Mapping the Intellectual Structure of Digital Consumer Behaviour Research: A Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of digital consumer behaviour research through a bibliometric analysis. Bibliographic data comprising 1,000 research papers published between 2000 and 2024 were retrieved from the Crossref database using Publish or Perish software. VOSviewer was employed to conduct a term co-occurrence analysis based on titles and abstracts in order to identify dominant research themes and patterns. The findings reveal that digital consumer behaviour research is structured around key thematic clusters, including the influence of digital marketing and online advertising, the role of digital transformation accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, psychological and emotional drivers of online purchasing, and trust- and society-based evaluative perspectives. The analysis further indicates a growing emphasis on health consciousness and changing consumption patterns in the post-COVID digital environment. By providing a systematic and comprehensive overview of existing research, this study contributes to a clearer understanding of major research directions and emerging themes in digital consumer behaviour, offering a useful foundation for future academic inquiry.

Keywords: Digital Consumer Behaviour; Digital Marketing; Online Purchasing; Bibliometric Analysis; VOSviewer; Digital Transformation.

Introduction

In contemporary times, digital marketing, online purchasing, online advertising, metaverse environments, and digital interactions have become an integral part of everyday life. As a result, research related to consumer behaviour—particularly consumers' perspectives, interactions, and engagement with brands, products, and services in online environments—has gained significant attention. Digital consumer behaviour has thus emerged as one of the most prominent and important areas of modern marketing research. Although a substantial body of literature exists on digital consumer behaviour, the research remains fragmented across diverse themes and perspectives. The absence of a clear and systematic structure makes it difficult to comprehensively understand the dominant research areas and emerging directions

within this field. To address this gap, the present study employs a bibliometric analysis to identify key themes and provide a systematic overview of digital consumer behaviour research. Bibliometric techniques enable the objective mapping of large volumes of scholarly literature and facilitate the identification of major research trends and thematic structures.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to analyse a substantial number of research papers related to digital consumer behaviour and to present a structured overview of the major themes and research areas that characterize this domain.

Methodology

This study adopts a bibliometric research design to examine digital consumer behaviour research. Bibliographic data were collected using the Publish or Perish software, and the Crossref database was consulted as the primary data source. Relevant keywords related to digital consumer behaviour, online purchasing, and digital marketing were used to retrieve publications. The time period of the study covered approximately two decades, ranging from 2000 to 2024. After applying the selection criteria, a total of 1,000 research papers were retrieved and included for analysis.

To identify the major research themes, the study employed VOSviewer for bibliometric mapping and visualization. A term co-occurrence analysis was conducted based on the titles and abstracts of the selected publications. Full counting was applied, and a minimum occurrence threshold was set to ensure clarity and relevance of the extracted terms. The resulting network visualization enabled the identification of prominent thematic clusters, each representing a distinct research direction within the field of digital consumer behaviour.

Results

The results of the bibliometric analysis are presented in this section. Using VOSviewer, a term co-occurrence analysis was conducted to identify the major research themes in digital consumer behaviour. The findings are discussed based on the thematic clusters generated from the analysis.
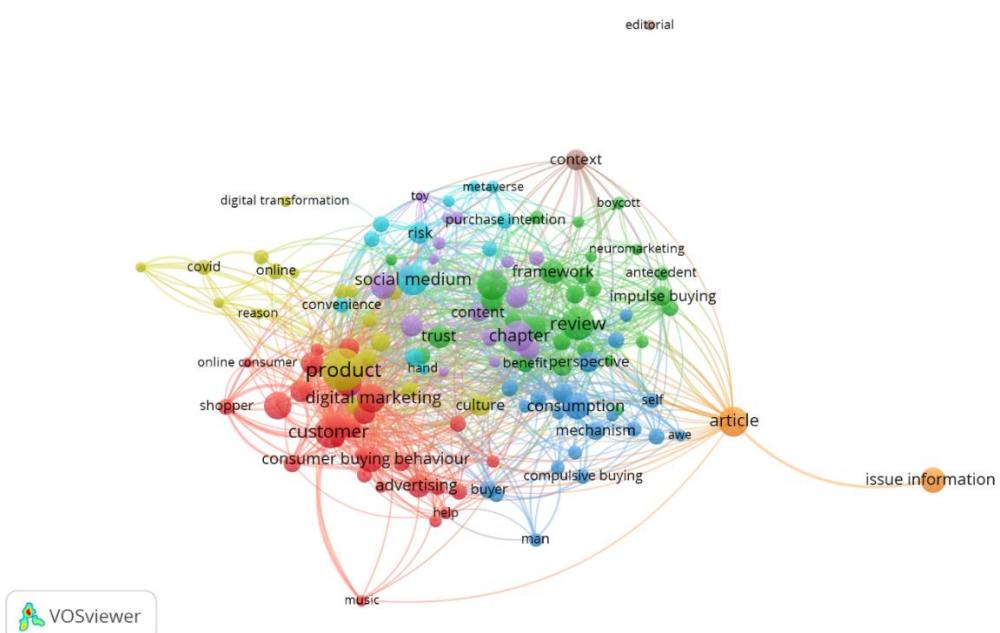
Figure 1 illustrates the term co-occurrence network generated using VOSviewer, highlighting the major thematic clusters in digital consumer behaviour research.

