

Analytical Review of Consumers' Buying of Organic Food Products: A Suggestive Approach

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Abstract: *Purpose* – This study aims to provide an overview of consumer's buying behavior for organic food products through a retrospection of review. *Design/methodology/approach* – This study conducts a bibliometric analysis to analyze the performance and intellectual structure of consumer buying for organic food and sustainability literature curated through International journals between 2000 and 2023. *Findings* – This study sheds light on the growing influence and impact of organic foods on the field of consumer behavior through major (themes): perceived meaning of sustainable food and organic food among consumers, sustainability or sustainable food consumption is modifying consumer purchase intent and consumer buying behaviour for organic foods sustainable organic food production and consumption shows environment concern among consumers and consumers are concerned about preference/choice and trust of the organic food products. *Research limitations* – Though this study offers a state-of-the-art overview of consumer buying behaviour for organic food, the insights remain limited to the accuracy and availability of bibliographic data of the journals from Scopus only. *Originality/value*: To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study represents the first objective assessment of sustainable organic food production and consumption shows environment concern among consumers and consumers are concerned about preference/choice and trust of the organic food products. Thus, this study should be useful to past and prospective authors, editorial board members, editors, readers and reviewers to gain a one-stop understanding and research avenues about sustainability, consumer behavior for organic food.

Keywords: Organic food, Consumer behaviour, purchase decisions, consumer trust, buying behaviour

1. INTRODUCTION

There are rapid changes being observed in the food habits of the human beings. Now-a-days, food consumers are focusing upon the quality of the food rather than quantity and availability of food (Feil *et al.*, 2020). So, there is observed a shift in food habits of the consumers towards conventional food and organic food after Covid-19 pandemic (Wang *et al.*, 2022; Chetioui *et al.*, 2022; Diagourtas *et al.*, 2022). Covid-19, threatened the habits of the consumption of the food of the people, the result of which shows that consumers are more aware and researching more about what they are consuming (Qi & Ploeger, 2021a, 2021b; Raj *et al.*, 2022). Also, environmental issues and pollution, which is the result of the economic growth (Chen *et al.*, 2017; Narula & Desore, 2016) have been responsible for the development and production of the green and organic products (Teoh & Gaur, 2019; Chaudhary & Bisai, 2018; Narula & Desore, 2016; Desore & Narula, 2018). There is a shift in the consumer purchases of unhealthier foods and beverages rather than healthier foods and beverages in their grocery bills (Pries *et al.*, 2019). But, during the Covid-19 times the sale and research of the organic food items is significantly increased (Ahn & Shamim, 2022), as a result of which organic foods are considered healthier and nutritive (Attwood & Hajat, 2020). Recently, lifestyle of health and sustainability (LOHAS) concern is observed among the consumers. This promotes the purchase of the healthier organic food production and consumption (Cheng *et al.*, 2019). Among consumers, 91% of the sample consumers shows environmental concern according to study done by Forbes, (2021). The primary reasons to buy organic food are different in developed countries as well as developing countries (Rana & Paul, 2017). But, in recent times two main factors contributed in the growth of the market of the organic food i.e. health and environment (Hensen *et al.*, 2018; James *et al.*, 2019; Issock *et al.*, 2020; Le-Anh & Nguyen-To, 2020). The impact of healthy food production on environment and health of the consumer is directly or indirectly explored in various studies (Konuk, 2018b; Demitras, 2019). Health concerns, fertilizers and pesticides usage in crops are making consumers uncertain about quality of the food. Food purchase decisions are now-a-days effected by economic factors, social and cultural factors (Joshi & Rahman, 2016).

Organic food is being produced and production is increasing because the demand of the organic food is also increasing (Schlatter et al., 2020). The global market for organic food, records a significant increase from 17.9bn (in 2000) USD to 114bn (2018), (Schlatter et al., 2020), yet there is huge market is still open for organic food (Čolović & Mitić, 2022). Also, the research of the organic food is also focused upon the developed and developing countries. The consumer's behavior of the organic food in Spain and Brazil was explored by Molinillo et al., (2020). In China, study was done by James et al., (2019) & Lin et al., (2020) and Aitken et al., (2020), studied New Zealand market of organic food. The awareness among organizations, academicians and consumers increased recently (Carrión Bósquez et al., 2023). Because of this extensive research, consumers of the developed and developing countries are aware about benefits of the organic food (Rehman et al., 2023). Food neophobia (resistance of consumer for trying new food) and food neophilia (willingness for trying new food) plays significant role in decision making of the consumer for organic food (Okumus et al., 2021). Decisions regarding to organic food consumption are complex ones (Liang & Lim, 2020). Question arises when we find intent of buying among consumers but shows low purchases (Elhaffar et. al., 2020). A gap of attitude and behaviour is also observed among the consumers (Park & Lin, 2020). Religious beliefs and ethical orientation of the consumers effects the choices made by the consumers (Cabano & Minton, 2023; Santovito et al., 2023). Consumers have shown progressive change in their food habits and consumers are more conscious about their food habits and they tend to develop healthy food habits (Su et. al., 2019; Orea-Giner & Fusté-Forné, 2023). Recent trends of organic food and purchase behaviour shows a trend among the consumers. Bibliometric studies shows organic food and sustainability, as top trending topic for research. In this paper our attempt is to analyse the recent trend of the organic food and sustainability. The research questions raised are as follows:

RQ1. What is perceived meaning of sustainable food and organic food among consumers?

RQ2. Does sustainability or sustainable food consumption is modifying consumer purchase intent and consumer buying behaviour for organic foods?

RQ3 Does sustainable organic food production and consumption shows environment concern among consumers?

