



## Lean on insight: bibliometric analysis of trust and fake reviews

Apoyarse en la perspectiva: análisis bibliométrico sobre la confianza y las reseñas falsas

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### Abstract

In an age where online reviews heavily influence consumer decisions, trust is paramount. Understanding the dynamics of trust and fake reviews is crucial for maintaining integrity in digital marketplaces. This research employs a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis to comprehend the research conducted concerning trust and fake reviews. By identifying gaps and deficiencies in current research, the study aims to shed light on the complexities of trust in online reviews. Through this comprehensive approach, the article endeavours to advance understanding and contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding trust in digital environments.

**Keywords:** fake reviews, online reviews, trust, systematic literature review, bibliometric analysis

### Resumen

En una era en la que las reseñas en línea influyen profundamente en las decisiones de los consumidores, la confianza es fundamental. Comprender la dinámica entre la confianza y las reseñas falsas es crucial para mantener la integridad en los mercados digitales. Esta investigación emplea una revisión sistemática de la literatura y un análisis bibliométrico para comprender los estudios realizados sobre la confianza y las reseñas falsas. Al identificar lagunas y deficiencias en la

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investigación actual, el estudio busca arrojar luz sobre las complejidades de la confianza en las reseñas en línea. A través de este enfoque integral, el artículo pretende avanzar en la comprensión y contribuir al discurso en curso sobre la confianza en los entornos digitales.

**Palabras clave:** reseñas falsas, reseñas online, confianza, revisión sistemática, análisis bibliométrico

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's digital environment, online opinions about products and services exert substantial influence on consumer decisions. Whether expressed through social media posts, product reviews, or forums, these evaluations guide purchasing choices and shape marketplace dynamics. As noted by Bulchand-Gidumal and Melián-González (2023), online reviews play a crucial role in shaping buying behaviour, becoming central to how consumers assess alternatives and reduce uncertainty.

However, not all online reviews are reliable. Distinguishing between genuine and manipulated opinions has become increasingly challenging, raising concerns about the credibility of the information consumers encounter. Exaggerated, biased, or fabricated reviews create informational noise that undermines confidence in digital platforms. When consumers begin to doubt the authenticity of online reviews, trust in the entire decision-making process erodes, compromising both consumer welfare and marketplace integrity.

Positive reviews carry significant economic value. Platforms such as Amazon and Google integrate them into recommendation systems that elevate highly rated products in search rankings (Shukla & Goh, 2024). This heightened visibility can directly boost sales, incentivizing businesses to seek favourable reviews. Consequently, unethical practices, such as incentivizing positive feedback or generating fake reviews, have proliferated, disproportionately harming small firms striving to compete on merit.

Beyond these commercial implications, online reviews function as a specific form of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM), where credibility cues fundamentally shape consumer judgement. Research shows that individuals rely on both cognitive and emotional indicators to assess review trustworthiness, including linguistic consistency, emotional tone, and cues of authenticity (Carbonell et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2023). These evaluations are also influenced by contextual factors such as reviewer expertise, message coherence, and platform reputation, all of which affect perceived credibility and subsequent decisions (Dong et al., 2018; Walther et al., 2023). Trust in online environments is therefore best understood as a dynamic psychological process shaped by heuristics, persuasion, and social proof embedded in review systems (Moon et al., 2021). This theoretical perspective clarifies why fake reviews can be so disruptive: they manipulate the very cues consumers rely on to infer authenticity, distort information processing, and weaken confidence in digital marketplaces (Wang et al., 2023).

Fake reviews, whether excessively positive or unjustifiably negative, mislead consumers and distort market competition. They generate inaccurate impressions of product quality, causing individuals to make poorly informed decisions. Their consequences are twofold: consumers may lose trust

and money, while businesses suffer reputational damage. Although various platforms have implemented detection tools and policy measures (Sahut et al., 2024), opportunistic sellers continue to exploit system vulnerabilities. Moreover, although detection algorithms have advanced, their effectiveness from a consumer perspective remains uncertain (Walther et al., 2023), underscoring the importance of developing user awareness and promoting critical evaluation skills.

The growth of online shopping, accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, has intensified this challenge. With physical stores limited, consumers increasingly relied on online reviews as their primary information source, while fake reviews expanded at a similar pace (Wang et al., 2023). As deceptive content proliferated, trust steadily eroded, yet long-term research on its broader consequences remains limited.

To rebuild trust in digital marketplaces, coordinated action is required. This includes improving detection methods, encouraging responsible platform design, advancing transparent communication practices, and strengthening consumer education initiatives. Developing systems that promote fairness and protect both businesses and consumers is essential for maintaining the integrity of online review ecosystems.

