Bibliometric Analysis of Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory: Past Developments, Current Applications, and Future Trends

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Abstract
S-O-R Theory is widely used in consumer behaviour studies. Comprehensive and holistic reviews of the theory's evolution remain limited, highlighting a significant gap in the research. This study addresses that gap through a bibliometric analysis, focusing on papers indexed in Scopus. The selection criteria are limited to English papers in the management field and open-access publications. The findings reveal that S-O-R Theory is commonly applied in research areas such as digital platforms, tourism destinations, live streaming, festivals or events, and cultural tourism. Furthermore, the variable of purchase intention dominates studies employing the SOR framework. As a result, variables such as social presence, interactivity, and sentiment analysis are suggested as potential stimulus variables for future research.
Keywords: S-O-R Theory, Bibliometric Analysis, Vos-viewer, Literature Review, Consumer Behaviour

Introduction
Theories have been employed in research to develop conceptual frameworks and facilitate the understanding of phenomena (Deacon, 2010). One of the most widely applied theories in psychology and marketing research is the S-O-R Theory, introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). This theory comprises three main components: stimulus, organism, and response. A stimulus is something that influences an individual internally and the environment externally.

Classical S-O-R Theory categorises stimuli into two types: environmental stimuli and those linked to individual personality traits (Jacoby, 2002). The organism acts as a mediator between stimulus and response, involving emotional reactions triggered by the stimulus. In contrast, the response represents the outcomes of these interactions, manifesting as either acceptance or rejection.

Several factors highlight the significance of examining the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory. First, it is a significant theory contributing to education and is widely applied across various disciplines. The S-O-R Theory has been utilised in diverse contexts, such as fashion context (Hewei and Youngsook., 2022), TikTok (Pilar et al., 2024), organic coffee (Espinoza et al., 2024), plant-based local food (Teangsompong et al., 2024), mobile payment systems (Alam, 2024), health tourism (Liao et al., 2023), and e-sports tourism (Zhang et al., 2022). The S-O-R Theory is also frequently employed to develop frameworks for understanding consumer behaviour (Van Zeeland & Henseler, 2018). Second, this study highlights the extensive use of the S-O-R Theory in behavioural science and psychology research (Fan et al., 2023; Liao et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2022; Alcántara et al., 2024) while also aiming to predict the evolutionary trends in the theory's application. It is hoped that this study will guide other researchers in exploring different areas of inquiry. Third, the S-O-R Theory is particularly relevant to research examining the psychological impact of the environment on behaviour (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). However, some scholars argued that the theory encounters substantial limitations in achieving its theoretical and practical potential, owing to consumer motivations' inherently complex and multidimensional nature. Consequently, this paper will describe the consumer motivation for using the S-O-R Theory in the research.

Although the S-O-R Theory has been discussed in previous literature (Nieves et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2022; Song et al., 2022), a comprehensive and holistic review remains lacking. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap with the following objectives: 1. To examine the trends in applying S-O-R Theory over time; 2. To explore the potential applications of S-O-R Theory across various contexts, 3. To identify the most influential authors in this area of research, 4. To investigate emerging topics within S-O-R Theory studies, 5. To analyse the types of consumer motivations commonly employed in research utilising the S-O-R Theory framework.

Methodology
Paper Selection
The papers analysed in this study were selected from the Scopus database. Scopus was chosen for analysis because it is one of the most prominent and comprehensive databases for scholarly journals worldwide. Scopus database is also widely recognised for its user-friendliness, offering researchers convenient access to the latest literature across diverse fields of knowledge. According to Elsevier's Research Academy, Scopus includes over 6,000 active gold open-access journals, facilitating and supporting researchers in conducting literature reviews (Schoombee, 2023). The illustration of the paper selection process is presented in the following figure:

