

The dynamics of research in customer retention: A bibliometric analysis



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Abstract Customer retention is crucial for businesses because it ensures the ongoing operation of a company's activities. Hence, companies must adopt suitable and inventive tactics to maintain customer retention. This study employed bibliometric analysis spanning the past decade to identify factors associated with customer retention that can be observed through data visualization networks, overlays, and density maps. The study involved analyzing a compilation of pertinent journals and scientific publications using the software tools Publish or Perish and VOSviewer. A total of 200 research articles were acquired from Google Scholar and subjected to analysis using the Publish or Perish tool. During the period from 2013 to 2023, there was a variable pattern observed in CR, as evidenced by fluctuations in both the quantity of research articles published and the number of citations received. The network visualization results indicate a strong correlation between customer retention and factors such as customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and customer relationships. The overlays' results for price, product, and cost exhibit the darkest colors, specifically purple. Conversely, keywords such as strategy, experience, and corporate image are represented by lighter colors, notably yellow. At that time, the colors that stood out the most were associated with density analysis, such as customer retention and customer satisfaction. In contrast, keywords such as competition, effort, price, challenge, success, and brand appeared less prominent.

Keywords: bibliometric analysis, customer retention, publish or perish, VosViewer

1. Introduction

Amidst a rapidly changing and fiercely competitive business landscape, numerous companies across different industries are placing growing importance on the retention of their current customers (Han & Hyun, 2015). This is deemed significant because the retention of current customers is vital for the uninterrupted operation of a business. Hence, companies must prioritize not only the acquisition of new customers but also the retention of existing customers. The implementation of CR strategies not only aims to retain current customers but also strives to cultivate a favorable customer experience, fostering customer loyalty. Regarding customer retention, customers serve not only as end users of a product but also as active contributors to product development. Customer engagement in the product development and design process, by offering suggestions, input, and feedback, enhances the level of interaction and interest between the company and its customers. This can also enhance the likelihood of customer retention, as customers perceive a sense of engagement.

To thrive in a competitive industry, companies must possess the ability to endure, and one effective approach to achieve this is by implementing customer retention strategies. The significance of customer retention has increased due to its ability to generate greater profitability than acquiring new customers. According to Han and Hyun (2015), the company stands to gain approximately 5% more profit by retaining its existing customers compared to acquiring new ones. Companies often prioritize retaining existing customers due to the typically higher costs associated with acquiring new customers. This phenomenon arises due to the necessity of undertaking extensive and rigorous marketing endeavors to attract new customers, resulting in greater expenses for acquiring new clientele than for maintaining the loyalty of already contented existing customers.

Customer retention is a crucial factor for the long-term viability of diverse industries worldwide, particularly in 2023. According to the data provided by Customer Gauge in their B2B NPS & CX Benchmarks Report (see Table 1), certain industrial sectors demonstrate commendable customer retention rates, while others encounter difficulties in retaining their customers. The energy and utilities industry has the highest customer retention rate, at 89%. The energy and utilities sector excels in customer retention due to its inherent ability to promptly adapt and innovate in response to customer demands. In the IT services industry, there is a strong inclination toward adaptability and the adoption of technological innovations, resulting in high customer satisfaction. Wholesalers in the industry exhibit the lowest rates of customer retention, specifically at a mere 44%. The primary obstacle encountered by the wholesale industry lies in fierce competition and ever-changing customer



preferences, which are influenced by a wide array of alternative options. Consequently, companies operating in the wholesale sector must employ innovative strategies to increase their CRRs.

Table 1 Levels of Customer Retention by Industry in 2023.

Industry Type	Customer Retention Level
Energy & Utilities	89%
IT Services	88%
Computer Software	86%
Service Industry	83%
Financial Services	81%
Professional Services	73%
Telecommunication industry	69%
Manufacture	65%
Logistics	60%
Packaged Goods	60%
Wholesaler	44%

Source: Customer Gauge (2023).

