

Product Marketing and Small Business Research, 2006–2026: Growth and Collaboration Fragmentation

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Abstract

This study maps the development of product marketing and small business research between 2006 and 2026. While previous studies focused on specific topics like market orientation or digital adoption, this research examines how the field has evolved as an intellectual landscape. Using a bibliometric approach with Bibliometrix and VOSviewer, the study analyzed 886 Scopus-indexed articles selected from an initial 1,799 papers within the Business, Management, and Accounting subject area. The findings reveal that publication activity became more sustained after the mid-2010s. Keyword analysis shows the field is strongly anchored in marketing (126 appearances), followed by innovation (76), marketing strategy (49), and SMEs (49). Citation analysis indicates concentrated intellectual influence, led by the United Kingdom (1,694 citations), the United States (1,436), and Italy (1,313). Thematic mapping identifies commerce, small business, and sales as motor themes, while marketing, marketing strategy, and entrepreneurship serve as basic themes. Furthermore, the co-authorship network reveals fragmented collaboration across small author clusters. Ultimately, this study clarifies the growth, thematic structure, and collaboration patterns of the field, helping scholars and practitioners identify established themes, emerging digital topics, and future opportunities.

Keywords: product marketing; small business; bibliometric analysis; thematic mapping; collaboration network

Abstrak

Studi ini memetakan perkembangan riset pemasaran produk dan usaha kecil dari tahun 2006 hingga 2026. Berbeda dengan penelitian terdahulu yang cenderung berfokus pada topik spesifik seperti orientasi pasar atau adopsi digital, penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana bidang tersebut tumbuh sebagai satu kesatuan lanskap intelektual. Menggunakan pendekatan bibliometrik dengan alat analisis Bibliometrix dan VOSviewer, studi ini mengkaji 886 artikel terindeks Scopus yang disaring dari total awal 1.799 makalah di bidang Bisnis, Manajemen, dan Akuntansi. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa aktivitas publikasi global mulai bergerak konsisten dan berkelanjutan sejak pertengahan 2010-an. Berdasarkan analisis kata kunci, bidang ini berakar kuat pada topik marketing (126 kemunculan), disusul innovation (76), marketing strategy (49), serta SMEs (49). Dari segi pengaruh sitasi, kontribusi intelektual didominasi oleh Inggris (1.694 sitasi), Amerika Serikat (1.436), dan Italia (1.313). Melalui pemetaan tematik, ditemukan bahwa topik commerce, small business, dan sales bertindak sebagai tema penggerak utama, sementara marketing dan entrepreneurship menjadi tema dasar. Di sisi lain, jaringan kolaborasi antar-penulis terdeteksi masih terfragmentasi dalam kelompok-kelompok kecil. Studi ini berkontribusi memperjelas struktur tematis masa lalu sekaligus memandu praktisi melihat peluang riset digital di masa depan.

Kata kunci: pemasaran produk; usaha kecil; analisis bibliometrik; pemetaan tematik; jaringan kolaborasi

INTRODUCTION

Product marketing has become an important strategic activity for small businesses because it connects product decisions with customer needs, market positioning, communication channels, and business performance. In small firms, marketing is rarely conducted as a formal and specialized function. It is often informal, adaptive, and strongly influenced by owner-managers who must make product, pricing, communication, and customer relationship decisions under resource constraints. This condition makes product marketing particularly important for small businesses because it helps them identify customer problems, communicate value propositions,



differentiate their offerings, and respond to market changes. Market orientation studies show that firms that generate market intelligence, coordinate internal responses, and act on customer and competitor information are more likely to achieve superior performance (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990). Similarly, the capability-based view of marketing explains that firms require market-sensing, customer-linking, and marketing implementation capabilities to create and sustain competitive advantage (Day, 1994; Vorhies & Morgan, 2005; Morgan et al., 2009). These arguments are highly relevant to small businesses because their survival and growth often depend on how effectively they translate limited resources into market-relevant products and customer value.

In the context of small businesses, product marketing does not only involve selling or promotion. It functions as a mechanism through which firms develop market knowledge, adapt products to customer expectations, build customer relationships, and strengthen competitiveness. Previous research on SME marketing emphasizes that small firms tend to practice marketing differently from large firms because they rely more on flexibility, networking, personal relationships, and experiential learning (Gilmore et al., 2001; Reijonen, 2010). Entrepreneurial marketing research also shows that marketing in smaller and entrepreneurial firms is shaped by opportunity recognition, innovation, customer intimacy, and proactive market creation (Stokes, 2000; Hills et al., 2008; Jones & Rowley, 2011). Therefore, product marketing in small businesses should be understood as a strategic and entrepreneurial process that links customer orientation, innovation, and adaptive decision-making.

