Popular Research Topics in Marketing Journals, 1995–2014

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Abstract

During the past two decades, the focus of marketing has moved from the tactics of persuasion to the strategies of value cocreation. After moving toward cognitive science and corporate strategies in the early 2000s, marketing research returned to its traditional domains of consumer psychologies and customer management. While conscientious consumers are gradually restraining themselves from selfish indulgence, marketers have refocused on a new set of values that encompass mental, experiential, and societal well-being. In this regard, we adopt an unprecedented approach by incorporating topic modeling with social network analysis. The results show that, in terms of topic heterogeneity, the most impactful journals are the most diverse, whereas each runner-up has a unique focus. Among the journals, we detect two major co-authorship communities, and among the topics, we detect three. Further, we find that the communities of the most cited papers are composed of heterogeneous clusters of similar topics. The pivots within, and the bridges between, these communities are also reported. In the spirit of collaborative research, our topic model and network analysis are shared via online collaboration and visualization platforms that readers can use to explore our models interactively and to download the dataset for further studies.
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Introduction

In the same way that they predict the trends in markets, data analytics may pinpoint the evolving trends within academia. By applying text-mining technology to journal articles, marketing researchers have identified the historical trends of popular research topics and thereby predicted the future direction of marketing science. The current study extends this research thread in three ways. First, while prior studies have each focused on a single journal, we cover all articles published in 25 journals (see Table 1). Second, leveraging recent advancements in data science, we discover more topics and trends in greater detail. Third, in the spirit of collaborative research, we upload our data to the Internet, visualize the results, and make them interactively accessible via online collaboration platforms.

The universal corpus enables us to compare the topical focuses across journals and capture the overarching trend. Advanced

techniques lead to many previously undocumented topics and insights. By combining topic modeling and social network analysis, we also examine the coauthorship structure across journals, topics, and the most cited papers. With these improvements, we aim to augment the aforementioned studies with a broader scope, greater detail, and better presentation.

Background and Literature Review

Natural language processing is a rapidly evolving technology that has been widely adopted in academia. In this regard, scholars have recently begun to adopt text analysis technology to study the topical history of marketing research. In three consecutive years, MS (*Marketing Science*: For conciseness we assign an abbreviated code to each of the 25 journals studied here—please see Table 1 for a complete list of the codes), JMR (the *Journal of Marketing Research*), and JCR (the *Journal of Consumer Research*) have each published a paper that elucidates the "topical history" of their articles. The authors have respectively studied 30, 50, and 40 years of historical text

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Table 1
The scope of analysis (25 SSCI journals, 1995–2014).

Journal name	Code	Listed since*	No. papers	No. cites	No. cites per paper	Impact factor**
European Journal of Marketing	EJM	2005	714	6,631	9.3	1.09
Industrial Marketing Management	IMM	1995	1,550	29,169	18.8	1.93
International Journal of Research in Marketing	IJRM	1997	482	10,526	21.8	1.83
International Marketing Review	IMR	1999	425	5,946	14.0	1.59
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	JAMS	1997	608	29,513	48.5	3.74
Journal of Advertising	JA	1995	576	13,332	23.1	2.29
Journal of Advertising Research	JAR	1995	741	10,705	14.4	0.99
Journal of Business Research	JBR	1995	2,908	50,214	17.3	2.13
Journal of Consumer Affairs	JCA	1995	395	5,479	13.9	1.05
Journal of Consumer Psychology	JCP	2000	576	12,119	21.0	2.01
Journal of Consumer Research	JCR	1995	1,079	48,619	45.1	3.19
Journal of International Marketing	JINTL	1995	391	8,725	22.3	3.25
Journal of Interactive Marketing	JIM	2007	160	2,967	18.5	3.26
Journal of Macromarketing	JMM	2008	188	1,096	5.8	1.43
Journal of Marketing	JM	1995	744	68,091	91.5	3.89
Journal of Marketing Research	JMR	1995	990	47,228	47.7	3.11
Journal of Product Innovation Management	JPIM	1995	804	24,649	30.7	2.09
Journal of Public Policy & Marketing	JPPM	1995	436	7,084	16.2	1.15
Journal of Retailing	JR	1995	547	22,188	40.6	2.01
Journal of Services Marketing	JSM	2009	275	1,277	4.6	1.02
Journal of Service Research	JSR	2004	271	6,744	24.9	2.46
Marketing Letters	ML	2001	396	4,660	11.8	1.51
Marketing Science	MS	1995	833	28,569	34.3	1.65
Psychology & Marketing	PM	1995	1,024	18,110	17.7	1.37
Quantitative Marketing & Economics	QME	2006	130	1,112	8.6	0.85
			17,243		24.9	2.03

1. For data integrity, all of the original data in this study, including the paper abstracts, the numbers of citations and the impact factors, were extracted from a single source—the *Web of Science*™ database maintained by *Thomson Reuters*™.

2. The 'listed since*' column above indicated the years when the journals were listed in SSCI. Usually, journals were listed several years after they were founded.

3. Impact Factor** was acquired from *Journal Citation Report*® 2015 in the *World of Science*® database.

extracted from MS, JMR, and JCR. While these studies all employed text analysis technology, the topic modeling methods differ from each other.

Mela, Roos, and Deng (2013) studied a corpus of 1,085 papers published in MS since 1982. Rather than finding topics from the text, the authors directly analyzed keywords and the most frequent words used in the papers' abstracts. They discovered that most of the popular words matched the traditional scope, the 4Ps and 3Cs, of marketing. Popular methods and subjects have evolved over time, from 'logit' and 'consumer choice' in the 1980s, to 'econometrics' and 'brand' in the 1990s, and to 'Bayesian,' 'Internet,' and 'customer relationship management (CRM)' in the 2000s. The authors observed that, while the introduction rate of new keywords increased over time, the survival rate of such words declined. Consequently, the authors posited that marketing science may have evolved from youth to maturity.

Huber, Kamakura, and Mela (2014) applied ontological learning, a dictionary-based topic modeling method (see Wong, Liu, and Bennamoun (2012) for a review), to 2,531 papers published in JMR and discovered 44 topics from the corpus. The authors observed that during the past 50 years, the popularity of 'information processing' has continued to rise; that of 'advertising,' 'choice model,' and 'measurement' has been falling; and that of 'consumer behavior' seems to have revived from a low point at the turn of the century.

Leveraging the current mainstream topic modeling method, latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA), Wang et al. (2015) analyzed 2,031 articles published in JCR since 1974. Although this study employed a powerful analytic method, it only acquired 16 topics from the corpus. The authors found that the popularity of 'methodology' and 'family decision' has continuously decreased; that of 'advertising,' 'memory and persuasion,' and 'customer satisfaction' has declined from its climax; and that of 'consumer culture' has continuously increased during the entire period (from 1974 to 2014). Based on their observation, the authors predicted that 'consumer culture,' 'social identity and influence,' and 'emotional decision' may be among the most promising research topics in the near future.

Enhancements and Distinctive Findings

The major objective of this research is to extend the breadth and depth of the aforementioned studies. Regarding scope, each of the aforementioned papers is dedicated to a single journal, and each of these journals has a specific area of interest. In contrast, we cover the whole realm of marketing with a corpus taken from 25 marketing journals (selected from the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI): see Table 1). In terms of corpus size, this study is at least 20 times broader than any of the prior works.