

Illustration and evaluation of international research in the field of customer journey and analysis of research gaps

Elahe Alraji¹ , Shahnaz Nayebzadeh² , Zahra Dashtlaali³ , Seyyed Hassan Hatami Nassab⁴ , Mohammadreza Sharifi-Ghazvini⁵ 

- 1- Ph. D. Student, Department of Business Management, dehaghan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Esfahan, Iran.
- 2- Professor, Department of Business Management, Yazd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Yazd, Iran.
- 3- Department of Management, Dahaghan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Dahaghan, Iran
- 4- Associate Professor, Department of Business Management, Yazd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Yazd, Iran
- 5- Department of Industrial Engineering, Dehaqan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Dehaqan, Iran

Receive:

26 January 2024

Revise:

26 July 2024

Accept:

26 December 2024

Keywords:

Customer Journey,
Touchpoints,
Customer Journey
Map,
Scientometrics,
Graphical Map,
Co-authorship
Network

Abstract

The present study attempts to identify research gaps and new topics by analyzing and visualizing international research conducted on customer journey. This study is a descriptive one conducted using a systematic review method and was examined using a search term defined in the Web of Science database in the title of articles published in the period 1990-2023. After searching, screening, and qualitative evaluation of the studies, a final analysis was conducted on 241 articles and an in-depth analysis of the studies showed that most of the research in the field of customer journey is related to the year 2021. The information required to achieve the research objectives was explored using the software "VOS viewer" version 11.6.1; a software in the field of scientometrics. Maps were drawn and analyzed. The results of the word co-occurrence showed the most frequent words in this field. Also, according to the results of co-authorship, the countries that had the most scientific cooperation were identified. By examining the publication trend of articles, it can be seen that the field of customer journey has been on an upward trend. Also, the map of co-authorship of countries shows the isolated role of Iran among other countries. As a result, paying attention to the most and least active countries, words and researchers through scientometrics can reveal research opportunities and weaknesses in the field of customer journey process and illuminate the horizon of progress of Iranian researchers to shine their research results at the international level.

Please cite this article as (APA): Alraji, E., Nayebzadeh, S., Dashtlaali, Z., Hatami Nassab, S. H. and Sharifi-Ghazvini, M. (2025). Illustration and evaluation of international research in the field of customer journey and analysis of research gaps. *Journal of value creating in Business Management*, 5(2), 165-188.



<https://doi.org/10.22034/jvcbm.2024.437604.1305>



Authors retain the copyright and full publishing rights.

Published by Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business. This article is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Publisher: Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

Corresponding Author: Shahnaz Nayebzadeh

Email: snayebzadeh@iauyazd.ac.ir

Extended Abstract

Introduction

The customer journey is defined as a process that the customer goes through in all stages and the touchpoints that constitute the customer experience; that is, as long as customers invest their resources (such as time, emotions or financial resources) in their brand interactions, their journey with the company will continue (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The customer journey explores the understanding of customers' behavior, emotions, and motivations along the journey (Fallast & Vorbach, 2019). Understanding the distinct stages, customers' encounters with an organization, and the factors that influence them is of considerable importance for any business that aims to increase customer orientation. These encounters are called touchpoints and refer to distinct entities such as places, people, or tools that customers encounter during their journey to purchase a product or service (De Keyser et al, 2020). The present study has dedicated its mission to reviewing published articles in the field of customer journey, which is one of the important and widely used areas of the management discipline, using scientific maps and providing scientometric analyses. A scientific map shows a spatial representation of the relationship between articles, terms, and their findings.

Theoretical Framework

Customer Journey

The customer and his satisfaction are key issues that can lead to the advancement of a group in the current competitive world. In this regard, it is necessary and important to pay attention to what can be effective in increasing customer satisfaction more accurately and completely. Today, the quality of services and products and customer satisfaction during the customer journey have become the most important core of marketing; because they are the prerequisites for customer loyalty and cause repeat purchases. They can attract more customers and, by providing more specific services to users than their other competitors, witness greater loyalty and attract more customers. (Behrozi, 2022). The customer journey is a tool for understanding the behavior and motivation of customers when purchasing, and is also used to analyze customer paths in order to identify problems when providing services. By looking at the role of each customer journey, fundamental insights are gained into how customers use the service offerings, portfolios, programs offered, and touchpoints that exist (Mucz & Gareau-Brennan, 2019).

Research Methodology

The method of conducting the present study is fundamental in terms of orientation, as it seeks to find the intellectual paradigm of international researchers in the field of customer journey. The approach of the present study is inductive, as it goes from part to whole, and its formulation is quantitative. From the perspective of the purpose of the research, the exploratory approach dominates the research, which is carried out in a single cross-sectional manner. Based on this protocol, on 4/10/2023, a systematic study was conducted of all research articles published in the database (Web of Science) regarding the customer journey, which were published between 1900 and 2023, and the data analysis was carried out using the software (VOS viewer). In the Web of Science database, the initial search results included 404 articles, which were screened based on the researchers' scientific judgment in three stages. After screening and final analysis, 241 articles were analyzed.

