

The Evolution of Ethical Consumerism from Niche to Mainstream: A Bibliometric Analysis of Intellectual Structure and Emerging Themes

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Abstract

The study intends to identify important contributors, trends, and future research paths while examining the development and intellectual framework of ethical consumerism research from 1969 to 2026. The results showed a consistent increase in research on ethical consumerism, with a notable increase in publications following the 1990s and in the post-COVID-19 era. The United States and the United Kingdom are the main contributors, although involvement is also rising in emerging nations like India. The analysis signifies four thematic clusters: (1) authenticity and ethical consumerism in marketing systems, (2) consumer citizenship and sustainability in the digital age, (3) the role of consumer culture in shaping professional gender norms, and (4) the commodification of adult gender identities. Thus, these themes highlight the interdisciplinary and evolving nature of ethical consumerism, influenced by digital transformation, socio-economic structures, and cultural dynamics.

Keywords:

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Introduction

The term 'ethical' can encapsulate different ideas, expressions, concerns, and issues for different consumers (such as environmental or green topics, worker rights, sustainability concerns, goods' countries of origin, the arms trade, fair trade, green consumerism [Carrington et al., 2010]. According to Kurenlahti and Salonen (2018), consumerism as a cultural phenomenon can be viewed as an "implicit religion" due to its significant influence on how people think and behave. Kurenlahti and Salonen (2018) stated that consumerism has three primary functions that are comparable to the functions of religion: a social function, a transcendent function and an existential function. In the last few decades, the media coverage of environmental and social issues has been continually growing momentum. (Han et al., 2019) analysed that higher number of consumers are attracted by the values of ethical consumerism. With these issues prevalent, ethically minded consumers are now concerned about the environmental impacts and social ethics in mainstream society (Wiederhold and Martinez, 2018).

The term "ethical consumerism" has been used with different meanings in various business management disciplines (Carrington et al., 2021; Papaoikonomou et al., 2023). For example, earlier, Cooper-Martin and Holbrook (1993, p. 113) defined ethical consumerism in terms of buyer characteristics, namely as "decision-making, purchases and other consumption experiences that are affected by the consumer's ethical concerns". Similarly, Summers (2016, p. 303) defines it as "the deliberate purchase, or avoidance, of products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons." In contrast, Irwin (2015)

defined it as a characteristic of firms, notably a broad label for companies providing self-appealing products (e.g., fair-trade coffee or charitable giving). More recently, Papaoikonomou et al., (2023, p. 1) introduced the concept of ethical consumer literacy, referred to as the "consumer's ability to consume in a way that will not have a negative social, animal, or environmental impact". Although these perspectives differ in their emphasis on consumers or companies, they share a common understanding that consumption is closely linked to its broader impacts on society and the environment.

While ethical consumerism has existed for centuries, it has only transitioned from a niche concern to a mainstream phenomenon in the past three decades (Low and Davenport, 2007). This shift has led to increasing scholarly attention across diverse disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, and business (Newholm and Shaw, 2007, p.253; Papaoikonomou et al., 2012).

Ethical consumerism refers to "the practice of purchasing products and services that actively seek to minimize social and environmental damage, and the avoidance of products deemed to have a negative impact on society on the environment" (Institute of Grocery Distribution, 2007). Ethical Consumerism is voicing ethical concerns about products and practices through choosing to purchase only products that meet individual's ethical criteria (Cho & Krasser, 2011). It is gaining momentum through social media, which serves as a convenient platform for the rapid dissemination of information, enhancing awareness, exposing malpractices, and enabling the exchange of opinions and concerns; consequently, it also encourages ethical behaviour in offline contexts (Wyrwoll, 2014). It may be defined

as the discretionary decision by consumers to buy goods and services, aiming at positively affect certain social and/or environmental issues (Doane, 2001; Jones, 2017). The empirical evidence on ethical consumerism based on surveys (Hoogendoorn et al., 2015; Jones, 2017; Morgan et al., 2016) or choice experiments (e.g., Marquina & Morales, 2012; Mohr & Webb, 2005) indicated that consumers are generally willing to pay a premium for companies involved in social initiatives

Over the past decade consumers' attitudes towards ethical issues have gained importance for businesses, as they are now viewed as a central aspect of business strategy. Along with, Consumers are now more aware of how their buying decision affect the environment (Sharma et al., 2020). Broadly, Society has shifted its preference from traditional products to more sustainable consumables to protect and sustain the environment. (Jaiswal and Kant, 2018; Uikey and Patil, 2024).

Ethical consumers have various motives i.e., environmental, social, political, religious, spiritual, or other motives for selecting one product over another (Harrison et al., 2005). (Beck and Ladwig, 2021) stated that it includes those products that emphasize animal welfare, environmental sustainability, human rights, and fair-trade practices. This form of consumerism serves for ethical action based on subjective moral judgments applied to individual products/brands across the production, consumption, and disposition cycle (Brunk, 2010). Making choices in this manner creates incentives for producers to align their production practices with consumer values. (Mak and Terry, 2020).

Ethical consumerism represents an increasing tendency among consumers to base their purchasing decisions on ethical, social, and environmental considerations (Carrington et al., 2014). To shape a sustainable future, it becomes one of the most powerful strategies, what people choose to consume, becomes more concern for the environmental challenges. Customers become aware via social campaigns; many of them have no favourable impressions of companies whose purpose is to earn excessive profits. Instead, customers have begun to expect firms to act as good corporate citizens and not just make a profit (Albus & Ro, 2013). As they become increasingly interested in ethical consumption, they take into account not only embedded product and service features but also social issues, such as the ethical treatment of employees, customers, and the environment (Huh & Kim, 2012). Barber (2014) highlights the importance of understanding consumers' levels of green consciousness and recommends targeting tailored strategies to specific green consumer segments as an effective operational approach for attracting and retaining more customers.

