Feel First, Buy Later: A Bibliometric Exploration of Emotion-Driven Decision Making in Marketing

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a bibliometric exploration of emotion-driven decision-making in marketing, aiming to map the intellectual landscape, key contributors, and emerging themes within this growing field. Drawing on a dataset of peer-reviewed articles from the Scopus database (2000–2025), the research employs VOSviewer to visualize co-occurrence networks, author collaborations, institutional linkages, and country-level interactions. The findings highlight "marketing" as the central thematic node, interconnected with clusters such as consumer credit, buy-now-pay-later, customer satisfaction, profitability, and pricing strategy. The overlay and density visualizations reveal a temporal shift from traditional pricing and digital satisfaction metrics toward contemporary issues like financial impulsivity and emotion-triggered consumption. Prominent scholars (e.g., Ailawadi, Ambler), institutions (e.g., University of Oxford), and countries (e.g., United States, United Kingdom) were identified as influential actors shaping the discourse. The study contributes theoretically by bridging emotional, behavioral, and financial dimensions of marketing, while practically guiding marketers to design strategies that align with emotionally charged consumer patterns. Despite limitations in database scope and content depth, this bibliometric analysis offers a foundational platform for future interdisciplinary research on the emotional underpinnings of marketing behavior.

Keywords: Emotion-Driven Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Decision-Making, Bibliometric Analysis, Vosviewer

1. INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of consumer behavior and marketing strategy, emotions have emerged as a pivotal factor influencing decision-making. Traditional marketing theories, grounded in rational choice and utility maximization, are increasingly being complemented by emotion-centric paradigms that recognize the power of affective stimuli in shaping purchasing behavior. Emotions are no longer perceived as mere byproducts of consumer experiences but are acknowledged as primary triggers that guide attention, memory, and ultimately, consumption decisions [1]. This shift has given rise to a burgeoning body of research focused on how emotional cues ranging from joy and nostalgia to fear and urgency, can be harnessed in advertisements, branding, and digital campaigns to elicit stronger consumer responses [2], [3].

Neuromarketing and cognitive psychology have further deepened the understanding of emotional mechanisms in consumer decision-making. Studies utilizing brain imaging and eye-tracking technologies reveal that emotional processing often precedes rational deliberation in the human brain, suggesting that many purchase decisions are made in milliseconds, driven by subconscious affective reactions [4]. These insights have profound implications for marketers seeking to influence consumer behavior in increasingly competitive environments. By tapping into emotional triggers, brands can build loyalty, create memorable brand experiences, and enhance customer satisfaction.

The rise of digital media has accelerated the significance of emotion-driven marketing. In the age of social platforms, short-form content, and viral trends, emotionally evocative content spreads faster and garners more engagement than rationally persuasive messages. Content that inspires awe, humor, anger, or sadness tends to be shared more frequently, indicating that emotional

resonance is a key driver of virality and online influence [5]. As such, marketing campaigns are no longer designed solely for conversion but also for connection—fostering emotional ties between brands and their audiences.

Furthermore, global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic have heightened the role of emotional marketing. In uncertain times, consumers seek empathy, reassurance, and purpose-driven narratives. Brands that demonstrate emotional intelligence have been more successful in maintaining consumer trust and loyalty during disruptive periods [6]. This context highlights the necessity of integrating emotional variables into strategic marketing decisions, particularly in brand communication, customer relationship management, and value proposition design. Despite the growing importance of emotional dynamics in marketing, the academic discourse remains fragmented. Scholars have explored various facets of emotion in marketing, but often within isolated silos. A bibliometric approach provides a powerful tool to map the intellectual structure of this research field, identify influential authors and journals, and uncover emerging trends and gaps. Through citation, co-authorship, and keyword analysis, bibliometrics enables a comprehensive and systematic exploration of how emotion-driven decision-making has been conceptualized and studied across disciplines and over time.

