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Juan Carlos Gázquez-Abad
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Advances in National Brand and Private Label Marketing

11th International Conference, Oxford,
UK, 2024

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Editors

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ISSN 2198-7246 ISSN 2198-7254 (electronic)
Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics
ISBN 978-3-031-69191-1 ISBN 978-3-031-69192-8 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69192-8>

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Preface

The International Conference on Advances in National Brand and Private Label Marketing (NB&PL) is the first international forum to present and discuss original, rigorous, and significant contributions specifically on NB and PL issues. Our aim is to promote, stimulate, and publish high-quality contributions approaching any topic on national brands and private labels in retailing, which could help retailers and manufacturers deal with a diversity of issues; this is why considering managerial implications is encouraged too. NB&PL Marketing aims at becoming the most relevant international reference for advancing national brand and private label research.

The 11th edition of the NB&PL is very special, as it is the first time that the Conference is not held in Barcelona. In particular, the NB&PL International Conference has moved to Oxford, where the Oxford Brookes University has hosted this eleventh edition.

After the success of the ten previous editions, this eleventh edition is still believed to be a unique international forum to present and discuss original, rigorous, and significant contributions on topics related to any retailing, private label, or national brand issues.

Each paper submitted to NB&PL 2024 has gone through a stringent peer review process by members of the Program Committee, comprising 44 internationally renowned researchers from 15 countries.

A total of 15 papers have been accepted. They address diverse areas of application such as customer journey, sustainability, the metaverse, online grocery retailing, assortment branding strategies, innovation, labelling, co-creation, among others. A wide variety of theoretical and methodological approaches have been used in these areas.

We believe that this eleventh edition has continued with the same goals as the ten previous editions: promote, stimulate, and publish high-quality contributions on national brands and private labels, which could help retailers and manufacturers deal with diversity of issues. Nevertheless, we hope to keep organizing this Conference which is aimed to become an international reference for advancing this promising research field.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the support of the sponsors *Springer*, *Circana* (formerly *IRI*), *Manufacturers-and-Retailers Spanish Multisectoral Association (AECOC)*, and *the University of Almería (Spain)*. We would also like to thank all the contributing authors, members of the Program Committee, and the rest of the Organizing Committee for their highly valuable work in enabling the success of this eleventh edition of NB&PL. Thanks for your generous contribution—NB&PL 2024 would not have been possible without you all.

Juan Carlos Gázquez-Abad
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Private Labels



The Progression of Sustainable Private Label Marketing: A Literature Review of Past Achievements and Future Promises

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Abstract. This study aims to provide a better understanding of research constituents, and intellectual and cognitive structures of sustainable private label (PL) marketing research field. Employing bibliometric analysis methods like performance analysis and science mapping (specifically bibliographic coupling and co-word analyses), this investigation scrutinizes 142 articles from the Scopus database using VOSviewer software. The study highlights a surge in research activity, primarily from the United States, Spain, and United Kingdom, and identifies five key research topics: (i) Corporate Social Responsibility Communication of Private Label (PL) Brands, (ii) Sustainable Supply Chain Management of Private Labels Products, (iii) Consumers' Perceptions on Sustainable Private Label Products and Sales Mode Selection, (iv) Sustainable Private Label Products as a Source of Competitive Advantage, and (v) Sustainability Commitments of Private Label brands to Public Health. Additionally, it offers insights into future research directions on topics related to store equity of PL brands, store loyalty, e-tailing of PL products, and economic sustainability of PL products. Notably, this pioneering work synthesizes sustainable private label marketing using a novel amalgamation of bibliometric techniques, significantly advancing theoretical and practical understanding in the field.

Keywords: Private Brand · Sustainable Supply Chain Management · Consumers' Perceptions · Sustainability Commitments · Corporate Social Responsibility Communication

1 Introduction

In current retail landscape, characterised by intense competition and constant evolution, private label (PL) brands (also called private brands, store brands, or own brands), once considered merely low-cost alternatives, are reshaping consumer expectations and

challenging established manufacturer brands. PL brands are moving beyond mere low-cost offerings to compete effectively (Gielens et al., 2021). In a world where consumers increasingly value sustainability, ethics and social responsibility, retail brands are beginning to take the opportunity to adapt their offerings to address these concerns holistically (Lee et al., 2012). The concept of marketing is being redefined, with considerations extending beyond the traditional factors of price and quality to include broader concerns such as environmental considerations (Perrini et al., 2010).

While PL products have been present in the market for decades, their association with sustainability has only recently gained traction. The pioneering research by Hill (1998) highlighted the pivotal role of environmental sustainability, innovation, and consumer orientation in shaping the marketing strategies of companies introducing PL brands. Subsequent studies have delved deeper, evolving from exploring the integration of corporate social responsibility (Perrini et al. 2010; Souza-Monteiro and Hooker 2017; Pulker et al. 2018) and its impact on solely communication to investigating novel approaches to sustainability specifically on brand image (Jimenez-Guerrero et al. 2015) or the integration on sustainable management of PL firms supply chain (Zhang et al. 2023; Dubey et al. 2018; Rueda et al. 2017). Yet, despite these advancements, a comprehensive review linking PL brands and sustainability remains notably absent, representing a critical research gap.

