

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP: DRIVING LONG-TERM SME GROWTH IN EMERGING ASIAN ECONOMIES



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Abstract

Increasingly volatile and digitalized markets, Customer Engagement (CE) has emerged not merely as a marketing approach but as a strategic capability that enables sustainable entrepreneurship, long-term value creation, and business resilience. This relevance is particularly pronounced for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups operating in emerging Asian economies, where sustained customer relationships, trust, and innovation capacity determine survival and growth. Despite the growing importance of CE, a comprehensive synthesis of its intellectual structure and sustainability-oriented implications remains limited. This study addresses this gap by systematically mapping the CE research landscape. The study employs bibliometric and co-word analyses of 803 CE-related articles retrieved from the Dimensions database, covering the period from 2003 to July 2023, using the VOSviewer tool. Bibliometric performance, co-citation patterns, and keyword co-occurrence networks are analyzed to uncover influential contributors and dominant research themes. The results reveal a substantial and sustained growth in CE research, with emerging themes emphasizing digital engagement, customer trust, value co-creation, and experiential interactions. These themes underscore CE's role in fostering innovation, enhancing customer retention, and building organizational resilience critical drivers of sustainable SME growth in emerging Asian contexts. The findings provide actionable insights for entrepreneurs, SME managers, and policymakers by demonstrating how CE can be leveraged as a long-term strategic resource to support sustainable business success in dynamic Asian markets. This study advances CE scholarship by explicitly linking bibliometric evidence to sustainable entrepreneurship and SME growth in emerging Asian economies.

Keywords: Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Customer Engagement, Digital Innovation, Emerging Asian Economies, Sustainable Marketing

1. Introduction

Customer Engagement (CE) has become an essential strategic capability rather than marketing concept in present-day business landscapes, where fast-paced digitalization, increased competition, and market uncertainty are new trends in the business environment. In addition to its conventional capability in strengthening brand communication and customer engagements underpinned by customer relationships, customer trust, organizational innovation and organizational resilience (Apriliyanti and Alon, 2017). These findings are especially crucial when it comes to entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and startups as the competitiveness and survival rates in the long run rely on the capacity to create lasting value by means of close and prolonged interaction with customers.

In terms of entrepreneurial and sustainability, CE allows companies to go beyond the realm of transactional interactions with one of relational and co-creative value generation. The involved

customers do not just participate by making repeated purchases but also sharing the feedback, engaging in the process of innovations, promoting brands, and enhancing trust based on communities. The interactions that are developed as a result of such engagement are efficient in resource utilization, lower the cost of acquiring customers, and create stable revenue sources, hence participating in the development of the enterprise in the long run. In the case of SMEs and startups, which usually work within the financial, informational, and operational limits, CE is one of the viable ways to become competitive and resilient without the benefits of scale.

The applicability of CE as a strategic strength is particularly strong in the emerging Asian economies. These consumer markets are dominated by SMEs, are digital-heavy, and characterised by fast changing consumer demands. The business environment in Asia is becoming more dependent on digital interaction platforms, interpersonal social media, and community-relationships to address lack of trust, product differentiation, and prompt response

to market fluctuations. Therefore, the insights of how CE research has developed, structured, and prevailed are important repercussions to sustainable entrepreneurship and SME development in the Asian market.

Bibliometric analysis has become a prominent methodological tool in the study of business and social sciences, which also gained popularity over the years in parallel with the increasing strategic relevance of CE (Donthu et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021). The further availability of more sophisticated bibliometric tools including VOSviewer, Gephi, and Leximancer have allowed researchers to handle vast amounts of scientific content in a systematic manner, determine the key players, and visualize the intellectual community of research fields in transition. Bibliometric methods assist in the synthesis of knowledge that is evidence based and provide information which aids in theory building as well as managerial and policy making.

The proliferation of the large academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Dimensions also contributed to the viability and the breadth of bibliometric studies. Although Convergent Scopus and Web of Science have long dominated bibliometric researches, there is new evidence to indicate that Dimensions offers more comprehensive journal coverage, especially in the social sciences (Singh et al., 2021). As a result of its widespread coverage of marketing, entrepreneurship, and sustainability-related studies, Dimensions is an adequate source of knowledge regarding the developing body of knowledge in the field of CE.

