

What's next on consumer-based brand-equity of digital brands? Research itineraries and new challenges

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1. Introduction

As a consequence of the worldwide dispersion of internet usage, consumers now have a larger number of companies to choose from when searching for some product or service (Jain et al., 2021). Therefore, the customer assumes a central point in strategic plans in order to obtain such advantages (Habel et al., 2020; Spottke et al., 2016), so organizations are increasingly concerned with creating lasting and profitable relationships with their strategic customers and, to do so, they invest in intangible assets, such as brand value, also called brand-equity (Payne, 2012; Rana et al., 2015).

In this scenario, the brand value construct has gained relevance in the business sphere as a key asset for the longevity of an organization (Rana et al., 2015). Brand value represents the union of several tangible and intangible factors and can be analyzed from several perspectives, such as corporate, which has an economic focus, and the customers', involving emotional and perceptual factors (Porto, 2018; Shariq, 2018), called consumer-based brand value or customer-based brand equity (CBBE). It is observed that studies related to brand value have followed the increasing changes regarding consumer behavior, particularly, in the period after the COVID-19 pandemic (Malarvizhi et al, 2022; Shuyi et al., 2022), highlighting the recrudescence migration of business to the digital world.

In this sense, the need to develop scientific reviews on the topic has been identified. The study conducted by Rojas-Lamorena et al. (2022) presents a review in a general way, based on the last three decades. However, the authors do not prioritize the digital or online scenario, which constitutes a gap. Thus, the present study advances on previous works by seeking to answer the following research question: what's next for consumer-based digital brand value? Therefore, the main objective is to carry out, via a systematic literature review with bibliometric analyses, the mapping of international research itineraries concerning consumer-based digital brand value, unveiling new challenges that guide the proposition of an agenda for further studies in a period of growing appreciation of digital business (Rosenbaum & Russell-Bennett, 2020). Therein lies the main theoretical contribution of this article. Furthermore, as a practical implication, e-commerce managers and its aspects may use the results engendered herein to support their decision making as to the positioning of brands towards a brand-equity based on the increasingly effective consumer.

2. Conceptual Framework

Consumer-based brand equity has been understood as the value of the brand from the consumer's perspective. This approach has been recognized for addressing the first economic attempts at object value, derived from Smith's (1784) value-in-use and exchange value. Farquhar's (1989) definition, Keller's (1993) initial modeling, and Aaker's (1996) classificatory proposal inaugurated a broad line of research on the subject within the marketing literature. Since then, numerous authors have tried to capture and prove the existence of brand value and its usefulness for firms' marketing activities and its importance to consumers (Christodoulides & De Chernatony, 2010).

Brand equity derives from aspects such as loyalty, perceived quality, name knowledge and brand associations (Aaker, 1996; Davcik et al., 2015). Thus, the presented construct has been studied in various contexts and scenarios, such as the organizational environment (Juntunen et al., 2011) and mainly, the consumer perspective (Christodoulides & De Chernatony, 2010; Porto, 2018; Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

How much the brand is worth to the consumer and how that consumer has valued or reacted to different brands has been the focus of most studies. To this end, researchers have

designed numerous objects with different brands such as: product (Netemeyer et al., 2004), companies (Hur et al., 2014), country (Zeugner et al., 2008) and people (King et al., 2012). Furthermore, the conception has presented itself with a financial (Wang, 2010) or perceived (Keller, 1993) focus, with diverse measurement instruments (Çifci et al., 2016), with distinct levels of analysis, for example consumer versus brand (Porto, 2018), relationships between its sub-constructs (Raut et al., 2019), samples of brands (case study versus several brands within the same category or sector) (Porto, 2019) and antecedent and consequent relationships of CBBE (Oliveira et al., 2023).

The issues of advancing the studies involve testing it in different contexts with the ascertainment of its usefulness for these contexts. Among them, comes its application in digital platforms, especially in the interaction of these brands with consumers, such as social media (Pham & Gammoh, 2015). Digital media have brought brands closer to consumers and this interaction has led to a proliferation of mentions to brands, being positive or negative to them or to consumers (Kumar & Singh, 2020).

In this manner, the current scenario, known as post-pandemic, has been characterized by a rapid growth in the digital sphere, especially with regard to social networks and e-commerce (Malarvizhi et al, 2022). Given this context, the literature has focused on studying brand value in the digital context. As indicated by the studies in the area, a direct relationship has been observed between brand value and the digital sphere, which can positively influence and add value to companies and their protagonists (Malarvizhi et al, 2022; Prados-Penã et al., 2022; Stojanovic et al, 2022).

