

“Psychological and decision-related themes in sustainable consumption research: A bibliometric analysis”

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PSYCHOLOGICAL AND DECISION-RELATED THEMES IN SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION RESEARCH: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

Abstract

Consumer-oriented sustainable consumption research has grown rapidly, but its psychological foundations and decision-related themes remain dispersed across different research streams. To clarify this field, this article analyzes 2,730 publications retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection, covering the period from 1991 to January 21, 2026. VOSviewer and CiteSpace were used to examine publication trends, leading sources, influential authors and documents, cited-author co-citation networks, keyword co-occurrence, thematic evolution, and recent research fronts. The results show three main stages of development: an exploratory stage from 1991 to 2009, a theoretical integration stage from 2010 to 2016, and a rapid expansion stage from 2017 to 2025. The co-citation analysis identifies four intellectual foundations: behavioral decision models, normative and value-based explanations, the intention-behavior gap, and green consumption research. The keyword analysis shows that the field is organized around sustainable consumption and ethical or food-related behavior; consumer attitudes and green purchase behavior; perceived value and trust; and pro-environmental values and beliefs. Recent themes include circular economy, environmental consciousness, perceived value, green products, young consumers, and social media. The study contributes by linking the intellectual base, thematic structure, and temporal development of sustainable consumption research within a consumer-focused framework.

Keywords

sustainable consumption behavior, psychological themes, consumer decision-making, bibliometric analysis, VOSviewer, CiteSpace

JEL Classification

M30, M31, Q56

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable consumption has become a central component of the global sustainability agenda because patterns of product acquisition, use, and disposal directly affect resource depletion, waste generation, and environmental degradation. Agenda 21 first identified the need to change unsustainable consumption patterns, and Sustainable Development Goal 12 subsequently reinforced the importance of responsible consumption and production (United Nations, 1992; United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], 2015). Within this agenda, consumers are not merely recipients of sustainable products and policies. Their evaluations, choices, intentions, and actual behaviors influence whether sustainability-oriented innovations achieve meaningful environmental and social outcomes (Reisch & Thøgersen, 2015).

From a consumer perspective, SCB refers to how people choose, buy, use, and sometimes reduce the use of products in ways that may lower environmental and social harm (Vergura et al., 2023; White et al., 2019). Early work in this area often tried to describe the environmentally conscious consumer. Later studies paid more attention to the reasons behind sustainable action. These studies examined values, beliefs,

norms, attitudes, perceived control, habits, social influence, and contextual barriers (Stern, 2000; White et al., 2019). The field has therefore grown in both size and scope. However, existing reviews suggest that its theories, determinants, behavioral settings, and consumption contexts are still scattered across partly separate research streams (Naini & Reddy, 2025; Vergura et al., 2023).

This study focuses specifically on consumer-oriented sustainable consumption research involving purchasing, product choice, adoption, intention, and consumption behavior. It does not seek to map the entire domain of pro-environmental behavior, which also includes household, workplace, citizen, and public-sphere actions that may not involve consumption or market decisions. Given the volume and diversity of this literature, bibliometric science mapping is appropriate for identifying the field's intellectual foundations, conceptual relationships, thematic evolution, and emerging research fronts (Chen, 2017; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Psychological foundations of sustainable consumer behavior

Sustainable consumer behavior has been explained from different psychological perspectives. One major perspective is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). TPB argues that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape behavioral intention. Intention is then related to actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This theory has been widely used because many sustainable consumption studies focus on attitudes, intentions, and behavior. Another perspective focuses on moral norms. The Norm Activation Model (NAM) explains behavior through personal norms. These norms are activated when people recognize the consequences of their actions and feel responsible for them (Schwartz, 1977). Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory develops this moral explanation further. It links values, environmental beliefs, awareness of consequences, responsibility, and personal norms to environmentally significant action (Stern et al., 1999; Stern, 2000). These theories show that sustainable consumption is not only a rational decision. It is also related to values, norms, responsibility, and perceived control.

Recent research has also moved beyond the core variables of TPB, NAM, and VBN. Reviews of green consumer behavior show that environmental concern, environmental knowledge, values, attitudes, norms, perceived behavioral control, trust, and perceived efficacy appear repeatedly across empirical studies (Naini & Reddy, 2025). Other constructs, such as consciousness, identity, and

perceived value, have also been used to explain why consumers accept, prefer, or avoid sustainable products and practices. More recent studies have paid particular attention to environmental consciousness and green perceived value, because these constructs help explain how consumers interpret sustainable products and form purchase intentions (Laheri et al., 2024; Riva et al., 2022). Overall, the literature contains many related constructs. However, these constructs are often examined separately and are not always organized within a common analytical framework.

1.2. Consumer decision processes and the intention-behavior gap

Sustainable consumption is not shaped by psychological factors alone. It also involves a decision process. Consumers first encounter information. They then evaluate product attributes and environmental claims. They compare functional and symbolic value. They form intentions. Finally, they decide whether these intentions can be carried out in real purchase or consumption situations (Carrington et al., 2010, 2014; White et al., 2019).

This process is important because intentions do not always become actions. Many consumers support ethical or environmentally friendly products. However, they may not buy or use them in practice. This is known as the intention-behavior gap. Price, convenience, habits, product availability, competing priorities, and doubts about sustainability claims can all weaken the link between intention and behavior (Carrington et al., 2010, 2014; White et al., 2019). Therefore, sustainable consumption is not only about whether consumers hold positive

attitudes. It also depends on whether sustainable options are trusted, affordable, available, and easy to use.

This decision-process perspective has become more important as SCB research has moved into specific consumption contexts. Studies on organic food, green cosmetics, sustainable fashion, ethical luxury, and circular products show that consumers consider many factors simultaneously. These include environmental concern, moral concern, quality, safety, affordability, accessibility, identity, and perceived value (Carranza et al., 2023; Riva et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2024; Tawde & ShabbirHusain, 2024; Testa et al., 2024). Digital communication has also changed consumers' decision-making process. Social media, online information, peer influence, and influencers affect how consumers receive sustainability information, judge credibility, and respond to social expectations (Li et al., 2024; Zaborek & Mabrouk, 2025). These studies suggest that SCB research is moving beyond isolated antecedents. Recent studies pay greater attention to how psychological, product-related, social, and situational factors interact across consumer decision stages (Naini & Reddy, 2025; Vergura et al., 2023). This view is consistent with integrative reviews, which argue that responsible consumption involves psychological, moral, and contextual mechanisms at the same time (Lanzini & Tencati, 2023).

