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Consumer preferences in the era of sustainability marketing: Insights from a bibliometric study

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to provide scholars with insightful information about consumer preferences in the epoch of sustainability marketing by employing bibliometric analysis. Using the data obtained from the Scopus database covering the period from 2000 to 2024, we carefully chose and analyzed 263 with the help of Biblioshiny software. Several bibliometric variables were included in our analysis, including most relevant sources, leading nations in research productivity, annual scientific production, and highly cited texts. Thematic analysis was conducted by generating a thematic map. Together, these assessments give scholars and researcher a thorough grasp of the topic and new developments in the field, enabling them to add to the growing corpus of knowledge.

Keywords: Sustainable marketing, green marketing, consumer preference

1. Introduction

In recent years, sustainability has emerged as a central focus for businesses and consumers alike, driving shifts in marketing strategies and consumer preferences. As environmental consciousness rises, companies are increasingly adopting sustainability marketing to meet evolving demands for eco-friendly products and practices. Sustainability marketing emphasizes environmental responsibility, social equity, and economic efficiency, intending to balance profit with the planet's well-being. This paradigm shift is not merely a trend but a response to the urgent need for sustainable consumption patterns, reflecting consumers' growing preference for ethical and responsible brands.

One tactic employed by marketers to achieve sustainability is green marketing (George, 2022) [2]. Sustainability marketing is the practice of promoting products, services, or brands by emphasizing their environmental, social, and economic benefits. Its aims at aligning marketing strategies with sustainable business practices, focusing on ethical production, eco-friendly materials and corporate social responsibility (CSR) and aims to attract eco-conscious consumers, build brand loyalty, and support long term environmental social wellbeing while remaining profitable. A growing percentage of consumers in the market have favorable opinions about corporate social responsibility, green products, and sustainability in general. These sentiments do not, however, always result in practical green consumption practices (Milovanov, 2015) [8].

Understanding consumer preferences in the context of sustainability is essential for businesses aiming to stay competitive. A bibliometric analysis of sustainability marketing research offers insights into current trends, influential publications, and key areas of interest within the field. By analysing existing literature, this study aims to highlight how sustainability marketing influences consumer behaviour and identify future research directions to foster sustainable consumer engagement.

2. Prior Literature

Kumar (2023) [5] emphasized that true green marketing comprises genuine efforts towards sustainability, transparent communication, and deep grasp of consumers' shifting expectations and highlighting a product's environmental attributes, whether they relate to its manufacture, packaging, distribution, or disposal. The findings show that associating green marketing with health advantages, ethical consumptions, and a lower carbon footprint, many consumers see it as a way to align their personal values with their purchasing decisions. Therefore, even though consumers clearly prefer eco-friendly items, firms must maintain

genuine sustainable practices in order to truly appeal to their environmental senses. Grubor & Milovanov (2017) ^[8] highlighted how sustainability plays a key part in branding theory and practice, and provide techniques for successfully integrating green values into brand management, with a focus on the brand equity construct, based on the findings of relevant research and analysis. In the future, one of the key prerequisites for a successful business will be understanding customers, making corporate procedures and branding green, and encouraging a wide audience to embrace sustainable behavior.

George (2022) ^[2] examined the impact of consumer behavior on green marketing. A total of 100 questionnaires were collected from the respondents of Tamilnadu through organized survey and also stated the need of consumers' education regarding environmental issues. The findings shows some of the respondents are worried about their health, the majority believe they are environmentally conscious. Some respondents stated that they would not be willing to pay more if the cost of environmentally friendly products rose in the future. As a result, consumer education and awareness raise awareness of green products.

Rahman *et al.* (2017) ^[10] studied the way that consumers view green values as a result of the promoters' green marketing initiatives and how this influences their decision to buy sustainable, ecofriendly items. According to the report, more marketing and brand awareness should be used to sell and market environmentally friendly and useful items. Marketers need to develop fresh, creative approaches to alter consumers' perceptions about green marketing.