Even though the study of CE has garnered a lot of academic interest, there is also a lack of coherence in the current body of research linking CE scholarship to entrepreneurial competitiveness, sustainability and SME growth, particularly in emerging Asian economies. In this gap, this study performs a stringent bibliometric and co-word analysis of 803 articles on the topic of CE published since 2003 and up until July 2023. This study aims to re-position CE as a strategic ability that helps to facilitate sustainable enterprise development, innovation, customer confidence, and strength by mapping the intellectual architecture, key players and the rising research themes.

2. Theoretical Background: Understanding CE

The study has been able to investigate the notion of engagement in different ways in different situations. When it comes to business, engagement has been termed as a formal agreement. In management literature, it has been discussed as an interactive project with internal stakeholders of an organization. Engagement in the marketing context implies customer-company interactions, commonly referred to as CE (Vivek et al. 2012).

CE concept gained much focus in the academic literature since 2010. So far, various perspectives

have tried to define CE but the definition has not been agreed upon (Harrigan et al., 2017).

Hollebeek et al. (2014) declare that CE is relevant to the positive emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement of the consumer in the consumer-brand encounters. Kumar et al. (2010) defined CE as value addition made by the customer in terms of transactions they perform and the interaction they have with other customers and the knowledge they pass to the company. Although Van Doorn et al. (2010) also looked at CE through a behavioral lens, Hollebeek (2011) was defining it within the context of the psychological state of customers. Although viewed slightly differently, Vivek et al. (2012) regards CE as engagement and involvement of the customers in the workings or products provided by a firm (or brand) (Hollebeek et al., 2022). The engaged customers are less inclined to change, less price-sensitive, and involved in the elaboration of the new product and recommend the firms to their unengaged counterparts (Hollebeek et al., 2016).

Comprising a variety of explanations relating to the formation of this concept in the marketing literature, Islam and Rahman (2016) explains that the inclination of a consumer to interact and communicate with company, brand, site, community, organizational activity or any other such focal entity poses the explanation. This orientation may take the either + or - aspect and may be strong or weak depending on how a customer communicates with various points of contact (physical or virtual).

The interpretation of CE presented by Pansari and Kumar (2017) is full and inclusive, encompassing all the activities done by the customers. Their definition of CE entails the procedures, by which the customer adds value to the company, whether indirectly and/or directly. The study highlights that the direct value may be created in terms of the purchases the customer made whereas indirect value may be created by way of customer referrals through which a firm gets new customers, customers influence on the brand creating community, customers views or ideas on how to improve their product etc.

The emotional connection, which had been formed between a company and a consumer, is included in the definition of CE by Moliner et al. (2018). This association is an evident by-product of the involvement that leads to active and positive psychological condition by the consumer.

Various theories have been used to analyze CE in the existing literature in the field of CE. First, the theories of both Service-Dominant Logic and Theory of Relationship Marketing have been employed as the conceptual framework when studying CE (Brodie et al., 2011; Breidbach et al., 2014 ; Hollebeek, 2011a). The common belief of these theories is that customers do not just receive information pertaining to the brand, but they participate actively in fashioning brand relationships (Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

Theory of social exchange, social practice theory and theory of social penetration are also the social behavioral theories that were studied in relation to the CE concept (Bitter et al., 2014; Hollebeek, 2011a; Verleye et al., 2014 and Hwang et al., 2015). The theories indicate that in cases where a brand makes positive interactions and offers initial benefits in the interaction, the customers are likely to respond positively in terms of attitude and behavior towards the brand.

Theories on individual behavior have provided a set of theories which further enlighten CE. These include the stimulus-organism response theory, as Mollen and Wilson (2010) have shown, organizational psychology, as the example of Dwivedi (2015) demonstrates, and the theory of planned behaviour. The embraced theories look at engagement as a natural attribute and strive to describe the consumer behaviour, starting with intention and transitioning to action, at the personal level.

3. Research Methodology

The bibliometric research involve counting of important articles, journals, authors, sources, countries and citation analysis to determine the relationship between articles, journals and author. (Osareh, 1996). The first descriptive method includes the study of a field, by using quantitative measures of its most important articles, authors, institutions, journals and geographical regions. With the help of quantification, aggregation and ranking, the analysis can understand comparative roles of journals, authors, etc., in the field. The other methodology uses citation analysis, e.g. co-citation,

to establish relationships between authors, journal and publication etc which are visualized on 2-dimensional map network. A research study carried out by indicated that network analysis is later used to make an analysis of these networks. In the bibliographical networks thus created, the variation of nodes (such as the difference in the size of the node) provides information on how a scientific field is constituted (Van Eck and Waltman, 2014). The closer the nodes are to each other, the stronger the thematic similarity. The joint citation between two articles by a third article is referred to as co-citation. The change in the co-citation network does occur after some time with the formation of new connections and this depicts the dynamic nature of these networks (Zhao and Strotmann, 2008). Scientific research mapping is widely applied to the networks (Chang et al., 2015), which is why the networks are embraced in the given study. However, there are some shortcomings to co-citation networks, including the fact that articles in a cluster can focus on several themes (Havemann and Scharnhorst, 2012).

