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Article

Customer Retention in the Life Insurance Industry: A Systematic Literature Review through the Lens of Service-Dominant Logic

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Abstract: *This paper examines customer retention in the rapidly evolving life insurance industry by utilising the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) framework to analyse the impact of co-production, engagement, trust, and value co-creation on enduring relational outcomes. The review used a systematic literature review methodology in accordance with PRISMA criteria, synthesising results from 33 peer-reviewed journal publications published between 2015 and 2025, obtained from Emerald Insight, Google Scholar, and EBSCOhost. The analysis assesses methodological approaches, sample attributes, construct operationalisation, and conceptual frameworks utilised in research about life insurance and associated financial service contexts. The results show that SDL has not been used consistently in different situations, and there are big differences in how basic concepts, especially co-production, involvement, and trust, are assessed. Most research depends on cross-sectional quantitative approaches, which makes it hard to see how value co-creation changes over time. The study points out important gaps in concepts, methods, and contexts, and suggests an integrated SDL-based framework to help future research. Overall, the study adds to what we know about relational value creation in both academic and practical terms. It also gives ideas for how to retain customers in the life insurance industry.*

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Keywords: Service-Dominant Logic, Co-production, Value co-creation, Customer retention, Life insurance

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1. INTRODUCTION

Service organisations operate in environments where customer retention is paramount for their financial sustainability. This is especially true in the life insurance business, where profitability depends on retaining long-term relationships with policyholders. Empirical evidence consistently shows that retaining customers is much less expensive than attracting new ones, and that even small improvements in retention can lead to customer lifetime value (Dawkins & Reichheld, 1990; Kumar & Reinartz, 2006). However, even though we know this, many life insurers still have high rates of surrender and lapse, which means they are still having trouble continuing long-lasting relationships with their customers (Handa & Singh, 2019).

Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) provides a suitable theoretical framework for comprehending these phenomena, since it conceptualises customers as operant resources who actively engage in co-production rather than as passive recipients of standardised products (Vargo & Lusch, 2014, 2008). The commonly accepted view of SDL is that value is not independently created by firms and transferred to customers, but is co-created through interaction, resource integration, and use within specific service contexts (Grönroos, 2008; Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Accordingly, SDL shifts attention from product ownership and transactional exchange toward relational processes, customer participation, and value-in-use. In SDL, co-production signifies customer participation in influencing service outcomes through effort, information exchange, and interaction, thereby enabling experience-based value creation (Grönroos, 2011). Empirical research in financial services indicates that co-production in service delivery improves customer satisfaction, value realisation, relationship quality, and eventually loyalty and retention (Auh et al., 2007; Casidy et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the degree to which co-production results in enduring policyholder engagement is insufficiently examined within the insurance sector through the lens of SDL, where insurance literacy, trust, and socio-economic factors present distinct contextual challenges.

Although there is a growing body of service research aligned with SDL, significant conceptual and empirical gaps remain (Auh et al., 2007; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Existing evidence regarding the relationships between co-production and retention is inconsistent across various contexts, indicating a lack of comprehensive explanations for moderating mechanisms such as trust, perceived fairness, and co-learning (Nyadzayo et al., 2023; Ruefenacht, 2018; Chen et al., 2010). The SDL-based theorisation of customer engagement and loyalty has primarily developed outside of insurance contexts, highlighting the necessity to synthesise how SDL constructs have been empirically established in long-term relational services. Third, limited reviews integrate the role of SDL-linked constructs in influencing retention outcomes within life-insurance markets, especially in emerging economies where maintaining relationships is vital for profitability.

This systematic literature review synthesises studies employing Service-Dominant Logic to comprehend customer retention and associated constructs in service-intensive contexts, particularly in financial and insurance industries. This review seeks to explain the nature of value formation based on Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) by analysing its theoretical positioning, operationalisation, and empirical extensions, while also identifying conceptual paths related to retention.

Despite the growing body of literature on customer retention within financial services and insurance markets, existing research remains fragmented across multiple theoretical perspectives, including relationship marketing, customer satisfaction, customer engagement, service quality, and trust-based frameworks (Akamavi et al., 2015; Brodie et al., 2011; Crosby & Stephens, 1987; Hallowell, 1996; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). While numerous empirical studies have examined individual antecedents of retention, such as satisfaction, loyalty, trust, switching barriers, and relationship quality, limited attention has been given to synthesising these findings through the lens of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), which emphasises value co-creation, customer participation, resource integration, and relational exchanges (Grönroos, 2008; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Furthermore, previous studies have often focused on broader financial services, banking, or general insurance contexts rather than life insurance specifically (Auh et al., 2007; Chang & Lee, 2020; Eling & Kochanski, 2013; Farquhar, 2004). Consequently, there remains insufficient understanding of how SDL-related constructs such as co-production, value co-creation, customer engagement, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty collectively contribute to customer retention outcomes in life insurance services. This systematic literature review addresses this gap by integrating existing evidence and developing an SDL-based understanding of customer retention within life insurance settings.

This review, informed by the theoretical framework, examines the following questions:

RQ1: In what ways has Service-Dominant Logic been theoretically established and implemented in the existing literature to explain customer value creation, engagement, and relationship continuity, especially in the contexts of financial and insurance services?

RQ2: To what extent does Service-Dominant Logic provide an appropriate theoretical lens for understanding customer retention mechanisms in the life insurance industry, and how can future research further extend its application?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology informed by the PRISMA 2020 Statement (Page et al., 2021), guaranteeing methodological transparency, replicability, and rigour. The review aims to integrate current research on Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) and its implementation in customer retention, loyalty, and co-production within the insurance and wider financial services industries. In accordance with established

protocols for systematic reviews (Liberati et al., 2009; Paul & Criado, 2020), a multi-stage methodology was utilised to identify, evaluate, and select pertinent studies. The review methodology consisted of three principal phases: (1) the identification of pertinent studies employing a Boolean search strategy; (2) the implementation of inclusion and exclusion criteria; and (3) the screening and selection of final articles utilising the PRISMA framework.

A systematic literature review (SLR) methodology was employed to guarantee transparency, replicability, and methodological rigour in the identification and synthesis of research pertaining to service-dominant logic, co-production, and customer retention. The SLR method follows the PRISMA framework, which gives explicit instructions on how to define the search strategy, record the criteria for including and excluding research, and make sure that the selection of studies follows a clear and verifiable procedure. This approach is especially suitable in domains like co-creation and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), where the literature is varied, conceptually fragmented, and spread across several service-related fields. Numerous authors assert that a structured review facilitates the consolidation of theoretical ideas, the identification of conceptual inconsistencies, and the highlighting of methodological gaps that may remain obscured in narrative reviews (Linnenluecke et al., 2020; Paul & Criado, 2020).

To enhance the depth of the review, the search method examined various expressions of SDL and co-creation-related ideas within the literature of service, marketing, and financial services. This is significant due to the varied operationalisation of SDL constructs across various research. For example, depending on the situation, co-creation might mean cognitive involvement, working together, sharing knowledge, or learning about customers (Tommasetti et al., 2017). So, to cover the whole conceptual area, we needed wide search phrases that included co-production, co-creation, value-in-use, participation, satisfaction, trust, loyalty, and retention. The search employed Boolean logic, which let people combine these phrases to find research that was either directly or indirectly related to SDL principles.

The literature search strategy was designed to maximise the relevance and comprehensiveness of retrieved studies. Boolean operators such as AND and OR were used to combine key concepts, while phrase searching was employed to identify exact terms such as "customer retention", "life insurance", "service-dominant logic", and "value co-creation". In addition, synonymous terms including loyalty, customer engagement, co-production, and policyholder retention were considered during the search process to improve coverage of relevant literature. The search strings were structured using nested combinations of these terms to ensure alignment with the review objectives.

Finally, we manually coded all of the articles chosen to identify recurring themes. The coding categories were the theoretical underpinning, the conceptual definitions, research context, the constructs employed, the methodological approach, and the main findings. This coding strategy made it easier to compare research and helped find thematic clusters, conceptual gaps, and methodological tendencies that influenced the analysis and synthesis that follow in Sections 3 and 4.