RQ4. Does consumers are concerned about preference/choice and trust of the organic food products?

This study will provide insights to the food production and marketing companies about shifting behaviours of the consumers and about their perception of organic and general food.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

ORGANIC FOOD AND USAGE

Organic food products are generally without pesticides and artificial fertilizers (Brown, 2016) and there are no preservatives and chemicals for rapid production (Siddiqua, 2017). In the developed countries, organic food products are easily available. Because of the preference of the consumers for the lifestyle which is environmental friendly and healthier (Slabakova, 2020; Robinson et al., 2019). The worldwide consumption of the organic food products is increasing rapidly because of the superior nutrition value and environment friendly production (Slabakova, 2020; Robinson et al., 2019). The freshness and safety in consumption of the organic food in comparison of the conventional food are major factors for their increasing popularity (Gopalakrishnan, 2019). The nutrient value of the organic food products is much higher than conventional food products (Kunhikannan & Ramachandaran, 2020).

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND ORGANIC FOOD:

Consumers are sensing the need of change of their food habits. Several indicators globally showing consumers to develop environmental friendly, sustainable food habits like depleting soil fertility, global warming, declining food quality and increasing disease among population etc. (Kostadinova, 2016). Recently, consumers are showing steady growth in the buying behaviours towards organic and sustainable food products and hence are developing sustainable food habits (Vergura et al., 2023). Lifestyles of health and sustainability (LOHAS) are observed among the consumers. Consumers are developing a environment friendly attitude in production and consumption of the organic food (Matharu et al., 2020). But there are exceptions for the growth of organic food consumption. For example, in Bangladesh, consumption of the organic food products is observed lower in comparison to other countries. The reasons for this behaviour are 'lack of awareness about benefits of organic food products' and 'lack of concern of consumer about their health' (Siddiqua, 2017). Along with these, higher prize of the organic

food products plays significant role in disinterest of the consumers for organic food products (Kunhiannan & Ramachandran, 2020). Non-availability of the organic food products is also one of the reasons for less consumption in the developing countries like Bangladesh (Siddiqua, 2017).

CONSUMER TRUST FOR ORGANIC FOOD:

The trust of the consumers is significantly affected by the insufficiency of the products in the market. Consumers are highly affected by the 'Limited time to buy' and their perception shifted to 'quality and better product' (Mou & Shin, 2018; Liang, 2016). This perceived insufficiency could modify the psychological factors, responsible for the decisions of the consumers (Yuen et al., 2020; Gupta & Gentry, 2019). The perceived value of the product is improved by insufficiency of the product in the market which results into the more demand of the product in the market (Li, 2017; Nuansoi et al., 2017). For products with the limited supply and better quality, companies use these products as their promotional communication with their consumers and improve brand perceived value and positive attitude among customers (Yuen et al., 2020). That positive attitude builds the trust for the brand among consumers. Also, product scarcity, when advertised among customers, boosts sale of the product in the market (Massey et al., 2018). The trust of the customer for the brand and product boosts the consumption of the product in the market. It also significantly affects the purchase intent and decisions of the consumers (Lavari et al., 2022; Frias-Jamilena et al., 2019).

PURCHASE INTENSION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS:

The consumption of the organic food products are increasing exponentially. This increase is the outcome of increasing concern of the consumer towards health, nutrition and environment (Aitken et al., 2020; Prakash et al., 2018; Rana & Paul, 2017). This increasing demand of the organic food products is motivating producers to shift towards organic food production and farming. According to the Marketing Analysis Report, 2022, the organic food market will show increase at a CAGR of 13% (from 2022 to 2030) and it was recorded US\$ 188.35bn in 2021. Peoples are concerned about the environment and are getting aware gradually with the help of social media and other researches (Ladwein & Romero, 2021). This shifting in the taste and preference of the consumer purchase behaviour is the significant factor in determining the intent of the consumer (Janssen, 2018). Also, trust of the customer and choice of the consumer also influences purchases of organic food repeatedly (Truong et al., 2021; Sultan et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2016).

SUSTAINABILITY AND ORGANIC FOOD:

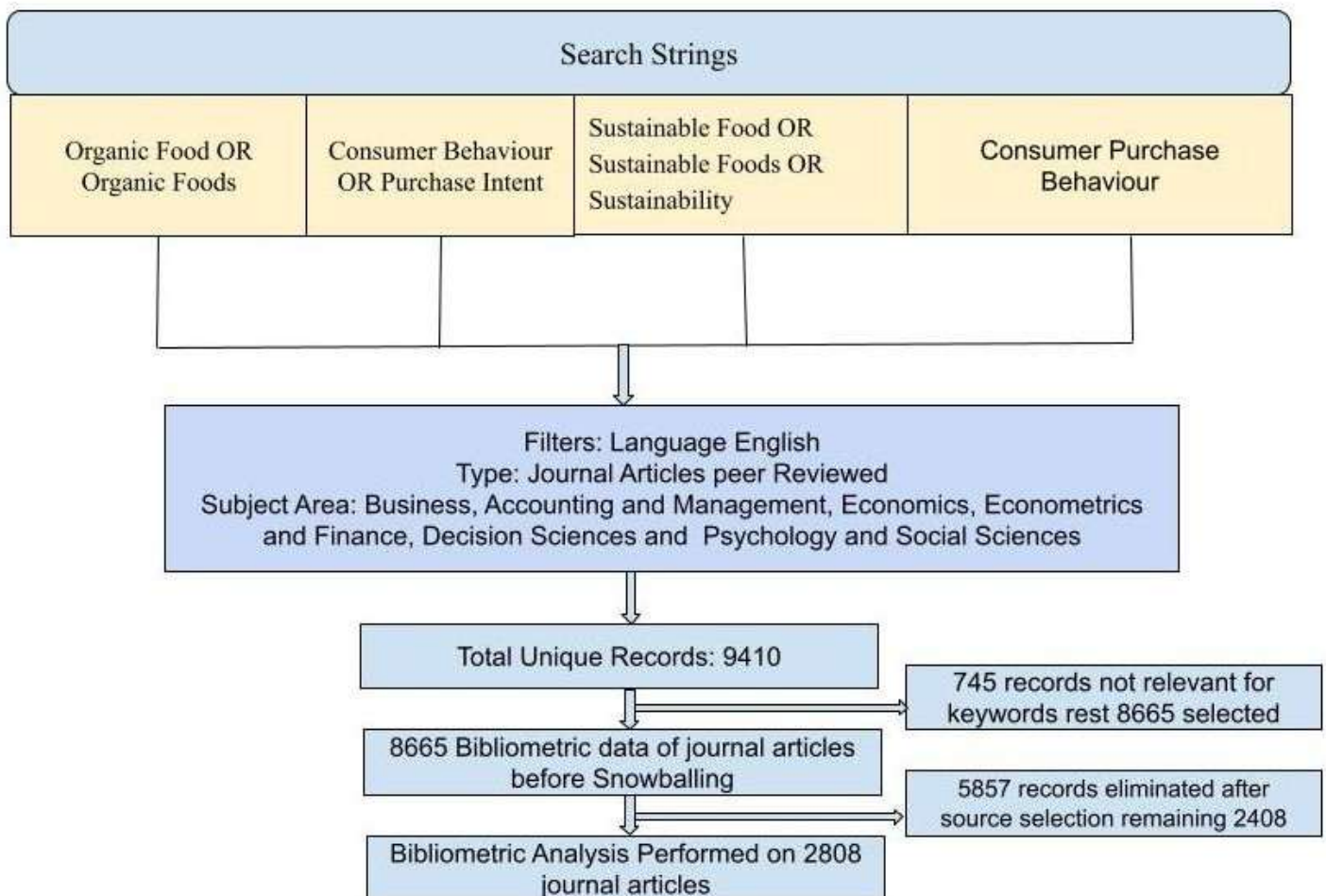
Now, various companies are concerned about environment and they are focused towards sustainable value generation in their organisation. Some companies are trying to achieve their goal of profit, keeping environment and people welfare in the centre of their corporate planning (Hristov et al., 2022). Environmental concern, social pressure and economic approach are the three major dimensions with reflects the sustainable consumption of the organic food products (Balderjhan et al., 2013). Health and sustainability lifestyle of the consumers encourage them to use eco sustainable products (Matharu et al., 2020). Recent researches focus is upon cognition in different variables which are in relation to the sustainable behaviours (Goyal et al., 2022; Dabbous & Tarhini, 2019). Thus, we are observing a shift in the researches from organic food consumption to sustainability and organic food and observed a constant growth in Sustainable food behaviours of the customers (Vergura et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In this paper, methodological approach of Ye et al., (2021) and Feng et al., (2017) is used. In this approach four steps are incorporated in the following manner: 1. Defining the search strategy 2. Initial screening of the search results 3. Refining the results 4. Describing the data processing procedure. In the 1st step, database selection was done with the help of Scopus database. Using standard bibliometric technique (Donthu et al., 2021a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h), a string of keywords was developed studies based upon the recent review (Sharma & Silal, 2023; Rehman et al., 2023). Using these strings, we retrieved record of 9410 journal articles. The string was made up of the "organic food", "consumer Behaviour", "Sustainable food". Using the Scopus database (Donthu et al., 2021a), we searched with the keywords like 'organic food', "consumer behaviour" and "Sustainable foods". We searched the data only from the period of 2020 to 2023 and only selected journal articles for our research. In the step 2, initially using the selection of the filters like language selection, time frame (from 2000 to 2023), area selection of the research and rest of the common filters. All the journal research articles were chosen for the further analysis. 9410 unique

articles were found in the initial search. But further analysis showed that 745 articles were not relevant for the our study. Rest of 8665 articles were refined further for the step 3 of the process. The top ranked journal articles were selected which were having significant contribution in their respective fields. The journals are “Sustainability Switzerland”, “Appetite”, “Journal of Cleaner Production”, British Food Journal”, “Journal of retailing and Consumer Services”, “Journal of consumer Marketing”, “Journal of Food Products Marketing”, “Journal of International Consumer Marketing”, Journal of International food and Agribusiness Marketing”, “Journal of Product and Brand Management”, “Innovative Marketing”, “Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies”, “Health Marketing Quarterly”, “Psychology and Marketing”, “Sustainable Development”, “International Journal of Research in Marketing” and “Journal of Consumer Psychology”. 5857 journal articles were removed after selection of these journals and 2408 unique articles were ready for the bibliometric analysis. Step 4. Pritchard (1969), gave the data processing procedure for the first time. With the help of statistical tools, bibliometric analysis converts unstructured bibliometric data into simpler and readable ones. In this study also, both of the bibliometric techniques (performance analysis and science mapping) (Cobo et al., 2011) are used to answer the research questions. Along with answering these questions, which are the probable future research areas, we tried to analyse. Figure 1 gives the brief idea of the four steps we used in the preparation of the bibliometric data and analysis.