The relationship between product marketing and small business performance can be explained through several mechanisms. First, product marketing supports market sensing by enabling firms to understand customer needs, competitor actions, and market opportunities. Second, it strengthens marketing capabilities by helping firms translate market knowledge into product positioning, communication, distribution, and customer engagement. Third, it supports innovation because product-related decisions must be aligned with changing customer expectations and market demand. Fourth, in digitally mediated markets, product marketing enables small businesses to extend customer reach through digital platforms, social media, electronic commerce, and online communication channels. Studies on SME performance indicate that marketing capabilities, innovation capabilities, learning capabilities, entrepreneurial orientation, and digital marketing adoption are associated with stronger competitiveness and firm performance (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; O'Dwyer et al., 2009; Sok et al., 2013; Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015; Marolt et al., 2022). These mechanisms show that product marketing affects small businesses not only through sales outcomes, but also through market responsiveness, innovation, customer engagement, and strategic adaptation.

Despite the practical importance of this topic, the literature on product marketing and small business remains conceptually dispersed. Existing studies have examined related areas such as market orientation, SME marketing practices, entrepreneurial marketing, marketing capabilities, innovation, digital marketing adoption, social media use, and crisis adaptation. However, these studies often focus on specific variables, industries, countries, or firm-level outcomes. As a result, it remains unclear how the broader body of knowledge has developed over time, which themes dominate the field, which topics are emerging, which countries and institutions shape the intellectual influence of the field, and how collaboration among scholars is



structured. This fragmentation creates a theoretical problem because knowledge accumulation becomes uneven and disconnected. It also creates a practical problem because small business practitioners and policymakers may lack a structured understanding of which marketing themes are mature, which digital issues are gaining scholarly attention, and where future research or policy support should be directed.

This gap is important because unresolved fragmentation may lead future studies to repeat isolated discussions without clarifying the intellectual structure of the field. For small business practitioners, the absence of a structured knowledge map may limit the translation of academic findings into practical guidance for product positioning, market responsiveness, innovation, and digital customer engagement. For policymakers, limited understanding of research trends may weaken the design of SME development programs, particularly those related to marketing capability development, digital transformation, and competitiveness. Therefore, bibliometric analysis is appropriate for this study because it enables researchers to examine large volumes of scientific publications, identify publication growth, map dominant and emerging themes, analyze citation influence, and reveal collaboration structures within a research field (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021). Science mapping tools are also useful for understanding the conceptual, intellectual, and social structure of a field through keyword analysis, citation analysis, co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and co-authorship networks (Cobo et al., 2011).

Based on this rationale, this study maps global research on product marketing and small business using Scopus-indexed publications from 2006 to 2026. The study analyzes 886 articles within the Business, Management, and Accounting subject area using Bibliometrix and VOSviewer. The analysis includes citation analysis, keyword analysis, co-authorship analysis, thematic mapping, and bibliographic coupling. This study addresses two research questions: (1) How has research on product marketing and small business evolved from 2006 to 2026? and (2) How can the thematic structure, citation influence, and collaboration patterns of product marketing and small business research be mapped based on global research trends? By answering these questions, this study contributes to the literature by clarifying the growth, thematic evolution, and collaboration structure of the field. It also provides practical insight for scholars, small business practitioners, and policymakers seeking to identify established research areas, emerging digital themes, and future opportunities for cross-country and cross-institutional collaboration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a bibliometric research design to map the development, thematic structure, citation influence, and collaboration patterns of research on product marketing and small business from 2006 to 2026. Bibliometric analysis was selected because it enables the systematic examination of a large body of scientific publications through publication trends, citation relationships, keyword structures, and collaboration networks. This approach is appropriate for identifying how a research field evolves over time and how its intellectual, conceptual, and social structures are formed.

