

WAVE OF PERSUASION: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF MARKETING RHETORIC

IMRAN, H. A.^{1*} – IBRAHIM, M. I.² – AHMAD, N. A.²

¹ *School of Languages, Civilisation and Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia.*

² *School of Business Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia.*

**Corresponding author*

e-mail: m_hariri_ali[at]ahsgs.uum.edu.my

(Received 08th March 2026; revised 29th April 2026; accepted 19th May 2026)

Abstract. Rhetoric is a pivotal element in marketing communication, serving as a persuasive tool to influence consumer perception and behaviour. Over the past decade, research on rhetoric in marketing has increased significantly, indirectly reflecting the importance of linguistic and visual strategies in building relationships between brands and their audiences. This study aims to analyse research patterns concerning rhetoric in marketing and advertising through a bibliometric approach, utilising the Scopus database from 2015 to 2025. A total of 239 documents were identified using keywords such as “rhetoric,” “persuasion,” “ethos,” “pathos,” “logos,” “marketing,” and “advertising.” The collected data were analysed using VOSviewer and Publish or Perish software to identify annual publication trends, the most productive authors and institutions, the most active journals, and the dominant keywords. Collaboration and co-citation network analyses were also conducted to map the intellectual structure and core research themes within this domain. The findings indicate that marketing rhetoric is an interdisciplinary field encompassing linguistic, psychological, and cultural aspects. Dominant research themes include visual rhetoric, brand narrative, and persuasive strategies in digital advertising. Several authors and institutions from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe emerged as major contributors to the literature. Furthermore, there is an increase in the application of rhetorical approaches in studies of digital and social media marketing, reflecting shifts in the contemporary communication landscape. This study contributes to mapping the research landscape of rhetoric in marketing and to identifying gaps and opportunities for future research. Its implications extend not only to academic researchers but also to marketing practitioners seeking to understand how rhetorical strategies can be effectively utilised to build consumer relationships. The study also underscores the need for interdisciplinary and contextual approaches to grasp the role of rhetoric in modern marketing communication.

Keywords: *marketing rhetoric, bibliometric analysis, Scopus database, persuasion, digital marketing*

Introduction

Marketing is a multifaceted academic discipline and practical endeavour that encompasses a diverse range of activities strategically aimed at promoting products, services, ideas, or desired behaviours to specific target audiences. At its core, the field involves meticulous market research, the execution of persuasive advertising campaigns, and the strategic planning of sales techniques and integrated business communications, all orchestrated to build and maintain robust customer relationships successfully (Jeanes, 2017). Marketing extends far beyond the mere function of selling products; it is a comprehensive strategic process that fundamentally encompasses creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that hold inherent value for customers and society at large (Malvey et al., 2015). This integrated process is essential for enabling companies to accurately understand and effectively meet consumer demands, thereby successfully fostering strong customer relationships and

ensuring long-term customer satisfaction (Saikrishna and Kurian, 2020). The evolution of marketing has demonstrated a critical shift from a purely production-focused approach to one that prioritises customers' perceived needs and wants. This transition is essential for businesses seeking to remain profitable in mature markets, which are typically characterised by overcapacity (Saikrishna and Kurian, 2020). Consequently, sophisticated marketing strategies are now indispensable for companies aiming to secure a competitive advantage, particularly as they navigate today's increasingly unpredictable market environments (Boryshkevych et al., 2023).

Moreover, marketing plays a significant and multifaceted role in social and economic development, influencing consumer behaviour and promoting socially beneficial changes (Ma, 2021). The strategic integration of information technology (IT) into marketing practice has further enhanced its effectiveness by substantially improving the overall quality and reach of marketing efforts across diverse platforms and audiences (Caescu et al., 2021). Marketing is a dynamic and integral component of business management, requiring a strategic approach that accurately understands and satisfies customer needs, effectively promotes products, and builds lasting customer relationships. It is a crucial discipline that must continuously adapt to evolving market changes and technological advancements to achieve core business objectives and drive sustained economic growth successfully (Boryshkevych et al., 2023; Saikrishna and Kurian, 2020). In the increasingly competitive contemporary marketing landscape, effective communication relies not merely on the dissemination of information but also demands the capacity to influence and shape audience perceptions. Rhetoric, as outlined by Aristotle, constitutes the art of communication designed to persuade through three fundamental elements: ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic) (Aristotle, 2007). In the context of modern marketing, the rhetorical approach has become fundamental to branding strategies, advertising communication, and digital narratives, which are oriented towards user experience (Oswald, 2012; McQuarrie and Mick, 1996). The deployment of rhetorical strategies allows marketers not only to attract attention but also to establish a deeper emotional connection between a brand and its consumers (Van Enschoot et al., 2008).

Marketing discourse, especially the concept of branding, functions as a powerful narrative force within postmodern societies, fundamentally influencing both consumer behaviour and wider societal values. This potent influence frequently diverges from established humanistic rhetorical principles, consequently raising significant ethical concerns (Smoleń-Wawrzusiszyn, 2019). To effectively engage with their audiences and lend meaning to their professional roles, marketers consciously deploy a range of rhetorical strategies. These tactics include relationship discourse and customer need discourse, both of which aid practitioners in constructing appropriate rhetorical selves necessary for the successful accomplishment of their objectives (Nilsson, 2019). Despite increasing interest in the application of rhetoric in marketing, research in this area has not yet been comprehensively studied with respect to publication patterns and scholarly networks. Previous studies have predominantly focused on qualitative analyses of advertising messages or brand narratives (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2004; Scott, 1994) but offer limited insight into how the concept of rhetoric has evolved as a research domain within the global marketing context. Furthermore, the role of rhetoric in digital marketing, social media, and the experience economy has not yet been systematically explored (Tafesse, 2020). This situation necessitates a bibliometric analysis that maps the evolution and research patterns in the field of marketing rhetoric. Bibliometric

analysis is increasingly recognised as a crucial quantitative approach for evaluating and visualising the intellectual structure of a given field (Donthu et al., 2021). This approach permits researchers to identify publication trends, influential authors and institutions, as well as core research areas through keyword analysis and citation networks. Within the context of marketing rhetoric, bibliometrics can help to understand the extent to which this topic has evolved in the academic literature, and how it relates to other domains such as strategic communication, sociolinguistics, and consumer behaviour. Through this approach, an intellectual map of the field can be generated to illustrate the relationships between the theories, concepts, and practical applications of rhetoric in marketing.

