

# **The discipline of marketing in transformation: a scientometric analysis of its roots, structures, and emerging trends\***

## **La disciplina del marketing en transformación: análisis cuantitativo de sus raíces, estructuras y tendencias emergentes**

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### **Abstract**

This article analyzes the scientific evolution and emerging trends in the discipline of marketing through a scientometric review of documents indexed in Scopus and Web of Science between 2003 and 2024. The study examined 659 records using indicators of scientific output, citations, countries, journals, authors, collaboration networks, and the Tree of Science methodology. The results show two main periods: a stage of conceptual and methodological consolidation between 2003 and 2015, and a stage of growth and uncertainty between 2016 and 2024, marked by digital transformation, artificial intelligence, sustainability, social media, augmented reality, and consumer well-being. Three main trends were identified: consumer, technology, and sales/market society. The findings suggest that marketing is moving toward a more pluralistic, global, technological, and socially responsible discipline. However, it still faces challenges related to theoretical fragmentation, ethical data use, and the integration of non-Western perspectives. This study contributes to the understanding of the intellectual structure of marketing and offers future lines of research to strengthen its scientific and social relevance.

**Keywords:** marketing discipline; scientometric analysis; tree of science; marketing trends; digital transformation; consumer well-being.

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## Resumen

Este artículo analiza la evolución científica y las tendencias emergentes de la disciplina del marketing mediante una revisión cuantitativa de documentos indexados en Scopus y Web of Science entre 2003 y 2024. Se examinaron 659 registros a partir de indicadores de producción científica, citaciones, países, revistas, autores, redes de colaboración y la metodología Tree of Science. Los resultados muestran dos periodos principales: una etapa de consolidación conceptual y metodológica entre 2003 y 2015, y una etapa de crecimiento e incertidumbre entre 2016 y 2024, caracterizada por la transformación digital, la inteligencia artificial, la sostenibilidad, las redes sociales, la realidad aumentada y el bienestar del consumidor. Se identificaron tres tendencias centrales: consumidor, tecnología y ventas/sociedad de mercado. Los hallazgos indican que el marketing avanza hacia una disciplina más pluralista, global, tecnológica y socialmente responsable, aunque persisten desafíos relacionados con la fragmentación teórica, el uso ético de los datos y la integración de perspectivas no occidentales. El estudio aporta una lectura de la estructura intelectual del marketing y propone líneas de investigación para fortalecer su relevancia científica y social.

**Palabras clave:** disciplina del marketing; análisis cuantitativo; árbol de la ciencia; tendencias del marketing; transformación digital; bienestar del consumidor.

## 1. Introducción

Marketing has established itself as a constantly evolving discipline. Its development reflects the different evolutions of consumers, markets, organizations, and society in general. From its initial focus on distribution, exchange, and the relationship between production and consumption, the field has progressed toward broader perspectives linked to value creation, customer orientation, relationship marketing, social marketing, inclusive marketing, sustainability, digital transformation, and consumer well-being [1]–[5]. This progress demonstrates that marketing can be understood as a scientific discipline that studies the relationships among markets, technologies, and actors within social contexts, rather than merely as a business function dedicated exclusively to selling.

Studies on the evolution of marketing thought show that it has undergone several phases of development, from functional and economic approaches to strategic, social, relational, and systemic perspectives [6], [7]. In this endeavor, authors such as Hunt have emphasized the need to consolidate the theoretical foundations of marketing to prevent its fragmentation and strengthen its autonomy from other areas of management science [8], [9]. Similarly, MacInnis [10] states that progress in the field depends more on conceptual contributions that renew theory, expand the area of study, and structure new research agendas than on empirical studies alone.

In recent years, the market has significantly broadened its thematic boundaries. Customer value, market orientation, the dominant service logic, theoretical pluralism, and co-creation

have strengthened the consumer's role in the processes of exchange and value creation [11]–[13]. Furthermore, the advancement of digital technologies has driven new lines of work related to social networks, big data, artificial intelligence, chatbots, augmented reality, sentiment analysis, and automation, creating a scenario where marketing decisions are increasingly based on data, technological capabilities, and digital interaction [14]–[16].

However, this growth poses significant challenges for the discipline. On the one hand, emerging phenomena such as sustainability, cultural globalization, inclusion, and ethics have been addressed through a diversity of approaches that have enriched the field. On the other hand, the sheer number of topics can lead to fragmentation if they are not articulated with solid theoretical foundations and a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among marketing, markets, and society. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the scientific trends in marketing not only in terms of the quantity of publications, but also in terms of their intellectual structures, influential authors, journals, countries, collaborative networks, and foundational works.

Thus, this paper aims to analyze the different trends within the marketing discipline through a systematic literature review and a scientometric analysis of documents indexed in Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus during the period 2003–2024. To this end, various indicators were reviewed, including scientific output, citations, countries, journals, authors, and collaborative networks. Additionally, the Tree of Science (ToS) tool, based on graph theory, was used to identify the documents located in the root, trunk, and leaves of the field of study [17]. In this way, the work provides an integrated reading of the evolution of marketing, its conceptual foundations, and its emerging trends, to contribute to the understanding of a pluralistic, global, technologically and socially relevant discipline.

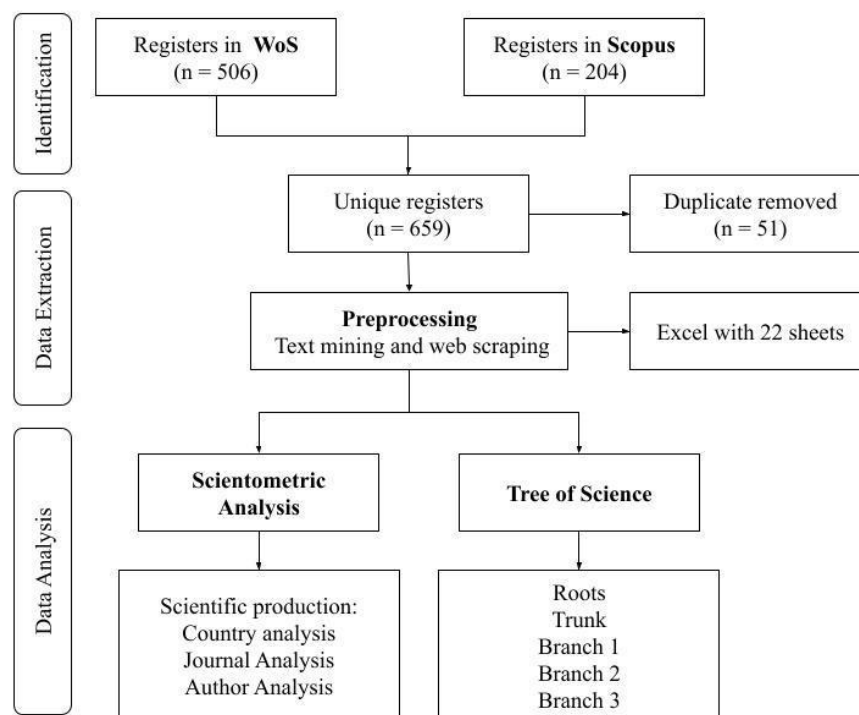
## 2. Materials and methods

The methodology was developed in two steps. In the first part, a scientometric analysis was performed, based on a systematic literature review. The collection of relevant articles for the research was conducted by generating a search query in September 2024 in the Scopus and Web of Science databases using the terms “marketing discipline,” “marketing trends,” “marketing research,” “marketing academic,” or “marketing business.” To ensure accurate information gathering, documents unrelated to the research focus were excluded. Table I summarizes the search strategy and the general results of the database search.

