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RESEARCH TRENDS IN SPORTS SPONSORSHIP: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This study seeks to elucidate the history of research and trends in sports sponsorship, and make a worthwhile contribution to the area in accordance with contemporary developments. Within the research scope, bibliometric data on scientific studies conducted with sports sponsorship were retrieved from the Web of Science (WOS) database without temporal restrictions. R Studio Bibliometric was used to analyze the data set obtained from 160 studies. While research in the field of sports sponsorship up until 2007 focused on topics such as fast food, sponsorship programs, and management, changes were observed after that year. Studies began incorporating alcohol industries, children's sports, scientific research, corporate social responsibility, and brand concepts. Further paradigm changes in scientific research were observed after 2013, followed by a trend toward consumer expectations in the industry after 2018.

Key Words: sponsorship, sport sponsorship, bibliometrics, bibliometrics analysing, Web of Science, R Studio Bibliometric

SPOR SPONSORLUĞUNDA ARAŞTIRMA EĞİLİMLERİ: BİBLİYOMETRİK BİR ANALİZ

Öz: Bu çalışma, spor sponsorluğu alanındaki araştırma ve eğilimlerin tarihçesini aydınlatmayı ve güncel gelişmeler doğrultusunda alana değerli bir katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında spor sponsorluğu ile ilgili yapılan bilimsel çalışmalara ilişkin bibliyometrik veriler Web of Science (WOS) veri tabanından zamansal kısıtlama olmaksızın elde edilmiştir. Toplam 160 çalışmadan elde edilen veri setinin analizinde R Studio Bibliometric kullanılmıştır. Spor sponsorluğu alanında 2007 yılına kadar yapılan araştırmalar fast food, sponsorluk programları ve yönetim gibi konulara odaklanırken, bu yıldan sonra değişiklikler gözlenmiştir. Çalışmalar alkol endüstrileri, çocuk sporları, bilimsel araştırmalar, kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk ve marka kavramlarını da içermeye başlamıştır. Bilimsel araştırmalarda 2013'ten sonra daha fazla paradigma değişikliği gözlenmiş, 2018'den sonra ise sektörde tüketici beklentilerine yönelik bir eğilim ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sponsorluk, spor sponsorluğu, bibliyometri, bibliyometri analizi, Web of Science, R Studio Bibliyometrik

INDRODUCTION

Sponsorship is considered to support a person or an organization to an individual, event, or organization by considering commercial purposes. Sponsorship activities play a role in creating goodwill among the target audience. However, when it is considered that sponsorship activities carried out to create goodwill also benefit the business, it is seen that sponsorship is a two-way gain area that benefits society and organizations (Ball, 1993; Haywood, 1991). The most significant share among sponsorship activities belongs to sports sponsorship. In the 2022 sponsorship status research, the share of sports sponsorship in sponsorship activities is 77

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percent (Mitchell, 2022). This figure shows that the most preferred type of sponsorship is sports sponsorship.

The prevalence of sport can be attributed to its widespread influence. Sport has the ability to engage people from diverse backgrounds, making it a popular leisure activity (McCarville et al., 1998). This approach ensures precision and objectivity in the language and structure and grammatically correct and spell-checked text for a clear presentation of ideas. It adheres to traditional academic norms and conventions. As a result, sports sponsorship allows brands to accomplish lasting objectives, raise brand recognition, enhance their reputation, and communicate effectively with stakeholders. According to research by Amis et al. (1999), Ferrand and Pages (1999), Stotlar (2004), and Zwick et al. (2005), providing financial aid or equipment to athletes, teams, and organizations (such as the Olympics, World Cup, and NBA) is critical for creating sporting opportunities that lead to success. Sports sponsorship has gained momentum, mainly due to advertising bans in the alcohol and tobacco sectors.

The alcohol and tobacco industries, which have sizeable markets, have increasingly turned to sponsorship rather than advertising due to bans. This trend gained further momentum in 1971 when tobacco advertisements were prohibited in the United States of America. Especially brands like Philip Morris and Reynolds (Winston) began allocating substantial budgets to sponsorship activities (Cornwell, 1997; Desbordes and Richelieu, 2012; Turco, 1999). Meanwhile, success in achieving marketing objectives through sponsorship activities has encouraged sports sponsorship among brands (Geng et al., 2002; Kubacki et al., 2018; Lee and Ross, 2012). This viewpoint is supported by the fact that sporting events garner extensive media coverage, which has positively influenced sports sponsorship's growth and development (Meenaghan, 1998). Sports sponsorship has recently gained significant attention from global enterprises, primarily due to its perceived potential as a robust and steady channel for effective communication and engagement with the intended audience (Santomier, 2008). With the rise of investments in sports sponsorship and the continuing expansion of sponsorships on a global scale, researchers have begun to alter their research methods and trends to comprehend the efficacy of sports sponsorship (Chadwick and Thwaites, 2005; Chebli and Gharbi, 2014; Dees et al., 2010; Stubb et al., 2019). Therefore, as sponsorship practices have become a marketing and communication tool, the number of studies in the field has increased daily (Ko et al., 2008), and each of these studies has a distinct approach and findings. Evaluating the field cumulatively to track the development course and reveal the trends is essential. Bibliometric analysis can identify the domain's primary tendencies, gaps, and paradigm shifts. This study seeks to assess the pertinent literature on sports sponsorship and ascertain the key patterns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sports sponsorship is widely regarded as the organization's most developed marketing tool (IEG, 2018; Toscani and Prendergast, 2018). Its benefits include enhancing sales, promoting brand awareness, and improving corporate image (Eshghi, 2022). Therefore, sports sponsorship is located at the intersection of those who market sports and those who market through sports (Farrelly and Quester, 2005). When globalization and a market surrounded by competition come into play, global firms have realized that sport, as an international concept, presents a highly positive image (Ferrand and Pages, 1996). Consequently, investments and activities related to sports sponsorship have surge.

