

# Bibliometric Analysis of Brand Purpose

Loso Judijanto

IPOSS Jakarta, Indonesia and [losojudijantobumn@gmail.com](mailto:losojudijantobumn@gmail.com)

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## ABSTRACT

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This study aims to map the intellectual structure, development trends, and research dynamics of brand purpose through a bibliometric approach. Data were collected from the Scopus database covering the period 2000–2026 and analyzed using VOSviewer to generate co-authorship, country collaboration, citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks. The results indicate a significant increase in publications over the last decade, reflecting growing academic and practical interest in purpose-driven branding. The United States and China emerge as dominant contributors, with extensive international collaboration networks. Thematic analysis reveals that brand purpose research is strongly connected to social media, consumer behavior, and marketing, while also expanding into sustainability, ESG, and technological domains such as artificial intelligence. The overlay and density visualizations further demonstrate a shift from traditional branding constructs toward more dynamic, technology-driven, and ethically oriented themes. Despite this progress, the field remains moderately fragmented, with limited contributions from developing regions. This study contributes by providing a comprehensive overview of the evolution and structure of brand purpose research, identifying key trends, influential works, and future research opportunities. The findings offer valuable insights for both academics and practitioners seeking to understand and implement brand purpose strategies in an increasingly complex and socially conscious marketplace.

*Keywords: Brand Purpose, Bibliometric Analysis, VOSviewer, Consumer Behavior, Sustainability*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the concept of brand purpose has emerged as a central theme in marketing and strategic management discourse. Moving beyond traditional notions of branding focused solely on product differentiation and financial performance, brand purpose emphasizes the broader role of organizations in contributing to societal and environmental well-being [1], [2]. This shift reflects changing consumer expectations, where individuals increasingly demand that brands demonstrate authenticity, ethical responsibility, and meaningful impact. As a result, companies are no longer evaluated solely based on the functional benefits of their offerings, but also on the values they represent and the purpose they communicate [3], [4].

The growing importance of brand purpose is closely linked to global transformations such as digitalization, sustainability challenges, and heightened stakeholder awareness. In an era characterized by rapid information exchange and transparency, consumers are more informed and critical of corporate behavior [5], [6]. Social media platforms amplify public scrutiny, enabling stakeholders to hold organizations accountable for inconsistencies between their stated purpose and actual practices. Consequently, brand purpose has evolved into a strategic asset that can enhance trust, foster emotional connections, and drive long-term loyalty. At the same time, it presents risks, particularly when perceived as superficial or opportunistic [5], [6], often referred to as “purpose-washing.”

From an academic perspective, research on brand purpose has expanded significantly, intersecting with related concepts such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability, brand authenticity, and brand activism. Scholars have explored various dimensions of brand purpose, including its influence on consumer behavior, organizational identity, and competitive advantage [7], [8], [9]. However, despite this growing body of literature, the field remains fragmented, with

diverse theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. This fragmentation makes it challenging to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual structure and evolution of brand purpose research.

To address this gap, bibliometric analysis has become an increasingly valuable method for systematically mapping scientific knowledge. By analyzing large volumes of academic publications, bibliometric techniques enable researchers to identify key trends, influential authors, collaboration networks, and emerging research themes. Tools such as VOSviewer facilitate the visualization of complex relationships within the literature, providing insights that go beyond traditional narrative reviews. Furthermore, databases such as Scopus offer comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed publications, ensuring the reliability and relevance of the analyzed data.

Despite the availability of bibliometric methods, there is still a lack of comprehensive studies that specifically examine the development of brand purpose research from a global perspective. Existing reviews often focus on conceptual discussions or limited subsets of the literature, without capturing the broader intellectual landscape. As a result, important questions remain unanswered regarding the evolution of research themes, the most influential contributions, and the direction of future studies.

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a bibliometric analysis of brand purpose research using data from the Scopus database. The objectives are threefold: (1) to analyze the growth and distribution of publications over time, (2) to identify key authors, sources, and influential works, and (3) to map the thematic structure and emerging trends within the field. By providing a comprehensive overview of the literature, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of brand purpose as a strategic and academic construct.

