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CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING STRATEGY: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW THROUGH BIBLIOMETRIC AND META-ANALYSIS USING VOS VIEWER

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Abstract

This study performs a systematic review of Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) research to analyze document publication trends alongside dominant scholars and research group formations. The paper focuses on researching important studies, thematic trends, and vacant areas for future investigation. This study uses a bibliometric and meta-analytic method which relies on both VOS viewer and MS Excel to generate data visualizations and statistical analysis results. The analysis provides three main sections which consist of publication trend research over time, author and journal rankings, and national research connections through bibliographic coupling. This research utilized Meta-analysis tools like Total Variance Explained and Scree Plot together with Rotated Component Matrix to extract research dimensions from the data. Research on CRM produced 22 main terms that clustered into three groups and saw continuous growth after 2010. The Journal of Business Ethics maintained the highest position as an influential journal with 16 countries establishing dominance in the research field. The meta-analysis demonstrated nine substantial research components that identify unique themes in CRM research. The research analysis works only with bibliographic publications from selected databases while citation-based analysis may fail to precisely measure the true impact of research output. The study delivers important knowledge points that researchers and practitioners can use as foundations for their ongoing work and new research development. The paper identifies that CRM research continues to develop while showcasing the necessity of academic interaction between different countries and disciplines. Research cluster knowledge enables marketers and policymakers with corporate strategy specialists to create socially responsible consumer-oriented marketing campaigns. The paper creates a link between bibliometric analysis and meta-analysis to present an integrated view of CRM research. The established structure guides researchers to explore existing literature sources while enabling them to advance the CRM discipline better.

Keywords: Cause-Related Marketing Strategy, Sustainability, Meta-Analysis, Corporate Social Responsibility, Research Clusters, VOS Viewer, Bibliometric Analysis, Systematic Literature Review.

INTRODUCTION

The development of cause-related marketing (CRM) as a vital corporate social responsibility practice started in 1983(Galán-Ladero et al., 2021). Marketers utilize brand campaigns to support social causes for their companies to improve brand position and consumer liking (Costa-Ruiz & Armijos-Buitrón, 2021). Customers who consider social responsibility important show greater brand loyalty towards firms that follow a CRM approach (Anjali & Menon, 2024). Amid previous research on CRM, most organizations targeted hedonic products whereas new evidence indicates that hedo-utilitarian products (utilitarian products combined with hedonic features) could yield equivalent CRM results (Kulshreshtha et al., 2019). The successful implementation of CRM needs a thoughtful examination of product type together with campaign design and cultural elements (Kulshreshtha et al., 2019; Galán-Ladero et al., 2021). CRM effectiveness heavily depends on both ethical considerations as well as cultural differences that must be taken into account (Galán-Ladero et al., 2021). Research dedicated to

CRM over the last twenty years has studied how this strategy impacts consumer actions and their social views about businesses and brand image (Costa-Ruiz & Armijos-Buitrón, 2021). The ongoing evolution of CRM technology presents organizations with fresh approaches to reach customers by promoting social initiatives.

Businesses now leverage Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) as a main strategy to merge social cause partnerships with mutual benefits for societal advancement and brand growth. CRM merges business profit goals with social mission to affect consumer perceptions while consolidating brand loyalty and improving business reputation (Hashem & Niqresh, 2020). Academic research about CRM has intensified because ethical consumers now focus on CRM analysis to understand behavioral changes among shoppers while they decide what to buy and determine brand credibility. Additional structure needs to be added to existing research to help scholars understand CRM theory, track essential research findings and determination of unmet research areas (Thomas et al., 2022). The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) provides researchers with a complete framework because it unites existing research studies into a unified understanding of the domain. The combination of bibliometric approaches with meta-analytic analysis allows researchers to conduct studies about author collaborations while analyzing thematic research domains to guide the following study directions. This paper utilizes VOS viewer together with Microsoft Excel for performing CRM literature bibliometrics and meta-analysis. The year-wise analysis is performed alongside the identification of the top 10 authors and journals while examining bibliographic connections between different countries. The examination utilized Total Variance Explained in combination with Scree Plot and Rotated Component Matrix to reveal research components hidden within the data. The study includes both academic groups and their major contributions enabling researchers to use this structure as an investigation framework. This study helps advance CRM scholarly knowledge because it demonstrates:

