

A Content Analysis on the Literature in Terms of Social Media and Consumer Behavior

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Abstract

The results of many studies show that most consumers are affected by what is said about products on social media, and this situation makes social media more important for companies. Brands pay regard to consumers' requests by using social media marketing and shape their brand's image and consumers' attitudes towards them. At this stage, consumers can examine the content created by users and brands. In addition, product use upon recommendation has become widespread. In this study, a content analysis is conducted by examining the literature on the effect of social media on consumer behavior. Studies conducted since 2015 have shown that quantitative research methods are frequently used and the majority of the sample consists of social media users and university students. The potential contribution of this study to the existing literature in the field is that, despite the abundance of quantitative studies, the content analysis shows that qualitative studies are still very few. Furthermore, social media as a topic is clearly related to many topics in the field in addition to consumer purchasing behavior.

Keywords

consumer behavior, marketing, social media

Introduction

Today, parallel to the rapidly developing technology, needs, expectations, and consumption patterns are changing. Consumers are now using new communication channels and shifting from passive and follower mode to active and participatory mode. Accordingly, brand-new market environments and purchasing styles have emerged. Social media affects consumption behaviour in many ways. There is an increase in technological devices and their usage. One of the important reasons for this is that social media enables a bidirectional ecosystem that includes interaction, instead of traditional media where communication is one-way.

This article examines the impact of social media on consumption behaviour and purchasing decisions. In this context, publications investigating the effect of social media on consumption patterns are addressed with bibliometric and content analyses. Various blogs, the World Wide Web, and large e-commerce platforms that include brands somehow affect changing and increasingly diverse consumer behavior.

Social media technologies have given rise to widely used platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, enabling users to connect, create, and share content. In this sense, social media

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has become a modern tool for acquiring information about products and services and an effective medium for their dissemination. Developing technology and widespread internet shopping have encouraged consumers to shop online, leading to changes in their preferred products (Izgi and Sahin, 213).

The impact of consumers' opinions is widely accessible offline. Social media influences consumer behaviour in many ways. One of these is word-of-mouth marketing (eWOM). People often engage in small talk by sharing almost anything to fill the conversation space. Therefore, eWOM has a significant impact on consumer behavior Berger (2014). A key reason consumers participate in word-of-mouth marketing is to influence how others perceive them. Although there are many reasons for word-of-mouth marketing, people generally prefer to share something good for themselves. According to Sundaram et al., offering superior product performance through high-quality, reliable, and durable products, combined with positive employee-consumer interactions, was found to trigger consumer purchases in terms of PWOM- positive word of mouth (Sundaram, Mitra, & Webster, 1998).

Therefore, this research examines the literature on social media and consumption in the field. The number of studies examining the complex purchasing decisions of consumers on the Internet is increasing. The method and findings will be evaluated following the conceptual framework on the subject.

Conceptual Framework

The constantly evolving and accelerating internet technology has led to the emergence of the new media age and thus the flow of information has accelerated. Technological advancements have accelerated the transformation of the social structure, and radical changes have occurred in every field. The development of the virtual world has led to the reshaping of individual and social perceptions. Accordingly, communication has reached unbreakable dimensions and taken a global form. According to Wasserman and Faust (1994), a social network represents a group of people and all the relationships between these people. Social media is a general name given to all sharing environments that emerged with the development of Web 2.0 technology. Web 2.0 is a new communication environment that allows sharing of comments, ideas, views, and online publications using its infrastructure (Gunelius, 2011). According to a general definition, social media is virtual environments where users create public or partially public profiles, prepare, view, and share content with a list of people they are in contact with, and observe the profiles and connections of other users (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as "a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological foundations of web 2.0, which are created by users and enable the production and sharing of content." Social media is a series of platforms that combine words, images, sounds, and videos with technology. On the other hand, it can be said that social media is a system that allows for two-way and simultaneous information sharing rather than one-way information sharing (Keskin and Baş, 2015). Therefore, social media is based on sharing and communication.

Social media, with its ability to rapidly disseminate information to vast audiences, has gained revolutionary popularity in marketing, particularly in advertising and promotion. Especially with the Covid-19 pandemic that has affected the whole world in recent years (Ünlü et al., 2020: 27) this popularity has increased rapidly. It is seen that social media has become an impressive platform used to access the consumer's behaviour, from obtaining information about consumer behaviour to post-purchase behaviour, consumer behaviour, and statements of dissatisfaction. At this point, it is necessary to mention what consumer behaviour is and the factors affecting consumer behaviour.