1.3. Existing bibliometric reviews and the research gap

Recent bibliometric reviews have made important contributions but have pursued different analytical purposes. Vergura et al. (2023) analyzed 274 Web of Science articles published between 1999 and 2021 from a demand-side perspective and used SciMAT to identify mainstream, emerging, and underexplored themes in sustainable consumption. Goyal and Goyal (2024) examined 1,824 Scopus-indexed articles from 1993 to 2022. They used temporal, co-word, citation, and bibliographic coupling analyses to map the broader field of pro-environmental behavior. Their scope included sustainable consumption but also ecotourism, workplace behavior, corporate social responsibility, and other non-market environmental actions. Naini and Reddy (2025) reviewed green consumer behavior research published between 2001 and 2021. They focused more specifically on factors influencing green consumer behavior and combined performance analysis, network mapping, thematic analysis, and content analysis to identify theoretical foundations, everyday green behaviors, and psycho-social and demographic determinants. These three reviews were selected because they have the closest substantive and methodological overlap with the present study, covering sustainable consumption, pro-environmental behavior, and green consumer behavior through bibliometric or science-mapping approaches.

Table 1. Comparison of closely related bibliometric reviews

Study	Scope and data	Methods and main findings	Analytical boundary and extension of the present study
Vergura et al. (2023)	Demand-side sustainable consumption; Web of Science; 274 articles published between 1999 and 2021	SciMAT-based performance, co-word, and thematic evolution analyses. The study identified the attitude–intention–behavior relationship, food and clothing consumption, circular practices, social influence, and emerging digital themes.	Provides a broad thematic overview but does not directly map the intellectual communities associated with major psychological theories. The present study connects theoretical foundations with psychological and decision-related thematic structures.
Goyal and Goyal (2024)	Broad pro-environmental behavior domain; Scopus; 1,824 articles published between 1993 and 2022	SciMAT and VOSviewer; temporal, co-word, citation, and bibliographic coupling analyses. Major themes included ecotourism, sustainable consumption, and corporate social responsibility, while green behavior and green marketing emerged as research fronts.	Covers consumer, workplace, tourism, organizational, and public-sphere behaviors. The present study adopts a narrower consumer and market-decision focus.
Naini and Reddy (2025)	Factors influencing green consumer behavior; Web of Science; 216 articles published between 2001 and 2021, with 57 co-cited articles examined in detail	Biblioshiny, RStudio, VOSviewer, Gephi, and cluster-specific content analysis. Three clusters concerned theoretical foundations, everyday green behavior, and psycho-socio-demographic determinants.	Focuses primarily on antecedents and determinant-oriented studies. The present study extends the analysis to intellectual foundations, consumer decision stages, thematic evolution, and emerging contexts.

Taken together, these reviews demonstrate the substantial growth and thematic diversification of sustainable consumption, green consumer behavior, and the wider pro-environmental behavior domain (Goyal & Goyal, 2024; Naini & Reddy, 2025; Vergura et al., 2023). However, they have not jointly connected the intellectual foundations of major psychological theories, the conceptual structure of consumer decision-related themes, and the temporal evolution of these themes within a consumer-focused sustainable consumption framework.

Accordingly, this study aims to map the intellectual foundations, thematic structure, temporal evolution, and emerging research fronts of psychological and decision-related themes within consumer-oriented sustainable consumption research.

2. METHODOLOGY

The analysis covers 2,730 publications indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection from 1991 to January 21, 2026. The study contributes by delineating a consumer-oriented SCB domain, linking its theoretical knowledge base with its conceptual and temporal structures, and distinguishing established themes from emerging directions in sustainable consumer decision research. The study combines cited-author co-citation analysis, VOSviewer keyword co-occurrence and clustering analysis, and temporal visualization. Co-citation analysis is used to identify the field's intellectual base and the relative position of TPB, NAM, VBN, and intention-behavior research. VOSviewer keyword analysis is used to map relationships among psychological constructs, decision stages, and consumption contexts. CiteSpace timeline visualization and VOSviewer overlay visualization are used to trace thematic evolution and recent research fronts (Chen, 2017; van Eck & Waltman, 2010; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

This study adopts a bibliometric approach to examine the development, intellectual structure, conceptual themes, and emerging directions of consumer-oriented sustainable consumption research. Bibliometric analysis enables a large body of publications to be examined systematically through performance indicators and science-map-

ping techniques, thereby revealing influential contributions, thematic relationships, temporal developments, and potential research gaps (Donthu et al., 2021; Vergura et al., 2023; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

Following established bibliometric procedures, the study was conducted in five stages: (1) defining the research scope and analytical framework; (2) selecting the bibliographic database and designing the search strategy; (3) filtering and cleaning the retrieved records; (4) conducting descriptive performance analysis and science-mapping analysis; and (5) interpreting and reporting the results. Figure 1 presents the detailed process of record identification, database filtering, metadata cleaning, and final inclusion.

2.1. Database selection and search strategy

The dataset was retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection. Following previous bibliometric research on sustainable consumption and consumer behavior, Web of Science was selected because it has been described as one of the most widely used databases in socio-economic disciplines (Montero-Navarro et al., 2021). Web of Science also incorporates citation information required for bibliometric analysis and exports bibliographic records in a standardized format compatible with science-mapping software (Vergura et al., 2023; Zupic & Čater, 2015). The use of a single database also reduces the duplication and metadata inconsistency that may arise when records from multiple bibliographic databases are combined (Vergura et al., 2023).

Drawing on previous SCB studies, a structured set of keywords was developed to represent sustainable consumption, consumer decision processes, and higher-order psychological antecedents. The full search query is provided in Appendix A.

The search strategy was designed as a conceptually bounded query rather than an exhaustive enumeration of every psychological construct examined in sustainable consumption research. The psychological block therefore included higher-order terms, such as attitude, perception, value, belief, motivation, willingness, and preference, which broadly capture psychological antecedents and consumer

decision processes. Specific constructs, including norms, identity, habit, trust, environmental concern, self-efficacy, moral obligation, knowledge, and consciousness, were not individually enumerated in the original query. Their representation in the final corpus was subsequently assessed through a post-retrieval coverage audit, as described in Section 2.2 and reported in Table B1 in the Appendix.

The consumer-related block was retained as an intentional scope-defining component. The study focuses on sustainable consumption in consumer and market decision contexts, including purchasing, product choice, adoption, intention, and consumption behavior. It does not aim to map the entire domain of pro-environmental behavior, which also encompasses household practices, workplace behavior, citizen behavior, and public-sphere environmental actions that may not involve consumption or purchasing decisions.

