A Bibliometric Analysis of Employee Advocacy and its Role in Enhancing Brand Loyalty

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This bibliometric analysis explores the intricate relationship between employee advocacy and brand loyalty, providing insights into how internal stakeholder engagement impacts consumer perceptions and brand success. Utilizing a systematic review of academic literature from more than past two decades, the study highlights the pivotal role of employees as brand ambassadors and the subsequent effect on customer trust and loyalty. Through an examination of key studies, including works by Aaker (2011) and Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001), the research underscores the significance of aligning employee experiences with external brand promises to enhance brand equity. The findings suggest that effective employee advocacy programs are crucial for fostering brand loyalty, particularly in environments where competition and consumer expectations are continuously evolving. Strategic implications are discussed, emphasizing the need for organizations to adapt their employee advocacy efforts in response to dynamic market conditions and evolving technological landscapes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the current competitive business environment, brand loyalty has become a vital component of long-term company success. Businesses work to build a strong, long-lasting relationship with their customers because they know that devoted clients are more likely to make repeat purchases and recommend their products to others [1]. Amid the myriad tactics employed to augment brand loyalty, employee advocacy emerges as a critical factor. When employees are involved in brand ambassador roles, they can greatly expand the reach of brand messages through their personal networks, providing a level of authenticity that may not be present in traditional marketing channels [2].

Employee advocacy is the act of a company's employees promoting it to their external social networks by sharing encouraging news and insights about their workplace. This phenomena is a potent marketing strategy because it capitalizes on the credibility and trust that people generally have inside their personal circles [3]. Studies show that public trust in a brand is increased

when employees' messages are viewed as more authentic than those from corporations [4].

In addition, the emergence of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn has changed the face of employee advocacy. With the use of these platforms, workers can share their opinions and experiences with their employer with a larger audience than in the past [5]. Thus, employee advocacy has a greater impact on brand loyalty due to its increased reach in the digital age.

Although employee advocacy is acknowledged to be valuable, there is a dearth of comprehensive empirical research examining its effects on brand loyalty, both directly and indirectly. The bibliometric studies that map out the current literature landscape and identify predominant trends and gaps make this gap more clear [6]. A comprehensive bibliometric analysis can shed light on the development of the field of employee advocacy research by identifying important works, recurring themes, and new directions.

However, there remains a significant gap in comprehensive bibliometric reviews on how employee advocacy shapes brand loyalty. Existing literature tends to focus either on the conceptual exploration of employee advocacy or on the empirical investigation of brand loyalty separately. There is a dearth of integrative reviews that connect these dots through a bibliometric lens. This lack of synthesis prevents a cohesive understanding of how theoretical and empirical advancements in employee advocacy and brand loyalty have evolved over time and interacted with each other [7]. The objective of this research is to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the existing literature on employee advocacy and its impact on brand loyalty. This study aims to map the intellectual structure of the field, identify the most impactful authors, documents, and journals, and reveal the evolution of key themes over time. Ultimately, this analysis seeks to uncover gaps in the current research and propose directions for future investigations that could enrich the understanding of employee advocacy's role in enhancing brand loyalty.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Employee Advocacy: Definition and Dimensions

The term "employee advocacy" refers to the act of an organization's staff members promoting its name, goods, or services on their personal social media networks [8]. This can involve disseminating information about the business, publicly defending it, or endorsing its goods and services [9]. The idea goes beyond simple communication; it also includes employee empowerment and engagement, which are important variables that affect advocacy behaviors. Workers become brand ambassadors because they genuinely enjoy their jobs and are in sync with the company culture, not because of directives from management [10].

Affective, cognitive, and behavioral components are all part of the dimensions of employee advocacy. Advocacy from a behavioral perspective entails things like posting positive experiences online or representing their brand at community events. It has to do with how emotionally attached workers are to their employer, which encourages them to talk favorably about it. Cognitively, it entails accepting and understanding the mission and values of the organization, which strengthens their advocacy [2].

2.2 Social Media as a Catalyst for Employee Advocacy

The advent of social media has significantly altered the

landscape of employee advocacy. Platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook have provided employees with tools to become everyday influencers within their networks [5]. Social media amplifies the reach and impact of employee messages, allowing for a rapid dissemination of brand-related content across diverse audiences. The interactive nature of these platforms also facilitates immediate feedback and engagement, creating a dynamic environment where employee posts can become viral and significantly impact brand perception [11]. Research highlights that social media enhances the visibility of employee advocacy efforts, but it also raises challenges in terms of message control and brand consistency. Companies must navigate these waters carefully to harness the benefits while mitigating potential risks associated with employee-generated content [12].

2.3 Impact of Employee Advocacy on Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is fundamentally about customers' willingness to continue purchasing from a brand, often accompanied by their refusal to switch to competitors [13]. Employee advocacy impacts brand loyalty through several mechanisms. First, it enhances brand visibility and reputation by leveraging the authentic voices of employees, which are often perceived as more credible than traditional corporate advertising [14]. Second, employee advocacy builds emotional connections with audiences. When employees share their positive workplace experiences, it humanizes the brand, which can lead to deeper customer attachment to the brand [2].

Empirical studies have shown a positive correlation between effective employee advocacy programs and higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. For instance, a study by [15] found that customers who were exposed to positive employee posts on social media were more likely to exhibit loyalty to the brand, influenced by the perceived internal health and stability of the company as reflected by its employees.

