

A Critical Review of Content Marketing: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

Purpose – The objective of this research is to conduct an empirical analysis of studies on content marketing featured within the two prominent databases, Scopus and Web of Science.

Design/methodology/approach – The approach adopted in this study was a bibliometric analysis utilizing the R programming language (specifically the Bibliometric R package). The analysis included 157 articles, selected after eliminating duplicates, spanning from 2008 to 2023.

Findings – The findings indicate that while the quantity of publications and citations remain modest, there is a noticeable upward trend. The *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* emerged as the leading publication in terms of the number of articles, and citations, as well as H- index and G-index scores, demonstrating its significant influence in this field. The majority of cited works and publications originated from the United States.

Research limitations/implications – This investigation was limited to only two databases, excluding potential studies available in other databases, which may influence the outcomes of this analysis.

Practical implications – The insights from this study provide value to marketers and academics alike, highlighting areas lacking in research and pointing towards opportunities for future inquiries in content marketing. Additionally, this study sheds light on publishing patterns within this area of study.

Originality/value – This study introduces a bibliometric approach to critically evaluate the body of literature on content marketing. It enriches the existing body of knowledge and offers guidance for researchers embarking on subsequent investigations.

Keywords: Bibliometric analysis, Cluster analysis, content marketing, Keyword analysis, Scientific mapping

1. Introduction

Recent developments have underscored the increasing prominence of bibliometric analyses within the domain of business research, as highlighted by Donthu et al. (2021). This methodology plays a pivotal role in offering researchers a deeper insight into the significance and prospective directions of a given topic. Bibliometric analysis stands out as a methodological approach that enables a detailed and informed evaluation of a vast corpus of academic literature pertinent to a particular subject, as outlined by Van Nunen et al. (2018). Through a systematic quantitative examination of data, it becomes possible to delineate the demographic characteristics, publication trends, and the evolution of scholarly contributions within a specific field of inquiry (Jia et al., 2014; Li and Hale, 2016). This approach facilitates the exploration of authorial, journal-based, institutional, and national research performances and trends, thereby illuminating patterns of collaboration among these entities (Li and Zhao, 2015). Moreover, bibliometric analyses aid in identifying leading scholars, key journals, foremost institutions, pivotal publications, and influential countries associated with a particular subject area. It also unveils the latest advancements, dominant research trajectories, and prevalent issues within a specific field of study (Wang et al., 2014). Such analyses provide valuable insights into relevant themes, keywords, and critical research voids, assisting researchers in pinpointing significant areas for investigation. Furthermore, bibliometrics is instrumental in uncovering existing research deficiencies in content and geographical coverage, guiding scholarly endeavors (Gall et al., 2015).

In addition to its academic utility, bibliometrics assumes a critical role in informing scientific and scholarly decision-making processes. It is extensively employed for the appraisal of applications for academic roles, as well as for evaluating the output of journals, institutions, and nations. The insights gleaned from bibliometric studies are invaluable

for funding bodies and decision-makers in making informed decisions regarding the allocation of research resources (Ugolini et al., 2015).

Content marketing, a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content, aims to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — ultimately, to drive profitable customer action. According to the Content Marketing Institute (2021), content marketing is rooted in the belief that if businesses deliver consistent, ongoing valuable information to buyers, the buyers ultimately reward the company with their business and loyalty. Pulizzi (2014) defines it as the art of communicating with your customers and prospects without selling, providing information that educates, entertains, or enlightens the audience, thereby establishing trust and positioning the brand as a thought leader in the industry. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) further elaborate on the importance of content marketing in the digital age, emphasizing its role in engaging with consumers through various platforms and formats, from blogs and videos to social media posts, making it an integral part of modern digital marketing strategies. As businesses increasingly shift towards digital channels, the relevance of content marketing continues to grow, underlining its significance in attracting and engaging with a digital-savvy audience.

Accordingly, this study aims to facilitate entry into this domain, recognizing the significance of bibliometric investigations and content marketing. It seeks to furnish valuable research insights pertinent to the topic at hand. To the best of our knowledge, there exists no prior bibliometric examination of content marketing. By employing bibliometric analysis, our objective is to review and encapsulate scholarly works using pertinent keywords, eminent scholars, leading journals, premier institutions, and countries, as well as to identify prospective research directions within the topic as documented in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. Efforts were made to evaluate the academic contributions and to contemplate future advancements in this area, with a specific focus on prior studies within the realm of content marketing. This document intends to assist researchers in discerning emerging fields and prospective research trajectories, thereby illuminating the academic robustness in the specified area.

1.1 Conceptual Clarity

The marketing industry underwent a revolution, going from mass marketing to targeted marketing (Dunakhe & Panse, 2022). Benjamin Franklin coined the term “content marketing” for the first time in their book, *Poor Richard's Almanack*. As time passed in the 19th century, prospects for content marketing emerged in magazines, newspapers, radio, and television. After the introduction of internet, content marketing has revolutionized because companies make their websites and use social media as promotional tools. They can share valuable information directly with their target audience. In 2000, the era of influencers emerged with new energy in content marketing. Influencers share sponsor content with their fan following because consumers are influenced by influencers (Rungruangjit & Charoenpornpanichkul, 2022). In simple terms, CMI gives definition, “Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience and ultimately to drive profitable action”. Another definition is cited by (Pulizzi, 2012): “Traditional marketing and advertising are telling the world you’re a rock star. Content Marketing is showing the world that you are one.” The world is globally connected via social media digitally. Today content marketing has become an essential part of any marketing strategy. Companies are creating high-quality content in the form of blog posts, videos, podcasts and social media posts. Approximately 82% of companies use content marketing as per a report by hubspot.com. The internet is a good source of content and strengthens content marketing. Digital content marketing helps consumer engagement towards brand and raises trust (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). It is crucial for businesses to use social media strategically as more businesses turn to content marketing. The study highlights the value of social and interactive components in raising user engagement on branded social media platforms. Brands should boost the sociability of their branded social media sites at priority in order to foster brand loyalty and increase purchase intention (Y. Wang et al., 2015). Along with other institutions, several charitable organisations that raise money make significant investments in content marketing, frequently working with experts to guide their operations. Content marketing is important for charitable institutions, they can use image enhancement and stimulate public perception to viral their message (Bennett, 2017). Numerous scholars have explored the topic of content marketing, with a significant focus also coming from the field of management, as further examined in this study.

2. Research Methodology

Zupic and Cater (2015) outlined a quintet of stages for the execution of scientific mapping, a methodology rigorously employed by the researcher in the present investigation. This methodological framework has also been embraced by Carvalho et al. (2021), Scussel et al. (2022), Gould et al. (2023), and Li et al. (2023), for conducting bibliometric analyses. According to the literature review, this approach is highly regarded and recognized for its reliability in the field. Initially, the process involves the selection of research questions, keywords, and databases to shape the study’s framework. The subsequent phase entails the acquisition of bibliometric information from the chosen databases. Analysis of the gathered data then follows, including the employment of suitable software for cleansing the data of inaccuracies and redundancies. The fourth stage is dedicated to the generation of data visualizations through the selected analytical software, facilitating the examination of the data.

The final and fifth stage involves interpreting the data, culminating in the derivation of conclusions from the study’s findings.

2.1 Software for Data Analysis

The investigation employed the R (Bibliometric R package) for its execution. As stated by Wikipedia, R Studio serves as a comprehensive development platform for R, which is a programming language dedicated to statistical computation and graphical representation (RStudio, 2023). Recent times have witnessed a surge in the utilization of R (Hussain, 2015). Data retrieved for the study was manipulated within R Studio and subsequently transformed into a bibliometric dataset. Additionally, this dataset underwent further examination through Biblioshiny, an extension within the R Studio framework.

2.2 Research Questions

RQ1: How many publications on content marketing exist in the relevant fields?

RQ2: Identify the 20 leading contributors in content marketing research, including authors, journals, institutions, and nations.

RQ3: What trends can be observed in the publication of content marketing materials? RQ4: Which keywords are commonly associated with content marketing?

