

A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER PARTICIPATION (1970-2023)

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Abstract

In this study, all published research on the subject of consumer participation, available in the Web of Science academic database between 1970 and 2023, was examined with bibliometric analysis. The purpose of this study is to analyse the existing literature on consumer engagement to examine its evolution by using bibliometric analyse. It has been concluded that the increase observed in the number of publications, especially in 2021 and 2022, is related to the increase in consumers' digital usage. Brand collaborations, in which consumers now take a greater role, have also played a role in the increase in studies on this subject. In the study, the most frequently used keywords were determined along with consumer participation. When the keywords frequently used in consumer participation studies are examined, terms such as "social media", "Facebook", "online brand communities" and "brand loyalty" stand out, and this has been revealed as one of the most important indicators of the increase in consumer participation with digitalization. In this study, which aims to contribute to the field of marketing, a comprehensive bibliometric analysis on consumer participation was conducted and the results were shared to contribute to future studies.

Key Words: Marketing, Consumer participation, Bibliometric Analysis

Jel Codes: M30, M31, M39

TÜKETİCİ KATILIMININ BİBLİYOMETRİK ANALİZİ (1970-2023)

Öz

Bu çalışmada Web of Science akademik veri tabanında 1970-2023 yılları arasında yer alan tüketici katılımı konusuna ilişkin yayınlanmış tüm araştırmalar bibliyometrik analizle incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bibliyometrik analiz yöntemini kullanarak tüketici bağlılığının gelişimini incelemek için mevcut literatürü analiz etmektir. Özellikle 2021 ve 2022 yıllarında yayın sayısında gözlenen artışın tüketicilerin dijital kullanımındaki artışla ilişkili olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Tüketicilerin artık daha fazla rol üstlendiği marka iş birlikleri de bu konudaki çalışmaların artmasında rol oynamaktadır. Çalışmada tüketici katılımıyla birlikte en sık kullanılan anahtar kelimeler de belirlenmiştir. Tüketici katılımı çalışmalarında sıklıkla kullanılan anahtar kelimeler incelendiğinde "sosyal medya", "Facebook", "çevrimiçi marka toplulukları" ve "marka bağlılığı" gibi terimler öne çıkmaktadır ve bu da tüketicilerin katılım sağlamasındaki en önemli göstergelerinden birinin dijitalleşmeyle birlikte artması olarak görülmektedir. Pazarlama alanına katkı sağlamayı amaçlayan bu çalışmada tüketici katılımına ilişkin kapsamlı bir bibliyometrik analiz yapılmış ve gelecek çalışmalara katkı sağlamak amacıyla sonuçlar paylaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pazarlama, Tüketici katılımı, Bibliyometrik Analiz

Jel Kodları: M30, M31, M39

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1. Introduction

The concept of consumer participation, which initially emerged only in the field of services (Bowen, 1990), began to take place in the field of application over time. The concept of consumer participation, which only includes the service sector, has gradually become related to the marketing of goods.

In their studies on consumer profiles in the last 20 years, Cova and Dali (2009) first described individual consumers in the 1990s. Then, the concept of hedonistic consumer emerged at the beginning of the millennium, and finally, the concept of participatory consumer emerged in the second half of the 2000s (Chaney, 2012). Consumers have become increasingly active, rather than traditionally playing the role of passive consumers, where only goods or services are marketed and consumers simply purchase and use those goods and services. Therefore, it has become very important for consumers to take part and participate in the market (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000). At the same time, the market, where only sellers took an active role in the past, has now entered an interactive process with the inclusion of consumers (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Wulf et al. (2003) stated that brands want customers to participate in the practices they implement to measure customer loyalty, but customers do not want to pay any fee in return.

Woisetschläger et al. (2008) concluded in their research on virtual brand communities that consumer participation has a positive effect on brand image and brand loyalty.

