

# Doing more with less: An integrative literature review on responsible consumption behaviour

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to critically review the existing literature on responsible consumption behaviour (RCB) and identify the factors that influence it. Our findings are based on an integrative examination of 203 papers retrieved from the SCOPUS and WoS databases and analysed with the bibliometrix R software. Along with some descriptive insights into the field, we explain its intellectual structure informing future scholars about the field's evolution, and propose a future agenda for its advancement in the form, methodology, context, and themes. Five major themes emerged from our study: social values, corporate social responsibility (CSR), ethical obligations, environmental concern, and economic behaviour, which serve as a foundation for thematic future research directions. The implications for policymakers and management practice, as well as theoretical implications, are addressed.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The recent thrust of high consumption has resulted in the establishment of global consumerism culture (Schmitt et al., 2021), which is leading to increased production across commodities and causing unbearable pressure on the resources available to humanity (Johnson & Chattaraman, 2019; Kautish et al., 2022). Human activities, including unsustainable land, water, and energy use, and climate changes, are fuelling the sixth mass extinction, which leads to the eradication of a high percentage of biodiversity, or distinct species, including bacteria, fungi, plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates (Giannetti et al., 2023). Whether it is a fuel crisis, global warfare, or coal shortages that cause power disruptions, the majority of today's environmental challenges can be traced back to consumption (Perera et al., 2020). According to the United Nations (2015), one of the most difficult global concerns is reconciling environmental sustainability with economic growth and welfare, which can be accomplished by decoupling environmental deterioration from economic growth and doing more with less (Bialowolski et al., 2021). Over the last century, economic and social progress has been accompanied by

environmental degradation, threatening the fundamental systems on which our future development and survival are dependent. Goal 12 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda is "Responsible consumption and production," and it calls for a radical rethinking of consumer wants and needs to be based on a heightened consciousness of the effects of individual actions on the larger social and ecological systems and encourages consumers to practice doing more with less. (Jacob-John et al., 2021).

Consumption behaviour is one area in which consumers, as members of society, have a responsibility to act responsibly (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Tilikidou & Zotos, 1996). As a result, the consumer role of every person becomes crucial to the success of sustainable development. Suggest that there are two ways in which consumers can contribute to the achievement of goal 12: (1) by minimising waste, and (2) by considering the products they purchase and opting for the more sustainable option whenever possible. This is not a big revelation, and researchers in disciplines as diverse as sociology, economics, geography, social psychology, and environmental psychology have studied this phenomenon extensively (Giannetti et al., 2023; Voola et al., 2022). Scholars in various fields

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have looked at global consumers to see if they are doing their part to safeguard the environment (Kinnear et al., 1974; Mishra et al., 2022; Tilikidou, 2013). Their research provides distinct characteristics of these buyers based on several types of determinants (Garg et al., 2022). Therefore, this research seeks to combine this extensive literature and explore the factors that foster responsible consumption behaviour (RCB), with the purpose of extending the literature on RCB.

## 1.1 | Context and background

The concept of responsible consumption (RC) views consumption as a tool with varying environmental and social impacts. As Fisk (1973) defines, RC is all about making the best possible use of the world's limited resources to support humanity on a global scale and according to the United Nations (2015), RC is “doing more with less, enhancing net welfare gains from economic activities by reducing resource usage, degradation, and pollution throughout the lifetime”. Researchers have been trying to classify consumers as “green,” “socially conscious,” or “environmentally conscious” for more than two decades (Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Mishra et al., 2022; Su et al., 2020). Various authors have observed consumers' spending habits in a variety of ways and many other identities have been proposed to explain this phenomenon, but they all seem to centre on the same ideas related to the ethical implications of consumer behaviour (Hu, 2023). Authors have tried labeling this behaviour with a variety of terms (such as “green” consumer behaviour, “ethical consumption,” “sustainable consumption,” and “socially responsible consumption”), but the contents and elements are found to be relatively comparable in meaning (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Peattie, 2010). Due to its nebulous nature, the term “responsible consumption behaviour” (RCB) is better described as a “construct” than a “concept”, since this latter term is sufficiently broad to accommodate all the conceptualizations that predominate throughout the literature and relate consumers' consumption habits with their duty to ensure the protection and sustainability of the environment (Dunlap, 1975; Gupta & Singh, 2017).

The concept of RC has been examined from several angles in the extant literature. Business and management researchers have approached the issue from a variety of perspectives, including corporate social responsibility (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017), socially responsible consumption (Chatzidakis & Shaw, 2018), the impact of sustainable production/products (Jacob-John et al., 2021), green consumption and even consumerism, to name a few. Pro-environmental behaviour, such as purchasing “eco-friendly” products and recycling, has received a great deal of attention (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978). Consumer psychology researchers, on the other hand, have explored why some people engage in sustainable behaviours and why others engage in unsustainable behaviours while having environmental concerns (White et al., 2019). According to Orazi and Chan (2020),

consumers have a favourable attitude towards environmental protection and have expressed a desire for green products.

