16]	Twitter power: Tweets as electronic word of mouth
1632	[17]	Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic Word-Of-Mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites
1396	[18]	The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model
1222	[19]	The impact of electronic word-of-mouth: The adoption of online opinions in online customer communities
1085	[20]	Credibility of electronic word-of-mouth: Informational and normative determinants of on-line consumer recommendations
917	[21]	The effect of electronic word of mouth on sales: A meta-analytic review of platform, product, and metric factors
847	[22]	What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms
668	[23]	Electronic word-of-mouth: Motives for and consequences of reading customer articulations on the internet

Source: Scopus 2026

The findings presented in Table 1 reveal the most influential sources in terms of e-WOM published to date, as per the number of citations. The results indicate that the field is highly driven by several pioneering studies that set the theory and evidence base related to e-WOM. The study by [23] with the largest number of citations (4,374) addresses the motivations behind consumer online opinion expressions and becomes a fundamental source when considering the issue of e-WOM participation. Other highly cited studies, including [15] on the use of e-WOM in hospitality and tourism industry, [16] on the role of Twitter as a platform for e-WOM, and [17] on the consumer social network participation, reflect the development of e-WOM research from classical online opinion platforms to social media-related interactions. Also, works of [22] made a considerable contribution in the exploration of information adoption, credibility and determinants that influence consumers' acceptance and dissemination of opinions online. The inclusion of [21] on the e-WOM sales impact

as assessed using a meta-analytic approach reflects increasing importance of measurable business outcomes of digital consumer communication.

Discussion

The findings of this bibliometric study provide several implications for businesses, marketers, and digital platform managers seeking to optimize electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) strategies. The results demonstrate that e-WOM has evolved into a critical component of digital marketing, with research concentrated around social media, online reviews, purchase intention, consumer behavior, and brand image. Therefore, organizations should actively manage and facilitate consumer-generated communication by creating digital environments that encourage customers to share authentic experiences. Companies can leverage positive e-WOM through review management strategies, customer engagement initiatives, and interactive social media practices to strengthen brand

credibility and influence potential consumers' decision-making processes.

The study also highlights the importance of information credibility and content quality as central elements in e-WOM effectiveness. Practically, businesses should not only focus on generating promotional content but also develop mechanisms to enhance consumer trust, such as encouraging verified reviews, responding transparently to customer feedback, and maintaining consistent service quality across digital platforms. Since consumers increasingly rely on online opinions before purchasing, organizations need to recognize that e-WOM represents both a marketing opportunity and a reputational risk. Negative electronic reviews, misinformation, or poor online engagement can significantly affect consumer perceptions; therefore, proactive digital reputation management should become an integral part of organizational strategy.

Furthermore, the identified research trends indicate opportunities for businesses to adapt their e-WOM strategies to emerging digital ecosystems. The increasing relevance of social media, user-generated content, sentiment analysis, and platform-based interactions suggests that organizations should utilize data-driven approaches to understand consumer conversations and behavioral patterns. Integrating analytics tools, artificial intelligence, and social listening technologies can help firms identify consumer needs, evaluate market sentiment, and develop more personalized engagement strategies. For policymakers and digital platform providers, these findings emphasize the need to support transparent online communication environments that promote reliable information exchange, consumer

protection, and responsible digital participation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric mapping of electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) research by examining publication trends, influential literature, collaboration patterns, and emerging thematic developments. The findings indicate that e-WOM has become a multidisciplinary research domain that has expanded from early studies focusing on online reviews, consumer motivations, and information credibility toward broader discussions involving social media, digital platforms, consumer behavior, purchase intention, and brand management. The analysis of citation patterns highlights the importance of foundational studies that established key concepts related to e-WOM adoption, credibility, and consumer engagement, while keyword and thematic analyses demonstrate the continuous evolution of the field in response to technological and market changes. Although e-WOM research has achieved significant global development, collaboration networks among authors and institutions remain relatively fragmented, suggesting opportunities for stronger interdisciplinary and international cooperation. Future research should further explore emerging phenomena such as artificial intelligence-generated content, influencer-driven e-WOM, algorithmic recommendation systems, and digital trust mechanisms to enhance understanding of how electronic communication continues to shape consumer decision-making and business strategies in the evolving digital environment.

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