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THREE DECADES OF SPORTS MARKETING RESEARCH: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW USING R

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Abstract

Sports Marketing has gained a lot of significance in the past three decades, which has resulted in increased attention from academic scholars. Therefore, this study is designed to evaluate the development of sports marketing research by conducting a bibliometric analysis of studies conducted from 1992 to 2024. The analysis uses PRISMA guidelines and is visualized through the bibliometrics package in the R programming language. The study provides valuable insights by identifying the key trends and top academic contributors like Jeffrey D. James and Shinhyoung Lee, as well as leading institutions such as Florida State University and the University of Georgia. The findings also reveal that institutions and authors from the USA, Australia and South Korea are leading the research on sports marketing. The most prominent journal identified from the analysis is the International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship. The study also reveals that there is a consistently growing trend in global collaborations and a shift towards global perspectives and digital media integration in sports marketing.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, Sports Marketing, Sports Branding, Athlete Marketing.

Introduction

Sports marketing has undergone tremendous growth in recent years due to the rise in sports viewership and the expansion of digital technology, making it an essential part of a larger marketing strategy. As more people watch sports on the internet and in traditional media, sports teams and athletes are using digital platforms more frequently to interact with fans, customize marketing campaigns, and make retail sales. This spike in viewership is consistent with projections that, thanks to developments in marketing and fan engagement technologies, indicate the global sports industry may top $600 billion by 2025. Both academic scholars and experts in the industry have been interested in this expanding field. There has been an increased focus on studying

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different elements of sports marketing, such as the influence of social media campaigns on fan loyalty and the effectiveness of digital advertising in increasing merchandise sales. In recent years, there has been even more interest in diverse sports issues, such as harassment, doping, corruption, and the impact of such issues on marketing-related activities.

Rationale of Research

Over the past few years, there's been a growing interest in athlete branding and sports marketing. It's crucial for everyone in the sports industry—marketers, athletes, and sports organizations—to understand the key factors that affect fan engagement, athlete brand image, and consumer behaviour. This research aims to explore the connection between consumer behaviour, sports marketing, and digital engagement. The goal is to uncover insights that can enhance marketing strategies, boost fan engagement, and improve the overall sports experience.

Problem Statement

It is both timely and crucial to undertake a bibliometric assessment of the literature, given the quick developments and growing complexity in sports marketing. An enormous amount of scholarly work has been produced as a result of the field's evolution, which advancements in technology and changes in consumer behaviour have fueled. It is difficult to identify important areas of attention, prominent researchers, important organizations, and the links between different sub-disciplines within sports marketing due to the abundance of available data. These components can be made clearer with the use of a bibliometric study, which can identify prominent authors, recurring themes, and any gaps in the literature. Such an analysis would advise practitioners on the most effective approaches and studies in the field, as well as future research directions.

In recent years, there have been some attempts to conduct bibliometric studies in the field of sports marketing, which highlights the ongoing interest and development within this area. For instance, Shilbury (2011) conducted an analysis focused on the citation patterns within 4 major sports management journals to understand what are the intellectual foundations of sports marketing. Another study by Sofyan et al. (2024) specifically focused on reviewing sports promotion, utilizing bibliometric methods, which helped in the identification of key trends and influential researchers related to physical health and sports activity. Shekhar & Shah (2023) analyzed sports marketing by focusing on the social structures and conceptual frameworks that have been used in the past, specifically related to collaboration in the field of sports marketing. However, these studies, while informative, were not exhaustive in capturing the full breadth of sports marketing research. Key gaps include the use of limited keywords and the reliance on a single database, such as the Web of Science, for gathering articles. Notably, the study by Shekhar and Shah used only one keyword to extract papers, resulting in a dataset of 83 articles, significantly fewer than the over a thousand papers indexed in Scopus. These limitations highlight the need for a more comprehensive bibliometric review that incorporates a wider array of relevant keywords and leverages more inclusive databases like Scopus to ensure a more thorough and representative analysis of the field.

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Research Questions

It will explore the following research questions:

1. Which authors are making significant contributions to sports marketing research?
2. What is the yearly trend in the number of publications on sports marketing?
3. Which countries are leading in sports marketing research efforts?
4. What are the main institutions affiliated with significant sports marketing research?
5. In which journals are sports marketing research predominantly published?
6. What are the emerging trends within the field?

Building on the goals outlined, the findings from this bibliometric analysis aim to encourage more scholarly work in the field of sports marketing. This study is important because it gives both established and new researchers valuable insights into citation trends across journals, papers, and authors. Our detailed global network analysis of journals, papers, authors, institutions, and countries will also help develop strategies for future research collaborations. Additionally, this research hopes to inspire young scholars to explore new areas within sports marketing, particularly the dynamics of digital engagement and branding. Moreover, this paper will be a useful tool not only for academic circles but also for marketing professionals looking to apply strategies within sports marketing. This study could help journal editorial boards monitor the development and impact of contributors within this evolving field.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to examine the various elements that influence athlete branding and fan engagement within the sports industry. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Identify the key components of athlete brand image and their impact on consumer perceptions.
2. Analyze the role of social media in driving fan engagement and interaction with sports entities.
3. Investigate the influence of sports celebrities on the behavioural intentions of different consumer segments, particularly Generation Y.
4. Provide a comprehensive overview of bibliometric trends in sports marketing research using tools such as VOSviewer and Bibliometrics.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on multiple theoretical frameworks that offer a basis for comprehending the workings of consumer behaviour and sports marketing dynamics. According to brand image theory, a consumer's perception of a brand, or in this case, an athlete, is shaped by their mental associations that P.R., marketing communications, and direct personal experiences often influence. Consumer behaviour studies how

people make decisions and how external factors like marketing efforts, social media, and celebrity endorsements affect their brand loyalty and spending habits. Social identity theory examines how individuals classify themselves and others into social groups, like sports fans, and how these group memberships influence their behaviours and attitudes. This helps us better understand fan loyalty and engagement within the realm of sports marketing. Additionally, bibliometric analysis identifies research trends, significant publications, and hot topics in the field of sports marketing by using systematic tools and methods to analyze the body of literature already in existence.

