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Attitude as a Bridge between Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention: A Bibliometric Analysis of Research Developments and Future Directions

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Abstract

This study maps the development of research on the role of attitude mediation in the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention. Using a bibliometric approach, data were retrieved from the Scopus database covering the period 1997–2025. A total of 96 selected documents were analyzed using VOSviewer to examine the relationships and relevance of keywords, authors, institutional affiliations, and publication sources. The results show a significant increase since 2015 and a peak in productivity in 2023. Major journals include developments in Marketing Science Proceedings, Journal of Business Research, and PLOS ONE, with major contributions from the United States, India, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The results of this study confirm that attitude is a key mediator that connects brand awareness with purchase intent. This research was conducted by integrating the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) frameworks and highlighting the importance of credibility, user digital experience, and brand emotional relationships in building positive consumer attitudes.

Keywords

Bibliometric Approach, Brand Awareness, Consumer Attitude, Consumer-Based Brand Equity, Purchase Intention, Theory of Planned Behavior.

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving digital marketing ecosystem, understanding how consumers recognize, evaluate, and ultimately decide to purchase a brand has become increasingly complex (Batra & Garg, 2025; Rosário & Dias, 2025). Brand awareness has long been regarded as the initial stage in the consumer journey toward purchase decisions. However, recent empirical evidence suggests that brand awareness does not directly drive purchase intention. Instead, its effect is indirect and requires the presence of mediating variables, particularly consumer attitude toward the brand. Azzari and Pelissari (2020) emphasize that brand awareness does not have a direct impact on purchase intention but must first influence dimensions of brand equity such as perceived quality, brand association, and brand loyalty, which subsequently shape consumers' purchase intentions. Puspadini et al. (2025) further support this mechanism by showing that electronic word of mouth enhances brand awareness and perceived quality, which subsequently increases purchase intention through a mediating effect. This finding indicates that the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention is not linear but rather a gradual psychological process mediated by cognitive and affective constructs (Hameed et al., 2023).

The position of purchase intention as a key variable is strongly supported by two major frameworks. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) positions intention as the most immediate predictor of actual behavior: "a central factor is the individual's intention to perform a given behavior" (Ajzen, 1991). Consistent with this, the Self-Determination Goal (SDG) framework also emphasizes that "intention is thus assumed to be the immediate antecedent of behavior" (Bosnjak et al., 2020). These theoretical foundations reinforce the urgency of comprehensively understanding the factors that shape purchase intention, particularly in the dynamic digital context.

From a psychological mechanism perspective, consumer attitude toward a brand has been identified as a critical bridge between brand awareness and purchase intention. Hameed et al. (2023) empirically demonstrate that brand awareness influences attitude, which in turn drives purchase intention, with celebrity endorsement acting as a moderating variable in this relationship. Furthermore, Machi et al. (2022), in the context of online shopping, found that brand awareness, brand attitude, and brand loyalty jointly influence purchase intention, with brand attitude emerging as the strongest predictor among them. This further reinforces the central role of attitude as an indispensable mediating construct.

Similarly, empirical studies in consumer behavior confirm that attitude functions as a key psychological mechanism translating brand knowledge into behavioral intention, particularly in digital environments where exposure and interaction shape consumer evaluation processes (Martins et al., 2019). In addition, integrated marketing communication research shows that brand awareness alone does not directly generate purchase intention unless it is processed through affective evaluation, such as attitude formation (Khan et al., 2016).

The acceleration of digital transformation has added new layers of complexity to this dynamic. Social media platforms, user-generated content, and influencer-based marketing have transformed how consumers develop brand awareness and attitudes. The value of influencers, as argued by Lou and Yuan (2019), is determined by advertising value and source credibility, both of which play a crucial role in building brand trust. Zeqiri et al. (2025), in a cross-country study of emerging economies, found that social media marketing activities significantly influence brand awareness and consumer brand engagement, both of which affect purchase intention, with notable cross-country differences highlighting the importance of cultural context in this research domain. In a more specific context, Alqaysi et al. (2024) further support this argument by demonstrating that adequate brand awareness attracts consumer

attention, fosters positive attitudes, and ultimately drives purchase decisions in a causal chain mediated by attitude and applicable across product categories.

