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Review Article

Mapping Hedonic Motivation, Digital Influence, and Conspicuous Consumption Behavior: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

Background: The rapid development of digital technology has amplified pleasure-driven behavior with socioeconomic implications, positioning hedonic motivation as a key explanatory concept. However, its interpretation remains divided between psychological and sociological approaches. This gap reflects the lack of integrative studies linking classical behavioral theory to contemporary digital consumption dynamics.

Objective: This study aimed to systematically map the intellectual structure of hedonic motivation research by examining publication trends in digital consumption, identifying dominant psychological and sociological themes, and interpreting these patterns through Veblen's classic theory of conspicuous consumption.

Design and Methodology: A bibliometric analysis was conducted on 111 articles from the Scopus database, published from 2004 to 2024, using Biblioshiny. This research combines bibliometric analysis with theoretical interpretation.

Results: The analysis identifies a significant growth in publications over the past two decades, with major contributions from China, the United States, and Indonesia. The findings confirm the enduring relevance of Veblen's theory, revealing its modern embodiment through social media influencers. Identify three main research clusters: impulse buying, the utilitarian-hedonic dualism, and technology adoption.

Conclusion and Implications: This study extends Veblen's theory by linking macro-socioeconomic factors and micro-psychological mechanisms. Specifically, the analysis reveals that hedonic motivation in digital consumption is mediated by social comparison and fear of missing out (FOMO). These findings are useful for: (1) behavioral scientists in designing “digital nudges” that reduce impulse buying; (2) for policymakers in developing digital financial literacy that targets emotional biases; and (3) for educators in creating sustainable consumption awareness curricula.

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Consumerist behavior in the digital era is driven not only by economic needs but also by increasingly strong emotional and social impulses. The conspicuous consumption theory proposed by Veblen (Stanković, 2018) explains that individuals attempt to display their social status through consumption patterns visible to others. In the modern context, this idea remains relevant, though the mechanisms have shifted with affective motivation, social comparison, and digital influence. Affective motivation drives individuals to seek instant pleasure and emotional satisfaction from consumption activities. In contrast, social comparison reinforces the desire to imitate the lifestyles of others perceived as more successful or influential. On the other hand, digital influence through social media and platform algorithms creates an

environment that stimulates and accelerates such consumptive behavior. Thus, Veblen's theory not only explains the macro-social phenomenon of status and prestige.

The development of information technology and social media has spurred hedonic transaction and purchasing motives (Ciocodeică et al., 2025). This is a result of the influence and initiatives frequently carried out by influencers across various other social media platforms (de Araujo et al., 2024). Some even engage in unnecessary transactions for items not on their list of needs, yet proceed with the transaction and purchase nonetheless. Moreover, this phenomenon is driven by dissatisfaction among the lower-middle class regarding income inequality and unequal access, where the poor benefit from subsidies, while the wealthy gain from tax amnesties. This has become a normalized practice among the *nouveau riche*, who often overlook financial obligations such as taxes, whereas the aristocracy avoids them due to amnesty policies. Meanwhile, the poor do not bear the tax burden due to subsidies. This positions them (the *nouveau riche*) as ideal subjects for taxation (Shao, 2025).

In the literature review, conspicuous consumption in the digital era is discussed more broadly as not only correlating with an individual's economic capability but also being driven by psychological impulses and social exposure mediated by technology (Alkhashnam, 2025). This concept aligns with hedonic motivation as a key variable. Various studies on behavioral psychology emphasise that this motivation is impulsive and oriented towards short-term satisfaction and rapid social validation (Miezah et al., 2023; Raio et al., 2020). It is this hedonic motivation that underpins this research. Structurally, it is linked to digital influence. Social media, influencers, and platform algorithms create a visual system that intensifies social comparisons and forms virtual reference groups for individuals. The interaction between hedonic motivation and digital influence then manifests as conspicuous consumption behaviour, often found among the middle economic class.

However, behavioral studies of hedonic motivation remain fragmented between psychological (individual affective drives) and sociological (status structure) approaches. The lack of an intellectual map connecting classical behavioural theory to the phenomenon of digital consumption raises the question: which sociological theory is most relevant to frame this comprehensive analysis? Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption offers an appropriate lens because it views consumption as a signal of social status, driven by mechanisms such as pecuniary emulation (Horodecka, 2025). Based on Veblen's theory of consumption, the motive of the *nouveau riche* in making hedonic purchases is, as mentioned, to gain social recognition. A study by Gorga et al. (2024) shows that visibility inequality on digital platforms strengthens the relationship between income inequality and conspicuous consumption, as individuals in the poorest-middle income groups face more intense upward comparison pressure but with more limited resources. The theoretical implication is an extension of the concept of pecuniary emulation to algorithmically mediated emulation, where platforms not only facilitate but actively shape the displayed status hierarchy.

This research is based on a conceptual framework that connects three main dimensions in the study of hedonic motivation. First, the psychological dimension highlights the 'individual's emotional drive to seek pleasure, satisfaction, and social recognition, which stems from affective and impulsive motivations. Second, the sociological dimension explains how the 'individual's consumer behavior functions as a means to assert social status, in line with Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption, where consumption acts as a symbol of prestige in society (Horodecka, 2025). Thus, the bibliometric analysis in this study not only maps publication patterns but also traces the conceptual interconnections between psychology, sociology, and technology in shaping hedonic consumption behavior in the digital era.

Previous studies have discussed hedonic motivation from various perspectives (Evangelin et al., 2021). Behavioral psychology research emphasizes that consumptive behavior is often driven by the pursuit of pleasure and short-term emotional satisfaction. In contrast, economic and sociological studies highlight that such behavior also stems from the drive to gain social recognition and build self-image in the eyes of others. Both approaches indicate the role of emotional drive in recognition, but differ in how they explain it from a socioeconomic perspective. However, there remains a conceptual gap in understanding how

personal hedonic motivation can develop into collective behavior patterns that impact economic inequality, financial pressure, and status display culture in digital spaces. Therefore, an approach combining psychological and sociological perspectives is needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of hedonic motivation and its implications for the socioeconomic well-being of modern society.

