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Branding in Social Media: A Bibliometric Analysis

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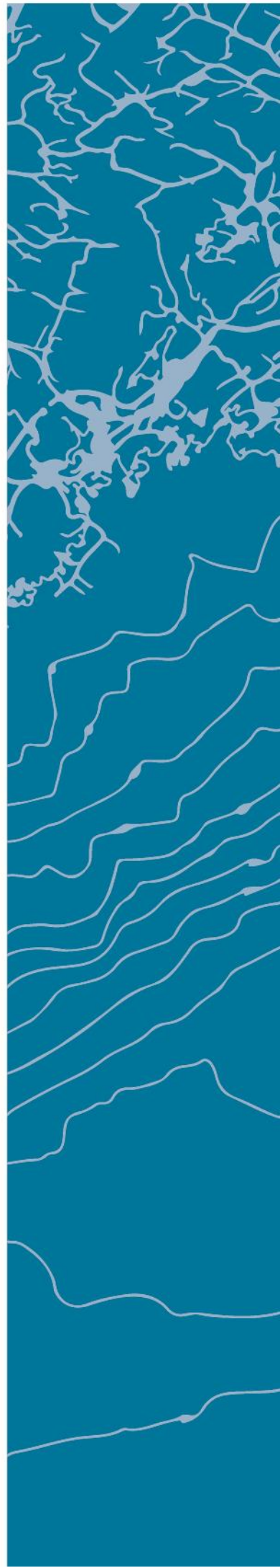
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Abstract

To have a clearer insight into how branding has evolved over the past ten years (2012-2022) in social media, a comprehensive bibliographic analysis is conducted on selected papers in the journals included in Web of Science database on branding in social media. We employ the VOSViewer tool to complete our bibliographic analysis. VOSViewer is used for graphical representations of network maps. We will be using this tool to explore the co-occurrence of keywords in the branding area. This work provides a basis for the scope of strategic approaches to branding in social media by investigating the scope of research to find areas of opportunity for scholars. We expound on the existing scholarly research on branding in social media, offer a procedural overview of the VOSViewer tool, provide managerial implications of this work, discuss limitations, and recommend areas for future research.

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Introduction

A remarkable shift in branding has been observed over the last ten years, mainly because of the evolution from traditional to digital media. This has introduced a new environment of branding opportunities, compelling businesses to rely less on traditional marketing tools and engage more in new media technologies. The development of social media has given room for people to connect, interact and relate with companies and their brands online (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Businesses use stories to provide interaction for their brands online. Storytelling has long been recognized in branding to give meaning and create connections with the brand by providing a theme to start conversations between consumers and brands (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Social media has evolved into essential channels for branding and elevates the role of consumers to participate with brand owners in creating stories for brands which is known as co-creation. For almost a decade, social media has transformed the classical theater into an improvisational version as they permit role diversity for key players involved in the process (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). When brands and consumers co-create brand stories, owners do not have complete control of their brands as consumer-generated brand stories can spread as rapidly as those created by companies. Customers are increasingly connecting on social media, where the sharing of personal stories influences their behavior (Neils Frederik Lund, 2018). This advancement in technology has enabled the use of online tools to connect and share content with people globally. Companies and businesses are using these online tools as a medium to engage in conversations with their existing and potential customers and modifying their branding strategies to suit this media. Today, social media has not merely allowed people to make zillions of linkages but also changed how individuals relate to products and services of renowned brands (Holt, 2016).

In this study, we aim to consider the work that has been done by previous writers and fill in the gap where necessary. Writers such as Kim and Ko, 2012 found out that branding activities in social media have a high impact on a brand's reputation; LaRoche et al. 2012 found out that branding in social media boosts brand awareness; while Shen and Bissel, 2013 found out that branding in social media enhances brand image (Islam & Chowdhury, 2019). This research covers limited areas on how social media has affected branding. Therefore, our study will look at how branding has evolved over the years due to social media and how this has affected brands. We will be doing a bibliometric analysis of branding in social media. Its

objective is to highlight how branding has evolved over the last ten years as a research topic and serves as a catalyst for additional research from a strategic management perspective. This work also highlights the methodological value provided by the VOSViewer bibliographic analysis tool. We aim to offer a way for scholars to identify beneficial research opportunities and shed more light on branding from a managerial perspective.

We begin with an overview of academic narratives surrounding this space through a brief background on branding and the use of bibliometric studies. The following section will describe the process and the source of literature data for the study. We will briefly describe the VOSViewer bibliometric analysis tool used in this paper to offer guidelines for anyone interested in using it for their own research. Next, we will present and discuss the results and their implications for scholars and practitioners. We will further conclude by acknowledging the limitations of this approach and recommendations for future research.

Background

Branding literature has long recognized storytelling as providing meaning to the brand (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). It has been used to enhance consumers' connections with brands. Stories are created with many touchpoints that affect the listeners' lives, facilitating an emotional relationship and communicating brand values. Brand stories contain a plot, characters, a climax, and a result that causes empathy in the listeners to help them remember the story told (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). A brand story transports listeners into the world of the brand narrative. An example of a firm-generated brand story is Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign. Firm-generated brand stories aim to create and strengthen consumers' relationships with the brand by providing a theme for conversations between consumers and firms (Sonja Gensler, 2013).

Brand stories aim to build awareness, comprehension, empathy, recognition, recall, and provide meaning to the brand. In brand storytelling based on classical theatre, the brand owner's realm constitutes of the story and its content, production, and distribution, while the consumer is the primary listener (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). But today, the emergence of social media has changed this perspective where the consumers' role in storytelling is now a more active participant. Branding in social media can be said to be like improv theatre

performance as both the brand owner and consumers can play either the role of a narrator or listener, which results in an interactive co-creation (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). With brand stories, brands enable consumers to integrate their products into their own experiences (Moro, 2016). The branding activities are frequently part of an organized campaign to establish a relationship with consumers and seek their loyalty. In branding, a target audience is identified, and messages are created to encourage an economic and emotional attachment to the branded product (Logan Molyneux, 2018). Social media platforms provide networks, relations, and interactions between brands and consumers. The growth of social media has created virtual channels for marketing and the role of consumers in the co-creation of brands and communication. Market power has now been shifted from firms to consumers as they can now produce and publish content. Consumers now can renegotiate, alter, and fragment the brand narratives according to individual experiences and opinions once brands are out in the market (Niels Frederik Lunda, 2018).

The topic of branding has accumulated significant scholarly focus. Still, there has not been a detailed study of how branding has evolved over the years because of the growth and development of social media. The next step in this paper is to develop a comprehensive literature review of the concept of branding in social media over the last ten years and related terms to establish a stronghold on the topic. A critical literature review of the subject is always essential for any research paper. A bibliometric study of a research field uses statistical methods to map trends in publication activity and trace relationships between authors, topics, and citations. This type of review provides guidelines to the editors of journals and the authors who submit their work to them. A critical literature review can identify conceptual and methodological issues and allow scholars to determine what essential areas warrant further research and theoretical development.

