



Trends and Trajectories in Consumer Behavior Toward Sustainable Fast Fashion: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract- This study uses a bibliometric approach guided by the PRISMA framework to investigate trends and trajectories in research on consumer behaviour toward sustainable fast fashion (2007–2025). The results show that research output has significantly increased in recent years, indicative of growing global awareness of sustainability issues. Dominant research clusters centered on ethical values, circular economy practices, environmental awareness, purchase intention, and sustainable consumption are identified through thematic analysis. New themes include digital influence, generational consumption patterns, and post-purchase sustainable practices like reuse and resale. The study charts the field's intellectual structure and thematic evolution, offering a thorough overview of research development in sustainable fast fashion consumer behaviour.

Keywords—Sustainable Fast Fashion, Consumer Behaviour, Bibliometric Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20 years, the fast fashion business model has emerged as a major driver of the global fashion industry's unparalleled growth [1]. Fast fashion is defined by quick production cycles, low pricing tactics, and regular releases of new styles that promote frequent purchases [2]. This model has increased global consumer access to fashion, but it has also raised concerns about social sustainability and environmental degradation [3].

The fashion industry has a significant environmental impact, including high water usage, chemical pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and the production of textile waste [3]. The production of clothing has almost doubled since the early 2000s, but the average rate of garment utilization has decreased, worsening disposal rates [4]. Beyond environmental impact, fast fashion practices have sparked ethical questions due to labor exploitation and subpar working conditions in global supply chains [1].

Sustainable fashion has emerged as a multifaceted framework incorporating ethical labor practices, environmental preservation, the circular economy, and responsible consumerism [5]. Consumer behavior is crucial to the advancement of sustainable fashion projects, as purchasing decisions directly impact production patterns and market offerings [6]. Despite growing environmental consciousness, an intention-action gap persists, where stated sustainability

preferences do not translate into actual purchasing behavior [7, 1].

A bibliometric analysis provides a systematic methodology for charting patterns and trajectories in consumer behavior toward sustainable fast fashion. Quantitative assessment of publication growth, citation networks, prominent authors, top journals, and thematic progression is enabled by bibliometric tools [8]. This study employs a bibliometric approach guided by the PRISMA framework to investigate trends and trajectories in this research domain (2007–2025).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Reframing Consumer Responsibility in Sustainable Fast Fashion

The discourse surrounding sustainable fast fashion has evolved from descriptive criticism of environmental deterioration to analytically intricate analyses of consumer action and structural limitations. Early study concentrated on environmental externalities and supply chain inefficiencies [2], while more recent studies position consumers as key players in sustainability shifts. The structural logic of fast fashion—quick production cycles, inexpensive labor, and accelerated consumption—systematically encourages disposability [3]. A large portion of the sustainability literature implicitly assumes that ethical concern and consumer awareness will be sufficient to upend this deeply ingrained system, potentially oversimplifying the structural embeddedness of consuming behaviors.

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B. Fast Fashion and the Emergence of Sustainability Concerns

Over the past two decades, the fast fashion industry has grown rapidly, radically changing the global apparel market. Fast fashion describes the quick production of low-cost apparel influenced by current trends, allowing retailers to deliver new collections in a short time [2]. Although this model has raised fashion's affordability and accessibility, it has also brought about serious social and environmental problems, including excessive resource consumption, environmental pollution, and increased textile waste [3]. Concerns about unethical labor practices in international supply chains have further heightened the sustainability discussion [1].

Sustainable fashion—emphasizing waste reduction, ethical labor practices, environmentally conscious production, and responsible consumption—has become prominent in both academic and business practice [5]. Researchers argue that significant change requires not only adjustments to production systems but also modifications to consumer attitudes and behaviors.

C. Consumer Behavior in Sustainable Fashion Consumption

Consumer behavior is largely responsible for driving the fashion industry's shift toward sustainability. Consumers are increasingly conscious of the ecological and social effects of fast fashion [6]. Despite rising environmental consciousness, adoption of sustainable fashion remains comparatively low, as price, convenience, and fashion trends continue to outweigh sustainability factors for many consumers [9]. Fashion consumption is driven by social, symbolic, and emotional factors, with clothing strongly linked to self-expression and personal identity [1].

Research has identified environmental concerns, ethical values, perceived product quality, and brand trust as key influences on sustainable purchase decisions [6]. However, the correlation between these factors and actual consumer behavior remains unclear.