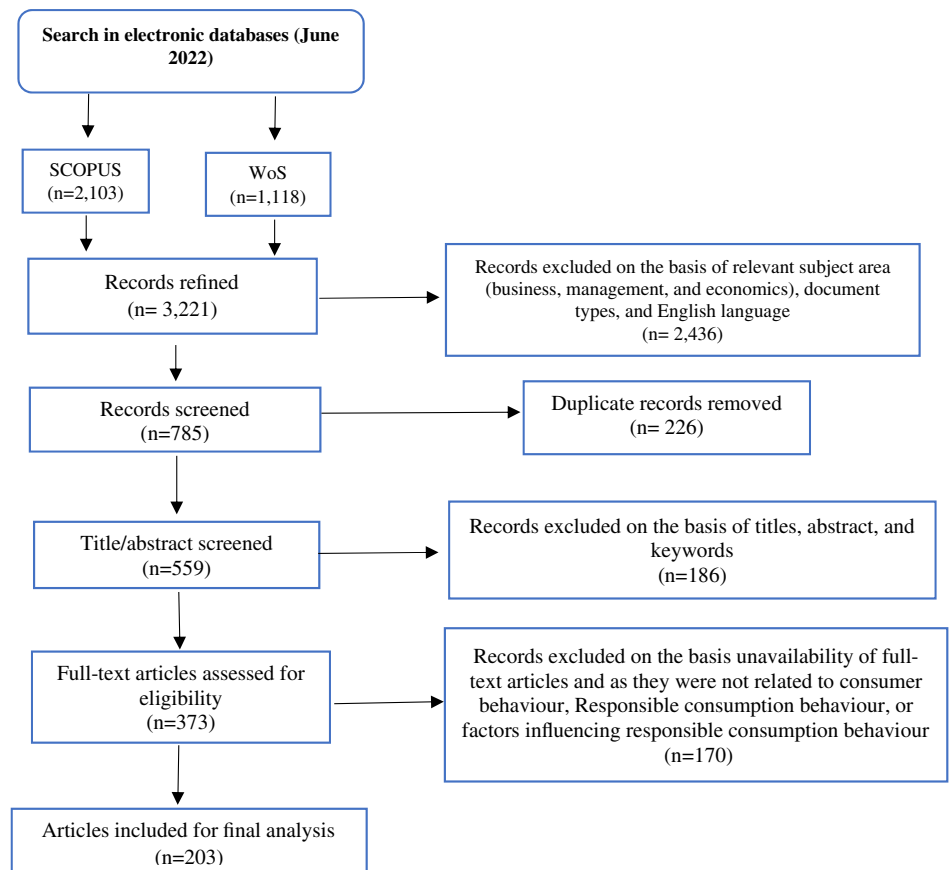
There has been an uptick in the number of academics who see sustainability as having multiple dimensions (Schöggel et al., 2020). Psychologically, consumers regard the social and environmental components of sustainability as separate, with the social aspect aligned with global, long-term, cognitive reflections and the environmental aspect tied to localised, short-term, emotive reflections (Catlin et al., 2017). More product-focused studies compare organic, locally sourced, and traded alternatives. Academics have some qualms about the concept of consumption in general since to “consume” something is to use or destroy it—two things that run counter to the concept of sustainability. Consequently, a new perspective of “consumption” is called for. Consumption has traditionally been restricted to buying (Shapiro, 1978; Wertenbroch, 1998; Westbrook, 1987). This is problematic since it is hard to appreciate the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of any type of consumption without first understanding the product's entire life cycle, from manufacture to disposal. This makes RCB more significant and relevant because consuming involves a series of consumer decisions and activities that include buying, using, and disposing of tangible things (Lanzini & Tencati, 2023). This study was motivated by the lack of a comprehensive analysis and theoretical framework for responsible customer behaviour.

## 1.2 | Objectives

In this context, the study's objectives are twofold: first, to investigate the factors that foster responsible consumption behaviour (RCB); and, second, to specify important research gaps and suggest future research agendas that provide opportunities for motivating RCB. The study employs an integrative review methodology with a two-level analytical approach comprising bibliometric analysis to identify the most influential articles, countries, and keywords on the subject based on their publication, citation, and importance to the intellectual network, and manual analysis of the available literature to shed light on the field's thematic structure. To further our understanding of RCB, we manually analysed each of the 203 papers that were shortlisted. The field of RCB is supported by five clusters addressing environmental concerns, social values, ethical obligations, economic behaviour, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), from which we take our conclusions and policy recommendations. We collected the data from the two most popular databases, the Web of Science and SCOPUS, as they are the largest citation-based databases and the most frequently used by social science researchers.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 discusses the study's methodology; Section 3 focuses on the trends and provides a general description of the existing literature; Section 4 discusses the main themes; Section 5 presents the opportunity for future research directions; Section 6 elaborates on the implications for theory and policy; and Section 7 concludes the study.

**FIGURE 1** Study flow diagram. RCB, responsible consumption behaviour; WoS, Web of Science.



## 2 | REVIEW STRATEGY

Literature evaluations can take numerous forms, and each has the ability to contribute to theory in a unique way (Fan et al., 2022; Yadav & Bansal, 2021). We adopted an integrative review methodology that comprises bibliometric analysis and manual examination of the retrieved literature since both methodologies are more suited to assessing an emerging research topic. Integrative reviews aim to evaluate, critique, and synthesize “representative” literature in order to produce new theoretical frameworks and viewpoints (Cronin & George, 2020). The bibliometric analysis proposes a quantitative and systematic examination of a study domain. It is typically used to discover highly cited publications, identify common research themes and their evolution, and create visualizations for co-citation networks, bibliographic coupling, co-authorship or cross-border collaboration, affiliations, co-word analysis, and thematic mapping. A manual insightful review compiles several studies from which conclusions can be formed and the overall picture examined (Sharma et al., 2021).

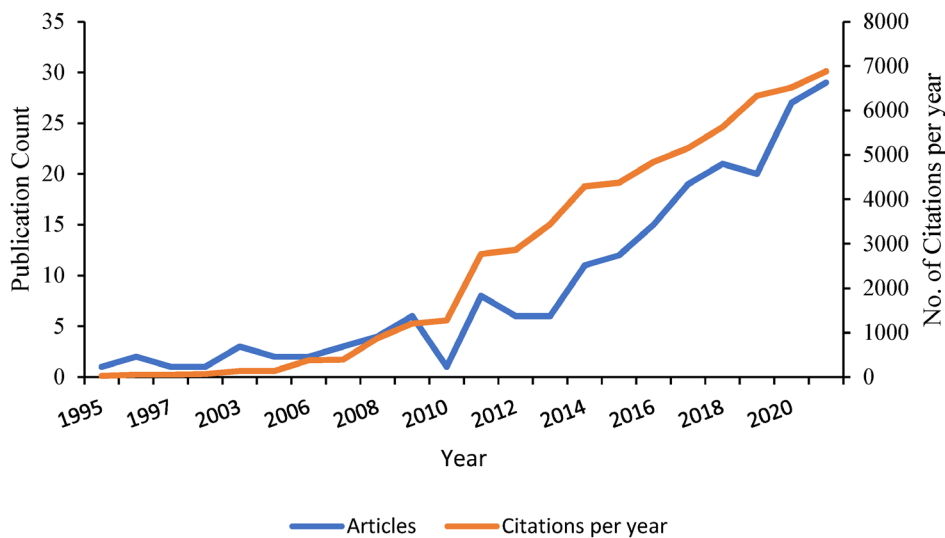
### 2.1 | Data collection protocol

To perform this study, we followed the steps outlined: identifying sources (databases); (ii) identifying articles; and (iii) establishing

inclusion/exclusion criteria. We began collecting data from two of the most popular databases, Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus, for the following reason(s): these databases are most frequently used by social science researchers; and (ii) a variety of database types (e.g., citation databases, and subject area databases) was necessary.

