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Review paper

Social marketing and happiness management: A bibliometric review on e-commerce context

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ABSTRACT

Introduction/Objectives: e-commerce is no longer just a sales channel. Nowadays new technologies have opened the door for e-commerce platforms such as Social Marketing (SM) or Happiness Management (HM), to engage with broader societal concerns, especially within their organisations. After a literature review where the three concepts are studied separately, a critical question yet remains underexplored: do these domains merely coexist, or can they reinforce one another in meaningful ways? And if so, what role does e-commerce play in that process? This study addresses precisely that question.

Methodology: a bibliometric review of the literature on SM and HM was implemented using the Web of Science and Scopus databases, applying the PRISMA methodology and Bibliometrix and VOSviewer tools. This combination enabled the development of co-occurrence and co-authorship maps, providing the research with greater analytical excellence.

Results: after filtering and analysing 65 articles, we discovered that e-commerce appears as a structural axis linking HM and SM, acting as a visibility channel for actions related to employee happiness. The analyses show that HM is still in a developmental phase, while SM demonstrates a more consolidated trajectory. However, both fields lack sufficiently robust collaborative authorship communities, unravelling the need to strengthen collaborative research synergies.

Conclusions: this study consolidates e-commerce as a connecting element between organisational happiness management and social marketing strategies, shaping an emerging field of research. It also shows that organisations wishing to gain a long-term competitive advantage should use digital platforms to promote social responsibility and employee well-being.

Marketing social y happiness management: revisión bibliométrica en el contexto del comercio electrónico

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

Felicidad organizacional, marketing social, comercio electrónico, bienestar, plataformas digitales, comportamiento del consumidor

Introducción/Objetivos: el comercio electrónico ya no es solo un canal de ventas. Hoy día, las nuevas tecnologías han abierto la puerta a que las plataformas de comercio electrónico se involucren en cuestiones sociales más amplias, como son el marketing social (SM) o la gestión de la felicidad (HM), especialmente dentro de sus organizaciones. Tras una revisión bibliográfica en la que se estudian los tres conceptos por separado, sigue sin explorarse una cuestión fundamental: ¿Estos conceptos simplemente coexisten o pueden reforzarse mutuamente de un modo significativo? Y si es así, ¿Qué papel desempeña el comercio electrónico en ese proceso? Este estudio aborda precisamente estas preguntas.

Metodología: se llevó a cabo una revisión bibliométrica de la literatura sobre SM y HM utilizando las bases de datos Web of Science y Scopus, aplicando la metodología PRISMA y las herramientas Bibliometrix y VOSViewer. Esta combinación ha permitido el desarrollo de mapas de coocurrencia y coautoría, lo que ha proporcionado a la investigación una excelencia analítica.

Resultados: después de filtrar y analizar 65 artículos, se ha descubierto que el comercio electrónico aparece como un eje estructural que vincula el HM y SM, actuando como canal de visibilidad para las acciones relacionadas con la felicidad de los empleados. Los análisis muestran que el HM se encuentra aún en fase de desarrollo, mientras que el SM presenta una trayectoria más consolidada. Sin embargo, ambos campos carecen de grupos destacados de autoría colaborativa consolidados, lo que pone de manifiesto la necesidad de reforzar las sinergias de investigación colaborativa.

Conclusiones: este estudio consolida el comercio electrónico como elemento de conexión entre la gestión y la felicidad organizacional y las estrategias de marketing social, dando así forma a un campo de investigación emergente. También muestra que las organizaciones que deseen obtener una ventaja competitiva a largo plazo deben utilizar plataformas digitales para promover la responsabilidad social y el bienestar de los empleados.

Introduction

Researchers and businesses deem e-commerce as a fundamental pillar of the contemporary economy. According to the data in UNCTAD (2024), the share of e-commerce has reached 25% in the global GDP for 2024. Such a skyrocketing surge in e-commerce dominance, indeed, impacts, transforms, and drives the relationship between companies and consumers who increasingly are engaged in technology-based interactive experiences (Wattoo et al., 2025).

At present, conventional retail and even wholesale markets cannot be imagined without acknowledging their deepest rethinking and transformation under the effects of e-commerce and its adjacent technologies. E-commerce is known to have its onset in the late 2000s – early 2010s, and since then its growth has been documented as unbreakable, with nearly 16-18% of GAR between 2010 and 2019, boosting up to 27% during the times of pandemic, with a recent GAR stabilisation of nearly 12% in recent years (UNCTAD, 2024).

As just noted, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the shopper experience routine that previously had tied consumers to brick-and-mortar retail. All of a sudden, overnight,

digital channels gained their precise ‘in-brain’ positioning as the only source to support living in prohibitive times. Interestingly, after the vanishing of the limitations caused by pandemic restrictions, consumers did not shift their preferences back to conventional retail, as expected in the expert community. In this regard, researchers suggest this surge was not a temporary spike but a structural shift in the economy (Roszko-Wójtowicz et al., 2024).

Furthermore, what has happened since is arguably more fascinating. Solely in the last couple of years, e-commerce, its technologies, and those that had earlier been perceived as only experimental means have started to reshape consumers’ buying habits, approaches and experiences in very concrete yet tangible ways even engaging populations who had been previously reluctant to partake in technology usage. That said, the benefits of e-commerce became so obvious that they have been accepted by the laggards. Currently, renowned technologies such as AR, VR, GenAI, to name a few, allow consumers to evaluate products prior to purchase with a level of detail precision formerly unattainable. Early evidence shows that these and various other technologies genuinely improve value perception by consumers and how

their transactions are completed online, in a timely and transparent manner (Dong et al., 2025).

Another notable technology, livestreaming, meanwhile, has introduced something different. It generates an effect of persuasive pressure on the consumer, pushing their quick purchase intentions, sometimes impulsive ‘not-need-this-thing’ decisions. According to Bai et al. (2024), such a rush reduces the conventional decision-making timeline characteristic of the past era. In addition, there is AI, which is proliferating at a high and even threatening speed. The role of AI is harder to pin down because it touches so many parts of the shopping process. Recent work in this regard points to an outcome that goes beyond efficiency. AI is considered to make consumers not just more decisive but, in some measurable sense, happier as Cuesta-Valiño et al. (2025b) pointed out in their study.

According to the literature, various researchers have indicated the benefits brought about by e-commerce in achieving strategic relevance for firms of all sizes. SMEs, micro firms, and independent entrepreneurs are in a particular ‘win-win’ situation in this respect. For this class of enterprises, e-commerce activates substantial yet affordable benefits of geographic expansion, unlimited 24/7 functioning time. Other gains include personalised customer experiences, the optimisation of logistics, transactional and general business processes (Costa & Rodrigues, 2024; Lambillotte et al., 2022). On top of that, personalised customer experiences, which are a genuine gem of e-commerce platforms, have markedly influenced immense opportunities to generate and implement consumer-centric marketing strategies, allowing small businesses to improve comprehension of consumer behaviour and needs; and then, to share innovative information in an increasingly competitive global environment (Rosário & Raimundo, 2021).

