



ETHICAL ISSUES IN MARKETING: A BIBLOMETRIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: Ethical issues in marketing have a wide area of research and range from use of Brain mapping in consumer Behaviour studies to marketing of products like Biobanks and Contraceptives; from medical representatives of pharmaceutical companies offering free gifts to doctors as sales promotion tools to marketing of food items involving insects and cell-based meat. Aim of this paper is to do the bibliographic literature review in terms of the research this field from 1972 to 2023. There are five research questions aimed at exploring the bibliographic knowledge base of research in this field and exploring the main areas of research in various studies. It has been observed that there has been a shift in literature from descriptive ethics to applied ethics. The research has evolved from conceptual themes to practical issues concerning morality of actions. The bibliometric analysis was done for 1173 research papers with 24000 citations using Vos-Viewer software.
Keywords: Ethical issues, marketing, literature review, Bibliometric analysis.

Introduction

Ethical issues in marketing are important because businesses need to think beyond their commercial goals. Businesses do not only have the social responsibility but moral responsibility as well. Social responsibility can be measured in terms of CSR activities or CSR expenditures, but there are no parameters to measure the morality of a business. Unethical marketing practices have resulted in serious implications on physical and mental health of consumers. For instance, the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverage, high in fats, salt and/or sugar has been strongly implicated in the rising levels of childhood obesity worldwide (Boylund, 2023). Neuromarketing research, a new theoretical concept of consumer behaviour research, which uses EEG (Electroencephalograph) and MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) for brain mapping of consumers has many ethical concerns and causes ethical dilemmas (Vuković, 2023). Ethics helps people in making thoughtful moral decisions. Ethics is related to morality, in fact morality is concrete and gives practical meaning to ethics which is abstract (Kamila & Jasrotia, 2023). Literature frequently critiques the need for more accurate definitions of terms, which can lead to misunderstandings or incorrect conclusions (Vadera and pathki, 2021).

Objectives of Research

Bibliometric analysis helps in collecting the knowledge base of research that has been done in the field in terms of prominent publications, authors, organizations, countries etc. who have contributed in the particular field. The primary benefit of using bibliometric approaches is that they provide a quantitative level of rigor into the previously subjective process of

evaluating literature Mukherjee et al. (2021). In recent years, bibliometric analysis has gained an enormous amount of popularity in the field of business research. (Khan et al., 2021). This popularity can be attributed to the advancement, availability, and accessibility of bibliometric software such as Gephi, Histcite, VOS viewer, and scientific databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Dimensions. More crucially, the rise in popularity of bibliometric analysis in business research is not the result of a passing trend; rather, it is an indication of the usefulness of this method for managing vast quantities of scientific data and creating high research impact.

Bibliometric analysis is used by academics for a variety of purposes, like, to discover emerging trends in article and journal performance, collaboration patterns, and research constituents; to investigate the intellectual structure of a particular domain as it exists in the existing literature. In other words, bibliometric analysis is beneficial for deciphering and mapping the cumulative scientific knowledge and evolutionary subtleties of well-established areas since it makes sense of enormous amounts of unstructured data in rigorous ways. This allows for the mapping of the accumulated scientific information.

There are five research questions:

RQ1: What is the Volume and document citation by time of ethical issues in marketing from 1972 to 2023?

RQ2: What are the countries that contributed most to the knowledgebase of ethics in marketing from 1972 to 2023?

RQ3: What are the top Journals that have published the 100 most cited articles on ethics in marketing and what are their characteristics?

RQ4: What is the intellectual structure of Knowledge-base on work place learning?

RQ5: What is the nature of collaboration that is evident from the publications of ethical issues in marketing?

Literature Review of Ethical issues in Marketing

The study of moral behaviour in marketing is known as “Ethical Marketing” (Niamey et al., 2022; Vitolla et al., 2021). The discipline of marketing ethics is embedded within a broader context that starts with applied ethics and includes engineering, law, and medicine (Costantini & Romano, 2022). Ethical Marketing is about being fair, honest and respectful when selling products or services. It involves understanding moral, social and environmental implications of selling a product. Ethical marketing means not lying or tricking people into buying things and treating them with dignity and respect. Unethical marketing is not only harmful for customers and society in the long run but also destroys the company's reputation and puts its survival under threat.