The data obtained based on the specified keywords consisted of 427 documents, subsequently exported and saved in RIS format. The RIS format facilitates data processing using VOSviewer software. The analysis results provide a visualisation of the connections,

both among authors and keywords. This enables the identification of the most prominent authors within a specific topic and offers a detailed understanding of the research conducted in the area.
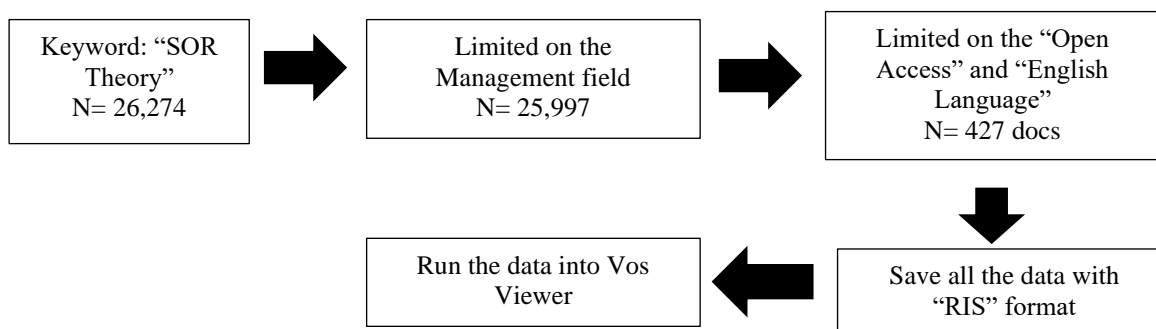

Figure 1. Paper Selection Procedures

Bibliometric Analysis
Bibliometric analysis has become a popular method in business research recently (Donthu et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021). It is a scientific analytical approach capable of processing large amounts of academic data and generating significant research insights. Analysis tools commonly used include Vos Viewer and Leximancer. VOSviewer was selected for this study due to its user-friendliness.

Visualization and Interpretation
After analysing the data using bibliometric methods, the results will include network, overlay, and density visualisation. **Network visualisation:** It examines the correlations and relationships between variables and assesses the number of authors researching a particular topic. **Overlay visualisation:** It shows the number of publication years for a specific paper. On the other hand**, Density visualisation** illustrates the density of published papers based on specific authors and keywords/topics.

This paper will present both descriptive analysis and bibliometric analysis, with each analysis explained as follows:
1. The descriptive analysis includes the total number of publications and the top 10 countries published on S-O-R Theory.
2. The bibliometric analysis presented includes bibliographic coupling and co-word analysis.
a. bibliographic coupling aims to identify documents that cite the same reference. Therefore, it can be seen that the more complex the network, the more authors will discuss the same topic. Similarly, a brighter and more distinct network indicates stronger correlations between authors, enhancing the understanding of their interconnections. The bibliographic analysis provides insights through network, overlay, and density visualisation.

b. Co-Word Analysis
Co-word analysis will show the research topics that have been published and allow for the examination of correlations between one topic and another. For example, it can show the correlation between religiosity and satisfaction. Co-word analysis also identifies which topics researchers have extensively discussed, indicated by clearer and larger network connections.

Similar to bibliographic coupling, co-word analysis provides insights through network, overlay, and density visualisation.

Findings and Discussion
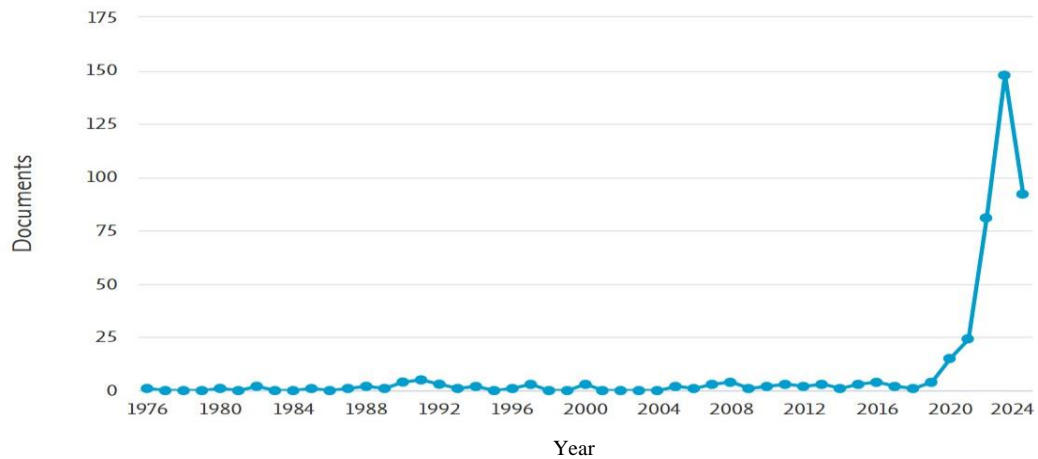*Analysis Descriptive*
Total Publication