Despite the growing academic attention to this topic, there remains a significant literature gap, namely the lack of systematic mapping of scientific developments concerning the relationship between brand awareness, consumer attitude, and purchase intention in digital marketing through a bibliometric perspective. Bibliometric analysis offers an objective and data-driven approach to identifying publication trends, collaboration networks, thematic clusters, and underexplored research opportunities. The novelty of this study lies in addressing this gap by utilizing Scopus data covering the period 1997-2025, making it one of the most comprehensive bibliometric studies in this domain. Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the trends in scientific publications related to the relationship between brand awareness, consumer attitude, and purchase intention from 1997 to 2025 based on Scopus data and identify future research directions and opportunities that can be developed based on bibliometric findings in the era of digital marketing.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Customer-Based Brand Equity and Theory of Planned Behavior

This study is grounded in two major theoretical foundations, namely Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). From the CBBE perspective, Keller (1993) argues that brand equity is primarily built through brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness represents the cognitive stage in which consumers recognize and recall a brand, while brand image reflects the network of associations, meanings, and evaluations stored in consumers' memory. These two dimensions work together to shape consumer attitudes toward a brand, which subsequently influence behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention. Therefore, brand equity can be understood as a psychological process that transforms brand knowledge into consumer response.

In parallel, TPB explains that behavioral intention is the most immediate predictor of actual behavior, and it is determined by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Bosnjak et al., 2020). By integrating CBBE and TPB, brand awareness is positioned as an antecedent that shapes consumer attitudes, which then drive purchase intention as the closest behavioral outcome. This integrated framework suggests a sequential mechanism moving from cognitive exposure to evaluative judgment and finally to intentional behavior. Empirical evidence by Moharana et al. (2023) also supports this linkage, indicating that brand equity dimensions significantly influence purchase intention through attitudinal mediation mechanisms. Hence, the integration of CBBE and TPB provides a strong theoretical basis for explaining consumer purchase intention formation.

2.2. Brand Awareness, Attitude, and Purchase Intention

Recent studies have made it increasingly clear that brand awareness rarely has a direct impact on purchase intent without intermediaries. This is in line with the findings of Azzari and Pelissari (2020), who stated that brand awareness does not directly affect purchase intention, so that the position of attitude becomes very important as an intermediary factor that connects consumers' initial awareness to purchase intention. The role of attitude as a bridge has also proven to be valid in the context of digital marketing, as reported by Hameed et al. (2023), who found a significant attitude mediating effect in the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intent.

Various factors in the digital ecosystem play an important role as drivers for the formation of consumer attitudes, where, in the context of online reviews or eWOM, for example, Erkan and Evans (2018) found that attitudes towards information have a positive relationship with purchase intentions, which indicates the position of

attitudes as a crucial connecting point. A similar mechanism is also seen in the realm of influencer marketing as an integrated model proposed by Lou and Yuan (2019), which shows that the value of advertising and the credibility of the source will build trust, which then flows to form a positive attitude towards the brand and ultimately leads to purchase intent.

The mechanism of this attitude intermediary role is also evident in game-based advertising strategies or gamification, where Ghosh and Dwivedi (2022) note that children tend to show more positive attitudes and purchasing intentions when exposed to brands through advergames, thus confirming the importance of the attitude position as a mediator. The same thing was conveyed by Pour et al. (2023), who stated that attitudes towards advertising games reflect customer feelings, both positive and negative, which serve to bridge the gaming experience with purchase intent.

