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Unveiling the Intellectual Landscape of Retail Research: A Bibliometric Analysis of Recent Trends and Emerging Themes

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Abstract

The retail sector of today has been witnessing a substantial transformation in recent years. Driven by advancements in technology, fluctuating customer behavior and changing market dynamics, have accelerated the growth of the retail sector. The retailers today are steering omnichannel business through both online and in-location offerings. The study intends to explore the intellectual structure and evolving trends in retail research through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis. The study examines a data set of scholarly articles published between 2014 and 2024 that was obtained from Scopus, to perform the bibliometric analysis. The study offers insights to research scholars. practitioners, and policy makers about the intellectual structure, research gaps and future directions in retail research through visualization techniques

Keywords: Retail research, bibliometric analysis, emerging trends, intellectual landscape, knowledge structure.

1. Introduction

The retail sector has undergone a dramatic transition in the recent years triggered by technological advancements, changes in consumer behaviors and changing dynamics in the market. Customer experience has been improved by the seamless amalgamation of online and offline channels due to the growth of e-commerce and omnichannel retailing (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013).This has lead to tremendous competition among the conventional brick and mortar retailers and the online platforms (FabHR, 2024).In addition, the rapid usage of digital transactions and contactless transactions have gained momentum with mobile wallets and cryptocurrencies becoming very common and popular . The Gen X and the millennials have using digital payments in a great way and payments are increasingly done via UPI, digital wallets, credit cards and debit cards (PineLabs, n.d.)The growth of Artificial intelligence (AI) and personalization have become crucial trends which facilitated retailers to propose customized suggestions and improved shopping experience Furthermore, social commerce and influencer marketing have emerged as integral components of retail strategies, with social media platforms driving product discovery and influencer partnerships (Becdach et al., 2022). Retail companies are now focusing on sustainability practices and the concept of experiential retail has gained significant traction, with customers looking for eco-friendly products and immersive store experiences (How retailers are embracing sustainability & making A difference this world environment day 2024). Due to the vast changes with respect to practises adopted by retails firms and changing preferences of the customers, the present study is aimed at addressing the following research questions.

RQ1: To classify the most significant authors, institutions, and countries in retail research.

RQ2: To envisage the knowledge structure of retail research through co-authorship and keyword co-occurrence analysis.

RQ3: To uncover emerging trends and themes in retail research

2. Literature Review: Contemporary Trends in the Retail Sector

There have been substantial changes in the retail sector due to the influx of advancements in technology, changing customer needs and growing trends in the market. Omnichannel retailing is most popular trend which is appealing to consumers which offers multiple avenues for shopping. Research studies have shown that customer loyalty and retention has been increased by omnichannel retailing (Grewal et al., 2017). Using various technologies like Artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and

Internet of things (IoT) have increased operations and customer engagement (Brynjolfsson et al., 2018). This implies impact of the digital transformation in the retail sector. Today's consumers are very much particular about health and the practices adopted by the firms in preserving the environment. One of their top priorities is to buy eco-friendly products and engage in socially responsible practices while making (Kang et al., 2019). Firms engage in creating immersive experiences in order to initiate customer loyalty and promotion (Kim et al., 2019).

Personalized experiences and endorsements are offered to the consumer with help of data analytics (Wang et al., 2019). There has been greater shift in buying behavior of the consumer post COVID-19 pandemic. Customers are habituated to online mode of shopping, with amount of money spend on online retailing account to 37% of total retail spend compared to 27% in pre-pandemic time (Deloitte, 2021). 90% of consumers prefer a digitally enhanced shopping journey (Deloitte, 2021). Artificial Intelligence has played a pivotal role in transforming the retail ecosystem by introducing a new age of unique insights and unlimited opportunities. American Retail giants like Amazon have started employing AI in their business operations and other players like Walmart and Target also investing in AI to improve their operational efficiency (Srivastava, 2024). Customer support is further augment by use of Chatbots and virtual assistants for customer support (Huang & Chen, 2018). Use of AI and machine learning technologies have helped in better demand forecasting and inventory management with help of predictive analytics (Brynjolfsson et al., 2018). Other commendable achievements are personalized recommendations using machine learning (Wang et al., 2019) and Computer vision for inventory tracking and security (Kim & Lee 2019). This study conducts a detailed and systematic review of recent trends in the retail sector and perform a quantitative analysis with the aid of bibliometric analysis. This study attempts to analyze the trends in the retail ecosystem and the quantitative analysis of research publications over the period, the most productive journals and the most influential research papers.