RQ5: In which areas do future research on content marketing need to focus?

2.3 Research Objectives

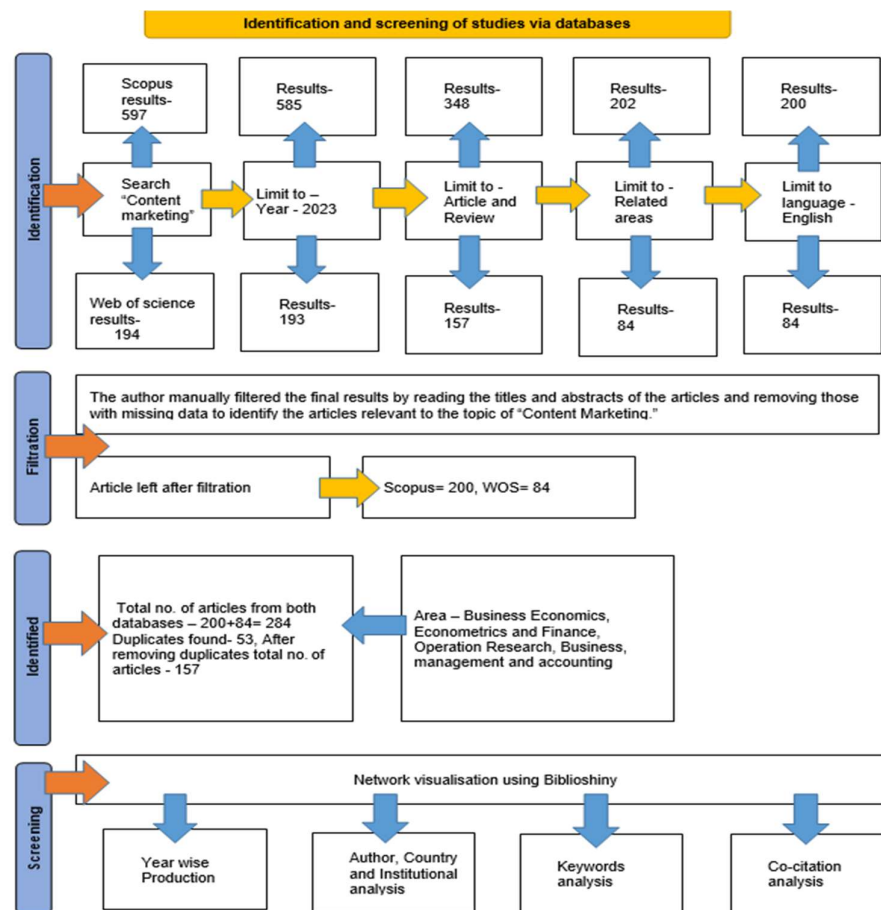
O1. To know the total quantity of publications on content marketing in the relevant fields;

O2. To know about the leading 20 contributors, including authors, journals, institutions, and countries, in the field;

O3. To know the publication trend in content marketing;

O4. To know the associated keywords with content marketing; and O5. To identify future research opportunities in content marketing.

2.4 Process of data screening and visualization



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2.5 Database and Keywords

In this research, information was systematically gathered from two comprehensive and rigorously maintained databases, namely Scopus and Web of Science. These platforms were chosen for their extensive coverage of journals in the fields of management, commerce, and similar disciplines. The extraction of data from these sources occurred concurrently on

February 8, 2024, spanning publications from 2008 to 2023. This period was selected based on the emergence of significant publications in content marketing beginning in 2008, and 2023 was chosen as it represents the last full year prior to the current study, allowing for a complete review of relevant literature up to that point. To ensure the precision of the search results, the search criteria included the phrase “content marketing,” targeting titles, abstracts, and keywords in Scopus, and extending to topics, abstracts, author keywords, and keyword plus in Web of Science. This approach yielded 597 entries in Scopus and 194 in Web of Science initially.

Subsequent limitations to the year 2023 narrowed the findings to 585 for Scopus and 193 for Web of Science. Then in the refinement processes the results were limited to articles and reviews, leading to 348 entries from Scopus and 157 from Web of Science. Further refinement focused on subject relevance within business economics, econometrics, operations research, management, business, finance, and accounting, culminating in 202 articles from Scopus and 84 from Web of Science. The final adjustment based on language preference isolated 200 entries in Scopus and 84 in Web of Science to English language publications.

To ensure the relevance and quality of the data, the researchers meticulously reviewed titles and abstracts, removing 64 articles from Scopus and 10 from Web of Science due to irrelevance or incomplete data. The remaining articles were compiled using Biblioshiny in Rstudio, resulting in a total of 210 documents. Duplicate articles, numbering 53, were identified and excluded to maintain the integrity of the analysis. Consequently, a final set of 157 articles was established for detailed examination and interpretation of the findings.

Table 1 Statistics of Data

Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	2008:2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	99
Documents	157
Annual Growth Rate %	4.43
Document Average Age	3.72
Average citations per doc	28.99
References	1608
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	183
Author's Keywords (DE)	581
AUTHORS	
Authors	359
Authors of single-authored docs	31
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	32
Co-Authors per Doc	2.57
International co-authorships %	6.369
DOCUMENT TYPES	
article	145
article article	1
article; early access	4
review	6
review; early access	1

Source: Created by Author

3. Statistical Overview of Data

In this research, the dataset spanning from 2008 to 2023 was gathered by consulting two prominent databases, namely Scopus and Web of Science, retrieving data in BibTex format for comprehensive analysis. Utilizing R Studio alongside bibliometric methods enabled the elimination of redundant entries and the consolidation of datasets. The investigation revealed a collection of 99 unique sources, comprising 136 entries from Scopus and 74 from Web of Science, with an overlap of 53 identical documents across both databases. Consequently, a total of 157 documents underwent thorough examination in this study. As delineated in Table 1's principal data, the mean publication year stood at 4.43, with the

average citations per document reaching 28.99. The analysis identified 581 author keywords and 183 Keyword Plus across various studies, indicating a wide-ranging and significant interest in the field of content marketing. Notably, the majority of the contributions were collaborative efforts, accounting for 328 publications, whereas solitary authors contributed 31 papers, underscoring the collaborative nature of research in this area.

3.1 Article Production Per Year

Referencing Figure 1, it becomes apparent that the years 2009 and 2010 saw no publication of articles, followed by a significant increase in output, culminating in 2023 with a peak publication count of 36 articles. Between 2019 and 2023, a cumulative total of 126 articles were disseminated, with an initial average publication rate of 2.64 articles per year, indicating that before 2018, at least two articles were consistently published annually. Notably, this average publication rate experienced a notable surge post-2019, escalating to 25.6 articles per year, illustrating a heightened focus on the subject matter by the research community beginning in 2016.

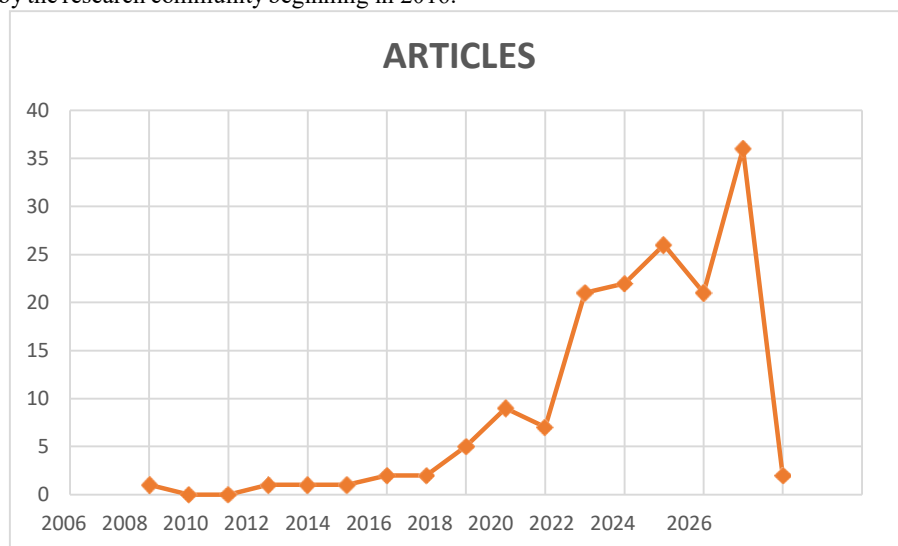


Figure 1 Article publication per year

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3.2 Average Article Citation Per Year

Citation analysis emerges as a pivotal method for delineating the scientific landscape, grounded in the premise that citations serve as markers of scholarly interconnectivity, manifesting through references from one paper to another (Appio et al., 2014). This analysis reveals that citations correlate significantly with the collaboration scope among authors, spanning across institutions and nations (Tahamtan et al., 2016). As depicted in Figure 2, the mean annual citation rate stands at 8.35, with the dataset extending from 2008 to 2023.

