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## Quality of Marketing Research: A Citation Analysis

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### Abstract

This paper examines the extant research in marketing discipline by conducting a bibliometric study of the articles published in three leading marketing journals of over the period between 2000 and 2010. The focus of this paper is two fold: a). using an approach of combining content analysis and citation analysis on a sample of 1534 articles this paper investigates the impact of research method and research theme on the quality of the articles published in three marketing journals, and b). using a descriptive analysis this paper examines the current and future direction of the marketing practice. Regression analysis reveals that empirical research with field data along with consumer behaviour are more likely to be cited within and outside of marketing discipline. The results also reveal the research trends of the marketing research. The findings of this study can be used as the direction of marketing practice by researchers, editors, and reviewers.

**Keywords:** content analysis, citation analysis, meta analysis, marketing research.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing practice is continuously experiencing rapid changes in last decades. Significant growth of methodologies and databases has had a major impact on marketing practices by providing information about particular issues (Bass, 1993). The debate about the quality of marketing publications has been going on for more than three decades (Fry et al., 1985; Luke & Doke, 1987; Baumgartner & Pieters, 2003a; Steward & Lewis, 2010).

Several methods have been used to measure the quality of a publication which include the number of citations to a paper (Baumgartner & Pieters, 2003b), article-download counts (Brody et al., 2006), Google's PageRank (Ding et al., 2009), journal impact factor (Garfield, 2006), and recently measure of h-index (Bornmann & Daniel, 2005), developed by Jorge Hirsch. Svenson (2005) classified all approaches for measuring the quality of the marketing publications into two main groups of citation-based and perception-based approaches. Among these approaches, citation analysis is widely used as an indicator of quality of publication (Bettencourt & Houston, 2001; Baumgartner & Pieters, 2003b; Svenson, 2005). Citations are the formal, explicit linkages between papers that have particular points in common (Garfield, 1998). Despite criticisms, citation analysis is a commonly accepted and recognized technique for examining the scientific literature that influences a particular field of research (Mac Roberts & Roberts, 2010; Chan et al., 2012). Citation analysis is often used as a tool for evaluating the journal performance and measuring the impact of scientists, institutions, journals, regions etc. (Matutinović, 2007). Garfield (1972) stated that the aggregated number of citations for a scientific journal can be

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an indicator of its importance in the field of research. It is argued that the scientific standing of marketing discipline to some extent depends upon the ability of its articles to be cited (Tellis et al., 1999).

Using this concept, a citation analysis has been applied to examine the quality of the articles published in three top marketing journals of Journal of Marketing (JM), Marketing Science (MS), and Journal of Marketing Research (JMR) between 2000 and 2010.

Group of researchers argue that the intellectual structure of marketing discipline can be reflected by two dimensions of research theme e. g. sales versus customer satisfaction and research method of work e. g. mathematical models versus literature review (McCain, 1990; White, 1990; Bettencourt & Houston, 2001; Sivadas & Johnson, 2005). Thus, with a citation analysis, we use research theme and method type in an attempt to investigate their impact on the quality of articles in three aforementioned.

## **II. RESEARCH TYPE AND RESEARCH THEME**

According to Chonko (1991, p. 16) “understanding of trends, why they are occurring, where they might lead, and when they might get there can be of great value”. Variety in research strategies, metrics, and methods provides the opportunity to qualify theoretical relationships and to refine marketing theory (Dahlstrom et al., 2008). Like any other discipline, marketing is a process therefore it would be of great help to understand the potential significance of each individual research efforts to the whole. Marketing discipline has employed different methodologies in investigating a wide range of topics such as consumer behaviour, branding, advertising, pricing, new product development etc. It is important for the marketing researchers and the entire discipline to examine the major research issues and its trends over time.

To discuss the direction for future of research in marketing it is imperative to examine the development of research in marketing in the past years. A serious challenge that marketing discipline is encountering is what was clearly elaborated by Reibstein et al. (2009, p. 2):

“There is an alarming and growing gap between the interests, standards, and priorities of academic marketers and the need of marketing executives operating in an ambiguous, uncertain, fast changing, and complex market space. This has gone beyond the familiar dilemma of academic research pitted against practical relevance. Our contention is that this divergence has become detrimental to the field”.