In order to make this review, we have accessed the articles on the database Dimensions. The rationale used to select Dimensions database is the highest journal coverage provided compared to Scopus and Web of Science by 48.17% and 82.22, respectively (Singh et al., 2021).

In order to carry out the CE literature review, we have taken steps as suggested by Rowley and Slack (2004) (see Figure 1).

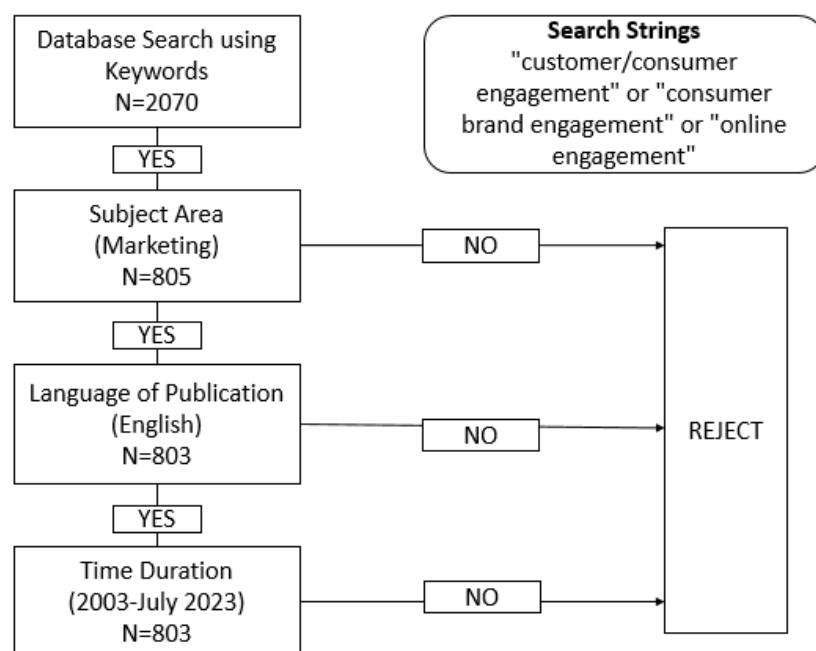


Figure 1: Flow Chart showing Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria (Source: Author)

The first search terms consisted of customer/consumer engagement, online engagement or consumer brand engagement and retrieved 2070 documents. After that, we narrowed the search to the topic of "Marketing" that gave us 805 relevant documents. Moreover, we filtered it down to 803 articles by filtering out non-English articles. Then, we collected the citation information, keywords, bibliographic record, abstract, and references of the 803 articles and stored them in a.csv format of the Dimension database.

The CE articles, journals, authors, sources, countries and so on, contained in the corpus were quantified, collected, and ranked according to their rank first. The step that follows is co-word analysis (with the use of co-occurrence of keywords words) to identify key thematic CE clusters. The results of the review are presented in two parts according to the research questions. The initial one will look at bibliometric performance and undergo co-citation analysis (RQ1 and RQ2), which involves the analysis of the overall body of work of CE, the performance of individual articles, authors, countries, and journals using the VOSviewer tool. The second part examines the intellectual framework (RQ3) that examines the emerging themes of research of CE, as manifested in mapping the scientific connections, through co-word or keyword co-occurrence.

4. Findings and Results

The following section outlines the findings of the bibliometric analysis that has been performed in the

study. The first part is the discussion of the citation analysis findings. This shall be preceded by postulation of results of co-citation and co-occurrence analyses.

Yearly output and Citations Analysis

The results of the analysis will include the following: the total statistics of the study, the number of publications annually, the most popular publications, the most influential authors, the most active journals, influential organizations and the most influential countries.

