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Social media marketing activities: a systematic review and future research agenda

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Abstract

Purpose – Academic and practical interest in social media marketing tools and social media marketing activities (SMMA) has attracted significant attention in recent years. Hence, this study aims to offer a comprehensive review of the subject through a systematic literature review (SLR) approach focusing on SMMA.

Design/methodology/approach – To achieve the study' objective, an SLR is conducted using the Theory-Context-Characteristics-Methodology (TCCM) framework, drawing on 61 high-quality articles on SMMA published in 42 academic journals from 2010 to 2023.

Findings – The study results revealed what the current state of academic understanding regarding SMMA literature and publication trends. The TCCM framework encapsulated considerable diversity in prior research on SMMA. This study also synthesized the mediator, moderator and outcome variables used in the SMMA literature, thereby developing a comprehensive conceptual framework of SMMA. This SLR also offered a research agenda outlining opportunities for future SMMA studies.

Originality/value – To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to provide a thorough, integrative analysis of the SMMA using the TCCM framework. By comprehensively reviewing the SMMA literature, this article contributes to theory and practice and develops a detailed research agenda based on the TCCM framework.

Keywords Social media, social media marketing activities, consumer behavior, systematic literature review, TCCM framework

Paper type Literature review

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Actividades de marketing en redes sociales: una revisión sistemática y una agenda de investigación futura

Resumen

Objetivo – En los últimos años, las herramientas de marketing en redes sociales y las actividades de marketing en redes sociales (SMMA, por sus siglas en inglés) han despertado un creciente interés tanto en el ámbito académico como en el profesional. Por ello, este estudio tiene como objetivo ofrecer una revisión exhaustiva de esta temática mediante una revisión sistemática de la literatura (SLR), centrada específicamente en las SMMA.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque – Para alcanzar este objetivo, se llevó a cabo un análisis de contenido basado en el marco TCCM (Theory-Context-Characteristics-Methodology; Teoría-Contexto-Características-Metodología), a partir de 61 artículos de alta calidad sobre SMMA publicados en 42 revistas académicas entre 2010 y 2023.

Resultados – Los resultados del estudio permiten establecer el estado actual del conocimiento sobre la literatura relativa a las SMMA y sus tendencias de publicación. El marco TCCM pone de manifiesto una considerable diversidad en la investigación previa sobre este ámbito. Asimismo, el estudio sintetiza las variables mediadoras, moderadoras y de resultado empleadas en la literatura sobre SMMA, lo que permite desarrollar un marco conceptual integral de estas actividades. La revisión sistemática también propone una agenda de investigación que identifica oportunidades para futuros estudios sobre SMMA.

Originalidad/valor – Este es el primer estudio que ofrece un análisis exhaustivo e integrador de las SMMA mediante la aplicación del marco TCCM. A través de una revisión completa de la literatura sobre las actividades de marketing en redes sociales, el artículo realiza contribuciones tanto teóricas como prácticas y desarrolla una agenda de investigación detallada fundamentada en el marco TCCM.

Palabras clave Redes sociales, actividades de marketing en redes sociales, comportamiento del consumidor, revisión sistemática de la literatura, marco TCCM

Tipo de papel Revisión de literatura

社交媒体营销活动：系统性文献综述与未来研究议程

摘要

研究目的 – 近年来, 社交媒体营销工具及社交媒体营销活动 (Social Media Marketing Activities, SMMA) 在学术界和实践领域均受到广泛关注。因此, 本研究旨在采用系统性文献综述 (Systematic Literature Review, SLR) 的方法, 对以SMMA为核心的相关研究进行全面梳理与评述。

研究设计/方法 – 为实现上述研究目标, 本研究采用TCCM框架(Theory-Context-Characteristics-Methodology, 即理论—情境—特征—方法)开展内容分析。研究样本包括2010年至2023年间发表于42种学术期刊的61篇高质量SMMA相关文献。

研究发现 – 研究结果系统揭示了SMMA领域现有知识基础及其文献发表趋势。基于TCCM框架的分析表明, 既有SMMA研究在理论、研究情境、研究特征与研究方法等方面呈现出显著的多样性。此外, 本研究对SMMA文献中涉及的中介变量、调节变量和结果变量进行了系统整合, 并据此构建了一个较为全面的SMMA概念框架。与此同时, 本系统性文献综述还提出了未来研究议程, 为后续SMMA研究识别了若干具有潜力的研究方向。

原创性/价值 – 本研究是首次基于TCCM框架对SMMA进行系统、全面且整合性分析的研究。通过对SMMA相关文献进行综合评述, 本文在理论与实践层面均作出了贡献, 并基于TCCM框架进一步提出了较为详细的未来研究议程。

关键词 : 社交媒体, 社交媒体营销活动, 消费者行为, 系统性文献综述, TCCM框架

文章类型 文献评论

1. Introduction

Social media platforms (SMPs) have fundamentally transformed the marketing landscape, evolving from simple communication channels into powerful tools for building brand equity and consumer relationships (Li *et al.*, 2023; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025). Central to this transformation are social media marketing activities (SMMAs) that involve strategic efforts

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in content creation, interaction and customization to promote brands and encourage customer involvement (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Khan, 2022). Under the broader social media marketing (SMM) research area, the seminal work of Kim and Ko (2012) developed a model of SMMAs in the Korean fashion industry that identifies five distinct dimensions: entertainment, customization, interaction, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and trendiness. This SMMA model has attracted a great deal of attention from academics and practitioners from different fields, such as hospitality and tourism (Aljuhmani *et al.*, 2023; Liu *et al.*, 2023), luxury fashion (Godey *et al.*, 2016), service industry (Torres *et al.*, 2018), and the e-commerce industry (Yadav and Rahman, 2017). Nevertheless, the rapid expansion of SMMA research has led to a fragmented body of knowledge lacking theoretical cohesion (Khan, 2022; Liu *et al.*, 2023).

A closer look at the literature reveals that this fragmentation spans three interrelated dimensions. At the conceptual level, there is still no consensus on how to define and measure SMMAs. For example, Kim and Ko (2012) proposed a five-dimensional model that has been widely adopted, yet several subsequent scholars have opted to treat SMMAs as a single unified construct (Cheung *et al.*, 2021; Hazzam, 2022), presenting a challenge to draw meaningful comparisons across studies or accumulate knowledge in any systematic way. At the methodological level, the heavy reliance on cross-sectional survey designs, often conducted in a limited set of geographic contexts, has constrained what the field can claim about causality and has raised legitimate concerns about whether reported relationships generalize beyond the specific samples studied (Yadav and Rahman, 2017; Aljuhmani *et al.*, 2023). At the contextual level, what works in one industry does not necessarily work in another, and these discrepancies have gone largely unaddressed. To illustrate, the relative weight of SMMA dimensions such as trendiness and interaction appears to differ considerably between luxury fashion (Godey *et al.*, 2016) and hospitality contexts (Liu *et al.*, 2023), yet only a few scholars have attempted to explain why such differences arise or what boundary conditions might account for them (Arrigo, 2018; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020; Ibrahim, 2021). This fragmentation presents a critical problem for both academia and practice. Theoretically, the presence of these conceptual, methodological and contextual inconsistencies prevents the development of a unified paradigm, making it difficult to compare findings across industries or platforms (Zollo *et al.*, 2020; Khan, 2022; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025). Practically, this lack of clarity creates a "black box" for marketers; without a consolidated understanding of which activities drive specific outcomes, managers risk investing resources in ineffective strategies that fail to deliver a return on investment (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2023; Polat *et al.*, 2023; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025). Consequently, the field currently faces a validity dilemma in which the abundance of creative ideas has outpaced the development of robust, generalizable results (Zollo *et al.*, 2020; Li *et al.*, 2023; Polat *et al.*, 2023; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025).

While previous reviews have attempted to synthesize this field, they remain limited in scope. For instance, Arrigo (2018) focused exclusively on the luxury sector, while meta-analyses by Ibrahim *et al.* (2020) and Ibrahim (2021) examined relatively few studies (15 and 11, respectively). These reviews, though valuable, fail to capture the cumulative complexity of the broader marketing landscape or address the notable surge in empirical research published in recent years (Kraus *et al.*, 2022). This surge necessitates an updated, comprehensive synthesis to consolidate a fragmented body of knowledge (Tang *et al.*, 2021; Kraus *et al.*, 2022). Indeed, scholars propose that a topic is ripe for a systematic literature review (SLR), particularly if no review has been conducted in the last five years and the number of studies has increased substantially (Torraco, 2016; Paul *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, an SLR is the most appropriate approach for this task, as it provides a rigorous, replicable method for mapping the existing intellectual territory, synthesizing fragmented findings and

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identifying critical gaps in this maturing field of research (Palmatier *et al.*, 2018; Kraus *et al.*, 2022).

