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Why Contemporary Marketing Still Needs a Deep Understanding of Marketing History

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Introduction

Marketing science as a discipline is in a state of alarming crisis (Yadav, 2014; El-Ansary, 2018; Hunt, et al., 2022), requiring a decision or a cri de coeur for a change coming. Webster and Lusch (2013) describe the contemporary situation as: "...the marketing discipline faces an urgent need for a rethinking of its fundamental purpose, premises, and implicit models that have defined marketing for at least the past 50 years". Eisend points out (2015) "...the growth of [marketing] knowledge is [currently] occurring at a decreasing rate, and marketing knowledge has reached a stage of maturity... The more mature a field of study is, the less groundbreaking its new insights are, which leads to a lower rate of knowledge growth...". The evidence from the study of the field reveals a fractured and identity-lacking scientific domain with a borrowing attitude from other sciences. While interdisciplinary studies are necessary to advance a field's relevance to practice and to address evolving societal challenges, marketing's relationship with other scientific domains needs to be based on more reciprocal co-creative mutual grounds and not purely based on an importing habitus.

This research identifies the key issues for rethinking the current state of marketing based on a comprehensive study that establishes a solid longitudinal reflection of the field for scholars to self-assess how the current disruptions within the state of practical and scholarly discourses affect the contemporary path of an indigenous knowledge development. Marketing, thus needs a new home within the scientific and transdisciplinary realm that stands on cyber-physical, eco-technological, and human-cultural pillars based on shared value (Yadav, 2020) and mindful consumption (Sheth, et al., 2011), while fulfilling marketing's essential jobs of creating, communicating and delivering value.

Purpose

This research aims to pave a designerly path towards unconcealing the new frontier of innovation in the age of technicity, particularly to establish a strong foundation for the future of marketing, wherein the locus of innovation lies within the development of indigenous theory and conceptual foundations within the field facing the AI-driven cyber-physical realities of the contemporary epoch.

Conceptual framework

The paper establishes a holistic and in-depth history, covering the last 80 years of the field's evolution within the 72 prominent journals, amounting to over 131,536 articles. Marketing as a foundational field of management science has been challenged from many sides, and this has affected its raison d'être. These challenges embrace the rise of technicity, a global movement for sustainability, a lack of indigenous theoretical foundation and cognitive identity, and a lack of development of a solid framework for organizational structures. As no other field in management has had such a long and prosperous history, 80 years of research is sufficient time for a field to reflect upon itself, account for a solid history, and thus propose a future direction for the field while understanding the many challenges affecting its foundation and simultaneously making the field fit for the challenges ahead.

Methodology

The research methodology (*Figure 1*) embraces many essential dimensions pertaining towards establishing a holistic analysis of a domain of marketing science and contributing for future researchers who seek to acquire the necessary foundations essential to the evolution of

the field, thereby contributing to the advancement of knowledge produced within the marketing discipline. By integrating and analyzing the complete sets of articles of the prominent journals, we have attempted to avoid domain lacuna within our literature collection thus establishing an objective historical foundation for the field. Our research accounts for the history of the various streams of influence and further it helps scholars to understand which movements were influential. Our focus was to avoid bias in conducting this research, so we took the approach of analyzing the total output of the top journals in marketing to understand our past. Since we had to deal with many literatures, the contemporary approaches of AI-driven technological advances were integrated.