Customer retention is intricately linked to customer satisfaction. Customers who experience satisfaction with a product are more inclined to persist in using that product rather than seeking out or utilizing alternative products. Ritonga and Digdowniseiso (2023) assert that consumer satisfaction with a product significantly impacts their decision to repurchase it. Hardjanti and Amalia (2014) determined that customer satisfaction strongly affects customer retention in a positive manner. The results of hypothesis testing indicate a significant and positive correlation between customer satisfaction and customer retention. Hence, customer satisfaction with a company's offerings directly impacts customer retention. This finding aligns with the findings of previous research conducted by Widayatna and Astutik (2022), which indicated a strong and statistically significant correlation between customer satisfaction and customer retention. Put simply, a higher level of customer satisfaction increases the likelihood of customer loyalty toward the company. Hence, it can be inferred that delivering excellent service, addressing customer grievances, and meeting customer demands can generate customer satisfaction, leading to a favorable effect on customer loyalty. This underscores the significance of companies prioritizing their endeavors to enhance customer satisfaction as a means to fortify enduring relationships with customers.

Sasongko (2021) defines loyalty as a strong and unwavering dedication to repurchasing or endorsing a favored product or service in the future, despite the possibility of situational factors and marketing strategies influencing customers to switch. Customer loyalty is demonstrated by a customer's steadfast dedication to consistently buying or endorsing a preferred product or service in the future, even in the face of external factors or marketing strategies that may tempt them to switch to rival brands. The significance of the loyalty concept is demonstrated by the findings of a study conducted by Wahyuni et al. (2022), which indicate that customer retention has a favorable and substantial impact on customer loyalty. Put simply, the more effective the endeavors to retain customers (retention), the greater the degree of loyalty that can be fostered. This signifies that recognizing the significance of establishing robust connections with customers, generating favorable encounters, and guaranteeing customer contentment is imperative. Emphasizing business strategies that aim to maintain customers can be crucial in attaining significant levels of loyalty, ultimately playing a pivotal role in a company's enduring prosperity.

2. Research Methodology

This study employs bibliometric analysis, utilizing a dataset sourced from a compilation of journals or scientific publications pertaining to customer retention. Budianto and Dewi (2023) define bibliometrics as an analytical approach employed to quantitatively assess the performance of scientific publications and examine patterns and trends in scientific literature. This study employs bibliographic data, including publication count, citation count, and relative success index, to identify and analyze publication and citation patterns within a specific research field or scientific discipline. Heersmink et al. (2011) consider bibliometrics to be a scientific discipline that focuses on the quantitative analysis of books, articles, and other forms of written material within the field of science. Bibliometrics places significant emphasis on the practice of bibliometric mapping. This approach seeks to generate a graphical depiction of the connections between particular units of interest. Examples of units of interest include documents, authors, or keywords. Relationships between units can be established through methods such as quotations, cocitations, coauthorships, or co-occurrences of keywords.

According to the definitions provided, bibliometrics is a quantitative approach used to assess the performance of scientific publications, detect patterns and trends in scientific literature, and analyze connections between entities of interest, such as documents, authors, or keywords.

Using the Publish or Perish software, a set of 200 scientific journals or publications was acquired from Google Scholar. Researchers typically rely on journals or scientific publications published within the past decade (2013-2023). This study

centers on customer retention to enhance the relevance of scientific publications obtained through keyword searches related to customer retention. The subsequent steps are the sequential steps or progression in the conducted research:

1. Determine the focus and main topics to be discussed.
2. The authors searched for and explored scientific journals related to customer retention using Publish or Perish software for 200 scientific publications in the 2013-2023 period.
3. After the collection of scientific publication data, the researcher exports and saves the file in the form of the RIS extension.
4. Then, the RIS file is imported. for analysis using VOSviewer software.

This bibliometric research uses several tools, such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Publish or Perish and VOSviewer. For more details, several tools used by researchers in this bibliometric research are listed in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Tools Used by Researchers.

No	Tools	Function
1	Microsoft Word	Used to provide a description of the results of the analysis and discussion in this research.
2	Microsoft Excel	Used to present tabulations of the required data as well as filter (selection) data that is considered relevant.
3	Publish or Perish	Used to search and identify journals or scientific publications related to the topic in this research.
4	VOSviewer	Used to carry out data analysis and data visualization based on a collection of journals or scientific publications.

Source: Analyzed by the authors (2024).