Low and MacMillan (Low & MacMillan, 1988) suggested that "as a body of literature develops, it is

useful to stop occasionally, take inventory of the work that has been done, and identify new directions and challenges for the future." However, it was believed that conventional review techniques would predominate (Kumar et al., 2020). Concurrently, numerous datasets gathered from the research field can be processed using a bibliometric literature review approach. Practitioners can process data totally through computer assistance with the use of bibliometrics analysis methodologies, which expedites, simplifies, and improves efficiency of the process (Binh Nguyen et al., 2023). Additionally, the bibliometric approach makes it possible to visualize research data using graphs and maps, something that is challenging to accomplish using conventional methods (Pandey et al., 2020). The bibliometric approach and systematic literature review method are two complementary strategies, rather than hostile (Binh Nguyen et al., 2023; Pandey et al., 2020). Hence, Donthu et al. (2021) have recommended bibliometric analysis when dealing with a broad scope of review and a large set of papers to analyse. Following this, the researcher addresses the following research questions on ethical consumerism:

RQ1: What is the annual growth rate of publications for ethical consumerism from 1969 to 2026?

RQ2: Which research network(s) include the primary contributors (authors, sources, countries) and ethical consumerism related documents?

RQ3: What are the themes derived from the co-occurrence of all keywords in the field of ethical consumerism?

RQ4: What are the prospective research questions in ethical consumerism?

Objective of the study

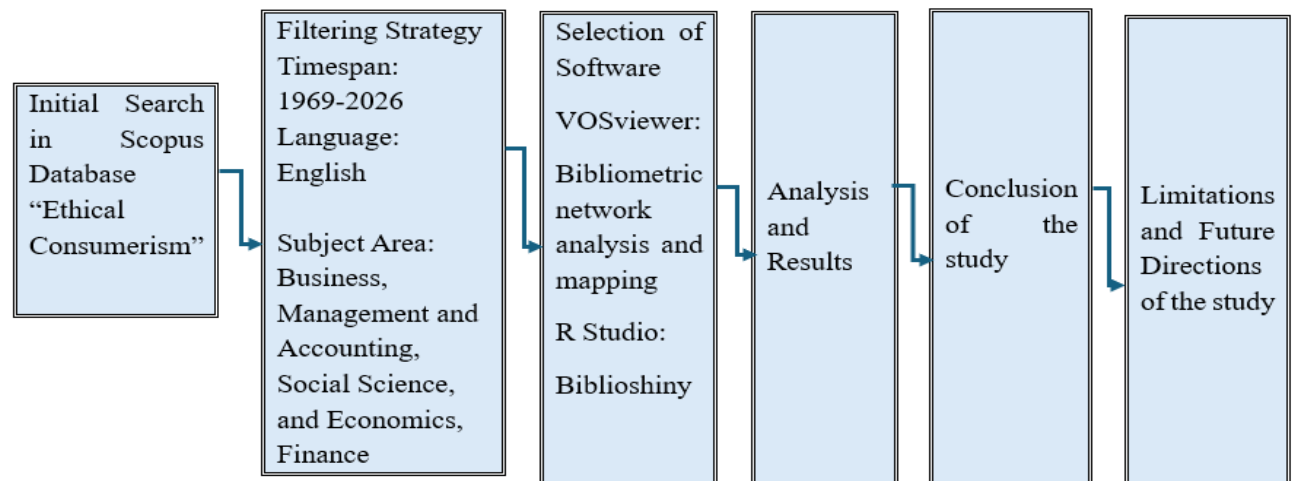
1. To evaluate the current state of the literature on ethical consumerism from 1969 to 2026 focusing on the level of engagement from the authors, countries and sources.

2. To examine the co-occurrence network of all keywords for identifying the current popular themes.

Methodology

The structure and methodology of this study are guided by the approaches adopted in previous bibliometric studies. (Farrukh et al., 2022; Noor et al., 2020). However, many researchers (Ghorbani et al., 2022; Leung et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2023; Noor et al., 2020; Paquette, 2013; Pham et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022) employed bibliometric analysis to mapping the trends, structure, theme, and dynamics. [Figure 1](#) depicts the outline the methodology comprising the six steps initiating from the selection of the database to the conclusion of the existing bibliometric study.

Figure I. Overview of the Methodology
Data Source & Search Strategy



In this section, the conclusion on ethical consumerism is compiled from the scientific studies.

The dataset was extracted from the Scopus database due to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals in the field of business, management, and information systems, with the search query conducted in January 2026 applying the following string: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Ethical Consumerism"). Thus, no filtration has been done as the number of the papers were 468 only. The data was retrieved in the bibtex & CSV format including full bibliographic information, abstracts, author keywords, and cited references. The search time interval was established between 1969 to 2026 which will be useful in extracting the evolution of Ethical Consumerism.

Software

In order to analyse the retrieved studies both software tools namely VOSviewer and RStudio are utilized. Both are an easy and effective software tools that have been extensively utilized for creating and visualizing the intellectual structure and networks in several study domains (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). VOSviewer software presents a significant amount of data in a single graphical map based on similarity visualization technique (Noor et al., 2020). As a result, map constructed in VOSviewer utilizing a text mining approach consists of associated terms, and with these terms a single cluster or theme is made (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). As a result of "citation analysis," "bibliographic coupling," and "co-occurrence analysis," several clusters or themes of "countries," "journals," "institutions," "sources," and "keywords" were found in the titles and abstracts of published works (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). To illustrate the proximity of various "keywords," "authors," "journals," "organizations," and "countries" in particular research streams, these clusters are coloured differently (van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

Results

The focus is to establish the groundwork for future research in this field.

