

EWOM RESEARCH DYNAMICS: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS 2020-2025

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Abstract

This bibliometric study analyzed the research dynamics of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) during the 2020–2025 period using data sourced from Scopus. The analysis revealed that Asia dominates publication contributions with 209 documents, where China, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia were identified as the main contributors. The pattern of international collaboration showed concentration around regional hubs such as the United States, China, and Indonesia, while cross-continental collaboration remained relatively limited. In terms of disciplines, business, management, and accounting remained the most dominant field (33.6%), yet there was a significant increase in contributions from environmental science and decision sciences, reflecting a shift in eWOM research themes toward issues of sustainability and environmental responsibility. The journal *Sustainability* Switzerland was identified as the most productive publication outlet, indicating the integration of eWOM themes within the discourse of sustainable development. This study not only updates the mapping of eWOM research post-2018 but also unveils the evolution of more interdisciplinary and sustainability-oriented themes that have not been identified in previous bibliometric studies.

Keywords: *Electronic Word-of-Mouth, eWOM, Bibliometric Analysis, Digital Communication, Consumer Behavior*

INTRODUCTION

A successful organization is one that can anticipate change, adapt to it, and use tactical initiatives to achieve strategic goals (Guillot et al., 2024; Yadav et al., 2024). To remain competitive in the 21st-century marketplace, businesses are striving to enhance their organizational competitiveness (Bag et al., 2023; Tiwari et al., 2024). This market is dynamic and electronically interconnected. Consequently, companies are increasing their agility to adapt more easily and respond more rapidly to changing market demands (Tiwari, 2021). Advanced industrial and digital technologies are being increasingly adopted by businesses to process, collect, and analyze data generated by machines and other mechanisms. This digital revolution enables firms to become more efficient and flexible (Gupta et al., 2020; Sharma & Lichtenthal, 2023). New technologies improve corporate efficiency by enhancing product quality and client satisfaction. However, organizations must cultivate a culture of learning satisfaction, complaint behavior, and information exchange, as well as word-of-mouth promotion, to fully reap these benefits (Kamble et al., 2020; Rajendran et al., 2023). The number of digital buyers has increased exponentially over the past decade due to rising internet penetration and the growing ease of online shopping. By 2023, 33.3% of the world's population made purchases online (Roy et al., 2025).

Marketers have long relied on word-of-mouth (WOM) communication to build brand reputation and influence purchasing decisions, as personal recommendations have proven highly effective (Hameed et al., 2022). Due to globalization, consumers today have more options and can obtain goods from distant countries (Shirvani et al., 2020). Manohar et al. (2020) argue that sustainable innovation leads to enhanced reputation and more positive word-of-mouth promotion. With the advancement of digitalization, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has emerged as a crucial source of information influencing purchasing decisions. Consumers value the opinions of other consumers and perceive them as more trustworthy than traditional advertising (Sair et al., 2020). Today's consumers are more engaged with digital word-of-mouth promotions, communicating with large audiences and sharing their experiences (Aslam et al., 2019). Consumers follow various electronic channels to research products and services, and the communication occurring on these channels significantly affects their purchasing decisions (Chetioui et al., 2021). EWOM communication stimulates consumers' purchase intentions and effectively reduces uncertainty and perceived risk during "the decision-making process" (Bilal et al., 2021). Users express their opinions and

recommendations through online reviews, comments, text posts, or visual posts on different platforms, and they also use these platforms to seek consumption-related advice (Tabassum et al., 2020). EWOM, as a form of communication, has become valuable in enabling consumers to evaluate products and services (Tobon & García-Madariaga, 2021). In addition, with the rapid growth of the e-commerce sector and high internet penetration, today's consumer behavior is increasingly influenced by online opinions and reviews shared by other users. Consumers today are highly active on social media platforms and frequently seek reviews and recommendations online before making a purchasing decision. Therefore, understanding trends and developments in eWOM research is essential for business people, marketers, and researchers. In today's digital landscape, a format of information exchange has emerged and evolved into one of the most reckoned channels, along with the popularity of online platforms (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). The development of modern communication tools, driven by technological advancements, directly affects the transformation in consumer habits (Gómez-Suárez et al., 2017). Thus, it is important for marketers to study the impact of eWOM on potential customers' purchasing decisions (Kudeshia & Mittal, 2016). Ratings on social media platforms play a significant role for marketers and buyers who want to understand the point of view of existing customers without having to read detailed reviews (Ray et al., 2021). This provides an opportunity for users to obtain and share data about a corporation, goods, or brand image (Gómez-Suárez et al., 2017).