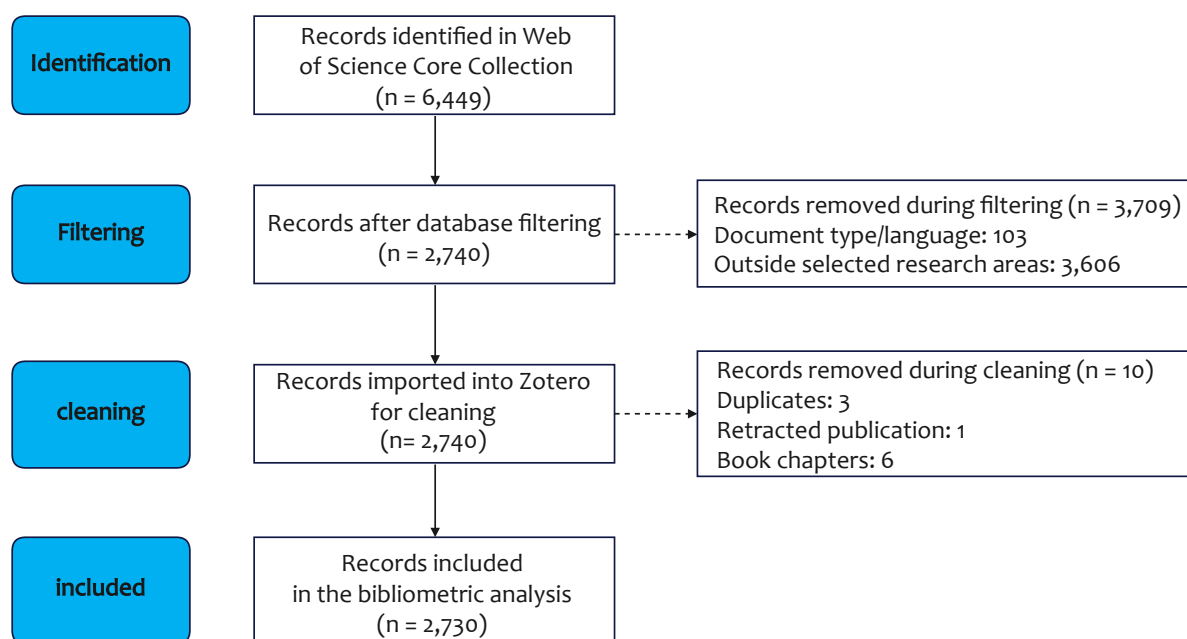
2.2. Database filtering and data cleaning

The record-selection procedure was documented using an adapted PRISMA 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021). On January 21, 2026, the search strategy reported in Appendix A was applied to the Web of Science Core Collection, yielding 6,449 records.

Two stages of database-level filtering were subsequently conducted within the Web of Science interface. First, the document types were limited to articles, review articles, and proceedings papers, and the language was restricted to English. These filters removed 103 records, leaving 6,346 records. Second, the Web of Science Categories were limited to Economics, Management, Business, Social Sciences Interdisciplinary, and Behavioral Sciences. The selected categories were used to maintain alignment with the study's consumer, behavioral, managerial, and market-decision focus. This disciplinary refinement removed 3,606 records and resulted in an exportable dataset of 2,740 records.

The 2,740 records were then imported into Zotero 6.0 for manual metadata inspection and cleaning. Ten records were removed: three duplicate records, one retracted publication, and six records imported as book chapters. Duplicate records were identified by comparing DOI, title, author, and publication year information. Following this cleaning process, the final corpus comprised 2,730 publications for bibliometric analysis. The second author independently verified the classification and removal of all ten records, and full agreement was achieved.

To assess whether the use of higher-order psychological terms resulted in the systematic absence of



Note: Adapted from the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework.

Figure 1. Flow of record identification, filtering, cleaning, and inclusion.

more specific constructs, a post-retrieval coverage audit was conducted on the final corpus of 2,730 publications. An author-keyword co-occurrence analysis was performed using VOSviewer with full counting and a minimum occurrence threshold of five. The threshold was selected to retain less frequently studied but theoretically relevant constructs while excluding keywords that appeared only sporadically. The same conservative thesaurus-cleaning procedure described in Section 2.3 was applied. The coverage audit showed that several selected psychological constructs not individually included in the original search query were still represented in the final corpus. These included norm-related constructs, identity, habit, trust, environmental concern, self-efficacy, moral obligation, knowledge, and consciousness. Detailed keyword variants, occurrence frequencies, and total link strength values are reported in Table B1 in the Appendix.

2.3. Bibliometric analysis tools

The analysis combined descriptive performance analysis and science mapping. Descriptive performance analysis was used to examine annual publication development and the basic characteristics of the corpus. Science mapping was used to identify the intellectual structure, conceptual structure, thematic evolution, and emerging research fronts of the field (Zupic & Čater, 2015; Chen, 2017; van Eck & Waltman, 2017). Table 2 summarizes the analytical techniques, units of analysis, software,

and principal purposes of the analyses conducted in this study.

VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) was used for cited-author co-citation analysis, keyword co-occurrence analysis, and keyword overlay visualization. Cited-author co-citation analysis was conducted to identify influential scholars and intellectual communities. Keyword co-occurrence analysis was used to examine thematic relationships, keyword prominence, total link strength, and cluster structure. Keyword overlay visualization was used to identify the temporal positioning of recent research topics.

For the VOSviewer analyses, cited authors were used as the unit of analysis for co-citation analysis, while all keywords were used for the main keyword co-occurrence and overlay analyses. Author keywords were used only for the post-retrieval construct coverage audit reported in Appendix B, as the audit aimed to verify whether several selected psychological constructs were explicitly represented in the final corpus. Full counting was applied. The networks were normalized using the association-strength method, and the default VOSviewer layout and clustering settings were retained. CiteSpace (version 6.2.R6) was used for timeline visualization to examine the temporal development of major research themes. CiteSpace is widely used to detect and visualize emerging trends and temporal patterns in scientific literature (Chen, 2006, 2017). In this study, CiteSpace

Table 2. Overview of the bibliometric analyses

Results section	Analytical component	Unit of analysis	Software/data source	Purpose and output
3.1 Publication Trends and Stage Classification	Publication trend analysis	Publications	Web of Science and Excel	Annual output and stage classification
3.2 Leading Journals, Authors, and Publications	Descriptive performance and citation analysis	Journals, authors, and documents	Web of Science, Excel, and VOSviewer	Leading journals, authors, and cited publications
3.3 Intellectual Structure: Cited-Author Co-citation Analysis	Cited-author co-citation analysis	Cited authors	VOSviewer	Intellectual foundations, TLS, and clusters
3.4 Thematic Structure: Keyword Clustering Analysis	Keyword co-occurrence and clustering analysis	All keywords	VOSviewer	Leading keywords, TLS, and thematic clusters
3.5 Temporal Evolution of Research Themes	Timeline visualization	Keywords	CiteSpace	Temporal evolution of major research themes
3.6 Emerging Research Frontiers: Keyword Overlay Analysis	Keyword overlay analysis	All keywords	VOSviewer	Overlay year and recent topics
Appendix B	Post-retrieval construct coverage audit	Author keywords	VOSviewer	Coverage audit of selected psychological constructs

was used only for timeline visualization. The main keyword clustering results were generated in VOSviewer and reported in Section 3.4.