Description of the Study

The data of the study was extracted from the Scopus database and the results are concluded in [Table 1](#). Data from 1969 to 2026, 468 publications from 340 periodicals are included. In this timespan, the average number of citations per documents was 39.95. However, the average citations per article in the area of ethical consumerism is indicated by higher annual growth rate. Moreover, the result stated that 879 authors contributed in the domain of ethical consumerism. Additionally, there are 197 single author documents with a total of 188 authors. Such extensive number of studies exhibit the significance of the ethical consumerism.

Table1. Summary Statistics

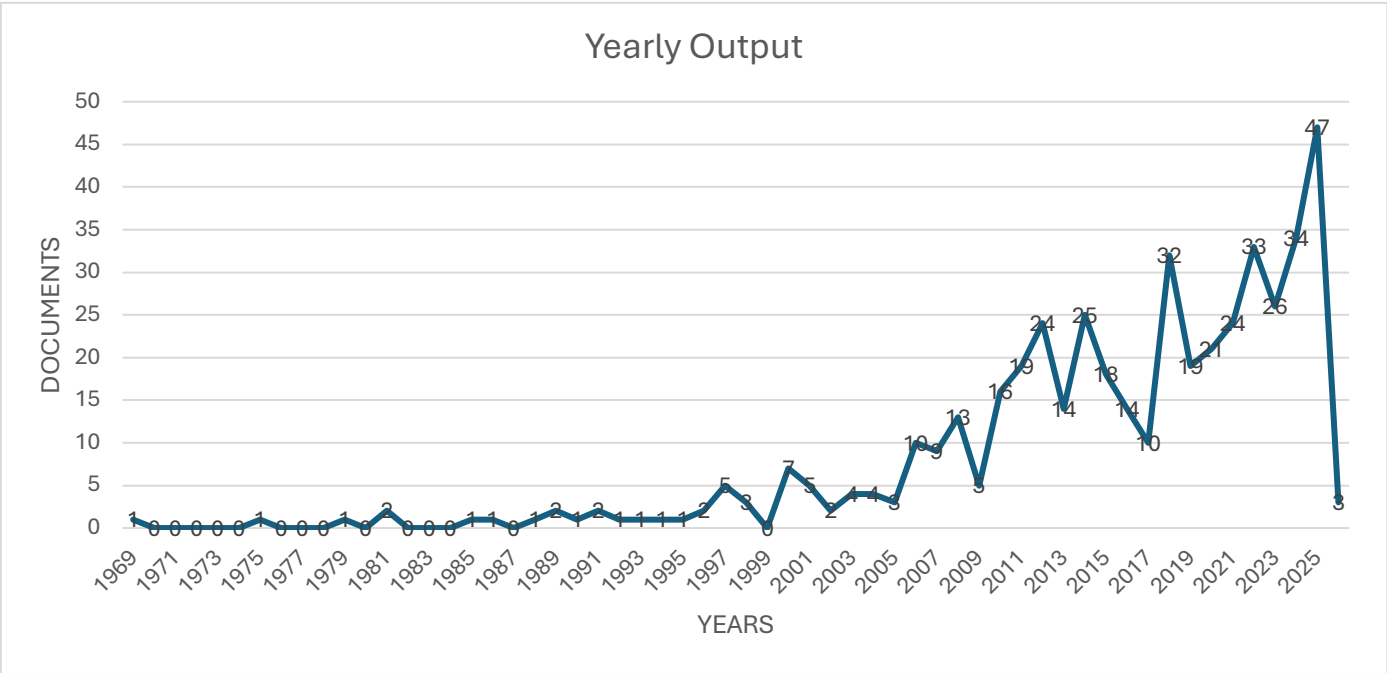
Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT ARTICLES	
Timespan	1969: 2026
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	340
Documents	468
Annual Growth Rate %	1.95
Document Average Age	10.7
Average citations per doc	39.95
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	875
Author's Keywords (DE)	1529
AUTHORS	
Authors	879
Single-authored docs	197
Authors of single-authored docs	188
Co-Authors per Doc	2.09

Source: RStudio

Performance Analysis

The trends shown in [Figure II](#) reflect the annual scientific production in the domain of ethical consumerism. The researchers include all the content of ethical consumerism during the decade, the first ever study on ethical consumerism and related topics were conducted in 1969. Consequently, the annual scientific production gradually started in effect after 1989, and growing rapidly with the time. However, the trend decreased tremendously from 2015 to 2017 with 18 publications in 2015 followed by 14 publications in 2016 and just 10 publications in 2017. During Covid-19 the significance of ethical consumerism publications expanded progressively from 2019 to 2022 with contribution of 19 publications in 2019, 21 publications in 2020, 24 publications in 2021 and 33 publications in 2022. This shows significant growth in the “Ethical Consumerism” area. There was again a decline in the manuscript production from 33 to 26 in the year 2023. The several economic and behaviour reason for declining is rising cost of living and Inflation, greenwashing and loss of trust, post-pandemic lifestyle. Subsequently, in the year 2024 and 2025, the trend inclined with 34 and 47 publications. In 2026 till January, 3 manuscripts related to ethical consumerism have been published in the database.

Figure II. Annual Scientific Production in Ethical Consumerism.



Source: Generated using Ms-Excel.