The search query yielded 506 records in Web of Science and 204 in Scopus. After removing 51 duplicate documents, the final database consisted of 659 records, as shown in Figure 1. The documents were cleaned by removing duplicates and reviewing their thematic relevance based on the title, abstract, and keywords. Works related to the evolution, trends, foundations, authors, schools, approaches, or transformations of the marketing discipline were retained. Documents whose use of the term “marketing” corresponded solely to sectoral applications unrelated to the disciplinary evolution of the field were excluded.

**Table I.** Search strategy and general results

| Criteria             | Web of Science                                                                                                       | Scopus |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Range                | 2003–2024                                                                                                            |        |
| Date                 | September 1, 2024                                                                                                    |        |
| Document types       | Articles, Reviews, Books, Chapters, Conferences                                                                      |        |
| Search terms         | "marketing discipline" or "marketing trends" or "marketing research" or "marketing academic" or "marketing business" |        |
| Results              | 506                                                                                                                  | 204    |
| Total (WoS + Scopus) | 659                                                                                                                  |        |



**Figure 1.** General methodology  
Source: Authors' own elaboration

Data preprocessing was performed using web scraping and data mining, resulting in an Excel file containing all the consolidated data across 22 working pages. This allowed us to conduct various scientometric analyses, including:

- Analysis of total scientific output: comparing publications and citations in the Scopus and Web of Science databases for each year within the analyzed period.
- Analysis of scientific output and impact by country: constructing a ranking and network analysis of the leading countries in terms of article production, citations, and production quartiles.
- Analysis of scientific output by journal: analyzing the journals and networks with the best indicators based on impact factor, quartiles, and H-index.
- Analysis of scientific output by author: constructing a ranking of the authors with the best indicators of output, citations, H-index, and Quality Diversity Index (QDI).

Subsequently, the results were uploaded to the Tree of Science (ToS) platform, which is based on graph theory [17]. This platform enables exploration and understanding of a specific topic by selecting relevant documents and authors. This method categorizes articles as "nodes" and their connections as "edges." The classification of nodes within the network was performed using three criteria: first, the most cited documents were placed at the root of the tree as hegemonic documents; second, documents that cite the root documents and have a high degree of influence within the network were classified as structural and placed in the trunk; finally, articles that cite other documents in the network (root and trunk) and shape future perspectives on the topic were placed in the leaves. In this way, the scientific output can be visualized.

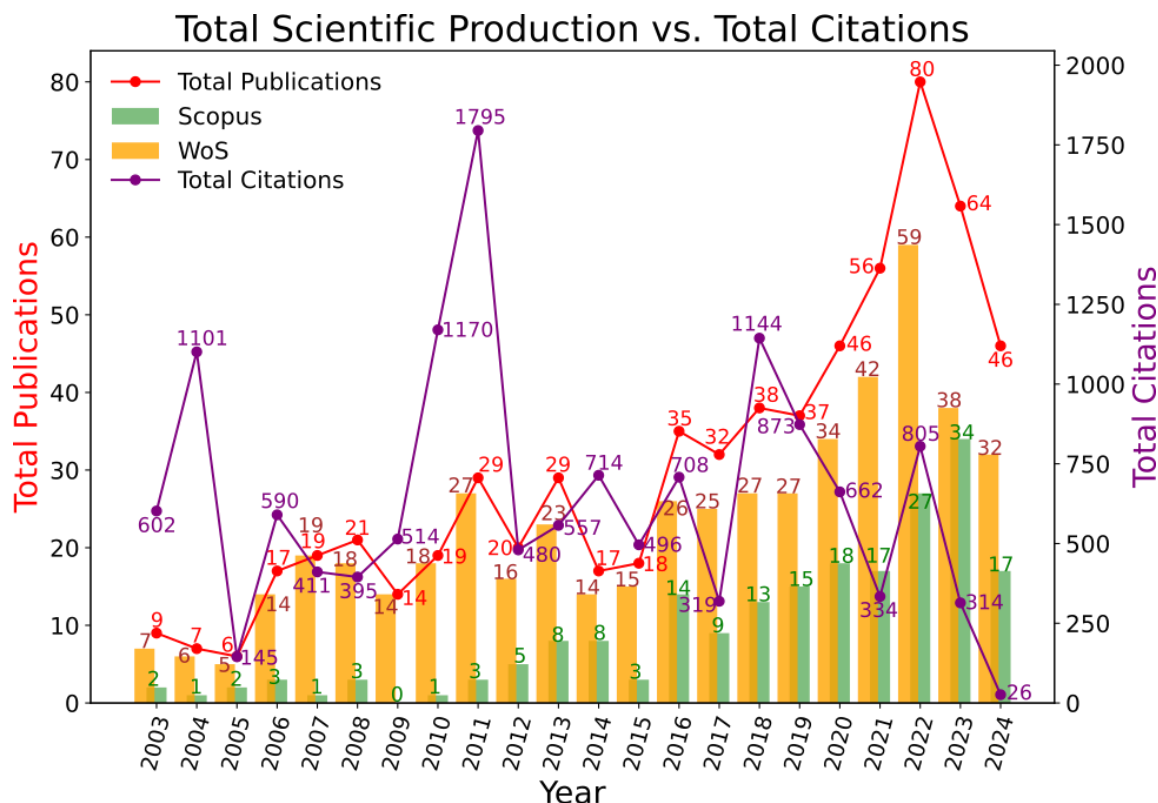
### 3. Results

#### ➤ Scientometric análisis

##### Scientific production

Analyzing scientific output over specific time periods within a research field is essential for identifying key turning points and understanding its evolution. Figure 2 presents the annual trends in publications related to the discipline of Marketing during the period from 2003 to 2024. During those 22 years, Web of Science (WoS) consistently reported more publications than Scopus. However, since 2016, Scopus has shown a notable increase in contributions, significantly enriching the overall publishing landscape.

