

Supply Chains in Style: A Bibliometric Analysis of Fashion and Supply Chain Management Interface

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ABSTRACT

The convergence of fashion and supply chain management (SCM) has gained increasing scholarly attention in response to growing global concerns over agility, sustainability, and responsiveness in the fashion industry. This bibliometric analysis aims to systematically map the evolution of literature at the intersection of fashion-related products encompassing apparel, garments, textiles, and clothing and SCM practices within the business and management domain. Using the Scopus database and a rigorously defined search protocol, we extracted and analyzed peer-reviewed journal articles published in top-tier journals. Analytical tools such as Biblioshiny (R package) and VOSviewer were employed to assess publication trends, identify influential authors, institutions, and journals, and explore thematic clusters. Our findings reveal five dominant clusters: (1) Strategic and Structural Adaptation in Fashion SC; (2) Circular Economy and Sustainability Transitions in Fashion SC; (3) Optimization and Coordination in Fashion SC; (4) Digital and Circular Transformation in Sustainable Fashion SC and (5) Ethics, Entrepreneurship, and Green Innovation in Fashion SC. The study also highlights research gaps and proposes directions for future inquiry. This work offers precious insights for scholars and practitioners looking to understand how SCM concepts have shaped, and been shaped by, the evolving demands of the global fashion ecosystem.

Keywords: Fashion Supply Chain, Textile Logistics, Apparel Industry Management, Bibliometric Analysis, Science Mapping, Sustainable Fashion

1. INTRODUCTION

The fashion business, marked by its dynamic characteristics and substantial worldwide impact, is closely associated with sophisticated, multi-continental supply chains (SC) (Sen, 2008; Macchion *et al.*, 2015; Tseng *et al.*, 2022; Sarker & Bartók, 2023; Zhang *et al.*, 2024). The SC that sources, produces, and distributes fashion products has experienced considerable revolutions in recent years, hurting industry performance and sustainability (Masson *et al.*, 2007; Kazancoglu *et al.*, 2022). Conventional production and processing techniques in the textile manufacturing sector substantially contribute to waste pollution, intensifying

environmental issues (Madhav *et al.*, 2018). The aforementioned challenges, along with escalating costs and heightened consumer demand for sustainable practices, have catalyzed substantial investment from governments, corporations, and institutions focused on improving the resilience, transparency, and overall sustainability of fashion supply chains (Shen, 2014; Choi *et al.*, 2018; Fung, 2020; Garcia-Torres *et al.*, 2022; Choi *et al.*, 2023). The demand for improved supply chain resilience has prompted implementing many solutions, such as nearshoring, which seeks to minimize lead times and promote agility by shifting manufacturing nearer to consumer markets (Stringer & Ramirez-Melgarejo, 2023; Li *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, integrating technologies such as blockchain and AI improves transparency, traceability, and efficiency across the fashion SC (Mohiuddin Babu, 2024; Chen, 2024; Singh *et al.*, 2024). Blockchain technology can enhance recycling efficiency by offering transparency, integration, behaviour modulation, and service transformation inside the recycling chain (Xie *et al.*, 2023). Likewise, AI applications are being investigated to enhance supply chain aspects, including design, production, logistics, and distribution (Giri *et al.*, 2019; Ramos *et al.*, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed supply chain vulnerabilities, pushing enterprises to implement sustainable measures to mitigate disruptions (Dohale *et al.*, 2023; Sarma *et al.*, 2023; Imran *et al.*, 2024).

Scholarly interest in the convergence of fashion and SCM has significantly increased, reflecting the escalating difficulties and issues encountered by the sector (e.g., Brun & Castelli, 2008; Turker & Altuntas, 2014; Chen, 2024; Zhang *et al.*, 2024). Researchers have investigated various subjects, including fast fashion dynamics, sustainable sourcing, digital transformation, and risk management (e.g., Bhandari *et al.*, 2022; Casciani *et al.*, 2022; Yuan, 2024). A company's reputation for sustainable SCM and careful management of SC participants at all tiers have been highlighted in recent research (von Berlepsch *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, to reduce waste and improve resource efficiency, circular economy ideas like recycling, upcycling, and product life extension are being used in sustainable SCM (e.g., Choi & Cheng, 2015; Bhandari *et al.*, 2022). Esteemed scholars worldwide have examined various aspects of the relationship between fashion and SCM, including agility (Christopher *et al.*, 2004), complexity (Masson *et al.*, 2007), manufacturing and retailing (Sen, 2008), supply chain strategy (Brun & Castelli, 2008),

Table 1 Select Bibliometric Review Papers on SC

Study	Focal Domain	Database / Source	Time Window	Records (n)	Techniques / Tools	Key Contributions	How it Differs from Current Study
González-Benito <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Automotive industry SCM	Business Source Complete (EBSCO)	1992–2011	404	Keyword search + bibliometric analysis	Maps outlets/authors and themes in automotive-SCM research.	Sector-specific (automotive), older window, different database; not fashion-focused.
Fahimnia <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Green SCM	Scopus	1992-2012	884	Bibliometric analysis + review synthesis	Synthesizes intellectual structure and streams in GSCM.	Topic-specific (GSCM); not fashion-SCM.
Maditati <i>et al.</i> (2018)	GSCM	Web of Science	1997-2016	1523	HistCite + VOSviewer (citation/co-citation/co-word) analysis	Maps GSCM knowledge base and evolution.	GSCM focus; WoS-only; not fashion-SCM.
Amirbagheri <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Green SCM	Web of Science	1995–2017	Around 1,900	VOSviewer; bibliographic coupling, co-citation, co-authorship, keyword co-occurrence	Productivity/influence map and thematic structure of GSC research.	Broader GSC; WoS-only; not fashion-SCM.
Feng <i>et al.</i> (2017)	CSR in SCM	Scopus	1997-2017	628	Bibliometric + network analysis (citation, co-citation, co-word)	Depicts knowledge structure and progress of CSR-for-SCM research.	CSR lens; not fashion-SCM; narrower topical boundary.
Mishra <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Big Data & SCM	Scopus	2006–2016	286	Bibliometric + network analysis; citation & PageRank; clustering	Identifies key topics/countries and six research clusters in Big Data–SCM.	Digital/analytics focus; smaller dataset; not fashion-SCM.
Xu <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Supply chain finance	Multiple academic databases (Scopus, ESBSCO etc)	1970-2016	348	Systematic review + bibliometric/network/content analysis	Maps SCF directions; proposes future research directions.	Finance focus; not fashion-SCM.
Rejeb <i>et al.</i> (2020)	IoT in SCM & logistics	Scopus	2000-2020	807	Bibliometric analysis and science mapping	Charts IoT knowledge development within SCM/logistics.	Technology focus; not fashion-SCM.
Fosso Wamba (2020)	Humanitarian SCM	Web of Science	1967-2020	1152	Bibliometric analysis and science mapping	Assesses current HSC research and proposes future directions.	Humanitarian context; not fashion-SCM.
Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Sustainable SCM under Big Data	Scopus	2012–2019	777	Bibliometric analysis + network visualization	Maps SSCM–big data landscape; key contributors and clusters.	SSCM–big data focus; shorter window; not fashion-SCM.
Riahi <i>et al.</i> (2021)	AI applications in supply chains	Scopus	1996–2020	136	SLR + bibliometric; classification framework	Process-based map of AI use across SC processes; future agenda.	AI-only; limited corpus vs. fashion-SCM.
Zhou <i>et al.</i> (2021)	SCM under carbon taxes	Multiple academic databases (Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Inform etc)	2010–2019	273	Descriptive stats + bibliometric + content analysis	Classifies SC decisions under carbon tax; future directions.	Policy/low-carbon lens; not fashion-SCM.
Fang <i>et al.</i> (2022)	SCM in general	Web of Science	2010-2020	8998	Bibliometric analysis	Defines SCM; discusses research state and future directions.	General SCM; not fashion-SCM.

Table 1 Select Bibliometric Review Papers on SC (Cont'd)

Study	Focal Domain	Database / Source	Time Window	Records (n)	Techniques / Tools	Key Contributions	How it Differs from Current Study
Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Circular SCM	Scopus and Web of Science	Upto 31 Dec 2021	1130	Bibliometric analysis-based literature review	Synthesizes circular SCM themes and evolution.	Circularity lens; not fashion-SCM.
Raza <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Machine learning in SCM	Multiple academic databases (Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Inform etc)	2008-2018	155	Bibliometric review	Maps ML–SCM research streams and directions.	ML focus; not fashion-SCM.
Rusydian <i>a et al.</i> (2023)	Halal SCM	Scopus	2015-2022	228	Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny mapping and analysis	Maps themes, productive contributors, and emerging topics in halal SCM.	Sector/faith-based scope; not fashion-SCM.
Kotzab <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Supply chain integration	Web of Science	1995-2019	1700+	Bibliometric analysis	Maps evolution/structure of SCI research.	Integration focus; not fashion-SCM.
Castillo <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Supply chain resilience	Web of Science	2004-2021	1596	Bibliometric synthesis	Assesses intellectual structure and theorization of SC resilience.	Resilience lens; not fashion-SCM.
Han & Fang (2024)	Blockchain in SCM	Web of Science	2017-2023	180	Bibliometric review	Maps blockchain–SCM research and future agenda.	Blockchain focus; not fashion-SCM.
Lwesya & Achanta (2024)	Food SCM	Scopus	2005-2022	466	Bibliometric analysis	Maps food SCM research trends.	Sector-specific (food); not fashion-SCM.
Zrelli & Rejeb (2024)	IoT applications in logistics & SCM	Scopus	2000-2023	2680	Bibliometric analysis	Shows evolution from foundational to mature IoT implementations in logistics/SCM.	IoT focus; not fashion-SCM.

sustainable operations (Turker & Altuntas, 2014), productin and supply network strategies (Macchion *et al.*, 2015), supply chain governance (Li *et al.*, 2014), supply chain visibility and transparency (Caridi *et al.*, 2013), blockchain and technology integration (Agrawal *et al.*, 2021), and artificial intelligence and Industry 4.0 (Khurshid *et al.*, 2024).