An analysis of the latest literature could be useful to show what the researchers have been doing and what will be the future direction of the discipline. In an analysis of 30 years (1978 to 2007) of publishing data from five major marketing journals, Yadav (2010) showed that conceptual articles are declining despite repeated calls for more emphasis on this form of scholarship. Yoo et al. (2011) reviewed the literature on hospitality research using four hospitality journals on the topical areas and research methods and discovered a notable trend for hospitality marketing research. Lehmann et al. (2011) investigated the level of analytical rigor and relevance in articles published in four major marketing journals. They argued that while rigor is desirable, other characteristics, such as relevance, communicability, and simplicity have been downplayed, to the detriment of the marketing discipline.

Based on the above discussion this study makes an attempt to investigate how quality of published research might relate to the research theme and research method. Also this study aims to profile all research conducted in three top marketing journals between 2000 and 2010. Top marketing journals serve as benchmark for scholars and predication both inside and outside of marketing discipline. Many scholars consider these three journals as

top marketing journals (Koojarenpravit et al., 1998; Trieschmann et al., 2000; Theoharakis & Hirst, 2002; Green et al., 2003; Svensson, 2005). The analysis provides the marketing audience with an overview of research published in three top marketing journals, helping them identify the research type and research theme with significant impact on citation of the published articles.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section, the methodology used in this study is discussed. This includes the research theme and the employed research method. Then the results of the study will be presented. This will be followed by discussion and conclusion.

### III. METHOD

For the purpose of this study three leading marketing journals have been selected. They are Journal of Marketing (JM), Marketing Science (MS), and Journal of Marketing Research (JMR) which all have long tradition in marketing discipline and are from top ranked marketing journals (Bettencourt & Houston, 2001; Lehmann, 2005; Yadav, 2010). They started publication in 1936, 1982, and 1964, respectively.

We conducted an extensive content and citation analyses of past issues of these journals. Access to the full text version of the articles was obtained via ProQuest database. The coverage of eleven years allowed us to analyze a substantial period of marketing research. Therefore all articles between 2000 and 2010 were selected, a total of 1534 articles (JM= 432, MS= 541, JMR= 561). The editorial comments, book reviews, and discussion notes were excluded. Each article was carefully examined to capture the relevant data. While different pieces of information were recorded for each article the following analyses have been done when examining the past research. First we examined the citation analysis for each individual article. Secondly, we investigated the research themes and research methods in the papers.

**Method type:** to classify method type the coding scheme described by Tellis et al. (1999) was employed. Tellis et al. (1999) employed three main categories of theoretical, empirical, and methodological articles. Theoretical articles are those that primarily develop, analyse, or describe theories that explain marketing phenomena. Theoretical articles can be classified into two types of mathematical or verbal logic. A theoretical article with mathematical logic is one in which the crux of explanation is expounded by equations. A theoretical article which uses verbal logic is one in which the crux of the explanation is developed through verbal arguments. Empirical articles are those that derive knowledge from actual experience rather than from theory. Based on the source of data empirical articles can be classified into laboratory or field studies. An empirical study with laboratory data is a controlled environment that does not occur naturally but allows the researcher to observe or make inferences about the cause of a phenomenon. An empirical study with field data is one in which the data relating to the phenomenon are drawn from the natural environment in which the phenomenon normally occurs. A methodological article is one that primarily develops or describes a procedure for conducting research, managing product, or evaluating research.

**Research theme:** Bush & Grant (1994) examined the content of 13 years of sales force research in four marketing journals to identify the direction in which authors, editors, and reviewers were taking the field of sales force management. They found that the sales force research was becoming a more rigorous and scientific field of study. In another study (Dahlstrom et al., 2008) provided a conceptual framework of diversity among strategies, measures, and methods employed in marketing research by analyzing 844 studies published in two marketing journal between 1986-1990 and 1996-2000.

Also Yadav (2010) examined all conceptual articles published in five marketing journals between 1978 and 2007 and found a significant decline in conceptual articles during the period. Yadav (2010) also found the management, planning, and strategy were the most researched research topics among conceptual articles.