This eWOM refers to the delivery of information, opinions, recommendations, and experiences about products, services, or brands through electronic media channels, especially online platforms (Gvili & Levy, 2018). It has emerged as an important phenomenon in the digital age, allowing individuals to express their thoughts and influence the perceptions and purchasing decisions of others (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). So, it is important for an entrepreneur or businessman to pay attention to product reviews and brand reputation in order to make products in great demand by consumers. Today, eWOM has become an important medium for corporate social media marketing (Hussain et al., 2017). Bibliometric research uses statistical and mathematical methods (Lancho-Barrantes & Cantú-Ortiz, 2019). In the scientific world, bibliometric analysis is recognized as a crucial tool for mapping the development and measuring the impact of knowledge on various fields of study (Donthu et al., 2021). As scholarly output evolves rapidly, bibliometric studies offer a holistic perspective on emerging trends, leading contributors, and the collaborative networks that make up the intellectual landscape of specific disciplines (Haghani, 2023). Analysis of bibliometric parameters, such as citations, co-authorship, and the simultaneous occurrence of terms, allows the identification of themes that appear in the scientific literature, dominant methodological approaches in the field, and areas of research that require further attention. This kind of analysis is important to uncover knowledge structures and trends in a particular field (Aichouch, I., Kachbou, Y., Bouklah, M., & Merimi, 2025; Benavides-Sánchez et al., 2025; Hassan & Duarte, 2024; Lrhoul et al., 2023). By measuring and analyzing scientific publications, this analysis helps visualize impacts, collaborative networks, and patterns that emerge in research (Chou & Chow, 2024); Kan et al., 2020).

Bibliometric analysis on electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has provided valuable insights into research trends, but previous studies often have limitations in the coverage of time periods and the use of analytical tools. A comprehensive survey by Abbas et al. (2020) analyzed eWOM trends using a limited Scopus database in the period of 2008-2018, so it does not reflect the latest dynamics and developments in the last five years. In addition, the study also acknowledges its limitations in using only one visualization software, namely VOSviewer, and suggests the use of other specific bibliometric analysis tools for future studies to get a more comprehensive picture. Previous journals have also suggested the need for replication or repetition of quantitative studies on eWOM to identify new issues and trends, given the ever-evolving area of research. Recognizing these gaps, this study aims to fill the literature gaps by exploring the dynamics of eWOM research in a more actual and in-depth manner. Focusing on the last 5-year period (2020-2025), this study provides a significant update on, firstly, the study identifies patterns of collaboration between countries in eWOM research. Secondly, the contribution of the most eWOM publications are analyzed based on the geographical area of the continent. Thirdly, this study identifies the scientific journals that publish the most eWOM studies. Finally, the most active disciplines in contributing to eWOM research are determined. To achieve this goal, this study integrates the use of two bibliometric analysis software, namely VOSviewer, in processing data from the Scopus database. To answer the research gaps that have been identified and provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) research from 2020 until 2025, this study is designed to answer the following series of research questions.

RQ1: What is the pattern of inter-country collaboration in electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) research in the last 5 years?

RQ2: Which continent has contributed the most to eWOM publications in the last 5 years?

RQ3: Which scientific journals publish the most electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) journal in the last 5 years?

RQ4: Which discipline is the most active in contributing to eWOM research in the last 5 years?

