Storytelling in Marketing–A Bibliometric Viewpoint

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Abstract
As the usage of storytelling become more prevalent in contemporary life, it's application in marketing is similarly on the rise. Notwithstanding papers written by industry experts, academia has also contributed a significant amount to the literature surrounding storytelling. This paper looks at investigating storytelling within the confines of marketing by reviewing the current status of research – its trends and patterns through the Web of Science (WoS) and VOSViewer analysis tools – in the last twenty-five years from 1998-2023. The analysis found that there was an increasing amount of interest in this area of research in the past 10 years. Research areas continue to be focus on the business, management, and tourism fields, allowing for opportunities in research in many sub-areas within those areas. This paper provides the implications of study, its limitations together with suggestions for forthcoming research.
Keywords: Storytelling, Marketing, Bibliometric, Vosviewer, Web of Science

Introduction
The power of storytelling is enormous. Stories are a part of a person's history. This inherent nature of storytelling and stories in human existence enables its utilisation and capitalisation for different needs. This is evident through its adoption in many aspects of theoretical studies as well as in industry practice, in both fields of science and social science. Historically, storytelling has been found to exist in research areas such as community building (Lambert, 2013; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2022; Prasetyo, 2017), education (Alterio & McDrury, 2003; Robin, 2016; Wu & Chen, 2020), medical (Lor, et al., 2020, Furtner, Shinde, Singh, Wong, & Setia, 2020), corporate (Gill, 2011; Söderström, Paasche, & Klauser, 2020) and branding and marketing (Fog, Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010; McDonald, 2016; Moin, 2020; Park, Treen, Pitt, & Chan, 2023) to name a few. When discussing its relevance in marketing, we find that traditional marketing methods based on the original 4Ps are no longer enough to keep up with the demands of today's marketplace. The focus has now been shifted

towards relationship marketing, which is extremely crucial in an era where information, feedback and responses are expected promptly. Kotler (2010, p.4) states that marketers must now treat customers as whole human beings who look beyond functional and emotional fulfilment when making product and service choices. Using this concept in today's digital world, it has be reiterated that marketing methods now need to be inclusive to be successful (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2016, p. 10). Marketers now need to consider "three screens" (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. 108) which comprise of television, internet and mobile when planning out campaigns not only to sell products and services but as Peter Drucker, the famous management consultant and theorist, in Kotler and Keller (2016, p. 88) said, "the aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous", which is to ensure that the customer's needs and wants are so well understood by marketers that the product or service will sell on its own. This is where marketing efforts can leverage on the use of storytelling to become successful.

Literature Review
Storytelling in Marketing
When looking at past research, storytelling in marketing has been defined as establishing customer interest and loyalty, and to foster and reinforce relationships between organisations and stakeholders (Escalas, 2004a; Özsomer & Altaras, 2008; Júnior, Limongi, Lim, Eastman, & Kumar, 2023). The persuasive nature of storytelling has often been used by organisations to communicate with stakeholders about not only its establishment and existence, but to create a longing for its products and services.

A quick search on the Web of Science database using the keywords in this study produces 472 publication titles. The use of the storytelling technique in marketing has been acknowledged as a super power for marketers in many academic publications (Simmons, 2006; Papadatos, 2006; Paquette, Yang, & Long, 2017; Mucundorfeanu, 2018; Ryu, Lehto, Gordon, & Fu, 2019 ; Moin, 2020). Storytelling was discovered to be successful in marketing campaigns even in pre-digital days as early as in 1895 (Pulizzi, 2012). In this case, it is not surprising to find that storytelling is even more capitalised on and relevant today where digital technology has taken over and lives are often fast paced and full of disruptions. This therefore leads to marketers having to establish more compelling methods to attract their target market.

From the data set, the studies where storytelling has been used in the recent years include how digital storytelling may be used to persuade and transport customers (T. van Laer, Feiereisen, & Visconti, 2019); the usage of storytelling and new technology to make tourism destinations more interesting and relatable (Ross & Saxena, 2019; Lin, Huang, & Ho, 2020; Santos, Ramos, Sousa & Valeri, 2022), the role of storytelling by influencers on purchase intention (Farivar, Wang, & Yuan, 2021; Farivar & Wang, 2022), visual storytelling's impact on brand connection (Lim & Childs, 2020) and effect of storytelling on customer engagement (Robiady, Windasari, & Nita, 2021). All these studies refer to various frameworks including amongst others, the usage of cognitive, emotional, and conative components together with participative co-creation on destination image and sites as well as the photo narrative transportation and narrative transportation theories. This study is aimed at obtaining an improved insight into the usage of storytelling in marketing for future research and practice.

