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41

A Decade of Visual Marketing in a Digital Environment: A Narrative Review

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Abstract: Research on visual marketing in the digital environment has primarily focused on social media platforms and has been predominantly experimental. However, there is still a lack of comprehensive reviews that assess the extent of research conducted on digital visual marketing to date. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a review of existing research to explore various possibilities within this topic. The research identifies frequently emerging concepts, research trends, areas of study, and the underlying philosophical foundations (paradigms) employed in research from 2012 to 2022. Utilizing the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method and a narrative approach, the study reveals that digital marketing, social media, influencer marketing, advertising, Instagram, augmented reality, social networks, eye-tracking, food marketing, and visual analysis are among the most commonly used concepts in the research. Notably, marketing management significantly dominates the field, indicating that research on digital visual marketing topics has predominantly followed a "monodisciplinary" approach. However, there is a recent emergence of netnography methods and the borrowing of critical theory (culture studies) as a form of interpretive paradigm, providing alternative perspectives. The theoretical implications of this study suggest the need for more balanced interdisciplinary research within the domain of digital visual marketing. Additionally, the practical implications highlight the necessity for closer integration between marketing and visual communication design disciplines, both in academia and in practice.

Keywords: digital marketing; visual marketing; SLR; Scopus; research paradigm.

JEL classification: M30; M31; M37.

58

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35

1

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1

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reviewing recent developments, the density of marketing traffic requires us to redefine marketing from what was once understood as “telling and selling” to activities that are customer-oriented in order to satisfy their needs. When viewed from its purpose, marketing aims more towards creating awareness of a particular brand or organization and increasing potential customer engagement with the brand (Yapa, 2017). This is different from sales, which is more focused on converting products into money. Although they are two different things, it does not mean they have to operate as separate activities. In more recent situations, in social media marketing, both brand awareness and sales/conversions are bridged by engagement, becoming an integrated stage, often referred to as the marketing funnel or popularly known as the customer journey (Leonard, 2016).

Customer interactions on social media can help with customer engagement as a measurement to determine the organic value of the brand-customer relationship. Therefore, it is important to increase verbal-visual interactivity on social media platforms, such as images, video content, carousels, contests, giveaways, questions, voting, and hashtags to increase customer engagement (Cuevas-Molano *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, it can be understood that the awareness and engagement stages are the domains of marketing. If marketing is understood as defined by Kotler & Armstrong, creating value for customers and building strong customer relationships to gain value from customers as a reward, then valuable marketing activities are required for potential customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p. 55). One approach to valuable marketing is visual marketing, which currently has a central role in the digital era and social media marketing.

In general, visual marketing is understood as the strategic utilization of visual symbols by commercial or non-commercial firms/organizations/brands to convey messages and build a desired and/or useful user experience for customers (Wedel & Pieters, 2008). Another definition characterizes visual marketing as the use of visual content in marketing activities (Manic, 2015). This definition is based on how visual aspects have become a key component of marketing tools, which involve numerous visual aids for more effective sales. As Manic (2015) notes, visual content should be the central focus of any marketing strategy since human perception is fundamentally visual. Therefore, visual marketing can refer to two distinct concepts: the use of visual media in marketing activities and the use of visual content in marketing activities. Visual media may include television, radio, newspapers, websites, internet advertising, books, brochures, social media, and film (S. P. John & De’Villiers, 2020). As stated by Wedel & Pieters, visual marketing is closely related to the discipline of visual communication design, and even blurs the boundaries between the two (Wedel & Pieters, 2008). The term “visual communication design” has recently been used interchangeably with “graphic design”.

For nearly two decades, the understanding of visual marketing has been relatively stable, if not somewhat stagnant. Recent literature suggests that visual marketing is a discipline that explores the relationship between an object, its context, and relevant imagery, considering the interdisciplinary connections between economics, visual perception law, and cognitive psychology (Pozhidayeva, 2021). However, this definition tends to neglect aesthetics, visual art, and culture, even though these aspects often play a crucial role in designing visually-based marketing media. Another definition that diverges slightly from the previous one views visual marketing as a process that utilizes photographs, graphics, videos, and other visual content to promote products or services. This approach focuses on using unique images and relevant

design elements to attract consumers' attention (Nwachukwu & Affen, 2023). The latter definition elaborates on the concept of "visual media" in the previous definition of visual marketing presented by S. P. John and De'Villiers (2020).

In the contemporary context, visual marketing media has undergone a transformation into digital mediums, commonly referred to as "new media" by Sperka and Stolar (2005). These new media are screen-based, meaning they exist in a digital format that can be perceived through visual senses. However, it doesn't stop there; new media are also "multi-modal," combining language with visual communication and sound. Moreover, they are non-linear, incorporating spatial and temporal patterns (Martinec & van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 1). In the present-day context, new media is directly connected to technology and encompasses various communication technologies related to the web. This includes blogs, wikis, online social networks, virtual worlds, and other forms of social media (Friedman & Friedman, 2008; Zhang, 2019). As such, being connected to a network or being "online" is a defining characteristic of these cutting-edge new media forms.

Visual marketing is also linked to electronic media such as television or billboards. Such media are referred to by Sperka and Stolar (2005) as traditional media. Media prior to the computer era are referred as traditional media based on paper, film, television, and radio (Sperka & Stolar, 2005). These visual marketing medias, in contemporary situations, have transformed into digital media, or what Sperka & Stolar call "new media" that is screen-based – meaning – digital content, which is also perceived by the sense of sight. From these definitions, a definition of "digital visual marketing" can be synthesized, which can be understood as a marketing activity that includes research, planning, and strategy setting that uses media which enables the implementation of visual content with artistic consideration to create value and build relationships with potential customers in the digital environment with tools and strategies implemented through the internet. The term "digital visual marketing" may not be commonly used, but not all digital marketing is visual marketing, so the term digital visual marketing is in a specific context, namely social media marketing and websites that require visual medium and content in digital marketing activities. This is also to provide a clear boundary between visual marketing that is "non-digital" or digital marketing that does not emphasize visual aspects.