This robust method is widely applied across diverse disciplines, including marketing, hospitality management, tourism, and general business research, and accurately identifies core research themes, emerging trends, and seminal, influential works (Park and Park, 2025; Klophaus, 2024). For example, within the niche field of green marketing, bibliometric techniques have been successfully utilised to classify research into critical clusters, such as consumption behaviour, firm innovation, and sustainability (Suyoto et al., 2024). Analogously, its application at the marketing-finance interface has proven valuable for identifying emerging research themes and pinpointing key knowledge gaps for future scholarly exploration (Liao et al., 2023). This study utilises the Scopus database due to its extensive coverage of high-quality publications across various disciplines, including marketing, communication, and linguistics (Mongeon and Paul-Hus, 2016). The analysis is performed on data spanning a significant time period to identify the evolution of publications, document and source types, and the research languages that dominate the field. Furthermore, collaborative analyses, including authorship, involved institutions, and major citations, will be conducted to identify key players and international collaboration networks. The visualisation of findings using software such as VOSviewer and Biblioshiny can systematically illustrate the conceptual networks and the evolution of the field (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017). Overall, this study aims to examine the development of research on rhetoric in marketing through a bibliometric analysis of Scopus data. Specifically, this study sets seven core objectives: (1) To analyse the types of documents published in the field of marketing rhetoric. (2) To examine the languages used in publications relevant to marketing rhetoric. (3) To assess the involvement of higher education institutions in rhetorical research. (4) To identify the countries participating in publications on marketing rhetoric. (5) To investigate the keyword networks utilised in marketing rhetoric studies within Scopus. (6) To analyse the author networks to understand the collaborative relationships and research patterns within the field. (7) To analyse citation metrics to evaluate the academic impact and research influence in marketing rhetoric studies. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this research will illuminate the trajectory and interdisciplinary nature of scholarly development pertaining to marketing rhetoric, not only by providing a comprehensive overview but also by establishing a foundational framework that prompts advanced investigations into how the enduring principles of classical rhetorical theory can be contextually applied and strategically reconciled with the complex, digitised imperatives of modern marketing communication practices.

Literature review

Rhetoric has long served as a fundamental basis for persuasive communication, and its application in marketing is receiving increasing attention amongst scholars. Within

the marketing context, rhetoric encompasses the linguistic strategies employed to influence consumer perceptions and behaviour. Classical studies, such as those by McQuarrie and Mick (1996), emphasised the importance of rhetorical style in advertising, whilst Phillips and McQuarrie (2004) expanded the understanding of visual rhetoric within brand communication. Rhetoric in marketing functions not merely as a communication tool but also as an epistemological framework that shapes how marketers convey value and meaning to their target audience. The development of rhetorical studies in marketing demonstrates a variety of approaches and paradigms. Miles and Nilsson (2018), writing in the *Journal of Marketing Management*, assert that rhetoric is not simply a tool of manipulation, but rather forms the basis for a deep understanding of marketing reality. They propose that marketing itself is a form of rhetoric that integrates narrative, metaphor, and symbolism to build both emotional and logical connections with consumers. Research conducted by Brown and Hackley further supports this view by examining how classical rhetorical elements such as ethos, pathos, and logos are utilised in modern marketing strategies. The role of rhetoric in marketing and advertising is multifaceted, influencing consumer behaviour through a range of techniques and strategies. Rhetoric in advertising frequently leverages cultural and social aspects to shape desires and purchasing behaviours, employing symbols and semiotic analysis to evoke psychosocial acceptance among target audiences (Berkane and Bektache, 2024). Furthermore, marketers deploy relationship and customer-needs discourses to construct suitable rhetorical selves, enabling them to achieve their professional objectives effectively (Nilsson, 2019). Additionally, rhetoric in social media marketing, grounded in Aristotle's principles of Logos, Pathos, and Ethos, strengthens consumer-brand relationships by enhancing brand attachment through the creation of self-brand connections.

In the digital era, marketing rhetoric has evolved through the deployment of more complex narratives and metaphors. Narratives in advertising enhance emotional engagement and message retention, whilst visual and verbal metaphors facilitate the transfer of concepts and boost the credibility of the brand message. Their research also underscores the importance of cultural context and audience cognition in determining the efficacy of rhetorical strategies. It suggests that marketing rhetoric is not merely universal but must also be adapted to the consumer's social and psychological background. Moreover, visual rhetoric plays a significant role in print media advertising, assisting the persuasive communication process by helping audiences assign meaning to visual elements (Nas Albakry and Daimin, 2016). This approach is also evident in the construction of identity discourses within artistic photography, where visual advertising rhetoric captures cultural values and fosters social awareness (Cedeño-Vega et al., 2024). Moreover, the use of language manipulation in marketing reveals how linguistic techniques can shape consumer perceptions and choices, thereby emphasising the necessity for ethical standards and transparency in advertising communication (Al-Badawi, 2024). In the realm of green marketing, rhetoric is utilised to promote sustainability and ethical behaviour, with environmental labels and communicative efficacy emerging as key themes (Bengtson and Mossberg, 2023). However, the effectiveness of advertising rhetoric can be nullified when applied to controversial topics such as violence and eroticism, where negative consumer responses may be exacerbated (Theodorakis et al., 2015). Conversely, integrating artistic communication values, such as poetry and national heritage, into marketing strategies

has been shown to positively influence consumer behaviour and sustain the country of origin's impact (Madan et al., 2022).