The methodological foundation of this review was to systematically discern patterns, theoretical applications, and empirical evidence across studies that connect Service-Dominant Logic with co-production and associated relational constructs, including customer loyalty and customer retention within financial and insurance domains. Previous reviews of loyalty and retention have frequently been narrative in nature; this study adheres to a systematic and transparent protocol to guarantee replicability (Linnenluecke et al., 2020).

A structured search strategy was employed to capture a comprehensive dataset of publications that explicitly or implicitly addressed SDL and retention-related constructs. The search strategy combined Boolean operators (AND, OR), phrase searching, synonymous search terms, and nested search structures to maximise both relevance and coverage of the literature. Key search terms included "Service-Dominant Logic", "co-production", "customer loyalty", "customer retention", "life insurance", "insurance", and "financial services". The principal search string was:

("Service-Dominant Logic" OR "co-production")
AND
("customer loyalty" OR "customer retention")
AND
("insurance" OR "life insurance" OR "financial services")

Searches were conducted between January 2015 and January 2025 across three major academic databases, Emerald Insight, Google Scholar, and EBSCOhost, chosen for their extensive coverage of management, marketing, and financial services research. The initial searches generated a total of 6,839 records, which were gradually refined through title, abstract, and full-text screening using the PRISMA method (see Figure 1). The detailed results by database are summarised in Table1.

Table 1: Summary of Literature Search Results by Database

Database / Search Engine	Initial Records Identified	Records excluded based on the keywords and abstracts	After Title & Abstract Screening	After Full-Text Screening	Final Selected Studies
Emerald Insight	1830	1305	525	20	12
Google Scholar	4,770	3780	190	7	3
EBSCOhost	239	190	49	20	18
Total	**6,839**	**6075**	**764**	**47**	**33**

Source: Authors' Creation

2.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Table 2 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide the study selection. These criteria were formulated to ensure that the review's focus on co-production, customer retention, and Service-Dominant Logic in the life insurance and other financial services areas was relevant in terms of ideas, theories, and real-world examples.

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Theoretical focus	Studies applying or extending SDL or related frameworks emphasising co-production and value co-creation.	
Context	Customer retention, loyalty, or engagement in service industries, especially life insurance and financial services.	Non-service sectors such as manufacturing or service sectors such as healthcare.
Outcomes of interest	Studies analyzing behavioral or relational constructs influencing retention, loyalty, trust, or co-production outcomes.	Studies focusing only on organisational perspectives without customer dimensions.
Study type	Empirical, mixed-method, or systematic review studies providing evidence of customer participation, retention, or relational mechanisms.	Purely conceptual articles, editorials, opinion pieces, or studies lacking methodological rigour or empirical data.
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles.	Non-peer-reviewed reports, unpublished theses, working papers, and non-English sources.
Timeframe	Publications from 2015–2025, aligning with the contemporary development of SDL and behavioural perspectives in insurance.	Publications to 2015.
Language	Studies published in English.	Non-English publications.

Source: Authors' Creation

The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025 and written in English. Exclusion criteria were applied to remove purely conceptual papers, editorials, opinion pieces, and studies lacking empirical or systematic review evidence. After applying these filters, the dataset was reduced to 20 articles from Emerald Insight, 7 from Google Scholar, and 20 from EBSCOhost. Subsequent full-text screening further refined the selection to 12 articles from Emerald Insight, 3 from Google Scholar, and 18 from EBSCOhost. In total, 33 studies met the final inclusion criteria and were selected for full-text review and synthesis.

To provide greater transparency regarding the contexts represented in the final sample, the 33 reviewed studies were classified according to their primary research setting. As shown in Table 3, four studies (12.1%) focused specifically on life insurance, two studies (6.1%) examined insurance services more generally, eight studies (24.2%) were situated within broader financial service contexts, and nineteen studies (57.6%) investigated SDL-related constructs in broader service-sector settings. This distribution indicates that although SDL has been widely applied across diverse service industries, relatively limited research has examined customer retention specifically within life insurance contexts, thereby reinforcing the importance of the present review.

Table 3: Distribution of Reviewed Studies by Industry Context

Industry Context	Number of Studies	Percentage
Life Insurance	4	12.1%
General Insurance	2	6.1%
Financial Services	8	24.2%
Broader Service Sector	19	57.6%
Total	**33**	**100.0%**

Source: Authors' Creation

The process of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1.

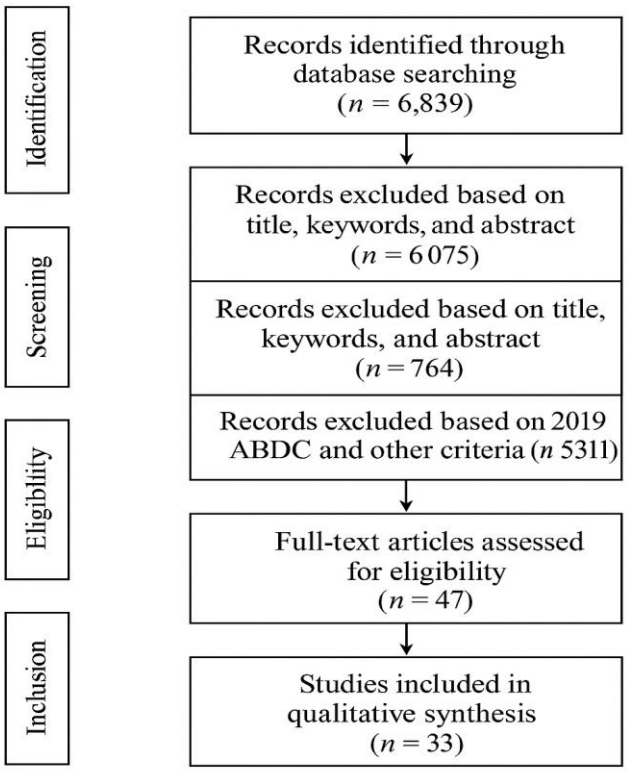


Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart
Source: Authors' Creation

3. ANALYSIS

An analysis of the 33 selected studies indicates significant variability in the conceptualisation and operationalisation of core constructs Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), co-creation, co-production, engagement, satisfaction, trust, loyalty, and retention across service sectors, especially in financial and insurance contexts. While SDL is the primary theoretical framework in numerous studies, its application varies and does not consistently adhere to its foundational principles. Certain studies approach SDL comprehensively, highlighting value co-creation as an ongoing process of resource integration within intricate service ecosystems (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). In contrast, other studies utilise SDL in a more superficial manner, treating it as a secondary framework without fully engaging with its relational, phenomenological, or ecosystem-level principles.

In the same way, considerable variation was observed in how empirical studies conceptualise customer participation. In certain contexts, co-production is narrowly defined as the customer's provision of information or participation in joint problem-solving activities, while in others it encompasses a broader range of behaviours including knowledge sharing, relationship building, emotional engagement, and active involvement in service delivery and evaluation (Auh et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2010). In financial and insurance service

settings, customer participation often extends to policy design, information sharing, service interactions, and collaborative decision-making processes between customers and service providers, all of which contribute to value co-creation and stronger relational outcomes (Hewawasam et al., 2026; Ruefenacht, 2018; Weedige et al., 2019). These discrepancies illustrate that service organisations conceptualise participation differently depending on service complexity, regulatory requirements, and the level of interaction required between customers and service representatives.

The literature review reveals that several studies affirm that co-creation and participatory behaviour significantly influence relational outcomes, including satisfaction, trust, value-in-use, and loyalty. Nyadzayo et al. (2023) found that customer participation and innovative service interactions contribute positively to customer outcomes and strengthen relational engagement. Similarly, Albuquerque and Ferreira (2022) report that service quality exerts a strong positive influence on loyalty and co-creation behaviour, reinforcing the idea that participation is not only a driver of improved service outcomes but also a consequence of customers' positive evaluations of service interactions. This reciprocal link between perceived quality, participation, and loyalty is particularly significant in high-credence services such as life insurance.

The thematic analysis also showed that there are problems with how customer retention is examined. Some studies define retention as a behavioural intention, whereas others define it as attitudinal loyalty, reduced switching intention, or improved relationship quality. Research focused on insurance indicates that trust, the quality of information, and the social dynamics between advisors and customers are key indicators of retention (Ruefenacht, 2018). Nonetheless, few studies incorporate SDL features (e.g., resource integration or value-in-use) directly into retention models, contributing to a fragmented understanding of how co-production eventually affects policyholder persistency.