The significance of this research lies in its ability to synthesize a rapidly expanding body of knowledge into a coherent framework. For academics, it offers a structured foundation for future research by highlighting gaps and opportunities for exploration. For practitioners, it provides insights into how brand purpose is conceptualized and operationalized in the literature, supporting more effective and authentic implementation in organizational contexts. Ultimately, this study underscores the growing relevance of brand purpose in shaping the future of marketing and business strategy.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a quantitative bibliometric approach to systematically analyze the development of brand purpose research within the global academic landscape. Bibliometric analysis is particularly suitable for mapping scientific knowledge, as it enables the identification of publication trends, influential authors, and the intellectual structure of a research field [10], [11]. The data for this study were retrieved from the Scopus database, which is widely recognized for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals and high-quality academic publications. The search process was conducted using relevant keywords such as “brand purpose,” “purpose-driven brand,” and related terms, covering the publication period from 2000 to 2026. To ensure data relevance and consistency, only journal articles written in English were included, while conference papers, book chapters, and non-indexed documents were excluded.

Following data collection, the bibliographic records were exported in compatible formats (e.g., CSV and RIS) for further analysis. The dataset was then cleaned to remove duplicates, incomplete records, and irrelevant entries. Descriptive analysis was first conducted to examine publication growth, distribution by year, leading journals, and country contributions. Subsequently, advanced bibliometric techniques were applied, including co-authorship analysis to identify

collaboration networks among researchers, citation analysis to determine the most influential publications, and keyword co-occurrence analysis to explore thematic relationships within the field. These analyses provide a comprehensive overview of both the productivity and impact of research in brand purpose studies.

To visualize and interpret the bibliometric networks, this study utilized VOSviewer, a widely used tool for constructing and mapping bibliometric data. VOSviewer enables the creation of network visualizations that illustrate relationships among authors, keywords, and cited references, allowing for clearer identification of research clusters and emerging themes [12], [13]. The results generated from the software were then interpreted using a descriptive and analytical approach to uncover patterns, research gaps, and future directions. By integrating quantitative bibliometric techniques with visual mapping, this study provides a robust methodological framework for understanding the evolution and structure of brand purpose research.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Author Collaboration Analysis