To address these gaps, this study reviews SMMA's impact on customer-brand relationships, drawing on a large body of studies to offer insights into SMMA's future in the marketing landscape. We use a concept-focused (i.e. SMMA) SLR approach to accomplish this purpose and answer the following research questions (*RQs*):

RQ1. What are the publication trends in SMMA literature by time, journals and influential articles?

RQ2. What and how do we know about SMMA research?

RQ3. What are the gaps in the reviewed literature and ways forward for future directions?

This research makes several contributions to SMMA literature. First, it moves beyond the limitations of prior reviews, which were either limited to niche contexts such as luxury fashion (e.g. Arrigo, 2018) or relied on small sample sizes in meta-analyses (e.g. Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020). By transcending these siloed perspectives, our study offers the first holistic, systematic synthesis of the field. Second, to achieve this synthesis, we use the Theory-Context-Characteristics-Methodology (TCCM) framework (Paul and Criado, 2020) as a powerful analytical lens to structure this fragmented knowledge. This approach allows us to present a comprehensive snapshot of the SMMA literature – encompassing its theoretical foundations, contexts and methodologies, as well as key publication trends (see Supplement Figure 1), productive journals (see Supplement Table 3) and influential articles (see Supplement Table 4). Third, our study makes a methodological contribution by introducing and applying a novel review protocol based on Kraus *et al.*'s (2022) framework for treating literature reviews as an independent study procedure, marking its first known application in this context. Fourth, based on this robust framework and methodology, our review provides a detailed map of the field's evolution, identifies critical research gaps and proposes a promising research agenda for the future. Finally, these findings yield actionable, practical implications for marketers seeking to optimize their social media strategies.

2. Conceptual background

The concept of SMMAs has recently garnered significant attention among marketing scholars. Through effective SMMA strategies, brands use personalized, engaging content to increase customer satisfaction, strengthen customer-brand relationships and enhance brand equity (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020; Kim and Ko, 2012). SMMAs have been conceptualized in various ways across literature, reflecting a lack of consensus on a unified definition. For instance, Ibrahim and Aljarah (2023) describe SMMAs as "promotional and relational communication tools that complement organizational marketing strategies by enhancing interactivity through online relationships between organizations and consumers" (p. 5). Similarly, Zollo *et al.* (2020) view SMMAs as tools that enable marketers to better understand their target audience by leveraging insights from both customer-to-customer and customer-to-brand interactions.

Seo and Park (2018), on the other hand, frame SMMAs around the consumer experience, arguing that what really counts is how users perceive and engage with branded content. These definitions are not contradictory, but they do show that scholars have examined at SMMAs through different lenses – some focusing on the organizational and promotional side (Ibrahim and Aljarah, 2023; Kim and Ko, 2010), others on the relational and interactive side (Zollo *et al.*, 2020; Yadav and Rahman, 2017) and still others foregrounding consumer

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perception (Seo and Park, 2018; Ebrahim, 2020). These perspectives shed light on different facets of the same phenomenon, and bringing them together into a coherent picture is one of the key reasons a systematic review is warranted.

This range of viewpoints has naturally pushed researchers to treat SMMAs as a multifaceted concept rather than a single activity. As highlighted earlier, Kim and Ko (2012), widely credited as pioneers in this area, proposed five core dimensions. Subsequent studies adopted and extended this framework across other industries (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Zollo *et al.*, 2020; Khan, 2022), with Godey *et al.* (2016) validating it cross-culturally and Khan (2022) finding that the relative weight of each dimension shifts depending on product category and consumer segment. Taken together, this body of work supports the view that SMMAs are best understood as a multidimensional construct shaped by the ongoing interplay between brands and consumers online (Kim and Ko, 2012; Godey *et al.*, 2016; Zollo *et al.*, 2020). That said, the original five dimensions have not gone unchallenged. Scholars have proposed additions such as personalization (Yadav and Rahman, 2017) and informativeness (Hazzam, 2022) and others have noted overlaps between dimensions, such as customization and personalization (Ebrahim, 2020). These unresolved debates point to the need for an SLR to map the dimensional landscape of SMMAs and provide a firmer foundation for future research.

Moreover, SMMAs play a crucial role in modern marketing strategies, as brands increasingly rely on SMPs to share engaging content and connect with consumers who now use these channels for product discovery and brand evaluation (Wang *et al.*, 2021; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025; Appel *et al.*, 2020). SMMAs act as a bridge between brands and their audiences, facilitating real-time communication and encouraging user-generated content that extends brand reach organically (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020). However, the existing literature on SMMAs is scattered across marketing, information systems and communication studies, making it difficult to develop a comprehensive understanding of how these activities shape consumer behavior. This fragmentation is what drives the present SLR, which aims to pull together current knowledge and pinpoint gaps that future research needs to address.

3. Methodology

Following Kraus *et al.* (2022), this study developed the methodological protocol using the elements presented in Figure 1, which are further explained in the subsequent sections.

3.1 Review type

In this study, we used a type of literature review, namely SLR, to achieve our objectives and address the research question (Kraus *et al.*, 2022). SLR is defined as:

> […] a specific methodology that locates existing studies, selects and evaluates contributions, analyses and synthesizes data, and reports the evidence in such a way that allows reasonably clear conclusions to be reached about what is and is not known (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009, p. 671).

3.2 Review focus

We conducted a domain-focused SLR, as highlighted by Kraus *et al.* (2022). Domain-focused SLRs review past research in a defined area, where a "domain" can refer to a field (e.g. social media marketing), a context (e.g. the UK), an outlet (e.g. *Spanish Journal of Marketing-ESIC*) or a concept (e.g. SMMA) (Kraus *et al.*, 2022; Lim *et al.*, 2022a, 2022b). Because SMMA is considered an essential concept in the domain of SMM, we preferred the concept-focused SLR among these fields. These aim to identify, evaluate and summarize all relevant studies on a specific concept (e.g. SMMA), rather than a domain (e.g. SMM), to provide an overview of current knowledge.

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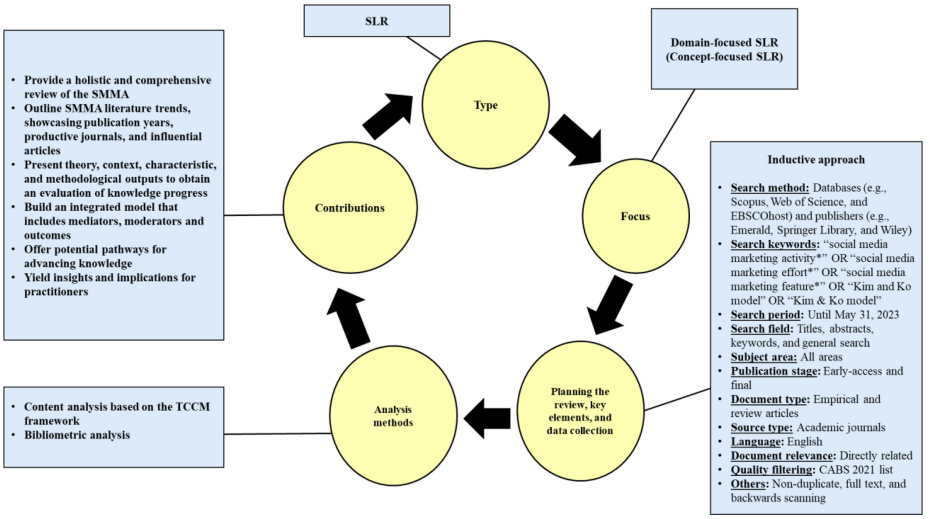


Figure 1. Protocol for literature review as independent studies Kraus *et al*. (2022)

3.3 Planning the review, critical considerations and data collection

Search method: We searched multiple academic databases (e.g. Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCOhost, etc.) and publishers (e.g. Emerald, SpringerLink, Wiley, etc.) to minimize selection bias and ensure broader coverage (Le *et al.*, 2019; Lim *et al.*, 2022a, 2022b). Using multiple sources improves the validity and reliability of the review.

Search keywords: The search keywords were determined through collaborative brainstorming among the authors, drawing on their expertise and a review of relevant literature. The search was conducted across all databases and publishers using the exact search string: "social media marketing activity*" OR "social media marketing effort*" OR "social media marketing feature*" OR "Kim & Ko model." Following recent SLRs (Lim and Rasul, 2022), we avoided abbreviations such as SM (social media) or SNS (social networking sites) in the search, as these tend to yield too many irrelevant results. In addition, it is common practice in quality journals for authors to use the whole phrase when first introducing such abbreviations.

Search period: The search was conducted on May 31, 2023 (C1 [1]), without specifying a start or end date. This allowed us to include all eligible papers published up to that date (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2024).

Search field: We searched titles, abstracts and keywords across databases, and conducted a broader search across publishers (Lim *et al.*, 2022a, 2022b).

Subject area: No restrictions were placed on the subject area. We included studies on SMMA across various fields, such as marketing, hospitality and tourism, and communications.

