

Marketing Sustainability through Local Wisdom and Cultural Narratives: A Global Bibliometric Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the intersection of sustainability marketing with local wisdom and cultural narratives has gained increasing scholarly and practical relevance. This study employs a bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer to map the global research landscape on how sustainability is communicated and promoted through culturally rooted strategies. Drawing data from the Scopus database covering publications from 2000 to 2025, the study analyzes keyword co-occurrence, institutional collaboration networks, temporal trends, and country-level partnerships. The findings reveal that while central concepts like “sustainability” and “sustainable development” remain dominant, emerging themes such as “cultural heritage,” “sustainable tourism,” and “local participation” indicate a shift toward more contextualized and human-centered approaches. The study identifies key institutions, regional clusters, and the evolving role of the Global South, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia in contributing to this discourse. The research offers practical insights for marketers, policymakers, and community leaders to design more resonant sustainability campaigns, while also contributing theoretically to the development of culturally embedded marketing frameworks. Limitations of data scope and metadata quality are acknowledged, with suggestions for future qualitative and comparative research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the face of intensifying environmental crises and the growing urgency to pursue sustainable development, the intersection of sustainability and marketing has evolved into a critical area of academic inquiry and practical transformation [1], [2]. Traditional marketing practices, once solely driven by profit and consumerism, are now being challenged by calls for responsible, ethical, and sustainable

engagement with both markets and society. This paradigm shift has opened the door to integrating cultural, ecological, and community-based values into branding and communication strategies, one of which is the promotion of sustainability through local wisdom and cultural narratives [3].

Local wisdom, or *indigenous knowledge*, reflects deeply rooted ecological values, traditional practices, and moral principles that guide communities in

maintaining harmony with nature. Across the globe, such wisdom is embedded in folklore, rituals, customary laws, and oral traditions that have long supported sustainable resource use and environmental conservation [4]–[6]. When translated into marketing discourse, these cultural assets provide not only authenticity but also a framework for sustainability communication that resonates with community identity, place-based storytelling, and environmental stewardship. Marketing that draws upon cultural narratives offers a richer, more resonant alternative to the impersonal, universalist rhetoric of global sustainability campaigns [7].

At the same time, the global marketing landscape has witnessed a renewed appreciation for storytelling rooted in culture. Brands, both multinational and local, have increasingly turned to traditional narratives and symbols to convey values of continuity, resilience, and ethical responsibility [8], [9]. Cultural narratives are being employed to frame environmental action in ways that are more relatable to local audiences, thereby enhancing community engagement, consumer trust, and behavioral change. Such approaches have gained prominence in developing countries, where sustainability efforts are more effective when anchored in community norms and cultural coherence rather than externally imposed standards [10].

Moreover, the rising consumer demand for authenticity, transparency, and cultural sensitivity has transformed how companies strategize their sustainability communications. Local wisdom-based marketing offers a powerful medium for brands to differentiate themselves while also fostering inclusive development [11], [12]. This transformation is also visible in the academic literature, where research has expanded beyond Western-centric paradigms to explore how local, traditional, and indigenous perspectives influence sustainable marketing, consumer behavior, and corporate social responsibility.

Given this increasing global interest, there is a need to map the development, patterns, and knowledge structures of this

emerging research area. Bibliometric analysis, as a quantitative tool, allows scholars to identify dominant themes, influential publications, and evolving trends. By examining global scholarly output on sustainability marketing informed by local wisdom and cultural narratives, researchers can uncover intellectual foundations, geographic distributions, collaboration networks, and thematic hotspots. This mapping is essential to assess the current state of knowledge, recognize gaps, and stimulate future research directions that are inclusive, diverse, and culturally grounded.

Despite the growing recognition of the value of local wisdom and cultural narratives in marketing sustainability, the academic discourse on this topic remains fragmented and underexplored. Studies often emerge from isolated regional contexts without a comprehensive understanding of how this field is evolving globally. There is a lack of integrative perspectives that examine the scale, scope, and structure of this body of knowledge across disciplines, geographies, and publication platforms. Furthermore, the literature lacks consensus on theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and practical applications, making it difficult for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to fully grasp the potential and challenges of leveraging culture in sustainability marketing. Without a systematic bibliometric review, opportunities for cross-cultural learning, innovation, and collaborative advancement may be lost. The objective of this study is to explore the global bibliometric landscape of research on marketing sustainability through local wisdom and cultural narratives.