Notably, there were only two instances where the average citations surpassed the threshold of 25. The period between 2013 and 2014 witnessed enhanced citation rates, with most years recording an average citation count exceeding 5.

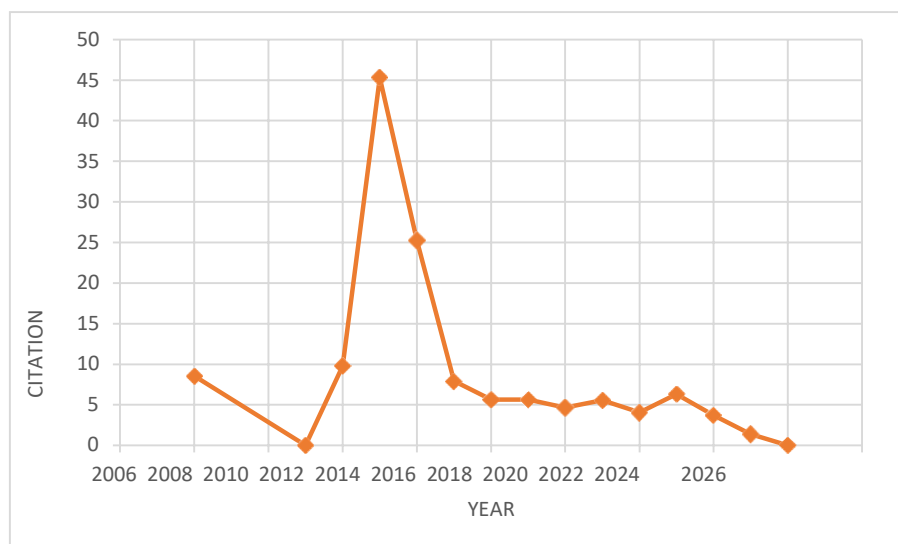


Figure 2 Average citation per year

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4. Source Analysis

4.1 Journal Analysis

In the examination of various selected publications, it has been identified that the *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* stands out for having disseminated 10 articles, marking it as the sole publication to achieve figure 3. Contrarily, only five other journals have managed to issue at least four articles on the topic, positioning the *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* at the forefront in terms of volume with 10 contributions. This is followed by *Industrial Marketing Management*, *European Journal of Marketing*, and *Journal of Brand Strategy*, each with 6, 5, and 5 articles, respectively, while the remaining publications have released fewer than four articles in this field. Such limited output suggests a pressing need for journals to enhance and encourage more scholarly work in content marketing. Further insights into the leading 20 journals by publication count are provided in Figure 3. In conducting a citation analysis, it was discovered that four journals have accrued over 300 citations each, with the *Journal of Interactive Marketing* leading at 920 citations, followed by the *European Management Journal*, *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, and *Industrial Marketing Management*, with citations numbering 354, 343, and 341, respectively, as detailed further in Figure 4. Additionally, it was noted that up until 2013, only the *Journal of Marketing Management* had featured articles on content marketing. Post-2013, the *Journal of Interactive Marketing* began including such articles, with a majority of journals initiating their contributions post-2014. Comprehensive details regarding this analysis are depicted in Figure 5, under the title “Source Analysis.”

