



Bibliometric Analysis of Customer Service in Purchase Intention

Análisis bibliométrico del servicio al cliente en la intención de compra

Alan Enrique Cáliz Hernández¹  

ABSTRACT

Customer service and purchase intention represent two constructs of interest for companies. The objective of this research was to examine the scientific production of customer service in purchase intention. A bibliometric study was used as a method to evaluate scientific activity and impact by searching for scientific articles in the Scopus database of articles published during the period from 2015 to 2023, using programs such as Excel and VOSviewer version 1.6.19 for data processing. The results show that the most productive years were 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2023, with five simultaneous publications. The countries with the highest scientific output are India and the USA. The main journal for these investigations was the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services. The authors with the highest number of citations are Anna Mattila, Wan Yang, and Cyril Foropon. The most trending keywords include service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer experience. In conclusion, there is a significant interest in the scientific community in developing research on customer service and purchase intention.

Keywords: advertising, bibliometrics, marketing, public relations.

JEL Classification: A1, M3, M14

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¹Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras. Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

RESUMEN

El servicio al cliente y la intención de compra representan dos constructos de interés para las empresas. El objetivo de esta investigación tuvo como propósito examinar la producción científica del servicio al cliente en la intención de compra. Se empleó un estudio bibliométrico como método para evaluar la actividad y el impacto científico mediante una búsqueda de artículos científicos en la base de datos Scopus, de artículos publicados durante el periodo 2015 y 2023, utilizando programas como Excel y VOSviewer versión 1.6.19 para el procesamiento de los datos. Los resultados muestran que los años más productivos fueron 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020 y 2023, con cinco publicaciones simultáneas. Los países con mayor producción científica son India y USA. La revista principal para estas investigaciones fue el Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services. Los autores con el mayor número de citas son Anna Mattila, Wan Yang y Cyril Foropon. Las palabras con mayor tendencia incluyen calidad del servicio, satisfacción y experiencia del cliente. En conclusión, se observa un interés significativo en la comunidad científica por desarrollar investigaciones sobre el servicio al cliente y la intención de compra.

Palabras clave: bibliometría, imagen de la marca, marketing, relaciones públicas.

Clasificación JEL: A1, M3, M14

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INTRODUCTION

According to the RAE (2023), customer service refers to the organization and personnel dedicated to protecting the interests or serving the needs of the public or entities, whether public or private. This approach emphasizes the importance of providing care and satisfaction through specific, service-oriented actions. Regarding the definition of “customer,” it is considered any individual who obtains a good or service through a mutually beneficial transaction (Hong & Kim, 2020). These individuals can be of various types, such as distributors, buyers, and end-users. Furthermore, a customer refers to someone who makes purchases or uses services offered by professionals or businesses (Varadarajan, 2020). This term encompasses retail business relationships and interactions with service providers, reflecting the wide range of contexts in which people may seek goods or services (Güntürkün et al., 2020).

Various studies on customer service have been conducted in different contexts to determine its essential components



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and potential areas for strengthening (Sharma & Foropon, 2019). For example, Lee et al. (2021) focused on identifying the crucial elements influencing customer service quality and their impact on purchase intention. Furthermore, García-Salirrosas et al. (2022) noted that the understanding of how to provide exceptional service has been enriched by the diversity of contexts studied, from the retail industry to professional services. This insight is crucial because it points to the importance of at least a multicultural approach, while an intercultural one would contribute to a quality and culturally adjusted experience.