Leading Journals in the domain of Ethical Consumerism

[Table 2](#) outlined the top 10 most effective journals and in order to identify the top journals, the analysis is “citation” and the unit of analysis is “sources” has

been done with minimum 3 documents and 3 citations in the VOSviewer. Top 10 most effective journals are considered out of 340 journals on basis of the number of publications & citations received by these journals. [Table 3](#) states the source impact analysis which has been conducted in Biblioshiny. In context of publications, the most leading journal is “Journal of Business Ethics,” which has published 29 articles and have 4092 citations followed by “International Journal of Consumer Studies” having 14 articles and 913 citations. The source impact analysis depict that Journal of Business Ethics has emerged as the foremost impact having (h index: 22; g index: 29). “International Journal of Consumer Studies” is the next most (h index: 11; g index: 14). Interestingly, the top three journals—Journal of Business Ethics, International Journal of Consumer Studies and Journal of Consumer Culture—illustrate that Ethical Consumerism is attaining significant attention across a broader spectrum of inter-disciplinaries.

Table 2. Top 10 Cited Sources

S. No.	Sources	Document s	Citation s
1	Journal of Business Ethics	29	4092

2	International Journal of Consumer Studies	14	913
3	Journal of Consumer Culture	8	617
4	Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics	5	148
5	British Food Journal	5	198
6	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	5	214
7	Geoforum	4	104
8	Sustainability (Switzerland)	4	72
9	Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science	3	379
10	Business Strategy and The Environment	3	321

Source: VOSviewer

Table 3. Source Impact Analysis

Source	h_in dex	g_in dex	m_i nd ex	T C	N P	PY _st art
				4		
				0		
Journal of Business Ethics	22	29	0.8	4	2	20
International Journal of Consumer Studies	11	14	0.4	0	1	20
Journal of Consumer Culture	7	8	0.3	6	4	04
				1		20
British Food Journal	5	5	0.1	4	8	07
Journal Of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics	5	5	0.3	1		19
Journal Of Sustainable Tourism	5	5	1.2	9	5	91
				1		
				4		20
				7	5	12
				2		20
				0		20
				3	5	23

				1		
			0.2	0		20
Geoforum	4	4	86	4	4	13
Sustainability (Switzerland)	4	4	0.3	6		20
Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science	3	3	33	8	4	15
Business Strategy and The Environment	3	3	0.1	3		20
				1		20
				5	4	07

Source: Biblioshiny

Acronym: TC, total citations; NP, number of publications; PY Start—publication starting year.

Table 4 illustrated the top 10 cited authors and the author-wise analysis has been done with a minimum 3 documents and 3 citations in the VOSviewer. The most leading author is Seyfi, Siamak with 9 documents and 241 citations. Hall, C. Michael is the next with 6 publications has 218 citations followed by Chatzidakis, Andreas has 4 publications and 656 citations. **Table 5** Author Impact Analysis has been conducted in Biblioshiny stated that Seyfi S hold the highest (h-index 6 and g-index 9). Hall Cm is second highest h-index and g-index of 5 and 7 followed by Chatzidakis A hold h-index and g-index 4.

Table 4. Top 10 Cited Authors

S. No.	Author	Documents	Citation
1	Seyfi, Siamak	9	241
2	Hall, C. Michael	6	218
3	Chatzidakis, Andreas	4	656
4	Zander, Katrin	4	490
5	Hamm, Ulrich	4	445
6	Vo-Thanh, Tan	4	193
7	Devinney, Timothy m.	3	769
8	Iglesias, Oriol	3	660
9	Johnston, Josee	3	513
10	Singh, Jatinder Jit	3	498

Source: VOSviewer

Table 5. Author Impact Analysis

Author	h_in dex	g_in dex	m_i nd ex	T C	N P	PY _st art
				22		
Seyfi S	6	9	1.5	4	9	2023
Hall Cm	5	7	1.25	20	7	2023

The Evolution of Ethical Consumerism from Niche to Mainstream: A Bibliometric Analysis of Intellectual Structure and Emerging Themes

Chatzidakis A	4	4	0.2	3	4	2007
Hamm			0.23	44		
U	4	4	5	3	4	2010
Singh			0.26	73		
Jj	4	4	7	5	4	2012
Vo-Thanh				18		
T	4	4	1	6	4	2023
Zander			0.23	48		
K	4	4	5	7	4	2010
Carrington M	3	3	0.17	18		
Devinn			0.12	76		
ey Tm	3	3	5	7	3	2003
Holden			0.33			
ACL	3	3	3	71	3	2018

Source: Biblioshiny

Acronym: TC, total citations; NP, number of publications; PY Start—publication starting year.

Contribution by Countries

The relative contributions of the various countries are depicted in the [Table 6](#) and [Figure III](#). The study found that the United States ranked top with 104 manuscripts and 3048 citations, followed by the United Kingdom with 81 publications and 4427 citations as mentioned in the table. Australia attained third position in the context of document contribution. Authors from India have secured the fourth position having 26 documents with 467 citations in the field of ethical consumerism. China held 17th spot in this study with 08 documents and 108 citations.

Table 6. Most leading Countries.