Bibliometric Analysis
Bibliometric as a term was first introduced in 1969 by Pritchard to be used as an "application of mathematical and statistical methods to books and other means of communications" (p. 349). More recently, bibliometric analysis has grown immensely in the field of business research (Leung, Sun, & Bai, 2017; Donthu, Kumar, & Pattnaik, 2020 ; Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, Pandey, & Lim, 2021). This paper uses the VOSviewer software created by Van Eck & Waltman (2011), as it has the ability to perform and map a visualisation of similarities cluster where the bibliographic map shows how distant or otherwise the relationships between the concepts are (McAllister, Lennertz, & Atencio Mojica, 2022; Park et al., 2023). This mapping technique allows for the revelation of structures and development of research areas in the field that is being analysed based on the occurrences of keywords (Leung et al., 2017; McAllister et al., 2022) .

In a bid to search for further research opportunities within storytelling in marketing, a first look was procured from the Web of Science database, using the keywords "storytelling" and "marketing" and "bibliometric". It was found that there were only two publications available on reviewing storytelling in marketing through bibliometrics on this database, one in February 2023, looking specifically at consumer purchasing behaviour and the other in November 2023 which focused on brand personality. It is by this discovery, that the idea for this paper focussing on storytelling within marketing to look at the trends and the published authors in this field came to light.

Research Methodology
This study looks at storytelling within the marketing field in the past 25 years from 1998-2023 to discover storytelling trends and topics of interest within the field of marketing, and to study the extent of its usage and the current level of interest in this topic. The study obtained its bibliographic data from the Web of Science database. Similar to other existing studies (Leung et al., 2017; Park et al., 2023) only one database was used to avoid an issue with a data conflict due to the different methods of indexing which may be used. In addition, WoS was also chosen as it has been reported to have been used in more studies compared to other databases including Scopus, and is more inclusive of scholarship from across the world and not centred on the Global North (Marín-Marín, Moreno-Guerrero, Dúo-Terrón, & López-Belmonte, 2021; Zhu & Liu, 2020). This data was downloaded by using the keywords "storytelling" and "marketing, where the search string selected dates between 1/1/1998 – 31/12/2023 and filters used were (storytelling) AND (marketing) in all fields to obtain a comprehensive list of publications available. In this search, only English research articles and books were selected, with other forms of publications excluded. The preliminary search yielded 472 records.

The next step was data cleaning abstracts were reviewed to confirm that the data obtained was in line with the topic and duplication eliminated. Only publications relevant to both keywords were selected and other publications which were only related to either one topic were removed from the list. No data consolidation was conducted. Subsequently, a review to ensure that the indexed data of the author were coded correctly was conducted due to the use of a single database. Data validation was conducted to confirm standardisation and consistency of information. These two processes were done at pre and post analysis after the first set of results were obtained from VOSviewer to create a thesaurus file for exclusion

for the second round of analysis to ensure that the clusters were presented correctly. Data cleaning tasks were conducted using Microsoft Excel and the final number of records available for data transformation was 296.

The data analysis consisted of the following steps:
1. Analysis of top 10 articles, categories of journals in which articles were published as well as a breakdown of articles per year from 1998-2023 which were extracted through the Web of Science analysis tool.
2. Citation analysis – Conducted to discover the effect of a certain publication from its total citations received and enables the researcher to determine influential publications in the field. Reviewing the relationship of authors, journals and papers determined by the number of times they cite each other allows understanding of intellectual dynamics in the field.
3. Co-citation analysis - Conducted to show the number of times two publications are cited together by a third publication. This method determines the relationship between the authors, journals, and papers by the number of times these authors are cited together. Co-citation analysis provides a view of the domain of a field being investigated.
4. Co-occurrence analysis - Conducted to discover the frequency a term appeared in more than a single publication. This is a study on the likelihood of two terms occurring next to one another in a publication. Clusters produced will normally show the main themes and provide an insight into existing and possible future relationships in the topic being investigated.

