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## Mapping the landscape of consumer empowerment and information communication technology: A comprehensive analysis

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### Abstract

The paper aims to offer researchers valuable insights into the current state of knowledge on consumer empowerment through information and communication technology (ICT) by employing bibliometric analysis. Utilizing data sourced from the Dimensions database spanning from 1993 to 2023, we meticulously selected and examined 56 documents using the Biblioshiny software. Our analysis encompassed various bibliometric indicators such as annual scientific production, key information sources, and leading countries in research productivity, and highly cited documents. Additionally, a thematic analysis was conducted through the generation of a thematic map. These analyses collectively provide researchers and academics with a comprehensive overview of the subject and emerging trends within the research domain, facilitating their contribution to the expanding body of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Consumer awareness, ICT, bibliometric study

### 1. Introduction

The emergence of the Internet has contributed to the rising consumer power in the digital era and such power got more ignited through social media (Labrecque *et al.*, 2013) <sup>[20]</sup>. The market power is transferring from suppliers to consumers as a result of increased usage of information and communication technologies (ICT), and the resulting increase in consumer empowerment is seen as an unintended result of marketing (Pires *et al.*, 2006) <sup>[24]</sup>. At the same time, Technology advancements have increased the potential for interactions between businesses and customers, as well as between customers and businesses (Ramani & Kumar, 2008) <sup>[28]</sup>. The process of joint value creation between businesses and their consumers has been accelerated by customer empowerment through the adoption of modern technologies (Agrawal & Rahman, 2015) <sup>[1]</sup>.

The internet has empowered customers, and people all around the world are now using online purchasing (Chew & Kim, 2021) <sup>[9]</sup>. So, digital advertisements could be a key source for empowering consumers (Hudders *et al.*, 2019) <sup>[15]</sup>. Suresh & Latha (2022) <sup>[26]</sup> studied consumer empowerment through e-commerce in rural India using the extended Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) and found that rural m-commerce behavior has a significant impact on rural empowerment. Gazzola *et al.* (2017) <sup>[13]</sup> studied consumer empowerment through sustainable buying decisions in the digital economy and found that online consumer skills, online consumer engagement, and online consumer awareness have a significant impact on sustainable buying decisions.

Studies have defined customer empowerment through approach/inhibition theory of power (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002) <sup>[3]</sup>. A highly empowered individual exhibits an approach-oriented mechanism. Customers who are approach-oriented feel free to express their worries, thoughts, and suggestions, connecting with the brand and creating value in the process. Customers who imitate others, however, are less empowered (Keltner *et al.*, 2003; Kini & Basri, 2023) <sup>[16, 17]</sup>. Kucuk (2009) <sup>[18]</sup> developed a theoretical Consumer Empowerment Model (CEM) based on the literature. According to the study, the important components of such a model are perceived consumer power, Perceived consumer trust, attitudinal consumer power and Behavioral consumer power.

Marketers in particular could encourage customer empowerment as a successful way to

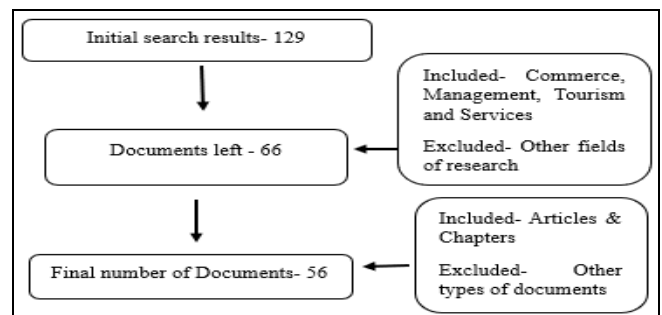
improve perceived customer orientation. Customers will reciprocate by offering rewards as they become more favourable corporate attitudes. In order to get a competitive edge in the market, managers can follow the promising positioning strategy of customer empowerment. Chatterjee & Kamesh (2020) [8] suggested that any significant relationship marketing components, such as quality service, co-creation, reliability, personalised communication, customer participation, and technology, should be carefully considered in order to increase the level of customer empowerment and satisfaction.

