

Social Brand Dynamics in Green Marketing Literacy

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the evolving relationship between social brand dynamics and green marketing literacy through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis. Drawing on data from the Scopus database and visualized using VOSviewer, the research maps the intellectual structure, thematic clusters, temporal trends, and global collaboration networks within the field. The co-occurrence analysis reveals that core concepts such as green marketing, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility are central to the discourse, while recent attention has shifted toward social media, brand image, and trust-building strategies. Temporal mapping indicates a growing interest in digital engagement and participatory branding, suggesting that green marketing literacy is increasingly shaped by consumer interaction within online ecosystems. The author co-citation network highlights both foundational contributors and emerging thought leaders, while country collaboration mapping reflects a globalizing research agenda led by the United States, India, and China. The findings underscore the interdisciplinary and socially constructed nature of green marketing literacy and call for future research to examine the digital, behavioral, and contextual factors that influence consumer understanding and trust in green branding practices.

Keywords: *Green Marketing, Sustainability Communication, Social Brand Dynamics, Greenwashing, Bibliometric Analysis*

1. INTRODUCTION

The escalating environmental concerns and climate change challenges have catalyzed a global movement toward sustainable consumption, prompting businesses to integrate environmental considerations into their marketing strategies. This shift has given rise to green marketing, a concept that emphasizes promoting environmentally friendly products and services [1], [2]. In this context, green marketing literacy (the ability of consumers to understand, evaluate, and act on green claims) has emerged as a critical element for the success of sustainability-driven branding strategies. However, bridging the gap between corporate environmental messages and public understanding requires more than information dissemination; it demands engagement through social brand dynamics, where brands interact within societal networks, identities, and conversations [3].

In the digital age, social brand dynamics have evolved significantly. Brands are no longer mere transmitters of information but are embedded within socio-cultural contexts where they actively participate in dialogues with stakeholders. Social media platforms, online communities, and influencer marketing have transformed brands into dynamic entities that both shape and are shaped by consumer narratives [4]. This transformation becomes particularly salient in green marketing, where authenticity, trust, and shared values are paramount. Brands must therefore develop socially embedded strategies to build green literacy not just as a knowledge base but as a social norm [5].

Consumers today are increasingly skeptical of green claims, with many being aware of greenwashing (the practice of deceptively promoting products as environmentally friendly) [6]. In response, socially conscious brands are investing in transparent communication, ethical storytelling, and participatory marketing approaches. These practices leverage social brand dynamics to

construct green marketing messages that resonate with specific values, lifestyles, and communities. Understanding how these dynamics influence consumer interpretation and trust in green marketing is essential for both marketers and policy-makers [7].

At the heart of these interactions lies green marketing literacy, not only as a measure of environmental knowledge but also as an outcome of social learning and cultural interaction. It encompasses the awareness of environmental issues, the ability to critically assess environmental information, and the competence to make sustainable choices. Social brand dynamics play a vital role in facilitating this learning by creating social contexts where green messages are circulated, debated, and normalized. As such, green marketing literacy becomes a collective phenomenon, influenced by peer networks, social media, and brand-consumer relationships [8].

Despite the growing interest in sustainable branding and environmental communication, scholarly attention to the intersection between social brand dynamics and green marketing literacy remains limited. While previous studies have explored the effectiveness of green marketing strategies and the importance of environmental awareness, fewer have investigated how brand narratives evolve socially and how these narratives contribute to the public's literacy on environmental matters [9]. A deeper understanding of this relationship is necessary to inform strategies that not only promote green products but also educate and empower consumers to engage with sustainability on a deeper level.

Although green marketing has become a mainstream strategy in corporate sustainability agendas, its effectiveness is often constrained by limited consumer understanding and trust. Many green initiatives fail to achieve desired behavioral outcomes due to a gap between what brands communicate and what consumers comprehend. Moreover, the rise of misinformation and superficial green claims exacerbates consumer confusion and skepticism. The problem lies not merely in the message content but in the social processes through which brand meanings are co-constructed. Without sufficient understanding of how social brand dynamics shape or hinder green marketing literacy, both academic inquiry and practical implementation risk oversimplifying the complex ways consumers engage with green marketing. This study aims to analyze the role of social brand dynamics in shaping green marketing literacy among consumers.