Some challenges of contextualization for digital brands permeate through revealing the distinct behaviors of consumers in the online medium (e.g., different types of reactions and clicks, as shown by Gürhan-Canli et al, 2016), their performances in the virtual world (e.g. Shuyi et al. (2022) and Ebrahim (2020) concluded that in social media, both fad, customization and word-of-mouth influence brand value), detection of relevant sub-constructs of CBBE in models that aggregate antecedents or consequents in the online medium (Bhakar & Bhakar, 2020; Oliveira et al, 2023), branding strategies to improve brand-equity (Alwan & Alshurideh, 2022; Haudi et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022; Zarei et al., 2022).

In addition, this review, besides portraying the research itineraries, intends to unveil other challenges and possibilities that will subsidize the composition of a research agenda on the subject, based on the methodological path described in the sequence.

3. Methodological Path

The protocol selected for the present systematic review was Templier and Paré's (2015), widely used in management research (Scussel et al, 2022), in which six stages are established to support its development. The first stage comprises the definition of a research problem, defined here as: what comes next in the topic of consumer-based digital brand value? To this end, the international research itineraries concerning digital brand value were mapped, identifying challenges that guide the proposition of an agenda of further studies.

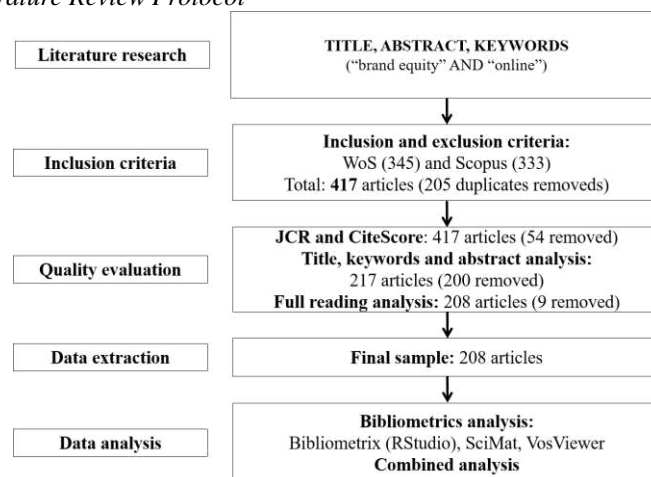
The next step of the protocol involves a literature search, so the Scopus and Web of Science databases were chosen. These databases stand out for the number of journals indexed, as well as for the temporal coverage and quality of the journals indexed, respectively (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016; Chadegani et al, 2013). In both bases, we searched titles, abstracts, and keywords containing "brand equity" AND "online". It is worth noting that no temporal clippings were used, as recommended for systematic literature reviews (Page et al, 2021), so that the sample of articles included all publications since the emergence of the theme in these databases.

Then, in the third stage, inclusion criteria were used to refine the initial sample. With this, only articles published in English language journals were selected, obtaining 471 articles, removing the duplicates of articles present in both databases simultaneously.

In turn, the fourth stage defined a criterion to provide greater quality to the review, so that only articles published in journals with indexing to the impact factors Journal Impact Factor-JIF (Journal Citation Reports-Web of Science) and CiteScore (Scopus) were accepted, remaining 417 articles. Following that, the titles, keywords and abstracts of these articles were analyzed in order to preserve only works that addressed the construct brand equity in the online context as the main object and not only tangentially. After this analysis, the sample was reduced to 217 articles, which were then analyzed in their entirety as a means of strengthening the adherence to the desired scope. Thus, the final sample consisted of 208 articles, constituting the corpus of this review.

The fifth and final step was then taken, in which the extraction of data from the original databases is consolidated. With the collection of articles from the final sample, we proceeded to the final stage, in which we analyzed the data. With the purpose of mapping the research routes in the theme, as well as unveiling new research challenges, bibliometric analyses were carried out. Figure 1 presents the protocol of this systematic literature review.