By defining digital visual marketing as the utilization of visual media in marketing activities within the digital internet environment, this research aims to explore the extent to which directly related studies on this topic have been conducted. For instance, research conducted by Gretzel (2017) reveals that the orientation of visual content on various social media platforms poses a new challenge for tourism marketers. This demands them to acquire new skills, such as photography and graphic design, to create visuals that are more compelling, communicative, and impressive to the audience. Similarly, Fox et al. (2018) conducted a study that examines selfie-marketing from the perspective of consumer behavior. Findings of this research demonstrate that narcissism is positively associated with millennials' attitudes and intentions to engage in selfie-marketing on social media. Furthermore, it was discovered that millennials strive to present their self-concepts differently across various social media platforms using selfies, and this has significant implications for marketing. In the following year, Fox et al. (2019) investigated Visual Social Media Marketing (VSMM) as the utilization of visual content on social media for marketing, advertising, and promotion. Through the application of eye-tracking technology, experimental scenario-based designs, and Snapchat's image features, this research demonstrates the positive impact of using figurative language (metaphors) combined with images on audience attention

in social media marketing. These findings came after a prior study by Nakhata and Fox (2018), which found that image-based information in VSMM positively moderates the relationship between the use of figurative language and consumer attention to captions in social media. This research also employed eye-tracking technology. Collectively, these studies provide valuable insights into how visual media is applied in marketing within the digital or internet environment and offer a deeper understanding of consumer behavior towards visual content on social media. The use of eye-tracking technology in some of these studies has the potential to assist marketers in designing more effective marketing strategies in the digital landscape.

The research conducted by Argyris *et al.* (2020) offers a conceptual framework known as Visual-Congruence-induced Social Influence (VCSI), which depicts how influencers use visual congruence as a representation of shared interests to establish strong connections with their followers on social media. This study aims to test and provide empirical support for the VCSI framework. Gao *et al.* (2020) investigate Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) and examine the effects of benefit types (self-benefit vs. other-benefit), message content (prevention-focused vs. promotion-focused), and visual design (humorous vs. aggressive) on customer engagement in CRM on social media. The findings indicate that customers emphasize self-benefit, and this also depends on the alignment of verbal messages with visual design. Holiday *et al.* (2021) explore the influential role of Insta-Moms as authentic influencers in their social media activities through text and image posts, playing a significant role in brand marketing efforts. Using experimental design, this research finds that netizens respond more positively when a brand is explicitly promoted through textual visual content compared to implicit promotion. Additionally, Michael and Fusté-Forné (2022) analyze how luxury hotels in the UAE promote gastronomy by identifying visual features of social media posts to manage their luxury image. The results reveal that cultural nuances, hotel environment experiences, novelty experiences, hedonism, and an authentic perception of luxury, prestige, and sophisticated technological lifestyle are the most significant visual themes. These are some of the research conducted in the last five years, found in public repositories of Scopus-indexed scientific journals.

Over the past 5 years, we can observe that research on visual marketing in the digital environment has predominantly focused on social media platforms, often employing eye-tracking technology and experimental designs. However, there has not yet been found, at least in Scopus-indexed scientific journal publication repositories, an article that conducts a meta-analysis of these studies. Thus, this paper aims to conduct a review of these studies to explore other potential research possibilities beyond experimental designs. Simultaneously, it seeks to address the myth that "experimental designs are more scientifically recognized than other research designs." Therefore, a more exploratory study is required on this topic, broadening the horizons, and delving into methodological problems from a more philosophical standpoint.

Consequently, the aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which research on digital visual marketing has been conducted. Based on this, the problem statement is formulated as follows: What is the breadth of research on digital visual marketing conducted during the past decade? To provide clear boundaries, "breadth" in this context refers to frequently emerging concepts, research trends, areas of study, and philosophical foundations. Hence, this study will specifically address several research questions:

- 1) What concepts often appear in digital visual marketing research topics from 2012-2022?
- 2) How is the trend of research on digital visual marketing topics from 2012-2022?
- 3) What fields of study often become the umbrella for research in digital visual marketing topics from 2012-2022?

70
4) What is the philosophical basis of research in digital visual marketing topics from 2012-2022?

To address the four questions, a literature search was conducted for research articles published in Scopus-indexed international academic journals from 2012 to 2022. This was based on the assumption that the year 2010 marked "The Explosion of Technology", a period when technological devices were able to connect with each-other (Edward, 2020). The search for research articles was conducted using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, which compiles, evaluates, and synthesizes all relevant research related to the topic of digital visual marketing. The search for research articles was carried out in Scopus-indexed scientific journal repositories due to their comprehensive metadata, facilitating easier extraction of keywords from author keywords and abstracts. Moreover, scientific articles published in Scopus-indexed journals have undergone rigorous peer review processes and are recognized by the scientific community. By addressing the research questions mentioned above, I hope that this study will contribute to the breadth of research on the topic of digital visual marketing and reveal potential avenues for further investigation, thereby serving as inspiration for future researchers.

2. METHOD

52
To answer the research questions, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method was employed. SLR is a process of compiling, evaluating, and synthesizing all relevant research related to a specific topic, in this case, digital visual marketing. The purpose of SLR is to provide a comprehensive overview of the research that has been conducted on digital visual marketing and to identify research gaps that need to be further explored. In this study, the SLR method as described by Xiao and Watson (2019) will be used, which generally consists of three major stages: 1) Planning the review; 2) Conducting the review; and 3) Reporting the review. Mengist *et al.* (2020) revealed that the main characteristics of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) include conducting meta-analysis, which involves: 1) Formulating clear research questions to be answered; 2) Stating clear objectives and employing explicit and reproducible methods; 3) Conducting a comprehensive search that includes all relevant studies meeting eligibility criteria; 4) Assessing the quality/validity of selected studies; 5) Providing a systematic synthesis of data extracted from the selected studies; and 6) Organizing study findings for scientific purposes and decision-making.