2.4 Bibliometric Studies on Employee Advocacy

Bibliometric analysis offers a methodological framework to quantitatively analyze the scientific literature on a given topic. In the context of employee advocacy, bibliometric studies help identify the most influential works, prevailing research trends, and potential gaps in the literature [16]. These studies utilize various metrics such as citation analysis, co-citation analysis, and network analysis to map out the intellectual landscape of the field.

Significant bibliometric analyses, such as those by [7], have provided insights into how the fields of employee advocacy and brand loyalty are interconnected. These studies highlight the evolution of key themes and how they converge or diverge over time, offering a meta-level understanding that is invaluable for researchers and practitioners aiming to build on the existing knowledge base.

3. METHODS

This research employs a bibliometric analysis to systematically review and synthesize the existing literature on employee advocacy and its impact on brand loyalty. Utilizing data extracted from the Google Scholar Database, the analysis covers articles published between 1961 and 2023. The selection criteria include articles that focus on "employee advocacy," "brand loyalty," and related keywords such as "employee engagement," "brand ambassador," and "social media marketing." The analytical process involves three primary steps: data retrieval, data processing, and data visualization. Initially, bibliographic records of relevant publications are retrieved, including author numbers, titles, publication years, and citation counts. These records are then processed using VOSviewer software, which assists in creating co-authorship and co-citation networks, thus enabling the identification of key authors, articles, and research clusters.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
4.1 Bibliometric Overview

Table 1. Data Citation Metrics

Publication years	1961-2024
Citation years	63 (1961-2024)
Paper	980
Citations	655959
Cites/year	10412.05
Cites/paper	669.35
Cites/author	363994.64
Papers/author	538.38
Author/paper	2.34
h-index	317
g-index	809
hI,norm	264
hI,annual	4.19
hA-index	98
Papers with ACC	: 1,2,5,10,20:750,686,594,501,403

Source: Publish or Perish Output, 2024

Table 1 offers a thorough summary of the citation metrics for a set of articles published between 1961 and 2024, demonstrating a significant amount of productivity and scholarly impact in a particular topic. Over the course of 63 years, 980 publications have received 655,959 citations, or an average of 10,412.05 citations annually and 669.35 citations per paper. This indicates that the papers have a high level of importance and influence within the academic world. With an average of 2.34 authors per publication, the metrics clearly show a high degree of collaboration. Individual authors also contribute significantly, with an average of 538.38 papers and 363,994.64 citations per author. An additional indication of the dataset's resilience is its h-index of 317, which indicates that at least 317 publications have each garnered at least 317 citations, demonstrating a consistent level of impact and quality in research. The most cited publications have had a major impact on the field, as evidenced by the g-index, which is noticeably higher at 809. After adjusting for career length, the normalized and annualized h-indices (hI,norm and hI,annual) are 4.19 and 264, respectively, indicating consistent influence over time. After accounting for the impact of several

authors, the hA-index, which stands at 98, indicates a sizable number of highly cited papers. Furthermore, 750 papers with at least one citation, scaling down to 403 papers with at least 20 citations, are among the papers achieving accelerated citation counts (ACC) at various thresholds (1, 2, 5, 10, 20). This distribution of papers demonstrates the extent of research influence over time. This thorough citation analysis demonstrates the collaborative nature and continuing relevance of the works within this corpus, in addition to their historical and ongoing academic effect.
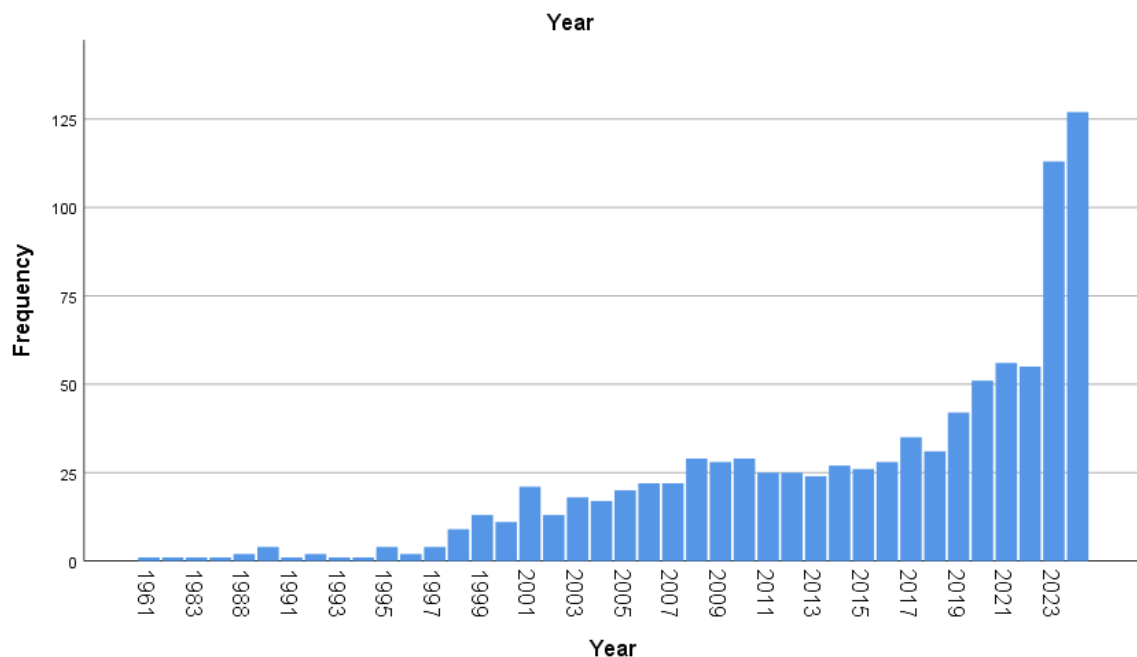
4.2 Literature Distribution