2. METHODS

This study employs a bibliometric analysis method using *VOSviewer* to map and interpret the global scholarly landscape on sustainability marketing that incorporates local wisdom and cultural narratives. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative approach that enables researchers to identify trends, patterns, and relationships in scientific

publications. It is particularly valuable for understanding the evolution of interdisciplinary fields and identifying gaps or emerging areas of interest. By focusing on citation patterns, co-authorship networks, and keyword co-occurrences, this method allows for a comprehensive overview of how knowledge is produced, shared, and clustered in the domain of sustainable marketing practices grounded in cultural and indigenous contexts.

The bibliometric data were sourced from the Scopus database, selected for its broad and multidisciplinary coverage of peer-reviewed literature. The search strategy utilized combinations of keywords including “sustainability marketing,” “local wisdom,”

“cultural narratives,” “indigenous knowledge,” “traditional knowledge,” and “green communication.” Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and quotation marks were applied to refine results and ensure relevance. The search was limited to documents published between 2000 and 2025 to capture the contemporary evolution of the topic. After removing duplicates and filtering out irrelevant document types (e.g., editorials, notes, book chapters), a curated dataset of approximately 200–250 documents was compiled. Only journal articles, conference proceedings, and review papers were retained to ensure the quality and comparability of scholarly contributions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Keyword Co-Occurrence Network

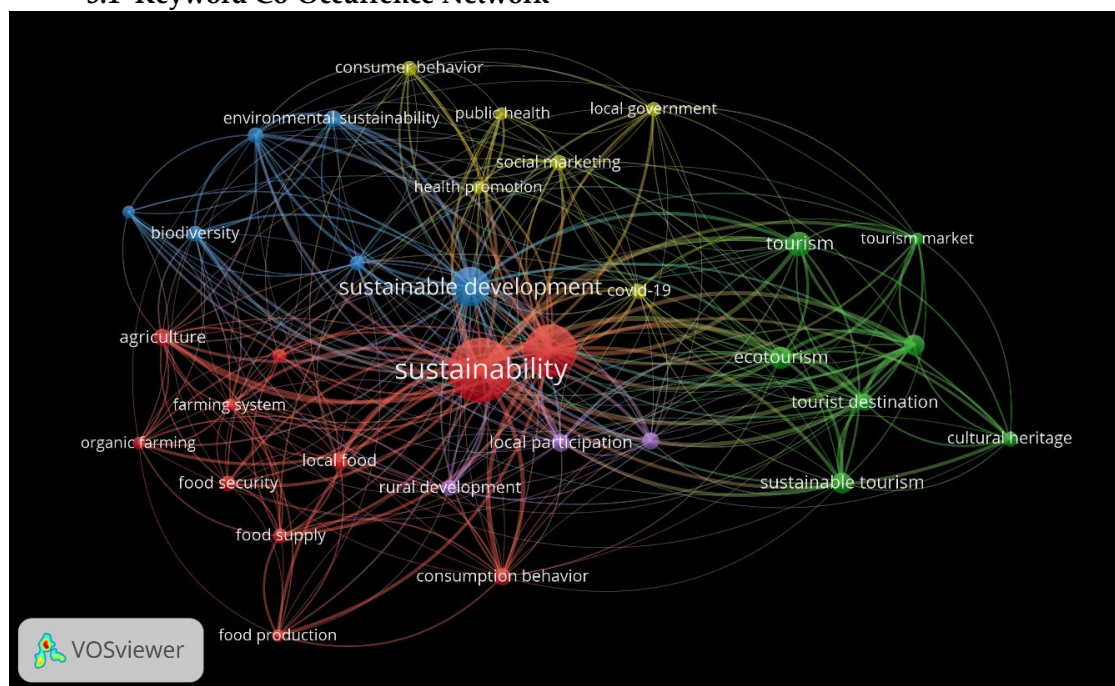


Figure 1. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

At the core of the visualization are the keywords “sustainability” and “sustainable development,” which form the most prominent and interconnected nodes. This central placement signifies that these terms are the dominant conceptual anchors across the corpus of literature analyzed. Their high connectivity indicates that nearly all subtopics within the dataset relate to these overarching