Publication stage: Both early access (in press) and final-published papers were included in our selection.

Document type: We included only journal articles (C2) in this study, as they are considered verified knowledge and typically have the greatest impact on the field. In contrast, books and book chapters rarely advance science and grey literature – like conference proceedings, reports and working papers – often is not peer-reviewed

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(Le *et al.*, 2019; Lim and Rasul, 2022). Therefore, these sources were excluded from this SLR (C2), consistent with past reviews.

Source type: Only international peer-reviewed academic journals were included as source types (C2) (Lim *et al.*, 2022a, 2022b), while industrial journals were excluded (C2). Academic journals are recognized for their role in producing, disseminating and exchanging scientific knowledge.

Language: We limited our selection to articles written in English (C3), as it is the predominant language for scientific research (Le *et al.*, 2019). Articles in other languages were excluded (C3).

Document relevance: We included only articles that directly focus on SMMA (C5), excluding those that either cover unrelated topics or mention SMMA only in passing without further investigation (C5) (Kraus *et al.*, 2022).

Quality filtering: We conducted a journal-focused review to assess the quality of the articles in our data set. Following recent reviews, we considered only articles published in journals listed in the 2021 Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) Journal Guide as high quality (C6) (Peñaloza *et al.*, 2023). The CABS guide is widely recognized as a key resource for identifying top-tier international journals and is frequently used in faculty evaluations across various countries, particularly in the marketing field (Peñaloza *et al.*, 2023). Adhering to these quality standards ensures that the included studies represent the most original and rigorously produced knowledge (Kraus *et al.*, 2022).

Exclusion-inclusion criteria: Defining inclusion and exclusion criteria is a critical step in ensuring the quality of an SLR. The criteria applied in this review are outlined in Table 1. Inspired by Schroeder *et al.*, 2023, the filtering and retention process at each step is briefly summarized below and visualized in Figure 2:

- *Impurity removal (C1, C2 and C3):* Based on the criteria, publications were filtered or retained.
- *Duplicate removal (C4):* If publication is available from multiple sources, it should be kept in only one and removed from the others as a duplicate.
- *Filter by title, abstract, keywords or full text (C5):* Articles were filtered or retained according to their direct relevance to the SMMA.
- *Quality retention (C6):* Journals were evaluated for quality using the CABS 2021 list, and high-quality journals were retained.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Timeline (C1)	< May 31, 2023	No
Literature type (C2)	Academic peer-reviewed journals	Industry journals, conference proceedings, thesis, book, book chapters, notes, data articles and so on
Language (C3)	English	Non-English
Duplicate (C4)	Nonduplicate	Duplicate
Relevance (C5)	Directly related to the SMMA	Indirectly and not associated with the SMMA
Quality (C6)	Listed in CABS 2021	Nonlisted in CABS 2021
Access (C7)	Full text	Nonfull text
Addition (C8)	Adding from the reference lists	Nonadding from the reference lists

Note(s): C = Criteria; We created this table based on reviews from Schroeder *et al.* (2023) and Tang *et al.* (2021)

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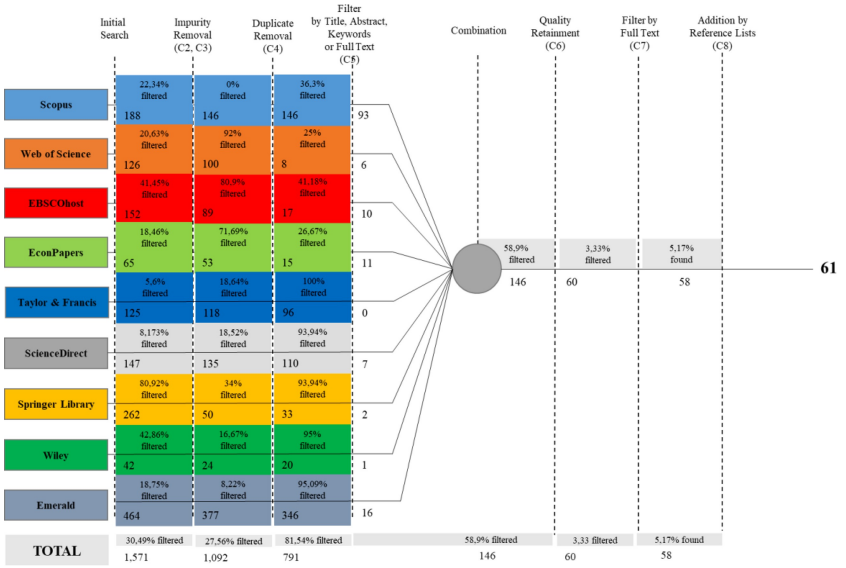


Figure 2. Search process steps (Schroeder *et al.*, 2023)

- *Access (C7):* Articles were excluded or retained based on access to their full text.
- *Addition (C8):* The references for the articles were reviewed, and the articles that met the previous criteria were included or excluded.

Screening process: Publications were initially retrieved using the specified keywords on May 31, 2023. As shown in Figure 2, a total of 1,571 publications were found across academic databases. The records were then exported into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for further processing. The second author manually conducted the impurity removal procedures, following the second (C2) and third (C3) criteria outlined in Table 1. As a result, 479 publications (30.49%) were excluded because they were not published in academic journals or in languages other than English. Of the remaining 1,092 articles, approximately a quarter (27.56%) were duplicates, leaving 791 unique articles. In the next step, the first and fourth authors independently conducted relevance screening (C5), assessing the title, abstract, keywords and, when necessary, the full text to determine direct relevance to SMMA. In cases of disagreement, they discussed their assessments until they reached a consensus (Polat *et al.*, 2024).

Subsequently, spreadsheets from academic databases and publishers were merged into a single data set, resulting in 146 articles. These articles were then quality-assessed based on the CABS 2021 list. As a result, more than half (58.9%) were excluded because they were not published in journals listed in CABS. The first author downloaded the full texts of the remaining 60 articles; however, two articles could not be accessed and were therefore excluded. Finally, the first author applied the snowball sampling technique by reviewing the reference lists of the 58 remaining articles and identifying three additional relevant articles not initially included in the data set. This brought the total to 61 articles, which were subsequently analyzed in this review. The final list of articles is presented in Supplement Table 1.

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3.4 Review the analysis method

In this SLR, we used content analysis to examine the coded literature data (Lim and Rasul, 2022). We chose the TCCM framework as our organizing structure based on insights from recent SLRs for several key reasons (Çelik *et al.*, 2023). First, TCCM provides a structured framework for SLRs, enabling a detailed examination of key variables – such as independent, mediator, moderator and dependent variables – and their relationships, thereby strengthening both theoretical insights and practical implications (Çelik *et al.*, 2023; Paul and Criado, 2020). Second, the framework is particularly relevant in digital contexts, making it well-suited to contemporary research in which technology is integral (Çelik *et al.*, 2023). Finally, TCCM is highly effective for developing a future research agenda, guiding both the summarization of existing studies and the identification of new research directions (Çelik *et al.*, 2023; Polat *et al.*, 2024).

We used both deductive and inductive methods to create the data extraction form. In the deductive approach, we predefined identifiers based on coding guidelines from similar studies and aligned them with the TCCM framework (Çelik *et al.*, 2023). In the inductive approach, we iteratively added and refined the form as we coded the articles' content (Kraus *et al.*, 2022). The first, second and fourth authors independently coded using an Excel sheet. Afterward, the coded data were compared, and any discrepancies were resolved through consensus to maintain agreement and reliability (Polat *et al.*, 2024).

4. Findings

4.1 Theory-context-characteristics-methodology framework

4.1.1 Theory. Theories play a crucial role in understanding and analyzing SMM's role in enhancing the customer-brand relationship. Overall, the top five theories commonly used in SMMA are the SOR framework ($n = 12$; 19,67% (Ibrahim and Aljarah, 2023), uses and gratifications theory ($n = 5$; 8.20%) (Zollo *et al.*, 2020), social exchange theory ($n = 4$; 6.56%) (Cheung *et al.*, 2021), theory of planned behavior ($n = 3$; 4.92%) and social identity theory ($n = 3$; 4.92%) (Torres *et al.*, 2018) (see Figure 3). In detail, among the social psychology theories, the most frequently used theory is the social exchange theory ($n = 4$; 6.56%) (Cheung *et al.*, 2021). The equity theory also receives notable attention ($n = 2$; 3.28%) (Wang *et al.*, 2021), exploring the concept of fairness and its impact on SMM.