3. Results and discussion

Extensive research on customer retention has been conducted in the past decade. This suggests that the subject of customer retention remains highly intriguing for future investigations. Of the 200 scientific journal collections focused on customer retention, the year 2018 had the most publications, with a total of 24. During the period from 2013 to 2023, the quantity of scientific publications addressing customer retention fluctuated. In 2013, there were a total of 16 scientific journals specifically focused on the subject of customer retention. The number subsequently experienced a slight decline in 2014, reaching 14, but saw a significant increase in 2015, reaching 22 scientific journals. Despite a decline in 2016 to a mere 17, the figures rose to 22 and 24 in 2017 and 2018, respectively. The years 2018 and 2019 reached their peak with 24 and 20 scientific journals, respectively. From 2020 to 2022, there was a consistent level of publications, suggesting a sustained research interest and concentration on this particular topic. Nevertheless, by 2023, there will be a substantial decrease, resulting in a mere 8 scientific journals. Figure 1 below illustrates the annual count of scientific journal publications from 2013 to 2023:

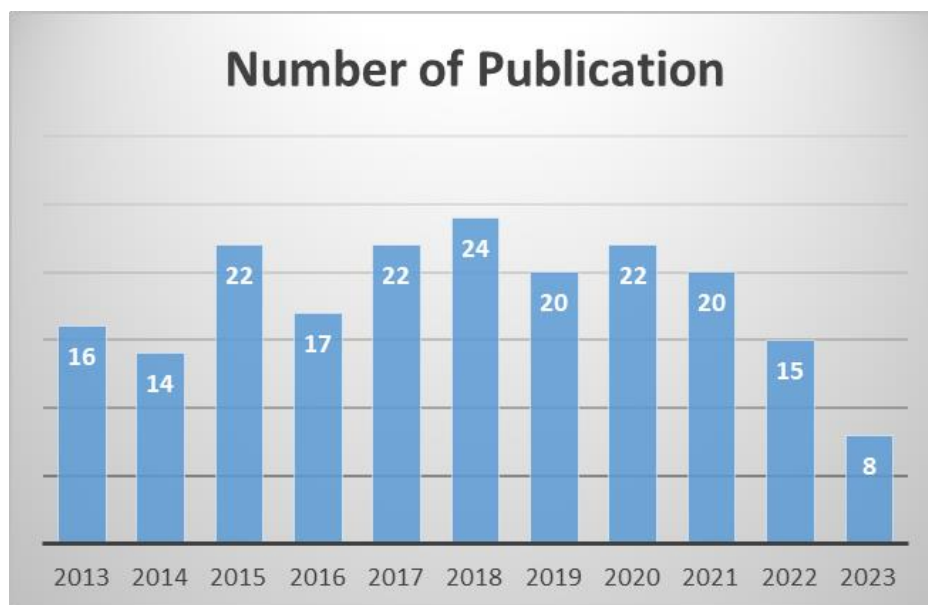


Figure 1 Number of scientific publications on customer retention.

A similar pattern is also evident in the overall number of citations in scientific journals pertaining to customer retention from 2013 to 2023. Over this time frame, the overall number of references in scientific publications pertaining to customer retention exhibited a variable pattern. In 2013, there were 729 citations, reflecting significant interest from numerous researchers in delving deeper into the topic of customer retention at the beginning of the decade. In 2014, the



trend of citations continued to increase and reached its highest point in 2015, with a total of 2251 citations. This surge signifies a notable advancement in comprehending and acknowledging the significance of customer retention within a business framework. Despite the fluctuations in total citations over the years, customer retention continues to be a prominent subject in the scientific literature. The total number of citations in 2018 was 1421, indicating a sustained level of interest and research in the field of customer retention. In subsequent years, notwithstanding the decrease, the aggregate number of citations remained relatively elevated. There is a notable decline in total citations in 2022 and 2023, with only 232 and 66 citations, respectively. This decline could be attributed to a change in research priorities or potentially influenced by external factors that impact customer retention interest. Figure 2 below displays the annual number of scientific journal citations from 2013 to 2023:

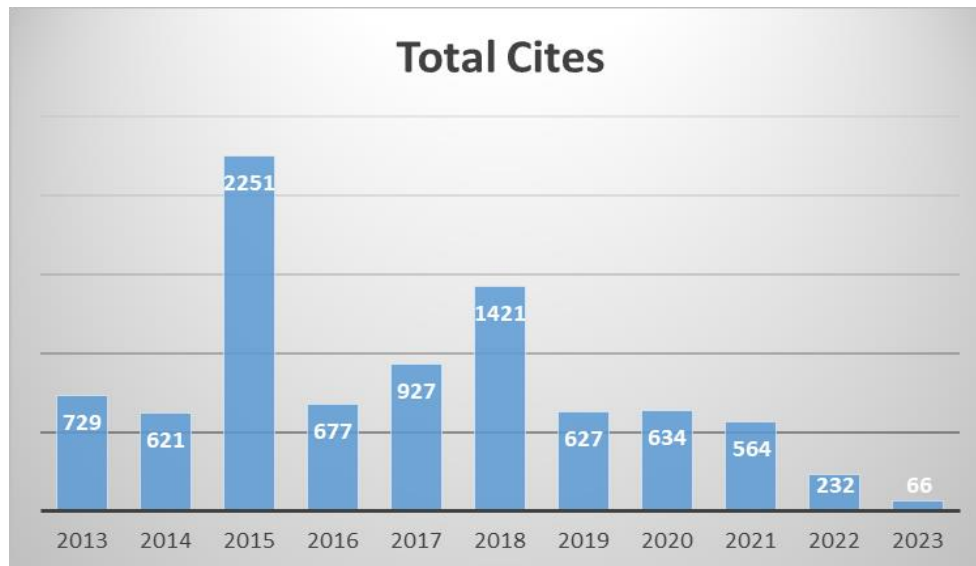


Figure 2 Number of Citations.

Of the 200 scientific journals focused on customer retention between 2013 and 2023, only 12 have received more than 100 citations. Conversely, the remaining 188 have fewer than 100 citations. The 12 journals with citation counts exceeding 100 can be found in Table 3.

The scientific journal with the highest number of citations is the one with 831 citations. The paper titled "Customer retention in the medical tourism industry: Impact of quality, satisfaction, trust, and price reasonableness" was authored by H Han and SS Hyun and was published in 2015. This journal focuses on customer retention, quality, satisfaction, trust, and price fairness within the medical tourism industry. According to Han and Hyun (2015), international medical tourists travel to different countries with the aim of finding medical care that is either reasonably priced or of superior quality. Factors such as perceived quality, satisfaction, trust in medical staff and clinics, and perceived price fairness play crucial roles in influencing the intention of international medical tourists to revisit clinics and destination countries for medical treatment. Trust is essential for maintaining ongoing relationships between customers and providers, and it significantly influences behavioral intentions related to medical care. Customer perceptions of price fairness exert a substantial influence on consumer behavior and attitudes when products or services are selected from service providers. The correlation between quality and satisfaction is crucial in the process of individual decision-making, as quality has a substantial impact on both satisfaction and the formation of intentions.

The scientific journal titled "The effect of service and food quality on customer satisfaction and customer retention" by AA Al-Tit, published in 2015, received the second highest number of citations, totaling 310. This journal explores research on customer satisfaction, customer retention, and customer loyalty in various industries, including mobile, fast food, banking, and hospitality. This journal also emphasizes the influence of service quality, customer satisfaction, and perceived value on customer retention and customer behavioral intentions. This journal also includes empirical studies conducted in Pakistan, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, China, and Greece. Furthermore, this journal explores the impact of both individual and situational factors on customer complaint behavior, as well as the utilization of various tools for assessing service quality within the restaurant sector. Al-Tit (2015) defines service quality as the discrepancy between customers' expectations of service and their perceptions of the actual service performance.

The article titled "The Influence of Customer Loyalty Programs on Customer Retention" has received a total of 225 citations, making it the third most cited journal in its field. SG Magatef and EF Tomalieh published this journal in 2015. Customer retention, as defined by Magatef and Tomalieh (2015), refers to the practice of a company retaining its customers through the provision of exceptional customer experiences. The findings of the study published in this scientific journal

indicate that research participants utilize different forms of loyalty programs, with point system cards being the predominant choice, accounting for 71.8% of the respondents. The study also revealed that all loyalty programs are effective in establishing and sustaining customer retention, with reward tier systems having the most notable influence. The researchers in the journal suggest utilizing various customer loyalty programs, particularly tiered reward systems, to effectively enhance customer retention. Marketers are recommended to develop loyalty programs that align with customer shopping attitudes and lifestyles to foster loyalty and cultivate long-term customers. Businesses must carefully manage the costs and revenues associated with each loyalty program and categorize them based on the characteristics and preferences of their target customers.

