

## Exploring Co-Creation and Service Failures: A Bibliometric Study

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### Abstract

*Co-production is the collaborative process where employees and customers work together to find solutions and contribute their creativity to products and services while service failure, particularly co-created service failure, refers to a situation in which both the service provider and the customer share responsibility for the failure of a service. This approach acknowledges that interactions between service providers and customers contribute to the production of services, with both parties influencing the overall quality and success of the service. This paper aims to investigate the interrelationships among co-creation, coproduction, and service failure, with a specific focus on conducting a bibliometric analysis within these domains. The study of co-creation and service failures research from 2001 to September 2023 identified 1,289 authors across 531 articles, showcasing the multidisciplinary nature of this research with a preference for collaborative efforts. It finds 181 authors engaged in multiple research projects, and four thematic clusters emerged, emphasizing collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and various aspects of co-creation and service failure research, contributing to the understanding of these concepts in diverse contexts with potential implications for the evolving digital landscape.*

**Keyword:** Co-production, service failures, research, articles, publications.

### Introduction

‘Imagination is the beginning of creation’ is the quote by George Bernard Shaw. Creation is neither secretive skill nor restricted to an insignificant group of geniuses minds. Co-creation is comprised of Create is defined by the Oxford Learners Dictionary as create something to make something happen or exist and co is defined as together with. The employees and customer come together to find solutions along with their creativity in the products and services. Co-creation, in the context of a business, refers to a product or services design process in which input from consumer plays a central

role from beginning to end. Less specifically, the term is also used for any way in which a business allows consumers to submit ideas, designs or content. In service organization, co-creation states to the service process and the service product; service providers aim to co-create with customers and other actors to create unique services, reduce costs or improve service performance (Oertzen et al., 2018). Co-creation refers to inviting participants to participate in a project or to formulate problem-solving process to harvest a mutually valued outcome. Co-creation is conceptualized as the value created and extracted through the interaction of the firm and the consumer (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). In addition to this value creation is always interactional and that together, the supplier and customers have the opportunity to create value through customized, co-produced offerings (Payne et al., 2008). From traditional business to advanced technologies and informative companies which realized due to good communication between customers and company is a paradigm shift. A low level of contribution in value co-creation in designing product or services, quality control, distribution channel and feedback in traditional business. The pattern of marketing consistently changing from offline to online due to new information technologies and various platforms for interaction and communication correlates with higher involvement of co-creation activities from customers and business. Therefore, there are two roles played as a co-creator as well as consumer by the user of the product and services (Hamidi et al., 2020). Value co-creation progressed in the direction of a co-creation activity due to digitization (Ciasullo et al., 2018; Sharafi et al., 2019) and consumer participation (Martínez-Cañas et al., 2016).

Co-created service failure refers to a condition in which both the service provider and the customer were accountable for the failure or collapse of a service. Co-created service failures distinguish that customers also have responsibility how their service experiences were shaped, in contrast to traditional service failures where the service provider is normally held solely responsible. When a service delivery breakdown or failure is co-created, it means that both the service provider and the service recipient (the consumer) are equally responsible. This approach is based on the notion that interactions between service providers and customers frequently result in the production of services, and that both sides are involved in deciding the overall success and quality of the service.

Customer participation and service failure is an essential aspect of service process management which proceed to introspections on the process with customer involvement and their satisfaction. Bendapudi and Leone (2003) found that when an outcome is not as good as expected because people who choose to co-produce the outcome are more satisfied than are customer those who have not involved. When problems or failures arise during the delivery of a service, it has to do with how energetically customers interact with service providing organisation and how they work together to recover the service. Service failures are defined as obstacles which occur during service delivery that does not meet customer expectations and drops in the established service standards (Zeithaml et al., 2009). These failures can range from minor inconveniences to significant disruptions in the customer's experience. Mattila and Cranage (2005) suggested that consideration of customers to control and how an initial service gets delivered affects their equity evaluations when there is a challenge of service failure.

Dong et al. (2008) considers customer involvement when the service failure itself was co-created. Customers input often used to mechanize the process of detecting service failures, as they prompt to notice while something went wrong. Customers' effective communication is important; however, there is requirement of reporting the issue on time and providing meticulous information to help service providers and to understand loopholes (Smith and Bolton, 2002). Customers' active participation in generating solutions has big impact and influence in the recovery process. Their involvement found instrumental in shaping the recovery process, and their willingness to accept proposed solutions or compromises is a vital part of successful service recovery (McCole et al., 2010). This paper aims to investigate the interrelationships among co-creation, coproduction, and service failure, with a specific focus on conducting a bibliometric analysis within these domains.