3.1 Coding Summary and Descriptive Analysis

Studies were coded based on research focus, theoretical foundation, methodological approach, empirical context, construct usage, and key findings. The coding framework allowed for a structured comparison of conceptual and empirical works, facilitating the identification of recurring patterns and divergences.

The dataset demonstrates a significant concentration in quantitative research designs, with 16 studies (48%) utilising quantitative methods, primarily through survey-based models like SEM or PLS-SEM. Twelve studies (36%) represented conceptual or theoretical contributions, whereas only three studies (9%) employed qualitative methodologies. Two studies failed to explicitly define their methodological design. This distribution indicates a predominant reliance on cross-sectional survey methodologies, while qualitative, experimental, and longitudinal designs are utilised to a lesser extent. The majority of studies are geographically concentrated in Asian and emerging-market contexts,

indicating a growing academic focus on customer retention and loyalty in developing insurance markets. This regional distribution indicates contextual influences on customer participation, engagement, and trust dynamics.

Table 4: Summary of the Total Studies Used for the Analysis

	Research area	Author & year of publication	Study design	Data type	Context	Focus
1	Customer Value Co-creation	Bosisio, J. (2024).	Systematic Literature Analysis	Secondary data and literature-	Global	Map the intellectual structure and evolution of customer co-creation value research.
2	Customer loyalty and satisfaction in electronic banking.	Kandampully, J., Zhang, T. (C.), & Bilgihan, A. (2015	Conceptual literature review	Primary data – quantitative.	Malasiya	Synthesize customer loyalty research and highlight emerging drivers in hospitality.
3	Technology-mediated value co-creation within service ecosystems	Zhang, T., Lu, C., Torres, E., & Cobanoglu, C. (2020	Critical review (conceptual)	Secondary data – conceptual/theore	Global	Examine how technological advancement reshapes value co-creation.
4	Customer loyalty and satisfaction in retail banking	Hinchcliff, M., Kyriazis, E., McCarthy, G., & Mehmet, M. (2023	Empirical survey (quantitative)	Primary – Quantitative	Australia	Analyze determinants of retention in Australian retail banking.
5	Service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty in telecommunications during COVID-19	Abd-Elrahman, A. H. (2023).	Quantitative – Survey-based SEM	Primary – Quantitative survey.	Egypt	How service-quality dimensions, affect customer satisfaction and loyalty, with satisfaction acting as a full mediator.
6	Perceived value dimensions influencing satisfaction and loyalty	Mainardes, E. W., & de Freitas, N. P. (2023)	PLS-SEM; multi-group	Primary – Quantitative	Brazil	Compare how perceived value dimensions drive satisfaction/loyalty in banks vs. fintechs.
7	Incentive design for customer acquisition and retention.	Wang, T. Duan, Y., & Liang, Y. (2022)	Analytical modeling (principal–agent)	Theoretical / Analytical mode	China	Design optimal incentives balancing acquisition and retention.
8	Service recovery performance, satisfaction, and loyalty in banking	Kamath, P. R., Pai, Y. P., & Prabhu, N. K. P. (2020).	PLS-SEM (quantitative)	Primary – multi-source	India	How service recovery systems and performance shape satisfaction and loyalty.
9	Service quality, service delivery, and customer co-production	Alzaydi, Z. M., Al-Hajla, A., Nguyen, B., & Jayawardhena, C. (2018).	Conceptual literature review	Secondary – Conceptual	Global context.	Synthesizes service-quality and delivery research with emphasis on customer co-production and
10	Consumer retention behavior in automotive retail (two-wheeler sector)	Malhotra (2022)	Quantitative – Survey-based study.	Primary – Quantitative (SPSS/AMOS)	India	Examines how service quality, perceived product quality, and perceived consumer value drive satisfaction and retention.

11	The role of personnel (staff) capability and customer satisfaction in driving customer retention in the banking sector	Darzi, M. A., & Bhat, S. A. (2018).	Quantitative empirical study	Quantitative empirical research	India	How personnel capability influences customer retention directly and indirectly via customer satisfaction
12	Customer satisfaction, trust, co-production, and loyalty in the insurance industry.	Ruefenacht, M. (2018)	Quantitative empirical research	Quantitative empirical research	Global	This study investigates the antecedents of satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty among insurance customers.
13	Role of insurance intermediaries (agents and brokers)	Dominique-Ferreira, S. (2018).	Mixed empirical study combining focus groups and	Primary data from ad hoc surveys and focus groups	Portugal	Identifies intermediaries' influence on satisfaction, claims handling, and purchase decisions.
14	Service quality and loyalty in Islamic banking, using the CARTER model	Fauzi, A. A., & Suryani, T. (2019)	Primary quantitative survey	Primary quantitative survey	Indonesia	Examines how service quality dimensions influence satisfaction, trust, and loyalty in Islamic banks.
15	Customer retention and loyalty; effects of switching barriers and inducements in mobile internet	Chuah, S. H.-W., Rauschnabel, P. A., Marimuthu, M., Thurasamy, R., & Nguyen, B. (2017).	Quantitative – Survey-based study using SEM	Primary quantitative survey	Malaysia	To analyze the relationship between customer satisfaction, loyalty, and key financial outcomes within the insurance sector.
16	Service-dominant logic and co-design in non-profit service systems	Trischler, J., & Charles, M. (2019).	Qualitative multiple case study using participatory design	Primary qualitative data (interviews and workshops)	Australia	Explores how co-design and SDL principles foster stakeholder participation, innovation, and co-creation of social value in non-profit services.
17	Service orientation and innovation outcomes under SDL	Finoti, L., Bonfim, L., Didonet, S. R., Toaldo, A. M. M., & Segatto, A. P. (2022)	Theoretical and conceptual model development.	Secondary conceptual synthesis.	Brazil and Canada	Distinguishes S-D service orientation from goods-dominant perspectives;
18	Critique of marketing-dominant logic in service design.	Secomandi, F. (2024).	Conceptual/theoretical analysis	Secondary (literature-based conceptual)	Global	Advocates moving beyond marketing-dominant immaterial views toward material, design-centered approaches to service conceptualization.
19	IT service management capability and value co-creation.	Winkler, T. J., & Wulf, J. (2019)	Quantitative survey and structural	Primary data from 256 European organizations.	Europe	Demonstrates how ITSM capabilities enhance IS effectiveness via alignment and co-occurring mechanisms of value co-creation and facilitation.
20	Integration of IoT and SDL in marketing management.	Woodside, A. G., & Sood, S. (2017)	Conceptual commentary using vignette methodology	Theoretical and secondary sources.	Global	Examines IoT's transformative role in SDL.

