

Research Evolution of Supply Chain and Operations Management in Cross-Border E-Commerce: A Bibliometric and Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract. The rapid digitalization of international trade has fundamentally transformed global supply chains; however, the intellectual landscape of cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) remains fragmented and insufficiently synthesized. To address this gap, the present study conducts a systematic bibliometric review to map the intellectual structure and evolutionary trajectory of the CBEC ecosystem at the intersection of logistics, informatics, and service science. Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, the study analyzes a curated dataset systematically extracted from 1,821 Scopus-indexed records. Advanced network visualization techniques, including co-citation analysis and bibliographic coupling using VOSviewer, are employed to examine the field's developmental patterns and emerging knowledge structures. The findings reveal a substantial evolution in the CBEC research landscape. While the foundational knowledge base was historically centered on macro-level trade governance and institutional infrastructure across four core themes, contemporary research has evolved into seven highly applied and operationally oriented clusters. Current scholarly attention increasingly emphasizes digital supply chain optimization, intelligent platform service quality, and the complex dynamics of cross-cultural consumer behavior. Overall, this structural mapping provides a comprehensive and evidence-based research agenda that can support supply chain managers in optimizing multinational logistics systems and assist policymakers in promoting resilient and sustainable digital transformation across emerging global markets.

Keywords: bibliographic coupling, bibliometric, co-citation analysis, cross-border e-commerce, PRISMA, systematic review.

1. Introduction

The traditional boundaries of international commerce have been irrevocably redefined by the proliferation of digital platforms, establishing Cross-Border E-Commerce (CBEC) as a highly significant and rapidly growing component of international trade (Gomez-Herrera et al., 2014). Driven by rapid technological advancements, this multidimensional ecosystem now seamlessly integrates the exchange of both physical commodities and digital services across geographical borders (Stiglitz, 2017). Consequently, navigating this dynamic environment has become a strategic imperative for international business. Unlike traditional domestic e-commerce, CBEC involves highly complex transactions across different jurisdictions, demanding a sophisticated understanding of international trade regulations, global digital platforms, and cross-cultural consumer behavior (Cheng et al., 2019; Cui et al., 2019). The profound impact of this shift is further evidenced by the dominance of multinational giants such as Amazon and Alibaba, which have fundamentally transformed how consumers access and interact with international markets (Hoque & Bashaw, 2020).

Although the literature on CBEC is expanding rapidly, its intellectual landscape remains structurally fragmented. Existing studies are largely confined to disconnected operational silos. For instance, while the importance of leveraging digital capabilities for innovation performance is increasingly recognized (Sun et al., 2024), most literature still treats supply chain management, digital transformation, and customer-centric fulfillment as isolated domains (Zhu et al., 2019; Mou et al., 2020). Furthermore, while numerous studies highlight the potential of e-logistics, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Big Data analytics, the literature lacks a unified consensus on how these technologies actively drive cross-border supply chain efficiency across varying global markets.

Consequently, this persistent fragmentation across disparate disciplines, coupled with contradictory empirical evidence, culminates in a significant knowledge gap that precludes a unified understanding of the global CBEC ecosystem. Most existing reviews in the field rely on traditional narrative methods, which often suffer from subjective selection bias and a lack of transparency in paper inclusion. Given the rapid evolution and massive volume of CBEC data, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines is not just beneficial but essential. The application of PRISMA ensures a rigorous, transparent, and reproducible process for identifying, screening, and evaluating relevant studies. By minimizing researcher bias through a predefined protocol, PRISMA provides a rigorous and widely accepted framework for synthesizing the complex and fast-moving multidisciplinary evidence of CBEC, ensuring that the resulting "knowledge map" is both comprehensive and scientifically grounded.

To overcome these inconsistencies, this study adopts a PRISMA-guided systematic bibliometric review to provide a comprehensive mapping of the global intellectual structure of CBEC from its inception as an academic field. To achieve this aim, the study is organized around three specific research questions (RQs), each corresponding to a distinct bibliometric methodological approach:

RQ1: What are the evolutionary publication trends, leading academic contributors, and geographical distributions within the CBEC ecosystem, as evaluated through descriptive performance analysis?

RQ2: What constitutes the foundational intellectual structure of CBEC research, and how are these core theoretical pillars interconnected, as mapped by document co-citation analysis?

RQ3: What are the contemporary thematic clusters, emerging technological trends, and future research agendas in the CBEC domain, as identified through bibliographic coupling and keyword co-occurrence network analysis?

This study contributes to the literature by providing a robust, replicable research map that clarifies the evolution of CBEC and offers a strategic roadmap for both academia and practitioners.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 details the research methodology, specifically the PRISMA-compliant data collection and the bibliometric tools employed. Section 3 presents the results of the descriptive and network analyses. Section 4 provides an in-depth discussion

of the findings, identifies remaining research gaps, and proposes a future research agenda. Finally, Section 5 concludes the study with theoretical and practical implications.

2. Research methodology

This study adopts a systematic and quantitative approach by integrating the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines with Bibliometric Analysis techniques. The synergy of these methods ensures a transparent, comprehensive, and reproducible mapping of the intellectual structure of Cross-Border E-Commerce (CBEC), minimizing researcher bias in the selection and evaluation of scholarly evidence.

2.1. Data Retrieval and PRISMA Screening Process

The data collection and screening process was strictly executed in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. In the initial Identification phase, a systematic search of the Scopus Core Collection was conducted in April 2026. The search query string utilized was: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("cross-border e-commerce" OR "CBEC" OR "cross-border electronic commerce" OR "international e-commerce"). The initial retrieval yielded a total of 1,821 records. The search query intentionally excluded peripheral phrases such as "global e-commerce logistics", "digital export", "cross-border digital trade" and "cross-border online retail" to maintain strict conceptual boundaries and prevent data contamination. Specifically, "global e-commerce logistics" often captures purely technical engineering or transport optimization studies devoid of e-commerce business strategies. Meanwhile, "digital export" heavily overlaps with macroeconomic trade policies rather than the operational dynamics of e-commerce platforms. Lastly, "cross-border online retail" is a restrictive subset that excludes business-to-business (B2B) transactions, which constitute a massive share of the cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) ecosystem. Therefore, relying on the core keywords and their direct semantic equivalents ensures that the retrieved dataset remains highly focused, structurally homogeneous, and fully aligned with the operational and supply chain scope of this review.

The data collection and screening process was strictly executed in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, as illustrated in Figure 1.

In the initial Identification phase, a systematic search of the Scopus database was conducted in April 2026, yielding a total of 1,821 records.

Subsequently, moving to the Screening phase, an automated process was applied based on specific eligibility criteria. Specifically, records were removed if they were published in languages other than English ($n = 45$) or were document types other than peer-reviewed journal articles, such as conference proceedings and book chapters ($n = 843$). This step reduced the sample to 933 total records screened (Note: the automated screening also confirmed zero duplicates within the Scopus export).