The year 2022 represents a crucial moment, marked by a sharp increase in publications indexed in both databases, a trend that did not persist in subsequent years. Overall, the data reveal a consistent and sustained pattern of scholarly output between 2016 and 2022, underscoring the field's growing academic relevance. To facilitate a more precise interpretation of this trajectory, the evolution of scientific output has been segmented into two clearly defined periods, which are discussed in the following sections.



**Figure 2.** Scientific production vs. total citations over time  
**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

## Foundational period (2003–2015)

During this period, scientific output was higher in Web of Science (WoS) than in Scopus, showing a total growth of 50%. This production dynamic corresponds mainly to publications in the journal *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* (9 publications), the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* (7 publications), and the *European Journal of Marketing* (7 publications). The year with the highest number of citations during this period was 2011, driven primarily by MacInnis's work [10], which received 749 citations. This work identified a decline in conceptual contributions in marketing research, alongside the growing predominance of empirical and methodological studies. The study concludes that the progress of the marketing discipline depends on balancing empirical evidence with a solid conceptualization that allows for the renewal of its theories, the expansion of its domains, and the guidance of new research agendas.

The second most important article is the work by Gallarza et al. [11]. It confirms that customer value is a central marketing concept, but it remains fragmented, ambiguously defined, and difficult to measure. The literature converges on a general relationship where

quality and price influence perceived value, which in turn influences satisfaction and, ultimately, loyalty. It concludes that multidimensional, interdisciplinary approaches and improved measurement methods are required to understand value creation and apply it to business strategy.

### **Period of growth and uncertainty (2016–2024)**

During this period, total scientific output exceeded that of the previous period, with sustained growth until 2022. This output was distributed across a large number of journals; the three with the most publications were the Journal of Marketing Management (11 publications), the Journal of Business Research (11 publications), and the Australasian Marketing Journal (10 publications). A rising trend in citations also characterized this period.

The most significant peak in both publications and citations occurred in 2022, driven by the work of Rauschnabel et al. [15] with 122 citations, where the authors define "Augmented Reality Marketing" as a novel, strategic, and potentially disruptive subdiscipline within marketing and propose several fundamental differences between AR Marketing and traditional digital marketing concepts, such as the redefinition of the concept of reality (reduced reality, normal reality, and augmented reality in a metaverse context).

The second most-cited work in this period is the research by Chandra et al. [18], with 91 citations. The article demonstrates sustained growth in personalized marketing and identifies six central themes: recommendations, relationships, privacy, advertising, conceptualization, and customer knowledge. The authors conclude that the field must move toward omnichannel experiences supported by AI, big data, blockchain, and IoT, without neglecting privacy, trust, and data quality.

A reduction in publications is observed in both Scopus and Web of Science for the years 2023 and 2024. Citations decreased sharply, a result that does not necessarily indicate a loss of academic relevance but may be associated with the recent publication of the articles and a possible partial data-collection period. Overall, the results show that the field maintains significant research activity, although its bibliometric impact should be re-evaluated once the 2023 and 2024 articles have had more time to circulate.

### **Country analysis**

Table II shows the scientific output in the Marketing discipline from the 10 countries with the highest publication rates, with impact metrics (measured by citations) and quality (measured by SCImago quartiles). The countries with the highest productivity are the USA at 21.95%, China at 8.6%, and the UK at 7.45%. Regarding the impact metric (citations), when comparing these three countries, the USA has the highest number, with 7,117 citations, followed by the UK with 2,321, significantly ahead of China.

In terms of quality, the USA leads by a wide margin with 80 articles in Q1. The Marketing discipline has gained prominence in recent years in Asian and Oceanian countries due to strong interest in the field across these regions. Australia and India lead in citations, with 775 and 558, respectively, ahead of China, which ranks second in scientific output.

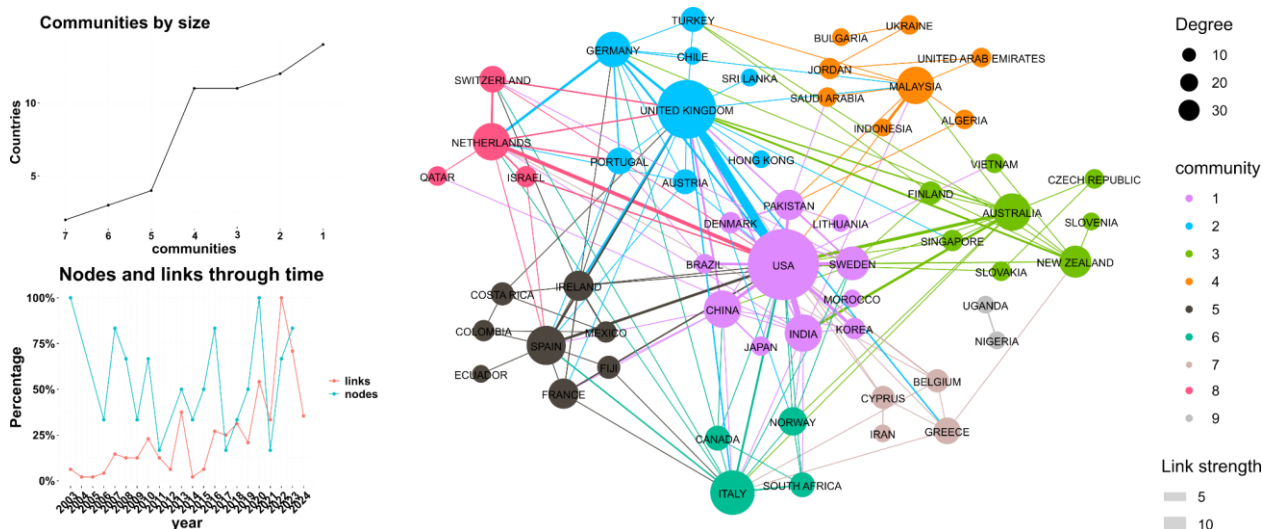
**Table II.** Scientific production and impact by country

| Country        | Documents, n (%) |       | Citations, n (%) |       | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|----------------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|----|----|----|----|
| USA            | 171              | 21.95 | 7117             | 35.11 | 80 | 30 | 16 | 2  |
| CHINA          | 67               | 8.6   | 457              | 2.25  | 16 | 5  | 4  | 5  |
| UNITED KINGDOM | 58               | 7.45  | 2321             | 11.45 | 19 | 12 | 9  | 1  |
| AUSTRALIA      | 51               | 6.55  | 775              | 3.82  | 27 | 11 | 4  | 1  |
| INDIA          | 38               | 4.88  | 558              | 2.75  | 12 | 7  | 4  | 1  |
| SPAIN          | 30               | 3.85  | 509              | 2.51  | 7  | 7  | 6  | 0  |
| INDONESIA      | 25               | 3.21  | 35               | 0.17  | 0  | 2  | 4  | 4  |
| GERMANY        | 19               | 2.44  | 1088             | 5.37  | 8  | 5  | 1  | 0  |
| NEW ZEALAND    | 18               | 2.31  | 344              | 1.7   | 10 | 5  | 2  | 0  |
| NETHERLANDS    | 16               | 2.05  | 2474             | 12.21 | 12 | 2  | 1  | 0  |

One of the most recent works from the USA is Bowen's article [19], which demonstrates that employees remain fundamental in-service organizations, even in the face of advancing artificial intelligence and automation. Using ten frameworks of organizational behavior and human resource management, it highlights the importance of service climate, empowerment, internal quality, coordination, and employee experience. The author states that sustainable competitive advantage depends on integrating people and technology, strengthening the experience and well-being of employees and customers, and promoting more interdisciplinary research between marketing and human resource management.