Many companies now try to structure their campaigns in a way that requires the active participation of consumers. For example, Nature Valley launched the “Protect the Parks” campaign in 2010 to benefit the National Parks Conservation Association. During the campaign, they asked consumers to log in to the company's website and make a \$1 donation and enter the product codes on their packages in return. By allowing its customers to participate on their existing websites, Nature Valley also offers options such as volunteering, personal donations or sharing the information on the site on social media channels. As a result, Nature Valley's social media engagement increased by 33% y and sales volumes increased by 7% compared to the previous year. In addition, over 800,000 dollars were made possible for the association (Howie et al., 2018).

Consumer participation also increases social promotions in online communities. For this reason, companies need to strategically use their usernames on social media by increasing their social network size, because the followers of these companies play a huge role in spreading company-related information among other users (Dwivedi et al., 2020). Besides Google Analytics, Ritz et al. (2019) stated that small business owners or managers can measure their

effectiveness in digital marketing by using metrics such as the ratio and the quality of positive online customer recommendations and reviews to negative ones.

Brodie et al. (2013) stated that consumer participation is an important concept especially for online brand communities and stated that consumer participation has cognitive, behavioral and emotional dimensions. They also concluded that consumers can develop loyalty and commitment as a result of sharing, learning together and socializing. Barger et al., (2016) stated that there are a number of factors that cause and affect consumer participation and examined them in 5 categories. They categorized the factors as brand, content, social media, product and other consumer participation. Tafesse (2016) examined 85 Facebook brand pages and conducted a systematic content analysis. As a result of the analysis, it was stated that brands that offer experiential opportunities provide higher consumer participation. Tarute et al. (2017) searched for the effect of mobile applications on consumer participation. They mentioned about the importance and positive impact of application designs and the quality of the information provided for consumer participation.

Dessart & Pitardi (2019) states that brands can influence consumers by cognitive, behavioral and emotional dimensions through storytelling and ensure consumer participation. In addition, they create a framework for the design of story content. Bilro & Loureiro (2020) conduct a literature review on consumer participation and put forward research questions to be studied empirically in the future. In their theoretical study Morgan et al. (2020) state that consumer participation has now developed socio-technically on digital platforms and consumer participation should progress in the digital ecosystem because of mutual interaction and quick change in this direction.

The purpose of this study is to present a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of studies on consumer participation published in the field of marketing. In line with the purpose of this research, the objectives of the study are listed as follows: (1) "Examination of Consumer Engagement," (2) "Examination of Categories of Consumer Engagement," (3) "Examination of Digital Platforms and Consumer Engagement," (4) "Examination of Evaluation and Metrics," (5) "Examination of Prospects and Emerging Paradigms," (6) To analyze research gaps and limitations in the current literature and provide suggestions for future research directions.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, consumer participation was analyzed within the scope of marketing by bibliometric technique. According to the results of the analysis, the gaps in the studies on consumer participation to date have been identified and it is predicted that it will be useful for future studies on this subject.

2. Methodology

The purpose of this research is to conduct a bibliometric analysis of studies on "consumer participation" in the field of marketing with pre-existing data. Methodologically, bibliometric analysis is related to the evaluation of previously conducted studies (Van Eck and Waltman, 2010). Bibliometric analysis is performed to examine the qualities of scientific articles in all fields of science. It is a quantitative research methodology and measurement is made entirely with previously prepared written documents (Mandal and Joshi, 2017).

This study and co-citation analysis center their focus on uncovering emerging themes in specific research domains and gauging the influence of different journals and schools of thought (Nyagadza, 2020). Bibliometric analysis necessitates an objective and measurable evaluation of bibliographic materials and serves as an effective tool for structuring knowledge within a specific academic domain (Moral-Muñoz, Herrera-Viedma, Santisteban-Espejo, & Cobo, 2020). Consequently, the integration of bibliometric analysis with keyword discovery facilitates the examination of nuanced aspects within the primary research themes of a particular field and enables the exploration of micro-level relationships (Chen & Xiao, 2016).