Figure 1: Author compilation; literature search and screening criteria



Source: Author Compilation

FINDINGS: Year wise publication of the articles

Figure 2 shows the number of academic articles published in (2000-2023). While analysing the number of articles published per year, a growth trend can be clearly recognized. It can be seen in the table that

maximum articles i.e. 339 published in 2021 year. Moreover, 294 articles were published in 2022, and 287 in 2020 and 232 articles published in 2019. Thus, a remarkable growth trend has been evident since 2000 where only 9 articles were published. The figure 2 also shows increasing trend since 2004 to 2022 where number of published articles every year was found to increased. In 2023, total number of articles published were 214 which is less in comparison to other past years (2019-2022). This is primarily due to the diversification of the research areas in to the main area of the organic food.

Figure 2 Year wise publication of the articles

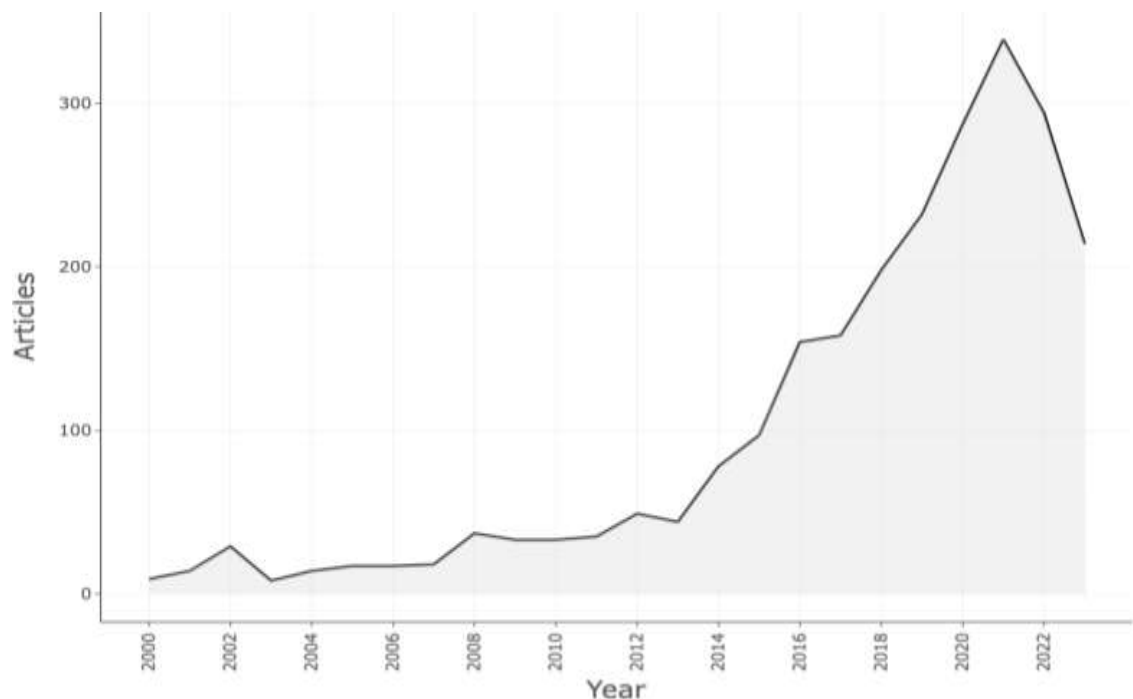
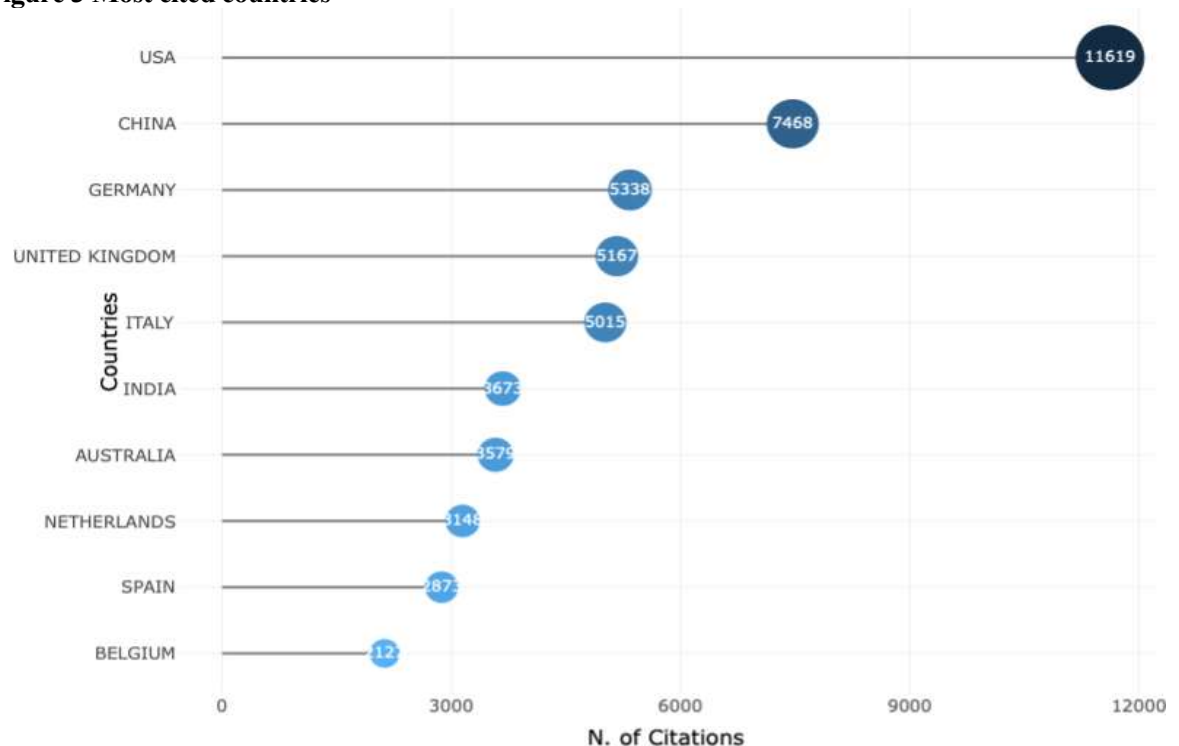