Despite the growing literature, a gap remains in bibliometric analyses mapping research at the intersection of fashion and SCM. Existing studies mainly focus on specific SCM themes (Table 1), such as sustainable SCM (Zhang *et al.*, 2021), digital technologies (Riahi *et al.*, 2021), green SCM (Amirbagheri *et al.*, 2019), and machine learning in SCM (Raza *et al.*, 2023), while a holistic view of fashion and SCM development remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap.

More precisely, this study aims to plug that research gap by conducting a bibliometric analysis of research on fashion and SCM within the business and management domain. Utilizing the Scopus database, we extracted relevant journal articles using a defined search protocol. Tools like Biblioshiny and VOSviewer were employed to perform cluster and thematic analyses, identifying key trends, influential authors, and emerging research areas. The study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) How has the academic literature on fashion and SCM evolved over time, considering factors such as publication trends, citation patterns, and the emergence of new research themes?
- 2) What are the predominant themes and research clusters in this field, and how do they reflect the evolving challenges and opportunities within the fashion industry's supply chain?
- 3) What directions should future research take to address existing gaps, and how can academics and practitioners collaborate to drive innovation and sustainability in the fashion supply chain?

By answering these questions, the findings of this study offer insights for academics and practitioners, informing future research directions and strategic decisions in the fashion industry's SCM. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive overview of the research landscape, identifying key focus areas, and highlighting avenues for future exploration. Furthermore, the findings can guide practitioners in developing more robust, resilient, and sustainable supply chain strategies that address the challenges and opportunities within the fashion industry (Imran *et al.*, 2024).



Figure 1 The Steps of Literature Collection and Selection

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the methodology, including the search strategy, inclusion criteria, and bibliometric techniques. Section 3 presents the results, including performance metrics, intellectual structures, and thematic evolution. Section 4 discusses the cluster analysis using bibliometric coupling. Section 5 outlines 20 future research directions across five clusters. Section 6 presents the discussion, theoretical contributions, and managerial implications. Finally, Section 7 concludes the study by summarizing the main insights and highlighting the limitations.

2. METHODOLOGY & DATA

This study adheres to the guidelines established by Donthu *et al.* (2021) for bibliometric analysis, encompassing the following stages (Figure 1). The details of various stages and steps are explained below (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu *et al.*, 2021).

The review process begins with identification, where the research scope, objectives, and inclusion or exclusion criteria are defined. This step sharpens the research questions and sets clear disciplinary boundaries, ensuring that the analysis remains focused. Once the scope is established,

acquisition involves collecting bibliographic data from major peer-reviewed databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and PubMed using structured search strategies. Since the choice of database directly shapes data quality and relevance, this step is critical. The collected records are then organized by consolidating entries from multiple sources, removing duplicates, and standardizing author names and keywords. Purification follows, applying quality checks through document-type filters, language and domain screening, and abstract or full-text reviews based on PRISMA guidelines. This results in a clean, reliable dataset ready for analysis. Evaluation then employs bibliometric and science-mapping techniques to reveal patterns in the literature. Performance analysis captures citation trends, publication growth, and author productivity, while enrichment analysis uses co-citation, bibliographic coupling, co-authorship, and keyword networks to uncover deeper structures. Tools such as VOSviewer, CiteSpace, and bibliometrix enable visual and quantitative insights. Finally, reporting integrates these findings, identifies major contributors and gaps, and clearly addresses the research questions using visuals, tables, and concise narrative explanations while also noting limitations and ensuring reproducibility.

Table 2 Main Information about Data

Description	Results
Timespan	1990:2025
Sources (Journals)	82
Documents	930
Annual Growth Rate %	10.51
Document Average Age	8.08
Average citations per doc	50.2
References	53,050
Author's Keywords	2,573
Authors	2,111
Authors of single-authored docs	85
Single-authored docs	99
Co-Authors per Doc	2.95
International co-authorships %	33.66

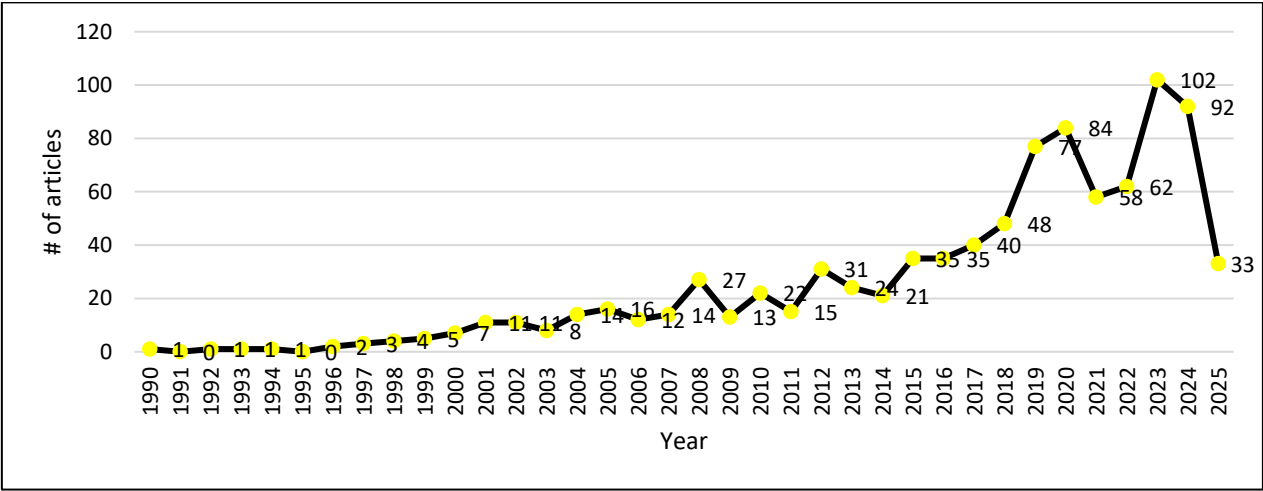


Figure 2 Annual Scientific Production

In this study, the above outlined process was followed and selected Elsevier’s Scopus over Clarivate’s Web of Science, consistent with Paul’s (2021) recommendations. Scopus offered broader coverage and aligned better with our research objectives, containing nearly 100 million documents from over 30,000 journals. The search focused on business and management literature, using terms that capture the intersection of fashion and supply chain change. Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and * refined the query, which was executed across titles, abstracts, and keywords following the methodology in Annexure 1. The initial search returned 9,606 articles (Figure 1). After removing studies outside Business and Management, the dataset narrowed to 3,352 articles. Excluding books, book chapters, and conference papers reduced this to 2,584, and filtering out non-English documents resulted in 2,426 articles. To maintain quality, only journal-listed articles from top-tier outlets were retained, yielding 930 articles. These were then screened at the abstract level for relevance to the research questions, and the final set was exported from Scopus in CSV format. In the evaluation stage, we conducted performance analysis, science mapping, and thematic analysis, followed by clear and concise reporting of the result.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Articles in Scopus Focusing on the Field of Research

The dataset spans 35 years from 1990 to 2025, indicating a long-standing yet evolving scholarly interest in the intersection of fashion and SCM (Table 2). Nine hundred thirty journal articles were retrieved from 82 distinct sources in the business and management domain, demonstrating a moderate level of journal diversity in this interdisciplinary field. The annual growth rate of 10.51% reflects a consistent rise in research output over the years, likely fueled by industry disruptions, the rise of fast fashion, and the global shift towards sustainable practices (Anjum *et al.*, 2024; Islam *et al.*, 2021; Peters *et al.*, 2021; White *et al.*, 2017). The average age of the articles, at 8.08 years, suggests a relatively contemporary knowledge base, while the average citation count of 50.2 per document highlights significant academic impact and citation visibility. With 2,111 contributing authors, this research domain shows high scholarly engagement. Collaborative research appears prevalent, with an average of 2.95 co-authors per document and a noteworthy 33.66% international co-authorship rate, underscoring the global relevance of fashion SCM. Only 99

Table 3 Top Cited Papers

Sr No	Title	Authors	Local Citations (LC)	Global Citations (GC)	Normalized LC	Normalized GC
1	Creating agile supply chains in the fashion industry	Christopher <i>et al.</i> (2004)	47	552	5.35	3.35
2	Lean or agile: A solution for supply chain management in the textiles and clothing industry?	Bruce <i>et al.</i> (2004)	46	491	5.24	2.98
3	Sustainable supply chain management in the fast fashion industry: An analysis of corporate reports.	Turker & Altuntas (2014)	42	359	6.49	3.30
4	Environmental sustainability in fashion supply chains: An exploratory case-based research.	Caniato <i>et al.</i> (2012)	38	422	9.90	3.79
5	Towards a sustainable fashion retail supply chain in Europe: Organisation and performance.	De Brito <i>et al.</i> (2008)	37	431	8.61	5.38
6	Social sustainability in developing country suppliers: An exploratory study in the ready-made garments industry of Bangladesh.	Anisul Huq <i>et al.</i> (2014)	26	302	4.01	2.78
7	Social management capabilities of multinational buying firms and their emerging market suppliers: An exploratory study of the clothing industry.	Huq <i>et al.</i> (2016)	25	260	8.03	4.07
8	Managing complexity in agile global fashion industry supply chains.	Masson <i>et al.</i> (2007)	23	128	7.67	1.94
9	Corporate social responsibility in garment sourcing networks: Factory management perspectives on ethical trade in Sri Lanka.	Perry <i>et al.</i> (2015)	22	117	9.28	1.59
10	Supply chain strategy in the fashion industry: Developing a portfolio model depending on product, retail channel and brand.	Brun & Castell (2008)	22	153	5.12	1.91

single-authored documents indicate a dominant preference for co-authorship, typical of multi-disciplinary and application-oriented domains such as fashion logistics and sustainable SCM. The corpus is also rich in metadata, with 2,573 unique author keywords and over 53,000 references, providing a strong foundation for co-word and thematic evolution analysis.