In this study, the problem formulation stage has been carried out in the introduction section, where a problem statement was presented regarding the breadth of research on digital visual marketing conducted during the last decade. This problem statement was then derived into four research questions related to the concepts, trends, fields of study, and philosophical foundations of research on digital visual marketing from 2012 to 2022. Although this study generally adopts the method of Xiao and Watson (2019), the research questions lead to answers that result from conclusions. Hence, a Narrative Review approach is used, focusing more on a general overview with the collection of relevant information to provide context and substance for a specific argument, with informal data extraction (Kastner *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, some adjustments have been made, especially during the "conducting the review" stage.

According to Ferrari (2015), narrative reviews aim to identify and summarize previous research and publications. This includes exploring existing debates, evaluating previous studies on a specific topic, identifying knowledge gaps, and speculating on possibilities for further research. What Ferrari has mentioned aligns with the research questions in this study.

Therefore, the Xiao & Watson method will be elaborated using Ferrari's general framework of narrative reviews. In the process, the review stage can be conducted informally with a flowing narrative style, tailored to the key concepts that have been established (Ferrari, 2015). In the context of this study, these key concepts are none other than the frequently emerging concepts in research, trends, fields of study, [44](#) philosophical foundations. In practice, the SLR process with a narrative approach can be visualized in the following [Figure no. 1](#).

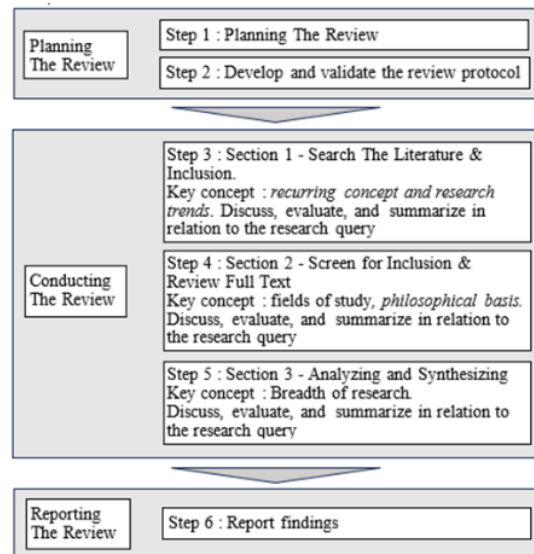


Figure no. 1 – SLR process with Narrative Review approach
Source: synthesized from Ferrari (2015); Xiao and Watson (2019)

By conducting the three stages of “conducting the review”, the four research questions outlined above can be answered. The literature search in [11](#) study was carried out using Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) software. Essentially, Publish or Perish is a software program used to retrieve and analyze academic citations. PoP uses various data sources to obtain publication titles, citations, and associated metadata, and then analyzes and presents them in various metrics, including the number of papers, total citations, and h-index. PoP has been commonly used in SLRs for at least the last decade. For example, in a study conducted by Elmawati and Juandi (2022), they employed the PRISM protocol and quantitative descriptive in their SLR, and in another SLR carried out by Carbonell-Alcocer *et al.* (2023), they used the DESLOCIS framework. Both studies utilized PoP to search for scholarly publications in various databases. To date, PoP has been used in at least 120,000 scholarly articles worldwide (Osunsan *et al.*, 2022). From the results of the PoP search, only scholarly articles resulting from research and published in international academic journals and conference proceedings were selected. The search results and selection were then stored in

.RIS format to create a bibliographic data map (author keywords and abstracts) using VOSviewer. This stage also served as a screen for inclusion.

The next stage is to conduct an assessment of quality by reviewing the full-text papers and selecting several articles that are directly related to the topic of digital visual marketing. This review will select articles that make visual and digital marketing the formal and material objects of research, and then examine the scientific field (perspective) that underpins the research. From the selected articles that are directly related to the study of visual and marketing, their contents will be read, and a conclusion will be drawn based on the purpose and philosophical basis of the research. The philosophical basis of the research is the research paradigm, such as positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, or pragmatism (Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). Considering that this study is a general review that focuses more on collecting relevant information which provides context and substance for a particular argument, with the extraction of informal data, the SLR conducted in this study belongs to the narrative review type (Kastner *et al.*, 2012; Xiao & Watson, 2019). Therefore, this study will commence the literature search stage in the analysis and discussion section.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Search the literature & inclusion

As stated by Xiao and Watson (2019), the quality of the produced SLR greatly depends on the collected literature. Therefore, as previously mentioned, literature search was conducted on the Scopus repository. The search was carried out using Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) software version 8.8.4275.8412 installed in a Windows 10 operating system. The search was conducted on February 5, 2023 by entering the keyword "digital visual marketing" in the Scopus repository, from 2012 to 2022. Here we are faced with an unknown population size, but with 20 million scholarly articles published in Scopus-indexed journals, we can establish that at least 201 or more measurements are needed to achieve a confidence level of 90% with a margin of error of $\pm 5.83\%$ from the measured value. Therefore, the maximum number of publication articles is set at 200. This is done to avoid excessively broad searches, as the search mode is conducted using "keywords" rather than "titles."

The result yielded 200 publications, consisting of articles, conference papers, letters, and reviews, all written by different authors. The average citation per year was 137.82 and the total citation count during 2012-2022 on the 200 publications was 1,516, as shown in Figure no. 2.

Out of the 200 publications, only articles and conference papers were selected by eliminating review, book, and letter publications, resulting in 192 publications. The next step was to save the 192 search results into the Research Information System (RIS) extension so that they could be opened in Mendeley Desktop software to complete their metadata, especially in the author keywords and abstract sections as illustrated in Figure 3. After updating the details in Mendeley Desktop, the documents were saved again in RIS format and then analyzed using VOSviewer software.