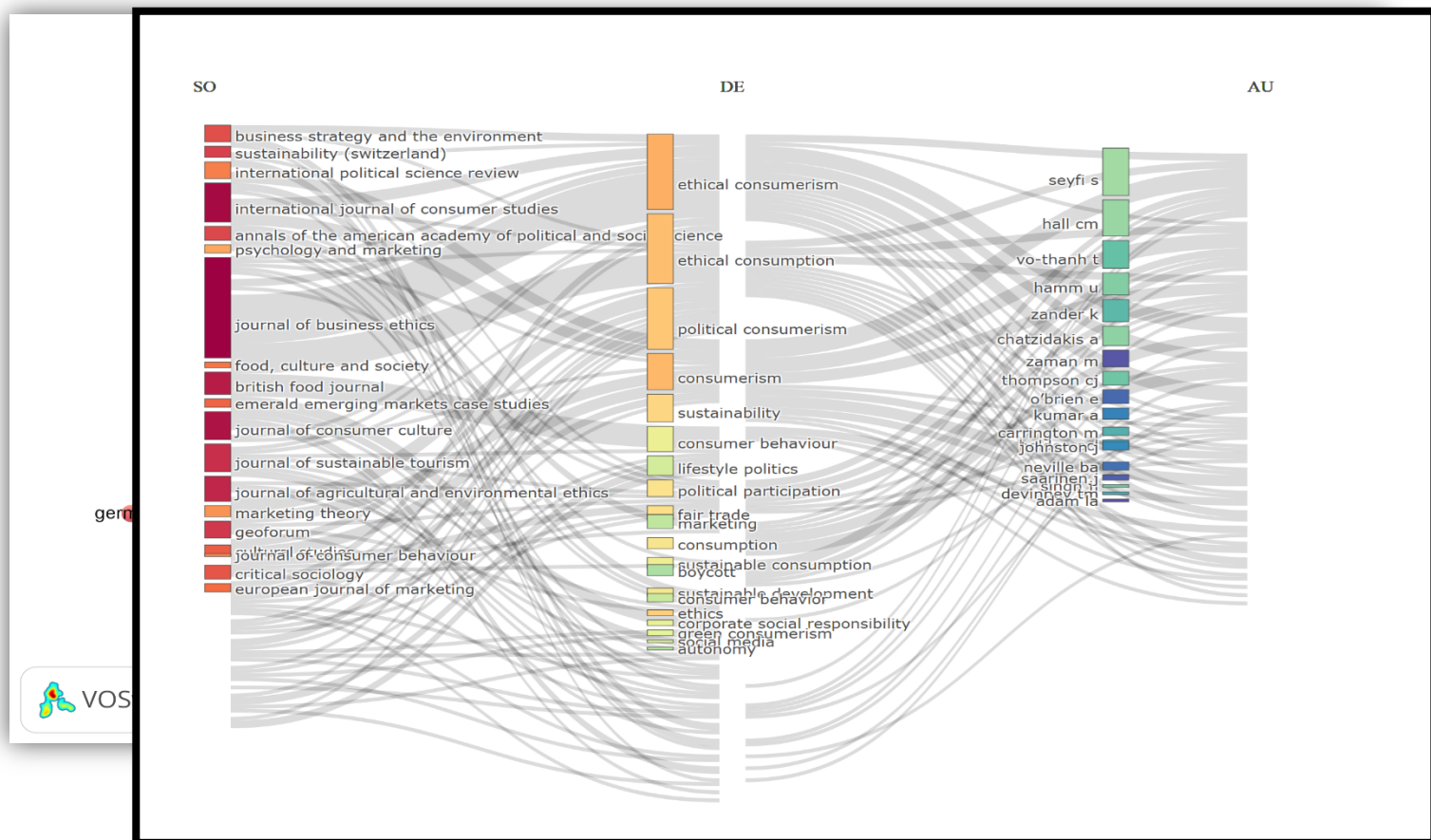
S. No.	Country	Documents	Citations
1	United states	104	3048
2	United Kingdom	81	4427
3	Australia	37	3857
4	India	26	467
5	Spain	24	1036
6	Sweden	19	1402
7	Malaysia	19	362
8	Canada	19	2572
9	Italy	17	336
10	Finland	16	826
11	New Zealand	16	483
12	France	16	496
13	Germany	16	691
14	South Africa	14	546

15	South Korea	11	279
16	Netherlands	11	205
17	China	8	108

Source: VOSviewer

Figure III. Contribution of the countries

The Evolution of Ethical Consumerism from Niche to Mainstream: A Bibliometric Analysis of Intellectual Structure and Emerging Themes



Source: VOSviewer

Relationship Between Sources, Keywords, and Authors

Figure IV illustrates how sources, keywords and authors are interrelated. The sources/journals are depicted on the left column; keywords are on the centre column and authors' name appears on the right column. The figure illustrates that the most common keywords and contribution given by authors were *ethical consumerism*, *ethical consumption* and *political consumerism*. Numerous research papers related to ethical consumerism has been used, the term "Consumerism", "sustainability", "consumer behaviour", "lifestyle politics", "political participation", "fair trade", "Corporate social responsibility" and countless other stated in the figure. In an emerging trend, firms are now publishing and communicating their ethical practices across both online and offline platforms to influence consumers' ethical purchasing behaviour. For instance, RIL; TCS and other firms are consistently striving in CSR initiatives such as Environmental Sustainability, Ethical Business Practices, Education and health & well-being. Hence, it is evident from the data that ethical consumerism is prioritized over other keywords. Though all journals made an equal contribution, *Journal of Business Ethics* and *International journal*

of consumer studies being the forerunners in this field of ethical consumption. Thus, further studies in this area may be constructive.

Figure IV. Three field Plot

Sources: Biblioshiny

Highly Cited Documents

Table 7 and **Figure V** provide the details of top 10 publications; the top document is *Why ethical consumers don't walk their talk: Towards a framework for understanding the gap between the ethical purchase intentions and actual buying behavior of ethically minded consumers* out of 468 publications having 1020 citations followed by *Politics in the supermarket: Political consumerism as a form of political participation* having 734 citations. On the other hand, *Post-humanitarianism: Humanitarian communication beyond a politics of pity* is on the last spot with 306 publications.