Before explaining consumer behaviour, it is helpful to explain consumer and consumption conceptually. 'Consumer' is defined as buying goods and services and using them to meet their needs. Consumers create demand for production sectors by purchasing goods and services, and as owners of labour, capital, and natural factors, they provide income by supplying production factors to these sectors. Thus, the economy's goods, money, and production factors create a continuous circulation between producers and consumers (Seyidoğlu, 2002). Consumption is 'the use of goods and services to meet human needs. By meeting needs in this way, it provides a benefit to the consumer. Consumption means final use in practice. In other words, it is the purchase of goods and services directly to meet





human needs rather than being processed or resold. Some goods are depleted or destroyed as they are consumed. This is true for most food items. However, consumption in the economy is different from its everyday use. In some cases, utility does not decrease with consumption, such as when looking at an art, reading a book, or watching television. This is because there is either no physical depletion of the good or the activity represents a long-term experience (Seyidoğlu, 2002, p. 648).

‘Consumer behaviour’, which covers the decisions of the target group defined as customers, buyers or consumers to obtain and consume products and services, aims to make explanations about what, where, how, when and why individuals buy as a research area (Akturan, 2007, p. 238). In addition, consumer behaviour covers not only the moment of purchase but also after the purchase. Consumer behaviour also affects subsequent purchases in the context of evaluation and satisfaction and can lead to the formation of attitudes (Erdem, 2006, p. 69). Therefore, consumer behaviour is transformed into practice within the framework of the stages of recognising the problem or need, identifying options and collecting information, evaluating, buying or not buying and post-purchase evaluation (Altunışık et al., 2006, p. 60).

Consumer behaviour, which contains multi-dimensional characteristics as a process in the flow, is influenced by sociocultural, demographic, situational and psychological factors. Sociocultural factors are determined by culture, subculture, social class, family, and reference group factors. Culture is considered the most fundamental reason for a person's behaviour. When purchasing, consumers are naturally influenced by society's established and ongoing beliefs and values, so they do not have to be judged. Cultural values shape consumers' consumption habits. For example, some countries consume tea for breakfast, while others prefer coffee. This stems from cultural values (Çakır, 2006). Subcultures are a common value system formed by people who have had similar life experiences in similar situations (Karafakıoğlu, 2016). Differences such as ethnic structure and religious beliefs constitute subcultures. For example, some societies consume spicy foods while others consume non-spicy foods. Marketing the most suitable product for the subculture determined as the target market makes it easier for marketers to do their job.

Regarding sociocultural factors, social class is determined by three main issues. These issues are consumption preferences, spending, and saving tendencies. Consumption preferences of consumers in the same social class, such as income, occupation, and education, show similar tendencies (Şahin & Akballı, 2019, pp. 45–46). The concept of family is a unit that starts with marriage, is connected by relatives and social ties, has different roles, affects each other, and usually consists of individuals living in the same house, both earning and consuming (Günindi & Giren, 2011, p. 351). Consumption is a process that starts with birth and ends with death. Family is the first stage where consumption patterns are formed. Although the consumption habits acquired in the family determine a large part of family members' current and future consumption preferences, consumption preferences change as the individual's environment and age change.

Another sociocultural factor is the reference group. A reference group is a real or imaginary person or group that guides a person's evaluation, attitude, and behaviour (Mucuk, 2009, p. 83). For example, a fictional character, Harry Potter fans consuming products with the Harry Potter logo can be shown as an example of reference group consumption preference. Another example is football club fans. For example, many children desire to be good football players by preferring products with the Fenerbahçe logo. Reference groups shape people's attitudes, product, and brand preferences.

Demographic factors affecting consumer behaviour are age, occupation, gender, environmental awareness, lifestyle, and economic characteristics. As individuals age, their social, physical, and psychological features also change. For example, while individuals under the age of 15 tend to prefer consumption without regard for health, such as junk food, those over the age of 65 are more likely to choose healthier options. Individuals acquire consumption habits according to their professions. For example, health sector employees prefer comfortable clothes and shoes and smell-free deodorants, and beauticians prefer prosthetic nails, silk eyelashes, and a wide variety of make-up materials. The gender factor significantly impacts both product and brand selection and purchasing decisions. For example, women's demand for apparel, shoes, bags, and accessories is higher than men's. Men's demand for cars, motorbikes, hunting, and camping products is higher than women's. Environmentally conscious





individuals prefer producing and consuming recyclable, renewable resources that create less pollution (Erbaşlar, 2012, p. 101). In today's society, the market for environmentally friendly products is growing gradually. Considering the economic characteristics, when the income of the individual increases, the demand for normal goods increases while the demand for low goods decreases. For example, the income increase supports the demand for red meat instead of beans, which are lower in protein.