Figure 2. The number of publications on S-O-R Theory by year

This paper does not restrict the publication year. This enables a more precise and comprehensive examination of this topic's publication history. Research on S-O-R Theory began in 1976, but the number of papers published on S-O-R Theory showed no significant changes from 1976 to 2018. From 2019 to 2020, a gradual increase in publications can be observed. As illustrated in the figure above, the total number of publications on S-O-R Theory demonstrates a substantial increase between 2020 and 2023, with approximately 150 papers published each year.
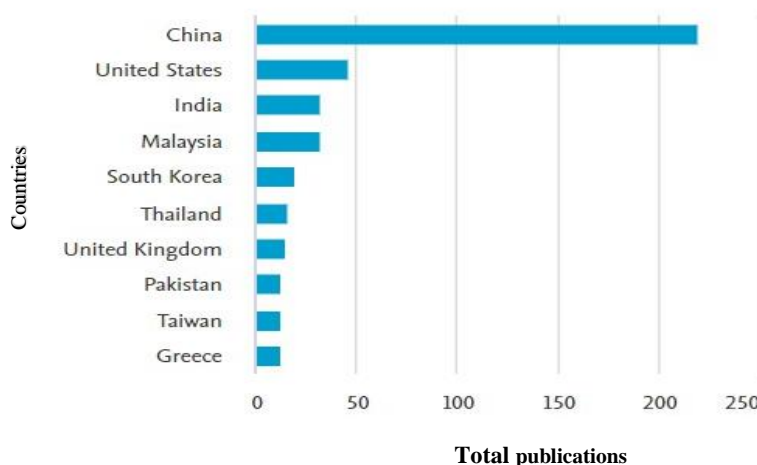
Publication based on Country

Figure 3. Top 10 countries publishing about S-O-R Theory

Based on the results, the top 10 countries that have published the most on S-O-R Theory are China, the USA, India, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand, the UK, Pakistan, Taiwan, and Greece. China as the leading country in publishing research on S-O-R Theory, with over 200 papers, followed by the United States in second place. India and Malaysia is the third and fourth rank, with fewer than 50 publications each. South Korea also has fewer than 50 publications, following India and Malaysia. Additionally, countries such as Thailand, the UK, Pakistan, Taiwan, and Greece have published fewer studies on S-O-R Theory than the leading countries.

The results indicate that no other countries ranked among the top 10 in applying this theory. This may be due to, Firstly, the context and relevance of the theory may not align with the local reality. For example, in a region of local communities, it may not be appropriate to apply Hofstede's theory, as it is typically used to study consumers from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, Schwartz (1999) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), like Hofstede, argue that each national culture represented by a specific country has a set of core values and norms that guide the behaviour of its consumers. Similarly, applying this theory in areas with limited access to technology may disturb its effectiveness in stimulating consumers. As a result, this theory may not be suitable for such countries. **Secondly**: Adaptation to cultural values is a key factor, where Western societies emphasise individualism, while certain other countries place more emphasis on collectivism. It is known that the S-O-R Theory focuses on the individual rather than the collective (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Jacoby, 2002; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007). Therefore, studies involving collectivist contexts, such as institutions or those involving many individuals, may be difficult to explain within the framework of S-O-R Theory. **Thirdly**, The popularity of alternative theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), has increased in certain countries because the S-O-R Theory is considered very simplistic for explaining complex phenomena. For instance, TPB considers factors such as social influences, attitudes, social norms, and intentions (Ajzen, 1991). As is known, S-O-R Theory focuses on the individual, which makes it less suitable for contexts involving broader scopes, such as organisational behaviour, public policy, and others (Byrne and Callaghan, 2022). These contexts can be better explained using frameworks like Complexity Theory.

Bibliographic Coupling
This paper will present a bibliographic coupling analysis using a table and VOSviewer visualisations. The table will display each author's link strength, main focus, and number of citations. Meanwhile, the VOSviewer visualisation will illustrate the correlations between the authors.

Based on the table above, it is evident that there are 5 cluster categories among the 19 authors. The first cluster, represented by red, includes Li, Q; Liu, Y; Wang, X; Wang, M; and Chen, Y. The green cluster consists of Chen, X; Zhang, H; Zhang, I; Zhang, S; and Wang, J. The blue cluster includes Wang, I; Cao, C; Li, C; and Liu, J. The yellow cluster is comprised of Li, Y; Xu, Y; Zhang, Y; and Li, X. Finally, the purple cluster contains only one author, Wang, Y.