One of the most significant advancements in sponsorship has been the rising volume of investments. Initially, this increase was thought to be a trait of Western economies. However,

as the operations of transnational companies have expanded globally, it has been acknowledged that the matter should be evaluated on a global scale independent of its Western origins (Meenaghan, 1998). In addition, the significance and role of sports sponsorship are continuously growing with the advancements in globalization and communication technologies. Gough (2023) reported that the financial value of sports sponsorship reached 66.1 billion dollars in 2022, and it is projected to rise to 108 billion dollars by 2030.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that sports sponsorship has been addressed and analyzed within the framework of different disciplines such as marketing (Cornwell, 2008; Jensen and Cornwell, 2017), public relations (Sherry, 1998; Wilson et al., 2008), finance (Blake et al., 2019; Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2019), event management (Ballouli et al., 2018; Speed and Thompson, 2000), business (Nufer and Bühler, 2010; Zinger and O'Reilly, 2010). Therefore, it is argued that despite the high interest as a field of study, little research has been conducted to reveal the critical points of the field (Koronios et al., 2021). From this point of view, the research focuses on the following question:

RQ: What are the research performance and trends in sports sponsorship research?

METHODOLOGY

The research objective is to identify research trends and paradigm shifts in sports sponsorship using bibliometric analysis. Bibliometric analysis, an analysis technique suited for different disciplines (Sánchez et al., 2017; Solano et al., 2009), is based on extensive datasets (Cobo et al., 2011, p. 146) and offers quantitative and systematic literature evaluations (Martinez et al., 2012). Bibliometric analyses can unveil the performance of publications, journals, collaborations, prominent trends, and country and institution productivity (Mavric et al., 2021; Polat and Seyfi, 2023; Zhang et al., 2019). These analyses offer a macroscopic view of scientific literature and enable the identification of gaps in science (van Nunen et al., 2018, p. 248). Science is cumulative, and each scientific study builds on previous research. The findings obtained from bibliometric analyses can be a reference for future studies (Ercan, 2023).

Data collection

Web of Science Core Collection (WOS) database was used in the data collection process. The WOS database is the most distinguished citation index for scientific publications (Birkle et al., 2020). For this reason, it is used as the most preferred database in scientific studies (van Nunen et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2013). The database indexing publications of high scientific quality is the largest (Echchakoui, 2020) and the most preferred database for bibliometric analyses (Ercan, 2023; Rodrigues et al., 2022). While conducting a database search, the titles were scanned using the keywords "sponsorship" AND "sport". The results were then filtered according to inclusion/exclusion criteria established per the research purpose, as in bibliometric studies. These criteria are utilized in multiple bibliometric studies (Li and Zhang, 2023; Polat and Seyfi, 2023; Zhang et al., 2019). No specific constraints were imposed on the year, discipline, or index for data selection. Criteria for inclusion/exclusion of data were as follows:

1. Must be related to sports sponsorship
2. The research abstract should be accessible,
3. Research should be in article and paper format.
4. Research should be indexed in the following indexes: Social Science Citation Index (SSCI),

Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-Expanded), Art & Humanities Citation Index, Emerging Science Citation Index (ESCI), Conference Proceedings Citation Index - Social Science & Humanities (CPCI-SSH) and Conference Proceedings Citation Index - Science (CPCI -S).

The first item comes into play in the inclusion/exclusion criteria as the research focuses on sports sponsorship. The second item requires information about the content of the research. The third item is related to the second item. Since it is not possible to access the abstract or content in books and book chapters, it is not possible to evaluate whether the content of the research overlaps with the purpose. The fourth item is that since the impact of the publication will also be analyzed within the scope of the research, the publication index directly affects the impact factor. When these four criteria come into play, the data set within the scope of the research emerges. As a result of the first search, 184 research data were found. In the inclusion-exclusion criteria, 12 research data that did not meet the second and 12 that did not meet the third items were excluded. Keywords and abstracts were analyzed for the remaining 160 studies. No research that did not meet the scope of the study was found. The PRISMA model in Figure 1 presents the research data set. The PRISMA model provides the reporting of the dataset in systematic reviews and meta-analyses. It also provides a checklist and a flowchart.

PRISMA, short for Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, consists of, among other things, a checklist and a flowchart" (Donato and Donato, 2019, p. 234).