3. Methodology

Bibliometric study investigates the statistical behavior over time regarding the familiarity about a particular subject and providing logical results which includes trends and themes of research for developing new endeavors (Pérez Matos,2002). For addressing the research questions in the study, the authors have applied the bibliometric study based on the framework suggested by Donthu et al., 2021. The research community uses a such type of study to understanding the emerging trends in article and performance of journals, investigating the research elements and patterns of collaboration and also to gauge the academic development of a specific area in the prevailing literature (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, & Lim, 2021; Verma & Gustafsson, 2020; Donthu et al.,2021). To identify various publications for conducting bibliometric analysis, the data was extracted from Scopus database. A Scopus is a "comprehensive, multidisciplinary, trusted abstract and citation database". Scopus database contains up to 80 million documents, 234,000 books, 7,000 publishers across the globe. The current study focuses on research literature pertaining to academic fields such as Retail along with the contemporary trends in the retail sector. The search query applied was TITLE (retail AND trends OR " Retail supply chain" OR "Retail marketing") AND PUBYEAR > 2013 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ch") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "cp")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

The main objective of the study was to obtain the most relevant and influential journals in the area of the retail. The search query resulted in 152 documents which were the most influentials articles related to the trends in retail domain.

The authors have cleaned the publications the 'titles' to undertake a detailed contemporary study. At first the authors got 554 documents. Then authors limited the time period between 2014 to 2024 which yielded 324 documents. This followed by confining the research to the subject area " Business Management and Accounting" which resulted in Then took document type and got 99 articles. Then took language and got 94 articles.

Table 1: Methodology Adopted for Bibliometric Analysis

Search and inclusion-exclusion criteria	Exclude	Include
Search term and criteria		
Search engine: 'Scopus'		
Search date: 2024		

Search term: 'retail' AND 'trends' OR' Retail Supply Chain' OR' Retail Marketing'		554
Time period: 2014 to 2024	228	326
Subject area: Business Management and Accounting	159	167
Document category: 'Article", 'Book chapter' and 'Conference paper'	12	155
Language of documents: 'include documents published in English only'	3	152

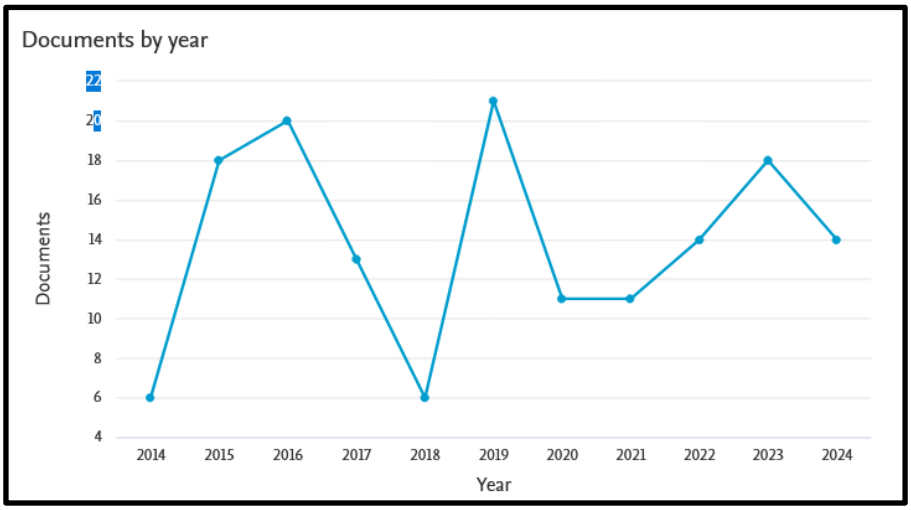
3 Results

3.1 Performance analysis of research in Retail Ecosystem

3.1.1Publication activity of research in Retail Ecosystem

When we analyze the number of the publications in the area of retail domain, it shows a gradual increase from six publications in 2014 and it has reached its peak to 21 in 2019 and again there is an increase in publications to 18 in 2023 and in so far 14 articles have been published in 2024.This shows a positive sign , which implies that researchers are keen in exploring the latest trends in the retail segment.

