

MARKETING OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: RESEARCH THEMES AND THEIR SHIFTING RELEVANCE OVER TIME

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ABSTRACT

Marketing plays a key role in the operation of contemporary universities, especially in the context of the increasing commercialisation of education. Like business, universities need to present themselves favourably to students, but also to employers and the broader public. Higher education marketing is a specialized branch of service marketing, which has evolved with increasing competition and the commercialisation of education. The unique nature of marketing in higher education stems from its dual purpose: attracting students while upholding the university's broader mission of education, research, and human capital development. Marketing strategies must be coherent with the institution's values and cater to multiple audiences. As such, the themes of ongoing research in higher education marketing can be expected to reflect these challenges and transformations.

This study aims to analyse the evolution of research topics in this field over the period 1999–2024, highlighting key themes, influential authors, and significant publication venues. To achieve this, the study employs bibliometric analysis, using both performance analysis and science mapping (bibliometric mapping) to examine how research areas, disciplines, and key contributions are interconnected. A Web of Science search was conducted based on identified keywords, resulting in a dataset of 494 publications. Using author-assigned keywords, the study identifies major research directions and their shifts over time.

Key words: marketing, higher education, literature mapping, bibliometric analysis.

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1. Introduction

The evolving perception of the role of marketing at universities is a natural consequence of the expanding higher education market at the turn of the century and the attendant challenges that have arisen. As universities operate in an increasingly dynamic environment, they must adopt deliberate marketing strategies to remain competitive and relevant. Within the education system, universities contribute to societal and economic development by providing education in specific fields of knowledge, conducting scientific research, as well as developing and promoting national culture and technological progress.

Changes in the higher education environment – driven by unfavourable demographic shifts, changes in the ways in which universities are financed, globalisation processes, and rapid technological and informational advancements – have necessitated the adoption of a marketing-oriented approach at universities, modelled on those seen in other industries. These changes entail not only a need to adapt the instruments used to emerging challenges, but also a shift in the perception of the role of marketing in higher education.

Marketing in higher education is a specialized branch of service marketing that has evolved alongside increasing competition and the commercialisation of education. Marketing strategies allow universities to stand out in a competitive market, attract students and build a strong brand, which is essential for their development and survival. Universities, like businesses, must present themselves effectively to their target audience, which primarily consists of students, but also includes employers and the general public.

Marketing in this context includes image and reputation management as well as effective communication, focusing on the intangible aspects of the university's offerings, such as quality of its teaching, its reputation and the student experience. Much like other service organisations, universities must build relationships with their customers, i.e. students and other stakeholders, and strive to tailor their activities to their expectations. Effective marketing of educational services crucially involves managing the perceptions of service quality, communicating the value of the programmes offered, and maintaining consistency in branding and messaging. Furthermore, universities must continuously monitor and refine their marketing strategies in response to shifting market demands and audience expectations, while taking into account the specific needs and motivations of students and building lasting relationships with graduates.

Modern marketing efforts in higher education are increasingly taking place in the digital sphere, where universities use websites and social media to communicate with potential students. By maintaining an active online presence and utilizing a variety of communication tools, universities strive to build lasting relationships with both current and future students.

The unique nature of marketing in higher education stems from its dual purpose: attracting students while upholding the university's broader mission of education, research, and human capital development. Marketing strategies must be coherent with the institution's values and cater to multiple audiences. Effective marketing activities should therefore focus on:

- building a strong university brand that is recognisable and valued in the market,
- market segmentation, with the offerings tailored to the needs of different groups of students,
- using digital tools to communicate and build relationships with students,
- constantly monitoring and adjusting strategies based on market trends and audience expectations,
- striving for student satisfaction and loyalty .

Universities that successfully combine marketing with their educational mission can achieve lasting success in the increasingly competitive environment.

The purpose of this study is to analyse evolving research trends on the role of marketing in higher education. This analysis will be supplemented with insights into the relevance of key publications, authors, and sources within the field. The study will be based on bibliometric analysis of metadata from relevant publications indexed in the Web of Science.

2. Literature review

Different types of reviews of the literature on the marketing issues addressed in higher education, i.e. systematic literature reviews, bibliometric analyses and meta-analyses, typically select one topic/issue from the given research area and qualitatively or quantitatively review the existing publications on that topic. Examples of this approach include review studies on social media use (Pawar, 2024), conceptualising market orientation (Dwyer, 2024), reputation and its management (Amado et al., 2022; Sun & Lim, 2023; Faraoni et al., 2023), service quality and student satisfaction (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2017; Onditi & Wechuli, 2017; Santini et al., 2017) lecturer satisfaction (Hoang, 2023), university brands (Yaping et al., 2023; Le et al., 2023), digital marketing (Jain & Rao, 2024) and university social responsibility (Fauzi et al., 2023).

In contrast, some scholars adopt a broader approach when defining the scope of their reviews. Notable examples include the works of Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006, 2011) and Rabenu and Shkoler (2022). Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka carried out a systematic literature review of marketing in higher education twice: the first review covered the period

1992–2004, while the second (which can be seen as a supplement/extension/update) covered the period 2005–2018. Their research identified several key phases in the evolution of marketing within higher education. Initially, in the 1980s and 1990s, marketing in education was treated as an adaptation of practices from the business sector, dominated by theoretical-normative approaches and handbooks on marketing techniques. Students were seen as a university's "product," employers as its customers. In the 1990s, a narrower view of marketing communications emerged, where the decision-making process of students and the content of print publications were analysed. Over time, it was understood that higher education was better understood as a service rather than a product, which led to the implementation of service marketing theory. During this period, attention began to be paid to building relationships with customers and using business models, especially those developed by Kotler.