In this sense, researchers have also taken an interest in studying concepts such as service quality. According to Parasuraman et al. (1985), service quality is the degree of satisfaction, fulfillment, or exceeding customer expectations. Expanding on these ideas, Tracogna and Hu (2024) emphasize that customer experience encompasses all interactions throughout the customer journey or consumption process, which involves analyzing each phase from consideration to post-sale. Therefore, it is important to highlight that companies that offer excellent service can improve the customer experience and increase customer satisfaction and purchase intentions (Rodríguez et al., 2020). Additionally, customers who receive high-quality service tend to develop greater loyalty to the company, which translates into repeat purchases and a willingness to recommend the brand to others (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Another significant study was conducted by Chen and Yang (2021), who argued that a positive customer service experience is associated with a higher likelihood of customers having positive purchase intentions. Furthermore, Haque et al. (2019) mention that “purchase intention” is defined as the likelihood that a customer will purchase a product or service. Similarly, Lindh et al. (2020) propose a definition of purchase intention as a customer’s willingness to buy a product at a specific time or circumstance.

In this sense, the objective of this research was to examine the scientific production of customer service in relation to purchase intentions, focusing on the following bibliometric indicators: 1) the amount of scientific research conducted on the topic; 2) the distribution of scientific production related to the topic; and 3) the most prolific authors of research on the topic.

Definitions of customer service

In this sense, Hayati et al. (2020) propose a broad definition of customer service that emphasizes its systemic nature, asserting that any subprocess related to customer service can be assumed as such. From this perspective, the set of subprocesses connected to the service is one of the core elements of a company’s functioning and an essential key to its success or failure.

Everything that connects the company to its customers is customer service, which is essential to a company’s success, as well as its focus and the key to its success or failure. On the other hand, Munyoki (2020) mentions that the system of activities developed at the business level to diagnose, evaluate, and satisfy customer needs can be classified as customer service. From the above, it is possible to identify structural aspects such as direct customer service, problem-solving in the process or product, complaint management, and after-sales follow-up.

With greater emphasis on the interactive process, Iglesias et al. (2020) define customer service as the process of establishing a relationship with the consumer by providing customers with various tools to satisfy people’s needs or requirements regarding a product or service. In this order of ideas, when a business relationship is established, the company must satisfy the customer’s needs because this makes them return to the company more frequently and with the intention of purchasing something (Hayati et al., 2020). In more practical terms, this relationship can be conceived as an act given with the purpose of solving a problem or difficulty for another (Migdadi, 2021; Shokouhyar et al., 2020).

Customer satisfaction as a differentiating element in organizations

Customer service represents one of the most important indicators in customer satisfaction measurement, and it should be at the heart of any commercial interaction and service offered by a company. According to Witell et al. (2020), understanding and meeting customer expectations is becoming a strategic priority, a statement supported by the increasingly competitive and customer-centric global business environment. Customer satisfaction goes beyond a simple transaction; it involves creating meaningful experiences that exceed expectations and generate a lasting emotional connection (Budhaye & Oktavia, 2023). According to the analysis of the sources, customers not only seek efficient service but also empathy, personalized attention, and a perception of value.

Haji et al. (2021) defined customer satisfaction from a dual perspective of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, nuanced

by the comparison of their experience, expectations, and previous similar experiences. An essential element of this definition is that satisfaction is anchored in expectation, a fact that highlights the value of a clear needs assessment, as well as the grading of these needs for their final evaluation (extremely satisfied or dissatisfied, for example).

Regarding the most recent trends, Islam et al. (2021) highlighted that at the business level, there is a tendency toward specialized customer service. According to the authors, satisfaction is a key factor because customers increasingly demand a high degree of fulfillment or even exceed their expectations due to the diversity of options within a given market. Consequently, the customer is the one who regulates the concept of service quality by establishing indicators, standards, and objectives.

Finally, other authors such as Xie and Sun (2021) define customer satisfaction as, in essence, an exercise in judgment, as customers evaluate the service/product based on their previous experiences and the perception of fulfillment after consumption. Therefore, it is agreed that customer satisfaction is considered a continuous and dynamic process that goes beyond an individual transaction and involves interactions over time (Otto et al., 2020).