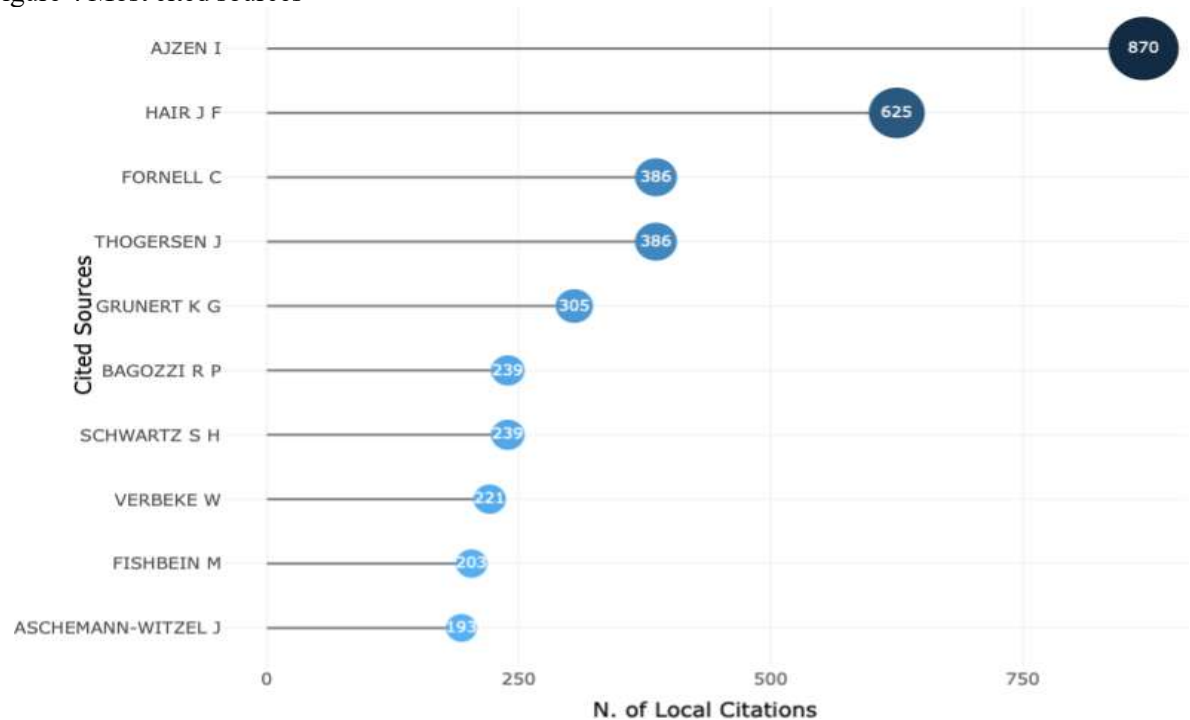
Figure 3 Most cited countries



Source: Author compilation

Figure 3 reveals the most cited countries. USA is found as the most cited country with total citations of 11619 and average article citations 44.01. The next most cited country is China with total citations are 7468 and average article citations are 35.56. Whereas Germany is the third most cited country with 5338 total citations and having 42.03 average article citations. United Kingdom is fourth cited country with total citations 5167 and average article citations are 43.42. On the contrary, Belgium is the less cited country out of total ten countries with 2127 total citations and average article citations are 78.78 and Spain is the ninth cited countries with 2873 total citations and 37.80 average article citations. This shows that most of the research is done in the developed countries. But, the research contribution of the developing countries is showing a shift pattern for the developing countries.

