

Ethical Considerations In Ai-Driven Online Retailing: A Bibliometric Analysis And Future Directions

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to explore the ethical considerations surrounding AI in online retailing through a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis. It seeks to address three key research questions: (1) What are the trends in publication and citation? (2) What are the major research clusters in the field? (3) What future research directions can be identified?

Methods: The study employs bibliometric analysis using VOS Viewer software, examining relevant literature on AI ethics in online retail. The analysis tracks publication trends, identifies key clusters of research, and highlights influential works shaping the field.

Results: Findings indicate that consumer trust in AI is closely tied to transparency, with data privacy emerging as the most critical concern. The analysis also reveals a preference for human interaction over AI-driven customer service due to its empathy and personalization, despite the efficiency AI offers.

Conclusions: The study contributes to the understanding of how ethical AI practices, especially regarding transparency and data privacy, impact consumer trust in online retailing. It offers valuable insights for future research and practical guidance for enhancing ethical AI use in the retail industry.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Bibliometric Analysis; Data Privacy; Online Retailing Ethics; Transparency in AI.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in online retailing has transformed the retail industry by enabling operational efficiencies and hyper-personalized consumer experiences (Huang & Rust, 2018; Kumar et al., 2019). Tools such as consumer behavior analytics, inventory optimization, and AI-driven customer service applications—including chatbots and recommendation engines—are now central to retail strategies. However, AI adoption raises ethical concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and cybersecurity, directly impacting consumer trust and engagement (Cowls & Floridi, 2018). Transparency is both an ethical imperative and a strategic asset that strengthens consumer-retailer relationships. Growing consumer awareness of data collection, storage, and usage—especially following high-profile breaches—has heightened privacy concerns (Acquisti, Brandimarte, & Loewenstein, 2015). Retailers that communicate data practices transparently are more likely to foster trust and loyalty (Binns, 2018).

AI-driven customer service platforms offer 24/7 support and faster responses but often lack the emotional intelligence typical of human agents (Grewal, Roggeveen, & Nordfält, 2017). This poses challenges in balancing efficiency with emotional resonance in AI-mediated interactions.

This study explores ethical dimensions of AI in online retail through three research questions:

- 1) What are the key publication and citation trends?
- 2) What are the dominant research clusters?
- 3) What emerging directions exist for future research?

A systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer visualizes scholarly output, highlighting major themes, influential works, and gaps in ethical AI research for online retail. The study aims to inform academic inquiry and practical design of ethically aligned AI systems that build consumer trust and meet evolving standards of responsible digital innovation.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature; Section 3 details methodology; Section 4 presents bibliometric findings; Section 5 interprets results within theoretical frameworks; and the final section offers conclusions and recommendations for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into online retailing has significantly transformed the industry by enabling highly personalized experiences, optimizing supply chains, and enhancing customer service. AI-driven recommendation systems analyze consumer preferences to suggest tailored products, improving satisfaction and boosting sales (Huang & Rust, 2018). Predictive analytics enhance demand forecasting, supporting better inventory management and reducing inefficiencies (Kumar et al., 2019). AI-powered tools such as chatbots and virtual assistants now offer instant customer support, though they still struggle with delivering empathy and managing complex, emotionally nuanced queries (Davenport et al., 2020).

Since 2020, scholarly interest in explainable AI (XAI) has grown, aiming to increase transparency in AI decision-making. In online retailing, explainability is crucial in personalized recommendations and automated support, where user trust depends on understanding how decisions are made (COWLS & Floridi, 2020). Clearly communicating how AI systems function and how consumer data is used is key to addressing ethical concerns around algorithmic bias, accountability, and autonomy (Floridi et al., 2021).

Ethical Concerns in AI

AI systems rely on vast amounts of personal data, raising concerns about privacy and security. Consumers increasingly fear misuse of their information, particularly through unauthorized data sharing or cybersecurity breaches (Acquisti, Brandimarte, & Loewenstein, 2015). Data spillovers—where data collected for one purpose is repurposed—pose additional risks (Transcend, 2023). Transparent data governance and informed consent mechanisms are therefore vital to maintaining trust (COWLS & Floridi, 2020).

Advancements in privacy-enhancing technologies (PETs), such as federated learning and privacy-preserving computation, offer promising solutions. These tools enable AI applications without directly exposing consumer data, aligning with regulations like the GDPR. However, the growing use of biometric data—including facial recognition and behavioral analytics—has sparked ethical concerns over privacy violations and potential discrimination in AI-driven retail systems (Transcend, 2023).

Consumer Trust and AI Transparency

Trust is central to consumer adoption of AI-enabled retail services. Research shows that ethical AI practices and clear communication around data usage foster higher consumer engagement (Binns, 2020). Allowing users to control their data—such as opting in or out of AI features—significantly boosts satisfaction and perceptions of fairness (Taddeo & Floridi, 2020). Explainable AI also enhances trust by clarifying how decisions and recommendations are generated (Floridi et al., 2021).

Despite AI's efficiency in customer service, many consumers still prefer human interaction, especially in emotionally complex situations. Balancing AI's speed with human empathy remains a core challenge for retailers seeking to optimize the customer experience (Grewal, Roggeveen, & Nordfält, 2020; Wirtz et al., 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the SPAR-4-SLR protocol proposed by Paul et al. (2021), a structured framework that ensures transparency and methodological rigor in systematic literature reviews (SLRs). Widely used in recent bibliometric studies (Kumar et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2023), the protocol comprises three sequential stages: assembling, arranging, and assessing. These steps guide the selection, evaluation, and justification of literature. Figure 1 illustrates the review process and associated outcomes.