RQ5: What does this study contribute to complementing the limitations of previous bibliometric studies that only cover the period of 2008–2018?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Advances in digital technology and social media have given birth to a communication phenomenon known as electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), which is now becoming more far-reaching. Essentially, eWOM is an expression of consumer assessment—both potential, present, or past—toward a product or company. This expression, which has a positive or negative tone, is then disseminated, so it is reachable by the public through the internet network (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004 deep Ojiaku et al., 2024). The form of eWOM includes various media such as online consumer reviews, discussions on forums, blogs, social media, and video platforms. Online Consumer Reviews (OCRs) are the most dominant form of eWOM because they can influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions (Hu & Yang, 2020). EWOM characteristics such as valence (positive or negative sentiment) and volume (number of reviews) have proven to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors. Empirical studies reveal that valence has a strong influence on the probability of choice, while volume amplifies the positive impact of reviews (Hu & Yang, 2020;Thakur et al., 2022;Shankar et al., 2020). Bibliometrics is a field that describes scientific trends and structures through the quantitative analysis of literature data. It involves the use of mathematical and statistical techniques to examine data in publications, including authors, keywords, and citations, to outline the distribution of scientific knowledge, collaborative networks, research centers, and trends (Mahadevan & Joshi, 2021). Bibliometrics also has a wide range of applications, allowing the evaluation of research production and its impact on a country or institution, and the identification of important research and literature boundaries within a particular country or institution domain (Ninkov et al., 2022). Bibliometric analysis has been used in various industry sectors to detect trends, difficulties, and research possibilities in a particular topic (Muhuri et al., 2019).

METHOD

This study used a descriptive bibliometric analysis method consisting of four important stages, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Mamata & Kavilal, 2025). At the identification stage, the researcher conducted a search using keywords in line with the research theme, namely "Electronic word of mouth" in the Scopus database. Through this step, 3,879 relevant articles were identified. The next stage was screening. At this stage, the researcher screened 3,879 articles that had been obtained in the previous stage using two criteria, namely articles containing keywords that were only included in the title and published in indexed journals. Based on these criteria, 3,249 articles did not meet both criteria and would not be processed further. Meanwhile, 630 articles met these criteria and would be continued in the next stage. The next stage was eligibility. At this stage, the researchers evaluated whether the 630 publications that had passed the previous stage were feasible to be included in the final stage of the study. The researcher decided to only include the period of 2020 until 2025, using the keywords Electronic Word of Mouth, electronic Word-of-mouth EWOM, electronic Word-of-Mouths, e-WOM. After the eligibility stage, 225 publications met these criteria. The 225 publications that met these criteria could proceed to the inclusion stage.

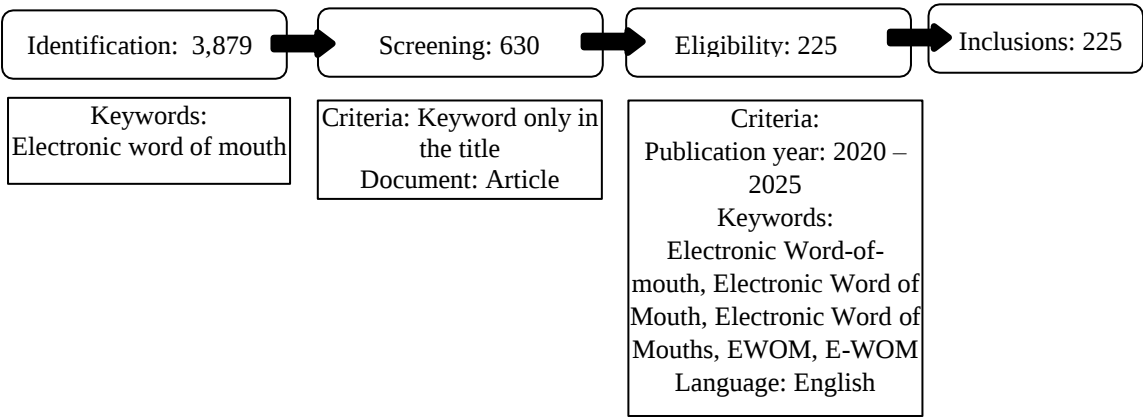


Figure 1. Stages in data refinement
Source: Authors (2025)