As far as we know, there has been no bibliometric review of branding in social media. Based on the increasing importance of branding in brand management strategy, we suggest this is an opportunity to map, trace, and understand the publication outputs and keywords in this domain. Therefore, this research paper aims to present the current state of literature and carve out paths to future research on this topic. A bibliometric review of branding in social media will help identify the most influential keywords and the journals in which the most works on these keywords have been published.

Moving on to the next section of this paper, we will describe the keyword selection process and the literature data source.

Methodology

The data source: Web of Science

The data source used for this thesis was the Web of Science (WoS) database. "WoS is an online subscription-based scientific citation indexing service that enables a researcher to conduct a comprehensive citation search by search terms, on a single journal, a large number of journals or all journals, or by both search term(s) and journal(s)" (Park, Treen, Pitt & Chan, 2021, p. 3). WoS allows users to designate article searches ranging from 1900 to today. While comparing citations on Google Scholar and WoS, we can see that WoS shows relatively fewer citations than Google Scholar. Fewer citations are because WoS only considers journals within their database. On the other hand, Google Scholar identifies all sources used on the internet. Nevertheless, the impact of the research papers is unchanging (Park et al., 2021).

WoS allows researchers to include and exclude search terms and specify journals to perform better results. We selected the following search terms: 'branding in social media' OR 'social media branding.' We chose these keywords because we wanted the research papers to be as specific as possible. The journal search option was left open to include all the available journals in the WoS database. However, we limited our search in the criteria WoS categories to management, business, and communication, so that we are determined to articles within our field. We searched for papers from 2012 until our analysis in 2022, which means the data for 2022 only includes the first four months of the year. After searching the search terms, WoS identified 100 papers. Further on, we categorized the specified documents based on the most occurred keywords (co-occurrences), as shown in table 1.

The analysis tool: VOSviewer

To analyze the data, we used a bibliographic analysis tool called VOSviewer. Visualization of similarities (VOS) viewer was developed at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman. This software aims to analyze bibliometric data by constructing bibliography maps for visualization and explorations (VOSviewer, 2022).

VOSviewer is our chosen tool for bibliographic analysis because this software allows easy

construction of visual maps to be transported to other documents. It permits the use of large numbers of documents for study at once.

The network map can be easily adjusted according to personal preferences. Such as the visual characteristics of the map, bubble density, resolution, bubble size, etc., can be easily adjusted by the user.

VOSviewer procedure

After producing the results in Web of Science, the results were exported into a machine-readable format, and we used a file extension (txt). To generate the results, they are uploaded in VOSviewer through the network map menu, which further allows you to base your results according to the following analysis: co-authorship, co-occurrence, citation, and co-citation.

Our chosen analysis for the thesis was a co-occurrence network map, where we set custom filters (e.g., the articles must have the word repeated at least five times to be included in the VOSviewer output). Following the filtering step, VOSviewer generated a network map based on co-occurrence and produced a list of all the most occurred words.

Table 1. List of papers retrieved for analysis from web of science

| <u>Social Media</u> |
|--|
| Amy .L. Parsons, E. L.-W. (2018). Social Media Marketing Management: A Conceptual Framework. <i>Journal of Internet Commerce</i> , 81-95. |
| Angella J.Kim, E. K. (2012). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brands. <i>Journal of Business Research</i> , 1480-1486. |
| Bissell, B. S. (2013). Social Media, Social Me: A Content Analysis of Beauty Companies' Use of Facebook in Marketing and Branding. <i>Journal of promotion management</i> , 629-651. |
| Bruno Godey, A. M. (2016). Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior. <i>Journal of Business Research</i> , 5833-5841. |
| Candice R.Hollenbeck, A. M. (2012). Consumers' use of brands to reflect their actual and ideal selves on Facebook. <i>International Journal of Research in Marketing</i> , 95-405. |
| Chen, Y. W. (2021). Luxury branding on social media. <i>Journal of Product & Brand Management</i> , 656–670. |
| Eduardo Oliveira, E. P. (2014). Content, context and co-creation: Digital challenges in destination branding with references to Portugal as a tourist destination. <i>Journal of Vacation Marketing</i> , 53–74. |
| Fevzi Bitiktas, O. T. (2020). Social media usage in container shipping companies: Analysis of Facebook messages. <i>Research in Transportation Business & Management</i> . |
| Gil Appel, L. G. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i> , 79-95. |
| Göçer, C. S. (2020). Examining social media branding profiles. <i>Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing</i> , 2023–2038. |
| Sangeeta Singh, S. S. (2012). Brand Performances in Social Media. <i>Journal of interactive marketing</i> , 189-197. |
| Sohail, M. H. (2021). The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumers' Purchase Decision: Investigating the Effects of Local and Nonlocal Brands. <i>Journal of International Consumer Marketing</i> , 350–367. [Original source: https://studycrumb.com/alphabeterizer] |

Table 1. (Continued)

Word of mouth (communication)

- Guan, J., Lau, Y. Y., Yang, H., & Ren, L. (2021). To buy or not to buy: how young consumers approach new smart products in the social media context. *Young Consumers*.
- Hudson, S., Roth, M. S., Madden, T. J., & Hudson, R. (2015). The effects of social media on emotions, brand relationship quality, and word of mouth: An empirical study of music festival attendees. *Tourism management*, 47, 68-76.
- Saleem, F. Z., & Hawkins, M. A. (2021). Employee-generated content: the role of perceived brand citizenship behavior and expertise on consumer behaviors. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*.
- Sashi, C. M., & Brynildsen, G. (2022). Franchise network relationships and word of mouth communication in social media networks. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 102, 153-163.
- Song, S., & Kim, H. Y. (2022). Is social media marketing worth it for luxury brands? The dual impact of brand page satisfaction and brand love on word-of-mouth and attitudinal loyalty intentions. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*.
- Swani, K., Milne, G. R., Brown, B. P., Assaf, A. G., & Donthu, N. (2017). What messages to post? Evaluating the popularity of social media communications in business versus consumer markets. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 62, 77-87. [Original source: <https://studycrumb.com/alphabetizer>]

Social Media Marketing

- Abdulla H. Fetais, R. S. (2022). Do Social Media Marketing Activities Improve Brand Loyalty? An empirical Study on Luxury Fashion Brands. *Information Systems Frontiers*.
- Amy .L. Parsons, E. L.-W. (2018). Social Media Marketing Management: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 81-95.
- Angella J.Kim, E. K. (2012). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brands. *Journal of Business Research*, 1480-1486.
- Bruno Godey, A. M. (2016). Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 5833-5841.
- Lamberto Zolloa, R. (2020). Unpacking the relationship between social media marketing and brand equity: The mediating role of consumers' benefits and experience.
- Reto Felixa, P. A. (2017). Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic framework. *Journal of Business Research*, 118-126.