Next, we chose articles for analysis based on the following criteria: (i) articles had to be published in business and management, economics, psychology, ethics, or social sciences journals; (ii) articles had to mention “responsible consumption” OR “sustainable consumption” OR “green consumption” OR “ethical consumption” in the title, abstract, or keywords; and (iii) articles had to be in English. Our search included publications until June 2022.

We identified 785 publications between 1990 and 2022 based on subject, document type, and English language (Figure 1). As duplicate articles occurred in both databases, we removed 226 and kept 559 for analysis. Then, we pulled the full record and cited references from the database, which includes title, year published, journal, keywords, abstract, authors, the author addresses, subject categories, and references. We eliminated 186 papers from the CSV (Comma Separated Values) file due to irrelevant titles, abstracts, and keywords. Next, both authors manually assessed 373 (full-text) articles and excluded 170 for not discussing consumer behaviour, RCB, or factors influencing RCB, leaving 203 for final analysis. Our examination of 203 articles revealed themes connected to responsible consumption.



**FIGURE 2** Annual publications and citations based on the Scopus database.

## 2.2 | Data analysis

We reviewed all 203 publications to identify research themes. As part of our research, the individual research topics addressed in the papers are discussed in greater depth below to bifurcate them into distinct themes (see Section 5). After identifying theme clusters, all articles in each cluster were reviewed to find their most prominent contributions, research methodologies, and theoretical viewpoints (Bansal, Singh, & Nangia, 2022). According to Maseda et al. (2022), the results of the bibliometric study should be assessed and supplemented by extensive reading. A literature review helps us enrich the major findings of bibliometrics by identifying research gaps and speculating about the field's future development. As a result, the research topics were classified into five major clusters identifying factors that drive RCB.

## 3 | TRENDS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE

### 3.1 | Publication output and growth trend

Publications and citations in this field are summarized yearly in Figure 2. According to the findings, the interest in this field of study has expanded over time from one article in 1995 to 20 in 2020 and 16 in 2021 (July). The concept of responsible consumption grew significantly after 2015, most likely as a result of the SDGs' renewal. The year with the most citation records is 2021, with a total of 6884. This ongoing interest suggests that this subject area remains relevant and researchers can still address many gaps.

### 3.2 | Keyword co-occurrence

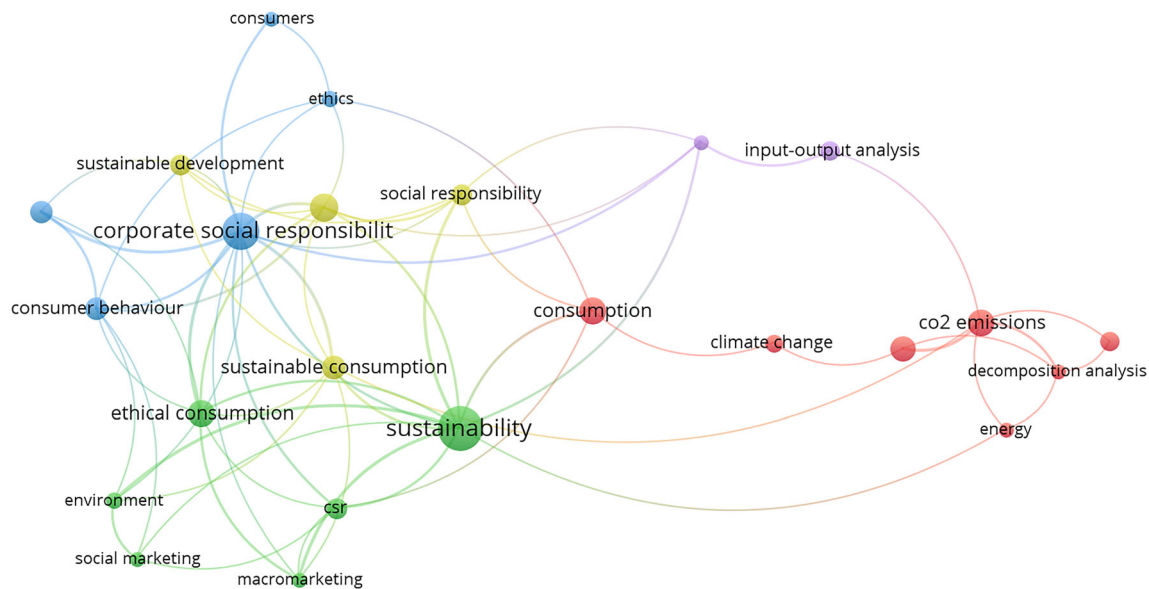
Keyword co-occurrence is the frequency, repetition, and proximity of similar keywords in research (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Figure 3

depicts RC's keyword co-occurrence network with 774 keywords in the field having at least five occurrences during the period. Each node represents a term, each colour a cluster, and each link displays keyword co-occurrence. Many terms depend on node thickness and connectivity.

Consumption, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, China, and climate change appear to be the most prominent words in the red cluster. This cluster is mostly concerned with the environmental aspects of RC. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions occurred 15 times, while China occurred 14 times. The previous literature on these keywords is primarily from China and has focused on China's measurement of and approaches to balancing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. He and Filimonau (2019) focused on the tourism sector and investigated whether the national culture influences travellers' pro-environmental behaviour in China. Consumption, which appears 16 times in the red cluster, focuses on consumers' propensity to be environmentally friendly and whether environmental knowledge and a collaborative economy contribute to RCB.

The next significant cluster, which is green in colour, features prominent keywords such as sustainability, ethical consumption, social marketing, and macro marketing. Sustainability, the most frequently occurring keyword in the literature (42 times), has links with practically all of the clusters; however, it is shown in the green cluster since it mostly relates to ethics, ethical consumption, and social marketing in the prior literature. Shaw et al. (2016) conducted a study on the topic of customers' ethical purchasing habits and found that the way people express "care" about their purchases warrants more consideration. Zollo et al. (2018) delves into the background factors that influence moral judgment and cognition to find that ethical concerns are strongly influenced by the characteristics of ethical consumption behaviour. Ethical consumption has occurred 16 times in the literature, and the research has concentrated on gender disparities in ethical consumption. Another concept that has evolved under ethical consumption is consumer empowerment.

The third cluster, which is blue in colour, features CSR, consumer behaviour, and ethics as prominent keywords. The literature on CSR focuses on company affiliations and consumer attributions. Golob



**FIGURE 3** Keyword co-occurrence.

et al. (2019) studied the function of customer motivation in CSR for RC. The phrase consumer behaviour appeared six times and refers to CSR's influence on buying behaviour and the attitude–behaviour gap for sustainable products.