Given this context, the objective of this study is to undertake a systematic literature review (SLR) and a bibliometric analysis to investigate the existing body of research related to trust and fake reviews. The study aims to address four shortcomings that impede progress in this field: (1) limited awareness of current trust research on fake reviews; (2) ambiguity regarding the level of interest in trust and fake reviews; (3) lack of clarity regarding the dynamics of trust and fake reviews; and (4) inadequate comprehension of publication trends in studies on this subject.

Accordingly, this study establishes the following research objectives (ROs):

- (RO1) to systematically identify and consolidate the existing scientific knowledge on trust and fake reviews;
- (RO2) to determine the level of scholarly interest and evolution of publications on this topic;
- (RO3) to analyse the main thematic areas, methods, and conceptual approaches addressed in the field; and
- (RO4) to map publication trends and emerging themes through a bibliometric perspective.
- These objectives ensure coherence between the introduction, methodological design, and final conclusions of the study. Consequently, this research aims to answer the following research questions (RQs):
- (RQ1) Does research analyse trust and fake reviews?
- (RQ2) Is there increasing interest in studying trust and fake reviews?
- (RQ3) What topics are studied regarding trust and fake reviews?
- (RQ4) How have publication trends in trust and fake reviews evolved, and what emerging themes or interests are evident?

## 2. PROCEDURAL METHOD

To address the research gaps and questions, an examination of existing literature was performed through a SLR, accompanied by a bibliometric analysis focusing on trust and fake reviews. These methodologies, as established by Cano-Marín et al. (2023), are essential in scientific literature review. They allow researchers not only to collect and assess relevant studies in a structured manner but also to gain a broader understanding of the evolution and patterns within a research field.

In line with Chaudhuri et al.'s (2023) suggestions, SLR was selected due to several objectives: (1) ensuring the quality of the literature review and analysis findings; (2) encompassing a broad spectrum of articles; (3) minimizing potential biases and errors; (4) promoting validity and transparency to enable the replication of analyses; (5) synthesizing existing literature and structuring search data across research domains; and (6) offering both theoretical insights and practical implications. Each of these aspects was carefully considered in designing the research process. For a topic like trust and fake reviews (which touches on fields such as marketing, consumer behaviour, data science, and ethics) a method that provides clarity and rigor across disciplines is particularly valuable.

Additionally, SLR becomes indispensable when researching a narrowly defined topic, aiding in understanding its current state and ensuring the study's applicability within its specific context (Deepa et al., 2024). Fake reviews, for example, represent a phenomenon that is relatively recent and rapidly evolving, often in response to changes in technology, algorithms, and consumer awareness. Traditional literature reviews may overlook critical nuances or emerging trends, while an SLR allows for the systematic capture of such developments and ensures that no relevant studies are omitted due to oversight or bias.

In this research, the SLR was structured around five sequential steps, inspired by the PRISMA methodology, which itself consists of four primary stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, as outlined by Moreno-Lobato et al. (2023). These stages were adapted to suit the specific needs of this study. The process began with the identification of articles using selected keywords and Boolean operators across multiple databases, ensuring a wide net was cast over both peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings. The screening phase involved removing duplicates and clearly irrelevant studies based on titles and abstracts. Then, during the eligibility phase, full texts of potentially relevant articles were examined against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure alignment with the study's focus on trust and fake reviews. The final stage, inclusion, involved retaining only those articles that met all criteria, resulting in a curated and high-quality dataset for deeper analysis.

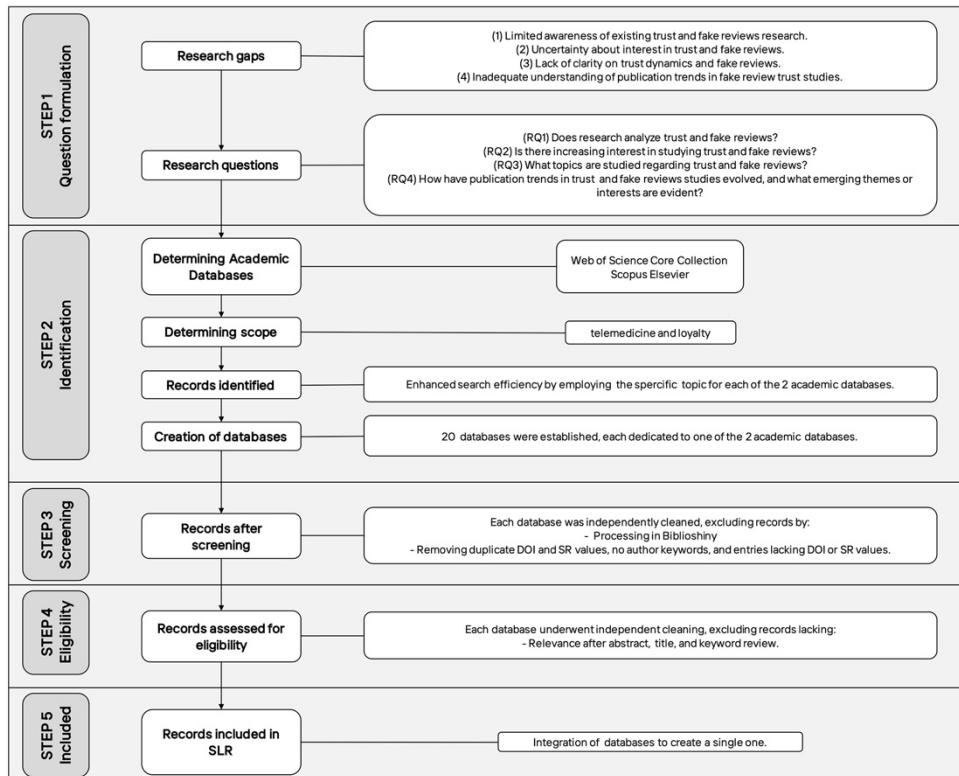
To further strengthen the review, a fifth step was added: data extraction and synthesis, where key variables such as year of publication, authorship, methodology, main findings, and keywords were catalogued. This stage bridged the SLR with the bibliometric analysis, allowing for a dual perspective: one focused on content and theoretical contributions, and another on publication trends, thematic evolution, and collaboration networks.