concepts, confirming that sustainability is both a foundational and integrative theme—bridging disciplines from agriculture and tourism to health and marketing. The overlap between “sustainable development” and more applied domains (e.g., food security, tourism, local participation) suggests that researchers view sustainability not just as a

theory, but as an actionable goal implemented across sectors.

To the right of the network, a green-colored cluster emerges, composed of keywords like “tourism,” “ecotourism,” “tourist destination,” “sustainable tourism,” “cultural heritage,” and “tourism market.” This cluster points to a strong research theme focused on sustainable tourism, particularly where it intersects with local culture and heritage. The presence of “cultural heritage” suggests that many studies explore how traditional values, practices, and storytelling influence tourism experiences and sustainability communication. This aligns with the theme of your study, indicating that cultural narratives are becoming a central component in the marketing of sustainability, especially in destination branding and ecotourism frameworks.

On the left side, a red cluster includes keywords such as “agriculture,” “organic farming,” “food security,” “farming system,” and “local food.” This cluster highlights a rich body of literature focused on sustainable food systems and the role of traditional or local practices in promoting food sovereignty. “Local food” and “food production” are closely linked with “rural development” and

“local participation,” suggesting that community-based approaches are key to achieving agricultural sustainability. These studies likely explore how indigenous knowledge, crop diversity, and local farming traditions contribute to both ecological balance and community resilience—adding further depth to the discourse on local wisdom in sustainability.

Toward the upper-middle section, a yellow-to-blue cluster features keywords such as “public health,” “social marketing,” “health promotion,” “environmental sustainability,” and “local government.” This indicates a growing intersection between sustainability communication and public well-being, where marketing strategies are used to promote health behaviors aligned with environmental values. The presence of “local government” suggests institutional involvement in these efforts, possibly through campaigns or community initiatives. The co-occurrence of “social marketing” with “local participation” reflects an emerging focus on community-engaged strategies that leverage cultural values for promoting behavioral change—especially in areas like recycling, public health, or sustainable consumption.