Table 1. (Continued)

| <u>Social Media Marketing</u> |
|--|
| <p>Rodriguez, J. H. (2018). The soft side of branding: leveraging emotional intelligence. <i>Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing</i>, 117–125.</p> <p>Sohail, M. H. (2021). The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumers' Purchase Decision: Investigating the Effects of Local and Nonlocal Brands. <i>Journal of International Consumer Marketing</i>, 350–367.</p> <p>Suchita Bali, C. H. (2018). Exploring the use of Facebook as a marketing and branding tool by hospital foundation. <i>Marketing and Management</i>, 1-10. [Original source: https://studycrumb.com/alphabetizer]</p> |
| <u>Branding & Brand Management</u> |
| <p>Albert A. Barreda, A. B. (2016). Online branding: Development of hotel branding through interactivity theory. <i>Tourism Management</i>, 180-192.</p> <p>Chen, Y. W. (2021). Luxury branding on social media. <i>Journal of Product & Brand Management</i>, 656–670.</p> <p>Guzmán, C. V. (2017). The evolution of brand management thinking over the last 25 years as recorded in the <i>Journal of Product and Brand Management</i>. <i>Journal of Product & Brand Management</i>, 2-12.</p> <p>Holt, D. (2016). Branding in the age of social media. <i>Harvard business review</i>, 94(3), 40-50.</p> <p>Karjaluoto, H. S. (2015). Industrial branding in the digital age. <i>Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing</i>, 733-741.</p> <p>Logan Molyneux, A. H. (2018). How journalists engage in branding on Twitter.: <i>Information, Communication & Society</i>, 1386–1401.</p> <p>Rodriguez, J. H. (2018). The soft side of branding: leveraging emotional intelligence. <i>Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing</i>, 117–125.</p> <p>Rowley, T. C. (2015). Social media brand building strategies in B2B companies. <i>Marketing Intelligence & Planning</i>. 754-776.</p> <p>Sonja Genster, F. V.-T. (2013). Managing Brands in the Social Media Environment. <i>Journal of interactive marketing</i>, 242-256.</p> <p>Tetiana Trachuk, O. V. (2021). Branding and Advertising on Social Networks: Current Trends. <i>International Journal of Computer Science and Network Security</i>. [Original source: https://studycrumb.com/alphabetizer]</p> |

Table 1. (Continued)

| <u>Co-Creation</u> |
|---|
| <p>Cassandra France, B. M. (2015). Customer brand co-creation: a conceptual model. <i>Marketing Intelligence & Planning</i>, 848-864.</p> <p>Eduardo Oliveira, E. P. (2014). Content, context and co-creation: Digital challenges in destination branding with references to Portugal as a tourist destination. <i>Journal of Vacation Marketing</i>, 53-74.</p> <p>Man Lai Cheung, H. T.-H.-N. (2021). Role of social media-based destination. <i>Journal of Product & Brand Management</i>, 28-43.</p> <p>Neils Frederik Lund, S. A. (2018). The power of social media storytelling in destination branding. <i>Journal of Destination Marketing & Management</i>, 271-280.</p> <p>Nick Hajli, M. S.-O. (2017). Branding co-creation with members of online brand communities. <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 136-144.</p> <p>Sangeeta Singh, S. S. (2012). Brand Performances in social media. <i>Journal of interactive marketing</i>, 189-197.</p> <p>Sarasvuo Sonja, R. A. (2022). Toward a conceptual understanding of co-creation in branding. <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 543-563. [Original source: https://studycrumb.com/alphabetizer]</p> |
| <u>Brand Equity</u> |
| <p>Cawsey, T., & Rowley, J. (2016). Social media brand building strategies in B2B companies. <i>Marketing Intelligence & Planning</i>.</p> <p>Chen, X., & Qasim, H. (2021). Does E-Brand experience matter in the consumer market? Explaining the impact of social media marketing activities on consumer-based brand equity and love. <i>Journal of Consumer Behaviour</i>, 20(5), 1065-1077.</p> <p>Godey, B., Manthiou, A., Pederzoli, D., Rokka, J., Aiello, G., Donvito, R., & Singh, R. (2016). Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior. <i>Journal of business research</i>, 69(12), 5833-5841.</p> <p>Hutchins, J., & Rodriguez, D. X. (2018). The soft side of branding: leveraging emotional intelligence. <i>Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing</i>.</p> <p>Jin, S. V., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instagram fashionistas, luxury visual image strategies and vanity. <i>Journal of Product & Brand Management</i>.</p> |

Table 1. (Continued)

| <u>Brand Equity</u> |
|--|
| Liu, C., Zhang, Y., & Zhang, J. (2020). The impact of self-congruity and virtual interactivity on online celebrity brand equity and fans' purchase intention. <i>Journal of Product & Brand Management</i> . |
| Raji, R. A., Rashid, S., & Ishak, S. (2019). The mediating effect of brand image on the relationships between social media advertising content, sales promotion content and behavioural intention. <i>Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing</i> . |
| Schivinski, B., Pontes, N., Czarnecka, B., Mao, W., De Vita, J., & Stavropoulos, V. (2022). Effects of social media brand-related content on fashion products buying behaviour—a moderated mediation model. <i>Journal of Product & Brand</i> |

Results

In this section, the results of the VOSviewer analysis of the most occurred key terms in social media branding are presented. The results represent the influence of the keywords on the research topic (branding in social media), along with discussing the evolution of branding in social media over the past years and how these keywords have helped to make social media branding more effective.

Co-occurrence analysis

Co-occurrence analysis is the relatedness of items (keywords) which is determined based on the number of documents in which they occur together (Park et al., 2021). VOSviewer helps to identify the most repeated keywords and disregards the common functional words such as articles, prepositions, and pronouns. For the words to be included in our analysis, they had to appear at least five times in all the documents, and fourteen words met this criterion. Out of the fifteen words chosen, we have divided some of the words into subcategories because this helps better understand the research topic and avoids duplication of the terms. Words divided into subcategories are social media and Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, Word-of-mouth and communication, brand management and branding, and customer engagement and consumer engagement.

A list of the most commonly occurring terms that appeared in the 100 papers is shown in table 2. The two most commonly occurring words were social media and word-of-mouth. Figure 1 shows the network of these terms and how they co-occur, and their interaction. From here, we can observe that there are three clusters formed from the network map. The first cluster of words (red) is about social media, brand management, communication, co-creation, consumer management, and Twitter. The second cluster (green) is about word-of-mouth, customer satisfaction, customer engagement, branding, and integrated marketing communications. The third cluster (blue) is about social media marketing, brand equity, Facebook, and Instagram. The green and the blue clusters are both primarily linked through social media (first cluster).