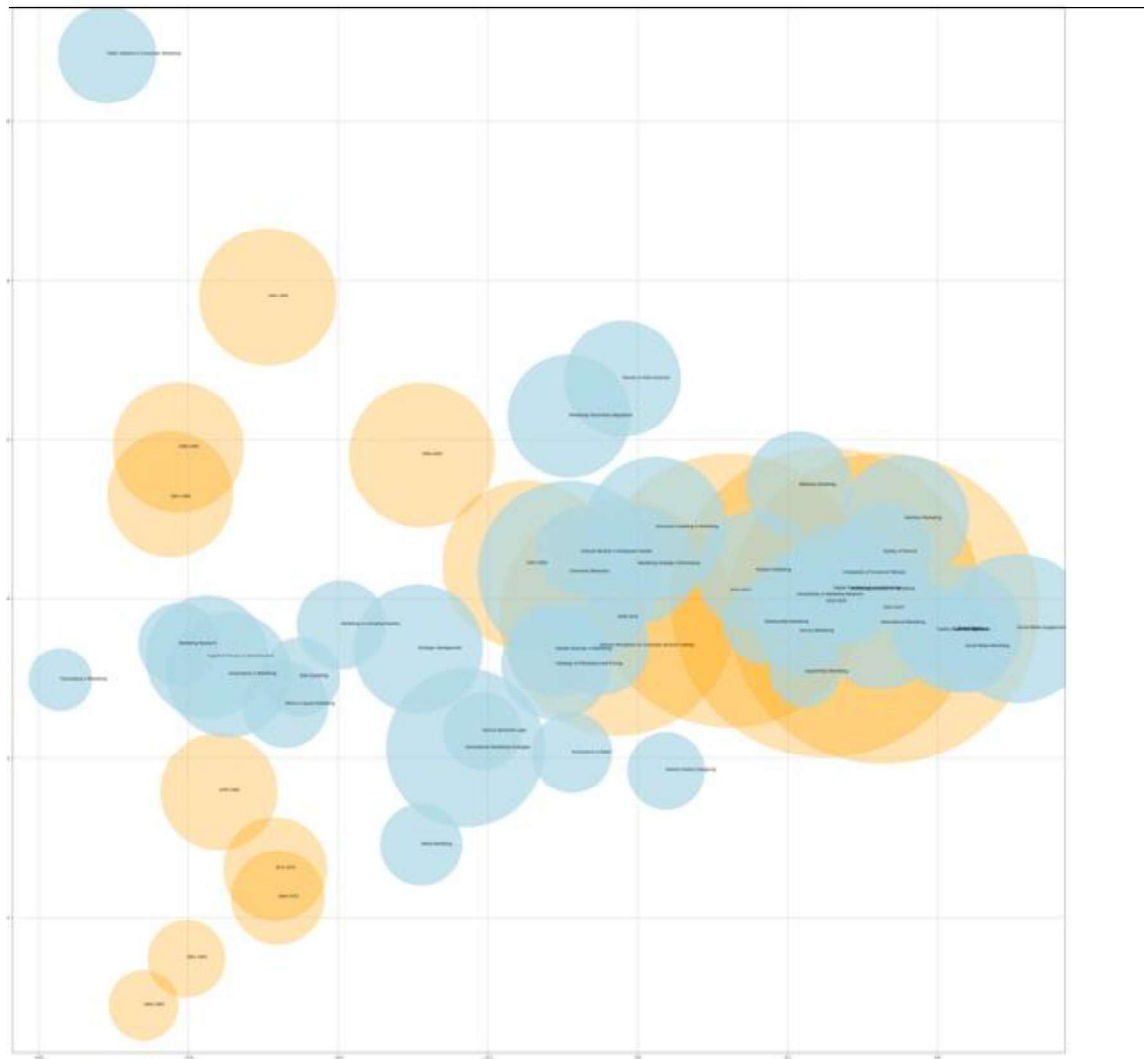| Data Import	Pre-processing	Topic Detection via LDA	Grouping	Visualization
• Selection of 131,536 articles (72 top journals) in marketing science • Creation of relevant Excel list including all relevant information (authors, title, journal, keywords, abstract, citations, citations per year)	• Coding of keywords to generate 40 preliminary topics manually • Tokenization of information about title, authors, and keywords • Punctuation erasure • Filter out numbers • Delete words with less than 3 characters • Creation of stop list to exclude specific common words	• Single-parallel distributed implementation of LDA in KNIME for detecting the topics most relevant to the research project • The node uses the MALLET topic modelling library • Generation of 40 topics based on sensitivity analysis of 5 terms each • Alpha = 0.01 and Beta =0.0001 => fine granularity	• Grouping of topic terms and weighting the qualitative evaluation • Pivoting of topics over years	• MCA was applied to identify the relationship between topic terms and keywords • MCA on the relevant journals for this research project • Time series plots with trendlines show assigned articles per topic over years • CA- analyses to present the interrelation of assigned topics to grouped years and journals • Box Plots