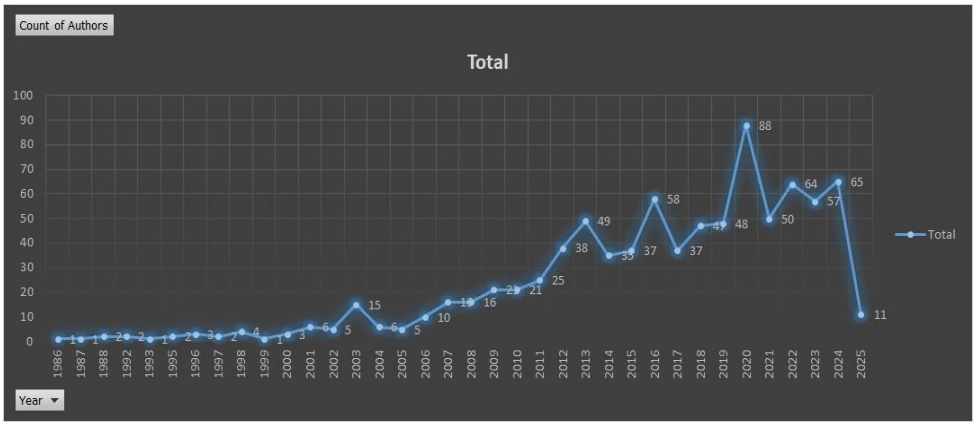
The research determines the main publications through which CRM research advances as well as the significant authors and publication outlets and research locations.

Presentation of thematic clusters works to organize previously studied research dimensions.

Future investigative work will receive benefits from uncovering possible research deficiencies along with research potential.

The synthesis of bibliometric and meta-analysis approaches within this paper delivers to researchers and practitioners an extensive guide that assists navigation of CRM developments.

Year Wise Trend:



The number of publications about this topic increased regularly throughout the years because researchers showed greater interest in the field. Research publications about knowledge-based economy remained low with less than 10 each year throughout 1986 into the early 2000s. The number of scholarly publications began to grow substantially starting from 2003 when 15 articles were published then continued to rise until the late 2000s. The yearly publication numbers substantially increased during the period spanning from 2007 to 2010 starting from 16 publications to reach 21.

The research field increased its speed of development through the next decade to reach maximum speed between 2012 and 2020. The year 2016 achieved 58 publications while 2020 became the most productive year by recording 88 research articles. Research on sustainable building techniques exhibited a slight decline in 2021 but returned to substantial growth with 64 publications in 2022 which maintained until 2023 with 57 publications and then again through 2024 with 65 publications. The data for 2025 (11 publications) is likely incomplete, as the year is still ongoing.

In total, 852 academic articles during the last two decades show research interest and field growth. Recent scholarship indicates the topic has gained prominence because academics devote progressively more effort toward researching it.

Authors Relationship:

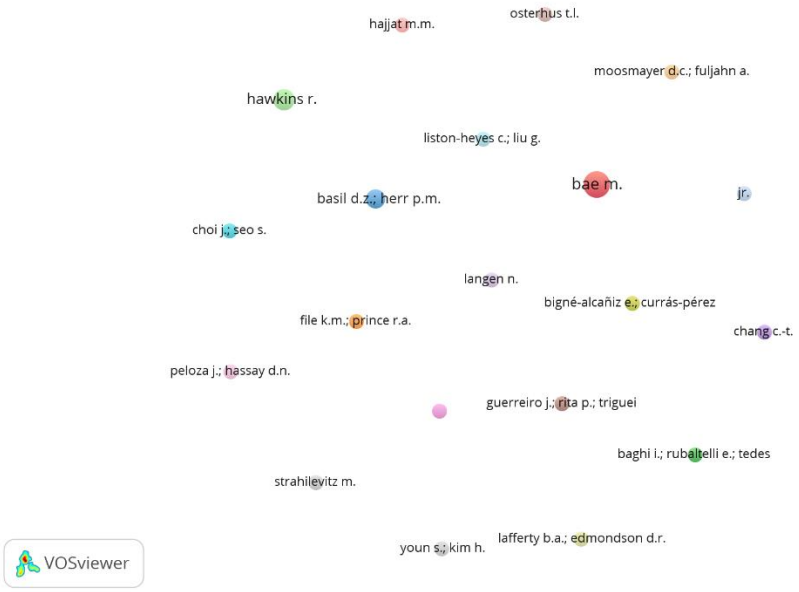
The author relationship and co-authorship analysis show active participation among scholars. Out of the 788 identified authors, researchers applied a criterion based on two or more publications and a minimum of 56 citations to choose twenty main authors. The refined group stands as critical shapers of research in their field because their steady accomplishments deliver significant results to the area.