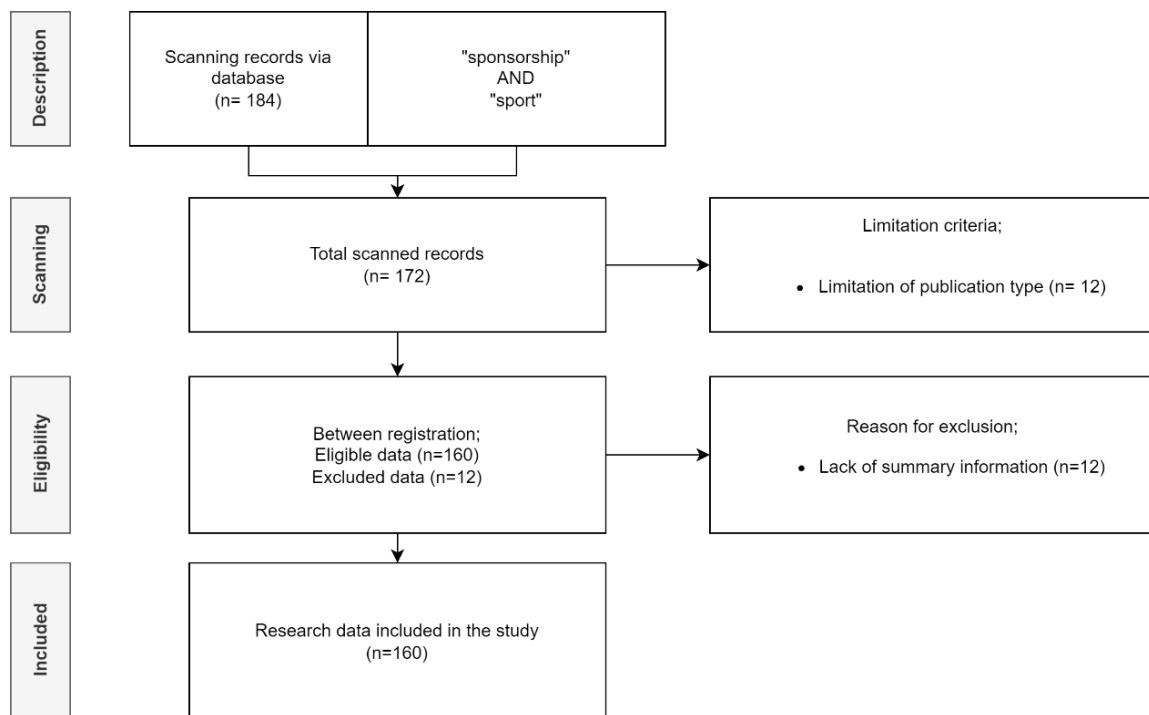


Figure 1. PRISMA Model

Data Analysis

Based on the data, R Studio Bibliometric was used to analyze performance, productivity, research trends, and scientific mapping. R Studio Bibliometric, developed by Aria & Cuccurullo (2017), is preferred because it is open source and provides pragmatic outputs for bibliometric research. When the literature is examined, it is seen that bibliometric analyses are carried out at three levels: descriptive analysis (word, citation frequencies), performance analysis (journal, institution, and country performance), and scientific mapping (a collaboration

of abstracts, authors and countries) (Gao et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2022; Li and Zhang, 2023; Marín-Marín et al., 2019; Ülker et al., 2023). Within the scope of this research, the data set was analyzed according to these three levels.

RESULTS

The findings obtained from the data set will be presented under three separate headings: descriptive results, performance analysis results, and scientific mapping results.

Descriptive Results

The data set consists of 160 studies. Basic information about the data set is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Main information about the data set

| Description | Results |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA | |
| Timespan | 1982:2023 |
| Documents | 160 |
| Annual Growth Rate % | 2,42 |
| Document Average Age | 7,44 |
| Average citations per document | 13,76 |
| References | 5480 |
| DOCUMENT CONTENTS | |
| Author's Keywords | 420 |
| AUTHORS | |
| Authors | 357 |
| Authors of single-authored documents | 19 |
| AUTHORS COLLABORATION | |
| Single-authored documents | 21 |
| Co-Authors per document | 2,98 |
| International co-authorships % | 29,38 |
| DOCUMENT TYPES | |
| article | 121 |
| article; early access | 4 |
| article; proceedings paper | 3 |
| book review | 1 |
| correction | 1 |
| editorial material | 10 |
| letter | 2 |
| meeting abstract | 1 |
| proceedings paper | 12 |
| review | 4 |
| review; early access | 1 |
| LANGUAGE | |
| English | 155 |
| Spanish | 2 |
| French | 1 |
| Portuguese | 1 |
| Turkish | 1 |

When examining the essential details of the dataset (Table 1), it becomes apparent that the data covers 41 years and consists of 160 publications. The yearly growth rate of studies in sports sponsorship is 2.42%, while the citation rate per publication stands at 13.76%. The average age of a study is 7.44 years. Even though 357 distinct researchers were involved in these publications, only 19 were sole authors. Although the language used in the studies is predominantly English (95.67%), there is an average of three authors per publication ($n=2.98$). The rate of international author collaboration in publications is 29.38%. Four hundred twenty keywords were utilized in the publications over 41 years. The most frequent words and phrases used in the publications' titles, keywords, and abstracts hold great importance for research.

Table 2. The 10 most common words/phrases used in keywords (unigram/bigram)

| Words (Titles) | f | % | Words (Keywords) | f | % | Words (Abstract) | f | % |
|---------------------------|----|----|-------------------|----|----|---------------------|-----|----|
| sport sponsorship | 79 | 60 | sponsorship | 59 | 35 | sport sponsorship | 157 | 44 |
| sport event | 12 | 9 | sport sponsorship | 35 | 21 | unhealthy food | 31 | 9 |
| alcohol sponsorship | 10 | 8 | sport | 21 | 13 | sport event | 28 | 8 |
| event sponsorship | 8 | 6 | alcohol | 11 | 7 | alcohol sponsorship | 23 | 7 |
| brand equity | 4 | 3 | marketing | 11 | 7 | purchase intentions | 22 | 6 |
| sponsorship announcements | 4 | 3 | attitude | 7 | 4 | brand equity | 21 | 6 |
| sponsorship effectiveness | 4 | 3 | sport marketing | 7 | 4 | sponsor brands | 18 | 5 |
| sport events | 4 | 3 | children | 6 | 4 | public health | 17 | 5 |
| brand personality | 3 | 2 | advertising | 5 | 3 | sponsor brand | 16 | 5 |
| csr-linked sport | 3 | 2 | gambling | 5 | 3 | structural equation | 16 | 5 |

The most commonly used term in the title, keywords, and abstracts (Table 2) of research papers on sports sponsorship is 'sports sponsorship.' This is closely followed by expressions that directly relate to brand marketing, such as 'sports events' or 'event sponsorship,' 'alcohol,' and 'alcohol sponsorship,' 'brand equity,' 'marketing,' 'purchasing,' 'attitudes,' 'advertising,' and 'corporate social responsibility.' Other salient words and phrases include 'children,' 'public health,' and 'structural equity.' There are fluctuations in popular research themes over time. Identifying significant trending topics (See Figure 2) is helpful in monitoring research trends.