After 2006, the increasing commercialisation of higher education worldwide prompted universities to adopt free-market practices and a more professional approach to marketing. At the same time, the importance of marketing communication, including online marketing and social media, increased. Authors began to focus on studying the effectiveness of these tools, their impact on the university's image and ways of engaging audiences. Branding became a key area of research and universities began to consciously build their brands. In addition, research covered the effectiveness of marketing strategies, recruitment, alumni relations and donations. As a result, five main research topics have been identified: commercialisation, marketing communication, brand building, marketing strategy, and recruitment, alumni and donations. An important measure of an author's influence within these research areas is the citation frequency of their publications.

Additionally, it is worth noting that certain books – although they are excluded from the bibliometric analyses that follow – have been extensively cited in academic discussions on marketing in higher education. These include Krip (2003), Molesworth et al. (2011), Maringe and Gibbs (2008), and Brown and Carraso (2013). From the Polish market, relevant books on similar topics include Drapińska (2011), Dziewianowska (2018), Hall (2011, 2022) and Leja (2011).

3. Research methodology

The general workflow for scientific mapping analysis involves a number of key steps (Börner et al. 2003; Cobo et al. 2011a): data search, preprocessing, network extraction, normalisation, mapping, analysis and visualisation. The final stage of this process involves interpreting the results obtained and drawing conclusions from them.

The objectives of the present bibliometric study are as follows:

1. to identify which journals, authors and papers are most frequently cited in the research area “marketing in higher education”,
2. to identify the journals, authors that have the greatest impact on research in the research area,
3. to identify key research topics in the area under study and track the changes that have taken place over time (i.e. from the first identified publication on the given topic to the present day).

Table 1. Basic information on the generated set of documents.

Description	Results	Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA		DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Timespan	1999-2024	Keywords Plus (ID)	766
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	207	Author's Keywords (DE)	1361
Documents	494	AUTHORS	
Annual Growth Rate %	10.8	Authors	1134
Document Average Age	7	Authors of single-authored docs	78
Average citations per doc	16.36	AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
References	20969	Single-authored docs	87
		Co-Authors per Doc	2.69
		International co-authorships %	27.33

Source: based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

There are several possible online bibliographic databases for data retrieval. The most important of these are Web of Science, Scopus or Google Scholar. These databases vary in terms of their coverage of specific scientific disciplines and journals, each with its own advantages and limitations, often discipline-specific (Bar-Ilan, 2010; Falagas et al., 2008).

For this study, the Web of Science (WoS) database was selected as the primary source of publications for a scientific mapping analysis. However, scientific map analysis should not be applied directly to data extracted from bibliographic sources, as these may contain errors. Therefore, a pre-processing step should be applied to improve the quality of the data. Various preprocessing methods can be used, including those that detect duplicate and misspelled elements, time-sharing and data reduction. The details of this process are shown in Figure 1.

The metadata of the 494 articles so selected was transferred to Biblioshiny software (Aria, Cuccurullo, 2017) to prepare for analysis. Subsequently, the completeness of the individual fields in the database was assessed to evaluate the quality of the data obtained. In all fields, i.e. author(s), publication title, and keywords, the proportion of missing responses is either zero or negligibly low. The characteristics of the resulting set of publications are shown in Table 1.

Citation analysis was used to achieve the stated objectives¹ and identify research trends through text analysis. Citation analysis was carried out across the entire timeline from the first identified publication on a given topic in the database to October 2024 (when the present analysis was carried out). To track research trends over time, the study divided the dataset into four sub-periods (1999–2009, 2010–2014, 2015–2019, 2020–2024)². The characteristics of the resulting subsets of publications are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Basic information on the generated set of documents and the identified sub-periods.

Description	1st period	2nd period	3rd period	4th period
Timespan	1999-2009	2010-2014	2015-2019	2020-2024
Sources (journals, book, etc)	15	52	104	80
Documents	42	99	177	176
Average Growth Rate (%)	17.46	9.78	20.9	-6.49
Average citations per doc	36.64	23.42	17.38	6.523
References	1813	4218	7854	10160
Keywords Plus (ID)	85	201	389	455
Author's Keywords	123	350	573	627
Authors	91	208	440	508

Source: based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

¹ Citation analysis measures the number of citations a paper has received, so that an overall assessment of the quality of the paper can be made (Andreson, 2006). This approach is based on the premise that frequently cited articles are considered influential within their research field. The underlying assumption is that authors cite papers that they consider important to their own work (Zupic & Cater, 2015). Citations also reflect the degree of knowledge transfer and dissemination, indicating how widely a paper is recognized and referenced by researchers from other institutions and research centres (Ejdys, 2016).

² Dividing research data into periods is a key step in the analysis of thematic evolution (Cobo et al., 2011b). This segmentation serves two purposes: (1) preventing data homogeneity and (2) enabling the identification of research field developments over time (Karakose et al., 2023). Our dataset was divided into four periods based on two key considerations. The first is the standard timeframe for research in identifying research trends, which is typically five years (Huang & Chang, 2016). Second, graph analyses of annual publication trends revealed that research in this field initially experienced low but steadily increasing publication rates. Therefore, to obtain enough data to be subjected to thematic evolution analysis, we decided to extend the first-time interval. The resulting intervals are characterised by enough publications so that the number of author keywords obtained on this basis can be subjected to analysis.