Figure 4 Most cited sources

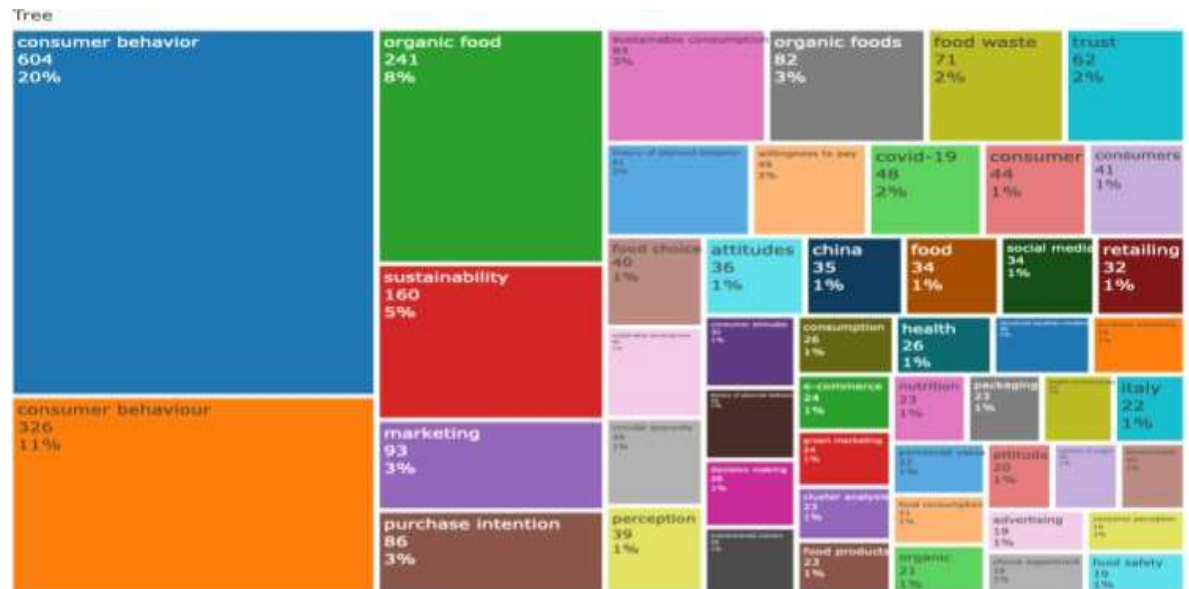


Source: Author compilation

Figure 4 shows the most cited sources in field of organic food and consumer behaviour. Ajzen I 870 followed by Hair J. F., 625 and Fornell C., 386 THOGERSEN J 386. There are some less cited sources out of mentioned sources in table. These are as ANDERSON J C 136, WANG Y 136 and PAUL J 138 in field of organic food and consumer behaviour.

Figure 5 shows the most frequent word used in the related study of organic food and consumer behaviour. It is evident that consumer behaviour word has been used 604 times and consumer behaviour 326 times. Moreover, the term organic food has been used frequently i.e. 241 times and sustainability and marketing terms were mentioned 160 and 93 times respectively. Whereas purchase intention, sustainable consumption, organic foods and food waste were used 86, 83, 82 and 71 times respectively. On the other hand, the terms like advertising, choice experiment, consumer perception, and food safety were mentioned 19 times. The terms like attitude, environment, and country of origin were used 20 times. We can conclude from this above figure is that there is parallel development of research on organic food, consumer behaviour and sustainability. As these keywords are mostly used by all the authors.

Figure 5 Most Frequent words



Source: Author compilation

Figure 6 shows the affiliations of articles on organic food, consumer behaviour and sustainability. 66 articles were found affiliated to Ghent university and most relevant affiliations found in Aarhus university with 47 articles, university of Copenhagen with 37 articles, the Bucharest university of economic studies with 35 articles, university of Kassel with 34 articles and university of Otago with 32 articles, Wageningen university and research with 30 articles. Moreover, it was found that Griffith university, Purdue university, and university of bologna, and university of south Australia with 29 articles. university of oxford with 26 articles. Most less affiliations are university of Novi sad, university of Cambridge, Sejong university, and Curtin university with 19 articles. This suggests that most of the development regarding the organic food products and sustainability are done in developed countries, especially Europe and America.