Literature Review

Bibliometric Analysis

There has been significant growth in the use of bibliometric analysis in recent years. The growth is not just limited to marketing studies but also across different disciplines. This method is considered highly effective because it can uncover evolving trends in topics, citations, authorship, geographic contributions, and collaborative networks (Donthu et al., 2021). The analysis utilizes statistical techniques to examine both qualitative and quantitative changes and developments within a particular scientific area, delivering insights on publication patterns and developing trends which can reveal many underlying insights. The application of such analysis is vast because it is essential for researchers and academics who aim to track and understand the dynamics of scientific exploration across diverse research topics (Mejia et al., 2021).

Bibliometric analysis is considered an effective method for examining extensive volumes of unstructured data from various databases, offering deep insights into scientific knowledge and expanding well-established research areas, such as marketing. A well-executed bibliometric study provides a strong rationale for further advancements in the field, which makes bibliometric analysis an extremely useful tool. It equips scholars with the necessary resources and direction to gain a comprehensive overview, identify under-researched areas, generate new research questions, and strategically plan their scholarly contributions. It is a highly valuable tool, specifically for new researchers.

There are various methods of bibliometric analysis which can be performed using a range of tools, such as specialized software like VOSviewer and CiteSpace, or through programming languages such as Python and R (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). All the different tools have specific advantages and disadvantages; for instance, VOSviewer is known for its intuitive interfaces that simplify network visualization and provide a friendly user interface for the researchers (Kirby, 2023), while Python is favoured for its comprehensive libraries that support data manipulation and machine learning applications, making it an ideal choice for extremely large and sophisticated datasets (Zhang et al., 2021).

R language can also be used for bibliometric analysis and has gained a lot of attention in recent years because of the unique advantages that it provides to researchers (Büyükkıdık, 2022; Ejaz et al., 2022; Guleria & Kaur, 2021). R has an extensive range of tools and packages that are available to researchers who are conducting bibliometric analyses. Furthermore, it is free of cost, which makes it more

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appealing to researchers from low-income countries. It also has a feature that allows it to combine two or more databases and conduct analyses at once.

Research Methodology

Research Framework

The first step was to enter the keywords in the Scopus database, which showed 979 documents that were then reviewed for relevance and other criteria. Using exclusion criteria based on the type of document, 159 documents were removed. Additional refinement involved excluding articles from journals and sources not related to the specific disciplines of the study, which further narrowed the selection to 659 documents. Additionally, 20 documents were removed because they were not written in the primary language of the study. The remaining 639 research papers constituted the dataset for the bibliometric analysis.

