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From Online Engagement to Purchase Decisions: A Literature Review of Social Media Marketing, Digital Trust, Perceived Value, and Consumer Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This review examines how social media marketing, online engagement, digital trust and perceived value are represented in research on distinct purchase-related outcomes.

Research Method: The Scopus-based systematic review covered English-language articles published during 2021–2025. The recorded screening and retrieval process yielded 107 included studies. Descriptive and thematic synthesis was complemented by VOSviewer keyword mapping.

Results and Discussion: The selected literature increasingly addresses social commerce and interactive platforms. Engagement, trust and value recur alongside purchase intentions and other outcomes, but measures, theoretical models and research designs differ. Keyword maps reveal a core around social media and consumer purchasing concepts, with emerging short-video and AI-related topics.

Implications: The review used one database and one reviewer; 286 sought reports were not retrieved. Co-occurrence and cross-study associations do not demonstrate a shared causal sequence. Better outcome specification and methodological triangulation are needed.

Originality: The synthesis differentiates engagement, trust, perceived value and purchase outcomes while identifying testable contextual and inferential boundaries.

Keywords: social media marketing; online consumer engagement; digital trust; perceived value; purchase intention; systematic literature review.

1. Introduction

Social media has become a setting in which marketing communication, peer interaction and commercial transactions increasingly overlap. Firms can distribute content, respond to customers and stimulate participation, while consumers evaluate messages alongside reviews, influencers and platform cues. Studies conducted across digital settings associate social media marketing with purchase-related responses, but the relevance of a marketing stimulus depends on what consumers attend to, believe and value (Alnaser *et al.,* 2024; Laradi *et al.,* 2024; Yuan *et al.,* 2025). The growing prominence of interactive commerce requires a more discriminating account than a simple assertion that marketing produces purchases.

Online consumer engagement provides one candidate explanation. Commenting, sharing, responding to live streams and interacting with creators turn audiences into participants rather than passive recipients of advertising. Yet engagement measures can capture attention or participation

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without documenting a completed transaction. Research on interactive marketing and influencer content supports investigating engagement as a substantive consumer response while avoiding the assumption that its association with buying-related intentions is identical across platforms (Apasrawirote & Yawised, 2022; Giang *et al.,* 2025; Qiao & Sun, 2024; Shuqair *et al.,* 2024).

Trust and perceived value offer distinct, potentially complementary explanations for subsequent consumer responses. Trust addresses uncertainty about sellers, brands, platforms, reviews and the safety of transactions; perceived value concerns how consumers weigh expected benefits against monetary and non-monetary costs. Prior studies examine aspects of these concepts in relation to purchase intentions and other outcomes (Haudi *et al.,* 2022; Maia *et al.,* 2022; Salhab *et al.,* 2023; Suhud *et al.,* 2025; Yunus *et al.,* 2022). Nevertheless, a finding about brand trust cannot automatically be transferred to platform trust, and an association with perceived value does not by itself establish a mediated causal process.

The literature also uses endpoints that are often grouped together despite important differences: purchase intention, stated purchase decision, observed purchasing behavior, repurchase intention and loyalty. They involve different measurements, time horizons and inference claims. At the same time, research spans ordinary social media feeds, social commerce, short-video applications, live streaming, artificial intelligence-assisted interfaces and immersive technologies. A synthesis that collapses these differences risks turning context-specific associations into an apparently universal pathway (Alrwashdeh, 2025; Emini *et al.,* 2025; Swasti *et al.,* 2024).

This review responds to those conceptual and methodological tensions by bringing together Scopus-indexed English-language articles published from 2021 through 2025. It asks how the field has developed (RQ1), which themes and relationships recur (RQ2), how engagement, trust and perceived value are represented in purchase-related research (RQ3), and which theories and methods shape the evidence (RQ4). The contribution is an evidence-bounded integration that separates observed publication and keyword patterns from substantive relationships, distinguishes purchase outcomes, and identifies the conditions under which a proposed engagement–trust/value–outcome sequence still requires direct testing. The following sections describe the review process, present findings, interpret their implications, and conclude with research priorities.

2. Review Methodology

2.1 *Review design and research questions*

The study was organized as a systematic literature review with descriptive, thematic and bibliometric components. The reported identification, screening, retrieval and inclusion pathway was documented using a PRISMA 2020-style flow, while the included reports were synthesized across four research questions. PRISMA is a reporting framework rather than evidence that the review was prospectively registered or independently replicated (Haddaway *et al.,* 2022; Page *et al.,* 2021). **Table 1** preserves the study questions and objectives.