Yoo et al. (2011) used 18 topical areas to investigate hospitality marketing research between 2000 and 2009 in four journals. They found customer behaviour, e-marketing, and service management as top ranked research topics in hospitality marketing. According to Yoo's et al. (2011) findings attention towards customer behaviour, market segmentation/positioning/targeting, market strategy/management/performance, and pricing/revenue/yield management subjects increased considerably between 2000 and 2009. In terms of research method Yoo et al. (2011) found that survey and secondary data are widely employed data collection methods.

For the present study research themes of the previous studies (see Table 1) were used, modified and in some cases, combined. As a result, 16 themes were used as a basis for analysis. For example different researchers examined various aspects of branding such as brand valuation, brand preference, brand management, and brand value. In the present study, all brand related themes were combined into one theme as "branding". This helped achieve higher level of consistency. In case of more than one theme researched in an article the main focus of the article was considered as research theme.

**Table 1**

**Major Studies on Marketing Research Themes**

Study	Area of Focus	Total Number of Themes/ Topics	Time Period	Number of Journals Covered	Number of Articles Covered	Major Findings
Bush & Grant (1994)	Sales Force	18	1980-1992	4	358	More rigorous and scientific research on sale field
Dahlstrom et al. (2008)	Marketing Practice	12	1986-1990, 1996-2000	2	844	The existence of limited diversity in strategies, metrics, and methods in marketing discipline
Yadav (2010)	Conceptual Articles	22	1978-2007	5	1047	Decline in conceptual articles. High portion of conceptual articles on management, planning, and strategy
Yoo et al. (2011)	Hospitality	18	2000-2009	4	570	Consumer behaviour, and e-marketing as most research topics; survey and descriptive analysis as most used data collection method and analysis data, respectively

Therefore, instead of focusing on specific domain of marketing such as hospitality or sales force and also instead of concentrating on specific type of research such as conceptual articles, in the present study we extend our research to cover all articles published in all domains of marketing. While the keywords and abstract can provide some information regarding the article's theme and methodology, referring to the abstract is not always accurate, especially in identifying the research topic and the methodology (Palvia et al., 2004). Therefore, along with abstract and keywords each article was subjected to

throughout review to extract the research theme and methodological aspects. Two independent judges analyzed the content of each article.

**Citation analysis:** citation analysis is the study of the impact and assumed quality of an article, an author or an institution based on the number of times works and/or authors have been cited by others. There are different indicators to assess the quality of research such as impact factor, however, while there are some advantages of using impact factor as an indicator of quality of research the main concern for this metric is that it can be manipulated (Reedijk & Moed, 2008). Therefore, some scholar argue that the impact factor can not be used in the current format (Hernán, 2008; Szklo, 2008; Jarwal et al., 2009). Therefore, to measure the quality of a research article a citation analysis was used.

A citation analysis was conducted for each of 1534 articles using web of science for the period 2000 through 2013. There is often a lag time between the publication of an article and citations of that article. To ensure of a reasonable citation history only articles published between 2000 and 2010 were included. Citation analysis determines how many times an article is being cited by other articles. Three sources of citation can be assumed (Cote et al., 1991): a). simple count of the number of times that articles appearing in JOM, JMR, and MS were cited, b). determining what other marketing journals cite the articles and c). citation from other disciplines. The average annual citation was calculated for each of the three sources by dividing each citation count by the number of years since its publication (Bettencourt & Houston, 2001; Svensson, 2005).