3.2 Annual Production

The annual scientific production on the intersection of fashion and SCM reveals a clear evolutionary trajectory from a niche research area in the 1990s to a rapidly expanding field post-2015 (Figure 2). During the first decade (1990–2000), publication output was minimal, rarely exceeding one to two articles per year. This slow start likely reflects the traditional focus of SCM on manufacturing and logistics-intensive sectors, with fashion's integration into supply chain discourse gradually emerging.

From 2001 onwards, a steady rise in publication volume was observed, reflecting increasing scholarly interest in the unique challenges of fashion’s dynamic, trend-sensitive, and time-compressed nature. A substantial inflection point occurred post-2015, with annual output exceeding 30 articles and peaking at 102 in 2023, followed by 92 in 2024 and 33 (partial year) in 2025. This growth aligns with global concerns around sustainability, fast fashion, digitalization, and transparency issues, placing fashion SCM as one of the important topics in academic and industry conversations (Choi *et al.*, 2018; Casciani *et al.*, 2022; Imran *et al.*, 2024; Choi *et al.*, 2023). The sustained

increase in publications also signals the field’s maturation and sets the stage for deeper thematic and co-citation analyses to explore research clusters and knowledge gaps. Importantly, this study examines absolute publication trends within the fashion–SCM interface rather than normalized growth relative to the entire SCM literature. As such, the observed increase should be interpreted as indicative of rising scholarly attention within this subfield, rather than as evidence of its proportional dominance in SCM research overall.

3.3 Citation Analysis

The most cited papers (Table 3) in this domain reflect the scholarly trajectory from foundational supply chain agility towards complex sustainability and social responsibility issues in the fashion industry. Leading the citation list, Christopher *et al.* (2004) emphasize the concept of agile supply chains to navigate fashion’s volatile demand environment. With 552 global citations, their work laid the groundwork for how agility can drive responsiveness in time-sensitive markets, a theme echoed in the similarly influential work by Bruce *et al.* (2004), which explores the lean–agile–leagile continuum and its relevance for quick response strategies in apparel manufacturing.

The mid-2010s marked a thematic shift toward sustainability. Papers by Turker & Altuntas (2014) and Caniato *et al.* (2012) delve into sustainable SCM (SSCM) and environmental practices, respectively, signalling a growing alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. These papers emphasize various sustainability practices

Table 4 Top Authors, Institutes and Countries

Top Authors			Top Institutions		Top Countries		
Authors	TP	Articles Fractionalized	Institutions	TP	Authors	TP	SCP
Choi T. M.	32	15.45	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	69	UK	101	56
Shen B.	9	2.42	Politecnico Di Milano	48	USA	99	67
Caniato F.	8	1.58	RMIT University	30	China	94	51
Li Y.	8	2.58	Hong Kong Polytechnic University	29	Italy	59	48
Pal R.	8	4	University Of Borås	25	India	51	40
Perry P.	8	3.33	University Of Science and Technology of China	23	Australia	37	24
Towers N.	8	3.12	Donghua University	22	Hong Kong	31	21
Ali S. M.	7	1.62	University Of Technology Sydney	18	Sweden	30	22
Chowdhury MMH	7	2.25	The University of Manchester	17	France	25	10
Kumar A.	7	1.78	Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology	16	Germany	25	18

Note: TP = Total Publications; SCP = Sole Country Publication

including sustainable sourcing, green supplier evaluation and transparency initiatives that are becoming embedded across fashion supply networks (Turker & Altuntas, 2014; Caniato *et al.*, 2012; Garcia-Torres *et al.*, 2022; Kazancoglu *et al.*, 2022b). De Brito *et al.* (2008) further broaden this narrative by examining supply chain performance through a European lens, underlining the role of policy and retail structures in shaping sustainability transitions. Social sustainability is another dominant area. Huq *et al.*'s (2014, 2016) papers explore supplier behavior in emerging economies like Bangladesh, emphasizing both enablers and barriers to socially sustainable practices. These contributions are significant for understanding the lived realities of developing country suppliers, especially in the context of Western audit cultures, compliance burdens, and post-crisis supply chain reforms. Masson *et al.* (2007) and Perry *et al.* (2015) complement this view by highlighting the strategic role of intermediaries and CSR compliance pressures in global fashion networks. Lastly Brun & Castell (2008) introduce a segmentation model that tailors supply chain strategies to different product types, retail channels, and brand positioning combinations. Though not as highly cited globally, this work is methodologically rich and highly relevant for supply chain strategy personalization in diversified fashion portfolios.

Our results display that these top-cited studies reveal three major intellectual pillars in fashion-SCM literature: (1) agility and responsiveness, (2) environmental and social sustainability, and (3) strategic segmentation and governance. This citation pattern confirms the field's evolution from operational efficiency toward ethical, strategic, and systemic concerns. The integration of these themes offers a robust foundation for identifying research gaps in digitalization, circular supply chains, and resilience planning, thus setting the stage for future scholarship.

3.4 Most Influential Authors, Institutions And Country

The author-level analysis (Table 4) reveals that T. M. Choi is the most prolific contributor to the intersection of fashion and SCM, with 32 total publications and the highest fractionalized authorship score (15.45), indicating high productivity and significant individual contribution. Other influential authors include P. Perry, R. Pal, and N. Towers, who have balanced productivity with substantial authorship roles, especially in socially responsible and strategic supply

chain studies in the fashion context (Perry *et al.*, 2015; Pal *et al.*, 2019). Their frequent collaborations on agility, sustainability, and ethics highlight a core group shaping scholarly discourse in this domain. Their contributions collectively span topics such as agility (Christopher *et al.*, 2004), responsible sourcing (Huq *et al.*, 2014), digital integration (Agrawal *et al.*, 2021), and performance improvement frameworks (Fung *et al.*, 2020), demonstrating the thematic diversity present in the literature.

Institutional productivity is led by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, contributing 69 publications and represented by multiple authors in the top contributors list (e.g., Choi and Li), underlining its role as a central hub in fashion SCM research. European institutions such as Politecnico di Milano (48 papers) and the University of Borås (25 papers) also emerge as key players, reflecting regional strengths in fashion design, logistics innovation, and sustainable practices (Brun & Castelli, 2008). RMIT University and Donghua University also show a growing footprint, particularly in sustainable and digital supply chain research.

In terms of geographical contribution, the United Kingdom (101 papers) leads, closely followed by the United States (99 papers) and China (94 papers), showcasing a balanced global research landscape. However, the USA leads in sole country publications (67 SCP), suggesting a preference for domestically-led studies, whereas India (40 SCP) and Italy (48 SCP) show increasing academic engagement, likely influenced by their growing manufacturing and fashion retail sectors. These trends align with the globalization of fashion production and the pressing need for region-specific SCM insights.

3.5 Most Cited Sources

The distribution of top journals underscores the interdisciplinary and sustainability-oriented nature of research at the intersection of fashion and SCM. The Journal of Cleaner Production (Elsevier) leads with 97 publications, reflecting the dominant role of sustainability and environmental considerations in the fashion supply chain discourse (Table 5). This aligns with recent scholarly trends emphasizing circular fashion, resource efficiency, and green logistics. The journal's prominence confirms that environmental sustainability has become central to how the fashion industry theorizes and applies SCM practices.

Table 5 Top Outlets

Journal name	Publisher	TP
Journal of Cleaner Production	Elsevier	97
International Journal of Production Economics	Elsevier	83
Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management	Emerald	81
International Journal of Supply Chain Management	Wiley	42
Supply Chain Management: An International Journal	Emerald	34
International Journal of Operations and Production Management	Emerald	28
International Journal of Production Research	Elsevier	27
Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review	Taylor & Francis	26
Business Strategy and The Environment	Wiley	24
International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management	Emerald	24

Table 6 Top Keywords

Words	Occurrences
Supply chain management	270
Textile industry	113
Fashion	105
Sustainability	101
Circular economy	33
Corporate social responsibility	32
Covid-19	24
Sustainable supply chain management	23
Case study	20
China	19
Fast fashion	18
Reverse logistics	18
Retailing	17
E-commerce	15
Game theory	15

Note: Similar meaning keywords are clubbed in one keyword

Following closely is the International Journal of Production Economics (Elsevier) with 83 articles and the Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management (Emerald) with 81 articles. The former provides a robust platform for quantitative models, production strategies, and economic evaluations of supply chain practices. At the same time, the latter uniquely bridges the gap between marketing and operations, focusing specifically on apparel and textile supply chains. The presence of both outlets at the top highlights a dual interest in operational efficiency and market responsiveness, which are key to fast fashion and agile SCM.

The remaining journals, including SCM: An International Journal (Emerald), International Journal of Operations and Production Management (Emerald), and Business Strategy and the Environment (Wiley), illustrate the domain's strategic breadth from logistics performance to corporate responsibility. Their combined influence indicates that fashion-SCM research is grounded in logistics and production theory and deeply integrated with broader business strategy, policy, and ethical considerations. This diversity of publication outlets underscores the richness and maturity of the field and supports a multi-disciplinary perspective in future research agendas.