The VOS method has been adopted to illustrate the development of research themes and visualize similarities in this study (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). The VOSviewer software has been utilized to create bibliometric network maps. VOSviewer software has been designed with extensive functionalities, including citation analysis, co-citation analysis, keyword co-occurrence analysis, co-authorship analysis, and bibliographic linking (Verma & Gustafsson, 2020). In this study, keyword co-occurrence analysis has been employed. Keyword co-occurrence measures the presence of keywords appearing together in the same publications. Co-citation, on the other hand, emerges when two publications are jointly cited in a third article.

2.1. Data Collection

2.1.1 Database Selection

This bibliometric analysis is built upon an extensive collection of academic articles and publications in the field of marketing. To ensure a meticulous review of the literature, the Web of Science database, encompassing journals, conference papers, and scholarly sources, was chosen.

2.1.2 Search Strategy

A systematic search strategy was preferred to identify relevant articles. In the search query, a combination of keywords and controlled vocabulary terms such as “Consumer Participation,” “Consumer Engagement” and “Marketing” was employed. Panel discussion is used to decide the key words for the first search. A group is organized to determine the topic search as $TS = [(\text{“Consumer Participation” OR “Consumer Engagement”}) \text{ AND } (\text{“Marketing”})]$. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to enhance search results, and the search was focused on studies published between the years 1970 and 2023, as specified.

2.2. Data Extraction

2.2.1 Inclusion Criteria

Prior to analysis, stringent inclusion criteria were applied to ascertain the suitability and quality of the collected literature. The following conditions were used for the inclusion of studies:

- If they were published within the defined time frame.
- If they were written in English.
- If they were centered on the topic of consumer participation and consumer engagement within the marketing domain.
- If they had undergone peer review.

After cleaning according to these criteria, a total of 2841 studies were analysed.

2.2.2 Data Fields

For each selected article, the following data fields were extracted: Title of the article, Author(s), Publication year, Journal/conference name, Abstract, Keywords, Citation count, and Affiliations of authors.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis and visualization were conducted using the VOSviewer software. This software facilitates the examination of bibliometric indicators, including citation counts, co-citation networks, keyword co-occurrence, author collaborations, and journal impact factors. The bibliometric indicators used in this analysis included: Citation counts to identify highly influential articles and authors, co-citation analysis to map the intellectual structure of the field, and keyword trend analysis to identify emerging research themes and trends.

2.4. Data Interpretation

2.4.1 Thematic Analysis

The acquired data underwent thematic analysis to discern primary research themes and trends within the realm of consumer participation in marketing. This process involved categorizing articles based on their primary focal points and scrutinizing patterns within the data.

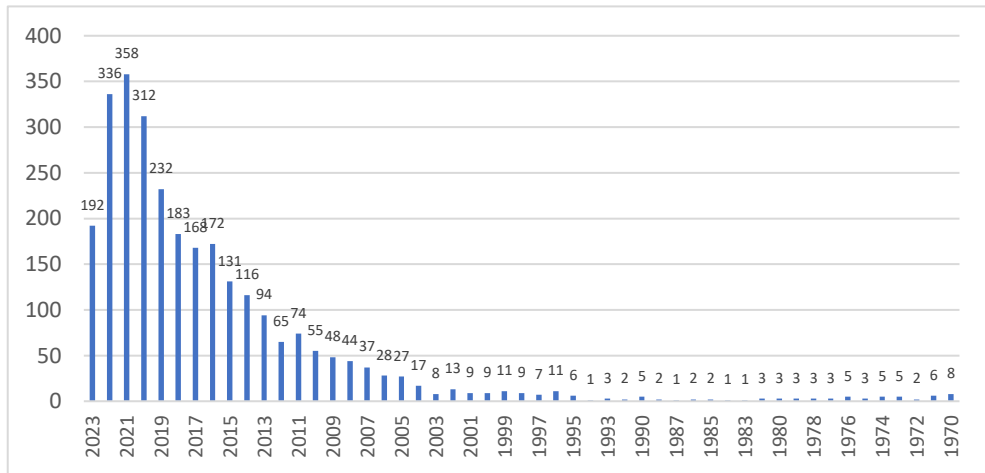
2.4.2 Visualization

Visual representations such as co-citation maps and keyword networks were generated to aid in data interpretation. These visual presentations assist in determining pertinent research clusters and identifying central articles and authors within the field.