Rhetoric's influence extends into contemporary advertising's intersection with poetics, promoting objectives such as ethical and sustainable consumer behaviour. Educational strategies that integrate classical rhetoric and storytelling are crucial for equipping students to create engaging and ethically conscious advertising narratives, thereby directly supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (Veríssimo and Sousa, 2025). Furthermore, the role of social media in integrated marketing communication (IMC) necessitates a focus on ethical and effective engagement. This shifts the evaluation criteria beyond conventional risk/reward metrics to emphasise communicative action and the acknowledgment of historical context in digital persuasion (Persuit, 2013). Consumer responses to advertising are demonstrably influenced by rhetorical elements, specifically schemes and tropes, which motivate cognitive processing and, consequently, enhance brand awareness and persuasion, even when the message does not increase the consumer's emotional liking for the advertisement (Huhmann and Albinsson, 2012). In the contemporary landscape, personalised advertising, deployed across both digital and television platforms, is increasingly effective at meeting individual consumer needs than generic mass media approaches. This focused strategy directly addresses prevalent issues such as advertising clutter and information overload (Lekakos and Chorianopoulos, 2008). Rhetoric also assumes a significant role in consumer activism, where consumers deliberately employ rhetorical strategies to challenge and undermine contentious advertising practices. This form of activism can successfully lead to the development of new message frames that effectively delegitimise certain forms of advertising, thereby underscoring the necessity for brands to rigorously consider the social and ethical implications of their advertising strategies, especially in the context of contemporary social justice issues (Middleton et al., 2022).

The bibliometric approach in marketing research has been widely employed to identify research trends and knowledge gaps. Terán-Yépez et al. (2024) reviewed 140 bibliometric studies across marketing journals and observed an increase in the use of bibliometric analysis as a tool for knowledge synthesis and theory development. They recommended that bibliometric studies in marketing should employ robust theoretical frameworks and meticulous methodologies to make meaningful contributions to the discipline. This research, therefore, provides an essential methodological foundation for a bibliometric study of rhetoric in marketing. Bibliometric analysis is valuable not only for mapping existing scholarly activity but also for identifying emerging areas and guiding future research directions. For example, in the study of digital marketing, bibliometric techniques have successfully identified nascent themes such as e-commerce, human information systems, and social networking, thereby providing a clear roadmap for subsequent investigations (Purnomo et al., 2021). Additionally, the analysis has been effectively employed to explore the integration of mixed reality into green marketing strategies, revealing the significant potential of technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) for advancing sustainability objectives (Biercewicz, 2024). Overall, the literature demonstrates that marketing rhetoric is a dynamic and interdisciplinary field encompassing linguistic, psychological, and cultural aspects. Although a variety of approaches and definitions exist, all studies emphasise rhetoric's role as a principal tool in shaping effective marketing communication. This bibliometric study is therefore designed to map the evolution of

research in this domain, identify dominant themes, and propose future research directions that are more contextual and data-driven.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a bibliometric approach to analyse research patterns in rhetoric across marketing and advertising from 2015 to 2025. This approach facilitates quantitative assessment of the published literature, including analyses of publications, author collaborations, dominant keywords, and high-impact journals. This method is well-suited for identifying research trends and knowledge gaps within a given discipline (Donthu et al., 2021). Data were retrieved from the Scopus database, one of the largest and most comprehensive bibliographic databases in the social sciences and humanities. The search was executed using the following combined keywords: (“rhetoric” OR “rhetorical” OR “persuasion” OR “ethos” OR “pathos” OR “logos”) AND (“marketing” OR “advertising”). This search yielded 239 documents published over the last 10 years (2015–2025). Furthermore, the inclusion criteria stipulated that only English-language journal articles directly pertinent to the fields of marketing and communication were considered. The retrieved data were exported in CSV and CIS formats, and subsequently analysed using the VOSviewer and Publish or Perish software packages. VOSviewer was employed to construct and visualise collaboration networks among authors, institutions, and countries, as well as to analyse keyword co-occurrence. Publish or Perish, meanwhile, was used to generate statistics on citation metrics. The combination of these two software tools facilitated a more comprehensive analysis of the bibliometric data. The findings from this analysis are expected to provide a thorough overview of the development of rhetoric research in marketing and to propose future research directions that are more contextually grounded and relevant. To ensure the robustness and accuracy of the initial data retrieval, a systematic data cleaning and validation process was undertaken. It involved manually reviewing the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the 239 identified documents to exclude publications deemed irrelevant or only tangentially related to the core concepts of marketing rhetoric (e.g., studies focused solely on political rhetoric or general linguistic analysis without a commercial context). Furthermore, data standardisation was implemented to harmonise naming conventions across authors and institutions, thereby preventing discrepancies in the calculation of productivity and collaboration metrics. This rigorous refinement process ensures that the subsequent bibliometric analyses accurately reflect the intellectual structure of the defined research domain.

Results and Discussion

Trend in the number of documents by year

Figure 1 illustrates the pattern of article publication on rhetoric studies in marketing from 2015 to 2025. Overall, this trend shows significant fluctuations, with two primary peaks in 2016 and 2023. The analysis of publication output, as depicted in *Figure 1*, reveals a non-linear and reactive growth trajectory in the field of marketing rhetoric, moving beyond a simple, steady accumulation of research. The overall pattern is characterised by two highly pronounced waves of scholarly activity, signalling the field’s sensitivity to major shifts in the technological landscape. The first major peak

occurred sharply in 2016, recording the decade's highest output at 29 documents. This dramatic surge, following the commencement phase in 2015 (15 documents), is strongly interpreted as a synchronous academic response to the full mainstreaming of social media and the proliferation of digital communication channels. However, this initial burst was followed by an immediate, steep correction, with output dropping to 19 documents in 2017. The subsequent period, from 2018 to 2022, represents a consolidation phase, during which scholarly volume stabilised at 18-20 articles annually. This plateau suggests that, after the initial exploratory rush, researchers concentrated on refining core concepts and methodologies rather than expanding into entirely new domains. The swift decline after the 2016 peak, therefore, signifies a transition from broad exploratory studies to more focused, theoretically anchored inquiries within the established digital marketing rhetoric. The field experienced its second major stimulus in 2023, with publications surging back to 28 documents, nearly matching the 2016 peak. This resurgence correlates powerfully with the rapid integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data-driven marketing systems. These technologies necessitate renewed rhetorical inquiry concerning issues such as algorithmic persuasion, authenticity, and automated narrative generation. Crucially, the output maintained a high, stable volume in 2024 and 2025 (26 documents), establishing a new and higher scholarly equilibrium compared to the preceding consolidation phase. This cyclical pattern of peak, correction, and sustained high output confirms the enduring relevance of rhetorical studies in marketing, demonstrates its capacity to adapt and respond to fundamental technological paradigm shifts, and presents significant avenues for future research that systematically bridge classical theory with contemporary digital practice.