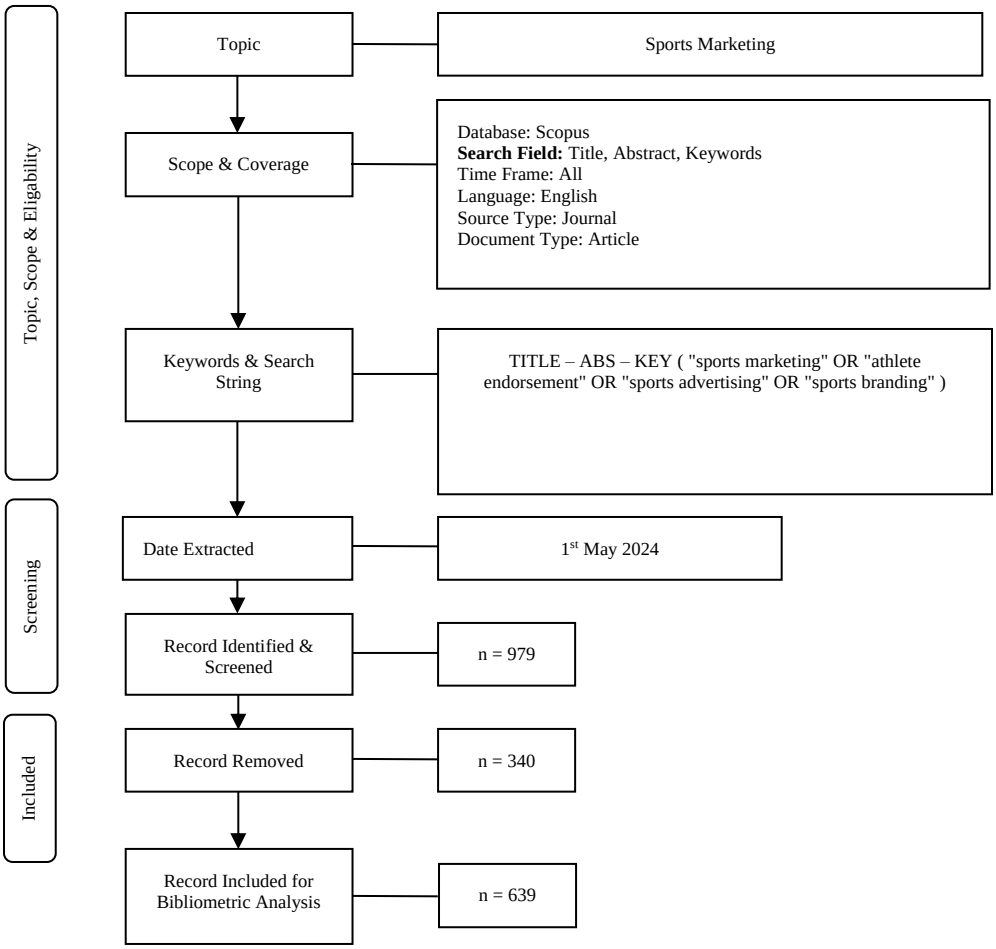


Figure 1: PRISMA Inclusion and Exclusion Process Flow

Table 01: Article Extraction from Scopus with Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria		
Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Document Type	Articles, Review Articles	Books, Book Chapters, Conference Papers, Editorial and Others
Journal/Source Disciplines	Business, Management, Accounting, Economics, Social Sciences, Decision Sciences, Psychology, Arts and Humanities Multidisciplinary	Medicine, Health Professions, Computer Science, Engineering, Mathematics, Environmental Science, Biochemistry, Genetics, Molecular Biology, Agricultural and Biological Science and Others
Language	English	Non-English

Analysis and Results

Table 02 shows that this dataset spans from 1992 to 2024 and includes a total of 639 documents sourced from 207 different sources. It has shown a significant annual growth rate of 8.72% in document production. On average, each document is around 8 years old and has received approximately 15.73 citations per document. The dataset indicates a healthy level of collaboration within the field, with 1,350 authors contributing to the documents, of which only 92 have authored documents single-handedly. This is further reflected in the average of 2.73 co-authors per document and the fact that 23% of the co-authorships are international, suggesting a wide and varied global research network.

Table 02:Main Information Regarding Selected Articles	
Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	1992:2024
Sources	207
Documents	639
Annual Growth Rate %	8.72
Document Average Age	8.01
Average citations per doc	15.73
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	244
Author's Keywords (DE)	1773
AUTHORS	
Authors	1350
Authors of single-authored docs	92
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	102
Co-Authors per Doc	2.73
International co-authorships %	23.02
DOCUMENT TYPES	
Article	630

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Annual Publication Trends

The historical data on scientific publications from 1992 to 2024, represented in Figure 1, reveals significant fluctuations and a general upward trend in annual output. Starting with two articles in 1992, the count dropped to zero in subsequent years until a slow increase resumed. Notably, a steady rise began in 1998, leading to a more pronounced surge from 2008 onward. The peak occurred in 2020 with 51 publications, followed by a slight decline. As of 2024, data up to the current point shows 29 articles, suggesting a potential stabilization or further changes in publication trends by the end of the year.

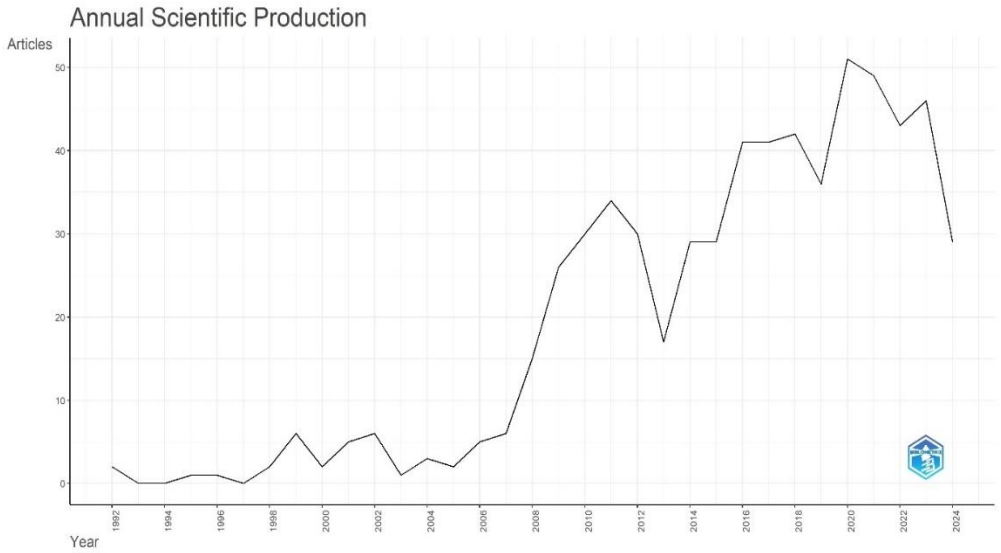


Figure 01: Annual publication trends

Most Productive Authors

Among the most productive authors in the dataset, Jeffrey D James and Shinhyoung Lee stand out with the highest number of publications, each having authored 10 articles. Following closely are Kevin Byon, Dae Hee Kwak, and James Zhang, each contributing to 7 publications. Additionally, Jonathan Jensen and Masayuki Yoshida have also made notable contributions with 6 articles each. The list also includes Bennett G, Desbordes M, and Dickson G, who have each written 5 articles.