Before network construction, a conservative thesaurus was applied to standardize singular and plural forms, British and American spelling variants, and punctuation variants. Conceptually distinct terms were retained separately. All network analyses were based on the standardized bibliographic records exported from Web of Science. Because the appropriate threshold depends on the unit and purpose of each analysis, the specific thresholds, numbers of eligible and visualized nodes, network sizes, and output indicators are reported in the corresponding Results subsections and figure or table notes.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Publication trends and stage classification

Figure 2 shows that publications on sustainable consumption research increased steadily after 1991 and expanded rapidly after 2017. The development of the field can be divided into three stages.

The first stage is the exploratory stage (1991–2009). During this period, sustainable consumption behavior gradually emerged as a research topic. A total of 81 papers were published, with an average annual output of 4.3 articles.

The second stage is the theoretical integration stage (2010–2016). During this period, SCB research became more visible, and publication output increased from 33 documents in 2010 to 115 documents in 2016. A total of 384 articles were published during this stage.

The third stage is the accelerated development stage (2017–2025). During this period, sustainable consumption research expanded rapidly, with 2,247 publications, accounting for about 82% of the final corpus. This stage reflects the growing diversification of research contexts, theories, and methods. Publications from 2026 were treated as partial-year records and were not included in the stage calculation.

3.2. Leading journals, authors, and publications

Citation analysis was conducted to identify the leading publication sources, productive authors, and highly cited documents in the corpus. Sources and authors were ranked by the number of documents, with citations and citations per publication (CPP) reported as citation-impact indicators. Highly cited documents were ranked by total citations.

Table 3 shows that sustainable consumption research is concentrated in consumer, ethics, business, and environmental management journals. The International Journal of Consumer Studies published the largest number of docu-

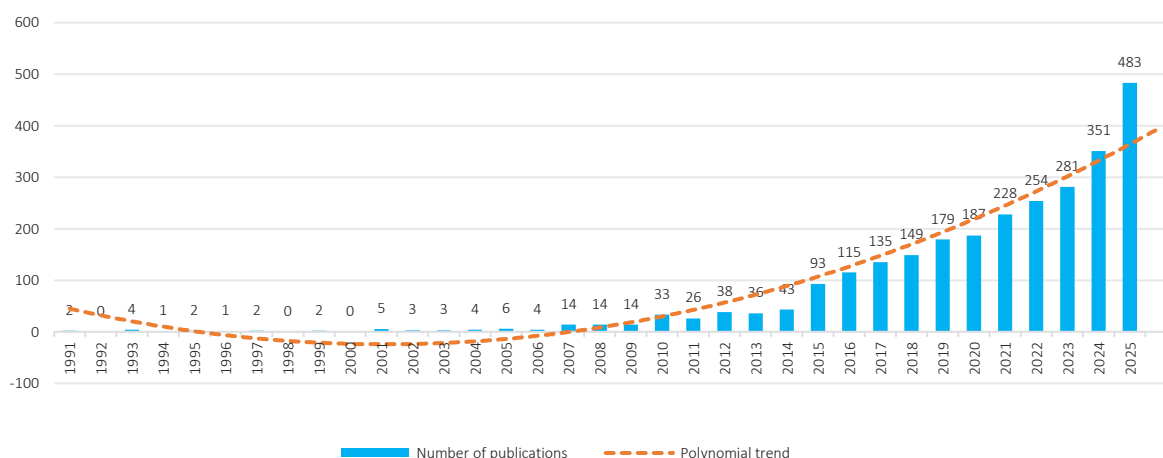


Figure 2. Annual publication output in psychological and decision-related sustainable consumption research, 1991–2025

Table 3. Leading publication sources in sustainable consumption research

Rank	Journal	Documents	Citations	CPP
1	International Journal of Consumer Studies	131	7433	56.74
2	Journal of Business Ethics	100	10769	107.69
3	Business Strategy and the Environment	99	5278	53.31
4	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	90	7134	79.27
5	Journal of Business Research	74	9376	126.70
6	Journal of Consumer Behavior	71	2266	31.92
7	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	61	1506	24.69
8	Journal of Consumer Marketing	58	1738	29.97
9	Psychology & Marketing	57	4976	87.30
10	Social Responsibility Journal	48	936	19.50

Table 4. Leading authors in sustainable consumption research

Rank	Author	Documents	Citations	CPP
1	Hoffmann, S.	12	291	24.25
2	Han, H.	10	1623	162.30
3	Thaichon, P.	10	209	20.90
4	D'Souza, C.	10	179	17.90
5	Thøgersen, J.	9	1391	154.56
6	Lobo, A.	9	1067	118.56
7	Quoquab, F.	8	518	64.75
8	Lim, W. M.	8	419	52.38
9	Ko, E.	8	369	46.13
10	Prakash, G.	8	326	40.75

Table 5. Highly cited documents in sustainable consumption research

Rank	Author(s)	Title	Source	Citations
1	White et al. (2019)	How to SHIFT Consumer Behaviors to be More Sustainable: A Literature Review and Guiding Framework	Journal of Marketing	1148
2	Diamantopoulos et al. (2003)	Can socio-demographics still play a role in profiling green consumers? A review of the evidence and an empirical investigation	Journal of Business Research	1067
3	Roberts (1996)	Green consumers in the 1990s: Profile and implications for advertising	Journal of Business Research	930
4	Carrington et al. (2010)	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	Journal of Business Ethics	891
5	Han (2015)	Travelers' pro-environmental behavior in a green lodging context: Converging value-belief-norm theory and the theory of planned behavior	Tourism Management	857
6	Yadav and Pathak (2017)	Determinants of Consumers' Green Purchase Behavior in a Developing Nation: Applying and Extending the Theory of Planned Behavior	Ecological Economics	836
7	Vermeir and Verbeke (2008)	Sustainable food consumption among young adults in Belgium: Theory of planned behavior and the role of confidence and values	Ecological Economics	759
8	Chan (2001)	Determinants of Chinese consumers' green purchase behavior	Psychology & Marketing	743
9	Tanner and Wölfling Kast (2003)	Promoting sustainable consumption: Determinants of green purchases by Swiss consumers	Psychology & Marketing	739
10	Rana and Paul (2017)	Consumer behavior and purchase intention for organic food: A review and research agenda	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	701

ments, whereas the Journal of Business Ethics and Journal of Business Research recorded higher citation impact. Table 4 indicates that author productivity was relatively dispersed, with Hoffmann, Han, Thaichon, and D'Souza among the most pro-

ductive authors. Table 5 shows that the most cited documents mainly addressed sustainable consumer behavior, green consumer profiling, ethical consumption, green purchase behavior, and the intention-behavior gap.

