Trends and Transformations in Content Marketing Research: A Comprehensive Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract. This study maps the scientific development and thematic trends in content marketing research using a bibliometric approach. As content marketing continues to grow in relevance within both academic and industry contexts, understanding how this field has evolved over time provides valuable insight into its intellectual structure and future research directions. By analyzing publications from 2010 to 2024 indexed in Scopus and applying tools like VOSviewer and Bibliometrix, the study identifies publication trends, influential authors and journals, thematic evolutions, and collaboration networks. This combination of tools enables a comprehensive visualization of the research landscape, capturing not only the volume of scholarly output but also the relationships among key contributors and topics. Results show a notable increase in academic interest after 2018, peaking in 2024, with dominant keywords such as content marketing, social media, and marketing, reflecting the central themes that have shaped the discourse over the past decade. Emerging themes like AI and user-generated content are also gaining prominence, signaling a shift toward more technology-driven and consumer-participatory approaches within the field. The study highlights key gaps in foundational topics like commerce and advertising, indicating areas that remain underexplored despite their relevance to the broader marketing discipline. These findings offer strategic insights for future interdisciplinary research and technological integration in the field, providing a foundation for scholars seeking to advance content marketing theory and practice.

Keywords: Content Marketing, Bibliometric Analysis, Digital Marketing, Social Media, Research Trends, Content Strategy

1 Introduction

In today's digital-driven marketplace, brands must move beyond traditional advertising by adopting value-based, engaging communication strategies. Content marketing has emerged as a central pillar, emphasizing the creation and distribution of relevant and consistent content to attract, retain, and convert audiences [1,2]. This reflects a shift in consumer behavior from passive message recipients to active seekers of authenticity

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and relational value [3,4]. Engaging storytelling and motivational content further illustrate the movement toward interactive marketing [5].

Over the last decade, content marketing has gained both practical and scholarly traction, explored in contexts such as brand storytelling, social media, B2B, and consumer engagement [6,7]. The field is marked by conceptual richness and methodological diversity [8,9], making it essential for firms aiming to build brand affinity and competitive advantage [10].

Despite this, a systematic understanding of its intellectual structure and thematic development remains limited. Gaps persist regarding leading contributors, key themes, and research patterns [11,12]. Thus, a bibliometric mapping is crucial to reveal trends, structures, and emerging domains [13].

Content marketing has rapidly evolved with the rise of digital technologies and changing consumer behaviors, now encompassing integrated strategies that blend traditional and digital tools to foster stronger brand–consumer relationships [14]. Its application spans various sectors [2] identified knowledge gaps in B2B influencer marketing, while [9] emphasized hero, hub, and hygiene content in tourism strategies. Consumer engagement remains crucial, with [15, 3] highlighting the influence of usability, eWOM, and influencer marketing on trust and repurchase behavior.

Recent research also addresses cognitive and emotional factors. [16] examined ephemeral content's psychological impact on user engagement, while [11] emphasized emotional storytelling's role in building loyalty. The growing role of AI is evident in [17] review of content personalization and [12] work on generative AI for efficiency. Social media's impact further necessitates tailored content strategies [18], with [19] using bibliometric analysis to identify automation themes, reinforcing content marketing's complexity and strategic importance in the digital landscape.

This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed articles from 2010–2024, using VOSviewer and Bibliometrix to examine productivity, citation impact, and thematic evolution [20, 19,21]. Central to this inquiry is: "How have trends, scientific productivity, and thematic evolutions in content marketing research developed between 2010 and 2024?" The findings aim to guide future research by identifying influential authors, conceptual hotspots, and key gaps [22].

2 Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative bibliometric approach to identify, map, and analyze publication trends, scholarly productivity, and thematic evolution in the field of content marketing. The bibliometric method was chosen because it allows for a systematic, data-driven mapping of scientific literature, enabling researchers to explore patterns in publication behavior, academic collaboration, and knowledge structures.