Figure 1. Yearly Publication
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The frequency of publications annually from 1961 to 2023 is shown in a bar graph. The trend illustrates a gradual rise of publications over time, with a more noticeable upsurge starting around 2007. Between 1961 and 2006, there was comparatively little publication activity; the majority of the years had less than 25 publications annually. Around 2007, there is a noticeable change in this tendency as there is a steady rise of publications. After 2015, the increase in frequency becomes very sharp, reaching a notable high in 2023 when there are more than 120 publications each year. This increase in the last few years probably reflects a growing interest in the topic, whether sparked by new developments in technology, increased interest from academics, or the emergence of pertinent global concerns. According to the statistics, research activities have been active and growing during the past few decades, with the greatest emphasis being placed on advancements made in the most recent years up until 2023.
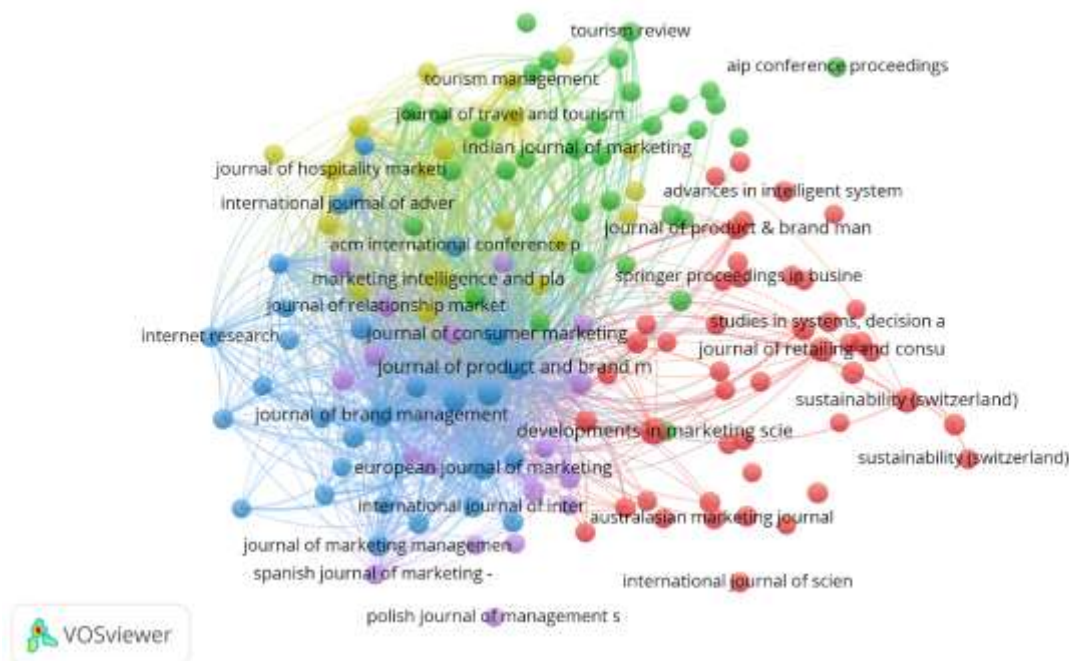
Figure 2. Journal Visualization
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The image displays a bibliometric network visualization generated by VOSviewer, showing the clustering of journals based on their co-citation relationships within the field of marketing and possibly tourism, as indicated by the labels. The various clusters are differentiated by colors, illustrating distinct thematic concentrations or scholarly communities. For example, journals like "Tourism Review" and "Tourism Management," colored in green, likely represent a cluster focused on tourism research. In contrast, journals such as the "European Journal of Marketing" and the "Journal of Brand Management," colored in blue, suggest a focus on broader marketing topics.
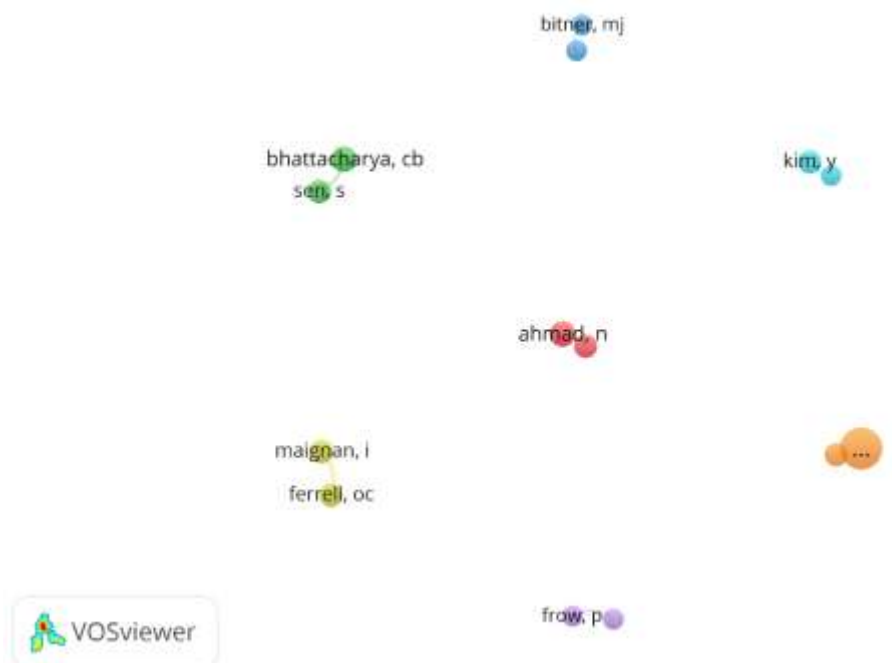
4.3 Author Collaboration