2. METHODS

This study employed a bibliometric analysis approach to systematically examine the academic discourse on the intersection of social brand dynamics and green marketing literacy. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative research method used to evaluate patterns in published literature through statistical and network-based techniques [10]. The method allows for the identification of key themes, influential authors, and keyword co-occurrence to map the intellectual structure and emerging trends in a particular research area. The software VOSviewer was used for data visualization and mapping of bibliometric networks, including author collaboration, keyword clustering, and thematic evolution.

Data for this study were collected from the Scopus database, one of the most comprehensive and multidisciplinary sources of peer-reviewed academic literature. The search was conducted using combinations of relevant keywords such as "green marketing literacy," "social brand," "brand dynamics," "sustainability communication," and "consumer environmental awareness." The search was limited to journal articles published between 2000 and 2024 to capture the most recent developments and long-term evolution of the field. Only English-language publications were included to ensure consistency and global relevance. After initial screening, a total of 318 relevant

documents were selected for further analysis. Following data collection, the documents were exported in RIS and CSV formats for processing in VOSviewer.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Network Visualization

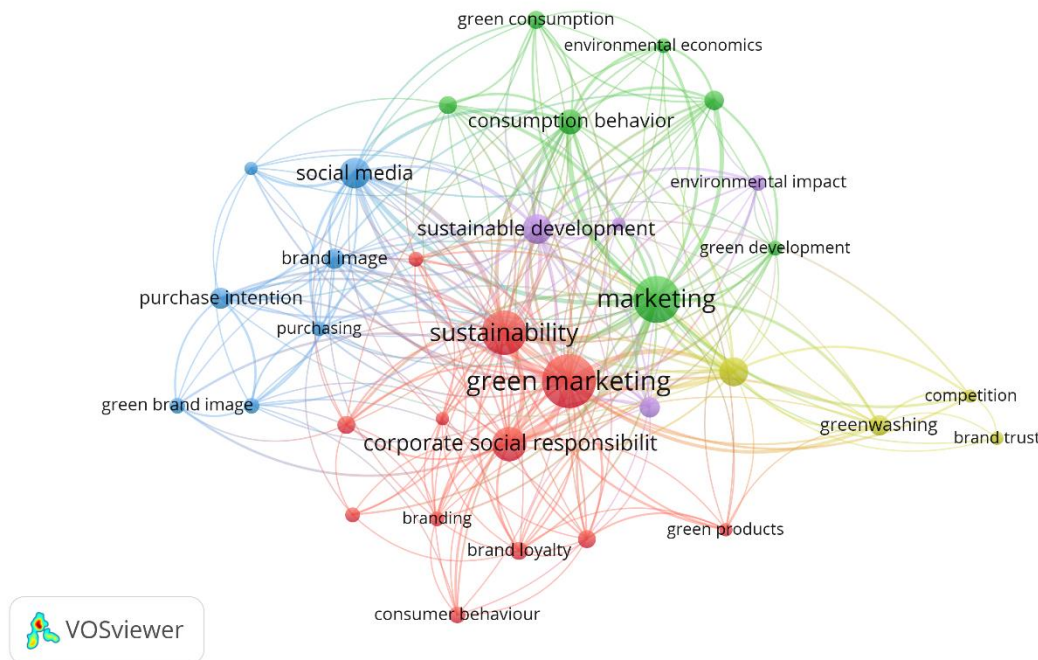


Figure 1. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 1 illustrates the thematic structure of the scholarly discourse surrounding green marketing, social branding, and sustainability. This bibliometric map reveals several clusters, each representing a distinct yet interconnected research theme. The central node in the red cluster is “green marketing,” highlighting it as the dominant concept with extensive linkages to other important themes such as “sustainability,” “corporate social responsibility,” and “branding.” This indicates that green marketing is not only the focal point of the field but also acts as a convergence zone for various related topics.