Table 1

Top 10 Documents in Bibliographic Coupling Analysis

Rank	Publication	Main focus	Total Link Strength	Context	Categories
1	Wang et al., (2024)	Consumer value co-creation and co-destruction behaviour	7	Live streaming E-commerce	Blue
2	Huang et al., (2024)	Emotional intelligence and safety performance	7	Workers	Red
3	Xu et al., (2024)	Stimulating residence tourist	6	Festival	Yellow
4	Zhang et al., (2023)	Safety management behaviour and safety citizenship behaviour	5	Workers	Green
5	Zhang and Lo (2024)	Tourists perceived destination image and heritage conservation intention	3	Tourists	Green
6	Li et al., (2024)	Public green behaviour	3	Policymakers	Blue
7	Jia et al., (2022)	Online shopping in China	3	Consumer from China	Yellow
8	Wang et al., (2024)	Tourism	3	Tourists from China	Purple
9	Chen et al., (2024)	Digital collection	2	Tourists	Green
10	Liu et al., (2023)	Rumor behaviour during a pandemic	2	Respondent from China	Blue

The keyword "S-O-R Theory" is strongly associated with author "Wang, I" in the blue cluster and "Chen, Y" in the red cluster. This is evident from their high total link strength compared to other authors. According to Guo et al. (2019), total link strength indicates the number of publications in which two keywords appear together. Based on the table above, it is also evident that the main focus of several authors predominantly applies S-O-R Theory to topics such as live broadcasting and tourism, with most of these studies being related to consumer behaviour. The results also show that the highest total link strength is associated with the topic of live streaming.

The results for each cluster show differences in topics, which can be classified as follows: Cluster 1 (red): This cluster consists of documents from 5 authors. These documents are labelled as **"consumer intention in the digital platform".** Li (2023), as a Generation Z respondent, has a unique characteristic pro-internet. Consumption patterns and consumption characteristics in the context of live streaming affect the purchasing intention of Gen Z. The study uses the S-O-R Theory because it considers the body's emotional response. According to Wang (2022), the application of S-O-R Theory is practical in analysing behavioural outcomes related to digital platforms. In addition, live broadcasting often involves the experience of flow, which is primarily derived from S-O-R Theory (Wang, 2022).
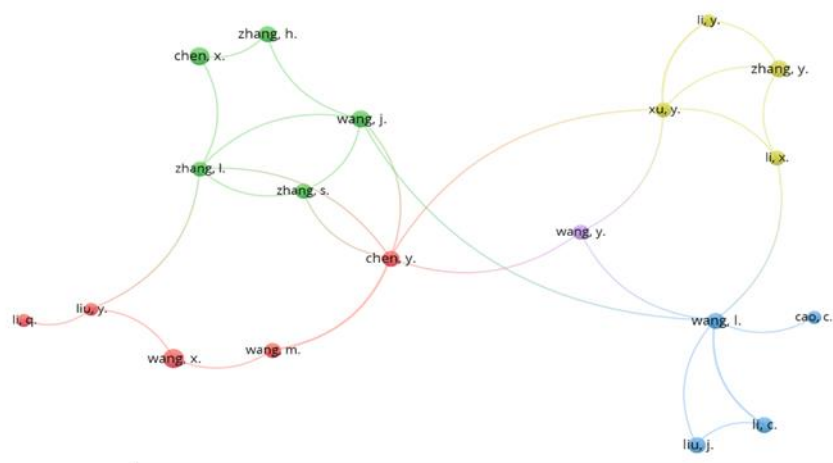
Cluster 2 (Green): In this cluster, the number of documents comes from 5 authors. These documents are labelled as **"tourists perceived destination".** Tourism is a field that frequently applies S-O-R Theory (Liao et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2022). Therefore, using S-O-R Theory to understand tourists' perceived destinations is highly relevant. Many researchers have applied S-O-R Theory to destination studies (Yadav et al., 2022; Yamagishi et al., 2024; Garzia et al., 2024; Pahari, 2024). Applying S-O-R Theory to tourists' perceived destinations can be used to study stimuli from tourists, which may include emotions and consumer perceptions that influence their decision-making when choosing a destination. In their previous research, Zhang et al. (2022) highlighted the role of environmental and psychological factors as stimuli that stimulate and evoke arousal.