Research on these emerging trends is necessary to inform a government policy brief that develops a set of strategies to mitigate hedonic consumption and support the financially pressured middle class. Furthermore, as is known, over the past two decades, digital technology and social media have transformed how individuals interact with consumption, expanding the space for hedonic motivations to develop in more complex and fragmented forms (Ciocodeică et al., 2025). Bibliometric research can identify trends in the literature, conceptual networks, and their influence on modern consumer behavior, demonstrating the continued relevance of Veblen's theory. Additionally, the findings from such a study can serve as a basis for developing policies, marketing strategies, and public education that are more responsive to consumption dynamics in the digital era (Zakariah et al., 2021).

Research Gap and Contributions

First, existing studies have not yet systematically combined quantitative bibliometric mapping with in-depth theoretical interpretation grounded in Veblen's classical theory. Second, existing research tends to be fragmented between psychological (individual motivation) and sociological (status structure) approaches, lacking a framework that connects the micro and macro levels. The contributions of this study are threefold: (1) presenting an interpretive bibliometric analysis that links literature patterns to Veblen's theory, (2) identifying psychosocial mechanisms linking hedonic drives to economic outcomes, and (3) providing an empirical basis for behavioral interventions in digital consumer policy.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation: Veblen's Theory of Conspicuous Consumption in the Digital Era

The theory of conspicuous consumption, introduced by Veblen (1899, as cited in Scott, 2020) in the theory of the leisure class, argues that consumption serves not only to fulfill utility needs but also to signal social status. Veblen identified two key mechanisms: (1) pecuniary emulation, namely the tendency of individuals to imitate the consumption patterns of higher status groups; and (2) conspicuous leisure, namely showing off free time as evidence of prosperity. Although Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption is a classical framework, it remains relevant as it explains the fundamental logic of consumption driven by the pursuit of social status and symbolic recognition. This concept has not disappeared in the digital era; rather, it has transformed. Therefore, this study uses Veblen's theory as the main conceptual foundation, while also developing/mapping recent findings relevant to the context of digital consumption. In the digital space, consumption becomes more democratic yet increasingly competitive, status dynamics become more fluid due to the transient nature of content, and the platform economy creates structural incentives that encourage sustainable conspicuous consumption practices. Veblen's theory is not a static concept but a dynamic framework for understanding contemporary consumption patterns.

Synthesizing Key Constructs: Hedonic Motivation, Digital Influence, and Conspicuous Behavior

Hedonic motivation, as the main driver for seeking pleasure and emotional satisfaction (Setianan et al., 2022), find a significantly enhanced field of expression in the digital age. Digital influences mediated by platforms, algorithms, and online social interactions not only facilitate but actively engineer an environment that reinforces the hedonic motivation cycle. This environment emphasizes speed, visibility, and instant feedback, shifting gratification from intrinsic experiences to measurable external social validation (Mposi et al., 2025).

Critical synthesis suggests that this interaction transforms hedonic motivation from a personal drive into a socially co-opted phenomenon. Conspicuous consumption practices, in this context, are the result of this convergence. These behaviors are no longer solely aimed at personal pleasure but function as status

performances in digital spaces, where the purchase and display of goods/services serve as symbols for gaining recognition, building identity, and asserting position within the virtual social hierarchy. Thus, digital influence acts as a catalyst and amplifier, transforming basic hedonic drives into visible, competitive consumer behavior, reviving the Veblenian logic of conspicuous consumption in a new, democratic yet fragmented format.

Research Objectives

The research objectives in this study will be formulated into three. First, it is important to note that intellectual structure refers to the pattern of conceptual and thematic relationships that shape a field's body of knowledge, which can be identified through keyword networks and cluster analysis. Based on this gap identification, the objectives of this study are:

1. To map the temporal development and scientific productivity of research on hedonic motivation in the context of digital influence and conspicuous consumption behavior during the period 2004–2024.
2. To uncover the intellectual structure and conceptual dynamics of the literature through keyword network analysis and thematic mapping.
3. To interpret these bibliometric findings using a framework based on Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption to understand the transformation of status imitation mechanisms in the digital environment.

Review Method

Design

This study employs a bibliometric approach to explore and map research trends related to hedonic motivation. Research trends refer to the collective shift in studies on a particular topic. This study employs Scopus as the primary bibliographic database due to its broad disciplinary coverage and rigorous indexing standards (Prakoso et al., 2024). Furthermore, this study utilises Biblioshiny, a web-based tool from the Bibliometrix (R) package, for bibliometric analysis, not only to generate knowledge-mapping but also to interpret co-occurrence results and theme evolution through the lens of Veblen's classical behaviour theory.

Figure 1

Workflow of the Bibliometric Analysis on Hedonic Motivation Research

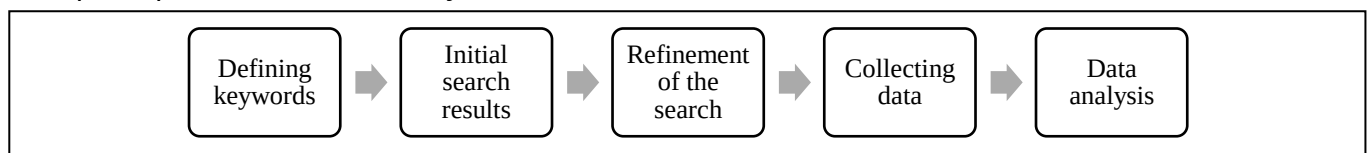


Figure 1 shows the stages of bibliometric research on the related topic. The bibliometric metrics planned for analysis in this study encompass quantitative, conceptual, intellectual, and social aspects. Examples include publication counts, citation counts, network linkages, keyword co-occurrence mapping, co-citation analysis, and bibliometric indicators available in the Biblioshiny (RStudio) application (Sundkvist et al., 2025).