Main Interpretations resulting from the analyses

- MCA analyses indicate accurate results regarding the applied methodology
- Marketing science and metaverse topics are identified, as the most discussed topics in present and possible future due to the trend lines
- The thesis has illustrated the fractured state of marketing. Marketing needs to establish itself as a holistic managerial science between (digital) humanities and business studies, thus bridge the gap towards sustainability and embracing the global culture of the digital natives
- Substantial scientific gap between marketing science and the Metaverse will be closed by this paper

Figure 1 : Methodology of the Analysis

A total of 131,536 articles were analyzed using Machine Learning Algorithms (MLA) to establish the historical account of the field of marketing, topic detection via Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), and in-depth content analysis (CA). The authors analyzed the textual data using unsupervised MLA to establish an objective account of the historical narrative. Thus, the authors have combined the scholarly analysis of the "lay of the land" in marketing with the techniques and tools of AI for greater precision and objectivity in establishing unbiased labelling of "*topic-keyword relationships*". LDA was used to identify the most relevant topics in the marketing field from a corpus of literature spanning nearly eight decades. The relevance of each topic was evaluated using the topic weightings generated as an output by the LDA algorithm. The subsequent quantitative assessment was based on proximity to the original keywords of the published articles and a topic-terms distribution analysis. The sensitivity analysis and practitioner's approach determined that the number of topics (K)=40, number of terms (T)=5, α=0,1 and β=0.001 (**Appendix 1**). These were used to represent the visualization of a variety of topics for subsequent analysis (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Word Cloud Term Weight

An MCA was used to see the relationship between the topic terms and keywords. As depicted in **Figure 3**, collected keywords from the articles (blue points) and associated terms (green points) and subordinate topics (orange points) overlap mostly, thus underpinning the good fit of the LDA topic extractor MCA aims to explain the interdependence among a set of categorical variables (keywords and topics) allows the researcher to explore and analyze multi-way tables to detect a structure in the relationships between nominal variables.

Figure 3: MCA Analysis showing proximity of article keywords, topic assignment and term assignment

A CA analysis was carried out to show the interrelation of the assigned topics to grouped years (**Figure 4**). Topics (blue bubbles) that are closely related to a period (orange bubbles) are also geometrically (in terms of the Euclidean distance) close together. The bigger the topic bubble, the more articles were published on the topic, and the bigger the years' bubble, the more articles were published in the respective timespan. The analysis provides a pair of coordinates in the two-dimensional space for each of the 131,536 articles included in the dataset.