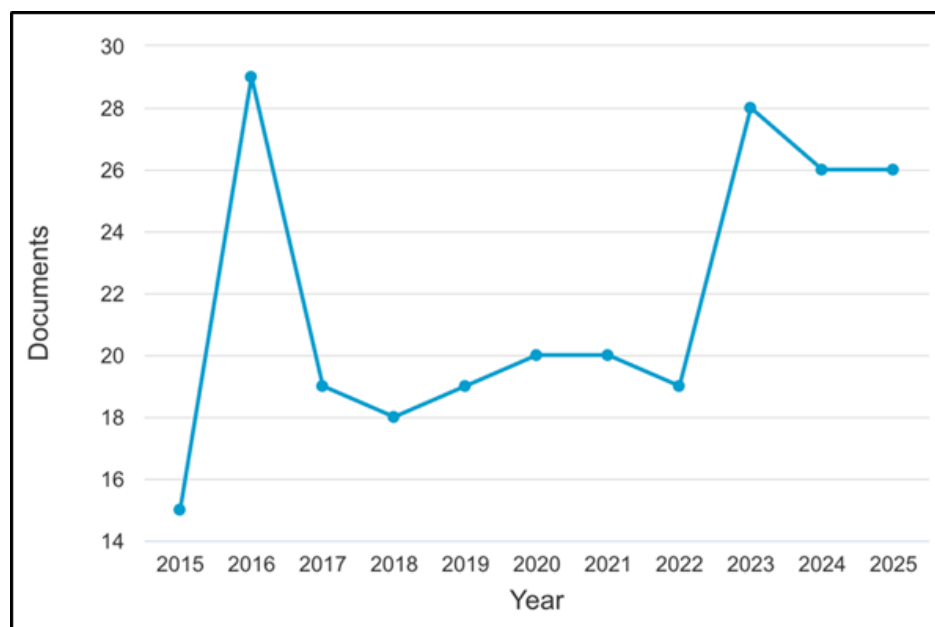


Figure 1. Trend in the number of documents by year.

Document types

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of document types published concerning rhetoric in the field of marketing over the 2015–2025 period. Overall, journal articles dominate, accounting for 73.2% and establishing them as the primary form of publication in this

domain. This dominance of journal articles is consistent with academic practice, which emphasises publication in indexed journals as the principal medium for disseminating new knowledge and research discoveries. Beyond the significant contribution of journal articles, Book Chapters represent the second largest category, accounting for 17.2% of the total output. This substantial proportion indicates that rhetorical studies in marketing also receive considerable attention within edited volumes and academic compilations. Book chapters typically offer in-depth theoretical discussions and conceptual explorations, effectively complementing the empirical research often featured in journal articles. Furthermore, the presence of Conference Papers at 5.4% signifies active engagement within scholarly forums and the early sharing of research findings, often serving as a precursor to formal, full-length journal publications. The remaining document types, consisting of Editorial, Review, and Book (each contributing 1.3%), alongside Note at a marginal 0.4%, constitute a relatively small fraction of the output. The particularly low percentage for Review documents suggests that comprehensive systematic literature reviews or meta-analyses are currently underrepresented in the field. This deficit immediately highlights a significant opportunity for future scholars to synthesise the accumulated knowledge and consolidate the field's various theoretical perspectives. In summary, the documented pattern underscores that research on rhetoric in marketing is heavily biased towards the rigorous, peer-reviewed format of the journal article. While this dominance strongly emphasises the need for empirical and quantitative analyses, the complementary contribution from book chapters and conference papers illustrates a necessary space for theoretical advancement and the exploration of new conceptual frameworks. The identified gap in review-type publications is particularly noteworthy, marking a critical area for systematic scholarly integration that could significantly enhance the discipline's intellectual coherence.

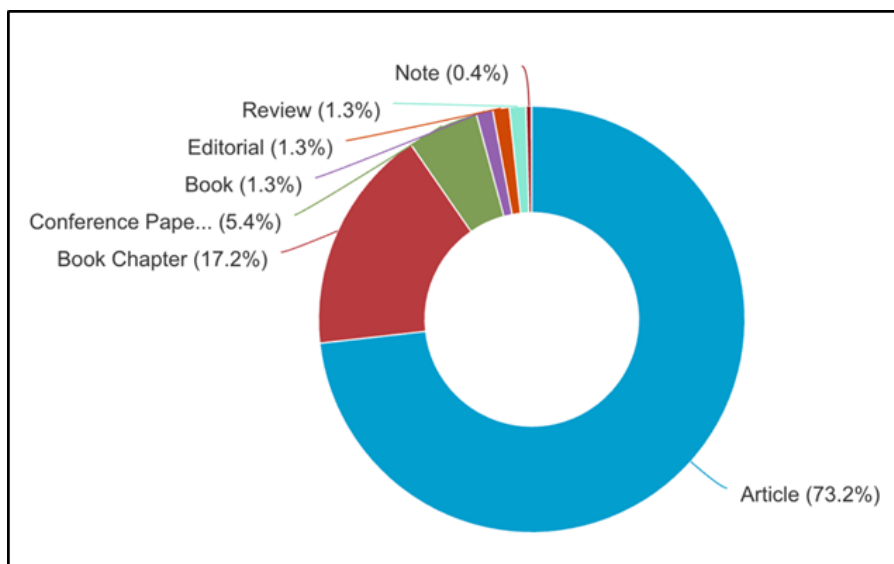


Figure 2. Document types.

Institutional involvement

Figure 3 illustrates the top ten most active institutions publishing research related to rhetoric in the field of marketing during the 2015–2025 period. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign dominates the list with nine documents, underscoring the institution's crucial role in shaping academic discourse on marketing rhetoric. This high

ranking is likely attributable to the strength of its communication and marketing programmes, as well as its extensive international collaboration networks. Securing the second position is the Universiteit van Amsterdam with six documents, closely followed by the University of Georgia with five documents. Both institutions demonstrate significant engagement in studies that merge rhetorical and marketing perspectives, particularly within the context of digital media and consumer culture. Other notable institutions, including Emerson College, Monash University, and Bournemouth University, each contributed four documents, signalling a pronounced geographical diversity in the research output of this domain. Intriguingly, the list includes several prominent European institutions, such as Wageningen University & Research and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, strongly suggesting that the study of rhetoric in marketing is not confined to the United States but is also a developing field across Europe. The presence of universities like Northwestern University and the University of Missouri completes this list, denoting the active involvement of institutions with strong, established traditions in communication and marketing studies. Collectively, this pattern confirms that research in marketing rhetoric is inherently global in scope, with active scholarly engagement from institutions spanning North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific (represented by Monash University). The observed dominance of a few premier universities points to the establishment of nascent centres of excellence in this domain, poised to serve as principal intellectual references for the broader research community. Furthermore, the geographical spread of these top-contributing institutions underscores a significant opportunity to reinforce international collaboration, particularly between institutions with established expertise in classical rhetorical theory and those leading innovation in digital marketing applications.