Citation metrics		Help
Publication years:	2012-2022	
Citation years:	11 (2012-2023)	
Papers:	200	
Citations:	1516	
Cites/year:	137.82	
Cites/paper:	7.58	
Authors/paper:	1.00	
h-index:	19	
g-index:	29	
hI,norm:	19	
hI,annual:	1.73	
hA-index:	8	
Papers with ACC >= 1,2,5,10,20:	118,65,17,5,2	

Figure no. 2 – Citation metrics in PoP, with the keywords “visual digital marketing”, in Scopus repository from 2012-2022
Source: writers’ document

After being converted back to RIS format, the search results that have complete metadata (abstract and author keywords) were analyzed using VOSviewer. In this stage, visualization was performed based on bibliographic data. The data was read based on the search results documents that have been equipped with their metadata in Mendeley Desktop software, where the analysis was carried out in terms of co-occurrence, which is the interrelationship between items (terms, keywords) determined based on the number of documents in which the items appear together. The unit of analysis in this stage is keywords. A thesaurus was also used to combine several types of keywords that are considered to have the same concept. In the context of this study, for example, “marketing” was conceptually equal to “digital marketing”, and “influencer” with “influencer marketing”. The threshold used was 2, resulting in the discovery of 777 keywords, 65 of which were repeated at least twice. The results of the visualization can be seen in Figures no. 3, no. 5, and no. 6, which are network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization.

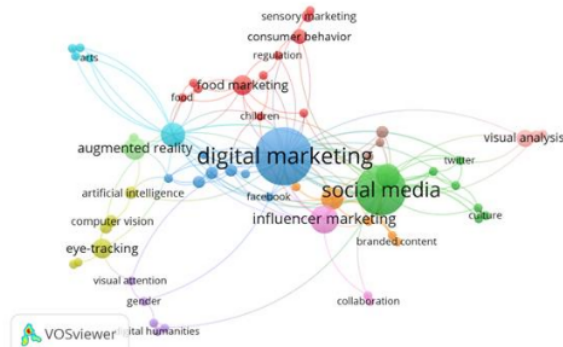


Figure no. 3 – Network visualization from 192 publications regarding visual digital marketing on VOSviewer
Source: writers’ documents

From the visualization of 65 keywords using VOSviewer, ten frequently occurring keywords were identified from the 192 publications, namely: 1) Digital marketing; 2) Social media; 3) Influencer marketing; 4) Advertising; 5) Instagram; 6) Augmented reality; 7) Social networks; 8) Eye-tracking; 9) Food marketing; and 10) Visual analysis. These ten keywords can be considered as frequently emerging concepts within the topic of digital visual marketing research. Among these keywords, "Digital marketing" (28 occurrences, 52 total link strength) and "social media" (23 occurrences, 45 total link strength) are two of the most frequently appearing keywords, and they are also themes in the keyword clustering. Both of them can be regarded as the most commonly used material objects of research within the domain of digital visual marketing research. The ten frequently occurring keywords can be seen in Figure no. 4.

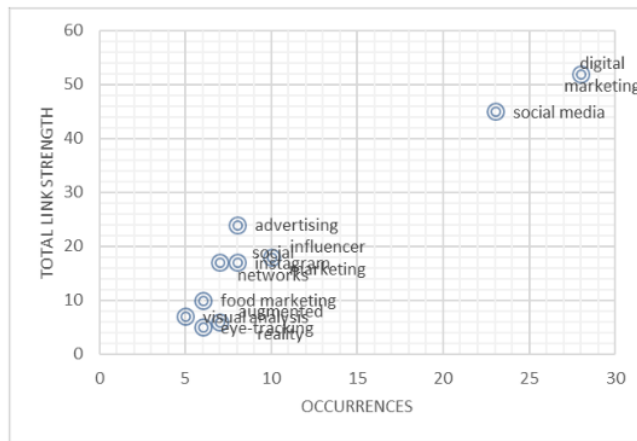


Figure no. 4 – The ten most frequently occurring keywords from 196 publications on digital visual marketing topic
Source: writers' documents

From those 65 keywords, at least 11 clusters were identified, but they have been further simplified by regrouping keywords into specific themes that are considered similar, resulting in 8 clusters with the following themes: 1) Consumer behavior and society; 2) Social media; 3) Digital marketing; 4) Technology and information systems; 5) Culture; 6) Art and design; 7) Influencer marketing; and 8) Research methods. The categorization of these keywords can be seen in Table no. 1.

Table no. 1 – Keywords clustering

No	Cluster	Keyword
1	Consumer behavior and society	children, consumer behavior, engagement, food marketing, perception, public health, regulation, targeting, and sensory marketing
2	Social media	culture, deep learning, fashion, Instagram, social media, text mining, twitter, user generated content
3	Digital marketing	digital marketing, digital media, Facebook, innovation, storytelling, visual communication, young people, YouTube

No	Cluster	Keyword
4	Technology and information system	artificial intelligence, computer vision, digital signage, e-commerce, eye-tracking, online ads, augmented reality, data mining, web intelligence
5	Culture	digital humanities, discourse analysis, gender, sentiment analysis, visual attention
6	Art and design	advertising, arts, character design, graphic identity, representative, television, visual analysis
7	Influencer marketing	branding, branded content, digital communication, influencers, selfie, social networks, collaboration, influencer marketing, multimodality
8	Research methods	netnography, qualitative research

Source: writers' documents

When reviewing the overlay visualization (Figure no. 5), from the ten keywords, we can observe that keywords from recent publications are highlighted in yellow, while the oldest ones are highlighted in green. The range of publications, from the oldest to the most recent, is gradually connected from green to yellow, covering the period from 2012 to 2022. We can identify the latest keywords from at least the last two years (yellow and green) which include: culture, text mining, netnography, qualitative research, food tourism, food marketing, storytelling, and artificial intelligence.