Figure 3. Author Collaboration Visualization
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The visualization depicts a bibliometric network analysis of author co-citation using VOSviewer, focusing on key researchers within a specific academic field. The graph illustrates various authors as nodes, where the size of each node likely indicates the citation frequency or impact of the respective author in the field. The colors of the nodes might represent different clusters or thematic groups within the network, indicating that these authors have been cited together frequently within the same context or research area. The spatial arrangement of the nodes suggests the relationships among authors: those closer together are more frequently co-cited, implying thematic or methodological similarities in their work. For instance, authors like "Kim, Y" and "Bitner, MJ" appear in the same cluster (blue), suggesting they might have contributions in similar subfields or methodologies. On the other hand, "Ahmad, N" and "Frow, P," colored differently, may represent different research themes or divergent scholarly approaches.
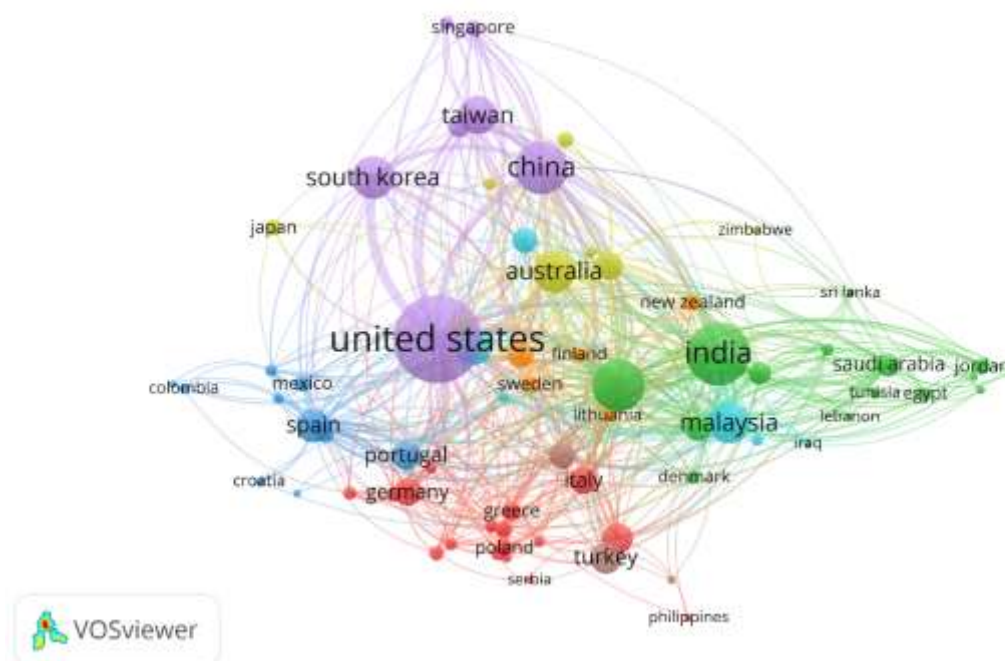
Figure 4. Country Collaboration Visualization
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The visualization clearly positions the United States as a pivotal node within the global research collaboration network, underscoring its significant role in the international academic community. The prominence of the U.S. in this network, indicated by the largest node, reflects its extensive collaborations with a diverse array of countries spread across various continents. This central positioning suggests that the U.S. not only contributes a substantial volume of research but also plays a crucial role in facilitating and integrating global scientific efforts. The myriad lines extending from the U.S. to other countries represent the extensive bilateral and multilateral collaborations that are likely driven by its advanced research infrastructure and funding capabilities, which attract partnerships worldwide.