Figure 1: Publications trends in Retail Research over the years



3.1.2 Prominent Journals, contributors, institutions, and countries of research in Retail Ecosystem

The international journals which are published prominently in the domain is presented in Figure 3 The Journal of retailing and consumer services is the leading journal with maximum no of citations of 418(Cite Score: 20.4) followed by Journal of business logistics with citations of 64 (Cite Score: 14.4). This shows there are only few journals which conduct quality research in the area of Retail but based on citations it can be inferred that quality of work in the domain is significantly high. Though contribution of work by authors in the area of retail is very less but noteworthy. The journals which have published prominently in the retail domain are presented in Table 2. Grant,D.B and Grower N with 3 publications and others having 2 publications each(Figure 2). Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of authors across 19 countries with USA, India, China and UK stand out with 42,27, 15 and 12 documents respectively. The most significant university is the university of Tehran,,Iran with 219 citations followed by Chalmers university of technology, Gothenburg, Sweden with 32 citations. Similarly, other institutions are of the utmost productive in terms of publications count based on collected citations.

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Table 2: Leading Journals

Sl.No	Journals	documents	TC
1	Journal of retailing and consumer services	4	418
2	Journal of business logistics	4	64
3	International journal of retail and distribution management	4	56
4	Handbook of research on strategic supply chain management in the retail industry	4	16
5	Developments in marketing science: proceedings of the academy of marketing science	4	3

Note: TC- total publications

Figure 2 Contributions from top authors

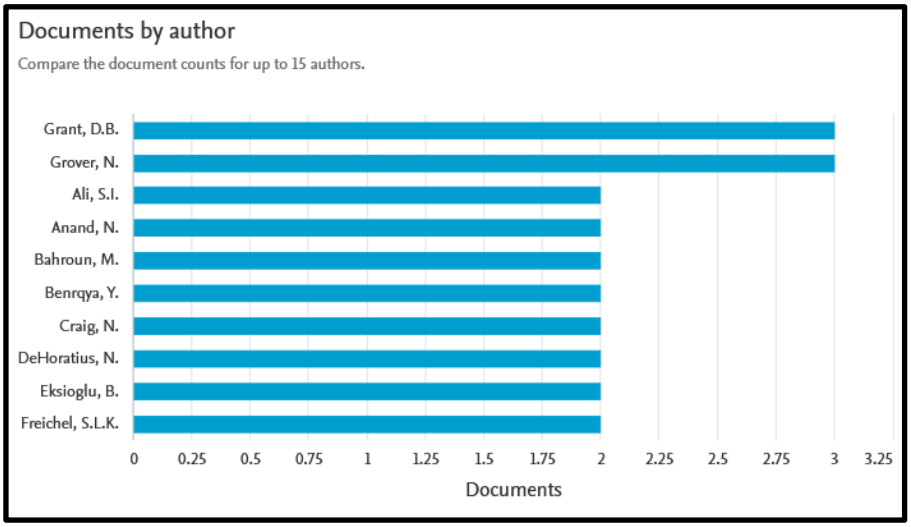

Figure 3: Prominent countries publishing in the area of Retail sector

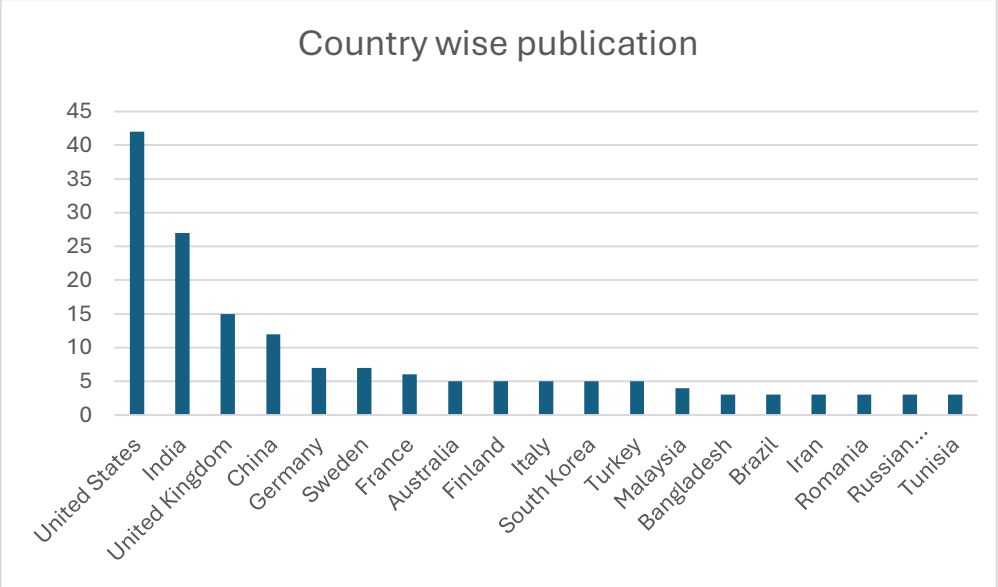

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Table 3: Prominent Institutions publishing in the area of Retail sector