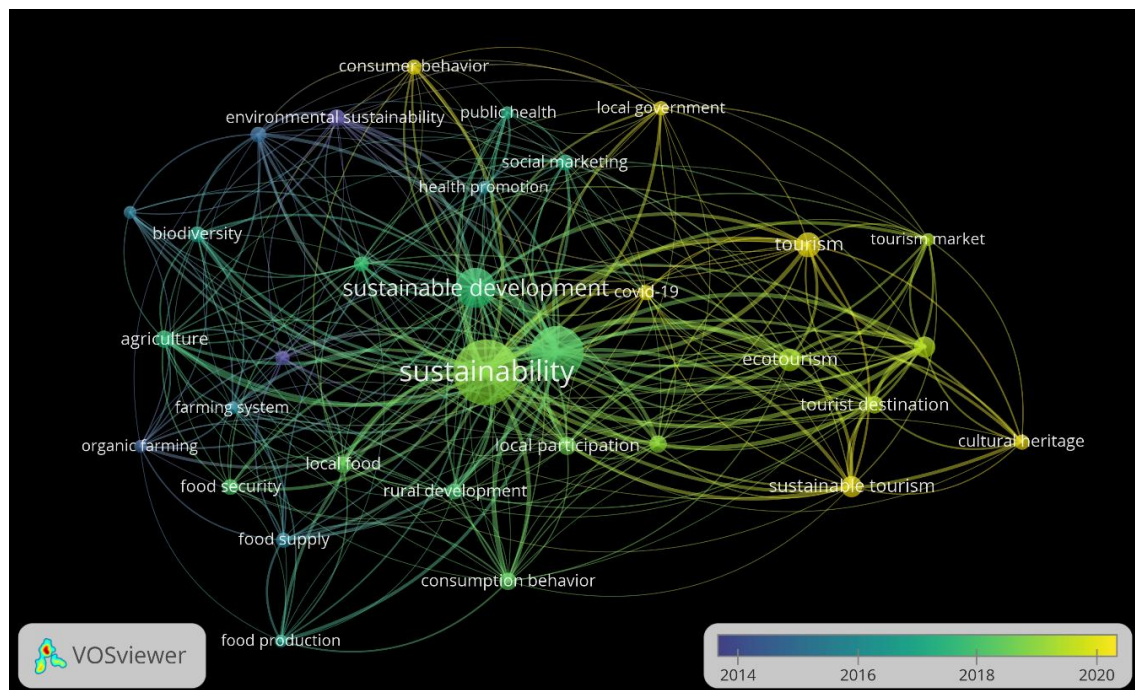


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 2 offers insight into the temporal progression of keywords in sustainability-related literature, with colors representing the average publication year of documents associated with each term—from blue (older, ~2014) to yellow (newer, ~2020). The core terms, such as “sustainability” and “sustainable development,” appear in green, suggesting they have been consistently studied throughout the timeline (2015–2018 peak). These keywords serve as the foundation from which various thematic expansions have emerged, particularly into sectors like agriculture, tourism, and governance, indicating their persistent centrality across time.

In the yellow-colored cluster on the right, newer research themes have increasingly focused on sustainable tourism, cultural heritage, ecotourism, tourist destination, and tourism market. These terms show a stronger average year of appearance closer to 2019–2020, signifying a recent surge in scholarly interest. This shift highlights an

evolving recognition of the role of cultural narratives and local identity in promoting sustainable tourism practices. The proximity of these tourism-related terms to keywords like local participation and social marketing also signals a growing integration between sustainability, community engagement, and localized storytelling in tourism development and destination branding.

On the left side of the map, older themes such as agriculture, organic farming, food security, farming system, and biodiversity are shaded in blue to light green, reflecting their dominance in earlier sustainability discussions (2014–2016). These topics have formed the foundational discourse of sustainability, particularly in relation to environmental conservation and food systems. However, their earlier concentration also implies a relative decline in new publications in recent years, as academic focus shifts toward sociocultural and behavioral aspects of sustainability.