In the context of behavioral theories, the theory of planned behavior received much attention ($n = 3$; 4.92%). The theory of reasoned action ($n = 2$; 3.28%) and engagement theory ($n = 2$; 3.28%) follow this. Self-concept and identity theories include the symbolic self-completion theory, which appears in ($n = 1$; 1.64%) study and the social identity theory, represented by ($n = 3$; 4.92%) studies (Chen and Lin, 2019; Torres *et al.*, 2018). Finally, several studies ($n = 22$; 36.07%) are not explicitly linked to any specific theory (see Figure 3)

4.1.2 Context. The distribution of articles by country (see Figure 4) reveals a diverse geographical representation. Among the countries examined, both China and India have the highest number of articles ($n = 8$; 13.11%), followed by Malaysia and Northern Cyprus ($n = 4$; 6.56%). In terms of industry, the largest number of articles focuses on the tourism and hospitality industry, comprising ($n = 11$; 18.03%). This is closely followed by the retail and e-commerce sector ($n = 10$; 16.39%) and the luxury fashion industry ($n = 9$; 14.75%) (see Figure 4).

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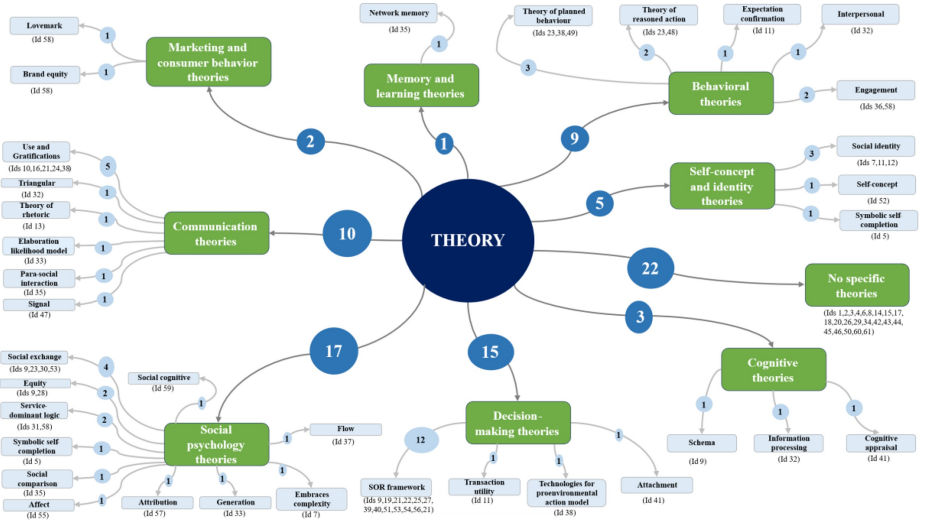


Figure 3. Theories applied in SMMA studies (Schroeder et al., 2023)

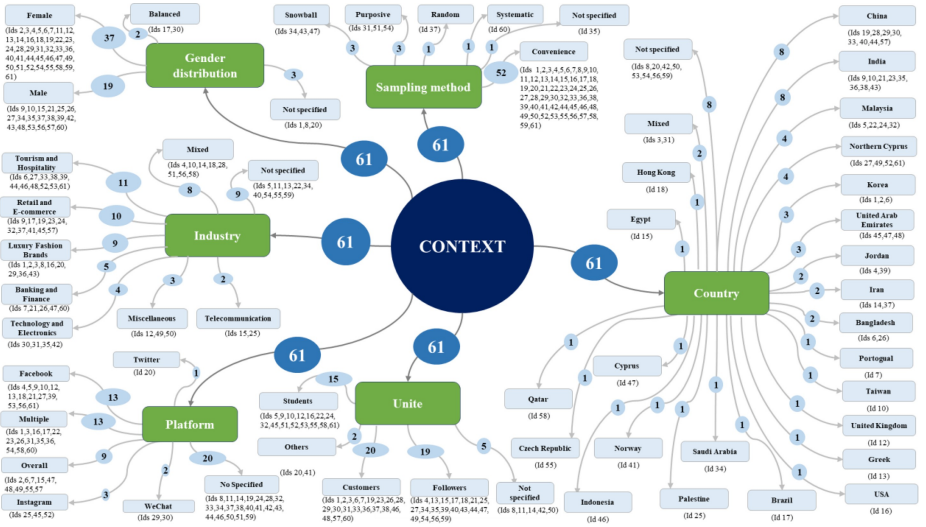


Figure 4. Research contexts in SMMA (Schroeder *et al.*, 2023)

Regarding sampling, the most frequently used technique in the obtained data set is convenience sampling ($n = 52$; 85.25%). Snowball and purposive sampling methods are also used, with each method being used in three studies, representing 4.92% of the total reviewed studies (see Figure 4). As for gender distribution, among the studies that provided gender information, the majority were female ($n = 37$, 60.66%). Male participants were predominant

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in several articles ($n = 19$; 31.15%), while a balanced gender distribution was observed ($n = 2$; 3.28%).

Finally, regarding the SMPs used, most studies used Facebook as the primary platform ($n = 13$; 21.31%). Instagram was used in three articles (4.92%), while WeChat was used in one study. Other studies used multiple platforms for their research ($n = 13$; 21.31%). Furthermore, nine articles (14.75%) adopted a comprehensive approach, whereas 20 studies did not specify the SMPs used in their investigations (see Figure 4).

4.1.3 Characteristics. We synthesized the characteristic findings of this SLR in the integrative/conceptual framework shown in Figure 5. This framework also outlines the SMMA's nomological network. On the other hand, Online Supplementary Table 2 details the main findings on the characteristics of the SMMA.

4.1.3.1 Antecedents. The majority of studies reviewed in this SLR did not investigate the antecedents of SMMA (Arrigo, 2018; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020; Ibrahim, 2021). Only one article examined how customer experience enhances SMMA in the context of an augmented reality (AR) application environment. The study by Chen *et al.* (2022) confirmed the importance of customer experience in AR mobile applications as a predictor and antecedent of SMMA. Our results indicate a lack of comprehensive exploration of the underlying antecedents of SMMA within the SMM field.

4.1.3.2 Mediators. *Theme 1: Brand-centered mediators*

The most frequently reported brand-centered mediators are brand trust ($n = 11$) and brand equity ($n = 6$), while brand experience ($n = 6$) and other mediators were less frequently mentioned, with fewer than four occurrences each. Among the group, trust emerged as a crucial factor, encompassing both brand trust and benevolence trust (see Supplement Table 2).

Theme 2: Customer value and benefits-centered mediators

Customer value- and benefits-centered mediators are a set of variables that have been shown to influence the effectiveness of SMMA in shaping consumer behavior by affecting the perceived value and benefits customers experience. These mediators include value co-creation ($n = 4$), relationship equity ($n = 2$), value equity ($n = 2$) and perceived value ($n = 1$) (see Supplement Table 2).

Theme 3: Customer-centered mediators

Our findings revealed several notable customer-centered mediators, including consumer inspiration ($n = 1$), engagement ($n = 4$), social presence ($n = 1$), active participation ($n = 1$), social support ($n = 1$) and social identification ($n = 1$) (see Supplement Table 2). Previous studies declared that engagement is a consequence of SMMA and an essential aspect of SMM settings (Cheung *et al.*, 2021; Khan, 2022; Aljuhmani *et al.*, 2023).

4.1.3.3 *Moderation* variables. Most seminal works in the SMMA have encouraged examining the role of moderators in the relationship between SMMA and consumer outcomes (Torres *et al.*, 2018; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020). The percentages are based on 65 moderator instances, since some articles examined two or three moderators. The presence of these moderators can impact on the relationships between SMMA and consumer behaviors. Demographic moderators, such as gender ($n = 4$), generation ($n = 2$) and age ($n = 1$), provide insights into how different population segments respond to SMMA initiatives (see Supplement Table 2).

4.1.3.4 *Consequence* variables. *Theme 1: Customer-based brand equity variables*

Our SLR revealed that several customer-based brand equity models examined in the previous studies, including overall brand equity ($n = 15$), loyalty ($n = 8$), image ($n = 5$) and awareness ($n = 3$). In this respect, previous literature has confirmed a positive relationship between SMMA and overall brand equity (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2021). In one of