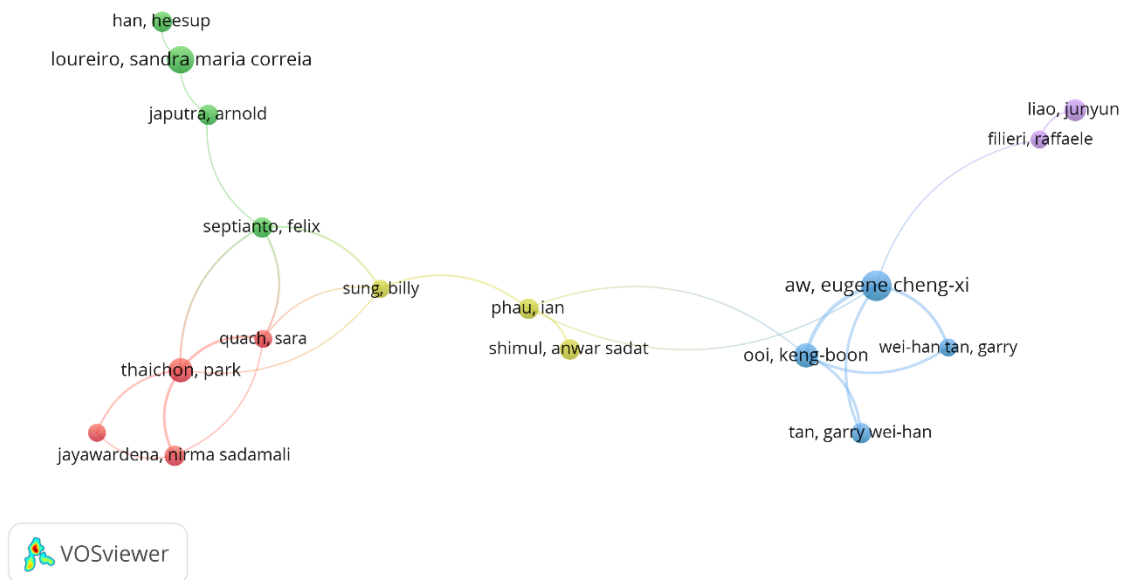


Figure 1. Author Visualization  
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 1 illustrates the author collaboration network generated using VOSviewer, revealing several distinct clusters that represent groups of researchers working closely within specific thematic areas of brand purpose research. The visualization shows that collaboration is organized into relatively small, interconnected clusters, indicating that while there is some level of cooperation among authors, the field remains moderately fragmented. Prominent clusters can be identified through dense linkages among authors such as Aw, Eugene Cheng-Xi and Ooi, Keng-Boon, suggesting strong collaborative relationships and potentially influential research contributions within their group. Meanwhile, other clusters appear more isolated, reflecting niche research areas or limited cross-group interaction. The presence of bridging nodes—authors who connect different clusters—highlights opportunities for greater interdisciplinary collaboration, which could enhance the integration of diverse perspectives in brand purpose studies. Overall, the network structure

suggests that although the field is growing, there is still significant potential to strengthen global research collaboration and knowledge exchange.

### 3.2 Country Contribution Analysis

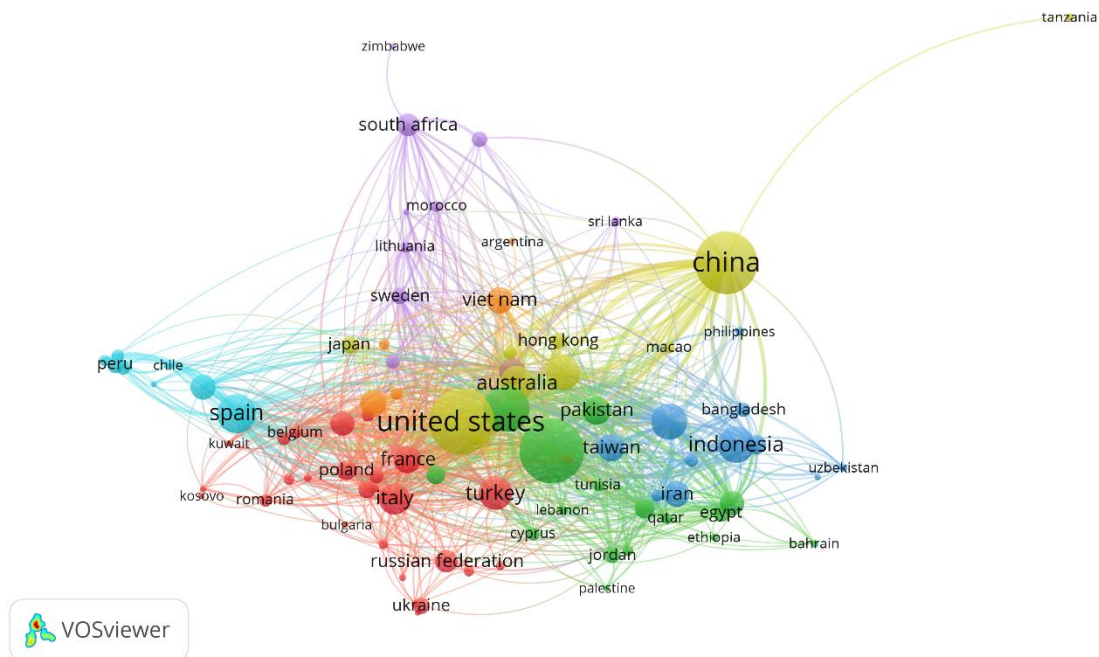


Figure 2. Country Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 2 presents the country collaboration network, visualized using VOSviewer, which highlights the global distribution and interconnectedness of brand purpose research. The map reveals that countries such as the United States and China occupy central positions with larger node sizes, indicating their dominant contribution and high publication output in the field. These countries also demonstrate extensive linkages with others, reflecting strong international collaboration networks. Several regional clusters are evident, including European countries (e.g., Spain, Italy, France), Asian contributors (e.g., Indonesia, Taiwan, Iran), and emerging research hubs such as South Africa. The dense connections among these countries suggest that brand purpose research is increasingly globalized, with knowledge exchange occurring across geographic boundaries. However, disparities remain, as developing countries tend to have smaller nodes and fewer connections, indicating lower research productivity and collaboration intensity. Overall, the visualization underscores the importance of cross-country collaboration in advancing the field while also highlighting opportunities to strengthen participation from underrepresented regions.