3.6 Most Popular Keywords

The keyword frequency results reflect the core intellectual priorities of research at the intersection of fashion and supply chain management (Table 6). “Supply chain management” (270 occurrences) is the dominant keyword, indicating that most studies anchor their discussion in SCM theories and practices applied within fashion contexts. This aligns with foundational works emphasizing agility, responsiveness, and integration in apparel supply chains (Christopher *et al.*, 2004; Bruce *et al.*, 2004). The strong presence of “textile industry” (113 occurrences) and “fashion” (105) shows the field’s continued focus on production systems, sourcing structures, and operational challenges of textile and garment ecosystems. Several studies highlight operational complexity and strategic adaptation within global textile networks (Macchion *et al.*, 2015; Masson *et al.*, 2007). A major thematic shift is visible in the high frequency of “sustainability” (101), “circular economy” (33), “corporate social responsibility” (32), and “sustainable supply chain management” (23). These keywords indicate that environmental and ethical concerns have moved to the center of scholarly discourse. Empirical work on sustainable sourcing, green supplier evaluation, and environmental management in fashion SCs reinforces this

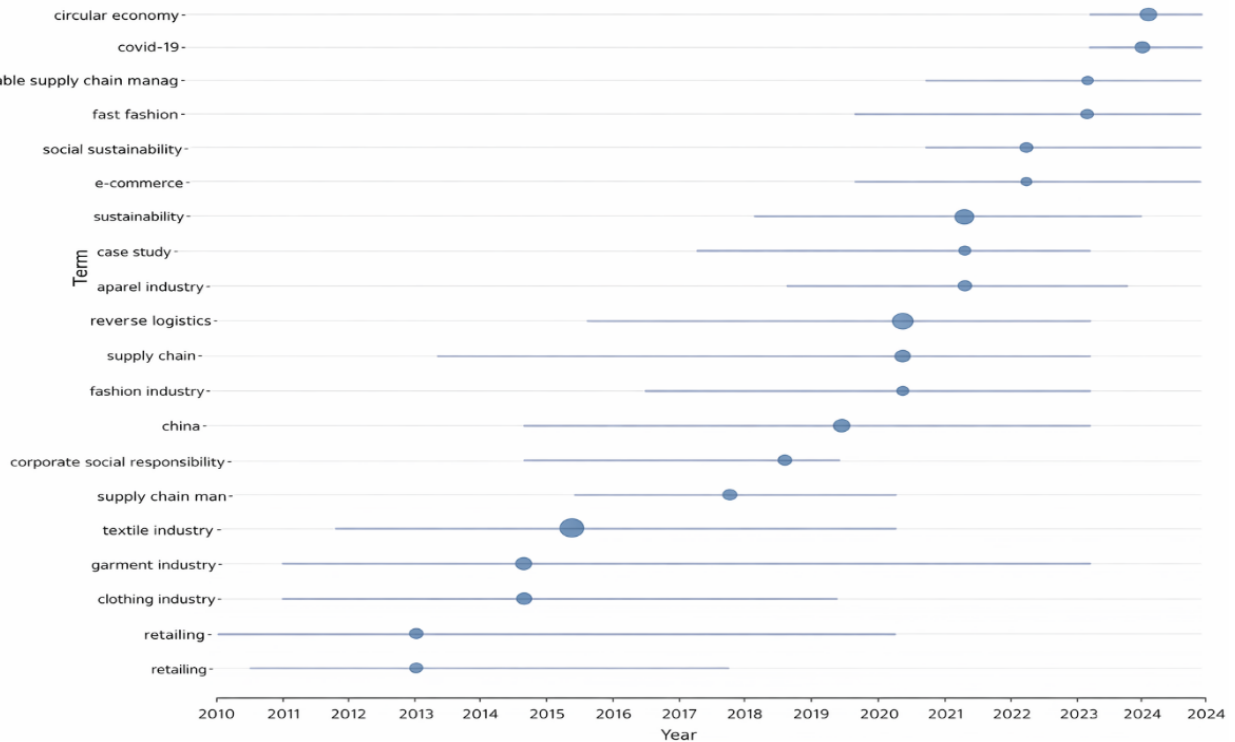


Figure 3 Trend Topic Analysis

pattern (Caniato *et al.*, 2012; Turker & Altuntas, 2014; Zhang *et al.*, 2021). The emphasis on circularity also mirrors current industry pressures to reduce waste and improve resource efficiency (Kazancoglu *et al.*, 2022a).

Keywords such as “fast fashion” (18), “reverse logistics” (18) and “e-commerce” (15) signal rising interest in agile and demand-driven models that characterize modern fashion retail. Studies on fast and ultra-fast fashion (Camargo *et al.*, 2020) and digital retail transformation (Hoang *et al.*, 2023) illustrate these operational and consumer-driven shifts. Finally, the emergence of “COVID-19” (24) and “China” (19) reflects context-specific disruptions and geographical focus in recent scholarship. COVID-19 prompted research on resilience, risk, and crisis responsiveness in apparel supply chains (Castillo *et al.*, 2024), while China’s role as the world’s largest textile hub continues to influence supply chain dynamics (Perry & Towers, 2013; Towers & Xu, 2016). The keyword structure demonstrates a field that is transitioning from traditional production-oriented studies to a more holistic agenda centered on sustainability, ethics, agility, and digital transformation

3.7 Trend Topic Analysis

The trend topic analysis (Figure 3) reflects the thematic evolution of research in this interdisciplinary field, showing how fashion-SCM scholarship has shifted over time. Earlier topics such as “clothing industry” (Q1: 2002) (e.g., Mattila *et al.*, 2002) and “retailing” (Q1: 2003) (e.g., Paulins & Geistfeld, 2003) dominated the discourse in the 2000s, focusing on production, distribution, and retail challenges in traditional textile and garment sectors. Keywords such as “textile industry” and “garment industry” emerged more significantly in the mid-2000s to early 2010s, indicating increasing academic interest in operational and sourcing

issues within vertically integrated supply chains (e.g., Gary Teng & Jaramillo, 2006; Sletten Daneshvary & Schwer, 2001).

From the 2010s onward, research began integrating strategic and ethical dimensions, evidenced by rising terms such as “corporate social responsibility” (median: 2016) and “China” (median: 2017), indicating both a growing ethical consciousness and a geographical focus on the world’s largest textile producer (e.g., Perry & Towers, 2013; Perry *et al.*, 2015; Towers & Xu, 2016). The increasing occurrence of “fashion”, “supply chain”, and “fashion industry” after 2018 aligns with heightened concern over agility, digitization, and branding in fast fashion ecosystems (e.g., Mamun, 2023; Tolentino-Zondervan & DiVito, 2024;). Furthermore, introducing “game theory” and “case study” in later years points to a methodological expansion in the field, incorporating analytical modelling and qualitative insights (e.g., Kumar *et al.*, 2023; Yu *et al.*, 2024; Wang & Liu, 2023).

Terms like “sustainability”, “reverse logistics”, “circular economy”, and “sustainable supply chain management” are becoming more popular in Q3: 2022–2024. Academic and business responses to environmental challenges and post-pandemic recovery plans are broader (Hoang, Kousi & Martinez, 2023). The rise of “social sustainability”, “fast fashion”, “e-commerce”, and “COVID-19” in the 2020s indicates a trend toward adaptable and inclusive SCM techniques to handle digital transformation and socio-economic disruptions in global fashion networks. This shift from operational efficiency to a combined focus on agility, ethics, sustainability and digital adoption has been highlighted by multiple studies examining post-pandemic restructuring and innovation in apparel sectors (Dohale *et al.*, 2023; Alblowi *et al.*, 2022; Hoang *et al.*, 2023).