Search Strategy and Data Sources

The bibliographic data retrieval mechanism in Scopus was conducted in September 2025. The search process began by selecting the “article title” field and typing the keyword “hedonic motivation”. The “article title” filter was chosen because it is deemed to reflect better the research focus aligned with the designated theme and has proven effective. Initial results showed 215 records. An advanced search was then conducted for the period 2004–2024, narrowing the results to 184 records. Subsequently, filters were applied based on document type (articles only) and language (limited to English), resulting in 132 articles. A final screening was conducted using Microsoft Excel to review article titles and abstracts to verify the accuracy of the search results. From this process, a total of 111 articles were deemed valid.

Data Screening and Validation

The selection process was carried out in two stages: (1) automatic filtering in Scopus (year, document type, language); and (2) manual screening in Microsoft Excel based on the relevance of the title and abstract. To ensure reliability, two independent researchers double-coded 30% of randomly selected articles. The level of agreement was measured by Cohen's Kappa ($\kappa = .85$), indicating “almost perfect” reliability (Derksen et al., 2024). The screening protocol used two main categories: relevant and irrelevant articles. Articles were categorized as relevant if hedonic motivation served as the primary research variable. Conversely, articles were categorized as irrelevant if hedonic motivation was only a secondary concept or not discussed in depth. Before the screening process began, each researcher was provided with an operational definition of 'hedonic motivation' and examples of relevant and irrelevant articles.

The manual screening process was conducted in Microsoft Excel by applying inclusion and exclusion criteria. During the inclusion stage, articles were selected that explicitly focused on hedonic motivation as the primary research topic, whether in the context of psychology, education, marketing, consumer behavior, technology, or other relevant disciplines. In the exclusion stage, articles that only briefly mentioned hedonic motivation or treated it as a minor part of the discussion rather than being the primary focus were removed from the analysis. All selection results were then reviewed by two independent evaluators with expertise in hedonic motivation and bibliometric methodology.

The Searching Strategy Justification

The search was limited to the “Article Title” field (not TITLE-ABS-KEY) based on the following considerations: (1) increasing the precision and relevance of documents, (2) focusing on studies that explicitly position “hedonic motivation” as a core construct, and (3) reducing noise from articles that only briefly mention the concept. This approach aligns with recommendations for thematic bibliometric studies (Houshyar & Sotudeh, 2018). All selection results were then reviewed by two independent evaluators with expertise in hedonic motivation and bibliometric methodology. To enhance the credibility of the selection process, both evaluators applied a data validation procedure by double-coding 30% of the randomly selected articles. The inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa coefficient. The research term was obtained in the following format: In Scopus. TITLE (hedonic motivation) AND PUBYEAR > 2004 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , “ar”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , “English”)). Searching with the TITLE format is preferred over TITLE-ABS-KEY to find more relevant articles.

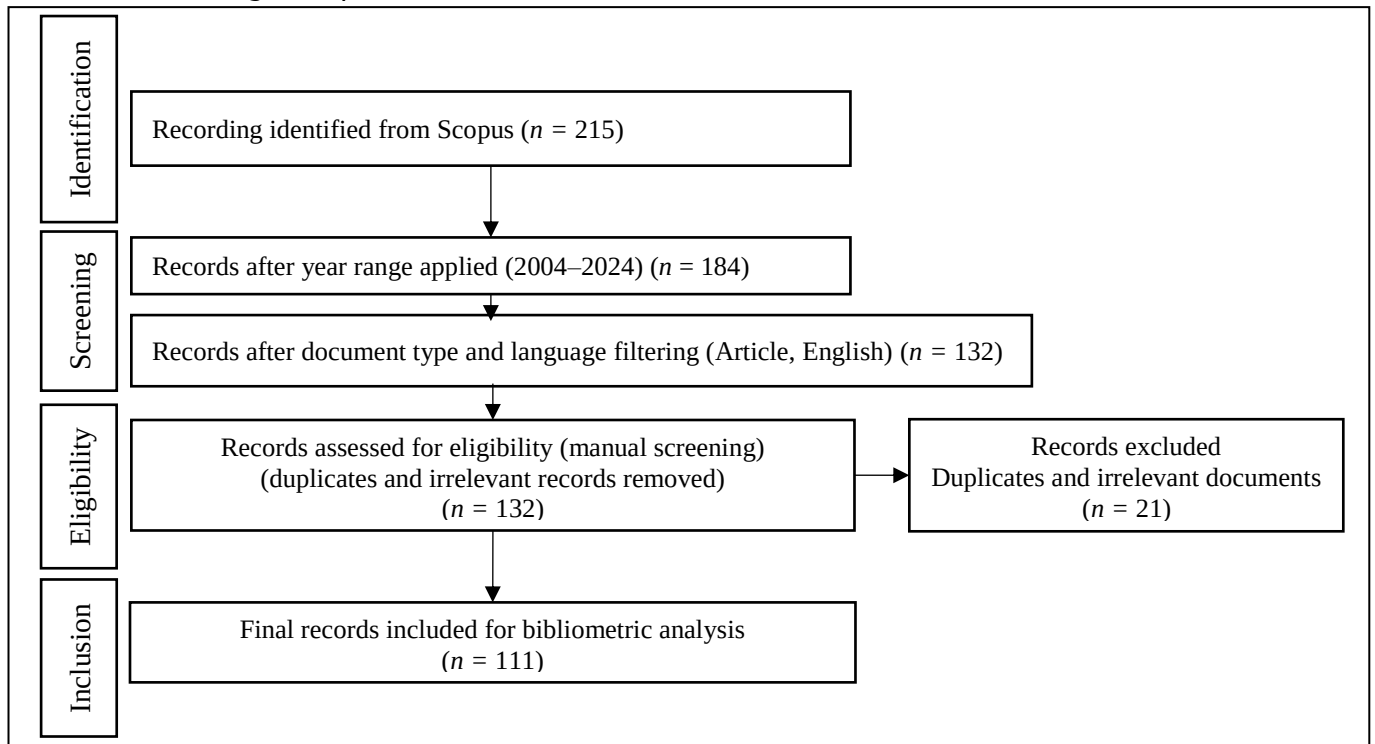
Figure 2 shows the flow of article selection according to PRISMA guidelines. The filtered documents were exported from Microsoft Excel to CSV, containing information such as author names, affiliations, titles, countries, journal names, and keywords. This data was then analyzed descriptively to address the research questions. To present the bibliographic data, this study used the Biblioshiny (RStudio) software.