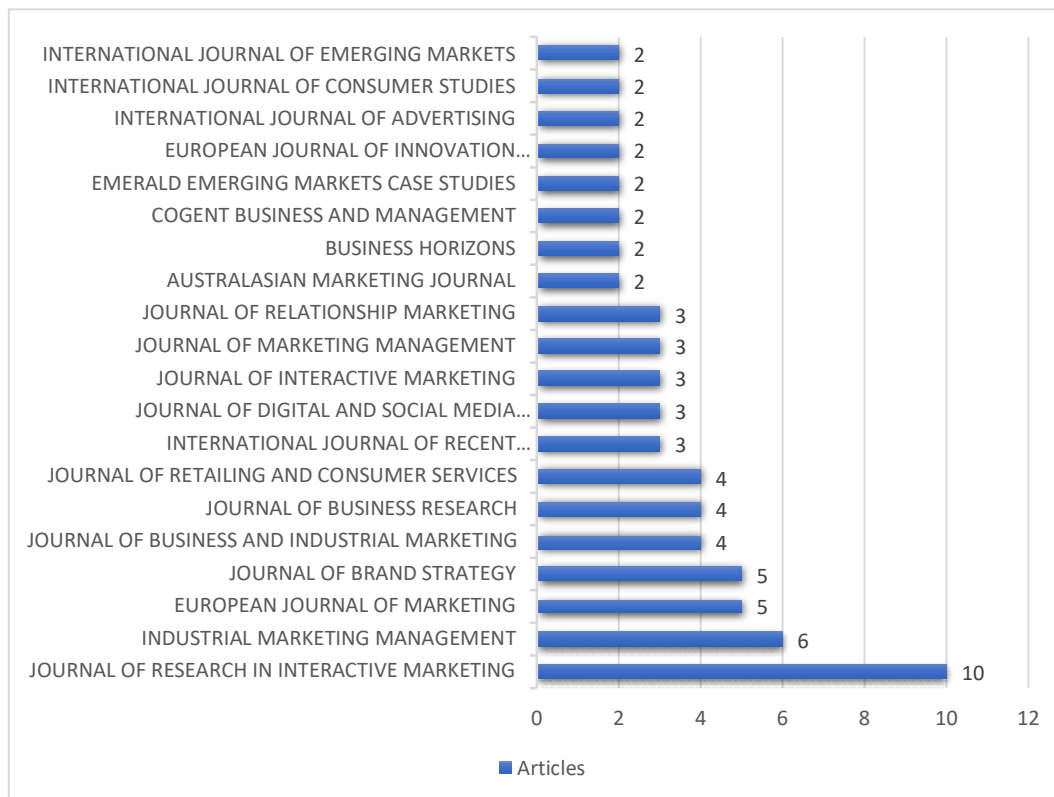


Figure 3 Publication by top 20 journals

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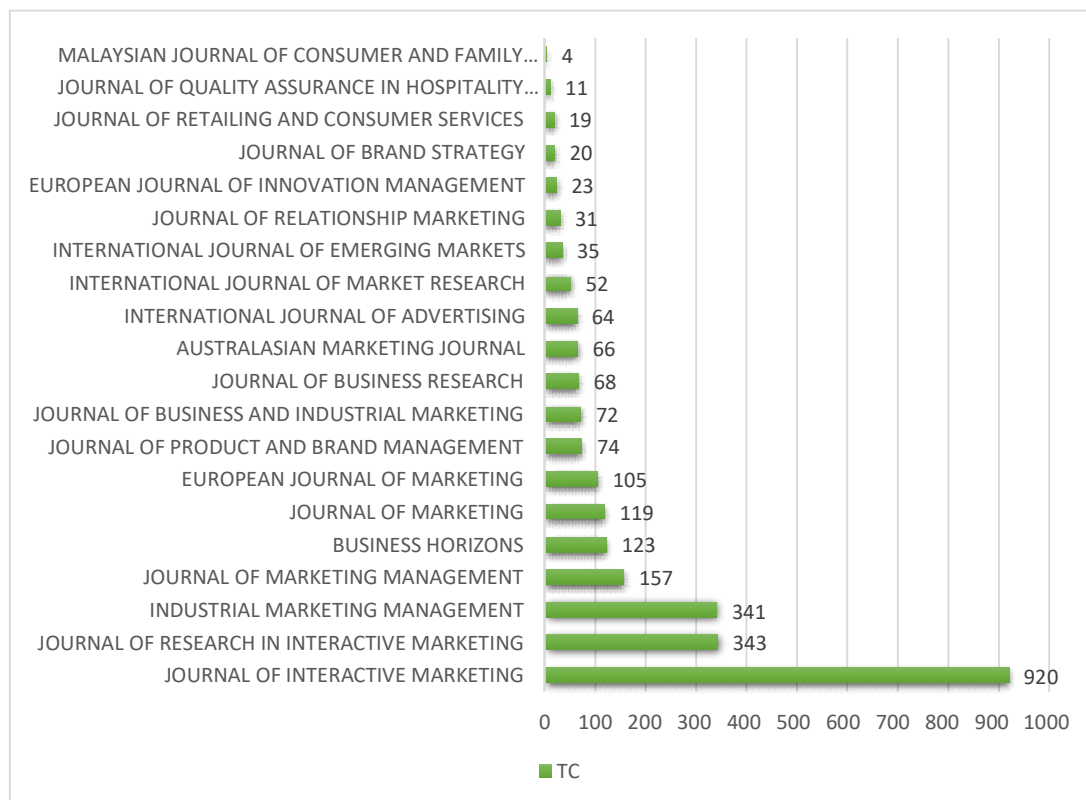


Figure 4 Citation received by top 20 journals

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4.2 Impact Factor of Top 20 Journals

4.2.1 H Index

In 2005, J.E. Hirsch introduced the Hirsch index, commonly referred to as the H-index, as a novel approach for assessing the impact and productivity of individual researchers and academic journals. This metric has been universally adopted across various institutions and publications for assessing their effectiveness. Hirsch (2005) defines the H-index, stating that “A scientist has index h if h of his or her N_p papers have at least h citations each, and the other $(N_p - h)$ papers have no more than h citations each.” The utility of the H-index is most pronounced when comparing the output of entities within the same field. An examination of the H-index scores of the top 20 journals in the field of content marketing, as illustrated in Figure 6, reveals that only two journals possess an H-index exceeding 5, while the remaining journals have an H-index of 4 or below. Notably, the *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* and *Industrial Marketing Management* led with the highest H-index of 6. Following these, the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* and the *Journal of Interactive Marketing* have H-index scores of 4 and 3, respectively.

4.2.2 G Index

In 2006, Egghe put forward the g-index as a refinement of the H-index. The g-index is defined as the maximum number of articles (g) that have collectively received at least g^2 citations, with the understanding that the next highest-ranked paper ($g+1$) would accumulate fewer than $(g+1)^2$ citations (Egghe, 2006). Through an analysis utilizing the g-index, it was discovered that the *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* ranks at the pinnacle, boasting a g-index of 10, alongside the highest H-index observed. This is followed by *Industrial Marketing Management* and the *European Journal of Marketing*, which hold index values of 6 and 5, respectively. A graphical depiction in Figure 7 aids in presenting information on the top 20 journals as ranked by the g-index.

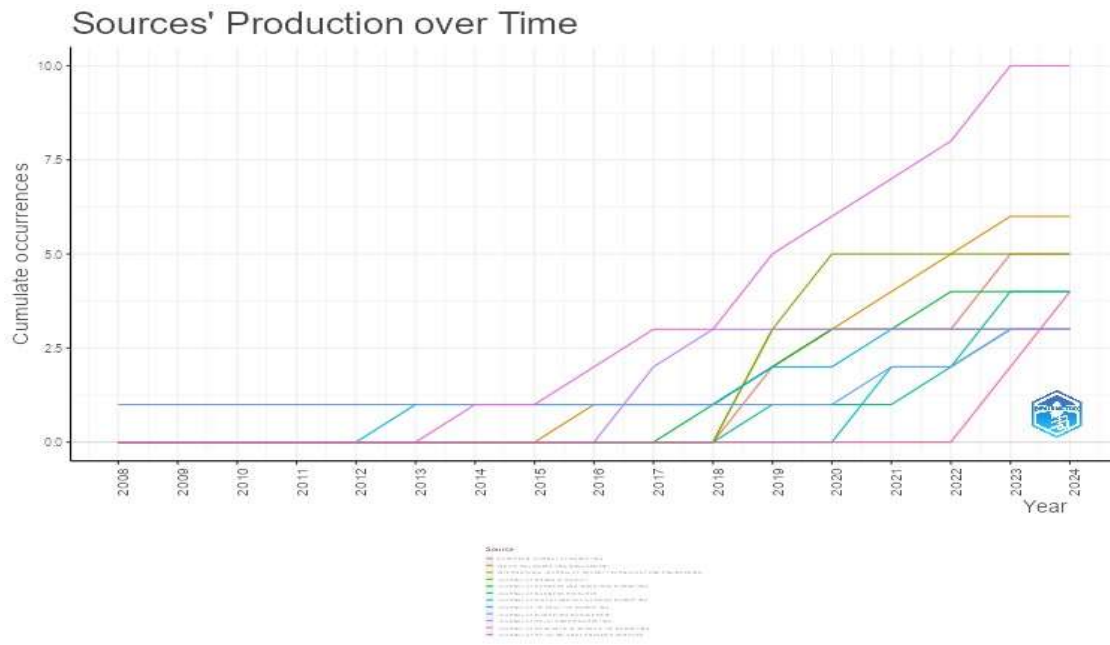


Figure 5 Source Analysis

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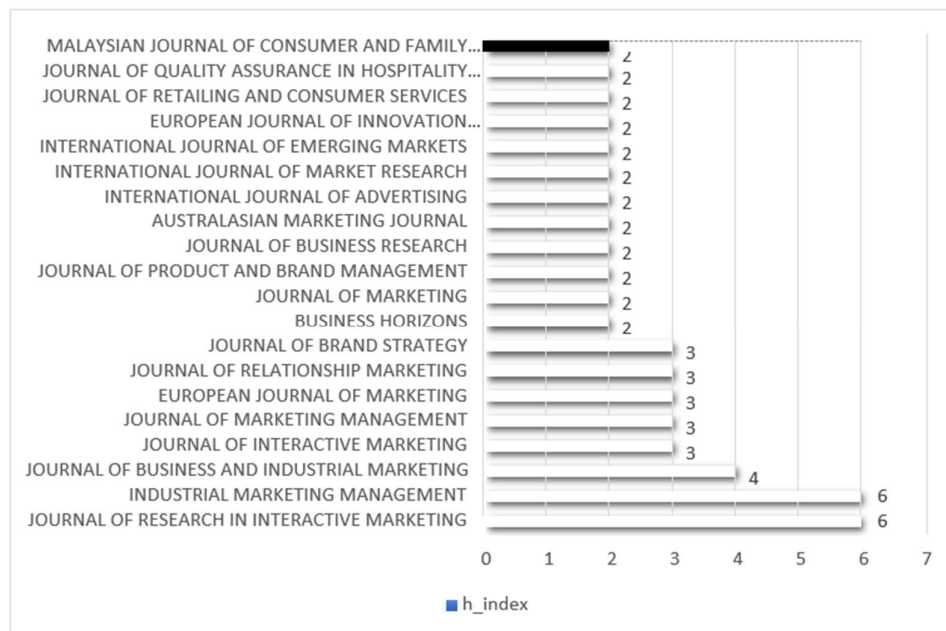