By combining these methodologies, the study not only builds a comprehensive understanding of the current academic landscape on trust and fake reviews but also lays a foundation for future research and practical strategies to tackle misinformation in digital reviews.

## 2.1 Stage 1: question formulation

Figure 1 illustrates the five-step procedure, beginning with the initial stage of formulating questions, as recommended by Beloskar et al. (2024).

**Figure 1.** General framework of the research and the methodology employed (source: authors' own elaboration)



## 2.2 Stage 2: identification

In the second stage, known as identification, particular databases are chosen, and Boolean operators are established to pinpoint articles, as suggested by Deepa et al. (2024) and Moreno-Lobato et al. (2023).

The criteria used for the development of the bibliometric analysis were guided by previous research (Beloskar et al., 2024; Liu & Avello, 2021; Kaur, 2024; Novitzky et al., 2023). Table 1 presents the Boolean criteria applied. These searches were executed on April 26, 2024, with the principal keywords being “trust” and “fake reviews”. Inclusion criteria were established based on document type, limited to articles, and language, confined to English. Table 1 also outlines the inclusion criteria concerning WoS categories and Scopus subject areas. Table 2 showcases the

number of records retrieved after the searches conducted using the primary keywords (“trust” and “fake reviews”).

**Table 1.** Decision criteria (source: authors’ own elaboration)

Criteria	Web of Science Core Collection	Scopus Elsevier
Search type	Meta-search	Meta-search
Search field	Title, abstract, keywords	Title, abstract, keywords
Search query	“Fake review” AND trust	“Fake review” AND trust
Document type	Article	Article
Language	English	English

**Table 2.** Number of articles retrieved per database (without filtering) (source: authors’ own elaboration)

Database	Number of articles
Web of Science Core Collection	8
Scopus Elsevier	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>

### 2.3 Stage 3: screening

In the third stage, duplicate articles within each database were systematically eliminated through independent cleaning processes. This procedure entailed the use of Biblioshiny to process and remove duplicate DOI and SR values, as well as entries lacking author keywords or DOI/SR values, as recommended by Cano-Marin et al. (2023) and Kaur (2024). Table 3 presents the outcome of these procedures on the records.

**Table 3.** Articles within databases scope: After deleting missing DOI values, duplicates DOI values, duplicates or no SR values and no author keywords (source: authors’ own elaboration)

Description	Number of articles
Records after merging Web of Science Core Collection and Scopus Elsevier	30

### 2.4 Stage 4: eligibility

Throughout this phase, each database, underwent individual cleaning processes, excluding records deemed irrelevant following a thorough review of abstracts, titles, and keywords, following the methodology suggested by Cano-Marin et al. (2023).

### 2.5. Stage 5: included

After merging the databases, a new scrutiny for duplicate DOI and SR values was conducted. Subsequently, a total sample comprising 27 records was performed. The selected sample size was considered suitable for this study, in line with recommendations from Chaudhuri et al. (2023) and Moreno-Lobato et al. (2023) (Table 4).

The concluding step involved performing bibliometric analyses using various software tools. This included utilizing Biblioshiny, a graphical interface of the Bibliometrix R package, which is commonly employed in contemporary bibliometric studies, as referenced by Beloskar et al. (2024), Makaya et al. (2023), and Oludapo et al. (2024). Additionally, for analysis and visualization purposes, Tableau and Microsoft Excel were utilized, as suggested by Alhashmi et al. (2024) and Del Gesso et al. (2024).

**Table 4.** Articles included after relevance screening (abstract, title, and keywords)

Description	Number of records
Records retained after eligibility screening ( <i>Web of Science Core Collection and Scopus Elsevier</i> )	27

Table 5 offers an overview of significant bibliometric metrics. The articles included in the study sample were published from 2017 to 2024, presenting an annual growth rate of 10.41 %.

