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Bibliometric Analysis of Perception Management and Future Trends

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Abstract

Today, with the impact of globalization and digitalization, perception management has become a strategic tool that shapes the thoughts and behaviors of institutions and societies. Perception management aims to influence the opinions, feelings, and behaviors of the target audience by using conscious communication strategies, while manipulation and propaganda involve more deceptive and misleading tactics. This study uses the bibliometric analysis method to understand the relationship between these three concepts and the status of academic studies on these topics. The study aims to analyze perception management between 2000 and 2023 and discuss future research trends. Within the scope of the study, the data collected in the Scopus database were analyzed with the "bibliometrix" module in the R program. In this context, bibliometric indicators such as annual publications and citations, top authors, institutions, countries, most cited publications, network analysis, clustering, and trending topics are presented. Findings from this research reveal that perception management has garnered significant and rapidly increasing academic attention in recent years. It finds the USA, the UK, and Germany leading scientific contributions, with perception management increasingly tied to digital tools and artificial intelligence. It reveals that perception management has shifted to social media and machine learning applications and has gained increasing importance in digitalized societies. Future research could explore the interplay of technology, ethics, and communication strategies. This bibliometric study fills a critical gap in understanding the intellectual landscape of perception management, offering insights into its ethical applications and highlighting areas for future exploration.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, Database, Literature, Perception Management, Research Status And Trend.

JEL Codes: C00, D83, M39, Y1, Y8

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Introduction

Today, advances in technology have become one of the most significant factors influencing communication. As a result of these advancements, the options for people to access and acquire information have also expanded. Communication is a complex process that is at the center of human interaction and helps us understand the functioning and cultural dynamics of societies. The power of communication rests on the potential that lies in the dissemination of thoughts and ideas, the transmission of information, and the intellectual orientation of society. However, communication does not only include information sharing. It also has the ability to shape information, create perceptions, and influence social behavior.

This power of communication has been among the main purposes for managing people's perceptions. In this context, those who manage perceptions are aware that they will manage other people more easily and effortlessly in line with their goals. Perception management, which aims to persuade or change the perception of an individual either compulsorily or voluntarily, has existed in every period of human history.

Based on the concept of the reality of perception, it can be stated that there are conscious experiences occurring between objects (Coren et al., 2004). Perception refers to the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory input to comprehend the presented information or the surrounding environment (Schacter, 2011). The term "perception management" was introduced to the literature by the United States Department of Defense. According to the Department of Defense, it is defined as "actions taken to communicate and/or deny selected information and indicators to intelligence systems and leaders at all levels in order to influence the emotions, motives, and objective reasoning of foreign audiences, as well as to influence official estimates" (Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 2023). In this context, this concept is defined as the ability to shape perceptions in one's favor in order to generate consent and facilitate task accomplishment (Siegel, 2005). It also requires asking questions and getting feedback from others (Russell, 2001).

Perception management, perhaps due to its popularity as a concept, makes it possible to discuss it in a broader context. Today, perception management is seen very clearly that it has penetrated almost every corner of the world. In the information society where communication and message exchange habits change and transform with these diffusion effects, perception management no longer has the tactical effects used in military actions.

Şengöz (2024) examines the role of artificial intelligence-supported algorithms in the formation and management of public perception and discusses critical issues regarding the practical use of these algorithms and suggestions for future research. In particular, this study provides a conceptual framework for how machine learning and deep learning techniques can be used to understand and guide public perception. Wolfberg (2022) extends the applications of data science and artificial intelligence techniques in social sciences, emphasizing the need to consider more parameters and variables and discussing the potential of algorithms to increase the predictive power of algorithms in this context. Efe (2023) examines how perception engineering in the age of cyber capitalism distorts rational economic expectations through social media and artificial intelligence and its effects on market efficiency. Studies such as Neudert et al. (2020) and Zhang and Dafoe (2019) have explored how perceptions of AI differ across demographic and cultural contexts and examined the impact of these perceptions on public policies and strategies. These studies provide important contributions to the literature on the social impacts and ethical dimensions of artificial intelligence (Gerlich, 2023).