Figure 1
Online Brand Value Literature Review Protocol



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The final sample of articles was analyzed using SciMat, VosViewer and the R language, using the Bibliometrix package. SciMat enables analyses over long periods of time, allowing bibliometric mapping according to the impact and quality of the articles (López-Robles et al., 2021). As for the VosViewer, the main relationships existing in the scientific field studied are identified, ensuring their graphic display in thematic groupings (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). On the other hand, the R language package Bibliometrix performs bibliometric analyses that support the recognition of scientific fields in their entirety, based on data extracted from databases (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

Furthermore, data analysis was carried out during the full reading of the articles. Thus, we sought to complement the bibliometric analyses with the understanding of results not covered by the software previously described. Therefore, the main results of each article, their places and sectors of application, and research techniques were analyzed, in order to better ground the subsequent discussions and the development of a robust research agenda with greater applicability.

4. Results

This section presents the results that allow portraying the past and current itineraries of research on digital brand value. Taking these results as a premise, it is possible to define a

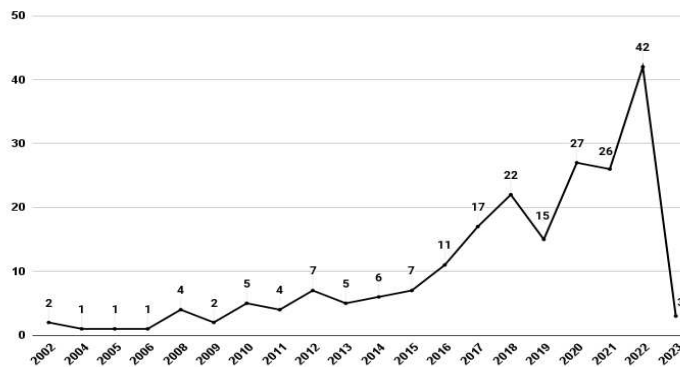
research agenda covering challenges and new study possibilities, contributing to the theoretical and empirical advancement of the construct.

4.1 Digital brand value research itineraries

Regarding the analysis results, it was identified that the first article that covered the brand value in the online context was published in 2002, according to the search and filtering parameters previously described. During this first decade, the number of publications maintained some constancy, with a slight increase until 2016, when it was noticed an increase in the number of articles. Since then, it is noticeable how the theme has aroused greater interest among researchers, with emphasis on the year 2022, with the largest number of articles during the entire period analyzed. It is worth noting that data collection occurred in January 2023, so that only the articles published in January were contemplated, which explains the drop in the evolution line. Figure 2 shows the evolution of the number of publications per year.

Figure 2

Number of publications per year

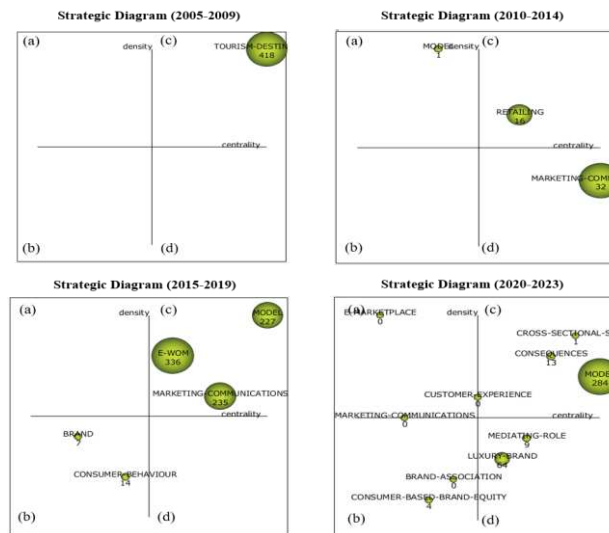


Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The SciMat software allows the visual representation of the scientific field of a given theme. Based on the words present in each article and their respective publication periods, strategic diagrams are generated according to axes of centrality (x-axis) and density (y-axis). Each diagram is delimited into four quadrants, namely: (a) specialized or isolated themes, representing themes of restricted application or low contributions to the literature; (b) emerging or declining themes; (c) driving themes, i.e., those consolidated in the scientific field, essential to its structuring; and (d) transversal and basic themes, with relevance in the literature, although not fully developed (López-Robles et al., 2021).

Hence, from the articles that composed the corpus of the review, strategic diagrams were created divided into distinct temporal periods. In the diagrams of Figure 3, the size represented by each word varies according to the number of citations of the articles that mention it, also reinforcing the relevance it has in the literature, in addition to just the number of appearances (López-Robles et al., 2021).