D. The Intention-Behavior Gap in Sustainable Fashion

The intention-behavior gap—the disparity between consumers' favorable perception of sustainable products and their actual purchasing habits—is one of the most frequently discussed phenomena in sustainable consumption research [7]. Price sensitivity is a significant obstacle, as sustainable clothing is typically more expensive than conventional fast fashion [9]. Scarcity of sustainable substitutes, unclear sustainability information, and habitual or impulsive purchasing behavior

further reinforce conventional fast fashion consumption patterns.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the present research, the bibliometric research approach was employed. Bibliometrics refers to a technique for measuring scientific literature using publication records, citation patterns, keyword frequencies, and other variables that indicate the trends and evolution of a theme [8]. Following this approach, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) criteria were followed to systematically select the literature to be studied.

The bibliometric approach is justified for this study due to its ability to identify key research themes, prominent researchers, leading journals, and future research areas. The Scopus database was used as the primary data source, covering publications from 2007 to 2025 on consumer behavior in sustainable fast fashion.

Bibliometric Research Methodology — Sustainable Fashion & Consumer Behavior

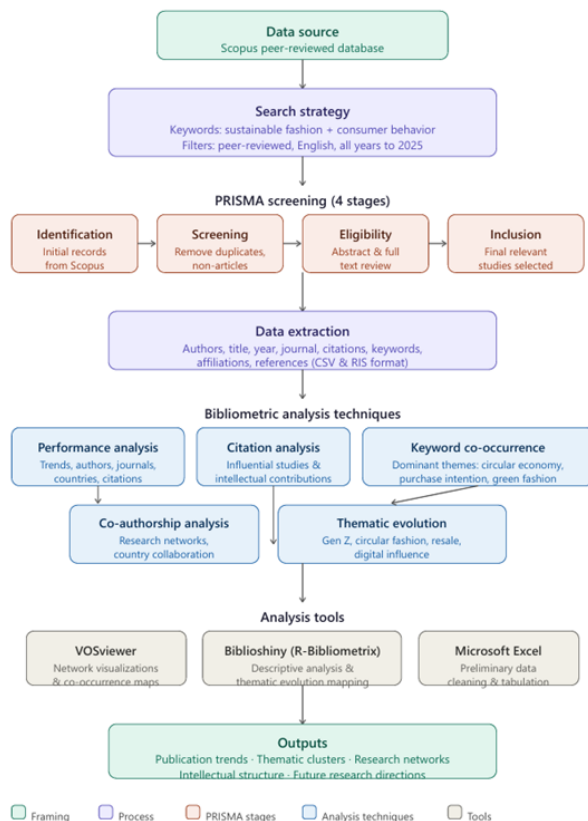


Fig. 1. Bibliometric Research Methodology — Sustainable Fashion & Consumer Behavior

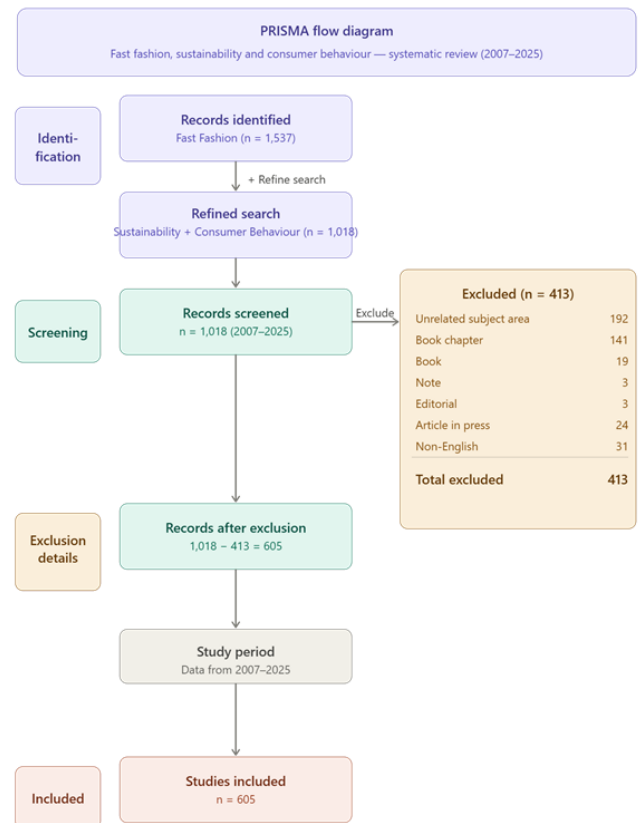


Fig. 2. PRISMA Flow Diagram — Fast Fashion, Sustainability and Consumer Behaviour (2007–2025)

IV. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

A. Authors' Production over Time

Fig. 3 presents a bubble timeline graph illustrating the range of publication years for the ten most productive authors in the dataset (n = 605). Each horizontal point indicates the years during which each author was active, with bubble size representing the number of articles and shading reflecting citations per year. The author Kim demonstrated the longest publication span, ranging from approximately 2014 to 2024, indicating sustained long-term interest in this discipline. More recently active authors include Neha, J.P., and Kumar, N. (2024) and Fares, N. et al. (2024), with activity concentrated between 2022 and 2024.