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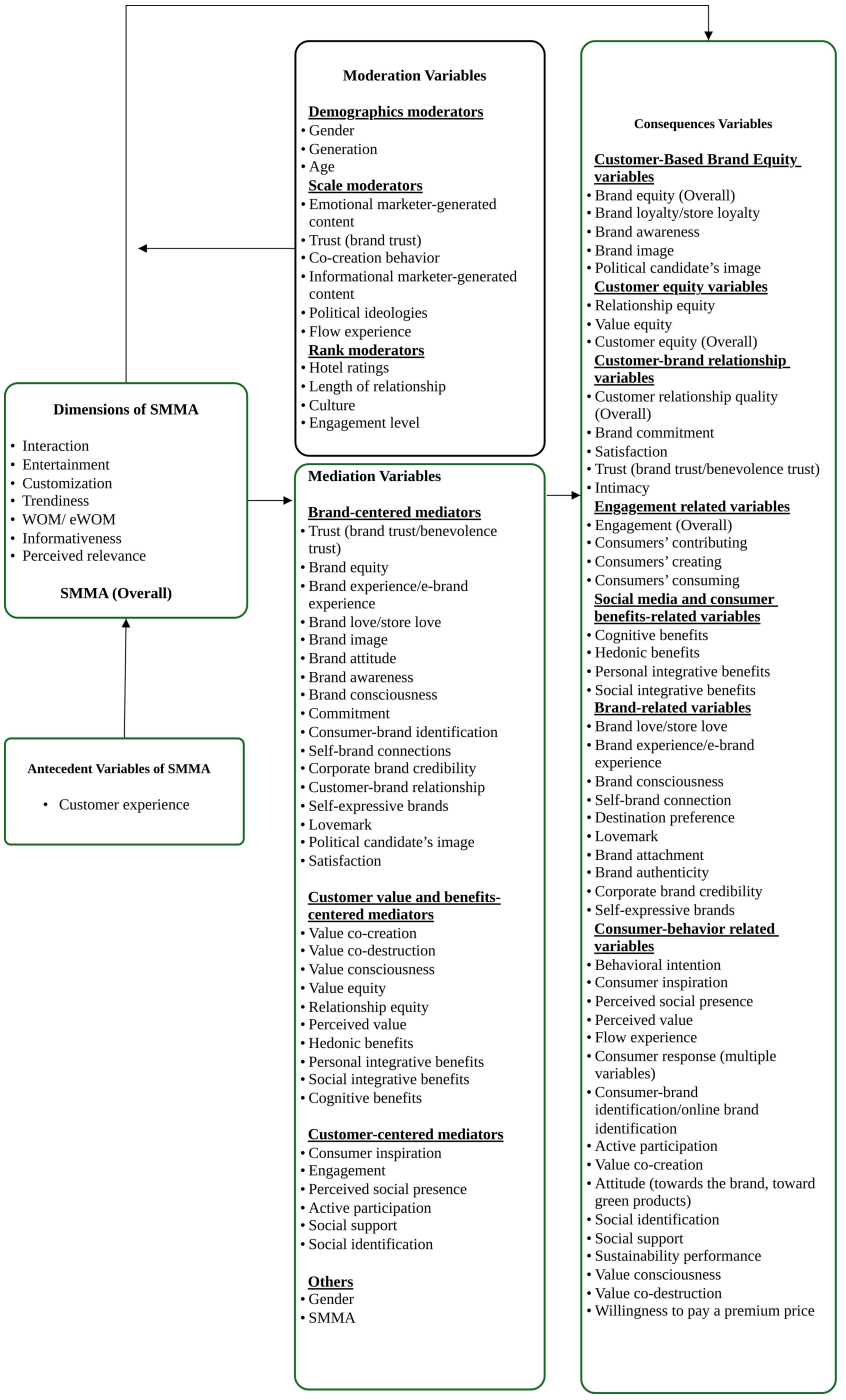


Figure 5. Integrative/conceptual framework of SMMA

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the first studies on SMMA, brand awareness and image were included based on the Keller brand measurement model and examined as factors positively affecting SMMA for airline brands (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Seo and Park, 2018).

Theme 2: Customer equity variables

Customer equity is a strategic marketing concept that represents the total value a customer brings to a business over the course of the relationship (Kim and Ko, 2012). In Kim and Ko's (2012) study, the SMMA model introduced customer equity as a first-order variable. The results showed that SMMA activities of luxury fashion brands positively affect value equity, relationship equity and brand equity (see Supplement Table 2).

Theme 3: Customer-brand relationship variables

One of the customer-brand relationship variables is the relationship quality concept, a significant outcome in relationship marketing studies. This study's findings showed that the customer relationship quality model has been examined in several studies, with commitment ($n = 1$), trust ($n = 11$) and satisfaction ($n = 2$), explored as outcomes of SMMA. For example, Ibrahim and Aljarah (2023) found that SMMAs positively influence the dimensions of customer relationship quality on Instagram pages and that SMMAs are stronger predictors of commitment than trust and satisfaction (see Supplement Table 2).

Theme 4: Engagement-related variables

The current SLR revealed 144 consequences of SMMA, with a considerable focus on engagement-related variables (14). According to our analysis, the most popular is engagement ($n = 11$). Three distinct categories emerged for consumers' online brand-related activities: contributing ($n = 1$), creating ($n = 1$) and consuming ($n = 1$).

Theme 5: Social media and consumer benefits-related variables

Scant research has been dedicated to examining the customer benefit outcomes of SMMA, focusing on four specific benefits, including cognitive benefits ($n = 1$), hedonic benefits ($n = 1$), personal integrative benefits ($n = 1$) and social integrative benefits ($n = 1$) (see Supplement Table 2).

Theme 6: Brand-related variables

Several brand-related variables have been tested as consequences of SMMA. These variables encompass a range of cognitive and affective factors that influence consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward brands. Drawing from the findings of our SLR, brand love and brand/e-brand experience, both with frequency, have been identified as essential outcomes of SMMA ($n = 5$) (see Supplement Table 2).

Theme 7: Consumer behavior-related variables

Behavioral intention ($n = 18$) is frequently used as a consequence variable. It refers to variables such as purchase or repurchase intention, donation intention and intention to follow advice. In detail, many studies have found that SMMA positively influences purchase intention (Khan, 2022; Kim and Ko, 2010). Furthermore, purchase intention was examined in the first study investigating the impact of the SMMA model on consumer behavior (Kim and Ko, 2010) (see Supplement Table 2).

5. Methodology

Figure 6 provides an overview of the methodologies adopted in SMMA research. This SLR shows that SMMA research relies overwhelmingly on quantitative methods, with little to no use of qualitative or mixed approaches. This methodological gap indicates a strong emphasis on theory testing rather than theory building.

We also examined the included articles regarding research design, time horizon and data collection tools. Our analysis indicated that cross-sectional, scale-oriented survey research (96.7%) overwhelmingly dominated, unsurprisingly given the complete dominance of

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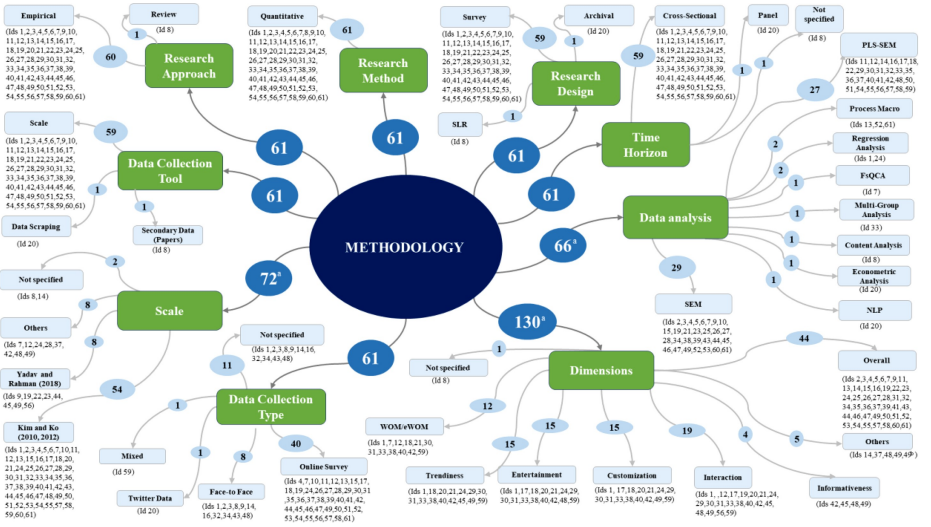


Figure 6. Research methodologies in SMMA studies (Schroeder *et al.*, 2023)

Note(s): [a]Because some studies were coded more than once, the figure's total values may not equal the sum of the studies examined; [b]The others in ID 49 were coded twice as they were two different variables. FsQCA: fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis, NLP: natural language processing

quantitative methods. The majority of studies (40 of 61 articles) reviewed in this SLR used online surveys as a data collection type (e.g. Torres *et al.*, 2018).

Regarding data analysis, the findings of this SLR reveal that structural equation modeling (SEM) (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Kim and Ko, 2012) and partial least squares (PLS) SEM (e.g. Chen and Lin, 2019) had the vast majority, with 29 and 27 articles, respectively. As mentioned above, the dominance of quantitative research and theory- or model-based testing in SMMA literature has led to the predominance of these analyses. Another methodological component is how studies measure SMMA. The majority of the articles (75%) used the Kim and Ko (2010, 2012) scale to measure SMMA, while a few studies (11%) used the modified scale by Yadav and Rahman (2017).

5.1 Future research agenda

5.1.1 Theory. Figure 3 illustrates the use of various social psychological theories in SMMA research. However, some key theories remain unexplored. For example, social presence theory has been widely applied to study individual behavior in social and virtual settings (Lu *et al.*, 2016). In addition, social capital theory offers a valuable perspective for investigating SMMA. Future studies can use this lens to examine how SMMA influences consumers' social relationships and brand engagement (see Table 2).