### 3.2 Citation Analysis

Table 1. The Most Impactful Literatures

Citations	Authors and year	Title
1465	Miguel, J.H., Cadenas-Sanchez, C., Ekelund, U., ... Ruiz, J.R., Ortega, F.B. (2017)	Accelerometer Data Collection and Processing Criteria to Assess Physical Activity and Other Outcomes: A Systematic Review and Practical Considerations

Citations	Authors and year	Title
861	Agu, P.C.,Afiukwa, C.A.,Orji, O.U.,... Ugwuja, E.I.,Aja, P.M. (2023)	Molecular docking as a tool for the discovery of molecular targets of nutraceuticals in diseases management
706	Jin, S.V.,Muqaddam, A.,Ryu, E. (2019)	Instafamous and social media influencer marketing
618	Deeks, J.J.,Dinnes, J.,Takwoingi, Y.,... Leeflang, M.M.G.,Van den Bruel, A. (2020)	Antibody tests for identification of current and past infection with SARS-CoV-2
596	Chung, S.,Cho, H. (2017)	Fostering parasocial relationships with celebrities on social media: Implications for celebrity endorsement
588	Vredenburg, J.,Kapitan, S.,Spry, A.,Kemper, J.A. (2020)	Brands Taking a Stand: Authentic Brand Activism or Woke Washing?
555	Chen, S.,Song, Y.,Gao, P. (2023)	Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance and financial outcomes: Analyzing the impact of ESG on financial performance
505	Fuller, D.,Colwell, E.,Low, J.,... Slade, L.,Taylor, N.G.A. (2020)	Reliability and Validity of Commercially Available Wearable Devices for Measuring Steps, Energy Expenditure, and Heart Rate: Systematic Review
485	Ko, E.,Costello, J.P.,Taylor, C.R. (2019)	What is a luxury brand? A new definition and review of the literature
463	Dolan, R.,Conduit, J.,Frethey-Bentham, C.,Fahy, J.,Goodman, S. (2019)	Social media engagement behavior: A framework for engaging customers through social media content

Source: Scopus, 2026

Table 1 highlights the most impactful literatures shaping the broader discourse surrounding brand purpose, revealing a multidisciplinary foundation that extends beyond traditional marketing studies. Highly cited works such as Jin S. V. et al. (2019) and Dolan R. et al. (2019) emphasize the critical role of social media and influencer engagement in building meaningful brand-consumer relationships, which are essential elements of purpose-driven branding. Similarly, studies like Vredenburg J. et al. (2020) on brand activism highlight the tension between authentic purpose and “woke washing,” reinforcing the importance of credibility in brand purpose communication. The inclusion of research on ESG performance (e.g., Chen S. et al., 2023) further demonstrates the integration of sustainability and financial outcomes within the brand purpose narrative. Interestingly, several highly cited works originate from adjacent fields such as health sciences and

technology, indicating that the intellectual structure of brand purpose research is influenced by interdisciplinary knowledge. Overall, the table suggests that brand purpose is not an isolated concept but is deeply interconnected with digital engagement, ethical responsibility, and stakeholder-oriented value creation, reflecting its evolving role in contemporary academic and practical contexts.