Erbay and Aslan (2019) investigated the relationship between the perception management process and social values and emphasized the role of social values in the adoption of social goals. In this context, the effects and strategic importance of perception management at the social level are explained. Bayrakcı (2021), while discussing the role of perception management in power and hegemony relations, detailed the historical development and social effects of perception management. Derman (2021) discusses how perception management and disinformation direct society through the media, while Siegel (2005) explains how perception management is used as a critical tool in US military strategies. These studies comprehensively examine the role of perception management in different fields such as communication, media, politics, and war strategies.

Perception management generally consists of four stages: (1) Attracting the attention of the target audience (2) presenting and sharing similar information to control the attention of the target audience (3) making the information presented consistent with the perceptions of the target audience (4) is the repetition of information in communication sources in order to keep it in the same position (Callamari and Reveron, 2003). Perception management can be seen as a kind of propaganda in terms of its aim to influence the target audience. However, although perception management has similarities with propaganda in terms of goals and results, it has differences in terms of tools and methods.

Propaganda was first used in 1622 Used by Pope XV. Gregory. XV. Gregory established the "Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide" organization, affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, in order to spread the teachings of the Catholic Church and to ensure

unity in religion. This organization, which was established for missionary purposes, was the first formation in history to use the word propaganda and was established specifically for propaganda activities (Qualter, 1980). Propaganda can be described as the manipulation of the emotions, attitudes, and behaviors of the masses on a specific subject. The term generally carries a negative connotation. It refers to deliberate and systematic communication efforts aimed at promoting or reinforcing a particular view, ideology, or belief (Brown and Yazar, 1992).

Propaganda can work in a manipulative way by distorting or exaggerating factual information, fueling emotional reactions, or simply presenting a certain point of view. Manipulation, a concept that should be considered together with the concept of propaganda, means changing information through selection, addition, and subtraction. The concept has different interpretations in economic, psychological, etc., areas. Manipulation is the art of making others accept your wishes and desires even if they do not need them, even by harming them when necessary (Pratt, 2017). When we look at the first examples of manipulation in history, the campaign implemented by Edward Bernays, one of the pioneers of public relations and marketing, for the Lucky Strike cigarette brand in 1929 comes to mind. Bernays has skillfully used manipulation techniques to increase demand for this brand of cigarettes.

Perception management, manipulation, and propaganda are concepts that reflect the power and complexity of communication. At this point, ethical values and transparency gain importance. Understanding the differences between perception management, manipulation, and propaganda and using the power of communication correctly and ethically is a requirement of social labeling and responsibility. By distinguishing these fine lines in communication, it can develop effective communication strategies and contribute to the meeting of society in a healthier and more conscious communication environment. This study focuses on the following questions in order to understand the place of perception management in academic literature and to analyze the trends in this field with a bibliometric approach:

How is perception management addressed in academic literature, and how are perception management strategies transforming with digitalization and artificial intelligence technologies?

What are the publication and citation trends of studies on perception management between 2000 and 2023?

What are the most important themes and disciplines that perception management research should focus on in the future?

This study provides an in-depth bibliometric analysis of the existing literature on perception management. In this regard, it emphasizes the importance of academics periodically reviewing previous scholarly works to develop a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual foundations and underlying structures within this field. Such an approach not only aids in grasping the current state of research but also contributes to making informed predictions about potential future directions and advancements. Despite the extensive body of literature available on perception management, manipulation, and propaganda, there appears to be a significant gap: no comprehensive bibliometric analysis has been undertaken to systematically map and elucidate the intellectual structure of these areas by considering the entirety of the available scientific data. This research aims to fill this critical void in the academic literature by examining perception management from the perspective of communication power, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of how this concept is framed and utilized within scholarly discourse. In addition, it will provide an important step in identifying research gaps in this field and predicting which areas future studies may focus on.

