A bibliometric review of service innovation: Constituting research themes

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ABSTRACT

Service innovation has been seen as a significant source of competitive advantage between the market and the business since its inception over two decades ago. Due to the growing interest in service innovation, this study delves deeper into the service innovation phenomenon to understand how service innovation has emerged and provides a comprehensive view of the phenomenon development of service innovation. A review of a systematic investigation of the evolution of “service innovation” in various sectors by conducting a comprehensive analysis (qualitative and quantitative) using 850 publications from the Web of Science was published during the 1996 - 2022 period. The quantitative method used was bibliometrics analysis (citation and co-citation) by VOS-viewer software. The results show that five clusters are distinguishable. Each cluster shows different characteristics of the service innovation sector, including innovation in market-oriented service companies, new service development, service innovation process, adding service value in manufacturing enterprises, and co-creator of value in services. Specifically, we analyse which research flows are relevant to service innovation and compare these themes over time. In-depth analysis and discussion of the five themes have helped to uncover two more sub-themes, service innovation and service innovation in brand engagement that scholars have been interested in and have developed. This paper supports the assertion that service innovation has an interdisciplinary theoretical foundation and that the structure of the service innovation research platform has changed significantly over time.

1. Introduction

Recently, service innovation has become an essential motivation for economic growth (Snyder, Witell, Gustafsson, Fombelle, & Kristensson, 2016) as well as a necessary factor for companies to upgrade business success, attract new customers, accelerate sales growth, and increase profits (Xie, Wang, & García, 2021). Innovation helps enterprises increase their competitive advantage through product and service differentiation. According to Hertog, Gallouj, and Segers (2011), to be considered a service innovation, a change in the offering does not need to be significantly new, introduced into the market, or made a significant profit. Service innovation addresses the multi-dynamic aspects of a new phenomenon (Hertog, Aa, & Jong, 2010) that surrounds an organisation and its functionalities, such as marketing, sales, and after-sale services, HRM, finance, technology, partnering, and so on.
Despite research in service innovation that started and was formally recognised from Barras’s suggestion of the theory of innovation in services (Barras, 1986, 1990), it is still emerging (Flikkema, Jansen, & Sluis, 2007). For nearly three decades, research on service innovation has widely developed, not only diverse but also multidisciplinary such as marketing, management, and encompassing economic (Ostrom et al., 2010; Rubalcaba, Michel, Sundbo, Brown, & Reynoso, 2012; Toivonen & Tuominen, 2009), it is urgent to systematically review the knowledge base (Gallouj & Windrum, 2009).

Some previous studies refer to the identification and the link in topics and trends in new product development (Page & Schirr, 2008), knowledge-intensive marketing, and innovation (Carlborg, Kindstrom, & Kowalkowski, 2014), information and communication technologies (Barrett, Davidson, Prabhu, & Vargo, 2015), hospitality and tourism (Marasco, De Martino, Magnotti, & Morvillo, 2018; Shin & Perdue, 2022) or difference of service innovation definition (Witell, Snyder, Gustafsson, Fombelle, & Kristensson, 2016), phases of “innovation” (Papastathopoulou & Hultink, 2012; Patrício, Gustafsson, & Fisk, 2018). These prior works of literature on integrated assessments of service innovation have identified service innovation as a growing, fragmented research area (Gustafsson, Snyder, & Witell, 2020). Several academic works, such as Carlborg, et al. (2014); Witell et al. (2016), sought to briefly outline the innovativeness sector. However, Witell et al. (2016) conducted an organized literature review to compile a list of the salient characteristics of service innovation from integration, categorisation, and aggregation perspectives. Its sole contribution was the identification of features in the definitions.