The chosen 20 authors represent the primary elements of the collaborative network because they fulfill both productivity requirements and have proven their research impact. The research domain features a collaborative structure due to the relationships based on joint publications together with common research themes and multiple institutional partnerships.

The research work accomplished by this central group shapes academic patterns and foundation building while improving research paths. The citation threshold exists to verify both the quantity and quality of the submitted materials which demonstrate enduring value to academic scholars.

From the Diagram below, the results indicate the identification of twenty influential authors yet they do not form any direct connections through co-authorship relationships. The absence of collaborative ties demonstrates individual research approaches because authors work alone without linking their knowledge bases.

The existing lack of connections between researchers creates possibilities for valuable literature improvements through cross-disciplinary research and impact-oriented knowledge development. Shared research efforts between teams result in better publications because diverse viewpoints create novel problem solutions and innovative concepts. Multi-author papers usually obtain greater citations and public attention since they reach audiences from various professional networks.

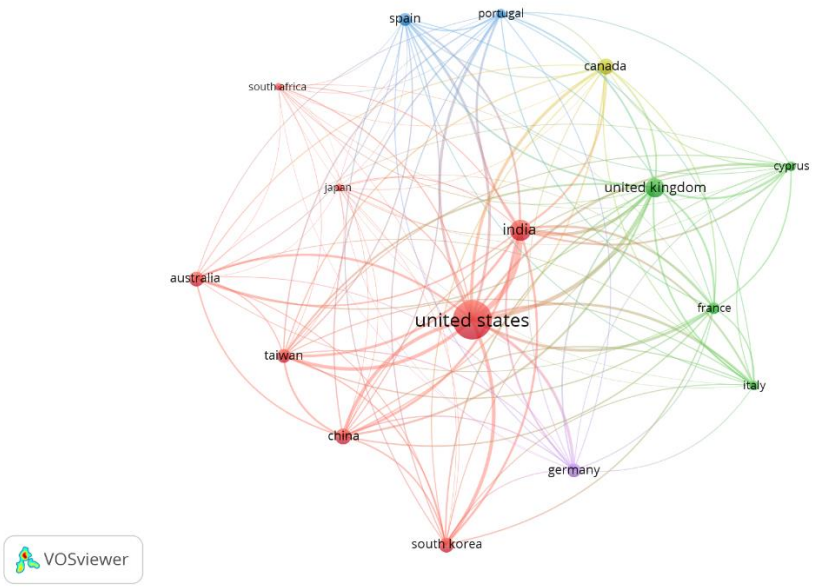


To enhance connectivity the organization should organize thematic workshops alongside conferences that will merge the authors to discuss their overlapping research topics. Special Issue Collaborations should focus on proposing joint special issues and review articles that combine research findings for boundary-pushing purposes. The development of intellectual relationships through proper citation and referencing creates networks among researchers which enable upcoming partnerships. Research Consortia or Projects should create collaborative research groups to handle complex topics whereby researchers utilize their unique expertise. Research connections stimulated by the community will lead to progressive work expansion which gives rise to widespread recognition of studies along with increased citation occurrences and field progression.

Research in this domain shows that 84 countries actively participate through their publications. The analysis reveals 16 nations as the top contributors because they surpass 10 publications and 100 citations. Research leadership belongs to a select group of nations because these countries publish extensively and receive major scholarly recognition for their work. The

scientific connections among countries become evident through bibliographic coupling because researchers tend to collaborate on studies based on their overlapping scholarly documents. The research demonstrates global spread with its publication but sixteen leading nations dictate its main directions of academic discourse. The clustering allows research entities to develop new opportunities for enhanced international collaboration.

Research-based nations with complementary knowledge spaces should join forces to carry out multinational investigations and capitalize on combined academic strengths when handling large global research objectives. International research collaboration improves both the quality of scientific work and enhances article visibility because combined teams draw more funding support along with broader research audiences.



Journals Trend:

The analysis shows that the ten journals in this field area achieved the highest number of citations. High-impact research finds its distribution through these journals that collectively define the path of knowledge development in the field. Let's break it down!