3.3. Intellectual structure: Cited-author co-citation analysis

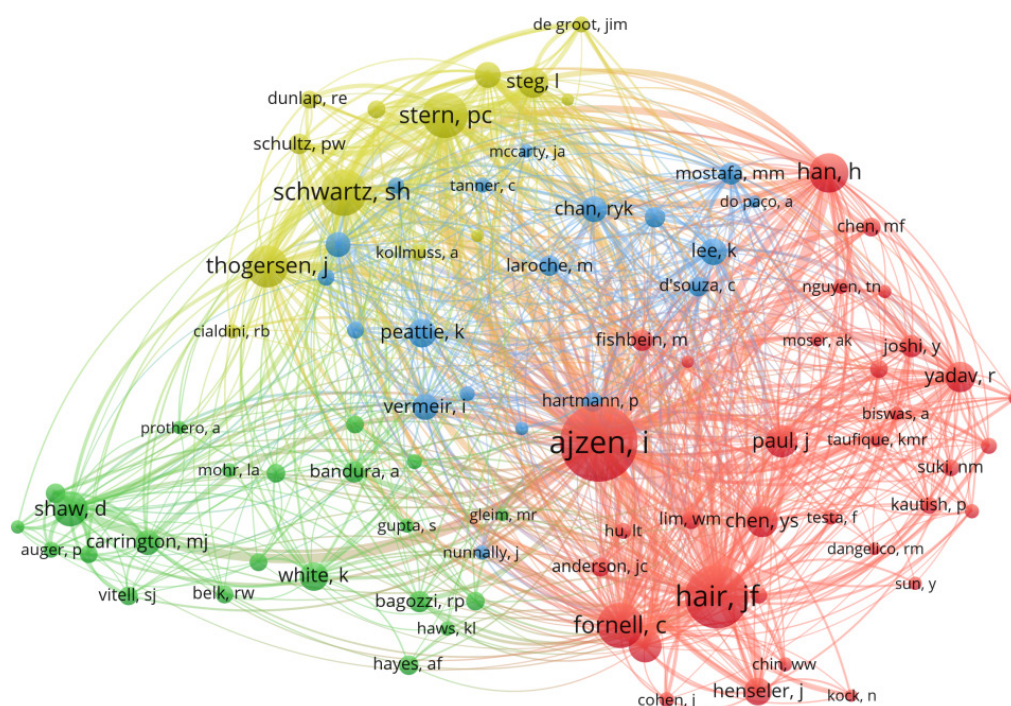
A cited-author co-citation analysis was conducted using VOSviewer to identify the intellectual structure of SCB research. Full counting was applied, and a minimum citation threshold of 150 was used. The final visualization included 88 cited authors and generated four clusters. Table 6 reports the ten most highly cited authors in the co-citation network, together with their total link strength and associated research streams. Figure 3 presents the corresponding co-citation network, in which node size indicates citation frequency, links indicate co-citation relationships, and colors represent intellectual clusters.

Cluster One (red) represents behavioral decision models and methodological foundations. It is anchored by Ajzen, whose Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) explains how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape behavioral intention and subsequent behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This cluster also includes highly co-cited methodological contributors, such as Hair et al. and Fornell and Larcker, indicating the central

role of structural equation modeling, measurement validity, and model evaluation in empirical SCB studies (Hair et al., 2011; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The presence of Han further shows the application and extension of TPB and VBN-based models in sustainable consumption and green hospitality contexts (Han, 2015).

Cluster Two (yellow) reflects normative and value-based explanations of sustainable consumption. It is associated with Schwartz, Stern, and Thøgersen. This cluster connects the Norm Activation Model (NAM), Value–Belief–Norm (VBN) theory, personal norms, environmental values, and responsibility-based explanations of pro-environmental action (Schwartz, 1977; Stern et al., 1999; Stern, 2000). Later studies extended this stream by examining how environmental values, personal norms, and different types of motivation influence consumer decision-making and sustainable behavior (Thøgersen, 2006; Steg et al., 2014).

Cluster Three (green) focuses on the intention–behavior gap. It explains why favorable ethical or environmental intentions do not always lead to actual purchasing or consumption behavior. Shaw and



Note: Minimum citation threshold = 150; 88 cited authors visualized.

Figure 3. Cited-author co-citation network

Table 6. Top co-cited authors and intellectual structure

Rank	Cited author	Citations	TLS	Research stream
1	Ajzen, I.	1520	22727	TPB-Behavioral Decision Models
2	Hair, J. F.	1183	16588	SEM-Methodological Foundation
3	Schwartz, S. H.	801	13654	NAM & Moral Norms
4	Fornell, C.	770	10967	Measurement Validity
5	Stern, P. C.	768	13495	VPN & Environmental Values
6	Thøgersen, J.	700	10610	Sustainable Consumer Behavior
7	Han, H.	636	9855	Green Consumption & Tourism
8	Shaw, D.	542	6922	Ethical Consumption & Intention–Behavior Gap
9	Podsakoff, P. M.	512	7468	Common Method Bias & Measurement
10	Paul, J.	494	8319	Review and Consumer Research

Note: Cited authors are ranked by citations in the VOSviewer cited-author co-citation analysis. TLS = total link strength. Minimum citation threshold = 150.

Newholm (2002), Carrington et al. (2010, 2014), and White et al. (2019) highlight the role of situational factors, habits, social influence, and implementation barriers in this gap.

Cluster Four (blue) represents green consumption and green marketing research. Peattie (2001) and Peattie and Crane (2005) linked marketing to sustainability and greenwashing concerns. Roberts (1996), Lee (2008), and Chan (2001) extended this stream by developing measurement tools and examining green consumption across different cultural and market contexts.

Taken together, the four clusters indicate that SCB research is built on four connected intellectual foundations: behavioral decision models, normative and value-based psychological drivers, the intention–behavior gap, and green consumption research. This structure is consistent with the co-citation network and Table 6, where the most influential cited authors represent both theory-building and methodological foundations of sustainable consumer decision research.