The red cluster further contains key concepts such as “brand loyalty,” “consumer behaviour,” and “corporate social responsibility,” signifying a research focus on how environmentally responsible branding affects consumer perceptions and loyalty. This cluster suggests an emphasis on examining how businesses build sustainable brand images and how these efforts influence purchasing decisions. The strong co-occurrence between “green marketing” and “corporate social responsibility” also reflects the academic consensus that CSR initiatives are critical components of effective green marketing strategies. In contrast, the blue cluster revolves around “social media,” “purchase intention,” and “green brand image.” This indicates a growing body of research analyzing the role of digital platforms and consumer interaction in shaping green brand perception. The appearance of terms like “purchasing” and “brand image” in close proximity to “social media” suggests that online branding strategies and digital word-of-mouth significantly influence how consumers interpret and respond to green marketing messages. This cluster aligns well with the idea of social brand dynamics, where peer influence and participatory communication play a vital role in green marketing literacy.

The green cluster highlights concepts such as “marketing,” “consumption behavior,” “green consumption,” and “environmental economics.” This thematic group seems to represent the behavioral and economic dimensions of green marketing. It indicates scholarly attention to the

economic rationale behind consumer choices, including willingness to pay for green products, and the macroeconomic implications of green consumption. The presence of “environmental impact” and “green development” in this area suggests efforts to quantify the outcomes of green marketing on sustainability goals and broader ecological effects. The yellow and purple clusters contain more specialized topics like “greenwashing,” “competition,” and “brand trust.” These clusters highlight growing concerns about the credibility and authenticity of green claims. The association between “greenwashing” and “brand trust” suggests that consumer skepticism is an increasingly researched issue, with implications for how trust is built or eroded in green marketing narratives. These fringe but connected themes reflect the evolving discourse on ethical branding practices and the challenges of maintaining transparency in a socially-driven brand ecosystem.

3.2 Overlay Visualization

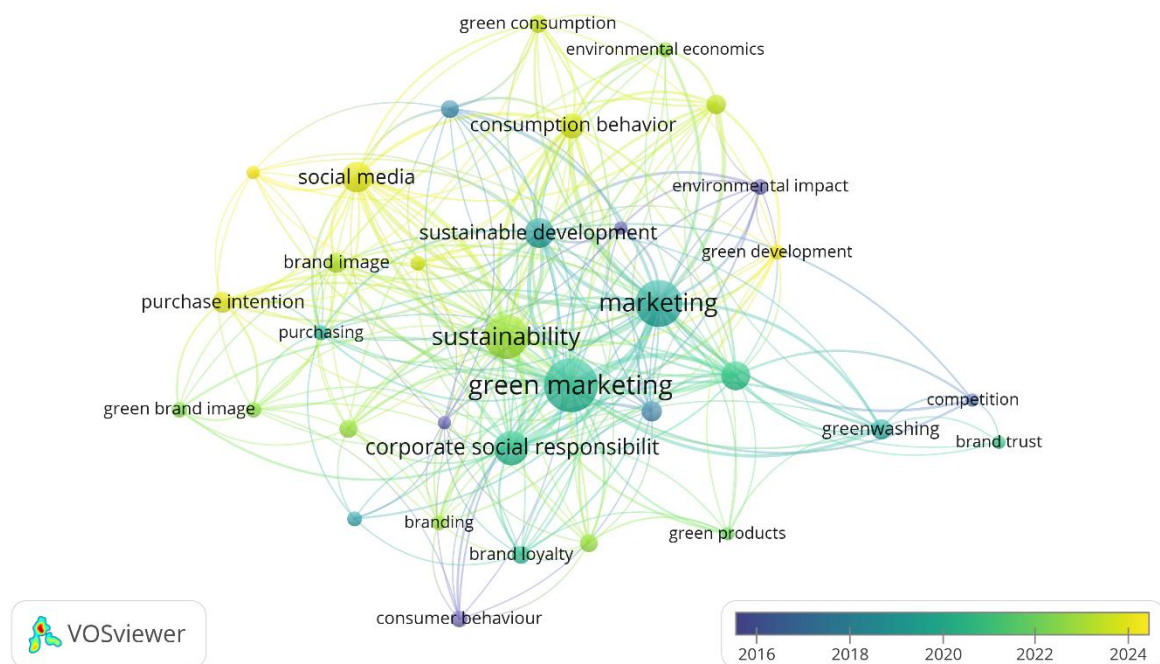


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 2 illustrates the evolution of research themes in the domain of green marketing, sustainability, and social branding based on the average publication year of co-occurring keywords. The color gradient, ranging from dark blue (earlier years, ~2016) to yellow (more recent years, ~2023–2024), provides insight into how scholarly focus has shifted over time. Central themes such as “green marketing”, “sustainability”, and “corporate social responsibility” appear in green, indicating that they have remained consistently relevant in the last 5–6 years, serving as the foundational axis of the literature throughout the studied period.