21	Value co-creation in social commerce using SDL	Dai, H., Hu, T. E., & Zhang, Y. J. (2019)	Quantitative empirical study	Primary survey	China	Investigates how customer interactions on social platforms drive value co-creation and loyalty.
22	Institutionalizatio n of SDL and macromarketing	Hunt, S. D. (2020).	Secondary literature review.	Historical-conceptual	USA	Discusses how SDL contributes to institutional norms shaping macromarketing, highlighting exchange.
23	Ethics, participation, and value co-creation in sharing economy	Nadeem, W., Juntunen, M., Hajli, N., & Tajvidi, M. (2021).	Quantitative survey (structural)	Primary Data	Global	Examines ethical perceptions (privacy, security, fairness) as mediators between participation and value co-creation in sharing communities.
24	SDL and value co-creation in SaleP	Paldal, H., Inyang, A. E., & Itani, O. S. (2021).	Quantitative	Primary survey and performance data	USA	Tests how listening, communication, and adaptive selling drive value co-creation with customers and improve sales performance under SDL principles.
25	Radical service innovation, servitization, and application of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) in manufacturing industries.	Goduscheit, R. C., & Faullant, R. (2018)	Qualitative multiple-case study	Primary qualitative data	Denmark	The study links servitization and service innovation literature to identify how manufacturing firms create radically new services using the principles of Service-Dominant Logic.
26	SDL, Value Co-creation, Business-to-Business Relationships	Skjølsvik, T. (2017).	Qualitative interview	Primary qualitative data	Norway	Explores how contextual knowledge and interpersonal chemistry contribute to ex ante value.
27	Co-production and public value within Public Service-Dominant Logic (PSDL)	Alford, J. (2016)	Theoretical and conceptual analysis	Secondary (conceptual integration).	Australia	Extends PSDL by categorizing forms of co-production and emphasizing 'publicness' and coercive aspects of state services.
28	Foundational conceptualization of service-dominant logic	Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004)	Conceptual/T heoretical	Secondary conceptual synthesis.	Global	Introduces SDL as a shift from goods-dominant to service-centered marketing logic, emphasizing value co-creation, operant resources, and relational exchange.
29	Customer satisfaction and loyalty through value co-creation and	Woratschek, H., Horbel, C., & Popp, B. (2020)	Quantitative empirical study	Primary quantitative data	Germany	Reconceptualizes satisfaction and loyalty antecedents using SDL.
30	SDL, Value Co-creation and Co-destruction, Interaction, and Sport Service Management.	Kim, K., Byon, K. K., & Baek, W. (2020).	Survey (SEM)	Primary Survey	South Korea	Examines how spectators' passion and dysfunctional behavior impact perceived value; identifies positive and negative dynamics within SDL.
31	Customer engagement (CE) in service	Kumar, V., Rajan, B., Gupta, S., & Dalla Pozza, I. (2019)	Quantitative framework	Quantitative Interview	Global	Develops a framework linking interaction orientation and omnichannel strategy to CE.

	ecosystems using SDL					
32	Conceptualization and empirical measurement of	Ranjan, K. R., & Read, S. (2016)	Systematic Literature review	Secondary and Literature review	Global	Identifies two key dimensions of value co-creation: co-production and value-in-use.
33	Service orientation and innovation outcomes under SDL	Finoti, L., Bonfim, L., Didonet, S. R., Toaldo, A. M. M., & Segatto, A. P. (2022)	Theoretical and conceptual model development.	Secondary conceptual synthesis.	Brazil and Canada	Distinguishes S-D service orientation from goods-dominant perspectives.

Source: Authors Creation

The review encompasses 23 journals, highlighting the interdisciplinary scope of SDL research and its dissemination across marketing, service management, financial services, public administration, and innovation sectors. Six journals contributed to 15 of the 33 studies reviewed, with the remaining studies distributed among a variety of publications, highlighting both scholarly interest and conceptual fragmentation. Table 4 indicates that the related articles were published in 23 different academic journals. This illustrates the extent of diversity and interdisciplinary nature of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) and customer value research. The review also included one paper each from 17 different journals, and these shown in Table 5 as follows.

Table 5: Distribution of Papers across Journals

Journal Title	No of Papers
International Journal of Bank Marketing	04
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	03
Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	02
Journal of Service Theory and Practice	02
The Service Industries Journal	02
Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing	02
Italian Journal of Marketing	01
Journal of Marketing Management	02
Public Management Review	01
Journal of Product Innovation Management	01
Journal of Business Ethics	01
Journal of Macro Marketing	01
Journal of Global Marketing	01
Conceptual / Theoretical – Critical Essay Group	01
Journal of Management Information Systems	01

International Journal of Contem: Hospitality Mgmt	01
European Business Review	01
Management Research Review	01
Business Process Management Journal	01
International Journal of Retail & Distribution Mgmt.	01
International Journal of Islamic Marketing	01
Journal of Non-Profit & Public Sector Marketing	01
Service Marketing Quarterly	01
Total	**33**

Source: Authors Creation

The thematic distribution of the reviewed articles (Figure 2) identifies five dominant clusters: (1) customer loyalty and retention, (2) value co-creation and SDL, (3) service innovation, (4) co-production and public service, and (5) ethical and digital contexts. The significance of SDL and co-creation themes indicates the theoretical development of value-exchange perspectives, while the emergence of digital and ethical lenses reflects changing socio-technological dynamics within service ecosystems.

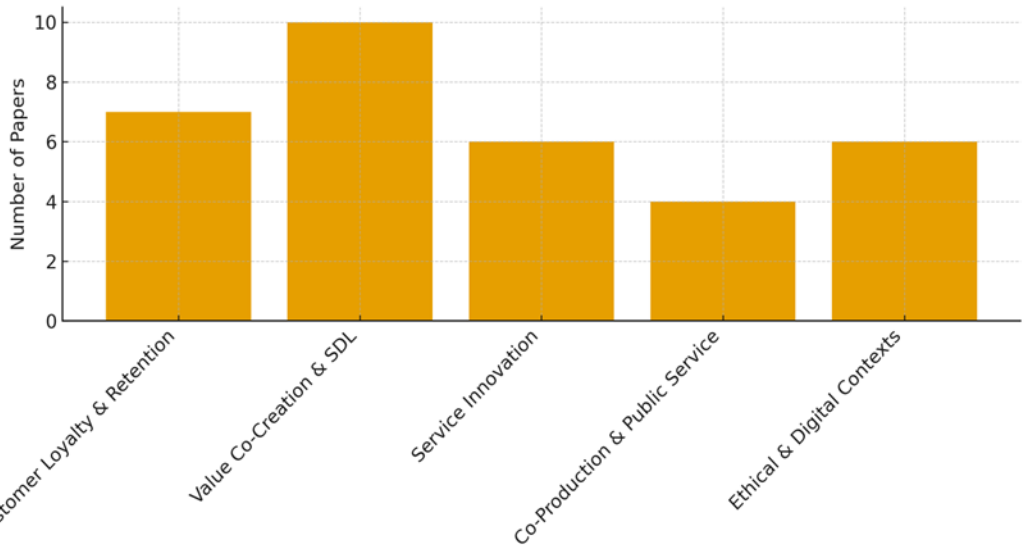


Figure 2: Distribution of Reviewed Articles by Thematic Category
Source: Authors' Creation

4. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings in relation to the application of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) in explaining customer retention within the life-insurance industry. The findings are organised into three main subsections. Section 4.1 synthesises how SDL has been theoretically applied to customer retention by identifying key predictors, relational mechanisms, behavioural sequences, and conceptual extensions. Section 4.2 examines how SDL has been employed empirically, focusing on research areas, methodological approaches, theoretical integrations, and research contexts, and Section 4.3 discusses the synthesis.

4.1 Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) as the Theoretical Lens in Customer Retention in the Life Insurance Industry

Certain studies approach SDL comprehensively by highlighting value-in-use, service ecosystems, and the dynamic interaction of operant resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). These studies define value not as an output delivered by firms, but as a phenomenological experience co-created within continuous service collaborations. Other research cites SDL mainly as a supportive framework without thoroughly addressing its foundational assumptions, leading to superficial or incomplete applications.

Although customer retention has been examined through several theoretical perspectives, including Relationship Marketing Theory, Customer Engagement Theory, and Stakeholder Theory, the findings of this review suggest that Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding customer retention in life insurance services. Relationship Marketing primarily focuses on maintaining long-term exchanges between firms and customers, while Customer Engagement Theory emphasises customers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural involvement with organisations. Stakeholder Theory adopts a broader perspective by examining relationships among multiple stakeholder groups. In contrast, SDL conceptualises customers as active co-creators of value and emphasises resource integration, co-production, and value-in-use throughout the service experience (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Given the ongoing interactions, advisory relationships, policy reviews, and claims processes inherent in life insurance services, SDL offers a particularly suitable lens for understanding how collaborative value creation contributes to customer retention.

The reviewed studies examined several interrelated constructs associated with Service-Dominant Logic and customer retention. However, the conceptualisation and measurement of these constructs varied across studies and contexts. To enhance clarity and facilitate comparison, Table 6 summarises the principal constructs identified in the literature, together with their definitions, commonly adopted measurement approaches, and representative studies. This summary provides an overview of how key SDL-related concepts

have been operationalised in prior research and highlights their relevance to customer retention within life insurance and related service settings.