Table 3 Scientific journals with more than 100 total citations.

No	Writer	Title	Year	Number of Citations
1	H Han, SS Hyun	<i>Customer retention in the medical tourism industry: Impact of quality, satisfaction, trust, and price reasonableness</i>	2015	831
2	AA Al-Tit	<i>The effect of service and food quality on customer satisfaction and hence customer retention</i>	2015	310
3	SG Magatef, EF Tomalieh	<i>The impact of customer loyalty programs on customer retention</i>	2015	225
4	E Ascarza, SA Neslin, O Netzer, Z Anderson	<i>In pursuit of enhanced customer retention management: Review, key issues, and future directions</i>	2018	224
5	NYM Siu, TJF Zhang, CYJ Yau	<i>The roles of justice and customer satisfaction in customer retention: A lesson from service recovery</i>	2013	210
6	SF Sabbeh	<i>Machine-learning techniques for customer retention: A comparative study</i>	2018	166
7	MA Mahmoud, RE Hinson, MK Adika	<i>The effect of trust, commitment, and conflict handling on customer retention: the mediating role of customer satisfaction</i>	2018	148
8	G Fullerton	<i>The moderating effect of normative commitment on the service quality-customer retention relationship</i>	2014	142
9	JR Hanaysha	<i>Customer retention and the mediating role of perceived value in the retail industry</i>	2018	140
10	J Yu, J Seo, SS Hyun	<i>Perceived hygiene attributes in the hotel industry: customer retention amid the COVID-19 crisis</i>	2021	129
11	GR Diaz	<i>The influence of satisfaction on customer retention in mobile phone market</i>	2017	107
12	MW Preikschas, P Cabanelas, K Rüdiger	<i>Value cocreation, dynamic capabilities and customer retention in industrial markets</i>	2017	103

In 2018, a scientific journal titled "In pursuit of enhanced customer retention management: Review, key issues, and future directions" was published by E Ascarza, SA Neslin, O Netzer, and Z Anderson. This publication received a total of 224 citations. The research findings indicate that the employee retention level is crucial for the overall well-being of a company. Specifically, a mere 1% improvement in the retention rate leads to a substantial 5% boost in customer equity. Assessing a company's health and performance requires the critical measurement of retention rates over time. According to Ascarza et al. (2017), customer retention refers to the act of customers continuing to engage in transactions with the company.

In 2013, NYM Siu, TJF Zhang, and CYJ Yau published a scientific journal titled "The roles of justice and customer satisfaction in customer retention: A lesson from service recovery." This publication received a total of 210 citations. This study investigates the correlation between justice factors and behavioral intentions, with a specific emphasis on distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice. The findings demonstrated a noteworthy indirect impact of distributive justice and procedural justice on behavioral intentions via satisfaction with recovery and the organization. However, interactional justice did not exhibit a significant indirect effect. There is a strong negative correlation between satisfaction

with recovery after an event and behavioral intentions. On the other hand, satisfaction with the organization has a significant positive correlation. The inclusion of two postrecovery satisfaction variables diminishes the influence of distributive justice and procedural justice to levels that are not statistically significant. Sobel testing revealed significant indirect effects, wherein distributive justice and procedural justice exhibited significant positive indirect effects on behavioral intentions by means of satisfaction with the organization. Siu et al. (2013) state that customer satisfaction is a crucial factor in maintaining long-term customer relationships, as emphasized in the relationship marketing literature.