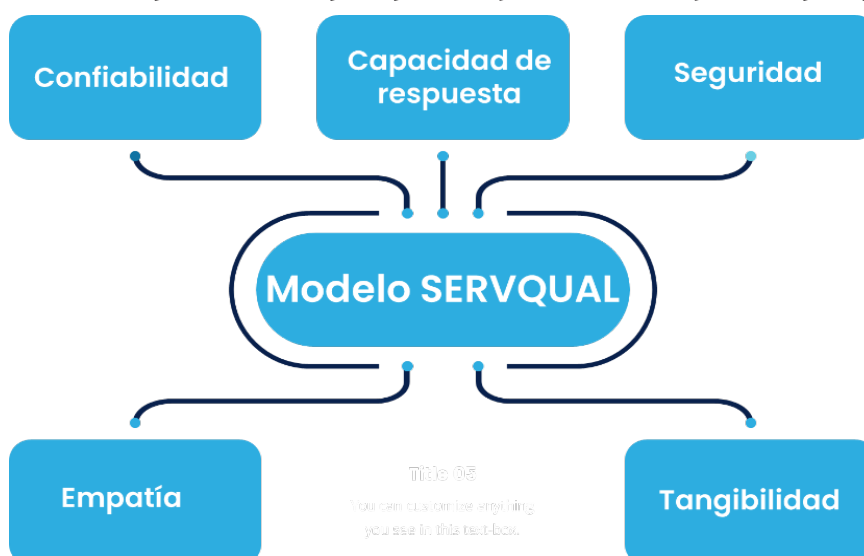
Service Quality from the Gurus' Perspectives

Traditionally, the definition of "quality" has been attributed to a variety of definitions provided by the ideas, experiences, and representations of gurus and specialists in the business field. In that sense, service quality can affect a customer's decision to purchase something in the short and long term. Positive perceptions of service quality not only strengthen the company-customer relationship but also significantly influence customer behavior (Slack et al., 2021). This creates a virtuous cycle where recommendations and loyalty become key indicators of an organization's sustainable success (Frempong et al., 2022).

Methods for measuring the quality of care

When studying the quality of care, one must be aware of the available measurement methods. These approaches facilitate the evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of care, as well as the identification of areas for improvement. For example, Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry created the SERVQUAL conceptual model of service quality in 1985 (Parasuraman et al., 1985). This model focuses on the differences between customer expectations and the quality of service they receive. Through surveys and interviews, this model established reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility as the five dimensions of service quality used in the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Figure 1.
Customer expectations and perceptions in five dimensions of service quality



Source: adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1985)

Note: the figure appears in its original language

How a company addresses and meets its customers' needs becomes a key differentiator in an increasingly competitive world where products and services can be similar (Keiningham et al., 2020). Prompt and friendly

service, effective problem resolution, and empathy for user concerns are examples of customer service quality (Balinado et al., 2021).

Purchase Intention and its theoretical referents

Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that a customer or consumer will purchase products or services within a given timeframe (Müller Pérez et al., 2021). This indicator is essential for companies, as it reveals the public's real interest in their business and allows them to anticipate future purchasing behavior (McClure & Seock, 2020).

In the study by Gelbrich et al. (2023), this intention is conceived as the likelihood that an individual will decide to purchase a specific product or service. Thus, this concept is based on the fact that reasoned action holds that a person's subjective attitudes and norms determine his or her intentions. Thus, the theory of reasoned action (TAR), proposed by Ajzen and taken up in the study by Dobbs et al. (2020), is a theoretical model that addresses the understanding and prediction of human behavior. ANT has proven useful in explaining and predicting various behaviors because it is based on two essential components: attitudes toward the behavior and subjective norms (Lamiño Jaramillo et al., 2023).

Likewise, another theoretical model for describing and predicting purchase intention is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), proposed by Ajzen (1991), based on three main elements: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Furthermore, TPB adds two factors that can affect purchase intention: unplanned influences and attitude toward the brand.