Table 7. Top 10 Publications

S.N	Documents	Author	Citatio on	Total Citatio n per docum ent
1.	Why ethical consumers don't walk	Carrington (2010)	1020	60

The Evolution of Ethical Consumerism from Niche to Mainstream: A Bibliometric Analysis of Intellectual Structure and Emerging Themes

	their talk: Towards a framework for understandi ng the gap between the ethical purchase intentions and actual buying behavior of ethically minded consumers	Stolle (2005)	734	33.36	Why do people buy organic food? The moderating role of environmen tal concerns and trust
2.					
3.		Mazar (2010)	720	42.35	An empirical test of a cross- national model of corporate social responsibilit y
4.		Carringt on (2014)	602	46.31	
5.			469	19.54	
6.	Politics in the supermarket : Political	Auger (2003)	435	22.89	
7.	consumeris m as a form of political participatio n	Johnsto n (2008)	339	48.43	Consumer preferences for additional ethical attributes of organic food
8.		Tandon (2020)	332	12.3	
9.	Do green products make us better people?	Quazi (2000)	319	18.76	Post- humanitaria nism: Humanitari an communicat ion beyond a politics of pity
10.	Lost in translation: Exploring the ethical consumer intention- behavior gap	Zander (2010)	306	18	
	What will Consumers Pay for Social Product Features?	Choulia raki (2010)			
	The citizen- consumer hybrid: Ideological tensions and the case of Whole Foods Market				

Source: Biblioshiny

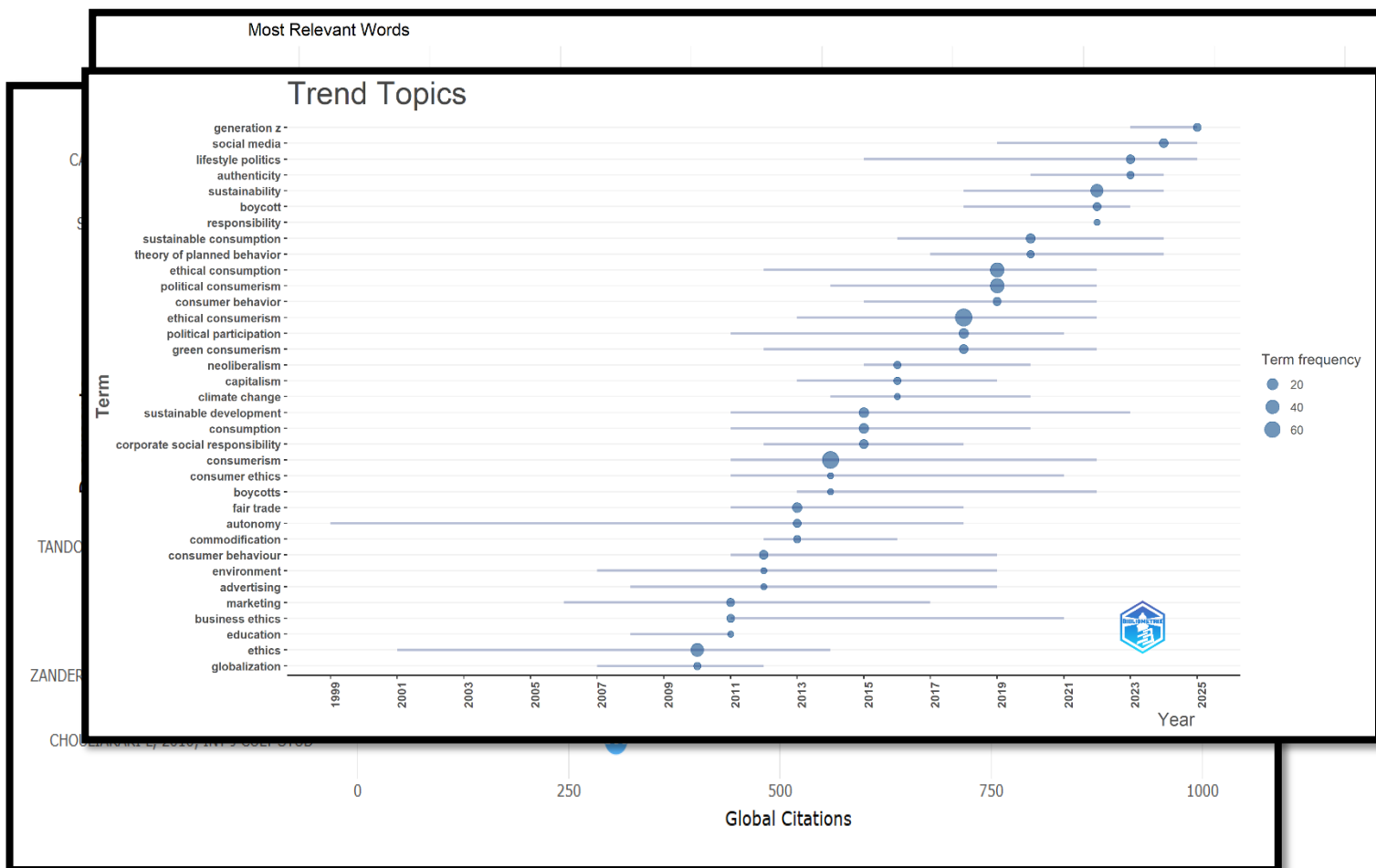


Figure V. Most Cited Documents

Source: Biblioshiny

Figure VI shows an author's keyword. An analysis has been done to identify the top author's keyword used in the paper. The study revealed that *ethical consumerism* is the most prevalent keyword followed by *consumerism* and *ethical consumption* respectively. **Figure VII** illustrates the top trending keywords year-wise. In Biblioshiny, "Author Keyword" was selected as the field with minimum word frequency set as five and three as the number of words per year. The analysis depicts that "generation z", "social media", "lifestyle politics" and "authenticity" have been growing in recognition over the last 4 years, highlighting the comprehensive attention consumerism related research.