### **Review of Literature**

Co-creation of value refers to the process in which a customer and a service provider collaborate, and co-creation of value denotes combined contribution towards value creation by a customer and a business for service recovery (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). By this way, companies seek opportunities to encourage, engage and team up with their customers. The customer's participation to the evaluation of

value resulting from co-creation capabilities in the context of a service failure and recovery suggests that repurchase intentions are positively correlated with equity and affect toward the recovery (Park and Ha, 2016).

A main component of the Vargo and Lusch (2004) proposition is the participation of the customers in value creation process. Enterprises play a key role in the creation of value, whether they are engaged in the production of commodities or the delivery of services. This value might take the shape of offerings that satisfy customers' needs and aspirations, such as goods, services, events, or solutions. 'Passive' customers are customer with neutral state of mind regarding the product. The phrase 'passive' customers refer to people or things that might not actively interact with or enjoy the value that businesses create. They could simply use the good or service without actively adding to its worth. Value depletion through consumption implies to some customers may unintentionally damage or drain the value that was previously generated by the business while utilising or consuming the product or service. This may occur as a result of misuse, wasting, or just simple neglect and criticize it.

There is distinction between two types of resources that have the potential to create value. Operand resources include raw materials, for processing in operation or utilized to produce effects in the product (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). These are usually tangible, inert and passive, and require input from an active agent in order to realise its value potential (Arnould et al., 2006). Operant resources are those employed to accomplish endeavour on operand resources and on other operant resources in direction to create value. Value creation can take various forms, including innovation, quality, convenience, and price competitiveness. These resources are usually intangible, such as knowledge, skills and labour (Arnould et al. 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Although there are various kinds of resources have fundamental value, but the value and potential can be understood by combining them with other resources as intellect of customers. Nevertheless, it is promising to codify and make those operant resources, including the tacit knowledge of the service employees and customer through interaction (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014). This significant shift from product-centric to service-centric marketing considers customers to be “value co-creators” by including innovation, quality, convenience, and price competitiveness (Bendapudi and Leone, 2003; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Many argue that customer value co-creation is critical for marketing success

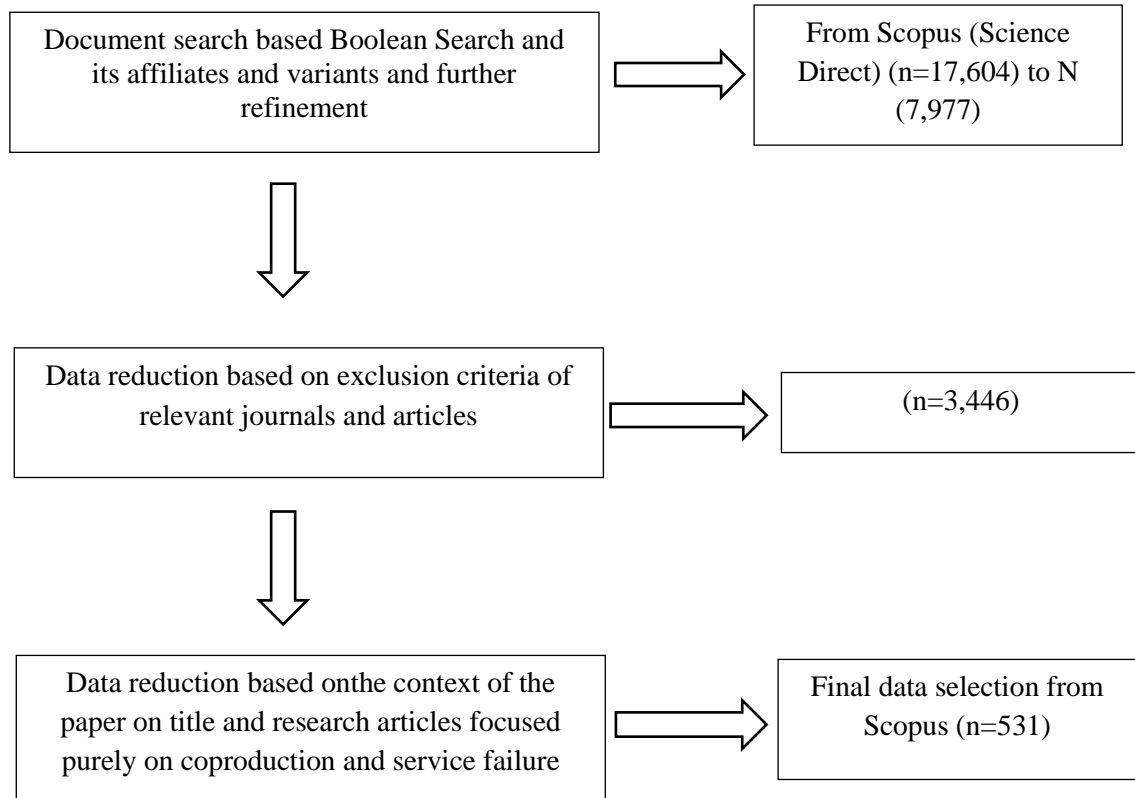
because, under the service-dominant logic, customers are contributing to the process of marketing, consumption and delivery of products/services. This emphasizes the shifts from value addition to value co-creation, products to experiences, value delivery to value propositions, and exchange of operand resources to operant resources (Lusch and Vargo, 2006, Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Moreover, customer co-creation of value benefits customers (e.g., faster speed and lower prices) as well as firms (e.g., enhanced operating efficiencies and greater service value; Claycomb et al., 2001).