Although each publication and study has its merits, each has inherent limits. Reviewing the latest existing literature on service innovation, we classify certain of these drawbacks, along with the choice of databases (Singh, Akbani, & Dhir, 2020; Witell et al., 2016); concentrate primarily on the nature of innovation (Klarin, 2019). The literature does not demonstrate the different types of innovation in industrialized and emerging nations, as well as the necessity of growth and the creation of new designs for service innovation (Calabrese, Castaldi, Forte, & Levialdi, 2018; Klarin, 2019). In light of these holes, there is still a need for additional study in the field of service innovation (Singh et al., 2020), and more research is needed to fill these gaps. Therefore, this paper addresses some of these limitations by (1) reviewing the article’s sources and (2) investigating the service innovation phenomenon more to understand how it comes about and grows and the prospects for service innovation in business and management. Therefore, this paper conducts a bibliometric analysis, focusing on co-citation analysis and citations, using data from the Web of Science database. The goal of this study was not to focus on a specific issue (for example, an empirical context about service innovation); however, the final data from 850 articles far outnumbered previous reviews. It ensures the most comprehensive coverage of a large field of research and heterogeneity in service innovation. Furthermore, unlike previous literature reviews that favoured manual or machine analysis (Antons & Breidbach, 2017; Gustafsson et al., 2020; Papastathopoulou & Hultink, 2012), this study employs both manual and automated analysis. It provides a whole picture of the most influential articles, authors, journals, organisations, and their geographical origins in the research area of service innovation from the most cited and impactful point of view. Simultaneously, visualisation and analysis of thematic networks and structures of service innovation research are also supplied. These perspectives suggest new understandings when seeking to develop new knowledge about service innovation in the current era.

Identifying knowledge clusters of innovation services makes several contributions to service innovation. As a result of combining traditional literature reviews with modern discovery techniques, a new classification of service innovation perspectives into five groups and outlining their main characteristics have been developed, with views on innovation in market-oriented
service companies, new service development, service innovation process, adding service value in manufacturing enterprises and co-creator of value in services and key research suggestions. Furthermore, the findings contribute to the literature on innovation management in general by demonstrating how service innovation formation influences innovation choice and practice. When researching service innovation, researchers can use our integrative analysis to identify relevant research objects and focus, select a compelling design, and formulate a compelling discussion. Our themes will also make it easier to position new research in a specific perspective and facilitate a more effective discussion of the findings across service innovation perspectives. Finally, each theme in our classification also offers the practical application of service innovation for innovation directors, marketing executives, policymakers, and innovative educators.

Bibliometrics is a quantitative approach to studying the impact of research findings by analysing the bibliographic literature (Martínez-López, Merigó, Valenzuela-Fernández, & Nicolás, 2017). Broadus (1987) emphasises bibliometric analysis of the bibliography of published documents and identifies patterns. Many management scholars have applied bibliometrics analysis to literature research on management (Souza & Bueno, 2022), economics (Luo, Li, Crabbe, & Pu, 2022), supply chain management (Xu, Zhang, Feng, & Yang, 2020) and marketing (Han & Bai, 2022). Bibliometrics analysis provides insight into the evolution of literature and knowledge flows in a specific field over time by analysing data from databases, such as the citation, author, keyword, or journal scope referenced (Raan, 2005). Among the various methods of bibliographic analysis are co-citation analysis, citation analysis, and citation-based bibliography (Bellis, 2009), and co-word analysis (Qin, 1999), co-citation analysis was used for this study. Small (1973) offered co-citation analysis using the principle that two articles are related if both are cited in subsequent papers. Liu, Yin, Liu, and Dunford (2015) also agreed that the logical foundation for most academic papers is built on previous citations, related scholarly articles, co-citation frequency, and patterns. These become evidence of the structure of knowledge and consciousness; a higher frequency of co-citations between articles indicates collective knowledge and background knowledge (Liu et al., 2015). In that sense, the current study applied bibliometrics to analyse papers published in top-tier academic journals of management and business from 1996 to 2022 (January). Therefore, this study aims to map and network major contemporary publications in the literature on service innovation, visualize key phrases from co-citation analysis, and match them with the works carried forward in previous synthetic reviews.