While there is a widespread acknowledgment of the central role that emotions play in marketing decision-making, existing research is dispersed across multiple disciplines and lacks an integrative overview. The absence of a systematic bibliometric mapping inhibits the ability of scholars and practitioners to track knowledge evolution, identify seminal works, and align future inquiries with the most impactful thematic clusters. Without such synthesis, there is a risk of redundant research, conceptual ambiguity, and missed opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. Therefore, there is a pressing need to chart the knowledge domain of emotion-driven marketing decisions through a rigorous and structured bibliometric analysis. This study aims to provide a comprehensive bibliometric exploration of emotion-driven decision-making in marketing.

2. METHODS

This study employed a bibliometric analysis approach to systematically explore the intellectual landscape of emotion-driven decision-making in marketing. Bibliometric methods are widely used to evaluate the structure, productivity, and evolution of scientific research through quantitative analysis of published literature. The analysis focused on peer-reviewed journal articles that specifically address the intersection of emotion and marketing decision-making. The Scopus database was chosen as the primary source due to its comprehensive coverage of high-quality scholarly publications in social sciences, business, and psychology. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords including: "emotion-driven decision making", "emotional marketing", "consumer emotion", "affective decision making", and "emotion and buying behavior". The search was restricted to articles published between 2000 and 2025, written in English, and categorized under marketing, business, psychology, or economics subject areas.

The retrieved records were exported in CSV and RIS formats, which included metadata such as title, authors, abstract, keywords, source journal, citations, affiliations, and references. These records were then processed using VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) to conduct co-authorship analysis, keyword co-occurrence mapping, co-citation networks, and thematic clustering. VOSviewer is particularly suitable for visualizing bibliometric networks and has been widely adopted in marketing and management literature reviews. Keyword co-occurrence analysis was applied to identify major themes and conceptual trends, while co-authorship and co-citation analyses were used to uncover collaboration patterns and influential contributors in the field. A minimum

threshold for keyword occurrence and citation count was applied to refine and highlight the most significant relationships within the dataset.

To ensure analytical rigor, data cleaning and standardization procedures were applied before the visualization stage. Author names, keyword variations (e.g., "emotion-based decision-making" vs. "emotional decision making"), and institutional affiliations were normalized to avoid fragmentation of the results. Duplicate records, non-article types (e.g., editorials, conference papers), and unrelated studies were excluded through manual filtering. The resulting maps were interpreted based on node size (representing frequency), link strength (indicating relational intensity), and clustering color (signifying thematic grouping).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
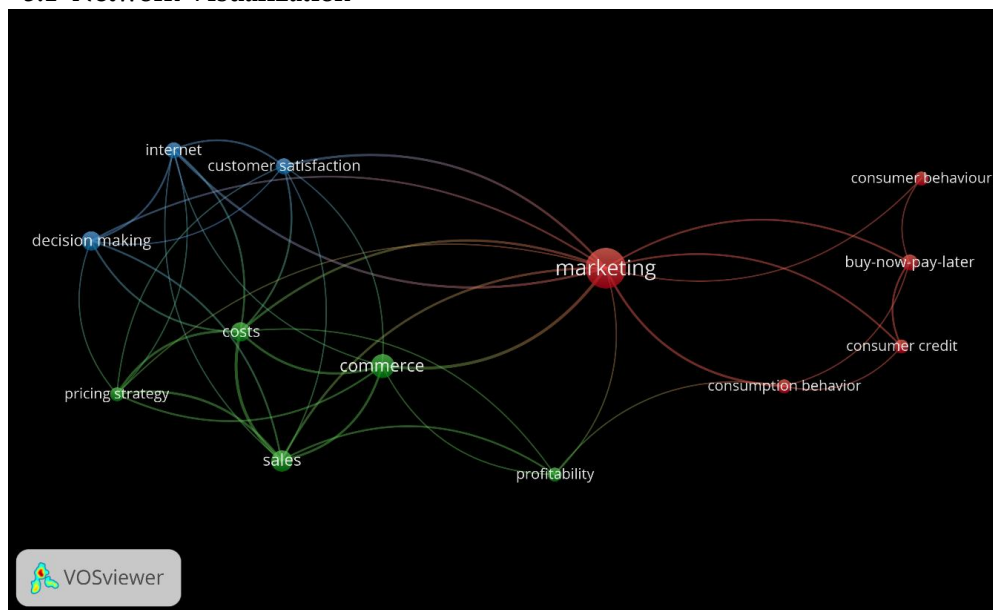
3.1 Network Visualization