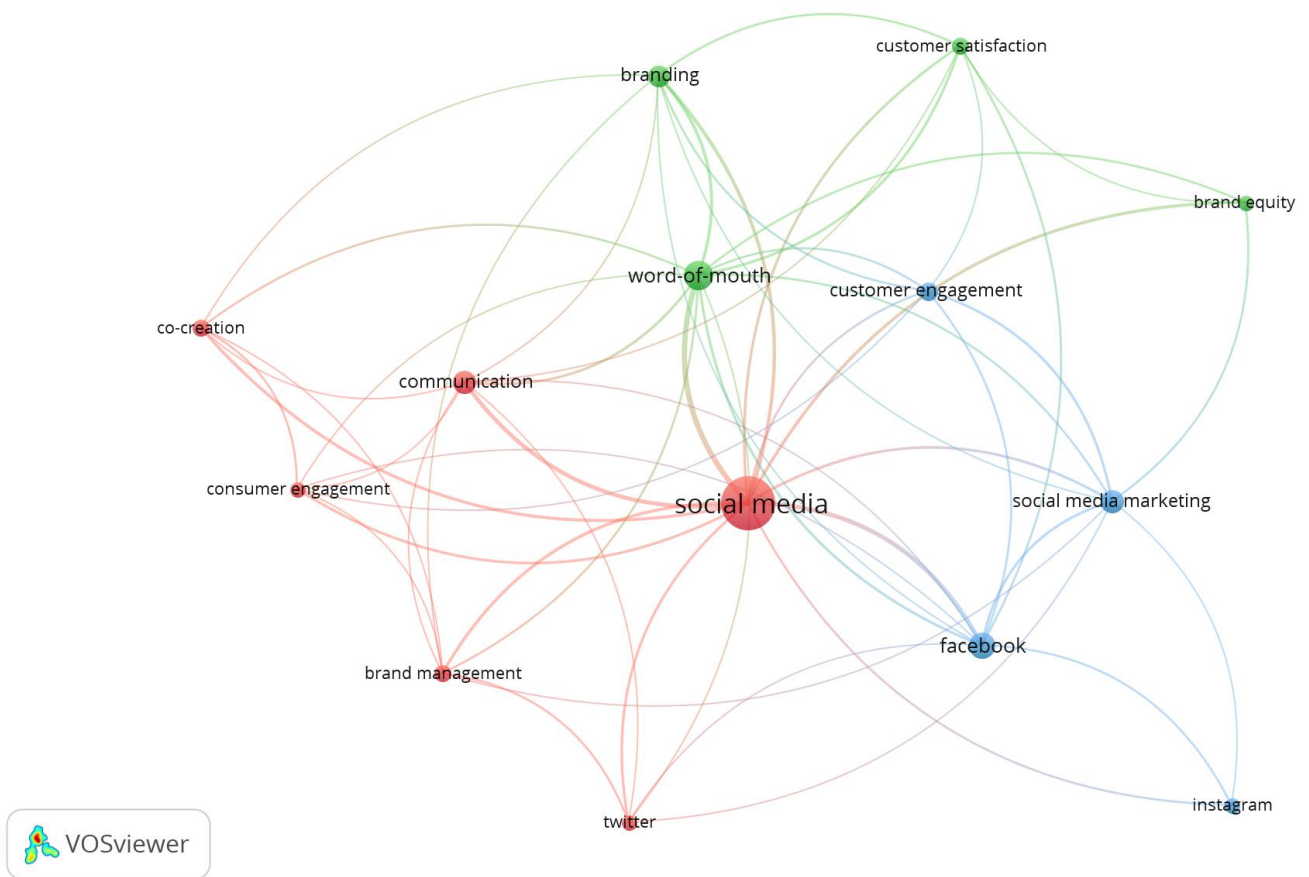


Figure 1. Co-occurrence of keywords in social media branding papers

Table 2. Most occurring keywords

| Keyword | No. of Occurrences |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Social Media | 61 |
| • Facebook | 15 |
| • Twitter | 5 |
| • Instagram | 5 |
| Word-Of-Mouth | 18 |
| Social Media Marketing | 12 |
| Communication | 11 |
| Branding | 10 |
| Customer Engagement | 7 |
| Brand Management | 6 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 6 |
| Co-Creation | 6 |
| Brand Equity | 5 |
| Consumer Engagement | 5 |

Social media

Social media, also known as 'user-generated communication,' offers various new information sources. It includes a wide range of online platforms such as social networking sites (Facebook), business networking sites (Twitter), video sharing sites (YouTube), and commerce communities (Amazon) (Fevzi Bitiktas, 2020). These various platforms create an opportunity for companies to interact with their customers and stakeholders, and sometimes, these conversations can go viral to reach hundreds of thousands of people. This proves that social media is an extension of Word-of-Mouth marketing. Therefore, businesses need to determine the most appropriate social media channel for their target market.

Social media can be described as an internet-based application that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content based on ideological and technological foundations (Bissel and Shen, 2013). Social media is referred to as an internet-based application built upon a technological ideology that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Chen, 2021). The presence of social media has transformed the traditional means of conducting business and marketing amongst consumers and businesses (Sohail, 2021). Users' way and level of interaction have been one of the most analyzed dimensions of traditional and social media. Traditional media typically exemplify a one-way model of communication like the newspapers, Tv programs, and radio, as it is utilized by a small number of social entities to pass information to consumers (Bissel and Shen, 2013). On the other hand, the communicative model embedded in social media has evolved into a two-way experience. Individuals and businesses have adopted social media platforms to build strong brands through marketing and branding (Bruno Godey, 2016).

Studies have shown that businesses have now used social media for digital marketing over the last ten years. It is recognized as an appropriate tool for B2-B communication between stakeholders and can be used to gather feedback while enabling two-way conversations (Göçer, 2020). Businesses improve their operations by creating awareness of their brands, developing online interactivity and engagement, and conducting adequate market research through the help of social media (Amy .L. Parsons, 2018). Branding because of social media now focuses on the interactivity and engagement of consumers. These consumers tend to get information from social media platforms, make purchase intentions based on the information obtained and pass information acquired to other consumers online through word of mouth (Angella J.Kim, 2012). Therefore, we can say that these social media platforms have become an essential marketing and communication channel for businesses, organizations, and institutions used to share content and receive information (Gil Appel, 2020).