In addition to the global outreach of the U.S., the network reveals distinct regional clusters that highlight the nature of collaboration within specific areas. For example, European countries such as Germany, France, and Italy are seen forming a tightly knit cluster, suggesting a strong pattern of intra-regional collaborations. This may be facilitated by shared cultural ties, geographical proximity, and similar regulatory and academic environments, which ease the process of collaboration. In Asia, countries like China, India, and Malaysia form another dense cluster, indicative of regional partnerships that could be based on shared developmental goals and research interests that address regional challenges. These clusters not only underscore the localized networks of collaboration but also reflect how regional priorities and relationships influence the global map of academic and scientific cooperation.
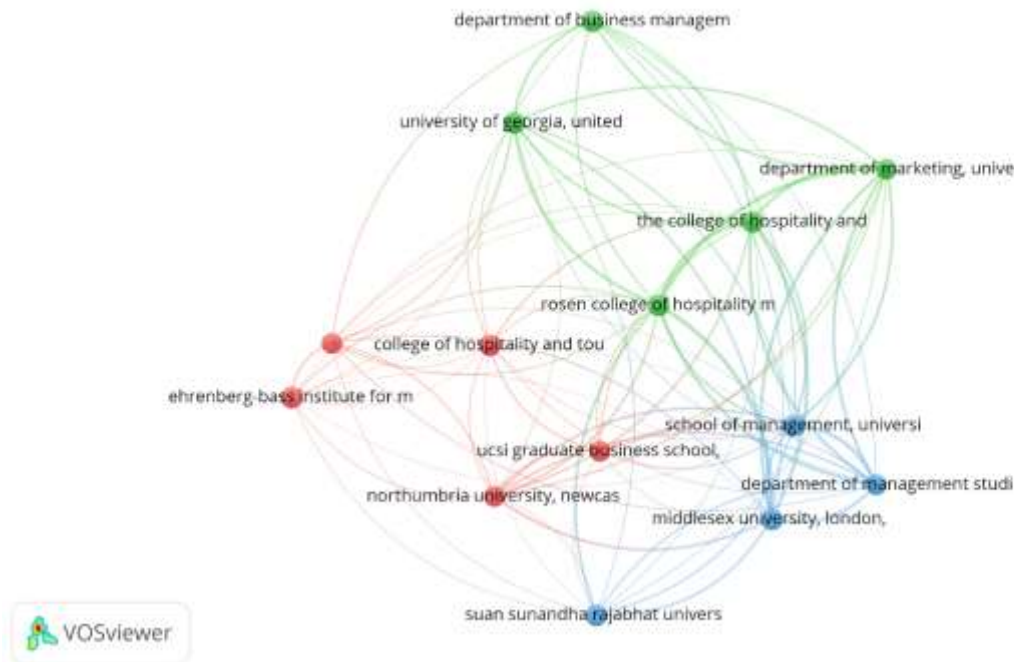
Figure 4. Author Collaboration Visualization
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The image illustrates a network map of various academic institutions and their departments, focusing on how they are interconnected, likely through academic collaborations, co-authorships, or research projects within the fields of business, marketing, and hospitality. At the center of this network is the College of Hospitality and Tourism, indicating its central role or significant contribution to collaborative efforts within these disciplines. The various connecting lines, differentiated by color, suggest the nature and possibly the strength of relationships between institutions. For example, the green and red lines could signify different types of collaborations or thematic connections. Institutions like the University of Georgia, Rosen College of Hospitality Management, and the Department of Marketing at various universities appear prominently, suggesting they are key nodes with numerous connections, reflecting their active participation and influence in the academic network.
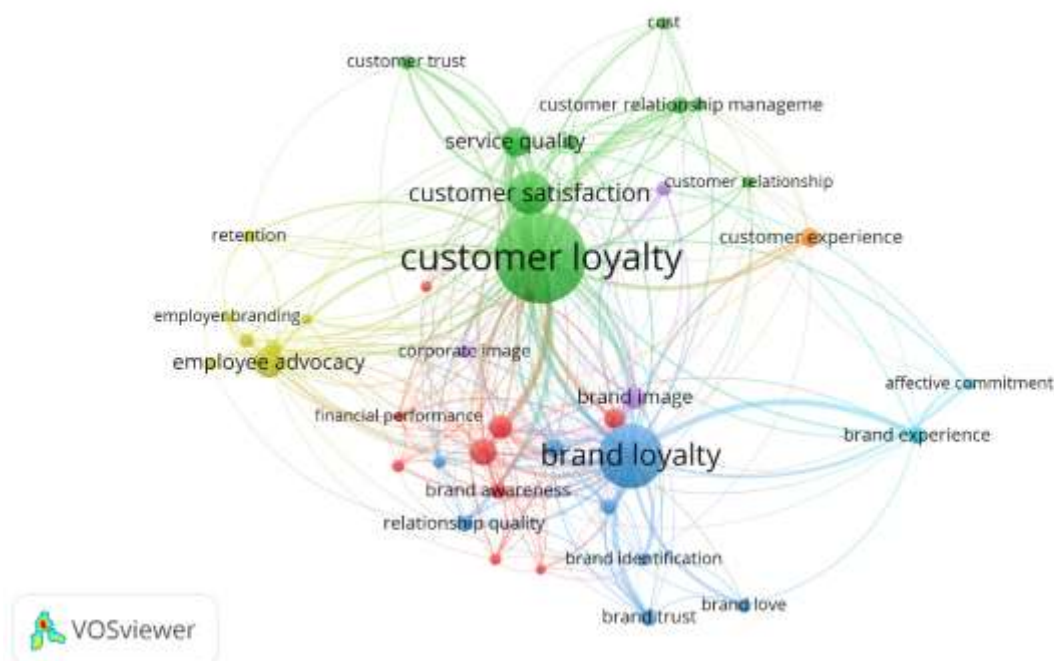
4.4 Keywords Visualization

Figure 5. Network Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2024

This visualization illustrates a complex network of concepts related to customer and brand loyalty, with each node representing a different aspect or factor contributing to these phenomena. Central to the network are the nodes labeled "customer loyalty" and "brand loyalty," which are significantly larger and more interconnected than other nodes, suggesting they are key areas of focus within the research domain. These central nodes are interconnected with various other concepts that are theorized or empirically shown to influence loyalty, illustrating the multidimensional nature of how loyalty is studied and conceptualized in business research.