## **Methodology**

Bibliometric analysis constitutes an analytical approach employed in the evaluation of publication quality through quantitative methodologies predicated upon the assessment of multiple criteria. This method serves a dual purpose, encompassing the identification of prospective research trajectories and the scrutiny of antecedent scholars' endeavors, while simultaneously elucidating overarching research trends spanning a designated temporal interval. Central to the application of bibliometric analysis is the utilization of assorted software tools designed to elucidate pivotal variables and terms. In this specific study, the data underwent meticulous refinement and analysis through the employment of spreadsheets and VOS viewer. While a multitude of articles addressing bibliometric analysis within the realm of co-creation and service failure are extant, this investigation unearthed a distinct corpus of literature. The primary objective of this paper resides in the comprehensive examination of studies pertaining to co-creation and service failure, along with a deliberate emphasis on forthcoming domains of interest within this thematic domain. The selection of studies possessing transparency and validation underwent a rigorous and transparent selection process. In the pursuit of appropriate keywords for data extraction, a sample of 10 articles sourced from Scopus-indexed journals, which specifically addressed co-creation and service failure, was meticulously chosen. The ensuing analysis entailed the application of a spreadsheet to enumerate the recurrence of words, culminating in the identification of 39 keywords, each accompanied by its respective frequency. Subsequently, these keywords were subjected to a more intricate scrutiny, including an examination of their proximate associations, which culminated in the generation of

thematic clusters. After several iterative refinements, five keywords of paramount significance coalesced, namely "co-creation," "co-created," "co-production," "coproduction," and "service failure." Notably, an assortment of synonymous variants was incorporated to ensure a comprehensive search strategy. The culmination of this preparatory phase culminated in the formulation of a Boolean search query, "co-creation" OR "co-created" OR "coproduction" OR "co-production" AND "service failure," which was subsequently deployed in the Scopus (Science Direct) database as of September 2023. The resultant inquiry yielded a corpus of 17,604 articles, inclusive of contributions emanating from diverse disciplinary domains, including medicine and engineering.

The inclusion and exclusion process of the articles involved an initial exclusion of disciplines such as medicine, agriculture, biosciences, and others, with a subsequent focus on only three specific disciplines: social sciences, business management, and accounting. This meticulous curation yielded a corpus of 8,679 articles. The inclusion criteria were restricted to review papers and research articles, while materials such as case reports and general write-ups were deliberately omitted. This additional screening resulted in the selection of 7,977 pertinent articles. In the subsequent phase of the analysis, a scrutiny of the journal sources was undertaken. Initially, a total of 25 journals emerged from the previous selection process. However, after a comprehensive evaluation, 11 journals were eliminated due to their predominantly generalized content, leaving behind 14 journals directly relevant to the subject of co-creation and service failure. Consequently, a total of 3,446 articles published up to the year 2023 were identified for further examination. During the final curation step, a meticulous assessment of each selected article's title, keywords, and research content was conducted. Articles that did not encompass the key themes of co-created, co-creation, co-production, or service failure were systematically removed from consideration. This rigorous vetting process led to the exclusion of 2,915 articles that did not align with the specific investigative areas of interest. Ultimately, a curated dataset of 531 articles, spanning from the year 2001 to September 2023, was derived for in-depth analysis. These selected articles underwent comprehensive scrutiny, encompassing bibliometric profiling, an examination of their substantive content, and categorization based on the various facets of service failure within the context of co-creation.