Table 6: Summary of Key SDL-Related Constructs Identified in the Review

Construct	Definition	Typical Measurement Approach	Representative Studies
Co-production	Customer participation in service creation and delivery processes	Participation, information sharing, collaborative activities	Auh et al. (2007); Chen et al. (2010); Casidy et al. (2022)
Value Co-creation	Joint creation of value through interactions between customers and service providers	Value-in-use, collaborative experience, resource integration	Vargo & Lusch (2004, 2008); Grönroos & Voima (2013); Hua Dai et al. (2019)
Customer Engagement	Cognitive, emotional, and behavioural involvement in service interactions	Engagement scales, participation intensity, interaction frequency	Brodie et al. (2011); Hunt (2020)
Trust	Customer confidence in the reliability and integrity of the service provider	Trust scales, perceived credibility, relationship confidence	Ruefenacht (2018); Dominique-Ferreira (2018)
Customer Satisfaction	Evaluation of service experiences relative to expectations	Satisfaction ratings, perceived service quality	Chuah et al. (2017); Fauzi et al. (2019)
Customer Loyalty	Commitment to continue a relationship and recommend the provider	Repurchase intentions, advocacy, commitment measures	Kandampully et al. (2015); Woratschek et al. (2016).
Customer Retention	Continued maintenance of the customer–provider	Renewal intentions, repurchase behaviour,	Crosby & Stephens (1987); Ruefenacht (2018)

relationship over time	relationship continuity

Source: Developed by the Authors based on the reviewed literature

This contradiction suggests that although SDL has gained prominence in service research, its theoretical rigour and conceptual clarity are inconsistent. Across the 33 included studies, SDL has been applied in multiple ways, reflecting different research purposes and extensions:

a. Identifying Predictors of SDL Application

SDL has been used to predict retention of customers in financial and insurance services, according to the reviewed literature. Co-production, trust, service quality, information transparency, and customer engagement are key determinants (Auh et al., 2007; Casidy, 2022; Ruefenacht, 2018). SDL views these predictors as operant resources that customers use with firm-provided resources to co-create value over time (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008).

Studies utilising SDL concentrate on pinpointing essential antecedents of customer retention, including participation, trust, and engagement. For example, Fauzi and Suryani (2019) showed that when customers are involved, they feel more value and satisfaction. Chuah et al. (2017) also stressed that good communication and quick responses are important co-production behaviours in life insurance. In developing markets, social influence and relational trust were primary predictors (Nomi & Sabbir, 2020; Weedige et al., 2019). These predictors are predominantly salient in life insurance due to the credence-based nature of the service, delayed benefit realisation, and high perceived risk.

b. Linking SDL to Retention and Loyalty

SDL-based research shows that there are strong real-world links between co-creation activities and loyalty outcomes. Customer engagement has a positive effect on satisfaction and behavioural loyalty (Abdel Fattah et al., 2021; Grönroos, 2011). Co-production during claims handling and policy servicing has also been shown to boost retention (Malhotra, 2022). In the realm of financial services, trust serves as a conduit between satisfaction and loyalty (Caceres & Paparoidamis, 2007). SDL-based research shows that value is created through use and interaction, not policy acquisition (Jaakkola et al., 2015). Continuous value co-creation through periodic evaluations, claims interactions, and advisory communication strengthens long-term insurance relationships and retention (Casidy et al., 2022; Ruefenacht, 2018).

c. Explaining the Full Behavioural Sequence

Several studies suggest a behavioural sequence for SDL processes to affect retention. Customer engagement or co-production improves value perception and satisfaction, which leads to trust, relationship quality, loyalty, and retention (Auh et al., 2007; Nyadzayo et al., 2023; Tommasetti et al., 2017). However, few studies explicitly represent this whole sequence in one framework, according to the review. Most studies examine partial associations like participation –satisfaction or trust–loyalty. This fragmented approach hinders SDL understanding of how value-in-use and resource integration affect life insurance policyholder persistency.

d. Extending SDL with Novel Constructs

Recent research expands SDL by incorporating novel constructs, including digital engagement, empowerment, and innovation (Goduscheit & Faullant, 2018; Nadeem et al., 2021). These show that technology makes things more open, trustworthy, and interactive, which helps co-production maintain the interest of customers.

Operational definitions clarify the conceptual underpinnings of SDL in the literature; nevertheless, it is also crucial to understand the relational and behavioural results linked to these constructs. Investigating the impact of co-production, co-creation, and participatory behaviours on satisfaction, trust, value-in-use, and loyalty clarifies the empirical mechanisms behind the functioning of Service-Dominant Logic in service contexts. This discussion not only elaborates on the response to RQ1 but also establishes a seamless transition to RQ2 by emphasising how these results influence retention-related dynamics.

4.2 Use of SDL as the Theoretical Lens in Customer Retention in the Life Insurance Industry

Service-Dominant Logic has been used to study life-insurance client retention in the evaluated literature. Instead of focusing on relational results, this section synthesises SDL-based studies' research fields, methodological techniques, theoretical integrations, and empirical contexts.

a. Research Areas Addressed

Most SDL-based retention studies focus on customer engagement, service quality, relationship marketing, service innovation, and customer loyalty. Studies consistently demonstrate that value co-creation reduces customer attrition and improves relational continuity (Chuah et al;2017; Fauzi & Suryani, 2019). Retention is often examined indirectly through loyalty or switching intentions (Casidy et al., 2022; Ruefenacht, 2018). This indicates that SDL's application to retention remains underdeveloped, despite its suitability for explaining long-term relational services.

b. Research Methods Deployed

Quantitative studies predominate in SDL applications, with SEM and PLS-SEM analyses being the most prevalent (Hua Dai et al., 2019; Malhotra, 2022). Most use Likert-type scales with five or seven points to find out how much people participate, how satisfied they are, and how much they trust others. The number of people in a sample usually ranges from 200 to 500, and they are usually policyholders or bank customers. Qualitative and longitudinal research is still rare, which means that, methodologically, SDL-based retention research is dominated by quantitative, cross-sectional survey designs, often analysed using structural equation modelling techniques (Albuquerque & Ferreira, 2022; Auh et al., 2007). Conceptual papers and literature reviews form a substantial portion of the reviewed studies, while qualitative and longitudinal approaches remain limited. The scarcity of qualitative and process-oriented studies limits deeper insight into how customers experience value co-creation and how these experiences evolve across the insurance lifecycle. This gap presents a clear opportunity for future research.

c. Other Theories Used / Combined Use of Theories

SDL is often integrated with Relationship Marketing Theory and Service Recovery Theory (Slack & Singh, 2020) to explain emotional and behavioural retention mechanisms. Institutional Theory elucidates the structural and cultural factors affecting co-production (Hunt, 2020), whereas Customer Engagement Theory expands Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) to encompass emotional and cognitive participation (Nadeem et al., 2021). SDL is combined with related theoretical frameworks in several studies to improve explanation. Relationship marketing, social exchange, trust, and consumer engagement theories are examples (Chen et al., 2010; Nyadzayo, 2023). Integrations enhance knowledge but can increase conceptual complexity and theoretical dilution when SDL is not the prevailing lens.

d. Research Context

The studies reviewed primarily originate from South and Southeast Asia, specifically Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, and Bangladesh, where insurance penetration is notably low (Weedige et al., 2019). There is a contextual gap because not many studies look at Western contexts or markets with a lot of penetration. This regional concentration highlights the necessity of evaluating SDL's universality across diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts.

4.2 Synthesis

This systematic literature review synthesises findings from Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, and EBSCOhost databases, including 33 peer-reviewed publications from 2015 to 2025. The studies examined collectively enhance comprehension of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), value co-creation, service innovation, and customer retention across various service sectors, including banking, insurance, telecommunications, manufacturing, and non-profit organisations.

Empirical investigations, predominantly employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), survey methodologies, and case studies, enhance theoretical developments that expand SDL's applicability to institutional, public service, and digital transformation contexts. The main points are that customer engagement, trust, and participatory co-production are the building blocks of value creation and retention, while technological capability, ethical governance, and institutional coordination are the factors that change the situation. This synthesis shows how SDL has changed from a conceptual paradigm to a full managerial and theoretical framework that can explain and help with long-lasting customer relationships, innovation, and sustainable value creation in modern service ecosystems.