Figure VI. Top 10 Author's Keywords

Source: Biblioshiny

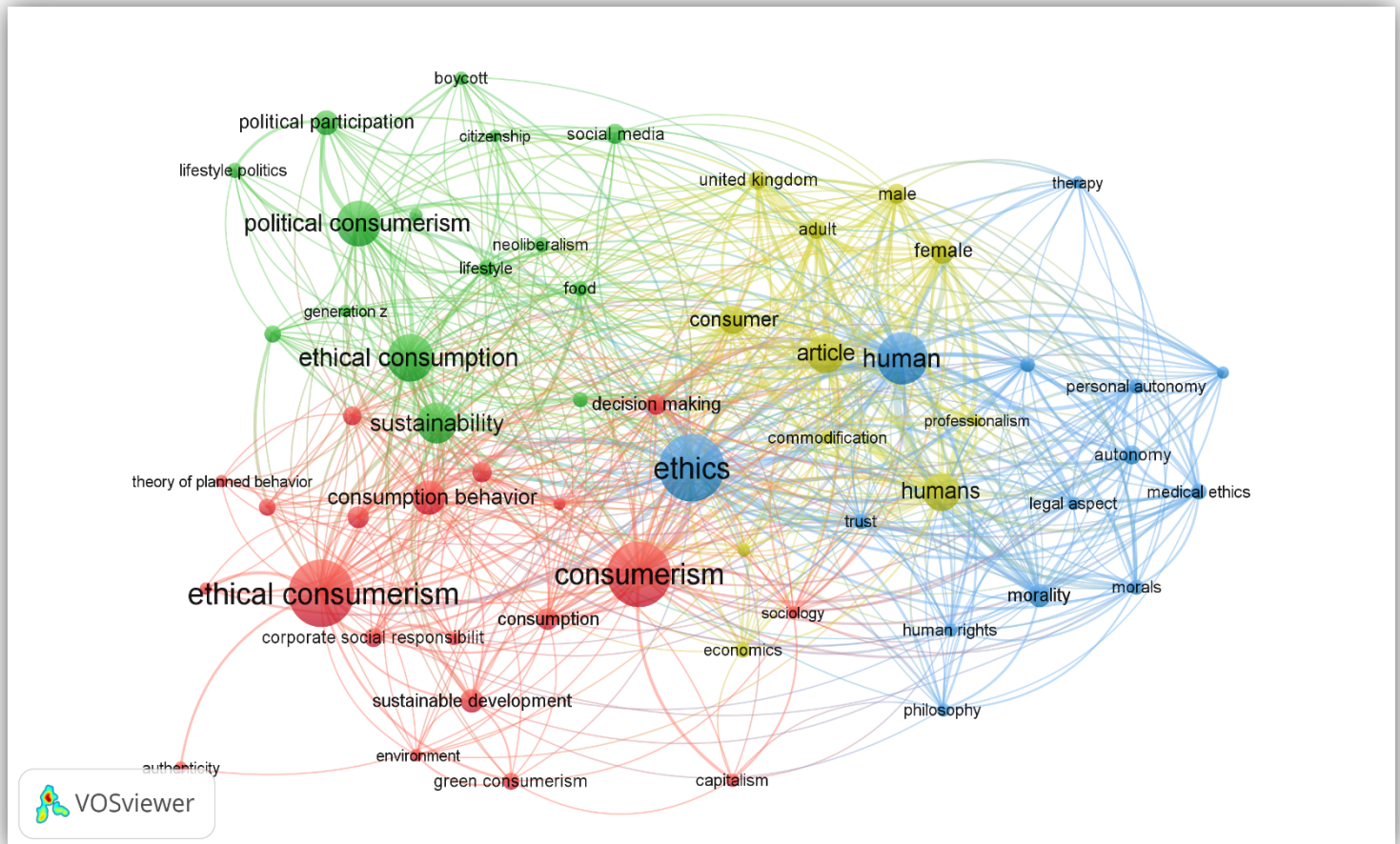
Figure VII. Trend Topics

Source: Biblioshiny

Keywords and Themes in Research Terms

The goal is to study a thematic analysis of 468 ethical consumerism publications using co-occurring keywords identified in the publications' titles, abstracts, and keywords. The purpose is to identify relevant areas where the publications of the topic were influential, and how they could be organized systematically. VOS viewer software provides three different mapping visualizations: network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization (Van Eck and Waltman 2010). The units of analysis were "co-occurrence analysis" and "all keywords." Moreover, threshold level has been selected with six minimum keyword occurrences. **Figure VIII** Network Visualization, each keyword presented in the coloured circle and 60 keywords are divided into four different clusters with their own colours.

Figure VIII. Network Visualization



Source: VOSviewer

Table 8 is a summary of four clusters along with cluster of the keywords and the main content in the study of ethical consumerism.

Cluster 1: Authenticity and Ethical Consumerism in Contemporary Marketing Systems

The theme reflects the increasing significance of transparency, brand behaviour, and responsible consumption in modern markets. Customers now expect businesses to act morally and communicate honestly in addition to selling goods. Modern marketing systems function in an international, digital, and socially responsible setting. Ethical consumerism can only succeed when brands, company demonstrate authenticity. Modern marketing systems operate in an international, digital, and socially conscious environment. Therefore, present day marketing system is to balance profitability with social responsibility.

Cluster 2: Consumer Citizenship and Sustainability in the Digital Age

The theme includes the various aspects of the digital age i.e., the internet, social media, e-commerce, and digital communication that has been transformed consumer behaviour and activism. In the digital era, consumer citizenship encourages individuals to use their digital voice and purchasing power to promote the sustainability. With the help of online

discussions, social media advocacy, and digital activism, consumers can pressure companies to focus more on responsible environmental and social practices.