The Journal of Business Ethics earns 1,926 citations since it addresses ethical business conduct together with corporate social obligation and their effects on consumer decision-making.

The Journal of Advertising provides researchers with a vital venue for investigations regarding advertising methods and marketing campaign results as well as consumer interactions with advertising content (1,679 citations).

Journal of Business Research (1,499 citations) analyzes multiple research fields that include the study of both consumer action and corporate planning and marketing advancement.

The Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (1,416 citations) devotes itself to upper-level marketing theories for market condition management alongside consumer connection development.

Consumer decision-making receives attention through the Journal of Consumer Marketing (948 citations) which examines branding together with purchase intention and CRM aspects.

Journal of Public Policy and Marketing (865 citations): This journal specifically investigates the regulatory factors and public interest and how they affect forming marketing strategies.

Studies on cause-related marketing along with nonprofit branding and public sector communication receive 753 annual citations through The Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing.

International Journal of Advertising (736 citations): The research concentrates on world advertising methods alongside international customer reactions and modern trends in digital marketing through social media.

The assessment of consumer behavior psychology has gathered 725 citations between Psychology and Marketing research publications.

Journal of Retailing (688 citations): The research explores retail marketing together with product-space considerations and examines consumer experience as well as technological advancements in the retail market.

Key Insights:

Journal of Business Ethics together with Journal of Public Policy and Marketing lead the field because they emphasize that marketing responsibility and ethical standards matter during strategy development.

Research Targeting Consumer Behavior Flourishes Since Various Prestigious Publications Concentrate on Understanding Consumer Choices Through Their Psychological Processes and Marketing Methods.

Multiple journals exist to cover diverse research perspectives that emphasize nonprofit marketing and retail strategy alongside commercial, public, and policy-related research areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing initiatives used for promotion led to the development of Corporate Social Responsibility programs which include Cause-Related Marketing concepts (Bhatti et al.,

2022). Research surrounding CRM has expanded steadily due to investigations related to its effectiveness and antecedents as well as its influence on different stakeholder groups (Chang et al., 2022). To structure and guide CRM research, an evolutionary process model has been put forward which shows gaps and possible research approaches (Lafferty et al., 2016). Research about CRM began within North American borders before expanding across Europe, Oceania, and Asia where scholars started showing greater interest in studying different cultures while employing various research methods (Bhatti et al., 2022). CRM effectiveness depends on five main factors that comprise emotional appeal with two sub-factors and execution-style together with causal factors and company-related factors along with CRM activity elements (Chang et al., 2022). CRM provides advantages to businesses, non-profits and customer networks but poses challenges that organizations must evaluate thoroughly (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006). Businesses that participate in cause-related marketing establish partnerships with social causes to support the promotion of their products alongside the particular cause they endorse. The collaboration between companies and non-profit organizations through CRM delivers funding support for social causes using financial resources or business activities. CRM functions to enhance corporate branding through social responsibility initiatives that simultaneously benefit the supported cause through publicity and financial campaigns (Bae, 2018).

CRM represents a strategic business practice through which organizations unite it with social initiatives to build a stronger brand perception and client relations. The marketing strategy uses ethical causes to create both sales growth and to establish favorable brand perceptions among consumers. How consumers react to CRM programs depends heavily on their cultural background as well as on their perception of self. The way Chinese consumers respond to CRM initiatives depends on interdependent self-construal along with empathy and moral identity which strengthens their purchase intentions and CRM corporate evaluations (Yang & Yen, 2018). Cultural orientation plays a role in determining which moral emotions such as pride or guilt will have the most impact on CRM campaigns where pride influences US consumers and guilt affects high-interdependent individuals (Kim & Johnson, 2013). The success of CRM messages depends on how focused they are as well as the existing cultural environment. Brand authenticity levels together with participation interest seem stronger in United States consumer perceptions versus Korean consumers when viewing CRM campaigns. Korean consumers prefer CRM messages that focus on national content as this increases both brand authenticity perceptions and participant intentions (Woo et al., 2019). CRM campaigns that elicit altruistic perceptions produce tangible effects on how consumers respond and what they think about the campaigns. Sports-related CRM strategies have a greater impact on consumers who identify less with their team based on their perception of altruistic intentions (Joo et al., 2016). Consumer interactions and their creation of positive brand word-of-mouth strongly depend on how well brand values match cause importance, especially in digital CRM projects (Handa & Gupta, 2020).