A rigorous manual review of titles and abstracts was then conducted for these 933 reports, resulting in the exclusion of 283 records. These articles were removed because they focused exclusively on domestic e-commerce models ($n = 142$) or purely technical logistics algorithms ($n = 141$). Following this step, 650 reports were retained and assessed for full-text eligibility.

In the final Included phase, a total of 349 records were carefully excluded after reviewing the full articles based on strict parameters. The specific reasons for exclusion were systematically categorized as follows: inaccessible full texts ($n = 28$); studies focusing purely on computer science or technical engineering without integration into supply chain and operations management ($n = 84$); and articles that deviated significantly from the core scope, such as those addressing broad macroeconomic policies

rather than digital supply chains or consumer behavior ($n = 62$).

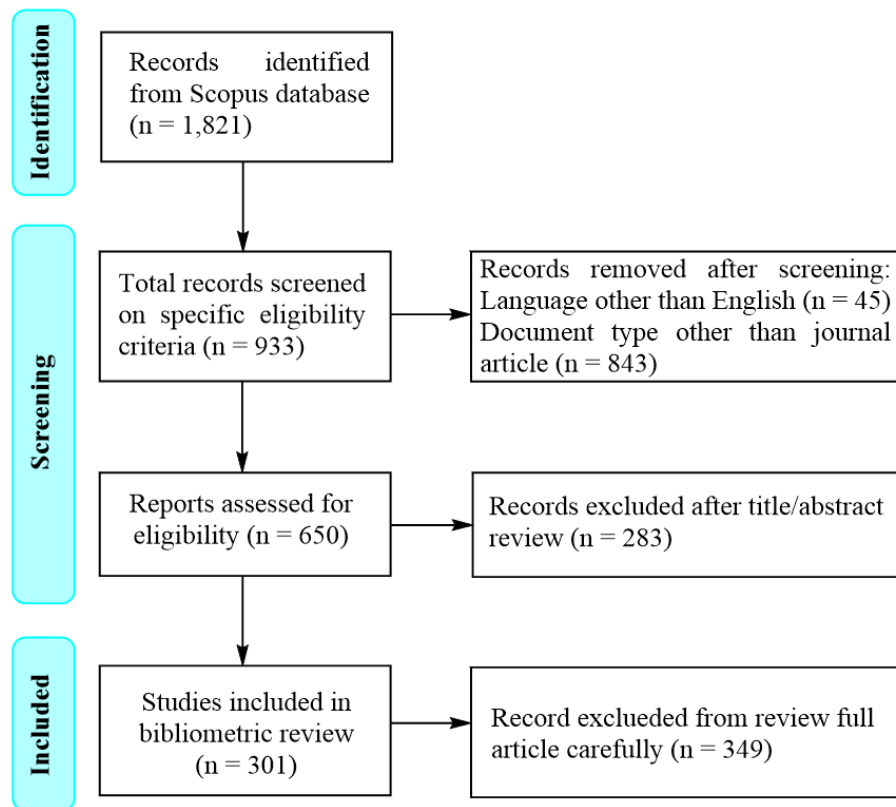


Fig. 1: PRISMA flow chart for data extraction

Finally, to conform to the structural quality index of the hosting journal, a remaining subset of articles ($n = 175$) was disqualified for failing to meet rigorous conceptual or structural quality standards. This latter category encompasses studies lacking robust empirical frameworks, as well as documents published by specific open-access platforms known for high-volume non-specialized clustering (such as MDPI, Frontiers, and Hindawi). For instance, a substantial number of articles were explicitly removed from specific journals within these publishers, including Sustainability (MDPI, $n = 42$), Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research (MDPI, $n = 17$), Mobile Information Systems (Hindawi, $n = 17$), and Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing (Hindawi, $n = 13$). Through these multi-layered screening rounds, the final sample included for the bibliometric review consisted of 301 high-quality studies.

2.2. Bibliometric Analysis and Visualization Techniques

This study conducts a systematic bibliometric review by integrating the PRISMA 2020 guidelines with advanced network analysis techniques. The subsequent phase of this study involves the application of bibliometric methods, which utilize statistical techniques to identify quantitative and qualitative shifts within a specific scientific domain. This approach allows for the establishment of publication profiles and the detection of evolving trends within a specialized field (Rey-Martí et al., 2016).

In this study, the Scopus online database was selected as the core data source. Scopus is widely recognized as one of the largest abstract and citation databases of peer-reviewed literature, offering extensive coverage across social sciences, business, and management disciplines (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). Its comprehensive indexing ensures the validity and quality of the retrieved articles for bibliometric mapping.

To construct and visualize the complex scientific networks of CBEC, this study utilized VOSviewer as the primary analytical tool. This software facilitates the extraction of bibliographic data from scientific databases, enabling the generation of expansive networks that encompass publications,

journals, researchers, organizations, countries, and keywords (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). As Zupic and Čater (2015) emphasize, the integration of bibliometric statistics significantly enhances the objectivity and persuasiveness of literature reviews. By employing various mapping algorithms, this approach effectively translates large volumes of metadata into a comprehensive "science map" of the research domain (Valenzuela et al., 2017).

To ensure methodological transparency and facilitate the reproducibility of the network visualizations, specific algorithmic parameters were configured in VOSviewer. The fractional counting method was utilized across all analyses to mitigate the disproportionate influence of documents with extensive reference lists or multiple co-authors. Network normalization was conducted using the association strength method, which is the optimal standard for bibliometric mapping. For the clustering algorithm, the resolution parameter was maintained at the default value of 1.00 to achieve optimal modularity without over-fragmenting the themes. Furthermore, strict criteria were established to reduce network noise: the keyword occurrence threshold was set at a minimum of 5 occurrences, and the citation threshold for bibliographic coupling and co-citation analyses was set at a minimum of 10 citations per document. These rigorous settings ensured that the generated networks captured only the most structurally significant elements of the CBEC research landscape.

Specifically, to unpack the intellectual landscape of CBEC, this study focuses on three core citation-based and occurrence techniques. First, bibliographic coupling was employed to identify current research clusters and emerging themes. This technique analyzes the overlap of references between publications, occurring when two separate studies cite the same third work (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Baker et al., 2021). Such overlapping references suggest a high degree of thematic similarity in the studies' vocabulary, structure, and research scope (Mulet-Forteza et al., 2018). Following the rationale provided by Donthu et al. (2021), documents sharing a high volume of common citations are generally classified within the same research area, thereby allowing for the precise identification of modern focal points and contemporary trends within the CBEC domain.

Complementing this, co-citation analysis was employed to uncover the foundational intellectual pillars and core theoretical frameworks that have historically shaped the field. Co-citation occurs when two earlier publications are frequently cited together by subsequent works (Small, 1973). As the frequency of these simultaneous citations increases, the co-citation link strength intensifies, indicating a high probability that the foundational concepts of the co-cited papers are fundamentally and theoretically interrelated (Ferreira, 2018).