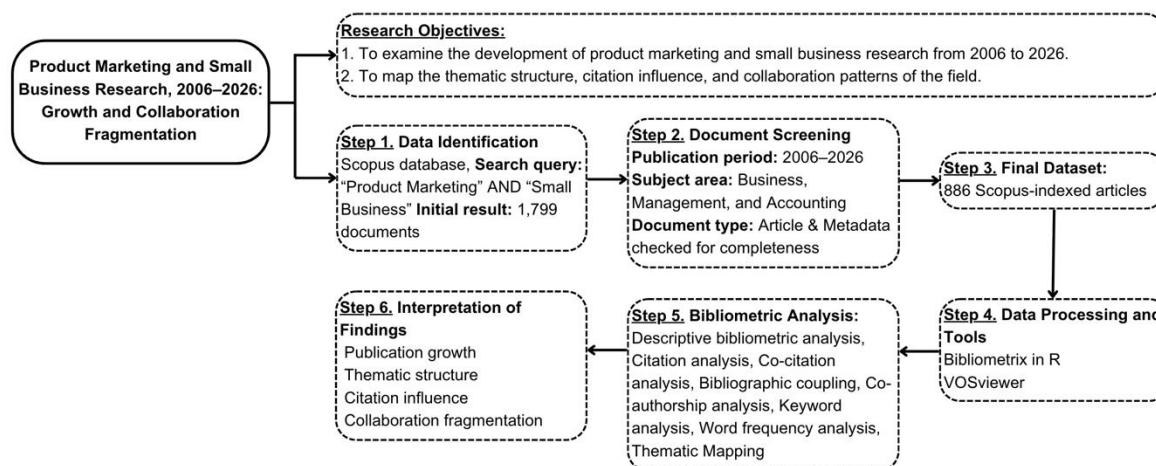


Figure 1. Sequential Workflow of the Bibliometric Analysis

The data were collected from the Scopus database using the search query “Product Marketing” AND “Small Business.” Scopus was selected because it provides curated bibliographic metadata that are compatible with bibliometric analysis tools. However, this study recognizes that Scopus represents a database-specific source and may not fully capture publications indexed in other databases, non-English publications, or journals that are underrepresented in international indexing systems. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted as a Scopus-based mapping rather than a complete representation of all global publications.

Data collection was conducted as a single data retrieval process in 2026 using Scopus records available at the time of export. The initial search produced 1,799 documents. The screening process was conducted sequentially using predefined criteria. First, the publication period was limited to 2006–2026. Second, the subject area was restricted to Business, Management, and Accounting to maintain disciplinary relevance. Third, the document type was limited to articles to ensure consistency in peer-reviewed scholarly output. Fourth, the exported metadata were checked for bibliographic completeness, including title, author name, affiliation, abstract, keywords, source title, citation information, and references. After applying these criteria, the final dataset consisted of 886 Scopus-indexed articles.

The inclusion criteria were: (1) documents indexed in Scopus, (2) documents published between 2006 and 2026, (3) documents categorized under Business, Management, and Accounting, (4) documents classified as articles, and (5) documents related to product marketing and small business based on the search query. The exclusion criteria were: (1) documents outside the 2006–2026 period, (2) documents outside the selected subject area, (3) non-article document types such as conference papers, book chapters, editorials, notes, reviews, errata, and letters, (4) documents with incomplete bibliographic metadata, and (5) duplicate records identified during metadata checking.

Since this study relied on database filters and bibliographic metadata rather than manual full-text coding, independent reviewer screening and inter-rater reliability assessment were not applied. This decision is consistent with the bibliometric nature of the study, where the primary unit of analysis is bibliographic metadata rather than subjective qualitative coding. Nevertheless,



this is acknowledged as a methodological limitation because the relevance of the dataset depends on the search query, Scopus indexing quality, and metadata accuracy.

The analysis was conducted sequentially in six stages. The first stage was data retrieval from Scopus using the predefined search query and filters. The second stage was document screening based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The third stage was metadata cleaning, including duplicate checking, keyword standardization, and verification of author and affiliation information where possible. The fourth stage was descriptive bibliometric analysis to identify publication development, author productivity, keyword frequency, most cited countries, and most relevant affiliations. The fifth stage was science mapping using citation analysis, co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, co-authorship analysis, keyword analysis, word frequency analysis, and thematic mapping. The sixth stage was interpretation of the results in relation to the research objectives.

Several bibliometric techniques were used because each technique captures a different aspect of the research field. Citation analysis was used to identify influential countries, sources, and documents based on citation impact. Co-citation analysis was used to examine the intellectual structure of the field by identifying references or authors that are frequently cited together. Bibliographic coupling was used to identify relationships among publications that share common references. Co-authorship analysis was applied to map collaboration patterns among authors and reveal the degree of connectedness within the research community. Keyword analysis and word frequency analysis were used to identify dominant concepts and frequently discussed topics. Thematic mapping was used to classify themes based on centrality and density, allowing the study to distinguish motor themes, basic themes, niche themes, and emerging or declining themes.

The data were analyzed using Bibliometrix in R (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and VOSviewer (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Bibliometrix was used to conduct descriptive bibliometric analysis, generate thematic maps, identify trend topics, and examine keyword frequency. VOSviewer was used to visualize bibliometric networks, including co-authorship relationships and other network-based structures. The use of both tools allowed the study to combine quantitative bibliometric indicators with visual science mapping. Nevertheless, the validity of the results depends on the quality of Scopus metadata, the search strategy, the selected thresholds, and the interpretation of network visualizations. Therefore, the results should be understood as a structured bibliometric representation of the selected dataset rather than as causal evidence of relationships among variables.

The methodological workflow is presented in Figure 1. The process started with the identification of documents from Scopus, followed by screening based on publication year, subject area, document type, and metadata completeness. The final dataset was then analyzed using Bibliometrix and VOSviewer through descriptive bibliometric analysis, citation analysis, co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, co-authorship analysis, keyword analysis, word frequency analysis, and thematic mapping. The results were interpreted to answer the research questions regarding the growth, thematic structure, citation influence, and collaboration fragmentation of product marketing and small business research from 2006 to 2026.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the previously described methodology, the bibliometric analysis provides a systematic overview of the evolution of research on Product Marketing and Small Business. The following section presents the principal findings and discusses their implications for global publication trends, thematic development, and the intellectual structure of the discipline.