2.3. Digital Marketing Dynamics and Emotional-Behavioral Mechanisms

In addition, emotional factors such as brand love, emotional attachment, and affective engagement play a significant role in shaping consumer decision-making through the attitude formation pathway (Choi et al., 2024). Na et al. (2023) emphasize that emotional attachment and effective storytelling strategies in digital marketing are capable of stimulating strong emotional responses among consumers. These emotional responses do not directly translate into purchase intentions; instead, they are first processed cognitively and affectively, leading to the formation of more favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward the brand (Wang et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2024). Once these attitudes are established, they subsequently influence behavioral intentions, including purchase intention. This indicates that emotional marketing strategies are most effective when they successfully shape consumer attitudes as an intermediate psychological mechanism (Styaningrum et al., 2025).

Even in the category of socially sensitive or high-risk consumption products such as alcohol, the mediating role of attitude remains highly critical in explaining consumer behavior. Noel et al. (2020) demonstrate that extensive exposure to digital marketing activities is significantly associated with increased consumption behavior, highlighting the persuasive power of digital advertising environments. However, this influence is not uniform, as consumer attitudes play a determining role in whether exposure leads to behavioral adoption. In contrast, Dixon et al. (2023) show that counter-advertising strategies can effectively alter consumer attitudes by reducing positive perceptions toward such products and encouraging intentions to limit or reduce consumption. Together, these findings reinforce the central role of attitude as a psychological bridge that connects emotional stimuli and marketing exposure to behavioral intentions in both positive and negative consumption contexts.

3. Methods

This study employs a bibliometric literature review approach to map the knowledge structure related to the themes of brand awareness, consumer attitude, and purchase intention. The primary data source is the Scopus database, covering publications from 1997 to 2025, with greater emphasis on the most recent period of 2015–2025. The search strategy used specific keywords, namely (“brand awareness” AND “attitude” AND “purchase intention”), and was limited to English-language journal articles and conference papers to ensure relevance and academic quality. After data retrieval, the records were exported in RIS format and underwent a data cleaning process, including deduplication, keyword standardization, and author name harmonization to ensure consistency and accuracy of the dataset.

The cleaned dataset was then analyzed using VOSviewer software to conduct co-authorship and co-occurrence analyses. This process enables the identification of

relationships among keywords, authors, institutional affiliations, and publication sources. VOSviewer was further utilized to generate bibliometric maps in three forms, namely network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization, which are used to identify thematic structures and research trends within the field. This approach allows a systematic mapping of how research on brand awareness, attitude, and purchase intention has developed over time.

The selection process followed PRISMA guidelines to ensure transparency and rigor. In the identification stage, 97 documents were retrieved from Scopus. During screening, duplicate records and non-English publications were removed, resulting in 96 eligible documents. In the eligibility stage, abstracts and full texts were assessed for relevance to the research topic, and all 96 documents met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final analysis. Although the study primarily applies quantitative bibliometric techniques, qualitative content analysis is also conducted to interpret and label the clusters generated by VOSviewer. The validity and reliability of the study are ensured through the use of a reputable database (Scopus), established bibliometric software (VOSviewer), and transparent analytical procedures.

4. Results

4.1. The Trends in Scientific Publications

This section presents a publication trend analysis of research on brand awareness, consumer attitude, and purchase intention based on Scopus-indexed data. The analysis focuses on the temporal evolution of publications, key contributing sources, and the structural development of the research field. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of documents by year and by source.