Bibliometric Analysis

The origins of bibliometric discussions trace back to the 1950s, marking the beginning of scholarly interest in the systematic analysis of publication patterns and research output (Wallin, 2005; Donthu et al., 2021a). While this indicates that the bibliometric methodology itself is not a recent development, its widespread adoption and use are relatively new (Donthu et al., 2021a). Bibliometrics, as defined by Pritchard (1969), refers to the employment of mathematical and statistical techniques to analyze books and various communication media. It encompasses a range of quantitative approaches aimed at systematically examining publications to extract meaningful insights regarding research trends and productivity (Leung et al., 2017). The scope of bibliometric analysis includes the quantitative assessment of diverse characteristics of scholarly documents or publications, such as author contributions, the journals in which they are published, thematic classifications, and detailed bibliographic information (Al and Tonta, 2004). By leveraging these methods, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the structure and dynamics of academic literature, facilitating a more comprehensive analysis of knowledge dissemination and scholarly impact.

Bibliometric analysis is an essential method for mapping the literature in a specific research domain, and it is widely recognized as a robust and effective approach for investigating and analyzing large datasets of scientific publications. Researchers employ bibliometric techniques for various purposes, such as identifying emerging trends in the performance of articles and journals, examining patterns of academic collaboration and research components, and

gaining insights into the intellectual structure of a particular field within the existing body of literature (Verma and Gustafsson, 2020; Donthu et al., 2021b).

In contrast to the methods commonly used for literature reviews, bibliometric analysis is highly organized and sequential. The most frequently used techniques in bibliometric analysis include citation-based analysis, common word or keyword co-occurrence analysis, and co-authorship analysis. Within citation-based analysis, additional classifications are made, including citation analysis, co-citation analysis, and bibliographic matching (Van, 2005; Van & Waltman, 2014).

Bibliometrics not only aid in conducting retrospectives of research but also enable both quantitative and objective exploration of emerging research topics and development trends across various fields. The outcomes of bibliometric analysis significantly contribute to the progression of a specific research area in several ways. More specifically, bibliometrics offers the ability to (1) evaluate the progress made within a given field by tracking the frequency and citation patterns of key publications, (2) identify the most reliable, influential, and widely recognized sources of scientific publications, including journals, conferences, and repositories, (3) recognize and assess the contributions of critical scientific actors, including authors, institutions, and research groups, (4) provide an evidence-based academic foundation for evaluating new scientific developments and emerging innovations, (5) highlight the growing research interests and unexplored areas that are attracting increasing scholarly attention, and (6) predict potential future directions and success rates of research trajectories based on historical trends and citation patterns (Mazloumian, 2012; Jeong et al., 2014; Martínez et al., 2015; Kulaklı et al., 2024).

This research aims to analyze two content types to determine the bibliometric characteristics of perception management, manipulation and propaganda publications.

Data Collection and Preliminary Statistics

The aim of a literature review is to gather, comprehend, and analyze existing knowledge, as well as to take the essential steps required to establish a foundation for future research. Typically, the literature review process involves a systematic approach, following specific search criteria and keywords. This study selected the Scopus database and used publicly available secondary data. This choice was made because Scopus is an extensive database that spans numerous disciplines. Furthermore, Scopus indexes more journals than other databases, offering a broader scope of coverage. Therefore, examining the research topic within the Scopus database is particularly significant in this context. Perception management was determined as the study theme, and perception management, manipulation, and propaganda were selected as keywords and search criteria. Document type, date range and publication language were used as criteria in the database. Figure 1 shows the schematic and process of the study. After searching 3 keywords in the Scopus database on December 3, 2023, 427 publications were found. Then, the language selection was English, the publication type was chosen as article, book, book chapter, conference papers, review, and the publication year was determined as 2000–June 2023.