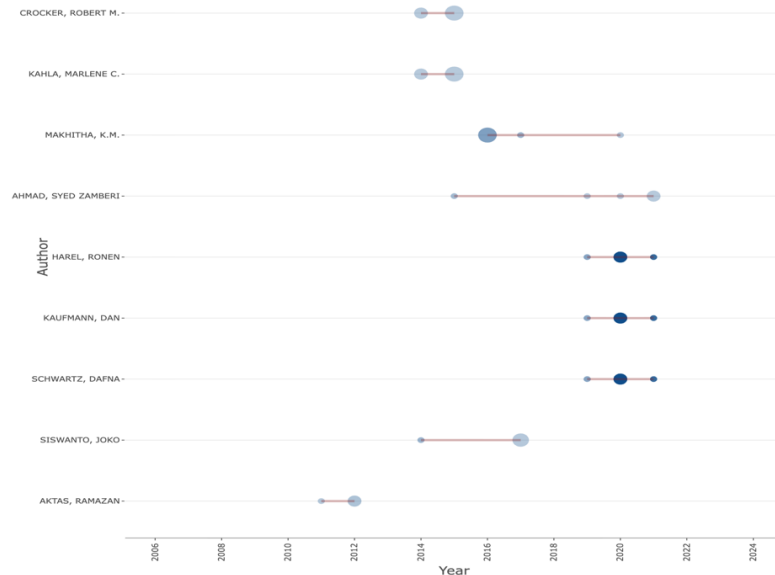


Figure 2. Authors' Production over Time

Source: Scopus bibliographic data using Bibliometrix (R-package) and VOSviewer

Figure 2 illustrates that research on Product Marketing and Small Business has been predominantly influenced by a limited group of recurring authors. Publication activity increased after 2014, reaching its peak between 2019 and 2021, whereas earlier contributions were sporadic. In subsequent years, author involvement became more consistent, particularly among Ahmad, Harel, Kaufmann, and Schwartz. This transition indicates that the field has evolved from isolated contributions to a more sustained and interconnected scholarly discourse, reflecting increased academic interest and the maturation of the research stream.

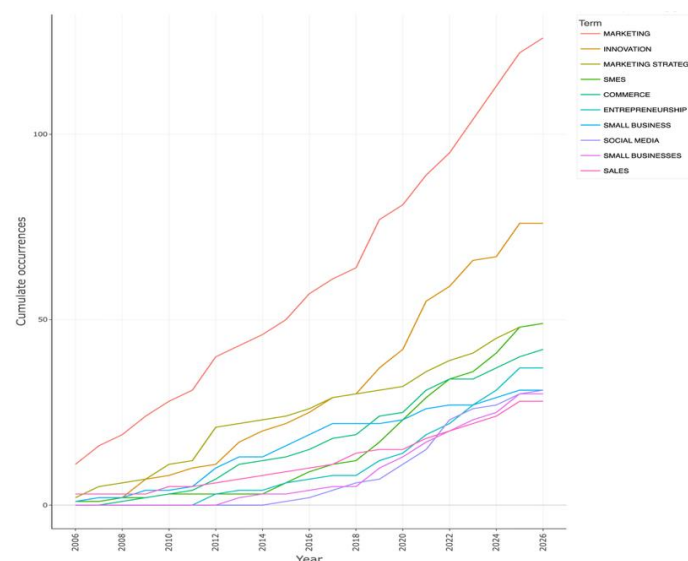


Figure 3. Words' Frequency over Time

Source: Scopus bibliographic data using Bibliometrix (R-package) and VOSviewer



Figure 3 demonstrates that the research landscape in Product Marketing and Small Business is primarily characterized by the dominance of the term marketing, which exhibits the highest and most consistent cumulative growth throughout the observed period. Concurrently, the rising frequency of terms such as innovation, marketing strategy, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), entrepreneurship, and social media indicates a gradual expansion from traditional marketing toward broader discussions of competitiveness, innovation, and digital business practices. This trend suggests that the literature is increasingly dynamic and multidimensional, mirroring the evolving challenges encountered by small businesses in contemporary markets.

Together, Figures 2 and 3 reveal that research on product marketing and small business has evolved into a more established and conceptually structured field. Figure 2 demonstrates a sustained increase in scholarly contributions, especially from the mid-2010s onward. Figure 3 shows that although the literature remains anchored in marketing, it has increasingly incorporated related themes such as innovation, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), entrepreneurship, and social media.