Results and Discussions
In this section's discussion, the results of the analysis conducted using the Web of Science analysis tool and the VOSviewer software and the terms used will be explained.

Looking at the trend of publication and citations for this study, Figure 1 demonstrates that despite the search dating back to 1998, the first paper found during the period of study on the Web of Science database was in 2001. Up to 2018, there has been a slow incremental growth of interest in the topic. Storytelling in marketing then saw a big shift in attention with a significant jump in 2019 and has so far been on a continuous rise except for in 2022 where one of the reasons may be due to the Covid-19 pandemic disrupting research activities for instance where several publications have noted that there were a reduced number of submissions from women researchers during this period (Viglione, 2020; Squazzoni et al., 2021; Squazzoni et al., 2021).

In terms of the top ten categories of journals where the papers were published, it was found that most of the articles were within the business categories with 143 out of the total 296 articles as demonstrated in Figure 2. As storytelling become increasingly accepted and recognised as a successful marketing and communication strategy for business, this could be the reason for the results as these business focused publications would be relevant to not only marketers but also to business owners and organisational decision makers. The next two most popular categories were management as well as hospitality, leisure, sports, and tourism.

The top ten most cited papers found on the Web of Science database for publications in this study is as in Table 1 below where the paper which can be considered the most

influential is by Woodside, Sood, and Miller (2008) on the marketing psychology of consumers and the discussion of storytelling and was published in the journal Psychology and Marketing. We can see from the same table, that Arch Woodside is one of the more prolific authors where he has either solo or co-authored four publications in the list generated. The Journal of Business Research was the more prominent journal in the top ten list where three publications were from the said journal, followed by Psychology and Marketing with two publications. The other journals within the list were a mix and it is interesting to note that apart from the expected marketing, business, and tourism journals where most of the publications is concentrated on, one of the journals was from *British Food Journal*, a food related journal.
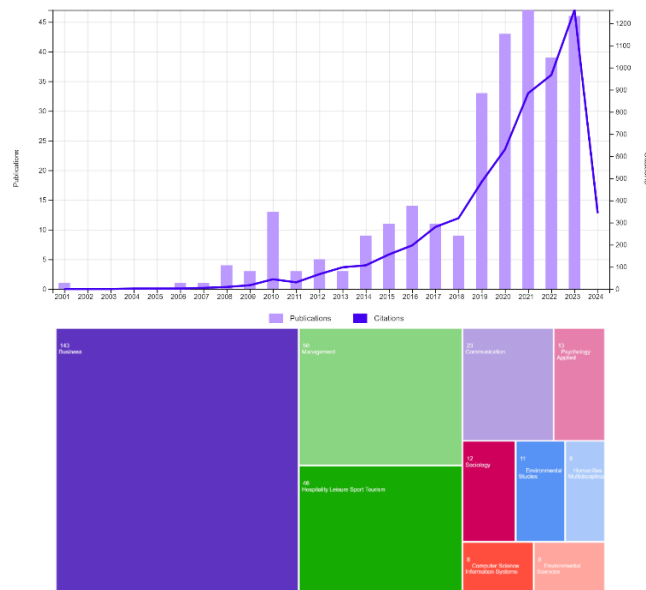

Figure 1. Number of Papers Published in WoS Journals from 1998 to 2023

Figure 2. Categories Journals where Papers were Published throughout the Research Period

Table 1

Top Ten Most Cited Papers in Web of Science and Total Number of Citations

Ranking	Paper	WoS Citations
1	Woodside, A. G., Sood, S., & Miller, K. E. (2008). When consumers and brands talk: Storytelling theory and research in psychology and marketing. *Psychology & Marketing*, *25*(2), 97-145.	320
2	Garud, R., Schildt, H. A., & Lant, T. K. (2014). Entrepreneurial storytelling, future expectations, and the paradox of legitimacy. *Organization science*, *25*(5), 1479-1492.	242
3	Singh, S., & Sonnenburg, S. (2012). Brand performances in social media. *Journal of interactive marketing*, *26*(4), 189-197.	167
4	Woodside, A. G. (2010). Brand-consumer storytelling theory and research: Introduction to a Psychology & Marketing special issue. *Psychology & Marketing*, *27*(6), 531-540.	164
5	Merchant, A., Ford, J. B., & Sargeant, A. (2010). Charitable organizations' storytelling influence on donors' emotions and intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, *63*(7), 754-762.	114