#### IV. RESULTS

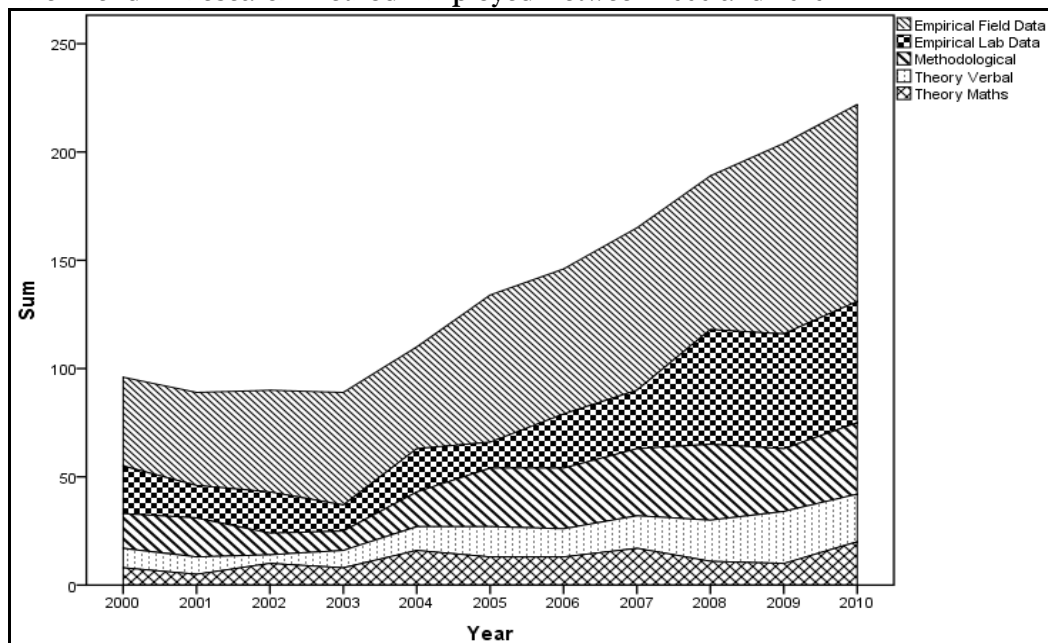
A major concern when utilizing content analysis is the degree of consistency between observers applying the same set of criteria to the same content (Bush & Grant, 1994). Two independent judges analyzed the method type and research theme of each article. To ensure of uniformity of the results the inter coder reliability was calculated. The two coders coded the same set of 100 articles independently. Inter coder reliabilities for research type and theme were 91% and 90% respectively. It's evident that inter coder reliability is above 90% recommended by the literature (Perreault & Leigh, 1989). All articles were coded over a period of twelve months. The time period allows us to collect a more realistic data on citation analysis and also allows more recent articles to influence subsequent research (Bettencourt & Houston, 2001). Table 2 presents the number of articles by journal and year.

**Table 2**  
**Marketing Research Articles by Journal and Year**

Journal	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
JMR	39	39	36	34	39	50	59	58	55	65	87	561
JM	23	25	28	30	38	47	41	47	51	57	45	432
MS	22	26	25	24	46	47	64	57	81	79	70	541
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>1534</b>

**Method type:** based on Tellis's (1999) classification for research methods the majority of articles employed filed data in an empirical research design (45%). 20.5% of articles used an empirical research method using laboratory data followed by methodological articles with 16.4%. Theoretical articles with verbal and mathematical logic were among less employed research methods (9.6 and 8.5% respectively). Figure 1 presents the trend in the marketing journals in terms of the research method between 2000 and 2010.

**Figure 1**  
**The Trend in Research Method Employed Between 2000 and 2010**



**Research theme:** for assessing the research themes, the normal count approach was used. For each article one keyword was extracted. To determine the research theme, the introductory sections of each article such as abstract, keywords, introduction/literature review, and theoretical background were examined. There were some studies that could not be classified in accordance to the proposed 16 themes (79 or 5.2%). These studies were classified as “others”. Table 3 shows the frequency and percentages of research articles during the study period. Overall, consumer behavior was the theme where the most research has been conducted.

**Table 3**

**Number of Articles by Research Theme**

Theme	Frequency	Percent
Consumer Behavior	223	14.54
Market Function/Strategy	221	14.41
Sales(Promotion/Management)	126	8.21
Pricing	120	7.82
Electronic Marketing	119	7.76
New Product Development (NPD)	111	7.24
Branding	97	6.32
Research Methodology	86	5.61
Others	79	5.15
Theory and Philosophy of Science	77	5.02
Advertising	68	4.43
Ethics and Social Responsibility	67	4.37
International and comparative Analysis	38	2.48
Legal, Political, and Economical Issues	38	2.48
Loyalty	33	2.15
Services	31	2.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>1534</b>	<b>100</b>

**4.1. Citation Analysis**

To test the effects of method type and research theme on the quality of the articles regression analysis was employed. Table 4 summarizes the results of the test.