There are many studies available in literature related to various ethical issues in marketing like green marketing/ Environmental Concerns-The literature covers papers from green marketing practices (Karakurum, 2023), ethical issues of zero emission vehicles (Duvall et al., 2002), Eco design (Verma & Tyagi, 2023), Sustainable marketing activities (Jung et al., 2020), Sustainable Supply chain (Mefford, 2011); Ethics in Health care sector-There are studies related to ethics of Drug development (Gawade, et al. 2023), (Brody, 2012); ethics of marketing unhealthy foods (Boyland, 2023), insects as food (Alhujaili et al., 2023), Ethics in clinical trials (Bernabe, 2019), prenatal testing (Gekas et al., 2016), Marketing of slim cigarettes (Dewhirst et al., 2015); Ethical issues in use of technology and Artificial intelligence in Marketing: There are studies related to ethical aspects of using ChatGPT (Diwedi et al., 2023), ethical concerns for global technological societies (Verma, 2023), ethical hacking (Patyane, 2023), Search engine optimization and ethics (Maihofer 2013); Ethics in marketing of consumer goods and services: There are studies related to ethics of

neuromarketing (Vuković,2023), (Ulman et.al. 2014), (Nagappan,2021), bias in Industry sponsored outcome research (Freeman,1994); Ethical issues in marketing (Roy,2012), (Vyas&Parmar,2019), Marketing research ethics (Skinner et al.,1988); Ethics of pharmaceutical gift giving (Stokamer,2003), (Brutt,2003) ethics of business of health promotion/communication, (McLeroy,1987), (Solomon et.al.2016) ,(Guttman et al., 2004), ethics in reproductive technology (Dickens &Cook, 1999), Human milk banking (Miracle et al.,2011), Laser ethics (Stylianou,2015), ethics in Physician advertising (Moser, 2016). The marketing ethics literature before 1970 was regarded as primarily descriptive (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). The studies after that were related to conceptual aspects of ethics and theoretical development in ethical marketing decision making (Ferrell et al., 2013) and gradually evolved to more practical aspects like ethics of Gruella marketing, ethical issues in video gaming, Bio-marketing. During the time period 2020-2023, there are many studies related to

covid-19 issues like Covid-19 related misinformation (Bastani et al.2021), Covid -19 and forced alcohol abstinence (Nadkarni et al.,2020).

Research Methodology

At the first place, the database was extracted from dimensions database. There was total 1400 documents including datasets, clinical trials, patents, policy documents and grants. Then the data was filtered to include only articles from various journals and there were 1173 research papers in different journals from 1972 to 2023. Then, descriptive information (such as - year-wise data, journal contribution, country-wise segregation and contribution) was gathered. Then bibliometric analysis was done with the help of VOS viewer software. With the help of this software citation analysis, co-citation analysis and co-authorship analysis was done.

Results and Findings

To answer the **RQ1**, it was found that there is an increasing trend in volume of research done in field of ethics in marketing from 1972 to 2023 as is evident from figure1 and figure 2 shows the total citations of these publications. There are a total of 1173 publications with total 28668 citations, citations mean is 24.38. The bibliometric criteria assess the publication output and the quality of publications. The number of publications is counted, but an article's overall number of citations determines its quality (Kamila &Jasrotia, 2023). Citation analysis is one of the most often used methods for obtaining quality research(Kumar, Surekha

&Colombage, 2020). Figure 2 shows the citation of articles associated with a yearly publication based on data from the Dimensions database and pertinent to ethical issues in marketing and related disciplines. The annual publication and citation of works on Ethical issues in marketing are fully covered. The graph shows overall an upward trend and publications of 2023 are showing a downward surge because the data for 2023 is incomplete as it was collected in October, 2023.