Interestingly, terms like “social media”, “purchase intention”, and “green brand image” appear in bright yellow, suggesting that these topics are emerging areas of current and future research interest. This indicates a growing academic focus on the intersection between digital branding platforms and sustainable consumer behavior. The temporal emergence of these keywords suggests a shift from purely strategic or corporate-centric green marketing approaches toward consumer-centric and socially embedded models, where communication and engagement via social platforms play a critical role in shaping green literacy and decision-making.

Conversely, keywords such as “greenwashing”, “brand trust”, and “competition” are shaded more toward blue or teal, reflecting that these were prominent topics in earlier years. Their earlier

prominence likely stems from the initial wave of skepticism and critical scrutiny toward environmental claims, which drove early debates in green marketing discourse. Over time, the field has transitioned toward solutions-oriented themes, such as trust-building through social media and consumer co-creation, marking an evolution from criticism to engagement. This timeline reveals a dynamic field that is progressively aligning itself with technological and societal shifts in communication and brand interaction.

3.3 Citation Analysis

Table 1. The Most Impactful Literatures

Citations	Authors and year	Title
806	[11]	Authentic™: The politics of ambivalence in a brand culture
300	[12]	Consumer behaviour for wine 2.0: A review since 2003 and future directions
294	[13]	Antecedents to green buying behaviour: A study on consumers in an emerging economy
257	[14]	EcoDesign: what's happening? An overview of the subject area of EcoDesign and of the papers in this special issue
214	[15]	Company environmental performance and consumer purchase intentions
164	[16]	Islamic marketing – a challenger to the classical marketing canon?
113	[17]	An analysis of consumer reactions to green strategies
110	[18]	The role of social identity and attitudes toward sustainability brands in buying behaviors for organic products
107	[19]	Green Marketing Approaches and Their Impact on Green Purchase Intentions: Mediating Role of Green Brand Image and Consumer Beliefs towards the Environment
106	[20]	Consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence as a determining factor of ecologically conscious behaviour

Source: Scopus, 2025

3.4 Density Visualization



Figure 3. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 3 illustrates the concentration and prominence of research themes in the field of green marketing and related topics. Areas in bright yellow indicate zones of high keyword co-occurrence and research activity, with “green marketing,” “sustainability,” “marketing,” and “corporate social responsibility” standing out as the most intensely studied terms. These topics serve as central pillars of the academic discussion, highlighting their integral role in structuring the field. The high density in these areas suggests they are foundational concepts that frequently appear across a wide range of studies, signaling strong scholarly consensus and continued relevance. Surrounding these core themes are keywords shaded in green and light blue, such as “social media,” “purchase intention,” “brand trust,” and “greenwashing,” indicating moderate research interest and emerging importance. These areas represent developing niches, where academic focus is growing but not yet as saturated. Their presence reflects the increasing attention toward consumer behavior, digital communication, and brand ethics in the context of green marketing. Meanwhile, peripheral terms like “competition” and “environmental economics” appear in darker shades, implying lower density and potentially pointing to underexplored areas or more specialized research tracks.