**Table 5.** Study sample technical characteristics (source: authors' own elaboration)

Description	Results
Timespan	2017:2024
Documents	27
Annual Growth Rate %	10,41
Document Average Age	3
Average citations per doc	11,19
References	470
Authors	83
Authors of single-authored docs	2
Co-Authors per Doc	3,15
International co-authorships %	14,810

### 3. DESCRIPTIVE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

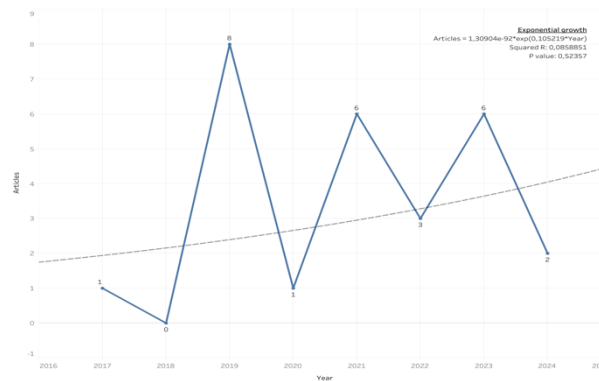
#### 3.1 Articles per year and country location

Since the first research on trust and fake reviews appeared in 2017, the field has experienced fluctuations in activity, with 2019 witnessing the highest number of published articles at 9 (refer to Table 7). Price's Index, indicating the percentage of references less than five years old, stands at 96% as of April 2024 (Gong, 2023; Price, 1970). Given the high values of the Price Index, as highlighted by Liu & Avello (2021), this emerging research area is considered original and robust. It is commonly observed that the development of a scientific discipline follows an exponential growth pattern, doubling in size every 10 to 15 years (Price, 1963). This evolution typically encompasses four stages: the precursor phase, the period of exponential growth, the consolidation of knowledge, and the decline in production.

Figure 2 and Table 6 illustrate that research in the field of trust and fake reviews is still in its precursor phase, as indicated by Liu & Avello (2021). However, the trajectory of its evolution remains to be viewed, considering the observed growth.

This line of research is predominantly concentrated in China (11), the United States of America, India, and Australia (6), as presented in Figures 3 and 4. Figure 3 emphasizes the presence of research activity in emerging economies, underscoring the need for further studies in developing nations, as recommended by prior research (Albahari et al., 2022).

**Figure 2.** Growth of scientific production (source: authors' own elaboration)

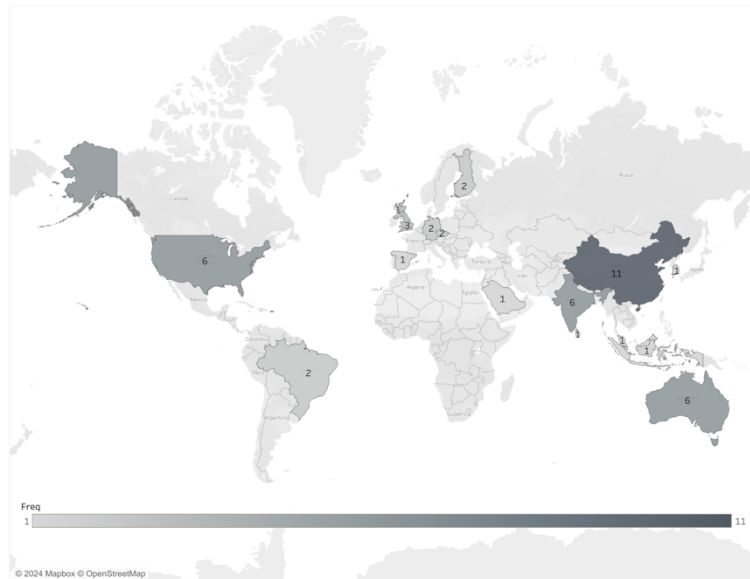


**Table 6.** Frequency of publication of articles concerning fake reviews and trust per year (source: authors' own elaboration)