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Table 1. Research questions and objectives

ID	Research Questions (RQs)	Research Objectives
RQ1	How has research on social media marketing, online engagement, digital trust, perceived value, and consumer behavior evolved over time?	To examine the evolution and development of research on social media marketing, online engagement, digital trust, perceived value, and consumer behavior.
RQ2	What are the dominant themes and conceptual relationships linking social media marketing to consumer engagement, digital trust, perceived value, and purchase-related outcomes?	To identify the dominant themes and conceptual relationships connecting social media marketing, consumer engagement, digital trust, perceived value, and purchase-related outcomes.
RQ3	How do online engagement, digital trust, and perceived value influence consumer purchase decisions and consumer behavior?	To synthesize evidence on how online engagement, digital trust, and perceived value shape consumer purchase decisions and behavior.
RQ4	What theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches have been used to explain the relationship between social media marketing and purchase decisions?	To examine the theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches adopted in studies investigating the relationship between social media marketing and consumer purchase decisions.

Source: *Research questions and objectives in the supplied study.*

2.2 *Information source and search strategy*

Scopus was searched on 6 September 2026 using TITLE-ABS-KEY fields. The recorded strategy combined three groups with AND: social or digital marketing concepts (including social media marketing, social commerce, influencers, content marketing and electronic word-of-mouth); engagement, interaction, trust or perceived-value constructs; and consumer behavior or purchase-related outcomes. The search therefore required at least one term from each group. The initial output contained 1,418 records. Publication-year restriction to 2021–2025 reduced this to 632; subject-area restriction to Business, Management and Accounting; Computer Science; and Economics, Econometrics and Finance yielded 511; restricting the records to English-language Articles left 417 for screening.

These database and filter boundaries define the evidence base: studies outside the selected subject areas, other document types and languages, or not indexed by Scopus would not be captured even if relevant. The search documentation expresses the concepts and filters, but faithful replication requires the precise, executable Scopus query and dated export. Consequently, the coverage of this review should not be interpreted as exhaustive evidence from every relevant literature database.

2.3 *Eligibility and selection*

Eligible reports were English-language research articles from 2021–2025 in digital marketing, social media, social commerce, e-commerce or related consumer settings that substantively addressed at least one focal construct and informed the review questions. Reviews and bibliometric studies were excluded in order to focus the synthesis on primary studies. Other grounds for exclusion were a non-consumer population, construct mismatch, context mismatch, or lack of relevance to the research questions. Screening and eligibility assessment were conducted by one reviewer; the source account reports no duplicates in the filtered dataset.

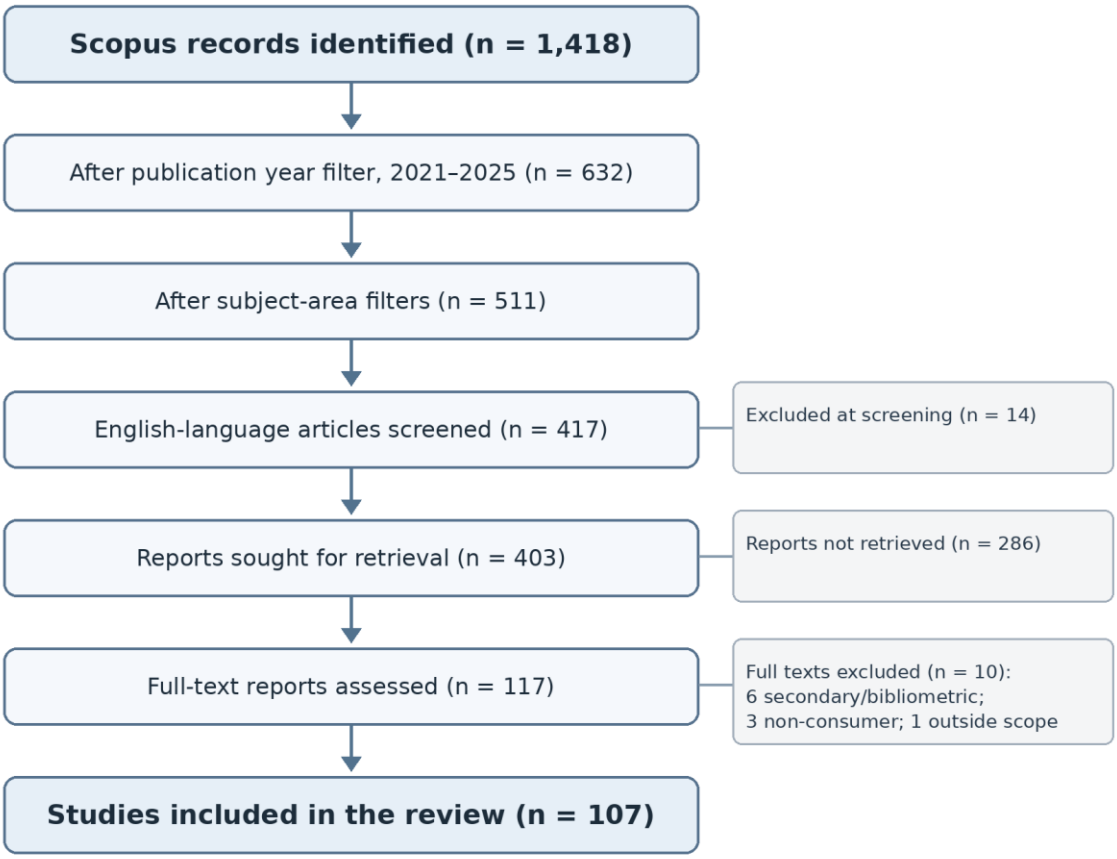
Of 417 screened records, 14 were excluded, leaving 403 reports sought for retrieval. Of these, 286 were not retrieved, leaving 117 reports assessed for eligibility. Ten full-text reports were excluded:

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six secondary or bibliometric studies, three outside the consumer context, and one outside the defined scope. The final synthesis comprised 107 studies (Figure 1). The large share of unavailable full texts is a material selection limitation: absence of retrieval should not be confused with demonstrated ineligibility, and the included corpus may overrepresent accessible research.

Figure 1. Flow of identification, screening and study selection



Source: *The study-selection counts supplied by the researchers.*

2.4 *Study quality appraisal*

The study evaluated methodological reporting against six cross-design criteria: clarity of the research objective, appropriateness of the design, adequacy of sample or source information, transparency of data collection, appropriateness of analysis, and alignment between findings and objective. Each item was assigned 0 for insufficient reporting, 1 for partial reporting, or 2 for adequately clear reporting. Summed scores therefore ranged from 0 to 12 (**Table 2**); categories were strong (10–12), moderate (7–9), and weak (0–6). Appraisal was performed by the same single reviewer and did not further restrict inclusion.

The recorded appraisal classified 104 studies as strong, two as moderate, and one as weak, with a reported mean score of 11.41 out of 12 (**Table 3**). Such a concentration at the upper end indicates high scores under this particular reporting rubric; it does not independently establish that study designs were unbiased or causal conclusions valid. The absence of a second assessor also limits reliability checks

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on subjective item scores. Accordingly, the appraisal is interpreted as descriptive evidence about reported methods, not as a definitive risk-of-bias assessment.

Table 2. Methodological reporting appraisal criteria

Criterion	Assessment focus	Score
Q1. Research objective	Clarity of the research objective	0–2
Q2. Research design	Appropriateness and clarity of the research design	0–2
Q3. Sample/data source	Adequacy and clarity of the sample or data source	0–2
Q4. Data collection	Transparency of data collection or data acquisition	0–2
Q5. Analytical method	Appropriateness and clarity of the analytical method	0–2
Q6. Findings	Consistency between the reported findings and the research objective	0–2
Maximum score		12

Table 3. Recorded appraisal of the included studies

Quality category	Score range	Number of studies	Percentage
Strong	10–12	104	97.2%
Moderate	7–9	2	1.9%
Weak	0–6	1	0.9%
Total	0–12	107	100%

2.5 *Data extraction and thematic synthesis*

The 107 included studies were organized by publication year, dominant research approach, theoretical perspective, digital setting and substantive relationship among focal constructs. Thematic synthesis grouped recurring evidence on marketing and engagement, trust, perceived value, emerging technologies and conceptual integration. Interpretations accounted for differences in constructs, populations, platforms and outcomes. A study describing purchase intention was not equated with one observing completed purchases, and a report of co-occurring keywords was not taken as evidence of mediation or a tested theoretical mechanism.

2.6 *Bibliometric analysis*

VOSviewer was used to describe author-keyword co-occurrence patterns across the included literature. The recorded analysis applied full counting with a minimum occurrence threshold of one and selected 489 keywords, yielding 31 clusters, 3,208 links and total link strength of 3,388. Network, temporal overlay and density maps were examined to distinguish central and emerging topics (Figures 2–4). The source output did not document a separate normalization method. With such a permissive threshold, peripheral items and small clusters warrant cautious reading; co-occurrence is a property of bibliographic description, not evidence that one construct causes another (van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

3. Review Findings

3.1 *Distribution and development of the included studies*

The final corpus contained 107 primary studies published from 2021 to 2025. The distribution was uneven: one study in 2021, six in 2022, fifteen in 2023, eighteen in 2024 and sixty-seven in 2025 (**Table**

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4). This progression demonstrates a marked concentration of included articles in the final observation year, not necessarily an equivalent increase in the entire worldwide research literature. Because the database, search terms, retrieval rate and eligibility rules delimit the sample, the observed time trend is best understood as growth within the selected review corpus.