The data were retrieved from the Scopus database, selected for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed academic journals and its frequent use in high-quality bibliometric studies. The search was conducted in June 2024 using the following search string:
(TITLE-ABS-KEY("content marketing" OR "digital content strategy" OR "branded content")) AND PUBYEAR > 2009 AND PUBYEAR < 2025. AND (LIMIT-TO(DOCTYPE, "ar")). AND (LIMIT-TO(LANGUAGE, "English"))

The data screening process followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. The following steps were conducted:

Table 1. The Flow of article selection is presented in a PRISMA diagram

Screening Stage	Number of Documents
Initial search results	1,114
After filtering by publication year	1,104
After filtering for document type	671
After relevance screening (content marketing)	209
Final included articles (English only)	194

Source: Author's Work

2.2 Data Analysis Techniques

The final dataset was analyzed using two main bibliometric tools:
VOSviewer was employed to generate visualizations of author co-authorship, institutional collaboration, country distribution, keyword co-occurrence, and co-citation networks.

Bibliometrix (Biblioshiny) in R Studio was used for analyzing annual publication trends, author and journal productivity, keyword dynamics, and thematic mapping (e.g., thematic evolution and trend topics).

The outputs from both tools were triangulated to comprehensively answer the research question and construct a data-driven narrative on the intellectual development of content marketing research.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Annual Scientific Production

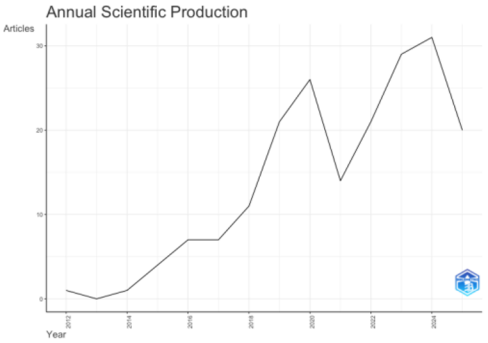

Fig. 1. Annual Scientific Production

The publication trend on content marketing from 2012 to 2024 reflects growing academic interest. Initial years (2012–2015) showed limited output, while interest grew steadily from 2016–2018. A notable surge in 2019–2020 aligned with the COVID-19 pandemic, driving digital and content-focused strategies. Despite a brief dip in 2021, output peaked in 2024. The 2025 decline is likely due to incomplete data. Overall, the trend confirms content marketing's rising significance in scholarly research and its cross-sectoral relevance.

3.2 Most Relevant Source

Table 2. Most Relevant Authors

Authors	Articles	Articles Fractionalized
Ahmad NS	4	1.33
Musa R	4	1.33
Taiminen K	3	1.25

Source : Author's Work

Table 2 identifies key contributors in content marketing research from 2010 to 2024. Ahmad NS and Musa R lead with 4 publications each and a fractional count of 1.33, indicating strong co-authorship. Taiminen K follows with 3 articles and a 1.25 score, reflecting active collaboration. Authors like Ahuja V, Al-Gasawneh JA, and others contributed 2 articles, often in leading roles. Coll-Rubio P and Davidavičius S show higher fractional values (1.5), suggesting dominant roles in fewer papers, while lower scores from Chen X and Malthouse EC indicate broader collaboration. These scholars play pivotal roles in shaping content marketing research.

3.3 Most Relevant Authors

Table 3. Most Relevant Source

Sources	Articles
Journal Of Brand Strategy	7
Journa; Of Digital And Social Media	6
Cogent Business And Management	4

Source : Author's Work

Table 3 highlights key journals contributing to content marketing research from 2010 to 2024. The Journal of Brand Strategy leads with 7 publications, followed by the Journal of Digital and Social Media Marketing with 6. Other active sources include Cogent Business and Management, Innovative Marketing, and Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing. The presence of interdisciplinary journals like IEEE Access and Computers in Human Behavior underscores the field's expansion into areas such as technology, analytics, and consumer behavior, reflecting content marketing's growing academic and practical relevance.