The fourth cluster, which is yellow, is the most essential because it is connected to all the others and contains recent and ongoing work. Responsible consumption, sustainable consumption, social responsibility, and sustainable development are included. This cluster focuses on the role of responsible and sustainable consumption in achieving the SDGs, the three pillars of sustainable development (social, economic, and environmental), sustainable and responsible innovation, and the role of responsible and sustainable consumption in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour (Kumar et al., 2021).

## 4 | FACTORS DRIVING RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOUR

Figure 4 is a two-dimensional graph showing density and centrality rank values (Cobo et al., 2011). Centrality is the interplay between themes or external strengths. Density refers to the internal links between a theme's keywords. A strategic map is a  $2 \times 2$  matrix with four quadrants that shows research topic themes. The four quadrants are motor (upper-right), basic (lower-right), niche themes (upper-left), and emerging/disappearing (lower-left quadrant). Certain topics, called “themes,” are organised in these quadrants based on their density (internal tie) and centrality (external strength) rank values (Aparicio et al., 2019).

The research field's strategy map highlights five themes (one motor theme, two base themes, one niche theme, and one emerging or disappearing theme). These four themes assist understand a domain's epistemology (Giannakos et al., 2020). Motor themes are

essential to the research and are the research domain's foundation. Basic themes are central to the topic but need more exploration. Niche themes have a high degree of density, or strong internal ties, but are weakly related to the major research field or other topics. Emerging or declining themes have weak internal and external ties. These themes disappear or move to the niche quadrant throughout time. Depending on study patterns, these subjects may become basic themes. In the emerging quadrant, “economic concern” is likely to emerge as a basic theme. The next section analyses these concepts (See Table 1 for the top-cited literature on the themes).

### 4.1 | Motor themes

The strategic map of this research base has one motor theme, namely “social values”. This theme is the field's second-largest. It includes sustainability, socially responsible consumption, social standards, personal values, and sustainable living. Social influence plays an important role in consumers' sustainable behaviours as they “save the earth”.

Consumers are often influenced by others' presence, behaviour, expectations, and other socio-psychological determinants such as social class and demographic characteristics of consumers. Social conventions, identities, and desirability impact consumption patterns and may encourage consumers to engage in sustainable behaviour (Golob et al., 2019). Social norms predict litter avoidance, recycling and composting, energy conservation, and choosing sustainably sourced food (Cialdini et al., 1990). According to the theory of planned behaviour, attitudes and perceived behavioural control influence intentions, which predict behaviour. Another means that social concern may influence sustainable behaviour is through “social desirability.” Consumers commonly choose sustainable solutions to impress others (Perera, Kalantari Daronkola, & Johnson, 2022; Pristi et al., 2021), and

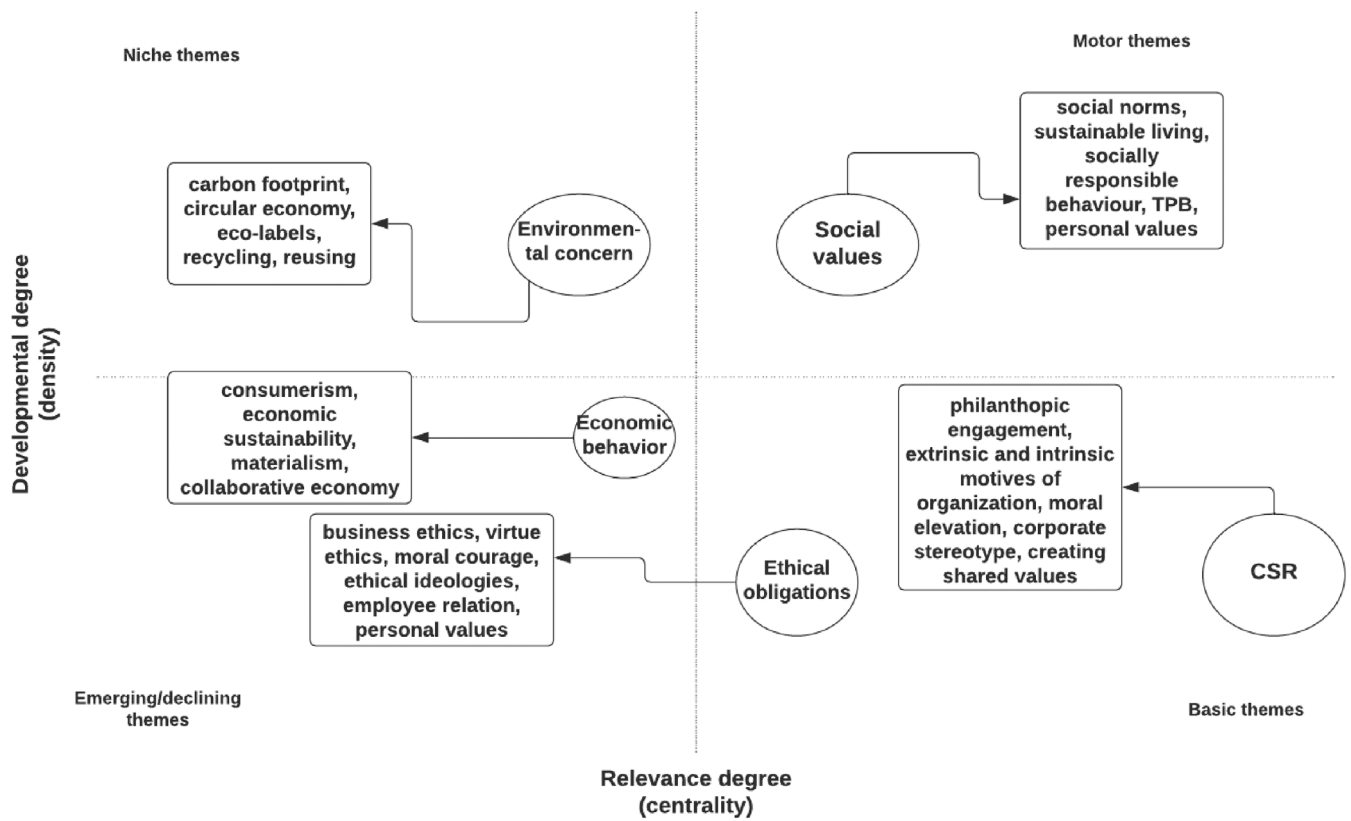


FIGURE 4 Thematic map.

TABLE 1 Thematic literature.