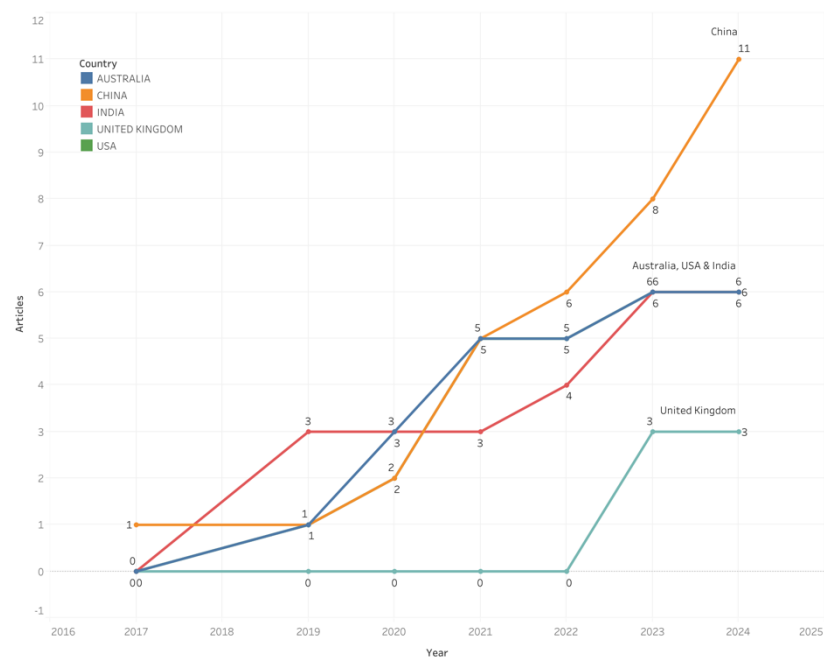
Year	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative relative frequency
2017	1	3,7%	12,50%
2018	0	0,0%	25%
2019	8	29,6%	37,50%
2020	1	3,7%	50,00%
2021	6	22,2%	62,50%
2022	3	11,1%	75,00%
2023	6	22,2%	87,50%
2024	2	7,4%	100,00%



**Figure 3.** Countries' scientific production of articles concerning fake reviews and trust (source: authors' own elaboration)



**Figure 4.** Countries' scientific production over time (source: authors' own elaboration)



## 3.2 Main topics analysed and research lines

### 3.2.1 Keywords

Analysing the frequency of keyword appearances provides valuable insights into the primary topics covered in the literature (Chaudhuri et al., 2023; Kaur, 2024; Liu & Avello, 2021). As indicated in

Table 7, terms such as “online reviews”, “sales”, “sentiment analysis”, and “word-of-mouth” emerge as the top four most frequently mentioned concepts.

Further examination of the word cloud presented in Figure 5 reveals that these terms are closely associated with purchasing experiences. Table 7 highlights additional topics explored in the literature. For instance, keywords such as “quality”, “reputation”, “price”, and “social media” have also emerged as significant areas of investigation.

**Table 7.** Frequency of occurrence concerning fake reviews and trust keywords (>2 times)  
(source: authors’ own elaboration)

Keywords	Frequency	Percentage
Online reviews	3	25,00%
Sales	3	25,00%
Sentiment analysis	3	25,00%
Word-of-mouth	3	25,00%

### 3.2.2 Co-word analysis

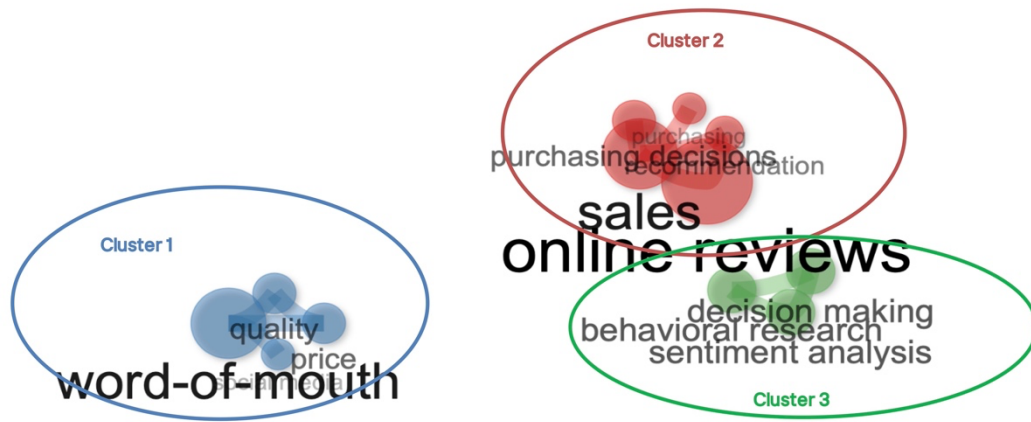
Biblioshiny designed the correlation networks map, presented in Figure 6, featuring three distinct clusters. These clusters, delineated by nodes of similar hues, offer insights into the relationships between keywords. Nodes within the same cluster positioned closely together denote a stronger correlation (Haba et al., 2023; Kaur, 2024; Liu & Avello, 2021).

Cluster 1, represented by the blue network labelled “Word of mouth”, incorporates topics such as price, social media, and quality. Cluster 2, portrayed by the red network titled “sales”, encompasses themes pertinent to purchase decisions and recommendations. Lastly, Cluster 3, showed by the green network under the banner of “Online reviews”, encompasses subjects concerning decision-making, behavioural research, and sentiment analysis.