Finally, to project the trajectory of the field, co-word analysis was integrated to map the longitudinal evolution of keywords. By analyzing the co-occurrence of specific terms across the dataset, this technique provides a critical diagnostic lens for identifying existing research gaps and establishing strategic directions for future empirical investigations in the CBEC ecosystem.

By strictly adhering to the PRISMA protocol, this study enhances the reliability and transparency of the produced research map. However, the author acknowledges certain objective factors that may influence bibliometric results. For instance, highly cited documents naturally create more bibliographic couplings regardless of their actual content relevance, which may lead to content bias. Additionally, two documents citing the same source do not necessarily imply identical research purposes (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). To mitigate these potential biases and the inherent "citation lag" of co-citation analysis, this study emphasizes a detailed manual evaluation of documents during the screening phase and prioritizes bibliographic coupling to capture the most recent academic movements and future research agendas.

3. Result

This section reports the descriptive bibliometric results obtained from 1,821 Scopus-indexed records, providing an overview of research evolution, geographical patterns, prolific contributors, and influential publications in the CBEC literature. To offer a macroscopic perspective on the field's development, the

descriptive statistics in Sections 3.1–3.5 are generated from the complete dataset ($n = 1,821$). By contrast, the bibliometric network analyses in Section 4 are conducted exclusively on the final screened sample ($n = 301$), which was selected to ensure analytical consistency and relevance to the study objectives.

3.1. Publication Trends by Year

As illustrated in Figure 2, the domain of CBEC is a relatively nascent research area on a global scale. Although literature began to appear sporadically in 2000, the majority of publications have only truly surged and concentrated within the last decade. Following the initial screening and the removal of duplicated and irrelevant studies, 933 eligible records remained.

Figure 2 delineates the annual publication volume of CBEC research from 2000 to 2026. It is evident that the number of published documents on cross-border e-commerce has increased sharply since 2021. This surge corresponds to the post-COVID-19 era, which significantly intensified consumer reliance on CBEC. The upward trajectory continued impressively, reaching its peak in 2025 with over 330 published articles. The apparent decline shown in 2026 is solely due to the data collection cutoff date (April 2026), which does not fully reflect the publication volume for the entire year. Ultimately, the continuous proliferation of scientific publications during this period demonstrates that CBEC is an increasingly critical topic, capturing profound attention from the international academic community.

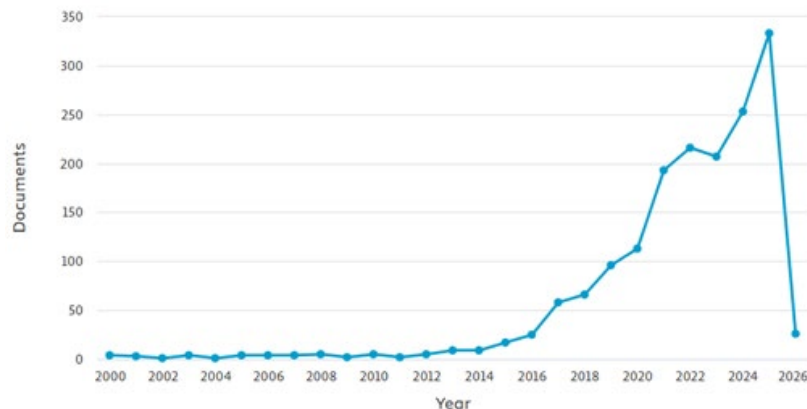


Fig. 2: Annual publication trends in CBEC research (based on the initial 1,821 retrieved records)

Having established the chronological growth of CBEC literature, it is imperative to examine its geographical distribution to identify the primary regional hubs driving this research agenda.

3.2. Most Productive Countries and Regions

The statistical results of cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) research reveal a profound disparity in academic interest across different nations. China leads overwhelmingly with 1,202 publications, significantly outpacing the United States, which holds the second position with 70 studies. This distribution aligns perfectly with their status as the world's two largest economies and their pioneering roles in shaping the global trade landscape.

Beyond the United States and the contributions from the United Kingdom (48 papers) representing Europe or Australia (30 papers), the majority of the remaining top 10 countries are concentrated in Asia. Specifically, high rankings are occupied by regional nations and territories, including South Korea (57 papers), Malaysia (56 papers), Taiwan (51 papers), Thailand (44 papers), India (27 papers), and Hong Kong (25 papers). These publication metrics indicate that researchers affiliated with Asian institutions are currently the most prolific contributors to CBEC literature within the analyzed dataset. Such a trend is unsurprising given the region's massive population, the rapid expansion of the middle class, and the high penetration rate of mobile devices. Consequently, the strong research focus on Asia accurately reflects the empirical reality of the boom and the increasing prevalence of cross-border trade in this

high-potential market.

Table 1: Geographical distribution of publications by country and territory

No.	Country	Number of publications	No.	Country	Number of publications
1	China	1,202	6	United Kingdom	48
2	United States	70	7	Thailand	44
3	South Korea	57	8	Australia	30
4	Malaysia	56	9	India	27
5	Taiwan	51	10	Hong Kong	25

Beyond geographical contributions, understanding the primary dissemination channels is crucial. Table 2 details the academic journals that have published the highest volume of CBEC research.

3.3. Distribution of Publications by Journal

Among the journals contributing to the CBEC discourse, 14 representative titles with the highest publication volumes are detailed in Table 2. Statistical data reveals that the leading journals include Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences, Electronic Commerce Research, and Mobile Information Systems. Notably, Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences distinctively leads the list with 38 articles, followed by Electronic Commerce Research with 23 articles.

Table 2: Distribution of publications by journal

Rank	Journal	Country	Publisher	Number of publications
1	Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences	Poland	Sciendo	38
2	Electronic Commerce Research	Netherlands	Elsevier B.V.	23
3	Security and Communication Networks	United States	John Wiley and Sons Ltd	14
4	Finance Research Letters	Netherlands	Elsevier Ltd	13
5	IEEE Access	United States	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Inc.	12
6	Plos One	United States	Public Library of Science	12
7	Mathematical Problems in Engineering	United States	John Wiley and Sons Ltd	11
8	Electronic Commerce Research and Applications	Netherlands	Elsevier B.V.	10
9	Journal of Computational Methods in Sciences and Engineering	Netherlands	SAGE Publications Ltd	10
10	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Netherlands	Elsevier Ltd	10
11	Sage Open	United States	SAGE Publications Inc.	9
12	World Customs Journal	Australia	International Network of Customs Universities	9

Geographically, journals headquartered in the United States and the Netherlands predominantly feature in this list, indicating a robust commitment and strategic investment from publishers in these nations toward the CBEC field. Furthermore, the inclusion of journals such as Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences or Mathematical Problems in Engineering underscores the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, which effectively integrates fundamental sciences and mathematics with contemporary commerce. Nevertheless, the majority of journals maintaining a consistent output are primarily situated within the domains of e-commerce, business, and services, such as Electronic Commerce Research or the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services. This trend highlights the escalating interest of high-impact business journals in CBEC, reflecting the critical importance of investigating consumer behavior and managerial strategies within the modern cross-border e-commerce landscape.