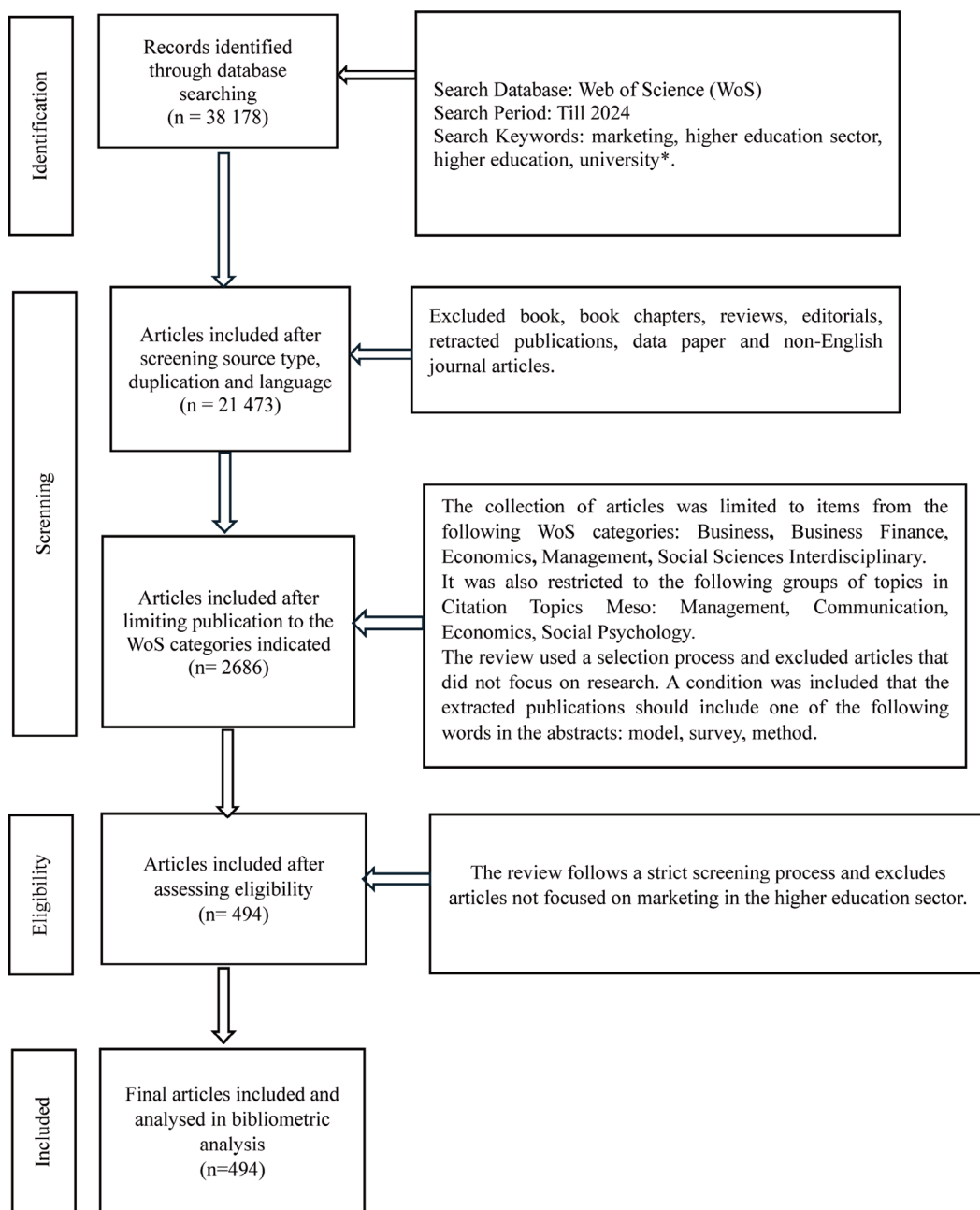


Figure 1. Stages reflecting the literature search and selection process (PRISMA protocol).

Source: based on Moher et al. (2009).

In parallel, we manually merged author keywords of similar relevance. This is a necessary step to improve the quality of the bibliometric and thematic analysis. Next, a science mapping analysis was carried out using Biblioshiny software to analyse the thematic structure and evolution of the research themes.

The themes obtained from the science mapping analysis are represented by a strategy diagram and a thematic network structure. Biblioshiny automatically calculates centrality (x-axis) and density (y-axis) values for each topic, and these are usually presented in a four-field, two-dimensional diagram. In this case, the centrality values reflect the extent of interactions between clusters and the strength of relationships between them. Results are presented in the diagram as follows (Cobo et al. 2011b):

1. Themes in the upper right quadrant (Motor Themes) are both well developed and important for structuring the research field. These are known as Motor Themes of Specialisation, given that they show strong centrality and high density. The placement of themes in this quadrant suggests that they are externally linked to concepts applicable to other themes that are conceptually closely related.
2. Themes in the upper left quadrant (Niche Themes) have well-developed internal linkages but insignificant external linkages and are therefore only marginally relevant to the field. These themes are highly specialised and peripheral in nature.
3. Themes in the bottom left quadrant (Emerging or Declining Themes) are both underdeveloped and marginal. Themes in this quadrant are low in density and low in centrality, representing mainly emerging or declining themes.
4. Themes in the lower right quadrant (Basic Themes) are important to the research field but are not developed. This quadrant therefore contains cross-cutting and general basic themes.