Kini & Basri (2023) [17] investigated how consumer empowerment affected customer engagement behaviours (CEBs) and how such behaviours affected customer value. According to the study, customer-empowered behaviours are associated with favourable CEBs, such as favourable reviews and testimonials, which in turn increase customer value. The results from the indirect effects show that CEB mediates the relationship between consumer empowerment and value. Anshari *et al.* (2012) [4] carried out a survey of healthcare organisations to confirm the empowering features that were built into the CRM 2.0 model. According to the survey's findings, customers like the model's empowering aspects. They favour having control over the data about their health and the programmes that might have an impact on it. Nishikawa *et al.* (2017) [23] emphasised that branding products as "customer-ideated" also contributes to higher market performance due to customers' views of the products, demonstrating that the beneficial effect of customer empowerment on sales need not necessarily result from product development.

It is also observed in the studies that users will inevitably migrate from one product or service to another as competitive options appear on the market (Bhattacharjee *et al.*, 2012) [6]. Kwarteng *et al.* (2020) [19] discovered that the perception of using price comparison websites has a high relationship with eSwitching through the consumer empowerment paradigm. This can be attributable to consumer empowerment. In this context, this paper attempts to make a bibliometric analysis that will help researchers and academicians to gain an overview of the existing literature. The remaining of the paper is designed in the following manner. Section 2- Methodology; Section 3- Results and Discussions; Section 4- Conclusion and Section 5-Future research direction.

## 2. Methodology

We have collected the data from the Dimensions database. It is a new and comprehensive database and it covers different types of publications (Hook *et al.*, 2018) [14]. We used the keywords- ("customer empowerment" OR "consumer empowerment") AND (ICT OR "information and communication technology" OR technology). We searched the words in the title and abstract and got 129 documents. Then we selected only Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services as the field of research which left 66 documents. We selected only articles and chapters as the document type and finally got 56 documents. Further analyses have been done with the 56 documents. Figure 1 shows this. The various bibliometric analyses have been conducted with the help of Biblioshiny software which is a very powerful tool for analysing bibliometric data through the science mapping technique (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) [5].