Cluster 3 (Blue): This cluster has four authors. These documents are labelled as **"consumer value on the live streaming".** In studies of consumer value in live streaming, S-O-R Theory is frequently used as an underpinning theory (Alcantara et al., 2024; Kang et al., 2021). With the rise of digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and others, the context of digital marketing is expected to increase, making the use of S-O-R Theory more relevant and widely applied (Wang and Wang, 2024; Li et al., 2022; Hu and Chaudhry, 2020). By utilising this theory, one can examine the stimuli occurring during live streaming and the organism's response to the stimuli, affecting the consumer's response, such as whether they will purchase a product or service offered through live streaming. According to previous research, responsiveness and personalisation, influenced by environmental and psychological factors, play a key role in this process (Kang et al., 2021).

Cluster 4 (Yellow): This cluster has four authors. These documents are labelled as **"Stimulating residence tourists on the festival".** This study also sees the widespread use of the S-O-R Theory. The theory is highly relevant in festivals, as evidenced by several researchers who have adopted it (Liu et al., 2024; Nutsugbodo et al., 2024). This theory can be used in festivals to understand how local or domestic tourists are influenced by various factors that motivate them to attend a festival. Like the previous cluster, the tourism field is one of the most prominent areas in which the S-O-R Theory is applied. By using S-O-R Theory, it becomes essential to identify the needs that drive tourists' desire to visit a festival.

Cluster 5 (Purple): There is only one author in this cluster. These documents are labelled as **"behavioural intention in cultural tourism".** Among the five clusters, tourism dominates the use of S-O-R Theory. This time, the application of S-O-R Theory focuses on cultural tourism, as seen in previous studies (Garcia et al., 2024; Kusumawati et al., 2023; Yamagishi et al., 2024). Cultural tourism is a form of tourism that centres on cultural experiences, historical traditions, and the heritage of a region. S-O-R Theory is highly relevant in cultural tourism activities to understand how tourists engage in cultural tourism experiences. This theory can help explain how cultural experiences influence tourists' intentions to participate, engage further, and recommend the experience to others.
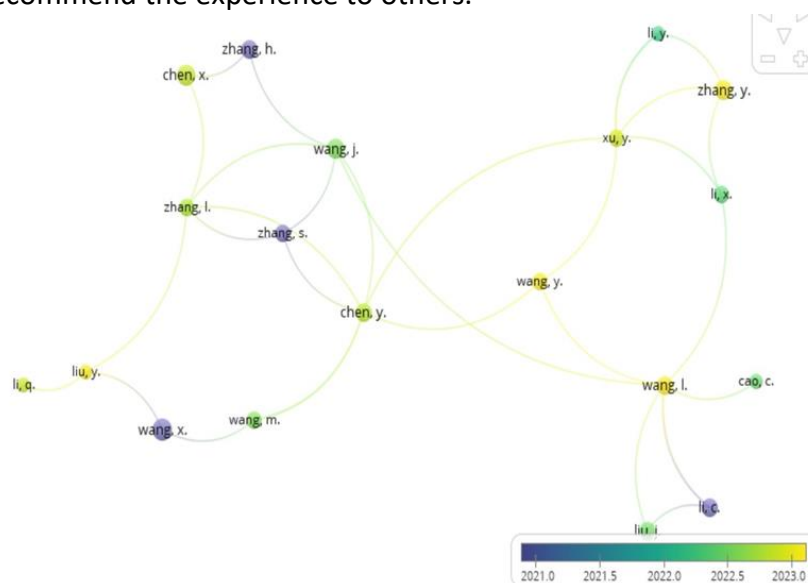