**Figure 1. Schematic representation of the systematic literature selection process**

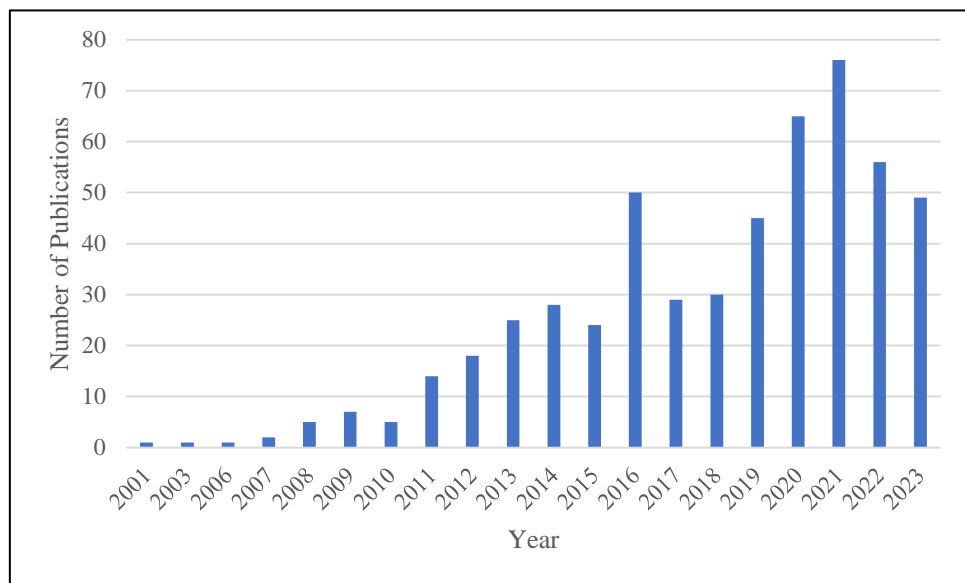
### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis phase involved a comprehensive examination of the article titles, authorship details (including co-authors), and the keywords within the finalized set of journals (n=531). Employing a blended research strategy that integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches, we undertook an in-depth analysis of the dataset. Qualitative data analysis was facilitated through the utilization of the VOS viewer software. This software was employed to identify prominent authors, ascertain those with the highest publication counts, conduct keyword analyses for the purpose of mapping and assessing thematic clusters, and draw meaningful insights from this qualitative data. To enhance the depth of our analysis, we selected various parameters to represent the dataset within the cluster analysis. In this representation, the size of nodes corresponded to the frequency of occurrence of specific elements. Additionally, the links connecting these nodes symbolized diverse relationships, encompassing

connections, co-occurrences, collaborations, or co-citations among the identified elements.