Moreover, SMEs can benefit substantially from incorporating new technologies such as the noted GenAI LLMs. In this vein, Barata et al. (2024) argue that GenAI LLMs, if combined with agile methodologies, enable an even greater degree of customer personalisation, optimisation, and adaptability. Nonetheless, the reality is not that explicit as it may seem. Firstly, depending on the gender or whether the company is small or medium-sized, a different strategy will be followed to promote organisational well-being (Martínez-Arvizu et al., 2025a; Salazar-Altamirano et al., 2025c). And secondly, the literature reveals several notable findings in this regard, indicating, for instance, that a firm can face a variety of challenges, such as technological complexity and the rapid speed of technology development, security, compliance, regulations and privacy issues (Gupta et al., 2023).

In such a reality, e-commerce provides a fertile ground for integrating the SM concept with organisational HM models. This can become feasible through e-commerce platforms, which leverage the dissemination of socially oriented messages. Such messages make it possible for firms to deliver messages to the public, communicating the firms’ responsible initiatives unambiguously, generating a positive perception that extends to both consumers and employees (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2024a; Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2025a), as is already done through other platforms such as social

media (Galiano-Coronil et al., 2021). In this domain, Christie and Venter De Villiers (2023) found that e-commerce platforms help implement the SM concept and accompanying activities aimed at boosting sustainable consumption and changing consumer behaviour for the better. At the same time, employee attitudes are increasingly affected by workplace well-being (Al Haziati, 2021). This is notably obvious in digitalised organisations, which seek to manage and measure employee happiness using tools such as Human Resource Analytics (HRA) to create value (Abellán-Sevilla & Ortiz-de-Urbina-Criado, 2023).

These developments are significant on their own but they also raise a wider question that the literature has not fully addressed so far. SM, and HM have both received scholarly attention to date as separate fields in academic marketing, but few studies have explored their intersection in the context of e-commerce using bibliometric methods. What remains unclear, nonetheless, is whether e-commerce acts merely as a context for these conversations or as a mechanism that ties them together and amplifies their effects. With this in mind, we arrive at the gist of the question this study endeavours to address: what role does e-commerce play in that process? That said, the purpose of this study is to examine an extant corpus of the academic marketing literature dedicated to SM and HM themes which consider e-commerce settings. More specifically, the study strives to classify and categorise the relevant publications in order to yield a clearer knowledge of these concepts. Finally, it seeks to offer academic and managerial recommendations for future research.

Research background

HM in the extant literature

In the observable history of mankind, individuals have always sought happiness as a source for a better way of life. This pursuit has always been pertinent to the general and work life of humans. Regarding the latter, the literature has amply explored job satisfaction as a form of happiness relevant to the context of the workplace, leading to the emergence of different tools for managing this construct such as the Work Attitudinal and Values Ethics Scale (Mercader et al., 2025b). In this vein, HM has emerged as a managerial tool and as a way of talent retention (Martínez Arvizu et al., 2025b). It is considered to improve employees’ quality of life and well-being according to Rando Cueto et al. (2024).

Researchers define the HM concept as an organisational culture and even a management philosophy, aimed at handling personnel happiness within the boundaries of the firm. HM comprises various constructs, namely internal communication, caring leadership, and innovation to improve personnel well-being, productivity, and work engagement (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2023).

This management approach has proven to be a useful tool for ensuring employee happiness across several processes. For example, HM is associated positively with organisation and commitment (Galván-Vela et al., 2026), digital

transformation (Dudezert et al., 2023) and occupational resilience, respectful engagement, or autonomous respect (Willett et al., 2026). Due to this digitisation in the workplace and the increase in the speed of life, FOMO (fear of missing out), life costs, political uncertainty, job insecurity and the proliferation of remote working modes, psychosocial risks such as fatigue, escapism and isolation are becoming increasingly common in the workplace. It is therefore necessary for organisations to promote happiness in the workplace to avoid these risks and maintain commitment and resilience (Salazar-Altamirano et al., 2025a). It has been demonstrated that happiness is able to be both an outcome and a driver of sustainable digital strategies. Thus, evidence shows that happiness, in addition to acting as an impetus for the implementation and consolidation of sustainable digital strategies, may also emerge because of them (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez et al., 2024).

Cueva-Estrada and Sánchez-Bayón (2024) examined the above-noted HM dimensions. They provided empirical evidence for factors associated with HM, which include social responsibility, organisational climate, human capital engagement, and intrapreneurship. In addition, other recent studies, such as the one proposed by Mercader et al. (2025a) further highlight business training, personal ethics and corporate social responsibility as predictors of happiness at work. These authors also have indicated HM's significance for firms and pointed to the cross-disciplinary research opportunity in their study, which sparks scholar's interest in many fields and sectors of research. Furthermore, other researchers in the field measured the effects of emotional 'salary', organisational justice, peculiarities of the corporate culture and determined their positive influence on HM and its outcomes (Díaz García et al., 2023; Martínez Falco et al., 2023; Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2024).

Next, according to Martínez Falco et al. (2023), by implementing HM, firms could generate a significant impact on employees' well-being, and, consequently, their happiness with their job and life. Furthermore, Pandey and Sharma (2025) echoed this finding and add another notable finding: happy employees tend to be more creative, diligent, engaged and, hence, they attain a higher degree of job performance. In addition, HM is positioned as a strategic tool to maintain employee retention (Martínez Falco et al., 2023; Salazar-Altamirano et al., 2025b).

To implement and measure this management approach, the intelligent HR models proposed by Abellán-Sevilla and Ortiz-de-Urbina-Criado (2023) stand out, along with the human resources analytics frameworks put forward by Abellán-Sevilla et al. (2024).

Review of SM research

SM is defined in the literature as the implementation of marketing strategies, activities and campaigns aimed at ensuring the acceptance of socially savvy concepts, ideas and paradigms by the target audiences. Coined by Kotler and Zaltman (1971), SM is expected to make an impression on marketing strategies development and decisions accompanying it, especially in terms of price, product, communication and distribution. Even approaches to

market research initiatives should also be aligned to the concept of SM (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971).

In this vein, SM seeks to influence the voluntary behaviours of the audiences targeted by a firm; therefore, this discipline does not aim to impose a behaviour but rather to encourage a behaviour that is usually voluntary (Baptista et al., 2021). Over the years, SM campaigns have focused on issues related to health (e.g., tobacco-use prevention), injury prevention (road safety, emergency preparedness, etc.), environmental protection, community-related issues (volunteering, animal rights, caring for elders, etc.) (Kotler & Lee, 2005) or nowadays AI-based application new scenarios (Ngobeni et al., 2026). The selection of specific SM direction uses to depend on the organisation strategy development based on its interests and in natural accordance with its business, is highlighted in Kotler and Lee (2005).

As such, SM has built its fences and positioned itself as an effective tool for modifying social behaviours and norms (Durmus Senyapar & Bayendir, 2023), having shown its ability to address social and behavioural problems at the micro, meso, and macro levels (Akbar & Barnes, 2024). Indeed, HM generates a constructive influence both on the individual and on the organization, promoting it (Baptista et al., 2021). On the individual level and in the extensively studied context of generations, extant research has shown that younger generations, mainly Generation Z, feel happy and develop emotional engagement with employer brands if they recognise brands' social orientation and benefits (Mishra & Das, 2024). At the organisational level, several researchers have examined the SM concept and determined its generalisability and viability in various sectors, including tourism, fashion, and education (Faludi, 2025; Harris, 2022; Truong et al., 2024) as well as in the other various business functions and specialisations (Baranowski et al., 2024).