4. Relevance of publications, authors and marketing publications in higher education

The earliest publication in the generated set of publications containing research results on marketing in university activities dates back to 1999. For the next five years, research in this area received little attention from researchers. However, there was a clear increase in publications since the mid-2000s. For instance, there were 62 publications in 2010, 115 in 2013, and 352 in 2020. This growth likely reflects the cumulative development of new ideas built upon previous scientific achievements.

Figure 2 shows the changes in the number of publications on marketing in higher education activities between 1999 and 2024. An analysis of the average citations per year can complement the resulting picture. The graph with average citations per year

identifies several points in time – such as 2007 and 2009 – with a higher number of citations.³

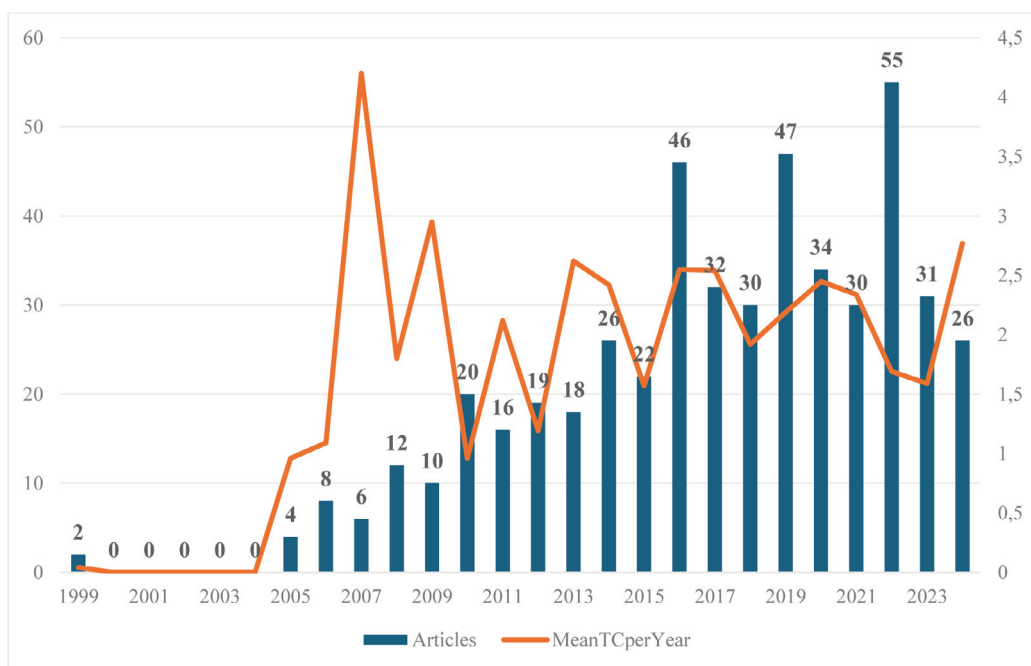


Figure 2. Number of publications on marketing research in higher education activities in the WoS database over the period 1991–2024. *Source:* based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

When the results from Figures 1 and 2 are juxtaposed with the data in Tables 1 and 2, several basic conclusions emerge. The number of publications reporting research in the field of marketing in higher education has been steadily increasing across the defined periods. Similarly, the number of citations per publication and the pool of contributing authors are both on the rise.

In addition, relevant publication outlets can be identified by considering both the number of articles published and the corresponding bibliometric indices. For the research area analysed, the three journals publishing the most articles are: *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, *International Journal of Educational Management*, and *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*. A detailed overview is presented in Table 3.

³ The spikes in citations for these years are likely attributable in part to the appearance of two of the most cited publications in the collection: Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana (2007) and Bennett & Ali-Choudhury (2009). According to Google Scholar, these articles have been cited 576 and 387 times, respectively (as of 03.11.2024).

Table 3. Relevance of higher education marketing journals.

	Source	Articles	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	PY_start	Bradford's Law Zone
1	Journal of Marketing for Higher Education	132	30	47	1.50	2819	2005	Zone 1 (core)
2	International Journal of Educational Management	34	15	23	0.75	596	2005	Zone 1 (core)
3	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	11	11	11	0.58	392	2006	Zone 2
4	Journal of Business Research	11	11	11	0.61	844	2007	Zone 2
5	Journal of Marketing Management	5	5	5	0.36	151	2011	Zone 2

Description: h-index – Hirsch index, g-index – Egghe's g-index, m-index – m-index, NP = total number of publications; TC = total number of citations, PY_start – first identified publication from a given field in a given journal.

The author with the largest number of publications in the area under analysis is Chris Chapleo with 6 publications (published independently as author or co-author, which means that his “fractionalized authorship” score is 4.03), followed by Tamer Elsharnouby, who also published 6 articles (albeit with a lower fractionalized authorship score, i.e. 3.5), and Emmanuel Mogaji with 5 publications (fractionalized authorship 2.17). The above list can be supplemented by the bibliometric index values (i.e. h-index, g-index, m-index) determined for each author. Details are provided in Table 4.

Table 4. The 5 most influential authors of publications on marketing in higher education.

	Author	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
1	Chris Chapleo	5	6	0,36	114	6	2011
2	Tamer Elsharnouby	5	6	0,50	164	6	2015
3	Emmanuel Mogaji	4	5	0,44	60	5	2016
4	Norazlyn Kamal Basha	3	3	0,30	34	3	2015
5	Riza Casidy	3	3	0,25	74	3	2013

Description: h-index – Hirsch index, g-index – Egghe's g-index, m-index – m-index, NP = total number of publications; TC = total number of citations, PY_start – first identified publication from a given author's field.