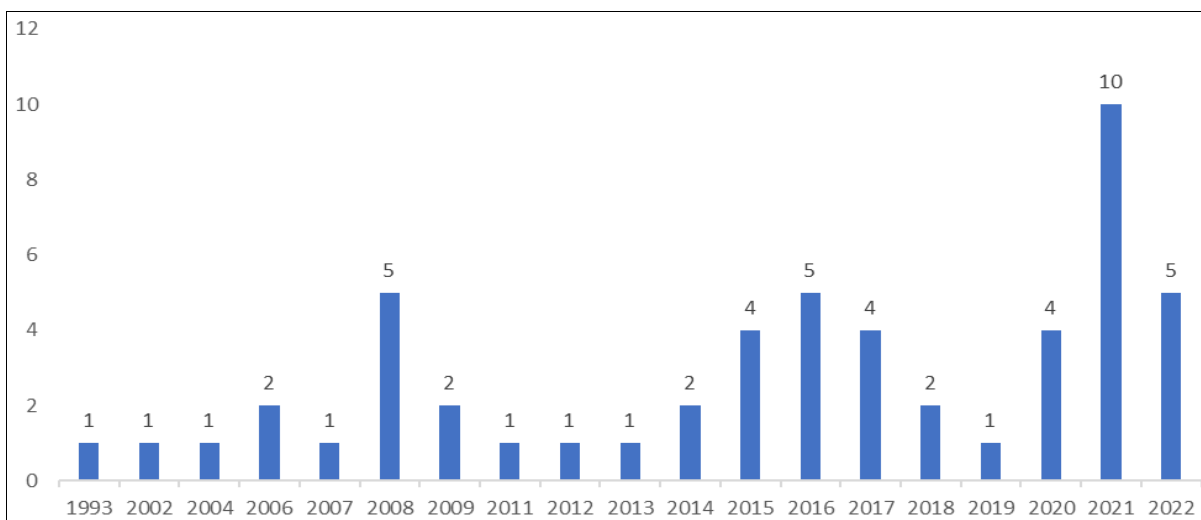
Source: Authors' own compilation

Fig 1: Documents selection criteria

## 3. Results and Discussions

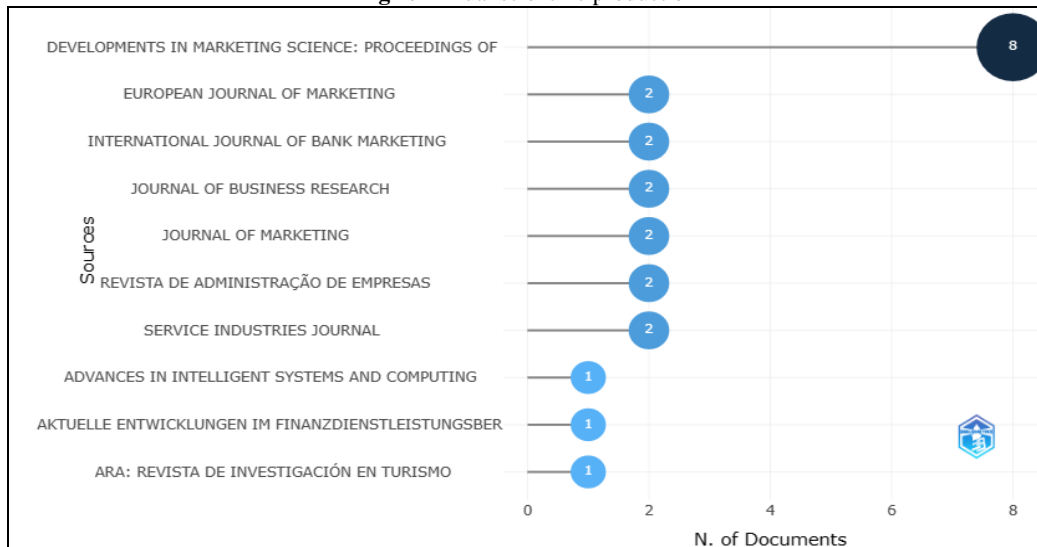
### Annual Scientific Production

Figure 2 shows the annual scientific production in the field of consumer empowerment and ICT. We have excluded the current year as it is not complete yet. We can observe that the trend is quite fluctuating which indicates that the topic has not been given due importance. The year 2021 has received the highest number of documents i.e. 10. As the topic is an important one it needs more attention by the researchers.