Seretny & Seretny (2012) ^[13] discussed of sustainable marketing and its basic significance in the evolution of Poland marketing theory, taking into consideration recent Poland discussions that frequently rest on a vague understanding of the marketing process. Introduction of new concepts as a result of the standardization of knowledge on marketing theory brought fresh methods into the advertisement process. Sustainable marketing is more than just avoiding tree-cutting and delivering better and more affordable products. This is a true useful benefit of conducting business which affects productivity, stimulates innovation, and promotes encourages and maintains collaboration. Singh & Pandey (2012) ^[14] suggested 8 keys to successful green marketing; (i) Being genuine, (ii) Educating your customers, (iii) Giving your customers an opportunity to participate (iv) Know your customer (v) Empower consumers (vi) Be transparent (vii) Reassure the buyer (viii) Consider your pricing. These marketing strategies described as a direct outcome of shifts in consumer market perceptions. Because of this, companies are now more frequently aiming to attract environmentally conscious customers.

Bhavana & Thiruchanuru (2018) ^[1] analysed a green consumer behaviour during decision making process by generating a gap model also described briefly how members of Generation Z and Y who care about the environment react to various elements that affect their purchasing decisions, including marketing tactics, customer attributes, price and quality impacts, advertisements, and other elements. Prihandono *et al.* (2020) ^[9] analysed how eco-

friendly labels, green advertising, and green marketing strategies affect consumers' decisions to buy mineral water. The Ades brand, which fosters an eco-friendly image in Indonesia, is discussed. Green marketing has emerged as a popular topic across all consumer-packaged goods sectors during previous decades. It is quite difficult for the bottled water sector to create a unique product that would earn a fiercely competitive market. Data were collected from 115 respondents using questionnaire and processed by SmartPLS 3.0 and apply partial least square analysis to examine the variable relationships.

Mancuso *et al.* (2021) ^[7] examined whether and how brand loyalty is impacted by sustainable marketing strategies by using the findings of a survey given to a sample of 907 Italian biscuit customers. The findings demonstrated that customers' focus on sustainability problems (in terms of brand loyalty) lack of sufficient information to help consumers select a brand) did not lead to brand loyalty. Katrandjiev (2016) ^[4] analysed the origins, evolution, and relationship between eco marketing, green marketing, and long-term advertising. Also incorporates scientific research studies that examined the impact of marketing on the environment. It was based on the four stage of development (1) embryo stage (pre-1974); (2) ecological marketing (1975-1989); (3) green marketing (1990-2000); (4) sustainable marketing (post-2000). The fourth stage is the "green wave" development in the marketing whose main traits consist of: a strong focus on the future, justice and a focus on the requirements of the population of the planet.

This work aims to make a bibliometric analysis to assist researchers and scholars to have a comprehensive understanding of the literature related to the field of sustainability marketing and consumer preference.

3. Methodology

We have collected data from Scopus Database. We used the key words - ("sustainability marketing" OR "green marketing") AND ("consumer preferences" OR "consumer behaviour" OR "consumer buying behaviour"). We initially searched for the keywords in the title and abstract and retrieved 397 documents. Next, we filtered for the years 2000–2024, reducing the count to 391 documents. We then refined the results by selecting only the fields of Business, Management, Accounting, Social Science, Economics, Finance, and Energy, which left us with 311 documents. We selected only article and book chapter that left us with 270 documents. Then we selected the English language and finally got 263 documents. Further analysis has been done with final 263 documents.

Figure 2 shows the number of articles published per year from 2000 to 2024 in the field of sustainability marketing and its impact on consumers. We can observe that, between 2000-2009, the numbers of articles per year remained consistently low, mostly between 1 to 5 articles annually. A gradual increase begins after 2012, showing growth trend with occasional fluctuations. Notable spikes are seen in years like 2019 and 2024. In 2024, there is dramatic rise, reaching the highest count of 40 articles, showing a significant increase in publications.