Qualitative Interpretation Procedure

Before the qualitative aspects, a quantitative bibliometric analysis was first conducted to examine publication performance and scientific mapping, including source productivity, country distribution, and co-authorship networks. Second, a thematic analysis was applied to the keyword co-occurrence clusters to identify dominant research themes. Third, the identified themes were theoretically interpreted using Veblen's classical concepts, namely conspicuous consumption, pecuniary emulation, and the leisure class, in order to contextualise patterns of hedonic motivation research (Mitchell, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

This research used publicly available secondary data from the Scopus database. It did not involve interaction with human subjects or access to personal data. Research that uses publicly available data and does not directly impact subjects does not require formal ethics approval from an institutional committee. However, all research was conducted in accordance with the principles of academic honesty, methodological transparency, and responsible reporting.

Figure 2*PRISMA Flow Diagram of Bibliometric Article Selection on Hedonic Motivation*

Results

Findings Related to Research Objective 1: Mapping Temporal Development and Scientific Productivity

The first finding will provide an overview of the development of research over time, trends in the growth of article publications on hedonic motivation, as well as the patterns and distribution of research. This aims to understand the dynamics and intensity of publication chronologically, thus gaining in-depth knowledge that is valuable for researchers interested in conducting research on hedonic motivation.

Annual Growth and Publication Trends

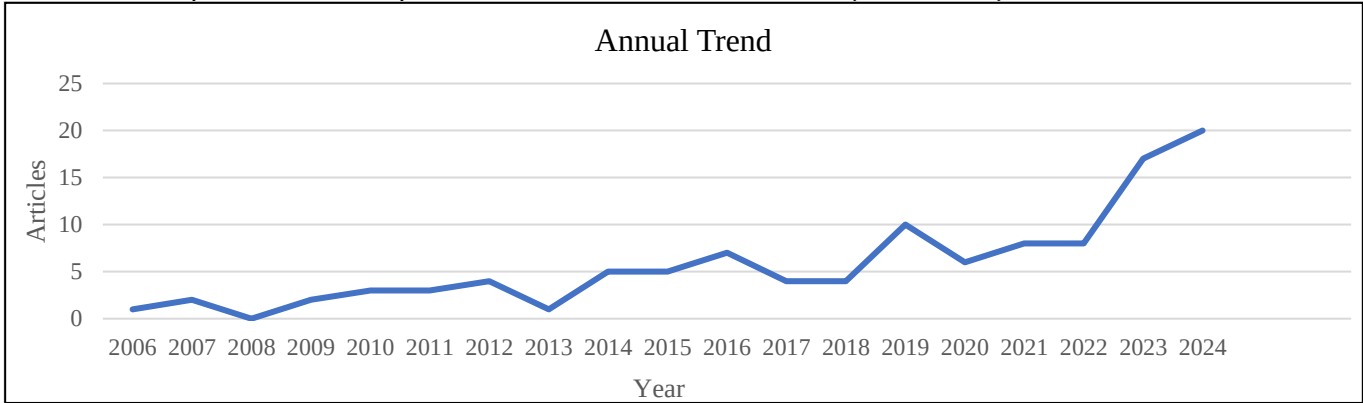
Figure 3 reveals a digital inflection point in 2014, where publications on hedonic motivation increased fivefold from the previous year. Veblen's theory provides a causal lens for this 2014 surge. The concept of pecuniary emulation directly explains the mass adoption of visual social media (Clavio et al., 2023). It takes 3–4 years for a surge in research to occur. This period is a social incubation period during which platforms have matured enough to display a digital status hierarchy (a digital leisure class), thus creating a natural laboratory for researchers to observe Veblen's theory at a new scale and pace. The most frequently cited study from that year, conducted by Anderson et al. (2014), confirmed that social media platforms have become the new status display arena where pecuniary emulation occurs virtually.

This visualization presents a line graph showing the temporal trend of scientific publications on hedonic motivation over two decades. The horizontal (X) axis represents the publication years from 2004 to 2024, while the vertical (Y) axis shows the number of articles published each year. The graph reveals four phases of research development: an initial phase with minimal productivity (2004–2013), a significant turning point in 2014 with a fivefold increase over the previous year, a period of stable growth (2015–2019), and a post-2020 exponential acceleration reaching a peak of 20 articles in 2024.

A positive trend is evident from 2021 to 2024. The highest number of published articles was in 2024, with 20 articles. These 20 articles predominantly discussed hedonic consumption behavior patterns in online gaming, as exemplified by the study conducted by Hussain et al. (2025) titled “Why premium in freemium: a hedonic shopping motivation model in virtual game retailing”. Furthermore, research trends

in hedonic motivation in 2024 explored the role of AI, as seen in the study by Dinh et al. (2023) titled, “How to increase consumer intention to use Chatbots?” An empirical analysis of hedonic and utilitarian motivations on social presence and the moderating effects of fear across generations.

Figure 3
Annual Scientific Production of Research on Hedonic Motivation (2004-2024)



The behavioral implications of Figure 3 can be explained by this shift in the arena, which changes the status dynamics because: (1) social visibility becomes cheaper and broader, (2) consumption signals can be produced and consumed instantly, and (3) social comparisons become more intense due to algorithmic exposure to unaffordable lifestyles. This phenomenon aligns with Veblen's concept of 'invidious comparison,' which is now accelerated by digital architecture.

Main Contributor: Author and Publication Source

To respond to research objectives, the authors and publication sources require an explanation related to the author names with the most documents in Table 1 and the most influential documents in Table 2.