Twitter

This is a social media tool that allows its users to post and read messages (tweets) that consist of not more than 140 characters. It has 27.3 million tweets per day. Twitter was created in 2006 and used initially by families, friends, and co-workers to stay connected with each other through the exchange of short text messages. But over the years, it has expanded its use to customer-to-business communication through web links, containing marketing messages

(Ph.D., 2011). It is an online network and a free service that can be accessed through different applications to facilitate communication. Twitter is a network for real-time information that connects users to the latest news, making it a valuable tool used by Companies and businesses to connect to their target audiences (Britto, 2011). It allows companies to have a deeper connection with their customers as to how they feel about a brand and, at the same time, build and enhance customer relationships. Businesses use Twitter to share information with people interested in their products and services, and gather responses to help build relationships with customers, partners, and influential people. Today, companies adopt Twitter as part of their marketing, public relations, and customer service approaches.

Instagram

Instagram is a social networking site and app that allows users to share photos and click and edit pictures with various digital filters. Instagram also allows users to share videos and stories from their profiles (Instagram, 2022). Instagram is one of the topmost popular social media platforms. According to Statista (2022), this social media platform will have nearly 1.2 billion users worldwide by 2023. Companies use Instagram because the platform is known for giving exposure to users using hashtags, following others, and staying active on the feed (Manikonda & Kambhampati, 2014). Companies use Instagram as an interactive tool to allow followers to provide feedback so that, in return, companies can improve the quality of service to customers (Martinus & Chaniago, 2017).

Facebook

Facebook was officially launched in the United States and has since grown globally with more than 2.23 billion monthly active users. Social media marketing has become an increasingly preferred choice of businesses that hope to reach a broader audience at a personal level through engaging content (Suchita Bali, 2018). The Facebook environment is different from other media as it entails different brand-consumer dynamics and requires novel marketing approaches. The success of a Facebook brand page lies in its ability to transcend simple information sharing and foster connectedness and socialization amongst the brand's followers and between the brand and its followers (Monica Alexandra Hodis, 2015). A brand's Facebook page aims to fully engage, integrate, and immerse users in a vivid and active brand community.

The increasing growth of social media platforms like Facebook has created room for individuals to connect with one another and companies to develop and promote brands (Bissel and Shen, 2013). Facebook facilitates the exchange of information in the marketplace and triggers high expectations from brands held by consumers. Social networking sites like Facebook enable consumers to dialogue with companies, brands, and other consumers to improve consumers' brand experience. Currently, many brands and businesses have Facebook pages because forming an attachment between a company's brand, its consumers, and potential consumers is the primary goal in brand marketing efforts. Based on statistics and observations, Facebook can attract many online users, which has equipped this platform with high business and branding value (Bissel and Shen, 2013).

Word of mouth (communication)

Word of mouth (WOM) refers "refers to the flow of communication among consumers about products or services" (Song & Kim, 2022, p. 4). WOM communication in social media refers to the circulation of information by consumers after using a particular service or organization (Guan, Lau, Yang & Ren, 2021). Consumers use social media to gather extensive information about companies and their products. Reading the feedback on the company's products and services helps customers trust the brand and make the purchase (Guan et al., 2021; Saleem & Hawkins, 2021). However, the circulation of information spread by customers is not always precise. Based on the rising number of social media users, consumers have a growing spread of inaccurate data, thus leading to a challenge to find methods that filter out the trustworthy information and user from the non-trustworthy information and user (Campan, Cuzzocrea, & Truta, 2017).

WOM exists due to constant consumer response and feedback, which has led to customers becoming co-creators (Sashi & Brynildsen 2022). This leads to customers having more control over their online experience and building trust and a committed relationship with the brand, further spreading positive WOM about the brand on different social media networks (Hudson, Roth, Madden & Hudson, 2015; Sashi & Brynildsen, 2022). Positive and negative WOM can both enhance and diminish the brand value of a company. The foremost reason is the amplifying ability of consumers to spread positive and negative WOM (Swani, Milne, Brown, Assaf & Donthu, 2017). Customers spreading positive WOM are known to be a company's best salespeople, and they are categorized as delighted customers, fans, and

advocates for a company (Kumar, Dalla Pozza & Ganesh, 2013). On the other hand, consumers with dissatisfying experiences tend to share their discontentment with negative WOM comments, reviews, and ratings. To overcome the negative WOM comments, businesses focus on customer needs to maximize positive WOM and strengthen their brand image (Sashi & Brynildsen 2022).

Social media marketing

The presence of social media as a marketing tool has changed the way organizations disseminate information about their brands and how they interact with their customers (Bruno Godey, 2016). Social media marketing is an activity carried out online to meet communication and branding objectives (Sohail, 2021). Social media marketing is used to build value for brands across industries. Social media marketing offers faster and cheaper media to reach out to a broader audience, run promotional campaigns and maintain customer relationships (Suchita Bali, 2018). Through social media marketing activities, marketers get to know their audience better through active interaction, improved brand value, and increased revenues (Lamberto Zolloa, 2020). Social media marketing provides high flexibility in message type and platforms upon which user interaction can be improved. Social media marketing is another way in which B2Bs can enhance their relationships, level of interaction and engagement with stakeholders, and enhance overall communication strategy (Rodriguez, 2018). Also, businesses can use social media marketing more reactively by monitoring and analyzing conversations and understanding how consumers view a firm and its actions. Social media marketing platforms are beneficial to marketers as customers willingly decide to follow some brands and agree to receive promotional information from them (Lamberto Zolloa, 2020). This allows marketers to identify consumers who are interested in their brand. According to Kim & Ko (2012), Social media marketing activities are a multidimensional construct encompassing five sub-constructs: entertainment, customization, trendiness, interaction, and electronic word of mouth (Angella J.Kim, 2012) (Bruno Godey, 2016). However, some other studies assert that social media marketing activities consist of all the above sub-constructs but not an electronic word of mouth (Abdulla H. Fetais, 2022).

Social media has evolved over the last ten years, and brands are beginning to see its effects on branding. It is used by consumers today to interact with brands actively and thus increases consumer engagement and creating relationships between consumers and companies (Amy.L.

Parsons, 2018). Researchers have empirically investigated social media marketing objectives to stimulate sales, increase brand awareness, improve brand image, generate traffic to platforms, reduce marketing costs, and create user interactivity on media (Reto Felixia, 2017). Therefore, brands need to engage in social media marketing to establish a presence and build an identity online to create awareness (Amy. L. Parsons, 2018).

Branding & Brand management

Branding can be defined as differentiating a company's product from that of its competitors in the market. The branding activities are frequently part of an organized campaign to establish a relationship with consumers and seek their loyalty. In branding, a target audience is identified, and messages are created to encourage an economic and emotional attachment to the branded product (Logan Molyneux, 2018).