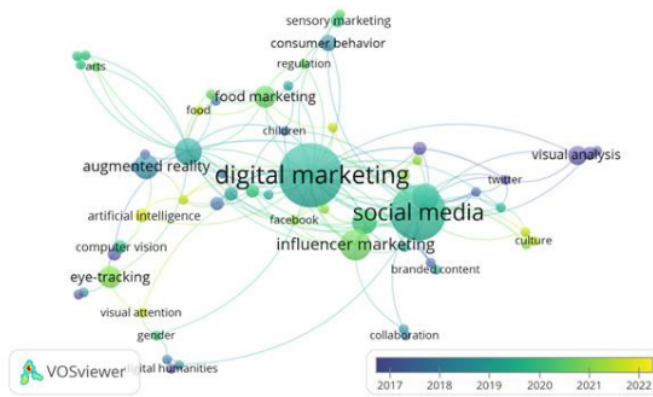


Figure no. 5 – Overlay visualization from 192 publications regarding visual digital marketing on VOSviewer

Source: writers' documents

However, when examining the density visualization (Figure no. 6), keywords that have appeared in the last two years have not yet appeared frequently. This means that research related to these concepts in the field of digital visual marketing is still rare but emerging. Therefore, these concepts can be considered as research trends that have started to emerge in the last two years and are worth anticipating.



Figure no. 6 – Density visualization from 192 publications regarding visual digital marketing on VOSviewer
Source: writers' documents

18

From the results of this visualization, it can be concluded that digital marketing, social media, influencer marketing, advertising, Instagram, augmented reality, social networks, eye-tracking, food marketing, and visual analysis are the frequently occurring concepts in the field of digital visual marketing research. Among these 10 concepts, digital marketing and social media occupy the top positions. This aligns with the initial assumption of the study, which was based on preliminary investigations of previous research to identify research gaps. It was found that in the 55 5 years, research on visual marketing in the digital environment has largely focused on social media platforms. Similarly, it can be inferred that the current research trend in digital visual marketing involves analyzing digital marketing and social media from the perspectives of technology and information systems, as well as cultural perspectives using qualitative methods and netnography approaches. The confirmation and in-depth study of these concepts and research trends will be conducted in the subsequent sections.

3.2 Screen for Inclusion & Review Full Text

The next step is to conduct inclusion. Inclusion in SLR (Systematic Literature Reviews) refers to the criteria used to select studies that will be included in the review. This includes criteria used to select relevant articles and studies related to the research topic under review (Xiao & Watson, 2019). The inclusion criteria for this study are as follows: Firstly, publications that are research results, best practices, or case studies directly related to the fields of marketing, technology and information systems, visual communication design or graphic design, and related fields such as psychology, neuroscience, fine arts, and cultural studies. Thus, publications in engineering, interior design, and other topics outside the scope of visual and marketing studies are excluded from this review. This is consistent with the scientific publications by Engelmann *et al.* (2022), which investigate how AI ambiguity in facial recognition ultimately reveals racial bias and discrimination. Although the study was conducted using visual data from digital advertising, the research is not directly related to the

topic of visual or marketing studies and will be excluded from the review. This also includes research conducted by Williams (2012); Messier and Johnson (2014); Bhatia and Ritchie (2016); Lee *et al.* (2018); Martín *et al.* (2019); Sung *et al.* (2022) and other authors whose research is not directly related to visual analysis and marketing topics. Secondly, the inclusion criteria are related to the topic of digital visual marketing research, which can be conducted using either qualitative or quantitative methods and/or other various approaches (experimental, phenomenology, netnography, etc.). Thirdly, the inclusion criteria are related to the publication year, language, and geographic area, which were taken from 2012 to 2022, written in English, and authored by people from all over the world. This screening for inclusion is done by reviewing the title and abstract of the 192 publications.

After the inclusion process, there were 126 publications remaining. These publications were then grouped according to the research paradigm that served as the philosophical basis for the studies. In addition, inclusion was also performed by assigning metadata tags using Mendeley Desktop software based on the field of study of each publication. The categorization of the field of study was based on the theoretical constructs developed in each publication. The research paradigm, as describe by Lincoln and Guba (2005); Kumatongo and Muzata (2021) refers to the method, model, or pattern used during the research process. It can also be defined as a set of ideas, beliefs, or understandings upon which theory and practice can operate. Some of the paradigms used in this study are described below:

1) Positivism

The positivist paradigm explores social reality based on the philosophical ideas of the French philosopher Auguste Comte, who believed in empirical observation and reasoning as the best way to understand human behavior and that true knowledge is based on sensory experience can be obtained through observation and experimentation (Pearce, 2015). Therefore, positivism is interpreted as a way of measuring reality from an objective point of view.

2) Interpretivism

Interpretivism, on the other hand, is a belief system in research which emphasizes that reality is based on the subjective experiences of individuals in the external world. Interpreters believe that there is no one correct route or particular method for knowledge, and that there is no objective knowledge that is independent of human thought or reasoning (Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Antwi & Hamza, 2015).

3) Constructivism

The constructivism or social constructivism paradigm is based on the premise that people seek to understand the world they live in through the development of subjective meaning from their experiences (C. W. John, 2009). Because it emphasizes individual experiences and subjective perspectives over objective data, research within the constructivism paradigm often uses methods such as interviews, case studies, observation, text analysis, or participation action research (PAR).

4) Pragmatism

The pragmatism paradigm in research is an approach that emphasizes the practical usefulness or benefits of research findings. In this paradigm, the main goal of research is to find solutions or answers that are useful for real-life problems. Therefore, the pragmatism paradigm is always problem-solving in nature.