Other factors that determine consumer behaviour are situational factors. These factors, which can be listed as physical and social environment, time, reason for purchase, and emotional and financial situation, are the situations that exist at the moment when the consumer makes a purchase decision. Factors such as store lighting, music, sound, and in-store advertisement constitute the physical environment factor; the sales staff, the person you go shopping with, and other consumers constitute the social environment factor; past and possible events, current events, and the current calendar constitute the time factor; factors such as feeling happy, angry, comfortable and healthy constitute the emotional factor and seriously affect consumer behavior.

In today's world, psychological factors of motivation, perception, attitude, and beliefs are important in purchasing decisions. The power that motivates an individual to act for a certain purpose is called motivation. When a need arises, the consumer will take action to purchase. This motivation for the purchasing behaviour of consumers is quite high (Çeltek, 2004, p. 6; Reid, 2008, p. 9). The perception factor is the individual's interpretation of external signals (Karafakioğlu, 2016, p. 92). Perception may vary according to the individual's education level, expectations, past experiences, learning process, and surrounding conditions. How consumers perceive products and their functions is a crucial factor for companies. A product can only exist when the consumer perceives it as fulfilling a need. Attitudes and beliefs are factors that directly affect individuals' purchasing decisions (Odabaşı & Barış, 2007, p. 158). For example, it is not possible to market cow meat to Indians, whose beliefs include the cow as sacred. Selling Chinese products such as cats, dogs, bats, and insects is easier. On the other hand, factors such as colour, shape, taste, and smell are among the important factors affecting individuals' purchasing decisions.

In addition to all these factors, the view that social media is also effective in the purchasing processes of consumers is accepted among researchers. Social media fosters an environment that enhances marketing opportunities for businesses while driving purchasing behavior among consumers (Arslan & Beğendik, 2023, p. 343). Social media, which plays an important role from the point of product search to the post-purchase stage, has become a powerful marketing channel that customers are interested in. Consumers who use social media effectively prefer digital marketing with a different marketing approach in their purchasing behaviour (Seçer & Boğa, 2017, p. 317).

Consumers prefer to shop via social media for reasons such as saving time, reaching the best price, finding the most suitable product in line with their wishes and needs (Punj, 2011). However, when consumers shop via social media, they do not experience problems such as crowded stores and waiting in queues that are likely to be encountered in traditional shopping environments. In addition, there are many advantages such as a wide range of products and no time restrictions in social media shopping. Social media, which brings together like-minded people, has also assumed the role of influencing perception when attitudes and behaviours are taken into account. Many businesses benefit from social media as it helps them to follow the strategy of others or to develop another strategy. In addition, social media provides businesses with various opportunities to interact with potential and present consumers.

Social media, which is an important marketing topic with its consumer socialisation and increasing popularity (Wang et al., 2012, pp. 203-208), has gained the same popularity in the academic field. In addition to Pütter (2017, pp. 7-13), who reveals that social media -especially on social networking platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and X (formerly known as Twitter) - work as mechanisms through which consumers can develop bonds and interact with brand-specific content with the changing technological times, there are studies such as Voramontri and Klieb (2019, p. 231), who reveal that social media provides more effective results in terms of trust, satisfaction and enjoyment in the information search and alternative evaluation phase compared to traditional methods.





There are a wide variety of articles and theses in the national and international literature on the impact of social media on consumer behaviour. In this context, the study aims to examine the literature on the impact of social media on consumer behaviour in the national literature.

Purpose and Scope of the Research

Bibliometric analysis was conducted on the journals on the platform that provides electronic hosting and editorial process management services for academic refereed journals published under the structure of TÜBİTAK Ulakbim, known as DergiPark in Türkiye. One of the popular and rigorous methods used to analyze large volumes of scientific data is bibliometric analysis (Donthu et al., 2021, p. 285) Bibliometric analysis is a research approach to understand research trends in a particular field based on the outputs of academic publications (Alsharif et al., 2020, p. 2949). The distribution of the chosen studies by year, research area, language, journals, keywords (and hence topics), and academic disciplines has been examined through bibliometric analysis studies in the literature (Seyran, 2020). Tables and mapping have been used in these analyses to present the findings (Sen, 2020). The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the research on social media purchase and consumer behavior and to analyze the studies within the context of various academic disciplines. As a result, the research questions have been developed in accordance with the objectives of the study and based on the literature. In line with the research aim, studies indexed in the DergiPark database were analyzed according to the following research questions:

- What is the distribution of studies indexed in the Dergi Park database on consumer behavior and social media by year?
- What is the distribution of studies indexed in the Dergi Park database on consumer behavior and social media by academic disciplines?
- What is the distribution of studies indexed in the Dergi Park database on consumer behavior and social media by journals?
- What is the distribution of studies indexed in the Dergi Park database on consumer behavior and social media by keywords?
- What is the distribution of studies indexed in the Dergi Park database on consumer behavior and social media by language?
- What is the distribution of studies indexed in the Dergi Park database on consumer behavior and social media by publication type?
- What is the distribution of studies indexed in the Dergi Park database on consumer behavior and social media by methodological approach?
- What is the distribution of sample types in studies indexed in the DergiPark database on consumer behavior and social media?