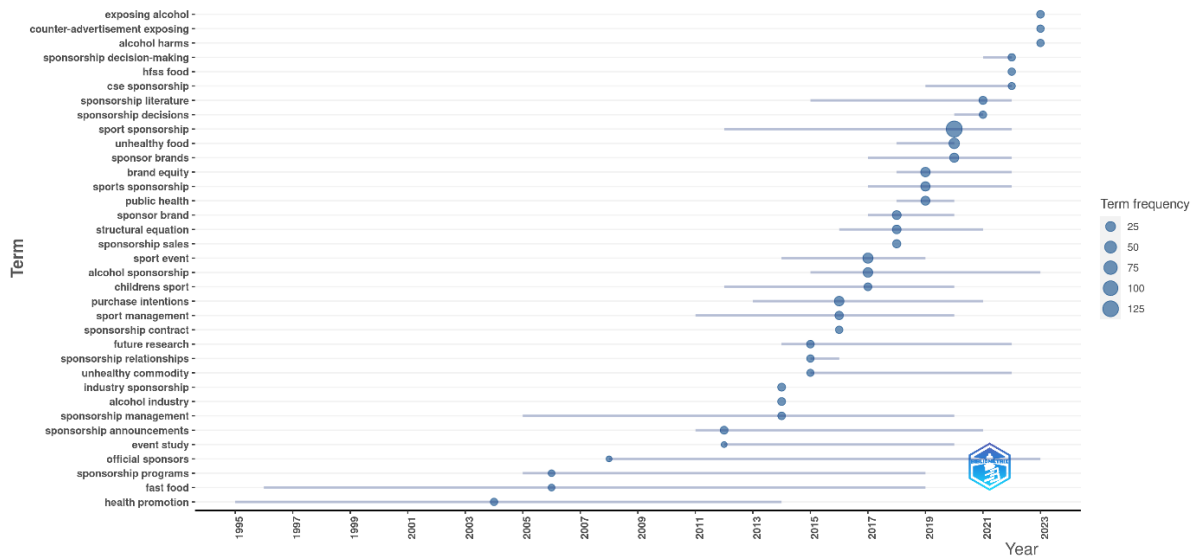


Figure 2. Trend topics

The trend topics (Figure 2), created based on the frequency of publications, are 1995-2023. Blue dots represent the frequency value of the trend topics. As the frequency increases, the blue dot grows. Accordingly, Table 3 categorizes the trending topics according to years (every five years). This categorization is based on the peak years of the topics.

Table 3. Categorization of trending topics by year

| Periods | Trend Topics |
|-----------|--|
| 1995-2000 | health promotion, fast food |
| 2001-2006 | fast food , sponsorship programs |
| 2007-2012 | sponsorship management, official sponsors, sport management, sponsorship announcements |
| 2013-2018 | purchase intentions, sport sponsorship, sport event, alcohol industry, industry sponsorship, sponsorship management, future research, health promotion, alcohol sponsorship, sponsorship literature, sponsorship relationships, unhealthy commodity, sport management, sponsorship contract, sponsor brands, childrens sport, unhealthy food, brand equity, structural equation, sponsorship sales |
| 2019-2023 | sport sponsorship, sport event, brand equity, sports sponsorship, sponsorship management, csr sponsorship, fast food, sponsorship programs, unhealthy food, sponsor brands, structural equation, image transfer, sport management, childrens sport, sponsorship decisions, event study, purchase intentions, sponsorship literature, sponsorship announcements, sponsorship decision-making, future research, unhealthy commodity, alcohol sponsorship, exposing alcohol, alcohol harms, counter-advertisement exposing, official sponsors |

When the categorization of trending topics according to years (Table 3) is examined;

- From 1995 to 2000 years; it is seen that fast food and public health incentive issues were addressed.
- From 2001 to 2006 years; in addition to the topics of the previous period, sponsorship programs were focused on.
- From 2007 to 2012 years; sponsorship calls, management, and official sponsorships were emphasized.
- From 2013 to 2018 years; unhealthy society, children's sports, the alcohol industry, alcohol sponsorship, sports sponsorship, brand personality and sponsorships, and

scientific research (future research, structural equality) are the years with a high tendency.

- From 2019 to 2023 years; although the topics in the previous years are continued, it is seen that there are tendencies toward decision-makers in sponsorship, sponsorships related to social responsibility, alcohol exposure and its harms, and opposing advertisements. The journals, institutions and countries that come to the fore in these publications on sports sponsorship are also important.

Table 4. The most relevant ten journals and institutions

| No | Journals | Articles (f) | % | Institution | Country | Articles (f) | % |
|----|--|-----------------|-------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 | International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship | 19 | 22,89 | University Peloponnese | Greece | 24 | 21,05 |
| 2 | Journal of Sport Management | 15 | 18,07 | German Sport University Cologne | Germany | 13 | 11,40 |
| 3 | Journal of Business Research | 9 | 10,84 | Griffith University | Australia | 12 | 10,53 |
| 4 | Sport Management Review | 9 | 10,84 | University of Queensland | Australia | 12 | 10,53 |
| 5 | Sport Business and Management – An International Journal | 8 | 9,64 | University of Wollongong | Australia | 12 | 10,53 |
| 6 | European Sport Management Quarterly | 6 | 7,23 | Cancer Council Victoria | Australia | 10 | 8,77 |
| 7 | BMC Public Health | 5 | 6,02 | Curtin University | Australia | 8 | 7,02 |
| 8 | Addiction | 4 | 4,82 | University Bayreuth | Germany | 8 | 7,02 |
| 9 | Journal of Advertising Research | 4 | 4,82 | University Sydney | Australia | 8 | 7,02 |
| 10 | Sport Marketing Quarterly | 4 | 4,82 | Brock University | Canada | 7 | 6,14 |

The most pertinent journals in the arena of sports sponsorship (Table 4) are the journals published in the realm of sports management and marketing. Among these journals, the International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship (n=19, 22.89%) holds the highest rank. Further journals (ranked 2, 4, 5, 6, 10) publishing in this domain account for 58.28% of the publications. In addition, publications appear in public health, addiction, advertising, and business journals. When observing the pertinent institutions (Table 4), it becomes evident that the University Peloponnese in Greece published 21.05% of the works. Conversely, the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth-ranked Australian institutions represent 54.4% of the total publications. The second and eighth-ranked German organizations account for 18.42% of the work. Consequently, sports sponsorship research is predominantly concentrated in Australia.