Figure 4 indicates that the citation impact of research on Product Marketing and Small Business is concentrated in a limited number of countries. The United Kingdom, the United States, and Italy exhibit the highest citation counts, followed by Australia, Canada, Malaysia, and New Zealand. In contrast, Indonesia, China, and Croatia demonstrate lower citation influence within the dataset. This distribution suggests that the field's intellectual influence is predominantly centered in a small group of countries, particularly within Anglo-American and European contexts, although contributions from emerging and non-Western countries are also present.

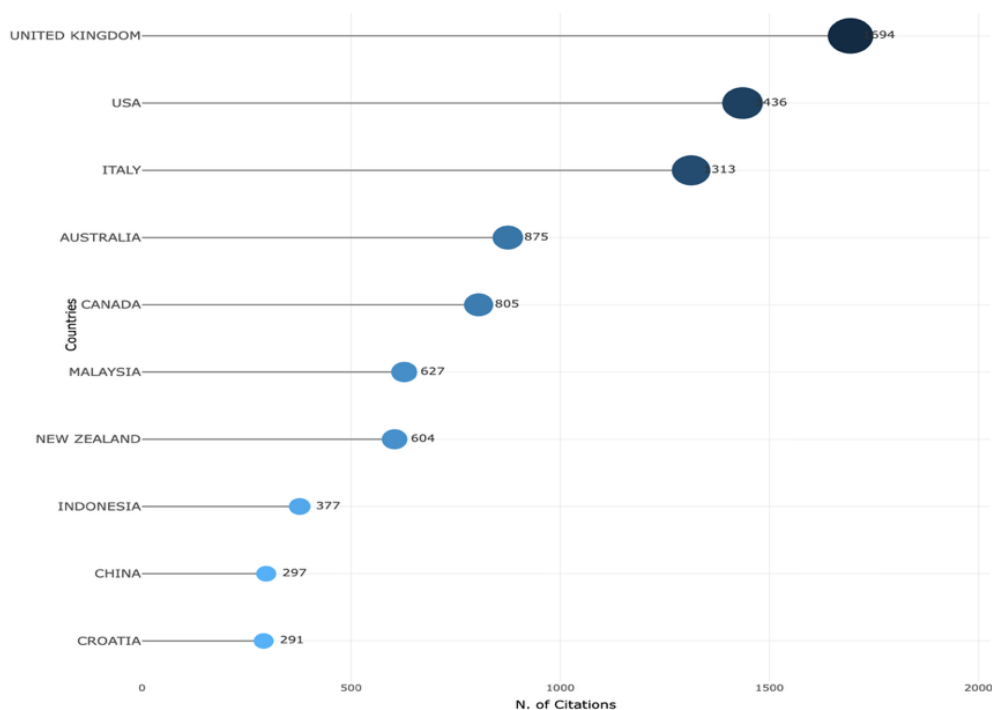


Figure 4. Most Cited Countries

Source: Scopus bibliographic data using Bibliometrix (R-package) and VOSviewer

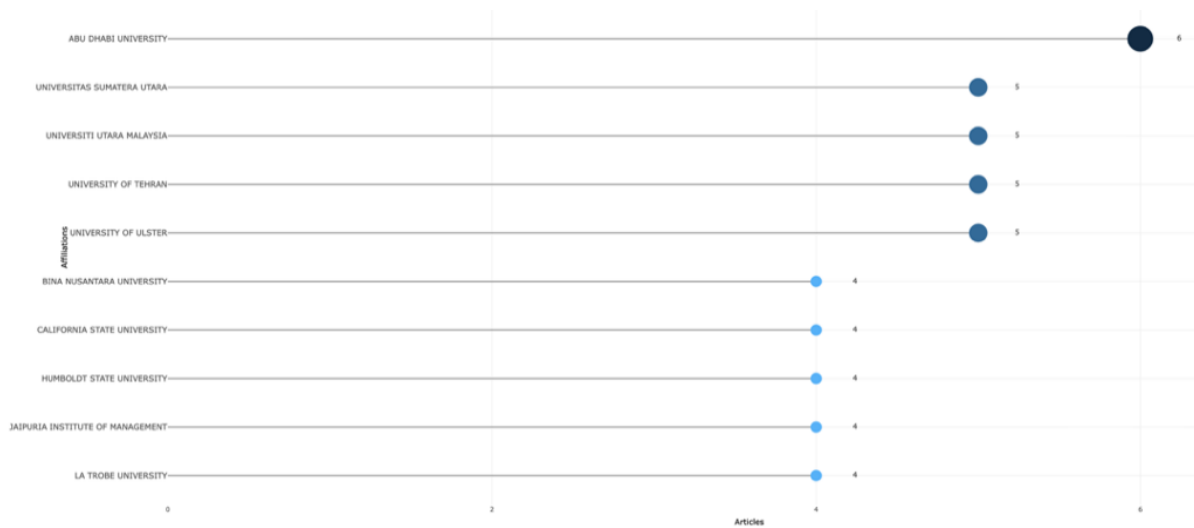


Figure 5. Most Relevant Affiliations

Source: Scopus bibliographic data using Bibliometrix (R-package) and VOSviewer

Figure 5 illustrates that institutional contributions to research on Product Marketing and Small Business are broadly distributed, with no single affiliation dominating the field. Abu Dhabi University accounts for the highest number of articles, followed by Universitas Sumatera Utara, Universiti Utara Malaysia, University of Tehran, and University of Ulster. Additional institutions, including Bina Nusantara University, California State University, Humboldt State University, Jaipuria Institute of Management, and La Trobe University, also make substantial contributions. This pattern suggests that the field benefits from a geographically diverse set of academic institutions, indicating extensive international engagement rather than a concentration within a small number of universities.