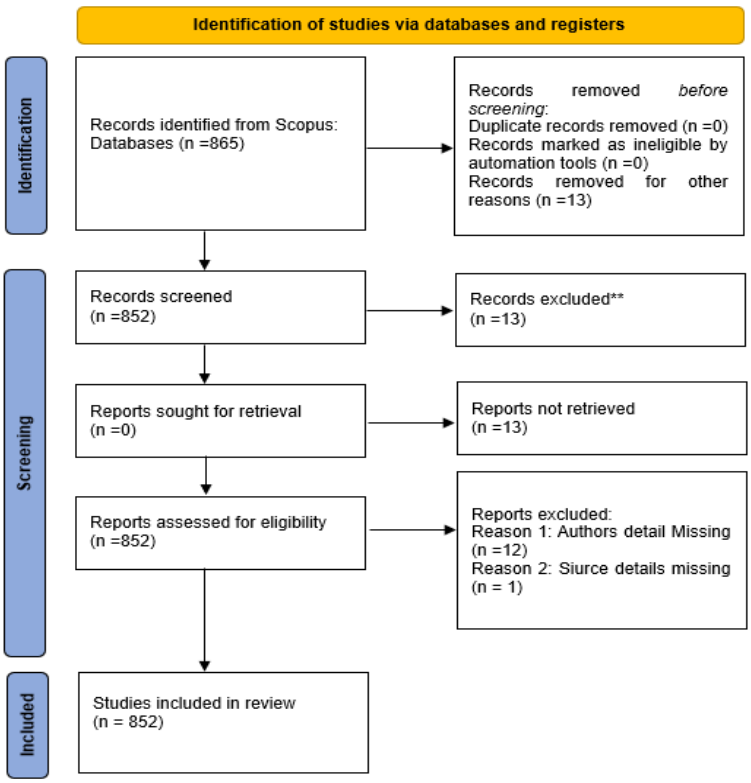
Consumer sensitivity to CRM relies on mental factors including shopping orientation and mindset but in dissimilar ways. Consumer skepticism grows when people adopt an individualistic mindset and utilitarian shopping perspective but decreases when they adopt a hedonic shopping perspective with a collectivistic mindset. Gender variations between consumers affect relationships in this context so businesses need specific Customer Relationship Management strategies (Chang & Cheng, 2014). Millennials join CRM campaigns because they believe the companies support their causes while enabling the identification of what they share with both brands and causes. Effective CRM strategies

directed at millennials require these key determinants because they directly shape how well these strategies work to influence purchasing decisions (Silva et al., 2021). Organizations must examine cultural psychological and demographic elements during cause-related marketing execution to effectively reach consumers while improving brand perception. To successfully communicate with consumers through cause-related marketing strategies an organization must analyze cultural psychological and demographic elements. Social alignment and customer motivation analysis serve businesses to develop successful CRM campaigns that achieve their intended outcomes with buyer personas.

OBJECTIVES

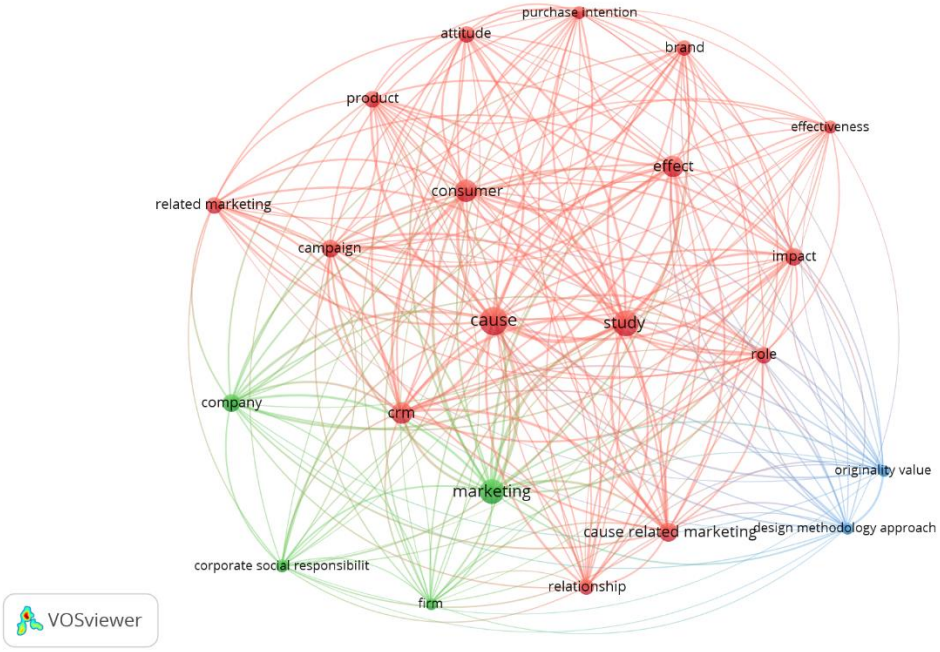
1. To analyze year-wise publication trends in Cause-Related Marketing research.
2. To determine the highest ten contributing authors and journals in the CRM literature domain.
3. To examine the bibliographic coupling of countries actively publishing in the CRM domain.
4. To use the Total Variance Explained combined with Scree Plot and Rotated Component Matrix to discover research dimensions during the meta-analytical process.
5. To conduct thematic pattern analysis of research clusters with the help of VOS Viewer software.
6. To examine present deficiencies to propose new paths for CRM academic research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