[Insert Figure 1]

ASSEMBLING

The first phase, assembling, began with identifying relevant keywords, guided by Madanaguli et al. (2022). A preliminary Google Scholar search using terms like “online retailing ethics” and “e-retailing ethics” informed the initial keyword pool by reviewing the top 100 relevant titles, abstracts, and keywords. Meta-analyses and SLRs in related domains, along with foundational works in Information Systems and Management (Hanelt et al., 2021; Nadkarni & Prügl, 2021), helped refine the list. Industry-specific terms from Cheng et al. (2023), Pencarelli (2020), and Stankov & Gretzel (2020) were also considered. A panel of three domain experts validated the final keyword list.

The final, expert-validated keywords were structured into the following Boolean search string:

“online retailing ethics” OR “e-retailing ethics” OR “e-commerce ethics” OR “privacy” OR “security” OR “reliability”) AND (“Artificial Intelligence” OR “AI”)

This query was used to search the Scopus database, targeting occurrences in article titles, abstracts, and keywords. Scopus was selected for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed academic literature and multidisciplinary scope, ensuring a high-quality dataset (Madanaguli et al., 2022). The overall data collection procedure is summarized in Figure 2.

[Insert Figure 2]

ARRANGING

The arranging phase involved systematically filtering the initial search results using Scopus. Filters applied included document type, subject area, source type, publication stage, and language. The search was restricted to articles published up to 2024, focusing on “articles” and “reviews” within Business, Management, Accounting; Decision Sciences; Social Sciences; Arts and Humanities; Economics, Econometrics, Finance; Computer Science; Psychology; and Environmental Science.

To ensure rigor, only peer-reviewed journal articles at the final publication stage and written in English were included. Articles in press and non-English publications were excluded for consistency. After filtering, duplicates were removed. A research team, alongside domain experts, assessed relevance by reviewing titles, abstracts, and keywords. This screening resulted in a final dataset of 362 journal articles published from 2009 to 2024, selected for bibliometric analysis.

ASSESSING

The final phase, assessing, involved a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the 362 selected articles. Bibliometric methods enable systematic exploration of large datasets, providing empirical insights into scholarly trends and key contributions (Donthu et al., 2021).

First, performance analysis evaluated publication and citation patterns to identify prolific authors, influential journals, and frequently cited works (RQ1). Next, keyword co-occurrence and bibliographic coupling analyses using VOSviewer revealed major intellectual structures and thematic clusters in the field (RQ2). These visualizations highlighted dominant research streams on online retailing ethics and AI. Finally, a thematic analysis of recent publications (2019–2024) identified emerging trends and research gaps, guiding future inquiry (RQ3). This step is crucial for advancing research on ethical AI in online retailing (Maital & Barzani, 2023; Cheng et al., 2023).

Publication trend and citation trend

To address RQ1, we analyzed the annual scientific output and citation trends related to online retailing ethics and artificial intelligence from 2009 to 2024 (see Figure 3). The initial publication on this subject appeared in 2009, and since then, the field has experienced a consistent growth rate of 26% in scientific output over the past decade. Particularly noteworthy is the gradual increase in research activity beginning in 2017, followed by a significant surge starting in 2020. On average, each document received approximately 22 citations.

[Insert Figure 3]

THEMATIC CLUSTERS ANALYSIS

I. Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

To map the intellectual structure of research at the intersection of online retailing ethics and artificial intelligence (AI), a keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted on the dataset spanning from 2009 to 2024. Applying a minimum threshold of eight keyword occurrences, the analysis captured a broad yet thematically coherent spectrum of research topics. Using VOSviewer, four distinct clusters emerged based on the co-occurrence frequency and link strength of keywords. Figure 4 displays the visual network map of keyword relationships, while Table 1 summarizes the key clusters, associated keywords, and thematic interpretations.

[Insert Table I]

[Insert Figure 4]

The keyword co-occurrence network reveals four major thematic clusters, each representing a unique yet interconnected stream of inquiry within the field. These clusters indicate both the diversity and the interrelatedness of research topics at the intersection of online retailing, AI, and ethics.

Cluster 1: Technological Innovations and Security Concerns

This cluster encompasses research on emerging digital technologies—such as AI, machine learning, big data, blockchain, and the Internet of Things (IoT)—and their associated security implications. Notably, machine learning (28 occurrences, 90 link strength) and cybersecurity (27 occurrences, 84 link strength) are prominent, signaling their central role in the discourse. The presence of terms like laws and legislation and information management suggests a growing concern for regulatory oversight and institutional frameworks. Overall, this cluster reflects a central tension in digital retailing: the drive for innovation must be counterbalanced with robust security, risk management, and governance mechanisms. The drive for innovation must be counterbalanced with robust security, risk management, and governance mechanisms.

Cluster 2: AI driven Decision-Making and Trust

This cluster centers on the use of AI in automated decision-making and decision support systems, with a strong emphasis on trust and user acceptance. Dominant keywords include artificial intelligence (212 occurrences, 432 link strength), decision-making (27 occurrences, 99 link strength), and trust (24 occurrences, 40 link strength). The inclusion of behavioral research and transparency indicates that scholars are increasingly attentive to the human factors shaping AI implementation. The strong interconnection between trust and AI systems reflects scholarly efforts to enhance the transparency and interpretability of AI. Research in this stream emphasizes the importance of fostering transparent, explainable, and trustworthy AI systems, particularly in high-stakes retail contexts.