Table 1
The Most Productive Authors in Hedonic Motivation Research

Authors	Articles	Articles fractionalized	H-index	Total citations
Mark (Arnold & Reynolds, 2012; Evanschitzky et al., 2014)	2	.67	2	203
Raffaele (Hu et al., 2022; Mainolfi et al., 2022)	2	.45	2	134
Johan (Flores & Jansson, 2022; Rezvani et al., 2018)	2	.83	2	191
Ranjeet (Totawar et al., 2016; Totawar & Nambudiri, 2014)	2	.83	1	14
Özen (Odağ et al., 2016, 2018)	2	.50	2	20

Table 1 identifies the five most productive authors based on the number of articles, citation impact, and other performance indicators. These productive authors provide valuable insights into the development of this research field, which is beneficial for both collaboration opportunities and analyzing the impact of their scholarly output. The recency of article publications serves as an important consideration in the ranking. Arnold and Reynolds (2012) are the most productive authors, having written two articles with a total of 203 citations. The article by Arnold and Reynolds (2012) related to hedonic motivation is titled “Approach and avoidance motivation: investigating hedonic consumption in a retail setting.”

Table 2 summarizes the performance of the top five journals based on various impact metrics in studies on hedonic motivation. From the table, it can be seen that the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services has made the largest contribution, with three published articles, an H-index of 3, and 447 citations. In discussions concerning hedonic motivation, this journal features a study by Coelho et al. (2023) titled,

Personal values and impulse buying: The mediating role of hedonic shopping motivations, which discusses how both resultant self-enhancement and resultant conservation indirectly influence impulse buying through the mediation of hedonic shopping motivations, with findings consistent across samples from Portugal and the United States.

Table 2

The Most Influential Publication Sources in Hedonic Motivation Research

Source name	N	CiteScore	H-Index	G-Index	M-Index	TC	PY-Start
Journal of retailing and consumer services	3	22.7	3	3	.250	447	2014
Sustainability (Switzerland)	3	7.7	3	3	.750	40	2022
Technology in society	3	21.9	3	3	.375	295	2018
Education and information technologies	2	11.8	2	2	.667	93	2023
Global business review	2	9.5	2	2	.667	28	2023

Note. N = number of publications; CiteScore = Scopus CiteScore indicating the average citations per document; H-Index = Hirsch index measuring the productivity and citation impact of a source; G-Index = index reflecting citation distribution with greater weight to highly cited publications; M-Index = h-index normalized by the number of years since the first publication; TC = total citations; PY-Start = publication year of the first indexed document.

Geographical Distribution and Collaboration Network

China leads research on hedonic motivation with 52 publications, followed by the United States with 51. Indonesia ranks third with 39 publications, followed by Malaysia ($n = 18$) and India ($n = 17$). This pattern indicates a concentration of knowledge production in Asia and North America. It confirms that the study of hedonic motivation is thriving not only in developed countries but also in developing countries experiencing rapid growth in consumption and digitalisation.

Figure 4

International Collaborations in Hedonic Motivation Research

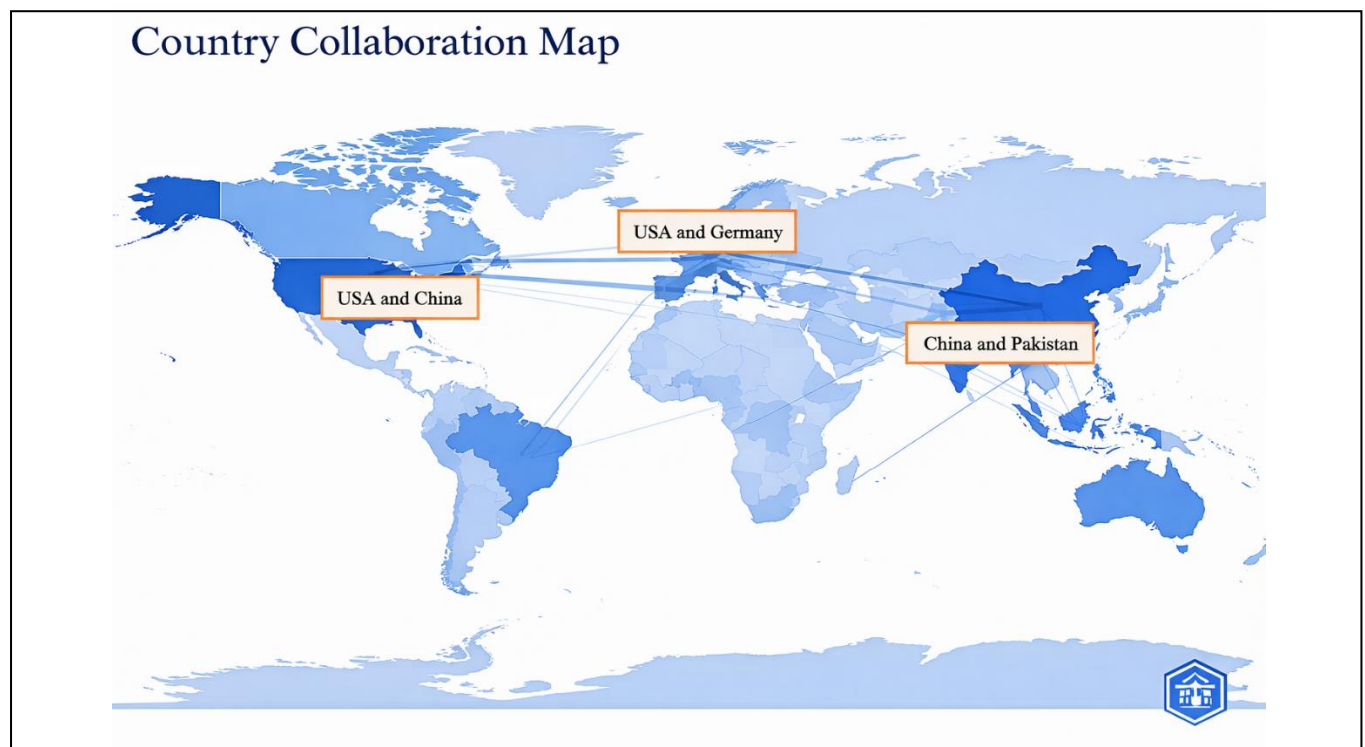


Figure 4 presents the global collaboration map for research on hedonic motivation, with brown network lines indicating the intensity and distribution of cross-country partnerships. The transcontinental connection between the United States (USA) and China signifies a strategic collaboration between two major research powers that combines Eastern and Western perspectives. Meanwhile, the USA-Germany linkage reflects the integration of European and American academic traditions in consumer behavior studies. At the regional level, the collaboration between China and Pakistan exemplifies South-South cooperation, focused on collectivist cultural contexts and emerging markets (Garcia-Aliaga et al., 2025). This pattern confirms that hedonic motivation research has become a global discourse, with individualistic countries (such as the USA and Germany) and collectivist countries (like China and Pakistan) complementing each other in exploring how hedonic motivations manifest across diverse sociocultural settings.