To provide firm theoretical grounds and pillars to support the SM concept, it hinges on several frameworks, among which the following stand out: the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the Health Belief Model, Social Cognitive Theory, SM's Ps Model, the Social Norms Theory, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the Theory of Reasoned Action, and the Transtheoretical Model, to name a few (Durmus Senyapar & Bayendir, 2023).

Interestingly, in this regard, Akbar et al. (2023) propose a conceptual framework that identifies four key themes for recognising failure in these actions. They argue that failures in SM implementation stem from the outcomes when (a) the desired behaviours are not achieved, (b) the tactics used to measure failure are insufficient, (c) the process itself fails, and (d) failures are either not measured or reframed as lessons learned.

Linkage between SM and HM

The increasing digitalisation of business, inclusive of the proliferation of e-commerce have radically transformed the relationship among consumers, organisations, and technology (Roszko-Wójtowicz et al., 2024). This determined phenomenon creates a controversial role for e-commerce technologies. On one hand, innovative technologies do indeed provide a myriad of benefits that improve consumer

happiness and well-being. Simultaneously, the same technologies denote well-studied restrictions and even hazards, altogether mitigating consumer happiness. To tackle the latter, the literature suggests positioning well-being-centred approaches into marketing strategies, according to McLean et al. (2025).

In this vein, SM assumes a relevant role by promoting values, attitudes, and practices aimed at improving the quality of life, with consequences on both individual and community well-being (Galiano-Coronil et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022). The nexus between SM and HM emerges particularly when both are oriented towards shared well-being objectives. When HM and SM initiatives work in tandem, the benefits tend to be tangible. They comprise higher satisfaction among both employees and consumers, and, over time, a sturdier firm's position in terms of sustainability and competitiveness. Galiano-Coronil et al. (2024) and Costa and Martins (2025) both arrive at this conclusion, though from somewhat different angles. Abbas (2024) further developed this idea in his research. He looked at advertising rooted in ethical and solidarity-driven messaging, and what he found was a forceful inference: such campaigns do not just improve brand image, they also generate positive word of mouth (WOM).

The implications of the noted studies are significant for the academia and management practices. In this vein, if socially purposeful communication can simultaneously serve a marketing function and contribute to well-being, then it may be doing something more fundamental, acting as a connective thread between SM strategy and the broader pursuit of individual and organisational welfare. Elias Zambrano et al. (2021) picked up on a related thread, arguing that campaigns built around responsible consumption can stimulate

personal happiness in ways that reinforce marketing's social role.

This phenomenon extends beyond external image management. Research by Rando-Cueto et al. (2024) and Galiano-Coronil and Blanco-Moreno (2024) demonstrates that social marketing initiatives not only reduce environmental harm and positively influence consumer perceptions but also unexpectedly improve employee morale, job satisfaction, and, consequently, organisational performance.

One study seemed to find a reason for this unpredictable finding. Ravina-Ripoll et al. (2023) determined that if the company does not solely declare SM and HM values to the public but implements these practices and positions them in the heart of the organisational management system, it appears human-centred and oriented towards sustainable development. Fulfilling such practices implies a shift from 'nice-to-have programmes' to real routine management activities so the firm's personnel understand what the company actually is.

Nonetheless, there is an employee side to this that often gets overlooked. Galiano-Coronil et al. (2024) found that workers pay attention to things beyond salary and working conditions. They notice the company's social reputation. They care about how people relate to each other inside the organisation. And this sensitivity increases when SM initiatives explicitly target well-being. Peña et al. (2024) arrived at a compatible finding from a different angle — when social engagement and well-being management are woven into strategy, the effect on organisational performance is not abstract. It shows up in the numbers.

A conceptual model (Figure 1) is proposed based on a literature review. It illustrates the interrelationships between SM and HM within the e-commerce environment. In this



Figure 1. Conceptual model

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

framework, e-commerce serves as the central context that supports the concepts of HM and SM, enabling both the external projection of socially responsible initiatives and the internal management of organisational well-being. The synergistic interaction between these concepts produces complementary effects on consumer and employee well-being, which ultimately influence organisational performance.

Methodology

Type, scope and research design

To contribute to the study of the correlation between HM and SM within the context of e-commerce, a bibliometric review of the literature on both concepts was conducted. This article follows a quantitative bibliometric approach with an exploratory and descriptive scope. The study has a non-experimental research design, as it analyses previously published scientific literature without manipulating variables.

Data

To encompass the largest possible number of publications covering these constructs and to guarantee that the research relied on solid and reliable databases, both Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus were employed, as they are widely recognised as leading databases in the academic field.

For this purpose, the PRISMA 2020 methodology was applied, and the information was retrieved from both databases on 3 October 2025. The bibliometric search strategy is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results and search terms on WoS and Scopus

Search terms	Registers
"Happiness at work" OR "Workplace happiness" OR "Employee happiness" OR "Happiness management" OR "worker well-being" OR "well-being at work" OR "Well-being management" OR "employee well-being" OR "Happ* organisations" OR "corporate happiness" OR "Corporate well-being" AND "E-commerce" OR Online commerce" OR "Online Shopping" OR "Digital Platform*" OR "Electronic Commerce" OR "Online Retail*" OR "Internet Shopping"	WoS Core Collection- 17 SCOPUS-35
"social marketing" OR "societal marketing" OR "public campaigns" OR "behaviour change marketing" OR "social change marketing" OR "social marketing programmes" OR "social marketing campaigns" AND "E-commerce" OR Online commerce" OR "Online Shopping" OR "Digital Platform*" OR "Electronic Commerce" OR "Online Retail*" OR "Internet Shopping"	WoS Core Collection- 52 SCOPUS-80

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The conditions and terms for the search of relevant publications were derived and contrasted with a preliminary literature review in the fields of SM and HM. After evaluating several alternatives and combinations, the selected terms were considered the most appropriate to represent the conceptual scope of the study. A deliberately broad approach was adopted to capture the various perspectives through which these concepts intersect with e-commerce.

Following the initial search, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. First, only documents classified as articles were selected in order to ensure the use of peer-reviewed and validated scientific evidence. Second, the results were filtered by language, limiting the selection to publications in English and Spanish. Finally, the search was restricted to relevant research areas. In WoS, the selected categories were Business Economics, Social Sciences Other Topics, Behavioural Sciences, and Social Issues; in Scopus, the areas included Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences, and Economics, Econometrics and Finance.

Procedure

Initially, this bibliometric study focused on scientific publications addressing the relationship between HM and SM. However, due to the limited number of results obtained in both databases, the scope was adjusted to analyse publications on Happiness Management and Social Marketing separately, both within the context of e-commerce.

After collecting all scientific documents from the initial database searches, a depuration process was carried out following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. This process involved the systematic screening and filtering of records based on the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

As a result, a final sample consisting of 17 articles related to HM and 48 articles related to SM was obtained. The complete selection process is illustrated in the flow diagrams (Figure 2 and Figure 3), which summarise the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages.