Cluster 3: Ethical Considerations and AI

Cluster 3 addresses the moral and societal dimensions of AI integration in retail. Key terms include ethics (42 occurrences, 104 link strength), AI ethics, ethical technology, generative AI, and ChatGPT. These keywords reflect mounting concern over issues such as algorithmic bias, fairness, and the societal consequences of advanced AI tools. The moderate frequency of terms like technology adoption and economic and social effects signals that these concerns, while emerging, are still underexplored. This cluster suggests a growing need to institutionalize ethical principles into AI design and deployment.

Cluster 4: Data Privacy and Protection

This cluster centers on data governance, with keywords such as privacy (56 occurrences, 143 link strength), data privacy (39 occurrences, 137 link strength), GDPR, and privacy concerns indicating the dominant themes. The strong co-occurrence of these terms suggests a tightly interwoven focus on consumer data rights, legal compliance, and information security. As digital retail platforms increasingly rely on personal data, the need to align AI applications with privacy laws and consumer expectations is both urgent and foundational to ethical AI integration.

CONCLUSION

The keyword co-occurrence analysis reveals a multifaceted and evolving research landscape composed of four interrelated themes:

1. Technological innovation and security,
2. AI-facilitated decision-making and trust,
3. Ethical considerations in AI, and
4. Data privacy and protection.

Together, these clusters illuminate the central debates and research priorities shaping the field. Although the body of research is expanding, the field remains relatively nascent, particularly in addressing ethical and privacy concerns in the face of rapidly evolving AI technologies. Future studies should address these underdeveloped domains, particularly focusing on the normative, behavioral, and legal challenges posed by AI in digital retail. A more integrative approach—bridging technological potential with ethical responsibility—will be critical in advancing both scholarly understanding and practical application.

II. Bibliographic Coupling Analysis

To further explore the intellectual structure and collaborative dynamics of research in online retailing ethics and artificial intelligence (AI), a bibliographic coupling analysis was conducted using the dataset from 2009 to 2024. This technique assesses the similarity between documents based on shared references, enabling the identification of thematic and geographic clusters within the literature. A minimum threshold of five citations per reference and at least five documents per country was applied to ensure robust representation and meaningful analytical depth.

Figure 5 illustrates the resulting bibliographic coupling network, while Table 2 presents a detailed summary of the key clusters, including the countries represented, their respective research outputs, total citation counts, and link strengths.

[Insert Table II]

[Insert Figure 5]

The analysis reveals four distinct country-level clusters, each characterized by varying levels of research productivity, citation impact, and international collaboration. These clusters provide critical insights into the geographical distribution, research influence, and strategic positioning of nations contributing to the field.

Cluster 1: High Impact and Strong Collaborations

Countries: Australia, Hong Kong, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Taiwan, South Africa

This cluster includes countries with moderate research output but high citation impact and strong international link strengths—indicators of high-quality research and extensive global collaboration. Australia emerges as a key player, with 17 publications, 2,705 citations, and a total link strength of 6,380, underscoring its scholarly influence and global integration. The Netherlands (20 documents, 2,367 citations, link strength 6,233) and Italy (19 documents, 1,276 citations, link strength 6,293) further reflect deeply embedded international research networks. Singapore stands out with only 7 documents but an impressive 2,266 citations and 5,441 link strength, signaling exceptionally high research quality. Countries such as Hong Kong, Spain, and Norway also contribute to this cluster's strong performance. Collectively, the nations in Cluster 1 are influential in shaping research trajectories and are deeply integrated into global knowledge networks. The relatively high citations and link strengths indicate that the countries in this cluster are pivotal in their respective fields, influencing global research trends and maintaining strong international research collaborations.

Cluster 2: Moderate Impact with Emerging Influence

Countries: Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Finland, France, South Korea, Sweden

Cluster 2 comprises a mix of established and rising contributors, reflecting transitional roles within the global research ecosystem. France leads the group with 25 publications, 1,629 citations, and a high link strength of 8,550, indicating substantial research engagement and cross-national collaboration. China, while recording

the highest output (28 documents), has a relatively low citation count (352), suggesting volume-driven rather than impact-driven growth. Its link strength of 3,696, however, reflects increasing international research activity. Countries like Canada and South Korea demonstrate steady scholarly performance, marked by moderate outputs and consistent link strength. This cluster highlights a set of countries poised to enhance their global research footprint through expanded collaboration and impact-focused publishing.

Cluster 3: High Output with Varied Impact

Countries: Greece, India, Malaysia, Qatar, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States
Cluster 3 includes nations with high research productivity, headlined by global leaders such as the United States and United Kingdom. The United States leads in all metrics, with 80 publications, 5,459 citations, and the highest link strength (13,184), confirming its dominant position in the field. The United Kingdom follows closely with 50 publications, 3,696 citations, and a link strength of 10,745, reflecting both volume and influence. India shows significant activity (43 publications) with moderate citations (1,390) but a strong link strength of 8,501, pointing to expanding global collaboration and growing influence. Emerging contributors such as Qatar (6 documents, 1,110 citations, link strength 5,244) demonstrate high-impact, niche scholarship, while Turkey, Malaysia, and others reflect increasing participation with varied influence levels. This cluster exemplifies both research intensity and global reach, led by prominent knowledge producers and supported by rising regional actors.

Cluster 4: Specialized Focus with Low to Moderate Impact

Countries: Germany, Iran

This cluster features countries with specialized research profiles and contrasting levels of influence. Germany maintains a strong presence with 24 publications, 2,619 citations, and a link strength of 6,872, suggesting a concentrated but high-quality research agenda. Iran, by contrast, exhibits limited output (5 publications) and lower citation impact (69 citations, link strength 124), indicating an emerging or regionally focused research trajectory. This cluster represents specialized or regionally embedded contributions, where Germany maintains a significant position, while Iran reflects a more nascent stage of international research engagement.