3.4. Thematic structure: Keyword clustering analysis

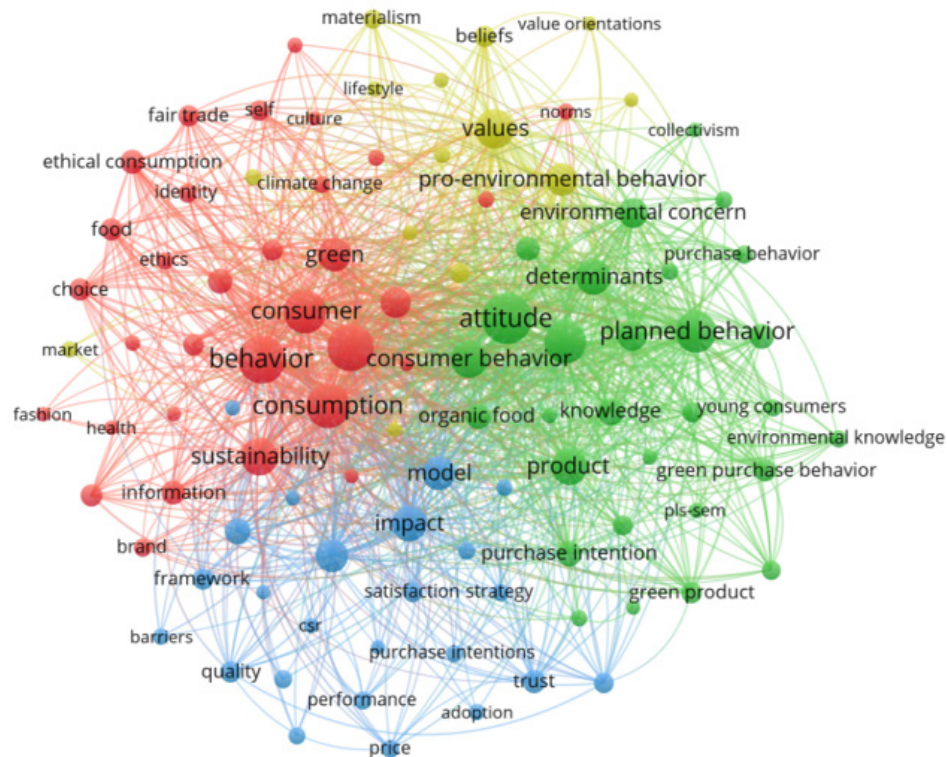
Keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted using VOSviewer with full counting. All keywords were used to capture the broader thematic structure of the field. A minimum occurrence threshold of 48 was applied, and 99 keywords met the threshold. Table 7 reports the leading keywords ranked by occurrences, together with their total link strength (TLS). The most frequent keywords were attitude, behavior, sustainable consumption,

consumption, consumer, intention, and planned behavior, indicating that the field is strongly organized around consumer attitudes, intentions, and behavioral explanations.

The keyword co-occurrence network generated four thematic clusters. Cluster 1, sustainable consumption and ethical/ food-related behavior, contained 32 keywords, including sustainable consumption, behavior, consumption, consumer, sustainability, green, willingness to pay, ethical consumption, food, and fair trade. Cluster 2, consumer attitudes, intentions, and green purchase behavior, contained 29 keywords, including attitude, intention, planned behavior, consumer behavior, product, determinants, environmental concern, green consumption, purchase intention, and green purchase behavior. Cluster 3, perceived value, trust, corporate social responsibility, and implementation factors, contained 24 keywords, including impact, model, perception, corporate social responsibility, trust, quality, framework, perceived value, price, and barriers. Cluster 4, values, beliefs, and pro-environmental orientations, contained 14 keywords, including values, pro-environmental behavior, beliefs, green consumer, materialism, personal values, value orientations, and perceived consumer effectiveness.

3.5. Temporal evolution of research themes

CiteSpace timeline visualization was used to examine the temporal development of major research themes. The analysis used keywords as nodes, with a time span from 1991 to January 21, 2026, and a two-year time slice. The g-index with k



Note: Minimum occurrence threshold = 48; 99 keywords visualized; full counting.

Figure 4. Keyword co-occurrence network

Table 7. Leading keywords in the co-occurrence network

Rank	Keyword	Occurrences	TLS
1	Attitude	748	4447
2	Behavior	641	3270
3	Sustainable consumption	629	3328
4	Consumption	543	3049
5	Consumer	520	2630
6	Intention	493	3004
7	Planned behavior	462	2897
8	Values	416	2468
9	Sustainability	380	2041
10	Consumer behavior	376	2192
11	Product	358	2295
12	Impact	332	1790
13	Determinants	331	2191
14	Model	306	1607
15	Green	298	1691
16	Perception	288	1619
17	Pro-environmental behavior	286	1460
18	Willingness to pay	254	1491
19	Environmental concern	240	1561
20	Antecedents	230	1504
21	Knowledge	183	1198
22	Corporate social responsibility	177	963
23	Motivation	164	915
24	Organic food	163	1072
25	Purchase intention	163	986

Note: Keywords are ranked by occurrences. TLS = total link strength. The analysis was based on all keywords using full counting.

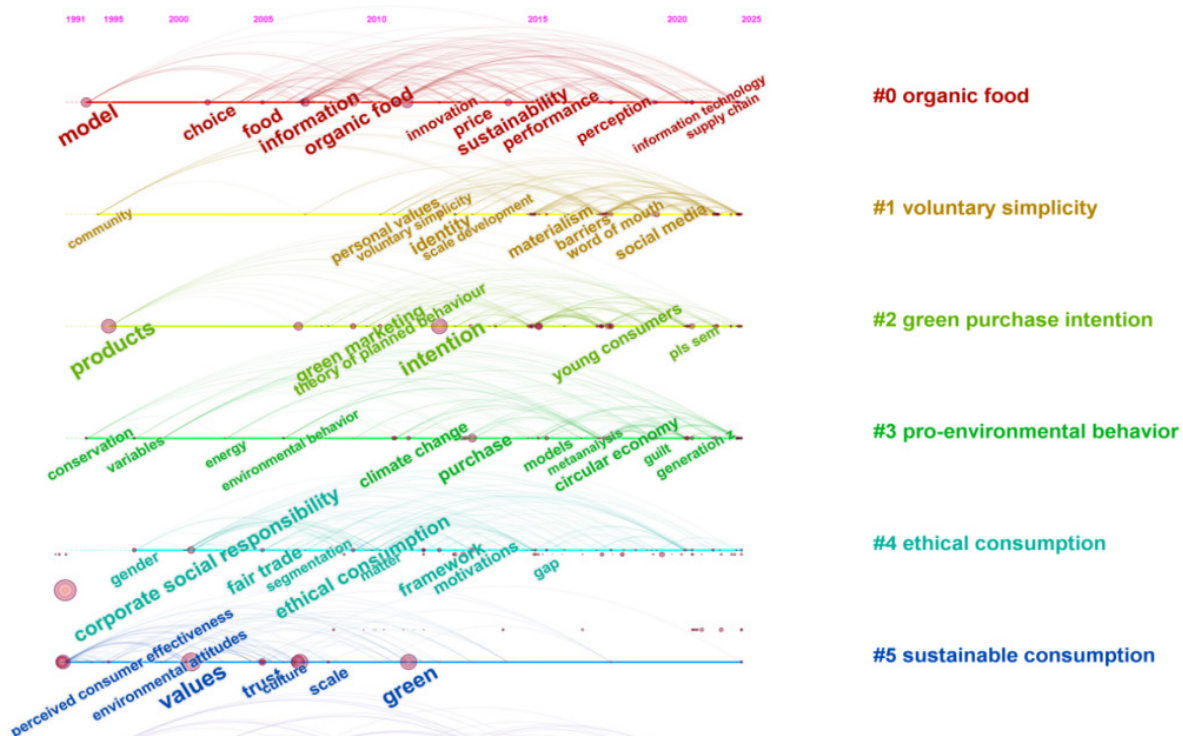
= 25 was used as the selection criterion. The generated network included 657 nodes and 5,631 links, with a density of 0.0261. The modularity value ($Q = 0.3253$) and weighted mean silhouette value ($S = 0.6334$) indicate that the timeline map has an acceptable structure for interpreting thematic evolution (Chen, 2017). Figure 5 shows the temporal evolution of SCB research.