Table 5. Corresponding authors' countries

| Country | Articles | % | SCP* | MCP** | f | MCP_Ratio |
|----------------|----------|-------|------|-------|-------|-----------|
| USA | 35 | 27,13 | 28 | 7 | 0,219 | 0,2 |
| AUSTRALIA | 33 | 25,58 | 29 | 4 | 0,206 | 0,121 |
| GERMANY | 13 | 10,08 | 11 | 2 | 0,081 | 0,154 |
| GREECE | 12 | 9,30 | 4 | 8 | 0,075 | 0,667 |
| UNITED KINGDOM | 11 | 8,53 | 8 | 3 | 0,069 | 0,273 |
| CANADA | 10 | 7,75 | 3 | 7 | 0,063 | 0,7 |
| NEW ZEALAND | 5 | 3,87 | 2 | 3 | 0,031 | 0,6 |
| JAPAN | 4 | 3,10 | 4 | 0 | 0,025 | 0 |
| CHINA | 3 | 2,33 | 2 | 1 | 0,019 | 0,333 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|-------|-------|
| FRANCE | 3 | 2,33 | 2 | 1 | 0,019 | 0,333 |
| *SCP (Single Country Publication) | | **MCP (Multiple Country Publication) | | | | |

When the countries of the corresponding author (Table 5) are analyzed, it is seen that the country ranking is the USA, Australia, Germany, Greece, England, and Canada. These countries constitute 88.37% of the total publications. It can be said that the publications are generally realized under the responsibility of USA and Australian authors. Publications are generally single-authored. It is seen that collaborative publications are published by responsible authors from Greece, the USA, and Canada, respectively.

Table 6. Most cited countries

| Country | TC | Average Article Citations |
|----------------|-----|---------------------------|
| USA | 665 | 18,47 |
| AUSTRALIA | 586 | 18,31 |
| PORTUGAL | 165 | 82,50 |
| UNITED KINGDOM | 157 | 13,08 |
| GERMANY | 151 | 11,62 |
| CANADA | 140 | 14,00 |
| GREECE | 108 | 9,00 |
| FRANCE | 54 | 18,00 |
| NEW ZEALAND | 40 | 8,00 |
| SINGAPORE | 26 | 13,00 |

When the countries are analyzed according to their citation status (Table 6), the USA and Australia are in the first place according to the total number of citations. However, Portugal stands out with its high average number of citations.

Table 7. The most relevant and most globally cited authors

| Most Relevant Authors | | Most Global Cited Authors / Documents | | | |
|-----------------------|----------|---------------------------------------|--|-----|-------------|
| Authors | Articles | Authors/Year | DOI | TC | TC per Year |
| KORONIOS, K. | 8 | MCDANIEL, S.R. /1999 | 10.1002/(SICI)1520-6793(199903)16:2<163::AID-MAR6>3.0.CO;2-Y | 170 | 6,80 |
| DIXON, H. | 6 | BISCAIA, R. /2013 | 10.1123/jsm.27.4.288 | 126 | 11,45 |
| JENSEN, J.A. | 6 | GWINNER, K. /2008 | 10.1123/jsm.22.4.410 | 115 | 7,19 |
| SCULLY, M. | 6 | LAMONT, M. / 2011 | 10.1016/j.smr.2011.04.004 | 75 | 5,77 |
| BREUER, C. | 5 | AMIS, J. /1997 | 10.1123/jsm.11.1.80 | 66 | 2,44 |
| CORNWELL, T.B. | 5 | BREUER, C. /2012 | 10.1123/jsm.26.6.521 | 62 | 5,17 |
| IRELAND, M. | 4 | BESTMAN, A. /2015 | 10.1186/s12889-015-2348-3 | 61 | 6,78 |
| KELLY, B. | 4 | JENSEN. J.A. /2014 | 10.2501/JAR-54-4-435-447 | 54 | 5,40 |
| NTASIS, L. | 4 | CHADWICK, S. /2005 | 10.1017/S0021849905050312 | 51 | 2,68 |
| O'REILLY, N. | 4 | JENSEN, J.A. /2017 | 10.1123/jsm.2016-0232 | 48 | 6,86 |

When the number of studies on sports sponsorship per author is analyzed (Table 7), Koronios, K., Dixon, H., Jensen, J.A., and Scully, M. come to the fore. However, the ranking changes when analyzed within the framework of the citations received by publications at the global level. Accordingly, McDaniel, S.R., Biscaia, R., Gwinner, K., Lamont, M., and Amis, J. are in first place according to their publications' total citations and annual citation rates. Breuer, C.

and Jensen, J.A. were identified as the most relevant authors and cited globally within this structure.

Performance Analysis Results

Under this heading, the performance findings of authors, journals, organizations, and countries are presented depending on the publications carried out within the scope of sports sponsorship.