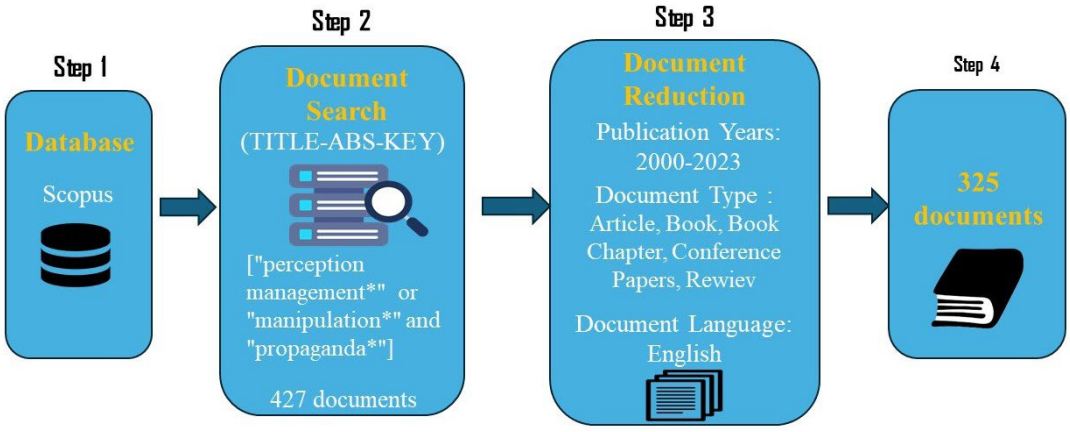

Figure 1. Working Chart

For a detailed bibliometric analysis, it is as important to use the right statistical software as the right database. It is concluded that the "bibliometrix" module in the R program is more comprehensive than the "BIBExcel" package (Persson et al., 2009). The VOSviewer package program is software designed for visual network analysis and includes visual elements such as word clouds, clustering analyses, and network maps. Due to its capacity to perform network analysis (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017) and to

perform analyses such as citation analysis, author analysis, journal analysis, and institution analysis, the "bibilometrix" module in the R package was determined and selected as the most appropriate statistical package (Ulu and Türkan, 2024).

Figure 2 presents the key statistics and summary details of the research. The investigation conducted within the Scopus database reveals that the first study related to our theme was published in 1937. However, there were no studies during certain years between 1937 and 2000, and the number of studies remained relatively low during this period. As a result, the focus was placed on the years between 2000 and 2023. Over the 23-year span, 295 sources and 325 documents (publications) were analyzed. Notably, after 2011, there was a significant increase in the number of publications, with 2020 marking the year with the highest output, totaling 47 studies. Within this period, the annual growth rate of the research was 4.89%, and the average age of the studies was 6.43 years. The 325 papers were authored by 546 researchers, with 186 of these papers being single-authored, while the remainder were co-authored. On average, each publication had 1.81 co-authors, and 11.08% of the publications were collaborative efforts involving multiple countries. A total of 913 distinct keywords were used across the publications, which cited 19,391 references, resulting in an average of 14.74 citations per publication.

Figure 2. Preliminary Statistics

Influential Authors

Figure 3 shows the top 10 most relevant authors. The 10 most interested authors carried out 9% of the studies carried out in the selected 23-year period. It has been seen that Ferrara is the first in the authors' local impact, and it can be said that Ferrara and Wang dominate this research area. Figure 4 shows the periods when the most relevant authors were productive. It has been observed that the most influential authors have made studies on the subject, especially after 2016.

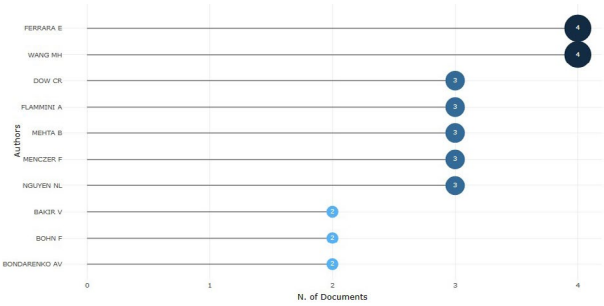

Figure 3. Most Relevant Authors

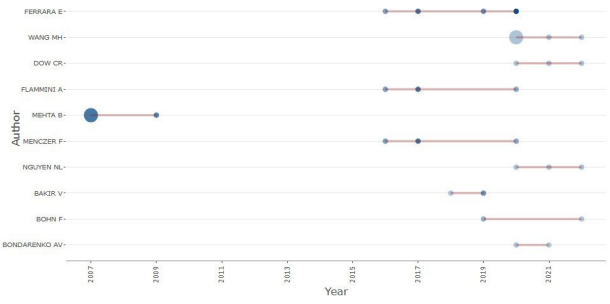

Figure 4. Authors' Production Over Time

Influential Countries

Figure 5 illustrates the map depicting the countries with the greatest influence in scientific production. Research on the topic has been carried out in 52 countries, with 21 countries having conducted five or more studies. The USA ranked first in scientific productivity with 128 studies, while the UK was second with 45 studies, Germany was third with 24 studies, and China and Ukraine were fourth with 18 studies. Singapore, USA, UK, and Germany are ranked as the most cited countries, respectively. The countries with the best scientific productivity were the USA, UK, Germany, China, Ukraine, Spain, Italy,

France, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Poland, and Portugal, respectively. Countries with political and ideological views and economically developed countries are countries that contribute to this field scientifically and academically. Especially during the Cold War period, the US government used perception management strategies with anti-communist propaganda and media campaigns. If we look at the political field, the Nazis in Germany created a perception that glorified their own ideology and leaders by using propaganda effectively. China, on the other hand, is known as a country that holds tight political control and uses perception management to maintain this control. Russia and North Korea, which are not on the list, were found to be weak in this area in terms of scientific productivity. In addition, most of the studies are single-country publications, and it has been determined that the number of multi-country publications is quite low.

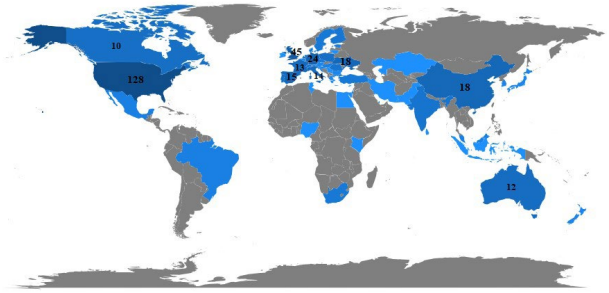

Figure 5. Countries' Scientific Production

Influential Institutions

Figure 6 shows the most influential institutions. The University of Oxford has been ranked at the top for intellectual contribution in this field. While Oxford University started its studies in 2003 and California University in 2005, other universities increased their studies as of 2015.

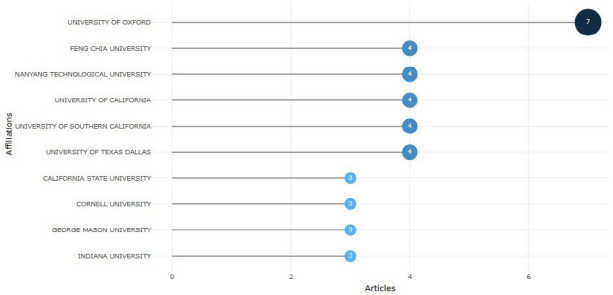

Figure 6. Most Relevant Affiliations

Influential Publications

Figure 7 shows the most globally cited studies. Tandoc et al. (2018) topped the list with 943 citations. Tandoc et al. studied the definition of fake news. Starbird (2019) studied disinformation as a collaborative study. Howard et al. (2016) have studied the difficulty of automated political communication for election law and administration in the United States. Edmond (2013) presented a model of information manipulation and political regime change. Oberschall (2010) studied ethnic manipulation. Mehta and Nejdl (2008) used collaborative filtering, and Mehta et al. (2007) tried to detect spam users in collaborative filtering for lies and propaganda. Other studies have been seen to explore the forms of political theater, perception, manipulation, propaganda, lies, media, communication, political regime, algorithm, filtering, spam and artificial intelligence.

Figure 7. Most Cited Documents Worldwide

Keywords

The word analysis provided information about the relationship between the keywords of perception management, which is a tool for strategic management, and the keywords of manipulation and propaganda. Researchers add a large number of keywords to publication studies, and word analysis examines the use of these keywords. The word cloud is given in Figure 8, and the most frequently used words are shown. Keyword networks aim to explore the relationships and links between concepts. Keyword analysis aims to reveal the conceptual frameworks of publications and refers to these general concepts or ideologies.

Figure 8. Keyword Cloud

The most frequently used words were social networking (online), social media, propaganda, social aspects, human, manipulation, mass media, semantics, classification (of information), fake news, politics, perception management, deep learning and public relations.