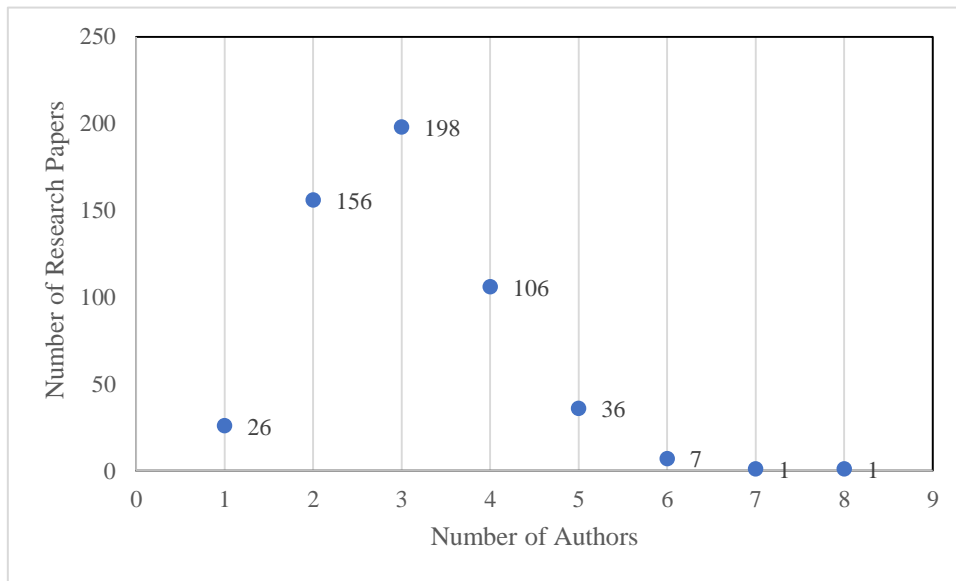
### Authorship Analysis

A total of 1289 authors were identified in the 531 articles published in tourism, general management, marketing and information technology and social behaviour journals. The break-up of the articles and their authors was presented in Fig.3. 198 were authored by 3 people representing 37.29% which was followed by 156 articles (29.38%) authored by 2 people and 106 articles (19.96%) authored by 4 people. Altogether 2 articles were written with a collaboration between 7 and 8 co-authors. 181 authors had collaborated and contributed more than 2 articles in the field of co-creation and service failure (Fig. 3). The VOSviewer tool was used to analyse co-authorship and found the top 3 authors to be as Kim H (6 collaborations), Hajli N. and Buhalis D. (5 collaborations) (Fig. 4). Other notable authors are Zhang Y., Okumus F., Nadeem W., Mele C., Jang Sshawn and Dey BL; each with at least 4 collaborations in these areas (Fig. 5).

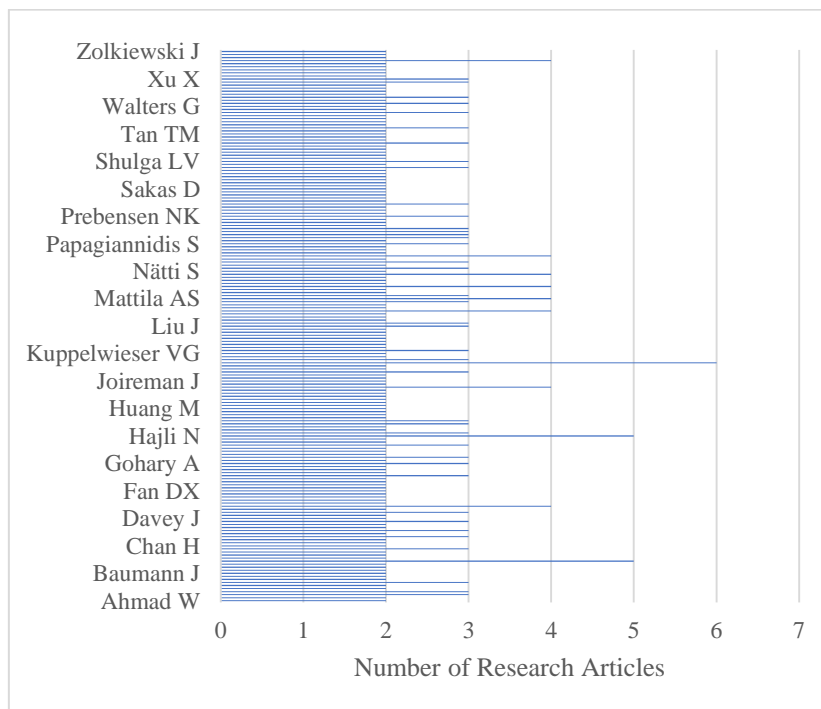


**Figure 2. Number of publications over the period 2001 to 2023**

The high number of collaborations in relation to the number of publications could be that the phenomena had been considered interesting and the number of articles published has been increasing over the period of time.