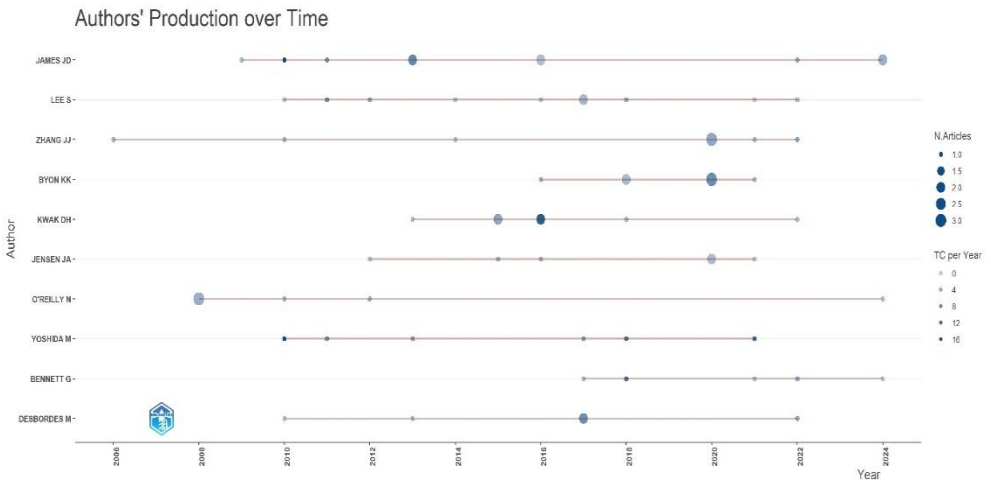


Figure 2 Authors' Production Over Time

Most Cited Papers

Table 03 represents the most cited papers in the field of sports marketing. The study by Hightower et al. (2002) led the way with the highest citation count, exploring the role of the physical environment in enhancing fan enjoyment at sporting events, and received 412 citations. Following that, Bush et al. (2004) investigated how sports celebrities influenced the behavioural intentions of Generation Y, accruing 258 citations. Another notable contribution came from Yoshida & James (2010), who focused on customer satisfaction with game and service experiences at sports events, earning 248 citations. These studies were among the most cited in the field, reflecting their significant impact on sports management and marketing research.

Table 03: Most Cited Papers

Title	Author(s) and Year	Total Citations	T.C. per Year
Investigating the role of the physical environment in hedonic service consumption: an exploratory study of sporting events	(Hightower et al., 2002)	412	17.91
Sports Celebrity Influence on the Behavioral Intentions of Generation Y	(Bush et al., 2004)	258	12.29
Customer Satisfaction With Game and Service Experiences: Antecedents and Consequences	(Yoshida & James, 2010)	248	16.53
Sport-based entrepreneurship: towards a new theory of entrepreneurship and sport management	(Ratten, 2011)	193	13.79
Understanding fan motivation for interacting on social media	(Stavros et al., 2014)	179	16.27
Social media and sports: driving fan engagement with football clubs on Facebook	(Vale & Fernandes, 2018)	169	24.14
The sport value framework – a new fundamental logic for analyses in sport management	(Woratschek et al., 2014)	161	14.64
Branding Athletes: Exploration and conceptualization of Athlete brand image	(Arai et al., 2014)	160	14.55
Consumer perceptions of service quality attributes at sporting events	(Kelley & Turley, 2001)	153	6.38
Predicting spectators' behavioural intentions in professional football: The role of satisfaction and service quality	(Theodorakis et al., 2013)	129	10.75

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Most Productive Countries

Figure 3 shows the most productive countries in terms of the number of publications in the field of sports marketing. The United States leads with a significant number of published articles, totalling 153. This highlights its strong influence in the field. Australia and Korea are also prominent, with 36 and 34 articles, respectively, demonstrating their active research communities. China is not far behind, contributing 28 articles, while Canada and the United Kingdom each have 26 articles, showing their solid engagement in sports marketing studies. Germany and Iran are also notable, each with 23 articles. Spain and India, though contributing less with 15 and 14 articles, respectively, still play important roles in adding to the global research on sports marketing. This variety shows how different countries contribute to and shape the field.