Broad themes	Sub-themes	Top cited supporting literature
Social values	social norms, sustainable living, socially responsible behaviour, TPB, personal values	Lundblad & Davies (2016); Minton et al. (2018); Panzone et al. (2016); Salazar et al. (2013)
Corporate social responsibility (CSR)	philanthropic engagement, extrinsic and intrinsic motives of the organization, moral elevation, corporate stereotype, creating shared values	Golob et al. (2019); Green et al. (2016); Han et al. (2020); Schlaile et al. (2018)
Ethical obligations	business ethics, virtue ethics, moral courage, ethical ideologies, employee relation, personal values	Hassan et al. (2016); May et al. (2014); Shaw et al. (2016); Zollo et al. (2018)
Environmental concern	carbon footprint, circular economy, eco-labels, recycling, reusing	Brough et al. (2016); Costa Pinto et al. (2014); Kang et al. (2013); Nepal et al. (2019)
Economic behaviour	consumerism, economic sustainability, materialism, collaborative economy	Alonso-Almeida et al. (2020); Dabbous & Tarhini (2019); J. Han et al. (2017)

they promote high-involvement sustainable options (e.g., hybrid autos) to signal their social standing to others. Authors, on the other hand, frequently see sustainable practices unfavourably, leading some consumers to eschew pro-environmental (Uckan Yuksel & Kaya, 2021). The two most important socio-psychological aspects that affect the RC are individual characteristics (consumer age, gender, income, education, and values) and contextual factors (cultural norms, media messages, and public policy) (Delistavrou et al., 2021). Motivating responsible consumption depends on both individual and contextual characteristics. Yet studies show that RC may be influenced more by contextual than personal factors (Perlaviciute & Steg, 2014; Uckan

Yuksel & Kaya, 2021). This is because contextual factors can influence the entire environment in which consumers make purchase decisions, increasing the likelihood that they will engage in RC (Sun et al., 2022).

## 4.2 | Base themes

This research base's strategic map reveals two basic themes: “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) and “ethical concern”. CSR is the largest theme both in the basic quadrant and on the strategic map, and it includes topics such as philanthropic engagement, intrinsic and

extrinsic corporate motives, consumer scepticism, green consumers, and so on. Previous studies on the effect of CSR activities on RCB have suggested that consumers place greater emphasis on the consumption of responsible products and monitoring enterprises' CSR initiatives, and greater attention to CSR has a significant positive influence on purchases (Guerrero Medina et al., 2021). According to the research, consumers' perceptions of a firm's CSR actions positively influence their satisfaction (Stefańska & Bilińska-Reformat, 2020), trust in the company, loyalty, attitudes, and behavioural intentions (Musova et al., 2021). CSR is also linked to the triple bottom line (TBL) idea, since it emphasises on the social and environmental aspects of performance. Previous study has looked at the influence of CSR and TBL on consumer behaviour and attitudes about purchasing sustainable products and services (Isacowitz et al., 2022). The main point of contention in this topic is the wide disparity between the supply and demand sides of the market. Firms are increasingly investing in CSR programs on the supply side, while consumers are paying more attention to unethical corporate behaviour on the demand side, and irresponsible behaviour of the companies has a stronger impact on consumer buying intent (Friske et al., 2022). According to Carroll (1991)'s CSR Pyramid, businesses should prioritise satisfying the requirements of their stakeholders, which would presumably include customers. One strategy for doing so is to promote "responsible consumption," or purchasing decisions that are mindful of the goods' potential negative effects on people and the planet.

The second theme emerging in the base quadrant is "ethical obligation", and this theme constitutes research areas such as business ethics, virtue ethics, ethical ideologies, moral courage, consumer ethics, and so on. This theme emerges as an important theme in the context of this study and comes from the knowledge base. According to prior studies, it is difficult for a behaviour to be beneficial to long-term sustainability and responsibility while breaching universally or commonly recognised moral norms and principles. Shaw et al. (2016) discovered the interaction between product features and social dimensions. When a company engages in immoral behaviour, a crucial product attribute of a telephone (i.e., audio quality) has no effect on public perception of it. Conversely, when a corporation acts ethically, good quality has a substantial positive effect on attitude. Thus, the existing literature on this topic demonstrates that, when a corporation acts ethically, consumers are more likely to engage in responsible behaviour (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021). Since the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), marketers have been required to coordinate their efforts in order to contribute to the attainment of the SDGs. According to studies, marketers are increasingly concentrating on how their activities might help accomplish these goals. This involves incorporating social and environmental goals into marketing strategy as well as incorporating sustainability into supplier chains (Jacob-John et al., 2021).

#### 4.3 | Niche themes

The upper-left quadrant, or niche themes, has one key theme, "environmental concern". This theme includes research topics such as

the circular economy, eco-labels, the carbon footprint, green consumers, global consumption, and so on. The literature on this topic has been studied from numerous angles. Environmental awareness has been researched extensively as one of the most important predictors of responsible consumption behaviour. This factor has generally been analysed as an environmental concern, environmental knowledge, and attitude toward the environment (Felix & Braunsberger, 2016; Kang et al., 2013; Thøgersen & Alfinito, 2020). All the relationships discovered were generally positive, but there were some negative relationships as well. For example, Reimers et al. (2017) concluded that the negative environmental repercussions of purchasing conventional apparel have no effect on the purchase of green apparel, whereas Abdul-Muhmin (2007) points out that consumers' desire to pay more for green products is unaffected by environmental concerns. Another central concept connected to the environmental component of RCB is the natural resource-based view (NRBV), which has its roots in the resource-based view theory and is a framework for perceiving the firm as a collection of assets and capabilities that may be leveraged to produce value. In addition to the relevance of the firm's natural resources for its competitive advantage, the literature reveals that NRBV has substantial implications for RC. In order to establish and maintain a competitive advantage, businesses need to take charge of the management of their natural resources (Hart & Dowell, 2011). The NRBV is useful because it gives a framework for thinking about how businesses might generate value through responsible consumption practices. A sustainable and efficient approach to natural resource management provides companies with a competitive edge that can help them succeed over the long run. Another significant environmental concern is the circular economy, which is a new field of study focusing on decreasing waste and boosting sustainability by closing the loop between production and consumption (Patyal et al., 2022). The research in this field focuses on developing solutions to lessen the environmental effect of economic activity. This involves reducing the quantity of resources used in manufacturing processes, reducing or eliminating the usage of hazardous compounds, and reusing or recycling materials (Giannetti et al., 2023).