The growing presence of social media has led to a new era of branding as there is a need for companies to have a creative positioning to build trust and loyalty to the brand. As a result, branding has become more customer-oriented and personalized because social media networks allow brands to customize their advertising and analyze customers' needs (Holt, 2016). Firms use social media as a platform for marketing and advertising their brands. Therefore, firms need to design their ads to attract customers. Branding in social media creates an opportunity for consumer marketing by the companies or consumers to maintain profitability, track consumer needs, and get consumer feedback. It also helps build trust between the brand and consumers through more interaction and involvement (Tetiana Trachuk, 2021). The traditional way of branding has changed as consumers have become active participants in brand building. Companies can no longer level the users of social networks because the brand's value is formed together with the consumers, and user content can negatively or positively affect the company's image. Branding in social media promotes customer communication with the company where customers can have social interaction, self-expression, and search for information about the products. Brands are successful when they can understand their audience and their motive for interacting with the brand. Therefore, if the company's contents meet the needs of the consumers, the brand will be popular and successful. Branding has become multi-directional, interconnected, and partly beyond the firm's control as consumers have extensive options to participate in the creating and sharing of content because of social media (Albert and Barreda, 2016). In today's communication environment, branding is related to managing customer

relationships by facilitating conversations around the brand. There is a need for companies to be consistent in producing branding actions in online and offline environments. Branding in social media has promoted transparency and honesty for companies that want to communicate effectively with their audience (Karjaluo, 2015).

Brand Management

Researchers have examined brand management as the management team's role in developing brand meaning and the direction of the brand and its performance (Guzmán, 2017). Brands are precious assets for firms; therefore, managers aim to build strong brands with a rich and clear knowledge structure in consumer memory by authoring compelling brand stories (Sonja Gensler, 2013). Traditionally, brand managers have used different marketing communication tools like advertising to passing their brand stories on to consumers. But social media presence has made brand managers lose their pivotal role as authors of their brands' stories (Sonja Gensler, 2013). It has been widely acknowledged that consumers and other stakeholders have become involved in co-creating a brand (Guzmán, 2017). What these stakeholders say, believe, and express impacts the market's perception and evaluation of a brand. Brand managers are faced with combining brand stories created by consumers on social media with their communication mix to enable compelling stories due to these changes in the branding landscape. The rise of social media and the large scale of consumer-to-consumer interaction has spotlighted the importance of recognizing and managing the multi-vocal nature of brand management (Sonja Gensler, 2013).

Consumer engagement/customer engagement

In the social media context, engagement refers to individuals' high level of involvement in the different social media platforms. "Engagement has to do with consumers' emotional, physical, and cognitive presence in their relationship with a service provider" (Patterson, 2006 as cited by Bailey, Bonifield & Elhai, 2021, p. 2). According to Vander Shee, Peltier & Dahl (2020), previous works of literature consider consumer engagement from a behavioral perspective that is surrounded by content consumption (learning, reading, watching), or dynamic behaviors in the form of contribution (reacting, commenting, sharing) and creation (posting user-generated content (UGC)).

Branding in social media focuses on behavioral interactions that are associated with likes, comments, and sharing different content. Loureiro et al. (2017, as stated in Vander Shee et al., (2020)) state that "affective and behavioral states are essential components of online consumer–brand engagement that led to positive brand outcomes" (p. 244).

Social media serves as a channel for many marketing activities, including customer relationship management, buyer research, paid advertising channels, and branding. To have a strong consumer engagement, it is essential to have relevant brand information (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). A study done by Hutchins & Rodriguez, (2018) showed that customers prefer content that does not overtly sell a product, since it builds a deeper emotional connection and increased engagement with the audience. To succeed in offering valuable content to customers, businesses must put themselves in the audience's shoes. Similarly, Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas (2015), also state that when companies heavily promote their brand, and their products and have a direct form of engagement with their consumers through calls-to-action, it leads to an increased level of consumer engagement

Customer satisfaction

When businesses meet the customers' needs, it leads to customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is customers' combined buying and consumption experience, and customer satisfaction is a "customer's feeling, attitude, or inclination towards a service/product after it has been used" (Yi, Yeo, Amenuvor & Boateng, 2021, p. 4). Customer satisfaction is more likely to occur when businesses provide adequate product information, are trustworthy, and bring forth positive attitudes towards their customers (Chung, Ko, Joung & Kim, 2020). Firms can provide customer satisfaction on social media platforms by providing feedback, giving product recommendations, and helping their customers (Carlson, Rahman, Taylor & Voola, 2019). The more satisfied customers are with their online experience, the more likely they will have a brand's positive image.

Consumers' brand image is highly influenced by reviews of their products, brand messages, and opinions expressed by their family and friends on the different social networking sites (Ramanathan, Subramanian & Parrott, 2017). A positive brand image is equivalent to a positive customer experience, thus a satisfied customer. Another technique to measure customer satisfaction is knowing a customer's post-purchase experience. Post-purchase customers tend to compare their product experience with their pre-purchase expectations,

resulting in satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Colicev, Malshe, Pauwels & O'Connor, 2018). During this situation, customers are on the lookout for consonant information because it reduces the post-purchase guilt (if the consumer realizes that a competing brand was better). Studies have found that customers spend less time evaluating their post-purchase experience. Hence, it is more important for businesses to ensure that customers have a tremendous pre-purchase experience (Batra & Keller, 2016; Colicey et al., 2018).

Co-creation

The theory of brand co-creation emerges from the supposition that consumers no longer want to be passive purchasers of a brand, but instead demand to be an active participants in creating brand experiences (Cassandra France, 2015). Hence, the customer can now play an influential role in determining the success of modern brands. The customer can co-create by influencing how other customers perceive the brand, making the customer's position in co-creation significant. Literature in co-creation has shown that the dominant approach to co-creation emphasizes the impact on brand value (Eduardo Oliveira, 2014). Studies have also shown that a firm cannot create anything of value without the engagement of individuals. Therefore, the co-creation of brand value can be identified because of brand engagement.

Research has suggested that social media platforms play an essential role in facilitating interactions between consumers and brands. These platforms are catalysts for branding co-creation, that is, the process of branding with consumers in an online environment (Nick Hajli, 2017). The adapted co-creation model in improv theater helps explain the idea of a co-created brand narrative that is ongoing and changes with each story (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Customers get the opportunity to share their experiences and create shared meanings for brands. Social media has enabled faster information sharing in the branding process. An essential part of brand co-creation is the involvement and participation in online communities like social media platforms. Based on this, branding has shifted from a firm-based activity to a more collaborative activity where firms and their stakeholders participate in value co-creation. In co-creation, customers are transformed from passive to active players as they become more engaged in creating value (Niels Frederik Lunda, 2018).