Figure 3
Strategic Diagrams by period



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Due to the low quantity of articles between 2002 and 2004, which was the seminal period of these studies, the first time-frame had an empty diagram, according to the software, which was opted to be excluded. However, this time period represents the beginning of a virtual approach to brand equity, with the utilization of Aaker (1996) proposed brand equity dimensions, under the perspective of online reality, which was acquiring a larger presence in the period (Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2004). The first studies on this subject underline the influence of online traffic over brand equity (Ilfeld & Wine, 2002), as well as the role of customer attraction strategies in this new context for promoting a higher value and financial return to the brands (Teo & Tan, 2002).

The first diagram generated by the SciMat software contemplate the period between 2005 and 2009, in which the term “tourist destinations” consolidated itself as a central theme, representing one of the main themes to the scientific field over this time-frame. Boo et al. (2009) is highlighted as it identifies the influence of brand experience over brand equity in tourist destinations. Furthermore, the use of customer attitudes over a certain brand, especially regarding the tourism field, allows the development of marketing strategies with higher levels of trust and more positive ratings of digital brands (Delgado-Ballester & Hernández-Espallardo, 2008).

In turn, the time-frame between 2010 and 2014 has the biggest variety of terms, with retail as the main theme and online communities as transversal themes. A higher interest in research about e-commerce is present, as well as the impacts of well-succeeded brand equity marketing strategies, in addition to its own process of developing in a digital context (Simmons et al., 2010; White et al., 2013). With that, the use of social networks and online communities as data sources, along with studies which connect consumer participation in groups of common interest and variables such as loyalty, consuming behavior and value attributed to brands deepens (Brogi et al., 2013; Callarisa et al., 2012).

The following period, from 2015 to 2019, presents electronic word-of-mouth and marketing communications as the main themes. With this, the development of research exploring the use of social networks and communities are identified, deepening and consolidating themes that emerged in the previous period. Therefore, the equity of online brands becomes related to the customers buying intentions, the relationship between consumers and

brands, in addition to loyalty, service quality, commitment, and emotional engagement with such brands (Chang & Jai, 2015; Dwivedi et al., 2019; Kao & Lin, 2016; Moreira et al., 2017).

Brands communications over social media is regarded as an essential aspect of creating positive experiences, influencing consumers attitudes over the value of these brands (Jha, 2019). Thus, the use of online communications promotes positive changes on consumer behavior, when used in favorable ways to the companies, introducing higher confidence, loyalty and satisfaction to their current and potential consumers (Grubor et al., 2017). Discussions over brands and consumer behavior were also presented, either isolated or in association with the main themes of this period. The term “model” was also found to be a main theme, essentially due to the large presence of studies which utilize structural modelling for the data analysis.

In the last time-frame, which contemplates the years from 2020 to the beginning of 2023, the term “model” stayed as one of the main themes, with high usage in the literature. This reiterates that a predominant part of the analyzed articles used structural modelling in their development, which reveals a strong trend on the online brand equity field of research. Furthermore, the terms “mediating role” and “consequences” are associated, introducing more sophisticated testing of between variable relationship modelling. With a bigger variety of terms, this period presents “marketing communications” in the interconnection of isolated themes and terms in decline, which indicates a decrease of their presence in the scientific discussions, especially when compared to the previous periods. It is also worth mentioning a bigger highlight for studies about luxury brands (Zollo et al., 2020), consumer-based brand equity (Algharabat et al., 2020; Chen & Qasim, 2021), and consumer experience (Saewanee & Khamwon, 2022).

4.2 Characterization of the theoretical field

With the purpose of characterizing the theoretical field of online brand equity, bibliographic analysis was carried out through the Bibliometrix package, written in R language. In addition, a descriptive analysis with the usage of the VosViewer software was executed for a deeper and more detailed description of this construct

From there on, Table 1 was created, which shines light on the journals which produced more articles with the theme of brand equity. The European Journal of Marketing was the periodic with the most articles published (n=7), evidencing a predominance of European publishing of this field. Furthermore, the Journal of Product and Brand Management, and the Journal Retailing and Consumer Services, both with 6 publications, take up respectively the second and third position in Table 1. These results point to a larger focus of the retailing field in the concepts of branding and brand equity.