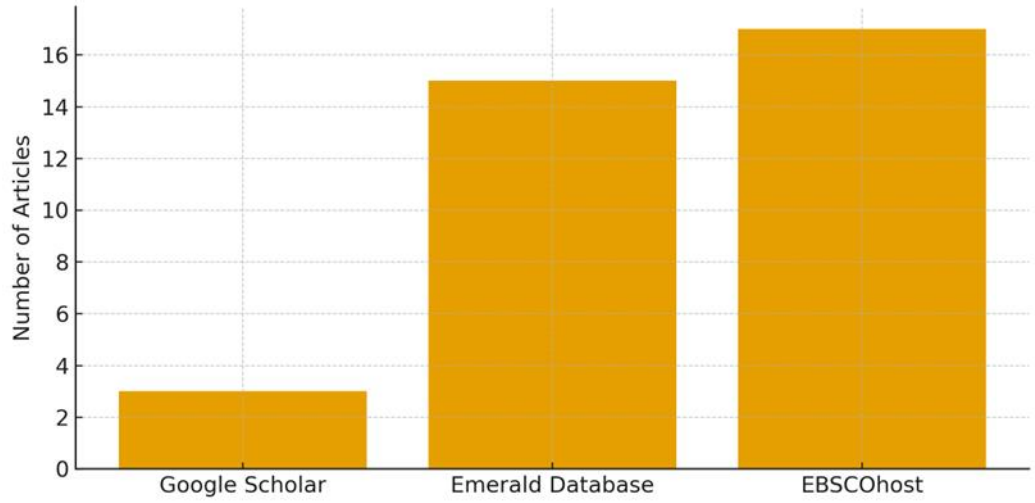


Figure 2: Database-wise Classification of the Articles
Source: Authors' Creation

In all 33 studies that were reviewed, SDL consistently shows that it is a strong base to understand retention through co-production and engagement. For RQ1, SDL defines co-production as a dynamic process wherein customers amalgamate their resources, knowledge, time, and trust into service interactions, thereby enhancing satisfaction and loyalty (Grönroos, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). For RQ2, there are still gaps in our understanding of how co-creation behaviours change over time and how digitalisation

affects value co-creation. Subsequent research is recommended to utilise longitudinal and multi-actor methodologies to examine the correlation between customer engagement and sustained retention.

Table 7: Summary of Key SDL Constructs, Contexts, Methods, Findings, and Theoretical Contributions

Study	Context	Key SDL Constructs	Method / Findings	Theoretical Contribution
Vargo & Lusch (2004, 2016)	Conceptual	Value co-creation, operant resources	Conceptual	Foundation of SDL theory
Ranjan & Read (2016)	Service management	Co-production, relationships	Conceptual	Defines co-creation as a relational process
Lusch & Nambisan (2015)	Service ecosystems	Value-in-use, actor networks	Conceptual	Extends SDL to digital and innovation contexts
Ruefenacht, M. (2018)	Insurance	Engagement, trust	Survey	Co-production increases loyalty and retention
Fauzi & Suryani (2019)	Life insurance	Participation, value-in-use	PLS-SEM	Participation enhances satisfaction and retention
Malhotra (2022)	Insurance (India)	Digital co-creation, trust	Survey	Technology-enabled co-production strengthens relationships
Hua Dai et al. (2019)	Service innovation	Actor-to-actor integration	Case study	Digital ecosystems support value co-creation and retention
Goduscheit & Faullant (2018)	IT services	Resource integration	Survey	Demonstrates digital innovation as an SDL mechanism

Nadeem et al. (2021)	Financial services	Customer engagement	SEM	Integrates engagement theory with SDL to predict loyalty
Hunt (2020)	Service ecosystems	Institutional logic, relational exchange	Conceptual	Links SDL with institutional and evolutionary marketing theories
Alnakhli et al. (2020)	B2B sales / service	Adaptive selling, communication, value co-creation	PLS-SEM	Shows value co-creation through SDL
Abd-Elrahman, A. H. (2023).	Telecom & financial services	Co-creation, relationship quality	Mixed-methods	Confirms SDL's role in digital transformation and customer experience
Fauzi, A. A., & Suryani, T. (2019)	Insurance (Indonesia)	Trust, religiosity, value co-creation	Survey	Extends SDL with cultural and behavioural constructs
Woratschek et al. (2016)	Service industries (general framework)	Value co-creation, customer identification, satisfaction, loyalty	Conceptual and empirical	Proposes a context-specific SDL model where multiple actors co-create value affecting satisfaction and loyalty.
Klafke et al. (2021)	Non-profit service delivery	Resource integration, trust, social capital	Conceptual	Demonstrates SDL's applicability in social exchange;
Zhang et al. (2020)	Multiple service domains	Value-in-use, value-in-context, value-in-social-context	Conceptual / integrative	Expands SDL by showing that technology and context dynamics transform co-creation from

				dyadic to multi-actor ecosystems.
Chuah et al. (2017)	Mobile internet (Australia	Satisfaction, loyalty, switching barriers, innovation	PLS-SEM	Finds that satisfaction alone doesn't ensure loyalty; switching barriers and inducements co-exist.
Darzi & Bhat (2018)	Indian Private Banking	Personnel capability, satisfaction, retention	SEM	Shows personnel capability → satisfaction → retention, mediated by satisfaction and moderated by gender.
Kindström et al. (2018)	Manufacturing and service innovation	Service innovation, operant resources	Multiple case study	Actor collaboration, consistent with SDL's co-creation view.
Woodside & Sood (2017)	IoT and digital marketing	Actor networks, technology-enabled co-creation	Conceptual vignettes	Proposes that IoT devices transform value co-creation through smart connectivity, reshaping marketing relationships under SDL.
Skjølsvik (2017)	Professional services	Client relationships, contextual knowledge	Interviews	Finds that contextual knowledge and relational chemistry drive co-created value.
Grönroos (2011)	Service Systems	Service logic, co-production	Conceptual	Clarifies that value is created in interaction, distinguishing

				value facilitation by firms and value realisation by customers.
Finoti et al. (2022) –	Service & product innovation	Service orientation, Value co-creation, Innovation	Theoretical / Conceptual	Proposes a framework linking service orientation, value co-creation, and innovation outcomes under SDL.
Yoshida et al. (2013)	Sports services	Co-creation, Identification, Engagement	Survey, SEM	Driving co-creation of loyalty and satisfaction; confirms SDL's multi-actor value network in sport consumption.
Jaakkola & Alexander (2014)	General services / relationship marketing	Engagement, Interaction, Co-creation	Conceptual synthesis	Linking interactional co-creation to relationship value; formalises engagement as an SDL-consistent construct.
Payne, Storbacka & Frow (2008)	Service systems	Co-production, Relationship experience, Value process	Conceptual synthesis	Introduces the PSDL (Practice-based SDL) framework clarifying the role of customer participation across interactional processes; defines co-production as a

	dynamic of resource integration and mutual learning.

Source: Authors' Creation

Table 8: Cross-cutting Themes and Core Insights

Cross-cutting Themes	Representative Papers	Core Insights
Customer Loyalty & Retention	Kandampully et al. (2015); Chuah et al. (2017); Weedige et al. (2019)	Loyalty and retention emerge from relational engagement, satisfaction, and co-created experiences.
Value Co-Creation & SDL	Vargo & Lusch (2008, 2016); Ranjan & Read (2016); Lusch & Nambisan (2015)	Value is co-created through the integration of operant resources and institutional coordination among actors.
Service Innovation & Digital Transformation	Finoti et al. (2022); Goduscheit & Faullant (2018); Hua Dai et al. (2019)	Digital orientation and innovation culture amplify co-creation outcomes and accelerate SDL ecosystem maturity.
Co-Production & Public Service Logic	Alford (2016); Klafke et al. (2021)	Public value and trust develop through participatory co-production and shared resource utilisation.
Ethical, Technological, and Cultural Dimensions	Nadeem et al. (2021); Nomi & Sabbir (2020); Weedige et al. (2019)	Ethical norms, technological readiness, and cultural collectivism shape engagement and loyalty behaviours in emerging markets.