The timeline supports the three-stage pattern identified in the publication trend analysis. During the exploratory stage (1991–2009), research mainly focused on environmentally conscious consumers, demographic characteristics, environmental attitudes, and early green consumer behavior. During the theoretical integration stage (2010–2016), TPB, VBN, and related behavioral models became more visible, and empirical testing increased. During the accelerated development stage (2017–2025), the field became more diverse and context-specific, with growing attention to digital media, cross-cultural comparison, generational differences, green products, and circular consumption. Publications from 2026 are treated as partial-year records and are not used to define the stage boundaries.

3.6. Emerging research frontiers: Keyword overlay analysis

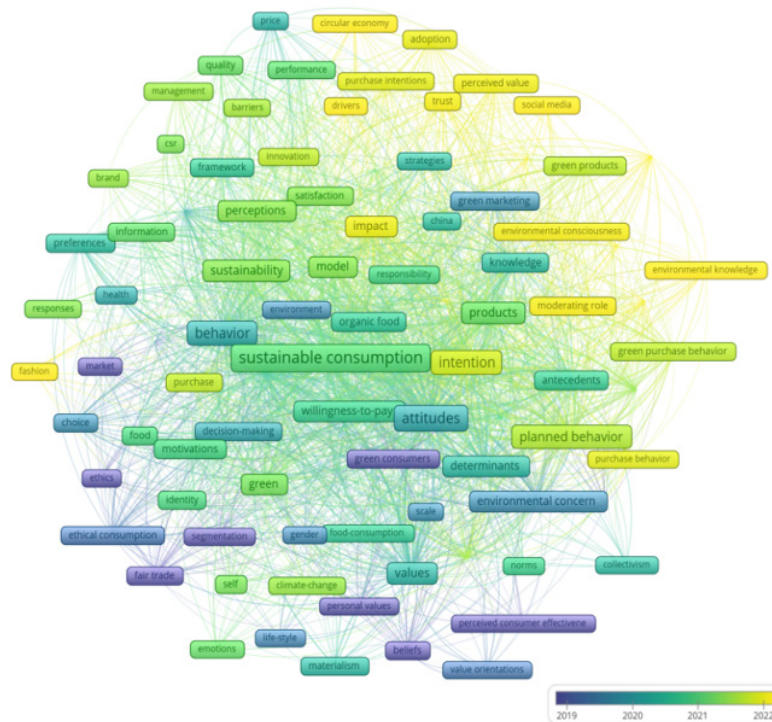
An all-keyword overlay map was generated in VOSviewer to identify recent research topics. For clearer visualization, a minimum occurrence threshold of 49 was used, resulting in 95 displayed keywords (Figure 6). Lighter nodes indicate more recent topics. The overlay map shows that recent frontiers are concentrated around circular economy, environmental consciousness, perceived value, green products, young consumers, and social media.

These topics suggest that SCB research is moving from broad concern with environmental attitudes toward more specific consumer decision contexts. Related recent studies also examined consumer responses to circular products, green product quality, perceived value, sustainability claims, young consumers, and social media influence (Dewantara et al., 2025; D'Souza et al., 2026; Kalam & Mollah, 2026; Kim et al., 2025; Tan et al., 2025; Toth-Peter et al., 2025). Overall, the overlay results suggest that SCB research is becoming more interdisciplinary, digital, and context-specific.



Note: Time span = 1991–January 21, 2026; slice length = 2 years; node type = keywords; selection criterion = g-index, $k = 25$; $Q = 0.3253$; $S = 0.6334$.

Figure 5. CiteSpace timeline visualization of research themes



Note: Minimum occurrence threshold = 49; 95 keywords displayed.

Figure 6. VOSviewer keyword overlay map

4. DISCUSSION

This study mapped consumer-oriented sustainable consumption research from 1991 to January 2026. The results show a clear shift in the field. Early studies were scattered and exploratory. Later studies became more theory-driven. Since 2017, the field has expanded quickly and has moved into more specific consumer contexts.

The co-citation results show that the field has several intellectual roots. Ajzen is the most influential co-cited author. This confirms the central role of the Theory of Planned Behavior in sustainable consumption research (Ajzen, 1991). Yet the field is not built on TPB alone. Schwartz, Stern, and Thøgersen also appear as important co-cited authors. Their work links sustainable consumption to personal norms, environmental values, and moral responsibility (Schwartz, 1977; Stern et al., 1999; Stern, 2000). This means that sustainable consumption research combines rational decision models with value-based and norm-based explanations.

The keyword results show four main thematic directions. The first concerns sustainable consumption

and ethical or food-related behavior. The second focuses on attitudes, intentions, and green purchase behavior. The third links perceived value, trust, corporate social responsibility, and implementation factors. The fourth concerns values, beliefs, and pro-environmental orientations. These clusters show that the field has moved beyond simple attitude–intention models. Consumers do not only form intentions. They also evaluate product value, credibility, price, quality, corporate responsibility, and practical barriers (Carrington et al., 2010, 2014).

This finding is closely related to the intention-behavior gap. Many consumers support sustainable consumption in principle, but they may not act on these intentions. Price, convenience, habits, product availability, and trust in green claims can weaken the link between intention and behavior (Carrington et al., 2010, 2014; White et al., 2019). Therefore, future research should not only ask whether consumers have positive attitudes. It should also examine when these attitudes become actual purchases or sustainable practices.

The timeline and overlay results show that the field has become more contextualized in recent years.

Recent topics include circular economy, environmental consciousness, perceived value, green products, young consumers, and social media. These topics suggest a move from general pro-environmental concern to concrete market decisions. Consumers now face many sustainability claims. They must judge whether products are useful, credible, affordable, and consistent with their values. Recent studies on environmental consciousness and green perceived value support this direction (Laheri et al., 2024; Tawde & ShabbirHusain, 2024).