6	Woodside, A. G., Cruickshank, B. F., & Dehuang, N. (2007). Stories visitors tell about Italian cities as destination icons. *Tourism Management*, *28*(1), 162-174.	114
7	Van Laer, T., Feiereisen, S., & Visconti, L. M. (2019). Storytelling in the digital era: A meta-analysis of relevant moderators of the narrative transportation effect. *Journal of Business Research*, *96*, 135-146.	100
8	Wiedmann, K. P., Hennigs, N., Henrik Behrens, S., & Klarmann, C. (2014). Tasting green: an experimental design for investigating consumer perception of organic wine. *British Food Journal*, *116*(2), 197-211	98
9	Hsu, S. Y., Dehuang, N., & Woodside, A. G. (2009). Storytelling research of consumers' self-reports of urban tourism experiences in China. *Journal of business research*, *62*(12), 1223-1254.	95
10	Tussyadiah, I. P., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2008). Marketing places through first-person stories—an analysis of Pennsylvania roadtripper blog. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *25*(3-4), 299-311.	91

Citation Analysis

In the initial analysis, out of the 711 authors from the dataset, only four authors had at least four publications. These authors were Kadembo, Maksi, Nyagadza, and Woodside. To obtain a better picture, the analysis set a cut-off point to establish the most influential within the field as per the method used by McCain in 1990. For this analysis, an author needed to have at least 100 citations to be considered and only five authors made the list from seven papers where three papers had a link strength of three. In the Vosviewer manual, the link strength is explained as the number of links one item has with (Van Eck & Waltman, 2011). In this case, three papers which two were written by one author, were found to have linkage with three other papers. This means that three of the publications have strong links to each other and were cited by each other. The two dominant authors were Singh for his 2012 paper as well as Woodside for his 2008 and 2010 papers. The next analysis conducted was the citation of sources where a journal needed to be cited at least five times. Out of the 169 journals from the dataset, only 11 journals met the criteria. One dominant cluster from this analysis was *Psychology and Marketing,* being the most prominent journal with links to the other ten journals in the cluster. The *Journal of Business and Research* was the second most dominant cluster with links to eight other journals.

Co-Citation Analysis

Due to the dataset having some 16062, the cut-off points at 29 for the minimum number of citations in a cited reference to select the top ten most influential publications resulted in only 8 authors being in the list. Out of this list, the top five most cited were Escalas's 2004 publication in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Woodside's *Psychology and Marketing* publication in 2008, Van Laer's 2014 publication in *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Brand Management's* publication by Lundqvist in 2013 (Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus, & Van Riel, 2013) and Woodside's publication once again in *Psychology and Marketing* in 2010. These three papers have been used as reference in multiple publications due to their exploration of narratives and storytelling on developing connections between brands and their stakeholders for marketing success. In today's digital age, the use of narrative transportation and processing is extremely relevant and important to content marketing and brand storytelling strategies which could be why these publications are still exceptionally

well-cited despite the age of the writings. The other five papers in the co-citation analysis of cited references are indicated in Figure 3.

In terms of the co-citation analysis of the cited sources, out of 8029 sources, the threshold for minimum number of citations to obtain the top ten most cited journals was set at 150 citations. In this analysis, the top five journals are as shown in Figure 4 with the total number of citations in the parentheses according to total link strength were Journal of Consumer Research (715), Psychology and Marketing (400), Journal of Business Research (427), Journal of Marketing (374) and Journal of Advertising (240). In this case, the link strength is the total strength of the link of the co-citation link of one publication with another. We find two main clusters in the analysis where the bigger cluster is more focused on marketing and business activities while the other cluster is focused on tourism. This gives an indication that the use of storytelling is also very prevalent in the marketing of tourism activities due to its ability to establish emotional connections to appeal to tourists and making destinations more interesting and inviting.
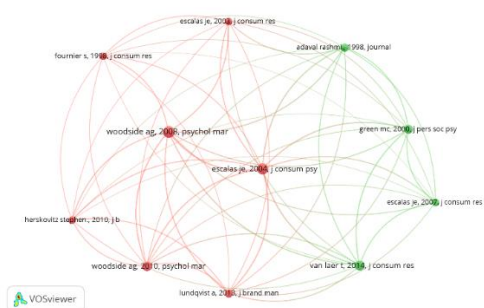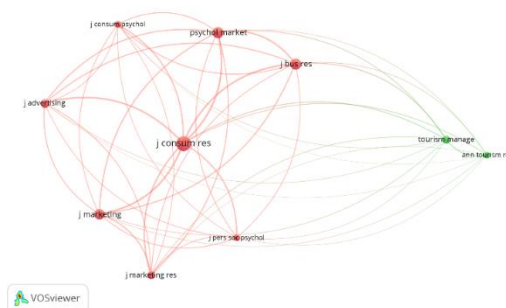