Data analysis

For the analysis of the bibliometric data, Bibliometrix software was used to merge and standardise the datasets obtained from both databases, enabling their joint examination. In addition, VOSviewer was employed to extract and visualise bibliometric networks.

These tools allowed the analysis of co-authorship patterns, citation networks, and keyword co-occurrence, facilitating the identification of relationships among authors, countries, and research trends within the field.

Ethical considerations

This study is based exclusively on secondary data obtained from publicly accessible academic databases, specifically Web of Science and Scopus. Therefore, it does not involve human participants and does not require informed consent. All data used are part of the scientific literature and were handled in accordance with ethical standards for research integrity and transparency.

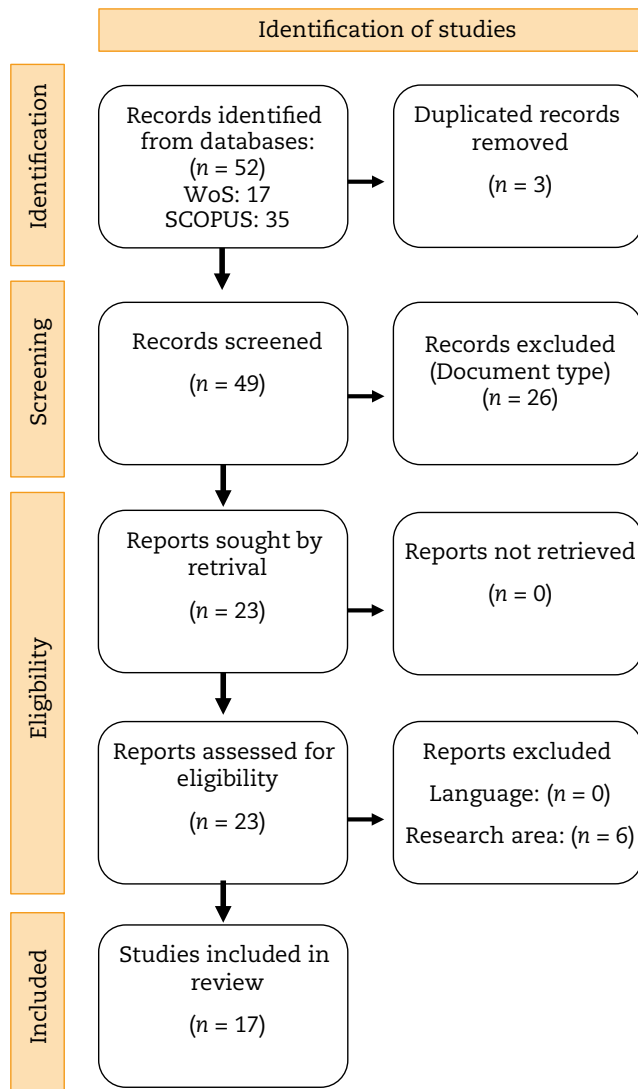


Figure 2. Flowchart of the HM screening process

Source: Authors' own elaboration. Adapted from PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021).

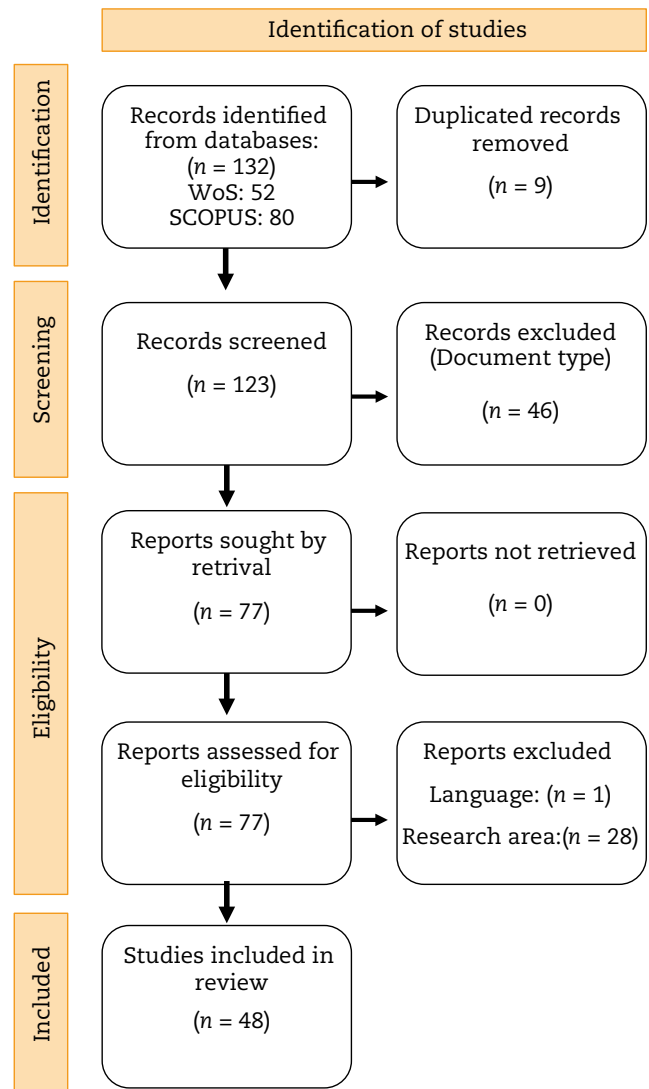


Figure 3. Flowchart of the SM screening process

Source: Authors' own elaboration. Adapted from PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021).

Results

Scientific production

The analysis of the scientific mapping presents data from 2008, the year in which the first publication scoped by our study was published, up to 2025. The examined research stream evolution (Figure 4) shows a sustainable and gradual increase over time in research related to the concepts of SM and HM. It has clearly visible trajectories and magnitudes, including certain but short periods of unproductivity and decline in the number of published works. Conversely, this noted trend is not reflected in the citations recorded in the academic literature, which exhibit a steady upward growth.

The publication timelines for SM and HM reveal two fields at very different stages of development. SM, which was coined earlier than HM, started gaining traction apparently earlier. Publication numbers began climbing

noticeably around 2015, and from 2020 onward, the output has remained consistently high. Citations reveal a similar story, though with an earlier starting point. The year 2000 marked a turning point, after which citation counts rose sharply, suggesting the field was entering a more mature, consolidated phase with more scholars interested in this discipline.

The HM research stream is distinctive. It is a late arrival by comparison, with publications only beginning to increase around the year 2020. There are obvious signs of researchers' activity in this field thanks to the growth of publications quantity. The year 2025 appears to show a spike, but it is too early to say whether this represents sustained growth or a temporary surge of interest. Apparently due to the relative novelty of this stream of research, a number of citations might seem modest, although the upward trajectory is obvious. The field, in short, is still building its foundation and seems promising and appealing to academia.