Figure 1. Network Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

The term "marketing" occupies the central and most prominent node in the network, indicating its pivotal role as the intellectual and thematic hub within the emotion-driven decision-making literature. The thick connections between marketing and other keywords such as consumer behaviour, consumption behavior, commerce, decision making, and profitability suggest that the majority of emotion-oriented studies are situated within mainstream marketing contexts. This prominence reflects how emotional factors are increasingly embedded in diverse marketing strategies from branding to pricing, and from consumer engagement to behavioral targeting. On the right side of the map, there is a red-colored cluster that includes keywords like consumer behaviour, buy-now-pay-later, consumer credit, and consumption behavior. These terms represent a thematic concentration on emotion-driven consumer actions, particularly in the context of impulsive or deferred purchasing mechanisms. The inclusion of buy-now-pay-later (BNPL) and consumer credit points toward an emerging subfield that connects emotional stimuli with financial risk and gratification delay. This aligns well with psychological research suggesting that affective states can override rational financial planning in purchasing decisions.

Toward the bottom-left and center of the map, the green-colored cluster reflects a performance and outcome-oriented strand in the literature. This thematic group explores how emotional marketing strategies translate into tangible commercial outcomes. Strong links between marketing and profitability as well as sales show the direct interest of scholars and practitioners in understanding the return on emotional investment (ROEI). The presence of costs and pricing

strategy in this network also suggests an analytical interest in the economic efficiency of emotion-based marketing campaigns. The top-left blue cluster includes nodes such as internet, customer satisfaction, and decision making. This indicates a strong digital marketing and consumer psychology theme, where emotional interactions are analyzed through online behavior, satisfaction metrics, and decision heuristics. The strong link between internet and customer satisfaction implies that digital platforms are a major site of emotional influence, likely due to their immediacy, interactivity, and data-rich environments. Moreover, the link to decision making implies that emotion-based research is frequently framed within behavioral economics or cognitive psychology frameworks.
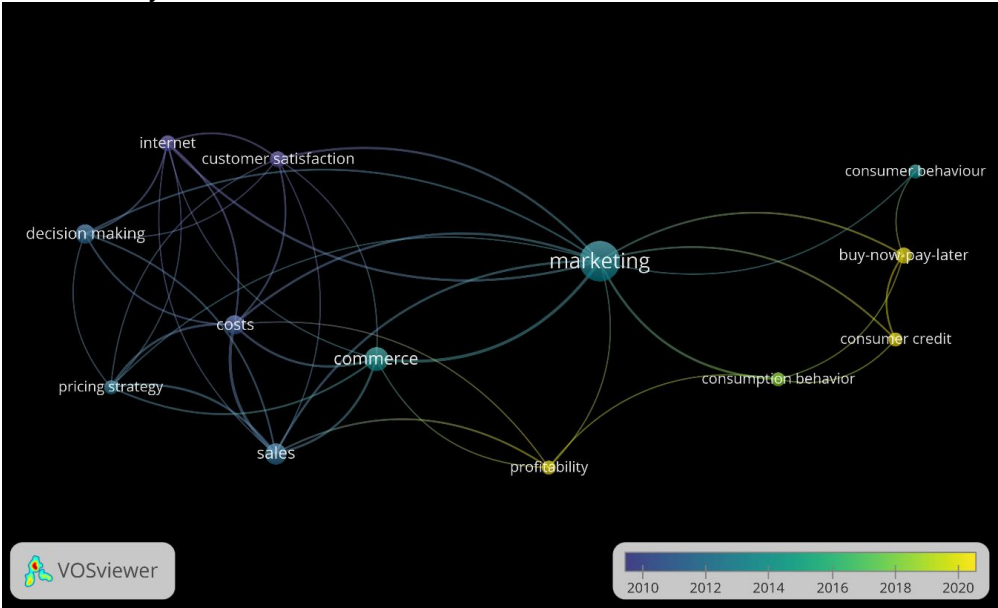
3.2 Overlay Visualization