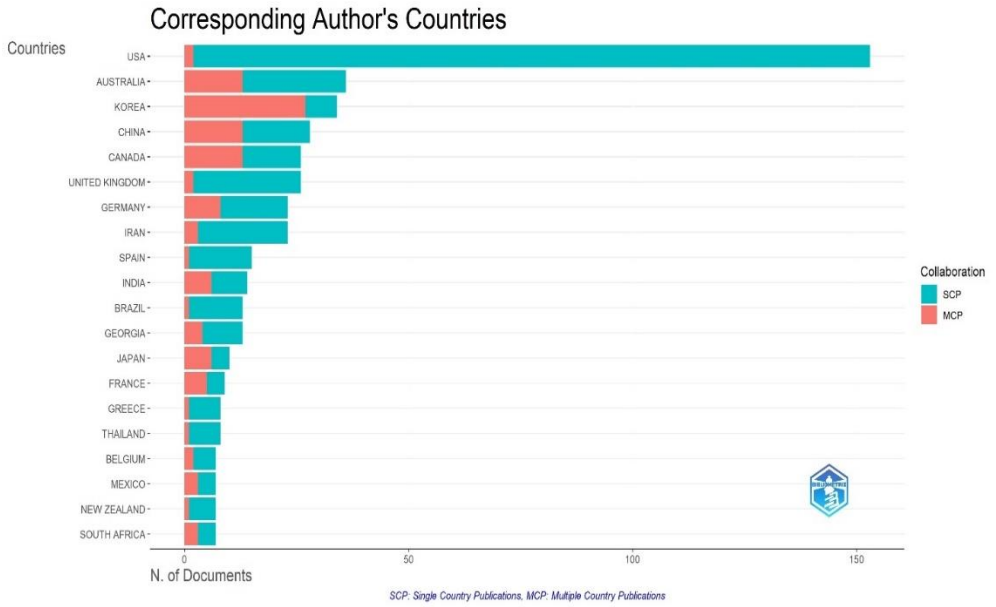


Figure 03: Most Productive Countries

Most Productive Affiliations

Figure 4 shows the most productive affiliations Florida State University leads in sports marketing research with a total of 21 articles, indicating its strong focus and productivity in this area. The University of Georgia follows with 17 articles showcasing its commitment to advancing sports marketing knowledge. Indiana University and Loughborough University have also made significant contributions, with 14 and 13 articles, respectively. The University of Florida has published 12 articles, further highlighting the interest and active research in sports marketing within U.S. institutions. Islamic Azad University stands out with 11 articles, indicating its prominence in this field outside the U.S. Both Temple University and Texas A&M University have contributed 10 articles each. Deakin University and German Sport University Cologne round out the list with 9 articles each, showing their active engagement in sports marketing research. This lineup reflects the diverse academic environments that contribute to the development of sports marketing globally.

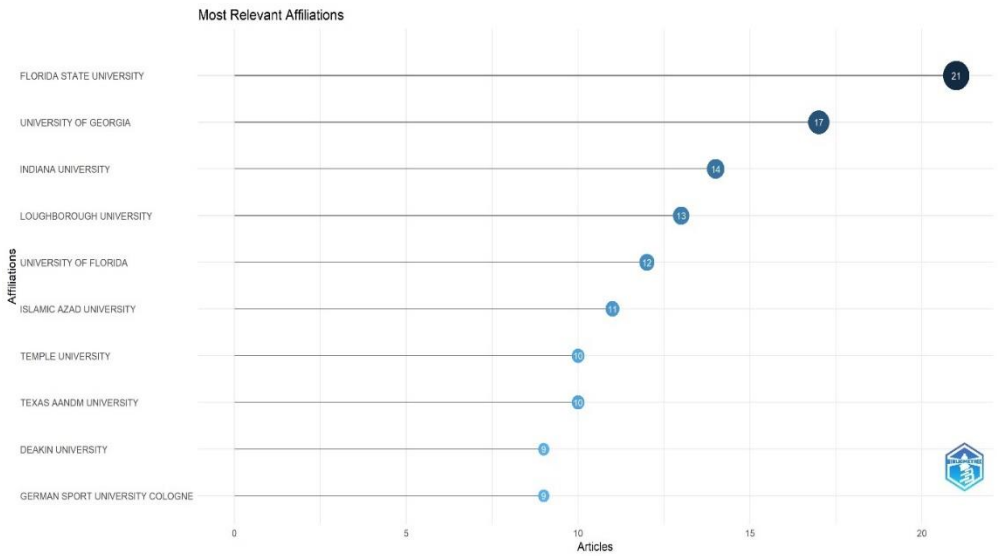


Figure 04: Most Productive Affiliations

Most Productive Journals

Figure 5 illustrates the most productive journals; the International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship leads the pack with 86 articles, demonstrating its major role as a publication hub for sports marketing and sponsorship research. Close behind is the International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing, which has published 79 articles highlighting its significant impact in the field. Sport Management Review has also made a substantial contribution with 31 articles. The Journal of Sport Management and Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal follow, with 22 and 21 articles, respectively, underscoring their importance in disseminating research related to sport management and business. European Sport Management Quarterly, with 16 articles, and both the Annals of Applied Sport Science and the Journal of Global Sport Management, each with 11 articles, show a focused but notable presence in the field. The Journal of Business Research and Sports Marketing Quarterly round out the list with 10 and 9 articles, respectively, indicating their active engagement in bridging sports with broader business and marketing studies. This distribution reflects the diverse platforms through which sports marketing research is shared and developed.

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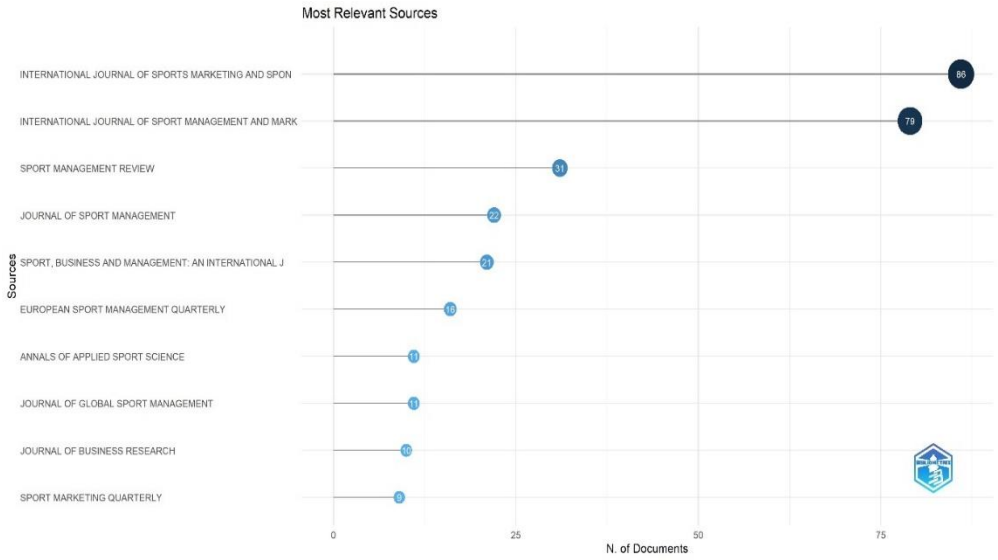