Table no. 2 – Paradigms and research fields in the academic publications that were found

Paradigm	Research field	Amount	Total
Constructivism	Marketing management	6	22
	ICT	5	
	Business management	1	
	Visual communication	2	
	Psychology	2	
	Education	1	
	Communication science	1	
Interpretivism	Culture studies	4	32
	Marketing management	9	
	ICT	2	
	Visual communication	1	
	Communication science	1	
Positivism	Culture studies	18	50
	Marketing management	17	
	ICT	5	
	Business management	1	
	Visual communication	13	
	Psychology	9	
	Education	2	
	Culture studies	2	
	Neuroscience	1	
Pragmatism	Marketing management	9	22
	ICT	7	
	Visual communication	3	
	Psychology	1	
	Communication science	1	
	Culture studies	1	
		Total amount	126

Source: writers' documents

3.3 Analyzing and Synthesizing

Through analysis of the 126 publications, we can observe that research which utilizes positivism has a considerable dominance in the scientific publications on the topic of digital visual marketing within Scopus-indexed journals from 2012-2022, accounting for 50% of the publications. The remaining publications utilize other paradigms are constructivism (18%), interpretivism (25%), and pragmatism (17%). However, if the three other paradigms (constructivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism) are considered as non-positivism, then the ratio of research publications utilizing positivism compared to non-positivism is 2:3, or 40% and 60%, respectively. While this finding is still partial, it dispels the notion that Scopus-indexed journals prioritize positivism research publications. Of course, this also depends on the field of study and may not generally apply. In the context of this study, it applies to research publications on the topic of digital visual marketing, and different findings may be observed for other topics.

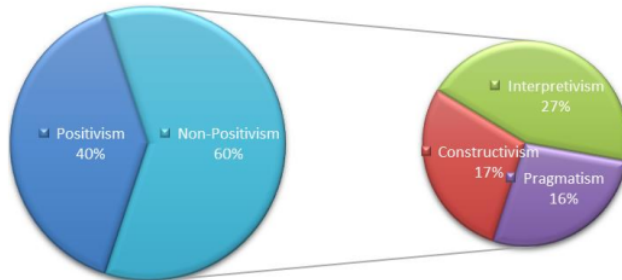


Figure no. 7 – Number and percentage of positivism and non-positivism research paradigms
Source: writer's document

In publications utilizing the constructivism paradigm, marketing management is the dominant field of study, accounting for 27% of the total publications, followed by ICT (23%), culture studies (18%), visual communication (9%), psychology (9%), business management (4%), education (5%), and communication science (5%). This is exemplified in the study conducted by Hackley *et al.* (2018) which is exploratory in nature. This study is unique in that it attempts to examine the implications of selfies for marketing management in the era of internet celebrity, to demonstrate that facilitating consumer creative performance is a key element of marketing management in the current media convergence. The study uses selfies taken by celebrities as a metaphor to develop a concept of the marketing practices dominated by celebrities and contemporary entertainment in the digital environment. The results of the study indicate that consumer creative participation plays a central role, and brands must be able to facilitate this through various media channels. Moreover, brands should also facilitate consumers in exploring their customer identity by assisting them in developing competencies in script writing, setting and scenes, plot development, cinematography and visual effects, character development, characterization, costumes, and movements.

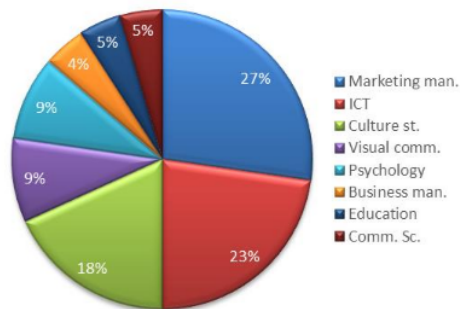


Figure no. 8 – Total and percentage of research umbrella in constructivism.
Source: writers' documents

23

The research conducted by Gupta (2019) reveals that customers currently have direct access to all kinds of information such as images and videos, which are mostly aimed at scrutinizing the product's US. This indicates that visual appeal influences customers' decisions towards the desired goal. In the context of ICT studies, Petit *et al.* (2019) argue that the adaptation of the latest tools/technology to provide richer online experiences for customers is needed today, such as multi-sensory emotional engagement, including touch/haptic, and even possibly smell. In the field of culture studies, we can see Choudhry *et al.* (2022) examining Virtual Influencers (VI), or commonly known as V-Tubers on YouTube platform. With the followers' approach interested in VI due to the unique combination of visual appeal, mystery, and creative image that distinguishes VI content from real human influencer content. Specifically, VI content allows digital artists and content creators to blur the boundaries of the body and physical features. Most of these constructivism-oriented studies focus on the "collaborative" variable between the brand and customers with visual media in the digital environment as its medium.

In publications or research with an interpretivist paradigm, culture studies (58%) dominate the data followed by marketing management (29%), ICT (3%), visual communication (1%), and communication science (1%), with no other fields identified. It is noteworthy that the interpretivist paradigm ranks second most prevalent (25%) after the positivist paradigm (40%). In the field of culture studies within the interpretivism, critical paradigms with critical-postmodern theory constructs are commonly found. This is demonstrated in the study by Spruce (2016), which criticizes the use of visual elements (photography) that exoticize poverty and tend to demean the subject, thereby reinforcing the inequality utilized in humanitarian campaigns on social media.

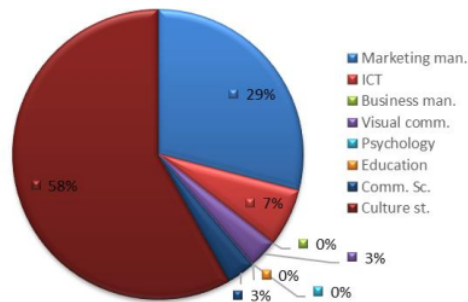


Figure no. 9 – Total and percentage of research umbrella in interpretivism

Source: writers' documents

Choi (2020) conducted a study on Instagram users in Hong Kong. Using an inductive approach, the research explored how young fashion readers perceive the self-modelling blogger phenomenon as a means of self-expression. The results showed that there was a tendency for social comparison, as there was a preference for fashion bloggers who were also image producers. This finding supports the idea of social comparison, that humans tend to compare themselves with others who are similar to themselves. There were other findings that showed the critical awareness of young fashion readers, where ideal beauty was perceived as a successful result of visual creation, namely "the creative self".