In addition, although cognitive load theory is vital for information processing and shaping consumer actions (Sweller, 1988), it has been largely neglected in SMMA studies. However, prior research suggests that the role of cognitive load arising from SMMA in mediating its effects and those of its sub-dimensions on consumer actions such as online brand engagement, trust and advocacy remains insufficiently explored (Sweller, 1988; Alalwan, 2018), representing a promising avenue for future investigation. Furthermore, it remains unclear how these types of

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Table 2. Future directions for research (TCCM)

TCCM	Future directions
Theory	• Examine the consequences of the SMMA model through the lens of different theories, such as social presence, social capital and cognitive and regret theory • Explore the dualistic passion model (DPM) (harmonious and obsessive brand passion) with the SMMA model • Investigate various mediation variables (e.g. online brand engagement, purchase intention and customer citizenship behavior), considering the influence of cognitive load theory • Using terror management theory as a framework to investigate following social anxiety, social isolation and social exclusion as outcomes of SMMA • Study how the consequences of SMMA differ based on how the content is framed (gain vs loss) according to the prospect theory • Examine media richness theory to understand how consumers respond to media-rich content on various SMPs and within different product categories
Context (general)	• Use more advanced sampling methods such as time-location and panel stratified or cluster sampling to examine the SMMA model with different types of analysis • Conducting studies on the consequences of SMMA across various SMPs (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, etc.) • Conducting future comparative studies on the SMMA model, considering factors such as culture, globalization and levels of wealth • Examine distinctions between SMMA and other marketing tools such as influencer, virtual, avatar, AR and traditional marketing tools in their impact on consumers' responses • Investigations into underrepresented SMMA in different SMPs include LinkedIn, Twitter (now referred to as X), TikTok, Thread and Snapchat
Context (industry)	• Study how SMMA affects customer responses in different industries such as social commerce, virtual shopping, retailing, electronics companies, fast-moving consumer goods, luxury, entertainment, healthcare, beauty and skincare and real estate and services • Investigate the impacts of SMMA on consumer behavior within the tourism and hospitality industry (including segments like the sharing economy, destination, travel agency, fast food, food delivery Apps and health tourism) • Exploring how immersive technologies like AR, VR, smart glasses, VR headsets, AR headsets, AR holograms, the metaverse and artificial intelligence influence the evolution of SMMA • Examine how SMMA contributes to promoting sustainable and prosocial behavior towards practices and products like eco-friendly materials, organic products, health food and green cosmetics
Context (unite/ sample)	• Firm perspective: there is a need for more firm-focused SMMA or social media marketing system (SMMS) scale research in the future • Firm perspective: a firm-focused investigation of SMMA's effects on employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to continue working and employee advocacy • Examine the effects of SMMA on different generational groups (Gen-X, Gen-Y and Gen-Z) and diverse sample types (including employees, customers, travelers and tourists)
Characteristics	*Antecedents: There is a need to examine the antecedents of SMMA, such as:* • Company or technological resources/technology factors • SMM capabilities • Social media support for marketing strategy (promotion strategy/product strategy) • Turbulent market environment (market/technological turbulence) • Big five personality

(*continued*)

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Table 2. Continued

TCCM	Future directions
	Mediations: There is a need to examine the mediation effect from different perspectives: • Different aspects of customer engagement like (active, passive) and (e.g. customer purchases, referrals, influence and knowledge) • The model of social commerce constructs (recommendation and referrals/forums and communities/rating and reviews) • Different variables (e.g. source homophily, credibility, perceived enjoyment, Involvement, perceived value and positive attitude) *Moderators:* • Investigate the following moderators such as social anxiety, social media self-efficacy, social media type, relationship age, brand type, product type, customer empathy, advertising value, habit, online reviews credibility and consumer personality traits (the "Big Five") • Examine other socio-demographic variables, such as age, income, employment, education and personality • Study the effect of different content, such as posts, reels, stories, photos, short videos and live videos as moderators • Examining the effectiveness of SMMA's role across diverse content types, including posts, reels, stories, photos, short videos and live videos *Consequences: There is a need to examine the different consequences of SMMA as follows:* • Pro-brand behavior (e.g. brand evangelism, brand fidelity, customer advocacy, customer citizen behavior and brand defense) • Intention behavior (e.g. sharing intention, intention to follow, continue intention, intent to recommend, brand switching intention) • Emotional attributes: Customer happiness/brand passion/brand love (by adopting a layered perspective incorporating micro- (individual), meso- (in-group), macro- (in-group vs out-group) and mega-layer (societal)/brand hate • Customers' internal responses, such as creativity, positive emotions and visual appeal • Aakaer brand equity model variables brand loyalty, brand association, brand awareness and perceived quality • Online behavioral engagement, encompassing actions like liking, using hashtags, sharing, commenting, retweeting and reposting • The "dark side" of SMMA: individuals' mental health, raise ethical concerns, shape political perspectives and influence spending patterns, encompassing factors like self-esteem, anxiety, depression, exposure to false information and shifts in political views
Methodology	• Conducting qualitative and mixed research • Use different analysis approaches, such as SLR, bibliometric analysis, content analysis and longitudinal analysis, to generate different theoretical perspectives in the SMMA settings • Analyzing SMMA content with advanced AI and machine learning techniques in the form of data scraping to provide more accurate insights into consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions • Applying necessary condition analysis (NCA) to identify the factors necessary for an SMM campaign to be successful • Conduct experimental studies that simulate images, videos, scenarios or content related to SMMA elements through different SMPs • Examine elements of SMMA through experimental studies • Development of a new SMMA scale suitable for the modern era

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cognitive load influence the consequences of SMMA on consumer behavior and the mechanisms underlying this impact. For instance, scholars should investigate how the rapid-fire, algorithmically curated content on emerging platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels contributes to intrinsic cognitive load compared to static content on traditional platforms. Furthermore, exploring how SMMA encourages deeper cognitive processing (e.g. interactive quizzes, knowledge-building campaigns) influences cognitive load (see Table 2).

One theory that has not received enough attention in SMMA research is prospect theory. Kahneman and Tversky (1979) introduced this theory to explain how people react differently to the same information depending on how it is presented. When a message is framed in positive terms, people tend to prefer safe behaviors, but when it is framed negatively, they become more willing to take risks. Despite this clear connection, we still do not have a clear understanding of how positive versus negative, or gain versus loss, framing of SMMA content shapes consumer behavior, especially in today's AI-driven social media feeds. Take the informativeness dimension as an example, does it make a difference whether a brand states that "90% of our customers are satisfied" or frames it as "only 10% of our customers are not satisfied"? Beyond that, how do platform algorithms decide which of these frames get more visibility? Future studies could tackle this by simulating how algorithms rank differently framed content and testing whether negative framing attracts more attention but comes at the cost of consumer trust.

Understanding how different SMPs vary in terms of media richness and how this influences consumer behavior can assist marketers in designing more effective and engaging content, an area in SMMA that has not yet been extensively explored (see Table 2). Little is known about how anxiety, social isolation and social exclusion predict SMMA's impact on consumer behavior. This research gap highlights the need for further investigation (see Table 2).

Another noteworthy theory may be the dualistic passion model (DPM) in SMMA research. Vallerand *et al*. (2003) operationalized the DPM into a harmonious and obsessive passion. The former is highlighted by favorable results achieved through well-balanced, appropriate engagement with a passionate activity or brand. In contrast, the latter is described as an uncontrollable urge to engage in these passions and is linked to a range of adverse outcomes (Vallerand *et al.*, 2003). In this vein, examining the effects of SMMA on harmonious and obsessive brand passion can make essential contributions. Specifically, there is a critical need to understand how hyper-personalized, AI-driven content recommendations fuel' obsessive passion' by creating feedback loops that reinforce addictive consumption. Focusing on these two comparative "bright" and "dark" sides in the context of algorithmic addiction would be particularly interesting (see Table 2).

Cognitive dissonance is a psychological state of discomfort caused by an imbalance in cognition, specifically by two conflicting cognitions occurring simultaneously (Bem, 1967). Future studies can examine how different types of SMMA affect various variables (such as brand switching, purchase regret, satisfaction and perceived service-quality failures) through the theoretical perspectives of cognitive and regret theories (see Table 2).

5.1.2 Context. This study reveals a notable limitation in SMMA research: more than half of the studies relied on convenience sampling, hindering the generalizability of their findings (Kim and Ko, 2010). To overcome this constraint in future SMMA research, it is recommended that researchers adopt advanced sampling techniques to ensure the representativeness and applicability of their results. For instance, using time-location sampling, a method that involves data collection across multiple times and locations to capture behavioral variation across contexts, can be strategically implemented.