Figure 3. Co-Citation Map of References   Figure 4. Co-citation Map of Journals

The final analysis conducted in the co-citation category is the analysis of the authors in the dataset. From a total of 11,890 authors, the minimum number of citations per author to obtain the top ten authors was 42 citations. The top five most cited authors (total citations in parenthesis), with the greatest total link strength were Escalas (188), Woodside (187), Green (91), T Van Laer (88) and D Hold (46). Figure 5 provides the co-citation map of authors. It is interesting to note that while some authors such as Escalas, Woodside and Stern have had a head start in publishing, the other authors in this list are relatively newer researchers, many of whom published during the beginning of the spike of interest as in Figure 1 in the three clusters led by Woodside, Escalas and Boje, all three "old-timer" researchers. This provides evidence that being a "newer" researcher does not reduce the importance of your publication, and that if the publication is of value, an author will be cited.
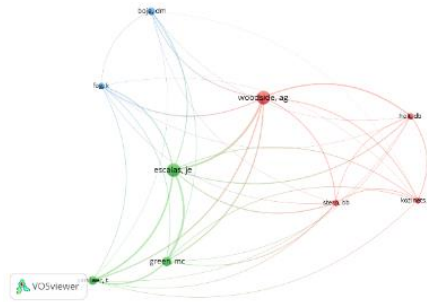
Figure 5. Co-citation Map of Authors

Co-Occurrence Analysis
Apart from searching documents for specific terms such as authors keywords, the VOSviewer also looks at other keywords in the documents. It then identifies which keywords appear frequently and demonstrates how they relate to one another. For this analysis, to obtain the top ten keywords, a cut-off of a minimum of 23 occurrences of all keywords was set which roduced eleven keywords. Trying a minimum cut-off of 24 occurrences however resulted in only nine top keywords and as such this study chose to highlight the top 11 keywords as the last two occurrences were similar in count. Table 2 provides a list of these eleven most used keywords where Figure 6 provides the map to view these clusters. The dominant cluster in red is about storytelling, its impact, narrative transportation, experience, model, and transportation. The second main cluster in green is about social media, psychology, consumers, consumption and is jointly linked to stories in the third cluster with the storytelling cluster. This analysis shows the importance and impact of psychology and communication models in the usage of the storytelling technique due to its ability to understand the brain process when engaging with stories that brands may tell its consumers, especially in this digital era.

Table 2
Top Most Commonly Used Keywords

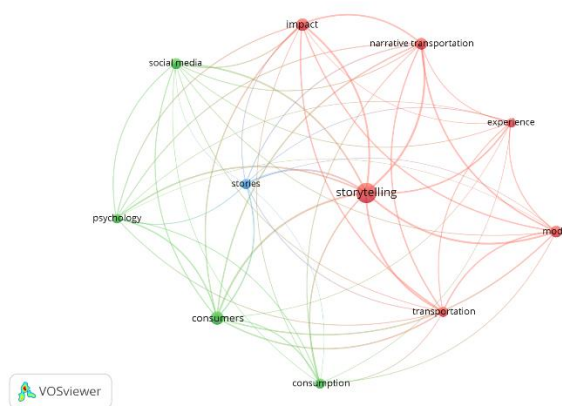| Keyword	No. of Occurrences
Storytelling	104
Consumers	47
Impact	40
Narrative Transportation	35
Model	35
Social Media	33
Consumption	27
Transportation	27
Stories	27
Experience	23
Psychology	23

Figure 6. Co-occurrence of All Keywords in Storytelling Publications

Conclusion and Implications

The rapid development of digital technology has changed the way marketing is now used by brands and organizations. As traditional marketing methods continue to evolve to meet this new shift in trends, studies on the newer methods of marketing are required for a better perspective of the research area. With storytelling, marketers can move beyond just focusing on the product and leverage on using narratives to communicate and connect with their consumers.