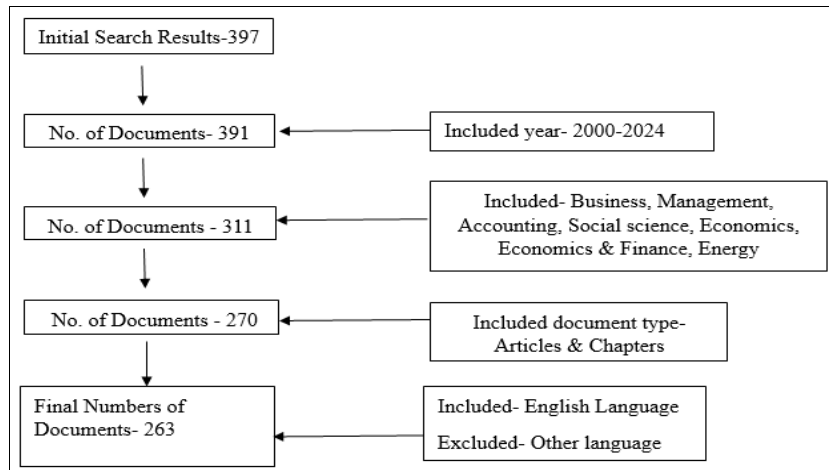


Fig 1: Documents Selection Criteria
Source: Compiled By the Author

4. Results and Discussions

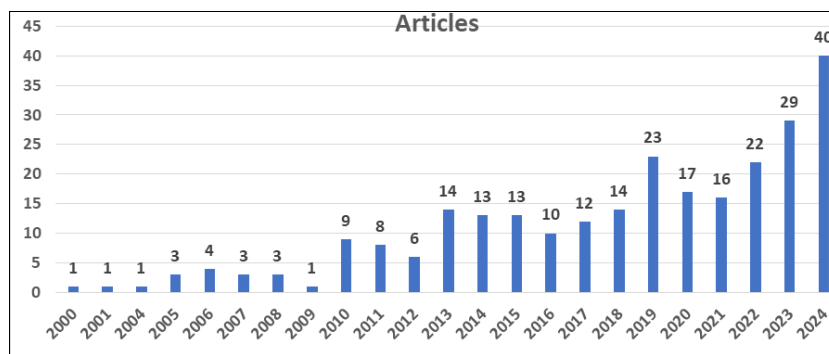


Fig 2: Annual Scientific Production
Source: Compiled By the Author

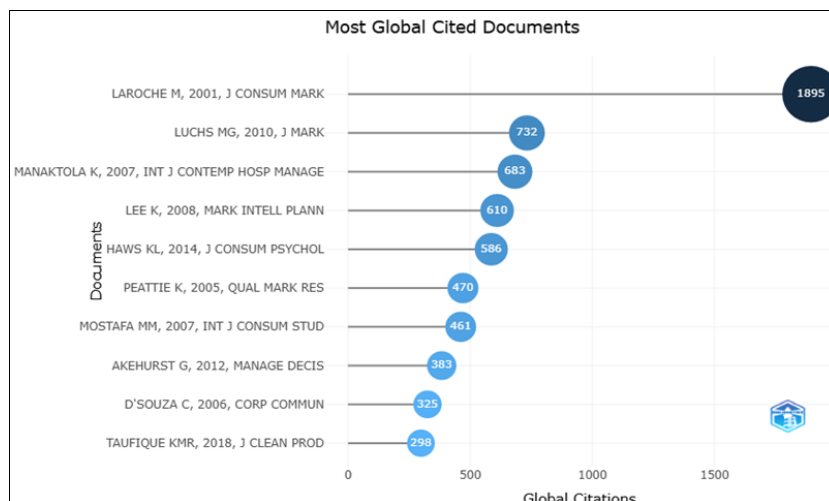


Fig 3: Most Global Cited Documents
Source: Compiled by the Author

Figure 3 shows the most cited academic documents, ranked based on their global citations. As per the analysis each document bubble represents a document, with its size indicating the number of citations. The most cited document is Laroche (2001) is marked at the top with 1895 citations. Other

significant documents have citations ranging between 732 and 298, as represented by different bubble sizes. Document titles and authors listed to the left of the bubbles, showing a clear ranking based on citation counts.