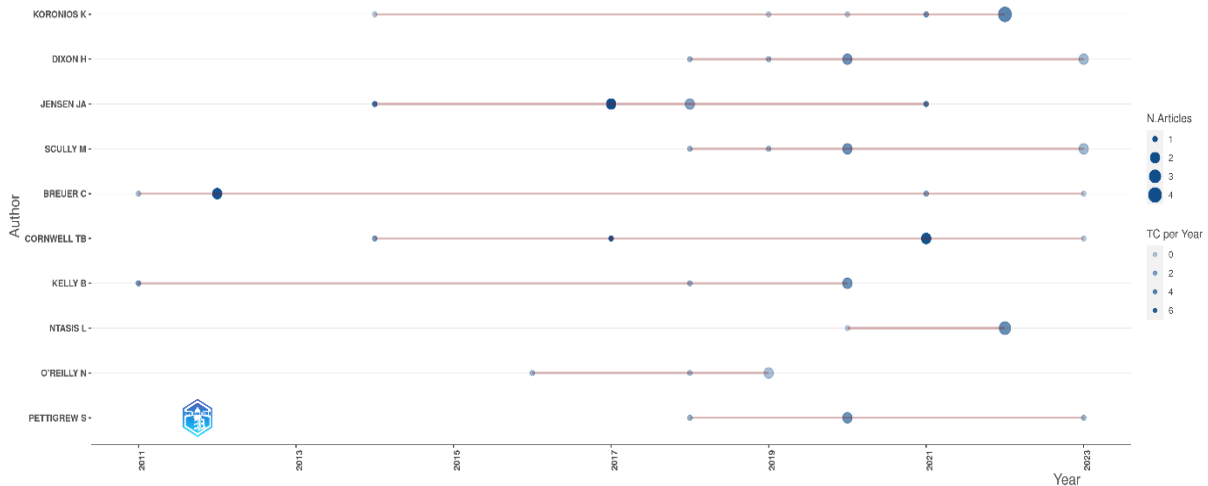


Figure 3. Performance of authors

When the performance of the authors (Figure 3) is analyzed, the most productive authors, according to the number of publications and annual citations, are Breuer, C., Cornwell, T. B., Dixon, H., Ireland, H. and Jensen, J.A.

Table 8. 10 most influential authors

| Authors | h_index | g_index | m_index | NP | TC | Publication year start |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|----|-----|------------------------|
| BREUER, C. | 4 | 5 | 0,308 | 5 | 100 | 2011 |
| CORNWELL, T.B. | 4 | 5 | 0,4 | 5 | 96 | 2014 |
| DIXON, H. | 4 | 5 | 0,667 | 6 | 29 | 2018 |
| JENSEN, J. A. | 4 | 6 | 0,4 | 6 | 133 | 2014 |
| KELLY, B. | 4 | 4 | 0,308 | 4 | 62 | 2011 |
| RUMPF, C. | 4 | 4 | 0,308 | 4 | 82 | 2011 |
| SCULLY, M. | 4 | 5 | 0,667 | 6 | 29 | 2018 |
| WAKEFIELD, M. | 4 | 4 | 0,667 | 4 | 28 | 2018 |
| CHAMBERS, T. | 3 | 3 | 0,429 | 3 | 22 | 2017 |
| IRELAND, M. | 3 | 3 | 0,3 | 3 | 27 | 2014 |

The H-index is utilized to gauge scientific productivity and impact, as created by J. E. Hirsch, an American physicist. The h-index can be defined as: "A scientist has index h if h of his/her N_p papers have at least h citations each, and the other ($N_p - h$) papers have no more than h citations each" (Hirsch, 2005). This calculation concerns the citations that the publications obtain. For the h-index to reach 10, every one of the ten distinct publications must have at least 10 citations. Citations other than those about the publications on which the h-index is based are disregarded. For this reason, assessing performance using the g-index is advisable. The g-index

gauges the number of highly cited publications (Egghe, 2006). The performance measurements for authors in Table 8 indicate that Jensen, J. A. has a more substantial publication record. Jensen's four distinct publications garnered four citations, resulting in an h-index of four. These publications have since continued to receive citations, leading to an increase in Jensen's g-index. In addition, Jensen has exceeded other authors in terms of total citation count. Breuer, Cornwell, Rumpf, and Kelly follow in Jensen's footsteps.

Table 9. Performance of journals

| Element | h_index | g_index | TC | NP | PY_start |
|---|---------|---------|-----|----|----------|
| JOURNAL OF SPORT MANAGEMENT | 12 | 15 | 617 | 15 | 1996 |
| INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SPORTS MARKETING & SPONSORSHIP | 9 | 13 | 195 | 19 | 2008 |
| JOURNAL OF BUSINESS RESEARCH | 7 | 9 | 103 | 9 | 2016 |
| SPORT MANAGEMENT REVIEW | 5 | 9 | 130 | 9 | 2011 |
| EUROPEAN SPORT MANAGEMENT QUARTERLY | 4 | 6 | 68 | 6 | 2010 |
| SPORT BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT-AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL | 4 | 8 | 85 | 8 | 2011 |
| AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH | 3 | 3 | 35 | 3 | 2016 |
| SPORT MARKETING QUARTERLY | 3 | 5 | 25 | 5 | 2015 |
| ADDICTION | 2 | 4 | 35 | 4 | 2008 |
| BMC PUBLIC HEALTH | 2 | 5 | 68 | 5 | 2014 |

When analyzing the performance of the journals (Table 9), it becomes apparent that the Journal of Sport Management, which began publication in 1996 and has 15 sports sponsorship-related publications, is the highest-performing journal. The publications in this journal (n=617, h-index=12, g-index=15) have a high citation performance. The International Journal of Sport Marketing & Sponsorship, ranked second overall, tops the list of most pertinent journals (see Table 4). However, its performance ranking is second. The journal claims the highest number of sports sponsorship publications (n=19), yet its citation performance comes second (h-index=9; g-index=13). This is perhaps due to six of the 19 publications not being cited. The Journal of Business Management is ranked third, with nine publications in this field. Despite nine citations, only seven publications have high citation numbers, making the h-index the determining factor in the ranking.