Collectively, Figures 4 and 5 reveal that the research landscape of Product Marketing and Small Business is international in scope but displays disparities in citation influence and institutional productivity. Figure 4 shows that scholarly impact is concentrated in a few countries, particularly the United Kingdom, the United States, and Italy. Conversely, Figure 5 demonstrates that article production spans a broader range of affiliations, with no single institution exhibiting pronounced dominance. These observations suggest that while the field attracts widespread global participation, its intellectual influence remains concentrated within specific national research contexts.



Figure 6. TreeMap

Source: Scopus bibliographic data using Bibliometrix (R-package) and VOSviewer

Figure 6 illustrates the thematic composition of research on Product Marketing and Small Business by displaying the relative prominence of the most frequently occurring terms. The treemap indicates that marketing is the primary theme, followed by innovation, marketing strategy, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which suggests that the field remains focused on core marketing and small business topics. Furthermore, the presence of terms such as commerce, entrepreneurship, social media, digital marketing, electronic commerce, and consumer behavior demonstrates that the literature has expanded to include digital, strategic, and performance-oriented perspectives. This distribution suggests that the field is conceptually broad and increasingly responsive to contemporary business environments.

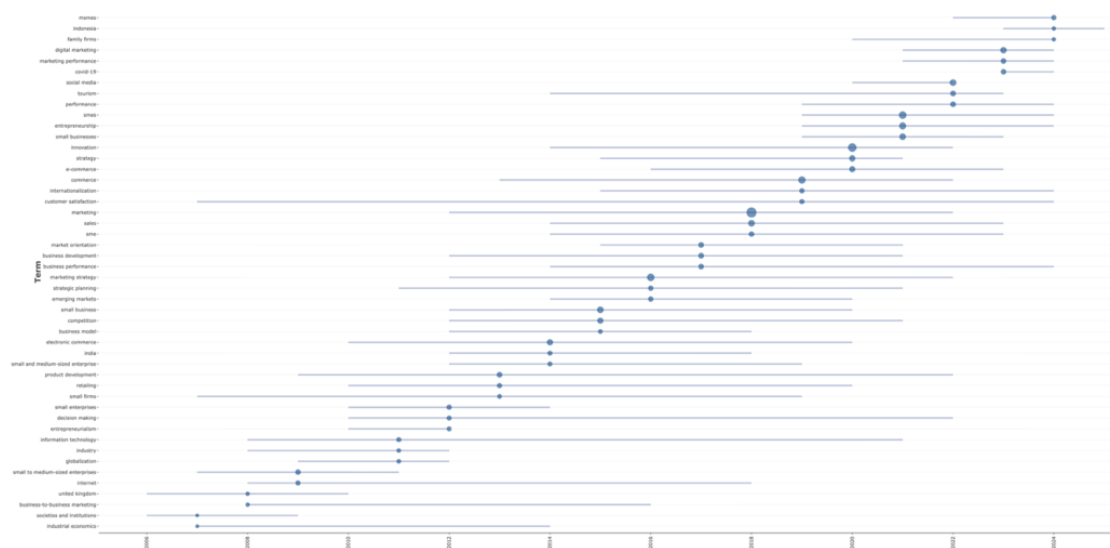


Figure 7. Trend Topics

Source: Scopus bibliographic data using Bibliometrix (R-package) and VOSviewer

Figure 7 presents the temporal evolution of research topics in Product Marketing and Small Business, highlighting a clear transition from earlier themes such as industrial economics, business-to-business marketing, the internet, and globalization to more recent emphases on marketing, innovation, entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), digital marketing, social media, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The figure also shows that contemporary topics, including COVID-19, Indonesia, and family firms, have gained prominence in the later period. This trend demonstrates the field’s growing responsiveness to digital transformation, emerging-market challenges, and region-specific small-business issues. These developments collectively suggest that the literature has shifted from foundational business concerns toward a more dynamic, applied, and context-sensitive research agenda.