Table 1
Journals with the most publications on the field

| Periodics | Num. of publications | CiteScore (2022) | JIF (2022) |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>European Journal of Marketing</i> | 7 | 4.7 | 5.181 |
| <i>Journal of Product and Brand Management</i> | 6 | 4.7 | 5.248 |
| <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> | 6 | 9.0 | 10.972 |
| <i>Journal of Business Research</i> | 5 | 9.2 | 10.969 |
| <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> | 4 | 3.5 | 4.232 |
| <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> | 4 | 9.4 | 10.427 |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---|------|--------|
| <i>Journal of Relationship Marketing</i> | 4 | 3.9 | - |
| <i>Journal of Research In Interactive Marketing</i> | 4 | 6.2 | - |
| <i>Technological Forecasting and Social Change</i> | 4 | 12.1 | 10.884 |

In regards of the most cited articles, Table 2 was created, with the top five most cited papers. Boo et al. (2009) is the most cited publication. In this article, the authors intend on creating a brand model for tourist destinations through the use of consumer-based brand equity models. Next, Schivinski e Dabrowski (2016) evaluate the effects of social media communications on customer perceptions of the brand, demonstrating that consumer-created media positively influence brand equity (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Additionally, Bruhn et al (2012) occupy the third rank on the list with an article in which the authors seek to compare the impact over brand equity of social media communications and traditional communication. The results of the study show that both means of communication have a significant impact on brand value, with social media influencing brand image, while traditional media affect brand awareness (Bruhn et al., 2012).

In turn, Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold (2011) studies the effects of negative online reviews, as a type of bad word-of-mouth marketing, on the equity of a brand. In that regard, the study shows that there is a dilution of the brand equity as a result of negative reviews. Finally, King & Grace (2010) differs slightly from the rest of the papers on Table 2, in the sense that the purpose of the study is to create and empirically test an Employee-Based Brand Equity (EBBE) model.

Table 2
Top 5 most cited articles

| Ranking | Authorship | Periodic | Total citations | Citations / Year |
|---------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 | Boo et al. (2009) | Tourism Management | 418 | 27.87 |
| 2 | Schivinski & Dabrowski (2016) | Journal of Marketing Communications | 357 | 44.63 |
| 3 | Bruhn et al. (2012) | Management Research Review | 349 | 29.08 |
| 4 | Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold (2011) | Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services | 221 | 17.00 |
| 5 | King & Grace (2010) | European Journal of Marketing | 199 | 14.21 |

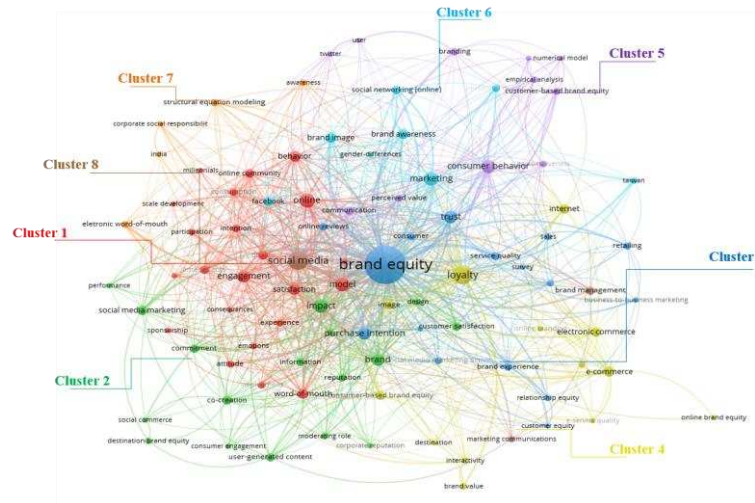
In regards of the nature or approach of these researches, the majority of the papers were of quantitative nature (78,1%), followed by multi-method (15,2%) and qualitative (6,7%). Concerning the techniques utilized in the collection and analysis of the theoretical-empirical articles, the most utilized technique was surveying (74,5%) and the most utilized analysis technique was structural equation modelling (64,4%). It should be noted that the use of experimental models proved to be so prominent and present in the studies that were included in two periods of analysis using the SciMat software as a main theme and with a high degree of citation.

The countries with the biggest presence as research locus were, respectively, the United States (11.5%), China (11%), India (7.7%), and Portugal and South Korea (1.92%). Regarding the application sectors of theoretical-empirical research, the digital environments that stood out the most were e-commerce (12%) and social networks (9.6%). As for the surveyed sectors, the tourism (10.1%), food (6.3%) and banking (5.3%) sectors also stood out in relation to the others mentioned in the study.