2. Theoretical basis

2.1. Change in definitions of service innovation

Deriving Croitoru (2012) asserted that innovation fosters economic progress, and a valuable invention must be released to the market and make sizable profits to qualify as innovation. Croitoru (2012) defined innovations as creating novel combinations. Later, researchers developed Schumpeterian’s view of “service innovation” (Gallouj & Windrum, 2009; Windrum & García-Goñi, 2008). Then, EIM Research Institute (2003) stated that due to the simultaneity of services, advancements in both products and processes frequently occur simultaneously. New services frequently mix with new client interactions, distribution strategies, quality assurance procedures, and so on. A broad universal definition that explains service innovation is initiating a first-hand or significantly improved product (good or service) or process, marketing strategy, or organizational method in corporate operations, the workplace, or in relationships with external parties (OECD, 2005). In addition, Woeder and Baker (2012) defined service innovation as a combination of innovation related to technology, business model, knowledge, organization, and needs with the goal of improving existing services in a way that augments or creates entirely new
services. More broadly, service innovation is considered a new process or service that is introduced and accepted and creates value for one or more stakeholders (Gustafsson et al., 2020). Over time, service innovation doesn’t seem to focus on a small scope or internal firms also widen to cover all a company’s internal and external partners and activities. Indeed, over the last decade or so, service enterprises have grown so dramatically that service innovation has significantly impacted market-level aspects. Salunke, Weerawardena, and McColl-Kennedy (2019) mentioned that service innovation refers to service offerings that directly or indirectly result in value for the firms and their customers/clients. Thanks to service innovation, the competitive strength changes among significant competitors in the market (Sharma & Bhat, 2020). Therefore, service innovation is often defined by dimensional changes that require multiple modifications to an existing service. Many aspects suggest that service innovation has been a broader concept and enterprises can innovate more than previous research has shown (Babaei & Aghdassi, 2020; Chae, 2012; Snyder et al., 2016). However, the service innovation field is also widely dispersed and the number of studies on service innovation is constantly growing. Given the growing number of studies on service innovation, this research aims to provide an up-to-date bibliographic analysis of research topics and identify the most influential journals, authors, and articles.

2.2. Bibliometrics analysis

Bibliometrics originates from Price’s observations of scientific activity patterns (Price, 1976). It is a powerful quantitative method and a popular research tool for systems analysis (Raan, 2005). Bibliometrics explains and measures scientific and technological advances by counting the number of patents, publications, and citations. Bibliometrics is now an economical and straightforward method to deploy vast amounts of data in ways that individuals could not process before (Kajikawa & Takeda, 2009). Most biometric analyses use large samples, so many cases must be handled with great complexity. The productive work of Waltman, Eck, and Noyons (2010) develops a freely available computer program, “VOS viewer”, for viewing and constructing bibliographic maps (Eck & Waltman, 2014). It is seen as an important milestone for the fusion of biometric and imaging research, helping to strengthen “term clustering” approaches and helping research to map future technology. Zhang, Guo, Wang, Zhu, and Porter (2013) asserted that a wide range of disciplinary fields from the Web of Science, including the Science Citation Index (SCI), the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), and related indexes, are leading sources of information. Bibliometrics involves various analysis techniques, such as citation-based analysis (co-citation analysis, citation analysis, and bibliographic coupling), keyword co-occurrence analysis, co-word analysis, and co-authorship analysis (Eck & Waltman, 2014). This network analysis is an essential subset of bibliometrics (Ding, Chowdhury, & Foo, 2001). Co-citation is the frequency with which two items of earlier literature are cited together by the later literature, used to identify the clusters of co-citation pairs (Small, 1973). Co-citation analysis has effectively assessed the intellectual structure of various disciplines (Ding et al., 2001). Randhawa, Wilden, and Hohberger (2016) also indicate that co-citation network analysis of a particular field of study is an effective tool for constructing intellectual connections between disciplines. Combining these tools in research science provides a harmonious and diverse whole for academic researchers. Co-citation analysis effectively structures the intellectual foundation across disciplines (Zupic & Cater, 2015). Co-citation analysis measures close and close relationships between subjects, researchers, and communities. Previous co-citation analysis of innovation research conducted by Rossetto, Bernardes, Borini, and Gataz (2018) demonstrated the prototype results of bibliographic co-citation analysis, including roof agencies, articles, and authors. This study used a quantitative bibliometric analysis (citation and co-citation analysis) of the literature obtained from the WoS database and applied the scientific mapping system VOSviewer (Eck & Waltman, 2010).
3. Methodology

This study utilized quantitative bibliometric analysis (co-citation analysis) of literature from the Web of Science database and employed the scientific mapping system VOSviewer (Eck & Waltman, 2010). The bibliometric analysis (co-citation analysis) process of service innovation has three stages (see Figure 1):

Stage 1: Data collection

This research used the Science Citation Index (SCI) and Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) of the WoS database, which is one of the most comprehensive scholarly article databases. Now of study, all articles from 1996 (the year indexing in WoS began) to January 12th, 2022, were available and were collected. In the databases’ title/summary/keyword field, the terms “service innovation” and “service in innovation” were searched. The initial search result was 1,807 publications containing all books, book chapters, articles, book chapters, and letters. Of these, 1,036 publications were selected from a database of research articles in business and management. Figure 2 provides the annual trend in the number of publications published between 1996 and 2022 (January). The amount of work on service innovation has increased significantly since 2008.