3.4 Keyword Co-occurrence Mapping

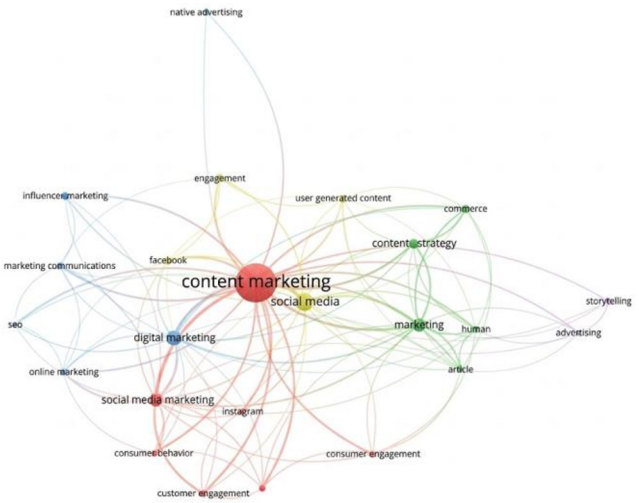

Fig. 2. Keyword Cooccurrence Mapping

The keyword co-occurrence mapping using VOSviewer reveals the centrality of "content marketing" and its strong interconnection with themes like "social media," "consumer behavior," and "digital marketing." Clusters highlight key focal areas: the red cluster emphasizes engagement through platforms like Instagram and user-generated content; the green cluster focuses on commerce, advertising, and value-driven person-

alization; and the blue/yellow clusters underline technical tools such as SEO and influencer marketing [23, 24, 2]. This structure illustrates how content marketing integrates consumer interaction, strategic communication, and digital technologies to enhance visibility and trust [4, 18].

Table 4. Trends Topic

Term	Frequency	Year (Q1)	Year (Median)	Year (Q3)
Article	5	2019	2019	2020
Content Marketings	14	2019	2020	2023
Social Media	10	2017	2020	2022
Commerce	9	2019	2020	2023
Marketing	23	2019	2021	2024

Table 4 shows that key terms like "marketing," "content marketings," and "commerce" have gained consistent relevance from 2019 to 2024, reflecting their central role in content marketing research. While "social media" emerged earlier in 2017, it remains relevant but has since been complemented by newer themes. Less frequent terms like "article" suggest limited thematic focus. Overall, the trend indicates a growing emphasis on strategic and commercial aspects of content marketing.

4 Conclusion

This bibliometric study maps the evolution of content marketing research from 2010 to 2024, revealing a sharp rise in academic interest especially post-2018 and peaking in 2024 driven by digital transformation and pandemic-induced shifts. Using Scopus data and tools like VOSviewer and Biblioshiny, the analysis identifies key contributors (e.g., Ahmad NS, Musa R), core journals (e.g., Journal of Brand Strategy), and central themes such as marketing, content marketing, social media, and commerce.

Thematic mapping shows "marketing and social media" as mature motor themes, while "commerce and advertising" remain basic yet underdeveloped. Niche areas like "sustainability" and "consumer behavior" show strong focus but limited integration. The emergence of AI and decision-making themes signals a shift toward more tech-driven, behavioral insights in future content marketing research.

Based on the findings, future research in content marketing should enhance conceptual depth in foundational yet underdeveloped areas like commerce and personalization, using robust theories and empirical methods. Integrating emerging technologies such as AI, AR/VR, and blockchain can unlock new strategic insights, while bridging human-centered and data-driven perspectives offers richer analysis. Expanding global and interdisciplinary collaboration, especially with underrepresented regions and fields, is crucial for broader relevance. Methodologically, scholars should diversify beyond bibliometrics to include approaches like netnography and neuromarketing. Additionally, research should address societal impacts such as misinformation and digital fatigue and emphasize ethical, sustainable content strategies. Finally, greater accessibility through

open access publishing and practical frameworks will strengthen the link between theory and real-world application.

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