This is evident with research in storytelling marketing increasing in recent years beginning 2019. Apart from the statistics extracted from the Web of Science database used in this study, a quick search on Google Scholar would show that during the pandemic, the use of digital storytelling by the industry through various digital platforms was on the rise (Francisco, Fardos, Bhatt, & Bizel 2021 ; Abdillah, Afiff, Hati, & Furinto, 2022 ; Michael & Fusté-Forné , 2022) and this could be one of the reasons contributing to the rise in academic study on this topic. As a result of the covid-19 pandemic, there has been a growth of digital services and increased social media usage. It is this connection that saw storytelling being even more beneficial by humanizing brands by making them more relatable. For instance, Nike's "Play Inside, Play for The World" campaign where the brand ambassadors of the brand posted how they could contribute by continuing sporting efforts indoors instead of outside to ensure everyone remained safe during the pandemic, demonstrates the company's efforts to remain relevant by using spokespersons who resonate with many consumers (Branding in Asia, 2020) communicating a community-based message.

Patterns from the analysis have shown that the most cited and co-cited authors are those from the earlier years of the study period. The publications by Escalas and Woodside which have strong link strength in various analysis show that the publications which were more theory based have served to underpin newer research in this area. It is interesting to note, that while the publications are academic in nature, many of the top 50 most cited publications on the Web of Science analysis study industry practices such as consumer (Granitz & Forman, 2015; Hughes, Bendoni, & Pehlivan, 2016; Scholz & Smith, 2019) and tourism (Hsu, Dehuang, & Woodside, 2009; Lund, Cohen, & Scarles, 2018; Ross & Saxena, 2019) marketing. This indicates that while the publications are prepared for academia, they can also be used by industry as guides into how these practices can be used for their marketing efforts.

The study also provides an indication that many of the publications are dominated by studies on consumer perspective. An overview of the common keywords shows that the keywords are closely related to consumer-based studies, such as "consumers", "consumption" and "impact". This is further supported by the finding that most of the co-citations in this study was from the *Journal of Consumer Research*. As a result, this provides an opportunity for academicians to look more towards studying the organization perspective for further research. Some of the theories in which studies can be conducted may consider the usage of narrative transportation or the brand storytelling theories. With the usage of both these theories, there are opportunities for further study in areas including measurement of engagement, brand perception, differentiation and positioning and emotional connection. These methods can be used in content analysis, longitudinal studies as well as experimental designing of which aspect of the storytelling technique is most suited for engagement and

researchers will be better able to better understand how stories can influence consumer behavior. With the many studies centred around consumer and tourism, other areas that can be looked at include the application of storytelling in retail, food & beverage as well as social media marketing. Another area of research is perhaps a relook at the foundational theories of storytelling to see how they have evolved and may be renewed to suit the current digital world.

This bibliometric analysis may serve as an initial start on research of storytelling in marketing to further understand its impact on the field as well as on the many marketing paradigms that exist. This include but is not limited to the advancement of new theories in marketing, evolution of storytelling concepts, strategic application of marketing strategies to bridge gaps between theory and practice as well as interdisciplinary connections where storytelling in marketing is integrated through various fields such as communication, media, and cultural studies.

This research is not without its limitations. The first being that it has only used one database, Web of Science, to obtain its data and therefore provides a conservative glance into the area. Further research may look at combining data from other databases such as Scopus and ProQuest which also index many social science publications. Aside from this, some other analysis such as bibliographic coupling, co-occurrence of author's keywords and contribution by countries to can be conducted to gain a better picture of the area of research. The usage of a single database may also lead to bias and overlook relevant studies from other fields due to a database often being specialized in a particular field. The application of a single source database can also limit the reliability of the bibliometric indicators such as h-index and impact factors to name a few. A combination of databases which may be more tedious in its data cleaning process may provide a more thorough set of indicators and therefore provide a more comprehensive and balanced view of the research landscape.

Notwithstanding the above, this analysis can provide academicians with a quick overview of storytelling in marketing in the past 25 years and allow them to chart new topics for future research in the coming years which will enrich the academic database. This may also be followed up by a more comprehensive systematic review to obtain a more in-depth insight into the topic of discussion.

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