### 3.3 Keyword Co-Occurrence and Research Themes

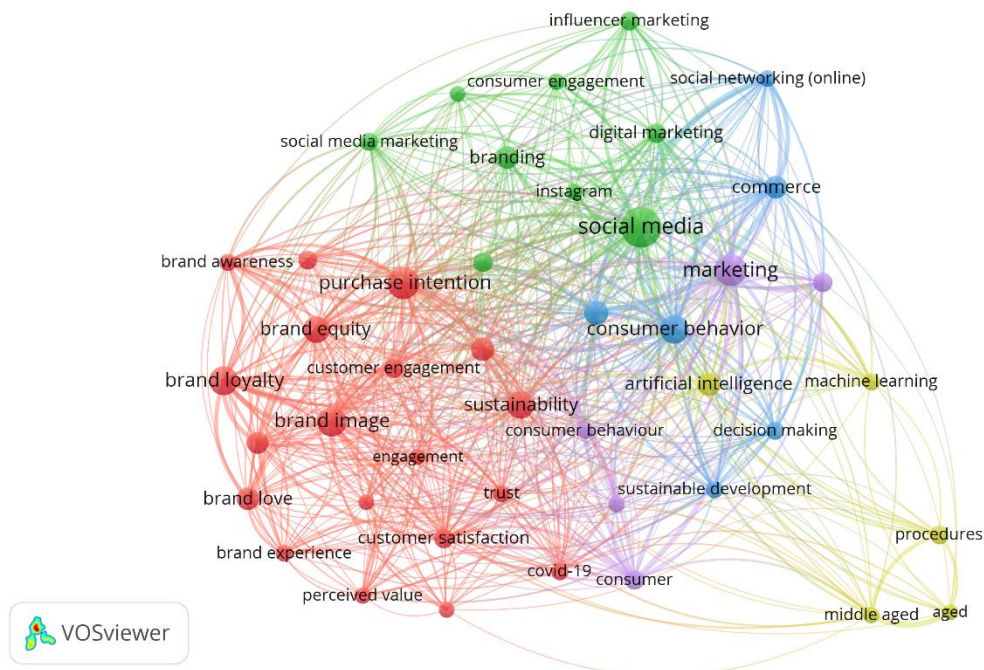


Figure 3. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 3 presents the keyword co-occurrence network generated using VOSviewer, illustrating the conceptual structure of brand purpose research through several interconnected thematic clusters. The visualization shows that core terms such as “social media,” “marketing,” and “consumer behavior” occupy central positions, indicating their strong influence and frequent co-occurrence across studies. Distinct clusters emerge, including a red cluster focused on brand-related constructs such as brand loyalty, brand image, and customer satisfaction; a green cluster emphasizing digital and social media engagement; and a blue cluster linking consumer behavior with technological aspects such as artificial intelligence and decision-making. The dense interconnections among these clusters suggest that brand purpose research is highly interdisciplinary, integrating perspectives from digital marketing, consumer psychology, and sustainability. Additionally, the presence of keywords like “sustainability” and “trust” highlights the growing importance of ethical and value-driven branding. Overall, the network demonstrates that brand purpose is embedded within a complex ecosystem of related concepts, reflecting its evolving role in shaping modern marketing strategies.