On the other hand, SMMA is increasingly popular for enhancing customer-brand relationships, such as customer loyalty, trust, purchase intention and engagement (Godey *et al.*,

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2016; Cheung *et al.*, 2021). However, its impact varies with factors such as the type of SMP, culture, globalization and wealth levels. Conducting future studies on factors such as culture, globalization and wealth is crucial. Research should also examine SMMA's effects across platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, X and TikTok. In addition, emerging influencer, virtual, avatar and AR marketing markets, which differ in methods, are expanding. (Haenlein *et al.*, 2020; Chen *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, investigating the varying impact of SMMA, influencer, AR, virtual, avatar and traditional marketing tools on consumer behavior can provide insights into effective SMM strategies for brands (Li *et al.*, 2023).

There is also significant interest from many journals in issuing special issues on the role of SMM in the tourism and hospitality sector and on how it can enhance the customer-brand relationship in different ways.

Several studies encourage investigating how immersive technologies such as AR, VR, smart glasses, VR headsets, AR headsets, AR holograms, the metaverse, ChatGPT and AI shape the evolution of SMMA (Chen *et al.*, 2022; Li *et al.*, 2023).

By contrast, specific sectors have remained marginalized within the existing literature on SMMA. One such sector is sustainability. SMP potential extends significantly toward promoting sustainable social behavior (Wang *et al.*, 2021). An exciting future research area is examining SMMA that promotes sustainable social behavior and positive attitudes toward eco-friendly materials, organic products, health food and green cosmetics. Findings show some SMPs have received more research attention than others (Khan, 2022; Liu *et al.*, 2023). This highlights the pressing need for further investigation into these underrepresented platforms, including LinkedIn, X, TikTok, Thread and Snapchat (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020).

This review found that SMMA has predominantly been studied from the perspective of consumers or customers, while the firm or brand perspective remains missing. To overcome this shortcoming, Varela-Neira *et al.* (2023) developed a contemporary multidimensional system, namely, the formalization, human resource management, co-creation, marketing planning and social media marketing (SMMS) scale, with a focus on firms. To conclude, there is a need for more firm-focused SMMA or SMMS research.

Furthermore, previous studies have encouraged exploring differences across generations in the SMMA (Khan, 2022; Liu *et al.*, 2023). Other disparities warrant investigation, such as how employees use social media differently from customers, travelers and tourists. It is necessary to examine the effects of SMMA across different generational groups (Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z) and sample types (employees, customers, travelers, tourists).

5.1.3 Characteristics. 5.1.3.1 Antecedent. Previous research has provided limited evidence concerning the antecedents of SMMA (Arrigo, 2018; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020; Ibrahim, 2021). In SMMA studies, only one investigation has examined customer experience as an antecedent to SMMA in an AR application environment (Chen *et al.*, 2022). Nonetheless, the scarcity of research on the antecedents of SMMA underscores the pressing need to explore them further (Kim and Ko, 2012; Godey *et al.*, 2016; Zollo *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, it is imperative to explore various SMM capabilities, encompassing an organization's skills, resources and strategies. These capabilities are pivotal to effectively leveraging SMMA's potential for marketing objectives.

5.1.3.2 Mediation. A thorough review reveals that many studies have examined how customer-brand relationships (e.g. trust, brand equity, engagement) mediate the relationship between SMMA and consumer behavior outcomes (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Kim and Ko, 2010). Other engagement constructs can be explored as mediation factors between SMMA and customer responses, such as active engagement, passive engagement and online engagement behaviors like sharing, commenting or other constructs of consumer engagement behavior (e.g. behaviors related to influencing, augmenting, mobilizing and market/brand co-creating)

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and even actors' negative engagement dispositions (i.e. negative emotions and cognition). It is also interesting to examine the association between SMMA and consumer behavior outcomes through different variables (e.g. source homophily, credibility, enjoyment, Involvement, perceived value and attitude).

In addition to the importance of friends' recommendations and the opinions of others on SMP for brands or other online communities in influencing consumer behavior (Polat *et al.*, 2023; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025), there is a lack of research on the impact of SMMA on social commerce constructs (recommendations and referrals, forums and communities/ratings and reviews), as well as on how these factors effectively create a positive feeling among consumers when considering others' ratings and opinions.

Previous studies have not explored the diversity of content types across SMPs and the distinct impacts associated with each type (Haenlein *et al.*, 2020). For instance, posts are the predominant content format on SMP, encompassing text, photos or videos. Instagram Reels are short, engaging videos that let users share thoughts, creations or cherished moments with followers. Each content type within social media has distinct characteristics in terms of shape, size and use (Li and Xie, 2020). Selecting the most suitable content type is pivotal, tailored to the audience's preferences and aligned with the brand's marketing objectives (Appel *et al.*, 2020; Li and Xie, 2020). Thus, future studies could explore the effectiveness of SMMA across diverse content types, including posts, reels, stories, photos, short videos and live videos, in enhancing customer engagement and promoting positive consumer behavior.

5.1.3.3 Moderators. Our review underscored that sociodemographic variables, including age, employment status, education and personality, were not adequately examined in most SMMA studies. To this end, an expanded exploration of moderators is warranted. Variables include social anxiety, social media self-efficacy, SMP types, consumer-brand relationship age and brand type.

Potential moderators are customer empathy, advertising value, customer habit and online review credibility. In addition, we recommend examining how product types affect marketing success and social media engagement patterns. For instance, users may engage more with new fashion products than with financial ones. Finally, other factors can be examined as moderators to determine whether they can strengthen the relationship between SMMA and customer outcomes. These diverse content types include posts, reels, stories, photos, short videos and live videos.

5.1.3.4 Consequences. Despite growing interest among researchers in the influence of SMMA on consumer behavior, the impacts of SMMA on pro-brand behavior (e.g. brand evangelism, brand loyalty, customer advocacy, customer citizenship behavior and brand defense) remain inadequately explored within the context of SMM (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020). For example, it is worth exploring the effects of SMMA on customer advocacy as a distinct and powerful form of positive eWOM (Li *et al.*, 2023) (see Figure 7).

For instance, several studies suggest that SMMAs enhance purchase intention (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Kim and Ko, 2010). Nevertheless, perspectives on behavioral intentions (e.g. sharing intention, intention to follow, continuing intention, intention to recommend and brand-switching intention) have been considerably overlooked. Future studies could also examine these factors (see Figure 7).

The extant literature has consistently documented the positive outcomes of SMMA. However, when these efforts exceed a certain level, they may also generate negative consequences, often referred to as "dark sides," for customers or brands. Therefore, identifying outcomes and boundary conditions is crucial. Scholars should also explore SMMA's broader impacts, including its effects on mental well-being, ethical issues, political views and spending patterns.

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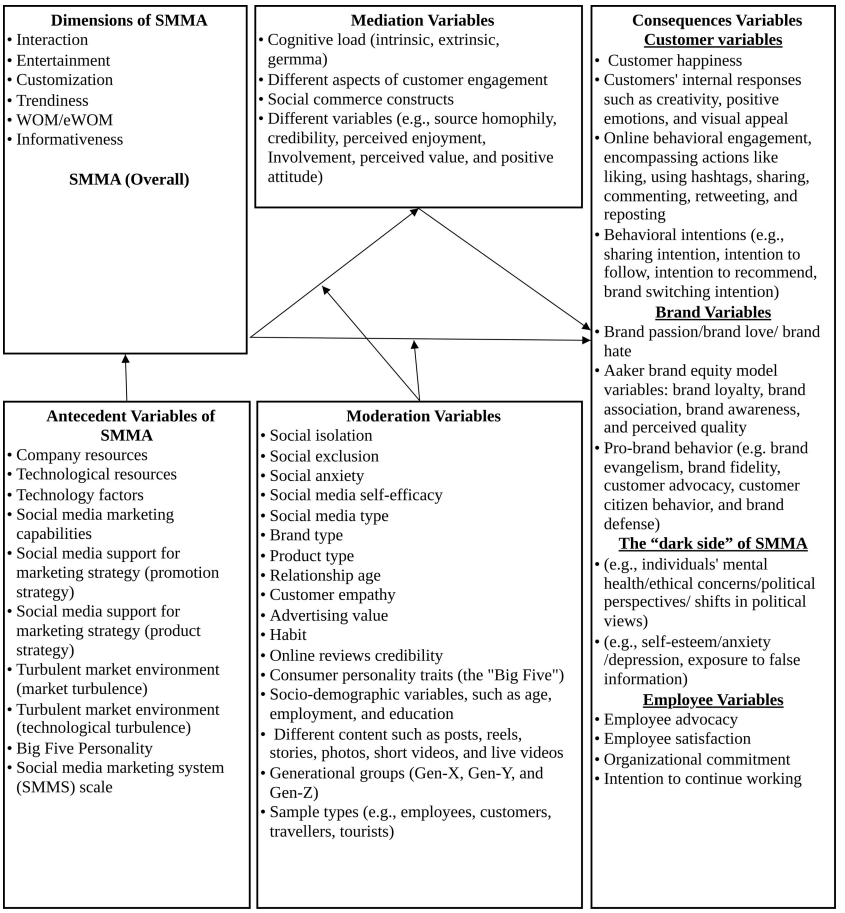


Figure 7. Model of future directions

5.1.3.5 Methodology. Figure 6 shows that quantitative cross-sectional surveys have dominated SMMA research, limiting contextual and interpretive depth. To advance understanding beyond surface-level empirical patterns, qualitative investigations are needed to provide deeper, contextually grounded interpretations of the phenomenon (Çelik *et al.*, 2023). Such approaches – like interviews, focus groups or netnography – can reveal meanings, motives and contextual variations that remain hidden in quantitative designs (Li *et al.*, 2023). Qualitative research also appears better suited to capturing the nuances and complexities of this emerging phenomenon, especially for exploratory purposes (Naab and Sehl, 2017). Given that marketing phenomena are shaped by human behavior and subjective experience, these interpretive methods are particularly appropriate (Polat *et al.*, 2023).