Stage 2: Process the data

All works’ titles and abstracts were carefully examined for their relevance to service innovation. Out-of-topic publications on service innovation, or duplicate publications, were included in the data. In the end, this research used 850 retained publications for the next phase.

Stage 3: Assessing the data

First, we use “descriptive statistics” to see (1) the number of related articles published annually, (2) Research areas in service innovation, and (3) Distribution publications of journals. Later, using VOSviewer software analyses the co-citation network for service innovation. Then, research themes are identified to uncover insights into the structure of service innovation research. Finally, analyzing the contents of major publications in each theme helps the authors propose further research directions.

4. Research results

4.1. Citation analysis

4.1.1. Publications

The number of “service innovation” publications has increased sharply since 2018 (see Figure 2). From 1996 to 2007, the number of annually published studies was less than 10 published studies. However, the number of publications increased sharply from 2008, reaching the highest level in 2018 - 2021, which shows that researchers are increasingly interested in “service innovation” and exploiting more and more aspects of it. The annual publication average of 30.27 shows that academics are increasing attention to service innovation.
4.1.2. Journal

Table 1 presents ten journals that have the most “service innovation” publications, of which the three journals with the most publications are: The Journal of Business Research (56 articles), Service Industries Journal (54 papers), and Journal of Service Management (47 papers).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Number of publications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Journal of Business Research</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Service Industries Journal</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Journal of Service Management</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Industrial Marketing Management</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Journal of Services Marketing</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Journal of Business Industrial Marketing</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Journal of Service Research</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Journal of Product Innovation Management</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Research Policy</td>
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Source: Web of Science (2022)

4.1.3. Nation

The geographical distribution of publications indicates that the United States and the United Kingdom have the most research output on service innovation due to their position as pioneers in service innovation development (see Figure 3). The other countries are primarily in Europe and America. Notably, published articles by Asian researchers only include Taiwan and China in the top 10 of this list.
4.1.4. Authors

In terms of authors, the results show that 21,697 authors contributed to the 850 articles in the sample. This study reduced the number of authors responsible for at least 20 citations of an author, thus leaving only 477 authors. The top three authors were Vargo, SL. (Professor of Marketing, the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa); Gallouj, F. (University of Science and Technology Lille 1, Lille, France), and Edvardsson, B. (Professor of Business Administration, CTF Service Research Centre, Karlstad University). Figure 4 depicts the authors with the most publications in the co-citation network.

Source: Analysis result in VOSviewer (2022)

4.2. Co-citation analysis

For the co-citation analysis, the study entered data from 850 research articles on service innovation in business and management into VOSviewer 1.6.17 software. From the initial
sample, the study only selected articles with 20 citations or more, so the sample size was narrowed down to 217 articles and divided into 05 clusters (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Co-citation network of publications

Source: Analysis result in VOSviewer (2022)

There are five clusters that provide various research areas: red Cluster (78 items), green cluster (57 items), blue Cluster (40 items), yellow Cluster (28 items), and purple cluster (14 items). Each item is represented by a bubble labeled with the author’s last name, publication year, and journal-title. The size of the bubbles denotes the number of standardized citations received by the articles, and the line thicknesses represent the strength of the citation relationship. The larger the bubble size is, the more cited the article was. In addition, the co-citation relationship was determined by the connection and distance between the two documents. Each study area is analysed in detail as follows.