Co-creation in branding focuses on how marketers and stakeholders influence brands through interactions and dialogues, leading to mutually beneficial outcomes like strengthened marketer-stakeholder relationships (Sarasvuo Sonja, 2022). The marketer may obtain valuable

stakeholder information, while stakeholders may gain more substantial brand experiences and engage in creative interests. Co-creation is perceived as a process of interaction among stakeholders and brands. Consumers no longer receive product-related information passively but actively contribute to creating value for firms, like when consumers have interactions with firms in different phases of the value creation process (Man Lai Cheung, 2021). The development of social media platforms has enabled marketers to encourage consumers to co-create values for brands by asking them to provide ideas about the designs and attributes of products. The interaction between firms and consumers leads to value creation, and thus, consumers are regarded as creators of brand equity (Man Lai Cheung, 2021).

Brand equity

Brand equity "is the incremental the perceived value of a product because of the brand name" (Schivinski, Pontes, Czarnecka, Mao, De Vita, & Stavropoulos, 2022, p. 3). The perceived value comes from consumers' experiences with the brand, and the brand's ability to be differentiated from its competitors. Liu, Zhang & Zhang (2020), state that brand equity "occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong and unique brand associations in memory", the memory is in the form of general knowledge of the brand's awareness and image (p. 785). A more substantial brand equity equals an increased brand preference, willingness to pay a higher price, and customer loyalty. Similarly, in social media settings, higher social media marketing activities contribute to a more substantial brand equity and a positive purchase behavior and response (Godey, Manthiou, Pederzoli, Rokka, Aiello, Donvito & Singh, 2016).

Chen, & Qasim (2021) state that brand equity is an essential element in branding because it predicts the loyalty of customers and the success of a brand. Hence it becomes imperative to enhance brand equity. According to Raji et al., (2019), the perceived quality of a product/service improves a business's brand equity because it provides customers with expectations of the characteristics, performance, and reliability of the given product/service. Another factor that helps in developing brand equity is social media sales promotions. These promotions are known to expand the consumers' emotional and rational association with the brand (Raji et al., 2019). Emotional associations are considered necessary for brand equity because consumers respond more favorably to the brand, and it also leaves a long-lasting impression and builds brand loyalty.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

Our research was based on social media branding using a bibliographic review-based approach. A bibliographic mapping tool called VOSViewer was used to analyze co-occurrences (keywords) and the effect of these keywords on social media branding sourced from the Web of Science database. In this section, we note several key findings that have implications for helping research based on branding in social media and provide limitations and possibilities for future research.

Academic Implications

The results contribute to existing research on branding in social media by providing a deeper understanding of what factors affect branding in social media the most. The current study found that having a positive attitudinal response to a marketer's social networking sites increases consumer engagement (Bailey et al., 2021). The other implication of this research is the network map (figure 1). The clusters of the related keywords show which areas the study is being conducted and where there is scope for more research opportunities. For example, figure 1 shows a disconnect between keywords such as 'brand management and 'customer satisfaction. Even though we know brand management is essential to providing customer satisfaction, through the figure, it appears that the connection between brand management and social media has not been widely studied in the literature.

Our analysis shows that the consumer perspective dominates branding in social media. The co-occurrence of keywords shows that the words are closely related to consumer-based social media branding. Such as 'word-of-mouth,' 'customer engagement,' 'customer satisfaction,' and 'co-creation' are consumer-centric words. We also noticed a pattern in the results from the analyses of keywords. It showed that the connection between branding in social media from a consumer perspective occurs notably through the keyword of 'social media.

Managerial Implications

According to the study results having a relevant brand, and information increases consumer engagement. Therefore, marketers can use social media to post content that appeals to their audience. To give their customers the best online experience and maintain a good image, brands must focus on customer needs to maximize positive WOM (Sashi & Brynildsen 2022). Businesses should use the various social media platforms to build trust and loyalty amongst

their consumers because it enhances brand equity. Additionally, providing customized advertisements to track customer needs and get consumer feedback to maintain a good brand image on social media.

Limitations

Web of Science was the primary data source for the articles used to conduct this study. Due to Web of Science's selectivity, not all journals are indexed in its database. As a result, a paper on branding in social media published in journals outside of Web of Science would not be included in our sample. Also, bibliometric analysis is limited in its insight. This analysis does not provide details about the degree to which the topic of branding in social media is central to a paper. Therefore, documents with branding in social media at their core are included in the same manner as those with branding or social media keywords. Bibliometric analysis does not specify the context within which a keyword is applied. In this paper, we used VOSviewer to do a co-occurrence analysis to generate keywords that were related to our study. These keywords mainly were related to how branding has affected consumers, leaving out other stakeholders associated with a brand. In addition, this work was limited to only one hundred selected articles in the field of business, communication, and management. Also, our analysis was limited to ten years covering from 2012 to 2022.

Future Research

There are avenues for future research in this study. Our work only focused on business, management, and communication. Therefore, it is essential to note that some of the highly cited work related to branding in social media is published outside the domain of business and marketing. This suggests that research in branding in social media has relevance to a broad range of fields ranging from business to health to economics. Evaluating the external validity of findings in one research area to another would likely be interesting for future research. Future research on this topic and others can also be done using the VOSViewer tool. It is a valuable bibliographic tool whose application is not restricted to this research topic. VOSViewer is flexible concerning the type and quantity of input data; thus, other bibliographic issues related to branding and social media are readily available. The data source, which in our study is restricted to Web of Science, can be further done using Scopus. Also, further analysis can be done by using citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, bibliographic coupling, and co-citation, as our paper is limited to co-occurrence analysis.

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Appendix A – Discussion Paper

Discussion Paper Branding in social media: A Bibliometric analysis

This discussion paper focuses on connecting the accumulated knowledge of the entire international business master's program with the Master's thesis and how it relates to the concept of "responsible," an important key concept in the UiA School of Business Law's mission statement and strategy.

Responsibility as a concept speaks to how businesses, individuals, and brands uphold their duties to the society and communities they operate in and how they manage and sustainably utilize available resources. Responsibility speaks to how organizations, brands, and individuals take ownership of ensuring a sustainable environment, tackling climate change, and ensuring its activities do not make the environment unliveable for future generations. In this discussion paper, the concept of responsibility will be connected with the gathered knowledge in the international Master's program and the Master's thesis

The Master's thesis is centered around the study of branding in social media using the bibliometric analysis method. Over the years, branding has evolved as technology disrupts the ways humans interact, engage, and create perceptions about their products, services, organizations, and individuals themselves. This research work investigates how branding has evolved over the last ten years and how the disruptive change in technology has impacted brands worldwide. The research work considered previous research work done and focused on identifying gaps in the body of research and investigating those gaps.