The results of this study also expand upon previous bibliometric research in the relevant field. Vergura et al. (2023) mapped demand-side sustainable consumption. S. Goyal and P. Goyal (2024) examined the wider pro-environmental behavior field. Naini and Reddy (2025) focused on factors influencing green consumer behavior. The present study adds to these reviews by linking the intellectual foundations, thematic structure, and temporal evolution of sustainable consumption research within a consumer-focused framework.

The overlay analysis also indicates where the field is likely to develop next. One area is circular consumption. Further work could examine how consumers make sense of reuse, recycling, second-hand products, and circular product value (D'Souza et al., 2026; Toth-Peter et al., 2025). A second area concerns green products and perceived value. Here, more attention is needed to product quality, eco-friendliness, green claims, and willingness to pay (Dewantara et al., 2025; Laheri et al., 2024; Najafabadiha et al., 2025; Tan et al., 2025; Tawde & ShabbirHusain, 2024; Yan et al., 2024). A third area concerns young consumers and digital contexts. Recent studies have indicated that social media, influencers, social pressure, and technological development may influence consumers' intention and actual behavior (Kalam & Mollah, 2026; Kim et al., 2025; Li et al., 2024; Yousef, 2025; Zaborek & Mabrouk, 2025). These themes point to a more practical view of sustainable consumption. Consumers do not only hold attitudes or intentions. They also compare products, judge value, assess trust, respond to digital influence, and deal with constraints in daily consumption.

CONCLUSION

This study mapped consumer-oriented sustainable consumption research using 2,730 publications from the Web of Science Core Collection. The analysis shows that the field has developed through three stages: exploration, theoretical integration, and rapid expansion. Since 2017, research has grown quickly and has become more diverse in theory, context, and method.

The findings show that sustainable consumption research is not built on a single theoretical base. TPB remains central, but normative, value-based, and green marketing perspectives also play important roles. The co-citation results identify four main knowledge bases: behavioral decision models, psychological and normative drivers, the intention-behavior gap, and green consumption research. The keyword results further show that the field has moved beyond general attitudes and intentions. Recent work increasingly examines perceived value, trust, CSR, environmental consciousness, green products, digital influence, and practical barriers.

This study contributes by linking the intellectual foundations, thematic structure, and temporal evolution of sustainable consumption research within a consumer-focused framework. It also identifies recent topics such as circular economy, social media, young consumers, perceived value, and environmental consciousness.

The study has limitations. Although the post-retrieval audit showed that the examined psychological constructs were represented in the final corpus, the search strategy may not capture every study using highly specific construct terms. The consumer-oriented scope also excludes pro-environmental behaviors that are not directly related to consumption, purchasing, or market decisions. In addition, the use of Web of Science, English-language publications, and selected research categories may exclude relevant

studies from other databases, languages, or disciplines. Future research can use broader databases and non-English literature to provide a more comprehensive view of the field.

Future research should pay more attention to actual behavior, longitudinal evidence, digital contexts, and cross-cultural differences. More integrative models are also needed to explain how environmental consciousness, perceived value, trust, social influence, and situational constraints shape sustainable consumption decisions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In preparing this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT and Grammarly for language editing and grammar refinement. All academic content, including the research design, analysis, and conclusions, was produced and verified by the authors.

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APPENDIX A

After reviewing highly cited literature in SCB research, this study identified subject terms encompassing relevant synonyms for “sustainable consumption” alongside psychological factors such as “consumer purchase decisions”, “attitudes,” and “perceptions”. Within this research, “Green consumption”, “Responsible consumption”, “Eco-friendly consumption”, “Environmentally sustainable consumption”, “Low-impact consumption”, “Ecological consumption”, “Ethical consumption”, “Conscious consumption” and “Pro-environmental consumption” were considered synonyms for “sustainable consumption”. The terms “purchase”, “buy”, “decision”, “choice”, “behavior”, “intention” and “adoption” were identified as keywords for “purchase decision”. “Attitude”, “perception”, “value”, “belief”, “motivation”, “willingness” and “preference” are regarded as subject terms for the psychological drivers of sustainable consumption behavior. The retrieval strategy employed a conceptually bounded, multi-block Boolean structure to identify consumer-focused sustainable consumption research involving psychological and decision-related terms.

The search query employed in this study is as follows:

(TS = (“Sustainable Consumption” OR “Sustainable consumer behavior” OR “Sustainable purchasing” OR “Sustainable buying”))

OR TS = (“Green consumption” OR “Green consumer” OR “Green purchasing” OR “Green buying”)*

OR TS = (“Responsible consumption” OR “Responsible consumer” OR “Responsible purchasing”)*

OR TS = (“Eco-friendly consumption” OR “Eco-friendly consumer” OR “Eco-friendly purchas*”)*

OR TS = (“Environmentally sustainable consumption” OR “Environmentally conscious consumption”)

OR TS = (“Low-impact consumption” OR “Low impact lifestyle”)

OR TS = (“Ecological consumption” OR “Ecological consumer”)*

OR TS = (“Ethical consumption” OR “Ethical consumer” OR “Ethical purchas*”)*

OR TS = (“Conscious consumption” OR “Conscious consumer”)*

OR TS = (“Pro-environmental consumption” OR “Pro-environmental behavior”))

AND

(TS = (“consumer” OR “customer*” OR “buyer*” OR “shopper*” OR “purchaser*”))*

AND

(TS=(“purchase” OR “buy*” OR “decision*” OR “choice*” OR “behavior*” OR “intention*” OR “adoption*”))*

AND

(TS = (“attitude” OR “perception*” OR “value*” OR “belief*” OR “motivation*” OR “willingness*” OR “preference*”))*

APPENDIX B

Table B1. Post-retrieval coverage audit of selected psychological constructs in the final corpus (n = 2,730)

Construct category	Author keyword variants identified	Highest occurrence	Highest total link strength (TLS)
Norm-related constructs	social norm, personal norm, subjective norm, moral norm, descriptive norm	26	67
Identity	identity, green self-identity, self-identity, moral identity, pro-environmental self-identity	14	39
Habit	habit	9	18
Trust	trust, green trust, brand trust, consumer trust	27	77
Environmental concern	environmental concern	110	279
Self-efficacy	self-efficacy	11	26
Moral obligation	moral obligation	8	27
Knowledge	environmental knowledge, knowledge, consumer knowledge, perceived knowledge	57	167
Consciousness	environmental consciousness, ecological consciousness	36	93

Note: The audit was based on VOSviewer author-keyword co-occurrence analysis of 2,730 publications. Full counting was applied, with a minimum occurrence threshold of five. The thesaurus standardized spelling, punctuation, and singular–plural variants, while conceptually distinct constructs were retained separately. “Highest occurrence” and “highest TLS” indicate the maximum values among variants within each construct category. Values were not summed across variants. Selected psychological constructs were represented in the final corpus.