4.2.1. Red Cluster: Innovation in market-oriented service firms

The red Cluster includes authors whose research has empirically examined structural relationships between innovation and other constructs. In our analyses, this is one of the largest co-citation groups. The studies of this group can be considered as the foundation of the academic field of service innovation. They discuss firms that use a combination of their resources such as market orientation (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990) and innovation (Schumpeter’s “creative destruction”) to create a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991), the new value created by innovation (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990), and compare the success and failure of innovation investments by market-oriented service firms (Avlonitis, Papastathopoulou, & Gounaris, 2001). Based on resource-based theory or dynamic capability theory, most of these studies discuss the strategies of companies that use technology in innovation to gain competitive advantage (Zhou, Yim, & Tse, 2005). Structural equation modeling (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), together with convergent and discriminant validity assessments (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) as well as common methodological biases (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), is often applied to empirically examine the links between “service innovation”, its precursors, consequences demonstrated by this group. In addition, the proposal of Berry, Shankar, Parish, and Cadwallader (2006) emphasizes the importance of service innovation in creating new markets. In particular, Agarwal and Selen’s work was critical in explaining service innovation achievement in light of stakeholder collaboration, especially customer engagement via a dynamic capability model (Agarwal & Selen, 2009). The effectiveness of this mix of internal and external resource determinants in boosting
competitiveness should be the subject of further research. In addition, considering service innovation in the “competitive advantage” mechanism for “business performance” remains a challenge in this topic. It can be used to examine the success of startups with new full-service (including production) integration in developing countries.

4.2.2. Green Cluster: Co-creator of value in services - service-dominant logic perspectives

The focus of a highly cited research group in the green Cluster is on marking the emergence and outstanding development of the new marketing concept known as “service-dominant logic” (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2008, 2015), as well as the development of multidisciplinary theories such as general service theories, general innovation theories connected to the creation of new services, and innovation management (Toivonen & Tuominen, 2009). Studies cited in Green Cluster also cover the analysis of intangible resource nature, relationships, and co-creation of value, as well as the increasing significance of new services, as well as new components and service combinations, to the development of collaboration patterns and networks in defining service innovation. The citation analysis found that the authors in this Cluster have the highest total link strength in our analysis, showing a keen interest in the numerous studies mentioned in this field of study. Studies offer a conceptual framework for examining the causes and effects of service innovation and managing value co-creation based on the growing service-dominant logic approach (Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008; Skålén, Gummerus, Koskull, & Magnusson, 2014) in different contexts such as a luxury hotel (Ordanini & Parasuraman, 2010) music business, non-profit business, financial service, construction service.

Future studies will continue to focus on the idea put forth by Ostrom et al. (2010), which has not yet been completely investigated in identifying business models for growth and expansion based on services and transforming organizations that produce things into service-oriented businesses.

Furthermore, the tripartite framework of digital service innovation of Lusch and Nambisan (2015) shows the trend of studies in this group consisting of (1) service systems (an actor-to-actor network’s collaborative process for creating innovation); (2) service platforms - venue for innovation that improves the actors’ exchange of services in terms of efficiency and effectiveness; and (3) co-creation of value (through integrating resources, the service provider and the service recipient co-create value) through resource integration. Consumers create content such as YouTube, or blogs and the role of non-supplier partners and intermediaries in co-creation. Case studies may be used to examine future empirical research as prior suggestions.

4.2.3. Blue Cluster: Service innovation process

The blue Cluster consists of authors whose scholarly work intended to explain service innovation processes. These studies look at a set of service characteristics that Gallouj and Weinstein (1997) developed from Lancastrian characteristics-based methodology, which has been frequently used to look at how different kinds of innovation in the service sectors are adopted. Similarly, to understand how well service businesses manage their innovation process (Sundbo, 1997), it is essential to understand the ideas of innovation in service formation and the varied roles of service firms in innovation processes. The research in this group shows that a synthesis approach to Schumpeter’s original innovation notion is broad enough to include manufacturing and services and that service innovation could play a role in strengthening the conceptual and theoretical foundation for studying service innovation (Drejer, 2004; Laursen & Salter, 2006). The authors also emphasise knowledge-intensive business services of particular importance to the innovation process (Den Hertog, 2000; Hipp & Grupp, 2005). The following researchers should investigate the impact of combining these knowledge-intensive business services on different modes of service innovation to form and manage successful flexible innovation processes.
4.2.4. Yellow Cluster: Adding service values in manufacturing firms