For the analysis process in the study, the advanced search system of the DergiPark page was used and 75 academic articles were accessed by using "consumer behavior" or "purchasing" and "social media" as keywords. Seventy-five articles on social media and consumer behaviour in DergiPark were subjected to content analysis without any date range restriction. Seventy-five articles (identified as 1-30 April 2024) were analyzed, including the term "social media and consumer behaviour" in their title, abstract, and keywords.

The process of selecting the articles through the DergiPark system is presented below:

Progress 1. : With the 'advanced search' option through the Dergipark System, articles with the keywords 'social media' and 'consumer behaviour' or 'purchasing' in the 'Keyword' section were searched and a total of 75 articles were accessed.

Progress 2. : The information of 75 articles searched with the words social media, consumer behavior, and purchasing was listed in Excel format using the 'Export' option through the DergiPark system. The articles' identification information was recorded. Some of this information is 'Article Title', 'Keywords', 'Subject', 'Abstract', 'Author Name', and 'Year'.



Data Analysis

The present study used qualitative research based on content analysis. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278), “Qualitative content analysis is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.”

In our study, the MAXQDA 2020 program was used for detailed qualitative analyses. MAXQDA is a programme used for the analysis of qualitative data. Various qualitative data such as text, audio, video, questionnaires, spreadsheets, photographs, bibliographic data and web pages can be analyzed using MAXQDA. The program can analyze all data commonly collected in the context of empirical social research. It is particularly well suited for conducting literature reviews, which is standard practice in all scientific disciplines. MAXQDA can also be used for systematic indexing and automatic coding of large volumes of text. In addition, it includes various useful visualization tools such as MAXMaps, Code Matrix and Code Relations (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019).

Academic articles were subjected to content analysis with the categories of publication year, keyword, journal name, academic discipline, main language, author, publication types, methodology used, and sample. To ensure validity and reliability, the categories' selection depended on the researchers' consensus. Frequency distributions and code cloud analyses of the categories in the 75 articles uploaded to the Maxqda program and related tables and visuals were obtained.

Research Limitations

The scope of our research was selected from the articles registered in the DergiPark system, which appears to be a limitation of the research. The fact that the studies in Google Scholar (Google Scholar) are not included in our study can also be seen as a limitation.

Findings

The data were analyzed in terms of frequency counts of categories. The tables below present the findings for each category. In order to provide objective results, the statements in the tables are presented in their original formats as stated in the source

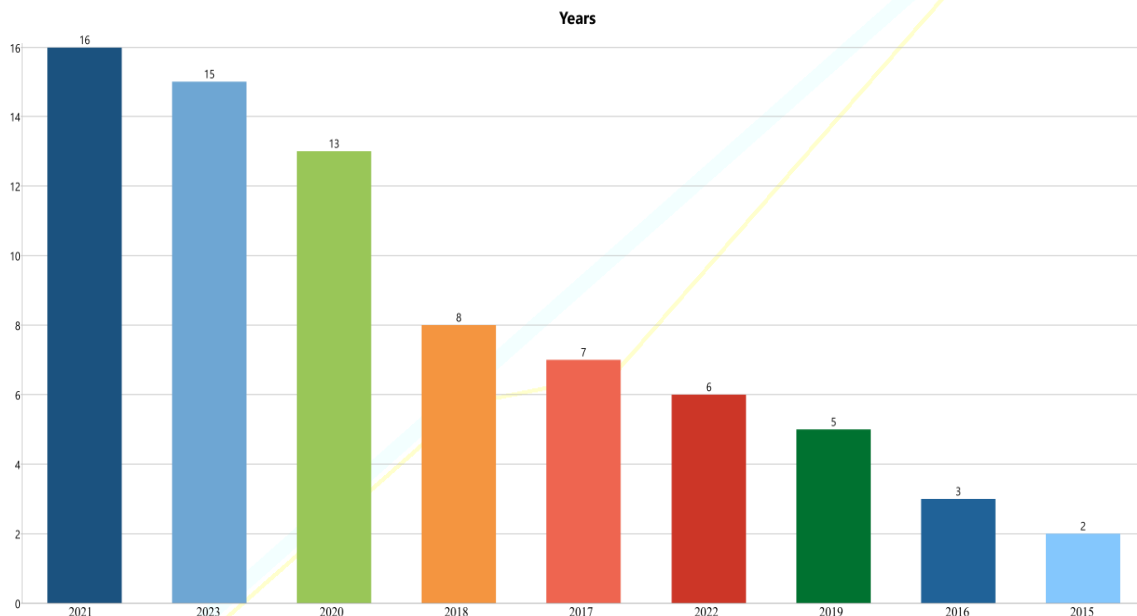


Figure 1. *Frequency of Studies by Year*

According to Figure 1, studies on consumer behaviour and purchasing in social media have started to be published since 2015. In 2021, the number of publications on the subject is highest (16), followed by 2023 (15) and 2020 (13).