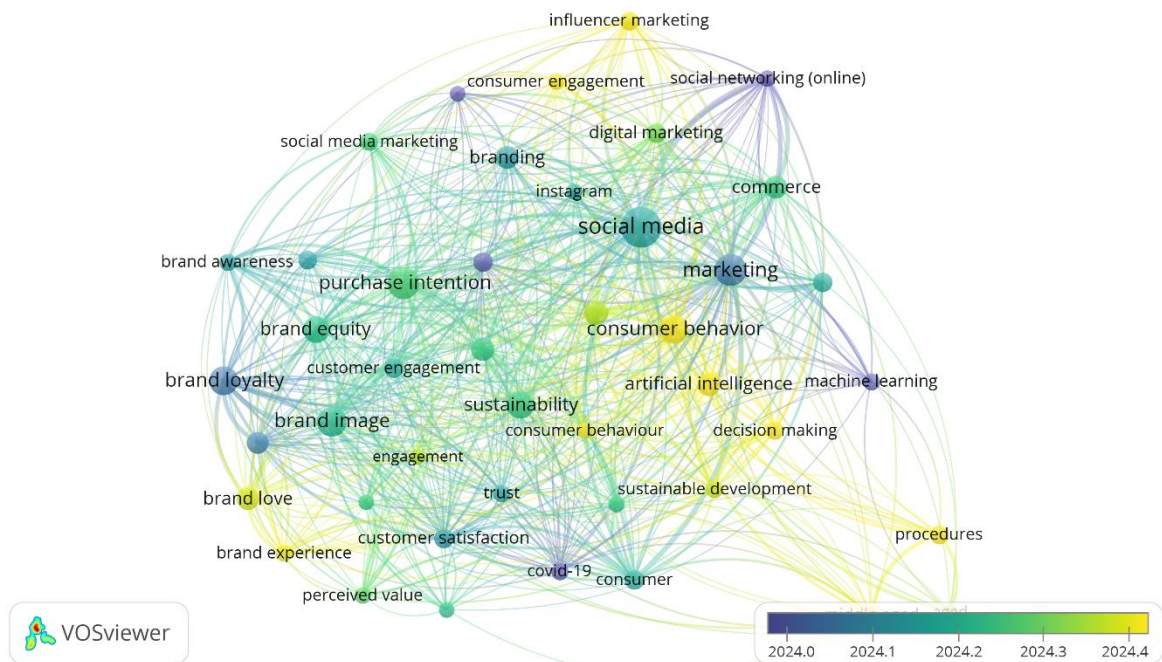


Figure 4. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 4 presents the overlay visualization generated using VOSviewer, which illustrates the temporal evolution of research themes in brand purpose studies. The color gradient, ranging from blue (earlier studies) to yellow (more recent studies), indicates that traditional topics such as brand loyalty, brand image, and customer satisfaction represent foundational areas of research. In contrast, more recent themes are highlighted in yellow, including “artificial intelligence,” “machine learning,” “influencer marketing,” and “sustainable development,” reflecting a shift toward technology-driven and sustainability-oriented perspectives. Central nodes such as “social media,” “marketing,” and “consumer behavior” remain consistently relevant across time, acting as bridges between earlier and emerging research areas. This pattern suggests that while the field builds upon established branding concepts, it is rapidly evolving to incorporate digital innovation and ethical considerations. Overall, the overlay visualization demonstrates that brand purpose research is becoming increasingly dynamic, with future directions likely to focus on the integration of advanced technologies and sustainability in shaping brand strategies.