In this particular context, through comprehensive bibliometric analysis, the study aims to achieve the following four objectives: (1) identify the primary components of research in sustainable PL marketing including journals, authors, and countries involved; (2) unveil the most impactful articles within sustainable PL marketing research; (3) examine the framework of research within sustainable PL marketing; and (4) track the progression of sustainable PL marketing investigation while suggesting possible future directions.

Through these four objectives, the present study fulfils the four essential elements necessary for a bibliometric analysis to contribute to theory advancement (Mukherjee et al., 2022). Consequently, it has significant implications for advancing the boundaries of knowledge on sustainable PL marketing. Firstly, we systematically identify knowledge clusters. Secondly, we delineate the nomological networks within the sustainable PL marketing research domain. Thirdly, we monitor evolutionary trends to forecast the trajectory of the field. Lastly, we identify the critical knowledge gaps to suggest potential avenues for future research.

To conclude, the study is organized as follows. In Sect. 2, we present the methodology of the research. We then present and discuss the results in Sect. 3. Finally, Sect. 4 concludes the study.

2 Research Methodology

2.1 Data Collection

The extensive array of scientific studies and comprehensive metadata and citation details, as demonstrated by research (Donthu et al. 2022; Veloutsou and Liao 2023), provide strong support for utilizing the Scopus database. The search query parameters were formulated by identifying the primary keywords and search phrases employed across

previous review studies (systematic literature reviews, bibliometric reviews, and meta-analyses) concerning PL marketing and sustainability (e.g., Czczotko et al. 2022; Nascimento and Loureiro 2024). Specifically, the search formula used was as follows: TITLE-ABS-KEY (“private labels” OR “private label” OR “private label brands” OR “private brand” OR “own label brand” OR “own brand” OR “store brand”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“sustainab*” OR “pro-environmental” OR “green” OR “ecolog*” OR “social responsibility” OR “ethical consum*”). The search was performed on February 1, 2024. The initial search uncovers 201 documents. To guarantee the quality of the papers analysed, the search was limited to articles, reviews, books, and book chapters, leaving conference papers, short surveys, conference reviews, erratums, and research notes, since they contain less validated knowledge. This exclusion criterion led us to 177 articles. Moreover, we refined our search to include articles written in English only and those published until December 2023. This led us to obtain a sample of 167 documents. Finally, we excluded articles published in trade journals from our sample. Thus, we met a sample of 150 documents.

In the next step, the authors manually evaluated the title, abstract, and keywords, and in selected cases the introduction section of the 150 papers. The objective was to exclude articles that did not address sustainability and PL marketing as a whole or, even if they did, were not relevant (i.e., did not address it as a central theme within the study). After this manual evaluation, eight articles were excluded and the 142 documents were therefore left for the final analysis. Of these 142 documents, 116 are journal articles, 24 book chapters and 2 books.

2.2 Data Analysis

This study focuses on two key bibliometric methods: performance analysis and science mapping (Donthu et al. 2021). Performance analysis involves using various metrics to assess research contributions in a field, including publication-related, citation-related, and combined metrics (i.e., citation-and-publication-related metrics) (Cobo et al. 2011). We specifically delve into analyzing metrics such as research production evaluation, major publishing journals, most prolific scholars, most prolific countries, and highly cited articles. These analyses provide insights into the performance of different research entities like journals, authors, and countries, which are fundamental aspects of bibliometric studies (Donthu et al. 2021). Our analysis involved examining 142 publications from WoS using Microsoft Excel 2010 for performance analysis and VOSviewer software (van Eck and Waltman 2010) for visualizing relationships between major research constituents, such as co-authorship networks and international collaborations among countries.

Next, to explore the intellectual and cognitive landscape of sustainable PL marketing research, we conduct bibliographic coupling and co-word analyses. Bibliographic coupling posits that publications with shared references also share similar content (Donthu et al. 2021), enabling us to group scientific contributions thematically based on shared references (Zupic and Cater 2015). This method generates thematic clusters from cited publications, shedding light on recent developments and the evolving intellectual structure of the field (Zupic and Cater 2015; Donthu et al. 2021). Co-word analysis, conversely, uncovers relationships by examining authors' keyword usage to delineate the conceptual framework of primary topics in a research domain (Callon et al. 1983). The frequency of keywords across multiple publications indicates closely related concepts (Zupic and Cater 2015), culminating in a semantic map that elucidates the cognitive structure of the field and visually depicts past, present, and future research trends (Börner et al. 2005). Both analyses were facilitated using VOSviewer software (van Eck and Waltman 2010).

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Performance Analysis

This section highlights the key findings of the sustainable PL marketing research, spanning the period from 1998 to 2023. The first subsection illustrates the evolution of the scientific production. Thereafter, the second subsection outlines the descriptive findings regarding the primary constituents of the research stream, including the most relevant journals, authors, countries, and influential articles.

3.1.1 Research Production

According to Fig. 1, the oldest article discovered for this research dates back to 1998. It can be considered a pioneering article on sustainable PL marketing. It is worth noting that the next article appeared five years later, in 2003 (Christensen et al. 2003). In Hill's (1998) article, the author relies on a combination of primary data, such as interviews with key strategic managers, and secondary data. The study delves into the main factors shaping the marketing strategies of the company under study and how it develops a PL aligned with its ethos of environmental sustainability, innovation and consumer orientation as a new marketing strategy. After this first article and that of 2003, some articles appeared sporadically between 2004 and 2011 (a total of 11 articles in this period of 8 years). But it was not until 2012 that the publication of scientific contributions related to sustainable PL marketing began to increase.