Table 4. Publication years of included studies

Publication Year	Number of Studies	Percentage
2021	1	0.9%
2022	6	5.6%
2023	15	14.0%
2024	18	16.8%
2025	67	62.6%
Total	107	100%

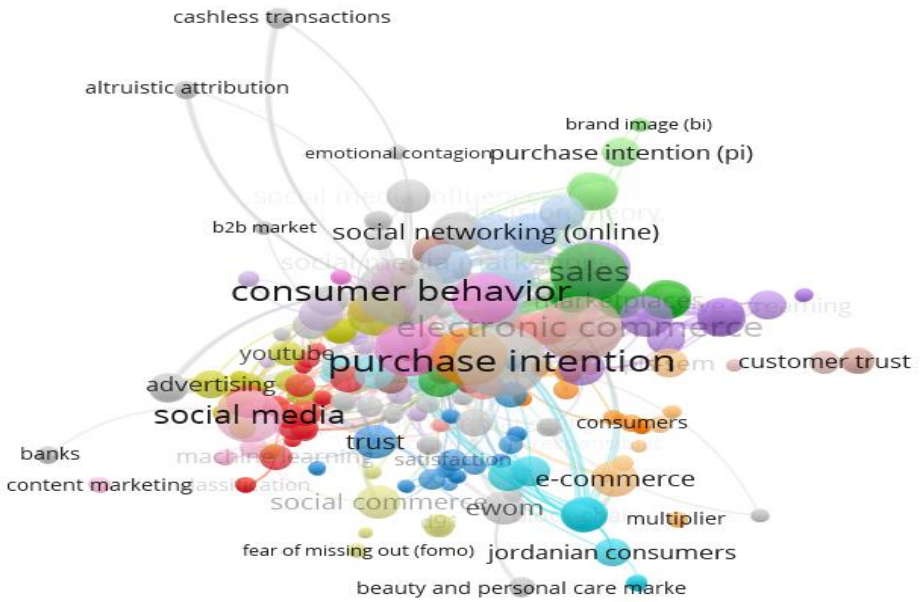
Source: *Descriptive classification of the 107-study review corpus.*

Substantively, the selected studies span social commerce, e-commerce, influencer marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, live-streaming shopping, short-video platforms and technology-assisted consumer experiences. Their diversification is visible in research on platform interaction, personalized content, artificial intelligence and augmented or virtual reality (Daoud *et al.,* 2023; Dandawate *et al.,* 2025; Emini *et al.,* 2025; Giang *et al.,* 2025). These settings broaden the types of consumer response investigated, but also introduce different transaction architectures and opportunities for consumer participation.

3.2 *Keyword co-occurrence and evolving topics*

3.2.1 *Network visualization*

Figure 2. Keyword co-occurrence network



Source: *Original VOSviewer visualization.*

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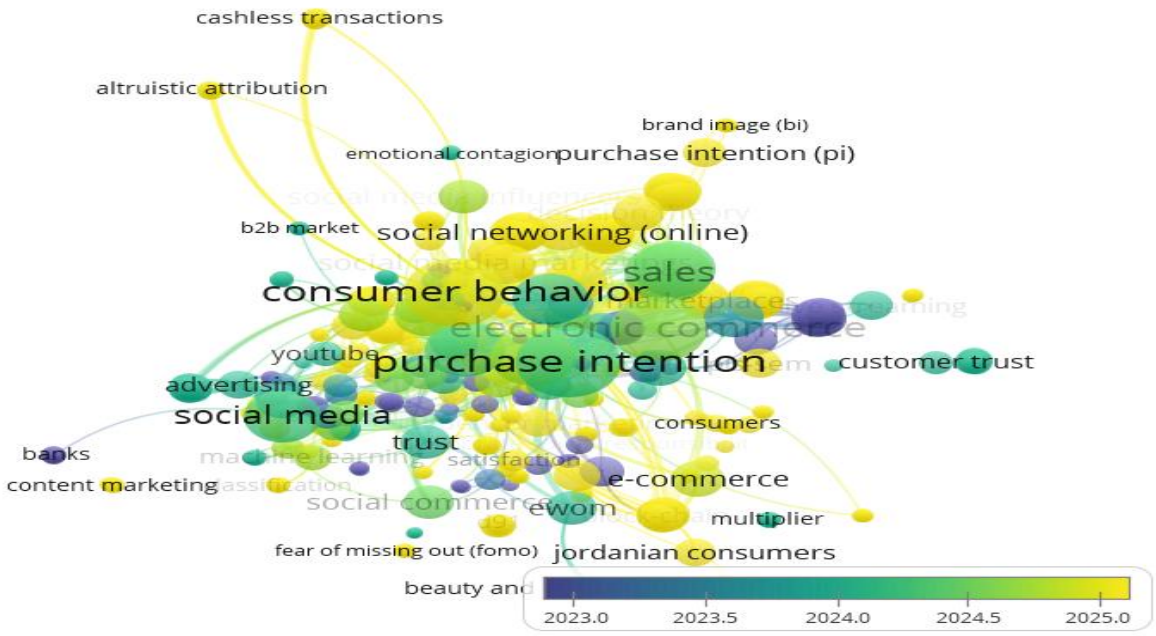
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The co-occurrence network centers on purchase intention, consumer behavior, social media, e-commerce, social media marketing, engagement, trust and social commerce. Electronic word-of-mouth, influencers, TikTok, live streaming, short-video content, brand-related concepts and consumer satisfaction connect to different portions of the map. Node size and proximity summarize keyword use and association in bibliographic records rather than the direction or magnitude of consumer-level effects. In that sense, **Figure 2** identifies a shared conceptual vocabulary in an increasingly diverse research field.