On the other hand, one of the latest studies from China, by DeBerry-Spence [20], shows that marketing has contributed to the common good, especially in matters of health, poverty, and education; however, research on gender equality remains limited, and the conclusion is that the discipline must strengthen its alignment with the SDGs through interdisciplinary studies that integrate equity, well-being, and sustainability at the individual, community, and global levels. Finally, studies from Australia, such as Lambert et al. [21], demonstrate that integrating Indigenous perspectives through authentic assessments, experiential learning, and critical reflection transforms marketing students'

attitudes. Participants developed greater respect, cultural awareness, competence, and confidence in working with First Nations communities and businesses.



**Figure 3.** Global collaboration network  
Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Figure 3 shows scientific collaboration between countries based on the affiliations of co-authors of the same article. The collaboration network presents two large groups led by the USA and the United Kingdom. A significant study conducted jointly by the USA and China, by Kumar [22], demonstrates that marketing has evolved from a function- and resource-centric approach to a customer-oriented, measurable, technology-driven discipline integrated with business strategy. Its main drivers have been data availability, analytics, accountability, and the growth of digital media. The study concludes that the future of marketing will depend on its ability to demonstrate financial impact, integrate with other organizational areas, and develop rigorous, relevant research on technology, new media, customer engagement, and social change.

A recent study by Yan et al. [23], conducted jointly by China and the United Kingdom, shows that virtual influencers with greater social media presence generate stronger emotional attachment and more intense pursuit of benefits among consumers. Furthermore, it demonstrates that these effects vary with the influencer's level of humanity and realism, thereby expanding understanding of social presence theory in marketing.

Also, collaborations between the Netherlands and the USA, such as Maignan and Ferrell [24], propose an integrative vision of corporate social responsibility based on stakeholder groups, in which companies must identify, communicate, and respond to stakeholders' norms and expectations. The authors confirm that CSR should not be limited to isolated

actions but should be incorporated into organizational principles and processes that strengthen stakeholder identification, trust, and support. Another collaborative work between Spain and the USA, Gallarza et al. [11], confirms that customer value is a central marketing concept, but remains ambiguous, multidimensional, and difficult to measure. The literature converges on a general relationship where quality and price influence perceived value, which in turn influences satisfaction and, ultimately, loyalty. The work reaffirms that interdisciplinary approaches, improved measurement scales, and a clearer delineation among value, quality, and satisfaction are required to strengthen both marketing theory and management.

### **Journal analysis**

Table III shows the 10 journals with the highest scientific output in the discipline of Marketing, along with their impact factors, h-indices, and SCImago quartiles. The journal with the most publications on Marketing in the Scopus and WoS databases is the Journal of Business Research, with an h-index of 265, placing it in Q1. The most cited article from this journal is Rauschnabel et al. [15], in which the researchers define augmented reality marketing as a strategic subdiscipline that integrates AR experiences to create value throughout the customer journey. It proposes the BICK FOUR framework—brand, inspiration, persuasion, and loyalty—and demonstrates that a lack of knowledge, tools, and organizational capabilities continues to limit its adoption. The authors conclude that AR can transform products, experiences, and customer relationships. However, its development requires strategic integration, interdisciplinary research, and special attention to privacy, ethics, and social effects—as noted in one of the most recent studies.

In one of the most recent studies, Badrinarayanan and Ramachandran [25] confirm that the commitment-trust theory transformed relationship marketing by explaining how to build and maintain successful relationships with buyers, suppliers, partners, and internal stakeholders; and that this framework remains fundamental for understanding business relationships in sales, although research gaps persist that require expanding its application to different types of relational exchange.

The Journal of Marketing Management shares first place with the most articles in the Web of Science database. The most-cited article is Hunt [8], which shows that strategic marketing went from a promising field in the discipline's early days to a consolidated field later. However, since 1980, it has fragmented and lost influence. The author states that the future of strategic marketing is promising, but requires recovering an integrative vision and strengthening its impact within and beyond marketing research.

**Table III.** Scientific production and impact by journal

| Journal                                                                            | WoS | Scopus | Impact factor | Quartile | h-index |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------|---------------|----------|---------|
| Journal of Business Research                                                       | 15  | 3      | 3.13          | Q1       | 265     |
| Journal of Marketing Management                                                    | 15  | 0      | 1.45          | Q1       | 90      |
| Australasian Marketing Journal                                                     | 13  | 0      | 1.56          | Q1       | 54      |
| European Journal of Marketing                                                      | 12  | 0      | 1.27          | Q1       | 154     |
| Journal of Historical Research in Marketing                                        | 12  | 0      | 0.28          | Q3       | 20      |
| Marketing Intelligence & Planning                                                  | 14  | 0      | 0.95          | Q2       | 84      |
| Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science                                        | 10  | 0      | 7.19          | Q1       | 207     |
|                                                                                    |     |        |               |          |         |
| Journal of Social Marketing                                                        | 9   | 0      | 0.71          | Q2       | 33      |
| Sustainability                                                                     | 9   | 0      | 0.67          | Q1       | 169     |
| Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science | 0   | 8      | --            | --       | --      |