Source: Authors' own compilation

**Fig 2:** Annual scientific production



Source: Compiled from Biblioshiny

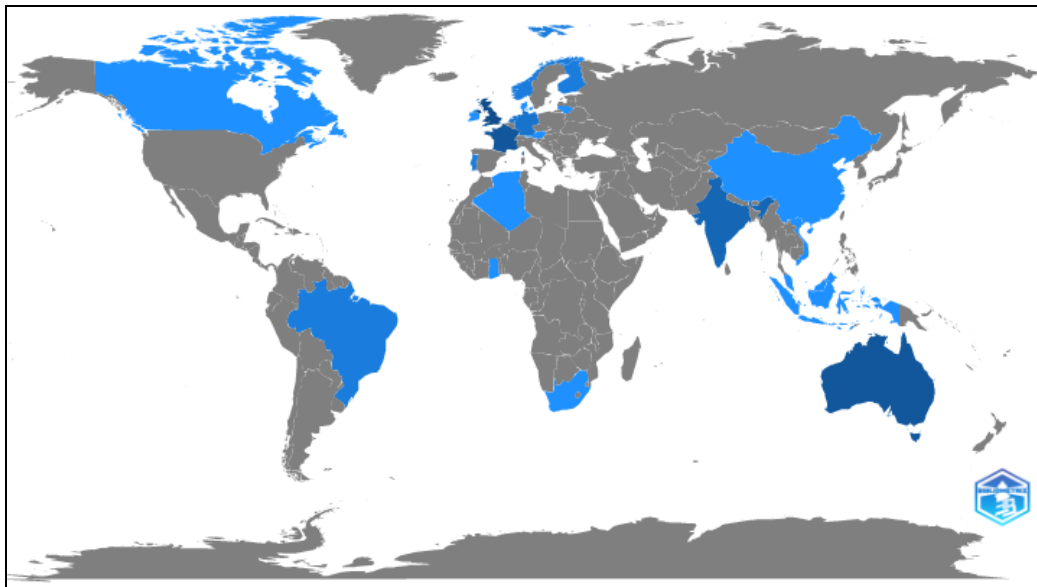
**Fig 3:** Most relevant sources

**Most Relevant Sources**

Figure 3 demonstrates the top 10 most relevant sources. It can be seen that Development in Marketing Science is the most relevant source with documents of 8. Other important journals like the European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Business Research, and Journal of Marketing are in the

second position with 2 number of documents each. Other journals are having 1 document each which are in the third position.

**Country Scientific Production**



Source: Compiled from Biblioshiny

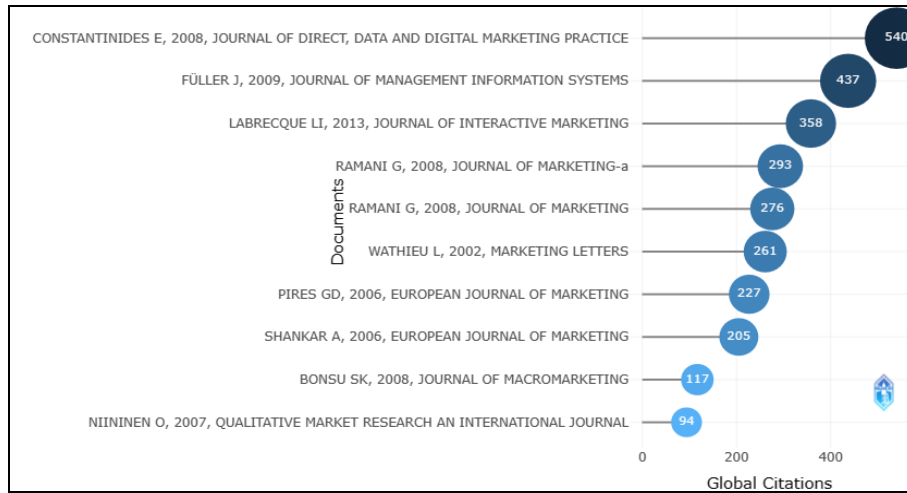
**Fig 4:** Country Scientific Production

Figure 4 shows the Country Scientific Production where the colour code ranges from grey to deep blue. Deep blue represents high production whereas grey color represents no production. Here United Kingdom is the country with highest number of documents i.e. 13. Australia and France are in the second position with 9 documents each. India is sharing the third position with 5 documents followed by Germany and Netherlands which are in the 4<sup>th</sup> position with 3 documents each.

**Most Global Cited documents**

Figure 5 shows the top 10 globally cited documents. As per

the analysis, Constantinides & Fountain (2008) <sup>[10]</sup> is the most cited paper. This paper focuses on Web 2.0 and marketing. The second most cited paper is Fuller *et al.* (2009) <sup>[12]</sup>. It is about empowering consumers through co-creation based on the internet. The third most cited paper is Labrecque *et al.* (2013) <sup>[20]</sup> which also speaks of rising consumer power in the digital era. Similarly, other top-cited papers focus on themes like consumer awareness, consumer control, internet, etc. (Bonsu & Darmody, 2008; Niininen *et al.*, 2007; Pires *et al.*, 2006; Ramani & Kumar, 2008; Shankar *et al.*, 2006; Wathieu *et al.*, 2002) <sup>[7, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28]</sup>.