CONCLUSION

The bibliographic coupling analysis reveals a stratified and dynamic global research landscape in online retailing ethics and artificial intelligence:

Cluster 1 comprises countries with high-impact research and robust international collaborations.

Cluster 2 reflects moderate influence with growing global integration.

Cluster 3 includes both leading research nations and rapidly emerging contributors, characterized by high output and expanding reach.

Cluster 4 highlights specialized research efforts, where impact varies based on integration and focus.

These insights provide a nuanced understanding of how different countries contribute to the field. They also point to strategic opportunities for international partnerships, capacity building, and impact-driven research to guide future scholarly endeavors.

FORGING THE WAY FORWARD: Strategic Research Directions

As technological transformation accelerates across industries and societies, the imperative for targeted, high-impact research grows increasingly urgent. This bibliometric analysis has illuminated key trends, thematic priorities, and collaborative networks shaping global scholarship in artificial intelligence (AI) and online retailing ethics. Drawing from these insights, this section proposes strategic research trajectories to guide future scholarly inquiry—ensuring that academic contributions remain relevant, responsive, and impactful in addressing the ethical, legal, and societal implications of emerging technologies.

[Insert Table III]

1. Prioritize High-Impact Research Domains

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning: The prominence of keywords such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and automated systems confirms the centrality of these technologies in current academic

discourse. Future research should explore novel applications of AI across sectors such as healthcare, education, and e-commerce. Also, investigate next-generation machine learning techniques (e.g., reinforcement learning, federated learning) and their socio-ethical implications.

Cybersecurity and Data Privacy: Keywords like cybersecurity, data protection, privacy concerns, and GDPR indicate an urgent need to bridge AI advancements with data governance. Researchers are encouraged to:

Examine how AI tools can both mitigate and exacerbate privacy vulnerabilities.

Develop frameworks that ensure data security compliance within evolving legal landscapes.

2. Deepen Exploration of Ethical and Legal Implications

Ethical AI and Algorithm Transparency: The growth in terms such as AI ethics, transparency, and fairness points to a critical research gap in aligning technology with ethical standards. Future agendas should focus on ethical risk assessments of AI systems. Also, they should design models for transparent decision-making in automated platforms, emphasizing accountability.

Regulatory Frameworks and Cross-Broder Compliance: The recurring presence of terms related to legislation, policy, and regulatory frameworks highlights the increasing importance of legal scholarship. Researchers should:

Conduct comparative studies on AI legislation (e.g., GDPR, AI Act, national privacy laws).

Explore the regulatory readiness of different nations in deploying ethical AI.

3. Leverage and Expand Global Collaboration Networks

Strengthen International Research Partnerships: Bibliographic coupling data revealed that countries like the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany dominate high-impact research. Strengthening alliances with these hubs can facilitate access to high-quality datasets and expertise and foster cross-institutional research publications and broader dissemination of findings.

Engage Emerging Research Hubs: Emerging players such as India, China, and Qatar are expanding their research footprint. Future collaborations should:

Incorporate these regions into multilateral research networks.

Focus on understanding local AI applications and governance mechanisms, enriching the global narrative.

4. Adopt Interdisciplinary Approaches

Technology Meets Social Sciences: The confluence of technology with behavioral science and ethics underscores the need for cross-disciplinary integration. Researchers should bridge computer science with sociology, law, psychology, and philosophy and investigate human-AI interaction in everyday contexts, including perceptions of trust and autonomy.

AI and Human Decision-Making: With keywords like automated decision-making and decision support systems gaining visibility, future work should:

Analyze how AI systems augment or replace human judgment.

Assess the psychological and institutional effects of AI-driven decisions in sensitive domains such as healthcare, criminal justice, and finance.

5. Identify and Address Research Gaps

Emerging and Underexplored Topics: Although terms such as explainable AI, generative AI, and privacy concerns appear with lower frequency, they signal cutting-edge areas with significant future potential. Researchers should anticipate technological developments and proactively shape scholarly discourse around explainability, transparency, and synthetic content. Also, investigate the societal impact of generative technologies (e.g., ChatGPT, deepfakes) on trust and misinformation.

Geographic Underrepresentation: Regions such as Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of South America remain underrepresented in the dataset. Targeted research in these areas can:

Bring context-specific insights into AI governance, consumer behavior, and ethical concerns.

Enhance global inclusivity and equity in technological development and policy formulation.

Conclusion: Building an Ethically Resilient Research Ecosystem

This forward-looking agenda emphasizes a balanced approach—championing technological innovation while safeguarding ethical integrity and societal well-being. By embracing interdisciplinary thinking, international collaboration, and strategic alignment with emerging trends, the scholarly community can play a pivotal role in shaping AI systems that are not only advanced but also responsible, transparent, and inclusive.

DISCUSSION

[Insert Figure 6]

To organize the findings beyond the thematic cluster analysis, we propose a conceptual framework that integrates the antecedents, ethical mechanisms, and outcomes of AI implementation in online retailing. This model synthesizes the results of our bibliometric analysis and draws from Stakeholder Theory and Trust Theory to establish a meaningful structure for understanding ethical AI practices.

Antecedents: Ethical AI adoption in online retail is influenced by regulatory frameworks (e.g., GDPR), institutional ethical norms, and rising consumer awareness. These antecedents serve as external and internal pressures prompting retailers to develop responsible AI systems.

Mechanisms: The core mechanisms for operationalizing ethical AI include:

Explainable AI (XAI): Making AI decisions understandable to consumers

Privacy-by-Design: Embedding privacy safeguards into AI architecture

Human-AI Collaboration: Ensuring emotionally intelligent interactions

Algorithmic Audits: Regular testing for bias, fairness, and discrimination

These mechanisms align with the Responsible Innovation framework, which emphasizes anticipation, responsiveness, and reflexivity in technology deployment.