Figure 05: Most Relevant Sources

Most Frequent Keywords

The most frequent keywords in sports marketing are shown in figures 5 and 6, "Sports marketing" leads with 174 occurrences, closely followed by "sports marketing" at 150 occurrences, indicating strong interest and ongoing discussions around these topics. "Sponsorship" appears 47 times, reflecting its importance in sports-related marketing strategies. "Social media" is mentioned 34 times, underscoring its role in modern sports marketing efforts. The term "sport" alone appears 28 times, while "sport management" is cited 27 times, both emphasizing the foundational elements of the discipline. "Football" shows up 23 times, suggesting specific interest in this sport within the broader field of sports marketing. The keywords "marketing" and "sports" are also frequently mentioned, with 22 and 21 occurrences, respectively, indicating their broad relevance. "Branding" rounds out the list with 20 mentions, highlighting its significance in building sports and athlete identities. This keyword analysis provides insights into the dominant topics and focuses on sports marketing research.



Figure 05: Most Frequent Keywords

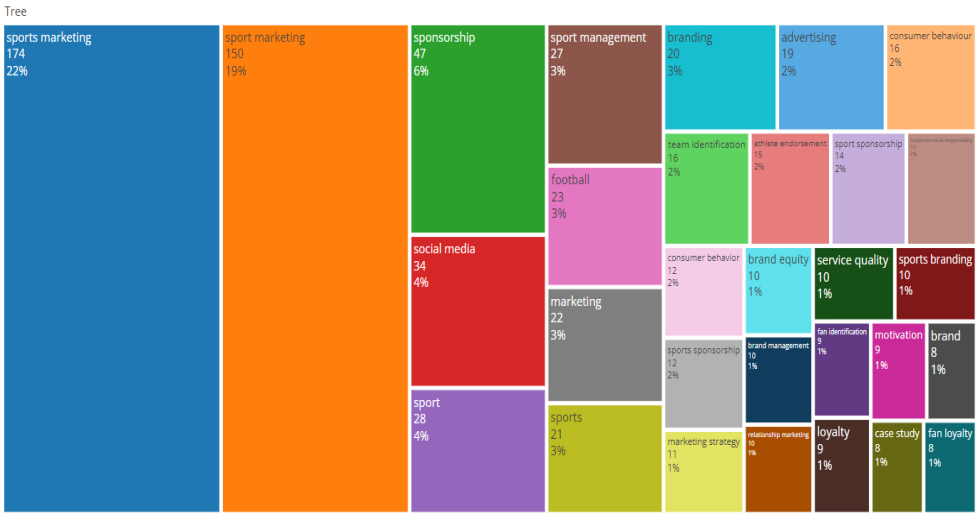


Figure 06: Tree Map

Network analysis

Network visualizations utilize colours and sizes of nodes to show the significance and types of connections between entities in a research domain (Imam et al., 2023). Figure 07 provides a network analysis of authors in sports marketing research. Cluster 1, highlighted in red, includes central figures like Kim D, who acts as a key connector among his peers, indicating significant collaborative efforts and influence in guiding research themes. Other active collaborators in this cluster are Byon KK, Kwak DH, and Ko Y.J., who work closely within the same thematic group. Cluster 2, shown in blue, features James JD and Yoshida M, both of whom bridge various research topics, underscoring their roles in developing and integrating sports marketing theories. Cluster 3, marked in green, includes Lee S and Kim Y, who have made important contributions to the field through their individual and joint research efforts.

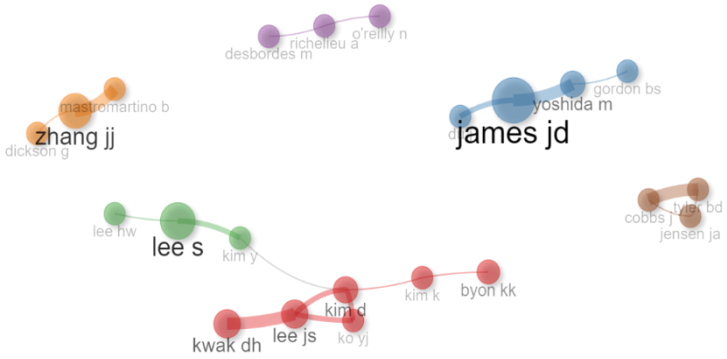


Figure 07: Network Analysis - Authors

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Figure 8 shows the network affiliations of these authors. In Cluster 1 (Red), Florida State University and the University of Georgia stand out for their strong research output and collaborations, alongside institutions like Indiana University, Texas A&M University, Louisiana State University, Seoul National University, and the University of Alabama. Cluster 2 (Blue) features Islamic Azad University, the University of Tehran, and La Trobe University, all of which play pivotal roles in sports marketing studies. Cluster 3 (Green) includes Temple University, the University of South Carolina, and Texas Tech University, all key contributors to research collaborations and the field's development.