Source: Authors' Creation

4.2 Evaluating the Applicability of Service-Dominant Logic for Understanding Customer Retention

One objective of this review is to assess the suitability of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) as a theoretical lens for understanding customer retention within life insurance services. The

findings indicate substantial support for SDL's central premise that value is co-created through interactions between service providers and customers rather than being embedded within products themselves (Grönroos, 2008; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Across the reviewed studies, constructs closely aligned with SDL, including co-production, value co-creation, customer engagement, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty, consistently emerged as important antecedents of customer retention (Auh et al., 2007; Brodie et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2010; Casidy et al., 2022; Maduku, 2020). The findings further suggest that customer retention in life insurance cannot be adequately explained through transactional perspectives alone. Instead, long-term policyholder relationships appear to be influenced by continuous interactions, information sharing, advisory support, and collaborative decision-making processes between insurers and policyholders (Crosby & Stephens, 1987; Dominique-Ferreira, 2018; Kaur & Singh, 2023). These observations reinforce the SDL perspective that customers are active participants in the service creation process rather than passive recipients of insurance products. Moreover, the reviewed studies demonstrate that value co-creation mechanisms contribute to improved relationship quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, all of which are associated with stronger retention outcomes (Auh et al., 2007; Casidy et al., 2022; Ruefenacht, 2018). Trust also emerged as a recurring factor that facilitates collaborative engagement and strengthens long-term relationships between insurers and policyholders (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

The reviewed studies collectively suggest that customer retention in life insurance services is influenced by a series of interrelated SDL-based mechanisms. While the specific relationships examined varied across studies, the evidence consistently highlighted the importance of co-production, value co-creation, customer engagement, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty in shaping retention outcomes. Figure:4 presents an integrated SDL-based framework developed from the findings of this review.

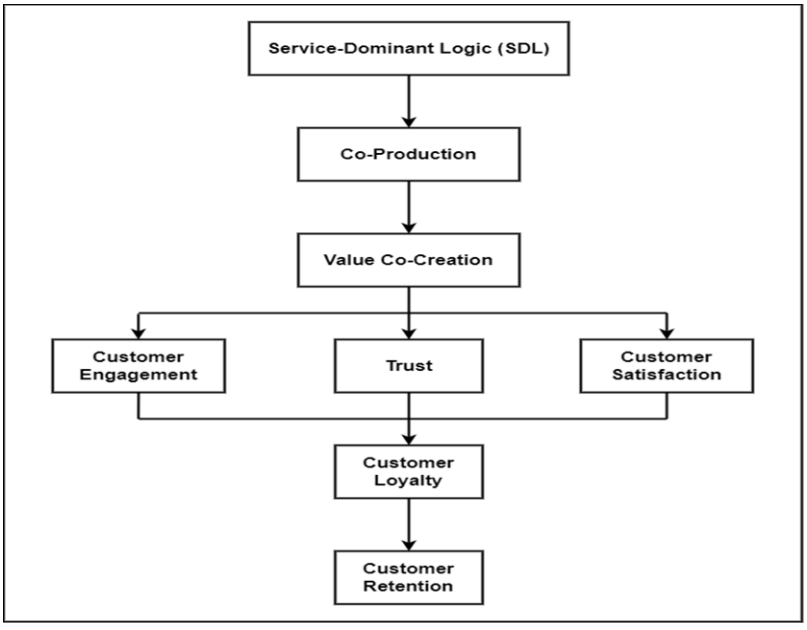


Figure 3: Integrated SDL Framework for Customer Retention in Life Insurance Industry
Source: Authors' Creation

The framework illustrates how SDL serves as the overarching theoretical foundation through which customer participation and co-production facilitate value co-creation. These collaborative processes contribute to higher levels of customer engagement, trust, and satisfaction, which in turn strengthen customer loyalty and ultimately enhance customer retention. The framework provides a consolidated representation of the principal pathways identified across the reviewed studies and offers a foundation for future empirical investigation within life insurance contexts.

5. CURRENT STATUS, GAPS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This section builds on the synthesis presented in Section 4 by evaluating the current state of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) research in relation to customer retention in the life insurance industry. The review of these 33 studies confirms that the Service Dominant Logic (SDL) provides that SDL is a robust and theoretically rich framework for understanding relational value creation, engagement, and continuity in service contexts, but its application is fragmented, inconsistent, and often incompletes valuable theoretical framework for examining customer retention in the life insurance industry. The gaps can be broadly classified into four categories: research areas addressed, research methods deployed, theoretical integration, and research contexts examined.

5.1 Research Area Gaps: Limited Focus on Retention as a Co-Created Outcome

Literature gaps include how SDL-based research conceptualises customer retention. Many studies analyse customer participation, co-production, engagement, satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, but few expressly characterise customer retention as a primary outcome of SDL. Retention is sometimes measured indirectly using proxy variables like attitudinal loyalty, repurchase intention, or reduced switching behaviour (Auh et al., 2007; Albuquerque & Ferreira, 2022; Wu et al., 2020).

Insurance industry-focused research emphasises that trust, advisor–customer interaction quality, and information transparency are relational factors that greatly influence customer retention (Chen et al., 2010; Ruefenacht, 2018). These studies rarely explicitly link drivers to SDL constructs like resource integration, value-in-use, or service ecosystems. Thus, SDL's theoretical contribution to retention is underdeveloped, especially in long-term contractual services like life insurance.

Future research should reframe retention as a co-created relational phenomenon arising from continual interaction, learning, and value realisation during the policy lifecycle. This method would support SDL's core idea that value is phenomenologically determined and

ingrained in ongoing service relationships (Jaakkola et al., 2015; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Future research will benefit by augmenting SDL's theoretical rigour by incorporating it with synergistic frameworks, including Relationship Marketing, Institutional Theory, and Service Recovery. This will facilitate the understanding of how institutional arrangements, recovery processes, and network effects affect co-creation and retention outcomes (Hunt, 2020; Slack & Singh, 2020).

5.2 Methodological Gaps

Methodologically, SDL research demonstrates constrained diversity and depth. Most empirical studies depend on cross-sectional surveys and PLS-SEM models, which are helpful for testing relationships but don't show how co-creation processes change over time (Auh et al., 2007; Albuquerque & Ferreira, 2022; Casidy et al., 2022; Malhotra, 2022). These studies provide useful insights on SDL-related constructs, but they cannot capture the dynamic, process-oriented value co-creation and retention that SDL emphasises. A limited number of studies utilise longitudinal, experimental, or mixed-method designs capable of elucidating causal mechanisms or contextual variations in customer engagement and retention.

Qualitative approaches, longitudinal designs, and mixed-method studies are notably underrepresented in the reviewed literature. This is particularly problematic in life-insurance contexts, where customer relationships unfold over extended periods and involve multiple touchpoints such as policy servicing, claims handling, and advisory interactions (Ruefenacht, 2018). The absence of longitudinal evidence restricts understanding of how participation, trust, and value-in-use evolve and how these processes ultimately translate into policyholder persistency. Another limitation pertains to measurement heterogeneity. Value-in-use, co-production, and engagement are examples of constructs that are often measured using scales that are only relevant to a certain situation. This makes it hard to compare studies and industries. The absence of standardised measurement models undermines the cumulative empirical validation of SDL (Ranjan & Read, 2016).

Numerous studies lack qualitative richness, reflecting a wider pattern in marketing research where quantitative survey designs dominate while deeper contextual qualitative insights remain limited (Rust, 2020). SDL stresses understanding things from a phenomenological point of view and creating value based on the situation. However, not many researchers use both quantitative and qualitative methods, such as interviews, ethnography, or narrative analysis. This limits the capacity to elucidate the reasons and methods by which customers and firms co-create value variably across service contexts. To enhance methodological rigour, subsequent research will benefit by employing multi-phase designs that amalgamate quantitative modelling (e.g., PLS-SEM, fsQCA) with qualitative insights, thereby ensuring both generalizability and contextual comprehension. Longitudinal methodologies are crucial for documenting alterations in engagement and retention behaviours over time.

Future research should therefore prioritise using longitudinal and multi-method designs, which can help in understanding how co-production and engagement change over time. Combining quantitative modelling (PLS-SEM, fsQCA) with qualitative exploration (case studies, in-depth interviews) would enhance comprehension of retention mechanisms and elucidate the temporal aspects of value co-creation (Malhotra, 2022; Nadeem et al., 2021). In light of the emergence of digital ecosystems, SDL research is required to integrate constructs such as digital trust, transparency, empowerment, and AI-enabled personalisation (Goduscheit & Faullant, 2018). Research may investigate the influence of InsurTech, mobile interfaces, and algorithmic service delivery on co-production and retention behaviours within the financial and insurance sectors.