**Figure 3. Number of authors and their publications**



**Figure 4. Number of articles (at least 2) published by authors**

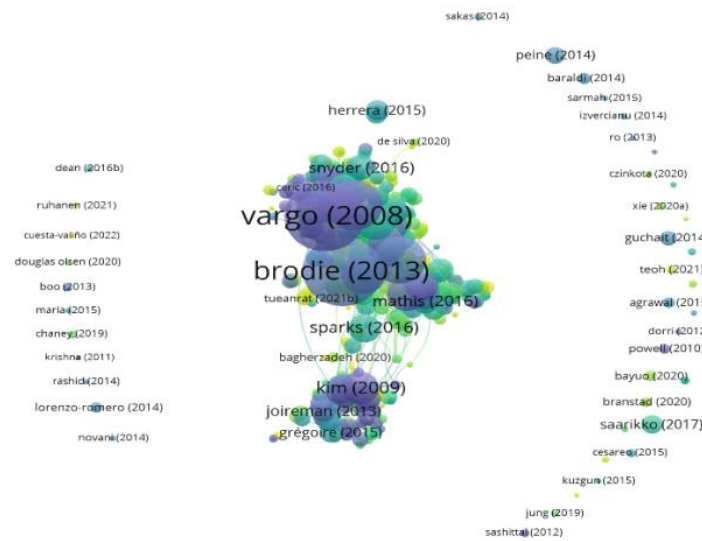
### **Co-citation of articles and author analysis**

Co-citation is a bibliometric method that assesses the extent to which two scholarly articles or documents are co-referenced by other academic publications. When

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papers A and B are frequently cited together by multiple third-party papers, it implies a degree of thematic or conceptual affinity between these documents. Co-citation analysis serves as a valuable tool for discerning research domains, subdisciplines, or subject areas that exhibit close associations, even if the documents in question do not explicitly cite one another. This technique excels at unveiling latent relationships embedded within the body of research literature.

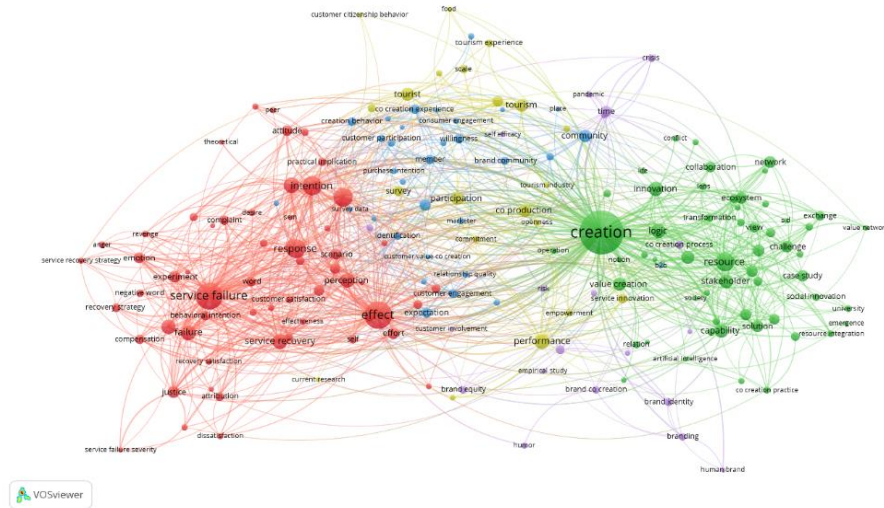
The analysis commenced by setting a minimum citation threshold of 10, and out of the original pool of 531 articles, 396 articles surpassed or met this citation criterion. This outcome indicates a focused examination of a subset of articles that have garnered substantial recognition within the academic community. Subsequently, through the co-citation analysis, five distinctive clusters of articles emerged, each characterized by varying numbers of articles and authors. Within these clusters, noteworthy patterns emerged: Cluster 1, the largest cluster, comprises 81 authors and their co-cited articles, indicating a substantial body of closely related research that has garnered significant attention within the field. Cluster 2, though somewhat smaller with 38 authors, represents another substantial grouping of research. Cluster 3, akin to Cluster 2, signifies a discernible subset of research within the broader domain of study, comprising 37 authors. Meanwhile, Cluster 4, with 32 authors, is somewhat smaller in scale compared to the previous clusters but still represents a noteworthy body of research. Finally, Cluster 5, the smallest among the identified clusters with 24 authors, possibly signifies a more specialized or niche research area within the larger academic domain.



