



Mapping the Landscape of Corporate Sustainability: A Bibliometric Analysis of Global Scopus-Indexed Publications

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this investigation is to conduct a bibliometric analysis of trends and other significant meta-data on research articles relating to the idea of "corporate sustainability." There is a notable lack of research in this field, and this work may be regarded as a groundbreaking attempt to carry out a bibliometric analysis. In the current study, bibliometric analysis is used to examine trends in research publications, citations, publications in particular countries, journals, authors, publishers, and cited papers relevant to Corporate Sustainability for the past 20 years from 1999 in the Scopus database. This method offers empirical proof of the thorough coverage of social science publications. Utilizing the Biblioshiny software for analyzing bibliometric data has facilitated the examination of key bibliometric markers. This includes assessing the growth rate of publications, conducting citation analyses, and evaluating research productivity. A total of 1,112 articles, containing 64308 references, were examined. The initial article on corporate sustainability to be included in the Scopus database made its debut in 1999. Evidence suggests that over the past 20 years, the number of articles in this area has gradually increased. Also, the results show that the Netherlands, France, and Australia received the most citations, while the Journal of Business Ethics, Business Strategy and the Environment, and the Journal of Cleaner Production were among the top publications in this field. Moreover, the most scientific publications have been published by Isabel Schaltegger, S. et al. (22 publications). According to the statistics, "Beyond the Business Case for Corporate Sustainability" by Dylick, T., and Hockerts, H. from 2002 received 1,963 citations. Marrewijk, V. from 2003 received 1309 citations, making it the second most cited article. In conclusion, we have identified the primary research domains of business sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Based on our findings, we suggest that upcoming researchers delve into topics such as sustainability assessment, entrepreneurship, and corporate performance.

KEYWORDS: Corporate Sustainability, Bibliometric Analysis, Corporate Social Responsibility

1 INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, business organizations across the world found themselves grappling with unprecedented sustainability challenges (Dissanayake et al., 2023). This scenario has thrust the concept of Corporate Sustainability (CS) back into the limelight. While CS has been defined from various angles by scholars in the field, a definitive consensus on its meaning remains elusive. However, a notable elucidation by Russell et al. (2007) encapsulates CS through four pivotal dimensions: the pursuit of enduring economic performance, the advancement of positive outcomes for the natural environment, the bolstering of societal well-being, and the adoption of a comprehensive, holistic approach (p. 42).

Despite the significance of CS and the plethora of discussions surrounding it, the existing literature exhibits noticeable gaps in terms of comprehensive bibliometric analyses. Analyses that examine published literature quantitatively have sporadically emerged, and this holds true for the field of corporate sustainability as well. Interestingly, the dearth becomes even more evident when looking at studies that investigate broader trends and metadata related to corporate sustainability using bibliometric analysis. A bibliometric analysis, as defined by Broadus (1987, p. 376), involves quantitatively dissecting published or bibliographic units, or their proxies. While this approach has gained momentum since the late 1980s, its application within the domain of social sciences, and specifically corporate sustainability, has witnessed a resurgence in recent years.

Amid this landscape, a critical void emerges –

a lack of research endeavors that systematically unveil the emerging trends and critical metadata associated with the field of corporate sustainability using bibliometric analysis. Only a few studies have conducted research on sustainability and risk management collaborative economy, corporate social responsibility, and sustainability (Ertz & Leblanc-Proulx, 2018; Meseguer-Sánchez et al., 2021; Nobanee et al., 2021). The application of bibliometric analysis to this domain is anticipated to yield invaluable insights into the publication trends, citation patterns, geographical distribution of research, key publishing outlets, influential authors, leading Institutes, keywords, themes, and seminal papers. As we look back over the past two decades, starting from 1989, this research undertaking harbors the potential to not only bridge a significant gap in understanding but also to provide a comprehensive panorama of the evolving corporate sustainability literature and its far-reaching impact.