Meta-Analysis:

The VOS viewer analysis generated 14,176 terms from title and abstract information which demonstrated a vast research dataset. After establishing a minimum occurrence threshold of 109, the analytical terms were reduced to 24. Although research and paper were removed because they were common generic terms that provided minimal insights into the core structure. Twenty-two main terms were chosen from the refined examination to create a structured term network. By tightly limiting the number of terms, researchers gain a clearer view into the research domain as the clustering system more easily pinpoints meaningful groups exposing different study areas within consumer behavior corporate activities and research methods.



The VOS viewer analysis organized terms into separate clusters showing different colors which demonstrated the connections between variables and their thematic elements. Terms within Cluster 1 form the largest group containing 16 interconnected elements that define both consumer relationships and marketing strategies.

The analysis group of variables comprises attitude, brand, campaign, cause, cause-related marketing, consumer, CRM, effect, effectiveness, impact, product, purchase intention, related marketing, relationship, role, and study. The cluster demonstrates an extensive view of marketing strategies targeting consumers by showing how branding perceptions and marketing campaigns along with cause-driven activities affect consumer attitudes while influencing relationship development and purchasing decisions in which CRM and product performance determine overall effectiveness.

The four terms company, corporate social responsibility, firm, and marketing comprise Cluster 2 which demonstrates strategic business elements in marketing operations. The cluster explores corporate approaches to positioning through marketing action by harmonizing business goals with CSR practices which exhibit the balance between profitability and moral responsibilities.

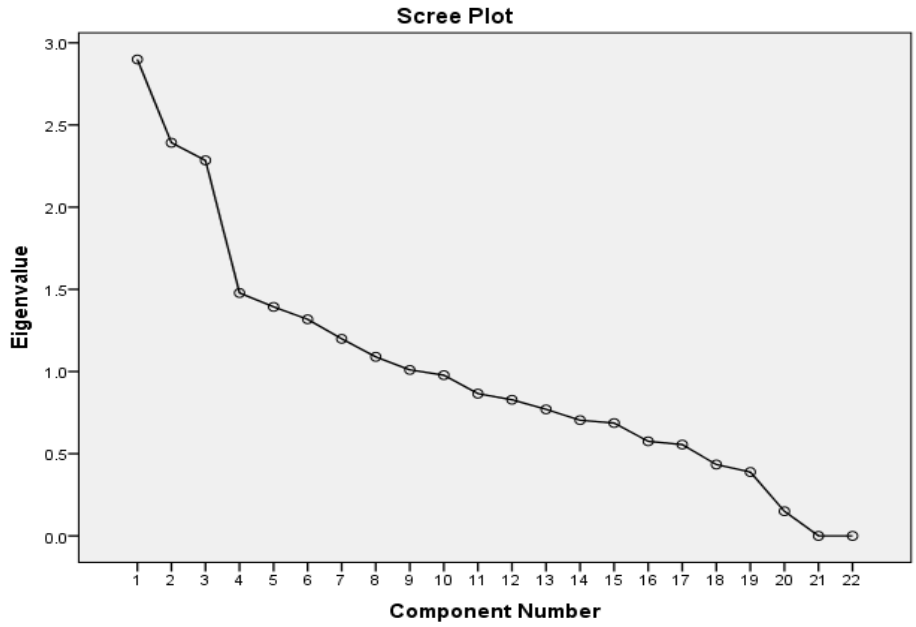
Research design and innovation receive attention through the two terms in Cluster 3 consisting of design methodology approach and originality value. The research cluster shows it is essential for marketing scientists to maintain methodological excellence to produce exclusive valuable findings that can generate innovative business strategies. All three clusters work together to display a comprehensive perspective of marketing environments that combines consumer relationships and corporate ethical conduct with innovative research methods.