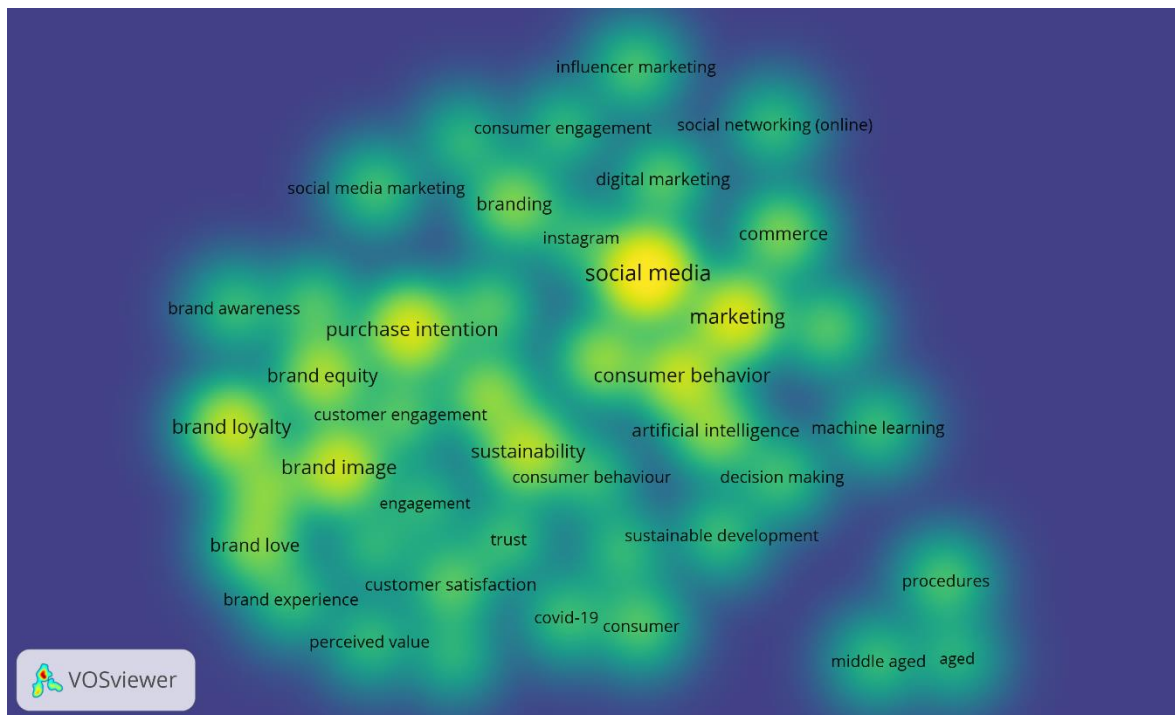


Figure 5. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

Figure 5 presents the density visualization generated using VOSviewer, which highlights the most intensively studied areas within the brand purpose research landscape. In this visualization, regions with brighter yellow colors indicate higher keyword density, reflecting topics that appear more frequently and are more strongly interconnected in the literature. The map shows that terms such as “social media,” “marketing,” “consumer behavior,” and “purchase intention” form the central hotspots, suggesting that these themes dominate current research discussions. Surrounding these core areas are moderately dense topics such as brand loyalty, brand image, sustainability, and customer engagement, indicating their continued relevance but slightly lower concentration. Meanwhile, less dense areas, shown in cooler colors, include emerging or more specialized topics such as artificial intelligence and sustainable development, which are gaining attention but are not yet as established. Overall, the density visualization confirms that brand purpose research is heavily anchored in digital marketing and consumer behavior, while simultaneously expanding toward technology-driven and sustainability-oriented domains.

### Discussion

The findings of this bibliometric analysis confirm that brand purpose has evolved into a central construct within contemporary marketing and business research. The rapid growth in publications, particularly in the last decade, reflects a paradigm shift in how organizations are perceived—not merely as economic entities, but as social actors expected to contribute to broader societal goals. This shift is reinforced by the strong presence of themes such as sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and stakeholder engagement across the analyzed literature [14], [15]. As a result, brand purpose is increasingly positioned as a strategic mechanism for aligning organizational values with consumer expectations, thereby enhancing trust and long-term relational outcomes.

From a structural perspective, the network and co-occurrence analyses reveal that brand purpose research is inherently interdisciplinary. The strong interconnections between clusters related to social media, consumer behavior, and branding indicate that digital platforms play a crucial role in shaping how brand purpose is communicated and perceived. Social media, in

particular, emerges as a dominant context where purpose-driven narratives are constructed, disseminated, and evaluated by consumers [16], [17]. This highlights the importance of transparency and authenticity, as digital environments enable immediate feedback and scrutiny, increasing the risk of reputational damage when brand purpose is perceived as inauthentic or inconsistent with organizational actions.

The temporal evolution of keywords further suggests that the field is undergoing a dynamic transformation. While earlier research focused on foundational branding concepts such as brand loyalty, brand image, and customer satisfaction, more recent studies incorporate emerging themes such as artificial intelligence, influencer marketing, and sustainable development. This indicates a shift toward more technologically integrated and innovation-driven approaches to brand purpose. The growing relevance of artificial intelligence and machine learning suggests that future research may explore how data-driven insights can enhance the personalization and effectiveness of purpose-driven branding strategies, while sustainability-related themes emphasize the increasing importance of ethical and environmental considerations.

Despite these advancements, the analysis also identifies several gaps and opportunities for future research. The dominance of contributions from developed countries highlights the need for greater inclusion of perspectives from emerging economies, where socio-cultural and institutional contexts may shape brand purpose differently. Additionally, the fragmentation observed in author collaboration networks suggests that stronger interdisciplinary and cross-regional partnerships are necessary to advance theoretical integration [1], [2], [18]. Future studies should also focus on developing robust empirical models that examine the causal mechanisms linking brand purpose to organizational performance and societal impact. Overall, this study underscores that while brand purpose research has made significant progress, it remains an evolving field with substantial potential for further theoretical and practical development.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of brand purpose research, revealing its rapid growth and increasing significance within the broader marketing and management literature. The findings demonstrate that brand purpose has evolved from a conceptual extension of corporate social responsibility into a strategic construct that integrates consumer engagement, sustainability, and digital transformation. The dominance of themes such as social media, consumer behavior, and marketing highlights the central role of digital platforms in shaping purpose-driven branding, while emerging topics such as artificial intelligence and sustainable development indicate the field's ongoing evolution.

Furthermore, the analysis identifies key contributors and global collaboration patterns, with developed countries playing a leading role in advancing the literature. However, the limited representation of developing regions suggests the need for more inclusive and context-sensitive research. The thematic and network analyses also reveal that while the field is expanding, it remains fragmented, indicating opportunities for stronger interdisciplinary integration and theoretical consolidation. Overall, this study contributes by mapping the intellectual landscape of brand purpose research and outlining future directions, including the need for robust empirical models, cross-cultural perspectives, and deeper exploration of practical implications to better understand how brand purpose can generate both economic and social value.

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