Figure 4: *CA-Analysis indicating the association of topics with time decades*

To assess the evolution of topics over time, the authors also performed a time series analysis to delve into the themes more in-depth (**Figure 5**). A positive (negative) slope of the trendline (dashed red line) illustrates an increase (decrease) in the average number of articles associated with the respective topic over the years. The unsupervised learning algorithms combined thematic close keywords into groups of related themes, which, as the prior robustness checks illustrated, seem to be meaningful from a marketing professional /scholar perspective.
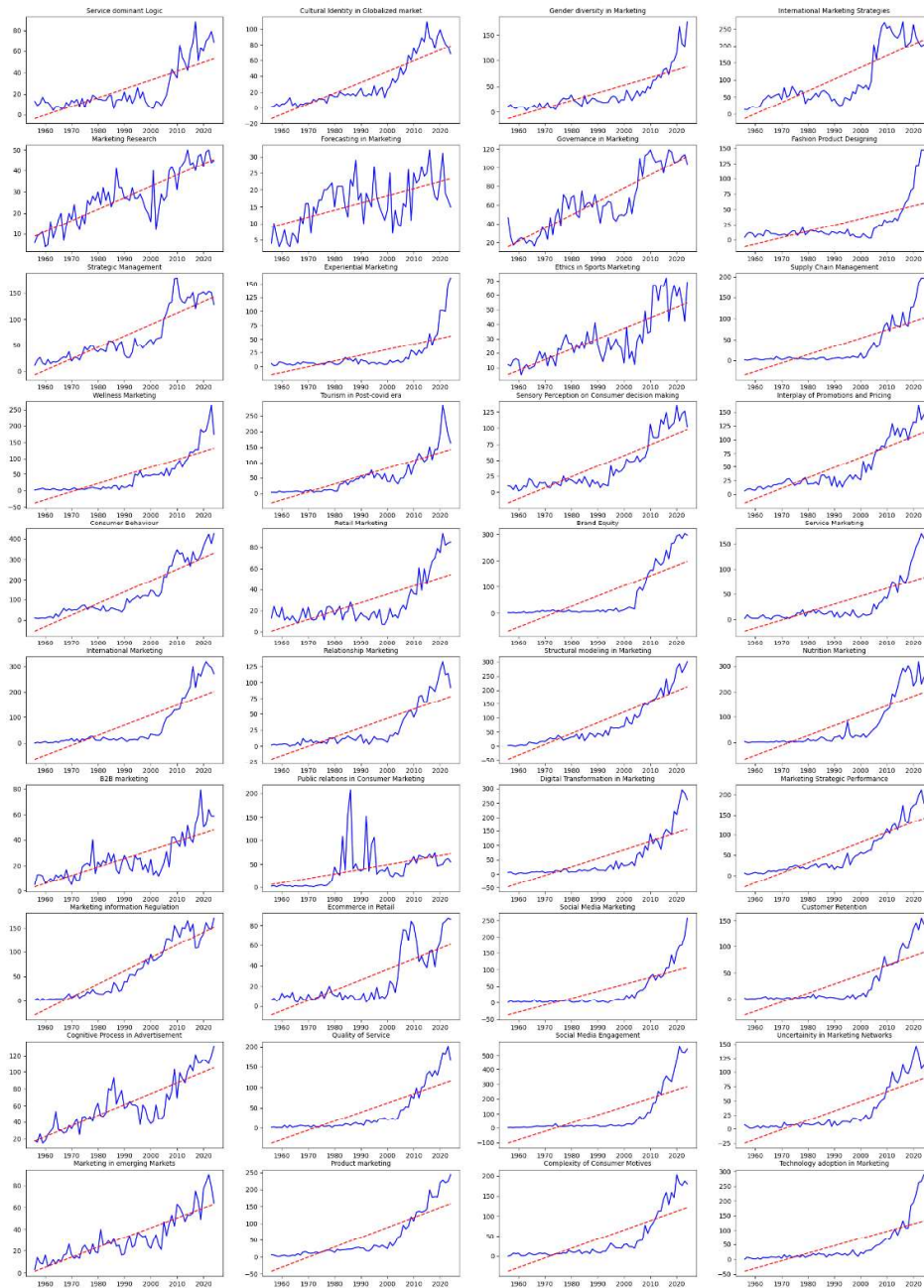
Figure 5: *Time Series plots*

Findings

While the first 40 years of research emphasized structural and strategic aspects of marketing, the last 40 years have seen a shift toward consumer-centric and behavioral models, with an increasing emphasis on digital marketing and interactive platforms. This interplay between systematic efficiency and human-centered engagement underscores the dual nature of marketing. Looking ahead, the convergence of these dimensions suggests that AI-driven analytics, behavioral insights, and ethical consumer engagement will define the next phase of marketing evolution. The traces of this transformation identified in this research suggest that the foundations of cybernetics and complexity sciences in marketing - balancing data-driven precision with consumer experience - may become a key area for future exploration.
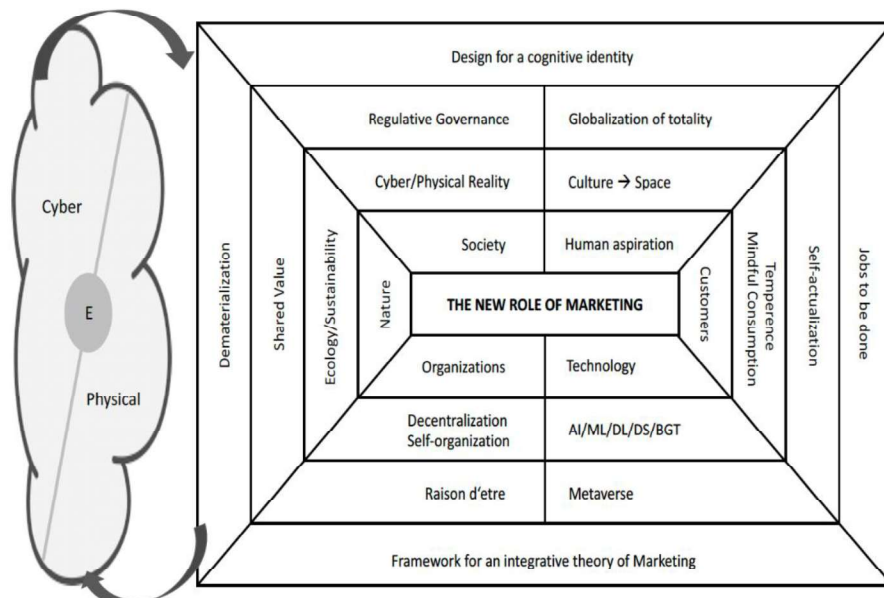
Contributions