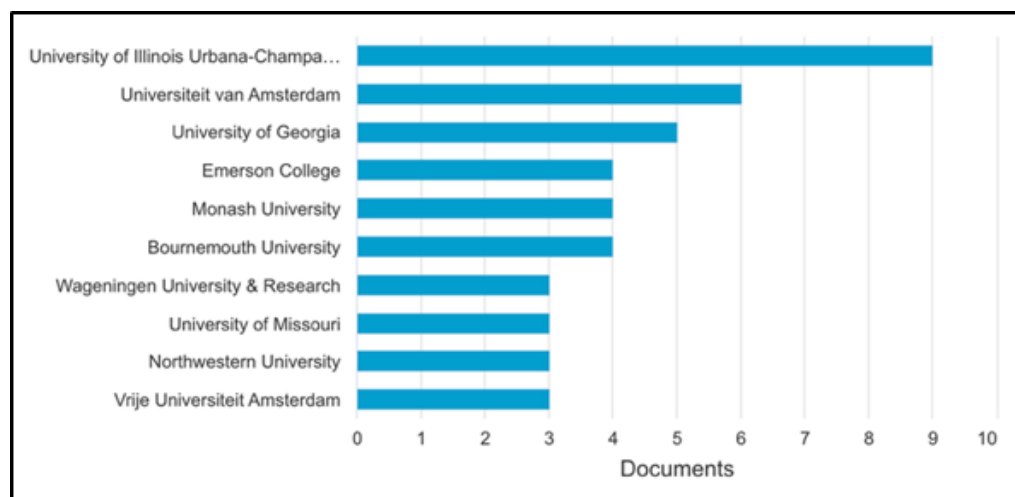


Figure 3. Institutional involvement.

Country involvement

The *Figure 4* illustrates countries' involvement in publishing research on rhetoric in marketing and advertising during the 2015–2025 period. The United States clearly dominates with the highest number of documents, tallying nearly 90 articles, thus establishing itself as the primary global centre for research in this field. This dominance reflects the significant academic and industrial strength of the marketing sector in the country, alongside the robust tradition of communication studies at leading universities

such as the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Northwestern University. The second position is the United Kingdom, contributing approximately 23 documents. This substantial output indicates active engagement in rhetorical studies, particularly in strategic marketing and the burgeoning field of digital media. Other countries, including China, the Netherlands, and Australia, each contributed between 10 and 15 documents. The presence of these nations signals a growing scholarly interest in rhetorical applications across the Asia-Pacific and European regions, diversifying the geographical focus beyond North America. Countries such as Germany, Canada, France, Sweden, and Portugal also feature in the ranking, albeit with smaller, yet significant, document counts. The inclusion of this diverse group underscores that research in marketing rhetoric is inherently global, even though it remains demonstrably concentrated in developed nations with mature academic and industrial ecosystems. This distribution implicitly suggests an opportunity to expand research initiatives into developing economies, where the pace of digital marketing development is accelerating rapidly. Collectively, this pattern confirms that the research landscape of marketing rhetoric is overwhelmingly dominated by Western nations, chiefly the United States and the United Kingdom. However, the notable involvement of an Asian country like China signals significant growth potential in that region, commensurate with its economic and technological expansion. The observed gap in scholarly contributions from developing countries presents a critical opportunity for more inclusive comparative studies. Such future research could substantially enrich the understanding of rhetorical adaptation across diverse cultural, economic, and social contexts globally.

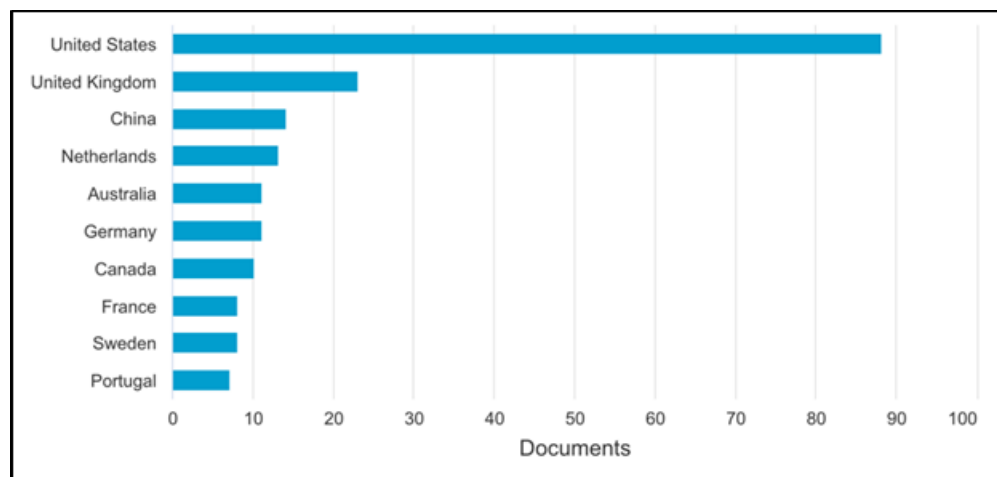


Figure 4. Country involvement.