Source: based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

A second important measure of a given author's contribution to the advancement of a particular field of research is the number of citations of his or her publications in that field. Among authors publishing on marketing in higher education, the most frequently cited are Jane Hemsley-Brown (with 48 citations), Adam Peruta, Alison B. Shields (43 citations each) and Shivonne Goonawardana (42 citations).

A ranking of the most cited papers can be constructed based on citations from the entire database (so-called *global citations*) or based on citations from items in the generated set of documents (so-called *local citations*). There may be differences between the two lists (i.e. global citations may be more numerous than local citations). Since this study focuses on research trends in higher education marketing, the local citation metric was prioritized. Table 5 summarizes the top 10 most cited publications in this field.

Table 5. The 10 most cited publications in the research area analysed.

	Publication	Local Citations	Global Citations
1	Hemsley-Brown, J., & Goonawardana, S. (2007). Brand harmonization in the international higher education market.	42	158
2	Bennett, R., & Ali-Choudhury, R. (2009). Prospective students' perceptions of university brands: An empirical study	31	91
3	Helgesen, Ø. (2008). Marketing for higher education: A relationship marketing approach	25	103
4	Lowrie, A. (2007). Branding higher education: Equivalence and difference in developing identity	24	76
5	Mourad, M., Ennew, C., & Kortam, W. (2011). Brand equity in higher education	23	88
6	Constantinides, E., & Zinck Stagno, M. C. (2011). Potential of the social media as instruments of higher education marketing: A segmentation study	21	121
7	Clark, M., Fine, M. B., & Scheuer, C. L. (2017). Relationship quality in higher education marketing: the role of social media engagement	21	83
8	Paswan, A. K., & Ganesh, G. (2009). Higher education institutions: Satisfaction and loyalty among international students	20	77
9	Rauschnabel, P. A., Krey, N., Babin, B. J., & Ivens, B. S. (2016). Brand management in higher education: the university brand personality scale	20	117
10	Peruta, A., & Shields, A. B. (2017). Social media in higher education: understanding how colleges and universities use Facebook	20	110

Source: based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

In first place is an article by Hemsley-Brown, J. and Goonawardana, S. from 2007, entitled: *Brand harmonisation in the international higher education market*. This is followed by an article by Bennett, R and Ali-Choudhury, R. from 2009, entitled Prospective students' perceptions of university brands: An empirical study. The third place is occupied by an article published by Helgesen, Ø. in 2008 entitled *Marketing for higher education: A relationship marketing approach*. A summary of the first 10 publications with citation data is provided in Table 5. A closer look at this list reveals that the dominant research themes in the most influential works are branding and social media in higher education marketing. These articles represent key foundational works in the field and could be considered part of a 'must-read' list for researchers and authors exploring this topic.

5. Research topics in marketing in higher education, their relevance and variability

Next, the research topics addressed in each publication were identified based on the author-assigned keywords. There are 1,361 author keywords in the generated set of publications, as opposed to 766 keywords assigned by algorithms in the Web of Science database (Keywords Plus). The larger number of author keywords should, we anticipated, ensure a greater diversity of keywords, which should provide the opportunity to identify research topics more precisely.

Once the resulting set of keywords was organized and refined, several research topics in this area could be tentatively identified.⁴ Notably, themes previously identified from publication titles – such as branding and brand image and the use of social media – are reinforced. Additionally, new recurring themes have been identified, including: student satisfaction and loyalty, service quality, marketing orientation. A detailed summary of the 15 most frequently occurring keywords is provided in Table 6.

The research topics presented in Table 6 relate to the full time period from 1999 to 2024. For more granularity in identifying researchers' interest in particular topics in different periods, the topics were analysed for the four sub-periods (1999–2009, 2010–2014, 2015–2019, 2020–2024). The results are presented in Table 7.

⁴ To refine the authoritative keyword dataset, we excluded certain terms from the analysis, such as keywords already used as search criteria, country names, and other non-thematic terms. Additionally, we standardized terminology by replacing plural keywords with singular forms, expanding acronyms into full names, and merging similar expressions to ensure consistency. This process helped create a more structured and accurate identification of research themes in marketing in higher education while reducing redundancy in the dataset.

Table 6. The 15 most frequently occurring author keywords.

	Keywords	Frequency of occurrence		Keywords	Frequency of occurrence
1	brand	96	9	value	25
2	student satisfaction	75	10	marketing communication	17
3	image	50	11	market orientation	16
4	social media	44	12	marketing strategy	16
5	service quality	39	13	internal marketing	14
6	student loyalty	29	14	trust	12
7	relationship marketing	26	15	WoM (word of mouth)	11
8	digital marketing	25			

Source: based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

Table 7. Evolution of research topics on marketing in higher education.

	1999–2009	2010–2014	2015–2019	2020–2024
Dominant research themes identified	•relationship marketing, •brand, •student satisfaction, •marketing strategy, •market segmentation	•student satisfaction, •services marketing, •social media, •digital marketing, •marketing strategy, •market orientation,	•market orientation, •university social responsibility, •student satisfaction, •social media, •brand	•market orientation, •university social responsibility, •student satisfaction, •social media, •brand

Source: based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

The next step sought to determine the relevance of the identified research themes, based on four-field thematic maps⁵ generated for each time period. The thematic map for the first period, i.e. 1999–2009 (Figure 3), shows a lack of motor themes, but themes in the other three areas can be identified. The individual thematic clusters are rather self-contained groups, not connected to each other.