The researchers performed a review of 803 CE articles that were published within the last 20 years between 2003 and July 2023. The publishing trend of CE articles on year-wise publication total shows that during the period since 2003 to 2013, publication of CE articles was very weak, but since 2014, there has been a healthy and steady growth over the years. Indeed, the number of publications has increased more than twice in 2021 with 120 published articles as compared to 53 in 2014 (Figure 2). It is interesting to note that the CE articles are the highest within the last five years (between 2018 to 2023) with an average of approximately 98 articles as compared to the total number of publications, which is 492. In addition to this, there is an exponentially growing volume of CE publications citation over the last two decades (Figure 3).

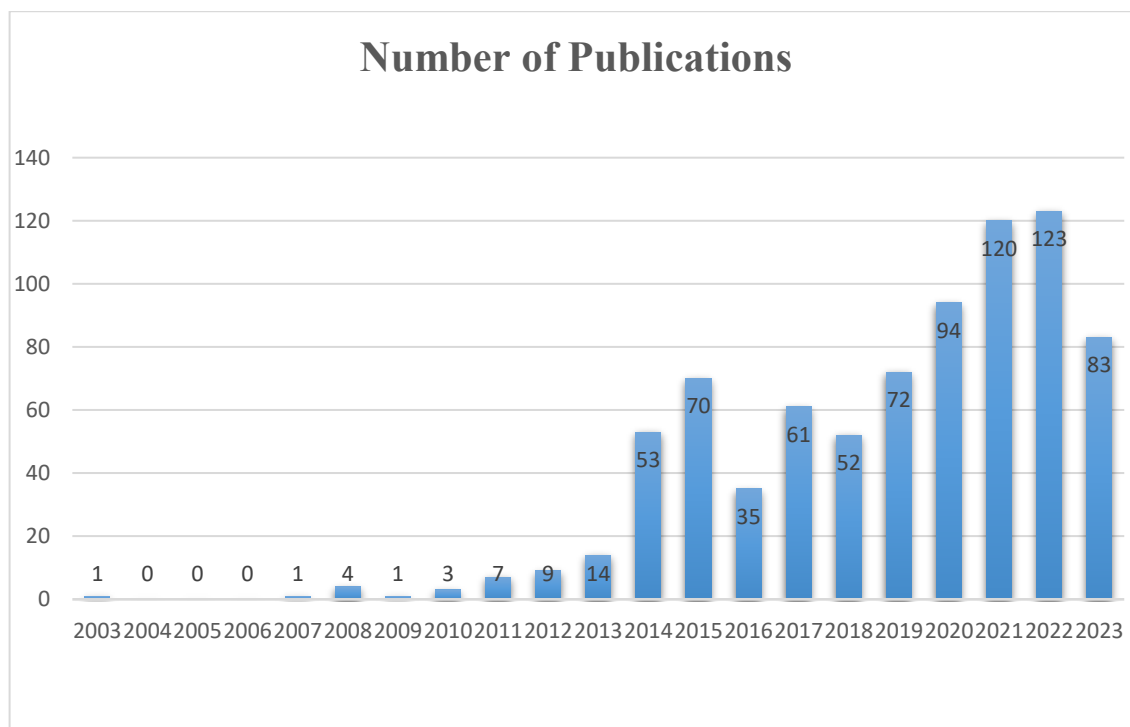


Figure 2: Number of CE publications between 2003 and July 2023 (Source: Author)

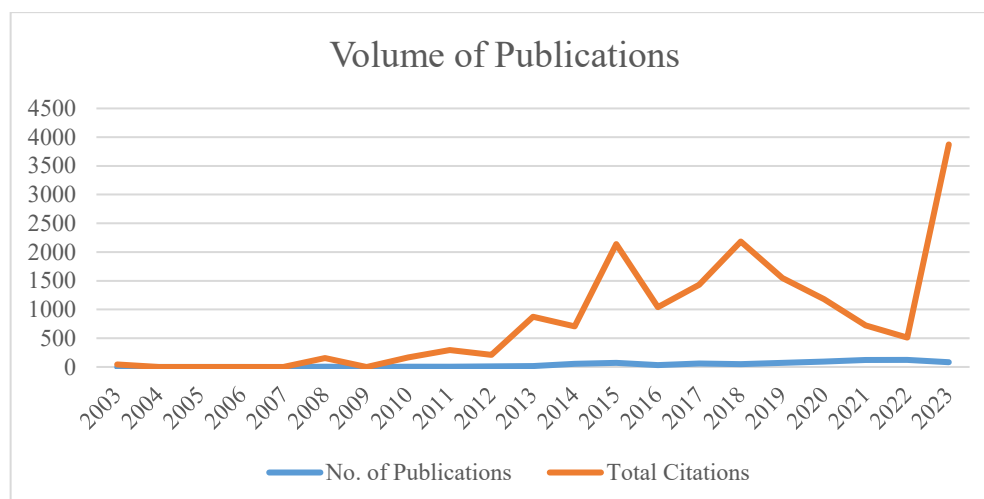


Figure 3: Total Citations of CE Publications between 2003 and 2023 (Source: Author)

Co-Citation Analysis: Most Influential CE Articles, Authors and Countries

To determine the most influential articles and authors in the field of CE, which have been extensively utilized by other authors in the field of CE (as illustrated in Table 1), the study has conducted a co-citation study that allowed conducting a thorough analysis of the citation performance.