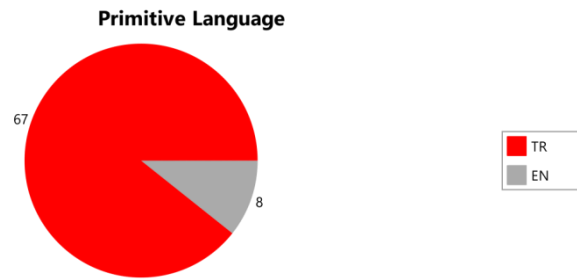


Figure 2. *Frequency of Studies by Language*

Figure 2 shows that studies were published in two languages, namely Turkish and English, While most of the research was published in Turkish (67).

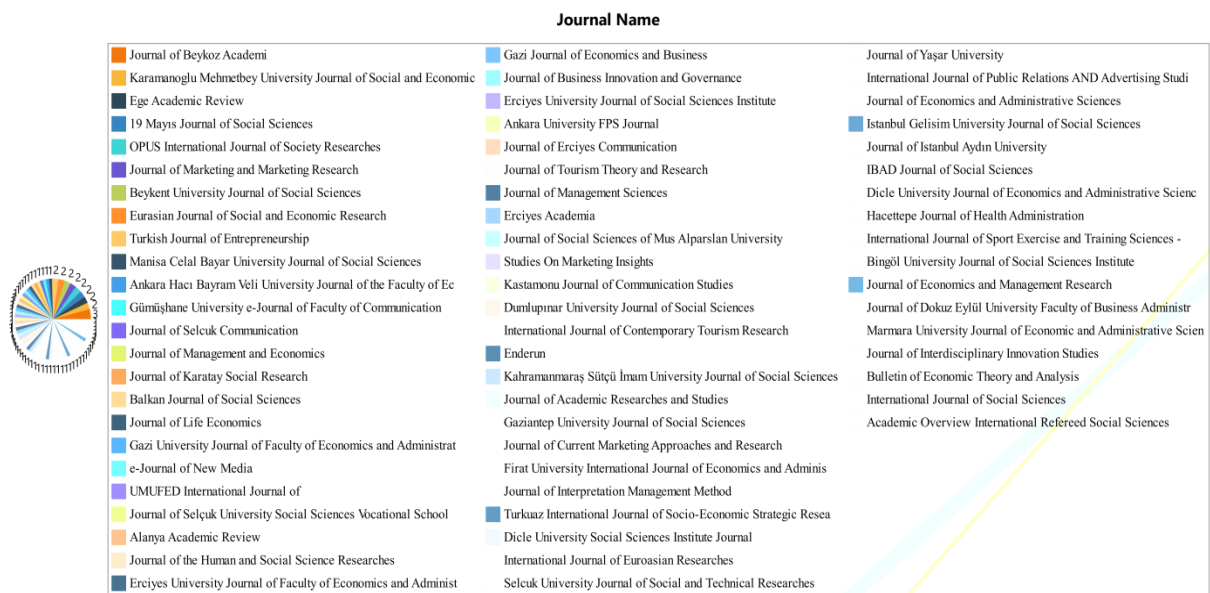


Figure 3. *Frequency of Studies by Journal*

It was determined that the academic studies examined were published in journals from various institutions and disciplines. These journals were mainly the Journal of Beykoz Academi, The Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University Journal of Social and Economic, Ege Academic Review, and 19 Mayıs Journal of Social Sciences. Figure 3 shows that the studies were published in 66 different journals.

