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## **TOWARDS A MORE UNIVERSAL UNDERSTANDING OF CONTENT MARKETING: THE CONTRIBUTION OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

### **Abstract:**

As a new marketing paradigm, the scholarly publications about content marketing have steadily increased since the first academic study in 2008. It is, however, still surpassed by the thousands of practitioner publications in the form of blogs, case studies, and industry publications. Varied perspectives and competing concepts about content marketing impede universal understanding and hinder future growth. Marketing scholars have only recently started to address content marketing's definitional and conceptual issues and have thus far contributed very little to the continuous debate about this shift in marketing thought.

This study was consequently done to address a gap in our understanding of content marketing by focusing on the state of current scholarly contributions when it comes to unanimity about its conceptual foundation. It is furthermore also important to be aware of how research has advanced content marketing theory so far to expand existing knowledge.

A directed, inductive content analysis of 191 academic studies about content marketing was done to establish how content marketing is conceptually and consistently explained and understood in existing scholarly work. Three main categories emerged that illustrate uniformity in views, namely delineation of content marketing, content marketing field, and foundational elements. Conceptual understanding of a phenomenon is crucial to develop frameworks and models to accurately describe it. This study could thus be an underpinning for future studies to add to incomplete conceptions about content marketing and thereby advancing its growth.

### **Keywords:**

content marketing, content marketing research, marketing theory, content analysis, social media

**JEL Classification:** M31, M30, M00