The research establishes a solid account of the history of the marketing discipline and identifies the roots of crises in the marketing discipline and lays a clear foundation wherein the next generations of marketing scholars can embrace the cognitive identity of the field and thus represent their individual research concentration while maintaining a holistic view of the macrocosm of the discipline.

The research gathers the fabric and essence of traditional marketing, its history and evolutionary pivots towards the holistic discipline of digital humanities. New sub-disciplinary fields have emerged from within the field of marketing, threatening the legitimacy of discipline and leading to the de-institutionalization of the field. A call for "re-institutionalization" (Hunt, 2020) may not necessarily be sufficient to save the discipline from a demise, but moreover it requires a radical "trans-institutionalization" approach to regain the lost raison d'être.

Based on the challenges facing the cognitive identity and legitimacy of the discipline, the lack of an indigenous theoretical foundation, and the grand strategy of putting marketing back within marketing (Yadav, 2020), this research provides a scientific, objective and novel analysis that enhances the scholarly debate and delivers a source of historical account and a foundation in marketing, whereupon the fragmented state of the field could be brought (back) together in concert, thus we are collectively, what we remember and based on the collective historical lens of the domain of marketing.

Implications

This paper aims to illustrate the structure and past evolution of the content of the marketing field, but also to find possible future directions for the development of marketing thought, derived from the authors' in-depth analysis. Our research enumerates that marketing in the digital age must evolve beyond conventional strategies and align with the proposed holistic dimensions that define its future trajectory:

Figure 6: *New Dimensions of Marketing Discipline*

i) **Ecological Responsibility:** Marketing must integrate sustainable practices by aligning activities with nature and ethical behavior, ensuring to make a positive contribution to the environment while maintaining economic viability.

ii) **Cyber-physical Integration**: The marketing domain extends beyond traditional marketplaces into the global digital and cyber-physical reality. The convergence of the digital and physical realms requires a shift in marketing strategies that leverage emerging technologies.

iii) **Human-Cultural Evolution**: As digital native cultures redefine consumer expectations, marketing must anticipate and respond to evolving human aspirations transcending borders and cultures, reshaping consumer identities and behaviours.

iv) **Understanding the Consumer Essence**: Marketing should move beyond the traditional focus on USPs to a deeper exploration of unique value propositions, consumer motivations, and experiences. The focus should be on mindful consumption, sustainability, and moderation, where brands foster meaningful connections rather than transactional engagements.

v) **Technology as a value system:** In the Anthropocene era, technology has become an integral part of human experience, where digital innovations are redefining our existence. Marketing must therefore design a valued perception of technology, as Alderson's postulates, from the marketing lens, thus technology is not an end but an enabler.

vi) **Organizational Transformation and Shared Value:** Organizations must move from shareholder-driven models to a raison d'être that prioritizes decentralized value creation, ensuring that businesses enhance stakeholder well-being and societal progress.

Discussions

While this research confirms Yadav (2010) and Hunt's (2020) observations about the nature of the decline of conceptual articles and the lack of indigenous themes and theory development in marketing (Hunt, 2018), it still provides evidence that the contributions of purely conceptual articles are essential in addition to the quantitative papers. Here, a call to action to the peers could be postulated that there is a need for additional theoretical contributions that would provide solid impulses adding to the quantitative-based and consumer behaviour-driven research to expand their themes in the image of fundamental marketing aspirations. Foundational work on sustainability in marketing (Lunde, 2018; Tian & Kamran, 2023) and solid insights on mindful consumption (Sheth, et al., 2011) have provided valuable frameworks for managing and framing a marketing value definition of the value designing capability. Additionally, these studies have contributed to the development of solid organizational theories for managing international companies, ensuring effective marketing responses be designed, and the theoretical limitations of the marketing field could be overcome (Hunt, 2020; Sheth, 2021; Kamran, et al., 2021)

These are sufficient reasons why it is essential for marketing to establish itself as a field of autopoietic sciences to provide a fundamental and integrated framework for the field to cope with contemporaneous technological developments and shifting societal forces by developing more fundamental grounds for more viable indigenous theory development capacities within digital marketing schools.