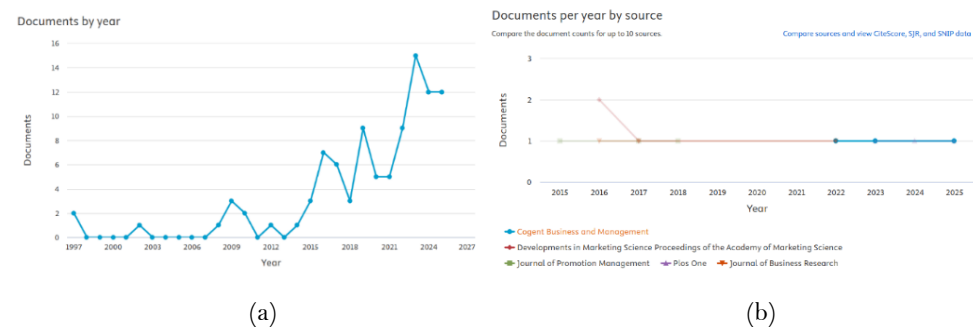


Figure 1. (a) Documents by Year (b) Documents per Year by Source

Figure 1 shows that the number of publications on the theme of brand awareness, consumer attitudes, and purchase intent increased sharply after 2015. The peak was reached around 2023, and the number remained high throughout 2024 to 2025. This steady rise signifies that the topic has become firmly entrenched in digital marketing research. In this research, various digital strategies such as advertising through influencers or blogs, advergames (in-game ads), and eWOM are increasingly tested using the flow framework of the influence of brand awareness on purchase intent through the attitude of mediators. Substantially, this trend also confirms the urgency of conducting bibliometric studies. This study is needed to map the structure of the latest research themes as well as to find the remaining research gaps (Donthu et al., 2021).

This panel features publication media dominated by marketing or management journals and some proceedings, such as *Developments in Marketing Science*, as well

as cross-disciplinary science channels such as PLOS ONE. The composition of these sources indicates that this research corpus is composed of reputable publication channels. In addition, the publisher has proven to be responsive in accommodating contemporary themes such as gamification, influencers, and digital branding. Therefore, it can be concluded that the evidence foundations used in this theme have an adequate level of credibility and representativeness for further analysis.

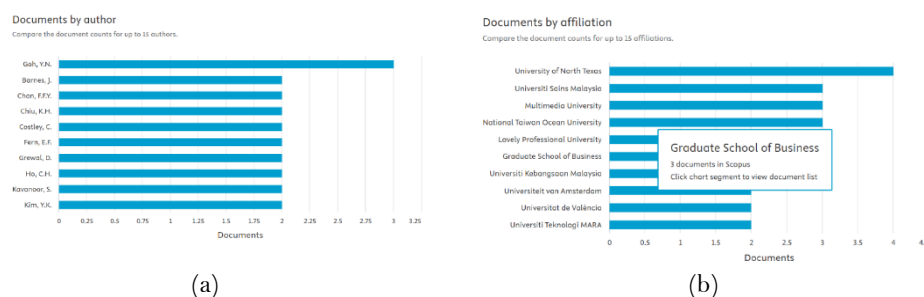


Figure 2. (a) Documents by Author (b) Documents by Affiliation

Figure 2 shows that the productivity of writers in this field looks uneven. There are only one or two very productive authors with the highest number of articles, while most other writers only contribute one or two articles. This pattern shows that this field of research is still very open and collaborative. There is not a single expert researcher who has truly dominated this field. In bibliometric analysis, this condition is important. This means that when the co-authorship network is mapped, it is likely to see several small research groups focusing on different sub-themes, not one dominant group (Kumar et al., 2021).

The institutions that contributed the most to this study were spread across different regions. It can be seen that there is a combination of institutions in America, such as the University of North Texas, and institutions in Asia, such as Universiti Sains Malaysia, Multimedia University, and others. This spread shows that the main centers of scientific research on digital branding are located in America and Asia. Therefore, when interpreting the results of such research, it is important to consider the differences in the market and cultural context that exist in each region (Zupic & Čater, 2015).