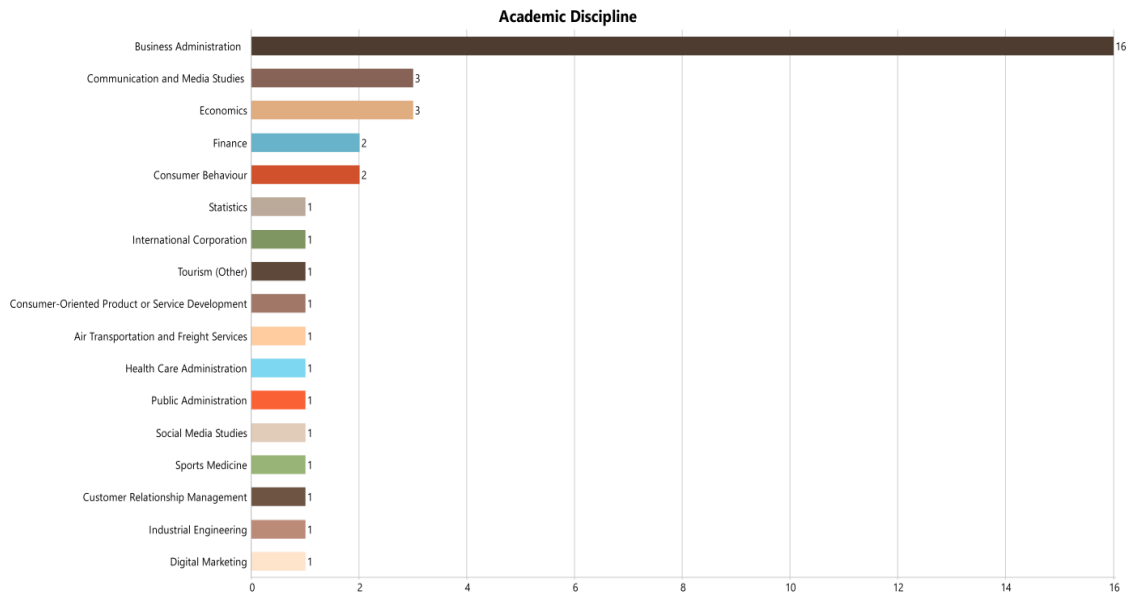


Figure 4. *Frequency of Studies by Academic Discipline*

The academic disciplines of the studies on the JournalPark system include business administration, communication and media studies, economics, finance, consumer behavior, statistics, international relations, tourism, consumer-oriented product or service development, air transportation and shipping services, health institutions management, public administration, social media studies, sports medicine, customer relationship management, industrial engineering and digital marketing (Figure 4).

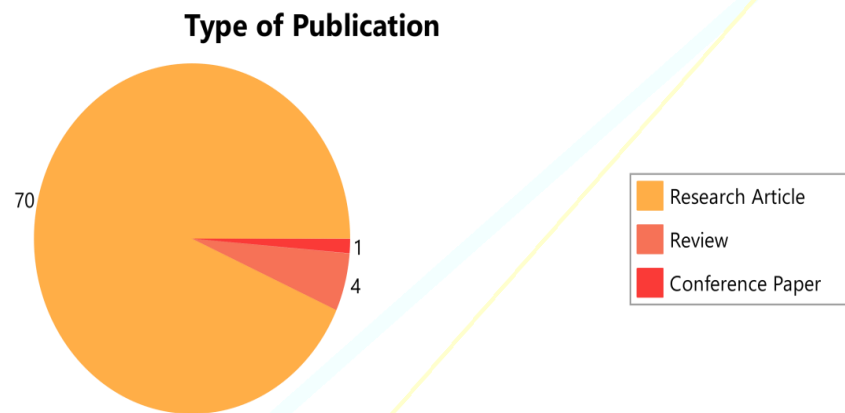


Figure 5. *Frequency of Type of Publication*

Most of the studies published are research articles and they were published as review and conference papers (Figure 5).