3.2.2 *Overlay visualization*

The temporal overlay contrasts established topics such as purchase intention, online consumer behavior, trust and e-commerce with relatively recent attention to AI-based personalization, chatbots, short-video formats, live streaming and cashless transactions. The displayed overlay scale lies approximately within 2023–2025, reflecting the keyword-time encoding used in the source visualization rather than redefining the 2021–2025 eligibility period. Figure 3 suggests diversification toward technology-specific settings; it does not measure the effectiveness or causal impact of these technologies.

Figure 3. Temporal overlay of keyword co-occurrence



Source: *Original VOSviewer visualization.*

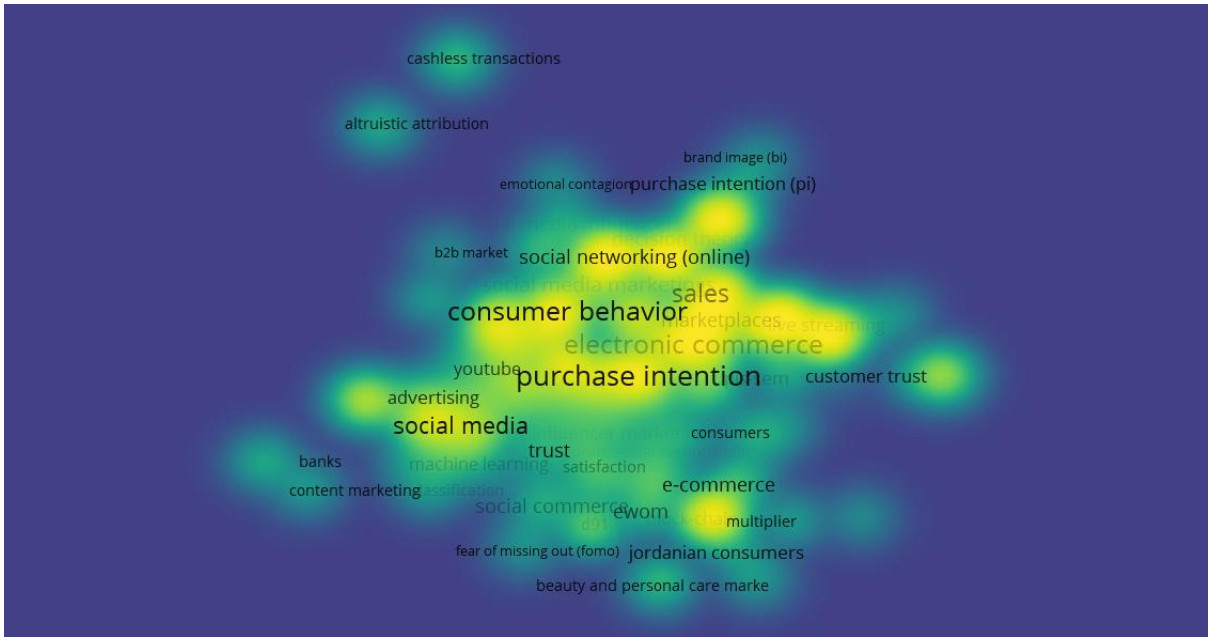
3.2.3 *Density visualization*

The density map depicts the greatest concentrations around purchase intention, consumer behavior, social media, e-commerce, engagement and trust. More specialized terms, including AI personalization, blockchain and cashless transactions, occupy less concentrated parts of the display. Figure 4 complements the network and overlay views by showing where repeated keyword combinations are most concentrated. Low density can reflect narrow topic coverage, varied terminology or a shorter publication history; it should not be presented as a finding that these technologies are unimportant or ineffective.

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Figure 4. Density of keyword co-occurrence



Source: *Original VOSviewer visualization.*

Taken together, the three maps depict a core vocabulary around purchasing-related responses and an expanding set of technological and commercial contexts. They answer a descriptive component of RQ2 and RQ1 while leaving the strength, direction and validity of reported empirical relationships to the full-text thematic synthesis. The maps should therefore be read alongside study design and measurement differences rather than substituted for their analysis.

3.3 *Research designs and methodological patterns*

Each study was assigned to its dominant methodological category for descriptive classification. Quantitative empirical research accounted for 70 studies (65.4%); computational or machine-learning work for 14 (13.1%); experimental or quasi-experimental studies for 13 (12.1%); other empirical approaches for five (4.7%); qualitative research for three (2.8%); and mixed or hybrid work for two (1.9%) (**Table 5**). These mutually exclusive categories summarize the source classification; they are not claims that methods cannot overlap within an individual study.