METHODOLOGY

Bibliometric analysis in various areas of knowledge

Bibliometric analysis comprises a set of quantitative methods used to measure and analyze scientific production as well as evaluate research performance (Donthu et al., 2021). This method is based on analyzing bibliographic and citation patterns to obtain an objective view of research activity and its impact (Fraumann & Mutz, 2021). Another relevant aspect is its flexibility since bibliometric analyses have been used in various areas of scientific knowledge. For example, in education (Li & Wong, 2022), innovation (Kumar et al., 2024), economics (Bahoo et al., 2021), health (Jimma, 2023), productivity (Wang et al., 2022), finance (Goodell et al., 2023), sustainable development (Hoyos et al., 2023) and quality (Ormaza Cevallos & Guerrero-Baena, 2021).

Given this background and its proposals, this research employed bibliometric analysis to evaluate the scientific activity and impact related to customer service and purchase intention (Gallardo-Garcia et al., 2023). The fundamental characteristics of these study variables were identified using a descriptive method (Siedlecki, 2020). The information was collected through the Scopus database, which provides abstracts and citations to peer-reviewed literature in various fields of knowledge, making it an invaluable tool for researchers worldwide (Al-Khoury et al., 2022).

To conduct the search, the fields "Article title" and "Search documents" were selected, using the words "intention" AND "buy" AND "service" AND "Customer." Data extraction was conducted on February 19, 2024. The search was limited to the subject areas of business, management, and accounting ("BUSI") and economics, econometrics, and finance ("ECON"), as well as to the document type "articles" in their final phase and to open access journals. Boolean operators were used to improve the precision of the search results, allowing for the combination of variables or the exclusion of two or more terms (Mohamed Shaffril et al., 2021).

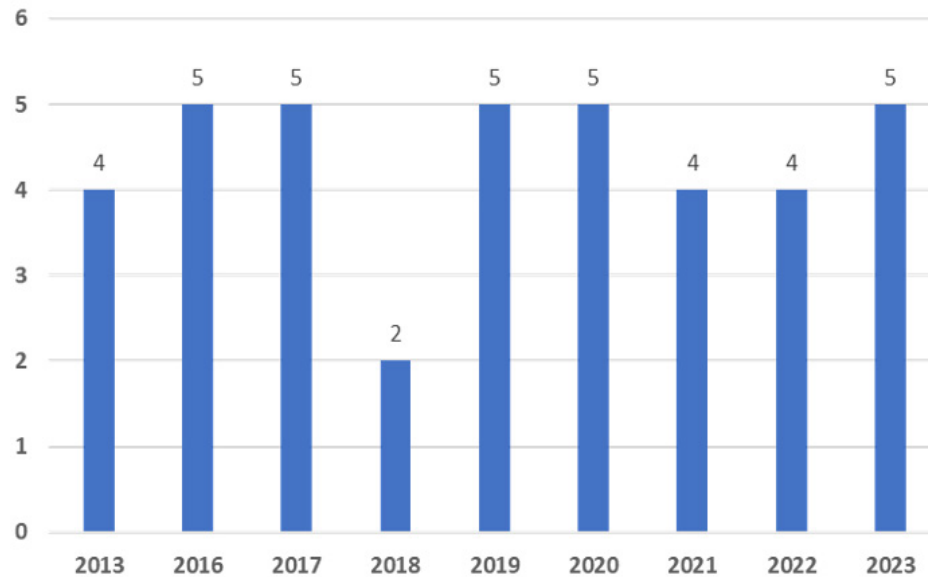
The resulting search equation was: TITLE ("intention" AND "buy" AND " service" AND "Customer ") AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "ECON")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English") OR LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "Spanish")) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA , "all"))

This led to the identification of 121 documents related to the study variables, of which 39 were open-access documents associated with the topic. The data were exported from Scopus in ". CVS" and plain text (". RIS") formats for subsequent processing in Microsoft® Excel® for Microsoft 365 Education and VOSviewer version 1.6.19, a specific tool for the creation and representation of bibliometric networks (Orduña-Malea & Costas, 2021).