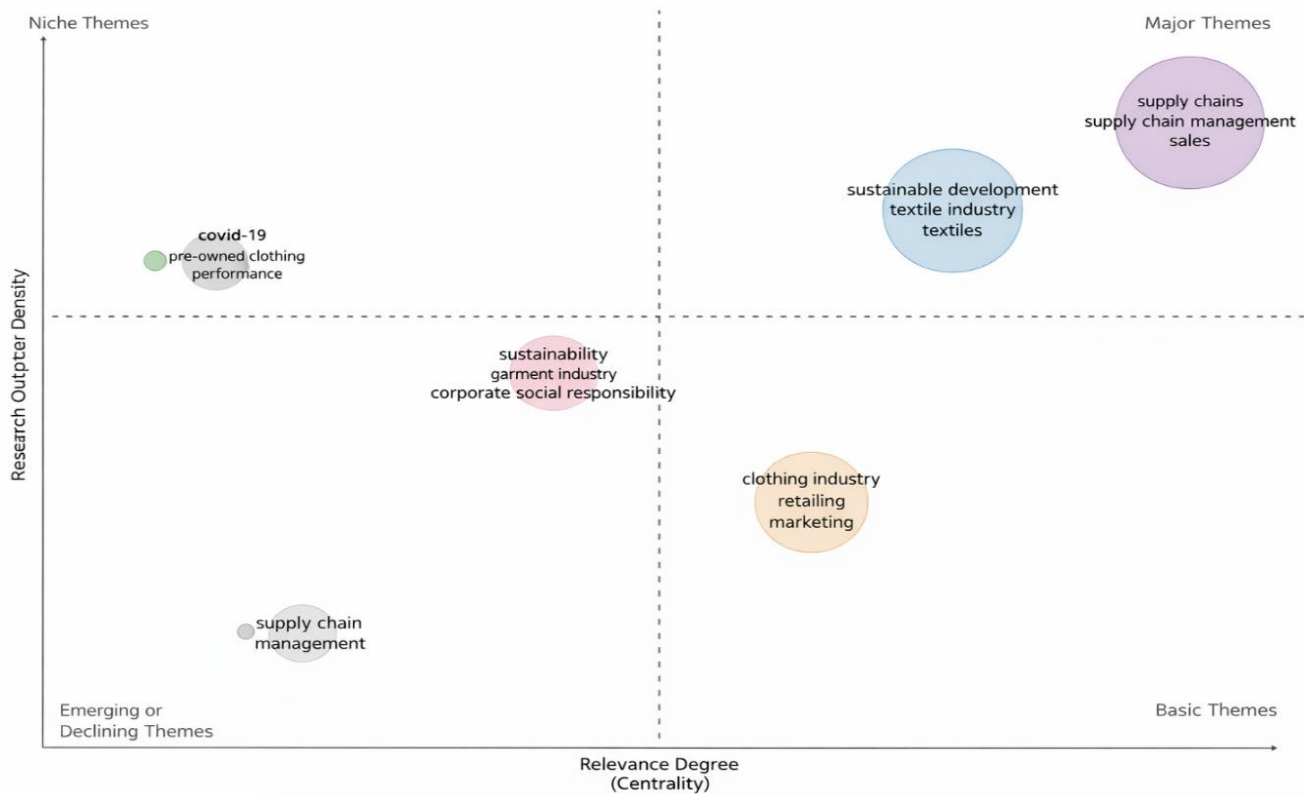


Figure 4 Thematic Map Analysis

3.8 Thematic Map Analysis

Bibliometric researchers use Thematic Map Analysis (Figure 4) to visualize a field's intellectual structure by centrality (relevance) and density (theme development). There are four quadrants of themes: Motor Themes are well-developed and core to the field; basic Themes are foundational but underdeveloped; Niche Themes are specialized and mature but peripheral; and Emerging or Declining Themes may represent nascent or fading research areas (Cobo *et al.*, 2011). The dominance of sustainability-related constructs in central quadrants of the thematic map is consistent with earlier systematic reviews in related supply chain domains (Fahimnia *et al.*, 2015; Han & Fang, 2024).

In this study, motor themes such as sustainable development, textile industry, environmental management, and textile supply chain indicate a strong research basis on fashion supply chain sustainability (e.g., White, Nielsen & Valentini, 2017; Madhav *et al.*, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2024). Traditional efficiency-based SCM models replace those emphasizing environmental responsibility, life cycle evaluation, and green technology investments (Shen *et al.*, 2021). Their high centrality and PageRank show their influence on fashion-SCM conversation. Conversely, Basic Themes such as the clothing industry, retailing, fashion, and logistics are highly central yet relatively underdeveloped, suggesting opportunities for deeper theoretical and empirical exploration (e.g., Ma *et al.*, 2024; Xu *et al.*, 2023). For instance, themes like product development, international trade, and innovation are fundamental to fashion-SCM but need a more cohesive scholarly focus to integrate them with emerging sustainability and technology trends (e.g., Fung, 2020; Huynh, 2022; Talay *et al.*, 2022).

Emerging or Declining Themes, including sustainability (despite its high frequency), the garment industry, corporate social responsibility, India, and consumption behaviour, maybe early-stage topics gaining traction (e.g., Li *et al.*, 2024) or declining areas needing redefinition. The presence of CSR and South Asian geographies in this quadrant suggests underutilized contextual perspectives in global SCM literature despite their practical importance in ethical sourcing (e.g., Tandon *et al.*, 2025).

Finally, Niche Themes such as COVID-19, protective clothing, and performance reflect recent or highly focused research areas triggered by external shocks like the pandemic (e.g., Su *et al.*, 2024; Castillo *et al.*, 2024; Majumdar & Srivastava, 2025). Though not central to the broader field, they contribute valuable insights into agility, risk management, and resilience in fashion supply chains.

3.9 Geographical Distribution

The geographical distribution reveals a vast network of international collaborations, with the United Kingdom, United States, China, and India emerging as central nodes in the global knowledge network on fashion and SCM (Figure 5). Notably, the UK–China (14 collaborations), USA–China (17), and UK–India (7) linkages indicate strong research synergies across developed and emerging economies, especially on issues like global sourcing, sustainability, and fast fashion. The presence of Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Vietnam in multiple bilateral ties (e.g., with the UK, China, USA, and India) suggests an increasing focus on low-cost manufacturing hubs and their integration into ethical and resilient supply chains.



Figure 5 Geographical Distribution

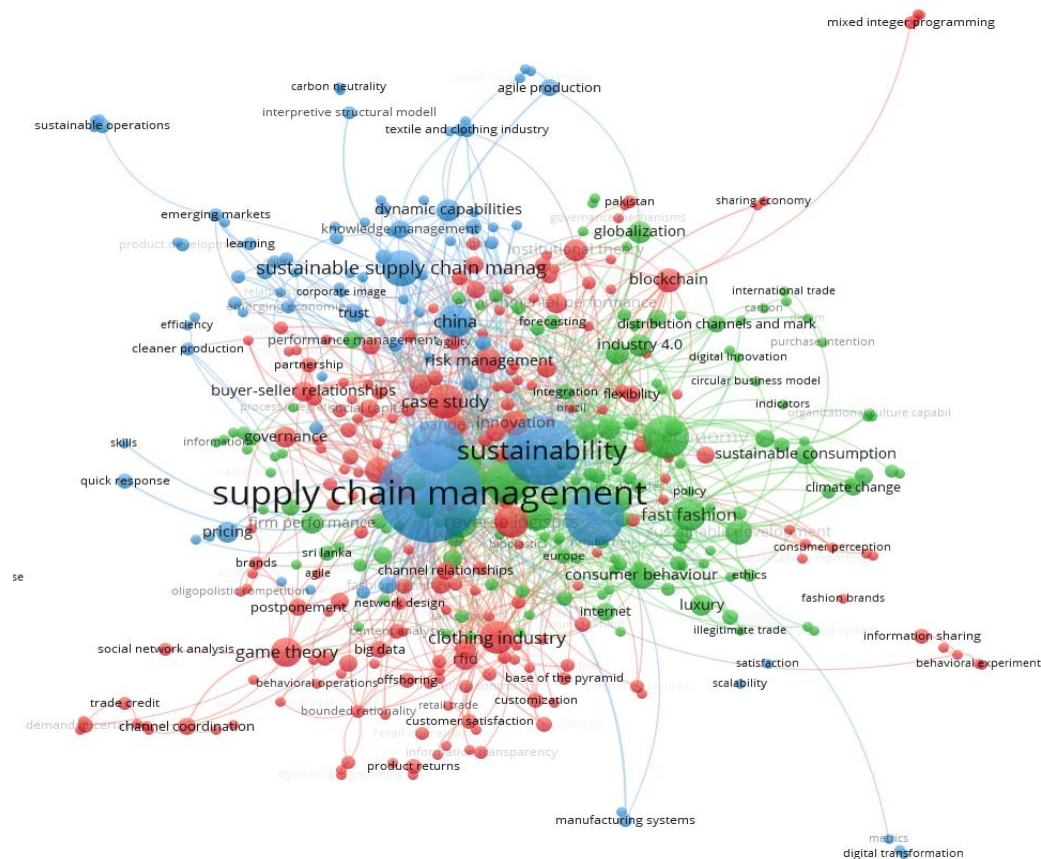


Figure 6 Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

Australia likewise demonstrates a diverse pattern of international collaboration, with notable linkages to Bangladesh (8 collaborations), Canada (3), and New Zealand (3), along with several smaller but meaningful ties with countries such as France, Germany, Malaysia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Saudi Arabia (Buxey, 2005; Burchielli et. al., 2009; Stringer *et al.*, 2022; Piller, 2023; Mamun, 2024). This breadth suggests Australia's engagement with both Global North and Global South research agendas, particularly in areas relating to apparel production, sustainability transitions, and cross-border value chain governance. Its collaborations with Bangladesh, in

particular, highlight Australia's participation in research addressing working conditions and ethical production in key garment-exporting nations.

This global spread aligns with themes from the Thematic Map Analysis. For example, motor themes such as sustainable development, environmental impact, and the textile supply chain are closely associated with the leading methodological and environmental research in developed countries. Meanwhile, Emerging or Declining Themes, such as corporate social responsibility, garment industry, and country-specific terms like Bangladesh and India, highlight underexplored regional dynamics in the global fashion

supply chain. These themes suggest a growing yet fragmented discourse on supplier practices and working conditions in the Global South areas that deserve deeper, context-specific investigation. Similar trends are visible in broader supply chain ethics studies emphasizing institutional pressures on suppliers in the Global South (Huq & Stevenson, 2020; Perry *et al.*, 2015).

The geographical data also show clusters of Niche collaborations, such as COVID-19 and protective clothing (e.g., USA–Korea, China–Bangladesh), reflecting research responses to short-term disruptions. On the other hand, Basic Themes such as retailing, logistics, and fashion appear to be widely addressed across countries but often lack high-density development, pointing to a need for further cross-border collaboration to advance these foundational yet under-theorized areas.

3.10 Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

The keyword co-occurrence network reveals (Figure 6) three tightly connected thematic clusters that jointly define the intellectual structure of research at the fashion–supply chain interface. The citations below are now woven into the interpretation at points where the studies best exemplify each theme.