Figure 2. Overlay Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 2 reveals the temporal evolution of research themes in emotion-driven marketing decision-making. The color gradient ranging from purple (older, ~2010) to yellow (newer, ~2020) shows that earlier studies were concentrated on foundational topics such as internet, decision making, costs, sales, and customer satisfaction. These keywords appear in cooler shades, indicating their emergence in the earlier phase of the research field. In contrast, more recent research frontiers are focused on consumer credit, buy-now-pay-later, profitability, and consumption behavior, reflecting a growing interest in the financial and behavioral consequences of emotionally influenced consumer actions. The central term marketing bridges both early and recent developments, signifying its ongoing relevance. This progression illustrates a shift from general e-commerce and pricing strategies toward nuanced investigations into financial psychology, behavioral economics, and emotionally driven purchasing systems such as BNPL models in contemporary marketing discourse.

3.3 Citation Analysis

Table 1. The Most Impactful Literatures

Citations	Authors and year	Title
350	[7]	Electronic tickets, smart cards, and online prepayments: When and how to advance sell
204	[8]	The determinants of consumers' online shopping cart abandonment

Citations	Authors and year	Title
82	[9]	Competing with copycats when customers are strategic
77	[10]	Pricing strategies for viral marketing on social networks
48	[11]	Click to buy: The impact of retail credit on over-consumption in the online environment
43	[12]	Decentralizing cross-functional decisions: coordination through internal markets
41	[13]	Search deterrence
38	[14]	Reduce or redirect? Which social marketing interventions could influence demand for traditional medicines?
38	[15]	Consumer options: Theory and an empirical application to a sports market
37	[16]	A comparative analysis of neuromarketing methods for brand purchasing predictions among young adults