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Appendix 1: *Mapping of Keywords to Topics*

Topic id	Concatenate (Term)	Sum (Weight)	Derived Topics
topic_00	brand, branding, brands, equity, extension	30806	Brand Equity
topic_01	co-creation, logic, creation, agenda, service-dominant	5510	Service dominant Logic
topic_02	industrial, b2b, turnover, compensation, incentives	4878	B2B marketing
topic_03	service, quality, recovery, attribution, transformative	23078	Quality of Service
topic_04	international, emerging, cultural, institutional, entrepreneurship	12637	International Marketing
topic_05	product, perception, visual, attributes, cues	15771	Product marketing
topic_06	perceived, technology, mobile, adoption, diffusion	17018	Technology adoption in Marketing
topic_07	health, promotion, physical, credibility, source	14682	Wellness Marketing
topic_08	obesity, nutrition, dietary, diet, foods	6879	Nutrition Marketing
topic_09	governance, administrative, training, bureaucracy, accountability	5568	Governance in Marketing
topic_10	consumption, complexity, regulation, materialism, motives	11418	Complexity of Consumer Motives
topic_11	culture, consumers, identification, sponsorship, globalization	11512	Cultural Identity in Globalized market
topic_12	performance, change, decisions, strategic, export	18713	Marketing Strategic Performance
topic_13	relationship, communication, leadership, behaviors, salesperson	15511	Relationship Marketing
topic_14	services, financial, banking, nonprofit, finance	11462	Service Marketing
topic_15	products, economy, fashion, collaborative, mediation	7899	Fashion Product Designing
topic_16	gender, control, psychological, diversity, dimensions	9371	Gender diversity in Marketing
topic_17	tourism, covid-19, future, pandemic, heritage	12754	Tourism in post-covid era
topic_18	model, models, structural, modeling, equation	20920	Structural modeling in Marketing
topic_19	management, strategies, organization, strategic, managerial	22352	Strategic Management
topic_20	information, responses, persuasion, antecedents, regulatory	16131	Marketing information Regulation
topic_21	experience, interaction, experiential, style, stakeholders	9604	Experiential Marketing
topic_22	retailing, internet, privacy, commerce, united	10878	Ecommerce in Retail
topic_23	marketing, strategy, international, communications, business-to-business	39587	International Marketing Strategies
topic_24	online, word-of-mouth, virtual, web, e-commerce	12393	Social Media Marketing
topic_25	cognitive, affective, managing, commercial,	4650	Marketing Research

Topic id	Concatenate (Term)	Sum (Weight)	Derived Topics
	academic		
topic_26	customer, engagement, customers, switching, retention	19858	Customer Retention
topic_27	energy, satiety, appetite, public-relations, rats	4315	Public relations in Consumer Marketing
topic_28	ethics, planning, sport, implementation, sports	7179	Ethics in Sports Marketing
topic_29	advertising, cognition, recall, advertisements, processes	13792	Cognitive Process in Advertisement
topic_30	social, media, corporate, engagement, CSR	39101	Social Media Engagement
topic_31	decision-making, sensory, behavioral, economics, perception	9482	Sensory Perception on Consumer decision making
topic_32	price, systems, pricing, competition, promotions	13726	Interplay of Promotions and Pricing
topic_33	network, networks, uncertainty, structure, resources	11127	Uncertainty in Marketing Networks
topic_34	consumer, behavior, behavior, buying, psychology	44642	Consumer Behavior
topic_35	supply, chain, management, global, environmental	14828	Supply Chain Management
topic_36	forecasting, accuracy, century, beyond, 3rd	1759	Forecasting in Marketing
topic_37	political, environment, economic, transition, socialization	7651	Marketing in emerging Markets
topic_38	retail, segmentation, music, behavioral, stores	8355	Retail Marketing
topic_39	digital, relationships, resource, channel, integration	13425	Digital Transformation in Marketing