Main information of bibliometrics presents several key descriptive indicators used to provide an overview of the main characteristics of a bibliometric dataset, including publication period coverage, authorship and collaboration patterns, etc., which serve as a basis for understanding the structure and development of research on hedonic motivations.

Table 3
Main Information of the Bibliometric Dataset on the Hedonic Motivation

Description	Results
Main information about data	
Timespan	2004 to 2024
Sources (journals, books, etc.)	95
Annual growth rate	18.1%
Document contents	
Keywords plus	346
Authors	349
Authors collaboration	
International co-authorships	31.5%
Document types	
Article	111

Table 3 presents comprehensive descriptive statistics of the corpus of 111 analyzed articles. The study period spans from 2004 to 2024, with an average document age of 6.05 years, indicating that the analyzed literature is relatively recent. An annual growth rate of 18.1% confirms the rapid expansion of this research field. This growth indicates that the topic is highly interesting for further exploration, especially given the trend of hedonistic consumption in society, often initiated by influencers (Yan et al., 2025).

Findings Related to Research Objective 2: Revealing the Intellectual Structure and Conceptual Dynamics

The second finding addresses the structure of thought and concept dynamics in research related to hedonic motivation. From here, researchers can map themes that are underdeveloped to those that are well-developed, as well as term integrations that can be linked. This finding is important for identifying the context of future research that is relevant to current developments.

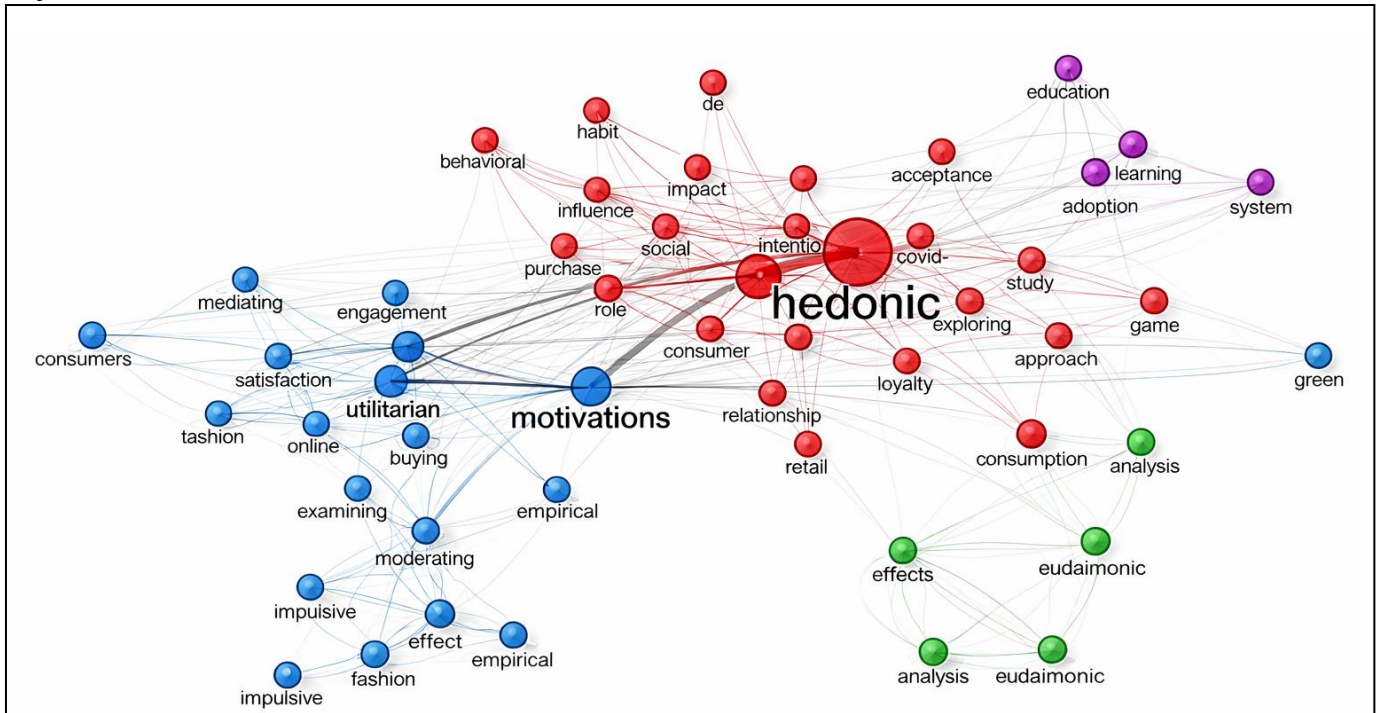
Dominant Thematic Cluster from Co-occurrence Analysis

The co-occurrence network analysis of research on hedonic motivation reveals four major thematic clusters, each representing a distinct research focus. The red cluster centers on the socio-behavioral dimensions of consumers, with keywords such as hedonic, consumer, relationship, social purchase,

behavioral, and habit. This indicates an emphasis on how social factors and habits shape hedonic consumer behavior within relational contexts.

Figure 5

Keyword Co-occurrence Networks in Hedonic Motivation Research



The co-occurrence network (Figure 5) reveals four thematic clusters that represent the hidden intellectual structure of hedonic motivation research.