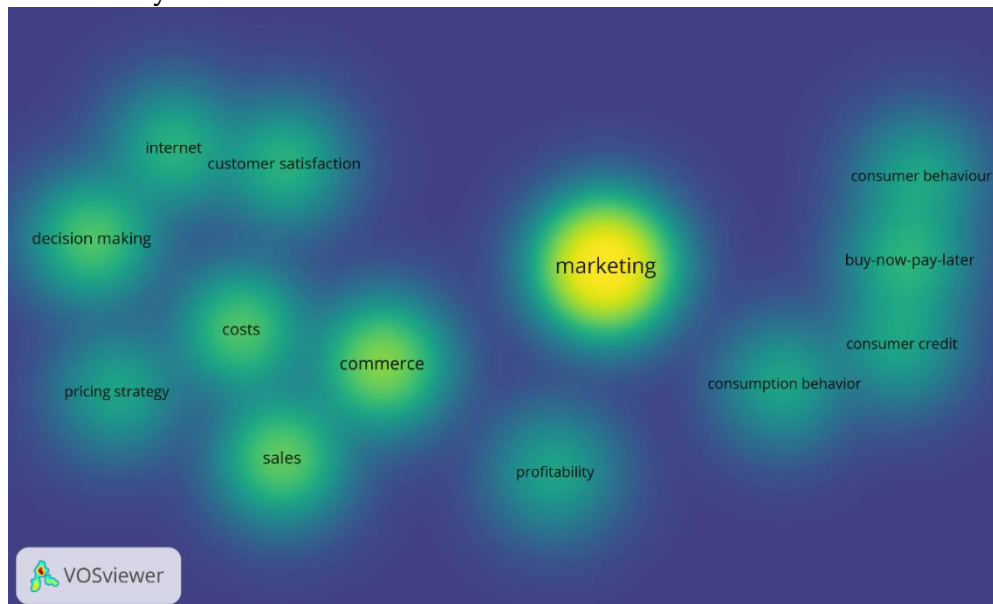*Source: Scopus, 2025*

3.4 Density Visualization

Figure 3. Density Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 3 above highlights "marketing" as the most dominant and frequently occurring keyword in the research landscape of emotion-driven decision-making. This is evident from its bright yellow core, indicating high co-occurrence density and centrality in the literature. Surrounding keywords like commerce, sales, costs, and profitability appear in greenish tones, suggesting their consistent yet comparatively moderate presence in academic discourse. This cluster reflects a traditional focus on business outcomes and commercial performance, where emotional influence is assessed through its impact on sales strategies, pricing policies, and profit generation. On the other hand, peripheral terms such as buy-now-pay-later, consumer credit, and consumption behavior are visualized in cooler green-blue areas, indicating emerging but still growing topics in this research field. Although less dense, their distinct positioning suggests a rising interest in how emotional impulses shape modern financial behavior and alternative purchasing methods. Similarly, the cluster on the top left represents foundational concepts that link emotional dynamics to digital consumer experiences.
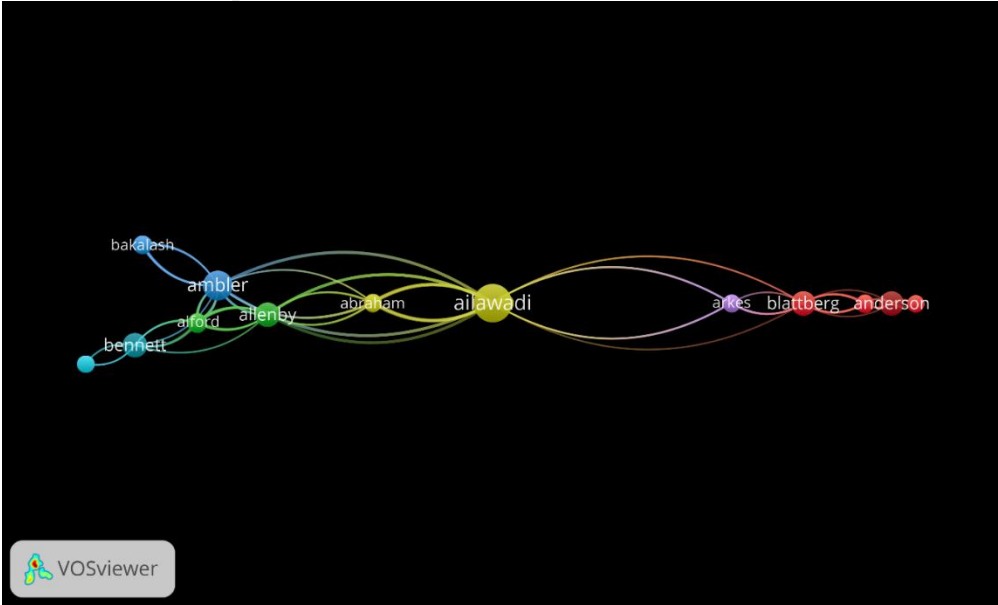
3.5 Co-Authorship Network