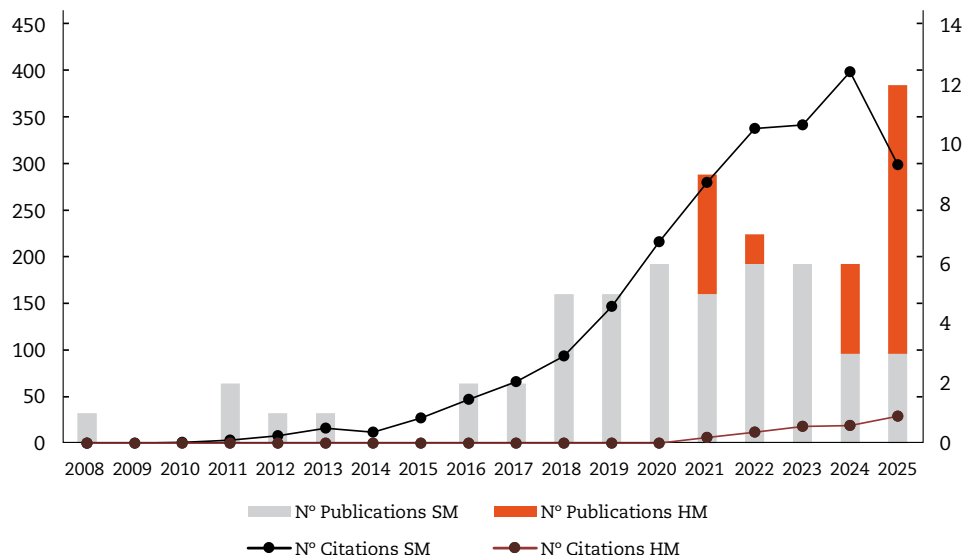


Figure 4. Evolution of publications and citations of both concepts

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Citation report

The analysis of the citation reports from 65 articles, examined under this study, reveals nearly 2,400 references in total. These numbers point to a marked difference depending on the topic, whether it is SM or HM. Table 2 presents the data corresponding to the total number of publications, overall citation volume, average citations per article, and the h-index associated with each of the constructs analysed.

Table 2. Citation report

	Social Marketing	Happiness Management
Articles	48	17
Total citations	2301	84
Average	47,94	4,94
H Index	18	5

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The results clearly show that SM is a more consolidated field with a longer research tradition. It has an established h-index and an interesting average citation rate, considering that the first article was published in 2008. In contrast, HM, being more recent, has an h-index of 5 and a low average number of citations per article, which is to be expected in emerging research areas.

Literature mapping

Based on all the scientific production analysed, Table 3 presents the most cited articles. Given that both SM and HM are relatively recent research concepts within the context

of e-commerce, these articles represent the main theoretical references currently available. Their analysis, therefore, enables the identification of the conceptual foundations and the evolution of knowledge in both fields.

A glance at the citation rankings makes one thing immediately clear: SM-focused articles are prevailing. The three most-cited studies all deal with consumer behaviour in digital settings, and while each takes a slightly different point of view, they converge on a shared set of concerns: social influence, trust, and how people come to accept new technologies. What runs through all three is the idea that commerce does not take place in isolation; it is shaped by social interactions and, crucially, by what other users say about their experiences.

Interestingly, one publication stands out. Oliveira et al. (2016) have accumulated 931 citations, which puts this paper well ahead of the rest. The reason is not difficult to find, as this article alone tackles something practitioners care deeply about, namely, how digital recommendations function and why they matter for trust-building in online environments. For anyone designing SM campaigns regarding e-commerce, the implications of that paper remain directly relevant.

The HM side of the ranking looks quite different. The first HM-related article does not appear until much further down, with only 37 citations (Toth et al. (2021). This contribution is nonetheless worth noting. Building on the Work Engagement Theory originally proposed by Schaufeli et al. (2002), they found that entrepreneurial passion correlates positively with work engagement, and, perhaps less intuitively, that job demands can improve engagement when the work environment is sufficiently complex. It is a finding that complicates simple narratives about well-being at work, even if the citation count has not yet caught up with its relevance.

Table 3. Most cited articles

N°	Authors	Title	Source	Concept	N° cit
1	Oliveira et al. (2016)	Mobile payment: Understanding the determinants of customer adoption and intention to recommend the technology	Computers in Human Behaviour	MS	931
2	Shin (2013)	User experience in social commerce: in friends we trust	Behaviour & Information Technology	MS	302
3	Yusuf et al. (2018)	Influence of e-WOM engagement on consumer purchase intention in social commerce	Journal of Services Marketing	MS	236
4	Zhang et al. (2021)	E-service quality on live streaming platforms: swift guanxi perspective	Journal of Services Marketing	MS	192
5	Jackler et al. (2019)	Promotion of tobacco products on Facebook: policy versus practice	Tobacco Control	MS	64
6	Zhu et al. (2016)	Exploring factors-of user's peer-influence behaviour in social media on purchase intention: Evidence from QQ	Computers in Human Behaviour	MS	53
7	Purdy (2011)	Using the Internet and social media to promote condom use in Turkey	Reproductive Health Matters	MS	51
8	Chang (2008)	Choice, perceived control, and customer satisfaction: The psychology of online service recovery	Cyberpsychology & Behaviour	MS	47
9	Vithayathil et al. (2020)	Social media use and consumer shopping preferences	International Journal of Information Management	MS	42
10	Toht et al. (2021)	Passionate and engaged? Passion for inventing and work engagement in different knowledge work contexts	International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research	HM	37

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Table 4. Top publishing journals. Q and h-indices

N	Source	N° Articles	Q	H
1	Tobacco Control	4	1	147
2	Sustainability	3	2	207
3	Computers in Human Behaviour	2	1	275
4	Journal of Services Marketing	2	1	130

Source: Authors' own elaboration using VOSviewer.

Not many journals have published extensively on these topics, but the ones that have tend to carry real weight as it can be seen in table 4. Tobacco Control leads with four articles, a Q1 ranking, and an h-index of 147 — numbers that speak for themselves when it comes to credibility in SM applied to public health. Sustainability comes next with three publications, though it sits at Q2, making it the only journal in the top group outside the first quartile. Computers in Human Behaviour and the Journal of Services Marketing round out the Q1 entries, both dealing with questions about consumer behaviour and digital services that overlap with e-commerce and HM research.

Beyond these points, the picture becomes more fragmented and multifaceted. The rest of the journals in the sample contributed only one publication each. That scarcity could be read negatively, but it also points to something else: research on these topics is not confined to a handful of

outlets. It is scattered across a surprisingly broad range of sources, which may say less about the quality of the work than about the fact that no single journal has claimed ownership of this intersection as yet.

Table 5. Top publishing countries

	SM	HM	Total
1 USA	15	5	20
2 India	8	4	12
3 China	9	1	10
4 Peoples R China	7	1	8
5 Malaysia	5	1	5

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Regarding the countries of publication of articles selected for the bibliographic review, as can be seen in Table 5, there is a clear leader. The United States tops the list in terms of both academic production on HM and SM. It should be noted that its closest rivals are located in Asia, so it is fair to say that, taken together, they account for the largest number of studies on the concepts analysed.

Co-occurrence and authorship

To deepen the analysis of the knowledge structure associated with the concepts of SM and HM within e-commerce,

bibliometric maps were generated based on the records retrieved from WoS and Scopus. This allowed the visualisation of keyword co-occurrence and coauthor networks among the publications analysed, supporting the identification of central themes, conceptual linkages, and joint relationships among authors.