**Figure 5.** Articles concerning fake reviews and trust keywords co-occurrence network in word cloud format (source: authors’ own elaboration)



**Figure 6.** Fake reviews and trust articles correlation map between keywords (source: authors' own elaboration)

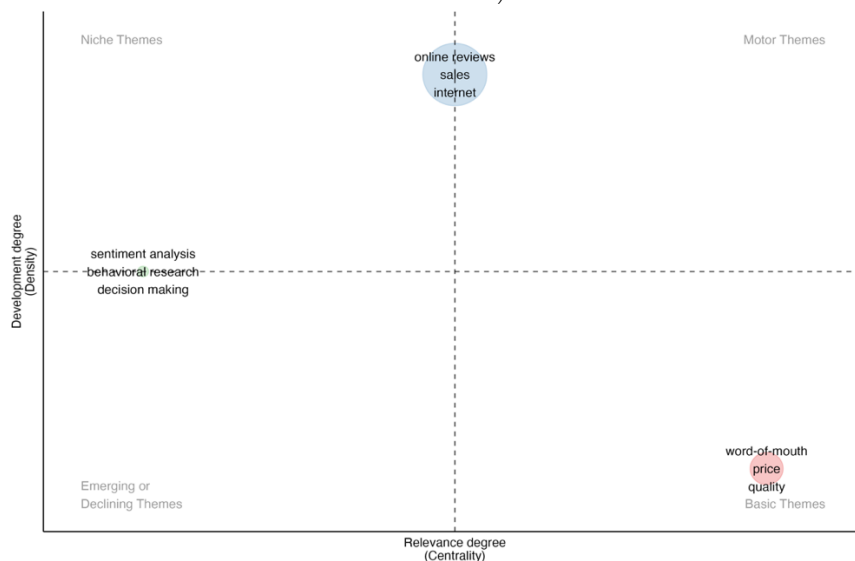


### 3.2.3 Thematic maps

Biblioshiny generates thematic maps for each bibliometric analysis, utilizing authors' keywords as the units of analysis to reveal crucial themes (Oludapo et al., 2024). These thematic maps are interpreted based on centrality, indicating their significance, and density, reflecting their growth trajectory across various research themes (Kaur, 2024).

Figure 7 showcases the thematic map, emphasizing “word of mouth”, “price”, and “quality” as fundamental themes relevant as general research topics. Additionally, themes such as “sentiment analysis”, “behavioural research”, and “decision making” represent emerging themes with limited representation but rapid growth. Lastly, “online reviews”, “sales”, and “internet” represent themes that span between motor and niche, signifying their transitional status in the research landscape.

**Figure 7.** Thematic strategic map concerning fake reviews and trust (source: authors' own elaboration)



### 3.3 Scientific scope

#### 3.3.1 *Most productive and influential journals*

The significance of journals was assessed through the analysis of the number of articles they published and their citation metrics (Bengoa et al., 2020; Liu & Avello, 2021). Table 8 provides insight into the two most influential journals concerning trust and fake reviews, drawn from a sample of 27 records. Specifically, the Journal of Business Research and Multimedia Tools and Applications stand out, each having published two articles on this topic.

**Table 8.** Top journals that have published more than one article concerning fake reviews and trust (source: authors' own elaboration)

Sources	NA Feb. 2024	TC 2022	TCA 2022	JCR 2022	JCR edition	JCR category	JIF quartile 2022	JIF rank 2022
Journal of Business Research	2	68,574	6	11.3	Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)	Business - SSCI	Q1	14/154
Multimedia Tools and Applications	2	29,293	2	3.6	Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE)	Computer Science, Theory & Methods - SCIE; Computer Science, Software Engineering - SCIE; Computer Science, Information Systems - SCIE; Engineering, Electrical & Electronic - SCIE	Q2; Q2; Q3; N/A	33/111; 32/108; 82/158; N/A

\*Note: NA number of articles, TC total cites, TCA total cites per article, JCR Journal Citation Reports Impact, JIF Journal Impact Factor.

#### 3.3.2 *Most cited articles*

Analysing the most cited articles within a discipline provides valuable insights into the literature considered significant by the research community. The number of citations serves as a crucial indicator of both influence and attention within the scientific community. It's important to note that the articles listed in Table 9 were retrieved on April 26, 2024. While the articles remain consistent upon repeated searches, the number of citations may vary as new citations accumulate over time (Bengoa et al., 2020; Liu & Avello, 2021).

Table 9 presents 27 articles, ordered by their citation counts along with the percentage of citations per year. Notably, seven articles have garnered at least 20 citations, which, while modest compared to more established fields of research, still denotes significant attention. The most cited

article, with 76 citations, pertains to the hospitality sector (Martínez-Torres and Toral, 2019). Following closely is the content analysis research conducted by Moon et al. (2021), which has accumulated 39 citations.