#### 4.4 | Emerging/declining themes

One theme that appears from the emerging/declining quadrant is "economic behaviour". This is the smallest theme on the strategic map, and it includes topics like consumer choice, economic stability, consumerism, materialism, and so on. One key factor influencing responsible consumer behaviour is income and economic savings. The argument on this subject is based on the observation that consumers' limited financial resources discourage them from buying eco-friendly things. The purchase of eco-friendly but costly products, such as hybrid cars and organic food, is positively correlated with income. Verteramo Chiu et al. (2017) discovered that consumer's willingness to pay for environmental well-being through products or services increases with earnings, however, other research has found that a

**TABLE 2** Future research directions.

Broad themes	Future research directions
Social values	Do household decisions influence consumption habits? What influence do consumers' households and upbringing play in their RCB? How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected responsible lifestyles? Will they become more sustainable in the future? What might be the marketing operations based on consumption patterns with special emphasis on CSR? Is there a difference in consumption patterns when utilizing services? What could be the influence of social norms and conscientious consumerism if framing public policy?
Corporate social responsibility	Low economic sustainability or low environmental sustainability: which is more dangerous? Do the three dimensions of the triple bottom line conflict with one another? If so, what could be done to synchronize them? How can social media be used for CSR awareness and the education of consumers?
Ethical obligations	How can marketers use the SDG framework to better understand behaviour of consumers? How can marketers use the SDG framework as a foundation for marketing strategy while remaining transparent about their implementation? What are the potential drawbacks of utilising the SDG framework to guide marketing strategy?
Environmental concern	Is environmentally conscious consumer behaviour driven by innovation? How can businesses promote long-term pro-environmental behaviour change to drive sustainable development? Do digitization and innovation help establish a circular and sharing economy, such as fixing products, buying used products, or sharing goods and services with other consumers?
Economic behaviour	Does consumer behaviour alter when purchasing low-involvement products (e.g., sustainable groceries) vs high-involvement and infrequent purchases (e.g., installing solar panels)? What effect does psychological distance have on the intention-behaviour gap? How is RCB affected by economic crises or booms and recent geo-political crises? What effect does technology have on RC adoption? How does change resistance affect RC adoption and the gaps? Is it true that older individuals have a lower willingness to pay for sustainable options than younger generations? Is this a consequence of a lack of intergenerational solidarity?

product's perceived economic worth in terms of future economic savings and benefits derived from distinguishing traits, such as lower energy consumption or enhanced durability, can have a significant impact on consumer choice. Another important concept is cognitive dissonance, which is a psychological phenomenon in which a person feels uncomfortable when confronted with two contradictory thoughts or concepts (Silva Souza & O'Dwyer, 2022). According to research on economic behaviour and cognitive dissonance, people frequently modify their beliefs and conduct to lessen the conflict. People who buy things with a negative environmental impact, for example, may try to rationalise their conduct by claiming that their own contribution to the problem is minimal or that the problem is too complex to fix (Elena Francke & Carrete, 2023).

## 5 | OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

We divided our recommendations for future research into three distinct but related categories: propositions pertinent to the themes discovered in the study, contextual propositions, and methodological propositions.

### 5.1 | Thematic propositions

The existing literature on responsible consumption has increased significantly over the last two decades. Based on a conceptual analysis of the literature, this study offers various opportunities for future research. We have presented the thematic propositions according to the themes identified in the study in Table 2.

#### 5.1.1 | Social values

Consumer behaviour and consumption patterns are significantly influenced by social values and norms. Many studies have shown that individuals' purchasing and consumption habits are highly influenced by societal and cultural norms (Pristl et al., 2021). In many communities, for instance, men are presumed to be the primary buyers and drinkers of alcoholic beverages. Furthermore, what is considered stylish or desired may be influenced by societal standards, which in turn can affect what consumers buying decisions.

While previous work has focused on the relationship between consumer lifestyles, it has failed to define a sustainable lifestyle and its components holistically, including typology criteria for persons



living a sustainable lifestyle. There is a need to analyse, intervene, and implement corporate lifestyle-based marketing activities with a focus on CSR, not only in developed but also in developing countries. Future research can also identify relevant state policy instruments for social sustainability and social support in times of inequality and uncertainty (Thaichon et al., 2022). We assume that the COVID-19 pandemic has already had an impact on people's ways of life and consumption habits and these behaviours will likely become more eco-friendly in the future. Additionally, social norms and responsible consumption study might investigate the function of consumer identities in the establishment of responsible consumption behaviour. Furthermore, research might be conducted to examine the possibility of consumer identity to be used in marketing efforts to encourage responsible consumption. Finally, there is scope for an investigation into the influence of social norms and conscientious consumerism on public policy.

### 5.1.2 | Corporate social responsibility

In recent years, there has been a rise in study of CSR and the triple bottom line as businesses have started to recognize the need of being responsible for their operations and the effects they have on society and the natural environment. Research has shown that responsible consumption is crucial, with the triple bottom line being used as a metric to evaluate success on all fronts (Birkel & Müller, 2021). Understanding how businesses may effectively implement policies and practices that have beneficial social, environmental, and economic effects has been a primary focus of CSR and Triple Bottom Line research.

Research on the relationship between consumer awareness and consumption is another vital topic of study in the realm of corporate social responsibility (Golob et al., 2019). The goal of this field of study is to better comprehend how consumers perceive and react to issues of sustainability, ethical sourcing, and moral consumption (Yoon, 2020). Even while environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability have each been studied separately in the previous literature, no study has analysed all three at once. Since these three areas are interconnected and even potentially contradictory, they must all be taken into consideration in the future studies. The success of CSR programmes in mitigating the environmental and social implications of consumption might be the subject of future studies in CSR, the triple bottom line, and consumption. Green marketing, product labelling, and corporate responsibility efforts are only a few examples of CSR tactics, tools, and approaches that may be investigated in this context. The impact of CSR programmes on the financial, social, and environmental performance of businesses would be an intriguing area of research. Future studies could also investigate if environmental knowledge (EK) is proportional to academic achievement or the product of the social influence of media, notably television and the Internet. Assessing the impact of CSR on customer advocacy and word of mouth, as well as exploring the usage of social media for CSR awareness and education of customers, would be intriguing topics for future scholars to investigate.