The green cluster surrounding "customer loyalty" includes closely related concepts such as "customer satisfaction," "service quality," "customer trust," and "customer relationship management." This cluster indicates a focus on the traditional determinants of loyalty derived from the quality of the customer experience and the relationship management efforts of a company. The emphasis on "service quality" and "customer satisfaction" highlights the foundational role these elements play in fostering customer loyalty, with extensive interconnections suggesting a strong consensus among researchers about their importance.

Conversely, the blue cluster centered around "brand loyalty" connects with nodes such as "brand image," "brand love," "brand identification," and "brand experience." This cluster reflects an emotional and identity-driven perspective on loyalty, where customers develop a deep, affective connection with a brand that goes beyond transactional interactions. These connections underscore the importance of emotional and psychological factors in cultivating brand loyalty, suggesting that customers' perceptions of a brand's identity and the emotional resonance of their experiences play critical roles in their decision to remain loyal.

Lastly, the network also shows interlinkages between "customer loyalty" and "brand loyalty" through various bridging concepts like "employee advocacy" and "employer branding." These links reflect an understanding that internal company dynamics and external brand perceptions are

closely intertwined. For instance, employee advocacy can enhance or diminish customer loyalty through direct customer interactions or through the broader impact on corporate image. Similarly, effective employer branding can contribute to both employee satisfaction and a stronger external brand image, which in turn can foster greater brand loyalty.
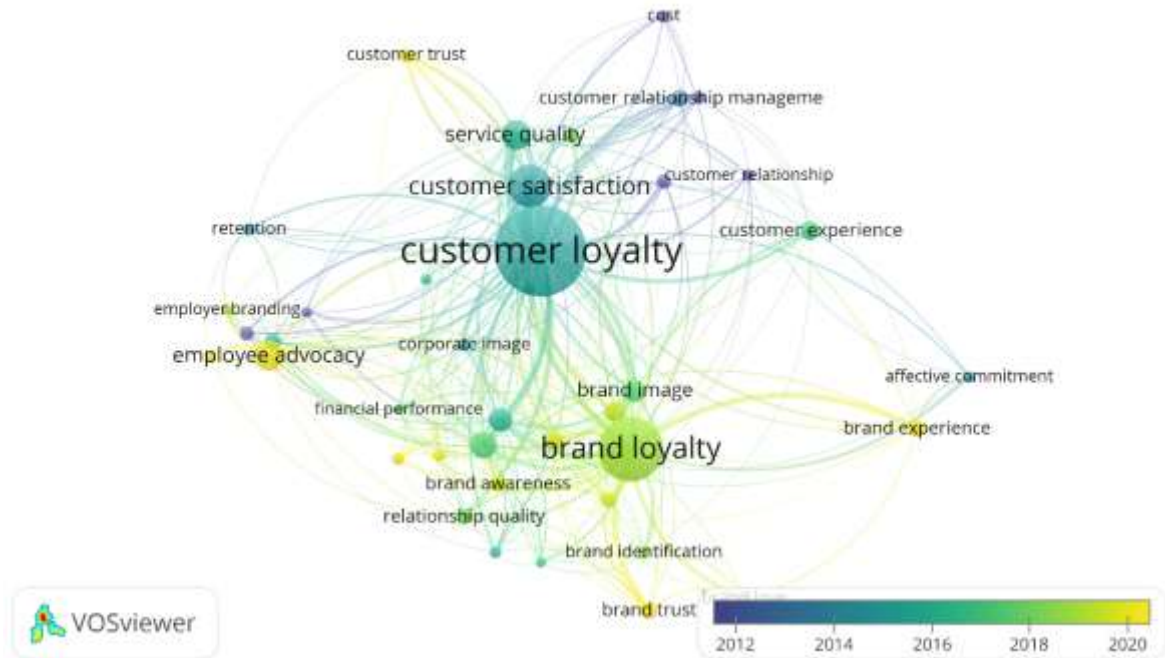

Figure 6. Overlay Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2024

The figure above captures the temporal development and interconnectedness of various concepts related to customer and brand loyalty from 2012 to 2020. This network map is overlaid with a time gradient, where the color shifts from blue in the earlier years to green and yellow in the later years, providing a visual representation of how these topics have evolved over time. Central to this map are the nodes for "customer loyalty" and "brand loyalty," indicating these areas as enduring focal points of research throughout the observed period. The dense network of lines connecting these central nodes to other concepts such as "service quality," "customer satisfaction," and "brand image" reflects the ongoing academic interest and significant cross-disciplinary influence these core ideas exert across related fields.

The shift in coloration from the cooler blues to warmer yellows around nodes associated with "brand loyalty," such as "brand trust" and "brand love," suggests an increase in research activity or evolving discussions in recent years, particularly closer to 2020. This change might indicate a heightened focus on the emotional and relational dimensions of brand loyalty as businesses increasingly recognize the value of cultivating deep, affective connections with consumers. The emergence of newer or more prominently discussed concepts such as "brand experience" and "affective commitment" in brighter colors further supports this trend towards exploring the deeper, more experiential aspects of consumer-brand relationships that transcend traditional satisfaction and quality metrics.