3.5 Co-Authorship Network

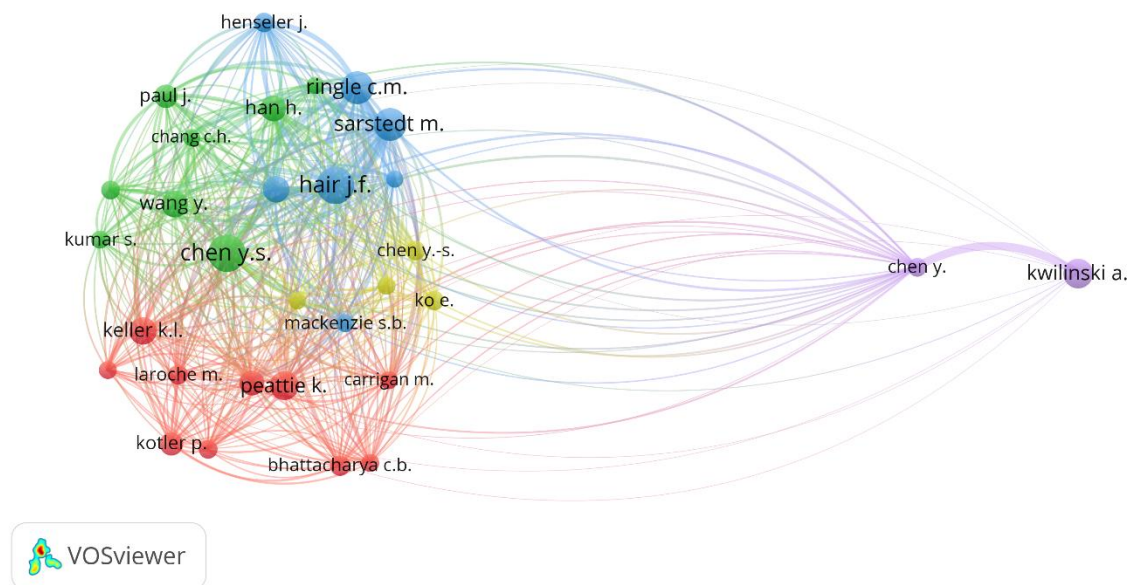


Figure 4. Author Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 4 illustrates the intellectual structure of the green marketing and branding literature by mapping how frequently authors are cited together in academic works. The dense core on the left side of the map features prominent scholars such as Peattie K., Kotler P., Hair J.F., Sarstedt M., and Ringle C.M., indicating their foundational influence in marketing, sustainability, and methodological development. These authors are clustered into various thematic groups—red for classic branding and green marketing theorists, blue for methodological experts in SEM and PLS, and green for sustainability and consumer behavior scholars. Interestingly, a distinct and isolated cluster appears on the right, featuring Chen Y. and Kwilinski A., who are heavily co-cited but largely disconnected from the central clusters. This separation may suggest a unique theoretical framework or a newer school of thought in the green marketing discourse, possibly integrating cross-disciplinary or regional perspectives.