Author involvement

Figure 5 displays the structure of the author collaboration network in rhetorical studies within marketing. Overall, the network is distinctly centralised, forming three major clusters that are interconnected by a single central author, Boerman, Sophie C. The prominent positioning of Boerman, Sophie C., at the network's nexus highlights their significant influence in facilitating collaborative ties and disseminating knowledge across diverse research groups. This central role classifies Boerman as a key 'broker' or 'hub' within the scholarly community of marketing rhetoric. The network is comprised of three primary clusters: (1) Cluster 1 (Green): This cluster features authors such as Lee, Rim, Kim, Hannah, Garcia, Chloe, Sejin, and Claire Monique. The dense

connection within this group suggests a tight-knit collaborative relationship. Given the names often associated with this field, this cluster is likely dedicated to exploring rhetoric in the context of digital marketing platforms and consumer behaviour analysis. (2) Cluster 2 (Blue): This cluster includes Meppelink, Corine S., and Voorveld, Hilde A. M., who are directly linked to Boerman. This connection indicates collaboration on studies potentially related to media influence and persuasive strategies in mass advertising. (3) Cluster 3 (Red): This group comprises Van Reijmersdal, Eva Adriana, Van Noort, Guido, Cartwright, Robert Freeman, and Oprea, Suzanne Johanna. While they form a self-contained collaborative unit, their connection to the central author, Boerman, suggests a thematic integration between studies rooted in classical rhetoric and more contemporary communication approaches. In summary, the collaboration pattern indicates that rhetorical studies in marketing exhibit a centralised collaborative structure, in which a few highly productive authors serve as crucial inter-group connectors. The presence of these three interconnected clusters reflects the inherently interdisciplinary nature of the field and demonstrates successful collaboration among researchers from distinct backgrounds, including communication science, psychology, and marketing. However, the relatively limited number of clusters highlights an opportunity to expand the collaboration network, specifically by engaging scholars from the previously identified less active countries and institutions.

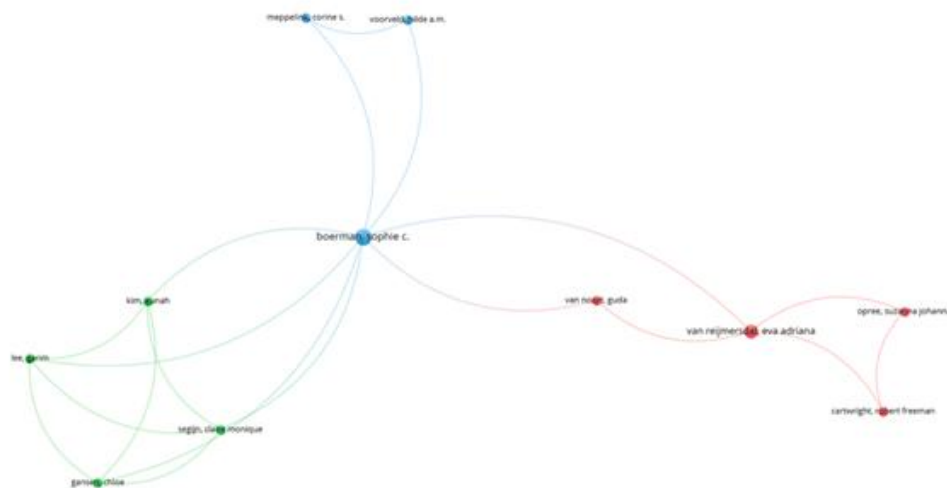


Figure 5. Author collaboration network structure.

Keyword usage and conceptual structure

Figure 6 illustrates the complex co-occurrence network of keywords used in rhetorical studies within marketing and advertising during the 2015–2025 period. The map’s structure reveals the field’s interdisciplinary foundations and core thematic clusters that define its intellectual landscape. The keyword “advertising” emerges as the largest and most dominant node in the network, underscoring that the primary locus of rhetorical application and analysis remains centered on the advertising medium. Its highly central position demonstrates a dense conceptual interconnectedness with numerous secondary themes, acting as a crucial pivot for concepts such as “visual rhetoric,” “persuasion,” and “marketing,” which form their own substantial clusters

across the map. Two other critical keywords, “marketing” and “persuasion knowledge,” feature prominently, reflecting a strong scholarly interest in the strategic persuasive processes inherent in marketing communication. This cluster clearly illustrates a deep engagement with consumer-centric outcomes, linking directly to keywords like “consumer behaviour,” “purchase intention,” and the application area of “digital marketing.” The strong co-occurrence links here signal the close relationship between rhetorical theory (how arguments are constructed) and consumer psychology (how arguments are received and acted upon), especially within the rapidly evolving digital context. Furthermore, the keyword “visual rhetoric” forms a distinct thematic cluster closely related to the central “rhetoric” node, signifying a consistent focus on semiotic analysis and the persuasive power of visual elements in advertising. The map also delineates a cluster incorporating keywords related to ethical and technological advancement, such as “communication technology,” “advertising ethics,” and “neuromarketing.” The presence of these terms, particularly at the periphery and linked to the core, demonstrates the field’s expansion beyond purely linguistic analysis to encompass technological dimensions and neuropsychological approaches to understanding persuasive impact. In summary, the keyword co-occurrence pattern distinctly reflects the interdisciplinary nature of marketing rhetoric research, synthesising perspectives from communication science, psychology, technology, and ethics. The dominance of advertising and digital marketing keywords confirms the field’s continued relevance in the era of digital transformation. However, the analysis also implicitly reveals a potential conceptual gap in keywords relating to global cultural context and cross-cultural adaptation. This area suggests a significant opportunity for more inclusive future research that enriches the understanding of rhetorical applications across diverse international and cultural settings.

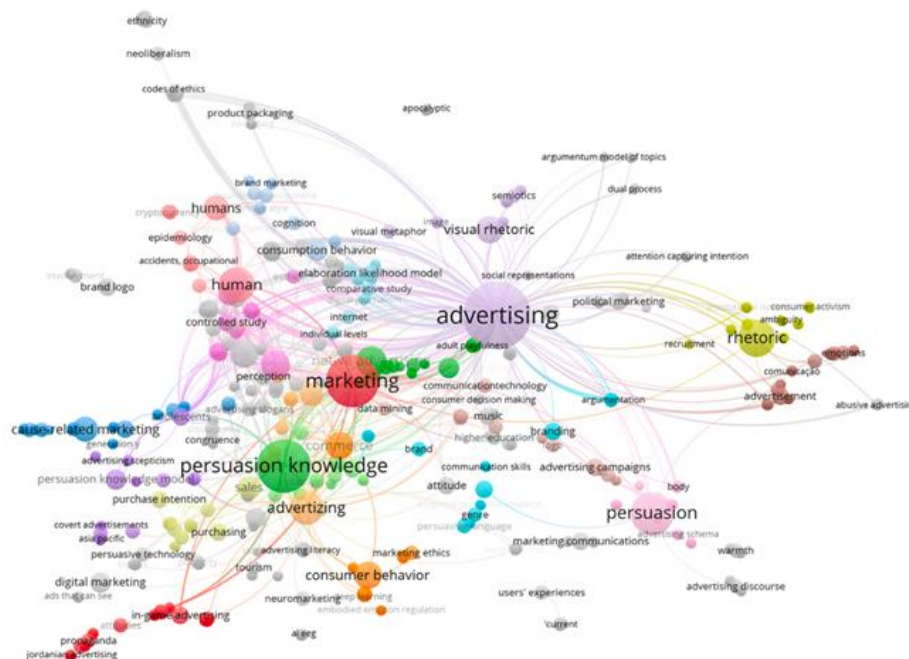


Figure 6. Dominant keywords and thematic clusters.