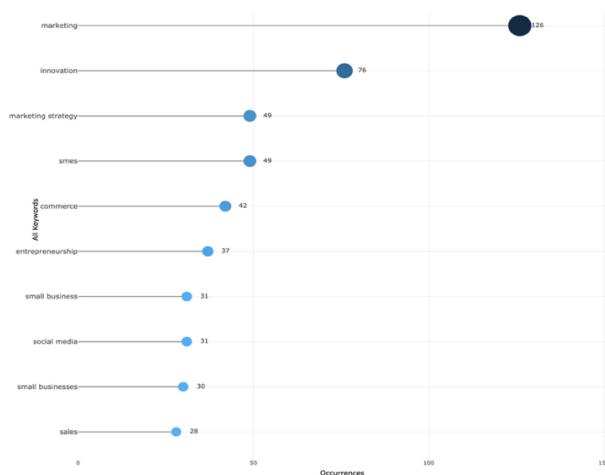


Figure 8. Most Frequent Words

Source: Scopus bibliographic data using Bibliometrix (R-package) and VOSviewer

Figure 8 displays the most frequent keywords in research on Product Marketing and Small Business, with marketing identified as the dominant term by a substantial margin. Innovation, marketing strategy, and SMEs are also prominent, indicating that the literature is primarily structured around core marketing issues and the strategic development of small enterprises. The

frequent use of terms such as commerce, entrepreneurship, small business, social media, and sales demonstrates that the field addresses both traditional and digital business practices, reflecting a broad, increasingly application-oriented research focus.

Together, Figures 6, 7, and 8 indicate that research on product marketing and small business is anchored in a strong marketing foundation and is expanding toward broader strategic, entrepreneurial, and digital dimensions. Figure 6 underscores the prominence of core themes, including marketing, innovation, marketing strategy, and SMEs. Figure 7 reveals a temporal progression from foundational topics to more recent issues, including digital marketing, social media, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and contextual themes such as COVID-19 and Indonesia. Figure 8 affirms the centrality of the most frequently used keywords in the field. These findings suggest that the literature has evolved into a more diversified, dynamic, and context-sensitive body of knowledge that mirrors the evolving realities of small-business competition and product marketing practice.

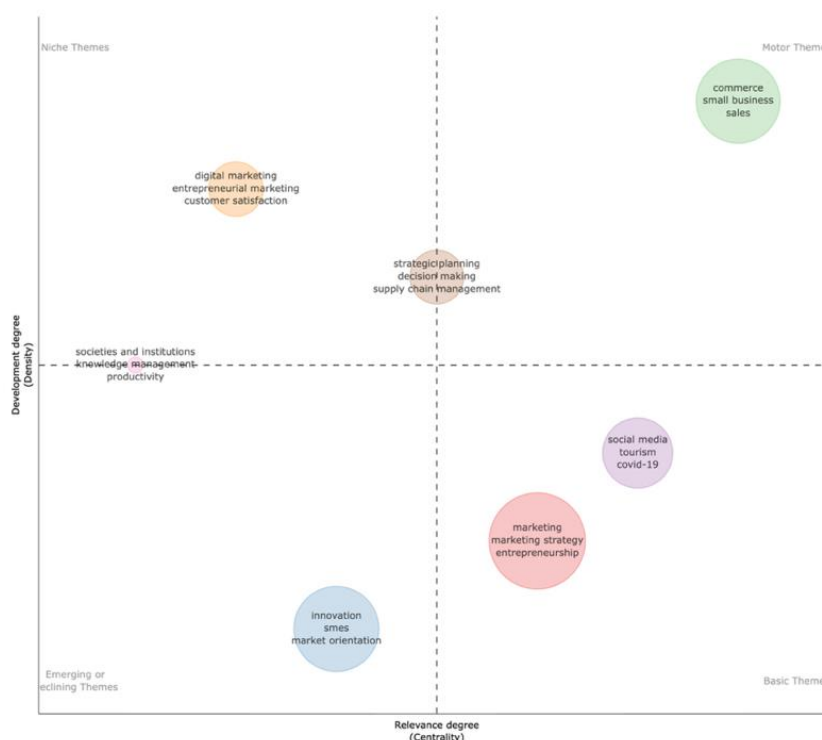


Figure 9. Thematic Map

Source: Scopus bibliographic data using Bibliometrix (R-package) and VOSviewer

Figure 9 presents the thematic structure of research on Product Marketing and Small Business, organizing topics by centrality and density. The analysis demonstrates that commerce, small business, and sales occupy the motor themes quadrant, indicating that these topics are both highly developed and central to the field. In contrast, marketing, marketing strategy, and entrepreneurship are categorized as basic themes, forming the conceptual foundation of the literature but displaying less internal development. Social media, tourism, and COVID-19 are also grouped within the basic themes area, representing relevant yet still evolving topics. Digital marketing, entrepreneurial marketing, and customer satisfaction are identified as niche themes, which exhibit strong internal development but have limited overall influence. Innovation, SMEs,

and market orientation are classified as emerging or declining themes, suggesting either new lines of inquiry or topics whose prominence is shifting within the broader research landscape.