⁵ The thematic maps are constructed using two axes: the x-axis represents the relevance of the theme, while the y-axis reflects its level of development. Themes are depicted as ovals (bubbles), each representing a network cluster labeled with the most frequently occurring keyword in that cluster. The size of each bubble corresponds to the number of occurrences of the keywords within the cluster, and its position on the map is determined by its relevance and stage of development. To ensure clarity, the analysis was limited to 75 keywords, meaning that only the most frequently occurring research topics are displayed on the maps.

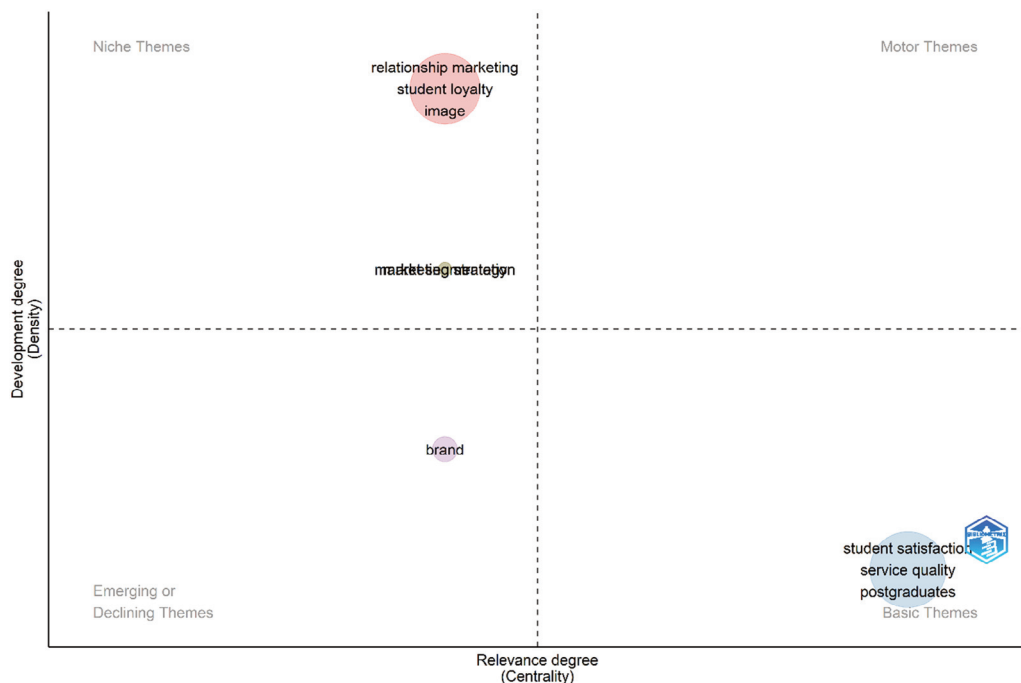


Figure 3. Thematic map for the period 1999–2009. *Source:* based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

In the map for 2010–2014, research topics appear in all fields (Figure 4). A greater thematic differentiation of the research carried out is becoming apparent, and links between the different clusters of the network are also beginning to emerge. Some of the themes (e.g. student satisfaction) do not change their position (i.e. they are still core themes), while others change their position (e.g. student loyalty stops being a niche theme and starts being a core theme). New niche themes are emerging, and these include internal marketing and job satisfaction.

The map for the third period (2015–2019) reveals further changes in terms of the relevance of research topics (Figure 5). The themes of brand and image have become driving themes. A similar position as in earlier periods is occupied by student satisfaction. New themes concerning values or curriculum (as a product/service concept) are emerging. A change in relevance can also be observed for topics regarding marketing orientation (shifting from the core topics area to niche topics). Research topics relating to the use of social media are now in the core topics section (in the previous period they were classified as a motor topic).

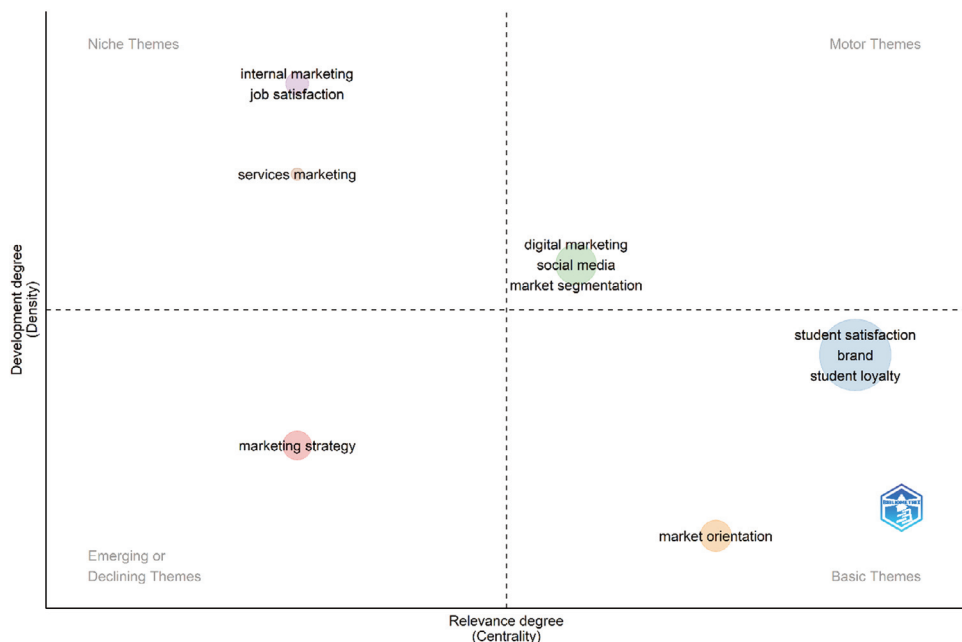


Figure 4. Thematic map for the period 2010–2014. *Source:* based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