Theme 1: Core Supply Chain Foundations

The blue colored cluster centres on “supply chain management”, “sustainable supply chain management”, “dynamic capabilities”, “knowledge management”, and “risk management”, indicating a foundational operations and strategy stream that treats fashion as a context for general SCM theory (Stahl *et al.*, 2023; Jahed *et al.*, 2021). This stream focuses on how firms design resilient, knowledge driven, and increasingly sustainable supply chains through analytics, optimisation and capability based views, as seen in work that maps analytics applications across fashion supply chain functions and develops comprehensive models of SCM adoption and practice in fast fashion (Jahed *et al.*, 2021; Stahl *et al.*, 2023). Studies on ESG related cost sharing contracts and digital product passports in textile apparel chains further exemplify this core by linking system level performance with environmental and governance objectives (Abreu *et al.*, 2025; Li *et al.*, 2024).

Theme 2: Sustainability and Responsible Fashion

The green colored cluster is organised around “sustainability”, “sustainable consumption”, “climate change”, “circular economy”, “ethical sourcing”, and “transparency”, signalling a strong emphasis on environmental and social responsibility in fashion supply chains (Mittal *et al.*, 2024; Wang *et al.*, 2024). Frequent co-occurring terms such as “circular fashion”, “textile waste”, “traceability”, “blockchain”, “product service systems”, and “sustainable development” indicate that scholars examine how circular business models, digital product passports and service based offerings reduce waste and improve ESG performance along textile and apparel chains (Abreu *et al.*, 2025; Mittal *et al.*, 2024). Research on ESG cost sharing in textile apparel supply chains and on the fate of leftover luxury products in the sharing economy illustrates how sustainability concerns are now analysed through quantitative models that trade off profitability, exclusivity and environmental impact (Li *et al.*, 2024; Wang *et al.*, 2024).

Theme 3: Fashion Markets, Consumers and Risk

The red colored cluster brings together demand side and market structure themes such as “fast fashion”, “consumer behaviour”, “game theory”, “pricing”, “sharing economy”, “retail operations”, and “risk management”, highlighting research that links supply chain design with consumer response and competitive dynamics (Rao *et al.*, 2021; Sarma *et al.*, 2023). Co-occurring terms like “omni channel”, “e-commerce”, “channel coordination”, “merchandising”, “social media”, and “CSR communication” show that this stream studies how retailers and brands coordinate inventory, channels and CSR signals in volatile fashion markets, including labour and reputation issues (Ginder & Byun, 2022; Rao *et al.*, 2021). Empirical and modelling studies on resilient fashion retail strategies during COVID-19 and on CSR communication by apparel retailers exemplify how risk, resilience and consumer trust are jointly analysed in this cluster (Ginder & Byun, 2022; Sarma *et al.*, 2023).

Across all the three themes, “supply chain management” and “sustainability” appear as the largest and most central nodes, confirming that sustainable supply chain thinking forms the backbone of fashion logistics and operations research (Jahed *et al.*, 2021; Stahl *et al.*, 2023). Strong inter-cluster links for example between “fast fashion” and “sustainable consumption”, or “blockchain” and “traceability” indicate that contemporary work increasingly integrates operational models with sustainability goals and consumer facing innovations, rather than treating these themes in isolation (Abreu *et al.*, 2025; Mittal *et al.*, 2024; Wang *et al.*, 2024).

4. BIBLIOMETRIC COUPLING AND CLUSTER ANALYSIS

The cluster analysis using bibliometric coupling offers a structured understanding of how contemporary fashion and SCM research is thematically organized based on shared references. By grouping publications that cite common sources, this method reveals intellectual communities and emerging schools of thought within the domain. The analysis using VOSviewer identified five coherent clusters (Figure 7), each representing a distinct thematic focus. Bibliometric coupling thus not only maps existing knowledge structures but highlights intersections and gaps, offering valuable direction for future interdisciplinary research in the Fashion and SCM fields. Within each cluster, a small set of influential studies emerges as reference points that shape the dominant thematic orientation of the cluster.

4.1 Cluster 1: Strategic and Structural Adaptation in Fashion Supply Chains

The cluster 1 tracks scholarly debate on how fashion supply chains strategically adapt to global trade shifts, production relocation (e.g., reshoring/backshoring), collaborative practices, and luxury sector dynamics. Brun *et al.* (2017) examined the segmentation of luxury fashion brand's SC and dynamic capacities. The theme evolved to include backshoring and bounded rationality in production location decisions (Boffelli *et al.*, 2020), collaboration models in facilities and apparel logistics (Abdeen & Sandanayake, 2022), and horizontal integration strategies in

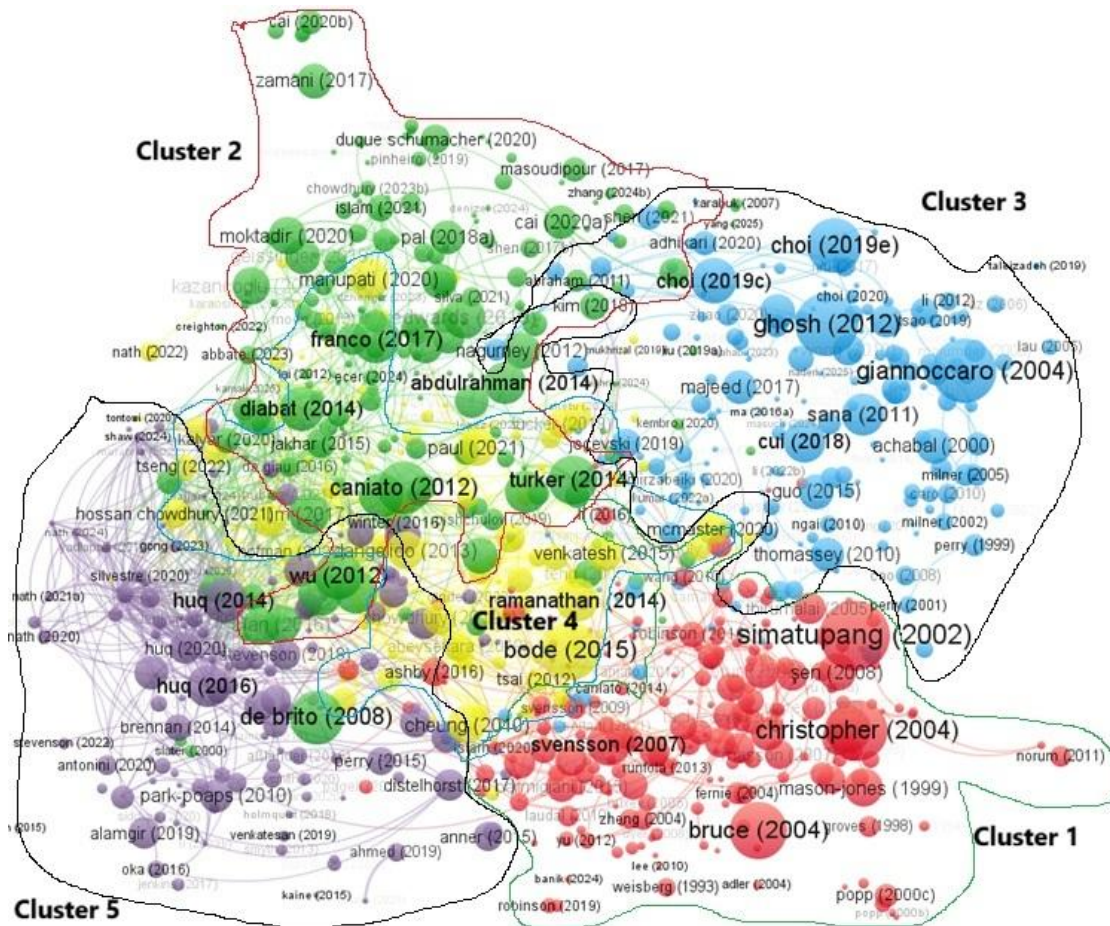


Figure 7 Cluster Analysis

response to modern slavery legislation. Recent research emphasizes regional trade ties (India–ASEAN; Banik & Kim, 2024) and strategic agility in fast/ultra-fast fashion supply chains (Camargo *et al.*, 2020), highlighting the cluster's focus on cost, resilience, and compliance.

Cluster 1 is anchored by influential studies such as Christopher *et al.* (2004), Bruce *et al.* (2004), and Simatupang & Sridharan (2002), which establish foundational perspectives on agility, responsiveness, and structural configuration in fashion supply chains. These works emphasize the need for speed, coordination, and strategic alignment in volatile fashion markets, forming the conceptual base for later research on reshoring decisions, regulatory compliance, and strategic adaptation in global fashion supply networks.

4.2 Cluster 2: Circular Economy and Sustainability Transitions in Fashion Supply Chains

This cluster focuses on new environmental sustainability and circular economy (CE) initiatives for fashion SC. Sustainability and performance measurement were the starting point (Bala *et al.*, 2020), but circular supply chain models, microplastic pollution, industrial symbiosis, and supplier evaluation have become the focus. The cluster shows how CE principles are operating to shut the fashion production and waste management loop. Recent publications address real-world ecological issues, including polyester microfiber shedding and CE implementation in a rapid fashion.

Figure 7 indicates that this cluster is structured around prominent contributions by Caniato *et al.* (2012), Diabat *et al.* (2014), and Franco (2017), whose studies focus on sustainability measurement, supplier evaluation, and environmental performance in fashion supply chains. Drawing from life-cycle thinking and performance assessment frameworks, these works provide the analytical foundation for subsequent research on circular economy practices, microplastic pollution, and closed-loop fashion systems.

4.3 Cluster 3: Optimization and Coordination in Fashion Supply Chains

Cluster 3 emphasizes fashion supply chain analytical modelling, inventory control, contract design, consumer returns, and uncertainty-driven supply chain coordination. In volatile markets, this cluster initially addressed stockout-based substitution and inventory management. The research expanded to include Markov decision processes, game theory, and contractual procedures to improve retailer–manufacturer coordination (Alom *et al.*, 2024; Naderi *et al.*, 2025). Quantitative supply chain models increasingly address sustainability, as Long and Gui (2024) integrate environmental operations and overproduction dynamics. These findings represent a shift from operational concerns to system-wide optimization solutions that account for disturbances such as e-commerce returns and customer behaviour. Current environmental indicators and efficiency goals suggest that sustainability and profitability must be co-optimized using new analytical methods.