### 5.1.3 | Ethical obligations

Poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation are only some of the worldwide problems that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to solve. Now, more than ever, it is the responsibility of marketers to contribute ethically to these ends. This line of inquiry will pave the way for more sustainable marketing practises by providing insight into the development of marketing plans that are more in line with the SDGs. Even though SDGs are getting more attention in marketing literature, they are still on the fringe. The opportunity for a more clear and strategic focus on the SDGs was emphasised by Kautish et al. (2022). Surprisingly, consumer behaviour research did not investigate whether certain SDGs had any bearing on consumption. It is striking that marketing scholars have been urging marketers to look for ways to decrease inequality, rather than enhance it. The impact of marketing on the global climate issue can be evaluated at every point in the product cycle or in the consumer decision-making process. There is a widespread failure on the part of marketers to create products that are environmentally friendly throughout the manufacture, consumption, and disposal phases, leaving consumers with few viable options. To make matters worse, people are numbed by the terrible truth and reality because of deceptive messages that greenwash and let firms dodge responsibility. To that end, marketing academics might explicitly incorporate SDGs into their research for a more in-depth examination in the interest of a more sustainable environment. The shift to sustainable and resilient communities depends on the responsible use of finite natural resources, making these changes and reaching the SDGs requires an integrated approach. Strongly integrated frameworks for sustainable consumption and production (Goal 12), environmentally conscious business practices and consumer behaviour (Goals 8 and 9), and adherence to international norms on the management of hazardous chemicals and wastes (Goals 6, 7, and 13) are all necessary for building resilient and sustainable societies. Future research into how the SDGs may be accomplished synergistically, which goals and targets have the greatest impact on responsible consumption patterns, and how to overcome them, promises to be highly interesting.

### 5.1.4 | Environmental concern

Recent years have seen a surge in worldwide environmental research that focuses on pro-environmental intent and the circular economy. Individual characteristics, environmental knowledge and information, attitudes and views, social norms, socioeconomic level, and media exposure are only few of the aspects revealed in studies to be linked to environmental concern and pro-environmental intents (Pekkanen & Penttilä, 2021). In order to effectively transition to a more sustainable and circular economy, researchers in the field of environmental concern and circular economy have concentrated on understanding the interrelationships between natural resources, economic activity, and human behaviour (Sun et al., 2022). Both of these areas have the

potential to be explored more in the future as we work toward a more sustainable future for our planet through the circular economy.

While the existing literature on green consumption, its effects on purchasing behaviour, and the drivers of green/eco-friendly consumption is extensive, many instances of deceptive advertising and “green-washing” have been uncovered because of the increased monitoring role of NGOs and institutional entities, which has reduced consumers’ trust in green claims. As a result, researchers need to investigate how green scepticism can mitigate the impact of environmental personal norms or green claims on packaging. In addition, a fresh examination of packaging may provide interesting new information for deducing sustainable lifestyle choices. Studies have looked at packaging as a factor in eco-friendly consumer practices (i.e., the choice of recycled or recyclable packaging). But it could be instructive to analyse how consumers’ perceptions of the consistency between the packaging and the product’s actual environmental benefits affects their purchasing decisions.

The circular economy paradigm has emerged as a prominent new research direction in the study of the factors that influence responsible consumption in recent years. Elzinga et al. (2020) examined the characteristics that influence consumer preference for one of the three most prominent circular economy business models (CBMs): take back, lease, and pay-per-use; all three are designed to increase product longevity (Sun et al., 2022). This means that consumers’ actions in conjunction with the product’s environmental impact are now just as important as the product itself in determining its green reputation. Similar concerns are emerging in the fashion industry: McNeill et al. (2020) investigated the drivers of slow fashion, delving into the role of customers in extending garment life, and Legere and Kang (2020) inspected how Indian millennials share the cost of high-end apparel purchases. Research into mobility systems that use the sharing economy paradigm, such as bike and car-sharing programs, is also an interesting avenue to explore. Future research could also emphasize the development of new and innovative approaches to encourage sustainable consumption.

### 5.1.5 | Economic behaviour

Economic behaviour and cognitive dissonance research investigate how people make decisions when confronted with competing economic incentives. It explores how people make such decisions by weighing short-term costs and advantages. Online buying behaviour influences consumer purchasing habits, which may differ from traditional shopping behaviour. Significant study into these disciplines is lacking, which we advocate for. As stated earlier, a large number of emerging and underdeveloped countries continue to lack an understanding of consumption concerns and sustainability. If these countries start to consider sustainability when making decisions about their development, the future of a sustainable world will appear realistic. The thematic findings show that to inculcate pro-environmental behaviour among consumers, encouraging them on an individual basis outperforms pushing them.

The literature currently lacks clear recommendations on environmentally friendly lifestyles that consumers may use to gauge their own sustainability efforts. The sense of empowerment may alter people’s image of sustainable living and make them more comfortable with adapting to such a lifestyle. Additionally, increasing consumer demand and, potentially, business profitability, can be accomplished through the development of products that are both appealing and cost-effective. More research be done on cognitive dissonance as a tool against environmental challenges. Methods of giving environmentally friendly products a “cool” reputation and simplifying the process of eco-labelling are essential if they are to gain widespread consumer support quickly.

Responsible consumption behaviour in e-commerce, particularly from the perspective of young adults, tends to suggest that, while online store implementation (including product availability, pricing, packaging, and responsibility information) is critical in allowing responsible purchase decisions, consumers’ own consumption patterns and habits, as well as everyday obstacles, also play an important role in responsible consumption. The need for responsibility is widely acknowledged, yet making ethical purchases is often seen as too time-consuming or difficult to warrant the effort. It can be difficult to incorporate responsibility into one’s current spending patterns, and it is simple to forget about or neglect, especially when making a purchase on the spur of the moment. How user interfaces, internet tools, and apps might aid consumers in responsibility assessments is a topic that may be explored in future research. Additional research is encouraged to determine if similar barriers exist across retail categories and/or demographic subsets, such as younger and older consumers. New online firms that either specialise in selling responsible items or respect the foundations of sustainable development in their services may find opportunities as the importance of both responsible consumption and online shopping continues to rise (Table 2).

## 5.2 | Methodological propositions

Indeed, qualitative techniques are a promising field. Qualitative research answers “why” and “how” questions concerning RCB. Case studies and systematic interviews can highlight RC obstacles. The given thematic propositions can be employed in qualitative research. This helps validate or refute hypotheses. Case studies assist construct theories by describing “why” and “how”. Welch et al. (2011) demonstrated the limitations of inductive theory building and proposed that the wider use of alternative approaches to theorizing would improve case studies’ explanatory ability and contextualization potential. Future researchers may take advantage of the chance to do a meta-analysis of the vast corpus of scholarly literature in order to chart out recurring topics, settings, theoretical perspectives, findings, and knowledge gaps.