Figure 5 reveals three distinct keyword clusters around SM. The blue cluster is perhaps the most telling. It traces how SM has gradually moved towards digital strategies aimed at changing consumer behaviour and driving interaction on platforms. “Social Marketing”, “Social Media”, and “Electronic Commerce” are situated at the centre of this cluster, which makes sense given how closely these concepts have become linked in practice. The green cluster is less immediately exciting but no less important: it captures the methodological backbone of the research. Terms such as “Article” or “Human” reflect how scholars have approached the field rather than what the field is about. Then, there is the red cluster, sitting somewhat apart from the other two. Its position is not accidental. It signals a growing, if still developing, interest in well-being management as a distinct area of research.

Figure 6 exhibits a different story. The HM keywords are there, but the connections between them are noticeably weaker. It has a lower clustering coefficient, as evidenced by the larger empty space between nodes. One way to perceive it is that the field has not yet consolidated around a shared vocabulary. But another, perhaps more productive, reading is that e-commerce and digital channels are only now emerging as relevant spaces for well-being research, and the map is capturing that process in real time.

The combined co-occurrence map visualised by Figure 7 is a research piece where inferences become even more interesting. It demonstrates that when SM and HM keywords appear together in the research, the result is a dense but legible structure. SM, social media, and impact are in the centre, pulling together what might otherwise remain separate conversations. Digital communication techniques are on one side, while organisational well-being can be noted

on the other. What the map suggests, taken as a whole, is that e-commerce may be functioning as a kind of meeting ground: a space where purpose-driven marketing and HM are not just coexisting but actively reinforcing each other within a broader sustainability framework. In Table 6, we indicate a list of authors linking the SM – HM construct in the last five years.

Table 6. Top publishing authors linking SM and HM in the last 5 years

		N° Publications	H-Index
1	Rundle-Thiele, Sharyn	22	41
2	Ravina-Ripoll, Rafael	12	19
3	Dietrich, Timo	10	24
4	Akbar, Bilal	9	6
5	Srivastava, Shalini	8	26

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

As can be seen, the most prolific authors who connect both concepts have a high h-index, which signals the extant interest in the field and their expertise. In terms of this output, these vibrant authors exceed the field's average by publishing at least two articles per year, especially in the case of Rundle-Thiele, who reaches the publications count of more than four per year.

The co-authorship maps for SM and HM (Figs. 8 & 9) demonstrate two alternative approaches of how research communities have organised themselves. In the SM map, the clusters are denser and slightly larger. It is what one would expect from a field that has had more time to mature. The HM map is quite different. The network is visibly more fragmented, with fewer links between the nodes, which is consistent with a concept that is still finding its grounds in the literature.

What both maps have in common, though, is arguably more revealing than what separates them. In neither case do authors appear to be collaborating much across

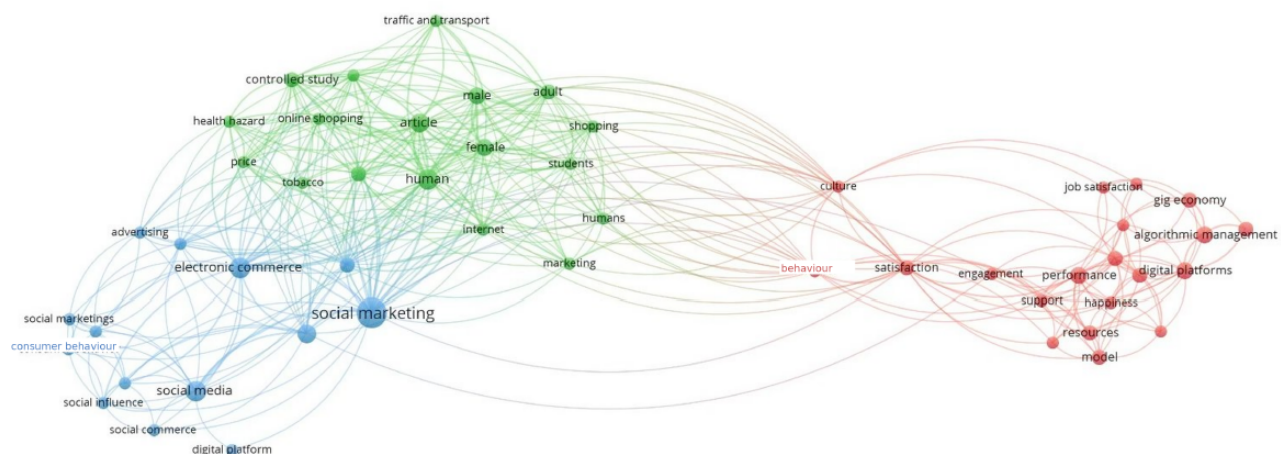


Figure 5. SM co-occurrence map

Source: Authors' own elaboration using VOSviewer.