As shown in Figure 7, key analytical studies by Giannoccaro & Pontrandolfo (2004) and Ghosh & Shah (2012) form the core of this cluster. These works emphasize quantitative modeling approaches including coordination contracts, inventory optimization, and decision-making under uncertainty to address operational inefficiencies in fashion supply chains. Their prominence reflects the cluster's strong methodological orientation toward system-level optimization and analytical rigor.

4.4 Cluster 4: Digital and Circular Transformation in Sustainable Fashion Supply Chains

Fashion SCM is moving toward digitization, circularity, and sustainability risk reduction in Cluster 4. The cluster uses Industry 4.0 technologies like blockchain, DPPs, and optimization models to solve environmental mandates and network complexity. Abreu et al. (2025) propose a blockchain-based DPP system for circular manufacturing and EU compliance. Ngo et al. (2024a) examine how dynamic SCM might reduce sustainability risks. These works indicate a convergence of fashion logistics technical innovation and regulatory change.

This cluster evolved from understanding traditional supply networks' environmental and institutional vulnerabilities. Since then, it has become a research program that uses optimization concepts like QFD, social capital, and resilience to construct intelligent, adaptive, and transparent supply networks. This cluster leads fashion's digital sustainability transitions due to its analytical expertise and policy significance.

The central positioning of Ramanathan & Gunasekaran (2014) and Bode & Wagner (2015) in Figure 7 highlights this cluster's focus on digital capability, risk management, and resilience within complex supply networks. These studies emphasize how information systems, analytical tools, and organizational capabilities enable supply chains to respond to sustainability risks and regulatory pressures, providing a foundation for more recent work on blockchain, digital product passports, and intelligent fashion supply networks.

4.5 Cluster 5: Ethics, Entrepreneurship, and Green Innovation in Fashion Supply Chains

Cluster 5 shows how fashion SCM (FSCM) literature has shifted toward ethics, green innovation, and socially responsible business. This cluster examines how ethical frameworks like the ethics of care (Castillo et al., 2024) and feminist entrepreneurial ecosystems (Blalock et al., 2025) affect fashion supply chain structures and leadership. It also incorporates new issues like natural capital accounting (Nunes et al., 2024a) and green innovation (Anjum et al., 2024) to expand sustainability beyond compliance and operational efficiency.

The increased realization of global fashion value chains' social and ecological implications has shaped this cluster. A normative discourse on ethical sourcing has evolved into empirical and theoretical research on how agency, identity, and leadership values affect sustainability implementation and innovation tactics. Gender, crisis response (e.g., COVID-19), and stakeholder engagement are used to examine global inequities and power dynamics.

Figure 7 further shows that Cluster 5 is anchored by influential contributions from Park-Poaps and Rees (2010),

Huq et al. (2014), Huq et al. (2016), and De Brito et al. (2008), which foreground ethical sourcing, social responsibility, and governance challenges in fashion supply chains. These studies draw attention to labor conditions, stakeholder accountability, and value-driven decision-making, shaping later research on ethical entrepreneurship, green innovation, and socially embedded sustainability transitions.

5. RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Rather than viewing research gaps as only static or isolated shortcomings, this study combines a conventional point-in-time assessment with a longitudinal perspective to show how research priorities at the intersection of fashion and SCM have systematically evolved over the past three decades. Drawing on the thematic evolution analysis, trend-topic results, and bibliographic coupling clusters, the identified gaps reflect shifting industry logics, regulatory pressures, technological capabilities, and societal expectations.

5.1 From Efficiency and Agility to Structural Reconfiguration (1990s–2008)

Early fashion-SCM research was dominated by concerns related to operational efficiency, lead-time compression, and agile supply chain design, particularly in response to fast fashion dynamics (Christopher et al., 2004; Bruce et al., 2004; Masson et al., 2007). While this stream laid the conceptual foundation for responsiveness and leagility, it largely treated supply chains as firm-centric and structurally stable systems. Despite extensive work on agility, comparative evidence on how structural adaptation strategies (e.g., reshoring, backshoring, nearshoring) differ across fashion segments (luxury vs. mass fashion) remains limited. Recent studies suggest that structural decisions are increasingly shaped by regulatory risk, labor governance, and geopolitical shifts, yet these dynamics remain under-theorized (Boffelli et al., 2020; Casadei & Iammarino, 2023; Banik & Kim, 2024). Longitudinal and comparative studies are needed to examine how structural adaptation strategies evolve over time and how they interact with product type, brand positioning, and regional trade agreements.

5.2 Sustainability as Compliance to Sustainability as Transformation (2009–2016)

From the late 2000s onward, sustainability emerged as a dominant theme, initially framed through environmental compliance, CSR reporting, and supplier monitoring, especially in developing-country sourcing contexts (Caniato et al., 2012; Turker & Altuntas, 2014; Huq et al., 2014). This phase largely emphasized risk mitigation and legitimacy rather than systemic transformation. While sustainability metrics and supplier audits are well studied, there is insufficient understanding of how sustainability transitions unfold dynamically across supply chain tiers, particularly in Global South manufacturing ecosystems. Research should move beyond cross-sectional sustainability assessments toward process-based and transition-oriented studies, examining how institutional pressures, policy frameworks, and buyer-supplier power asymmetries shape long-term sustainability adoption (Bhandari et al., 2022; Bala et al., 2020).

Table 7 Cluster Evolution and Emerging Research Imperative

Cluster	Phase 1: Foundation (2000–2010)	Phase 2: Expansion (2011–2018)	Phase 3: Integration (2019–2025)	Emerging Research Imperative
1	Agility, lean-agile trade-offs	Segmentation, governance	Nearshoring, regional integration, compliance	How do locational, compliance, and resilience strategies interact?
2	Waste reduction, compliance	Environmental certifications, audits	Systems transformation, CE business models	How do firms implement CE as systems change vs. incremental improvement in developing contexts?
3	Deterministic models, cost minimization	Inventory, logistics optimization	Behavioral, stochastic, environmental integration	How do overproduction, returns, and markdowns interact with sustainability?
4	Traceability concepts	Blockchain pilots, IoT experimentation	DPP standardization, regulatory compliance	How do firms standardize, govern, and democratize access to digital infrastructure?
5	Compliance audits, CSR reporting	Labor standards, social audits	Feminist ethics, moral agency, care frameworks	How do diverse ethical frameworks and stakeholder values shape practice?

5.3 Rise of Circular Economy and Reverse Flows (2017–2020)

More recent scholarship reflects a clear shift from linear sustainability toward circular economy (CE) models, including reverse logistics, recycling, and product life extension (Kazancoglu *et al.*, 2022b; Cai *et al.*, 2020). However, CE research in fashion SCM remains fragmented, often focusing on isolated practices rather than integrated system design. There is limited empirical work examining operational trade-offs between cost efficiency, speed, and circularity, particularly in fast and ultra-fast fashion contexts. Future studies should adopt multi-criteria and system-level modeling approaches to evaluate CE implementation across sourcing, production, and returns management (Alblowi *et al.*, 2022; Bait *et al.*, 2022).

5.4 Digitalization, Data, and Traceability as Enablers (2020–Present)

The post-2020 period marks a sharp increase in research on digital transformation, driven by blockchain, digital product passports (DPPs), and Industry 4.0 technologies aimed at enhancing traceability, transparency, and regulatory compliance (Agrawal *et al.*, 2021; Chen, 2024; Abreu *et al.*, 2025). Despite growing conceptual work, empirical evidence on the long-term performance and governance implications of digital traceability systems remains scarce. There is a need for longitudinal, firm-level, and network-level studies examining how digital infrastructures reshape power, coordination, and risk distribution in fashion supply chains (Ngo *et al.*, 2024a; Al Amin & Baldacci, 2024).

5.5 Ethics, Social Sustainability, and Values-Based Governance (Emerging)

The most recent wave of research reflects a shift toward ethics, care, entrepreneurship, and green innovation, accelerated by COVID-19 and climate-related disruptions (Castillo *et al.*, 2024; Anjum *et al.*, 2024). Unlike earlier CSR-focused studies, this stream emphasizes values, leadership, and moral responsibility in supply chain decision-making. Ethical considerations remain weakly integrated into formal SCM decision models and are largely

qualitative or conceptual. Future research should explore how ethical frameworks, feminist values, and natural capital accounting can be operationalized within SCM strategy and performance measurement systems (Nunes *et al.*, 2024b; Blalock *et al.*, 2025).

Our analysis demonstrates that research gaps in fashion SCM have shifted from efficiency-centric concerns to systemic, ethical, and digitally mediated challenges. Addressing these evolving gaps requires methodological pluralism, deeper engagement with Global South contexts, and stronger integration between technology, sustainability, and governance research streams. Finally, building on the five clusters discussed in section 4, Table 7 traces the evolution of these clusters and highlights the emerging research imperatives, while Table 8 presents specific future research directions for each cluster.

6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This bibliometric analysis reveals that the intersection of fashion and SCM has undergone thematic evolution from operational agility and efficiency to sustainability, ethics, and digital transformation. Foundational works in the domain emphasized lean and agile frameworks to meet fast fashion's demand for speed and flexibility (Christopher *et al.*, 2004; Bruce *et al.*, 2004). However, more recent scholarship reflects a deep integration of sustainability concerns, social accountability, and technology-led traceability, indicating a shift in how scholars conceptualize and examine SCM (Caniato *et al.*, 2012).