**Table 9.** Articles published concerning telemedicine in marketing (source: authors' own elaboration)

Authors	Year	Title	Journal	TC	TC per year	Normalized TC
Martinez-Torres, M., & Toral, S.	2019	A machine learning approach for the identification of the deceptive reviews in the hospitality sector using unique attributes and sentiment orientation.	Tourism Management	76	12,67	2,05
Moon, S., Kim, M. Y., & Iacobucci, D.	2021	Content analysis of fake consumer reviews by survey-based text categorization.	International Journal of Research in Marketing	39	9,75	2,84
Moon, S., Kim, M. Y., & Bergey, P. K.	2019	Estimating deception in consumer reviews based on extreme terms: Comparison analysis of open vs. closed hotel reservation platforms.	Journal of Business Research	30	5,00	0,81
Dong, B., Li, M., & Sivakumar, K.	2018	Online review characteristics and trust: A cross-country examination.	Decision Sciences	28	4,67	0,75
Poongodi, M., Vijayakumar, V., Rawal, B., Bhardwaj, V., Agarwal, T., Jain, A., Ramanathan, L., & Sriram, V.	2019	Recommendation model based on trust relations & user credibility.	Journal of Intelligent & Fuzzy Systems	26	4,33	0,70
Budhi, G. S., Chiong, R., & Wang, Z.	2021	Resampling imbalanced data to detect fake reviews using machine learning classifiers and textual-based features.	Multimedia Tools and Applications	20	5,00	1,46
Chuah, S. H. W., Rasoolimanesh, S. M., Aw, E. C. X., & Tseng, M. L.	2022	Lord, please save me from my sins! Can CSR mitigate the negative impacts of sharing economy on consumer trust and corporate reputation?	Tourism Management Perspectives	20	6,67	0,90
Zelenka, J., Azubuike, T., & Pásková, M.	2021	Trust model for online reviews of tourism services and evaluation of destinations.	Administrative Sciences	11	2,75	0,80
Carbonell, G., Barbu, C. M., Vorgerd, L., & Brand, M.	2019	The impact of emotionality and trust cues on the perceived trustworthiness of online reviews.	Cogent Business & Management	11	1,83	0,30
K S, S., & Danti, A.	2019	Online fake review identification based on decision rules.	International Journal of Advanced Trends in Computer Science and Engineering	7	1,17	0,19
Chiou, S. Y.	2016	A trustworthy online recommendation system based on social connections in a privacy-preserving manner.	Multimedia Tools and Applications	7	0,88	1,00
Costa Filho, M., Nogueira Rafael, D., Salmonson Guimarães Barros, L., & Mesquita, E.	2023	Mind the fake reviews! Protecting consumers from deception through persuasion knowledge acquisition.	Journal of Business Research	6	3,00	5,14
Steuer, A. J., Fritzsche, F., & Seiter, M.	2022	It's all about the text: An experimental investigation of inconsistent reviews on restaurant booking platforms.	Electronic Markets	5	1,67	0,22
Cruz, B. D. P. A., Silva, S. C., & Ross, S. D.	2021	The social tv phenomenon and fake online restaurant reviews.	Tourism and Hospitality Management	5	1,25	0,36
Vidanagama, D. U., Silva, T., & Karunananda, A.	2021	Content related feature analysis for fake online consumer review detection.	Computer Networks, Big Data and IoT	3	0,75	0,22
Reddy, D.	2022	Fake review detection and emotion recognition based on semantic feature selection with bi-directional long, short-term memory.	International Journal of Intelligent Engineering and Systems	3	1,00	0,13

Vindha, V.	2019	Determining trust-based examination on social networks for hotel recommendation.	International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering	1	0,17	0,03
Mohawesh, R., Xu, S., Springer, M., Jararweh, Y., Al-Hawawreh, M., & Maqsood, S.	2023	An explainable ensemble of multi-view deep learning model for fake review detection.	Journal of King Saud University - Computer and Information Sciences	1	0,50	0,86
Mahinderjit Singh, M., Wern Shen, L., & Anbar, M.	2019	Conceptualizing distrust model with balance theory and multi-faceted model for mitigating false reviews in Location-Based Services (LBS).	Symmetry	1	0,17	0,03
Li, Y. M., Lin, L. F., & Lien, M. Y.	2021	An appraisal mechanism for a social marketplace.	Information & Management	1	0,25	0,07
He, P., Shi, V., Zhang, J., & Chen, X.	2024	Channel strategy and the management of fake reviews in a catering platform service supply chain.	Expert Systems with Applications	1	1,00	2,00
Pan, Y., & Xu, L.	2024	Detecting fake online reviews: An unsupervised detection method with a novel performance evaluation.	International Journal of Electronic Commerce	0	0,00	0,00
Deshai, N., & Rao, B. B.	2023	Transparency in healthcare and e-commerce: detecting online fake reviews using a dense neural network model with relevance mapping.	Soft Computing	0	0,00	0,00
Yu, H., Ji, S., & Yang, D.	2020	the effect of experienced buyers' feedback on consumer behaviour: Evidence from the largest online marketplace in China.	Journal of Intelligent & Fuzzy Systems	0	0,00	
Khan, J. A., Ullah, T., Khan, A. A., Yasin, A., Akbar, M. A., & Aurangzeb, K.	2023	Can end-user feedback in social media be trusted for software evolution: Exploring and analysing fake reviews.	Concurrency and Computation: Practice and Experience	0	0,00	0,00
Kim, R. Y.	2023	Text mining online reviews: What makes a helpful online review?	IEEE Engineering Management Review	0	0,00	0,00
Beck, B. B., Wuys, S., & Jap, S.	2023	Guardians of trust: How review platforms can fight fakery and build consumer trust.	Journal of Marketing Research	0	0,00	0,00