Table 5. Dominant approaches of included studies

Research Approach	Number of Studies	Percentage
Quantitative empirical	70	65.4%
Computational / machine learning	14	13.1%
Experimental / quasi-experimental	13	12.1%
Other empirical approaches	5	4.7%
Qualitative	3	2.8%
Mixed methods / hybrid	2	1.9%
Total	107	100%

The prevalence of quantitative designs is consistent with work that models measured relationships among marketing activities, perceptions and consumer intentions (Govender & Yavisha,

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2023; Hindieh *et al.,* 2025; Qiao & Sun, 2024). Experimental tasks and machine-learning approaches address other dimensions of digital choice and pattern detection (Radons *et al.,* 2024; Tripathi *et al.,* 2025). However, methodological diversity should not obscure variation in inferential capacity: cross-sectional correlations offer limited temporal identification, experimental conclusions depend on assignment and implementation, and predictive models require credible validation. The relatively small qualitative and mixed-method groups indicate an opportunity to examine the meanings and contexts of trust and value more closely (Ruytenbeek & Decock, 2024).

3.4 *Theoretical perspectives in the selected literature*

The included articles draw on heterogeneous theoretical traditions, among them Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R), the Technology Acceptance Model, the Theory of Planned Behavior, the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, platform affordances, Uses and Gratifications, Flow Theory, Protection Motivation Theory, Signaling Theory and Social Exchange Theory. **Table 6** describes their main explanatory emphases rather than assigning unverified adoption frequencies. A theory mentioned in a citation is not necessarily the main organizing model of a study; its empirical use must be assessed in the context of specified constructs and outcomes.

Table 6. Theoretical perspectives described in the review

Theoretical perspective	Main explanatory focus
Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R)	Explains how external digital/social stimuli influence internal consumer states and subsequent behavioral responses
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Explains technology adoption and acceptance through perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and related beliefs
Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)	Explains behavioral intention through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control
Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)	Links attitudes and subjective norms to behavioral intention
Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)	Explains how consumers process persuasive information through different routes
Social/Platform Affordance	Examines how platform features enable or constrain consumer interactions and behaviors
Uses and Gratifications	Explains consumers' motivations for using digital and social media platforms
Flow Theory	Addresses immersive experiences and engagement during digital interactions
Protection Motivation Theory	Explains responses to perceived threats and protective motivations in digital contexts
Signaling Theory	Explains how information cues reduce uncertainty and influence consumer evaluations
Social Exchange Theory	Examines reciprocal relationships and value exchanges between consumers and organizations

S–O–R provides a language for distinguishing marketing stimuli, internal consumer responses and subsequent behavior, as illustrated by short-video shopping and online fashion research (Bothma & Van Staden, 2025; Yu *et al.,* 2025). Intention-based models emphasize attitudes, norms and perceived control, whereas technology-acceptance and affordance accounts attend to usefulness, ease of use and action possibilities (Mohammed, 2024; Uyen *et al.,* 2025). Trust-oriented research examines credibility and uncertainty in different digital relationships (Maia *et al.,* 2022; Siow & Phang, 2025). These frameworks may complement one another, but their explanatory constructs and assumptions cannot be treated as interchangeable.

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3.5 *Thematic synthesis*

3.5.1 *Social media marketing and online engagement*

A recurring research stream treats marketing as interactive communication rather than one-way promotion. Content quality, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer attributes, responsiveness and social affordances feature in analyses of consumer engagement and related outcomes (Mohammad *et al.,* 2025; Narongkananukul *et al.,* 2025; Osorio-Andrade *et al.,* 2025; Shuqair *et al.,* 2024). TikTok and live-streaming environments add immediacy, entertainment and commerce features to the setting in which consumers participate (Giang *et al.,* 2025; Suhud *et al.,* 2025; Yu *et al.,* 2025). Across these studies, engagement is an important response to investigate, but its operational definitions and its position relative to intention or behavior vary.

3.5.2 *Digital trust and consumer response*

The trust literature uses several related constructs: online trust, consumer trust, brand trust, platform trust, seller trust and confidence in reviews or other information sources. Studies of digital marketing, online reviews, social platforms and live commerce link different trust constructs with purchase-related intentions or responses (Maia *et al.,* 2022; Salhab *et al.,* 2023; Suhud *et al.,* 2025; Walean *et al.,* 2025; Yunus *et al.,* 2022). Such recurrence gives trust an important conceptual role, but a uniform trust pathway cannot be presumed when the object of trust changes. Credibility of a creator, confidence in payment security and trust in a product brand may involve distinct risks and evaluations.

3.5.3 *Perceived value and purchase-related outcomes*

Perceived value captures evaluations of product or service benefits in relation to sacrifices and expectations. Research on social media marketing, online marketplaces and other forms of commerce examines its association with purchasing intentions or decisions (Cao *et al.,* 2025; Haudi *et al.,* 2022; Kurniawan *et al.,* 2025; Mirbabaei *et al.,* 2023). The construct complements trust without duplicating it: an apparently trustworthy seller may still offer insufficient value, while a valuable offering may be avoided when transaction risk appears excessive. Studies do not necessarily measure all dimensions of value, and evidence concerning intention must not be presented as observed buying behavior.