Additionally, the visualization highlights other related areas like "employee advocacy" and "employer branding," which are shown to connect with both "customer loyalty" and "brand loyalty." This indicates a

recognition in the literature of the integral role that internal stakeholders play in external brand perceptions. The interplay between these internal and external factors is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of brand dynamics. The positioning and connection of these nodes suggest a holistic approach to loyalty that incorporates multiple touchpoints and stakeholders, reflecting a complex ecosystem of influences that businesses must navigate to cultivate and maintain loyalty among their customer bases.
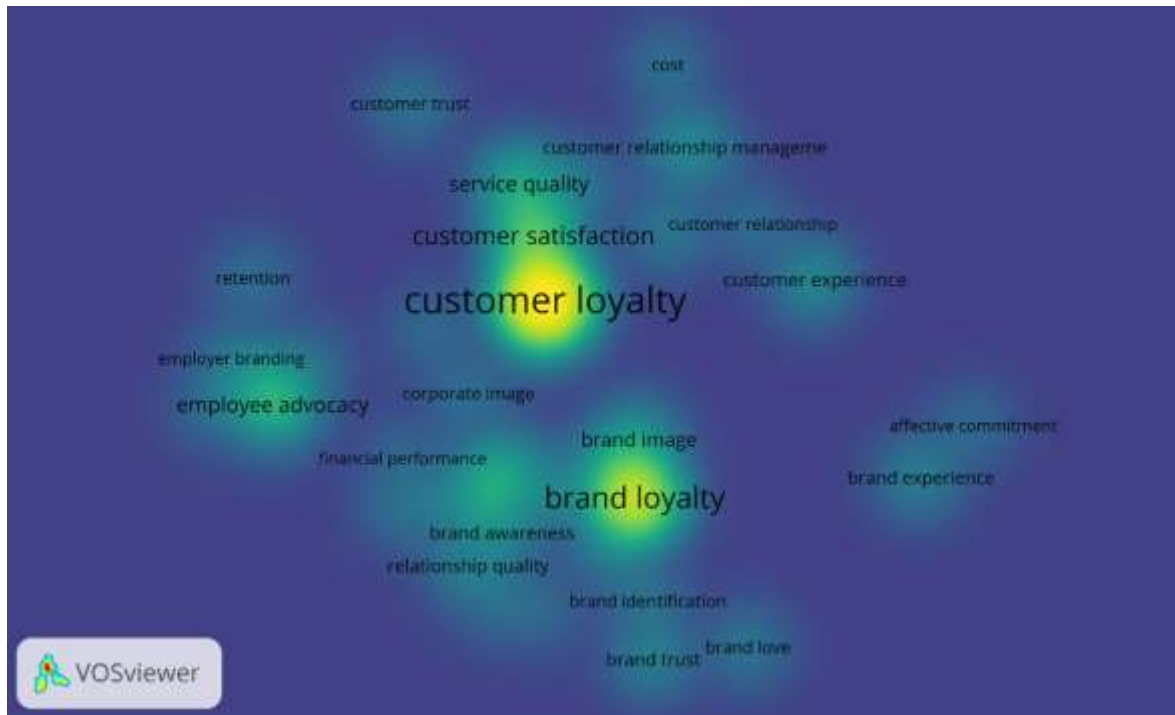

Figure 7. Density Visualization
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The density visualization depicted provides an insightful representation of key themes and focal areas in research related to customer and brand loyalty. In this map, the most intense areas—highlighted by the brightest colors around the terms "customer loyalty" and "brand loyalty"—indicate these as central and most densely connected themes within the scholarly dialogue. The clustering of related concepts such as "customer trust," "service quality," "customer satisfaction," and "customer experience" around "customer loyalty" suggests that these factors are frequently discussed together in the literature, highlighting their perceived importance in building and sustaining customer loyalty. Similarly, the proximity of "brand image," "brand awareness," and "brand love" to "brand loyalty" underscores a focus on the affective and cognitive dimensions of how consumers perceive and relate to brands.

Furthermore, the visualization employs a color gradient to depict the density of connections among these concepts, with cooler colors indicating less dense areas and warmer colors denoting higher densities of connectivity. This visual tool effectively illustrates how different concepts are interrelated within the fields of marketing and customer relationship management. For example, the gradient transition from "employee advocacy" and "employer branding" towards the core loyalty concepts may suggest an emerging recognition of the internal factors that influence external perceptions of loyalty. This map not only aids in visualizing the relationships and relative importance of various loyalty-related factors but also highlights areas that might be ripe for

further academic exploration, such as the links between corporate image and financial performance to overall loyalty constructs.