Social media has become the dominant form of interaction in today's world as more and more people spend more time on social media. Therefore, this has made it critical to have a good brand perception and visible brand on social media. Brands have used social media as a tool to own their brand story, reinvent their brand, and for some, maintain their brand visibility and dominance. Many new brands have also emerged from social media, which might not have been possible using other traditional means of brand promotion.

The thesis of this discussion paper focuses on how branding has evolved over the last ten years, and this discussion paper will connect the critical concept of responsibility to the research work. The research shows that organizations, businesses, and individuals have to take responsibility for how their brands are perceived on social media; they must take ownership of their branding stories. The brand must be responsible for not being deceptive and not having a false representation on social media, which can lead to a loss of trust and confidence in the brand (Jenn, 2006). The presence of social media has transformed the traditional means of conducting business and marketing amongst consumers and businesses (Sohail, 2021). Users' way and level of interaction have been one of the most analyzed dimensions of traditional and social media. Traditional media typically exemplify a one-way model of communication like the newspapers, Tv programs, and radio, as it is utilized by a small number of social entities to pass information to consumers (Bissel and Shen, 2013).

On the other hand, the communicative model embedded in social media has evolved into a two-way experience. Therefore, it is the responsibility of individuals and businesses to adopt social media platforms to build strong brands through marketing and branding (Bruno Godey, 2016). Also, word-of-mouth communication in social media is responsible for the circulation of information by consumers after using a particular service or organization (Guan, Lau, Yang & Ren, 2021). The consumers' responsibility is to use social media to gather extensive information about companies and their products. The thesis of this discussion paper also focused on Social media marketing as an activity carried out online to meet communication and branding objectives (Sohail, 2021). Social media marketing is responsible for building value for brands across industries. It is the responsibility of this type of marketing to offer faster and cheaper media to reach out to a broader audience, run promotional campaigns and maintain customer relationships (Suchita Bali, 2018). Through social media marketing activities, marketers get to know their audience better through active interaction, improved brand value, and increased revenues (Lamberto Zolloa, 2020). Brands are responsible for adopting social media marketing as it provides high flexibility in message type and platforms upon which user interaction can be improved. Social media marketing is another way in which B2Bs can enhance their relationships, level of interaction and engagement with stakeholders, and enhance overall communication strategy (Rodriguez, 2018). Social media presence has also given consumers and other stakeholders the responsibility to co-create brand stories. Co-creation in branding focuses on how marketers and stakeholders influence brands through interactions and dialogues, leading to mutually beneficial outcomes like strengthened marketer-stakeholder relationships (Sarasvuo Sonja, 2022). Co-creation is perceived as a process of interaction among stakeholders and brands. Consumers no longer receive product-related information passively but actively contribute to creating value for firms, like when consumers have interactions with firms in different phases of the value creation process (Man Lai Cheung, 2021). Brand equity is also recognized as an essential element in branding. Therefore it is the responsibility of brands to ensure they have good brand equity because it predicts the loyalty of customers and the success of a brand. Hence it becomes imperative to enhance brand equity.

Also, the process of carrying out the research work required that responsibility be taken to ensure the quality of the research paper, that every ethical standard was followed, and that there was no conflict of interest. During the process of carrying out this research work, various ethical challenges, both actual and potential, were experienced. Some of these challenges include getting the informed consent of the involved parties in the research work. This is one of the ethical challenges encountered in this research work. The involved parties need to give support to be a part of the research work, and there is a risk of them accepting or declining for different personal reasons.

Conflict of interest was a potential ethical challenge in this research work. This was managed by ensuring that involved parties in the research work were fully informed of the objective of the research work, and their consent was fully obtained before engaging them in the research work.

Another potential ethical challenge was the option that involved parties in the research work had the liberty to opt-out at any time, given that it was primarily voluntary. This was an ethical challenge that could have affected the delivery of the thesis if any of the involved parties decided to opt-out during the investigation.

During the research work, other ethical concerns identified and addressed were protecting the anonymity of parties involved who don't want their identity revealed for safety purposes and other reasons. This crucial moral concern was duly managed in this research work. All parties involved enjoyed anonymity and also confidentiality for information shared or resources provided.

At every step of the research work, ethical challenges were experienced. The responsibility to ensure that each moral challenge, both potential and actual, was managed correctly was critical to the entire process of writing the research work. Ethical challenges experienced in during this research work will be discussed based on each stage of the research work; they are;

The research design stage covers the stages of developing a research topic and the research question of the thesis. At the research design stage, there was the ethical challenge of ensuring that the research was well planned, adequately designed, and ethically approved. This speaks to adhering to a core concept called "responsibility" in the research process. Therefore, to manage this ethical challenge in the research work, a research protocol was set up and followed throughout the entire research work. All contributors, collaborators, and parties involved in the research work had their functions and roles spelled out in the research protocol, and they had to agree on the terms of the research protocol. During this research work, approval of the ethics committee of all the parties involved was obtained. (Jenn, 2006)

The research findings ethical challenges: During the data collection and analysis process, there was the moral challenge of correctly analyzing the data to avoid misinterpretation of data that could mislead the reader. This ethical challenge was managed by disclosing all sources and methods used to collect and analyze the data used in this research work. All references and techniques used in this thesis work data collection, analysis, and presentation are fully disclosed to avoid assumptions and misinterpretation of the research results. Also, conscious efforts were made to prevent research writers' bias, and any identified bias is revealed for true transparency in line with the critical concept of responsibility.

Given that this research work focused on the previous work of others, there was the ethical challenge of authorship. There is essentially no standard agreed definition of authorship. Still, it is generally agreed that the author of any given work must make a significant contribution to the intellectual content of the research work, which includes various stages of the research work, from conceptualizing and designing the study to obtaining, analyzing, and interpretation of data. The ethical challenge of authorship was managed in this research work by ensuring that responsibility is taken to confirm that the manuscript represents the objective of the research work and all contributors to this research work were credited correctly.

The ethical challenge of conflict of interest was also identified and managed as a potential moral challenge that could impact the quality of the research work. Therefore, measures were taken to identify any conflict of interest with a personal, political, or financial interest. If any were determined, it would be declared in the research work.

The final ethical challenge during this research work was the challenge of plagiarism. This challenge was managed by ensuring that used publications were properly cited and new knowledge was added to every aspect of the research work. Also, a plagiarism check was used to check for plagiarism in the research work to maintain originality and authenticity in the research work.

In closing, this research work was conducted to ensure that the concept of responsibility is upheld to ensure the quality and integrity of the research work. The research work focused on the evolution of branding in the age of social media and how social media has changed how branding is perceived, and how it is managed and sustained in today's world. It also covers the role social media plays in branding and the responsibility of brands to define their narrative in the age of social media. (Dissertation.laerd, 2012) (Govert Valkenburg, 2020)

Appendix B – Bibliography (discussion paper)

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