In addressing this research gap, our study aims to unravel the intricate tapestry of corporate sustainability literature by scrutinizing the quantitative dimensions that have hitherto remained relatively unexplored. By charting the trajectory of publications and their dynamics over time, shedding light on the global footprint of research, identifying the scholarly trailblazers, and recognizing the seminal works that have steered the discourse, our endeavor seeks to make a substantial and lasting contribution. Through these multifaceted insights, we aspire to enrich the comprehension of the scholarly community, practitioners, and other stakeholders, thereby fostering a deeper awareness of corporate sustainability's journey

over the past two decades.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used the Scopus database to explore the publications related to Corporate Sustainability (CS). Empirical evidence suggests that the Scopus database consists of comprehensive coverage of sources except medicine and physical science compared with the Web of Science (Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019; Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). The inclusion of journal articles, books, book chapters, and conference papers results in a broader scope of the review (a similar strategy is adopted by (Det Udomsap & Hallinger, 2020). The start date was not included in the SCOPUS search engine with the intention of recognizing the historical publications on CS. The search string “Corporate Sustainability” entered into the Scopus search engine and was directed towards the title of the publications. The initial search yielded 3,503 publications. The database was reduced to 1,161 publications with the application of an “English language articles filter” and excluding trade publications, short surveys, notes, and reports-based document types. The final database included 1,112 publications on corporate sustainability after the exclusion of non-relevant documents.

The analyses of this study were performed using Biblioshiny software (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

3 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This section includes the results and discussion on the bibliometric analysis performed and the discussion thereon.

3.1 Analysis based on the Year of Publication

The number of publications on Corporate Sustainability (CS) between 1999 to 2022, is depicted in Figure 1. A notable surge in publications has been observed since 2010, a trend that can be attributed to multiple factors. One significant driver is the escalating and urgent global environmental challenges that have demanded increased scholarly attention (*Earth.Org*, 2022). Furthermore, the proliferation of reporting initiatives such as the Global Reporting Initiative has contributed to this upward trajectory (GRI, 2022). This surge in interest could also be linked to growing corporate awareness of the tangible benefits associated with incorporating sustainability practices into their operations, driven by both ethical considerations and the potential for enhanced reputation and financial performance.

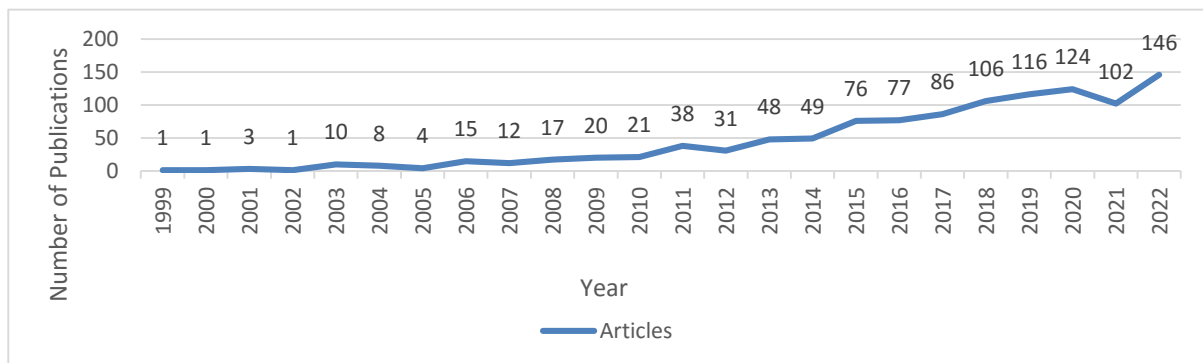


Figure 1: Annual Trend of Publications

3.2 Analysis based on the Country

The country-wise analysis included contributions from 82 countries that had publications on Corporate Sustainability, and the top publishing countries on this topic are depicted in Table 1. It could be observed that the top three cited countries are the Netherlands, France, and Australia. Except for China, all other highly cited are considered as developed economies. This exhibits a dearth of studies related to the emerging economy perspective. In Sri Lankan context there are 7 papers published in the SCOPUS database.