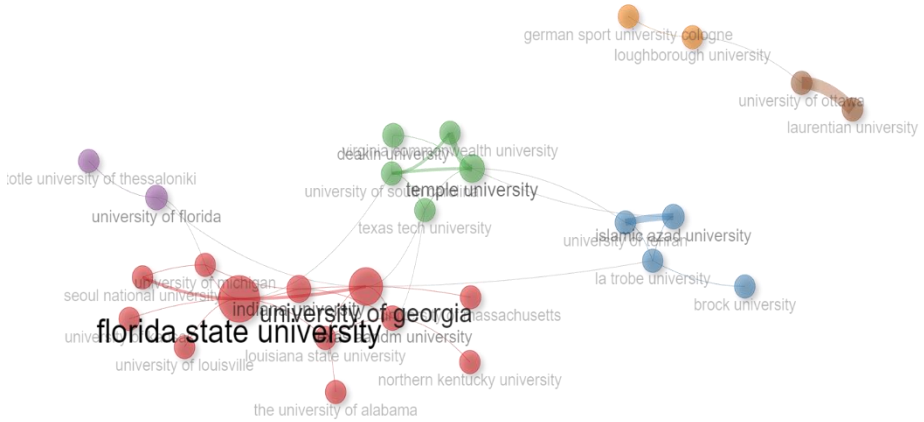


Figure 08: Network Analysis - Affiliations

Figure 9 illustrates the network visualization of countries involved in sports marketing research. Cluster 1 (Blue) includes prolific contributors such as the USA and the United Kingdom, which lead with extensive publications. Other active countries in this cluster are Canada, China, Korea, Australia, Iran, Brazil, France, Turkey, Greece, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, and Sweden, each showing varying levels of output. Cluster 2 (Red) features Spain and Mexico, with Spain having a strong research presence and Mexico indicating emerging involvement. Cluster 3 includes India, South Africa, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates, all notable for their growing research contributions, reflecting a broader geographical spread in sports marketing studies.

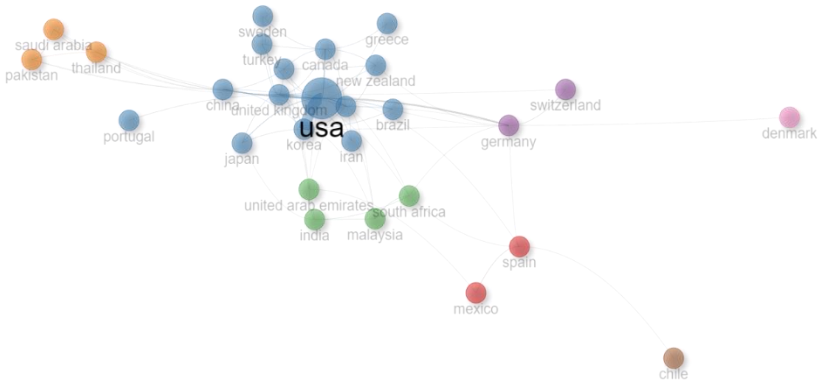


Figure 09: Network Analysis - Countries

Thematic Evolution

The thematic evolution, as revealed in Figure 10, shows how the field of sports marketing research has evolved over the years. The early themes from the 90s to 2015 were such as "advertising," "brand loyalty," and "content analysis". These themes can be categorized into focusing on the basics of marketing and how they were applied to sports. There was also significant attention on "athlete endorsements" and "sports branding". However, these themes were no longer relevant in the years to come as the research expanded to other areas. The focus after 2016 has been more towards global integration and technological advancements. More recently, the focus has been on "cause-related marketing" and "service quality". Furthermore, the depth and diversity of topics in recent years have increased, as it is evident from Figure 10 that the new research has been related to diversified areas such as social responsibility, technology, globalization, sponsorships, and branding.

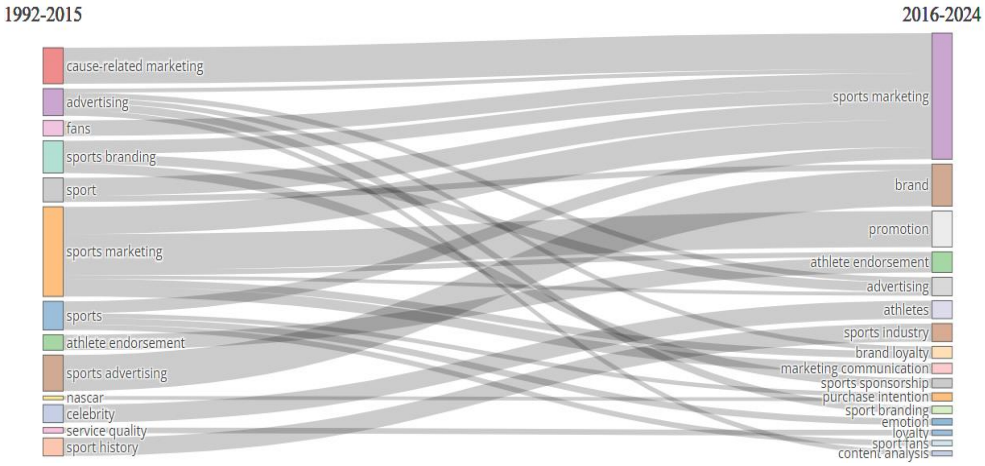


Figure 10 Thematic Evolution

Discussion and Conclusion

The dataset from the Scopus database spans from 1992 to 2024 and includes 639 documents from 207 different sources. This collection shows a significant yearly growth rate of 8.72% in document production, highlighting the increasing interest and research activity in this field. On average, each document is about eight years old and has garnered approximately 15.73 citations, reflecting its impact and relevance within the academic community. The data also points to a strong trend toward collaboration, with 1,350 authors contributing to these documents. Remarkably, only 92 authors have written documents on their own. The data shows an average of 2.73 co-authors per document, and 23% of these co-authorships are international, pointing to a broad and varied global research network. The consistent increase in document production and high levels of international collaboration suggests a growing interest and significant engagement across Sports Marketing.