**Figure 5. Co-citation of authors**

Brodie’s (2013) paper delves into the concept of consumer engagement within virtual brand communities, highlighting its multifaceted nature, dynamic attributes, and its repercussions on various dimensions, including but not limited to, loyalty, satisfaction, trust, and commitment. Additionally, it addresses the collaborative generation of value among participants in these online communities. Kim’s (2009) investigation focuses on the impact of three dimensions of justice—distributive, procedural, and interactional—on customer satisfaction following service recovery in luxury hotels. It further delves into the intricate interplay between satisfaction post-recovery and subsequent customer behaviours such as trust, word-of-mouth promotion, and intention to revisit. Furthermore, Vargo’s (2008) work presents an innovative outlook on the creation of value, focusing on the roles of service systems and the service-dominant logic paradigm. The argument posits that value is mutually generated through the interaction of resources within service systems, emphasizing the primacy of value-in-use over exchange-based value. In the analysis of these papers, it is found that they are frequently cited together in the context of discussions related to the broader concepts of consumer engagement, customer satisfaction, and value co-creation within service-oriented research. The co-citation analysis reveals the interconnectedness of these topics through the following possible potential co-cited topics: consumer engagement, online brand

communities, netnographic methodology, value co-creation, perceived justice, customer satisfaction, service recovery, trust, word-of-mouth, value co-creation, service systems, service-dominant logic and value-in-use.



**Figure 6. Co-occurrence of keywords from co-creation and service failure**

In the process of conducting this study, a meticulous examination was carried out on the selected research articles to identify and extract pertinent keywords. From a pool of 531 articles, a total of 1,773 relevant keywords were amassed. Subsequently, employing a minimum occurrence threshold of 10, a subset of 330 keywords met this criterion, thus forming the basis for the subsequent analysis. This analysis unveiled the existence of four primary clusters, as illustrated in Figure 6. The foremost cluster exhibited a pronounced focus on the conceptual domains of creation and resource allocation. It was prominently associated with keywords such as "stakeholder," "collaboration," "capability," "actor," "network," and "co-production." This suggests an underlying emphasis on collaborative research endeavours and the facilitation of partnerships and resource sharing among diverse stakeholders within specific contexts. The subsequent significant cluster centered on themes related to service failure and was linked to keywords encompassing aspects of "effect," "intention," "behaviour," "experimentation," "justice," "complaint," and "apology." This cluster appeared to be directed towards the examination of service quality, customer behaviour, and the resolution of service-related shortcomings. Cluster 3, characterized by a preponderance

of the keyword "participation," encompassed concepts such as "tourism," "community," "tourist," "customer," "intention," "effect," and "creation." This cluster seemingly explored the active involvement of various stakeholders, including tourists and communities, within the domain of tourism, with a particular focus on their intentions and the consequences of their participation. The fourth and final main cluster pertained to co-created processes and was prominently associated with keywords such as "brand co-creation," "identity," "branding," "crisis," "COVID," "identity," and "multiple stakeholders." This cluster delved into the intricate dynamics of brand identity, branding strategies, and crisis management, potentially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the active engagement of multiple stakeholders. It is noteworthy that these clusters exhibit a discernible commonality in their emphasis on collaboration and the involvement of stakeholders. The principal cluster underscores the significance of collaborative efforts and resource-sharing among stakeholders. Collectively, these clusters enrich our comprehension of stakeholder engagement, service quality, participation, and co-creation across diverse contexts, conceivably within the domains of business and service industries.

## **Discussion**

The concept of co-creation fundamentally challenges the prevailing notion that creative endeavours are the exclusive purview of enigmatic savants, contending instead that creative processes are open and accessible to a broader demographic. Co-creation, as a construct, involves a collaborative synergy wherein employees and customers converge (Chathoth et al., 2013), harnessing their collective creativity to exert influence over the contours of products and services. Within the domain of business, co-creation delineates a comprehensive paradigm wherein consumers occupy a central role throughout the entirety of the product or service design continuum, encompassing facets such as idea generation, design conception, and content contribution (Pohlmann and Kaartemo, 2017). In the context of service-oriented entities, co-creation extends its ambit to encompass the entirety of service processes and products, thereby fostering a collaborative milieu conducive to the generation of distinctive services, the amelioration of cost structures, and enhancements in service performance. Co-creation, at its core, revolves around the dynamic interplay that characterizes interactions between firms and

consumers, with value emerging as a byproduct of this interactive symbiosis (von Wallpach et al., 2017). This paradigmatic shift, precipitating a transition from conventional business models to digital landscapes, underscores the changing landscape, primarily driven by robust and enhanced communication channels between consumers and corporations. Within this digital milieu, consumers assume a dual role, concurrently functioning as co-creators and consumers, as technological advancements proliferate and communication platforms burgeon. The digital transformation of value co-creation is propelled by heightened consumer participation and exemplifies a transformative shift in the modus operandi of business-consumer engagement.