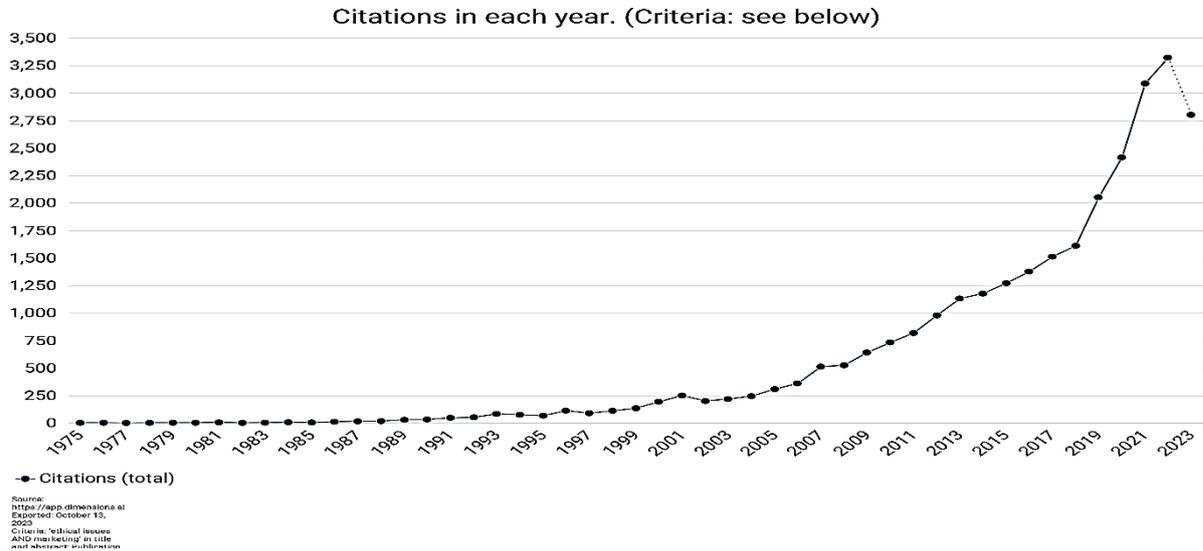


Figure 1: Publications in each year from Dimensions database

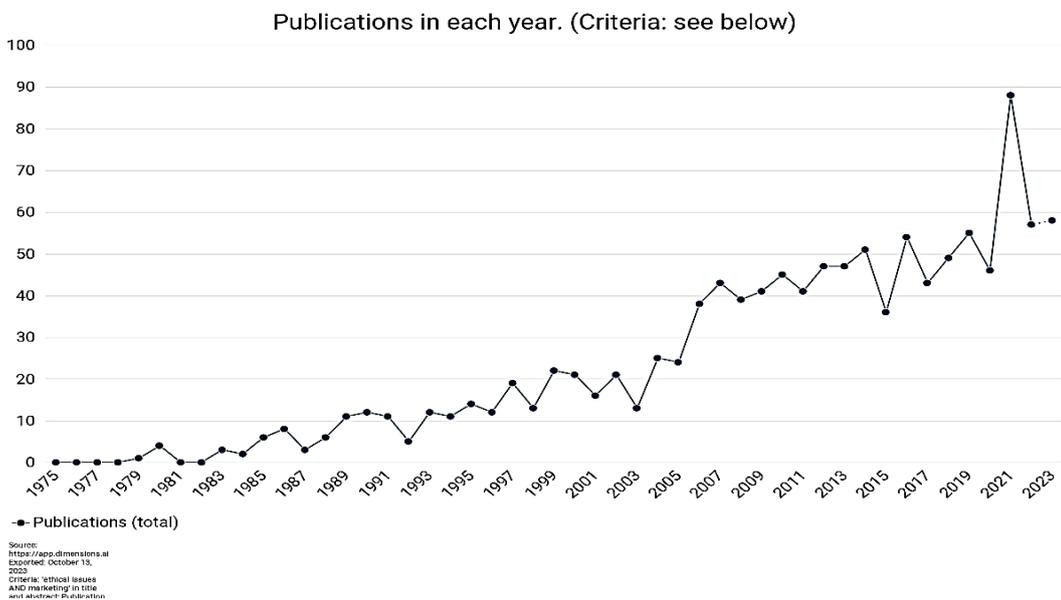


Figure 2: Citations in each year from Dimensions Database

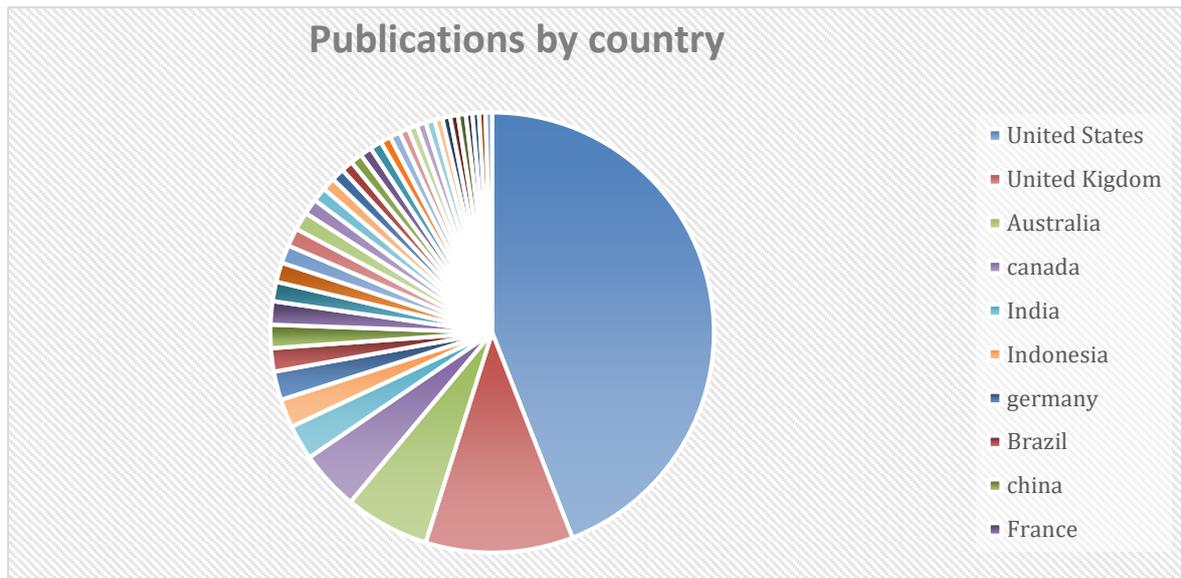


Figure 3: Publications by country

Second research question **RQ2** is related to the contribution by countries to the research in field of ethical issues in marketing. It was found that maximum contribution was from united states (464), followed by United Kingdom (113) and Australia (46), as is evident from figure 3 and figure 4.