3. Findings

The following table presents the distribution of publication years for studies on consumer participation. This distribution allows us to investigate the temporal trends and patterns in research activity within this domain, particularly revealing periods of heightened interest or changes in research focus.

Graph-X. Publication Years for Studies on Consumer Participation



The graph above shows the distribution of studies on "consumer participation" and "consumer engagement" by year. Several noteworthy observations can be made from the data.

In recent years, there has been a significant surge in publications related to consumer participation. Notably, in 2021 and 2022, there was a substantial increase in the number of

publications, with 358 and 336 records, respectively. This suggests a growing interest in this area and possibly reflects the impact of digital technologies on consumer engagement.

The table reveals those studies on consumer participation date back several decades, with publications as early as the 1970s. This historical context highlights the enduring interest in understanding how consumers engage with brands and products, even before the digital era.

Certain years, such as 2011 and 2014, stand out with higher-than-average publication counts. This could indicate specific periods of intense research activity or shifts in research priorities.

In Table-X, we present an overview of the prevailing trajectories observed in scholarly investigations, elucidating the evolution of research paradigms within the subject matter under scrutiny.

Table-X: Trends of the Studies on Consumer Participation

Cluster Name	Cluster Description	Topics Included
Consumer-Generated Content (CGC)	The investigation of how individuals engage in the generation, dissemination, and utilization of content pertaining to goods and corporate entities.	Social media, user-generated content, word-of-mouth marketing, crowdsourcing, co-creation
Consumer Co-creation	The examination of how individuals cooperate with enterprises in order to generate fresh commodities, amenities, or encounters.	Crowdsourcing, co-design, co-marketing, co-branding
Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) Interaction	The exploration of how individuals engage in mutual interactions, facilitating the transmission of data, viewpoints, and endorsements regarding commodities and corporate entities.	Online communities, social media, word-of-mouth marketing
Consumer Participation in Marketing Channels	The scrutiny of how individuals partake in the marketing progression, including activities such as furnishing feedback, disseminating evaluations, or formulating procurement determinations.	Online reviews, social media marketing, customer relationship management
Consumer Participation in the Value Creation Process	The analysis of how individuals contribute to the establishment of value for enterprises, whether by proffering insights, feedback, or aiding in problem resolution.	Crowdsourcing, co-creation, open innovation

When analysed in Table-X, it is seen that current research trends on consumer engagement can be combined in a total of 5 clusters. The details of these clusters can be expressed as follows.

a. Consumer-Generated Content (CGC)

This cluster focuses on studies related to content and information generated by consumers themselves. It encompasses research on consumer activities such as sharing content on social media platforms, creating user-generated content (like reviews or blogs), the impact of word-of-mouth marketing, collaborative efforts through crowdsourcing, and co-creation activities between consumers and businesses.

b. Consumer Co-creation

This cluster highlights research that revolves around the collaborative efforts of consumers in various aspects of product and brand development. It encompasses studies on crowdsourcing ideas or designs, co-designing products or services with consumers, co-marketing strategies, and co-branding initiatives where consumers play a role in shaping brand identities.

c. Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) Interaction

This cluster concentrates on interactions between consumers themselves. It includes research on how consumers engage in online communities, communicate via social media platforms, and participate in word-of-mouth marketing by sharing opinions and recommendations about products and brands with other consumers.