Cluster 1 (Red)

The dominant cluster, highlighted in red, emphasizes how digital marketing and online advertising influence consumer buying behaviour. This cluster illustrates the impact of web-based and internet platforms on shoppers' product purchase decisions, showing how online promotional activities shape consumer responses and purchasing patterns.

Cluster 2 (Yellow)

The yellow cluster highlights the theme of digital transformation and focuses on the reasons behind consumers' shift toward online purchasing. It indicates that online buying, which initially emerged as a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic, has gradually become an integral part of consumer buying culture. This cluster also reflects consumers' increased focus on organic products, suggesting a rise in health consciousness. Additionally, the frequent appearance of Nigeria in this cluster indicates that a significant number of studies have examined these transformations within the Nigerian context.

Cluster 3 (Blue)

Another significant cluster, represented by the blue color, signifies the psychological factors influencing consumer purchase behaviour. This cluster highlights elements such as perceived risk and reward, compulsive buying tendencies, and consumers' self-perception while making purchase decisions. It further reflects how individual expectations and motivations affect buying behaviour, particularly within social media environments where digital interactions shape consumer responses.

Cluster 4 (Green)

The green cluster represents research that evaluates digital consumer behaviour through trust-based and societal perspectives. This cluster focuses on how antecedent factors such as trust, concern, and perceived risk influence consumer intention and lead to specific outcomes, including boycott behaviour, panic buying, and changes in purchasing decisions. It also reflects studies that examine these phenomena across different countries and social contexts, often using case-based and review-oriented approaches. The presence of terms related to researchers and practitioners indicates an emphasis on linking theoretical understanding with practical implications for society and digital markets.

Discussion

Overall, the findings of the study, based on the analysis of 1,000 research papers on digital consumer behaviour, indicate that online advertising and digital marketing have significantly influenced consumer purchasing patterns. What initially emerged as a compulsion during the COVID-19 pandemic has gradually evolved into a regular buying culture among consumers. The results further suggest that digital consumer behaviour is shaped not only by marketing influences but also by a combination of psychological and societal factors. Internal factors such as motivation, self-identity, expectations, and risk perception interact with external pressures including social concerns, trust, and societal influences to affect purchase decisions. Additionally, the analysis reveals a growing focus on health consciousness in the post-COVID period, with

increased attention toward online and health-related products, as reflected by the prominent terms identified in the clusters.

Conclusion

This study examined 1,000 research papers using VOSviewer term co-occurrence analysis to understand the thematic structure of digital consumer behaviour research. The findings indicate that digital marketing and online advertising significantly influence consumer behaviour, while the emergence of digital consumption was initially driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and later evolved into a broader digital transformation shaped by convenience and cultural acceptance. The study also highlights the role of psychological and emotional factors, including motivation, self-perception, and impulsive buying tendencies, along with societal pressures that influence online purchase decisions. This research contributes to the literature by identifying key contexts and antecedents affecting digital consumer behaviour beyond marketing perspectives alone. Future research may build upon these findings to develop broader thematic frameworks and explore emerging dimensions within digital consumer behaviour research.

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