3.4. Most Productive Authors

Table 3 delineates the most prolific contributors to the field, specifically highlighting scholars who have authored five or more publications. Notably, researchers such as Ma, S., Mou, J., Niu, B., Giuffrida, M., and Lei, F. have established themselves as prominent experts in CBEC research. Leading this cohort is Ma, S. with 18 published articles, followed by Mou, J. with 14 articles; both have made extensive contributions to elucidating critical aspects of the global cross-border e-commerce landscape.

Table 3: The most prolific authors in CBEC research (minimum of five publications)

Rank	Author	Publications	Rank	Author	Publications	Rank	Author	Publications
1	Ma, S.	18	7	Mangiaracina, R.	7	13	Zhang, X.	6
2	Mou, J.	14	8	Zeng, Y.	7	14	Cohen, J.	5
3	Niu, B.	11	9	Cui, Y.	6	15	Dong, Y.	5
4	Giuffrida, M.	8	10	Perego, A.	6	16	Fang, M.	5
5	Lei, F.	8	11	Wang, N.	6	17	Huang, J.	5
6	Jia, F.	7	12	Yan, W.	6	18	Wang, Y.	5

3.5. Distribution by Research Areas

The statistical distribution by research field indicates that cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) is an inherently interdisciplinary subject, establishing strong connections between diverse domains ranging from technological and engineering foundations to business, management, and sociology. The following statistics delineate the research fields associated with CBEC based on their respective publication counts. The data shows that the primary research contributions are concentrated within the digital technology cluster, specifically Computer Science with 916 publications and Engineering with 472 publications.

However, these technological fields are closely trailed by the business and human-centric disciplines, which represent a significant volume of academic output, including 467 publications in Business, Management and Accounting, 353 in Social Sciences, and 301 in Economics, Econometrics and Finance. This statistical evidence suggests that while CBEC is inextricably linked to and heavily reliant on the advancement of computer science systems, it maintains its fundamental character as a field deeply rooted in business management, economic theory, and social behavior.

Table 4: Distribution of publications by subject area and discipline

Ranking	Research area	Number of publications	Ranking	Research area	Number of publications
1	Computer Science	916	9	Energy	93
2	Engineering	472	10	Materials Science	75
3	Business, Management and Accounting	467	11	Physics and Astronomy	71
4	Social Sciences	353	12	Arts and Humanities	49
5	Economics, Econometrics and Finance	301	13	Multidisciplinary	36
6	Mathematics	251	14	Medicine	35
7	Decision Sciences	245	15	Agricultural and Biological Sciences	32
8	Environmental Science	105	16	Earth and Planetary Sciences	30

Having mapped the multidisciplinary nature of CBEC across diverse subject areas, it is critical to identify the foundational studies that have profoundly influenced this academic discourse. Table 5 synthesizes the top 10 most influential studies.

3.6. Most Cited Publications

Table 5 synthesizes the top 10 most influential studies, which collectively possess a total citation count exceeding 3,100. Notably, the most prominent study alone has garnered over 1,100 citations, reflecting the profound interest of both the academic and business communities in cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) and digital transformation. These publications focus on providing a detailed analysis of the impact of critical factors, specifically enterprise digital capabilities, the integration of blockchain technology in supply chains, and logistics services, on international trade operations.

Furthermore, themes such as transaction trust building, environmental barriers, and consumer purchase intentions, including the influence of live-streaming commerce, have been extensively explored. Collectively, these seminal works offer a comprehensive overview of the CBEC ecosystem and the multidimensional factors that drive its development and evolution.

Table 5: Most cited publications

Authors	Year	Title	Keywords	Total Citations	Citations per Year
Panel A: Foundational Works (General Digital Transformation & E-commerce)					
Li et al.	2018	Digital transformation by SME entrepreneurs: A capability perspective	digital entrepreneurship, digital platform, digital transformation, dynamic managerial capabilities, organizational capabilities, process model	1,107	158.14
Tan and Thoen	2000	Toward a generic model of trust for electronic commerce	control procedures, electronic payment, international trade, trust, trust creation methods	373	14.92
Panel B: CBEC-Specific Influential Works					
Liu and Li	2020	A blockchain-based framework of cross-border e-commerce supply chain	blockchain technology, cross-border e-commerce, product traceability, supply chain management	331	66.20
Elia et al.	2021	Resources and digital export: An RBV perspective on the role of digital technologies and capabilities in cross-border e-commerce	cross-border e-commerce, digital export, digital export capabilities, digital transformation, firms' capabilities, internationalization, resource-based view	322	80.50
Gomez-Herrera et al.	2014	The drivers and impediments for cross-border e-commerce in the EU	e-commerce, European Union, gravity equation	231	21.00
Niu et al.	2021	Should multinational firms implement blockchain to provide quality verification?	arm's length principle, blockchain technology, co-opetitive supply chain, cross-border e-commerce, tax-planning	196	49.00
Hsiao, Chen, and Liao	2017	Logistics service design for cross-border E-commerce using Kansei engineering with text-mining-based online content analysis	cross-border logistics service, kansei engineering, partial least squares, service design, text mining	176	22.00
Zhu, Mou, and Benyoucef	2019	Exploring purchase intention in cross-border E-commerce: A three stage model	commitment-involvement theory, cross-border e-commerce, hierarchy-of-effects model, purchase intention, three-stage theoretical model	155	25.83
Kim, Dekker, and Heij	2017	Cross-border electronic commerce: Distance effects and express delivery in European union markets	centralized distribution centers, cross-border demand, distance, distance effects, express delivery, global e-commerce, gravity model, willingness to pay	153	19.13

Table 5 presents the most influential publications within the analyzed dataset, ranked by total citations. To accurately reflect the intellectual structure of this domain, the highly cited documents have been deliberately categorized into two distinct streams. Panel A highlights general foundational works, such as the seminal study by Li et al. (2018) on SME digital transformation. While not exclusively focused on cross-border transactions, these foundational papers are frequently cited by CBEC scholars because they provide the essential theoretical scaffolding for digital supply chain integration and broad technological adoption. In contrast, Panel B isolates the core CBEC-specific influential works. These studies directly investigate the unique operational dynamics of international e-commerce, such as cross-border logistics systems, e-platform operations, and customs facilitation. By separating the broad digital transformation foundations from the highly specialized CBEC literature, this dual-panel structure offers a more precise mapping of the direct and indirect intellectual roots that shape the current CBEC ecosystem.