Research findings

In the present study, according to Table 1, out of all 241 articles published by different authors, according to the Web of Science database report, an H-index of 44 was reported,

which indicates the strength of the scientific credibility of the research conducted in the field of customer journey. Citation or use of scientific materials of an author by another author who has referred to it in his article or book indicates the high credibility of that article. Increasing referencing to a researcher also has a direct relationship with increasing the H-index of that researcher. The citation index in the present study, according to the Web of Science database report, is 5582. Based on the year of publication of the articles, Chart 2 shows that during the years 2011 to 2023, the research trend and growth of scientific production on this subject have been on an upward trend, and the number of articles in this field has grown significantly. In this study, it was found that many researchers are engaged in research on the subject of customer journey. In Table 3, ten authors who have published more research in reputable journals in the field of customer journey are shown. In the present study, the co-authorship network of researchers in the field of customer journey is drawn according to Figure 3. In this regard, for a more detailed understanding, the connections between authors who have scientific collaborations were identified through the Vis Viewer software, which are classified into 4 clusters, and each color in the image represents a cluster. In Figure 5; the network map, each circle represents a keyword analysis unit. The purpose of the present study in drawing this map is to understand the structure of the relationships between concepts related to the customer journey that have been used by the authors in the articles. In this way, by considering the main axis of each of the research conducted on the subject under study, in addition to identifying new concepts, it is possible to discover remote but important terms. The overlap map shows the relationship between terms associated with the research period. Figure 6 depicts the year-by-year trend of research conducted on the customer journey. Based on the navigation bar on the right side of the map, we can say that the yellow color represents new terms and the older terms are blue. In other words, keywords that are dark blue are related to articles published around 2018 and before, and conversely, yellow keywords are related to articles published around 2020. In the vocabulary overlap map, we can see that most of the map area has a green color tending to yellow. This indicates the growth of scientific research on the customer journey.

Conclusion

Statistics and figures show that in the field of customer journey in the business domain, the largest number of articles is about 61%, in the field of management, 50% of the articles are included, and there are articles in other fields as well; but to a lesser extent, which indicates that there is a long way to go for the development of customer journey in the field of health and medicine, which researchers have not yet reached. In the map of co-authorship of countries, 67 countries had published at least 1 article. Based on the results of this map, it was determined that the United States is known as the largest research center with the publication of 55 articles and 4107 connections. As mentioned, Iran does not have a place in this map. This indicates the lack of cooperation of Iran with other countries on the subject under study; of course, this result is not far-fetched considering the theoretical background. It is also ranked second by a small margin from the United Kingdom with the publication of 49 articles and 1295 connections. The trend of studies in this field showed that although the amount of research has increased continuously in the period under review, scientific production has increased significantly from 2011 to 2023; and in the year ending in 2021, the number of articles published has reached its maximum, and out of the 241 articles reviewed, 53 articles have been published, which indicates the research interests of scientists in this topic. The co-authorship network drawn from authors in the field of customer journey studies showed that the active and top authors in this field are Jaakkola, Elina\ Rauschnabel, Philipp A.\ Lemon, Katherine N\ Bonfanti, Angelo\ Verhoef, Peter C. In the network map, each circle represents a

unit of keyword analysis, and by examining the aforementioned map, it can be seen that the words customer journey and customer experience are among the most frequently used words with 25 and 17 repetitions, respectively. In the word overlap map, the co-occurrence of words shows the relationship between terms associated with the research area. In recent years, concepts such as “consumers”, “identity”, “technology”, “strategy” and “augmented reality” have been in focus, while more recent concepts such as “customer journey”, “customer experience”, “satisfaction” and “impact” have become widespread (trending). In the maps of co-authorship network and co-authorship density of countries, it examines the countries active in the field of research on the subject of customer journey. According to the aforementioned map, it can be found that the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, Norway, Finland and Sweden can be considered pioneers and founders in the field of scientific production. If researchers are willing to conduct research in this field, the least used keywords are an opportunity to do something new, and if they are willing to improve the citation index of their articles, choosing the most used keywords can provide them with this opportunity. Thus, this study has played a significant role in promoting knowledge in this field by introducing the emerging trend of scientific research in the field of customer journey. According to the findings of the research on international research and co-authorship maps of countries on the subject of customer journey, it is suggested that Iranian authors have scientific cooperation with other foreign countries, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, in order to improve both the position of authors among international authors and the position of Iran in the co-authorship map of foreign countries. Also, considering the results of the co-occurrence of words, it is suggested that researchers take advantage of emerging words in this field such as "customer journey", "customer experience", "satisfaction", and "consumption rate"; and thereby fill the existing research gaps. The most recent and emerging themes identified in the word co-occurrence maps should be tested through quantitative methods. The customer journey path should be analyzed in other reputable scholarly databases such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Scopus using other bibliometric and scientometric techniques.