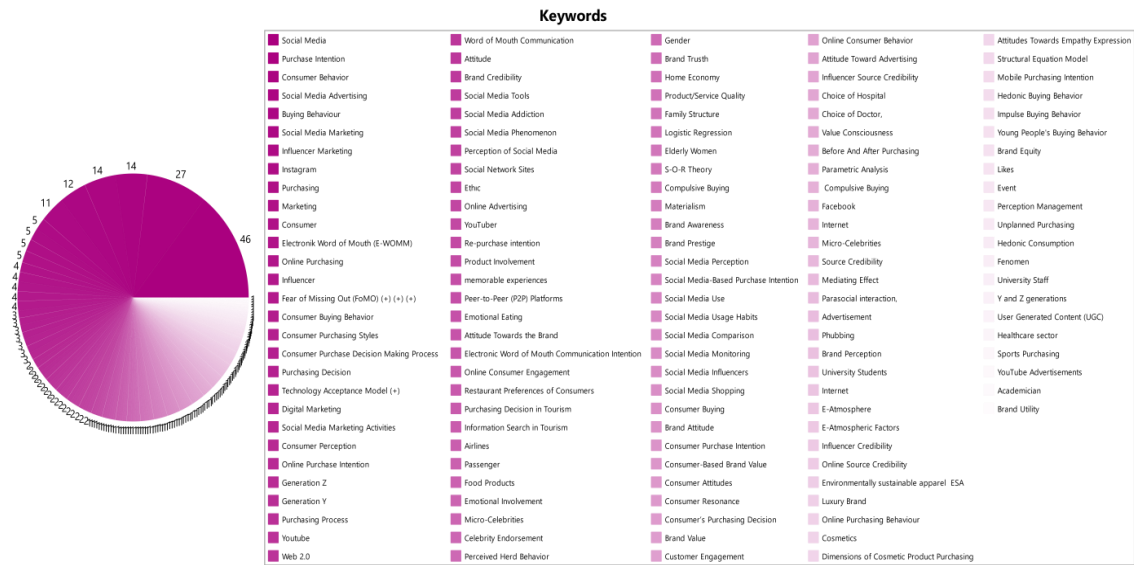


Figure 6a. Frequency of Studies by Keyword

Figure 6a and 6b show that 137 different keywords were used in 75 studies. The most frequently used keyword is "Social Media" (60,81 %), followed by "purchase intention" (36,49%), "consumer behavior" (17,57%), "social media advertising" (17,57%), "buying behaviour" (16,22%), "social media marketing" (14,86 %), "influencer marketing" (6,76 %), "Instagram" (6,76%), " purchasing" (6,76%), "consumer" (5,41%), "marketing" (5,41%), "Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)" (5,41%), "Elektronik Word of Mouth (E-WOMM)" (5,41%) "Online Purchasing" (5,41%). Studies were examined with the keywords 'social media, consumer behaviour, and purchasing'. Furthermore, the keywords Instagram, FoMO, influencer marketing, social media advertising, and social media marketing attracted attention in our research.



Figure 7b. Frequency of Studies by Keyword

Figure 7 shows that most studies used quantitative methods (84,0 per cent). Data were obtained through online and face-to-face surveys. The quantitative methods used in the studies were structural equation modelling, ANOVA, and regression analyses. Respectively, qualitative methods (10,7 per cent), review methods (4 per cent), and mixed methods (1,3 per cent) followed.



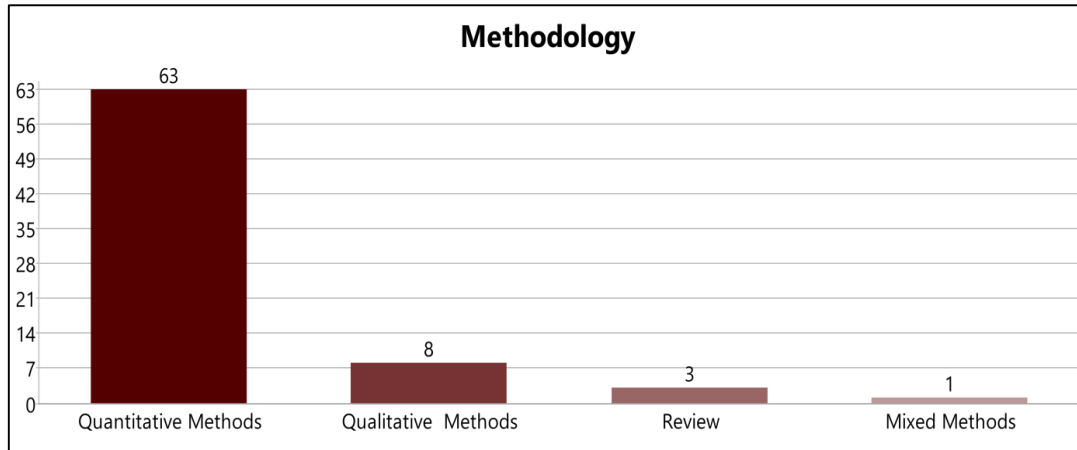


Figure 8. *Frequency of Studies by Methodology*

Figure 8 shows that 14 different kinds of samples were represented in 72 of the studies. However, no sample could be specified for the other 3 studies since they were theoretical, descriptive, or based on a literature review. Social media users (23.6 percent) and students (23.6 percent) were used as samples. In addition, individuals (13,9 per cent), Social Media Followers (11,1 per cent), Consumers (8,3 per cent), Y and Z generation (5,6 per cent), and articles (4,2 per cent) were also used as samples. "social media user" and "social media follower" are different. In the studies, analyses conducted on the followers of a brand or influencer's social media pages are coded as "social media followers", while studies conducted on social media users, in general, are coded as "social media users".