The study was conducted exclusively by utilizing VOSviewer through the selection of the option "Co-authorship" with the "Countries" unit to map the collaboration network. The resulting visualization illustrates each country as a node, in which the size of the node reflects the productivity of the publication. Meanwhile, the connecting lines between the nodes depict the existence of writing cooperation, with the thickness of the lines indicating the intensity of the collaboration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we will discuss the trends of collaboration among countries, the most dominant contribution of eWOM publications from the geographical area among continents, the trends of which scientific journals publish the most eWOM research, and the most contributive disciplines to eWOM research. Firstly, the pattern of collaboration among countries and among leading institutions are described. The visualization of the collaboration network illustrates how researchers from different countries and institutions collaborate and share knowledge in eWOM studies. Through this analysis, the impact and legacy of eWOM studies can be traced by assessing their contribution in shaping the direction of successor research and being used as a reference in the academic community, as well as identifying the most influential countries in this collaborative network during the time period of 2020 to 2025. Secondly, the discussion highlights the contribution of eWOM publications that are the most dominant from the intercontinental geographical area. This trend provides an overview of the regions that are most active in publishing eWOM research, reflecting the most influential scientific centers in this field. Thirdly, it is the analysis that identifies which scientific journals publish the most eWOM research. This information is important to understand the main publication channels for eWOM researchers, as well as to indicate the journals that have a wide impact and scope in disseminating research results in this field. Finally, the most active disciplines contributing in eWOM research are discussed. This analysis reveals the multidisciplinary roots of eWOM research, showing how various fields of science, ranging from marketing, management, and communication to computer science, have made significant contributions. Understanding the contributions of disciplines will be able to enrich our comprehension of the complexity of the eWOM phenomenon and open up opportunities for interdisciplinary research in the future. This overall analysis is critical to comprehensively understanding the eWOM research landscape, identifying key players, and predicting future developments. These findings are expected to be valuable considerations for academics, institutions, and policymakers in developing a more effective and impactful research agenda.

Trends in Inter-Country Collaboration

Visualization of inter-country collaboration networks reveals how researchers from different parts of the world are interconnected in the eWOM study, demonstrating the trend of cross-border cooperation that occurred from 2020 to 2025 related to the electronic word of mouth research. In a co-authorship analysis to map trends in cross-country collaboration patterns, we set a minimum limit of one document for each country. Of the total 54 countries identified, 54 countries meet this threshold, making it the main focus in the visualization of the resulting collaboration network, which can be seen in Figure 2.

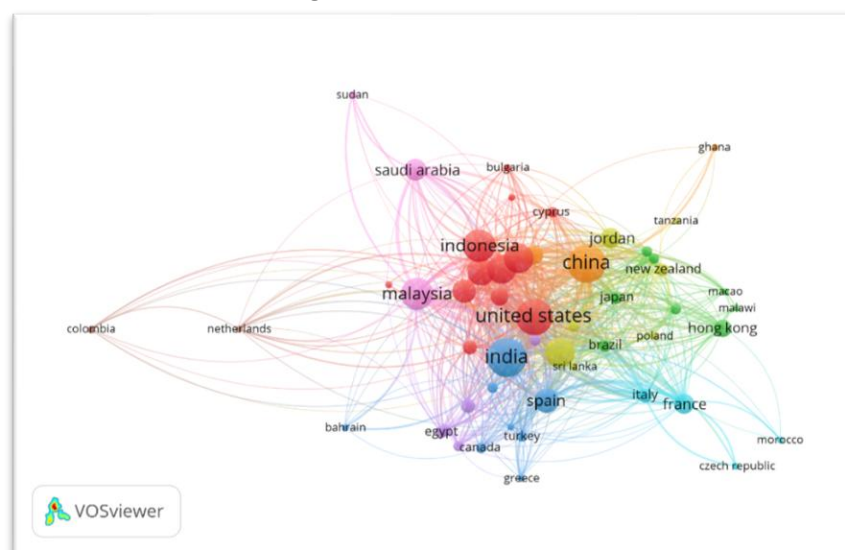


Figure 2. Trends in inter-country collaboration
Source: Authors Analysis (2025)