Cluster 3: Economics, Consumer Culture, and the Construction of Professional Gender Norms

The theme defines how economic systems and consumer culture shape and reinforce gender expectations in professional environments. It examines how markets, media, and consuming habits affect, what society views appropriate roles, behaviours, and appearances for men and women in the workplace. It also encourages critical examination of how economic and consumer systems may reinforce or challenge gender inequalities in professional contexts. It emphasizes how consumer culture and economic forces shape professional gender norms, which affect how people are expected to act, look, and perform in the workplace.

Cluster 4: Commodification of Adult Gender Identities in Consumer Culture

The theme reflects how gender identities of adults are shaped, represented, and commercialized through the processes of consumer culture and market practices. It focuses on how businesses, media, and marketing systems transform aspects of gender identity into products, services, and.

commercially viable symbols that may be purchased, traded, and consumed. It highlights how consumer markets transform adult gender identities into commercial opportunities, where products, branding, and media representations influence how gender is expressed, performed, and perceived in contemporary society.

Table 8. Theme derived from keywords

Cluster (No. of Keywords)	Keywords	Theme
1 (20)	Authenticity, business ethics, capitalism, consumer behavior, consumption, consumerism, consumption behavior, corporate social responsibility, environment, decision-making, ethical consumerism, fair trade, green consumerism, marketing, responsibility, sociology, sustainable consumption, sustainable development, theory of planned behavior.	Authenticity and Ethical Consumerism in Contemporary Marketing Systems
2(15)	Boycott, citizenship, consumer behavior, education, ethical consumption, food, generation z, globalization, lifestyle politics, neoliberalism, political consumerism, political participation, social media and sustainability.	Consumer Citizenship and Sustainability in the Digital Age
3(14)		Economics, Consumer Culture, and the Construction of Professional Gender Norms
4(11)		Commodification of Adult Gender Identities in Consumer Culture

Autonomy, ethics, medical, human rights, legal aspects, medical ethics, morality, morals, personal autonomy, philosophy, therapy, trust, United states.

Adult, advertising, article, commodification, consumer, economics, female, humans, male, professionalism, United Kingdom.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis (like performance analysis and science mapping) on ethical consumerism research spanning from 1969 to 2026. Bibliometric analysis is a technique that enables researchers to identify key themes and generate new insights by facilitating a comprehensive review of the literature on a specific topic (Farrukh et al., 2022). The expansion in the field of ethical consumerism research started in 1969. The study depicts that ethical consumerism has evolved from a niche academic concern to a multidisciplinary and globally relevant field. The findings revealed that, "Ethical Consumerism" is frequently used keyword. In addition to ethical consumerism, other topics such as ethical consumption, political consumption, and so on can also be studied. This study also depicts how steady annual growth rate and increasing number of publications showcase the expanding scholarly interest in understanding the insight of how ethical considerations influence consumer behaviour and market dynamics. The top most publications pertaining to ethical consumerism were- *Why ethical consumers don't walk their talk: Towards a framework for understanding the gap between the ethical purchase intentions and actual buying behavior of ethically minded consumers* and *Politics*

in the supermarket: Political consumerism as a form of political participation.

The study also analyses the “thematic trends” of ethical consumerism by categorizing keywords into four themes. As stated in [Table 8](#) and [Figure VIII](#) and demonstrated how marketing strategies, digital revolution, socioeconomic structures, and cultural factors interact to shape the complex and dynamic field of ethical consumerism. The four clusters are interconnected and provide a holistic understanding of ethical consumption. The mentioned themes highlight how consumption patterns are embedded within social structures, shaping identities, professional expectations, and ethical perceptions. Moreover, the themes suggest that ethical consumerism is a dynamic system of interactions between consumers, businesses, and society that is fueled by ideals, digital influence, and cultural shifts rather than being restricted to individual purchase decisions. From a geographical perspective, the dominance of developed countries; United States and the United Kingdom reflect the leading research in ethical consumerism, along with countries like India demonstrate a growing global interest, specifically in developing economies where sustainability challenges are increasing rapidly.

Conclusion

In conclusion, ethical consumerism has not only transitioned from a niche concern to a mainstream phenomenon but also become a potent paradigm influencing modern consumption patterns and business strategies. The study reflect that ethical consumerism is a combination of consumer awareness, technological advancements, and corporate responsibility. Additionally, Businesses are adjusting by incorporating ethical principles into their operations and communication strategies in tandem with consumers' growing consciousness and value-drivenness. Overall, ethical consumption is more than just a fad; it is a revolutionary force that might change international markets and help create a more just and sustainable future

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Regardless of significant efforts to complete the existing study, limitations pertaining to data collection and analytical shortcomings are inevitable. The present study excludes major databases, like “Web of Science, Google Scholar, and many others,” that becomes a major drawback. Other related keywords were not taken into consideration and only the keyword “Ethical Consumerism” was undertaken to explore the journals. Hence, only two techniques “co-occurrence and co-authorship analysis techniques” have been used in the study. Additionally, No bibliometric study has been conducted covering an extensive 57-year period from 1969 to 2026, also time-based thematic analysis has not been undertaken in this study due to the extensive time span of 57 years (1969–2026). Also, no bibliometric

study has been conducted covering an extensive 57-year period from 1969 to 2026. Additionally, due to the inherent limitations of bibliometric analysis, the definitions of the clusters theme might be biased.

Future studies may take into consideration the databases (e.g., Web of Science, Google Scholar etc.) and analyse the collected records. Additionally. The Future researchers should explore these interdisciplinary connections to foster innovative methodologies and develop more robust theoretical frameworks. Future research on this topic could make it possible to categorize articles into time period in different phases (pre- Covid and post-Covid periods, pre digital era and post digital era or Both,) in order to understand how technological advancements and external events impact ethical consumerism.

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