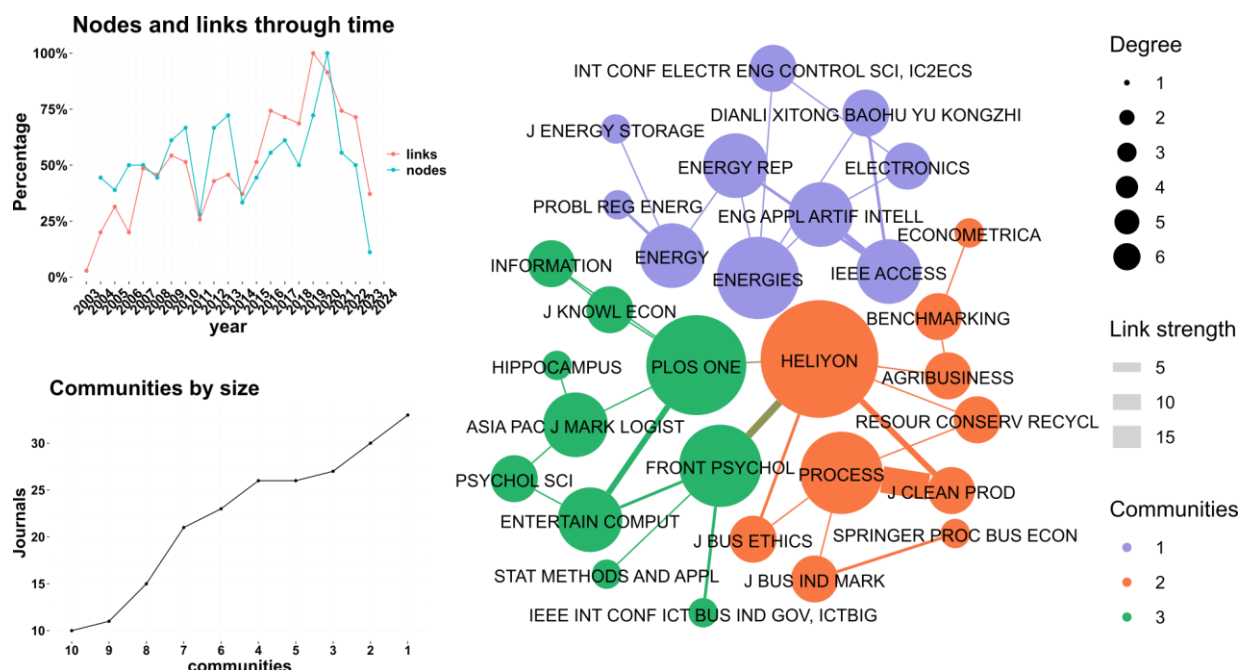
**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

Figure 4 shows the citation network among the journals; it reveals the three main groups. The first group includes the journal Engineering Applications of Artificial Intelligence, highlighted by studies such as Habbat et al. [26], who assert that AI-based sentiment analysis is a growing trend within the marketing discipline, enabling the processing of large volumes of consumer opinions and transforming them into useful information for decision-making. The use of models such as BERT, deep learning techniques, and data balancing methods demonstrates the transformation of marketing toward more analytical, automated, and interdisciplinary approaches, aimed at more accurately understanding customer satisfaction, perceptions, and behavior.

The second group is led by the journal Processes. In the main article, Toha et al. [27] clarify that eco-innovation is consolidating as a relevant trend within marketing, integrating environmental and social criteria into the design of products, processes, technologies, organizational structures, and communication strategies. The proposed model demonstrates that practices such as ecodesign, environmental labeling, reusable packaging, and green marketing can strengthen corporate sustainability, improve corporate reputation, and generate competitive advantages, especially when integrated with environmental management systems such as ISO 14001:2015.

In the third group, Enax et al. [28] show that fair trade labels increase willingness to pay and improve product perception by activating brain processes associated with reward and valuation. This reinforces neuromarketing and sustainability as relevant marketing trends.

Similarly, Figure 4 shows that the proportion of links compared to nodes (journals) has been higher in recent years. This demonstrates that Marketing has positioned itself as an academic field supported by international journals.



## Author analysis

Table IV shows the ten most productive researchers in the discipline. S. D. Hunt has authored the most articles on marketing and has the second-highest h-index. He recently published research extending the dominant service logic to the marketing discipline itself, arguing that academics also possess operational resources capable of generating knowledge and solving relevant problems in the field. His main contribution is highlighting the figure of the "marketing expert academic" as a key player in disciplinary development, exemplified by Michael J. Baker, whose academic competence significantly advanced understanding and evolution of marketing [29].

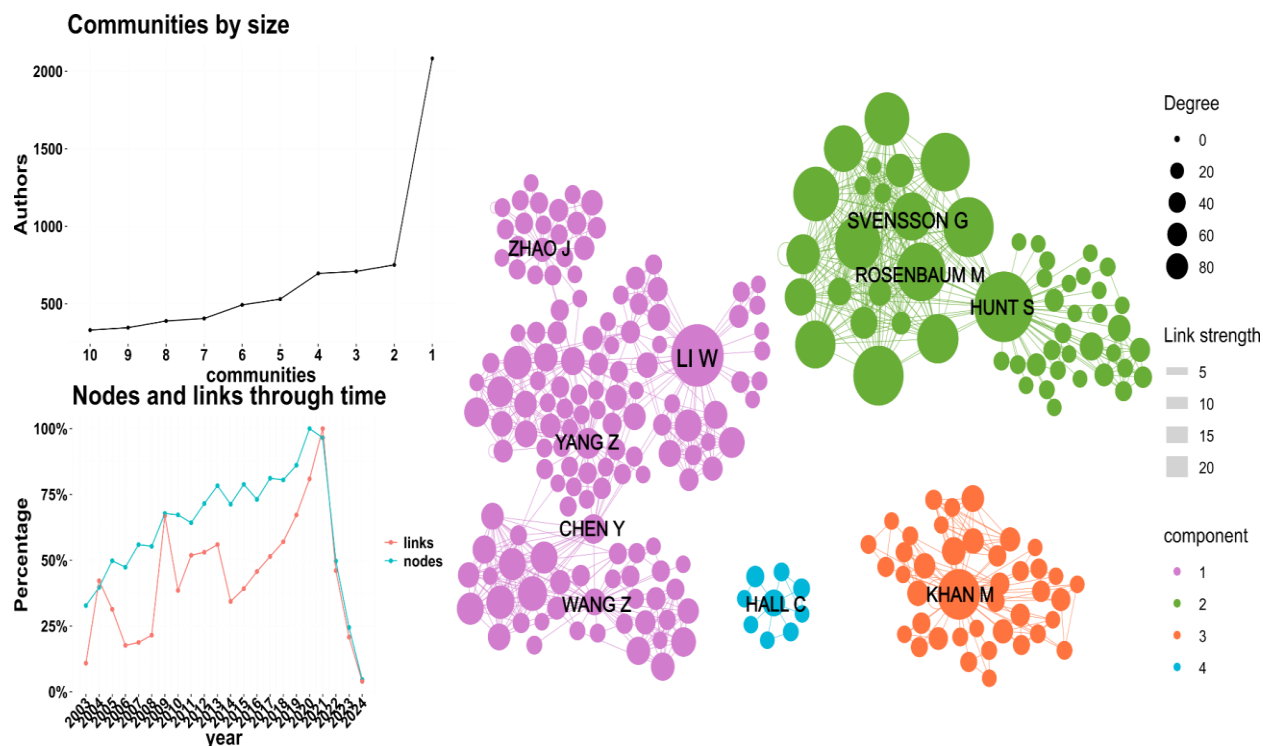
On the other hand, the researcher with the highest h-index is Professor Hall, whose main research argues that marketing maintains an ambiguous relationship with sustainability: on the one hand, it has driven consumption, but on the other, it can promote more responsible practices. Its main contribution is to point out that sustainability in marketing requires a profound change in vision, overcoming the dominant market logic and orienting the discipline towards more critical and sustainable models of consumption, education, and research [30].