### 3.3.3 Most used research methods

Research methods play a crucial role in facilitating the systematic collection and analysis of real-world data, thereby advancing scientific knowledge (Liu & Avello, 2021). Table 10 illustrates that most studies are empirical, comprising 81% of the total. Among these empirical studies, quantitative methods are predominantly used (68%), with various approaches employed for both data collection (50%) and analysis (68%).

**Table 10.** Main research methods used (source: authors' own elaboration)

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Type of study (n=27)</b>		
Conceptual / review	5	19%
Empirical	22	81%
<b>Research methodology (n=22)</b>		
Qualitative	6	27%
Quantitative	15	68%
Mixed methods	1	5%
<b>Data collection method (n=22)</b>		
Interviews/focus groups	0	0%
Experiment	5	23%
Survey	5	23%
Mixed data collection	1	5%
Others	11	50%
<b>Quantitative data analysis technique (n=22)</b>		
Co-variance and variance-based SEM	6	27%
Bivariate	0	0%
Multivariate	1	5%
Not Applied	0	0%
Other statistics	15	68%

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH LINES

This study contributes to the growing field of research on trust and fake reviews by combining a systematic literature review with a bibliometric analysis to clarify how scholarship has conceptualized this phenomenon. Rather than reiterating publication patterns or keyword frequencies, the analysis reveals that this domain remains in an early stage of development, characterized by conceptual dispersion and heterogeneous methodological approaches, a pattern commonly observed in emerging research areas (Liu & Avello, 2021).

A central insight from the review is that trust in digital marketplaces is not solely a technical or computational issue, but a socio-psychological process shaped by consumer heuristics, emotional responses, and platform governance structures. Prior studies show that consumers rely simultaneously on cognitive cues and affective indicators when judging the credibility of online reviews (Jin et al., 2023; Walther et al., 2023). This highlights the need for integrative theoretical perspectives that connect detection-oriented research with models of consumer behaviour, persuasion and trust repair.

The findings also point to several conceptual tensions that merit further exploration. First, research alternates between preventive approaches, such as transparency mechanisms and responsible platform design, and reactive approaches focused on detecting fraudulent content (Sahut et al., 2024). Second, although many studies analyse trust as an outcome, far fewer address its reconstruction after exposure to deceptive practices. Third, technological solutions are often studied in isolation from consumer-level processes, despite evidence that platform

communication strategies strongly influence perceptions of credibility (Wang et al., 2023). Addressing these tensions can support the development of more comprehensive frameworks for understanding how trust is formed, undermined, and repaired in digital environments.

From a methodological perspective, the predominance of quantitative and algorithmic research provides important insights into detection mechanisms, but the gradual emergence of qualitative and mixed methods work offers valuable depth by capturing contextual, emotional, and ethical nuances that numerical analyses alone may overlook. This diversification opens opportunities for interdisciplinary research spanning marketing, psychology, communication, and information systems.

Future studies should deepen our understanding of the mechanisms through which consumers assess credibility, including how review characteristics, platform policies, and interface designs shape decision-making (Walther et al., 2023). Cultural and demographic factors also warrant further attention, as trust dynamics likely differ across contexts and user groups. Finally, the increasing role of artificial intelligence in detecting deceptive content raises the need to examine issues of transparency, fairness, and accountability in automated review-moderation systems.

Overall, advancing research on trust and fake reviews requires shifting from descriptive analyses toward integrated theoretical models that explain why deceptive content affects consumers, how platform governance moderates these effects, and which behavioural and contextual factors influence trust formation. Such progress will be essential to strengthening the credibility of online marketplaces and supporting more informed and resilient consumer decision-making.

## 5. AUTHORSHIP DECLARATION ACCORDING TO THE CRediT TAXONOMY

**Recuero-Virto, Nuria:** conceptualization; methodology; software; validation; formal analysis; investigation; resources; data curation; writing-original draft; writing-review & editing; visualization; supervision; project administration; funding acquisition.

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