5.3 Theoretical Integration Gaps: Partial and Inconsistent Use of SDL

The review also highlights the gaps pertaining to how SDL is theoretically integrated within retention studies. SDL is often used as a framework, but few studies operationalise its key concepts. SDL is often integrated with other theories such as relationship marketing, trust, social exchange, and consumer engagement theories without clearly stating its main explanatory role (Chen et al., 2010; Nyadzayo et al., 2023). SDL as a backdrop perspective rather than a central analytical lens might dilute conceptual knowledge, while theoretical integration can enrich understanding. Co-production and participation are occasionally explored without resource integration or value-in-use, which contradicts SDL's core logic (Tommasetti et al., 2017).

SDL has become the main way to explain value co-creation and retention, but its theoretical use is still not very clear. The studies examined demonstrate discrepancies in the definitions and operationalisation of constructs such as value-in-use, co-production, and operant resources (Grönroos, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Some scholars regard co-production as mere participation or transactional involvement (Fauzi & Suryani, 2019), while others conceptualise it as a multidimensional construct encompassing interaction, feedback, trust, and mutual learning (Nadeem et al., 2021). This conceptual variability has impeded the process of cumulative theory development.

Furthermore, SDL's principal assertion that value is co-created dynamically through ongoing resource integration and engagement is frequently implemented as a static result. This constrains theoretical comprehension of the evolution of co-creation over time and through interactional episodes. Consequently, the development of longitudinal theory is still in its early stages, particularly when it comes to clarifying how customer relationships evolve and become stable in intricate service systems. In summary, the theoretical gaps do not stem from SDL's deficiencies, but rather from its partial empirical implementation. There is an urgent need for clear ideas, models that bring together different parts, and theories that focus on processes to understand how value is created and kept at different levels.

Future research should explicitly position SDL as the fundamental theoretical framework and selectively use additional theories to explain trust building or commitment. Describe the distinctions and relationships between co-production, co-creation, and engagement, which are commonly used interchangeably in studies. Integrative SDL-based conceptual models should explicitly link behaviour from participation to value creation and retention. Theoretical improvement is needed to advance SDL-driven customer retention reasons in complex service environments.

5.4 Research Context Gaps: Limited Focus on Life Insurance and Emerging Markets

The evaluated studies are geographically diversified but disproportionately concentrated in general service or banking environments, with few life insurance research. This gap is substantial given life-insurance services' extended contract duration, delayed benefit realisation, high perceived risk, and advisor-mediated delivery (Ruefenacht, 2018).

Though many research studies are from Asian and emerging markets, few specifically analyse how institutional, cultural, and regulatory issues affect SDL-based retention mechanisms. Financial literacy, confidence in institutions, socio-economic vulnerability, and regulatory frameworks might affect customers' co-creation and resource integration (Ruefenacht, 2018; Maduku, 2020). As well, SDL research is presently focused on emerging and collectivist economies, particularly in South and Southeast Asia, including India, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. This regional emphasis has produced significant cultural insights; however, it constrains the global applicability of the findings (Nomi & Sabbir, 2020). SDL is still not well understood in Western, African, and Latin American settings, where individualistic values, advanced digital infrastructures, and different regulatory frameworks may lead to different patterns of co-creation.

The contextual gap is exacerbated by the scarcity of research in crisis or post-crisis settings, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where digital transformation, risk perception, and trust were crucial in influencing customer retention. SDL has been applied in IT and telecommunications (Chuah et al., 2017; Goduscheit & Faullant, 2018), but it has not been used much in life insurance and financial services in digital, hybrid, or uncertain settings. Also, there isn't much diversity in the sectors. Most SDL studies are focused on financial services and insurance. There aren't as many studies in healthcare, education, tourism, or public services, which are all areas that also depend on long-term customer relationships and service continuity. Extending the empirical reach of SDL to these sectors can assist in affirming its universality and resilience as a meta-theoretical framework for value creation within service ecosystems.

Future research should therefore address cross-cultural and comparative investigations. To ensure external validity, SDL must be assessed across diverse cultural and institutional contexts. Most existing studies come from Asian and collectivist economies, but there aren't many that compare them. For instance, Chuah et al. (2017) and Nomi and Sabbir

(2020) emphasise the impact of cultural and relational dimensions on co-creation and trust within service environments, whereas Abdel Fattah et al. (2021) broaden the discourse to the financial context of the Middle East. Additional cross-regional studies may clarify the influence of cultural orientations and institutional trust on the co-creation–retention dynamic in Western, Asian, and African markets.

Finally, SDL should be empirically expanded to the healthcare, education, and public service sectors, where value co-creation significantly impacts outcomes such as compliance, participation, and well-being. From a managerial perspective, life insurance companies can use SDL principles to create ways to measure how well they engage with customers, how they work together to make products, and how they keep customers by building trust. Regulators can benefit from SDL insights to make policy guidelines that put customers first and make the industry more sustainable.

In conclusion, this review confirms SDL's theoretical robustness and practical significance in elucidating customer retention, while underscoring the necessity for enhanced integration, methodological innovation, and contextual diversity. Dynamic, multi-level, and cross-sectoral inquiry will not only improve the academic legitimacy of SDL research, but it will also make it more useful for life insurance and other service industries that work in markets that are constantly changing and driven by technology.

5. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review investigated the application of the SDL framework in elucidating customer retention and co-production within service industries, specifically life insurance. The review emphasises SDL's efficacy as a relational, process-oriented framework for comprehending the co-creation of value by customers and firms, while simultaneously exposing conceptual discrepancies and contextual constraints. Most studies have defined and measured retention using engagement, trust, satisfaction, and perceived value, but inconsistency is detected in this process. Co-production is frequently perceived narrowly as customer participation, rather than as a multidimensional process encompassing emotional, cognitive, and social components.

The prevailing view within the Service-Dominant Logic literature is that value is not created solely by organisations and delivered to customers, but rather emerges through collaborative interactions in which customers actively participate as co-creators of value (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). This perspective emphasises customer participation, resource integration, and relational exchanges as fundamental mechanisms through which service outcomes are achieved. Based on the findings of this review, the authors concur with this view and argue that SDL provides a particularly suitable framework for understanding customer retention in life insurance services. The recurring importance of co-production, value co-creation, customer engagement, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty across the reviewed studies suggests that customer retention is best understood

as a relational and collaborative process rather than a purely transactional outcome. Consequently, SDL offers a comprehensive theoretical foundation for future research and managerial practice aimed at strengthening long-term policyholder relationships.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that life insurers should move beyond transactional customer management approaches and actively facilitate value co-creation throughout the policyholder journey. This may be achieved through structured policyholder onboarding programs, regular policy-review discussions, proactive agent–policyholder communication, and the use of digital engagement platforms that encourage ongoing interaction and information sharing. Furthermore, insurers should strengthen trust-building initiatives by ensuring transparency in policy administration, premium management, and claims handling processes. Particular attention should be given to claims-stage communication, as policyholder experiences during claims processing often shape perceptions of service quality, trust, and long-term commitment. By encouraging customer participation and collaborative engagement, life insurers can strengthen customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately customer retention.

The review finds three main gaps: (1) Conceptual; insufficient consistency in delineating fundamental SDL constructs; (2) Methodological; a preponderance of quantitative methodologies that hinder temporal comprehension; and (3) Contextual; a significant focus on Asian and collectivist economies like Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh, with inadequate investigation in Western or African contexts. This limited focus limits SDL's external validity and global use.

Subsequent research ought to amalgamate relational and institutional theories, utilise longitudinal and mixed-method approaches, and evaluate SDL across diverse cultural settings to elucidate the impact of institutional trust, digitalisation, and cultural orientation on value co-creation and retention. In conclusion, SDL offers a strong but underused framework for explaining how customer retention is affected by co-production and engagement. Future research should use it more often and in different service ecosystems to show how well it works.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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