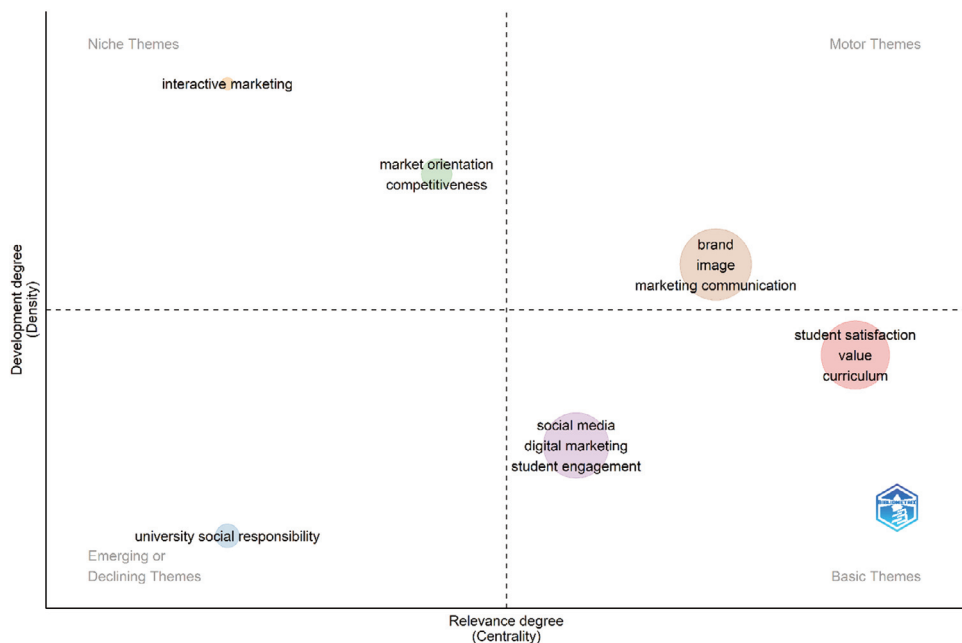


Figure 5. Thematic map for the period 2015–2019. *Source:* based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

The final period studied, 2020–2024 (Figure 6), reveals the emergence of further research topics, e.g. related to *international students*, *sustainability issues* and *e-learning*. Research on *branding*, *image* and *student satisfaction* continues, while digital marketing remains a *core theme*.

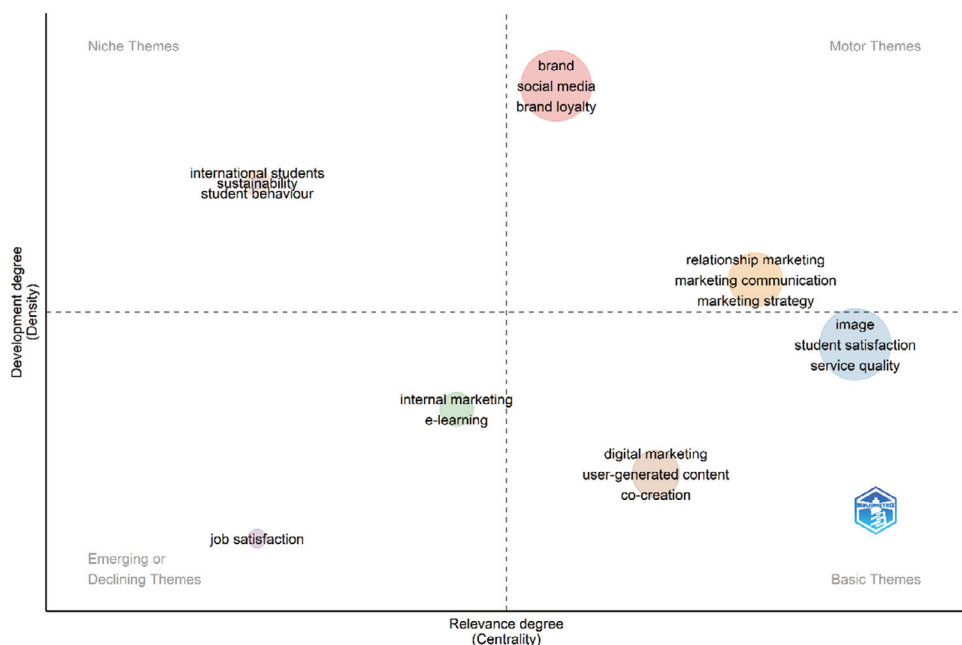


Figure 6. Thematic map for the period 2020–2024. *Source:* based on bibliometric analysis in Biblioshiny.

6. Discussion and conclusions

The research objectives outlined in the methodology section led to the use of citation analysis, which focused on publication and author data while omitting aspects such as author affiliations and country of origin. In identifying research topics, only author-assigned keywords were considered, while Keywords Plus was excluded. Despite these limitations, the information gathered (Table 8) successfully addresses the stated research objectives.