Figure 9 presents a thematic map for the studies analyzed. Thematic maps are designed to assess

concepts in a specific sequence, providing a clear visual representation. These maps are primarily constructed based on centrality (x-axis) and density (y-axis) factors. Centrality indicates the importance of a concept within a central theme, while intensity measures the development of the chosen theme. Thematic maps are typically divided into four key sections, each offering a simplified visual representation that organizes the themes into four distinct quadrants. Themes located in the lower-left section of the map represent topics with either increasing or decreasing trends. These themes are typically derived from existing research or developed by researchers themselves. The lower-right section of the thematic map reflects core subject areas that are supported by a significant body of research. The upper-left quadrant highlights specialized but isolated niche topics, while the upper-right section focuses on well-established and more specific areas of study.

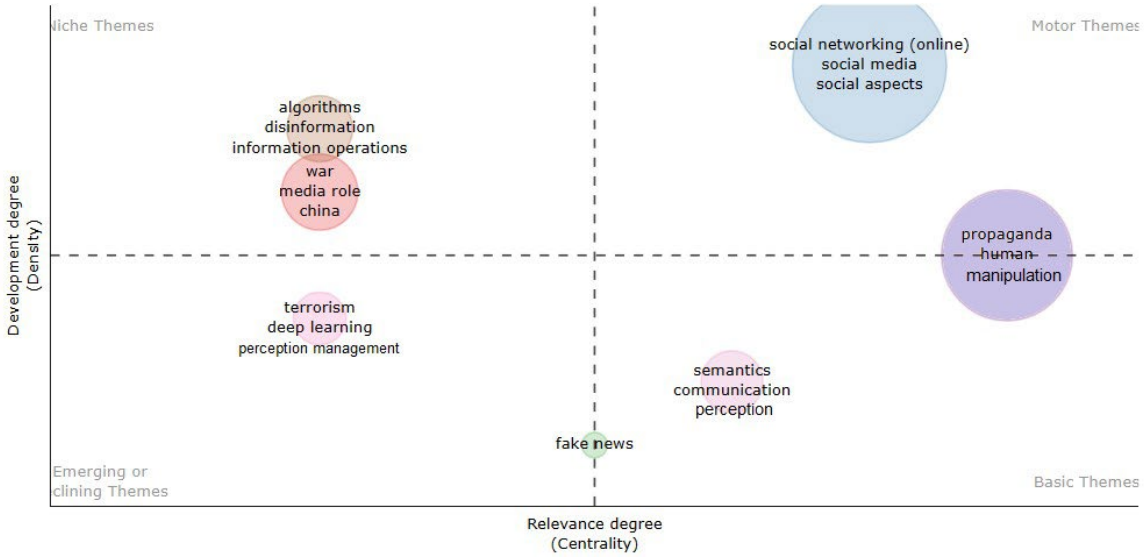

Figure 9. Keyword Thematic Map

Key words such as perception, semantics and communication in the basic theme part showed the main emphasis of the study in the literature. At the same time, manipulation, propaganda, human and the transition from the motor theme to the basic are seen in perception management tools. In the motor theme part, it was seen that the environments where keywords such as social network, social media, social aspects were dominant and perception directions were made. In the Niches theme section, it is shown that the necessary work is done to spam content with algorithms and information operations. At the same time, the war, the role of the media, and the situations in China show that this area will be studied. Emerging or clinic themes show that a new trend will be born or will end. In this context, perception management is poised to become a central focus in research, particularly as it relates to communication power. As technology and artificial intelligence continue to evolve, the application of sophisticated algorithms such as deep learning and machine learning will significantly enhance the capabilities of perception management. These technologies will play a pivotal role in shaping public perception, especially by filtering out negative or undesirable perceptions, and will be instrumental in crafting and controlling the narratives that influence societal attitudes and behaviors. The increasing complexity and reach of these algorithms will provide a more refined and targeted approach to managing perceptions across various domains.