Source: Compiled from Biblioshiny

Fig 5: Most Global Cited documents

Word Cloud



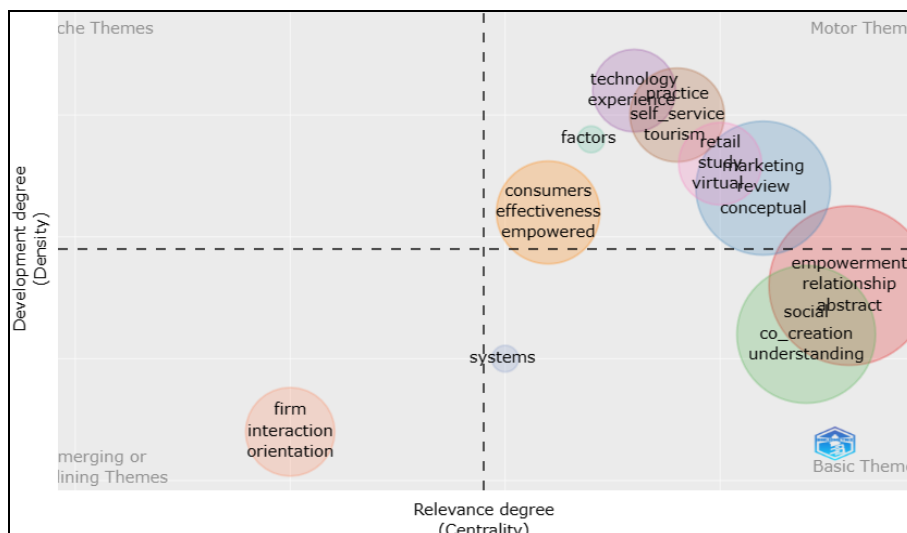
Source: Compiled from Biblioshiny

Fig 6: Word Cloud

Figure 6 shows the word cloud where most frequently used words are shown in the middle with a bigger size and less frequent words are shown on the side with a smaller size. We have taken consumer and customer as synonyms of customer. By doing this we got customer as the most frequent word with 40 occurrences. Similarly,

empowerment is the second most frequent word with 20 occurrences followed by digital and marketing which have a frequency of 9 each.

Thematic Map



Source: Compiled from Biblioshiny

Fig 7: Thematic Map

Figure 7 shows the thematic map which is divided into four themes as niche themes, motor themes, basic themes, and emerging themes. Niche themes represent themes that are important but have not been explored much. In our study, there is no theme in this category. Motor themes represent themes that are trending and hence should be given more importance. In our analysis, we have themes like technology, experience, consumers, empower, marketing, etc. which are driving the research. Basic themes indicate general themes which are often used. Here we have themes like empowerment, co-creation and social in this category. And finally, emerging or declining themes suggest themes that are either declining or emerging in the research field. In our analysis, we have themes like firm, interaction and orientation in this category.

#### 4. Conclusion

After going through all the analyses we have got an idea of the trend of research, most relevant journals, most relevant documents, trend topics, and themes in the field of consumer awareness and ICT. We observed that the trend of research is fluctuating which indicates proper attention has not been given to this area. From the word cloud and thematic map it can be observed that researchers have focused on themes like consumer, empowerment, digital, technology, etc. which should be continued as the driving themes.

#### 5. Future Research Direction

The findings are in line with the previous studies. Emerging themes like firm and interaction can be incorporated into future research. At the same time, attention should be given to motor themes like technology, experience, consumers, empower, marketing, etc. Ramani & Kumar (2008) <sup>[28]</sup> suggested that future empirical studies could look at how much an interaction orientation contributes to a firm's positional advantage relative to other factors and how much of an overall effect each of factors like entrepreneurship, innovativeness, and market orientation has individually. Similarly, Gazzola *et al.* (2017) <sup>[13]</sup> suggested that future research may go further into defining linkages between the concepts that have been suggested, for instance, by examining interactions between the constructs of online consumer skills, awareness, and engagement. Fuller *et al.* (2009) <sup>[12]</sup> suggested that future research should address questions like what additional factors impact the empowerment of consumers? What impact does actual consumer empowerment have on their contributions' originality, excellence, and quantity? Do consumers get committed to the new virtual product as a result of their experienced empowerment? And other questions. Studies have also suggested to conduct longitudinal study which can help understanding the impact of events like COVID-19 (Kini & Basri, 2023) <sup>[17]</sup> while some other studies have suggested generalisation of the relationship with more sample size (Akbar *et al.*, 2023; Kwarteng *et al.*, 2020; Meitner *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[19]</sup>. Taking all these points into consideration, future researchers may come up with more innovative studies to add to the existing body of knowledge.

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