This bibliometric analysis employs VOSviewer software for data visualization, commencing with the network/clustering technique. The data generated from VOSviewer were previously visualized by incorporating all scientific journals that focused on the primary keyword "customer retention". The relationships between appearing keywords are depicted using circles, colors, and lines in this network approach. Color is instrumental in illustrating the distinction between clusters. The line in the visualization represents the intensity of the relationship between keywords. A thinner line indicates a higher frequency of the same keyword occurring within the cluster. The proximity of the lines connecting the keywords indicates a stronger interaction. On the other hand, the size of the circles in the visualization is related to the frequency of the keywords appearing in the research area. A larger circle indicates a higher frequency of keywords appearing in scientific literature (Yartono et al., 2023). Based on this network/clustering analysis, keywords with large dots are indicative of their frequent occurrence in scientific journals. Conversely, keywords that are connected by a distant line suggest their infrequent appearance in scientific journals.

Figure 3 displays the information. The network visualization reveals a significant correlation between customer retention and customer satisfaction, as indicated by the largest circles representing the keywords "customer satisfaction" and "customer" being in close proximity to the keyword "customer retention." This suggests that extensive research has been conducted on the subject matter associated with these two keywords. In addition, the terms customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and relationship also encompass significant spheres. This suggests that there is a high frequency of research on the correlation between customer loyalty and customer retention through relationships. This is highly relevant because customer loyalty plays a crucial role in retaining current customers, and by offering high-quality service, a company can effectively sustain customer retention. However, the keyword challenge is the most distant, suggesting that there is currently limited scientific research on the connection between customer retention and challenges. The subsequent content pertains to the visualization of Figure 3 in the network:

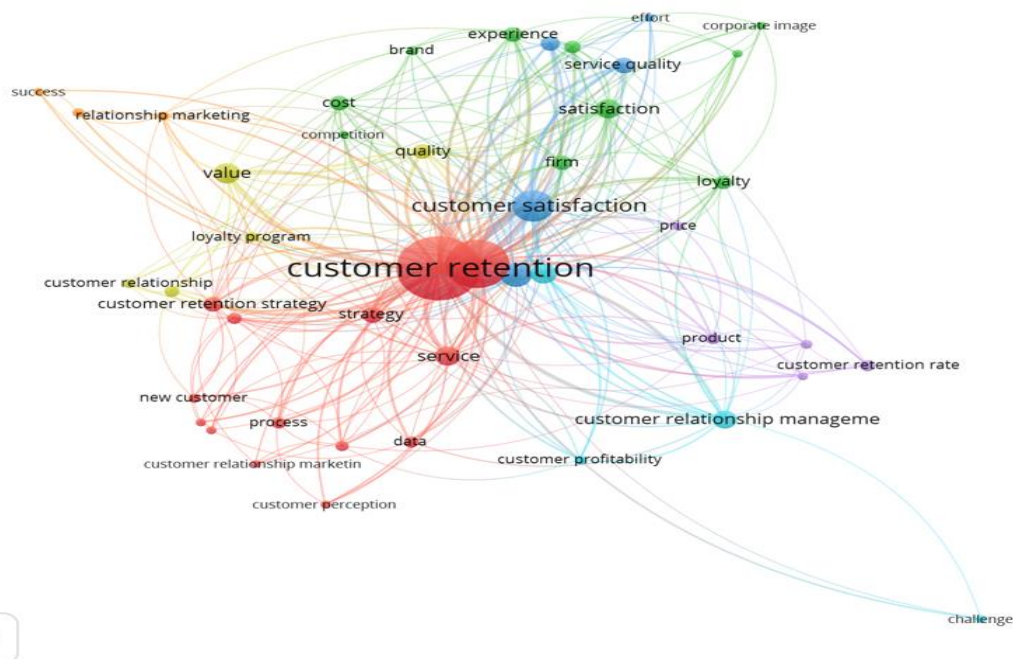


Figure 3 Network Visualization.

Figure 4 also reveals the presence of distinct clusters delineated by color. Clusters illustrate the correlation between a single keyword and multiple other keywords. The analysis revealed the presence of 7 clusters, each characterized by a specific color and a corresponding number of keywords. The red cluster consisted of 14 keywords, the green cluster contained 10 keywords, the dark blue cluster contained 5 keywords, the yellow cluster contained 5 keywords, the purple cluster contained 5 keywords, the light blue cluster contained 4 keywords, and the orange cluster featured 3 keywords. Additional information can be found in Table 4 below:



Table 4 Keyword Clusters.