4. Discussion and Future Research Directions

While the previous section delineated the descriptive landscape of Cross-Border E-Commerce (CBEC) research by highlighting publication trajectories, key geographical hubs, and influential contributors, this section delves deeper into the hidden intellectual structure and evolutionary dynamics of the field. Moving beyond surface-level metrics, we employ advanced network analysis to unpack the conceptual

linkages that bind this scientific domain. Specifically, this section first utilizes bibliographic coupling to map the contemporary research fronts and emerging applied clusters. Subsequently, co-citation analysis is applied to trace the foundational theoretical pillars that have historically shaped these modern trends. By synthesizing these structural insights, the discussion critically evaluates the paradigm shifts within CBEC literature and proposes a robust, data-driven agenda for future empirical investigations, particularly emphasizing cross-cultural consumer behavior and sustainable logistics in emerging markets.

4.1. Foundational Knowledge Base: A Co-Citation Analysis

To establish a comprehensive understanding of the CBEC domain, it is essential to first identify the foundational intellectual pillars that have historically shaped its academic landscape. This section employs co-citation analysis to reveal the core theoretical frameworks upon which contemporary research is built.

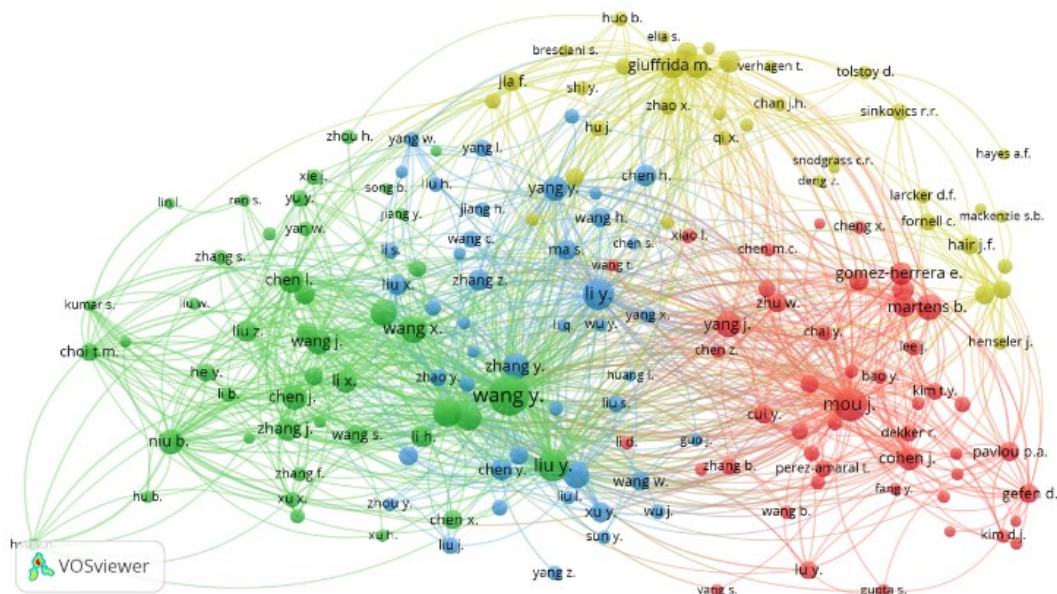


Fig. 3: Visualized co-citation network

The results of the co-citation network analysis reveal an exceptionally robust and densely interconnected knowledge foundation within the field of Cross-Border E-commerce (CBEC). Specifically, the network of source documents is organized into seven foundational thematic clusters, comprising 13,924 links and an enormous total link strength of 138,056. This exceptionally high total link strength value, which is nearly ten times greater than the simple number of links, provides compelling evidence of profound theoretical convergence within the field.

This finding suggests that the "seed documents" in CBEC research are frequently co-cited by the scholarly community at a remarkably high rate, serving as fundamental references and theoretical premises for emerging studies. The division into seven clusters reflects the diversity of core schools of thought and intellectual traditions within the discipline. However, the existence of tens of thousands of interwoven connections indicates that these schools are far from isolated or fragmented. Instead, they are closely integrated, forming a highly interdisciplinary and cohesive theoretical framework that serves as a solid foundation for the advancement of contemporary research trends.

Alongside bibliographic coupling, which is utilized to identify emerging research trends, this study integrates co-citation analysis. This method plays a crucial role in delineating the core theoretical foundations, thereby facilitating the identification of academic gaps or research questions that remain unresolved in previous seminal works.

The results of the co-citation analysis categorize the foundational studies into four main foundational themes (Figure 3). These themes are designated based on the core content of the most

highly cited representative studies and are detailed in Table 6. Specifically, Cluster 1 focuses on the international development of cross-border e-commerce, exploring the macro-level opportunities, potentials, and strategies arising from global trade connectivity (e.g., Mou et al., 2019; Gomez-Herrera et al., 2014). Cluster 2 emphasizes supply chain innovation and performance optimization, highlighting solutions to enhance corporate competitiveness through operational optimization within the CBEC context (Niu et al., 2021). Furthermore, Cluster 3 delves into consumer purchase intention in cross-border e-commerce platforms, dissecting the psychological and cognitive factors that directly govern online cross-national purchasing decisions (Li et al., 2023; Huang & Chang, 2019). Finally, Cluster 4 addresses digital transformation and logistics solutions, investigating the application of digital technologies and the construction of optimal logistics networks that serve as the fundamental support for the sustainable development of the CBEC ecosystem (Giuffrida et al., 2020; Elia et al., 2021).

Table 6: Foundational research themes identified through co-citation analysis

Themes	Top Documents	Core Keywords	Rationale for Label Assignment
Theme 1. International Development of Cross-Border E-Commerce	Mou et al. (2019), Mou et al. (2020), Gomez-Herrera et al. (2014), Cui et al. (2019), Cui et al. (2020), Kim et al. (2017)	Gravity equation, E-commerce sustainability, Psychological distance.	Macro-level trade connectivity, global expansion strategies, and cross-national economic opportunities.
Theme 2. Supply Chain Innovation and Performance Optimization in Cross-Border E-Commerce	Liu et al. (2021), Niu et al. (2021), Chen et al. (2022), Ren et al. (2020), Wang et al. (2020)	Blockchain technology, Co-opetitive supply chain, Supply chain resilience, Business model innovation.	Enhancing corporate competitiveness through operational efficiency and supply chain resilience within the CBEC context.
Theme 3. Consumer Purchase Intention in Cross-Border E-Commerce Platforms	Li et al. (2023), Huang & Chang (2019), Guo et al. (2018), Lu et al. (2023), Jian et al. (2023)	Sellers' trust, Consumer trust, Cultural differences, Usage intention.	Dissecting psychological and cognitive determinants such as trust, perceived quality, and behavioral intentions in cross-national online shopping.
Theme 4. Digital Transformation and Logistics Solutions in Cross-Border E-Commerce	Giuffrida et al. (2020), Giuffrida et al. (2021), Elia et al. (2021), Wang et al. (2020), Pan et al. (2023), Duan et al. (2021)	Logistics solutions, Risk management strategies, Digital transformation, Digital entrepreneurship.	Examining the integration of digital technologies and the construction of optimized logistics networks to support sustainable trade.