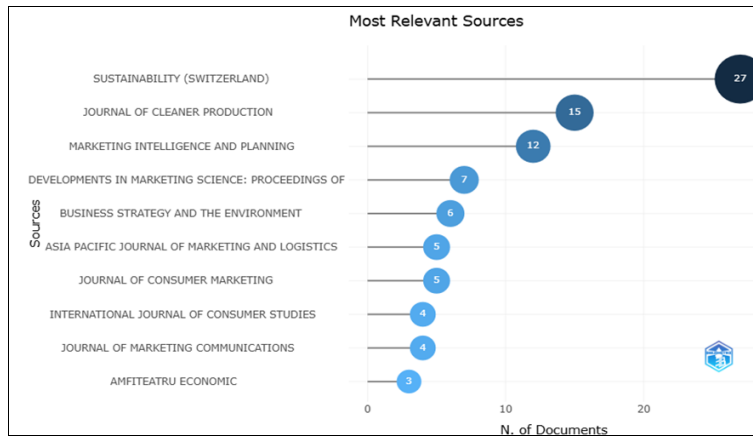


Fig 4: Most Relevant Sources
Source: Compiled by the Author

Figure 4 shows top 10 most relevant sources. It can be seen that the largest bubble, corresponding to Sustainability (Switzerland), indicates 27 documents, making it the most relevant source. Other top source like Journal of Cleaner

Production is at the second position with 15 documents and Marketing Intelligence and Planning with 12 documents is at the third position. The remaining sources contribute between 7 and 3 documents each.

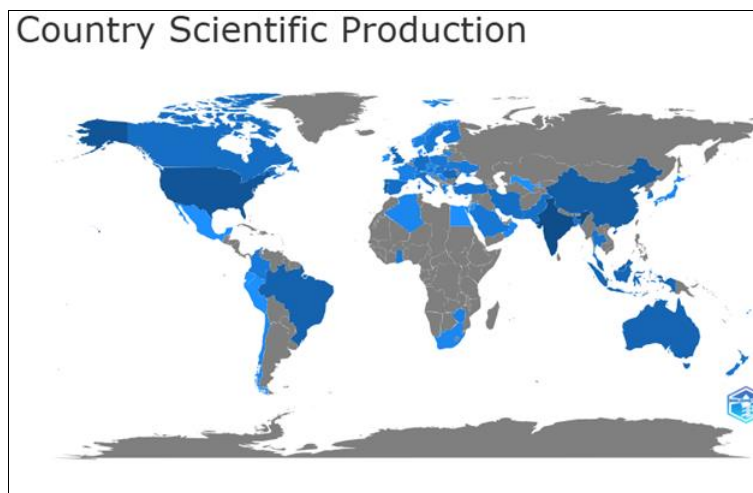


Fig 5: Country Scientific Production
Source: Compiled by the Author

Figure 5 demonstrates the Country Scientific Production where the colour code ranges from grey to deep blue. Deep blue indicates higher scientific production, while grey shades indicate no production. Here India is the country

with highest document i.e,160, USA is at the second position with 85 documents, then China poses third position with 46 documents, Malaysia and Brazil are in 4th and 5th position with 33 and 32 documents respectively.



Fig 6: Word Cloud
Source: Compiled by the Author

Figure 6 shows the word cloud which represent the frequency of words, where larger words at the middle appear more frequently and less frequently used words are shown on the side with smaller size. By doing this we got

Marketing as the most frequent word with 45 occurrences. Similarly, consumer behavior is second most frequent word with 34 occurrences followed by Sustainability 18 frequency and Sustainable development 16 frequency each.