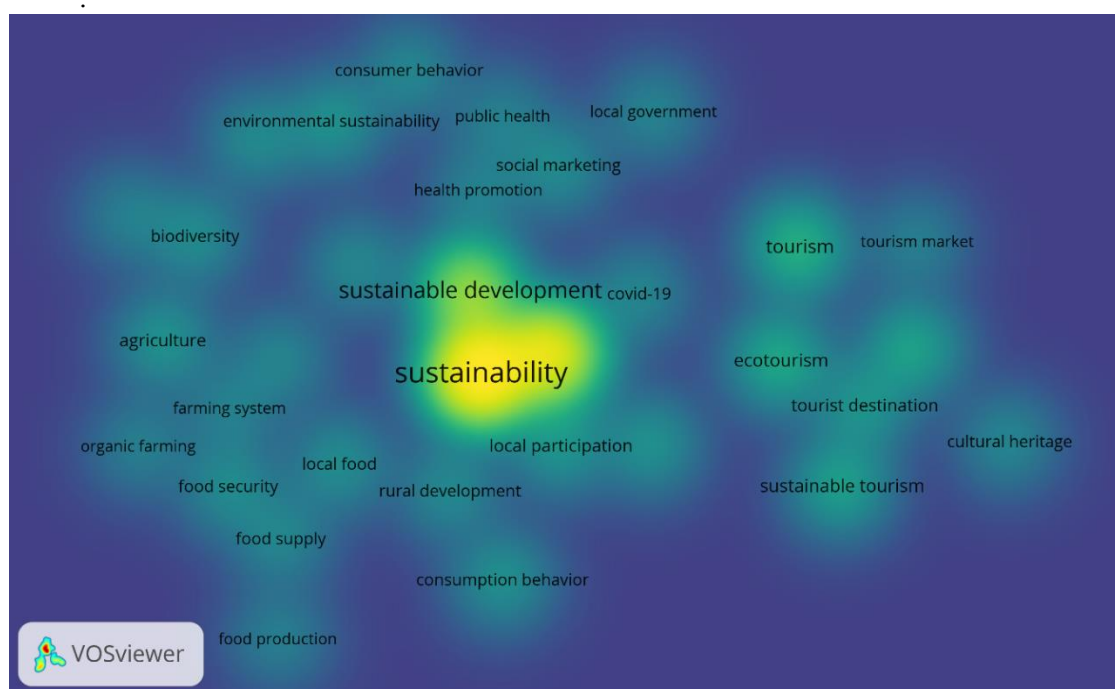


Figure 3. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

Figure 3 highlights “sustainability” and “sustainable development” as the most intensively researched and cited themes in the analyzed literature. These terms are shown in

bright yellow, indicating a high frequency of occurrence and strong centrality in the knowledge network. This prominence suggests that most scholarly works in the

dataset are anchored around broad discussions of sustainability, often framing it as a central goal or guiding principle across various subdomains such as environmental management, policy development, or corporate responsibility. The surrounding nodes like “local participation,” “rural development,” and “consumption behavior” are also moderately dense, signifying their importance as recurring topics, albeit with slightly less intensity.

In contrast, topics such as “cultural heritage,” “tourist destination,” “sustainable tourism,” and “ecotourism” appear in less intense green zones, suggesting that while they are present in the scholarly conversation, they are comparatively less explored or more recent in focus. Similarly, agricultural themes like “organic farming” and “food security” occupy peripheral but still relevant positions, reflecting their foundational yet stabilizing role in sustainability discourse.

3.2 Co-Authorship Network

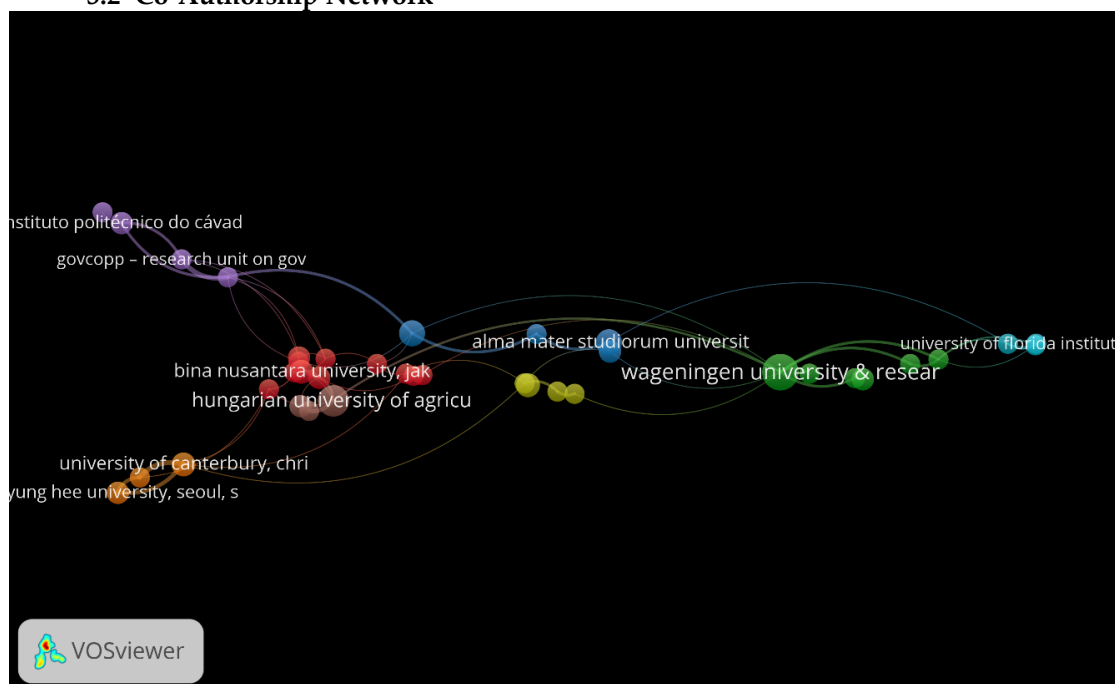


Figure 4. Author Collaboration Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