Furthermore, the occurrence of political crises, conflicts, and terrorist incidents will only heighten the relevance and necessity of perception management. In such volatile environments, controlling how information is perceived and disseminated becomes crucial. The ability to influence public opinion and control the narrative during such times can have profound implications for national security, political stability, and even international relations. As such, the intersection of communication power, technological advancements, and global events will likely shape the future of perception management, making it an essential area of study for researchers aiming to understand the dynamics of public opinion, media influence, and societal control.

Multiple Correspondence Analysis

Multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) is widely regarded as a standard technique for reducing the dimensionality of multivariate data sets. In this research, the keywords searched from the Scopus database were subjected to a visual configuration and divided into two different clusters from the total of 913 keywords. Figure 10 shows the conceptual

structure map for MCA. Cluster 1 is the red-colored keywords, Cluster 2 is the blue-colored keywords, and the black dots represent the individual factors related to the clusters.

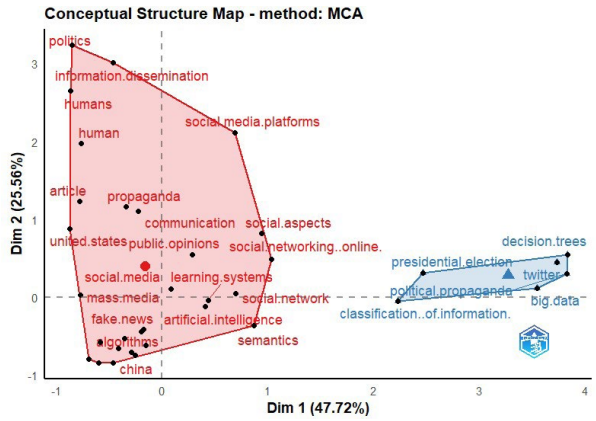

Figure 10. Cluster Map

Topic Dendrogram

The subject dendrogram visualizes the hierarchical order and relationships that are created by the hierarchical clustering method of keywords. Dashed lines and vertical lines in the form of subject dendrograms guide readers by facilitating the analysis and interpretation of different clusters. The aim here is not to determine the exact levels of association between clusters but rather to estimate the approximate number of clusters suitable for further analysis and discussion. Figure 11 shows the topic dendrogram.

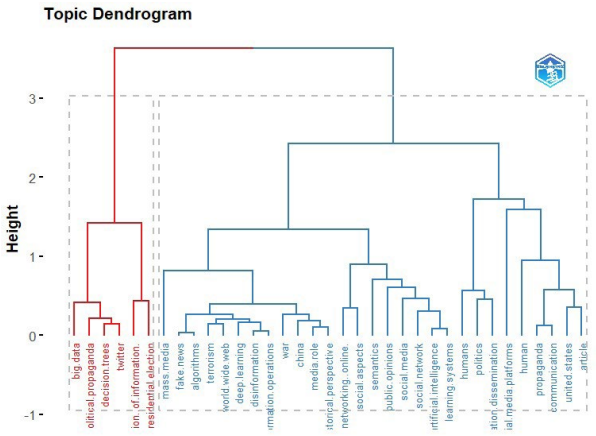

Figure 11. Topic Dendrogram

Trend Topics

The term "trending topics" refers to topics that have gained popularity over a certain period of time or are of interest to a wide audience. Trending topics can often change quickly and have different priorities over time. Trend topics are given in Figure 12. Although the role of the media and rights relations have been studied in the past, issues such as war, politics, terrorism, and people will continue to be studied today. Current topics in perception management are social media, social aspects and social networking (online). Apart from this, with the development of technology, the artificial intelligence factor came into play. Topics such as deep learning, machine learning, decision support systems have become important topics for the classification and validation of information. With the importance of data science, perception management will be carried out on big data and algorithms or fitting and verification processes will be among the future issues.