**Table IV. Scientific production by author**

| No. | Author      | Total Publications | h-index | Affiliation                                                      |
|-----|-------------|--------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Hunt S      | 5                  | 46      | Texas Tech University, Lubbock, United States                    |
| 2   | Svensson G  | 5                  | 48      | Kristiania University College, Oslo, Norway                      |
| 3   | Chen Y      | 4                  | 5       | University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China        |
| 4   | Hall C      | 4                  | 87      | University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand              |
| 5   | Khan M      | 4                  | 1       | International Islamic University, Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan |
| 6   | Li W        | 4                  | 1       | State Grid Corporation of China, Beijing, China                  |
| 7   | Rosenbaum M | 4                  | 32      | Hawai'i Pacific University, Honolulu, United States              |
| 8   | Wang Z      | 4                  | 2       | NARI Group Corporation, Nanjing, China                           |
| 9   | Yang Z      | 4                  | 41      | City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, Hong Kong               |
| 10  | Zhao J      | 4                  | 7       | State Grid Corporation of China, Beijing, China                  |

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

Figure 5 shows the scientific collaboration network among the authors; it is built on their personal networks. The collaboration network shows four groups. The first is a highly cohesive group that includes the leading researchers. For example, Professors Wang et al. [31] demonstrate that robotic process automation, combined with artificial intelligence, is a key trend in the digital transformation of marketing. Their main contribution lies in showing how these technologies optimize processes, automate repetitive tasks, strengthen customer service, and improve service quality inspection, contributing to operational efficiency and greater business responsiveness. The second group consists of Professors Rosenbaum et al. [32], who redefine the concept of "Place" in marketing, showing that physical or virtual spaces not only facilitate commercial exchanges but also generate relational resources, social support, well-being, and consumer loyalty. Finally, other authors have identified marketing analytics as a central trend in digital transformation. However, they warn that its development depends on resolving ethical, legal, and privacy challenges in the use of consumer data [33].



**Figure 5.** Collaboration network of the most productive authors  
**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

## ➤ Tree of Science (ToS)

### Root

At the roots are the foundational articles on the discipline of Marketing. These studies are characterized by their intention to bring about a change in mindset, starting with product distribution as the discipline's focus and moving towards a more scientific approach. Shaw [1] anticipated one of the historical foundations of modern marketing by highlighting the need to scientifically study distribution, market segmentation, product differentiation, and advertising as mechanisms to connect production and consumption more efficiently. Later, Kotler and Zaltman [2] introduced social marketing as a key extension of the discipline, showing that its tools can be applied to social causes through research, segmentation, product, price, communication, and distribution, oriented towards planned social change.

Another important contribution is that of Fornell and Larcker [34], who strengthened the methodological foundation of marketing by proposing more rigorous criteria for evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error, providing key tools for validating theories and causal relationships in marketing research.

Additionally, Morgan and Hunt [3] identified relationship marketing as a central trend in the discipline, demonstrating that trust and commitment are key variables in building cooperative, stable, and successful relationships among companies, customers, suppliers, and other market players. Finally, Wilkie and Moore [6] show that marketing thinking has evolved through four major eras, moving from a vision focused on distribution and economic efficiency to a more scientific, managerial, and specialized field. Their main contribution is to warn that the current fragmentation of the discipline can weaken its coherence and reduce attention to the relationship between marketing and society.