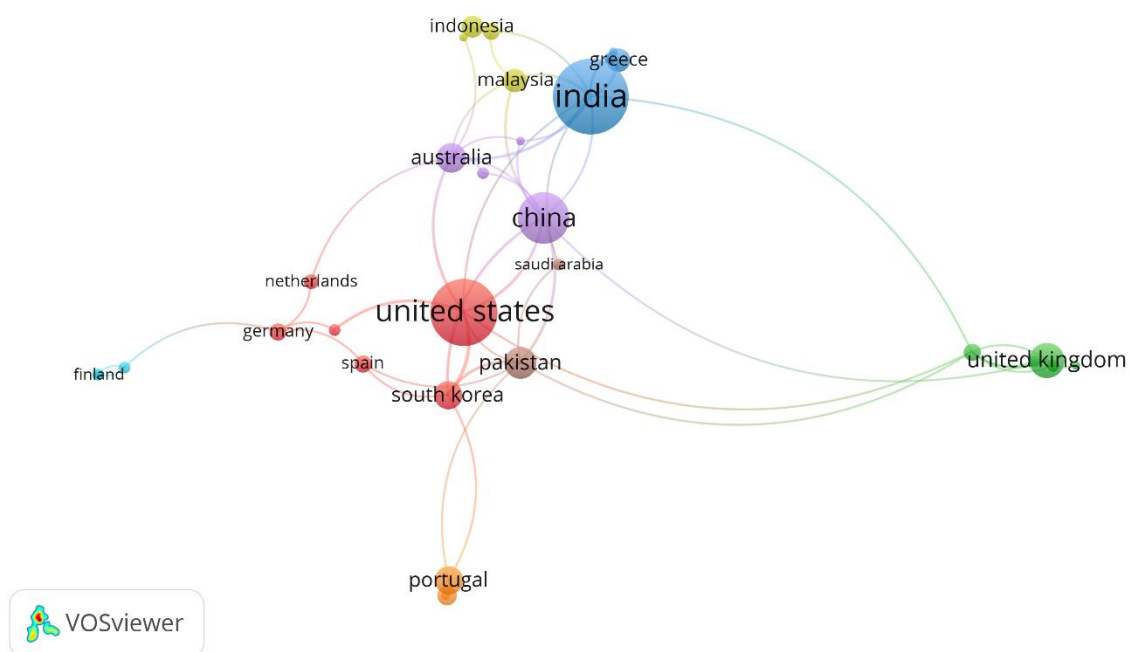


Figure 5. Country Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 5 reveals the global research landscape on green marketing and social branding, highlighting key nations involved in academic cooperation. The United States emerges as the most central and collaborative hub, forming strong connections with countries like China, India, Pakistan, Portugal, and South Korea, signifying its pivotal role in international research partnerships. India and China also serve as significant nodes, actively engaging with diverse countries such as Malaysia, Greece, and Australia, indicating a rising contribution from Asia in sustainability and marketing scholarship. Notably, the United Kingdom appears as an influential but more isolated cluster, collaborating primarily with the United States and India. Smaller nodes like Indonesia, Finland, and Saudi Arabia suggest emerging participation in the field, while countries like Germany, Spain, and Portugal maintain moderate but regionally focused engagement.

Discussion

1. Core Concepts and Thematic Convergence

At the center of the keyword co-occurrence map lies the strong interconnection between “green marketing,” “sustainability,” and “corporate social responsibility (CSR)”. These terms not only dominate the literature but also act as conceptual anchors that connect various sub-themes. The centrality of “green marketing” in the network affirms its pivotal role as the driving construct that integrates branding, ethical practices, and consumer behavior within an environmentally conscious framework [21]. The close linkage with CSR reflects how companies increasingly use branding strategies to signal environmental stewardship, with the aim of building long-term trust and loyalty [22].

Moreover, the thematic clustering shows that “branding,” “brand loyalty,” and “consumer behavior” are integral to the discourse, highlighting the need to understand green marketing not just as a set of promotional tactics, but as a dynamic social process. The integration of consumer-centric keywords such as “purchase intention”, “brand trust”, and “social media” reveals an important shift in the literature toward investigating how consumers co-create brand meaning, assess the credibility of green claims, and make informed decisions based on perceived authenticity. This supports [23] view of brands as cultural and social actors embedded in networks of meaning and interaction.

2. The Rise of Socially Embedded Green Marketing

A notable insight from the co-occurrence and temporal overlay visualizations is the recent rise of terms associated with social platforms and digital communication, such as “social media,” “brand image,” and “green brand image.” These terms appear in brighter colors in the temporal map, indicating that they are more recent entries into the scholarly conversation. This trend aligns with real-world transformations in marketing practice, where the shift from one-way corporate messaging to two-way brand-consumer engagement on digital platforms has fundamentally altered how green messages are communicated and received [24].

This also underscores the role of social brand dynamics, where brand identity is no longer dictated solely by firms but co-constructed with stakeholders—especially in online environments. Social media amplifies peer-to-peer influence, enhances transparency, and enables rapid spread of both positive endorsements and critical responses [12]. This participatory mechanism plays a key role in shaping green marketing literacy, as it allows consumers to engage with, challenge, and reinforce green claims in real time.

3. Greenwashing and Trust Dynamics

While green marketing has evolved to become more transparent and participatory, concerns surrounding greenwashing remain salient. The presence of keywords such as “greenwashing” and “brand trust” in the co-occurrence and temporal maps especially toward the earlier phases of the timeline signals that skepticism and ethical concerns have long been central to academic inquiry. [13] argued that greenwashing erodes consumer confidence, and the current mapping confirms that scholars have actively explored this issue, particularly in the late 2010s. However, the relative shift of focus in recent years toward trust-building strategies, as indicated by the rise of terms like “green brand image” and “consumer engagement”, suggests a transition from diagnosing problems to developing solutions. This mirrors an evolving scholarly interest in exploring how authenticity, transparency, and consistent branding can mitigate distrust and support higher levels of green marketing literacy. Trust, therefore, is not a static attribute but a negotiated outcome of brand-consumer interaction, shaped heavily by social discourse.