Mixed-method procedures provide detailed insights into interrelated causal relationships and can help address both current and future research issues (Çelik *et al.*, 2023). Using such designs would further enhance theoretical development and improve the generalizability of future findings (Polat *et al.*, 2023). Within this context, several analytical approaches, such as

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SLR, bibliometric analysis, content analysis and longitudinal analysis, remain understudied despite their significance (Çelik *et al.*, 2023). While a substantial number of quantitative studies dominate the field of SMMA, meta-research remains underdeveloped. Advances in AI and big data have made it easier to draw conclusions directly from SMMA data and overcome the limitations of earlier tools (Chen *et al.*, 2022; Polat *et al.*, 2023). AI and machine learning analysis will also aid SMMA research (Chen *et al.*, 2022).

For instance, examining SMMA through sentiment analysis, multimedia analytics, cognitive modeling, data mining or topic modeling can accurately study consumer attitudes and behavior intentions (see Figure 7). Moreover, NCA may be helpful for future scholars investigating SMMA with a quantitative focus. NCA can identify factors essential to successful SMM campaigns, such as going viral, increasing engagement and raising brand awareness. In addition, there have been high-profile developments, including Metaverse, ChatGPT and AI. In this vein, a new SMMA scale is needed to integrate SMMA into this modern era and to investigate customers' attitudes and behavioral intentions toward it. For instance, marketing scholars can use experimental studies to simulate various facets of SMMA, encompassing images, videos and scenarios (Li *et al.*, 2023).

6. Conclusions

6.1 Theoretical contributions

This SLR contributes to the theoretical development of SMMA literature in several ways. First, this study provides a thorough and integrative analysis of the SMMA through a systematic synthesis. Previous meta-analyses did not provide a holistic review, as they focused only on relationships among specific variables (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020; Ibrahim, 2021). Second, we adapt the TCCM framework (Paul and Criado, 2020) as a powerful analytical lens to structure this fragmented knowledge. Using this framework, we detailed the theories, contexts, characteristics, and methodologies used in SMMA studies and discussed their contribution to the literature. This approach allows us to present a comprehensive snapshot of SMMA literature, encompassing not only its theoretical foundations, contexts, and methodologies, but also its nomological network.

Third, our SLR makes an important methodological contribution. To our knowledge, we introduce and apply for the first time in this context a novel review protocol (see Figure 1) based on the "procedure of literature reviews as independent studies" by Kraus *et al.* (2022). Although their seminal paper has received numerous citations, it has not yet been formalized as a protocol such as PRISMA or SPAR4-SLR, making our application a novel formalization in this context. Finally, we developed a detailed research agenda based on the TCCM framework. SLRs make essential contributions by identifying research gaps, synthesizing the existing literature and providing clear, promising directions for future research (Palmatier *et al.*, 2018).

6.2 Practical implications

The study also has several implications for practice. It highlights opportunities for managers and marketers across fields and industries to leverage SMMA to develop effective marketing plans. This article may be an invaluable resource for marketers seeking to understand the various types of SMMA across sectors and identify their potential benefits (e.g. luxury fashion brands, retail and e-commerce, banking, electronics, tourism and hospitality). These plans are the cornerstones that drive a positive perception of the brand's performance on SMP, ultimately translating into greater satisfaction and loyalty. Many industries can use the results to promote SMMA, thereby helping companies communicate with customers and actively improve their brand presence. For example, entertaining content, such as funny videos and memes, aligns with the audience's interests, specifically when adapted to the short-form, algorithmic nature of emerging platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels. In

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addition, leveraging tags, AI, and analytics personalizes the experience by delivering content that aligns with customers' preferences. For instance, a tech gadget retailer displays products based on interactions and AI-driven predictive recommendations. In addition, SMP marketers should devise strategies grounded in fundamental interactions, such as promptly responding to comments to foster communication.

On the other hand, encouraging shared customer experiences creates eWOM marketing. A travel agency soliciting vibrant vacation snapshots is a case in point. SMP is invaluable for engaging customers, enhancing the brand, expanding reach, nurturing relationships and driving sales growth. However, managers must also consider how algorithmic influence shapes the visibility of this content, ensuring that engagement strategies are optimized for machine-learning ranking systems and human preferences. Table 3 provides a concise synthesis of the main conclusions from this review, along with the corresponding theoretical and managerial implications.

6.3 Limitations and future research

First, we limited our sample to peer-reviewed articles in English-language academic journals. Future research could be more comprehensive by including grey literature, such as book chapters, conference proceedings and publications in other languages. Second, to evaluate the quality of the articles we included in the sample, we adopted a journal-oriented approach and

Table 3. Main conclusions and implications

No.	Main conclusions (what we have found)	Theoretical and managerial implications (what we recommend)
1	*SMMA research is conceptually fragmented:* Scholars apply the construct both as a multidimensional scale (Kim and Ko, 2012) and as a single unified measure, limiting cross-study comparability	*Theoretical:* Future studies should adopt consistent operationalization's of SMMA dimensions to enable cumulative knowledge building and cross-context comparison
2	The TCCM framework applied for the first time to SMMA, effectively maps 61 articles from 42 journals (2010–2023), revealing entertainment and interaction as the most studied dimensions	*Theoretical:* the TCCM lens offers a replicable analytical protocol for future SMMA reviews and for structuring primary research designs
3	Cross-sectional survey designs dominate the SMMA literature; experimental, longitudinal and mixed-method approaches remain underused, constraining causal inference	*Theoretical:* Researchers should prioritize longitudinal and experimental designs to establish causality in SMMA-outcome relationships
4	SMMA outcomes-brand equity, purchase intention, eWOM and loyalty-vary substantially across industries (luxury fashion, tourism, banking, e-commerce), confirming context dependency	*Managerial:* Managers should tailor SMMA strategies by industry and platform (e.g. short-form algorithmic content for TikTok; AI-driven personalization for e-commerce) rather than applying a universal approach
5	A comprehensive conceptual framework integrating mediators (e.g. brand trust, satisfaction) and moderators (e.g. involvement, culture) was synthesized and proposed for the first time in the SMMA domain	*Managerial:* Practitioners can use the proposed framework to diagnose which SMMA dimensions and boundary conditions are most relevant to their specific sector, customer segment and platform context

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considered articles published in journals listed in CABS 2021. Future studies may broaden this scope by adopting a more inclusive search strategy to capture a wider range of high-quality studies and enhance coverage, while also complementing this with article-level quality assessments. Third, we used the TCCM framework for content analysis, which inevitably shaped and constrained our findings. While it allowed us to map the theories, contexts, characteristics and methodologies in SMMA research, it provides a limited scope for critically assessing theoretical inconsistencies, capturing the dynamic nature of social media environments or evaluating methodological rigor and emerging approaches. Accordingly, future studies may adopt alternative frameworks, such as 5 W + 1H/6W, 7-P, 7 W, ADO-TCM, APC and IMO, to capture dimensions beyond the scope of TCCM. Fourth, reliance on quantitative surveys limits understanding of SMMA interactions and misses the nuances of consumer behavior. The dominance of cross-sectional designs is particularly problematic because SMMA effects, such as trust formation and loyalty building, unfold over time. However, the field lacks longitudinal evidence to determine whether these relationships are genuinely causal or merely co-occurring at a single point in time. Moreover, the repeated use of self-reported Likert scales across studies introduces common-method bias and raises legitimate concerns about measurement validity, as constructs such as interaction and customization are captured through perceptions rather than observed behavior. There is a need for qualitative and mixed-method approaches, such as netnography and interviews, to explore deeper psychological processes.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The preparation and revision of this article involved the use of ChatGPT 3.5 (2025) and Claude Opus 4.6 (2026) to support the review, editing, and refinement of the manuscript. All AI-assisted content was critically reviewed and validated by the authors, including consideration of potential biases. The authors take full responsibility for the final content of the article.

Note

[1.] C = Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

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Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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