The best-cited CE publication by other publications on customer engagement ranked Hollebeek et al. (2014) at number 1 (with 158 citations). This study has suggested a separate dimension group under Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE) which includes cognitive processing, activation and affection. These dimensions explain the cognitive, behavioral and emotional reaction of customers towards dealing with brands. The authors have highlighted two important implications of CBE, which are self-brand connection of customers and the intention to use company brand.

Van Doorn et al. (2010) was the second article with the highest number of citations by other articles in CE (150 citations). The study introduced an alternative approach of consumer engagement called Consumer Engagement Behaviors (CEB) which is based on such aspects as word of mouth, written reviews and blogging. This legal and societal fronts and has requested brands to consider holistic

approaches that can enable them to manage these engagement behaviours.

The next article to be included in the list of the top cited CE articles in the sample research corpus (147 citations) is Brodie et al. (2011). Their study put forward a theoretical basis of the CE concept by creating a link between the theory of relationship marketing and service-dominant logic. They made a cautious distinction between the term, CE and the other related terms such as customer participation and customer involvement in this work.

One of the articles by Brodie et al. (2013) was on the fourth position by the number of citations in other articles on CE (129 citations). The study also elaborated on the behavioral, emotional and cognitive CE elements, and their importance in online brand communities. The authors emphasized that a high level of CE in such communities results in a customer loyalty, satisfaction, and empowerment. Vivek et al. (2012), is classified fifth in the CE corpus and had 120 citations. The research introduces a Consumer Engagement (CE) model, in which customer participation and involvement arouses the engagement of the existing or potential customers. This will create some type of chain reaction, which may result in such outcomes as value perception, trust, emotional commitment, word of mouth (WOM) referrals, active participation and loyalty exhibited to brand community.

Ranking	Article	Citations	Title
1.	Hollebeek, Ld, et al. (2014). Journal Of Interactive Marketing, 28(2), 149-165	158	Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation
2.	Van Doorn, J, et al. (2010). Journal Of Service Research, 13(3), 253-266	150	Customer engagement behavior: Theoretical foundations and research directions
3.	Brodie, Rj, et al. (2011). Journal Of Service Research, 14(3), 252-271	147	Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research

4.	Brodie, Rj, et al. (2013). Journal Of Business Research, 66(1), 105-114	129	Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis
5.	Vivek, Sd, et al. (2012). The Journal Of Marketing Theory And Practice, 20(2), 122-146	120	Customer engagement: Exploring customer relationships beyond purchase
6.	Fornell, C, et al. (1981). Journal Of Marketing Research, 18(1), 39-50	87	Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error
7.	Hollebeek, L (2011). Journal Of Strategic Marketing, 19(7), 555-573	83	Exploring customer brand engagement: definition and themes
8.	Hollebeek, Ld (2011). Journal Of Marketing Management, 27(7-8), 785-807	82	Demystifying customer brand engagement: Exploring the loyalty nexus
9.	Bowden, Jlh (2009). The Journal Of Marketing Theory And Practice, 17(1), 63-74	79	The process of customer engagement: A conceptual framework
10.	Sprott, D, et al. (2009). Journal Of Marketing Research, 46(1), 92-104	65	The importance of a general measure of brand engagement on market behavior: Development and validation of a scale

Table 1: Top Ten Maximum cited Publications by Other CE Publications

Table 2 shows the maximum cited CE authors by the number of citations attained by each author, which is an indication of the impact made by each author. The list includes, Hollebeek, Brodie, Verhoff, Kumar and

Malthouse. The cumulative references that these elite authors have accumulated highlight the great impact that they have in academia irrespective of how often they publish the CE field.