Figure 6 Most relevant affiliations

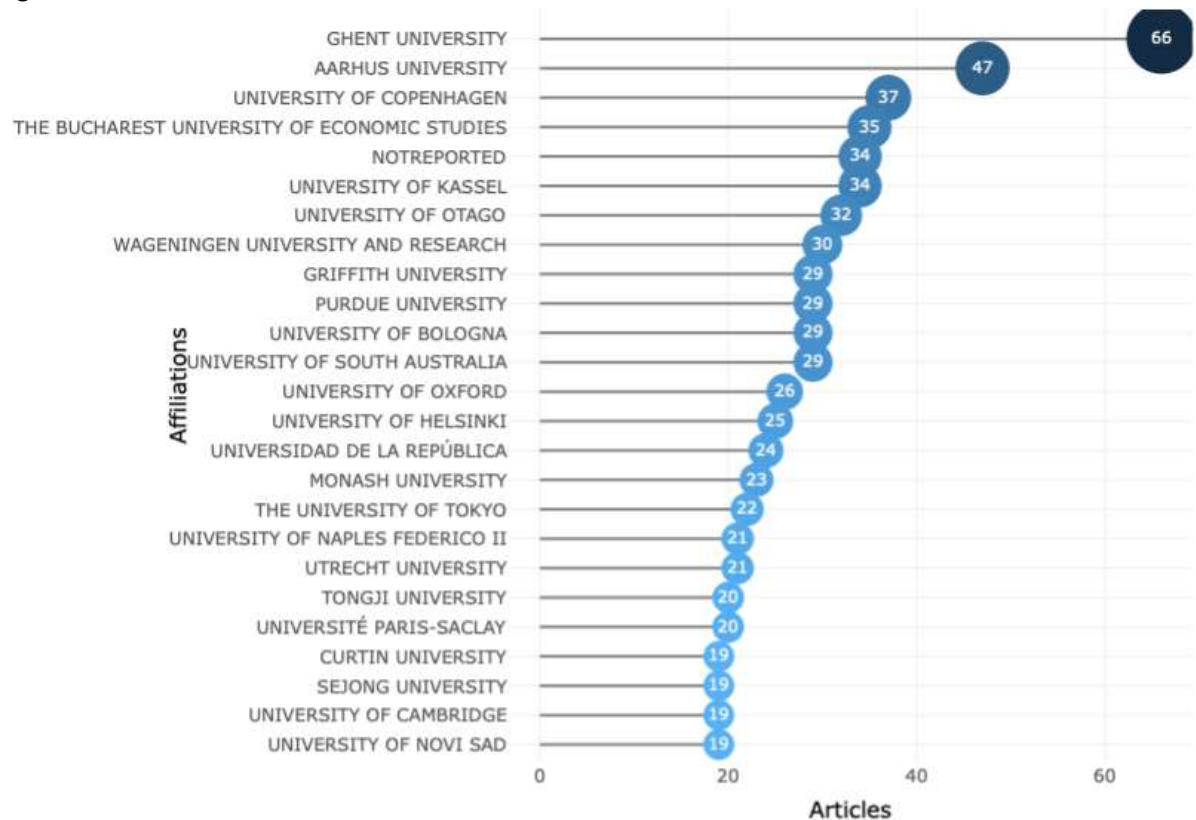
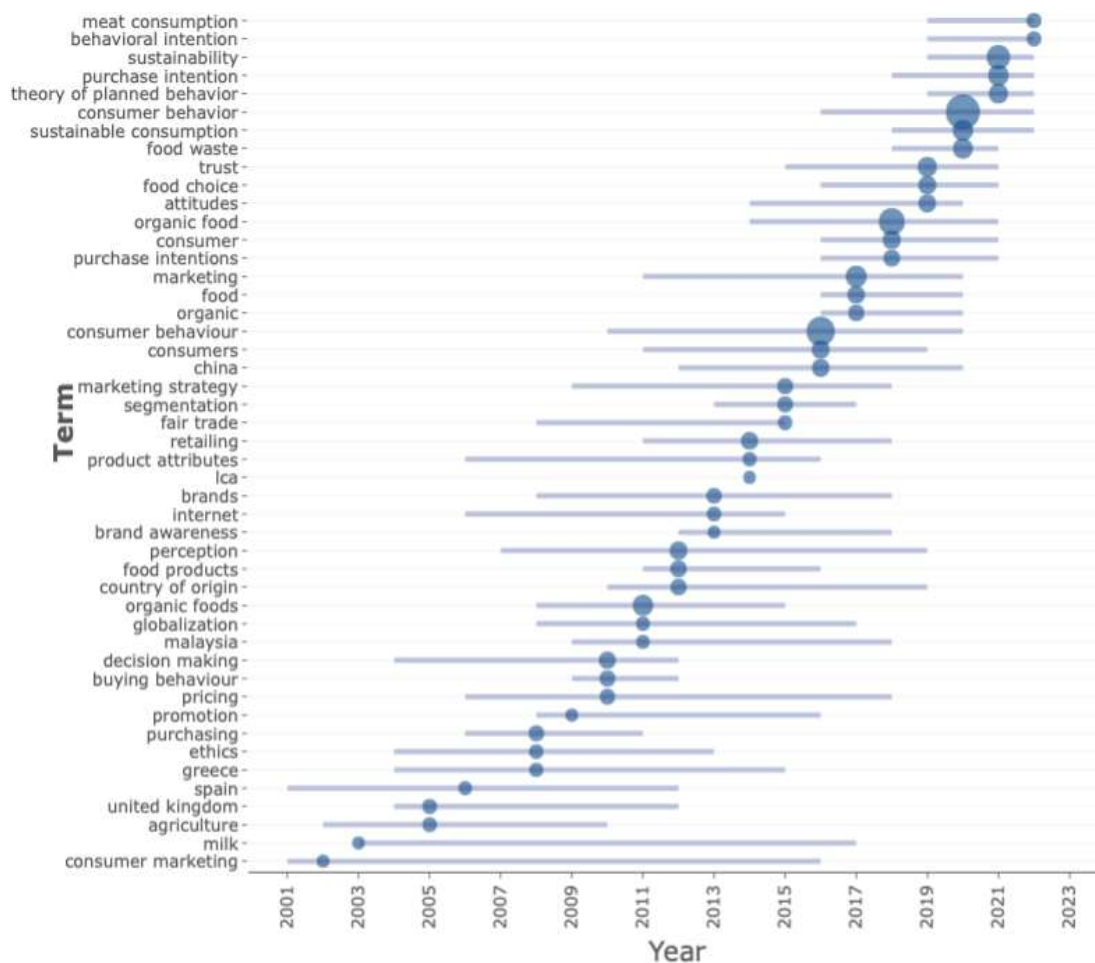


Table 2 Most relevant sources



Sources	Articles
SUSTAINABILITY (SWITZERLAND)	634
APPETITE	412
JOURNAL OF CLEANER PRODUCTION	341
BRITISH FOOD JOURNAL	281
JOURNAL OF RETAILING AND CONSUMER SERVICES	256
JOURNAL OF CONSUMER MARKETING	93
JOURNAL OF FOOD PRODUCTS MARKETING	75
JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CONSUMER MARKETING	53
JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL FOOD AND AGRIBUSINESS MARKETING	52
JOURNAL OF PRODUCT AND BRAND MANAGEMENT	41
INNOVATIVE MARKETING	33
EMERALD EMERGING MARKETS CASE STUDIES	29
HEALTH MARKETING QUARTERLY	26
PSYCHOLOGY AND MARKETING	25
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN MARKETING	21
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	19
JOURNAL OF CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY	17

Table 1 shows the most relevant journals that published articles on organic food and consumer behaviour and sustainability. Most relevant sources are Sustainability (Switzerland) with 634 articles, appetite with 412 articles, journal of cleaner production with 341 articles, British food journal with 281 articles published, journal of retailing and consumer services published 256 articles, journal of consumer marketing published 93 articles, journal of food products marketing published 75 articles, journal of international consumer marketing published 53 articles, journal of international food and agribusiness marketing published 52 articles, and journal of product and brand management published 41 articles. Moreover, International journal of research in marketing published 21 articles on organic food and consumer behaviour and Sustainable development published 19 articles, journal of consumer psychology published 17 articles.