3.5.4 *Emerging technologies and commercial settings*

Studies of short video, streaming, social influence, chatbots, AI-enabled personalization and immersive product presentation extend inquiry beyond conventional feed-based communication (Altarifi *et al.,* 2025; Dandawate *et al.,* 2025; Emini *et al.,* 2025; Giang *et al.,* 2025; Yu *et al.,* 2025). They change how product information is encountered and how consumers interact with sellers and peers. The overlay map is consistent with increased attention to these topics in the recent part of the selected period. Nonetheless, an emerging keyword does not itself demonstrate adoption at scale, a superior consumer experience, or improved conversion rates.

3.5.5 *Integrating relationships without imposing one causal model*

Taken together, the selected studies support investigating links among social media marketing, engagement, trust, perceived value and purchase-related outcomes; they do not establish that all five were measured jointly or sequentially in every study. Some authors examine marketing and engagement

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(Hindieh *et al.,* 2025; Qiao & Sun, 2024), others focus on trust and intention (Salhab *et al.,* 2023; Walean *et al.,* 2025), while a further stream examines perceived value in consumer decisions (Cao *et al.,* 2025; Haudi *et al.,* 2022; Kurniawan *et al.,* 2025). An illustrative synthesis is marketing-related stimuli → engagement and evaluations of trust/value → specifically defined purchase-related responses; this is a research proposition assembled across studies, not an estimated effect, demonstrated temporal sequence or universal mediation model.

4. Discussion

4.1 *From exposure to engagement: participation is not conversion*

The synthesis suggests that social media marketing should be theorized as an environment for interaction rather than as a uniform persuasive exposure. Platform design, content format and opportunity for reciprocal communication shape what "engagement" can mean. A like, a live-stream comment, a product inquiry and a consumer-created review are all interactions, but they vary in intensity, motivation and proximity to a transaction. The literature connecting marketing activities and engagement (Apasrawirote & Yawised, 2022; Hindieh *et al.,* 2025; Qiao & Sun, 2024) supports the relevance of participation while showing why engagement indicators require explicit definition. Evaluating engagement only by aggregate activity can conceal distinctions between attention, expressed interest, social participation and economic action.

The distinction matters for interpretation. Engagement can precede an intention, accompany a purchase decision, follow a transaction or simply reflect entertainment use. Cross-sectional relationships among marketing exposure, engagement and intention cannot determine which ordering occurred without stronger design evidence. An integrative framework can use engagement as a plausible connecting construct while keeping alternative directions, confounding influences and platform-specific affordances open to empirical testing. In particular, interventions aimed at increasing reactions or comments should not be evaluated as successful purchase interventions unless purchase outcomes are independently observed.

4.2 *Trust and perceived value as distinct evaluations*

Trust and perceived value should not be merged into an undifferentiated favorable attitude. Trust speaks to confidence about the reliability and integrity of an exchange partner or information source; perceived value evaluates the balance of expected benefits and sacrifices. In social commerce, a consumer may regard influencer content as credible but the offered item as overpriced, or perceive attractive value while doubting seller reliability. Studies involving online reviews, brand trust, TikTok commerce and marketplace transactions make these mechanisms relevant to consumer decisions (Maia *et al.,* 2022; Kurniawan *et al.,* 2025; Salhab *et al.,* 2023; Suhud *et al.,* 2025). The theoretical implication is that explanations must name the object of trust and the dimensions of value rather than inferring both from a generic positive response.

It is also premature to assume a fixed mediation chain. Trust can be a condition for interaction, develop through repeated engagement, influence a value judgment or operate in parallel with value. Competing pathways are plausible and may depend on product risk, payment structure, consumer experience and the source of product information. The reviewed record suggests these questions but does not provide a common harmonized dataset with which to compare mediation effect sizes. Future

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theory development should therefore specify temporal ordering and rival explanations, differentiate seller, brand and platform trust, and test whether perceived value contributes independently after accounting for prior attitudes and consumer characteristics.

4.3 *Do not collapse intention, decision, behavior and loyalty*

A principal contribution of this synthesis is the insistence on outcome specificity. Intention is a stated willingness or plan; a reported decision may express a selected option; behavior requires evidence of an action; repurchase intention refers to a subsequent anticipated transaction; and loyalty encompasses a broader pattern of attachment or repeat patronage. These outcomes need not move in parallel. A participant who is highly engaged and willing to buy may abandon a shopping cart because of price, delivery terms or payment concerns. Conflating them overstates the transferability of study findings and can turn a model of intention into a misleading account of completed purchases.

Researchers should operationalize the endpoint before specifying the hypothesized pathway, use methods appropriate to the observation window, and avoid substituting self-reported intention for verified transactions. When longitudinal transaction data are not available, claims should remain about the outcome genuinely measured. The wider theoretical contribution is not a universal model of conversion but a conditional account of how interaction, confidence and value evaluation may connect to distinct stages of consumer choice. This formulation is compatible with the diversity of the reviewed literature without suggesting that incompatible measurements represent one effect.