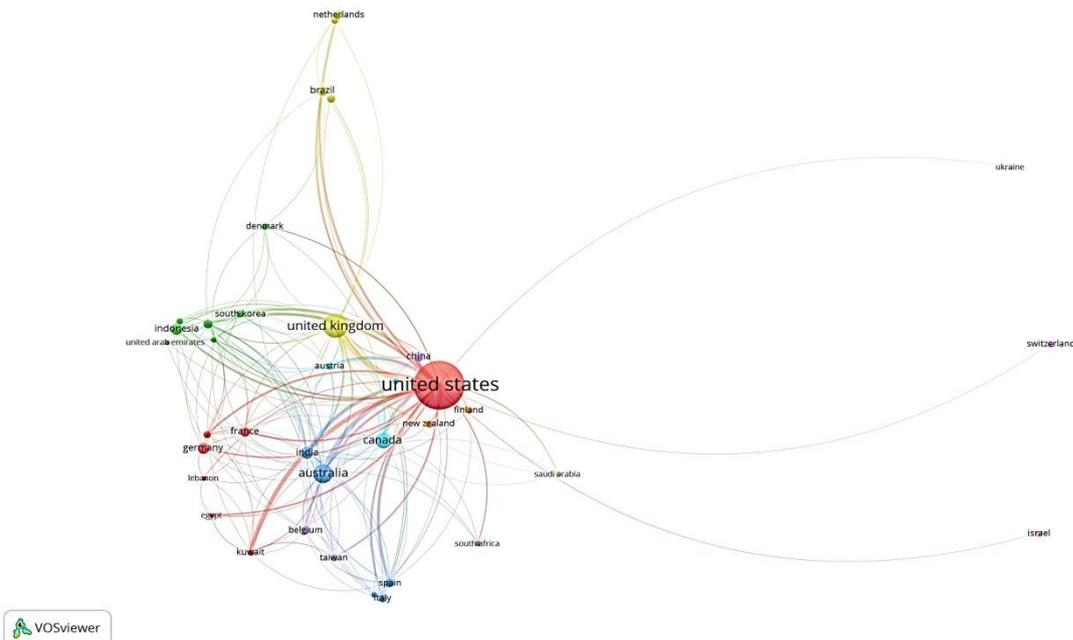


Figure 4: Map of Citations by countries

Contribution of Journals

The third research question was related to the top journals that have published 100 most cited articles. The journal performance, and the characteristics of journals are evident from table I:

Table I: Top Journals and their Characteristics						
Journal name	TP	TC	CPP	Cite Score*	SNIP**	SJR** *
Journal of Business Ethics	70	3981	56.87	12.0	2.976	2.59
M/C Journal	41	145	3.54	NA	NA	NA
Journal of Marketing Education	19	333	17.53	6.3	1.778	0.743
Journal of Macro marketing	15	492	32.80	4.3	1.157	0.82
Journal of Business research	12	934	77.83	16.0	3.238	2.895
European Journal of Marketing	12	556	46.33	8.1	1.749	1.63
Journal of Academy of Marketing Science	9	1328	147.56	23.0	4.27	6.248
Journal of Consumer Marketing	8	158	19.75	4.5	0.964	0.845
Journal of Medical ethics	7	207	29.57	6.2	1.425	1.111
Journal of public policy and marketing	6	461	76.83	9.9	2.1	3.263
Business ethics Quarterly	6	220	36.67	5.4	2.1	1.947
Journal of Marketing	6	734	122.33	22.1	4.716	10.802

Notes: TP=Total Publications, TC= Total Citations, CPP=Citation per Publication, *2022 data taken from Scopus database, **Source normalized impact per paper (from Scopus database), ***Scimago Journal ranking (from Scopus database)

The results show that Journal of Business ethics tops the list with 70 research papers on Ethical Issues in Marketing, followed by M/C Journal with 41 articles. Cite score signifies the average citations per document a journal receives over a three-year time period.

Citation analysis

Citation analysis is a vital tool for scientific mapping that relies on the premise that citations indicate the intellectual linkages between publications from one article referring to another (Appio et al.2014). The significance of a publication is measured by the number of times it is cited in subsequent research. The methodology makes it possible to determine which papers have had the most impact within a certain field of study. The purpose of citation analysis is to gain an understanding of and make an evaluation of the contributions that authors have made to a specific field of research. The process of ranking and evaluating work that has been published in respected periodicals is simplified as a result. An examination of the number of times each publication was cited can be accomplished through the use of network analysis. The method identifies the work that has the most influence as well as the degree to which it is accepted by readers. On the basis of available data, a list of the top 10 authors was compiled as shown in table III. Table II shows the authors and citations of their articles and figure 5 shows the network map of citations. There are six clusters.