Table 1: Publications according to the country

Country	TP	TC	ATC
Netherland	89	4032	122.18
France	53	3246	216.40
Australia	196	3055	61.10
Germany	164	2721	47.74
United Kingdom	195	2508	43.24
USA	233	1969	32.82
Canada	103	1815	64.82
China	193	1351	22.90

TP; Total Publications, TC: Total Citations, ATC: Average Article Citations

Source: Constructed by the Authors

3.3 Analysis based on the Journals

The analysis of the journal citations was conducted using the 1112 articles that appeared in 495 journals. The journals with the most citations per year on corporate sustainability are depicted in Table 2. The leading journals are the *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business Strategy and the Environment* and *Journal of Cleaner Production* followed by *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management and Sustainability (Switzerland)*. It is observed that the scope of these journals are in the theme of “corporate sustainability”. Additionally, the most cited journals are also noted to be rated with Association of Business Schools (ABS) rating.

Table 2: Publications according to journals

Journal	H index	G index	M index	Total Citations	Number of publications	Publication year start
Journal of Business Ethics	32	43	1.524	5950	43	2003
Business Strategy and the Environment	26	57	1.13	5057	57	2001
Journal of Cleaner Production	39	68	2.167	4685	783	2006
Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management and Sustainability (Switzerland)	20	34	0.952	2074	34	2003
Organization and Environment	22	34	2.2	1555	112	2014
Management Science	10	13	0.625	1244	13	2008
International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development	1	1	0.1	850	1	2014
Journal of World Business	3	5	0.158	651	5	2005
Journal of Environmental Management	3	3	0.214	649	3	2010
	5	5	0.263	608	5	2005

3.4 Analysis based on the Authors

The analysis of this study identified 2,223 authors from 1112 published articles on the subject of Corporate Sustainability. Table 3 illustrates the top contributing authors in the CS field. It is noted that the highest cited author was Hockerts K who received 2080 citations for three publications and the second highest cited

author was Hahn T received 2051 citations for 10 papers. On the other hand, Isabel Schaltegger, S. published the highest number of articles (twenty-two) but was the 9th highly cited author on Corporate Sustainability and the second highest publications are by Searcy, C. with twelve publications.

Table 3: Top Contributing Authors

Element	h_index	g_index	m_index	Total Citations	Number of publications	Publication year start
Hockerts K	3	3	0.136	2080	3	2002
Hahn T	10	10	0.556	2051	10	2006
Dyllick T	2	2	0.091	1966	2	2002
Figge F	7	8	0.5	1826	8	2010
Van Marrewijk M	5	5	0.238	1768	5	2003
Preuss L	5	5	0.357	1626	5	2010
Pinkse J	5	5	0.357	1604	5	2010
Baumgartner Rj	7	7	0.438	1505	7	2008
Schaltegger S	13	22	0.722	1340	22	2006
Serafeim G	4	4	0.4	1227	4	2014

3.5 Analysis based on the Institution

Table 4 indicates that Swinburne University of Technology, which published 37 articles is the most active organization in the CS area followed by the Leuphana University Lüneburg and Ryerson University which has 20 articles. Even though most of the authors and institutions belong to the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, it is observed that there is dearth of studies conducted using samples from Asia. Therefore, the findings indicate that most of the contributions on Corporate Sustainability pertain to the Western economies, but publications are made by researchers from worldwide.

Table 4: Top Publishers

Affiliation	Articles
Swinburne University of Technology	37
Leuphana University Lüneburg	20
Ryerson University	20
Democritus University of Thrace	18
Mahidol University	17
Kedge Business School	16
University of Gloucestershire	16
Brno University of Technology	15
Asia University	13

3.6 Analysis based on the Top research Publications

Table 5 shows the top research publications by citations. The highest cited article is “Beyond the business case for corporate sustainability” by (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002) with 1,963 citations. Second highest cited publication is

done by (Van Marrewijk, 2003) with 1350 citations. We could note top publications in the field of corporate sustainability.