## 5.3 | Contextual propositions

In this section, we highlight the context settings, and one approach to consider is to study RCB with respect to countries (i.e., developed

regions, emerging economies, and lesser developed regions). The country determines the institutional frameworks and other countries/regional factors that either challenge or assist RC behaviour. We identified very few studies in the context of emerging economies/regions (Voola et al., 2022). Many of the suggestions for future research made in the preceding section can be carried out with a specific focus on RCB in developing countries as there are many possibilities for carrying out more studies based on the challenges faced by consumers in consuming responsibly as well as the processes and consumption patterns of consumers from less developed/underdeveloped regions as the majority of previous studies were conducted in the context of developed countries.

The industry is another contextual background to consider. RCB, in our opinion, is also influenced by the industry with which it is affiliated. Several studies have analysed the food and retail industries, especially FMCG and clothes. By comparing RCB from developed and emerging locations, we may compare RCB in technology-intensive industries and secondary industries like manufacturing and construction. Consumers from different sectors can help comprehend RCB's method and pace and identify differences in customer behaviour. Cultural diversity can also have an impact on responsible consumerism. Those in some cultures are particularly sensitive to the environment and the need to conserve resources, whilst people in others are more focused on instant satisfaction and consumerism. For future research, it could be interesting to compare the cultures or economies that adhere to individualism vs those that adhere to collectivism, and how they affect RCB. Similarly, Masculinity vs. Femininity as a consumer attribute might be contrasted for some intriguing conclusions.

## 6 | IMPLICATIONS

The 2030 Agenda gives substantial recognition to the idea of responsible consumerism. Goal 12 of the Sustainable Development Agenda recognizes that production and consumption patterns are at the heart of the planet's sustainability concerns and places them at the center of the sustainable development agenda while also trying to motivate consumers to practice doing more with less. SDG 12 implementation is related to overall development goals, the reduction of future economic, environmental, and social costs, the improvement of economic competitiveness, and the reduction of poverty, making it even more comprehensive and significant for all stakeholders. The study has important theoretical as well as policy implications in terms of potentially boosting the desirability of RCB. According to the study's findings, social influence and environmental concerns are the most important aspects to consider when comprehending RCB. Thus, the study not only raises the question of various motivations for executing a specific behaviour but also implies that these factors motivate different consumers to varying degrees. As such, this study adds to the emerging literature on RC, highlighting the impact of social influence, environmental concern, and ethical obligations on consumer responsible behaviour in general.

The study has a few theoretical implications for RCB. At the outset, it is vital to note that people's irrationality when it comes to purchasing decisions should not be underestimated. This means that they do not always opt for the actions that are best for them and the planet (Mohan et al., 2022). Secondly, responsible consumer behaviour necessitates that people consider the consequences of their actions on both the natural and human communities (Lasrado et al., 2022). This necessitates that consumers are well-versed in the goods they purchase and the organisations they are supporting. Last but not least, people need to be willing to alter their consumption habits if they want to see a positive shift in the natural environment (Mishra et al., 2022). Several theories have been useful to RCB researchers. These include the theory of buyer behaviour, the theory of reasoned action, the theory of planned behaviour, the self-determination theory (SDT), consumer culture theory, and sociological perspectives. Although SDT adds little to the RCB literature, it has proven to be a helpful concept and theoretical framework in consumer research (Sahelices-Pinto et al., 2021). The extent to which ICT and AI can be used to improve self-determined decision-making about RCB, as well as whether certain of these techniques are more effective than others in reaching such goals, maybe driving such study. The explanations for human behaviour drawn on components of SDT in combination with other models and theoretical frameworks can be researched more in the future.

Marketers and public policymakers may try to raise the presence of social issues and the social activities of responsible customers while lowering the barriers to this type of behaviour. In order for them to perform socially desirable acts, their appeals should emphasise the social norms connected with society's problems. Influencers or positive role models, for example, who are regarded by a specific population could be included. To boost RCB, marketers and public policymakers must also be vigilant and supply sufficient information to customers as well as influence personal norms through societal norms, concerns, and ethical beliefs. In particular, ethical beliefs should be emphasized while attempting to affect the conduct of the masses, beginning with young children in schools. Consumers are frequently dubious about businesses' environmental claims and struggle to identify green products. As a result, environmental education should teach consumers how to identify environmentally friendly products. Furthermore, manufacturers and marketers should endeavour not just to introduce eco-label products but also to increase customers' trust in eco-labels. Marketers can use eco-labels to create public awareness, educate individuals on the meaning and availability of eco-labels, and explain the benefits of using eco-labelled products. To ensure that customers' ethical concerns are supported, the government should also monitor the integrity of the messages transmitted by eco-labels.

## 7 | CONCLUSION

Responsible consumption entails doing more with less, which can be accomplished by decoupling economic growth from environmental

degradation, enhancing resource efficiency, and encouraging sustainable lifestyles, thereby integrating sustainable development goals. The primary goal of this article is to give a state-of-art review of the literature on responsible consumer behaviour. We generated a knowledge map of the literature by reviewing and criticising 203 papers concerning RCB. We then developed a country collaboration map, co-cited authors, keyword analysis, and thematic map. According to the findings, the United States is the most prolific country in responsible consumption research, followed by the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, and France. A keyword analysis map, similarly, illustrates the study pattern in this research domain.

We next used thematic analysis to identify the elements that promote RCB by studying the existing literature stock and identifying the most explored, emergent, and niche research themes in this research domain. Social values, CSR, ethical obligations, environmental concerns, and economic behaviour are the five of drivers of RCB. This comprehensive integrative review provides thematic, methodological, and contextual information for future research agendas. This is supported by the fact that consumption is a critical socioeconomic component with direct and indirect effects on all aspects of human existence and the environment.

The study is not without limitations. To begin, this is an integrative study, and while we made every effort to be objective and comprehensive, additional empirical research may be required to fully corroborate our conclusions. Second, it is possible that several articles in this line of study with different keywords were left out since we recognized them using the keyword-based search. Third, the vast majority of the studies in our data were carried out in developed nations; if there were more studies from developing nations as well, we may have arrived at different conclusions, as the factors that influence consumption in a developing nation may differ from those in a developed nation. Finally, we only used WoS and Scopus to extract data, which may have constrained the findings of our study. While this is in line with conventional thinking for structured literature reviews, future research should look into including more databases (for example, Google Scholar, and PubMed).

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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