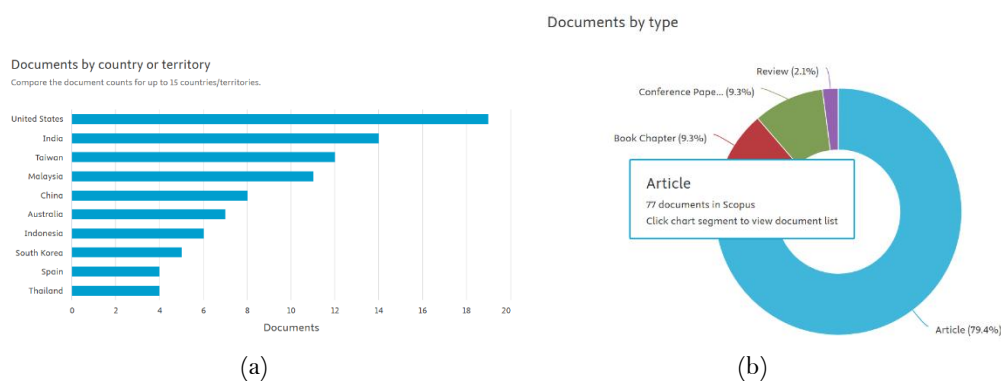


Figure 3. (a) Documents by Country (b) Documents by Type

Based on Figure 3, the research productivity is geographically distributed across multiple countries, with the United States as the leading contributor, followed by India, Taiwan, Malaysia, China, Australia, and Indonesia. This distribution reflects

the global expansion of digital marketing research, particularly in regions with active digital platform adoption and large consumer markets.

The types of documents in this field are mostly journal articles, which account for about 79% of the total publications. Other types, such as conference papers and book chapters, have much smaller portions, about 9% each. The number of review documents is the least, only about 2%. The dominance of journal articles has an important meaning. This shows that existing studies have a strong empirical evidence base, which is obtained through tested research methods such as surveys (including SEM), experiments, or field studies. With this strong methodological foundation, testing the role of “attitude” as a mediating variable in the relationship between awareness and intention becomes more adequate. This makes the conclusions drawn on the topic more believable.

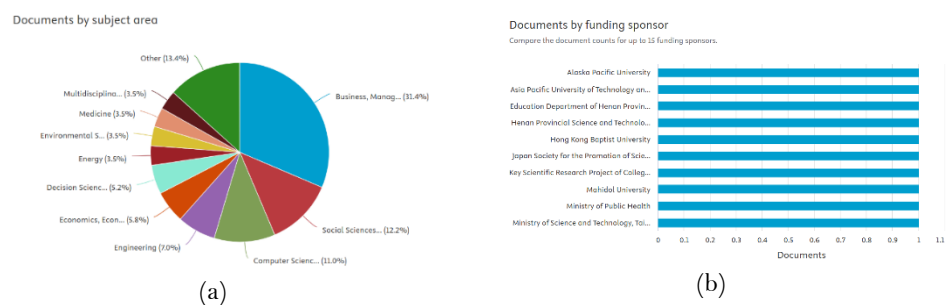


Figure 4. (a) Documents by Subject Area (b) Documents by Funding Sponsor

Figure 4 shows that this research group is dominated by the fields of business, management, and accounting. However, this research also draws a lot from other fields such as social sciences, computer science (information systems), engineering, economics, and decision-making science. The existence of a mixture of various disciplines is what provides an explanation. This explains why concepts related to technology or user perception (such as TAM/PEOU, engagement) are often studied in conjunction with brand concepts (such as CBBE, brand image/awareness). Basically, the two groups of concepts (technology and brands) work together to form consumer “attitudes”. This attitude then functions as the main mediator that encourages “purchase intention”.

Funding data shows that the sources of funding for this research are very diverse. Most institutions (sponsors) generally only fund one document. These sponsors include various types of institutions, ranging from government ministries in Asia (the Ministry of science/technology), research universities in various regions, to institutions focused on public health. The fact that there is no one major sponsor dominating this funding is crucial. This reduces concerns about research bias that may arise if the research is funded by one party with a particular interest. In addition, the diversity of sponsors also confirms that the research interest in the relationship between awareness, attitude, and intention is very broad. This topic is relevant and researched in various contexts, both for commercial (business) and social issues (such as in research related to alcohol consumption).

4.2. Bibliometric Analysis and Future Research Directions

The bibliometric analysis examines the intellectual structure of research on brand awareness, consumer attitude, and purchase intention using Scopus data (1997–2025) processed with VOSviewer. It focuses on co-authorship, keyword co-occurrence, and publication trends to identify key patterns and research networks. The analysis highlights dominant themes, influential contributors, and emerging topics in the field. Visualization maps are used to illustrate relationships among

concepts and research clusters. The following section presents the detailed bibliometric findings.