Figure 4 displays a co-authorship network by institutional affiliation, highlighting clusters of collaboration among universities and research centers involved in sustainability-related studies. At the center-right, Wageningen University & Research emerges as a major hub (green cluster), indicating its central role in global scholarly collaboration. To the left, Bina Nusantara University and the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (red cluster) represent another active group of

interconnected institutions, likely engaging in joint research on sustainability from agricultural or governance perspectives. Smaller but distinct clusters are visible, such as Instituto Politécnico do Cávado, Kyung Hee University, and University of Canterbury, showing more regional or bilateral connections. The positioning of Alma Mater Studiorum University and University of Florida Institute along the network's axis suggests they serve as bridging institutions, linking disparate research communities.

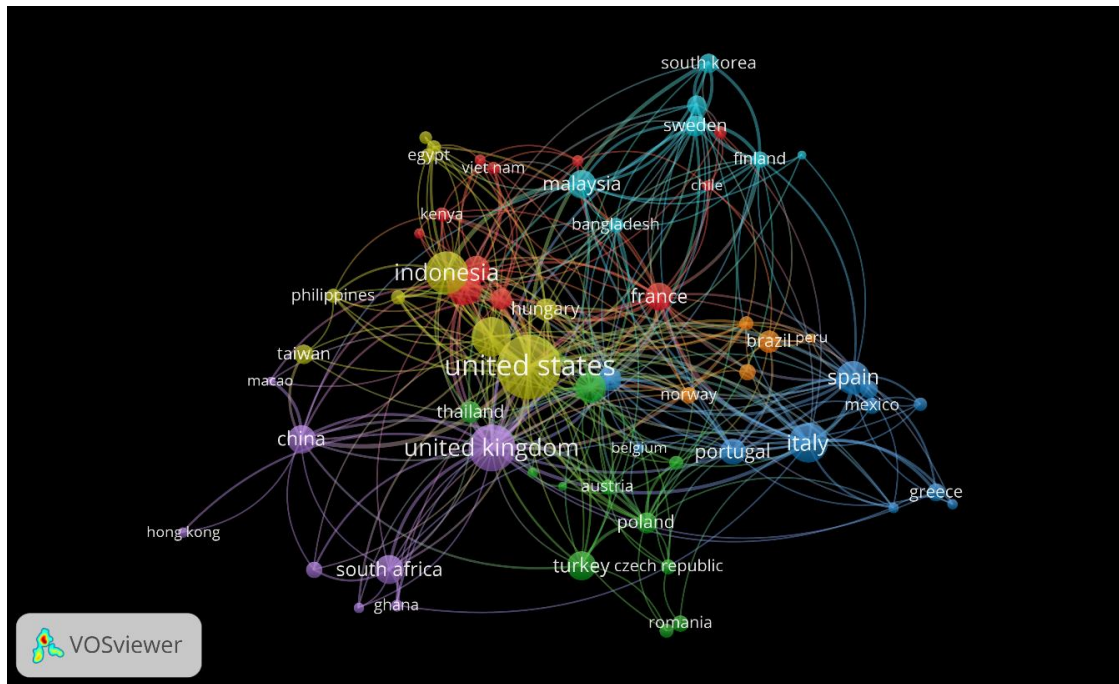


Figure 5. Country Collaboration Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2025

Figure 5 illustrates the global collaboration landscape in sustainability-related research, particularly in areas involving cultural narratives and local wisdom. At the center of the network, the United States, United Kingdom, and Indonesia appear as key nodes, indicating both high research output and strong international partnerships. The United States acts as a major hub connecting with nearly all clusters, while Indonesia is notably central in

the Asian collaboration cluster, linking actively with Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippines, and Thailand, suggesting its growing influence in sustainability studies rooted in local culture and context. Meanwhile, European countries like Italy, Portugal, and Spain form tightly knit sub-networks, as do China, South Korea, and Taiwan in East Asia. The presence of countries like Kenya, Egypt, and South Africa reflects emerging contributions from the Global South.