Outcomes: When applied effectively, these mechanisms contribute to:

Enhanced consumer trust and loyalty

Increased regulatory compliance

Competitive differentiation via ethics as a value proposition

This trust-building dynamic is supported by Trust Theory, where transparency, accountability, and reliability are essential antecedents to sustained engagement.

The findings of this bibliometric analysis offer critical insights into the evolving discourse on ethical AI in online retailing. The identified clusters—technological innovation and security, trust and decision-making, AI ethics, and data governance—highlight the multifaceted nature of ethical concerns that retailers, consumers, and regulators must navigate.

To move beyond isolated cluster-level observations, this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework that organizes the key antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes of ethical AI implementation. This framework provides a theoretical scaffold informed by Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), which positions consumers, developers, and regulators as primary actors in shaping responsible AI systems. Additionally, Trust Theory (Mayer et al., 1995) informs the role of explainability, transparency, and perceived fairness as essential drivers of consumer trust.

The framework suggests that regulatory pressure, institutional ethics, and consumer awareness act as antecedents prompting ethical transformation. These antecedents activate operational mechanisms, such as explainable AI (XAI), privacy-by-design, human-AI collaboration, and algorithmic fairness. Together, these mechanisms facilitate outcomes like enhanced consumer trust, brand reputation, and compliance with evolving legal standards.

CONCLUSION

As AI technologies continue to reshape online retail, their ethical deployment is not only a regulatory obligation but a strategic imperative. This bibliometric analysis offers key insights into ethical concerns in AI-driven retail and proposes a conceptual model linking ethical antecedents to operational mechanisms and consumer outcomes. Major research clusters identified—data privacy, AI transparency, and consumer trust—are central to framing the ethical landscape of online retail.

While AI enhances personalization and operational efficiency, challenges around data security, algorithmic bias, and ethical AI use remain critical. Transparency and consumer empowerment are essential to building trust in AI-enabled retail environments. The proposed model, grounded in Stakeholder and Trust theories, illustrates how technology, normative principles, and governance must work in concert to foster responsible innovation.

The analysis also highlights that AI ethics research is nascent, with bias mitigation, explainable AI, and regulatory frameworks requiring deeper exploration. The identified clusters provide a roadmap for future studies focused on these emerging issues.

Moving forward, strategic research should prioritize AI, machine learning, cybersecurity, and data privacy, emphasizing their ethical and legal dimensions. International collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches will be vital in addressing existing gaps and advancing knowledge.

This study advances the discourse by offering a conceptual framework and actionable insights for practitioners and policymakers. Ethical AI should be embraced not just as a constraint but as a catalyst for trust, value creation, and sustainable growth in online retail.

Implications

This study carries significant implications for both academic research and the practical implementation of ethical AI in online retailing.

Academic Implications

The bibliometric mapping offers a structured view of the current intellectual landscape, revealing dominant themes and gaps in AI ethics within online retail. Future researchers can build on these findings to explore niche areas such as algorithmic bias in personalization, ethical concerns in AI-driven dynamic pricing, and the impact of regional regulatory frameworks on AI adoption. This roadmap can guide interdisciplinary studies that integrate ethics, technology, and consumer behavior.

Practical Implications for Practitioners

Retailers and technology developers can draw on this study to implement actionable strategies that improve ethical AI deployment:

- **Integrate Explainable AI (XAI):** Develop interfaces where consumers can see why a product was recommended or a price was assigned, increasing transparency.
- **Adopt Privacy-by-Design Approaches:** Embed data protection into system architecture from the start, rather than as an afterthought.
- **Consumer Consent and Control:** Offer customizable privacy settings, opt-in personalization, and transparent cookie/data usage policies to empower users.
- **Ethical Training for AI Developers:** Incorporate ethics modules and stakeholder impact assessments into product development cycles.
- **Trust as a Competitive Advantage:** By prioritizing fairness, transparency, and inclusivity, retailers can differentiate themselves and build long-term customer loyalty.

Policy Implications

Policymakers should use the findings to design and enforce global and local AI regulations:

- **Standardize Ethical AI Guidelines:** Collaborate internationally to create common frameworks for fairness, accountability, and transparency in AI.
- **Enforce Algorithmic Auditing:** Mandate third-party audits for AI systems used in consumer-facing retail platforms.
- **Data Sovereignty and Portability:** Ensure that consumers have control over where their data is stored, processed, and transferred.
- **Support Ethical Innovation:** Offer incentives (e.g., tax credits or certifications) to companies that adhere to ethical AI standards in retail.

By addressing both strategic and operational dimensions, this study provides a blueprint for aligning AI innovation with ethical accountability in online retailing.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

This study provides valuable insights into ethical concerns surrounding AI in online retail but has certain limitations. While it addresses key issues like data privacy, transparency, and trust, it does not deeply examine other important areas such as AI's effects on employment or its role in exacerbating economic inequalities. Future research should explore these aspects to offer a more comprehensive understanding of AI's ethical impact. Additionally, with emerging technologies like the Metaverse and blockchain gaining traction in retail, subsequent studies should investigate their unique ethical challenges related to identity, security, and transparency, necessitating updated ethical frameworks and regulations.