Table 2: Maximum Cited CE Authors (Total Citation Wise)

Ranking	Name of the Author	Total Citations
1	Hollebeek, Linda D.	1022
2	Brodie, Roderick J.	491
3	Verhoef, Peter C.	301
4	Kumar, V.	251
5	Malthouse, Edward C.	225
6	Lemon, Katherine N.	208
7	Bagozzi, Richard P.	193
8	Beatty, Sharon E.	187
9	Morgan, Robert M.	183
10	Van Doorn, Jenny	173

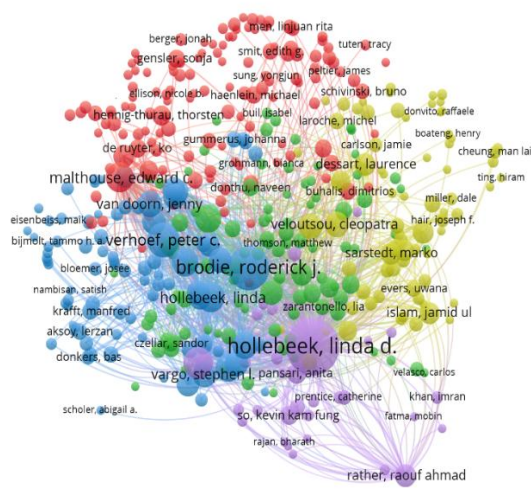


Figure 4: Authors Co-Citation Network based on top-cited CE articles by other customer engagement authors

Figure 4 illustrates a co-citation Network on top-cited CE articles of other CE authors. In this analysis, publications that are thematically similar and cited frequently with each other are identified. The sample CE database articles were published by different authors who represented 66 countries. Table 3 below presents 15 most noticeable countries regarding the number of articles published and cumulative citation score. The 15 leading countries have added 70.89% of the articles published to the database of CE. The most numerous CE articles were

published in the US, India, the UK, Australia and China. More than 40 percent of citations in the total CE corpus have been made by the US, New Zealand and Australia. The number of publications in the top five countries in terms of the CE articles is significantly low even though some emerging economies such as India and China have won their places in the top five countries. This implies that the articles in these countries have not achieved significant influence or impact on academia research.

Table 3: Country-wise Rankings for CE Articles and Citations

Rank on the basis of highest articles published				Rank on the basis of highest citations			
Ranking	Country Name	Articles	% Articles	Ranking	Country Name	Total Citation	% Citations
1	United States	144	20.25	1	United States	5023	20.44
2	India	53	7.45	2	New Zealand	2617	10.65
3	United Kingdom	50	7.03	3	Australia	2501	10.18
4	Australia	46	6.47	4	United Kingdom	2280	9.28
5	China	36	5.06	5	Finland	1244	5.06
6	Portugal	26	3.66	6	China	1203	4.90
7	France	23	3.23	7	Portugal	949	3.86
8	Malaysia	19	2.67	8	Germany	944	3.84
9	Indonesia	18	2.53	9	France	814	3.31
10	Spain	18	2.53	10	Norway	723	2.94
11	Italy	17	2.39	11	Spain	610	2.48
12	New Zealand	15	2.11	12	United Arab Emirates	608	2.47
13	Germany	14	1.97	13	India	587	2.39
14	Canada	13	1.83	14	Ireland	575	2.34
15	South Africa	12	1.69	15	Canada	403	1.64

The list of top 15 journals with the most citations (Table 4) in CE research indicated that the Journal of Business Research was the journal with the greatest impact so far in the area of CE research, then Journal of Marketing. Of all these 15 best journals, at least 10 of them have more than 500 citations. The list of top

15 journals with the most citations (Table 4) in CE research indicated that the Journal of Business Research was the journal with the greatest impact so far in the area of CE research, then Journal of Marketing. Of all these 15 best journals, at least 10 of them have more than 500 citations.

Table 4: Most Prominent CE-Publishing Journals (on the basis of citations)

Ranking	Journal	Citations
1	Journal of Business Research	1326
2	Journal of Marketing	1182
3	Journal of Interactive Marketing	837
4	Journal of Marketing Research	833
5	Journal of Consumer Research	831
6	Journal of Service Research	819
7	Journal of The Academy Of Marketing Science	773
8	Journal of Retailing And Consumer Services	549
9	Computers In Human Behavior	546
10	Journal of Product & Brand Management	505
11	Journal of Marketing Management	467
12	European Journal of Marketing	370
13	Psychology And Marketing	356
14	Journal of Advertising	333
15	Tourism Management	333

Co-Word Analysis: Emerging Focus Areas and Themes in CE Research

The study employed co-word analysis as the unit of analysis in order to investigate the recent focus of the studies that were published in the CE research. Co-word analysis focuses on single words as its unit of analysis. Unlike citation analysis, bibliographic coupling and co-citation analysis that are based on cited publications, co-word research explores the material content of the publications (Donthu et al., 2021). Co-word study employs terms that are normally based on abstracts, article titles and even on full text to aided with the co-word analysis.