The results of this bibliometric analysis were classified according to bibliometric indicators that measure scientific production, the countries with the highest production, the most relevant journals, the most prominent authors on the subject, and the most prominent keywords related to customer service and purchase intention in the last decade. Finally, the most significant results regarding customer service and purchase intention are discussed, and the corresponding conclusions are presented.

RESULTS

Figure 2.
Evolution of scientific production



Source: own elaboration based on data from Scopus (2024)

The graph shows the annual trend in scientific production of articles on customer service and purchase intention from 2013 to 2023. Overall, it is observed that, on average, four articles are produced per year. Five publications are published in 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2023.

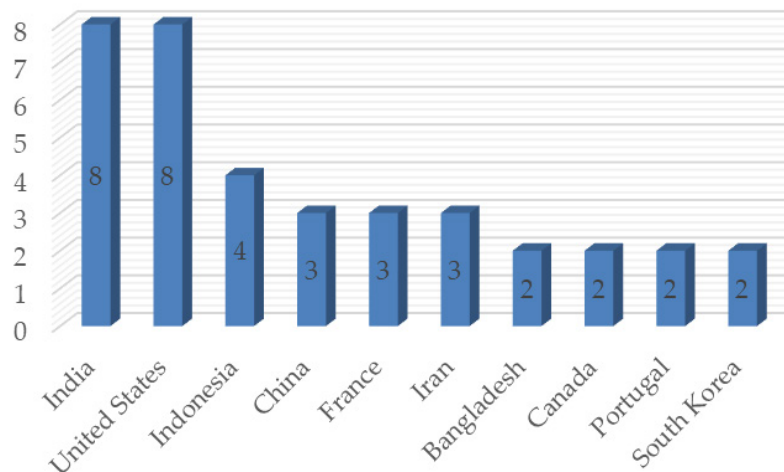
Table 1.
Scientific production per year

Period	Articles	% Scientific production
2013	4	10
2016	5	13
2017	5	13
2018	2	5
2019	5	13
2020	5	13
2021	4	10
2022	4	10
2023	5	13

Source: own elaboration based on data from Scopus (2024)

As shown in the table above, the annual scientific output in a specific field was 39 articles published between 2013 and 2023. Around four articles were published per year on average, with a variability of two to five publications per year. The years with the highest output were 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2020, each with five articles, while 2018 had the lowest output, with only two articles.

Figure 3.
Scientific production by country



Source: own elaboration based on data from WoS (2024)

Table 2.
Scientific production by country

Country	Articles	% Scientific production
India	8	22
United States	8	22
Indonesia	4	11
China	3	8
France	3	8
Iran	3	8
Bangladesh	2	5
Canada	2	5
Portugal	2	5
South Korea	2	5

Source: own elaboration based on VOSviewer

According to table 2, the countries with the highest scientific production in the field of “customer service and purchase intent” are the United States and India, followed by Indonesia. The list of countries with the highest scientific production includes countries from several continents, as well as a wide range of countries conducting research in these fields. However, it is important to keep in mind the limitations of bibliometric analysis and the need for more in-depth studies to obtain a more complete picture of scientific production worldwide.

Journals with scientific production

The Scopus scientific article database includes a wide range of specialized journals in various fields, including management, economics, finance, information management, industrial engineering, and marketing. Notable publications include the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, the International Journal of Business Innovation and Research, and the Corporate Reputation Review. The Journal of Services Marketing and the Asian Academy of Management Journal focus on economics, while the Journal of Internet Commerce focuses on finance. The wide range of topics covered in Scopus, from engineering to tourism, reflects its broad scientific scope.

The most prestigious journals on the list are the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, the International Journal of Hospitality Management, the Journal of Business Research, and the Journal of Marketing, primarily located in the 1st and 2nd quartiles. These publications are recognized for their significant contributions to their fields.