Figure 6 H- Index of top 20 journals

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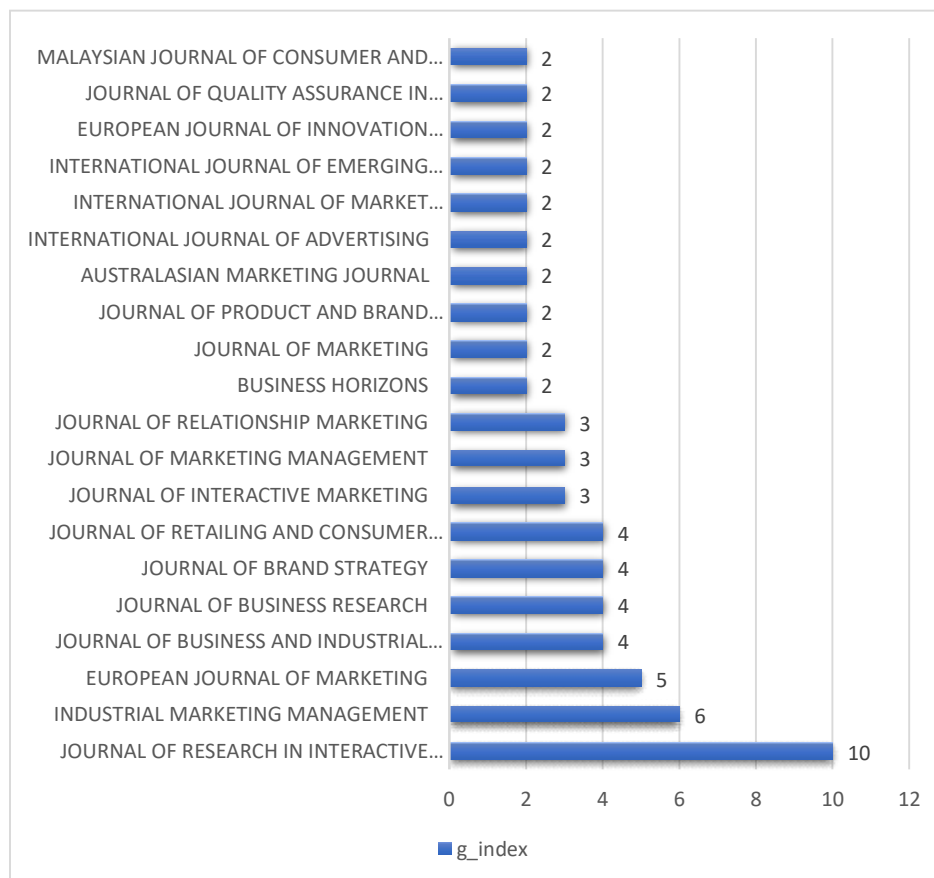


Figure 7 G- Index of top 20 journals

Source: Created by Author

4.3 Author Analysis

It was observed that six scholars have been particularly prominent in the realm of content marketing, each having contributed three publications. Thirty-two researchers have each authored two articles, while the remainder have produced a single article within this domain. Such figures are indicative of a concerning trend: a limited interest among scholars in the area of content marketing. A similar pattern emerges from the analysis of citations, with only two individuals, HOLLEBEEK L and MACKY K, accruing seven citations each. Conversely, the other contributors have garnered five or fewer citations. This data suggests a pressing need for an increase in both scholarly contributions and citation rates within this field. Further details on the publications and the citations received by authors are provided in Figures 8 and 9, respectively.

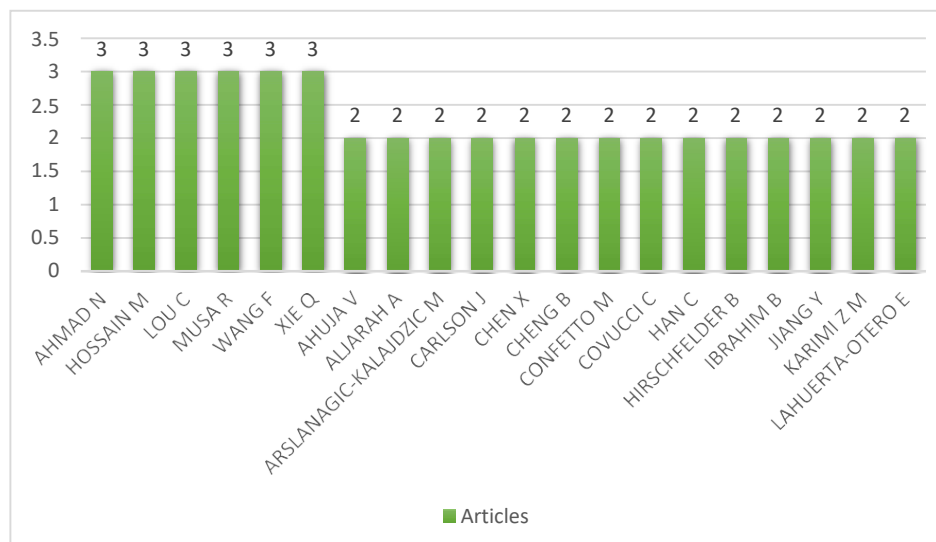


Figure 8 Top 20 Authors by publications

Source: Created by Author

4.4 Affiliation Analysis

In the analysis of affiliations, it was observed that seven institutions each contributed two publications. These include the Department of Economics and Statistics at the University of Salerno, Fisciano, Italy; the Department of Marketing, Business, and Trade at the Odessa National Academy of Food Technologies, Odessa, Ukraine; the Department of Marketing Management at the University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa; the Department of Political and Communication Sciences at the University of Salerno, Fisciano, Italy; the Gordon Institute of Business Science at the University of Pretoria, Johannesburg, South Africa; the Temerlin Advertising Institute at Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX, United States; and the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Other affiliations contributed only one article each, indicating a lower level of output. This suggests a need for increased scholarly output from these affiliations. Further information about the leading 20 affiliations is presented in Figure 10.