Cluster	Color (Quantity)	Keywords
1	Red (14)	“Business”, “Customer”, “Customer Acquisition”, “Customer Behavior”, “Customer Churn”, “Customer Perception”, “Customer Relationship Marketing”, “Customer Retention”, “Customer Retention Strategy”, “Data”, “New Customer”, “Process”, “Service”, “Strategy”
2	Green (10)	“Brand”, “Competition”, “Corporate Image”, “Cost”, “Current Customer”, “Experience”, “Firm”, “Loyalty”, “Satisfaction”, “Trust”
3	Dark Blue (5)	“Commitment”, “Customer Satisfaction”, “Effort”, “Relationship”, “Service Quality”
4	Yellow (5)	“Customer Relationship”, “Importance”, “Loyalty Program”, “Quality”, “Value”
5	Purple (5)	“Customer Retention Process”, “Customer Retention Rate”, “Customer Service”, “Price”, “Product”
6	Light Blue (4)	“Challenge”, “Customer Loyalty”, “Customer Profitability”, “Customer Relationship Management”
7	Orange (3)	“Relationship Marketing”, “Relationship Quality”, “Success”

The second analysis employs an approach known as overlays. The overlay method visualizes the same data as the network but with a greater emphasis on time. The purple color represents the time when the research was conducted in the past. The color that appears most vividly, yellow, indicates that the research was conducted recently or very close to the present time. In this study, specific terms such as price, product, and cost are represented by the darkest hue, which is purple. These keywords were frequently found in scientific journals published in the past or approximately 2017. During that period, companies focused primarily on price and cost when implementing their strategies, often neglecting the product itself. Consequently, extensive research has been conducted specifically on these aspects. The keywords strategy, experience, and corporate image are highlighted in yellow, indicating their frequent occurrence in scientific journals published in or approximately 2019. Figure 4 below demonstrates the use of a more intricate overlay technique for data visualization:

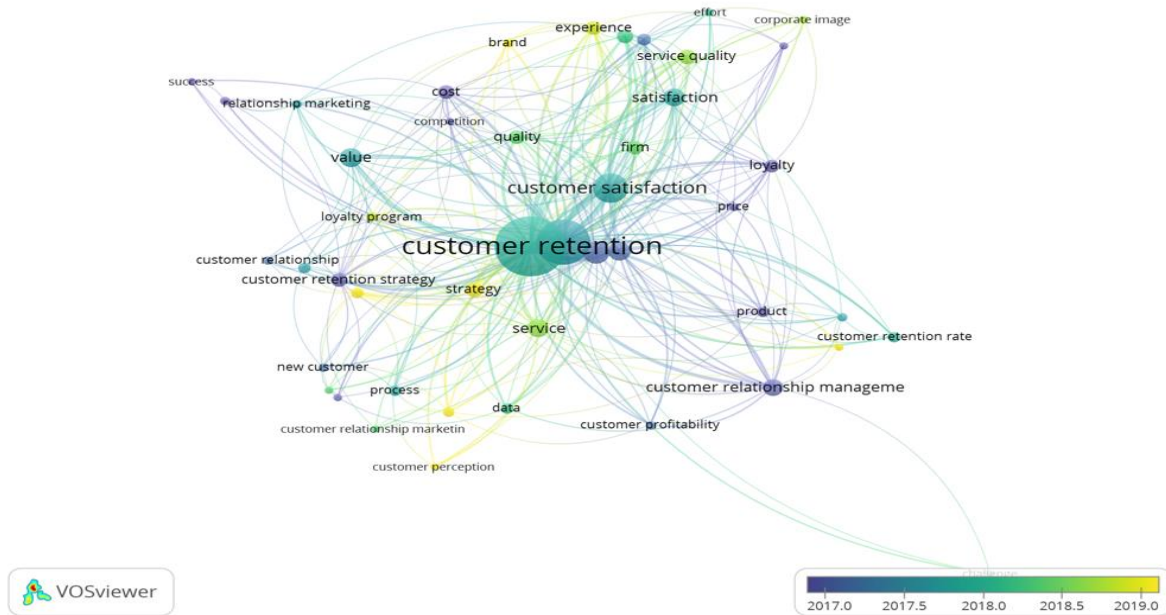


Figure 4 Overlay Visualization.