Figure 2. Overlay visualisation of Author

Co-Word Analysis
Table 2
The top 10 of the document according to the keyword

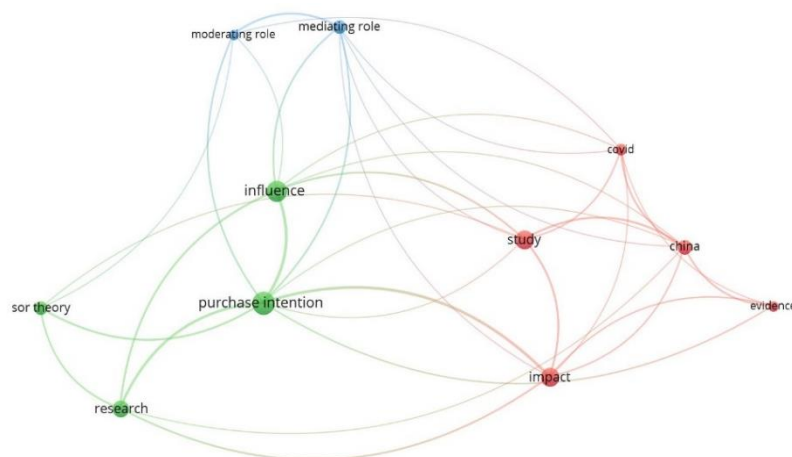| Rank	Keyword	Total Link Strength	Category
1	Impact	21	Red
2	Study	16	Red
3	China	16	Red
4	Mediating role	14	Blue
5	Moderating role	10	Blue
6	Purchase intention	9	Green
7	Evidence	8	Red
8	Influence	7	Green
9	Research	5	Green
10	S-O-R Theory	4	Green

Figure 3. Network visualisation of Keyword
The results of the network visualization of the keywords used show three clusters: red, green, and blue. The first cluster, red, contains 5 keywords, while the second cluster, green, contains 4 keywords. The third cluster, blue, includes two keywords. This visualisation allows us to observe which variables have the potential to be used in the application of S-O-R Theory.

Cluster 1 (Red): The cluster labelled **"Impact covid with the study evidence in China".** S-O-R Theory has been widely applied in studies on COVID-19, particularly in studies conducted in China. The study of the impact of COVID-19 using the S-O-R Theory is highly relevant for understanding how the pandemic has affected consumer behaviour, especially among Chinese consumers. It is known that the traumatic effects following the pandemic have been significant. Studies on COVID-19 are crucial for applying S-O-R Theory, as they involve changes in stimuli within the individual context and shifts in the environment. Zhang et al. (2023) highlighted individual context factors such as anxiety and rumour beliefs, while changes in the environment, such as reducing Islamic attributes due to decreased physical contact, were noted by Schafwe (2024).

Cluster 2 (Green): The cluster labelled **"The effect of the S-O-R Theory on the Purchase Intention".** This keyword is highly relevant to S-O-R Theory, as the theory helps researchers determine the factors influencing consumers' purchase intentions. According to Hu and Chaudry (2020), the SOR model is used to understand how relational ties can enhance consumer engagement. As a result, several studies are related to purchase intention. For example, Li's (2022) study stated that, based on the S-O-R Theory, the influence of customer/fan comments affects the users' flow experience. Most flow experience originates from the S-O-R Theory (Li, 2022). In Guo et al.'s (2021) research, the S-O-R Theory links the relationship between stimuli, such as live streaming features, which can influence purchase intention.

Cluster 3 (Blue): The cluster labelled **"The Variable Moderator and Mediator That Using in the S-O-R Theory Study".** With the formation of this third cluster, it is evident that the use of S-O-R Theory can also be combined with moderators and mediators. For example, in the study by Teh et al. (2014), the moderator variable in this study is the personality used as the

organism. In addition to the cluster results, the density of research topics related to S-O-R Theory can also be observed. The density visualisation of keywords is shown in the following image:
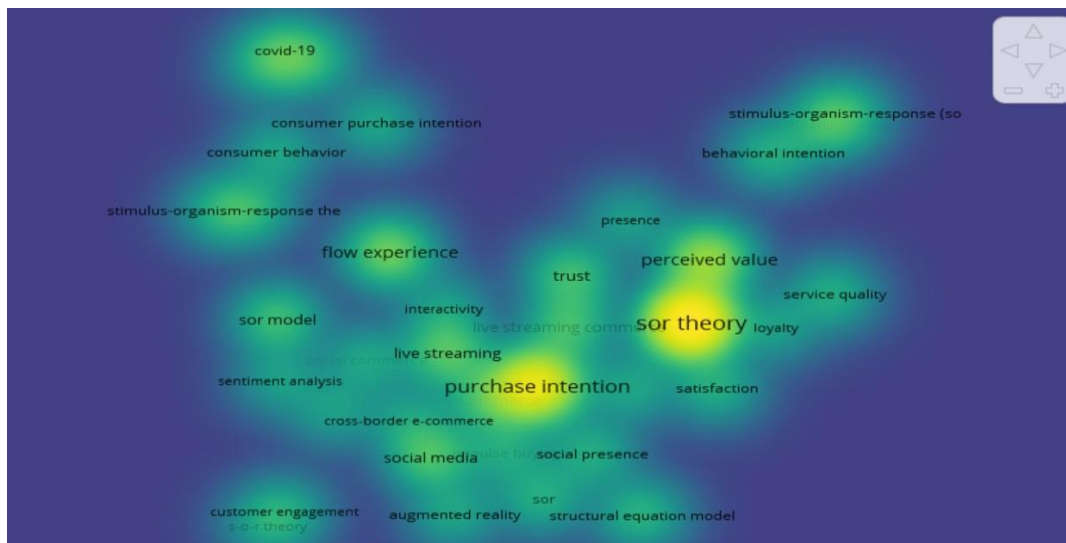