d. Consumer Participation in Marketing Channels

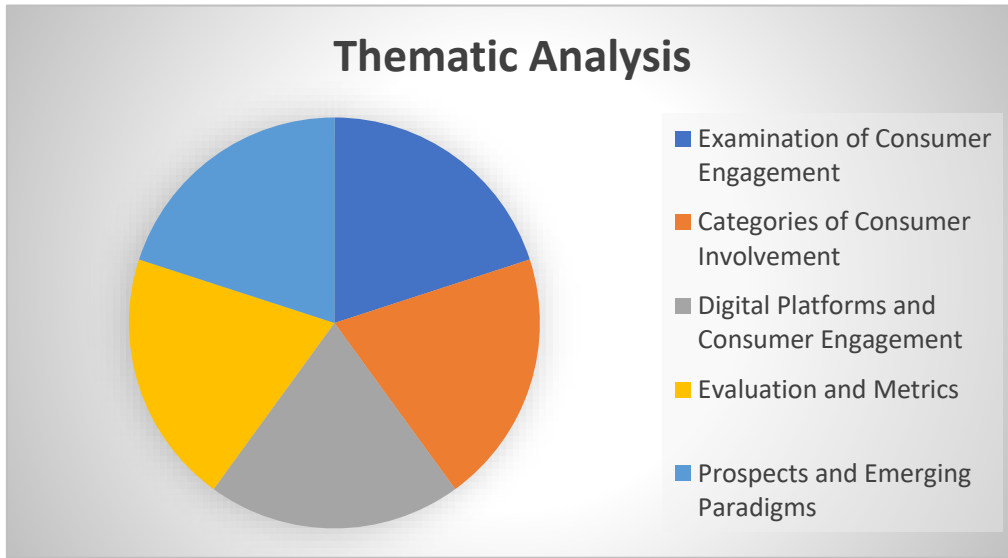
This cluster delves into how consumers actively engage with marketing channels and strategies. It covers research on consumers providing online reviews and ratings, their participation in social media marketing campaigns, and their interactions with customer relationship management efforts undertaken by businesses.

e. Consumer Participation in the Value Creation Process

This cluster is centered around consumers' contributions to the overall value creation process for businesses. It encompasses research on how consumers participate in crowdsourcing initiatives, co-create products or services with businesses, and engage in open innovation processes by sharing ideas and feedback.

In Figure-1, present the outcomes of thematic analysis, providing a graphical depiction of the principal thematic classifications derived from the comprehensive literature examination concerning “Consumer Participation” and “Consumer Engagement” within the domain of marketing.

Figure-1: Thematic Analysis results



In the scholarly exploration of consumer participation within the domain of marketing, a comprehensive thematic analysis reveals five distinct themes that encapsulate the multifaceted dimensions of this subject. This introductory narrative provides an overview of these themes and highlights their key findings, shedding light on the intricate tapestry of research in this field.

Theme 1, "Examination of Consumer Engagement," delves into the dynamic realm of consumer engagement, emphasizing its pivotal role in contemporary marketing strategies. This theme underscores a substantial body of literature, emphasizing the significance of consumer engagement within the marketing landscape. Studies within this thematic domain often scrutinize consumer engagement across digital platforms, such as social media and online communities, unraveling its impact on various facets, including brand allegiance, viral marketing, and customer relationships.