Scientific production by authors

The analysis of the Scopus database on the topics of customer service and purchase intention was carried out with a sample of approximately 86 authors who have contributed at least one literary work in the last 10 years, and those with the highest number of citations are Anna Mattila, Wan Yang, Cyril Foropon, Aasha Sharma, Shimi Naurin Ahmad, and Michel Laroche.

Table 3.
Authors with the highest number of citations

Author	Article Title	Citations	Year
Anna Mattila	Why do we buy luxury experiences?: Measuring value perceptions of luxury hospitality services	140	2016
Wan Yang	Why do we buy luxury experiences?: Measuring value perceptions of luxury hospitality services	140	2016
Cyril Foropon	Green product attributes and green purchase behavior: A theory of planned behavior perspective with implications for circular economy	125	2019
Aasha Sharma	Green product attributes and green purchase behavior: A theory of planned behavior perspective with implications for circular economy	125	2019
Shimi Naurin Ahmad	Analyzing electronic word of mouth: A social commerce construct	107	2017
Michel Laroche	Analyzing electronic word of mouth: A social commerce construct	107	2017

Source: own elaboration based on data from Scopus (2024)

Figure 4.
Authors with the highest number of citations

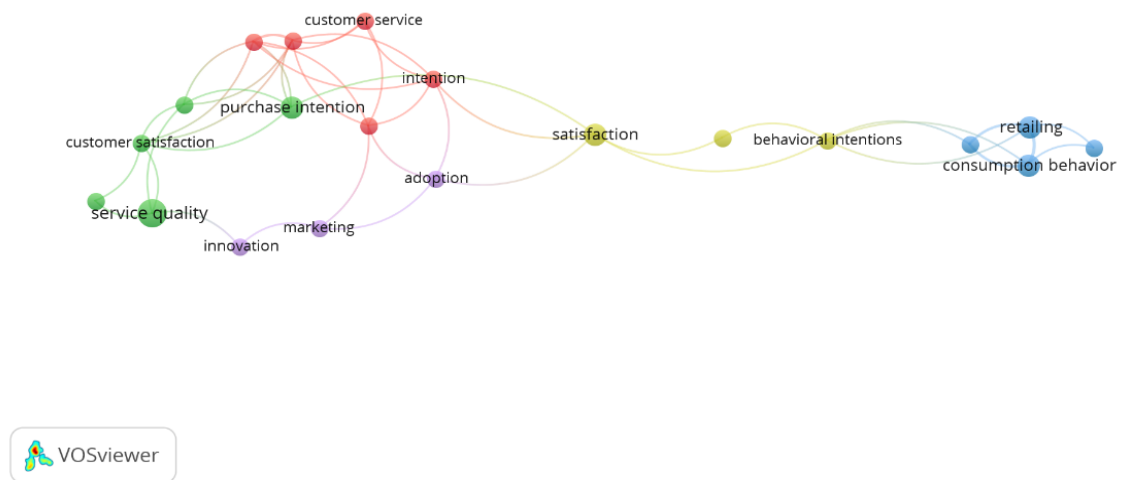


Source: own elaboration based on VOSviewer

It is worth noting that Wan Yang, from the Collins College of Hospitality Management, and Anna S. Mattila, from Pennsylvania State University (United States), are leading experts in marketing and consumer behavior. Wan Yang

specializes in hospitality and tourism management and has conducted relevant research on how social media affects cultural satisfaction and hotel booking decisions (Madera et al., 2023). Mattila is particularly relevant in the field of customer behavior studies, where she has recently delved into areas such as morality (Ye & Mattila, 2025) and self-expression (Rita Gonçalves et al., 2025), both studies to be officially published in 2025.

Figure 5.
Keywords



Source: own elaboration based on VOSviewer

Figure 6.
Word co-occurrence network



Source: own elaboration based on VOSviewer

Michel Laroche, on the other hand, specializes in marketing and consumer behavior and has conducted important studies on the cultural influence on purchase intention and the challenges of marketing in the digital age. The author, with an exceptional h-index of 84, has published exceptional works addressing crucial aspects of customer service and purchase intention (Walsh et al., 2024).