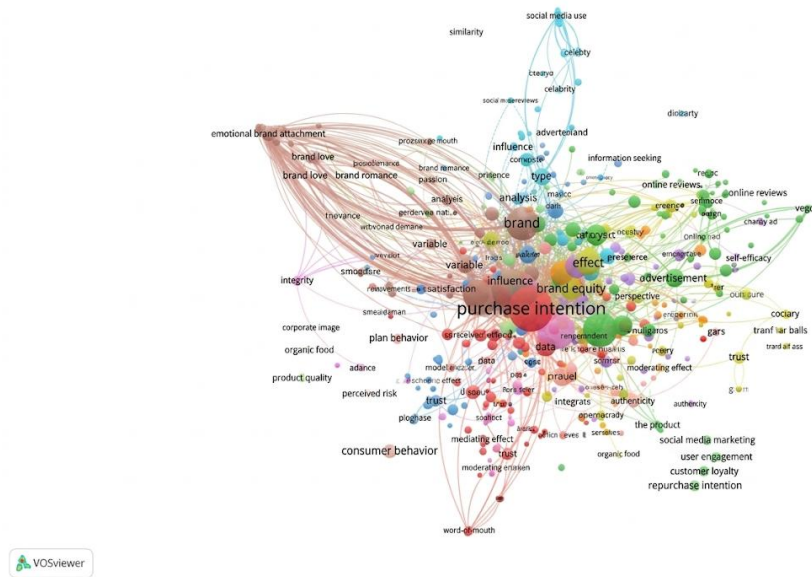


Figure 5. Network Visualization

Figure 5 shows the network map of this study, which visually illustrates the existence of a number of key anchor nodes that include purchase and brand intent, as well as brand equity and consumer attitudes, from which various more specific research clusters emanate. These groups discuss a wide range of topics, ranging from influencer advertising and source credibility to the application of advergames within the framework of the Technology Acceptance Model, to the dynamics of brand emotional relationships, such as love and trust, as well as issues around alcohol advertising and counter-advertising. The structure of the network basically reflects a direct mapping of the twelve previously identified research clusters that include the tactical dimension, technology and the relational affective side as well as the regulated domain and the liaison function of CBBE, so that through this mapping the network analysis confirms the fundamental conclusion that attitude variables play a vital role as a central intermediary node that functions to bind various antecedents or triggering factors either which is communication and relational with the final result, namely purchase intention (Donthu et al., 2021).

According to Figure 6, the results of the mapping visualization show that the current themes that emerged in the period 2021 to 2024 tend to focus on specific areas such as advergame and influencer dynamics, as well as testing the effects of mediation and alcohol marketing, while fundamental concepts such as purchase intent and brand and attitudes remain stable throughout the research time span. This phenomenon indicates that the current direction of cutting-edge research is focused on the exploration of digital tactical innovations as well as the deepening of structural mechanisms that collectively enrich the understanding of how brand awareness is effectively channeled through attitude variables that lead to intention formation (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