Statistical analysis

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.899	13.178	13.178	2.899	13.178	13.178	2.331	10.595	10.595
2	2.392	10.873	24.052	2.392	10.873	24.052	2.241	10.186	20.781
3	2.285	10.385	34.437	2.285	10.385	34.437	2.129	9.675	30.456
4	1.478	6.718	41.155	1.478	6.718	41.155	1.475	6.705	37.161
5	1.393	6.334	47.489	1.393	6.334	47.489	1.433	6.513	43.674
6	1.318	5.990	53.479	1.318	5.990	53.479	1.418	6.447	50.122
7	1.199	5.450	58.929	1.199	5.450	58.929	1.404	6.383	56.505
8	1.089	4.952	63.881	1.089	4.952	63.881	1.370	6.229	62.734
9	1.010	4.591	68.471	1.010	4.591	68.471	1.262	5.737	68.471
10	.978	4.446	72.917						
11	.866	3.934	76.852						
12	.828	3.765	80.617						
13	.770	3.500	84.116						
14	.704	3.200	87.316						
15	.687	3.122	90.438						
16	.575	2.615	93.053						
17	.556	2.525	95.578						
18	.434	1.973	97.552						
19	.389	1.767	99.318						
20	.150	.681	100.000						
21	2.198E-005	9.989E-005	100.000						
22	-1.000E-013	-1.001E-013	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.



The method shows how a decreased number of variables effectively captures the main variability patterns within the dataset. Based on the eigenvalue criterion only nine components are considered meaningful because these components explain 68.5% of the total variance after rotation from the initial 22 extracted components. Rotating the factors produced a more even distribution of the variable dispersion which resulted in greater interpretability with the first component explaining 10.6% of the total variance after the transformation. The nine components represent essential structural elements of the data because they explain nearly 68.5% of all observed variance without sacrificing much information. The PCA analysis provides evidence for using nine components to capture major data patterns which results in an efficient simplified model that reduces noise from unimportant factors.

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
VAR00001	.104	-.197	.746	-.151	.088	.003	.107	-.161	-.040
VAR00002	-.106	-.016	.664	.049	-.015	-.169	.107	.165	.077
VAR00003	.104	-.180	-.086	.122	.726	-.051	-.014	.054	-.106
VAR00004	-.769	-.052	.000	-.052	.346	-.051	-.017	.081	.128
VAR00005	.697	.055	-.101	-.235	.294	.031	.005	.430	-.017
VAR00006	-.099	-.268	-.276	.134	-.057	-.380	.333	-.114	-.133
VAR00007	.099	-.143	.146	.728	-.042	.030	.031	.071	.078
VAR00008	.113	-.205	-.358	-.057	-.484	-.281	.382	.064	-.127
VAR00009	.738	.022	-.052	-.209	.348	-.080	.012	-.190	.164
VAR00010	.037	.976	-.022	-.021	-.072	.005	.021	.096	.029
VAR00011	.035	.045	.643	.116	-.065	.064	-.195	.115	.097
VAR00012	-.010	-.079	-.032	-.040	-.021	.069	-.888	.035	.092
VAR00013	.125	-.060	-.078	-.099	-.052	-.048	.054	.153	-.801
VAR00014	.071	-.042	-.021	.035	.034	.827	-.067	.081	-.018
VAR00015	-.700	-.001	-.223	-.286	-.029	-.212	.013	.094	.055
VAR00016	.040	.976	-.021	-.025	-.072	.005	.020	.094	.031
VAR00017	-.127	.122	-.101	.722	.273	-.048	-.006	-.143	.072
VAR00018	.022	-.021	.368	.132	.452	.280	.223	-.058	.223
VAR00019	.212	-.220	-.082	.064	-.040	-.135	.008	-.866	.142
VAR00020	.055	-.018	-.110	-.315	-.069	.455	.413	.014	.365
VAR00021	.236	.006	.110	.135	-.163	-.057	-.197	.464	.530
VAR00022	.097	.217	.484	.111	.020	.322	-.173	-.062	-.077