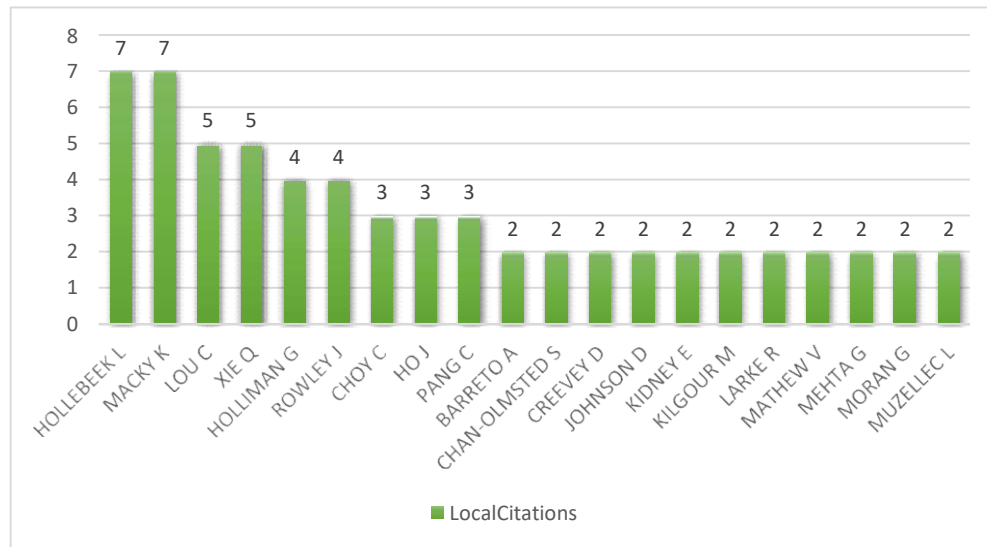


Figure 9 Citations Received by Top 20 Authors

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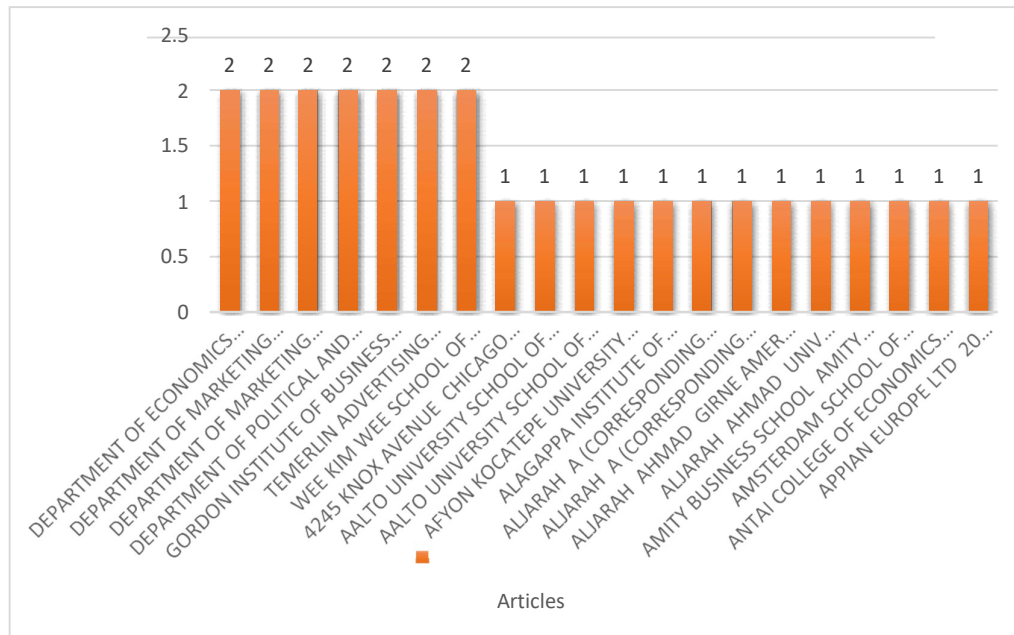


Figure 10 Top 20 affiliations by publication

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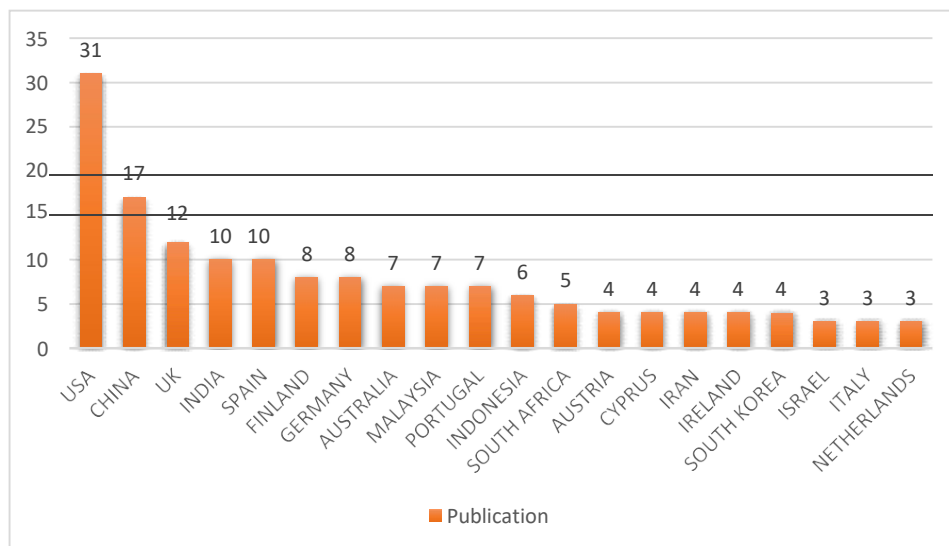


Figure 11 Top 20 countries by Publications

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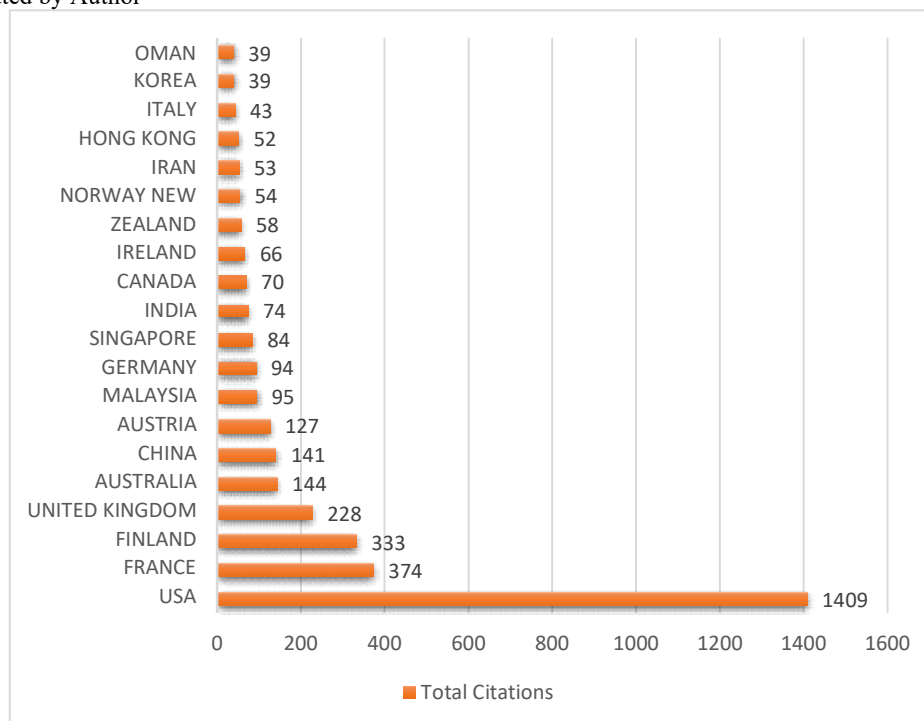


Figure 12 Citations received by top 20 countries

Source: Created by Author

4.5 Country Analysis

Within the scope of global contributions to content marketing research, the United States emerges as the leading nation, with a total of 31 published articles, surpassing China and the United Kingdom, which have produced 17 and 12 articles, respectively. A select group of only five countries, including the USA, China, the UK, India, and Spain, have each published a minimum of 10 articles. Detailed insights into the leading 20 nations by publication volume are illustrated in Figure 11, indicating a widespread international engagement in content marketing research. Among these, the top five countries alone account for 80 of the 157 articles reviewed. However, the disparity in research output is stark, with the United States significantly outpacing other nations, highlighting the imperative for these countries to enhance their focus on content marketing research across various sectors and timeframes, particularly in fields that bolster industry marketing efforts.

In terms of citations, the United States also leads significantly, with 1,409 citations, while France and Finland follow with 374 and 333 citations, respectively. The citation distribution among the top 20 countries, as shown in Figure 12,

reveals a pronounced gap between the United States and its counterparts, with only seven countries receiving 100 or more citations. This discrepancy underscores the need for sustained and quality research in content marketing to bridge the gap.

Therefore, there is a critical need for countries to foster research that not only advances the understanding of content marketing among consumers and marketers across different sectors but also aids in the international and domestic promotion of their products. This concerted effort in research and application is essential for improving the global landscape of content marketing.