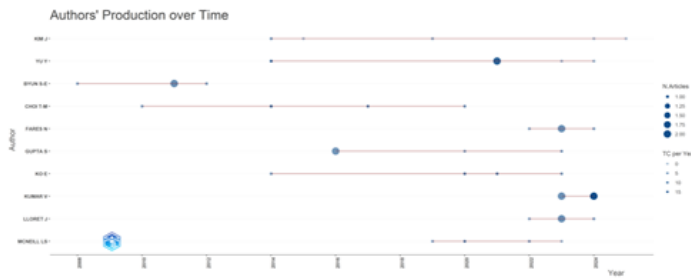


Fig. 3. Authors' Production over Time

B. Most Relevant Words

Fig. 4 presents a lollipop chart ranking the top ten keywords by frequency of occurrence across the 605 selected studies. "Fast Fashion" emerges as the most frequent term with 221 occurrences, followed by "sustainability" with 181 occurrences. A steep decline follows, with terms such as "circular economy" (65), "sustainable development" (63), "fashion industry" (61), "textile industry" (54), "fashion" (47), "sustainable fashion" (46), "clothing industry" (43), and "consumption behaviour" (43) appearing in a cluster. This pattern indicates strong thematic convergence across the body of literature.

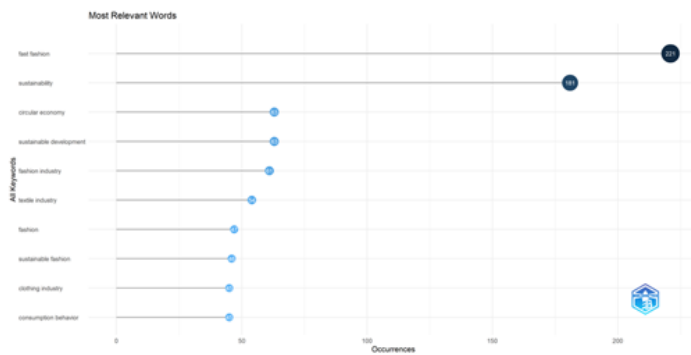


Fig. 4. Most Relevant Words by Occurrence Frequency

C. Most Cited Countries

Fig. 5 depicts the number of citations by country of author affiliation. The USA leads with 3,645 citations, approximately three times that of the second-ranked country. The UK follows with approximately 1,190 citations, Canada with approximately 1,100 citations, and Finland ranks fourth with approximately

1,000 citations. Australia, China, Turkey, Spain, Italy, and Korea also appear in the top ten, reflecting the global distribution of influential research in this domain.

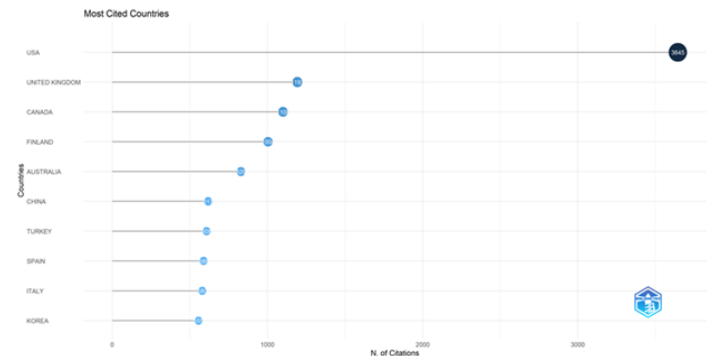


Fig. 5. Most Cited Countries

D. Country Production over Time

Fig. 6 presents a cumulative line graph depicting the number of articles produced annually from 2007 to 2025 for the top five productive countries. All countries showed near-zero production until 2



V. CONCLUSION

This study presents a bibliometric analysis of consumer literature on sustainable fast fashion between 2007 and 2025. The results demonstrate a notable increase in publication rate after 2019, driven by heightened global awareness of the environmental and social impacts of the fashion industry. The USA, UK, and China emerged as leading countries, with sustainability, circular economy, and ethical consumption forming the intellectual core of the discipline.

Although environmental awareness among consumers is increasing, the intention-behavior gap remains a recurring challenge, influenced by cost concerns, purchasing habits, and market structures. Emerging research areas include digital marketing influence, generational consumption patterns, and post-purchase circular activities such as resale and clothing rental.

Future research should pursue longitudinal studies, cross-cultural comparisons, and examination of structural factors beyond consumer psychology that influence sustainable consumption behaviors. Policymakers and industry stakeholders should use these findings to develop concrete measures for promoting sustainable consumption in the fashion industry.

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