From this comprehensive overview of the literature, it is evident that Cluster 3, focusing on consumer purchase intention and shopping behavior on CBEC platforms, is currently one of the most frequently investigated areas within the academic community, as evidenced by the substantial number of core publications adhering to this theme. Decoding the factors driving cross-border purchase decisions not only makes profound theoretical contributions but also opens a highly practical avenue for international enterprises. This further reflects the necessity of delving into consumer behavior research within the CBEC context, particularly in emerging economies experiencing rapid e-commerce integration. Exploring these rapidly digitalizing global markets will bridge existing research gaps and provide valuable strategic managerial implications for multinational platforms.

4.2. Mapping Current Research Themes: A Bibliographic Coupling Analysis

Building upon these foundational theoretical roots, bibliographic coupling is further utilized to map the contemporary research fronts. This analysis identifies how the field has branched into specific applied clusters in recent years, reflecting the current state of the CBEC ecosystem.

Bibliographic coupling is a scientific network analysis technique that occurs when two or more studies cite a common reference (Mulet-Forteza et al., 2018). Given that sharing cited references inherently suggests a high degree of structural and thematic similarity, documents converging on a similar citation profile typically belong to the same research area (Donthu et al., 2021). Consequently, this technique provides a robust foundation for categorizing and accurately identifying academic focal points within a specific domain.

Based on the bibliographic coupling analysis of the 301 retrieved articles, the cross-border e-

commerce (CBEC) ecosystem is categorized into seven core research clusters (Table 7). Through content analysis, this study identified the current key trends. Specifically, Cluster 1 is the largest (72 publications), focusing on innovation and supply chain performance optimization (Elia et al., 2021). Cluster 2 (63 studies) delves into supply chain digitalization to enhance platform quality (Niu et al., 2021). Cluster 3 (51 studies) concentrates on an in-depth analysis of consumer behavior (Cui et al., 2019). Cluster 4 (48 studies) discusses the cross-national development of CBEC (Valarezo et al., 2018). Cluster 5 (26 studies) specializes in logistics solutions (Gomez-Herrera et al., 2014). Cluster 6 (22 studies) unpacks the determinants of cross-border purchase intention. Finally, Cluster 7 (19 studies) addresses the inevitable role of digital transformation in CBEC enterprises (Li et al., 2023), specifically focusing on how leveraging distinct digital capabilities can directly enhance the innovation performance and operational resilience of cross-border firms (Sun et al., 2024).

Overall, the seven thematic clusters can be synthesized into three main pillars of cross-border trade. First, the operational and strategic dimension (Clusters 1, 2, 5, and 7) emphasizes the role of innovation, digital technology, and logistics solutions in improving performance, thereby helping enterprises adapt to a complex competitive environment. Second, the macro-level dimension (Cluster 4) highlights the importance of developing cross-national CBEC policies to promote global economic cooperation.

Table 7: Bibliographic coupling clusters on CBEC

Cluster name	Top Documents	Core Keywords	Rationale for Label Assignment
Cluster 1. Supply Chain Innovation and Performance Optimization in Cross-Border E-Commerce	Elia et al. (2021), Feng & Chen (2022), Yu et al. (2021), Mou et al. (2020)	Supply chain integration, Digital transformation, Service quality evaluation.	Exploring novel operational models, efficiency improvements, and supply chain resilience within global trade networks.
Cluster 2. Digitalization of Supply Chains and Quality Enhancement in CBEC Platforms	Niu et al. (2021), Wang et al. (2020), Liu et al. (2021), Ren et al. (2020), Zha et al. (2022)	Blockchain technology, Quality verification, Supply chain integrators, Supply chain resilience.	Implementing digital tools and data integration to upgrade platform service quality and streamline information flow.
Cluster 3. Consumer Behavior in Cross-Border E-Commerce Platforms	Cui et al. (2019), Huang & Chang (2019), Cui et al. (2020), Hsiao et al. (2017), Yu et al. (2021)	Purchase intention, Psychological distance, Consumer behavior, Logistics service design.	Analyzing post-adoption behaviors, ongoing shopping habits, and cross-cultural consumer dynamics in digital environments.
Cluster 4. Cross-Country Development of Cross-Border E-Commerce	Valarezo et al. (2018), Yin & Choi (2023), Ma et al. (2024), Chen et al. (2022), Zhong et al. (2021)	Drivers and barriers, International trade, Export diversification, B2B partner selection.	Investigating macro-level trade policies, regional economic integration, and structural barriers to international expansion.
Cluster 5. Logistics Solutions for Cross-Border E-Commerce	Gomez-Herrera et al. (2014), Kim et al. (2017), Ducret (2014), Giuffrida et al. (2020), Giuffrida et al. (2021)	Logistics solutions, Express delivery, Urban logistics, Risk management strategies.	Developing efficient international delivery networks, last-mile distribution systems, and sustainable freight practices.
Cluster 6. Determinants of Cross-Border Online Purchase Intention: Trust and Perceived Quality	Ho & Chuang (2023), Jian et al. (2023), Lu et al. (2023), Cui et al. (2020), Zhu et al. (2019)	Purchase intention, Usage intention, Quality attributes, Consumer trust, Psychological distance.	Identifying pre-purchase psychological drivers, specifically focusing on building consumer trust and mitigating perceived risks.
Cluster 7. Digital Transformation of Cross-Border E-Commerce Enterprises	Li et al. (2023), Duan et al. (2021), Jiang et al. (2022), Pan et al. (2023), Mou et al. (2019)	Digital transformation, Digital platforms, Digital entrepreneurship, SME participation.	Examining how individual enterprises adopt emerging technologies to overhaul and modernize their traditional business models.

Third, the customer-centric operational dimension (Clusters 3 and 6) delves into decoding consumer behaviors to improve service quality, platform operations, and supply chain responsiveness. From this comprehensive review, it is evident that the market and customer dimension, specifically consumer behavior (Cluster 3) alongside the antecedents of purchase intention such as trust and perceived quality (Cluster 6), has garnered significant attention from the international academic community, as evidenced by the large volume of studies in these two groups. This affirms that researching cross-border shopping behavior is not only a rich topic but also a highly potential and practical direction. Stemming from this context, deeply unpacking the factors affecting consumer behavior in CBEC operations, especially in emerging economies characterized by unique sociocultural dynamics and shifting consumption patterns, is an essential future research direction to fill theoretical gaps and provide valuable managerial implications for global enterprises.