Table 10. Performance of institutions

| Institution | Year | Articles | TP |
|------------------------|------|----------|------------|
| University Queensland | 2016 | 14 | 126 |
| | 2017 | 14 | |
| | 2018 | 14 | |
| | 2019 | 16 | |
| | 2020 | 16 | |
| | 2021 | 16 | |
| | 2022 | 18 | |
| | 2023 | 18 | |
| University Wollongong | 2016 | 9 | 86 |
| | 2017 | 9 | |
| | 2018 | 10 | |
| | 2019 | 10 | |
| | 2020 | 12 | |
| | 2021 | 12 | |
| | 2022 | 12 | |
| University Peloponnese | 2020 | 10 | 70 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|------|----|-----------|
| | 2021 | 12 | |
| | 2022 | 24 | |
| | 2023 | 24 | |
| German Sport University Cologne | 2021 | 11 | |
| | 2022 | 22 | 46 |
| | 2023 | 13 | |
| Griffith University | 2022 | 12 | 24 |

The institutions' performance rankings in sports sponsorship (Table 10) based on the total number of publications (TP) are presented in Table 10. All institutions show an increase in the number of publications. Considering this, the University of Peloponnese has the highest rate of increase, with a 20% increase in the first period and a 50% increase in the second. This is followed by the University of Queensland (first increase of 14.3%; second increase of 12.5%) and the University of Wollongong (first increase of 11.11%; second increase of 20%). The German Sport University Cologne exhibits an uneven distribution of publications, with a 40.9% decrease in 2023 despite a 100% increase after 2021.

Table 11. Performance of countries

| Country | <i>f</i> |
|-------------|----------|
| AUSTRALIA | 130 |
| USA | 121 |
| UK | 48 |
| CANADA | 35 |
| GREECE | 35 |
| GERMANY | 33 |
| NEW ZEALAND | 13 |
| SPAIN | 10 |
| JAPAN | 9 |
| FRANCE | 8 |

Regarding countries (Table 10), Australia has the highest publication performance. The USA, United Kingdom, Canada, Greece and Germany follow this.

Scientific Mapping Results

This section presents the findings of the social network analyses of the collaborations of institutions, authors, and countries.

According to the collaborations developed among the authors (Figure 5), different collaboration networks emerge. Accordingly, the most intense collaborations are formed around Kronos, K., Dixon, H., Scully, M. and Pettigrew, S.

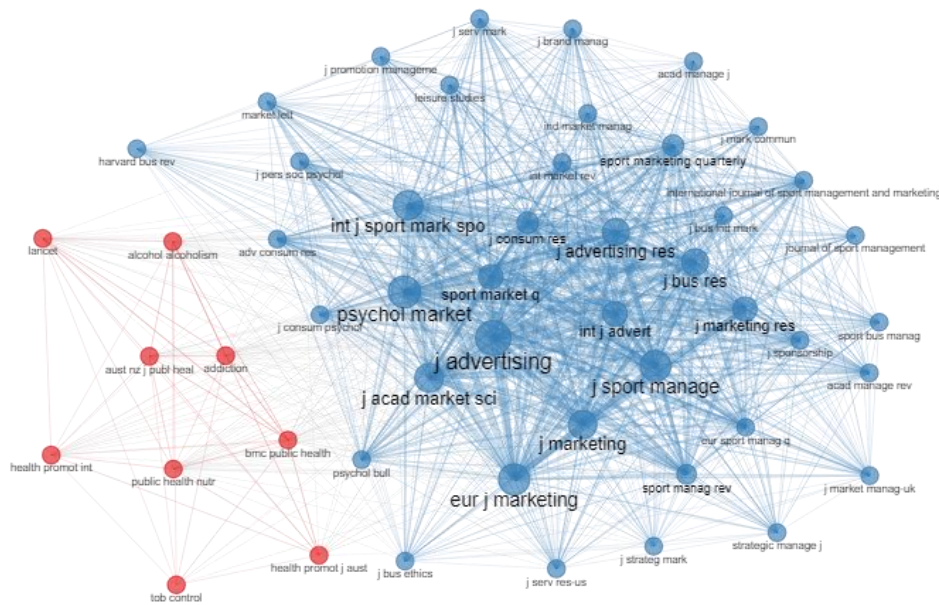


Figure 6. Collaboration network between journals

The cooperation network between journals (Figure 6) shows an intense cooperation network centered on Journal Advertising, Psychology Marketing, Journal Sport Management, and European Journal Marketing.

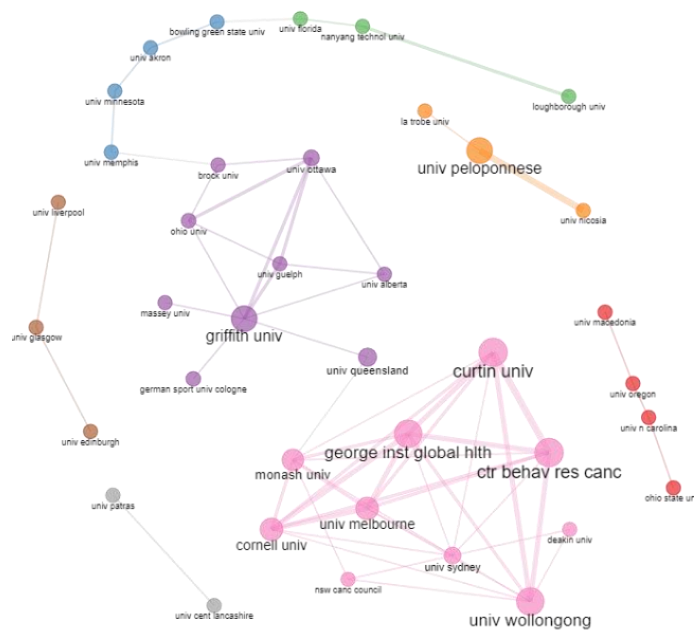


Figure 7. Inter-institutional collaboration network

According to the collaboration network (Figure 7), there are collaborations of 8 different clusters. The most intense collaborations within this network are in the purple cluster centered on Griffith University and the pink cluster centered on George Institution Global Health, CTR Behaviour Research Cancer, University Wollongong, and Curtin University.