In addition to the critical paradigm, it is interesting to note that there are five research publications that utilize the method of netnography, a relatively new method in social sciences and humanities research. Netnography is a specific type of qualitative research method used for social media research. Netnography adapts the methods of ethnography to understand social interactions in the context of contemporary digital communication. Netnography can also be seen as a set of specialized actions for conducting research within and about social media. The research publications are authored by de Carvalho and Marôpo (2020); Uzunboylu *et al.* (2020); Pemberton and Takhar (2021); Rodner *et al.* (2022) and Shen (2022). In de Carvalho and Marôpo (2020) study, netnography was used to understand how young viewers of Sofia Barbosa's YouTube channel construct meaning about the commercial content authenticity presented by the YouTuber. de Carvalho and Marôpo (2020) analyzed 1,961 comments written by subscribers on 10 videos posted between January and October 2018. Takhar and Pemberton (2019) research used netnography to obtain visual rhetoric and evaluate the online production of four Muslim fashion (hijab) influencers in France, namely Zozoliina, Lady Zoro, Salima Aliani, and Barchamammas. They also analyzed comments made by subscribers and found that Muslim women who wear hijab in France are increasingly positioning themselves as "cyberarbiters" fashion marketing.

Rodner *et al.* (2022) employed netnography to uncover how the aesthetic works of influencers act as "packaging" in the cosmetics marketing landscapes on Instagram. Using a postfeminist neoliberal lens, the study found that the emotional aesthetic works of these influencers helped to package, disseminate, and navigate the cosmetics marketing landscape. The research conducted by Uzunboylu *et al.* (2020) and Shen (2022) also utilized netnography to uncover the same phenomenon that occurs in the digital world. If connected with the trend found in the previous stage, where the keywords "netnography" and "qualitative" emerged as keywords (at least in the last 2 years) in scientific publications related to digital visual marketing topics in the Scopus repository, then netnography as a method in research that borrows critical theory lenses (culture studies), is something worth considering.

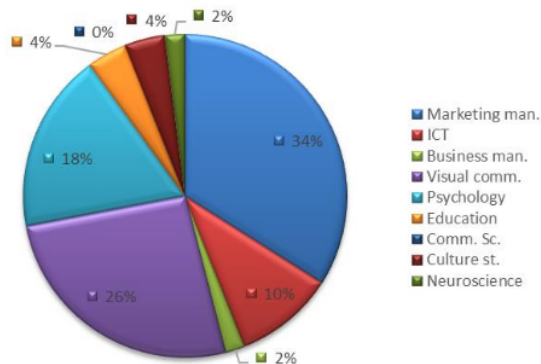


Figure no. 10 – Total and percentage of research umbrella in positivism

Source: writers' documents

Research based on the positivist paradigm received the largest share of attention in digital visual marketing research (40%). In this paradigm, research is dominated by the field of marketing management (34%), followed by visual communication (26%), psychology (18%), ICT (10%), education (4%), business management (2%), and neuroscience (2%). the methods used are predominantly questionnaires and experiments, but it is interesting to note that there are public opinions that employ the eye-tracking method, such as the research conducted by Andrew *et al.* (2019). The purpose of this study is to explore how brain imaging technology can be applied to measure people's emotional and subconscious responses to various forms of outdoor advertising media, ranging from static paper posters to multisensory digital advertising screens. Using eye-tracking equipment, they observed visual attention, emotional intensity, desirability, and memorability. They found that static and full-motion visual marketing content elicit positive emotional responses. However, dynamic advertising materials generated higher emotional responses and more peaks in response. This suggests that visual marketing design not only needs to have aesthetic value, but also needs to cause greater emotional impact by using the content of the advertisement.

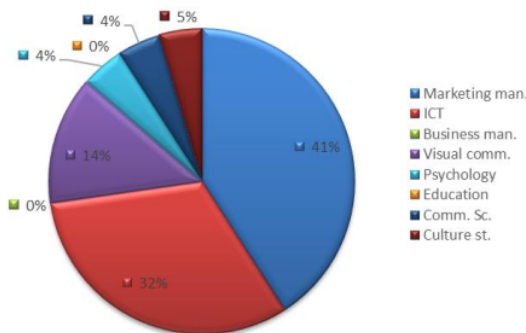


Figure no. 11 – Total and percentage of research umbrella in pragmatism
Source: writers' documents

In pragmatism research, we can see that this paradigm is still dominated by the field of marketing management (41%), followed by ICT (32%), visual communication (14%), psychology (5%), communication science (5%), and culture studies (5%). In this paradigm due to its focus on problem-solving, we will see that almost all of the studies are product or model/framework development research. This is demonstrated in the study by Ciriaco *et al.* (2022), who developed a predictive model that can connect visual attributes and engagement levels on Instagram. The model was developed by observing the attributes of 439 photos of Taquile Island on Instagram. these attributes were then quantified using image analysis tools. The study shows that the most important visual attributes for increasing engagement on Instagram are lifestyle and natural scenery. From here, the predictive model was developed. Similar to this, a development study was conducted by Coates *et al.* (2019), who attempted to develop a new methodology platform (model) to assess digital food marketing and provide important information that can be considered in policymaking. In this study, Coates *et al.* (2019) conducted exploratory observations of food and beverage images displayed in

YouTube videos by two popular influencers among children over a period of 1 year. Consequently, a model was developed that can be used as a guide for influencers promoting healthy food. Similar model development studies were also conducted by *Kozhemyakin and Loyagina (2020)* and *Guo et al. (2023)*, but they're using different methods.