4.5 Citation Analysis

Table 2. Top Cited Research

Citations	Authors and year	Title	Findings
53857	[17]	Principles of marketing	This seminal text outlines fundamental marketing concepts, strategies, and practices. It emphasizes the importance of understanding consumer behavior, market segmentation, and the marketing mix as crucial components of effective marketing.
29126	[18]	Managing brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name	Aaker discusses strategies for managing brand equity effectively. He explains how brand equity is built, measured, and managed over time, highlighting its impact on financial performance and competitive advantage.
20979	[19]	Whence consumer loyalty?	Oliver explores the psychological and practical underpinnings of consumer loyalty. He proposes a framework that describes different stages of loyalty development, from cognitive loyalty to affective loyalty, and finally to conative and action loyalties.
19376	[20]	Building strong brands	This work extends his earlier discussions on brand equity, providing a comprehensive strategy for developing strong brands that achieve and sustain competitive advantage through brand positioning, identity, and marketing tactics.
12523	[21]	Zero defections: quality comes to services	Reichheld and Sasser examine the correlation between service quality and customer retention, suggesting that improving service quality can significantly reduce customer defections and increase profitability.
12381	[22]	The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: the role of brand loyalty	The authors establish a model linking brand trust and brand affect with brand performance, mediated by brand loyalty. They suggest that higher trust and positive affect towards a brand lead to greater loyalty, which enhances overall brand performance.
10318	[23]	Evaluating service encounters: the effects of physical surroundings and employee responses	Bitner's study focuses on the tangible aspects of service encounters. She demonstrates how physical settings and employee behaviors critically influence customer perceptions and satisfaction.
9725	[24]	Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: a meta-analysis.	This meta-analysis finds strong links between employee satisfaction, engagement, and various business outcomes, including profitability and customer satisfaction.
9426	[25]	The different roles of satisfaction, trust, and	Garbarino and Johnson differentiate the roles that satisfaction, trust, and commitment play in

Citations	Authors and year	Title	Findings
		commitment in customer relationships	forming and sustaining customer relationships, highlighting how each contributes differently to relationship maintenance and loyalty.
7662	[26]	Brand experience: what is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?	The authors define brand experience as sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli. They develop a scale to measure brand experience and demonstrate its significant impact on customer loyalty.

Source: Publish or Perish Output, 2024

Discussion (The Role of Employee Advocacy on Brand Loyalty)

The role of employee advocacy in enhancing brand loyalty represents a pivotal aspect of contemporary marketing strategy and organizational behavior. Employee advocates, when effectively harnessed, serve not only as assets for external marketing efforts but also as crucial contributors to building a loyal customer base. This discussion synthesizes findings from multiple studies, including insights drawn from [20] on brand equity, [22] on the effects of brand trust, and [24] on the relationship between employee satisfaction and business outcomes, to explore the multifaceted impact of employee advocacy on brand loyalty.

The integration of employee advocacy initiatives aligns closely with the creation of authentic brand experiences that foster trust among consumers. Aaker's model of brand equity emphasizes the significance of brand loyalty, which is substantially supported by trust that customers place in a brand [20]. Employees, as the first point of contact in many business interactions, play a fundamental role in transmitting the values and reliability of the brand to customers. [22] research further supports this by linking trust directly to customer loyalty, mediated by brand affect. In this context, employee advocacy can enhance brand trust by ensuring consistent, positive interactions with customers, thereby reinforcing brand messages and values.

The meta-analysis by [24] illustrates a direct correlation between employee engagement, satisfaction, and positive business outcomes, including customer loyalty and financial performance. Engaged employees are more likely to believe in the brand they represent and, consequently, are more effective in their advocacy roles. When employees are genuinely satisfied and engaged with their work, their enthusiasm naturally extends to their interactions with customers, which can be a powerful driver of brand loyalty. This emotional contagion, where positive employee attitudes translate into positive customer experiences, underpins the effectiveness of employee advocacy programs.

To operationalize employee advocacy effectively, organizations must focus on comprehensive internal branding efforts. These efforts should align with external brand promises, thus avoiding dissonance between what the brand communicates externally and what employees experience internally. This alignment enhances employees' understanding of the brand and empowers them to act as credible brand ambassadors. Furthermore, providing employees with the right tools, training, and incentives to advocate for the brand is crucial. These resources enable employees to deliver consistent and authentic messages, which solidify customer perceptions of the brand's reliability and quality.

Despite the benefits, there are inherent challenges in implementing effective employee advocacy programs. One significant challenge is ensuring consistent messaging across diverse employee groups and touchpoints. As [23] highlights in her study on service encounters, the physical and

interpersonal environment can significantly affect customer perceptions. Hence, maintaining a consistent brand message across all employee interactions, both online and offline, is critical. Additionally, the integration of employee advocacy into the broader marketing strategy requires continuous monitoring and adaptation to changing market conditions and consumer expectations.

The strategic implications of integrating employee advocacy into brand loyalty initiatives are profound. As organizations navigate increasingly competitive markets, the authentic interactions facilitated by employee advocates can serve as a key differentiator. Future research should explore the specific tactics and strategies that enhance the effectiveness of employee advocacy programs. This includes investigating the role of digital platforms in amplifying employee voices and examining the impact of such programs across different industries and cultural contexts.

5. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric analysis has provided a comprehensive overview of the dynamics between employee advocacy and brand loyalty, illuminating the essential role of employee engagement in shaping customer perceptions and enhancing brand trust. The study highlighted the critical influence of consistent, authentic employee interactions on fostering deep, enduring customer relationships that are foundational to brand loyalty. Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of aligning internal branding efforts with external brand messages to ensure cohesive and powerful brand advocacy from employees. As markets continue to evolve and consumer expectations shift, the insights derived from this bibliometric analysis suggest that organizations must continue to invest in and refine their employee advocacy strategies to maintain a competitive edge. Future research should further explore the integration of digital tools in advocacy efforts and the adaptation of these strategies across different cultural contexts to fully harness the potential of employee advocacy in driving brand loyalty. This study not only contributes to academic discourse but also offers practical guidance for organizations aiming to leverage their internal human resources to achieve sustained market success.

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