The yellow Cluster comprises studies identifying foundational aspects of adding service values in manufacturing firms by applying dynamic service innovation capabilities. The “servitization of business” formula developed by authors Sandra Vandermerwe and Juan Rada results in value-adding to their core corporate offerings through services as follows: “Goods + Services + Support + Knowledge + Self-Service” (Vandermerwe & Rada, 1988). Grounded in dynamic capabilities theory, these studies in this group analyse how manufacturing companies evolve into service solutions providers by identifying key micro foundations outperforming their competitors (Hertog et al., 2010; Kindström, Kowalkowski, & Sandberg, 2013; Teece, 2007). Most of these studies discuss the addition of services business to their portfolio and what they do to change the organizational structure (Gebauer, Fleisch, & Friedli, 2005) for the development of service offerings (Oliva & Kallenberg, 2003) or hybrid offerings (Ulaga & Reinartz, 2008). Storey, Cankurtaran, Papastathopoulou, and Hultink (2015) proposed service innovation processes, customer engagement and processes, senior management support, team empowerment, and organisational structure as significant service antecedents of innovation performance in manufacturing firms. Further research should investigate the impact of service sector characteristics on explicit and implicit service performance outcomes and the impact of design and alliances on successful service innovation.

4.2.5. Purple Cluster: New service development

Studies in the purple Cluster are preoccupied with documenting new service development in terms of definition, new service development types, and new service development management. These authors in this Cluster clarify the definition of new services regarding the product or service outcomes or business aims (Market penetration, market development, product development, and diversification) (Johne & Storey, 1998; Menor, Tatikonda, & Sampson, 2002). These researchers analyse that radical innovation can help exploit new services, such as new services for the market presently served, startup businesses, new digital services, incremental innovations with service line extensions, service improvements in features, and style changes. It is attractive for the following researchers to continue to exploit the difference between tangible and intangible product development, discontinuous innovation, and incremental new services (Brentani, 2001; Johne & Storey, 1998). Most of the authors in this group explain that antecedents of new service development are like those found in manufacturing, such as team-based organizational structure, process design, and information technology choices (Froehle, Roth, Chase, & Voss, 2000; Johne & Storey, 1998). Also, the studies assess the critical role of customer involvement in antecedents and outcomes of new service development (Carbonell, Rodríguez-Escudero, & Pujari, 2009). Based on the preceding analysis, the following researchers should investigate the performance implications of the customer type involved at various phases of the development process. Another vital area of research within this group has been based on describing the methods used for new e-service development for organic research and development. This research group has significant implications for policymakers interested in promoting health and environmental protection at the national and regional levels.

5. Conclusions & recommendations

The bibliometric analysis provides an intriguing and simple glimpse into scholarly work. Given the widely recognised diversity of the service innovation sector, specific alternative stories will be interesting to various audiences, such as innovation in market-oriented service firms, co-creator of value in services, service innovation process, adding service values in manufacturing firms, and new service development. Our detections raise numerous ways for the explanation, and
we encourage readers to contemplate them from their viewpoints. This article has been easy to read, enjoyable, and helpful in explaining the main themes of modern service innovation studies.

The findings highlight several main characteristics of service innovation research. First, this field comes from the strategy of the market-oriented enterprise to which the resource-based theory and the dynamic capacity theory are applied. Second, although there is a service-dominant logic approach that emphasizes the cooperation between stakeholders to co-create more valuable, especially the engagement of customers (this group is the most cited), service systems and service platforms are considered unbalanced interests. Third, the service innovation process is more interested in an integrated knowledge-based approach to applying Schumpeter’s original innovation concept. Fourth, even research in areas considered central to service innovation (for example, adding service values in manufacturing firms by applying dynamic capabilities and new service development) must be cited by others from the near outside fields. It also suggests that researchers working on this subject may need to effectively share their discoveries with those outside of their immediate fields, which would restrict the benefits of their work and any possible achievements.

Some certain limitations in our analysis are acknowledged. This study affords a concise overview of the research groups that study specific topics that are most usually cited in service innovation papers. It is just the beginning as multiple scientific investigations have significantly changed the field. Moreover, defining the articles that constitute service innovation is problematic. While we utilised aggregate data from 1996 to 2022, the “prevalence” of the groups should be approached with caution since it is based on citations received. Because many researchers cite papers for several reasons, the groups’ popularity only sometimes reflects their academic importance to theoretical argumentation or empirical research. However, it is plausible to accredit that by presenting the most crucial groups, along with a network that demonstrates the interrelatedness of these topics, we offer an intriguing overview of the present state of service innovation research. Future research can overcome this shortcoming by incorporating many techniques in bibliometric analysis, such as bibliographic coupling co-wording, and co-authorship, to investigate and offer sub-themes in the research that will be more convincing. In particular, the bibliographic coupling can help discover new directions suitable to enterprises’ innovation conditions in the current context.

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