In the initial phase, the application of marketing and its principles was often fragmented and poorly coordinated and integrated. Nowadays, however, the discussion is no longer about the validity of applying the concepts of marketing to higher education institutions, but rather about how to properly adapt marketing tools to the specifics of the educational market and what opportunities marketing offers such institutions.

For example, in view of the increasing surplus of university places universities in many countries are seeing in relation to the number of applicants, entailing intensified national and international competition, the importance of the university's brand, currently one of the pillars of university positioning, is certainly on the rise. Thus, having a good brand, becoming synonymous with the prestige of a university, can support market expansion and serve as an indicator of the university's value and quality.

The growing number of publications studying the use of marketing in higher education suggests that this research area will continue to develop, albeit at a gradual pace. Rather than experiencing rapid expansion, the field is likely to see steady contributions from individual researchers. The journals cited in these publications also indicate a transfer of knowledge from broader marketing research into the field of higher education marketing.

To address the research objectives outlined in the methodology section above, we applied citation analysis, focused solely on publication and author data. Certain aspects, such as author affiliations and information about their country of origin, were omitted. Similarly, in the identification of research topics, author-provided keywords were utilized, with Keywords Plus excluded. Despite these limitations, the information gathered (Table 8) successfully addresses the stated research objectives.

The first stated objective was to identify the most frequently cited journals, authors and papers in the field of "Marketing in Higher Education". The most cited publication in the given set of publications is Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007), followed by Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) and Helgesen (2008). The indicated articles form part of a recommended reading list on the use of marketing in higher education. The authors of the publications with the highest number of citations are: Jane Hemsley-Brown (48 citations), Adam Peruta and Alison B. Shields (43 citations each). In contrast, the most cited journals in this area are: *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* (1212 citations), *Journal of Marketing* (956 citations) and *Journal of Business Research* (800 citations). These journals reflect the main sources of knowledge generation and transfer in higher education marketing research.

The second objective involved identifying the journals and authors with the greatest impact on research in this area. Four such journals were identified: *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, *International Journal of Educational Management*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing* and *Logistics* and *Journal of Business Research*. The most influential authors include Chris Chapleo, Tamer Elsharnouby and Emmanuel Mogaji.

The third objective concerted with the identification of the research themes pursued in each time frame. By dividing the dataset into four sub-periods, the study revealed thematic shifts in higher education marketing research. The comparison between early

and later periods shows an increasing diversity of topics. The results dovetail with findings from other literature reviews, although differences may arise due to broader search criteria used in systematic reviews. While systematic literature reviews can include multiple databases, bibliometric analyses typically rely on one of the two largest scientific publication databases—Web of Science or Scopus.

Table 8. Summary of Citation Analysis and Research Topics Identified in the Field of “Marketing in Higher Education”.

Basic Data	Citation Analysis	Identification of Research Topics by Period
• First publication in the generated dataset: 1999 • Identified set of publications: 494 items in WoS • Average number of authors per document: 2.69 • Highest number of new publications in this research area recorded in 2022: 55 publications • Average document age (in years): 7 • Period 1999–2009: 15 different publication venues, 42 publications, 91 authors, 1813 bibliographic entries • Period 2010–2014: 52 different publication venues, 99 publications, 208 authors, 4218 bibliographic entries • Period 2015–2019: 104 different publication venues, 177 publications, 440 authors, 7854 bibliographic entries • Period 2020–2024: 80 different publication venues, 176 publications, 508 authors, 10160 bibliographic entries	• Average number of citations per document: 16.36 • Authors with the highest number of publications in this field: Chris Chapleo (6 publications) and Tamer Elsharnouby (6 publications) • Authors with the greatest influence on other publications: Chris Chapleo (h-index=5) and Tamer Elsharnouby (h-index=5) • Journal with the highest number of publications in this field: <i>Journal of Marketing for Higher Education</i> (132 publications) • The journal with the greatest impact in this area: <i>Journal of Marketing for Higher Education</i> (h-index=30) • The most relevant journals in each research area (zone 1, Bradford's law): <i>Journal of Marketing for Higher Education</i>, <i>International Journal of Educational Management</i>. • Highest average number of citations per year: 4.02 (2007) • Local citations. Most cited work: Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007).	• The three most frequently occurring keywords in publications from 1999–2024 are: brand (96 times), student satisfaction (75 times), and image (50 times). • Years 1999–2009: <i>relationship marketing, brand, student satisfaction, marketing strategy, market segmentation</i>. • Years 2010–2014: <i>student satisfaction, services marketing, social media, digital marketing, marketing strategy, market orientation</i>. • Years 2015–2019: <i>market orientation, university social responsibility, student satisfaction, social media, brand</i>. • Years 2020–2024: <i>student satisfaction, brand, market orientation, international students, relationship marketing</i>.

Source: based on bibliometric analysis using the Biblioshiny software.

The thematic relevance of research topics varies across periods. While student satisfaction remains a core theme, brand-related research has fluctuated in prominence. These findings highlight the evolving priorities in marketing research within higher education.

Overall, the findings of this study provide a comprehensive overview of how marketing research in higher education has evolved, highlighting key publications, influential authors, and dominant research themes. The results suggest that while the field continues to grow, its expansion is steady rather than rapid, with knowledge transfer largely influenced by broader marketing research. As competition among universities increases, branding, student satisfaction, and digital marketing are likely to remain key focal points in future research.

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