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The analysis examined the productivity of authors within the dataset. Jeffrey D. James and Shinhyoung Lee emerged as the most prolific, each having authored 10 articles. They were closely followed by Kevin Byon, Dae Hee Kwak, and James Zhang, who have each contributed to seven publications. The analysis of citation patterns reveals key insights into influential works within the field of sports marketing. Leading the citation count is the 2002 study by Hightower et al., which received 412 citations for its examination of how the physical environment at sporting events enhances fan enjoyment. This suggests a strong academic and practical interest in the spatial aspects of sports marketing. After that, Bush et al.'s 2004 study, which examined the effect of sports personalities on Generation Y's behavioural intentions, received 258 citations. This suggests a strong interest in celebrity endorsement tactics and how well they work with younger audiences. Another noteworthy study by Yoshida & James (2010) received 248 citations and concentrated on customer satisfaction with regard to game and service experiences at sporting events. This emphasizes how important it is for sports marketing research to keep putting a strong emphasis on the customer experience.

When it comes to contributions from different parts of the world, the USA is the clear winner, with over 153 published articles highlighting its dominant role in the field. It is quite evident that the USA has this dominance in research because the sports industry in the USA is the largest in the world. Australia and Korea are also significant contributors, with 36 and 34 articles, respectively. Just like the USA, these countries also have a significant sporting fan base and a sporting culture. China, Canada, and the U.K. follow closely, each making substantial contributions that show the widespread global interest and engagement in sports marketing studies. Countries like Germany, Iran, Spain, and India are actively participating as well, reflecting the field's international relevance and the impact it has had all over the globe.

With 21 publications under its belt, Florida State University is a leader in sports marketing research, demonstrating the depth of its commitment to this field. The University of Georgia, which is obviously dedicated to advancing our understanding of sports marketing, comes in second with 17 articles. With 14 and 13 publications, respectively, Indiana University and Loughborough University are also significant contributors, demonstrating their active involvement in research. Twelve papers from the University of Florida have been added to the field, highlighting the interest that American universities have in sports marketing. With 11 pieces, Islamic Azad University—a non-US institution—stands out and emphasizes its important significance globally. Texas A&M University and Temple University have each contributed ten publications. With nine publications apiece, German Sport University Cologne and Deakin University complete the list. Deakin University and German Sport University Cologne have also contributed 9 articles each, showing their engagement in sports marketing research.

Furthermore, several journals were identified in the study as leading sources for publications in the field of sports marketing. The International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship was the most prominent, with 86 articles. It was closely followed by the International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing, with 79 articles. Sport Management Review had 31 articles, and the Journal of Sport Management and Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal

published 22 and 21 articles, respectively. These journals can be targeted by researchers who have been focusing on the field of sports marketing research.

Furthermore, the analysis of the past studies also reveals clear trends that emerged from thematic evolution. The research related to sports marketing from 1992 to 2015 focused on core topics such as advertising, brand loyalty, and content analysis. Such topics were prevalent, concentrating on applying basic marketing principles within the sports context as these were considered unexplored areas in sports marketing research. During this period, there was a strong emphasis on sports branding and athlete endorsement, highlighting the importance of media and personal branding in the sports industry. Since 2016, the scope of research themes has broadened considerably due to technological advancements and global shifts. Recent studies have pivoted towards cause-related marketing and service quality, indicating a shift towards incorporating social responsibility and enhancing customer satisfaction within sports marketing strategies. The rise of digital platforms has expanded the focus on sports sponsorship and sports branding, emphasizing how digital media influences fan engagement and reshapes sponsorship practices. Additionally, emerging themes like technology and globalization suggest that sports marketing is increasingly considering global markets and technological innovations. This thematic shift highlights how the field is adapting to new challenges and opportunities presented by a changing global and digital landscape.

Significance of the Research

The study has made several contributions that go even beyond the academic circles. Most importantly, this research informs sports marketing practitioners about important studies and emerging trends in the field of sports marketing. Furthermore, this study can act as an important study for new researchers who wish to pursue research in sports marketing. They can identify citation patterns, influential institutions, and top contributors just by looking at the analysis of this research. These can be extremely helpful for new researchers who wish to find potential collaborators from different parts of the world and find relevant journals to publish their research in the area of sports marketing.

Similarly, this research is important for editorial boards, specifically for journals related to sports marketing, as the study demonstrates how the research has evolved and what the current trends and topics in this field are. Through this study, they can plan future publications and special issues with an informed approach. Overall, this study not only charts historical trends but also lays a foundation for continued growth and development in sports marketing research and practice.

Limitations of Research

This bibliometric review, consisting of 639 articles from the field of sports marketing, sourced from the Scopus database from 1992 to 2024, provides a unique and valuable perspective. However, a major limitation of this study is that it is only based on the Scopus index and does not include articles from other reliable and credible databases such as Web of Science. Sports Marketing is a vast field, and many authors have been actively pursuing research related to it and may not have published in Scopus-indexed journals. Therefore, there is a possibility that some of the most critical

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works in this field might have been overlooked, which potentially limits the depth of the analysis and the implications it has for the stakeholders. Furthermore, the focus of the study was to answer the specific research questions, and it stuck to the scope of the study. However, while analysing the trends, several new research directions emerged that could have been employed in the study, such as the growth of journals in the past three decades that focus specifically on sports marketing.

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