In order to deepen the themes discussed by the studies, an analysis of the co-occurrence of the keywords of the articles in the final sample was carried out, which can be seen in Figure

4. In this sense, the main themes explored in the publications of this subject were grouped through clustering, which associates the keywords and main themes of publications in a visual representation (Zupic & Čater, 2015).

Figure 4
Keywords co-occurrence analysis



Source: Elaborated by the authors

Cluster 1, represented by the color red, highlights aspects inherent to consumer behavior, especially in the digital environment. In these characteristics, it is possible to observe the constructs of satisfaction, emotions, engagement and buying intentions. In this context, Schivinski et al. (2019) states that consumer-based brand equity positively drives consumer behavioral engagement with brands on social media. In this way, consumer perceptions and attitudes and their engagement with a brand can directly impact on its consumption. Online communities are also analyzed in this cluster. Given this scenario, studies carried out by Divakaran (2018) show that variables related to brand communities help the level of service and purchase decisions. Kim and Manoli (2020), when investigating brand equity in sports teams, observed that a socially responsible image cooperates in building online communities and brand identification.

Cluster 2, shown in green, highlights the brand construct from a general perspective and how it can be perceived through its impact, performance and reputation. In addition, it is possible to observe another theme highlighted in this group, the co-creation process. In this context, the studies carried out by Pereira et al. (2022) explain how this factor can directly influence brand equity when combined with user-generated content, in addition to impacting customer engagement.

Cluster 3, represented by the blue color, brings together brand equity models. Among the various studies found on the construct, the review by Christodoulides and Chernatony (2004) stands out, which presented an update on the methods for measuring brand equity. Among them, it is noted that the model created by Aaker (1996) has become one of the most utilized, which explains that brand equity can be measured through four dimensions: loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations and brand awareness

This construct can also be applied to other dimensions, such as customer value and relationship value. Regarding the first theme, the studies carried out by Chen et al. (2016) show that experiences with a strong brand influence the construction of customer value. Furthermore,

Rienetta et al. (2017) explain the value of the relationship in the context of brands and show that it can directly influence customer value.

Cluster 4, identified by the color yellow, deals with loyalty as a driver of brand equity in the context of e-commerce. The study carried out by Kao and Lin (2016) in the context of virtual banks demonstrates that loyalty is directly affected by consumer trust and satisfaction, directly contributing to brand equity.

Cluster 5, in purple, presents antecedents and consequences of CBBE, based on quantitative models' tests. In this sense, models study the degree to which brand equity is influenced by some aspect, notably: social media marketing (Malarvizhi et al., 2022) and price promotions (Bhakar & Bhakar, 2020). Furthermore, in e-commerce, website design, security and customer service are indirect influencers, while trust and satisfaction are direct influencers of brand equity (Butt et al., 2018).

Cluster 6, in light blue, deepens the association between brand knowledge and brand image as factors related to brand equity, especially regarding the use of social networks. In this sense, Masa'deh et al. (2021) point out word-of-mouth, customization and interaction as aspects that significantly affect brand knowledge and image. In addition, empirical studies demonstrate that, in social networks, both the content generated by firms and that generated by consumers positively influence brand awareness (Guha et al., 2021; Schivinski, 2015). On the other hand, Rios & Riquelme (2008) point out that brand awareness does not directly contribute to the creation of brand value in digital companies. This conclusion is in line with studies by Nag and Gilitwala (2022), who indicate image as the variable that most creates brand value, while perceived quality and brand identification have a smaller relationship with value creation, and brand awareness has a negative correlation.

Cluster 7, in orange, deals with the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and brand equity. In this sense, studies show that CSR practices in strategies have a positive impact on brand equity (Ma & Kaplanidou, 2021), with brand knowledge, loyalty and brand image playing a mediating role in this relationship (Singh & Verma, 2017). Furthermore, a significant positive influence was identified between consumers' perception of CSR strategies and brand value on purchase intention (Chang & Jai, 2015).

Cluster 8, in brown, focuses on brand management or branding strategies. In this sense, Shuyi et al. (2022) and Ebrahim (2020) describe that social media activities for brand communication have three main attributes: fad, customization and word-of-mouth. These authors demonstrate that the three aspects can directly (Shuyi et al., 2022) and indirectly (Ebrahim, 2020) influence brand equity. Thus, it is pointed out that social media marketing strategies have a positive effect, mainly in relation to purchase intention, trust, loyalty and brand value (Alwan & Alshurideh, 2022; Cheung et al., 2020; Haudi et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022; Zarei et al., 2022), which is consistent with the results shown by the articles in cluster 6.