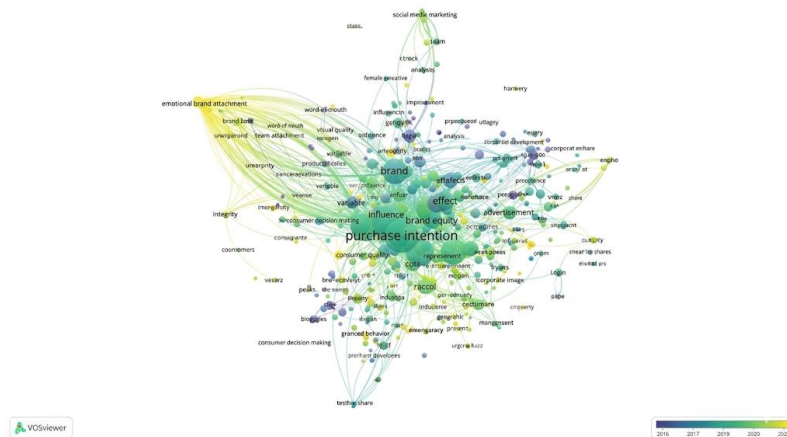


Figure 6. Overlay Visualization

Figure 7 shows that the results of the density map analysis confirm that the densest research concentration is indeed centered on the variables of purchase intent, brand, and brand equity, as well as consumer attitudes, with strong additional focus pockets on areas of brand love as well as advertising and loyalty, which is in line with the findings of the previous network and overlap analysis. The core of the entire corpus of this research basically rests on the attitude mediation pathway because this variable has been proven to function as a vital link that links various triggering factors ranging from the exposure and credibility of the message to immersive experience and relational affection with the final result, namely purchase intention, so that these findings expressly validate the position of attitude as a central variable that is very crucial both as a basis for the synthesis of current research and as a reference for future research agendas (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

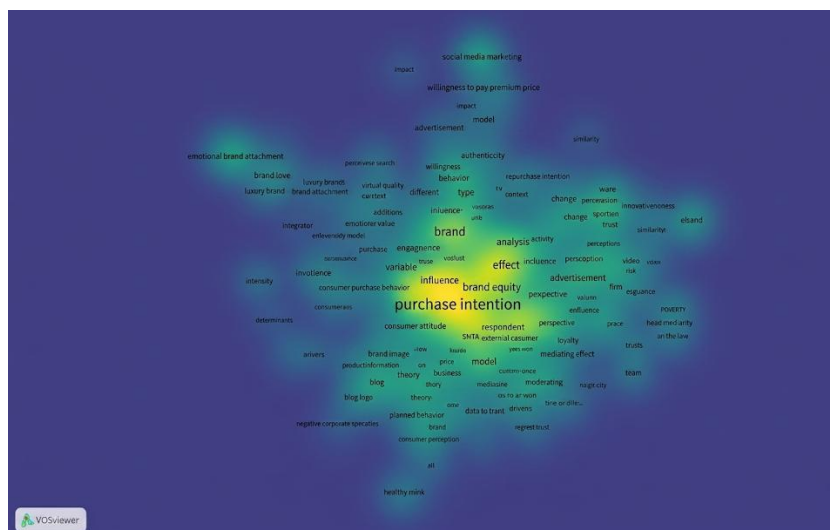


Figure 7. Density Visualization

Based on the bibliometric findings, several future research directions can be proposed. First, future studies are encouraged to examine the relationship between brand awareness, consumer attitude, and purchase intention in emerging digital environments such as short-video platforms, social commerce, and AI-driven marketing systems. These contexts remain underexplored within the current

literature. Second, future research may incorporate additional mediating and moderating variables such as perceived trust, engagement, parasocial interaction, and perceived value to enrich the explanatory framework of consumer decision-making processes. Third, comparative studies across cultural contexts and generational cohorts are recommended to better understand how consumer attitudes differ in shaping purchase intention across markets. More interdisciplinary approaches combining marketing, data analytics, and behavioral science are needed to capture the complexity of digital consumer behavior in the evolving marketing ecosystem.

5. Discussion

The results of this bibliometric study provide a comprehensive overview of the intellectual structure and development of research on brand awareness, consumer attitude, and purchase intention within the digital marketing ecosystem. The findings indicate a significant increase in publication trends after 2015, with a peak around 2023, reflecting the growing academic attention toward the integration of branding and consumer behavior in digital environments. This trend aligns with the rapid expansion of the digital marketing ecosystem, where technological advancement has reshaped how consumers process information and form behavioral intentions (Batra & Garg, 2025; Rosário & Dias, 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, the dominance of the attitude construct as a central mediating variable in the bibliometric network is strongly consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which positions intention as the most immediate antecedent of behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Bosnjak et al., 2020). The visual mapping results in this study confirm that attitude consistently functions as a bridging mechanism between brand-related stimuli and purchase intention. This is in line with empirical findings by Machi et al. (2022) and Hameed et al. (2023), who demonstrate that brand awareness alone is insufficient to directly influence purchase intention without the mediation of consumer attitude. Similarly, Azzari and Pelissari (2020) emphasize that brand awareness operates through brand equity dimensions before influencing behavioral outcomes, reinforcing the sequential cognitive affective conative process identified in this study.