The words with the highest occurrences are: “Service quality” (5), “Consumption behavior” (3), “Purchase intention” (3), “Retailing” (3) and “Satisfaction” (3). In this result, five key concepts can be seen for the study of the influence of customer service on purchase intention. Based on the map and the triangulation with other similar studies, it can be stated that service quality is one of the most analyzed factors for consumer behavior by companies that are trying to improve customer satisfaction and increase sales. So much so that Bhale and Bedi (2024) demonstrated that customer satisfaction is a field of study with multiple disciplines and a geographical presence throughout the globe.

DISCUSSION

Scientific production on customer service and purchase intention has been stable over the past ten years, with peaks in 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2023. Research, published primarily in the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services and the Journal of Business Research, considered high-ranking journals, is led by India and the United States. Both journals listed under the Marketing classification are currently in the first quartile of the prestigious ScimagoJCR, where the Journal of Business Research stands out for its more than twenty consecutive years as a journal.

Regarding the featured authors, Anna Mattila appears among the ten most important authorities in her field according to Google Scholar, with a total of 38,520 and an h-index of 100. Wan Yang, meanwhile, is an emerging and relevant voice who has gained prestige and visibility due to her scientific output since her doctoral thesis, especially since 2019. These authors have significantly contributed to the understanding of service experiences and purchase intention, which are relevant topics in current consumer trends.

The results of this study confirm that customer service is an important factor in purchase intention. Companies that offer excellent customer service can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty; on the other hand, service quality and problem resolution are the dimensions of customer service that companies should focus on to improve purchase intention. Similar bibliometric studies confirm these findings, such as those conducted by Palácios et al. (2021) and Chaudhuri et al. (2023).

The keywords “service quality” and “consumer behavior” show consistent interest and practical relevance. Customer relationship management depends on service quality because it directly affects purchase intention and customer loyalty. Future research should examine these dynamics in emerging cultural and technological contexts to guide organizations toward sustainable success.

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals a constant transformation in scientific production related to customer service and purchase intention between 2013 and 2023. Sustained interest in this area is observed, with peak productivity in certain years, underscoring its relevance in both academic and practical settings. Research comes from various countries, with India and the United States leading the way, highlighting the importance of approaching this topic from multiple cultural and economic perspectives.

Customer satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase intention are closely linked to service quality. Publications in prestigious journals and the most cited authors confirm the importance of this area of study. The emergence of new approaches and methodologies, such as bibliometric analysis, reflects the evolution of the field and its expansion into topics such as the effects of technology, sustainability, and personalization on customer service and purchase intention.

This bibliometric analysis confirms the influence of customer service on purchase intention. Improving service quality and problem resolution can strengthen customer satisfaction, loyalty, and, consequently, their intention to make future purchases. These studies provide companies with valuable information for developing customer service strategies in line with changing consumer expectations. Service quality is seen as a key factor in establishing lasting relationships with customers, which favors increased purchase rates. Continued research in this area is essential to deepen academic knowledge and provide practical guidelines that drive business success in a dynamic environment.

The study faced some limitations, mainly the lack of access to 82 of the 121 scientific articles identified in the Scopus database, as only 39 were openly available. The information contained in these restricted-access articles could have enriched the analysis. It is also important to consider that the study's results may be affected by constant database updates, which could influence the findings depending on the time of the search.

The article also suggests new lines of research on adopting technologies in customer service to boost purchase intent. In practical terms, this study's results can be useful for marketers, market researchers, data analysts, sales managers, and public relations and communications professionals, as they offer insights for improving customer experience and boosting purchase intent.

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AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.

Data Curation: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.

Formal analysis: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.

Research: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.

Methodology: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.

Software: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.

Supervision: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.

Validation: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.

Visualization: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.

Writing - original draft: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.

Writing - proofreading and editing: Alan Enrique Cálix Hernández.