In this work, we are using the VOSviewer software to analyse the abstracts of these studies. The textual map was built by using the full counting method by extracting terms in both the metadata of the study. The selected terms that occurred at least 15 times making us have 429 terms that fit this criterion among the 16,571 terms.

It resulted in the generation of five major clusters who were interested in CE research in the period between 2003 and July 2023 (Figure 5). After the elimination of the terms that did not belong to any category, the break-down of the CE groups is as follows: Cluster I (containing 81 items) covers studies that viewed CE as a way to affect the customer behaviour, Cluster II (containing 70 items) involves the theme of digital marketing and the associated approaches, Cluster III (containing 32 items) entails the studies that associated CE with the customer experience and attitude and Cluster IV (containing 31 items) covers the styles that are related to the services marketing.

The red network studies (Cluster I) in which the authors have viewed CE as a means of altering customer behaviour, employed terminologies of intention, behaviour, brand image, cognitive behaviour, brand love, participation, satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand community, brand experience, involvement, millennial, word-of-mouth (WOM), brand equity, e-WOM, commitment and China.

The second group (green network) that was devoted to the theme of digital marketing and strategies. The keywords key in the cluster include communications, internet, web site, tool, campaign, sale, guerrilla marketing, blog, digital marketing, target audience, social network, visitor, big data, new technology, cost, marketing strategy, digital platform and internet.

Cluster III (blue network) was devoted to research on customer experience and includes keywords, including experience, respondent, attitude, happiness, good, image, luxury, online community, friend, event, theme, fan and celebrity.

The fourth cluster (yellow network) has a services marketing theme and includes such keywords as: app, retailer, perception, expectation, online shopping, delivery, mobile device, store, India, Indonesia, price, service provider, service quality, customer relationship and customer satisfaction.

The fifth cluster (purple network) is anchored on social media marketing theme and it includes the following keywords as: review, post, comment, click, video, Instagram, influencer, social networking site, popularity, online review, tourism, tourist and hotel.