For academia, this study offers a consolidated map of the intellectual landscape, revealing five distinct research clusters: (1) Strategic and structural adaptation in fashion SC; (2) Circular economy and sustainability transitions in fashion SC; (3) Optimization and coordination in fashion SC; (4) Digital and circular transformation in sustainable fashion SC and (5) Ethics, entrepreneurship, and green innovation in fashion SC. These clusters identify where the literature has matured and expose under-researched intersections, such as the integration of ethics with digitalization or behavioural perspectives on reshoring

Table 8 Future Research Directions

Cluster	Cluster Name	Research Questions	References
1	Strategic and Structural Adaptation in Fashion Supply Chains	1. How do backshoring decisions in fashion supply chains differ across product categories (e.g., luxury vs. fast fashion)? 2. What collaborative models best enhance resilience in garment supply chains subject to social compliance regulations? 3. How does digital infrastructure enable horizontal integration within emerging market supply chains? 4. How do regional trade agreements (e.g., ASEAN partnerships) shape sourcing and distribution decisions in the apparel industry?	Banik & Kim (2024); Casadei & Iammarino (2023); Bindi <i>et al.</i> , (2023)
2	Circular Economy and Sustainability Transitions in Fashion Supply Chains	1. How can fashion brands integrate microplastic mitigation strategies into circular supply chain design? 2. What institutional or policy frameworks best support CE adoption in developing economies' garment sectors? 3. What are the operational trade-offs between cost efficiency and CE implementation in fast fashion supply chains? 4. How can multi-criteria decision models be adapted to evaluate suppliers based on circularity metrics?	Cai <i>et al.</i> , (2020); Alblowi <i>et al.</i> , (2022); Bait <i>et al.</i> , (2022)
3	Optimization and Coordination in Fashion Supply Chains	1. How can behavioural patterns in online fashion returns be integrated into optimization models to enhance circular supply chain performance? 2. What hybrid contract mechanisms can improve coordination in fashion supply chains facing high product variety and uncertain demand? 3. How can overproduction risks be minimized by minimizing environmental and financial performance indicators in operations strategy? 4. What role can reinforcement learning or AI-driven models play in dynamic pricing and markdown optimization in fashion retail networks?	Alom <i>et al.</i> , (2024); Eruguz <i>et al.</i> , (2024); Long & Gui (2024); Naderi <i>et al.</i> , (2025)
4	Digital and Circular Transformation in Sustainable Fashion Supply Chains	1. How can blockchain-enabled digital product passports (DPPs) be standardized across the fashion industry to enhance traceability and regulatory compliance? 2. What social capital and resilience configurations most effectively mitigate network complexity in sustainable fashion supply chains? 3. How can optimization like QFD be integrated with digital tools to enhance circularity in fashion sourcing decisions? 4. What are the long-term impacts of Industry 4.0 adoption on risk exposure and adaptability in sustainability-focused fashion supply chains?	Al Amin & Baldacci, (2024); Chowdhury <i>et al.</i> , (2024); Ngo <i>et al.</i> , (2024a); Abreu <i>et al.</i> , (2025)
5	Ethics, Entrepreneurship, and Green Innovation in Fashion Supply Chains	1. How do feminist values and care ethics reshape leadership and governance structures in sustainable fashion entrepreneurship? 2. How does natural capital accounting impact the corporate image and investment behaviour in the fashion industry? 3. How does green innovation mediate the relationship between internationalization strategies and SC performance in emerging economies? 4. What ethical decision-making frameworks most effectively guide fashion firms during global crises (e.g., pandemics and climate shocks)?	Anjum <i>et al.</i> , (2024); Castillo <i>et al.</i> , (2024); Nunes <i>et al.</i> , (2024a); Blalock <i>et al.</i> , (2025)

decisions. Scholars can use this as a springboard to explore context-specific issues (e.g., South Asian manufacturing hubs), methodological advancements (e.g., fsQCA, MCDM, or hybrid models), and emerging priorities like social sustainability and ethics (Huq & Stevenson, 2020).

For practitioners, notably supply chain leaders and sustainability managers in the fashion industry, the insights from this study highlight the strategic importance of digitalization and value-driven innovation. Technologies like blockchain and optimization frameworks such as QFD are no longer optional but essential tools to meet rising consumer expectations and regulatory pressures (Al Amin & Baldacci, 2024). Moreover, the growing emphasis on ethics and stakeholder trust, especially during global disruptions

like COVID-19, signals that competitive advantage in FSCM increasingly depends on relational capital and responsiveness, not just operational cost-efficiency (Castillo *et al.*, 2024).

The practical implication is clear: fashion firms must simultaneously invest in agile infrastructure and develop a robust social-ecological strategy. This includes rethinking sourcing models, adopting traceable supply systems, and embedding ethical reflexivity into decision-making. From an academic-practitioner interface perspective, there is also a strong case for collaborative research involving real-time data from fashion brands, enabling the co-creation of context-sensitive, scalable fashion SCM solutions. Bridging this gap between theory and practice will be vital for designing resilient and inclusive SC.

7. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the intellectual landscape at the intersection of the literature on fashion and SCM, drawing from 930 top-tier peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in the Scopus database. Using tools like Biblioshiny and VOSviewer, the study systematically maps publication trends, influential authors and institutions, popular keywords, thematic evolution, and bibliometric structures, including co-citation, co-occurrence, and bibliographic coupling. As expected given the search design and journal selection, core supply chain concepts such as efficiency, agility, and integration appear frequently in the dataset. However, beyond this baseline presence, the clustering patterns, thematic evolution, and co-occurrence structures indicate that these foundational SCM concepts are systematically adapted and extended to address fashion-specific challenges such as time sensitivity, global sourcing complexity, and demand volatility. The results reveal a rich and evolving field structured around five dominant research clusters: strategic adaptation, circular economy, optimization and coordination, digital transformation, and ethics and green innovation in fashion supply chains. Thematic map and trend topic analyses show a clear shift in scholarly attention from operational efficiency toward broader concerns, including environmental sustainability, ethical labour practices, and supply chain transparency. The co-citation and bibliographic coupling analyses further highlight how foundational works have shaped different clusters of inquiry, while emerging themes such as reverse logistics, e-commerce, and post-COVID-19 resilience signal future research directions. Geographical and collaborative analysis show that FSCM research is global, with academic contributions from the UK, USA, China, and India and expanding participation from developing nations like Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The study has some drawbacks despite its extensive findings. First, it limits its dataset to Scopus and business and management, which may have excluded material science, engineering, and environmental policy contributions. Second, the analysis only includes English-language journal publications, which may exclude non-English-speaking or regional research communities. Third, whereas bibliometric tools like Biblioshiny and VOSviewer offer structural insights, they cannot capture theoretical reasoning or

qualitative subtleties without manual assessment. Fourth, the research only covered top-tier journal papers, which could restrict its generalizability by excluding important insights from specialized journals.

Future studies could overcome these constraints by adding databases (e.g., Web of Science), studying cross-disciplinary contributions, or using content analysis to enhance quantitative mapping. Longitudinal examinations of how themes like circular fashion or digital traceability have grown in reaction to global crises like COVID-19 or climate policy adjustments may provide better, more contextualized findings. This study provides a solid empirical foundation for academics and practitioners entering the dynamic fashion and SCM field.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENTS

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Annexure 1: The search protocol

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("fashion" OR "Appael" OR "Cloth*" OR "Garment" OR "Textile" AND "supply chain*" OR "logistic*") AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "4or") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Accounting Auditing And Accountability Journal") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Asia Pacific Journal Of Marketing And Logistics") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Benchmarking") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "British Journal Of Industrial Relations") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Business Process Management Journal") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Business Strategy And The Environment") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Corporate Social Responsibility And Environmental Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Critical Perspectives On International Business") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Decision Support Systems") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Engineering Economics") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "European Journal Of Marketing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "European Management Journal") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Fiib Business Review") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Global Business Review") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Global Journal Of Flexible Systems Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Harvard Business Review") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Human Relations") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Human Systems Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "IEEE Transactions On Engineering Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Indian Journal Of Marketing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Industrial Management And Data Systems") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Industrial Marketing Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Industrial Relations") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Business And Society") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Consumer Studies") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Emerging Markets") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Information Systems And Supply Chain Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Logistics Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Logistics Research And Applications") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Operations And Production Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Operations And Quantitative Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Physical Distribution And Logistics Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Physical Distribution Logistics Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Production Economics") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Production Research") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Productivity And Performance Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Quality And Reliability Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Retail And Distribution Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Retail Distribution Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Journal Of Supply Chain Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Marketing Review") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "International Transactions In Operational Research") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Business And Industrial Marketing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Business Ethics") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Business Logistics") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Business Research") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Cleaner Production") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Enterprise Information Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Fashion Marketing And Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Global Fashion Marketing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Global Operations And Strategic Sourcing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Humanitarian Logistics And Supply Chain Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Industrial And Management Optimization") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Operations Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Modelling In Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Product Innovation Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Purchasing And Supply Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Retailing") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Retailing And Consumer Services") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Risk And Financial Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Supply Chain Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of The Operational Research Society") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Theoretical And Applied Electronic Commerce Research") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Labor History") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Management Science") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Manufacturing And Service Operations Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Measuring Business Excellence") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Omega United Kingdom") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Operations And Supply Chain Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Operations Management Research") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Production And Operations Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Review Of International Business And Strategy") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Supply Chain Management") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Sustainability Accounting Management And Policy Journal") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Systems Research And Behavioral Science") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "TQM Journal") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Technological Forecasting And Social Change") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Transportation Research Part E Logistics And Transportation Review") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Work Employment And Society") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Economic And Labour Relations Review"))

Date of search: 1 April 2025