The *red* cluster (socio-behavioral dimension) is characterized by the dominance of keywords such as “hedonic,” “consumer,” “relationship,” and “habit”. This pattern indicates that hedonic consumption is no longer merely an individual decision, but has become an internalized and socially embedded habit within digital relationships. This result supports an expansion of Veblen’s theory, as conspicuous consumption appears to have shifted from a deliberate status-oriented strategy into a routine practice that is increasingly reinforced and automated through platform design mechanisms. The blue cluster (digital motivation dimension) shows a strong linkage among the keywords “impulse,” “online,” and “satisfaction”. This relationship suggests the emergence of a cycle of digital gratification, in which impulse buying provides short-term satisfaction that reinforces repetitive and potentially unsustainable consumption behavior. In this context, the digital environment functions as a reinforcement loop, resembling a tragedy of the commons dynamic at the individual level, where personal gratification contributes to broader patterns of overconsumption.

The purple cluster (edu-tech dimension) highlights the critical presence of education and technology themes within the broader hedonic motivation research landscape. The inclusion of this cluster suggests that digital hedonic experiences are increasingly being examined in relation to learning systems, technological mediation, and educational contexts. This indicates that hedonic motivation is not only discussed in consumer behavior, but also in domains connected to digital learning and innovation. Finally, the green cluster (eudaimonic dimension) represents the reflective and long-term counterpart of hedonic motivation. It is associated with keywords such as “eudaimonic,” “self-actualization,” “learning,” and “education”. This cluster points to a growing stream of research exploring how digital consumption experiences may contribute not only to pleasure, but also to meaning-making, personal development, and self-actualization over time.

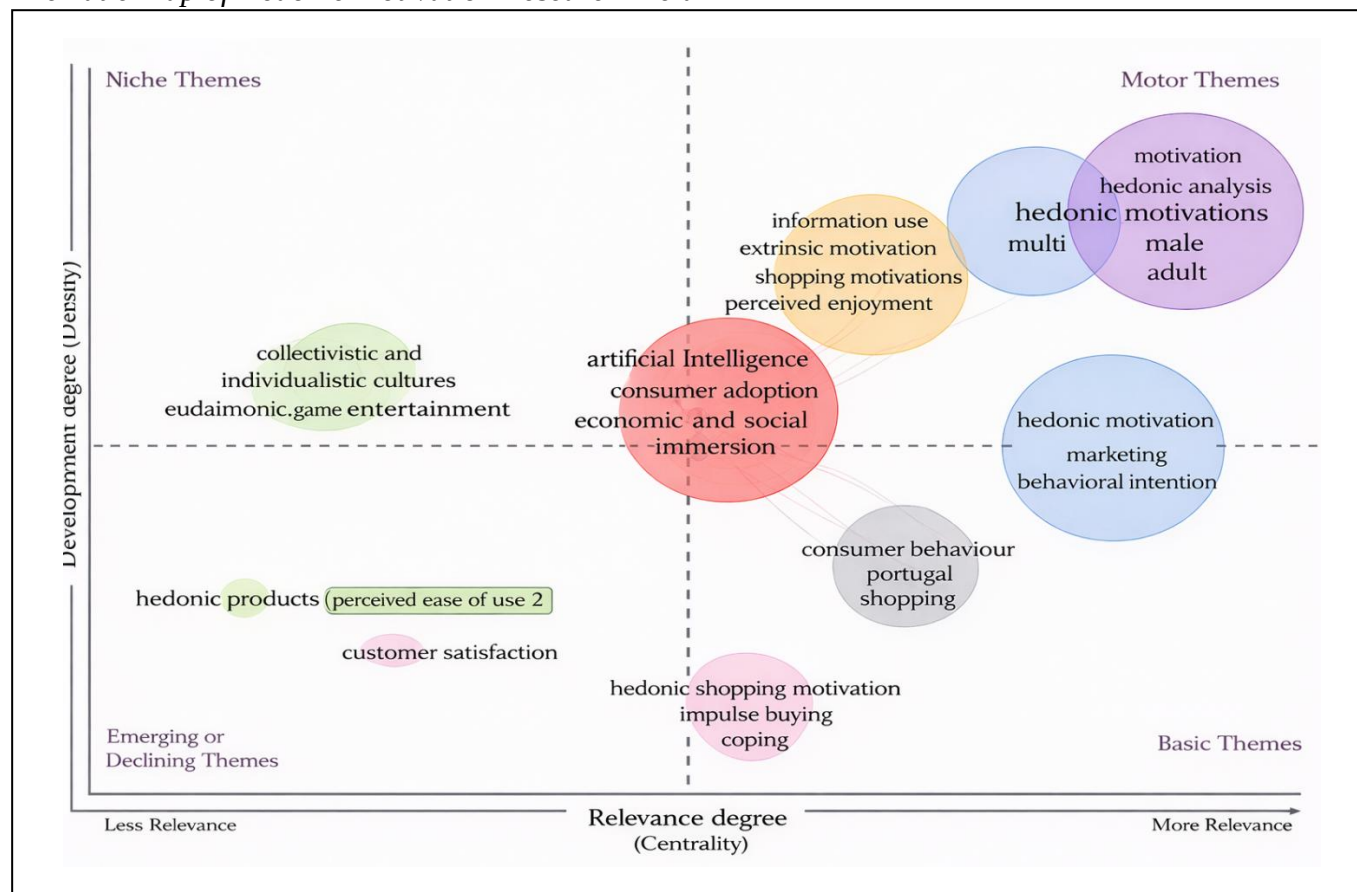
Strategic Theme Development from Thematic Mapping

The thematic map in the bibliometric analysis reveals that topics such as hedonic analysis, human, intrinsic motivation, artificial intelligence, shopping motivations, immersion, and perceived enjoyment occupy the quadrant of motor themes characterized by both high relevance (density) and rapid development (centrality).