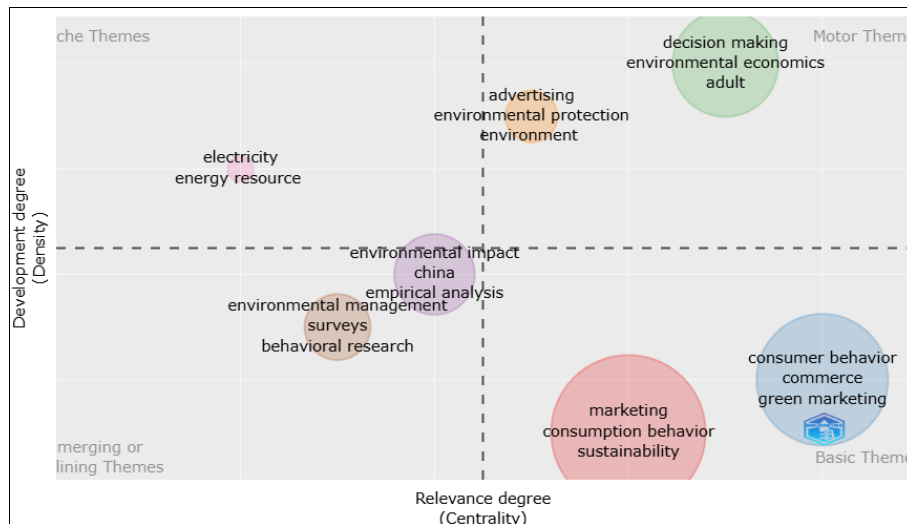


Fig 7: Thematic Map
Source: Compiled by the Author

Figure 7 shows the Thematic Map which is divided into four quadrants based on two axes: “Development Degree (Destiny)” and “Relevance Degree (Centrality)”. Each circle on the map represents the thematic clusters, with larger circles denoting more prominent themes. Top right quadrant (Motor themes) represents topic that are highly central and well-developed. Here, terms like ‘decision making’, ‘environmental economics’, and ‘adult’ are displayed in a green circle. Bottom right quadrant (Basic themes) shows well-developed but less central topics, indicating fundamental or established themes. This area includes terms such as ‘consumer behavior’, ‘commerce’, and ‘green marketing’ in a blue circle. Top left Quadrants (Niche themes) are central but less developed topics. In this section, the map highlights terms like ‘advertising’, ‘electricity’, ‘energy resources’ in a purple circle. Bottom left quadrant (Emerging or Declining themes) represents less central and less developed, indicating potential emerging trends or areas of lower importance in the context. Here we find terms like ‘environmental management’.

5. Conclusion

After completing all the analysis, we have a general understanding of research trend, the most pertinent journals, the relevant documents and the trend themes in the field of Sustainability marketing or Green marketing and its impact on consumer behavior. We noticed that the research trend is significantly increasing day by day. From the word cloud and thematic map, it can be concluded that researchers have focused on the themes like marketing, consumption behavior, sustainability, consumer behavior, green marketing, etc. which should be continued as the driving themes.

6. Future Research direction

Based on the word cloud and thematic map, future research could explore consumer behaviour in green marketing, examining factors that drive sustainable purchasing, such as environmental attitudes and social influences. Additionally, the link between advertising and environmental protection

invites studies on how eco-friendly campaigns shape consumer attitudes and intentions, revealing effective strategies for promoting sustainable brands. Another direction involves decision-making in the green economy, focusing on how adults weigh financial and social trade-offs when choosing eco-conscious products. Interdisciplinary studies on sustainable development in commerce could bridge economic growth with sustainability by analysing business transitions to eco-friendly models. Regional and cultural influences, particularly across Eastern and Western markets, also warrant exploration, as responses to green marketing vary. These directions could enrich understanding of consumer dynamics, sustainable business strategies, and the behavioural impacts of environmental issues.

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