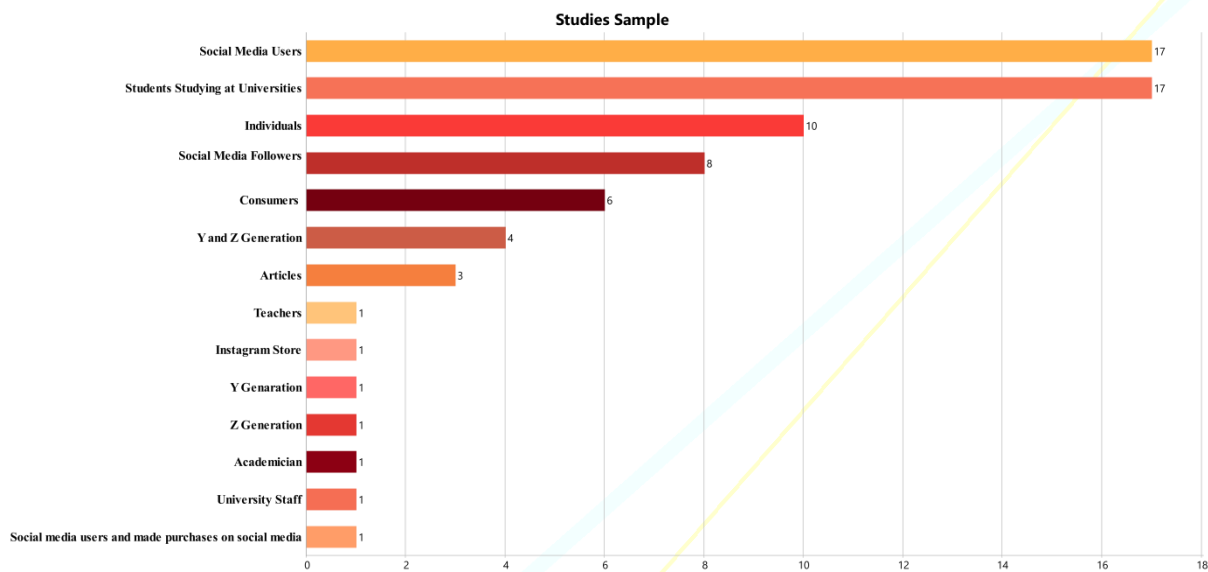


Figure 9. *Frequency of Studies Samples*

Results

This study aims to examine academic studies examining the impact of social media on consumer behavior and purchasing through bibliometric analysis. Academic studies on social media, consumer behavior, and purchasing indexed in the DergiPark database were examined. The studies in the database were scanned to include the words 'social media', 'consumer behavior', and 'purchasing', and studies on these topics were found. 75 studies, published between 2015, when the first study was published, and April 2024, when this study was conducted, were analyzed using MAXQDA. According to the data obtained, it was concluded that academic studies on the impact of social media on consumer behavior and purchasing in the literature began to appear more in the years 2015, 2022, and 2023, compared to other years. As social media has expanded applications such as advertising and promotion, academic interest has naturally shifted to this area, also the Covid-19 outbreak, which





affected the whole world in 2020, has also increased this trend. Due to the pandemic, consumers' tendency towards online platforms and online shopping has increased.

According to the results, Turkish was the primary language used in studies, reviews and conference reports. In studies examining the impact of social media on consumer behavior and purchasing, social media users, especially university students, were preferred as samples and quantitative methods were mostly preferred among the research methods. It is seen that the analyzed literature mostly consists of quantitative studies and the subject of "social media" is the most used subject.

Therefore, it is recommended to conduct more qualitative research.

Businesses are increasingly taking into account all the comments from consumers on social media. It has become quite common for consumers to share on social media whether they are satisfied with the product or service before and after purchase. In addition, word-of-mouth marketing has a significant effect on the formation of the purchase decision.

Consequently, the findings of our study, when this content analysis covering the period 2015-2024 is examined holistically, the increase in publications in this field over the years is remarkable. In addition, it was determined that different keywords were used in academic articles that deal with a wide range of disciplines, especially business management, communication and media studies, economics and finance. This finding proves that social consumer behavior and purchasing attract the attention of various academic fields. This result, which is also valid for Turkish literature, can be emphasized by the determination that social media words are dominant. It is anticipated that the number of studies on social media, consumer behavior and purchasing will increase especially with the constantly developing technology and that academic interest in this field will continue. It is expected that this study will guide researchers in identifying gaps in the literature on the subject.

Ethical Declaration

In the writing process of the study titled "A Content Analysis on Literature in Terms of Social Media and Consumer Behaviour", scientific rules, ethics and citation rules were followed. No falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to another academic publication platform for assessment.

Statement of Contribution Rate of Researchers

The contribution rates of the authors in the study are equal.

Declaration of Conflict

There is no potential conflict of interest in the study.

Notes

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