Table 5: Top Research Publications according to the Citation Analysis

Author	Title	Year	Journal	Citations
(Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002)	Beyond the business case for corporate sustainability	2002	Business Strategy and the Environment	1963
(van Marrewijk, 2003)	Concepts and Definitions of CSR and Corporate Sustainability: Between Agency and Communion	2003	Journal of Business Ethics	1309
(Eccles et al., 2014)	The impact of corporate sustainability on organizational processes and performance	2014	Management Science	850
(Schaltegger et al., 2012)	Business cases for sustainability: The role of business model innovation for corporate sustainability	2012	International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development	617
(Milne & Gray, 2013)	W(h)ither Ecology? The Triple Bottom Line, the Global Reporting Initiative, and Corporate Sustainability Reporting	2013	Journal of Business Ethics	598
(Salzmann et al., 2005)	The business case for corporate sustainability: Literature review and research options	2005	European Management Journal	529
(Hahn et al., 2014)	Cognitive Frames in Corporate Sustainability: Managerial Sensemaking with Paradoxical and Business Case Frames	2014	Academy of Management Review	482
(Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010)	Corporate sustainability and organizational culture	2010	Journal of World Business	482
(Hahn et al., 2015)	Tensions in Corporate Sustainability: Towards an Integrative Framework	2014	Journal of Business Ethics	456
(Whiteman et al., 2013)	Planetary Boundaries: Ecological Foundations for Corporate Sustainability	2012	Journal of Management Studies	453
(Montiel, 2008)	Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Sustainability: Separate Pasts, Common Futures	2008	Organization and Environment	448

The exploration of seminal works within the domain of corporate sustainability reveals key contributions that have significantly shaped the discourse. Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) underscore the evolving nature of business sustainability, emphasizing the interchangeability of terms like eco-efficiency and sustainability within corporate contexts. However, they highlight the inadequacy of this conceptual conflation, which overlooks essential prerequisites necessary for true sustainability. Their work delineates the trajectory of sustainable development's evolution over the preceding three decades and its application in the business realm. Building

on this foundation, they elucidate the pivotal role of economic, natural, and social capital in achieving corporate sustainability. Managers are tasked with satisfying criteria such as eco-efficiency, socio-efficiency, eco-effectiveness, socio-effectiveness, sufficiency, and ecological equality to realize sustainable corporate outcomes.

An additional pivotal work by van Marrewijk (2003) unpacks the European Corporate Sustainability Framework (ECSF) project. This initiative introduces a multi-layered business framework aimed at navigating corporate complexity and change. Underpinned by EU

funding, ECSF presents a comprehensive suite of corporate institutional arrangements. These arrangements, informed by value systems, business philosophies, methodologies, and concepts, encompass measurement tools. This robust framework offers practical guidance for managing the intricate dimensions of sustainability within corporate dynamics.

Eccles et al.'s study (2014) delves into the nexus of corporate sustainability and its effects on organizational processes and performance. Drawing on a sample of 180 U.S. companies, their research discerns distinct organizational processes of "high sustainability" companies, which voluntarily adopted sustainable policies in 1993. This group contrasts with "low sustainability" firms that embraced fewer of these policies. Notably, high-sustainability companies exhibited a formal commitment to sustainability within their board structures and aligned executive compensation with sustainability metrics. Furthermore, they showcased pronounced stakeholder engagement, long-term orientation, and frequent nonfinancial information disclosure, correlating with superior stock market and accounting performance over the long term.

Schaltegger et al. (2012) contribute a perspective on leveraging sustainability for financial benefit. They emphasize the systematic and ongoing nature of developing business arguments for sustainability, grounded in evolving business models. Proposing a business model innovation framework, they advocate for its integration into business

operations to facilitate the continual creation of strategic approaches.

Milne and Gray (2013) address the contemporary dissonance between sustainability reporting practices and ecological imperatives. They critique the prevailing "triple bottom line" (TBL) paradigm and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) for their limited consideration of ecological factors. Their study underscores the necessity of incorporating economic, environmental, and social performance indicators within management and reporting procedures, while also underscoring ecological awareness.

Whiteman et al. (2013) draw attention to the intersection of corporate sustainability and the natural sciences. Their exploration of "Planetary Boundaries" emphasizes ecological limitations critical to Earth's well-being. This novel perspective underscores the importance of studying corporate impact on these boundaries, particularly thresholds relating to climate change, the global nitrogen cycle, and biodiversity loss.