Figure 4. Density visualisation of keyword

It is widely recognized that, according to keyword density analysis, the 'Purchase Intention' variable stands out prominently. This indicates that researchers have extensively explored this variable. However, there are other studies related to S-O-R Theory that are still rarely examined and could serve as valuable suggestions and ideas for future research, such as sentiment analysis (Li et al., 2022), interactivity (Kang et al., 2021), and social presence (Ming et al., 2021).

Conclusion

This review provides a fundamental understanding of the S-O-R Theory literature by visualising the knowledge structure of the subject's science map. Studies on S-O-R Theory reviews are still relatively scarce, particularly those employing bibliometric analysis. The results show that the highest number of publications on S-O-R Theory occurred in 2024. China is also the leading country in utilising this theory. According to the bibliometric analysis based on authors, the S-O-R Theory topic is divided into five cluster categories: consumer intention in digital platforms, tourists' perceived destination, consumer value in live streaming, stimulating resident tourists at festivals, and behavioural intention in cultural tourism. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that applying S-O-R Theory is significant in understanding consumer behaviour in contexts such as digital platforms, live streaming, festivals or events, and cultural tourism. From these five main topics, it can be inferred that the importance of stimuli, including individual aspects (Eroglu et al., 2001) and environmental influences (Upadhyay and Kamble, 2023), plays a significant role in shaping behavioural intentions (Laos et al., 2024; Abumalloh et al., 2024).

Based on the keywords, there are three clusters: the impact of COVID with study evidence in China, the effect of S-O-R Theory on purchase intention, and the moderator and mediator variables such as personality used in S-O-R Theory studies. From these clusters, it can be concluded that research on S-O-R Theory has been extensively conducted in the context of China (Wang et al., 2022) and on the use of the purchase intention variable (Kumar et al.,

2021; Hewei & Youngsook, 2022), as well as the use of moderator and mediator variables (Hewei & Youngsook, 2022; Fan et al., 2023). Regarding density results, the purchase intention variable is the most frequently used in research. In contrast, other variables such as sentiment analysis, interactivity, and social presence have yet to be explored deeply.

Implication

Studies utilising S-O-R Theory have been widely applied, particularly in consumer behaviour studies (Laos et al., 2024; Haq et al., 2024; Fan et al., 2023). Researchers can gain a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour by employing this theory. This theory leads to more effective marketing strategies, as S-O-R Theory explains how stimuli (emotions, attitudes, and perceptions) can influence organisms before generating specific responses (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Consequently, emotion, attitude, and perception prove that external and internal factors can influence an individual's decision-making process (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Furthermore, in behavioural studies, S-O-R Theory is a theoretical foundation for measuring the impact of physical or digital environments on individual behaviour (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Lee and Yun, 2015; Wu and Li, 2018). In sum, the role of S-O-R Theory in existing studies is to provide a comprehensive framework for explaining the relationship between external and internal factors and behaviour, which can be applied in research contexts. In addition, this theory has also been adopted in sociology, management science, and marketing research (Van Zeeland & Henseler, 2018). With numerous researchers incorporating S-O-R Theory into their studies, it can be concluded that it is highly multipurpose and has significant implications for cross-disciplinary research. Moreover, this study provides a way to formulate ideas for other researchers and can explore research gap information.

This study can guide the design of strategies by understanding the individual internal and external factors. Applying this theory is anticipated to facilitate the development of appropriate methodological approaches and procedures for future research. This theory can also be applied to marketers. By applying this theory, marketers could implement strategies more effectively and efficiently.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study only limits a literature review based on bibliometric analysis. On the other hand, it provides suggestions for subsequent research. Therefore, the study offers ideas for future research, suggesting the inclusion of variables such as social presence, interactivity, and sentiment analysis as stimulus factors.

Acknowledgement

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