Figure 13 Word cloud

Source: Created by Author

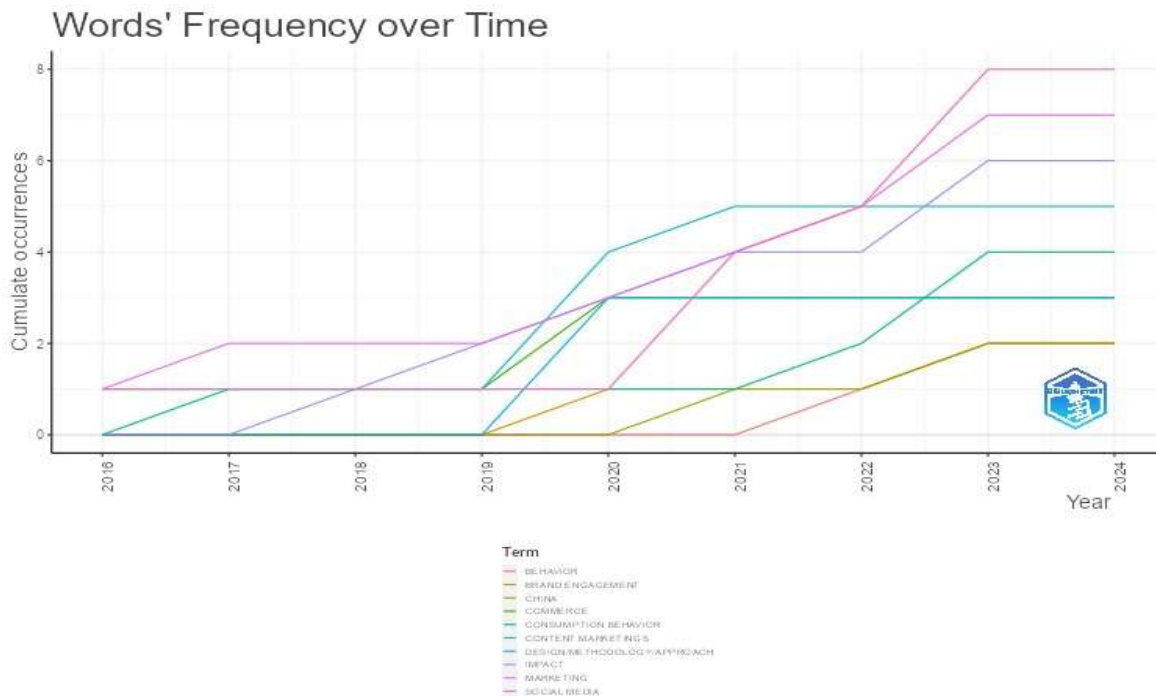


Figure 14 Word Growth Chart

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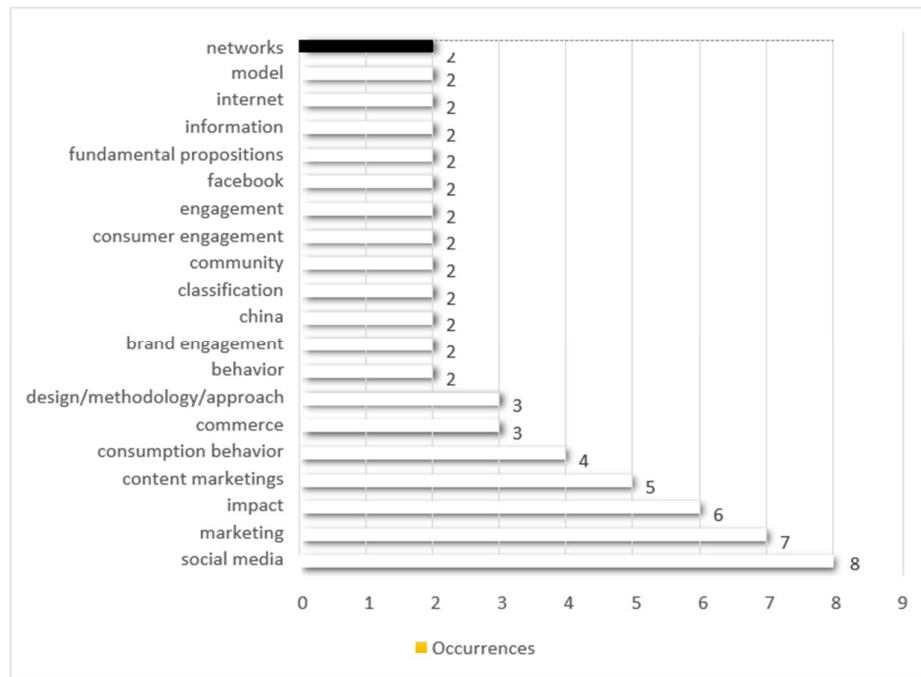


Figure 15 Top 20 Words by Occurrences

Source: Created by Author



Figure 16 Word Tree

Source: Created by Author

4.6 Keyword Analysis

Keurok and Vrechopoulos (2009) highlighted that the frequency of keywords might only provide a comparative insight into the various categories and subcategories of study areas, reflecting their popularity among scholars. Similarly, Wu et al. (2012) posited that analyzing keywords could offer a distinctive perspective in understanding the topics “Encoded” by authors through providing succinct topical summaries, thereby facilitating the identification of the core themes or messages within research works. The utilization of Keyword Plus to create a word cloud in Biblioshiny, as depicted in Figure 13, illustrates that terms such as social media dominate the research landscape, succeeded by marketing, impact, content marketing, and consumption behavior. The analysis further reveals a scarcity of research in areas that present opportunities for future inquiry, encompassing topics like behavior, brand engagement, consumer engagement, fundamental propositions, information, perceptions, performance, sales, social networking (online), stakeholder engagement, sustainable development, websites, advertising, affective content, antecedents, assortment selections, attribute performance, celebrity endorsements, channels, communication, community structure, competition and competitive advantage. Potential research questions might encompass the effects of content marketing on consumption

behaviors, consumer perceptions towards content marketing, its impact on sales and company performance, the use of content marketing tools for competitive advantage, and its role in internal firm communication, among other aspects. These inquiries could be applied across various sectors.

Further, examination of the word growth graph in Figure 14 reveals an upward trend in the study of terms associated with social media, marketing, impact, content marketing, consumption behavior, and brand engagement, especially post-2019, indicating a continuous interest in these subjects within the context of content marketing. The analysis of word occurrences in Figure 15 shows social media, marketing, impact, and content marketing as the most frequently occurring terms, with respective frequencies of 8, 7, 6, and 5. Additional details on the top 20 occurrences are provided in Figure 15. The word tree methodology elucidates the percentage occurrence of various terms, highlighting social media at 8%, followed by marketing and impact at 7% and 6%, respectively. Most variables registered less than 2% occurrence, suggesting a wide scope for researchers to explore content marketing in conjunction with these variables, as indicated in Figure 16.