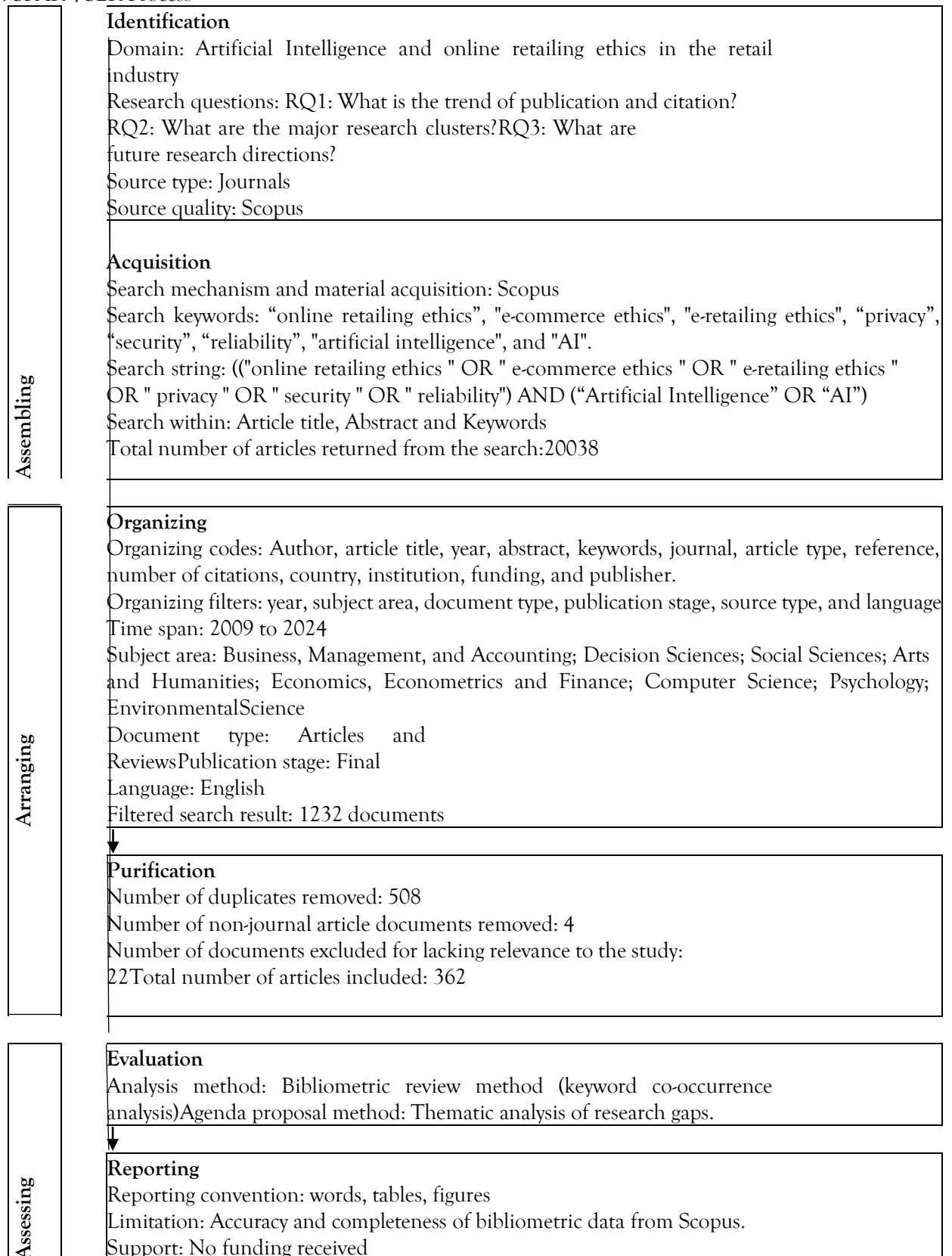
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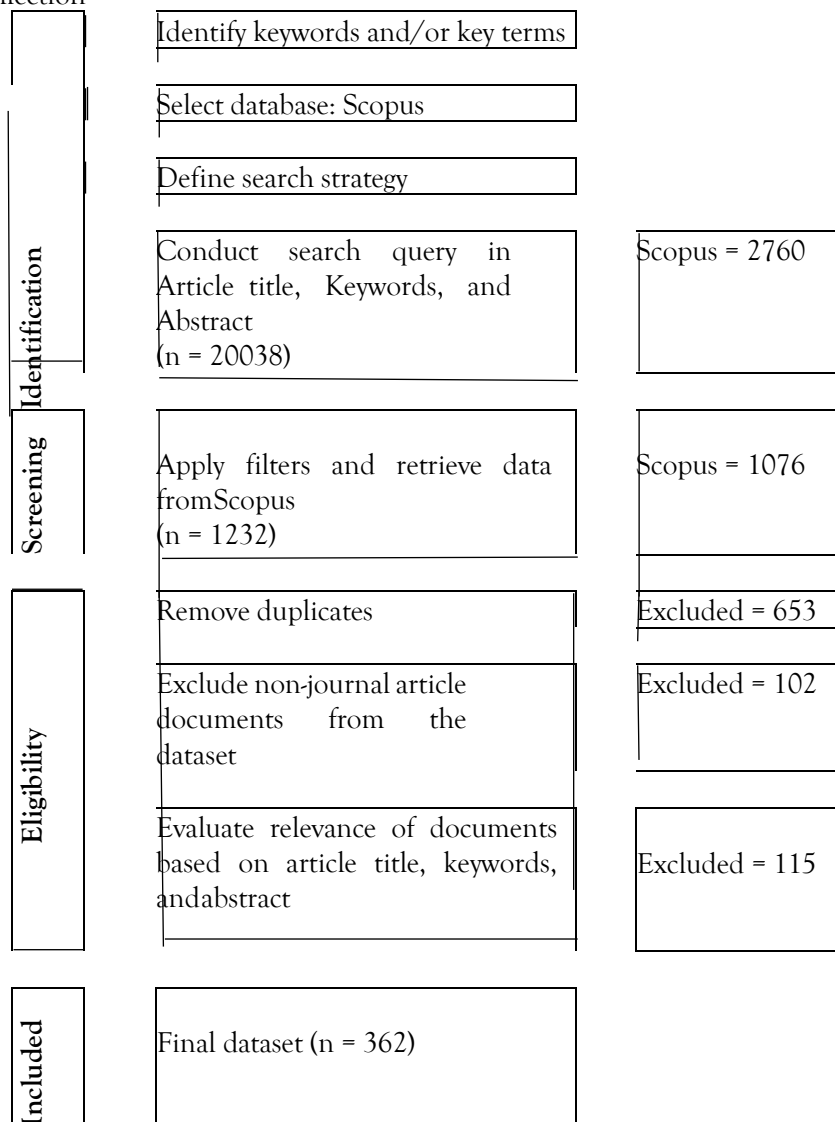
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Figure 1: SPAR-4SLR Process