Several studies address the needs for examining the relationship between co-creation and service failures. This study focused on co-creation and service failures research from 2001 to September 2023 in business journals. The turn of the century and the presence of few articles on co-creation has been taken as an anchor point for the study. All the articles examined in this study are related to co-creation and service failures. An analysis of 531 articles across diverse academic journals related to tourism, management, marketing, information technology, and social behaviour revealed insights into authorship and collaboration trends in the fields of co-creation and service failure. A total of 1289 authors were identified, highlighting the multidisciplinary nature of research in these domains. Most articles were authored by small teams, with 37.29% having three authors and 29.38% having two authors. Only a few articles involved larger collaborations of four or more authors. Notably, 181 authors were engaged in multiple research projects within these fields, indicating sustained interest and growth in these research areas over time. The analysis also identified top collaborative authors, such as Kim H, Hajli N., and Buhalis D., underscoring the significance of cooperation in advancing understanding in co-creation and service failure. The data analysis of 531 research articles revealed four key thematic clusters. The first cluster focuses on creation and resource allocation, emphasizing collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders (Schiavone et al., 2021). The second cluster centres on service failure, exploring service quality and customer behaviour. The third cluster highlights participation, particularly within tourism, and examines the intentions and consequences of stakeholder engagement (Zhang, 2023). The fourth cluster delves into co-created processes, including brand identity, branding strategies, and crisis management, often

within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Collectively, these clusters emphasize collaboration and stakeholder involvement, enriching our understanding of stakeholder engagement, service quality, participation, and co-creation across diverse contexts, with potential implications for business and service industries.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this scholarly article is to scrutinize research articles focusing on co-creation and service failures, with a particular emphasis on the areas of interest within the business sector during the inception of the co-creation concept at the turn of the century. Co-creation challenges the conventional belief that creativity is a privilege of a select few, emphasizing its accessibility to a broader demographic (Zhang, 2023). It entails a collaborative synergy between employees and customers, allowing them to collectively shape products and services across diverse domains. The comprehensive analysis of co-creation and service failures research spanning from 2001 to September 2023 illuminates the evolving research landscape in these fields. This investigation identified 1,289 authors contributing to 531 articles in a range of academic journals, highlighting the multidisciplinary nature of this research. Most articles were collaborative efforts, suggesting a preference for teamwork. Notably, 181 authors engaged in multiple research endeavours, indicating sustained interest and growth in these domains. The study also identified prominent collaborative authors, such as Kim

H, Hajli N., and Buhalis D., underscoring the significance of cooperation in advancing knowledge pertaining to co-creation and service failure. Furthermore, the analysis of these research articles revealed four distinct thematic clusters, enriching the comprehension of co-creation and service failure. These clusters emphasize collaboration, stakeholder engagement (Babu et al., 2020), and various facets of these research domains, including creation, resource allocation, service quality, customer behavior, participation, and co-created processes (Zhou et al., 2014). Collectively, these findings enhance our understanding of stakeholder involvement, the enhancement of service quality, dynamics of participation, and co-creation practices within diverse contexts. These insights may hold potential implications for the business and service industries within the evolving digital landscape.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study has certain limitations that merit discussion. Firstly, the articles used for analysis were primarily sourced from a single database, specifically Science Direct by Scopus. Consequently, there exist limitations concerning the potential omission of relevant articles related to co-creation and service failure that fall beyond the scope of Scopus. Secondly, the methodology employed in this study imposes constraints that necessitate a cautious interpretation of the findings. The qualitative technique adopted herein precludes the generalizability of the conclusions to other contexts or situations involving the studied phenomenon. Moreover, it is worth noting that co-creation is an evolving process, and research on co-creation and service failure has been burgeoning at an accelerated pace. The criteria used for sample selection may have inadvertently excluded journals addressing policy and business practices published in offline formats. Therefore, future research endeavours may consider incorporating additional clusters into their bibliometric investigations to identify potential cross-disciplinary research gaps.

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