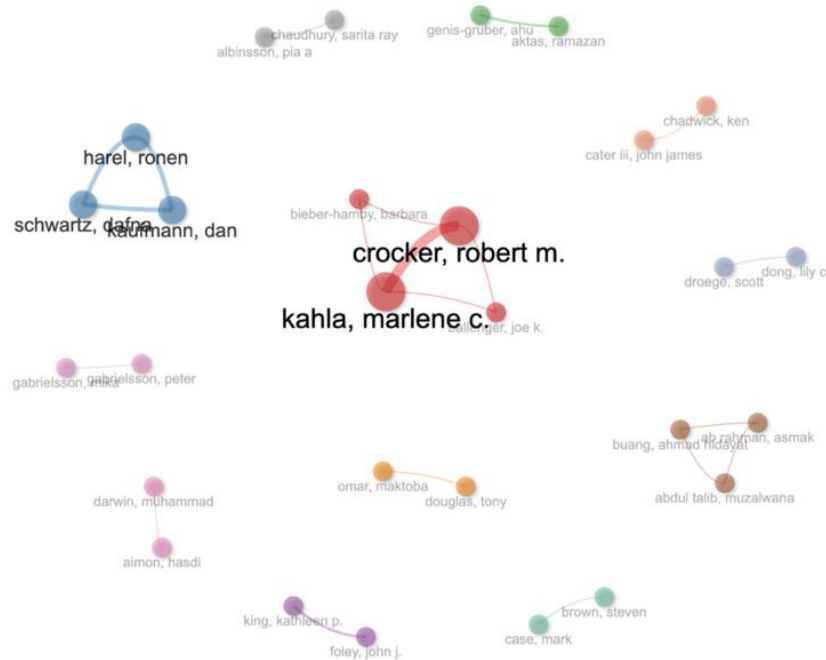


Figure 10. Collaboration Network

Source: Scopus bibliographic data using Bibliometrix (R-package) and VOSviewer

Figure 10 presents the collaboration network among authors in the field of Product Marketing and Small Business, revealing that scholarly collaboration is organized into several small, distinct clusters. The most prominent collaborations involve authors such as Crocker and Kahla, as well as Harel, Schwartz, and Kaufmann, indicating that these individuals occupy more central positions within the co-authorship network. Nevertheless, the presence of numerous isolated or weakly connected groups suggests that collaboration in this field remains fragmented rather than highly integrated. This pattern demonstrates that, despite the emergence of several active research partnerships, the overall author network lacks extensive interconnection across clusters.

CONCLUSION

In summary, research on product marketing and small business has developed into a broader, more structured, and increasingly significant area within business and entrepreneurship scholarship. The findings show that the field has experienced consistent growth, particularly since the mid-2010s, as reflected in sustained author productivity, increased keyword frequency, and the emergence of enduring thematic areas. The mapping results indicate that the literature is anchored in core themes such as marketing, innovation, marketing strategy, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), while also expanding toward digital and contextual topics, including social media, digital marketing, commerce, entrepreneurship, COVID-19, and region-specific concerns. Intellectual influence is concentrated in a few countries, notably the United Kingdom, the United States, and Italy. In contrast, institutional contributions are more geographically distributed, while author collaboration remains fragmented within relatively small clusters. The thematic structure further reveals that commerce, small business,



and sales serve as motor themes, whereas marketing, marketing strategy, and entrepreneurship remain foundational within the field.

Theoretically, this study contributes by clarifying the intellectual, conceptual, and social structure of product marketing and small business research. As a bibliometric study, it does not test causal relationships directly; rather, it provides a structured knowledge map that helps explain how the field has evolved, which themes have become central, and where scholarly fragmentation remains. This contribution is important for related fields such as SME marketing, entrepreneurial marketing, digital marketing, innovation management, and small business development because it shows how these areas intersect within the broader product marketing literature. For researchers, the findings provide a reference point for identifying mature themes, emerging topics, underexplored research areas, and potential collaboration opportunities across countries, institutions, and author networks.

Practically, this study offers useful insight for SME practitioners, policymakers, and academic institutions. For practitioners, the results highlight the importance of marketing, innovation, digital channels, and customer-oriented strategies in strengthening small business competitiveness. For policymakers, the mapping can support the design of SME development programs by identifying knowledge areas that require further research, training, and institutional support. For academic institutions, the fragmented collaboration pattern suggests the need to encourage more cross-country and cross-institutional research collaboration in product marketing and small business studies.

Future research could expand the dataset beyond Scopus, compare findings across multiple databases, and investigate emerging themes using systematic literature review or qualitative content analysis. Further studies may also examine the mechanisms through which product marketing influences SME performance, particularly through market orientation, innovation capability, digital marketing adoption, and customer engagement. By doing so, future research can move beyond mapping the field toward developing stronger theoretical explanations and practical guidance for small business growth.

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