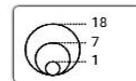
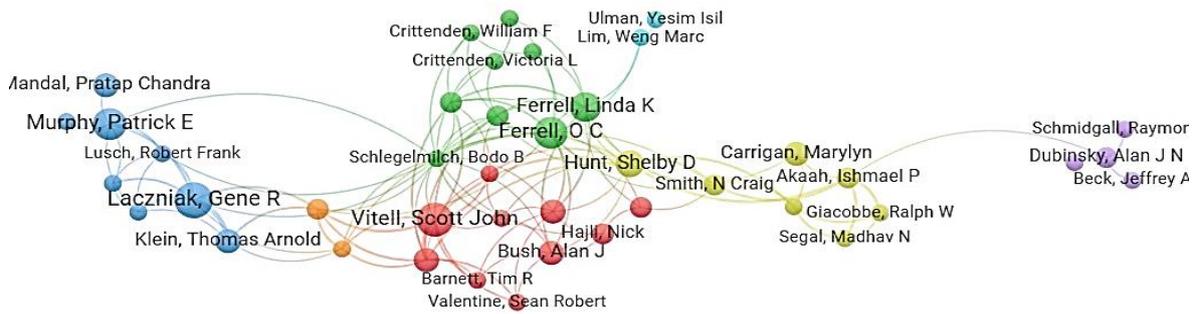


Figure 5: Network map of citations(authors)

Table II: Authors and citations		
Authors	Citations	Link strength
vitell, scott j.	30	3495
murphy, patrick e.	14	1878
lacznia, gene r.	12	779
hunt, shelby d.	10	3232
ferrell, o. c.	9	1120
ferrell, linda	8	194
dubinsky, alan j.	7	604
Armstrong, robert w.	6	318
martin, kelly d.	6	542
rallapalli, kumar c.	6	708
rao, c. p.	6	202
akaah, ishmael p.	5	338
carrigan, marylyn	5	1242
hajli, nick	5	371
nill, alexander	5	199
smith, n. craig	5	542
van kenhove, patrick	5	251

Source: Vos-viewer .csv file

Table III: Top 10 Authors			

Name	Publications	Citations	Citation mean
Gene R Laczniak	9	313	34.78
Scott Jhon Vittell	8	789	98.53
O.C.Ferell	7	216	30.86
Patrick E Murphy	7	580	82.86
Linda K Ferell	6	178	29.67
Rachel Clare Baggaley	5	35	7.00
Shelby D Hunt	5	712	142.40
Pratap Chand Mandal	4	10	2.50
Victoria Davies Bush	4	86	21.50
Linda Gail Gail Bekker	4	33	8.25

Co-Citation Analysis

The fourth research question is related to intellectual structure of knowledge base on Ethical issues in Marketing. To answer this question, co-citation analysis was done. Co-citation analysis indicates a citation matrix for authors, domains, journals, and keywords. It emphasizes the connection between author collaboration and the network of co-citations between the authors.

The co-citation network links two publications together when they appear simultaneously in the references of another article (Singh et al., 2021). The size of the co-citation network and the spacing between points reflect the time since the co-citation was made. Figure 6 shows that there are 5 clusters in all, the top four co-citations are of Hunt & Shelby d. (with 336 co-citations and link strength, 28554); Vitell and Scott (329 co-citations and link strength 37320.); Ferrell & O.C (329 co-citations and link strength 20146); Singapakdi & Anusorn (321 co-citations and 21775 link strength.). Figure 7 shows the co-citation network which displays the relationship between the cited references.