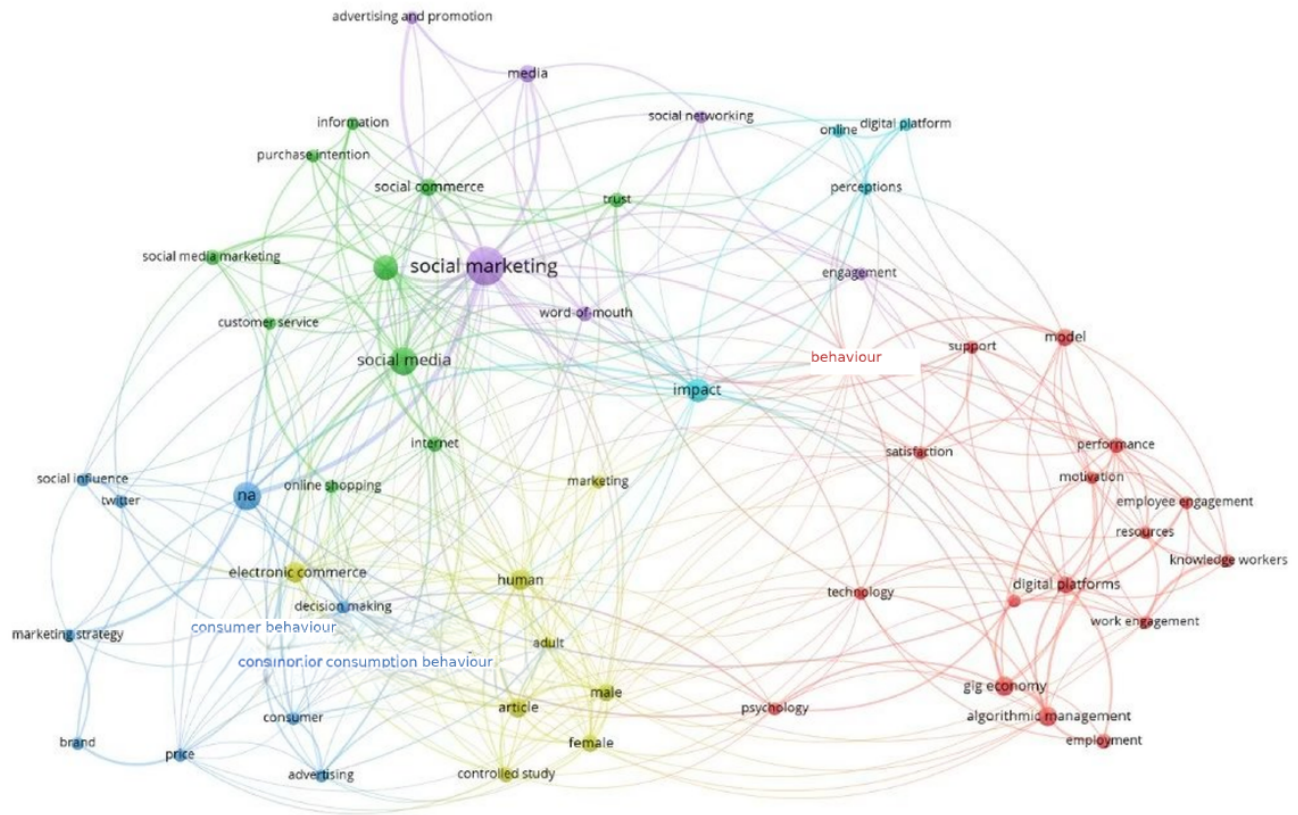


Figure 6. HM co-occurrence map

Source: Authors' own elaboration using VOSviewer.

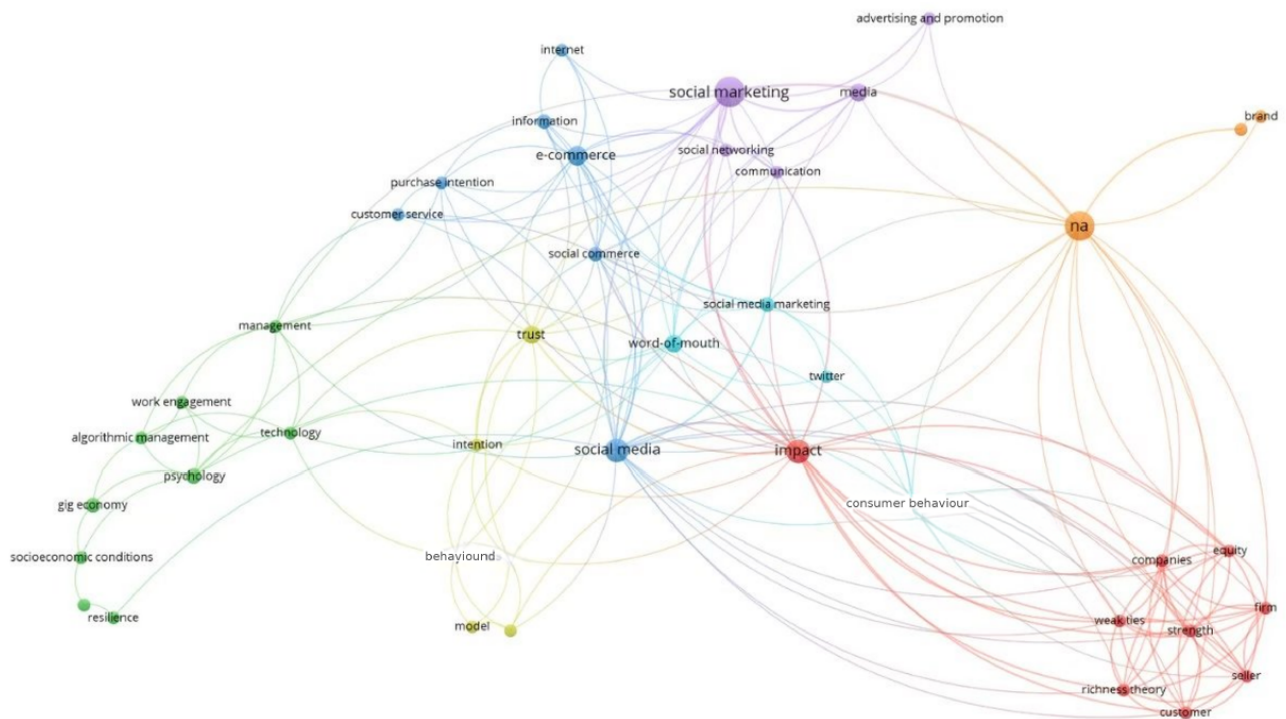


Figure 7. HM+ SM co-occurrence map

Source: Authors' own elaboration using VOSviewer.