In conclusion, seminal works within the corporate sustainability realm have provided critical insights into various dimensions of the concept. The authors have examined its evolution, organizational implications, financial rationale, and ecological alignment. These contributions collectively enrich the discourse, fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between sustainability, business practices, and broader ecological systems.

centrality and low density. These cornerstone themes—leadership, stakeholder engagement, innovation, corporate sustainability, corporate social responsibility, sufficiency economy, literature review, and sustainability strategy—form the backbone of understanding. They provide essential touchpoints for researchers, underpinning a holistic comprehension of corporate sustainability's multifaceted

dimensions.

Interpreting these implications guides the strategic exploration of research areas. It prompts the recognition of critical focal points, unexplored niches, evolving trends, and the enduring foundations that collectively contribute to advancing knowledge in the field of corporate sustainability.

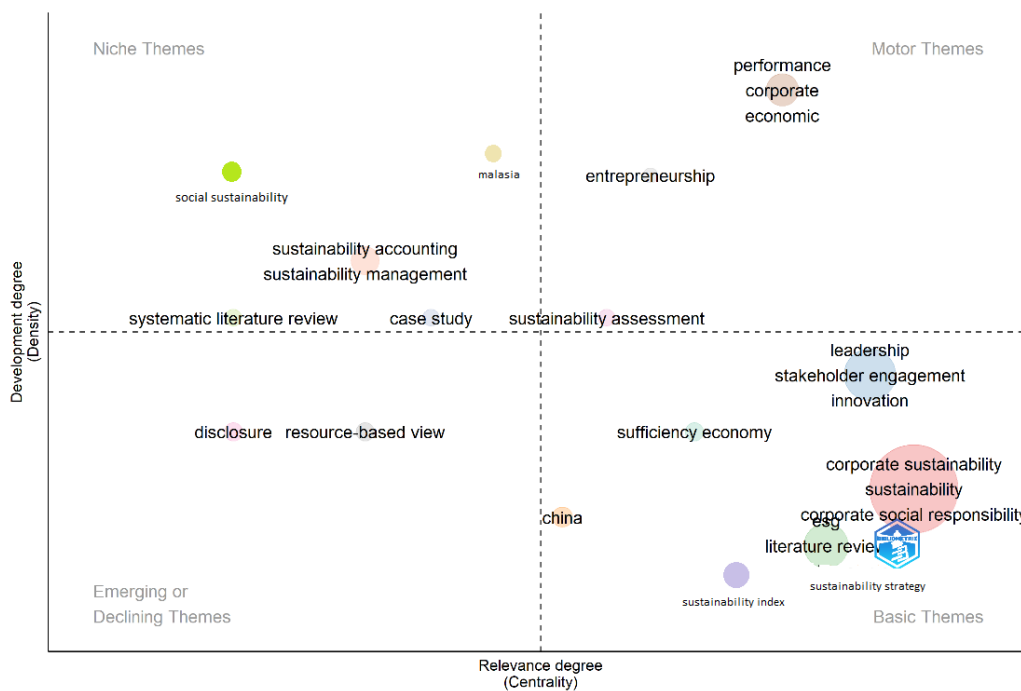


Figure 3: Thematic Maps

4 CONCLUSIONS

In order to pinpoint trends, top contributions, top authors, and other meta-data in the area of Corporate Sustainability study, this work presents a bibliometric review. Corporate sustainability papers began to appear in the Scopus database in 1999, and during the past 20 years, there has been a phenomenal growth in the number of publications in this area. Following 2010, there was a huge increase in the number of publications, according to the analysis. Furthermore, it was determined

through the keyword analysis that the CS researchers mostly concentrated on the domains of corporate sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Considering the results, we suggest that future scholars look into topics like entrepreneurship, sustainability assessment, and corporate performance. In terms of countries where CS research had been performed, it was noted that the Netherlands, France, and Australia had the highest number of publications and the highest number of citations concentrated in the developed countries in terms of citations.

Thus, based on the findings, we propose that the research on CS should be accelerated in developing economies. This study is a pioneering study that analyses bibliometric indicators of the publications in the CS literature and suggests that researchers and regulators could obtain several insights. This study faces certain limitations and the findings should be interpreted and understood accordingly. The data mainly focused on the research published in the SCOPUS database and published using the English language, and future research could expand to other databases and other languages on CS literature.

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