Figure 2 presents a visualization of the trends in collaboration among countries in the electronic word of mouth research, as indexed in the Scopus database. The size of the node represents the relative contribution of each country. From the visualization of VOSviewer, several countries that are active in research on electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) are identified, showing the existence of diverse and complex collaboration patterns. Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, India, China, and the United States emerge as key actors that are often central to collaborative networks. This is in line with previous studies of research Ahn et al., (2020) which confirms that eWOM has become one of the most influential forms of communication in the digital age, with a reach that strengthens cross-border collaborative networks in the context of tourism and hospitality. Research by Aimon et al. (2023) also emphasizes Indonesia's strategic role as a center for eWOM development in the halal tourism sector, supported by digital infrastructure and intensive international collaboration. Sharma and Lichtenthal (2023) find that India is becoming one of the key actors in the eWOM network, particularly in the context of digital services such as food delivery apps, which drive cross-regional interaction through online platforms. Meanwhile, Tang and Kim (2022) reveal how the United States and China are at the center of the network in the hospitality industry through big data analysis of online hotel reviews in Las Vegas and Macau, confirming the strength of both countries in producing and deploying eWOM. In line with the study, Hua et al. (2024) demonstrate the importance of eWOM volume, valence, and resources in the context of mobile applications in China, which also presents the country's strong role in the eWOM research network. These findings reinforce that the active involvement of countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, India, China, and the United States in the eWOM research collaboration network reflects the significant contribution of the Asia and North American regions to the development of knowledge in this field.

Meanwhile, European countries such as Spain, France, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic also appear to be involved although their level of involvement may be more diffuse or concentrated on specific clusters. This finding aligns with research by Shu et al. (2025), which specifically utilizes TripAdvisor reviews of luxury hotels in Spain as a case study to develop an eWOM-based customer segmentation model, demonstrating the active contribution of European countries to empirical eWOM research. Similarly, Ilieva and Boteva (2023) examine the impact of eWOM factors on consumer behavior in the Bulgarian context, particularly regarding destination selection. This further strengthens the evidence that researchers from these European countries are actively contributing to the academic discourse on eWOM with distinctive focuses and approaches. The participation of Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, and Egypt indicates a growing interest in the eWOM theme, although intensive collaboration appears to be more concentrated among countries with more dominant research output. This finding is supported by research from Almohaimmeed (2020), which specifically explores the impact of brand experience on eWOM in Arab restaurants, as well as by Al-Gasawneh et al. (2023), which examines the role of eWOM in purchasing intentions in the Jordanian property sector, considering the moderating effect of reliability. Both studies confirm the significant contribution of Middle Eastern countries to the development of eWOM research, although with varying scopes and focuses. Overall, this collaboration map indicates that eWOM research is driven by a broad international network, with some countries serving as primary hubs, while others participate in more specialized collaborative groups.

Trends in the Most Frequent Intercontinental Publication

The next trend highlights the grouping of the most prolific publications across continents. The influence of the leading authors is measured by the highest number of publications from 2020 to 2025 related to electronic word-of-mouth research, as illustrated in Figure 3.