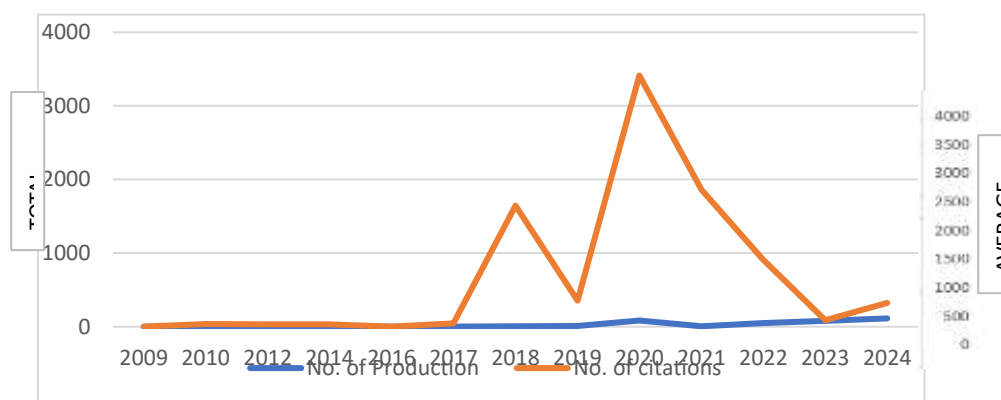
Source: Figure by authors

Figure 2: Process of Data Collection



Source: Figure by authors

Figure 3: Publication trend and citation trend



Source: Figure by authors

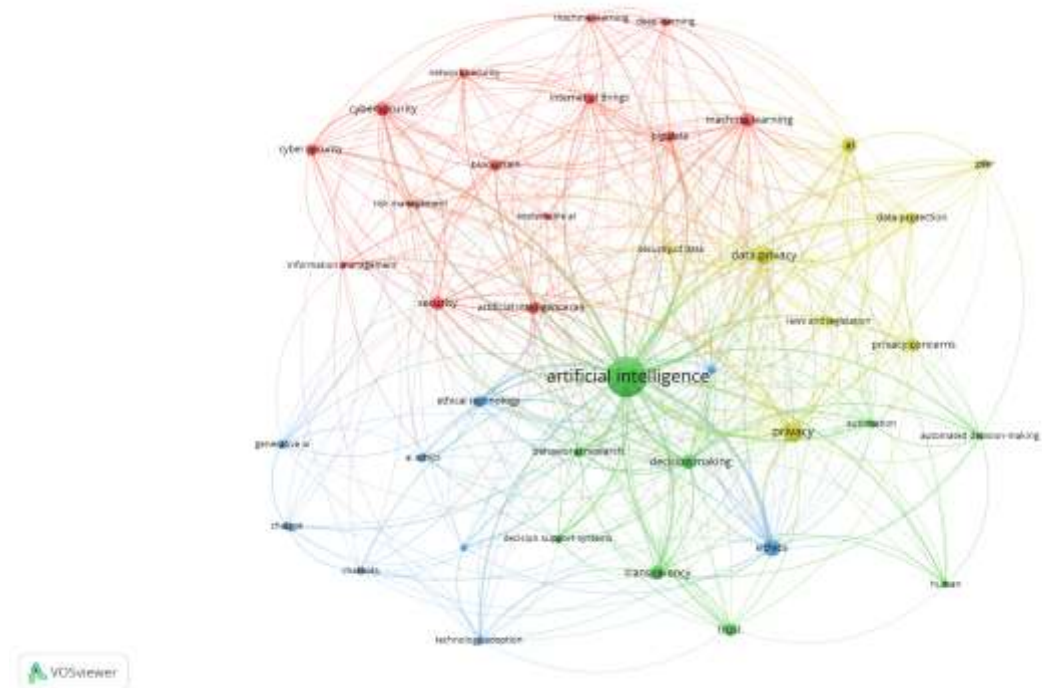
Table I: Keyword Co-occurrence

Cluster	Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link
Cluster 1(red)	artificial intelligence (ai)	19	51
	big data	16	51
	blockchain	17	51
	cyber security	19	64
	cybersecurity	27	84
	deep learning	10	31
	explainable ai	8	14
	information management	8	32
	internet of things	18	65
	laws and legislation	10	39
	machine learning	28	90
	machine-learning	11	44
	network security	11	28
	risk management	8	27
	security	24	72
Cluster 2(green)	artificial intelligence	212	432
	automated decision-making	8	37
	automation	10	46
	behavioral research	14	56
	decision making	27	99
	decision support systems	9	34
	human	8	26
	transparency	27	71
	trust	24	40
Cluster 3(blue)	ai ethics	11	18
	chatbots	8	20
	chatgpt	9	19
	economic and social effects	10	40

	ethical technology	19	59
	ethics	42	104
	generative ai	11	19
	technological development	8	23
	technology adoption	10	31
Cluster 4(yellow)	ai	32	73
	data privacy	39	137
	data protection	19	74
	gdpr	12	37
	laws and legislation	10	39
	privacy	56	143
	privacy concerns	24	46
	security of data	9	33