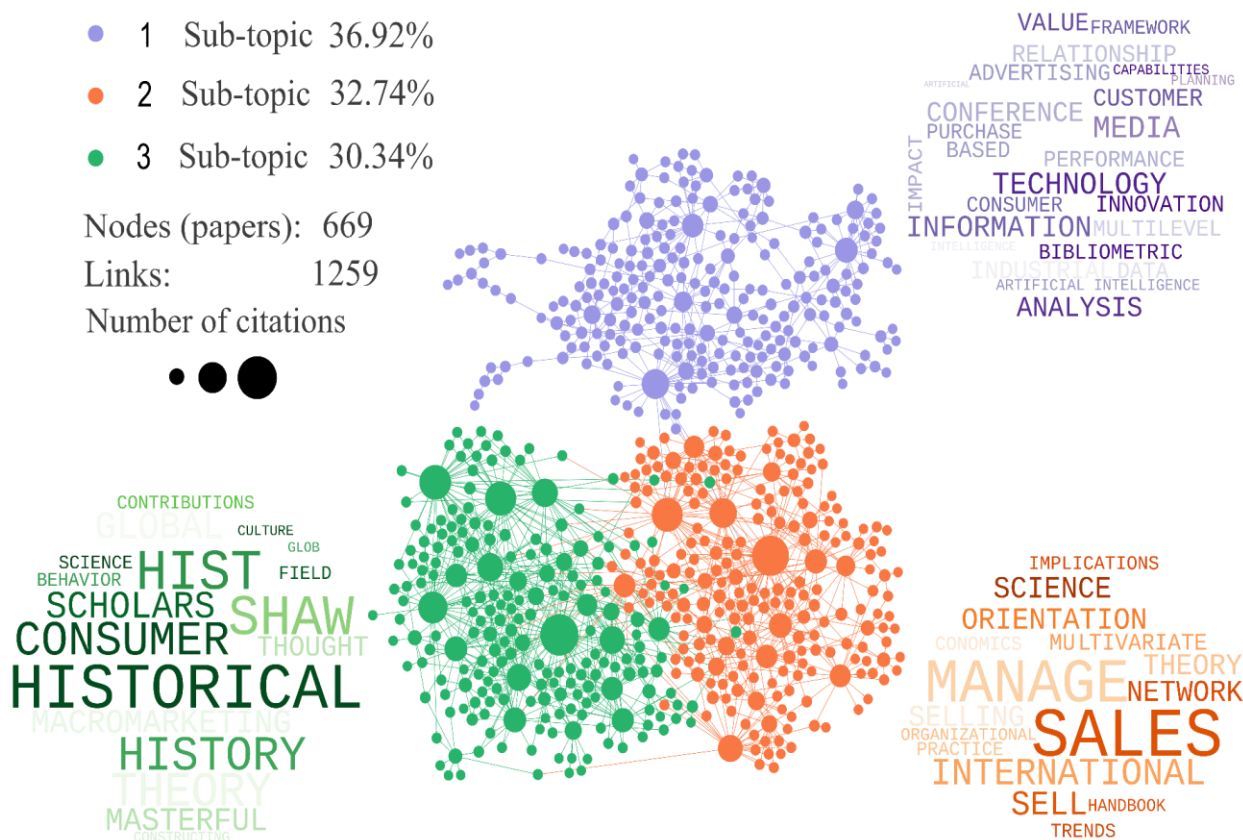
## Trunk

The articles in the trunk are the contributions that support the theme of Marketing and represent the works that consolidate the discipline, articulating its evolution from conceptual roots to more robust applications and practical frameworks. This section includes research such as Duffy et al. [35], which demonstrates that customer orientation, although central to current marketing, has its roots in management thinking and has evolved to integrate with recent approaches such as service-oriented logic, co-creation, design thinking, business models, disruptive innovation, and the Lean Startup. Their contribution is to recover this trajectory, avoid superficial reinterpretations, and strengthen the future of marketing thought and practice.

Jones and Tadjewski [36] highlight Percival White's contributions as a pioneer of market research and scientific marketing, showing how he applied principles of engineering and scientific management to measure markets, understand consumers, and guide business decisions based on data. Another work is that of Lefebvre [37], who proposes transformative social marketing as a trend aimed at generating social change through people-centered approaches, integrating and co-creating communities, experiences, and values such as dignity, hope, love, and trust, to broaden the impact of social marketing.

One of the most important articles in this section, continuing the social line, is Gordon [38], who warns that social marketing is often misunderstood, which can limit its effectiveness, especially when separated from its marketing foundations. His contribution is to reaffirm that consumer orientation, exchange, education, regulation, and social advocacy are key components for achieving relevant social change. Finally, Varadarajan [39] highlights that strategic marketing remains key to strengthening the marketing discipline, especially through the development of its own theory, noting that concepts such as market strategy, competitive advantage, and resource-based theory can project marketing beyond its disciplinary boundaries.

Figure 6 Illustrates, through a co-occurrence map, three main trends in marketing research. This analysis shows how scientific output has coalesced around distinct but complementary approaches.



**Figure 6.** Co-occurrence map of the main marketing research trends

**Source:** Authors' own elaboration.

### Trend 1: “Consumer”

The first trend identified concerns research explaining the evolution of marketing from a company-centric perspective to a more market-oriented, customer-centric, and value-creation-focused one. In this trend, the consumer is recognized as a central actor in the processes of exchange, relationship building, and experience creation, and is no longer seen merely as a passive recipient of commercial offers.

On the one hand, Goldman and Grinstein [40] demonstrate that market orientation has been one of the central axes in the evolution of marketing, moving from a conceptual stage to a consolidated empirical approach, showing how this trend reflects the maturity, internationalization, and progressive specialization of marketing research. On the other hand, Stremersch and Verhoef [41] demonstrated the increasing globalization of marketing authorship, showing the decline of American dominance and the increased participation of researchers from other countries, noting that this internationalization broadens the field's diversity. However, it also poses challenges to the impact and visibility of publications.

Additionally, Bocconcelli et al. [42] highlight Italy's contribution to B2B marketing, showing how industrial districts, subcontractors, and medium-sized manufacturing companies have strengthened the understanding of business relationships, value networks, innovation, and internationalization. Their central contribution is demonstrating that "Made in Italy" also represents a relevant trend in the development of business-to-business marketing. Similarly, Möller's [12] work argues that marketing should be understood as a pluralistic discipline, comprised of diverse theoretical traditions such as marketing management, services, channels, networks, relationships, and the dominant service logic. His central contribution is to defend theoretical pluralism as a way to understand better the complexity of exchange, relationships, and marketing contexts.

Finally, Theoharakis and Sajtos [13] analyze the dominant service logic as a theoretical trend that seeks to broaden the foundations of marketing by centering value creation on service, co-creation, intangible resources, and dynamic capabilities. They show that this logic strengthens the relational and strategic vision of marketing, although it still requires further empirical development.

In general, this trend demonstrates that the consumer remains one of the structural pillars of the marketing discipline, but needs a broader, more relational, and strategic understanding. Furthermore, it confirms the need to continue strengthening theoretical frameworks that better explain market orientation, value creation, and the exchange relationships of that value in increasingly complex contexts.

## **Trend 2: "Technology"**

In this branch, the topic focuses on analyzing digital transformation and its impact on how organizations and brands understand, segment, create value, and communicate with consumers. Technology has ceased to be an operational resource. It has become a strategic tool within the discipline, which helps modify company-customer relationships, decision-making processes, and the permanence of brands in increasingly digital markets. For example, the work of Sung et al. [43] shows that virtual reality is emerging as an educational trend in marketing, improving students' immersion, attitude towards learning, and enjoyment. However, it warns that its use should be complementary, since it does not necessarily improve performance in knowledge tests.

Diaz et al. [14] identify digital tools and smart technologies as a key marketing trend, showing their evolution towards topics such as eWOM, social networks, big data, artificial intelligence, IoT, augmented reality, and personalization. Its central contribution is to show that these technologies transform the company-customer relationship, value creation, and competitiveness in national and international markets.

On the other hand, Singh [44] identifies social media marketing as a key trend for business success, highlighting that factors such as trust in the platform, reliability, public opinion, speed of response, and customer support are central enablers to strengthen the relationship

with consumers and improve the performance of digital strategies. Additionally, Urbani et al. [16] position chatbots powered by artificial intelligence as an emerging trend in marketing, sales, and customer service, highlighting their potential to automate interactions, personalize content, and improve operational efficiency. However, it warns that adopting them requires evaluating organizational readiness, trust, data privacy, and technological integration.

Finally, Jatmika et al. [45] propose applying artificial intelligence to marketing as an opportunity to strengthen the commercial capabilities of microentrepreneurs, especially in the food and beverage sector, and present a conceptual framework that integrates AI, digital marketing, and digital transformation to improve online segmentation, content creation, and commercial performance.

In summary, this trend confirms that technology is one of the main drivers of change in the marketing discipline. In addition, it shows the need to develop research that integrates technological innovation, business responsibility, and the creation of sustainable value through digital tools and artificial intelligence, enabling organizations to expand their analysis, personalization, interaction, and automation capabilities.

### **Trend 3: “Sales, markets, and society”**

This trend focuses on broadening the understanding of marketing beyond commercial transactions, integrating contributions from marketing theory, macromarketing, distribution channels, ethics, consumer welfare, and global cultural perspectives. This trend demonstrates that sales should be understood as part of a broader system of value creation, market relationships, and social responsibility, and not merely as an operational outcome.