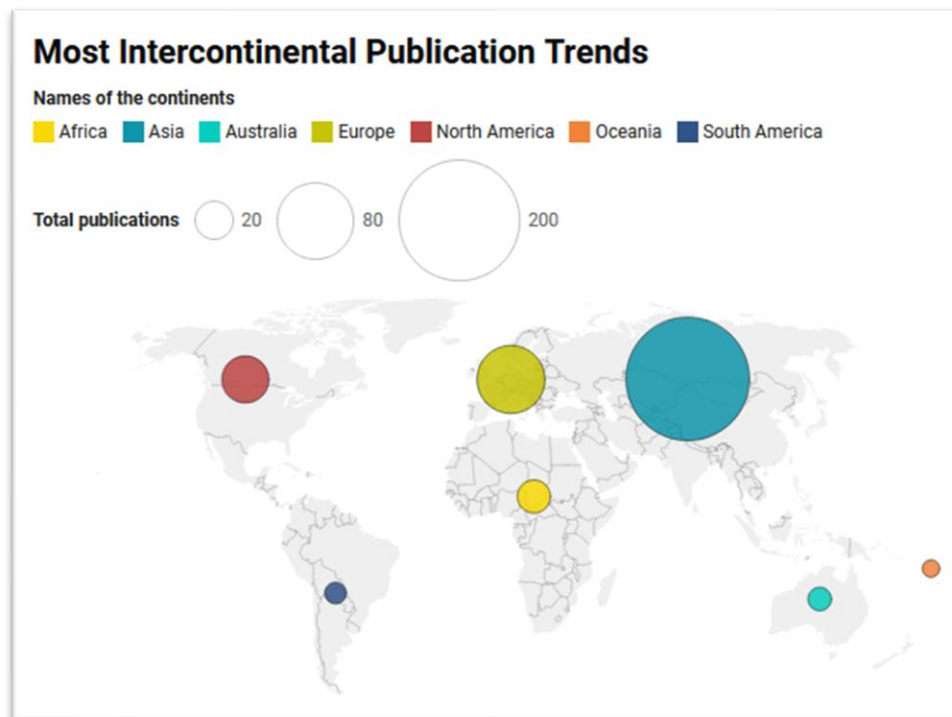


Figure 3. Trends in the Most Frequent Intercontinental Publication
Source: Authors Analysis (2025)

Based on the data analysis of publication trends among continents presented in Figure 3, scientific publication trends are predominantly dominated by the Asian continent, with a total of 209 documents. China contributed 31 documents, India 30, and both Indonesia and Malaysia contributed 20 documents each. This finding aligns with the research by Tang and Kim (2022), which highlights the active role of Asian countries, particularly China, in eWOM research through big data analysis of hotel reviews in Las Vegas and Macau. It is further supported by Rajalakshmi et al. (2024), who confirm the high interest and contribution of Asian consumers toward green products through eWOM, reflecting the concentration of eWOM research in this region. The European continent ranks second with 61 documents, led by the United Kingdom with 16 documents and Spain with 13. This finding corresponds with the empirical contexts examined in related studies, such as Shu et al. (2025), who analyzed reviews of luxury hotels in Spain based on TripAdvisor data, and a meta-analysis by Ismagilova et al. (2020), which includes numerous studies from various European countries, including Spain and the UK, analyzing the influence of eWOM on purchase intentions. It indicates that Europe, especially the UK and Spain, has made a significant contribution to the development of digital marketing and eWOM literature. North America recorded 28 documents, with the United States contributing 26. This finding aligns with previous research confirming the significant role of the United States in the dynamics of eWOM. For example, Park and Park (2020) analyzed Samsung's crisis response strategy on Facebook and found that consumer interactions and conversations as forms of eWOM were heavily influenced by user activity from regions such as North America, representing a complex digital landscape.

Meanwhile, other continents such as Africa have 13 documents. It aligns with the research of Ojiaku et al. (2024), which highlights that although electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has a significant impact, its empirical exploration—as reflected in the distribution of publications—remains concentrated in regions with more advanced research infrastructure and higher e-commerce adoption. Australia has 6 documents, consistent with the findings of Nadroo et al. (2024), who emphasize that in today's digital landscape, intense parasocial interactions (PSIs) with influencers—a phenomenon widely studied in regions with high eWOM publication output—can act as a catalyst for vicarious expression and trigger a bandwagon effect, ultimately strengthening online purchase intentions through eWOM. Then, South America has 5 documents. This finding aligns with the research of Fiuza et al. (2025), analyzing tourists' experiences and the service quality of Bento Gonçalves' Wine Train using TripAdvisor reviews confirming that, despite its relatively small volume, Brazil has made a significant contribution to eWOM research, particularly in the context of cultural and heritage tourism. This suggests both potential and opportunities for further eWOM research development in South America and Oceania. Oceania has only 3 documents, indicating a significantly lower publication volume. Rabah et al. (2024) find that despite involving researchers from the University of Otago, New Zealand, their study focuses on higher education in Jordan, reflecting that despite Oceania's research capacity,

eWOM publications specifically originating from or focused on this region remain very limited. This confirms a significant gap in research productivity and the concentration of global academic output in Asia and Europe.

Trends in the Most Productive Journal Publication

The next trend focuses on the publication patterns of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) research over the past five years, emphasizing the identification of scientific journals with the highest publication volumes. This analysis aims to reveal dominant publishing trends and highlight the primary platforms that shape the scientific discourse on eWOM, as illustrated in Figure 4.