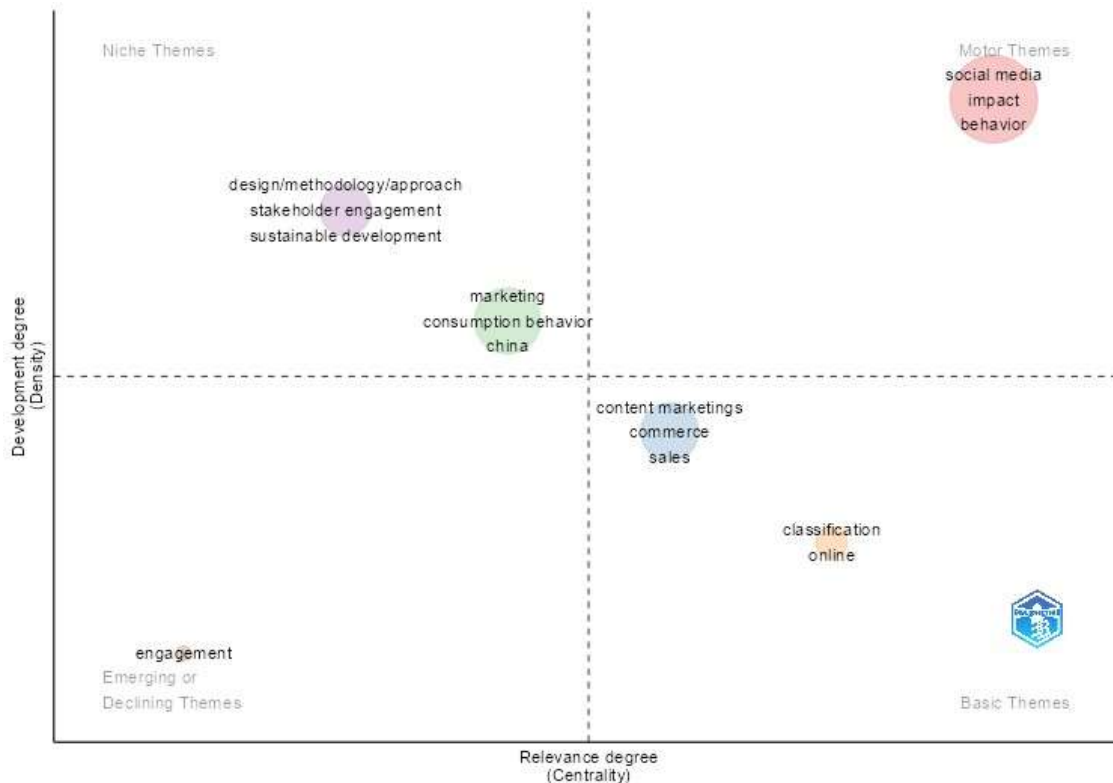


Figure 17 Thematic map

Source: Created by Author

4.7 Thematic Analysis

Thematic mapping, a crucial method in the domain of image classification, is widely recognized for its significance in remote sensing analysis (Foody, 2004). The process of disseminating information through thematic maps is acknowledged as a nuanced and conjectural endeavor (Dent, 1970). Defined by its graphical representation, a thematic map articulates data through the positioning of centrality on the x-axis and density on the y-axis, facilitating a quadrant-based analysis of various topics. Centrality quantifies the significance of the primary theme, while density assesses the evolution of the selected theme. As illustrated in Figure 17, a thematic map is divided into four segments. The quadrant at the bottom left highlights themes that are either emerging or waning, such as engagement, which researchers may choose to further investigate or abandon. The lower right quadrant is dedicated to foundational themes that have been extensively studied, including classification and online content marketing, commerce, and sales, indicating potential areas for exploration based on the map's analysis. The upper left quadrant presents niche themes like stakeholder engagement, sustainable development, marketing, and consumer behavior, which, despite their development, remain isolated. Conversely, the upper right quadrant encompasses mature themes such as social media, impact, and behavior, which, although developed, still harbor opportunities for future inquiry. The thematic map underscores that all discussed themes possess prospects for additional research, without any reaching their full investigative potential. Researchers are encouraged to prioritize areas such as content marketing, stakeholder engagement, consumer behavior, sustainable development, and impact for future studies.

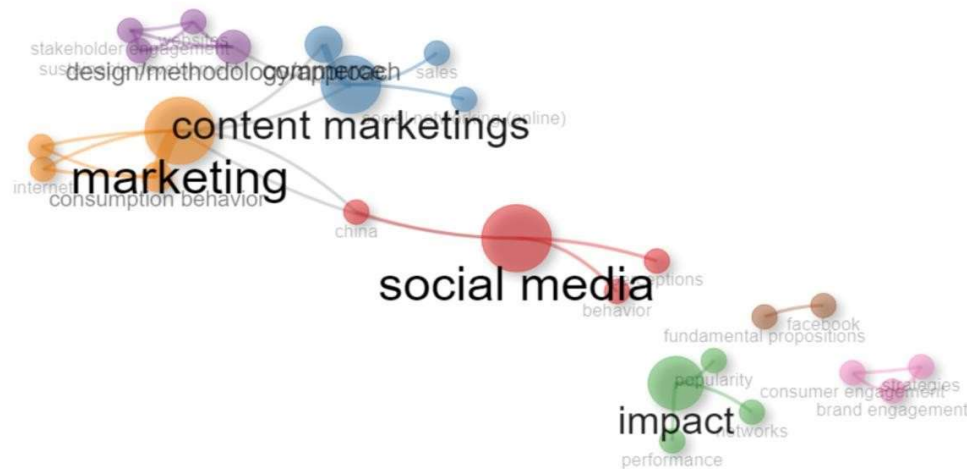


Figure 18 Keywords Cluster

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4.8 Cluster Analysis

During the 1930s, the initial discussions around cluster analysis emerged within the social sciences. It was perceived by Tryon (1939) as a rudimentary alternative to factor analysis during that era, and it wasn't until the 1950s and early 1960s that it began to garner significant interest (Blashfield and Albenderfer, 1978). Cluster analysis is depicted in Figure 18, where it organizes various clusters based on the distinct attributes identified through Keyword Plus.

This analytical method is instrumental in dissecting the thematic structures within co-citation networks. As illustrated in Figure 18, seven distinct clusters—red, orange, blue, green, magenta, pink, and brown—are established through Keyword Plus with the aid of Biblioshiny. These clusters are differentiated by color to signify that the keywords within each cluster share similar traits. For instance, themes such as social media, behavior, China, and perceptions are grouped within the red cluster. In a similar fashion, the blue cluster encompasses topics related to content marketing, commerce, sales, and online social networking. The orange cluster is associated with marketing, consumption behavior, the internet, and theoretical studies. Additional clusters include the green cluster, which focuses on impact, networks, performance, and popularity; the magenta cluster, which covers design/methodology/approach, stakeholder engagement, sustainable development, and websites; the pink cluster, dedicated to brand engagement, consumer engagement, and strategies; and the brown cluster, which is specifically related to Facebook and fundamental propositions.

5. Conclusion

This manuscript examines the assessment of trends in content marketing literature through bibliometric analysis. It aims to highlight key contributors, including leading researchers, countries, premier institutions, and also identifying areas for future investigation. The analysis spans publications from 2008 to 2023, encompassing 157 research articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science databases. These articles represent the collaborative efforts of 359 authors, 99 journals, 348 institutions, and 44 countries. However, the rate of publication within this domain averages at 9.81 articles annually. Despite increasing to an average of 25.2 articles in the last five years, it remains modest and underscores the necessity for enhanced research output. Citation analysis reveals an average of 8.35 citations per article per year, indicating a need for higher impact research. The *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* and *Industrial Marketing Management* stand out with high H-index of 6 and G-index of 10, respectively, and *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* with the former journal also leading in terms of publication in this field. Yet, the general publication frequency across journals is low, with many journals publishing fewer than four articles in content marketing.

Further analysis shows a significant commencement of content marketing related publications in journals from 2016 onwards. In terms of authorship, six scholars have notably contributed three publications each to the field, while HOLLEBEEK L and MACKY K have each garnered seven citations. Among institutions, seven notable affiliations have each published two articles, highlighting a need for increased research output. In geographic terms, the United States leads in content marketing research, contributing 31 articles and receiving 1,409 citations, which constitutes 19.7% of the total examined publications.

Visual analyses such as word clouds and thematic maps have elucidated key themes and potential areas for future research, which may include studying the impact of content marketing on consumer behavior, its effects on sales and organizational performance, and the strategic use of content marketing tools. This study comprehensively maps the

intellectual landscape of content marketing literature, offering insights into predominant authors, journals, affiliations, and the geographical distribution of publications and citations. The findings reveal a global shortfall in content marketing research, emphasizing the importance of this field in aiding consumers and fulfilling market demand. The identified themes suggest a range of focal points for future scholarly work. This calls for a concerted effort among countries, industries, and academic institutions to bolster research endeavors in content marketing, aiming to enhance market share, consumer engagement, and retention strategies through informed research collaborations.

6. Limitations and future research directions

Our investigation acknowledges certain constraints that pave the way for prospective scholarly inquiries. Initially, the scope of our analysis is confined to bibliometric evaluation, providing an overview of prevailing research trends and salient features within the literature. Consequently, we recommend that future studies might benefit from undertaking meta-analyses, which are recognized for their enhanced efficacy. Moreover, our research utilized data exclusively from Scopus and Web of Science databases, potentially overlooking studies published elsewhere. Future researchers are encouraged to expand their data collection to include additional databases. Tools such as thematic maps, word trees, and word clouds have highlighted potential research themes in the realm of content marketing. Our analysis also uncovers a notable lack of research in areas ripe for exploration, touching upon subjects like consumer behavior, brand and consumer engagement, core theories, information processing, perceptions, performance metrics, sales, online social networks, stakeholder involvement, sustainable practices, web presence, marketing strategies, emotional content, precursors, product assortment, brand endorsements, distribution channels, communication tactics, community dynamics, market competition, and strategic advantages. Addressing these gaps presents valuable opportunities for stakeholders including marketers, consumers, businesses, management professionals, and academics in future endeavors.

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