Sl.No	Institution	TP	TC
1	School of industrial engineering, college of engineering, university of tehran, tehran, iran	2	219
2	Department of technology management and economics, chalmers university of technology, gothenburg, sweden	2	32
3	Catholic university eichstätt-ingolstadt, ingolstadt, germany	2	17
4	Th köln, cologne university of applied sciences, cologne, germany	2	17
5	University of petroleum and energy studies, india	2	1

Note: TC- total publications, TP- total publications

3.2 Scholarly and Significant architecture of research in Retail Domain

3.2.1 Knowledge foundations of research in Retail Domain

The knowledge foundations of a particular field are depicted by the semantic linkages of by the semantic linkages of co-cited references determined by co-citation analysis (Donthu et al., 2021).In a co-citation network , two publications are connected they occur in the reference list of another publication and helps to find Identifies core themes and seminal works that form the basis of research in a particular field. The co-citation map of references mentioned at least three times by the articles in the review corpus are presented in figure 4. There were 49 references cited with respect to trends in retail sector. From the citation analysis it was clear that there were 3 clusters formed and appropriate names based on references were given based on the most references belonging to them. The first cluster was explaining the models and frameworks used in assessing the ability of retail supply chains, hence it was named as "*Assessing capabilities of Retail supply chain".* The second cluster was identified as *"Identifying factors for improving Retail Supply chain performance "* focusing on methods applied for determining the main components required for improving performance of retail supply chains. The third cluster was deliberating on various strategies to be adopted by firms for betterment of supply chains, thus it was described as *Adopting appropriate strategies for improving Retail Supply chain.*

Figure 4. Co-citation analysis of highly cited references used in research papers on Retail domain

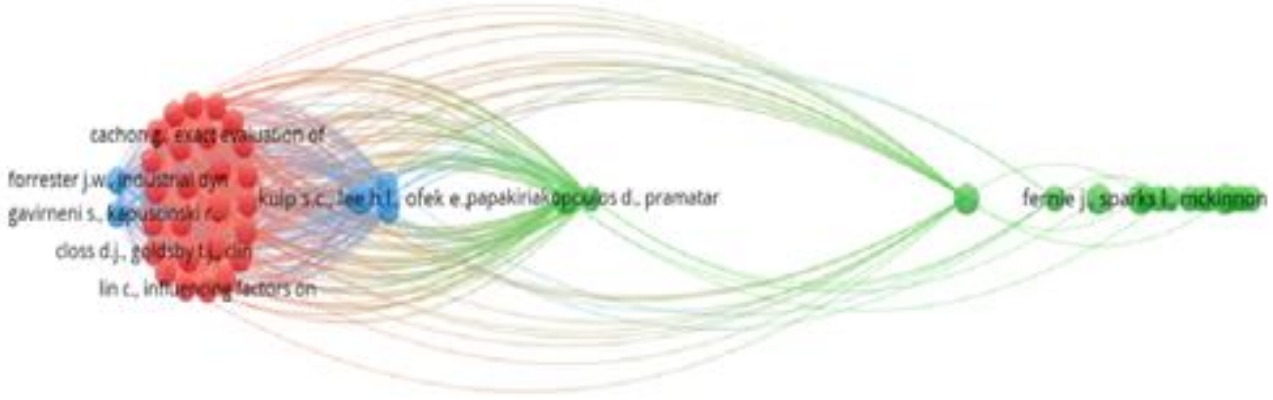

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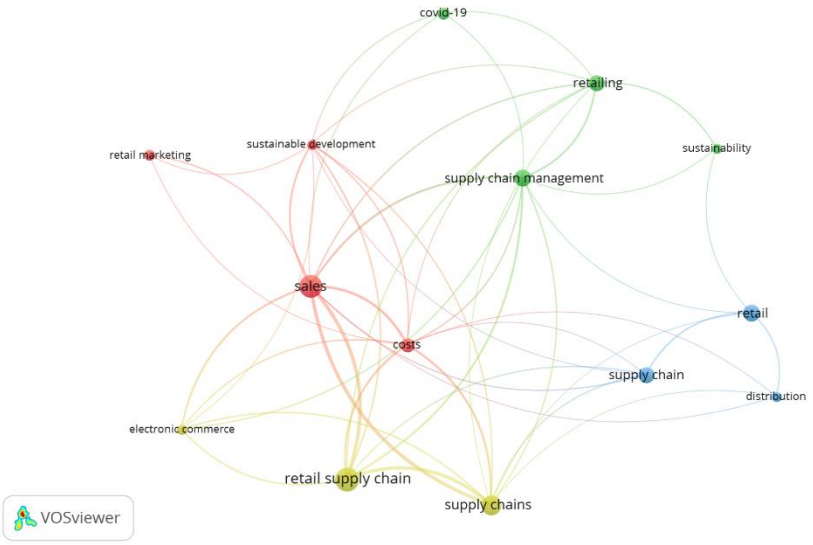
Table 4 Co-citation network analysis clusters