Figure 4. Author Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 4 showcases key author collaborations within the field of emotion-driven marketing and decision-making research. At the center of the network is Ailawadi, who serves as a pivotal bridging figure connecting multiple author clusters across disciplines. On the left, authors like Ambler, Allenby, Alford, and Bennett form a tightly knit group focusing on foundational marketing concepts, with moderate interconnections to Ailawadi. On the right, another prominent cluster includes Arkes, Blattberg, and Anderson, suggesting their collaborative focus on analytical or consumer behavior-related themes. The map highlights how Ailawadi acts as a central intellectual conduit, linking distinct scholarly domains and facilitating knowledge exchange between psychological, economic, and strategic marketing perspectives
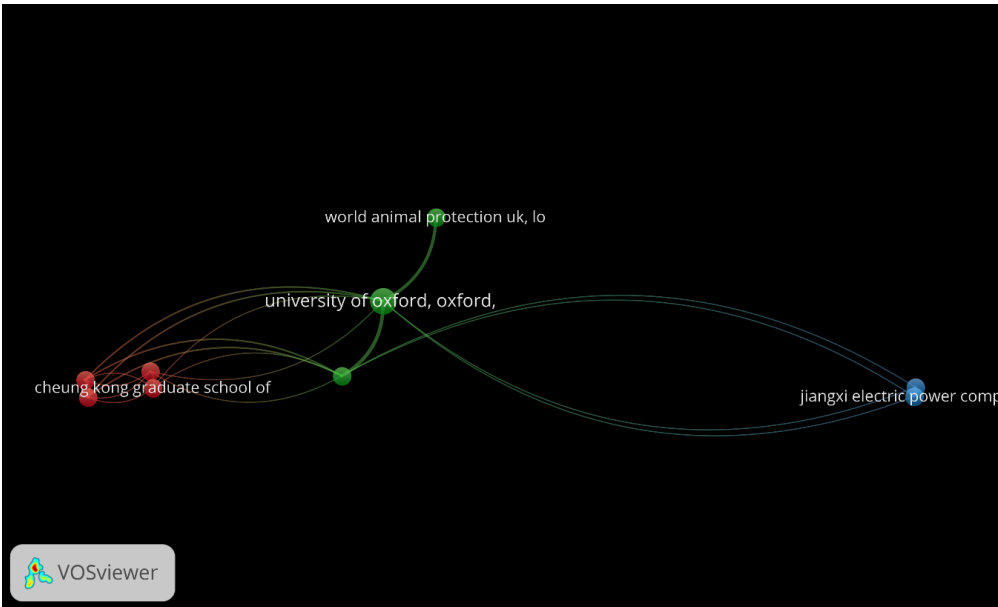

Figure 5. Affiliation Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 5 reveals a network of academic and organizational partnerships in emotion-driven marketing research. At the core is the University of Oxford, which functions as a central hub linking both Western and Eastern institutions. Strong collaborative ties are observed between Oxford and Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business (in red), indicating a transnational academic alliance, possibly blending Western behavioral theory with Eastern market applications. Additionally, Oxford is connected to World Animal Protection UK, suggesting interdisciplinary research that may explore emotional appeals in ethical or cause-related marketing. On the far right, Jiangxi Electric Power Company appears more peripheral but maintains direct ties with Oxford, indicating some degree of applied or industrial collaboration.
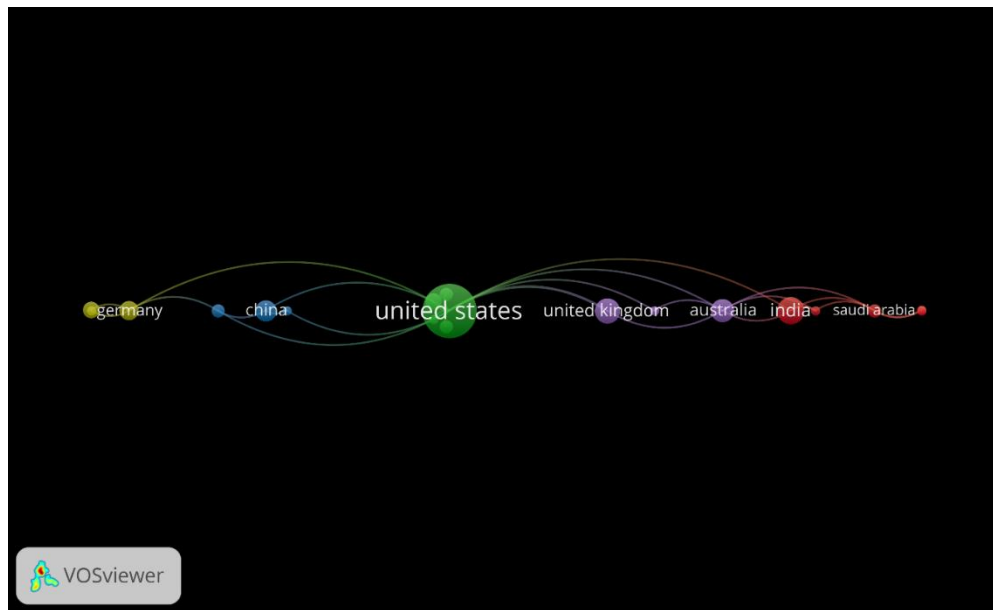