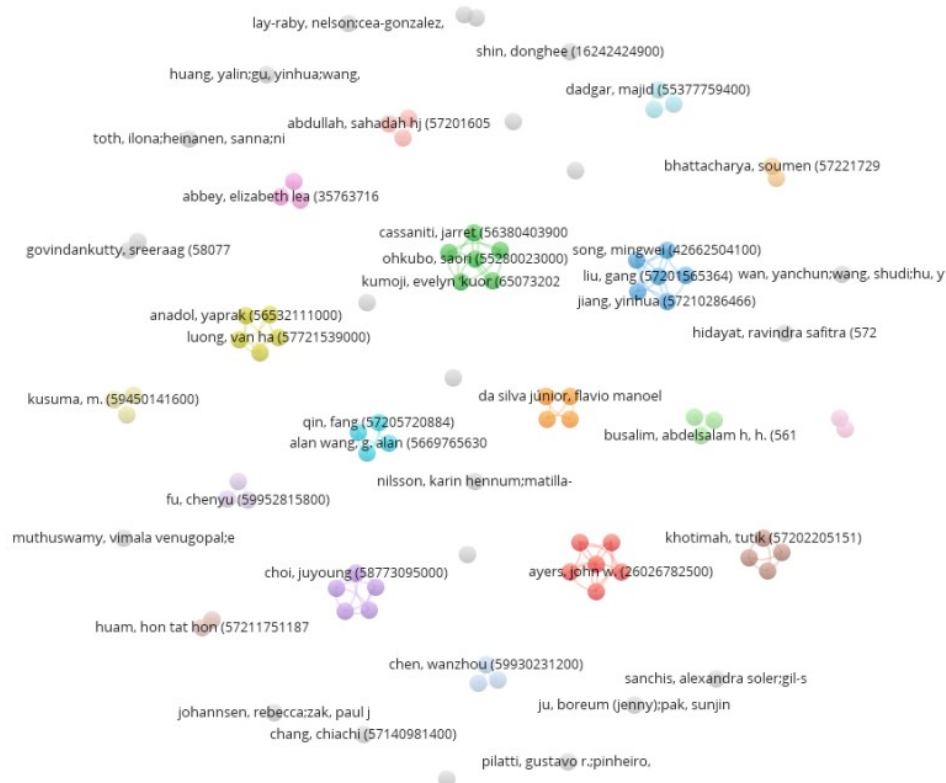


Figure 8. SM co-authorship map

Source: Authors' own elaboration using VOSviewer

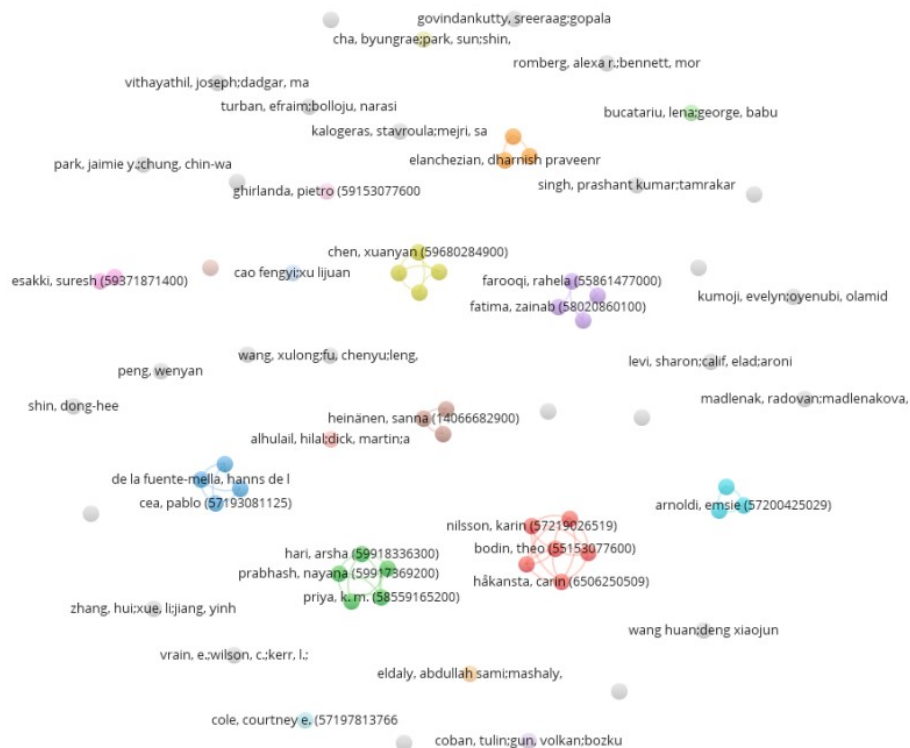


Figure 9. HM co-authorship map

Source: Authors' own elaboration using VOSviewer.

cluster boundaries. The groups are there, but they are largely talking to themselves. This is a problem if the goal is to build a coherent body of knowledge that bridges SM and HM. Yet it reinforces the argument that deliberate efforts to connect these two research communities are not just desirable but overdue.

Discussion of the findings

Theoretical discussion

As a key takeaway note, the completed study has determined that research streams on HM and SM have been gradually proliferating in the recent years. Another vantage point of this study is that e-commerce may be the thread that links them together. The co-occurrence map supports this finding as e-commerce does not sit passively between the two fields but appears to actively channel SM strategies towards organisational happiness, all within a framework that takes sustainability and collective well-being seriously. That said, the present study reveals a significant gap noted in the literature. As of now, not a single article found in either WoS or Scopus platforms ties all three concepts together in a single study. The linkage between them, in other words, exists in the data but is not yet reflected in the extant publications themselves.

This finding comes to light as SM literature has been around longer, has a more settled theoretical vocabulary, and unsurprisingly scores higher on citation metrics such as the h-index. HM is a different case entirely — younger, growing fast, and still working through what its core ideas actually are (Martínez-Falcó et al., 2023; Pandey & Sharma, 2025). That difference in maturity matters because it shapes what kinds of questions researchers feel equipped to ask. E-commerce, for its part, remains surprisingly underexplored in relation to both fields. Most of the existing work treats organisational and consumer perspectives separately, which makes it difficult to build the kind of integrated models that e-commerce probably requires (Goyal & Deshwal, 2024). The encouraging part is that the conceptual links are already visible in the co-occurrence data. They are just waiting for someone to develop them.

Managerial discussion

From a managerial standpoint, regarding SM, the digital environment plays a fundamental role in the development and consolidation of these strategies. In this context, third-party recommendations — particularly highlighted in the most cited studies in the field (Oliveira et al., 2016; Shin, 2013; Yusuf et al., 2018) — stand out. This form of recommendation, also known as electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), has a strong impact on online purchasing attitudes (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022), especially when recommendations come from friends and close social circles (Shin, 2013). Therefore, e-commerce can become an essential platform for communicating SM actions related to organisational well-being and happiness, acting as a digital amplifier of

corporate commitment and positive experiences of internal stakeholders, particularly company employees.

Social discussion

Stepping back from the numbers, the bibliometric data also has a social sense and meaning. SM has not stood still, as it has been evolving for years, and one of the directions that evolution has taken is towards the workplace. HM has become a recurring stream of research whenever scholars examine how SM principles play out inside organisations rather than in consumer-facing campaigns.

The evidence of this point is consistent. Firms that commit to social and environmental responsibility tend to end up with more satisfied employees. Rando-Cueto et al. (2024) and Galiano-Coronil and Blanco-Moreno (2024) both documented this, working independently. What Galiano-Coronil et al. (2024) and Costa and Martins (2025) added to the picture is that folding HM into SM strategy does not just help employees feel better. It appears to benefit customers too and being a part that gets management's attention it contributes to sustainable outcomes and competitive positioning. The practical question, then, is how organisations communicate these commitments. Digital environments seem to be part of the answer. They offer a channel through which social and environmental values can reach both internal audiences and the public, and early indications suggest that this visibility, in and of itself, has a positive effect on employee satisfaction.

Limitations and future research

This study is not without limitations. It is a bibliometric study, not an empirical one, which means everything presented here is filtered through what other researchers have published to date. The analysis cannot test causal relationships directly. It can only map the findings stemming from the extant literature. We also can document an issue of conceptual maturity. Some of the constructs examined, HM for example, have not been developed far enough for researchers to draw firm connections between them with confidence. These are real constraints, not just ritual disclaimers. They point directly to what needs to happen next: empirical work that tests whether the links visible in the co-occurrence data hold up when subjected to econometric modelling. Can SM, e-commerce, and HM be shown to influence each other in measurable ways? The bibliometric evidence suggests they would. But that claim needs numbers behind it.

Conclusions

Because of this analysis, we can conclude that conclude that Happiness Management, Social Marketing, and e-commerce conform a conceptual triangle with significant potential for sustainable research and business practice. However, although no studies currently integrate these three constructs simultaneously, our results suggest that e-commerce may be positioned as a structural pillar, connecting

HM with SM. Furthermore, we observed a clear gap between each concept. While SM shows greater maturity, HM remains an emerging field which is still progressing and consolidating as a theoretical and corporate concept. In this context, e-commerce and e-WOM are greater tools for promoting and reinforcing the impact of social responsibility initiatives, including actions with employees and internal stakeholders as a HM corporate strategy. In this sense, integrating HM as a social marketing strategy of strength and corporate commitment, at the same time, enhances sustainability, competitiveness, and collective well-being.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing financial or non-financial interests that could have influenced the work reported in this study.

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

During the preparation of this paper, the authors used AI-assisted systems, specifically ChatGPT (version 5.2), to assist with language polishing, grammar checking and stylistic refinement. After using this AI system, the authors carefully analysed and edited the document and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the content of the published article, including theoretical development, arguments and interpretations.

Authors' contribution

Pedro Cuesta-Valiño: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Fundraising, Research, Methodology, Project management, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualisation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing; Patricia Durán-Álamo: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Fundraising, Research, Methodology, Project management, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualisation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing; Israel González-Santos: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Fundraising, Research, Methodology, Project management, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualisation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing; Sergey Kazakov: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Fundraising, Research, Methodology, Project management, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualisation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

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