The co-occurrence and network analysis further reveal that digital marketing technologies such as influencer marketing, eWOM, and gamification are strongly associated with attitude formation. This supports the argument by Lou and Yuan (2019) that credibility and message value significantly shape consumer trust and attitude in digital environments. Likewise, Erkan and Evans (2018) confirm that eWOM plays a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes, which subsequently influence purchase intention. The presence of TAM-related constructs such as perceived usefulness and engagement in the bibliometric clusters also reflects the interdisciplinary nature of this field, where information systems and marketing theories are increasingly integrated (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Zeqiri et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the emergence of emotional and experiential constructs such as brand love, attachment, and arousal highlights the importance of affective mechanisms in shaping consumer behavior. This is consistent with Wang et al. (2021), Na et al. (2023), and Styaningrum et al. (2025), who emphasize that emotional engagement strengthens attitude formation, which in turn drives purchase intention. The density visualization results in this study also confirm that emotional and relational constructs are closely connected to the central attitude–intention pathway.

Interestingly, the bibliometric results show that research in this field is highly interdisciplinary, involving business, social sciences, computer science, and decision-making domains. This supports the view of Donthu et al. (2021) and Kumar et al. (2021) that bibliometric analysis is particularly effective in identifying cross-disciplinary knowledge structures. The integration of branding theories such as

CBBE by Keller (1993) with technology acceptance and digital engagement models further demonstrates the convergence of marketing and information systems perspectives in explaining consumer behavior. The findings of this study confirm that consumer attitude serves as a critical mediating mechanism that connects brand awareness and purchase intention across various digital marketing contexts. This reinforces the importance of considering both cognitive and emotional processes in understanding consumer decision-making in the digital era (Islam et al., 2024).

6. Conclusion

This bibliometric study maps research on brand awareness, consumer attitude, and purchase intention using Scopus data from 1997 to 2025. The findings show a strong publication growth after 2015, marking the shift toward the digital marketing era, with quantitative studies dominating the field. The United States, India, and Taiwan are the most productive countries, while network analysis confirms that consumer attitude consistently acts as a key mediating variable linking brand awareness and purchase intention. Recent trends (2021–2024) highlight a growing focus on influencer marketing, advergames, and brand emotional relationships, reflecting the integration of CBBE, TPB, and TAM frameworks in explaining consumer behavior.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the central role of consumer attitude as a key mechanism linking brand awareness and purchase intention, highlighting the integration of major frameworks such as CBBE, TPB, and TAM in explaining digital consumer behavior. From a practical standpoint, the results indicate that marketers should prioritize the development of positive consumer attitudes through credible communication, emotionally engaging content, and interactive digital experiences, particularly via influencers, gamification, and social media platforms. By strengthening these elements, brand awareness can be more effectively translated into favorable behavioral intentions, ultimately enhancing purchase outcomes in increasingly competitive digital markets.

Despite its limitations, including reliance on Scopus data only, the quantitative nature of bibliometric analysis, and possible exclusion of very recent publications, this study may not fully capture the broader and deeper qualitative dynamics of consumer behavior. Future research is encouraged to integrate multiple databases and combine bibliometric methods with systematic literature reviews or meta-analyses to obtain richer conceptual and causal insights. Further studies should also investigate emerging topics such as artificial intelligence in marketing, personalized consumer experiences, and sustainability-oriented branding. This study confirms that consumer attitude remains a central mediating mechanism between brand perception and purchase intention in the digital marketing era.

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Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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