Sl. No	Clusters	Select Citations
1	**Assessing capabilities** of Retail supply chain	Aviv, 2007, Walters, 2007, Rosenzweig et al., 2003.
2	Identifying factors for improving **Retail Supply chain performance**	Fernie et al., (2010). Lorentz & Lounela, 2011,Fisher et al., 2015,
3	Adopting **appropriate strategies** for improving Retail Supply chain	Ramdas et al., 2000, Vickery et al., 2003, Kulp et al., 2004,

3.2.2 Thematic trends in Retail Domain

There was a total of 726 keywords and only 14 them have satisfied the minimum number of occurrence threshold of 5. There were three clusters out of 4 clusters were found suitable based on the figure 5. The three clusters were appropriately named based on the group of keywords belonging to them.

Figure 5. Cluster of Keywords of research on trends in Retail Sector



The first cluster named as "*Achieving excellence in omni channel retail"* had three keywords namely Retail marketing, Sales , Sustainable development. The second cluster, termed as "Enhancing Supply Chain Agility Amidst COVID-19" contained four keywords including Covid 19,Retail,Supply chain and Sustainability . The third cluster was labelled as" Evolution of supply chains in retail sector" had three keywords Electronic commerce, Supply chains and Retail Supply chain

Table 5: Clusters of Keywords of research on trends in Retail Sector

Clusters	Keywords	Frequency	Total link strength
Achieving excellence in omni channel retail	Retail marketing	6	4
	Sales	9	32
	Sustainable development	24	64

		5	16
Enhancing Supply Chain Agility Amidst COVID-19	Covid 19	7	4
	Retail	14	8
	Supply chain	12	11
	Sustainability	5	4
Evolution of supply chains in retail sector	Electronic commerce	5	16
	Supply chains	18	50
	Retail Supply chain	26	52

3.2.3 Word cloud analysis

Word clouds provide a visual representation of word frequency, with text size corresponding to the frequency of term occurrence in the analyzed material. This visualization technique helps identify the central themes and concepts in written text (Atenstaedt, 2012). In bibliometric research, word clouds reveal key areas of focus by highlighting the most prominent words. Conversely, smaller text indicates potential research gaps and future study directions (Mulay et al., 2020). By converting text into tagged words, word clouds enable the analysis of relative word importance through varying font sizes and colors, providing a concise visual summary (Mulay et al., 2020)."

Figure 6: Word cloud Analysis, Articles from 2014 to 2024

The “word cloud” is a unique way of representing the vital topics in the area of retail, by analyzing their trends and patterns, used in research. The analysis was done in an opensource scientometric software called scientoply. The results of the word cloud analysis is presented in figure 6. The keywords” Retail” Supply Chain”,COVID-19, Sustainability appear evident which in the cloud which indicate that these words are most frequently used in literature.

Conclusion

The study on retail research conducted a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of scholarly articles published between 2014 and 2024, focusing on key themes and trends in the retail sector. The analysis revealed prominent keywords such as 'Retail,' 'Supply Chain,' 'COVID-19,' and 'Sustainability,' indicating the prevalent topics in the literature. By employing visualization techniques like word cloud analysis, the study provided a visual representation of the intellectual structure of retail research, highlighting central themes and potential research gaps for future exploration

The research aimed to identify emerging themes and knowledge foundations in the retail domain through co-citation analysis, shedding light on core themes and seminal works that form the basis of research in this field Through performance analysis of research in the retail ecosystem, the study observed a gradual increase in publications over the years, indicating a growing interest among researchers in exploring the latest trends in the retail segment

Overall, the study contributes valuable insights to research scholars, practitioners, and policymakers by offering a detailed examination of the evolving trends and emerging themes in retail research, guiding future research directions in the dynamic retail industry**.**

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