3.3 Citation Analysis

Table 1. Top Cited Research

Citations	Authors and year	Title
2056	[13]	Marketing the competitive destination of the future
392	[14]	Towards a sufficiency-driven business model: Experiences and opportunities
384	[15]	The role of ecotourism in conservation: Panacea or Pandora's box?
354	[16]	Consumers' perceptions, preferences and willingness-to-pay for wine with sustainability characteristics: A review
330	[17]	Universal health coverage in Indonesia: concept, progress, and challenges
294	[18]	Developments in breeding cereals for organic agriculture
289	[19]	Reconciling traditional inland fisheries management and sustainability in industrialized countries, with emphasis on Europe

Citations	Authors and year	Title
287	[20]	Sustaining intensification of smallholder livestock systems in the tropics
247	[21]	Food tourism, niche markets and products in rural tourism: combining the intimacy model and the experience economy as a rural development strategy
235	[22]	The Transformation of the 'Barcelona Model': An Analysis of Culture, Urban Regeneration and Governance

Source: Scopus, 2025

Practical Implication

The findings of this study provide actionable insights for sustainability marketers, policy makers, and tourism stakeholders who aim to promote sustainability through culturally grounded approaches. The emergence of themes such as cultural heritage, local participation, and sustainable tourism indicates that campaigns rooted in community narratives and traditional knowledge systems are gaining traction. Marketers can leverage this by co-creating messages with local communities, using storytelling methods that reflect their values, rituals, and identity. Governments and development agencies may also benefit by aligning sustainability policies with culturally resonant communication strategies, thereby enhancing public engagement and policy adoption. Additionally, the identification of leading countries and institutions offers a roadmap for strategic academic and practitioner partnerships, particularly for actors in the Global South seeking to elevate indigenous perspectives in global sustainability discourse.

Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to the literature by providing a systematic and visual mapping of how local wisdom and cultural narratives intersect with sustainability marketing research globally. It reinforces the theoretical premise that sustainability is not a monolithic concept, but one that is socially constructed, context-dependent, and culturally embedded. By highlighting the growing presence of keywords related to tourism, agriculture, health promotion, and rural development within the sustainability literature, the study

extends institutional, socio-cultural, and behavioral theories of marketing into the sustainability domain. Moreover, it opens space for a hybrid framework that bridges sustainability science, marketing communication, and cultural studies—thus enriching our understanding of how meaning is created, shared, and mobilized in support of sustainable development goals.

Limitation

While this bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of research trends, it has several limitations. First, the study is restricted to documents indexed in Scopus, which, although comprehensive, may exclude relevant publications from local or non-English databases where culturally rooted studies are often published. Second, the analysis is inherently quantitative and does not assess the qualitative depth or contextual richness of how local wisdom is represented or interpreted in each article. Third, some institutional names and country affiliations may appear fragmented or incomplete due to metadata inconsistencies, which could influence network accuracy. Future studies are encouraged to complement this analysis with systematic literature reviews, discourse analysis, or fieldwork, to deepen understanding and ensure marginalized voices are not only counted but critically examined.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has mapped the evolving landscape of sustainability marketing through the lens of local wisdom and cultural narratives using bibliometric analysis. The findings reveal a growing scholarly interest in

integrating indigenous knowledge, cultural identity, and community participation into sustainability discourse, especially in fields like sustainable tourism, agriculture, and social marketing. By visualizing co-occurrence networks, institutional collaborations, and global author-country linkages, the study highlights both the centrality of traditional sustainability concepts and the emerging significance of culturally grounded approaches. It underscores the need for more inclusive, pluralistic, and context-sensitive strategies in

both academic inquiry and practical implementation. As sustainability challenges become more complex and global, integrating local values and stories into marketing practices offers not only authenticity but also a powerful means of mobilizing behavioral change and fostering long-term engagement. This research thus provides a valuable foundation for future interdisciplinary exploration that bridges sustainability science, cultural studies, and communication strategies.

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