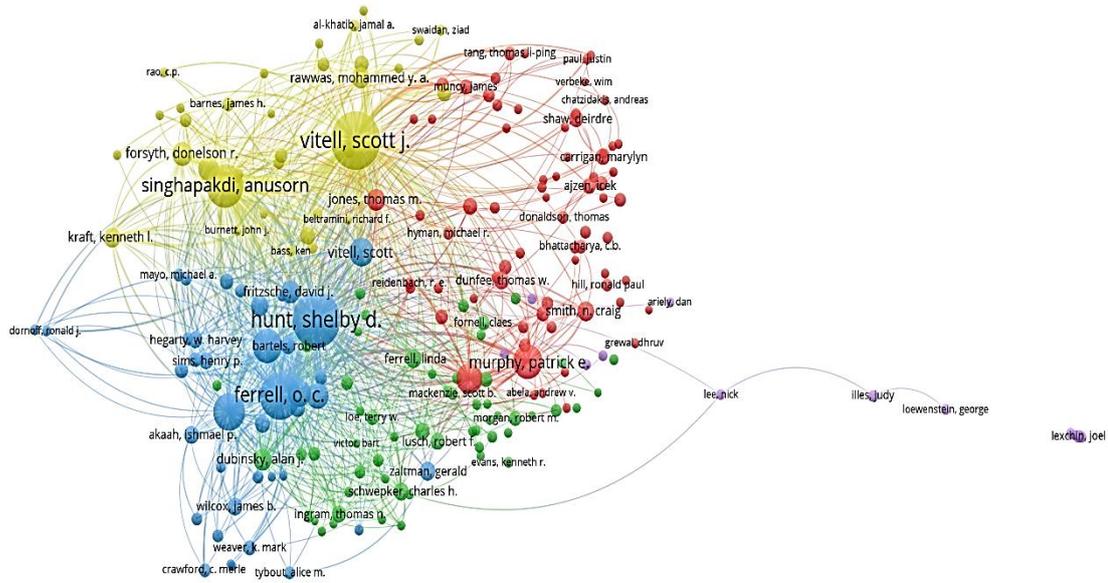
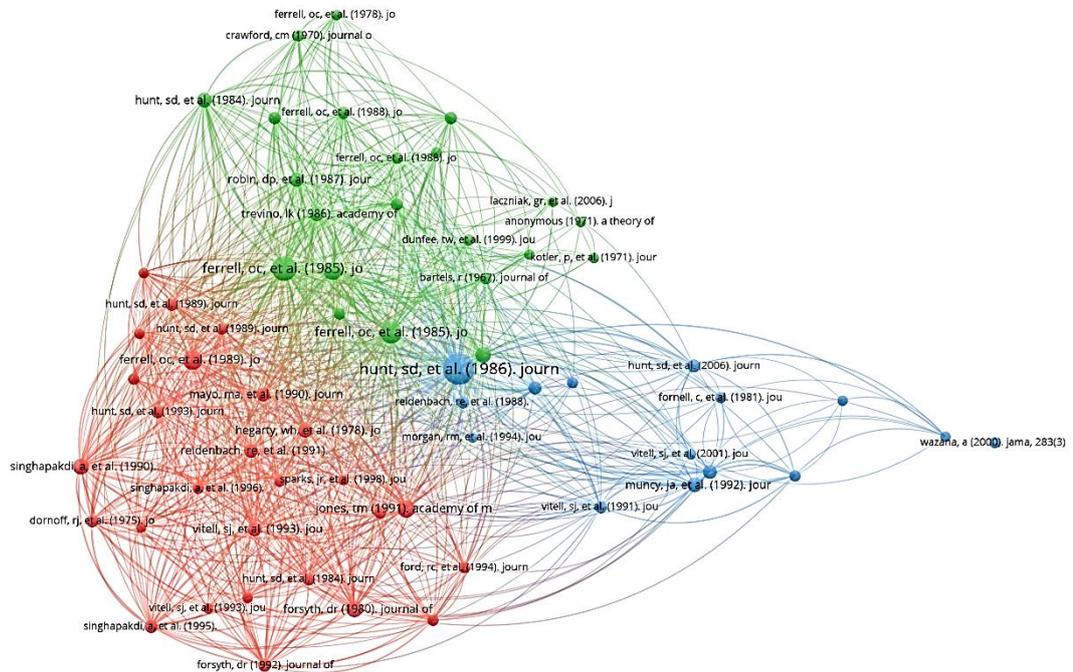


Figure 6: Co-citation Analysis (Authors)

Figure7: Co-Citation (cited references)



Fifth research question or **RQ5** was related to nature of co-elaborations between publications, for this a co-authorship analysis was done using Vos-viewer. Vos-viewer allows co-authorship analysis of authors, countries and institutions. A co-authorship analysis for authors was done and results are depicted in table IV and figure 7. Figure 7 is a map from Vos viewer

software which shows co-authorship analysis. There co-authorship profile is prominent among only two pair of authors only-namely Vitell and Scott j. with 10 co-authorships and singhapakdi and Anusorn with 9 co-authorships.