Figure 6. Country Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 6 illustrates the global distribution and interconnectivity of research on emotion-driven marketing decision-making. At the center is the United States, depicted with the largest and most connected node, indicating its dominant role as a leading contributor and collaborator in the field. The U.S. maintains strong bilateral research ties with both Western countries like the United Kingdom and Germany, as well as emerging contributors like China, India, and Saudi Arabia. The presence of countries such as Australia, Germany, and Saudi Arabia at the periphery—with fewer and thinner connections—suggests growing but still limited integration in global research networks.

Practical Implication

This study offers valuable insights for marketing practitioners aiming to design more emotionally resonant campaigns and strategies. By uncovering the dominant themes and emerging trends in emotion-driven marketing, the findings help businesses understand how emotional appeals—such as urgency, empathy, nostalgia, or excitement can influence purchasing decisions across diverse platforms and demographics. For instance, the rise of "buy-now-pay-later" (BNPL) schemes tied closely with emotional triggers like gratification and FOMO (fear of missing out) signals a strategic opportunity for financial and e-commerce platforms to tailor messaging that taps into such affective states. Additionally, the identification of customer satisfaction and profitability as major nodes in the bibliometric analysis encourages marketers to balance emotional engagement with measurable business outcomes. Practitioners can also use the visualized networks to benchmark their strategies against the most researched emotional mechanisms, allowing for more data-informed experimentation in content, product design, and consumer journey optimization.

Theoretical Contribution

Theoretically, this study contributes to the consolidation and mapping of a previously fragmented body of literature surrounding emotion-driven decision-making in marketing. Through the use of bibliometric tools such as VOSviewer, the research reveals the intellectual structure of the field, bridging disparate concepts like pricing strategy, customer satisfaction, consumer credit, and profitability under the umbrella of affective influence. It highlights key scholars (e.g., Ailawadi, Ambler), institutions (e.g., University of Oxford), and countries (e.g., United States, United Kingdom) that have shaped the discourse, thereby offering a citation-based foundation for future theory development. Moreover, the study advances emotion-centric theories in marketing by showing how affect functions not only as a mediator of decision-making but also as a direct catalyst for financial and behavioral shifts, an area that remains underdeveloped in traditional cognitive or rational-choice marketing frameworks. The co-occurrence of psychological, financial, and digital dimensions of emotion expands the theoretical boundary of marketing behavior into a more interdisciplinary domain.

Limitation

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the bibliometric analysis is limited to documents indexed in the Scopus database, which, while comprehensive, may exclude relevant publications from other databases such as Web of Science, PubMed, or regional sources. Second, the keyword-based search strategy, while carefully curated, may miss publications that use alternative terminologies for emotion-driven behavior, potentially underrepresenting the scope of the field. Third, bibliometric tools like VOSviewer emphasize quantitative citation and co-occurrence patterns, which may overlook the depth and quality of conceptual contributions found in qualitative or conceptual papers. Lastly, while the study reveals patterns and trends, it does not delve into the content analysis or theoretical frameworks used in the referenced studies, leaving a gap for future research to perform meta-analyses or systematic literature reviews to complement these findings.

CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study provides a comprehensive overview of the evolving landscape of emotion-driven decision-making in marketing, highlighting its interdisciplinary growth, key contributors, and thematic directions. By mapping the co-occurrence of concepts such as consumer credit, buy-now-pay-later schemes, customer satisfaction, and profitability, the analysis reveals how emotional influence extends beyond traditional advertising into financial behavior and digital commerce. The central role of "marketing" as a knowledge hub, along with the emerging focus on affective mechanisms, suggests a paradigm shift from rational persuasion to emotional engagement in shaping consumer behavior. Through author, institutional, and country collaboration maps, the study also demonstrates the global and networked nature of this field, with the United States and institutions like the University of Oxford playing pivotal roles.

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