

A Bibliometric Analysis of Meaningful Marketing: A Systematic Review of Global Trends, Leading Contributors, and Thematic Evolution

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Abstract

In an era of socio-cultural change, ecological complexity, and evolving consumer expectations, traditional transactional marketing models are increasingly viewed as ethically and emotionally limited. Meaningful marketing has emerged in response, emphasizing value co-creation through ethical engagement, emotional resonance, and social responsibility. Despite growing interest over the past two decades, the field remains fragmented, lacking a consolidated intellectual structure, shared vocabulary, and comprehensive bibliometric mapping. This study presents a systematic bibliometric analysis of 104 Scopus-indexed publications on meaningful marketing from 2005 to 2025, using Bibliometrix, VOSviewer, and CiteSpace to examine citation patterns, conceptual clusters, international collaborations, and thematic evolution. The findings reveal a marked rise in publications after 2015, reflecting increasing scholarly and practical recognition. Research spans ethical branding, purpose-driven innovation, sustainability, and brand authenticity, yet lacks theoretical cohesion. The United States, Australia, India, and the United Kingdom lead in contributions, while international collaboration remains limited. The field's development follows three phases: emergence (2005–2010), consolidation (2011–2018), and rapid growth (2019–2024). This study maps the intellectual structure of meaningful marketing, highlights key knowledge gaps, and offers strategic directions for future research. It underscores the need for stronger international collaboration, interdisciplinary integration, and cohesive theoretical development to establish meaningful marketing as a mature research domain.

Keywords: Meaningful Marketing, Systematic Review, Bibliometric Analysis, Marketing

1. Introduction

Amid social change, environmental uncertainty, and rising consumer awareness, traditional marketing focused on short-term transactions is seen as ethically and emotionally limited. As consumers seek purpose and brands aim for lasting trust, meaningful marketing has emerged as an alternative, emphasizing value co-creation through socially grounded, emotionally engaging, and ethically informed interactions [1, 2]. Meaningful marketing is more than adding social values to existing models. It represents a deeper shift, integrating insights from philosophy, sociology, psychology, and economics [3, 4]. Rather than focusing solely on profit, it adopts a human-centered approach where thought, emotion, intention, and ethical behavior support individual and societal well-being [4]. This aligns with value-based marketing linking customer experience, social responsibility, stakeholder engagement, and authentic branding [5, 6]. Despite growing interest, research remains fragmented. Studies explore brand–cause fit [2], meaning in luxury consumption [7], and purpose-driven innovation in hospitality [8], but there is no comprehensive overview of patterns, key themes, influential works, or collaboration networks. This limits theory development and practical application in sectors like tourism [5], agriculture [9, 10], and luxury branding [7]. Bibliometric evidence from 2005 to 2025 shows steady growth and broad geographic participation, led by the United States, Australia, India, and the United Kingdom. Yet literature remains uneven, and cross-institutional and international collaboration is limited [11]. While journals such as *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, and *Journal of Macromarketing* support the field, a full comparison of authors, institutions, journals, and themes is lacking.