**Table 4**  
**The Results of the Regression Analysis of the Impact of Research Type and Research Theme on Quality of the Articles**

Dependent Variables: Average Citation	Method Type		Research Theme		R <sup>2</sup>
	Standardized Coefficient (SC)	p-value	Standardized Coefficient (SC)	p-value	
Citations Appeared in JOM, JMR, and MS	0.27	***	0.31	***	0.26
Citations Appeared in Other Journals	0.38	***	0.45	***	0.39
Citations Appeared in Other Disciplines	0.18	**	0.20	**	0.27

\*\*\*:  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*:  $p < 0.01$

The results of regression analysis in Table 4 show that both research type and research theme are significantly related to the citations within JOM, JMR, MS, within other journals, and within other disciplines revealing a significant impact of the independent variables on the quality of the articles published in three journals. The two independent variables accounted for between 26 and 31% of variation in the quality of articles published. The results of regression coefficients reveal that the research theme has more impact on the citation in all of three sources of citation (0.31, 0.45, 0.20). For further analysis we conducted regression analysis using all categories to investigate the impact of individual research method and research theme on the dependent variables. Tables 5 and 6 summarize the results of the regression analysis using all categories of research method and research themes.

**Table 5**  
**The Impact of Categories of Research Type on The Average Citation**

Dependent Variables: Average Citation	Theoretical-Mathematical		Theoretical-Verbal		Empirical Laboratory		Empirical Field		Methodological	
	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p
Citations Appeared in JOM, JMR, and MS	0.09	**	0.35	***	0.23	**	0.37	***	0.12	***
Citations Appeared in Other Journals	0.13	**	0.41	***	0.24	***	0.44	***	0.18	**
Citations Appeared in Other Disciplines	0.07	***	0.22	**	0.07	**	0.22	**	0.11	***

SC: Standardized Coefficient; \*\*\*:  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*:  $p < 0.01$



**Table 6**  
**The Impact of Categories of Research Theme on The Average Citation**

Dependent Variables: Average Citation	Consumer Behavior		Market Function/Strategy		Sales		Pricing		Electronic Marketing		NPD		Branding		Research Methodology		Theory & Philosophy of Science		Advertising		Ethics & Social Responsibility		International & Comparative Analysis		Legal, Political & Environmental Issues		Loyalty		Services	
	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p	SC	p
Citation Appeared in JOM, JMR & MS	0.29	***	0.26	**	0.11	**	0.08	***	0.11	***	0.23	**	0.19	***	0.12	***	0.22	**	0.17	***	0.09	***	0.05	***	0.11	**	0.17	***	0.09	***
Citation Appeared in Other Journals	0.33	***	0.30	**	0.11	***	0.13	***	0.18	***	0.24	***	0.15	**	0.10	**	0.29	***	0.18	***	0.14	**	0.13	***	0.09	**	0.15	***	0.18	***
Citation Appeared in Other Disciplines	0.21	*	0.14	*	0.05	**	0.09	*	0.19	**	0.15	**	0.05	*	0.09	**	0.30	**	0.11	*	0.21	*	0.19	**	0.15	*	0.13	**	0.18	**

SC: Standardized Coefficient; \*\*\*:  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*:  $p < 0.01$ ; \*:  $p < 0.1$

**V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The first aim of this study was to investigate the impact of research type and research theme on the quality of research published in three marketing journals. We acknowledge that there are other factors which might affect the quality of an article such as content, topicality, orientation (Van Raan et al., 2003; Bornmann & Daniel, 2008), ranked journals (Jarwal et al., 2009). A citation analysis is an important bibliometric methodology for investigating the relationships among published scientific works (Smith, 1981). Citation analysis includes comparing the citations of previously selected papers to other scientific articles in a certain body of literature. It is assumed that more frequently cited papers have a greater impact on scientific research than papers that are cited less frequently (Sharplin & Mabry, 1985). Therefore, a citation analysis was used to assess the quality of research articles published in three marketing journals. The average citation score for each article was calculated by divided the total citations by the number of years since the article had been published. Comparing with the results of previous studies (e. g. Zinkhan et al., 1992; Bettencourt & Houston, 2001) the results of this study indicates that the citation trend has not changed over the last decades.