Source: Table by authors

Figure 4: Keyword Co-occurrence



Source: VOSviewer

Table II: Bibliographic Coupling

Cluster	Country	Documents	Citations	Total link strength
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Cluster 1(red)	Australia	17	2705	6380
	Hong Kong	8	1129	4379
	Italy	19	1276	6293
	Netherlands	20	2367	6233
	Poland	6	1192	4163
	Norway	12	1509	5909
	Saudi Arabia	9	1048	4130
	Singapore	7	2266	5441
	Spain	16	1316	5637
	Taiwan	6	1140	4356
	South Africa	7	1313	4521
Cluster 2(blue)	Austria	9	370	937
	Belgium	5	28	665
	Canada	16	269	1646
	China	28	352	3696
	Finland	5	104	1432
	France	25	1629	8550
	South Korea	12	548	1272
	Sweden	8	326	642
Cluster 3(green)	Greece	7	130	420
	India	43	1390	8501
	Malaysia	11	58	1109
	Qatar	6	1110	5244
	Turkey	8	27	1644

	United Arab Emirates	8	34	347
	United Kingdom	50	3696	10745
	United States	80	5459	13184
Cluster 4 (yellow)	Germany	24	2619	6872
	Iran	5	69	124

Source: Table by authors

Figure 5: Bibliographic Coupling



Source: VOS viewer

Table III: FORGING THE WAY FORWARD

Theme	Research Gaps	Suggested Research Questions
AI Ethics in Online Retailing	Lack of well-established guidelines for transparency and accountability in AI retail systems. Insufficient tools and methodologies for detecting and mitigating algorithmic bias in real-time operations. Limited research on how AI adoption in retail impacts emerging markets, both socially and economically.	- How can ethical frameworks for AI in online retailing be standardized across different regions and industries? - What ethical guidelines are necessary to ensure transparency in AI decision-making for personalized shopping experiences? - How can biases in AI algorithms be identified and mitigated in online retail environments? - What are the social and economic consequences of widespread adoption of AI in retail, especially in emerging markets?
Data Privacy and Consumer Protection	Insufficient models for transparent communication between AI-driven systems and consumers regarding data usage and collection. The integration of blockchain with AI systems in	- How can online retailers enhance consumer trust through improved transparency in data collection and use? - What technologies (e.g., blockchain) can be leveraged to

	retail remains under-explored, particularly in terms of scalability and cost-effectiveness. Lack of concrete studies on how PETs can balance privacy protection with AI-driven business performance.	secure customer data while maintaining efficient AI operations? • How can privacy-enhancing technologies (PETs) be integrated into AI systems without compromising performance? • How can AI-driven online retailers ensure compliance with stricter regional regulations like GDPR and CCPA?
AI Transparency and Consumer Trust	Few standardized mechanisms for transparency that consumers can easily understand and trust. Limited empirical research on how transparency impacts trust, especially in long-term AI-customer relationships. XAI remains a theoretical concept with limited application in retail settings; need for real-world case studies. Lack of comprehensive educational tools or platforms that help consumers understand AI processes and recommendations.	• What mechanisms can ensure that AI systems in retail are transparent to consumers regarding how decisions are made? • How does transparency in AI processes impact consumer trust and satisfaction in AI-driven online retail platforms? • What role does explainable AI (XAI) play in bridging the gap between consumer understanding and AI decision-making? • How can consumers be better educated about the AI mechanisms behind personalized recommendations?
Human-AI Interaction in Retailing	Insufficient exploration of consumer preferences regarding AI-human service interactions, particularly in complex or emotionally charged situations. AI systems are primarily designed for efficiency, with limited capabilities for handling emotional nuance or complex customer needs. Lack of longitudinal studies examining AI-driven customer service's impact on long-term customer satisfaction and loyalty.	• How do consumers perceive the trade-offs between efficiency and empathy in AI-driven customer service interactions? • How can AI-driven systems be designed to handle complex and emotionally charged customer interactions effectively? • What are the long-term implications of relying on AI for customer service in terms of

		consumer loyalty and satisfaction? • How can AI and human agents collaborate to improve overall customer experience in the retail industry?
Regulatory Frameworks for AI in Retail	Limited progress on developing unified, globally accepted regulatory standards for AI in e-commerce. Insufficient research on balancing compliance with operational efficiency in AI-driven retail, particularly with evolving data protection laws. Differences in regulatory frameworks across countries create challenges in global AI governance.	• What regulatory standards are needed to govern AI use in online retailing, particularly in the context of consumer data? • How can online retailers ensure compliance with evolving data protection regulations like GDPR while maintaining operational efficiency? • What are the global challenges in developing a unified regulatory framework for AI and data privacy in e-commerce? • How can retailers adapt their AI systems to meet regulatory requirements without sacrificing innovation and user experience?

Figure 6: Conceptual Model of Ethical Online Retailing

ANTECEDENTS	MECHANISMS	OUTCOMES
Regulatory Pressure	Explainable AI (XAI)	Consumer Trust & Loyalty
Ethical Norms	Privacy-by-Design	Brand Reputation
Consumer Awareness	Human-AI Collaboration	Regulatory Compliance
	Algorithmic Fairness	



Source: Authors' conceptualization based on bibliometric synthesis