Citation metrics

The Citation Metric Analysis for the 239 documents published between 2015 and 2025 demonstrates a significant level of academic impact and scholarly influence within the field of marketing rhetoric studies (*Table 1*). The total number of Citations recorded is 2,928, resulting in an average of 292.80 Citations/Year over the decade. This consistent annual attention confirms that research in this field remains relevant within the broader academic community. The metric Cites/Paper stands at 12.25, which is considered moderately robust for a decade-long analysis, suggesting that the majority of articles have achieved stable, measurable influence within the discipline. In terms of impact indices, the h-index value of 29 signifies the presence of a substantial and influential core of literature: at least 29 articles have each received a minimum of 29 citations. Furthermore, the significantly higher g-index of 45 indicates a pronounced positive skew in the data, suggesting the presence of a few highly cited, seminal studies whose influence far exceeds the average output. These seminal works serve as primary intellectual references for the field. Additional metrics, such as hl,norm (19), and hA-index (11), provide supplementary evidence regarding the stability and longevity of the citation impact over the measurement period. The average number of Authors/Paper is 2.30, which suggests a clear propensity towards collaborative research, although the average team size remains relatively small. This figure aligns seamlessly with the findings from the author collaboration network analysis, which identified small, interconnected collaborative clusters. Importantly, the Cites/Author metric is exceptionally high at 1,436.16. This high figure strongly suggests that the most influential authors in the field are highly productive and are responsible for publishing the majority of the top-cited, high-impact articles, thus concentrating intellectual authority and influence among a relatively small group of scholars. These comprehensive citation metrics reflect that the study of rhetoric in marketing is not only expanding numerically but also maintains a firm, established academic impact. The strong h-index and clear evidence of highly cited articles (as indicated by the g-index) collectively demonstrate that the field possesses a robust theoretical foundation and remains critical in the modern marketing context. However, while the overall impact is sound, the moderately stable average of Cites/Paper suggests a strategic opportunity to further elevate the field's global visibility through targeted international collaboration and deliberate publishing in journals with the highest impact factors.

Table 1. Citation metric analysis.

Reference date	02 November 2025
Publication Year	2015-2025
Citation Year	10 (2015-2025)
Papers	239
Citations	2928
Cites/Year	292.80
Cites/Paper	12.25
Cites/Author	1436.16
Paper/Author	139.95
Author/Paper	2.30
h-index	29
g-index	45
hl,norm	19
hl,annual	1.90
hA-index	11

The bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive, quantitative overview of the intellectual evolution and structural characteristics of research on rhetoric in marketing and advertising over the 2015–2025 period. The systematic assessment across seven core dimensions: publication trends, document types, geographical involvement, collaboration networks, dominant keywords, and citation impact; uncovers several critical patterns that definitively reflect the dynamic, interdisciplinary, and technologically reactive nature of this academic domain. The analysis of the annual publication trend reveals a distinctive cyclical pattern marked by two significant peaks, confirming the field's sensitivity to major market shifts. The initial surge in 2016 (29 documents) is directly attributable to the academic community's response to the proliferation and maturation of social media as a primary marketing medium, forcing a re-evaluation of rhetorical strategies in novel digital spaces. The subsequent, powerful resurgence in 2023 (28 documents) aligns critically with the widespread integration of sophisticated smart technologies, notably Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data-driven communication. While a natural correction followed both peaks, the sustained output volume maintained in 2024 and 2025 demonstrates that the field has achieved a new, higher scholarly equilibrium, affirming the enduring necessity of rhetorical inquiry in a technologically mediated world. The analysis of document types confirms the field's scholarly rigour, with journal articles accounting for 73.2%. This high frequency underscores the preference for empirical research and publication in peer-reviewed, indexed outlets, which are crucial for establishing credible, evidence-based knowledge. The substantial contributions of Book Chapters (17.2%) and Conference Papers (5.4%) provide complementary spaces for conceptual development and in-depth theoretical framing. However, the paucity of Review documents (1.3%) represents a notable methodological gap. This omission suggests that the field requires a deliberate effort towards systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses to effectively synthesise the rapidly accumulating knowledge and enhance the overall intellectual coherence of the domain.

The findings regarding institutional and country involvement collectively define the research's geographical and structural boundaries. The United States maintains an overwhelming dominance (nearly 90 documents), closely followed by the United Kingdom (22 documents), confirming the Western-centric nature of the discipline rooted in mature academic traditions in communication and marketing. However, the consistent appearance of major European (e.g., Universiteit van Amsterdam) and Asian-Pacific (e.g., Monash University, China) contributors signifies the field's inherent globalisation. This concentration, paired with the structural insight from the author network analysis, which identifies a centralised collaborative structure focused around a key broker (Boerman, Sophie C.), points to the existence of established 'centres of excellence'. The relatively small size of the collaborative clusters, despite the global spread of institutions, underscores an immediate strategic opportunity: to significantly expand international collaboration beyond existing small networks to include scholars from less active countries, particularly those in developing economies, to facilitate more inclusive and cross-cultural comparative research. The keyword analysis establishes the interdisciplinary nexus of the field, demonstrating a fusion of four core themes: Communication ("advertising", "visual rhetoric"), Psychology ("consumer behavior", "persuasion knowledge"), Technology ("digital marketing"), and Ethics ("advertising ethics"). The dominance of advertising and digital-related terms confirms the field's

practical and contemporary orientation. This thematic strength is corroborated by robust citation metrics, which attest to the research's academic vitality. The high h-index (29) and the even higher g-index (45) demonstrate a strong core of seminal, highly cited articles. While the average Cites/Paper (12.25) is moderate, the overall influence confirms that marketing rhetoric provides a firm theoretical foundation that is critically relevant to contemporary marketing challenges. The bibliometric evidence confirms that rhetorical studies in marketing are a rapidly evolving field with significant academic stature. The core findings confirm that the domain is primarily driven by reactions to digital transformation and focused on the persuasive mechanisms in advertising. However, the analysis highlights three primary areas for future strategic growth: closing the methodological gap in review publications; broadening the geographical scope to include comparative studies from developing nations; and systematically expanding international collaborative networks to enhance further the global visibility and impact of the research output.