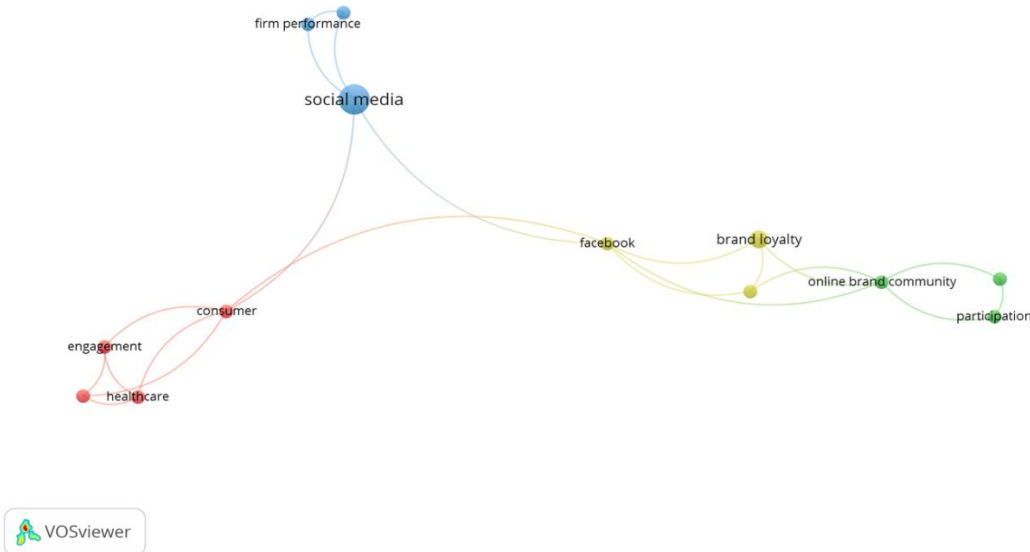
Theme 2, "Categories of Consumer Involvement," the focus shifts to the myriad manifestations of consumer participation in marketing endeavors. This theme categorizes inquiries based on the specific modes through which consumers actively participate. Noteworthy findings encompass diverse forms of consumer involvement, including collaborative creation, co-design, and participatory marketing. Researchers delve into the underlying motivations propelling consumer participation, while also investigating its influence on product innovation and development.

Theme 3, "Digital Platforms and Consumer Engagement," spotlights the transformative influence of digital platforms on consumer participation and engagement. This theme accentuates the central role played by digital platforms in facilitating interactions between consumers and brands. Researchers analyze how social media platforms empower consumers to engage with brands and express their viewpoints. Additionally, investigations within this theme explore the impact of online communities and forums on consumer engagement dynamics. Furthermore, this thematic strand underscores the growing significance of influencer marketing to amplify consumer participation.

Theme 4, "Evaluation and Metrics," addresses the intricacies of quantifying and measuring consumer participation and engagement. Researchers within this theme grapple with the challenges associated with effectively measuring these constructs. They propose diverse metrics and frameworks for evaluating consumer engagement, encompassing approaches such as sentiment analysis and engagement indices. The theme highlights the necessity of standardized measurement protocols in advancing the field.

Finally, Theme 5, "Prospects and Emerging Paradigms," embarks on a forward-looking journey, contemplating the future trajectories and nascent trends in the realm of consumer participation and engagement. Scholars envision the sustained evolution of consumer participation, driven by technological advancements. Explorations within this thematic domain deliberate on the potential impact of emerging technologies like virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and immersive experiences on consumer engagement dynamics. Additionally, this theme encourages further exploration into the ethical considerations surrounding consumer participation in the digital milieu.

In Figure-X, we present a thorough examination of the commonly utilized terms within research on Consumer Participation, accompanied by their patterns of co-occurrence. This analysis elucidates the prevailing subjects and interconnections within the scholarly dialogue.

Figure 2. Frequently Used Keywords and Co-Occurrence Patterns in Consumer Participation Studies

When examining the most frequently used keywords in Consumer Participation studies depicted in Figure 2, it is observed that the term "social media" ranks first. Following the keyword "social media," we find the expressions "consumer," "Facebook," and "brand loyalty." Notably, among the most commonly used keywords, the term "online brand community" occupies the fifth position.

Furthermore, Figure 2 provides an examination of the co-occurrence of keywords. Accordingly, it is evident that the terms "consumer," "engagement," "research," and "healthcare" are grouped in the first category, "social media," "firm performance," and "personnel engagement" in the second category, "Facebook," "social networking sites," and "brand loyalty" in the third category, and finally, "online brand community," "psychological empowerment," and "participation" in the fourth category.