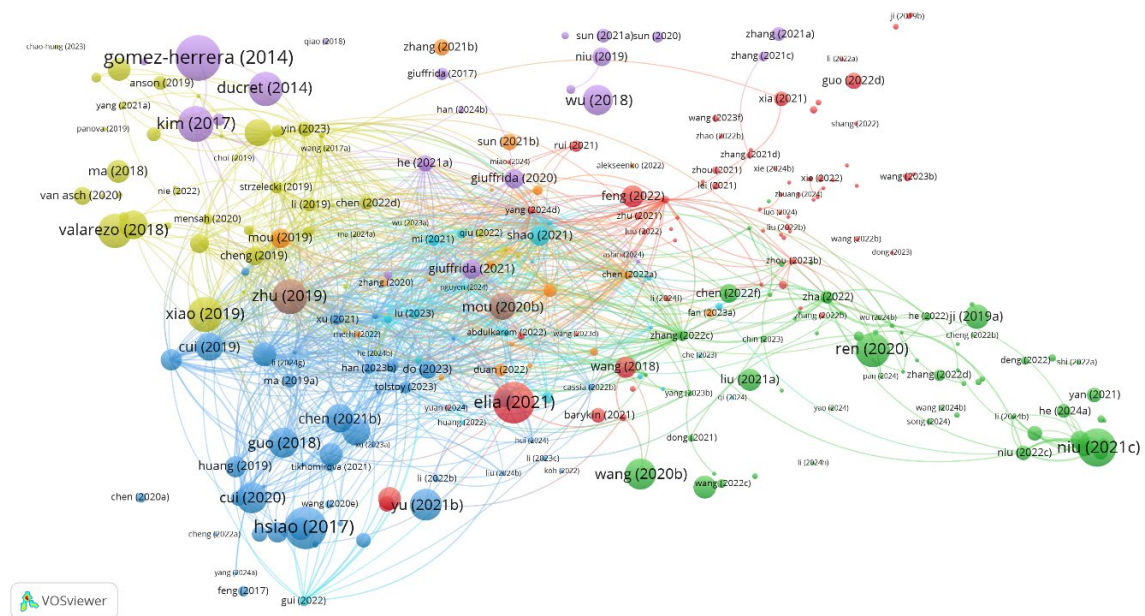


Fig. 4: Bibliographic coupling network

The results of the bibliographic coupling network analysis indicate that the research ecosystem surrounding Cross-Border E-commerce (CBEC) is highly interconnected and demonstrates a considerable degree of maturity. Specifically, the article network is differentiated into seven thematic clusters, comprising 6,908 links and a total link strength of 11,448.

From the perspective of relational structure metrics, the substantial number of links (6,908) provides strong evidence that studies in this field share an extensive body of common references, thereby forming a dense web of interconnected knowledge. More importantly, the total link strength value (11,448) significantly exceeds the mere number of links, highlighting the depth and intensity of these scholarly connections. This high level of link strength reflects a strong degree of scholarly convergence within the international research community, suggesting that researchers are drawing upon a common set of theoretical foundations and core literature to advance their work. Overall, these robust network indicators confirm that the development of the CBEC research ecosystem is not fragmented; rather, it is deeply integrated through shared foundational knowledge pillars.

4.3. Evolution of Knowledge Structure and Future Research Agenda

To complement the static keyword co-occurrence analysis, the temporal overlay visualization presented in Figure 5 illustrates the longitudinal evolution of academic terms and their interrelationships over time, following the bibliometric mapping principles proposed by previous studies (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010; Donthu et al., 2021). The temporal patterns reveal a substantial transformation in the research trajectory of cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) between 2020 and 2026. During the earlier stages of development, the literature predominantly focused on macro-level trade governance and foundational technological infrastructure, as reflected by frequently occurring keywords such as “internet of things”, “logistics”, and “online shopping”. In contrast, recent research trends indicate a growing emphasis on micro-level operational optimization and advanced behavioral analytics. The increasing prominence of terms such as “deep learning”, “neural networks”, and “forecasting” reflects a notable methodological shift toward predictive analytics and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven approaches. These findings suggest that the field is progressively evolving beyond broad macroeconomic and trade policy discussions toward more application-oriented investigations centered on supply chain optimization and consumer behavior within the global digital economy.

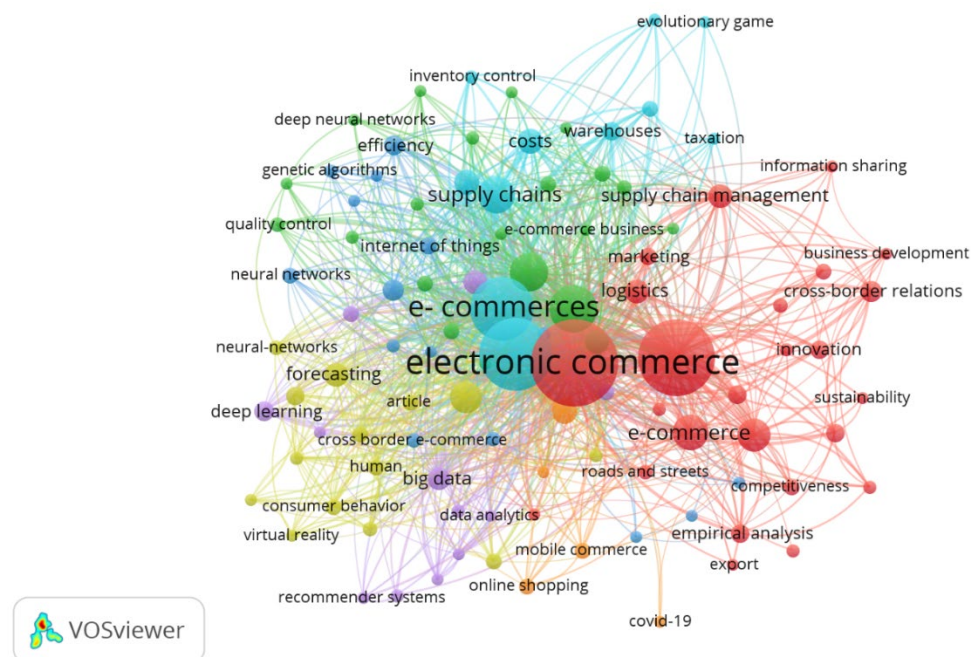


Fig. 5: Visualized keyword network

This thematic divergence and theoretical specialization profoundly redefine the structural knowledge of the CBEC landscape across three interconnected lenses: logistics, informatics, and service science. From a logistics perspective, academic attention has shifted from static physical infrastructure planning toward dynamic, resilient, and sustainable supply chain frameworks capable of facilitating real-time cross-border inventory allocation. In terms of informatics, data has evolved from a simple transactional byproduct into a primary operational driver, requiring firms to leverage digital capabilities to enhance innovation performance (Sun et al., 2024). Advanced technologies, such as AI for predictive analysis and blockchain for product traceability, are no longer viewed merely as independent IT infrastructure, but as essential mechanisms for mitigating operational risks and resolving information asymmetry in international trade (Liu & Li, 2020; Niu et al., 2021). Finally, from a service science perspective, cross-border order fulfillment is conceptualized through a customer-oriented approach, where superior logistics service quality (LSQ), platform responsiveness, and frictionless reverse logistics (returns service) serve as fundamental prerequisites for bridging cross-cultural psychological gaps and fostering long-term consumer trust (Hsiao et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2019).