4. Density and Centrality of Research Topics

The density visualization reinforces the findings above by indicating where the bulk of scholarly attention has been concentrated. The bright yellow nodes representing “green marketing,” “marketing,” and “sustainability” suggest that these are intensely studied and conceptually mature areas. Their high density implies not only frequent citation and co-occurrence but also a solid theoretical grounding across multiple disciplines, including environmental management, consumer psychology, and corporate strategy. In contrast, keywords such as “green products,” “environmental economics,” and “competition” appear in lower-density areas, indicating either emerging or underexplored themes. These peripheral areas may represent opportunities for future research, especially in integrating economic models and competitive dynamics into the conversation about social branding and sustainability. For instance, how market competition affects the adoption of green practices—or how economic incentives align with social branding strategies, remains fertile ground for further investigation.

5. Intellectual Structure and Author Collaboration

The author co-citation map reveals a well-established intellectual backbone, with classic marketing scholars like Kotler, Peattie, and Keller forming a red cluster focused on branding, green marketing foundations, and CSR. Meanwhile, authors such as Hair, Sarstedt, and Ringle, associated with methodological rigor in PLS-SEM, populate the blue cluster, signaling a strong emphasis on empirical validation in the field. The green cluster, with authors like Chen and Wang, bridges branding with behavioral and sustainability insights, emphasizing interdisciplinary integration. A striking pattern is the relative isolation of the purple cluster, particularly authors like Chen Y. and

Kwilinski A., suggesting a potential emergence of a parallel theoretical or regional school of thought. These scholars may be contributing through region-specific models, alternative methodologies, or novel frameworks that have yet to be fully integrated into the mainstream conversation. Future research could benefit from bridging this divide, exploring how alternative or localized perspectives enrich the global understanding of social brand dynamics in green marketing.

6. Global Collaboration and Geographic Trends

The country collaboration network provides additional insight into the geopolitical distribution of research activity. The United States is the most dominant hub, with strong ties to China, India, Pakistan, and European nations, reflecting its role as a central contributor and collaborator in sustainability and branding research. India and China also emerge as significant players, indicative of their growing academic infrastructure and policy interest in green innovation. Interestingly, countries like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia appear as smaller nodes, suggesting emerging interest in the field from developing economies. Their engagement is likely to increase in the coming years as environmental challenges and digital adoption rise across the Global South. These geographic patterns suggest that the field of green marketing literacy is becoming more globally inclusive, with increasing potential for cross-cultural and context-specific studies that account for diverse consumer realities and branding practices.

7. Toward an Integrated Framework

The bibliometric evidence supports the conceptualization of green marketing literacy as a socially co-constructed phenomenon, facilitated through brand interactions, digital platforms, and consumer engagement. The convergence of branding theory, environmental communication, and consumer psychology in recent years reflects an increasingly interdisciplinary approach to understanding how sustainability is promoted, interpreted, and internalized by various audiences. To advance the field further, future research should consider integrating longitudinal studies, digital ethnography, and experimental designs to explore the causal pathways between social brand dynamics and green consumer behavior. The interplay between platform affordances (e.g., Instagram, TikTok), influencer authenticity, and regulatory mechanisms also deserves more empirical exploration. Ultimately, understanding how green messages gain traction in digital and social ecosystems will be essential for advancing both academic theory and practical strategies in sustainability communication.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric overview of the evolving landscape of green marketing research, emphasizing the role of social brand dynamics in shaping green marketing literacy. Through visual analyses of keyword co-occurrence, temporal trends, thematic density, author co-citation, and country collaboration networks, the study reveals that green marketing has transitioned from a firm-centric communication strategy to a socially embedded, digitally mediated discourse. Core themes such as sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and consumer behavior continue to dominate the field, while emerging areas like social media engagement, green brand image, and trust dynamics are gaining scholarly attention. The findings highlight the importance of participatory and transparent branding strategies in building consumer understanding and trust toward sustainability claims. Moreover, the global distribution of research collaborations indicates increasing contributions from both developed and emerging economies. Future research should deepen the exploration of contextual, digital, and behavioral dimensions to develop more nuanced models of how green literacy is co-constructed in contemporary brand ecosystems.

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