The findings from this bibliometric study reveal critical structural and geographical gaps in the research landscape, opening significant avenues for future inquiry designed to consolidate the field's theoretical foundations and enhance its global relevance. The study found low scholarly participation from developing countries, in contrast to the dominance of the United States and the United Kingdom. Future research must explicitly focus on non-Western cultural and economic contexts, particularly in high-growth regions such as Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Braca and Dondio, 2023). This approach is essential to decolonise the current academic discourse by moving beyond the implicit biases of Western perspectives. Such comparative studies will be instrumental in enriching the understanding of how rhetorical figures, appeals, and persuasive knowledge are adapted, interpreted, and rendered effective within varying cultural and socio-linguistic frameworks, thereby enhancing the universality and applicability of marketing rhetoric theories. The analysis of document types revealed a critical deficit in systematic synthesis, with comprehensive Review documents accounting for only 1.3% of the total output. Therefore, future scholarly efforts should be strategically directed towards generating systematic literature reviews, scoping reviews, and meta-analyses (Abhishek and Srivastava, 2021). These synthesis-based studies are necessary to effectively integrate the fragmented perspectives scattered across journal articles and book chapters, identify robust theoretical linkages, and construct a more coherent and validated theoretical framework for the entire domain. Furthermore, these reviews serve a crucial pedagogical function by providing essential navigational guides for new researchers entering the field.

The author network analysis identified a centralised collaborative structure dominated by small, closely linked clusters. To elevate the field's visibility and impact, researchers are strongly encouraged to expand international collaboration networks proactively. Collaborative partnerships between institutions across different continents, particularly pairing experts in classical rhetorical theory with those specialising in digital technology and cultural studies, will not only increase citation impact and research quality (Donthu et al., 2021) but also facilitate the sharing of unique interdisciplinary expertise (e.g., psychology, linguistics, and communication technology). Establishing formal, cross-border research consortia should be prioritised to foster greater intellectual exchange. Given the pronounced orientation of current keywords towards digital marketing and ethical considerations, future research must dedicate sustained attention to the rhetorical implications of emerging communication

technologies. This includes examining the persuasive architecture of AI-driven marketing, the communicative dynamics of neuromarketing applications, and the evolving role of rhetoric in algorithmic content creation and distribution on social media. Crucially, these studies must be paired with rigorous ethical inquiries into the implications of these persuasive strategies, addressing mounting consumer concerns regarding data privacy, algorithmic manipulation, and transparency in the digital environment. Finally, while citation metrics confirm the presence of high-impact research, the moderate average Cites/Paper (12.25) suggests a need to improve the overall visibility of published work. To maximise academic impact, researchers should place greater emphasis on publishing in journals with higher impact factors and strategically utilising open-access platforms where appropriate. These publication strategies are widely recognised as key factors in boosting citation counts and ensuring that marketing rhetoric research strengthens its position as a relevant, influential, and accessible scholarly domain (Donthu et al., 2021). In summary, these recommendations advocate for a more inclusive, methodologically synthetic, and future-oriented approach to marketing rhetoric research. Their implementation will be instrumental in strengthening the theoretical base, dramatically enhancing global visibility, and securing the field's ongoing relevance in the increasingly complex, technology-driven era of digital marketing.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis has successfully provided a comprehensive, quantitative overview of the research trajectory on rhetoric in marketing and advertising spanning the decade from 2015 to 2025. The systematic examination of the 239 identified documents has confirmed the domain as a dynamic, interdisciplinary, and academically vital field. The annual publication trend demonstrated a non-linear growth pattern, characterised by two significant publishing peaks in 2016 and 2023 (Donthu et al., 2021). These surges were strongly correlated with major paradigm shifts in marketing, specifically, the rise of digital and social media, and the emergence of AI and new smart technologies. Despite fluctuations, the overall trend indicates sustained, high scholarly interest in the topic. The dominance of journal articles (73.2%) as the primary publication medium underscores a clear academic preference for empirical research. However, the low incidence of systematic review studies highlights a significant methodological deficiency that needs to be addressed to achieve greater theoretical coherence (Abhishek and Srivastava, 2021). Furthermore, the analysis of institutional and country involvement revealed a strong Western bias, with an overwhelming dominance by the United States and the United Kingdom, alongside limited contributions from developing nations. This geographical disparity presents a clear opportunity for inclusive comparative research to mitigate this bias and enrich the global understanding of rhetorical adaptation (Braca and Dondio, 2023). The author's collaboration network analysis revealed a centralised structure comprising small, tightly linked clusters, indicating a potential need to expand international collaborations to enhance study visibility and impact. Simultaneously, the keyword analysis established the field's thematic nexus, demonstrating a clear orientation towards digital marketing and ethical discourse, integrating concepts from communication, psychology, and technology (McQuarrie and Mick, 1996).

Finally, the citation metrics confirmed the field's robust academic impact, evidenced by a total of 2,928 citations and a strong h-index of 29. This figure suggests the presence of influential, high-impact research. Nonetheless, the moderately stable average citation per article signals a need to strategically increase study visibility through high-impact publications and expanded international collaboration (Donthu et al., 2021). In essence, this study has not only successfully mapped the current intellectual landscape but has also provided a robust foundation for future strategic development. The practical implications of these findings mandate that marketing researchers actively integrate classical rhetorical perspectives into the rapidly evolving landscape of digital strategy, rigorously investigate the ethical ramifications of persuasive techniques in automated and data-driven environments, and prioritise strengthening global collaborative networks to elevate overall academic impact. By implementing the recommendations, the field of marketing rhetoric can ensure its continued relevance and authoritative influence in an increasingly complex, technologically oriented communication era.

Acknowledgement

This research is self-funded.

Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involving any parties in this research study.

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