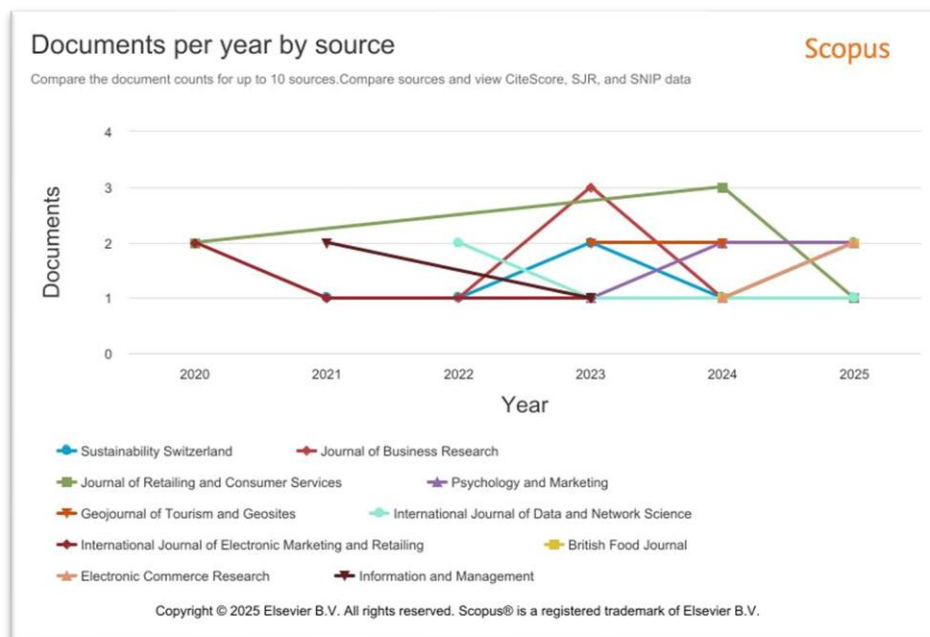


Figure 4. Trends in the Most Productive Journal Publication

Source: Authors' Analysis (2025)

Based on Figure 4, the trends in the most productive journal publication indicate that from 2020 to 2025, a group of journals has consistently contributed to the output of scientific literature. The journal "Sustainability Switzerland" stands out as the most productive, followed by leading journals in business and marketing such as the "Journal of Business Research", "Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services", and "Psychology and Marketing". Additionally, journals like "Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites", "International Journal of Data and Network Science", "British Food Journal", "Electronic Commerce Research", and "Information and Management" also demonstrate significant productivity, reflecting contemporary research focuses on sustainability, digital transformation, business, and consumer behavior. This finding aligns with current research trends, as exemplified by Liu et al. (2022), whose study was published in Sustainability examining the intention to continue using e-payments during the COVID-19 pandemic from a sustainable development perspective. Furthermore, Hua et al. (2024), in a research contributing to the discourse on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and consumer satisfaction, also confirm the relevance of sustainability and digital consumer behavior topics in reputable journals. These studies reinforce the position of these journals as primary publication channels for interdisciplinary and up-to-date eWOM research.

Trends in the Most Active Discipline

This part, Trends in the Most Active Discipline, is a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of scientific publications over the past five years. The primary objective of this study is to systematically identify and map the scientific fields that consistently exhibit the highest levels of publication activity, thereby becoming major contributors to the relevant scientific literature.