5. Discussions and Research Agenda

Based on the results collected, it was possible to identify new challenges and elaborate a research agenda for future studies on the theme of consumer-based brand equity of digital brands. Considering the number of publications on the subject in recent years, the interest in this field of knowledge and its growing evolution since its seminal studies (Ilfeld & Wine, 2002; Teo & Tan, 2002) is remarkable, especially in the last decade, whose thriving scientific production reached a notable increase.

With regard to the countries and regions that publish the most on the subject, Europe is highlighted, as the region with the highest number of published articles. In addition, it was observed that the research application sites are predominantly the United States and China, as well as the online reality itself. Given this, challenges related to addressing the issue in developing countries such as those in South America, Africa and Oceania, where electronic

commerce has grown at an exponential pace, are identified. Also, given that such locations have a wide cultural diversity, studies on the influence of cultural aspects on the value of online brands are especially welcome.

In summary, the articles that stood out the most on the subject, appearing in the top five most cited papers, were dedicated to creating models of CBBE for tourist destinations, evaluating the effects of communication through social media on brand equity, to compare the impact of communicating with consumers through social media and communicating through traditional media on brand equity, to study the effects of negative online reviews on brand equity, and to empirically test an innovative model of brand equity based on employees (Employee Based Brand Equity-EBBE).

As highlighted by Malarvizhi et al (2022) and corroborated in this review, the so-called post-pandemic scenario has been characterized by a rapid growth in the digital sphere, especially regarding social networks and e-commerce, where attention to the construct of brand equity has grown substantially. In fact, the value based on the consumer of digital brands showed a strong connection with other variables typical of relationship marketing. It is also worth noting the presence of studies that analyzed the value of online brands from the perspective of consumers' sensory and emotional aspects, evaluating their experience as a whole, a trend with strong research potential.

Furthermore, the state of the art on the subject in the last 3 years has been characterized by the introduction of more sophisticated tests of structural models of relationships between variables, including mediation and the identification of antecedent and consequent relationships of CBBE, as pointed out as a trend by Oliveira et al (2023).

There is also a greater emphasis on studies on luxury brands (Zollo et al., 2020), consumer-based brand equity (Algharabat et al., 2020; Chen & Qasim, 2021), and online consumer experience (Saewanee & Khamwon, 2022) predominantly in the tourism and banking sectors.

As a corollary, ways are open to study the various other sectors of the economy, including the third sector, which is still unexplored from this perspective, as well as to develop research from the B2B (business-to-business) and C2C (consumer-to-consumer) perspective. Furthermore, researches that analyzed the value of public brands in the digital scenario were not found in the sample, also representing an opportunity for further investigations. In this sense, a gap in studies of the value of digital brands considering ethical issues and articulations with aspects of sustainability, challenges imposed in an increasingly patent and intense way in organizational management, was also identified.

Despite the predominance of quantitative studies in the body of the analysis, the development of theoretical essays that advocate the investigation of the theme under interpretive epistemologies and different theoretical lenses is strongly encouraged, as well as studies with a multi-method approach, in order to better understand the phenomenon from which the numbers do not measure. Only then will it be possible to contribute to the progressive advancement of theoretical-empirical knowledge of consumer-based value of digital brands.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the limitations of this study, starting with the restriction to the Web of Science and Scopus databases, despite their recognized use and relevance in systematic reviews. The other filters adopted in the review protocol, such as articles only published in English and in journals with JIF and CiteScore impact factors, can be understood as limiting factors. In this sense, reviews that include other databases, different languages and scientific literature, such as organized books and articles published in scientific events, may expand the scope of the review and the results achieved.

6. Conclusion

This research aimed to answer the question “what comes next in the consumer-based value of digital brands”, which gives title to the article, synthesizing an initial effort, based on a gap identified in the literature, to map the past and present itineraries of research, which unveiled new challenges to compose an agenda for further studies, with a specific focus on the digital market. Thus, we understand that we have contributed to the advancement of consumer-based brand-equity research.

Furthermore, as far as practical implications go, the results achieved so far can inspire managers of online companies with regard to the positioning of brands in the electronic context, the creation of marketing strategies, management of brands, experience and relationship with customers. Through management based on scientific evidence, it will be possible to implement more effective branding strategies towards greater value for brands in a progressively digital business environment.

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