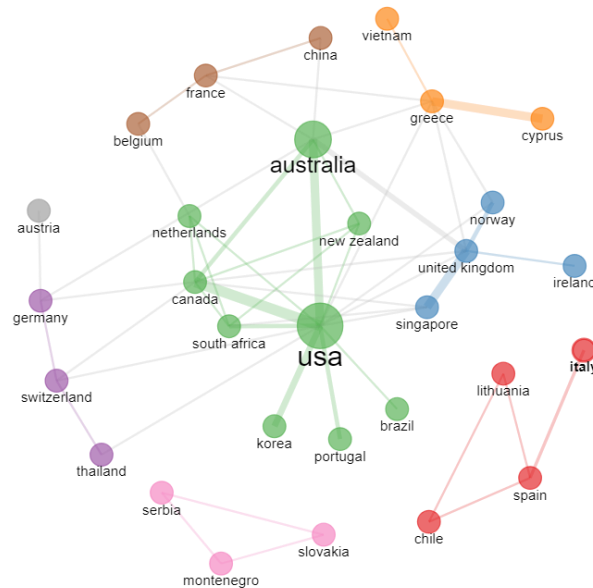


Figure 8. Inter-country collaboration network

The cooperation network developed between countries (Figure 8) shows that the cooperation network centered on the USA and Australia is more intense.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Bibliometric analysis seeks to establish theoretical and empirical foundations (Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro, 2004), by identifying paradigm shifts within the field (Pasadeos et al., 2010). In the context of sports sponsorship, this study aimed to expose research trends and performance of the research topic from the past to the present.

Sponsorship has gained momentum since the late 1980s and early 1990s (Bragg et al., 2018). A bibliometric analysis reveals that academic research on sports sponsorship intensified in the 1990s. During these years, research trends in sports sponsorship focused on "fast food" and "public health," continuing until the 2000s. Until 1995, sports sponsorship dominated the industry. Since 1995, the growth rate of sports sponsorship has decreased due to the inclination towards art sponsorship. Branded alcoholic beverages have effectively been marketed through sports sponsorship. Still, there is increasing demand to narrow advertising and marketing options for products such as alcohol and tobacco due to their adverse effects on human health. At that time, Alcohol Concern expressed their call for additional advertising bans (Meerabeau et al., 1991). The research focus during this period on food, beverage, and public health aligns with existing literature.

Research on sports sponsorship diversification began after 2013. Mainly, research has focused on using structural equation modeling to analyze relationships between various dependent and independent variables while solving complex research problems systematically. This approach allows for examining mediating and influencing effects and testing numerous theories (Dursun

and Kocagöz, 2010). Therefore, the emphasis on structural equation research since 2013 indicates a shift in the scientific paradigm. Moreover, this period's investigations centered on youth, alcohol, brands, unhealthy societies, and children's sports. In a 2009 study by Smith et al., a correlation between alcohol advertisements targeted at young people and increased alcohol consumption was found. Since then, research has centered on the relationship between alcohol industries and branding. During this period, international brands provided funding for sports facilities for young people. However, obesity and diabetes rates in low- and middle-income countries have surpassed acceptable levels (Bragg et al., 2018). Research on youth sports and societal health issues is becoming more intense and is reflected in current literature. In the scientific mapping, the close relationship network between alcohol sponsorships, brands, children's sports, unhealthy foods, and alcohol harms supports relevant literature.

The increase in size and commercial activity of sporting organizations has diminished the backing of their intended audiences and weakened the significance of sponsoring (Coates and Wicker, 2015). We live in a time where it is necessary to question the duties of organizations. Consumers demand that organizations fulfill their obligations to society and the environment. Therefore, stakeholders can be assured of the legitimacy of mega sports events that generate social and environmental benefits via sports sponsorships that correspond with CSR (Roberts et al., 2017). In addition to the previous research issues, post-2018, we have seen that social responsibility, decision-making, and counter-advertising concepts are among the current study problems. In this regard, it can be stated that the research subjects vary based on the growth patterns of the market, consumer requirements, and sponsorship dynamics.

In the 2000s, sports sponsorship studies have gained a new perspective. It has been observed that the trending topics within the scope of sports sponsorship are sports sponsorship event management, corporate social responsibility, image management, and branding. Chadwick and Thwaites (2005) emphasized the development of public relations discipline in sponsorship. The areas of public relations include corporate social responsibility, event management, and image management. The results of the bibliometric analysis overlap with the findings of Chadwick and Thwaites (2005) in this framework.

In studies exploring sports sponsorship, it has been established that field-specific journals are the most frequently cited. Researchers investigating this subject tend to favor journals dedicated to the field, such as the *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship* and the *Journal of Sport Management*, over those encompassing marketing in general. Based on geographical location, it has been observed that Australia and the USA have published more research in this field than other countries, resulting in a more robust collaborative network. Among researchers, Breuer, C., Cornwell, T. B., Dixon, H., Ireland, H., and Jensen, J. A. have more significant potential for publication. Of these authors, Dixon, H. has the most extensive collaboration network.

Among the 184 publications published between 1982 and 2023 (as illustrated in Figure 1), 160 research data suitable for the research structure were analyzed. With a 41-year research history, sports sponsorship sees an average of 4.5 publications annually. While this field involves massive budget transfers and interdisciplinary work, the trends in study are still lacking. The annual growth rate of this field is 2.42%.

In this study, we analyzed the data from scientific studies published on the topic of sports sponsorship. Bibliometric research is crucial in highlighting gaps in the field, tracking trends, and investigating paradigmatic shifts. This investigation is restricted to bibliometric data

analysis on sports sponsorship. Still, its outcomes can be further expanded through meta-thematic analyses to gain a more profound understanding of the field. In addition, adopting a cumulative sponsorship approach could prove beneficial for the outcomes of this investigation. As a marketing and communication tool, sports sponsorship is experiencing rapid development. Accordingly, it is increasingly favored by global businesses. This is particularly noteworthy given the prominent position of products such as alcohol and tobacco in the global market, where their advertising is prohibited. The research into sports sponsorship has advanced in line with sectoral and academic discussions. The field has evolved in alcohol sponsorship, sports sponsorship, adolescent health, unhealthy lifestyle, scientific research methodologies (structural equation), brand recognition, and corporate social responsibility.

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