4.4 *Platform affordances and the limits of generalization*

New digital settings may change which mechanism matters most. Live streaming offers synchronous interaction, short-video applications organize exposure through rapid and often algorithmically recommended content, and immersive tools can alter how consumers assess product characteristics. AI-assisted personalization can similarly change information relevance or raise new questions about transparency. The emerging topic patterns in the selected studies and overlay map (Dandawate *et al.,* 2025; Emini *et al.,* 2025; Giang *et al.,* 2025; Yu *et al.,* 2025) are consistent with these contextual differences, but do not establish that any platform necessarily increases trust, value, or sales.

A useful boundary-condition agenda would compare purchase categories of different involvement and risk, experienced and first-time platform users, and settings with different transaction safeguards. Rather than labeling all social platforms equivalent, studies could report the salient affordances, data collection period and commercial practices that shape the observed relationship. Such design detail would improve the cumulative interpretability of findings and help explain why results diverge across settings. Platform-specific mechanisms should be investigated rather than retrospectively assumed from technological labels.

4.5 *Theoretical and methodological implications*

The theoretical variety documented in **Table 6** is both an asset and a challenge. S–O–R and information-processing perspectives clarify the movement from external cues to internal responses, while intention models, technology acceptance and affordance approaches offer alternative explanations of adoption and action. Yet a multiplicity of named theories does not by itself amount to cumulative theoretical progress. Theories should be evaluated by the incremental explanatory work they perform: which mechanism is unique, what competing prediction follows, which construct is directly measured, and

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what outcome is actually observed. In particular, an integrated pathway assembled from different articles is a framework for future tests, not confirmation of its causal links.

Methodologically, the strong representation of quantitative research makes construct validity, common-method concerns, measurement invariance and inferential boundaries central. Greater longitudinal, experimental and mixed-method evidence could clarify temporal ordering, contextual processes and contradictions among consumers. Computational analysis can supplement this effort when leakage, validation and interpretability are handled transparently; qualitative work can examine the lived meaning of confidence, risk, value and participation. These approaches should answer different parts of a coherent research question instead of being combined merely for methodological novelty.

4.6 *Review limitations and a focused research agenda*

Several limitations qualify the synthesis. First, a single Scopus search restricted to English-language Articles, three subject-area groups and 2021–2025 creates database, language, discipline and publication-type boundaries. Second, 286 of the 403 full-text reports sought were unavailable, creating a substantial opportunity for retrieval bias. Third, one reviewer conducted screening and quality appraisal, precluding independent resolution of classification disagreements. Fourth, the broad 0–2 reporting rubric and unusually high concentration of strong scores cannot replace study-specific assessments of bias, confounding or inference. Finally, full-counting keyword mapping with an occurrence threshold of one is sensitive to vocabulary variation, and map connectivity does not test substantive effects. These limitations restrict the strength of generalization, not the descriptive usefulness of the synthesis.

Future reviews should preserve and report the executable search expression, deduplicated bibliographic export, eligibility reasons, the final included-study inventory, appraisal decisions and the analysis configuration so that selection and mapping can be rechecked. A multi-database update with more complete full-text retrieval and independent screening could assess the stability of the observed patterns. Primary studies should distinguish intention from purchase behavior, identify the object of trust and dimensions of value, measure platform-specific affordances, and use longitudinal or appropriately designed causal comparisons when claiming mechanisms. Carefully designed qualitative and mixed-method research could also illuminate conditions under which apparently similar engagement signals lead to different decisions.

5. Conclusion

This review synthesized 107 Scopus-indexed English-language primary studies published from 2021 to 2025 on social media marketing, engagement, digital trust, perceived value and purchase-related outcomes. Within this selected corpus, the literature became markedly concentrated in 2025, quantitative empirical approaches predominated, and bibliometric maps located purchase intention, consumer behavior, social media, engagement and trust near the conceptual center while depicting growing attention to short-video, live commerce and AI-related settings. The thematic synthesis revealed recurring but heterogeneous links among marketing stimuli, consumer participation, evaluations of trust and value, and purchase-related responses.

The central contribution is a differentiated conceptual account rather than a single verified causal sequence. Engagement is not the same as a purchase, trust must be tied to a specified object,

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perceived value must retain its benefit–sacrifice meaning, and purchase intentions, decisions, completed behaviors and loyalty must not be conflated. Future investigation should test these relationships with context-sensitive designs and comparable measures. Interpretation of this review remains constrained by its single database, one-reviewer assessment, high non-retrieval of full texts and descriptive bibliometric method. More transparent, independently assessed and methodologically diverse evidence is needed before broader causal or universal claims can be drawn.

Statement of Use of Generative AI

During the preparation of this work, the author used generative artificial intelligence tools to support the scientific writing process. All interpretations, analyses, and conclusions presented in this study are the sole responsibility of the author.

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