4. Conclusion & Discussion

The bibliometric analysis of studies conducted in journals indexed in the Web of Science database, focusing on consumer engagement and consumer participation in the field of marketing, provides valuable insights into the evolution of research in this area. The temporal distribution of publications, as evidenced by a significant increase in publications in 2021 and 2022, indicates a noteworthy surge in interest in consumer participation, particularly in

recent years. This upsurge can likely be attributed to the widespread impact of digital technologies on consumer engagement, signifying a growing interest in this domain.

Remarkably, the historical context revealed by the data underscores the continuity of research into how consumers interact with brands and products dating back to the 1970s, well before the digital age. Specific years, such as 2011 and 2014, stand out with publication counts exceeding the average, indicating periods of intensified research activity or shifts in research priorities. Examining publication counts by year, the substantial increase observed in 2021 and 2022 potentially signifies heightened interest in consumer participation catalyzed by the expanding influence of digital technologies on consumer behaviors. The historical perspective is equally compelling, as research extending back to the 1970s emphasizes the enduring interest in consumer-brand interactions. The notable increase in publications coincides with the era of marketing's digital transformation, revealing that digital technologies not only shape consumer behaviors but also set the research agenda. Consequently, adapting to these technological changes is crucial for businesses to gain a competitive advantage and ensure firm sustainability.

The clustering analysis of current research trends in consumer engagement provides insight into the multifaceted nature of this field, revealing five distinct clusters. These clusters, demonstrating the trends, can be categorized as follows: the cluster of consumer-generated content, the cluster of consumer co-creation, the cluster of consumer-to-consumer interactions, the cluster of consumer participation in marketing channels, and finally, the cluster of consumer involvement in value creation processes. Considering these findings, it is evident that consumer engagement and consumer participation remain dynamic and evolving research areas within marketing. Digital platforms and collaborative interactions play significant roles in shaping current research priorities. The segmentation of current research trends into five distinct clusters offers a comprehensive perspective on the multifaceted nature of consumer engagement and consumer participation. These clusters provide a structured framework for researchers and practitioners to explore various dimensions of these topics. Clustering analysis also highlights potential research gaps and areas requiring further exploration. In future studies, delving deeper into specific clusters can contribute to enriching the literature by uncovering unexplored dimensions or testing emerging theories and concepts. Given the interdisciplinary nature of these clusters, collaborative efforts across various academic disciplines can further enhance contributions to the field.

This comprehensive bibliometric analysis of consumer engagement and consumer participation in the field of marketing has unveiled a versatile research landscape. Thematic analysis has revealed five distinct themes, each shedding light on a unique aspect of this complex

subject. The identified themes are as follows: "Exploring Consumer Engagement," "Categories of Consumer Engagement," "Digital Platforms and Consumer Engagement," "Assessment and Criteria," and finally, "Expectations and Evolving Paradigms."

Examining the frequently used keywords in consumer engagement and consumer participation studies, the dominance of the keyword "social media" stands out, reflecting its central role in contemporary research. Additionally, terms such as "consumer," "Facebook," and "brand loyalty" indicate the interconnectedness of these concepts. Particularly, "online brand communities" prominently features among the commonly used keywords, underscoring the significance of online communities in the context of consumer participation.

Furthermore, the co-occurrence of keywords shown in Figure 2 reveals the diverse associations within the research interests. The first category encompasses keywords such as "consumer," "participation," "research," and "health services," indicating a collective focus on understanding consumer participation. In the second category, keywords like "social media," "firm performance," and "employee participation" align with research investigating the impact of digital platforms on corporate dynamics. The third category, with keywords "Facebook," "social networking sites," and "brand loyalty," highlights the interaction between social media and consumer loyalty. Finally, the fourth category, featuring keywords "online brand communities," "psychological empowerment," and "participation," emphasizes the synergy between online communities, psychological aspects, and consumer participation.

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