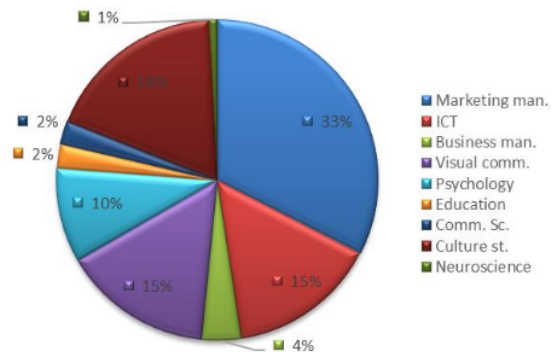


Figure no. 12 – Total and percentage of research umbrella in all paradigms
Source: writers' documents

The examinations of abstracts and contents of scientific publications also yields a general conclusion regarding the fields of study used in scientific publication. Most publications related to the topic of digital visual marketing are dominated by the field of marketing management (33%), followed by culture studies (18%), ICT (15%), visual communication (15%), psychology (10%), business management (4%), education (2%), communication science (2%), and neuroscience (1%). With marketing management dominating the field, it can be said that research related to the topic of digital visual marketing is still largely conducted in a monodisciplinary manner that views digital visual marketing from a marketing perspective. However, there is a growing trend of interdisciplinary studies, such as culture studies, ICT, and visual communication.

4. CONCLUSIONS

With the literature search and inclusion, the first research question on frequently occurring concepts in the field of digital visual marketing research from 2012 to 2022 can be answered. It can be concluded that digital marketing, social media, influencer marketing, advertising, Instagram, augmented reality, social networks, eye-tracking, food marketing, and visual analysis are the frequently occurring concepts in the field of digital visual marketing research. Among these 10 concepts, digital marketing and social media occupy the top positions. This aligns with the initial assumption of the study, which was based on preliminary investigations of previous research to identify research gaps. It was found that in the last 5 years, research on visual marketing in the digital environment has largely focused on social media platforms.

Similarly, the second research question on an overview of research trends in digital visual marketing from 2012 to 2022 can be addressed by reviewing the overlay visualization.

The recently appearing keywords (colored in yellow and green) include culture, text mining, netnography, qualitative research, food tourism, food marketing, storytelling, and artificial intelligence. From this visualization, 50 can be inferred that the current research trend in digital visual marketing involves analyzing digital marketing and social media using technology and information systems perspectives, as well as cultural perspectives using qualitative methods and netnography approaches. Netnography, as a qualitative research technique, adapts ethnographic methods to understand social interactions in contemporary digital communication contexts. Netnography can also be considered as a set of specialized actions for researching and studying social media. In this context, employing netnography with a critical theory lens (culture studies) is a viable approach.

The third research question, which explores the dominant fields of study in digital visual marketing research from 2012 to 2022, can be addressed by analyzing the abstracts and contents of academic publications. The majority of publications related to digital visual marketing are dominated by the marketing management field (33%), followed by culture studies (18%), ICT (15%), visual communication (15%), psychology (10%), business management (4%), education (2%), communication science (2%), and neuroscience (1%). The dominance of the marketing management field indicates that research on digital visual marketing is often conducted from a monodisciplinary perspective focusing on marketing. However, there is also a trend towards interdisciplinary studies, such as those in culture studies, ICT, and visual communication.


Through the inclusion process, reading the abstracts and contents of academic publications, and analyzing their contents, the fourth research question on the philosophical basis of digital visual marketing research from 2012 to 2022 can be answered. The study found that research with a positivist paradigm significantly dominated the academic publications on digital visual marketing in Scopus-indexed journals from 2012 to 2022, accounting for 50%, while the rest were based on other paradigms, including constructivism 25%, interpretivism (25%), and pragmatism (17%). Most constructivist-oriented research focuses on the "collaborative" relationship between brands and customers using visual media in the digital environment. Interpretivism-based research is largely dominated by culture studies, which adopts critical theory, and this is a notable trend, especially when implementing netnography methods. In positivist-oriented research, the average methods used are questionnaires and experiments, but it is interesting to find research publications that use eye-tracking methods, indicating a trend in digital visual marketing research. Pragmatism-oriented research is primarily dominated by the marketing management field (41%), followed by ICT (32%), visual communication (14%), psychology (5%), communication science (5%), and culture studies (5%). Due to its problem-solving nature, it is reasonable that all of these studies involve develop 60 a product (software) or model/framework.

Regarding the study's objectives, which aim to explore the extent of research on digital visual marketing, it can be concluded that research related to digital visual marketing is still primarily conducted from a monodisciplinary perspective focusing on marketing itself. Concerning theoretical implications, this study demonstrates the need for balanced interdisciplinary studies to explore new possibilities for research under the umbrella of digital visual marketing. The study also reveals that in practice, the fields of visual communication design and marketing have been integrated, but academically, "visual marketing" is still largely viewed from marketing theories' perspective.

Regarding the practical implications of this study, the term "digital visual marketing" is rarely used to refer to marketing activities that utilize visual elements in the digital environment. People tend to use terms such as "digital marketing" or "visual marketing" only. In the literature search conducted, no publication explicitly included the term "digital visual marketing" in its title. Although this is not common and requires verification, the term "digital visual marketing" emerged from the spirit of bringing together two fields, marketing and visual communication design, within the academic research space. Another practical implication is that this study highlights the importance of practitioners from both fields to understand the scientific structures of each other's disciplines. Graphic designers should be aware of at least the basics of segmentation, positioning, brand management, and marketing strategies. Conversely, marketing professionals should understand visual aesthetics, basic visual composition, design principles, visual perception, and the principles of gestalt.

Regarding the association with frequently occurring concepts in digital visual marketing research, the keyword "SME" (Small-Med ⁶² Enterprise) does not appear, even though "SME" has been a hot topic related to resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. This indicates that research and development related to digital visual marketing in the last 10 years in Scopus repositories have not directly or significantly contributed to SMEs. As for the weaknesses of this study, they include: 1) The article search was limited to the Scopus-indexed academic journal repository, and thus, there is a possibility of obtaining different results if other repositories are involved; 2) This study is an SLR-Narrative review that relies heavily on flowing analysis-discussion and tends to lack rigor, which may result in subjective biases on the part of the authors.

51

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