Madhavaram [46] highlights Shelby D. Hunt's contributions as fundamental to strengthening the theoretical evolution of marketing, especially in strategic marketing, ethics, macromarketing, distribution channels, and resource advantage theory. His main contribution is demonstrating that disciplinary advancement depends on robust, cumulative research programs that impact theory, practice, and academic training. Furthermore, Hunt et al. [47] demonstrate that macromarketing has evolved from being the *raison d'être* of marketing to becoming an institutionalized and promising field. The study highlights the importance of examining the relationship between marketing, markets, and society more closely to understand the discipline's current and future challenges.

Additionally, Mishra and Mishra [7] review the main schools of thought in marketing and show how their approaches have evolved from economic and functional perspectives to more interactive, social, managerial, and systemic views. They demonstrate that the marketing discipline has been built on multiple theoretical currents, whose continued relevance enables a better understanding of its current trends and helps bridge the gap between academic theory and managerial practice.

In their work, Peterson and Park [9] emphasize Shelby D. Hunt's legacy in strengthening marketing as an autonomous discipline, especially for his contributions to marketing theory, macromarketing, ethics, and resource advantage theory. Their central contribution is to show that the future of marketing requires greater theoretical rigor, disciplinary integration, and attention to new ethical and social challenges.

In this trend, Stewart [4] reaffirms the role of marketing in consumer well-being, demonstrating that value delivery systems have historically contributed to improving quality of life, reducing inefficiencies, and better connecting supply and demand. His central contribution is to propose a research agenda that reclaims the social function of marketing in the face of the challenges posed by markets, governments, and collective well-being.

Finally, Zhou et al. [48] argue that marketing must move toward a more global and less Westernized vision, incorporating East Asian perspectives such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Their central contribution is to show that culture and philosophy influence marketing strategies, consumption, and business relationships in international markets.

Taken together, this trend demonstrates that the marketing discipline needs to strengthen its theoretical foundations and its social impact to respond to the challenges of today's markets.

The analysis of the results shows that the marketing discipline has been undergoing significant evolution over the last two decades, accentuated by a progressive growth in scientific output and an expansion of its theoretical and applied approaches. The work allowed us to identify two main moments: a period of consolidation between 2003 and 2015, characterized by conceptual, methodological and strategic discussions; and a period of growth and uncertainty between 2016 and 2024, in which issues associated with technology, sustainability, artificial intelligence, social networks, well-being and digital transformation emerge with greater force. This approach is in line with what Kumar [22] states, who points out that marketing has shifted from a resource- and function-focused logic to a more customer-oriented, measurable discipline, with technology integrated into the business strategy.

The foundational writings that belong to the root demonstrate that marketing has been built on a broad historical foundation that includes distribution, marketing research, social marketing, measurement models, and relationship marketing. Shaw [1] foresaw the need to study distribution scientifically and its connection to consumption; Kotler and Zaltman [2] extended the scope of marketing toward planned social change; and Morgan and Hunt [3] strengthened commitment and trust as the axes of relationship marketing. These contributions allow us to conclude that the discipline has not evolved in a linear manner but rather through the integration of methodological, social, economic, and relational perspectives.

One of the important findings is the continuity of the USA as a leading country in production, publications in high-impact journals, and citations. However, an increase in participation by China, the United Kingdom, India, Australia, and other countries is also observed, confirming the internationalization of the field. This analysis is consistent with Stremersch and Verhoef [41], who demonstrated the globalization of marketing and the

relative decline of American dominance. However, the disparity between productivity and impact indicates persistent asymmetries in scientific visibility, particularly between leading countries and emerging economies. Thus, the future development of the field demands strengthening more diverse collaborative networks and incorporating non-Western approaches, as Zhou et al. [48] suggest, highlighting the relevance of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism to understanding marketing and consumption in East Asia.

The analysis of journals demonstrates that discussions about the discipline of marketing are concentrated in high-impact publications, such as the *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and *Australasian Marketing Journal*. These journals have served as platforms for legitimizing classic debates and emerging trends. In particular, the *Journal of Business Research* appears to be linked to current topics such as augmented reality, relationship marketing, personalization, and digital transformation [15], [25]. This shows that the discipline maintains significant scientific activity, and its latest debates are oriented toward increasingly technological and interdisciplinary phenomena.

Among the authors, the most influential researcher in terms of theoretical contributions to strengthening the discipline is Shelby D. Hunt. His contributions to macromarketing, marketing theory, ethics, strategy, and resource advantage theory have been important in consolidating marketing as a discipline with its own identity [8], [9], [46]. This finding is relevant insofar as it demonstrates that the future of marketing depends on the development of its own theory, which is cumulative and important for explaining complex phenomena for brands, rather than solely on the adoption of advanced technological tools.

The identified trends reflect the breadth of the field of study. The first trend, “consumer,” confirms that the consumer has historically been the central focus of the discipline and that, in recent years, they have adopted an active role in value co-creation processes, exchange systems, and relationships with brands. Research such as that by Goldman and Grinstein [40], Gallarza et al. [11], Möller [12], and Theoharakis and Sajtó [13] demonstrates that customer value, market orientation, theoretical pluralism, and the prevailing logic of service have broadened our understanding of consumers and business-market relationships. Furthermore, digital transformation has become a crucial axis in contemporary marketing.

Artificial intelligence, chatbots, augmented reality, social media, and personalization are changing the way organizations segment, interact, communicate, and create value for their customers [14]–[16], [44]. These advances also open the door to ethical and organizational challenges related to privacy, trust, bias, data quality, and technological readiness—aspects that should be central to future research [33]. The third trend highlights the need to reclaim the social, ethical, and disciplinary dimensions of marketing. Studies in this discipline should not be limited solely to issues of business efficiency; they must also contribute to collective well-being, equity, sustainability, and quality of life [4], [20], [30], [47]. This perspective is especially important in a context where marketing practices face scrutiny regarding their relationship with excessive consumption, digital manipulation, the use of personal data, and environmental impacts.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the discipline of marketing is undergoing expansion and redefinition, marked by the convergence of consumers, technology, markets, and society. The results demonstrate that the field retains a solid historical foundation but faces the challenge of integrating its new trends with robust theoretical frameworks. In this sense, the future of marketing will depend on its ability to articulate digital transformation, ethics, sustainability, consumer well-being, and diverse cultural perspectives without losing disciplinary coherence.

This study has some limitations. First, the search focused on Scopus and Web of Science, so relevant documents indexed in regional databases such as SciELO, Redalyc, or Latindex may have been omitted. Second, the analysis depends on the search query used and the metadata available in the databases consulted. Finally, publications from 2023 and 2024 may have fewer citations due to their recent publication, so their impact should be reviewed in subsequent studies.

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