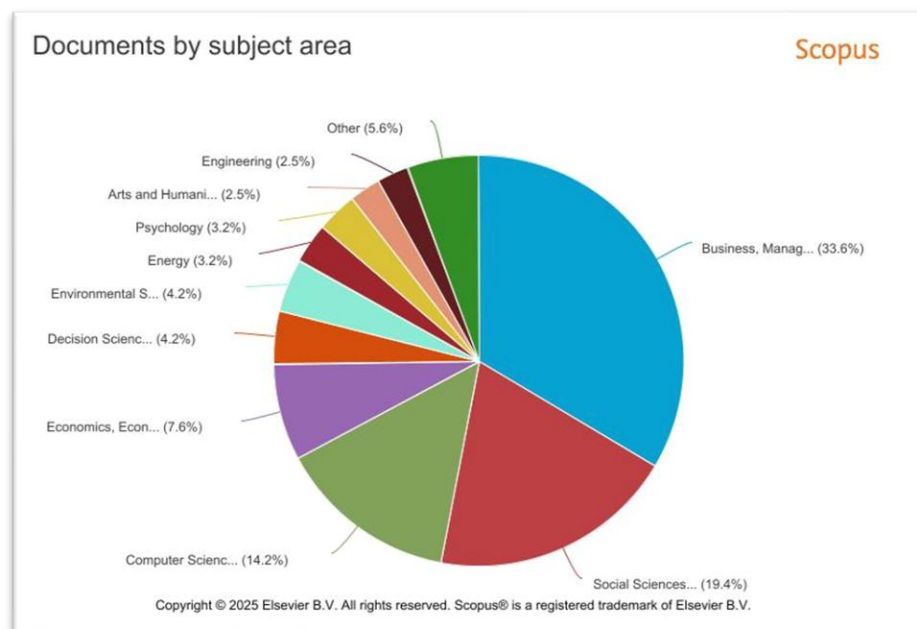


Figure 5. Trends in the Most Active Discipline
Source: Authors' Analysis (2025)

Figure 5 highlights that the field of business, management, and accounting contributes significantly, in which accounting contributes for 33.6% of the research output, making it the most productive research area. This is followed by social sciences (19.4%) and computer science (14.2%), also demonstrating high research activity and forming the top three main research areas. Disciplines such as economics, econometrics, and finance (7.6%), along with decision sciences and environmental science (4.2% each), represent fields with moderate activity. In contrast, fields such as engineering, arts and humanities, psychology, and energy (ranging from 2.5% to 3.2%), as well as other categories (5.6%), exhibit lower levels of productivity. This distribution indicates that current research is heavily concentrated in applied social sciences, management, and technology. These findings align with the research of Tam et al. (2025), who employed co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and co-word analysis techniques to map the intellectual structure and trends of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) research. Their study emphasizes management aspects, consumer behavior, and marketing strategies within the context of eWOM. This dominance underscores the relevance of eWOM in business and management literature and confirms that research in this area significantly contributes to the development of theory and practice in the commercial sector, particularly in understanding the impact of eWOM on consumer decisions and organizational strategies.

CONCLUSION

Based on a bibliometric analysis of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) research publications from 2020 to 2025, it can be concluded that the research landscape in this field continues to evolve dynamically. This study identified Asia as the leading contributor, with 209 publications, primarily from China, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia, highlighting the region's role as the epicenter of current eWOM research activity (Tang & Kim, 2022; Rajalakshmi et al., 2024). Meanwhile, international collaboration networks are strengthening, with countries such as the United States, China, and Indonesia serving as major hubs. However, intercontinental collaboration remains largely dominated by regional clusters (Shu et al., 2025; Almohaimmeed, 2020). From a disciplinary perspective, business, management, and accounting remain the most dominant fields (33.6%), followed by social sciences (19.4%) and computer science (14.2%), indicating that eWOM continues to be a major focus in digital marketing and consumer behavior studies (Tam et al., 2025). This finding is further supported by the identification of leading journals such as *Sustainability Switzerland* and the *Journal of Business Research* as the most productive publication outlets, reflecting the current research focus identified in the study (Abbas et al., 2020). The main contribution of this study lies in addressing RQ5 and complementing the limitations of previous bibliometric studies. Abbas et al. (2020) focused on earlier periods, whereas this study updates the analysis period to 2020–2025, thereby capturing the latest developments in the field of eWOM post-2018. Unlike prior studies that relied solely on VOSviewer, this research combines VOSviewer with a more comprehensive bibliometric analysis approach, resulting in a deeper and more current trend mapping. Furthermore, the findings reveal the emergence of disciplines such as environmental

science and decision sciences, alongside the increasingly prominent role of sustainability-related research in eWOM publications—new developments not identified in previous periods. This shift indicates that eWOM research is expanding beyond business and consumer aspects to encompass issues of sustainability and environmental responsibility, reflecting an evolution toward a broader, interdisciplinary focus. Thus, this study not only updates the eWOM research landscape but also broadens insights into future research directions and priorities.

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