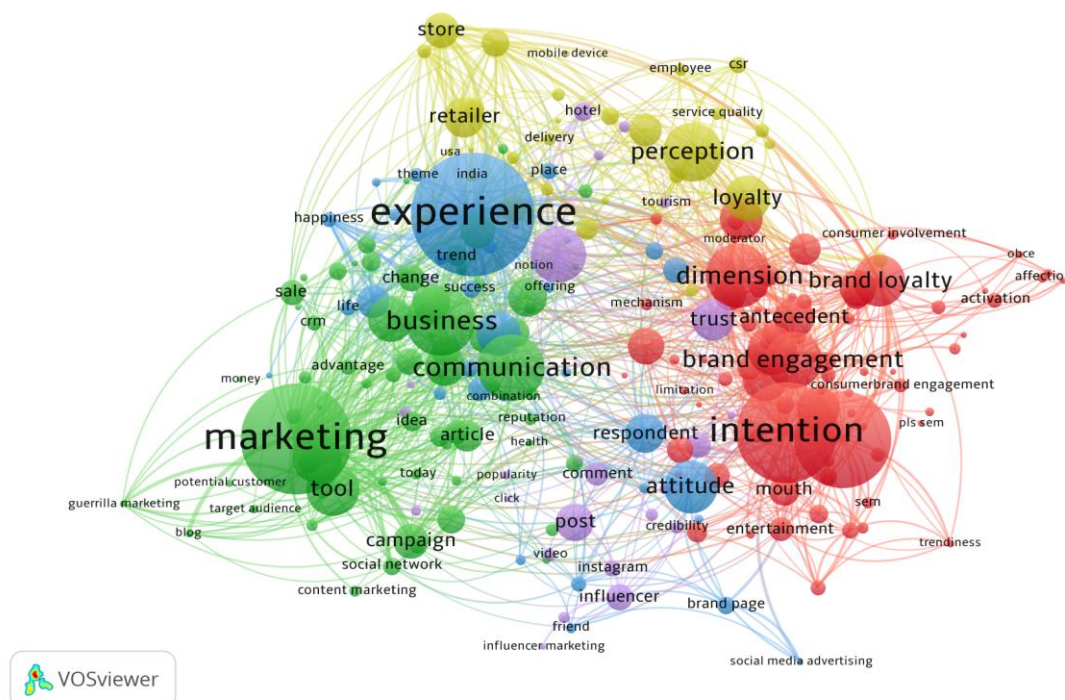


Figure 5: Clusters CE Research identified through Co-Occurrence

Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications

The amount of academic research that has been dedicated to the Customer Engagement (CE) topic continues to rise, the conceptual integrity of the study area still cannot be said to be very cohesive, especially in the context of facilitating sustainable entrepreneurship and long-term enterprise development. To bridging this divide, the current research has used bibliometric and thematic analysis to map the intellectual organization and development of the CE research in terms of 803 articles published between 2003 and July 2023. The results show that there is a significant increase in the number of publications and citations on CE after 2014, which is associated with the growing strategic suitability of engagement-based methods in the context of digitally mediated and highly competitive business operations.

The co-citation analysis shows the seminal works of Hollebeek et al. (2014) and Van Doorn et al. (2010), which put the focus on the centrality of consumer-brand engagement, behavioral expressions and interactive value creation in the CE scholarship. Despite the citation influence of the developed economies like the United States, New Zealand and Australia, the thematic clusters produced by the co-word analysis show increasing relevance addressing service based, digitally empowered and relationship-driven settings. These circumstances are a close reflection of the structural realities of the modern Asian economies, where SMEs and startups are the sources of the entrepreneurial activity. The five prevailing groups consumer behavior, digital marketing strategies, customer experience, services marketing, and social media engagement- all support CE as a relationship-based value-generating mechanism, as opposed to transactional results.

As an entrepreneur, the results make CE a strategic capability through which the SMEs and startups in Asia can become more competitive and sustainable with growth. Loyalty-based relationships enhance customer loyalty, emotional connection and value perception, which increases retention and stabilizes flows of revenue. These retention effects lower the cost of acquisition and help financial viability of SMEs in the long run, which is more than crucial in unstable and competitive markets.

In addition, CE supports innovation by engaging customers in constant interaction and co-creation. Involved customers will provide feedback, insights, and ideas that are input to product and service development to allow firms to make responses that are dynamic to market needs and minimize uncertainty. Such participatory innovation process improves flexibility and facilitates sustainability through effective use of resources and reduction of risks of failure.

CE also helps companies to be more resilient in an organization by integrating companies in consumer communities and digital engagement ecosystems. In

Asian markets which are rapidly changing and uncertain, long-term interaction facilitates absorption of shocks, maintenance of relational capital, and survival of disruptions in the enterprise. We are enhancing these effects through digital interaction platforms which allow us to interact by scale, personalize based on data, and create value over the long term. Put together, these mechanisms place CE as a pillar of sustainable entrepreneurship and sustainable value generation of the SMEs in Asia. Academically, this work contributes to the field of CE by clearly connecting its intellectual framework with sustainability-focused entrepreneurship building upon the previous load of bibliometric studies with a specific focus on SME development and its presence in emerging economies. On the managerial side, the results give practical lessons to the entrepreneurs and managers within the SMEs on how the CE can be used in addition to promotions to reinforce retention, innovation, and other resilience as part of strategic goals.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has a few limitations despite its contributions. To start with, the analysis will only be based on bibliometric information that is obtained in the Dimensions database and this might lead to the omission of other CE studies that are recorded in other databases. Second, unlike firm-level or performance-based results, bibliometric approaches are more concerned with publication and citation trends and restrict direct empirical conclusions. Third, even though the study focuses on Asian SMEs, it lacks empirical differentiation between countries and sectors and in various stages of entrepreneurial development in Asia.

In the future study, these limitations can be overcome by using multi-database examination, longitudinal firm-level research, and comparative research among rising Asian economies. More academic research should be given to CE in Asian startups and SMEs, especially in various stages of growth and in the context of various industries. Also, the connection between CE and sustainable consumption should be studied in the future, addressing the impact of relationships based on engagement and the formation of responsible consumer behavior and long-term trust. More attention should also be paid to digital interaction-based sustainable growth, such as platform dependency, data-powered personalization, and resilience-creating mechanisms between SMEs.

This kind of research would enrich the knowledge about how customer engagement as a strategic asset of sustainable entrepreneurship can be applied to ensure growth of SMEs in the long term, responsible consumption, and resilience in the emerging Asian economy.

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