The subsequent bibliometric analysis employs VOSviewer, specifically focusing on density. The density results of the data visualization display the luminosity of the colors in the appearing keywords. This color represents the degree of prominence of keywords in scientific journals. The greater the brightness is, the more frequently the keyword is utilized as a subject in scientific journals. As the color becomes fainter, the frequency with which the keyword appears in scientific journals decreases, indicating that it is not a prominent topic of research in many scientific journals. The visual representation in Figure 5 reveals that customer retention and customer satisfaction stand out prominently among the other keywords due to their vibrant colors. This suggests that these two keywords have been frequently examined as subjects of research. Conversely, keywords such as competition, effort, price, challenge, success, brand, and others have lost significance, indicating that they are infrequently explored as subjects in research. Nevertheless, these keywords can evolve into a subject



of investigation in the future. For further information on density visualization, please refer to Figure 5, which is displayed below:

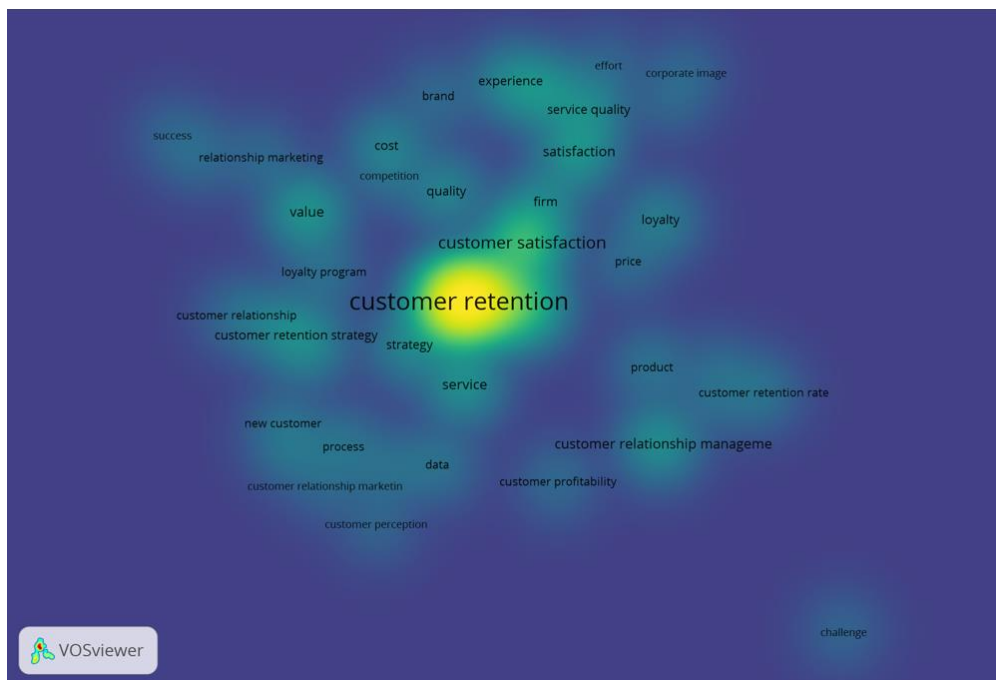


Figure 5 Density Visualization.

4. Final Considerations

From the preceding discussion, it can be inferred that there have been variations in the quantity of scientific journal publications pertaining to customer retention, as well as the overall number of citations, between the years 2013 and 2023. This phenomenon occurs annually due to a change in research priorities, particularly in the field of marketing. Between 2013 and 2023, out of the 200 scientific journals focused on customer retention, 12 journals received more than 100 citations in total, while the remaining 188 journals received fewer than 100 citations in total. The network visualization results indicate a significant correlation between customer retention and customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and relationships. This suggests that maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and strong customer relationships will contribute to the retention of customers. The overlay visualization indicates that price, product, and cost, among others, are depicted with the most intense hues, whereas keywords such as strategy, experience, and corporate image are represented with the most subdued shades. Customer retention and customer satisfaction exhibit the most vibrant colors when considering density, whereas competition, effort, price, challenge, success, brand, and other relevant keywords appear less prominent.

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Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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