The findings of our empirical study reveal that in research articles published in JM, JMR, and MS the method type and research themes are likely to be cited both within and outside of the marketing discipline though the likelihood is higher for the research theme. Empirical studies with field data and theoretical studies with verbal logic are two method types with high chance to be cited in all sources of citation. Also, in terms of research theme customer behaviour, market function/strategy, and new product development are the themes which are likely to be cited in within and outside of marketing disciplines. This is consistent to the findings of Bettencourt & Houston (2001). There are some new theme seems are being cited both within and outsides of marketing disciplines. These themes include “theory and philosophy of science”, “ethics and social responsibility”, and “electronic marketing”. In terms of the trend of research theme and based on a detailed analysis of the publications during these years we determined the subject areas most often investigated and also the research method most often employed. The results indicate that consumer behaviour, market function/strategy, sales, pricing, and electronic marketing

were the five most popular research themes within these years. The five themes consisted of approximately 52.74% of reviewed articles for this study. Consumer behaviour was a theme that attracted attention of most researchers. This is aligned with previous studies (Lewis, 2005).

The considerable increase in such themes as consumer behaviour might indicate that significant numbers of researchers are moving toward behavioural themes. Also there is new trend in borrowing from other disciplines such information technology. Themes such as value creation, international marketing and comparative analysis have been virtually ignored by the three journals. It is anticipated that retailing, customer satisfaction, and ethics and social responsibility will receive much more attention over next years. The finding also reveals that there has been an increased in the utilizations of theories and conceptual frameworks. However, the slow increasing trend in theoretical research identified by as Yadav (2010) between years 1987 and 2007 still continues within years between 2007 and 2010 investigated in the present study. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that the lack of sufficient theory development still remains.

During the study period, while a significant part of all marketing research employed empirical methods there are some considerable increase in other methods such as methodological and theoretical articles with verbal logic. More discussion has been provided for each individual journal as follows:

**Journal of Marketing:** overall, the top three themes in JM are consumer behaviour, market strategy, and theory and philosophy of science are among themes with largest increased in terms of the number of articles during 11 year period in this study. Yadav (2010) argue that the decline of conceptual articles has weakened the theoretical core of marketing discipline In Yadav's study the number of conceptual articles had been consistently declining between 1989 and 2007 (from 34.56% in years 1989-1992 to 6.7% in 2003-2007). However, the findings of the present study reveal that the Journal of Marketing has made a significant change in focusing on theoretical articles in recent years. During the same periods international and comparative analysis experienced 67% decrease.

**Journal of Marketing Research:** JMR had the lowest increase (53%) in articles published in two periods. Overall, consumer behaviour, pricing, and branding are the most researched themes over 11 years period. The themes with the highest increase in the number of articles are retailing, legal, political, and economic issues and consumer behaviour. However, loyalty and international and comparative analysis declined by 33 and 50% respectively.

**Marketing Science:** Marketing Science has come about because of the development of a critical mass of scholars devoted to the study of relationships central to marketing using methods of ever increasing power and data of ever increasing scope, detail, and variety (Bass, 1993). Marketing Science had the largest increase in terms of articles published between 2000 and 2010 with (129%). During 2000-2005 the most researched themes were pricing, consumer behaviour, and other themes. These themes remain as top three themes in 2005-2010.

Our results reveal that several themes have received very limited or no attention, while a few topics have received much attention during the study period. One reason for relative lack of attention could be that there are some specific journals devoted to such themes. For instance, international marketing received limited attention (80 articles in total). This might be due to the general tendency among researchers to consider international or regional journals devoted to international issues such as European Journal of Marketing, International Journal of Research in Marketing, or International Marketing Review.

In this study we used metrics to measure the quality of the published articles. Metrics are objective and can be easily used. However it is worth noting that there are some challenges in using metrics. For example some of these challenges are self-citation in which authors cite their own work, negative citation in which due to being contentious or debatable the article attracts a lot of citations even though it may contribute little to science.

There are some limitations in this study. Firstly, this analysis is made of the studies conducted in the 11 year period. This compilation should be considered as indicative and not an authoritative declaration. We are aware that our analysis excludes those studies that have been published in other journals during the period of our analysis. Secondly, for ranking of research themes the normal count approach was used. We just viewed the frequencies of research themes. The significance and the impact of articles were not assessed in our analysis. We believe the findings of this research would lead to a broader understanding of marketing research by both academics and practitioners in the entire marketing community. Furthermore, our findings have implications for researchers, journal editors and reviewers.

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