Based on the structural mapping of the literature and the emerging trends synthesized in Table 8, a

robust, data-driven agenda for future empirical investigations is proposed to bridge remaining academic gaps. The first pivotal direction targets consumer-driven supply chain operations within rapidly digitalizing emerging markets across Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa, moving away from the historical over-reliance on developed-nation data. Drawing upon theoretical perspectives such as the Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM) and Institutional Theory, future studies should investigate how specific dimensions of LSQ directly influence cross-cultural consumer trust and post-adoption behaviors. Methodologically, while structural equation modeling techniques (e.g., PLS-SEM) provide useful baseline assessments, capturing evolving behavioral dynamics requires a more versatile toolkit, specifically integrating longitudinal panel data and controlled behavioral experiments.

The second critical avenue entails exploring complex, cross-continental trade corridors through the lenses of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Transaction Cost Economics (TCE), particularly examining e-commerce firms as supply chain integrators (Elia et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). Future research must formulate concrete inquiries to address operational challenges, specifically: (1) How can AI-based demand forecasting improve cross-border inventory allocation accuracy? and (2) How do blockchain-enabled traceability systems influence cross-national consumer trust and reverse-logistics efficiency? Investigating these questions requires moving beyond traditional regression models toward advanced machine learning algorithms, dynamic system simulations, optimization techniques, and in-depth case studies of multinational platform ecosystems. At a broader level, the transition toward sustainable global distribution demands actionable solutions regarding multinational green logistics networks. Future studies should adopt mixed-methods approaches that bridge quantitative logistics optimization with qualitative policy analysis to evaluate the policy and cost-related barriers hindering a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive CBEC ecosystem.

Table 8: Mapping foundational themes to contemporary research clusters and emerging trends

Themes	Co-citation themes (Foundational Knowledge)	Bibliographic coupling clusters (Contemporary Trends)
Theme 1	International Development of CBEC	Cross-Country Development of CBEC
Theme 2	Supply Chain Innovation and Performance Optimization in CBEC	Supply Chain Innovation and Performance Optimization in CBEC.
		Digitalization of Supply Chains and Quality Enhancement in CBEC Platforms
Theme 3	Consumer Purchase Intention in CBEC Platforms	Consumer Behavior in CBEC Platforms
		Determinants of Cross-Border Online Purchase Intention: Trust and Perceived Quality
Theme 4	Digital Transformation and Logistics Solutions in CBEC	Logistics Solutions for CBEC
		Digital Transformation of CBEC Enterprises
Emerging trends		Application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning in operations
		Cross-cultural consumer behavior in emerging markets
		Blockchain traceability and Green logistics networks

In conclusion, the paradigm shift from macro-level governance themes to highly specialized, micro-level operational and behavioral clusters underscores the growing maturity and structural refinement of the CBEC research domain. Addressing these contemporary research fronts through multi-methodological agendas and diversified theoretical lenses will effectively resolve existing knowledge fragmentation across disparate disciplines. Ultimately, this comprehensive science map provides actionable strategic roadmaps for both multinational managers and policymakers, serving as the vital conceptual foundation for the theoretical and practical implications delineated in the concluding section. By bridging physical logistics, digital informatics, and customer-centric service science, these insights lay the groundwork for a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive global digital trade ecosystem.

5. Conclusions

This study conducted a systematic review to map the intellectual structure and analyze the evolutionary trajectory of supply chain and operations management in cross-border e-commerce (CBEC). By

systematically retrieving and analyzing 301 scientific articles using two advanced network techniques, specifically co-citation analysis and bibliographic coupling, this research successfully unpacked the core academic foundations and elucidated the complex relationships among concepts, research sub-domains, and the global network of scholars.

The findings indicate that the CBEC knowledge ecosystem has undergone profound development and specialization. From four initial foundational theoretical pillars, the field has evolved into seven highly applied and specialized thematic clusters. The most notable paradigm shift is the transition from macro-level governance frameworks to resolving micro-level operational problems. This demonstrates a deep focus on understanding customer-centric supply chain optimization, platform reliability, and the enhancement of distribution strategies in digital environments.

Simultaneously, supply chain digitalization, the development of optimized logistics solutions, and the facilitation of cross-national trade operations are affirmed as the primary driving forces behind the sustainable growth of CBEC. These findings not only consolidate the theoretical foundation but also offer valuable strategic implications. Theoretically, the study provides an up-to-date knowledge map assisting scholars in identifying potential research gaps, exemplified by the urgent need for empirical research on demand-driven operations in emerging markets. Practically, to enhance global competitiveness, policymakers and corporate managers must prioritize resources for digital transformation and leverage digital capabilities to boost innovation performance (Sun et al., 2024). Furthermore, they must optimize multinational logistics networks and formulate localized operational strategies to solidify online customer trust and operational efficiency.

Building upon this comprehensive overview, the study outlines essential directions for the future of CBEC through concrete research questions and a diversified methodological agenda across three interrelated pillars. From a technological perspective, future research should investigate how the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) can optimize cross-border inventory allocation through advanced optimization algorithms and machine learning techniques, as well as how Blockchain technology can improve reverse-logistics efficiency, which may be examined through system simulations and empirical case studies. In terms of market dynamics, further investigations are required to quantify the extent to which cultural diversity influences localized supply chain responsiveness and fulfillment expectations. To better understand cross-national consumer trust over time, scholars should employ a versatile methodological toolkit encompassing PLS-SEM, panel data analysis, and controlled behavioral experiments. From a broader macro perspective, future studies should also evaluate policy and cost-related barriers associated with implementing multinational green logistics models, while adopting mixed-methods approaches to generate actionable and data-driven strategies for fostering a more sustainable and inclusive future for CBEC development.

Despite its significant contributions, this study acknowledges certain objective limitations. Specifically, the research data was restricted to a predefined set of keywords, prioritized English-language publications, and was extracted exclusively from the Scopus database. Consequently, this approach may have inadvertently omitted valuable localized studies or publications indexed in other databases (e.g., Web of Science or regional platforms). In the future, expanding the scope of data collection, incorporating advanced text-mining techniques, and delving deeper into foundational theoretical constructs will be necessary to fully decode the complexity of the CBEC ecosystem. Overall, CBEC remains a highly dynamic field, and continuously monitoring its academic evolution will play a crucial role in driving the growth of global digital trade.

While this study provides a comprehensive overview of the CBEC ecosystem, it is not without limitations that future research should address. Foremost is the exclusive reliance on the Scopus database for data extraction. Although Scopus is widely recognized as one of the most extensive and appropriate databases for bibliometric studies, utilizing a single repository inherently introduces a coverage bias. Consequently, this approach may exclude valuable and highly relevant literature indexed in other prominent databases such as Web of Science (WoS), IEEE Xplore, EBSCO, and Emerald

Insight. Furthermore, given the rapid expansion of CBEC in the Asia-Pacific region, omitting regional Asian academic databases might overlook localized, context-specific empirical findings. Future reviews should employ a multi-database approach, integrating and deduplicating records from diverse platforms to construct an even more holistic and inclusive mapping of the global CBEC intellectual structure.

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