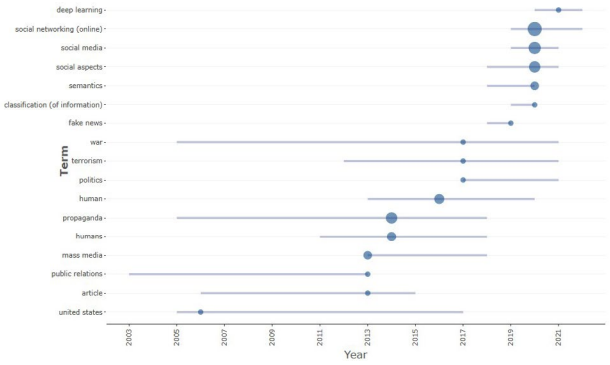

Figure 12. Trend Topics

Limitarions

This research has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study relies exclusively on the Scopus database, which could result in missing data, as it does not incorporate other sources such as Web of Science, Google Scholar, or Microsoft Academic. Future studies could address this gap by including data from multiple sources to provide a more comprehensive analysis. Second, the study is limited to the period from 2000 to 2023, meaning that earlier relevant studies may have been excluded from the analysis. Future research could expand the time frame to include earlier studies and assess their impact on current trends. Third, the research focuses only on scientific keywords, which may overlook other important aspects, such as policy implications or broader societal trends. Future studies could consider a broader set of keywords or explore other dimensions of the subject for a more holistic view. Finally, conducting quantitative analysis requires researchers to have a deep understanding of the subject, as interpreting complex data necessitates specialized knowledge. Future research could enhance its robustness by involving interdisciplinary teams with expertise in both the subject matter and advanced data analysis techniques to ensure more accurate interpretations and conclusions.

Conclusion

In the technological era, the influence of mass media is undeniably recognized. With rapid technological advancements, individuals are bombarded by a

constant flow of information, much of which is difficult to verify, making it challenging to distinguish between fact and fiction. The speed at which information is disseminated facilitates the spread of vast amounts of unverified data, contributing to what is often referred to as information pollution. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the media content we consume—whether through television, social media platforms, or digital news outlets—is largely influenced by the underlying dynamics of capitalism. In contemporary capitalist systems, the selection of content we engage with is not driven by the public's informational needs but by market forces and corporate interests, often curated through algorithms designed to maximize engagement and profit.

In this context, communication strategies and techniques are important. Perception management, manipulation, and propaganda are concepts that reflect the power and complexity of communication. Although there are fine lines between these three concepts, perception management is generally accepted as a more transparent, ethical, and purposeful type of communication, while manipulation and propaganda can have a negative meaning. In this context, more studies and practices are required in this area. The importance of the relationship between politics, war, and perception management, which has continued from the past to the present, is quite wide in social, political, and ethical aspects. The interaction of these issues can profoundly influence societies' decision-making processes, international relations, and understanding of history.

Perception management and the use of artificial intelligence play an important role in today's increasingly digitalized communication and information flow. Artificial intelligence can help manage perception management strategies in a more effective and customized way. Perception management can be shaped by making personalized communication, rapid response and analysis, trend forecasts, sentiment analysis, and crisis, risk, and opportunity forecasts with artificial intelligence.

Social media platforms are areas where individuals and institutions reach large masses, and at the same time, perception management strategies are effectively implemented. With social media platforms, large audience access, fast and instant interaction, content dissemination and management, targeted communication, and participation in social discussions can be achieved. As a result, social media is an important tool for the effective implementation of perception management. However, improper or unethical use of social media platforms can also lead to negative consequences.

Future research will allow for a more detailed exploration of the structure of digital perception management. In particular, the integration of artificial intelligence and deep learning applications into perception management represents an important research area, and the effects of these technologies on social media platforms should be further investigated (Mehta et al., 2007; Mehta and Nejdl, 2009; Şengöz, 2024). Additionally, studies on the societal and cultural impacts of digital perception management should increase. The long-term effects of social media interactions and algorithms on societal perceptions are of critical importance for future research (Tandoc et al., 2018; Neudert et al., 2020; Derman, 2021).

The ethical dimensions of perception management need to be addressed in more detail. With digitalization, perception management has often become intertwined with manipulation and propaganda; therefore, it is necessary to draw ethical boundaries and develop new strategies in this field (Brown & Yazar, 1992; Siegel, 2005). Furthermore, studies on how digital tools and social media platforms can be used more ethically will help shape societal perceptions in a healthier way. These studies will provide a more solid foundation for the future applications of digital perception management and contribute to creating a more ethical communication environment.

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