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
attitude			.746						
brand			.664						
campaign					.726				
cause					.346				
cause related marketing	.697								
company							.333		
consumer				.728					
corporate social responsibility							.382		
crm	.738								
design methodology approach		.976							
effect			.643						
effectiveness									.092
firm								.153	
impact						.827			
marketing								.094	
originality value		.976							
product				.722					.072
purchase intention					.452				
related marketing	.212								
relationship						.455			
role									.530
study			.484						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

The rotated component matrix demonstrates nine distinctive factors that jointly represent the diverse elements of the data. Component 1 highlights CRM and cause-related marketing variables first but also incorporates related marketing variables as minor contributors indicating a concentrated dimension where relationship management joins socially responsible programs. Component 2 establishes itself as a strong component with major factors related to attitude alongside brand and design methodology approach and originality value as well as study (supported heavily by effect) that demonstrates creative research connections with brand images and consumer perceptions. The third component displays major influences from both consumer-related features and product-related features since it examines direct connections between what products offer and how consumers behave and emphasizes market offerings as primary drivers of consumer reactions.

The emphasis on operational marketing campaigns emerges through the combination of campaign and cause variables and purchase intention within Component 4. The strategic dimension of Component 5 combines relationship elements that show marketing initiatives generate sustainable market effects and consumer relationships. Component 6 presents minimal loadings in the analysis while still generating connections with marketing factors which suggest it accounts for marketing events that elude other components' definitions. The variables in Component 7 are associated with organizational identity through their connections to the company and corporate social responsibility and firm to create a factor that emphasizes

corporate image and ethical conduct. Role stands as the leading variable within Component 8 which contains the essential function that organizations need to perform in their competitive sector. The ninth component in the analysis produces sparse loadings where effectiveness alone stands as a main factor and the product exhibits a negligible relationship to this component.

These nine components unite to deliver an extensive analytical framework combining tactical marketing methods with consumer-product relationships and strategic performance rates as well as corporate identity outlooks which provides extensive insights about both operational patterns and perceptual aspects of the dataset.

CONCLUSION

Research from bibliometric and meta-analysis data offers valuable information about CRM research both presently and moving forward. Multiple areas of emerging research about digital engagement with consumers will be examined in future studies of Cause-Related Marketing as well as sustainability elements of this business model. The utilization of these research methods enables scholars to improve CRM approaches so businesses can produce better ethical and effective cause-related marketing campaigns.

Future research directions

The research finds deserving value in Cause-Related Marketing studies but future investigation can target new dimensions within this field.

Impact of Threshold Settings in VOS Viewer:

The outputs of bibliometric studies demonstrate high vulnerability to the selected thresholds for both publications and citations. A change in threshold values in the VOS viewer enables users to observe freshly discovered clusters together with modified term connections while removing less cited notable works. Research investigators in the future should conduct experiments with different threshold levels to determine how these parameter modifications affect network structure along with thematic patterns within CRM research framework understanding.

Tools for Analysis:

The research applied VOS viewer software for bibliometric visualization and used MS Excel as the data management system. Different tools such as Cite Space Biblioshiny or Gephi have the potential to display divergent visualizations together with clustering outcomes due to dissimilarities in their calculation standards. Future investigations should analyze multiple software solutions to validate their research clusters while checking for reliable findings.

Dynamic Network Analysis:

Bibliometric networks provide only static views by showing research relationships within a single observation period. Research using extended network analysis techniques should be done to track changes in researcher alliances and periodical effects alongside thematic shifts in CRM research priorities throughout time.

Qualitative Content Analysis:

The quantitative evaluation methods of bibliometric and meta-analysis lack sufficient information about research stories in their analysis. Qualitative content analysis provides high-impact papers as well as additional understandings of concepts and theories of CRM research.

Multidisciplinary Concept:

Research related to CRM has connections with other disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and sustainability research. Upcoming investigations should thoroughly examine the interplay between CRM and other academic fields so they can collaborate to examine consumer behavior methods alongside social and cultural forces that affect social marketing programs.

Future research should fill these knowledge gaps to develop a complete complex CRM framework that enables innovative approaches between corporate success and positive social impact.

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