The thematic map (Figure 6) not only classifies topics but also reveals the research landscape. For the motor themes (hedonic analysis, AI, immersion), the position of these themes as the driving forces of research suggests that the field is undergoing a technological behavioral transformation. The critical interpretation shows the dominance of AI and immersion in this quadrant reflects a digital paradox: the same technologies that can manipulate hedonic motivation (through personalized nudges) can also mitigate it (through reflective AI assistants). For the emerging/declining themes, their peripheral status indicates a significant research gap. Thus, the behavioral implications are that although ChatGPT and smartphones are primary media for contemporary hedonic consumption, the paucity of research on them creates an academic blind spot, as we study hedonic motivations without fully understanding the medium that most influences them.

Figure 6

Thematic Map of Hedonic Motivation Research Field



Findings Related to Research Objective 3: Interpretation of Bibliometric Findings through Veblen's Theory

The third finding largely discusses the relationship between hedonic motivation research and Veblen's theory. This needs to be considered to help identify the research gap. There is an interpretation based on trends and thematic clusters, which is useful to ensure that future research remains theoretical and aligns with the current context.

Veblenian Interpretation of Publication Trends

The 2014 turning point (Figure 3) can be interpreted through the lens of Veblen's theory. The concept of “pecuniary emulation” explains the mass adoption of visual social media (such as Instagram, launched in 2010). The 3-4 year period (2010-2014) represents a social incubation period during which the platform had matured enough to display a digital status hierarchy (a digital leisure class), thus creating a “natural laboratory” for researchers. This phenomenon aligns with Veblen's concept of invidious comparison, now accelerated by digital architecture.

Theoretical Meaning of Thematic Cluster

Each thematic cluster represents a modernization of the Veblenian concept. The red cluster (socio-behavioral) indicates the dominance of the words habit and relationship indicates that conspicuous consumption has shifted from a deliberate status strategy to habitual practices automated by platform design and micro-digital interactions. The blue cluster (digital motivation) indicates the strong link between online satisfaction and impulse reveals a dangerous digital gratification cycle. Digital environments create a reinforcing loop in which short-term hedonic satisfaction (through impulsive purchases) reinforces unsustainable consumption behaviour. The purple and green clusters show the presence of educational and eudaimonic clusters indicates an expansion of the realm in which Veblenian logic operates the pursuit of well-being in digital spaces.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion of Main Results

This bibliometric study aimed to map, uncover the structure, and interpret the literature on hedonic motivation in a digital context. The most striking overall finding is the confirmation of the digital transformation of Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption. The analysis shows that Veblenian status logic not only persists but has been remediated by platform architecture, shifting the arena of conspicuous consumption from a physical, territorial to a digital, algorithmic one. This change results in status dynamics that are more fluid, measurable, and accelerated, but also more competitive and potentially exploitative.

Development and Productivity

Mapping temporal development reveals an inflection point in 2014, marking a phase of exponential research growth. This surge is not coincidental; it directly reflects the maturation of visual social media platforms (such as Instagram) as new natural laboratories for observing status dynamics (Zhang & Yu, 2025). The dominance of research productivity from China, the US, and Indonesia indicates that this phenomenon is global. However, the socioeconomic contexts differ: it is developing both in mature digital economies (the US) and in societies with a rapidly growing digital middle class and stark inequality (China, Indonesia), where pressures for conspicuous consumption may be more intense.

Intellectual Structure and Conceptual Dynamics

The disclosure of intellectual structure through cluster analysis and thematic maps validates both fragmentation and convergence in this field. Four main clusters of socio-behavioral, digital motivation, edu-technology, and eudaimonic, demonstrate that hedonic motivation has become a fluid, interdisciplinary subject of study. Critical is the position of themes such as “artificial intelligence (AI)” and “immersion” as driving themes (Figure 5). This marks a paradigm shift: cutting-edge research no longer solely studies human behavior, but also human-algorithm interactions in generating and satisfying hedonic drives (Miller, 2018). Meanwhile, the marginal position of “ChatGPT” as an emerging theme underscores a dangerous research gap amid the rapid adoption of generative AI technologies.

Interpretation of Veblen's Theory

Interpreting the findings through a Veblen lens (RO3) yields two key insights. First, the concept of pecuniary emulation has evolved into “platform-mediated emulation”. Platforms are not passive, they

algorithmically curate status references, reinforce social comparison, and capitalize on the fear of missing out (FOMO) as an engine of engagement (van Tran et al., 2023). Second, rigid Veblenian status hierarchies have been replaced by an economy of visibility, in which the currency of status is measurable attention and validation (likes, shares) rather than simply the ownership of luxury goods. This shift requires extending Veblen's theory to include algorithms and platform design as non-human actors that shape the social structure of consumption (Zhechev & Sekulova, 2024).

Theoretical Implications and Policy Directions

Collectively, these findings justify the need for a *Veblen 2.0* or digital conspicuous consumption framework that explicitly integrates platform logic. The policy implications are two-tiered. At the meso (platform) level, a design ethic that prioritizes reflective choice architecture, such as default cooling-off periods and the hiding of social metrics, is needed (Phippen, 2024). At the macro (educational) level, digital literacy curricula should be upgraded to critical algorithmic literacy, equipping consumers, particularly younger generations, with an understanding of how their motivations are manipulated by digital design (Duan, 2023). Only by understanding the engines that drive the attention economy can behavioral interventions and public policies effectively address the challenges of sustainable consumption.

Limitations

This research has several limitations. First, the study only uses the Scopus database, so publications not indexed in Scopus are excluded from the analysis. Second, the analysis is limited to English-language articles, so the research findings may not fully represent the literature in other languages.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis affirms the continued relevance of Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption, updated for a digital era in which social media influencers spur emulative, hedonic consumption. The field demonstrates robust growth, with key contributions centered in China, the United States, and Indonesia. The study implies that policymakers need strategies that address the psychological drivers of consumption to mitigate financial strain. Developing motivational literacy is crucial to help individuals navigate digital marketplaces and make more prudent financial decisions. This study's scope is constrained by its reliance on the Scopus database and a search strategy limited to the specific phrase "hedonic motivation" in article titles. Subsequent studies should pursue qualitative inquiries into the relationship between digital consumption and well-being. Further investigation is also warranted into how emerging technologies like AI can be harnessed to guide hedonic impulses.

Declarations

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