Table IV: Co-authorships				
Name of Authors	No. of authorships	Co-	Link strength	Weight (Citations)
Vitell & Scott	10		30	3495
Singhapakdi&Anusorn	09		35	2712
Rao & C.P.	06		10	202
Rallapalli, Kumar, C.	06		13	708
Marta, janet, K.	04		06	219
Kraft, Kenneth L.	03		08	720
Lee,Dong-jin	03		06	198
Hunt & Shelby d.	02		04	3232

Source: .csv file from Vos viewer software

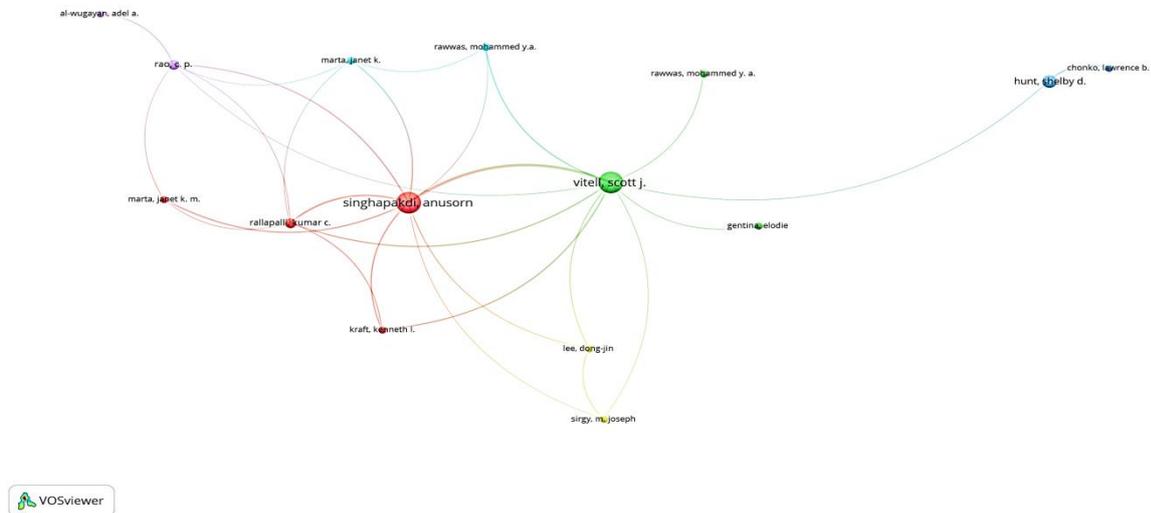


Figure 8: Co-authorship Map

Conclusion

The current study makes a contribution to the body of prior research by providing information on the most recent and relevant papers published in this subject. The study presents its significance from the point of view of social studies and demonstrates that the current research landscape is concentrating its attention on ethical issues of marketing. The study shows that there is a diverse literature on ethical issues which on the one hand is related with marketing of conventional products like contraceptives and unhealthy preservatives and colours in food items and on the other hand, to the recent adverts like use of artificial intelligence in education, plastic surgery, transportation, consumer behaviour studies etc. The

literature is also related to responsible and sustainable marketing practices not only by the businesses but also professionals like physicians and surgeons. The current research can provide future scholars with information on high-impact journals as well as journals that publish articles related to their field. In addition to this, the study sheds light on the writers who have made the most significant contributions to the field, as well as the countries that are most prominent in the publishing industry in terms of ethical issues in marketing. According to the findings of the study, there has also been an increase in the quantity of papers that have been published in this sector, which points to the ever-emerging relevance of ethical issues in marketing.

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