Figure 7 Most trend topics of the research based upon authors keywords

Among the trending topics, sustainability and organic food consumption are the most researched topics, along with ‘meat consumption’. We can observe in figure 7, from the year 2019, sustainability, sustainable consumption, purchase intention, consumer behaviour are among the top trend topics of the research. This is reflecting the shift from consumer behaviour, organic food towards sustainable consumption and sustainability. Trust and purchase intention are similar trend topics which are indicating towards sustainable organic food consumption. Similar results are shown in the thematic evolution time slice 1 (Figure 8), sustainable consumption, sustainability and consumer behaviour are grouped together and organic food/foods and consumer behaviour are grouped together. In the 2nd time slice (figure 9) as well, this trend is clear. Trust, sustainable consumption, organic food, trust of the consumers are among recent research trends across the world. There is also shift in the consumers choice of the food and consumers preference about the consumed food.

Figure 8 thematic evolution slice 1

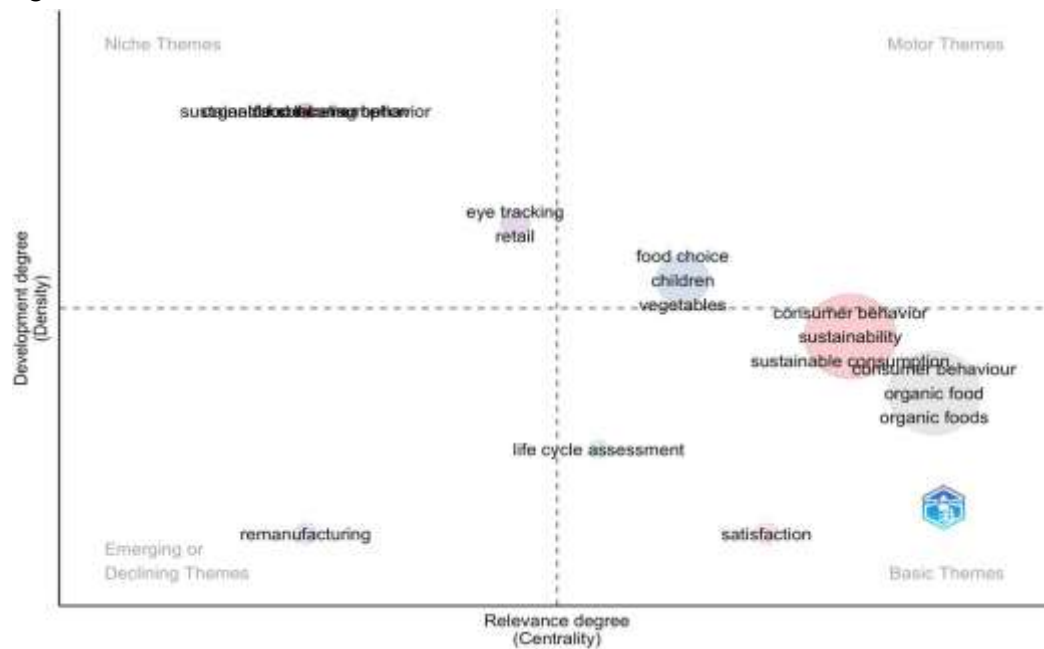
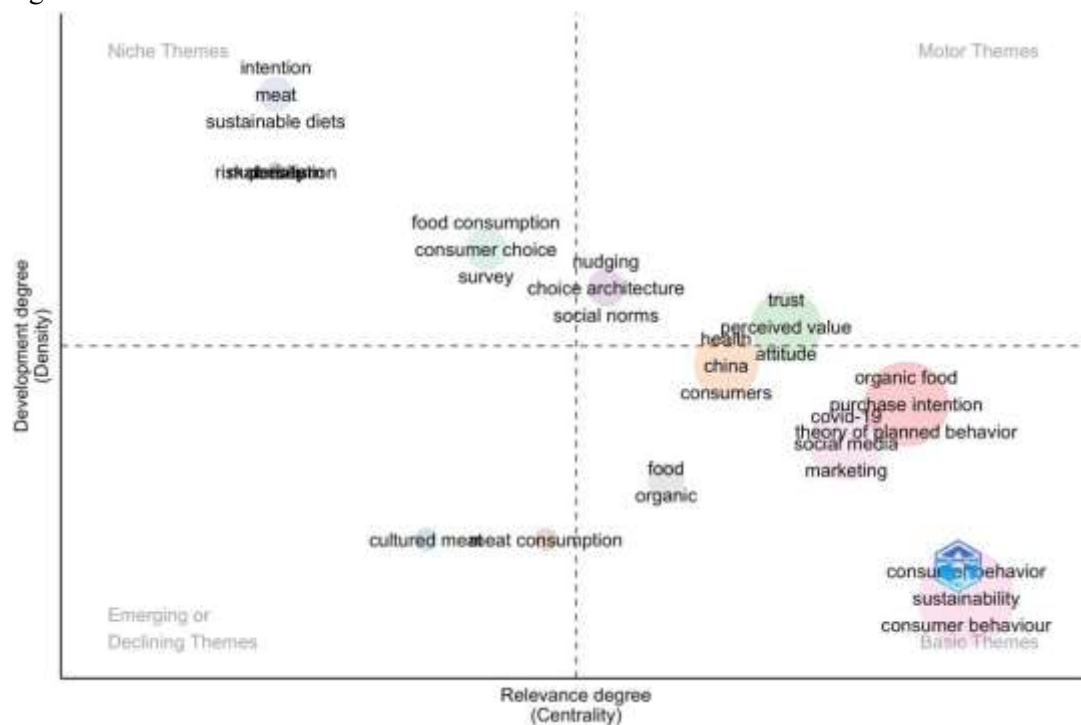


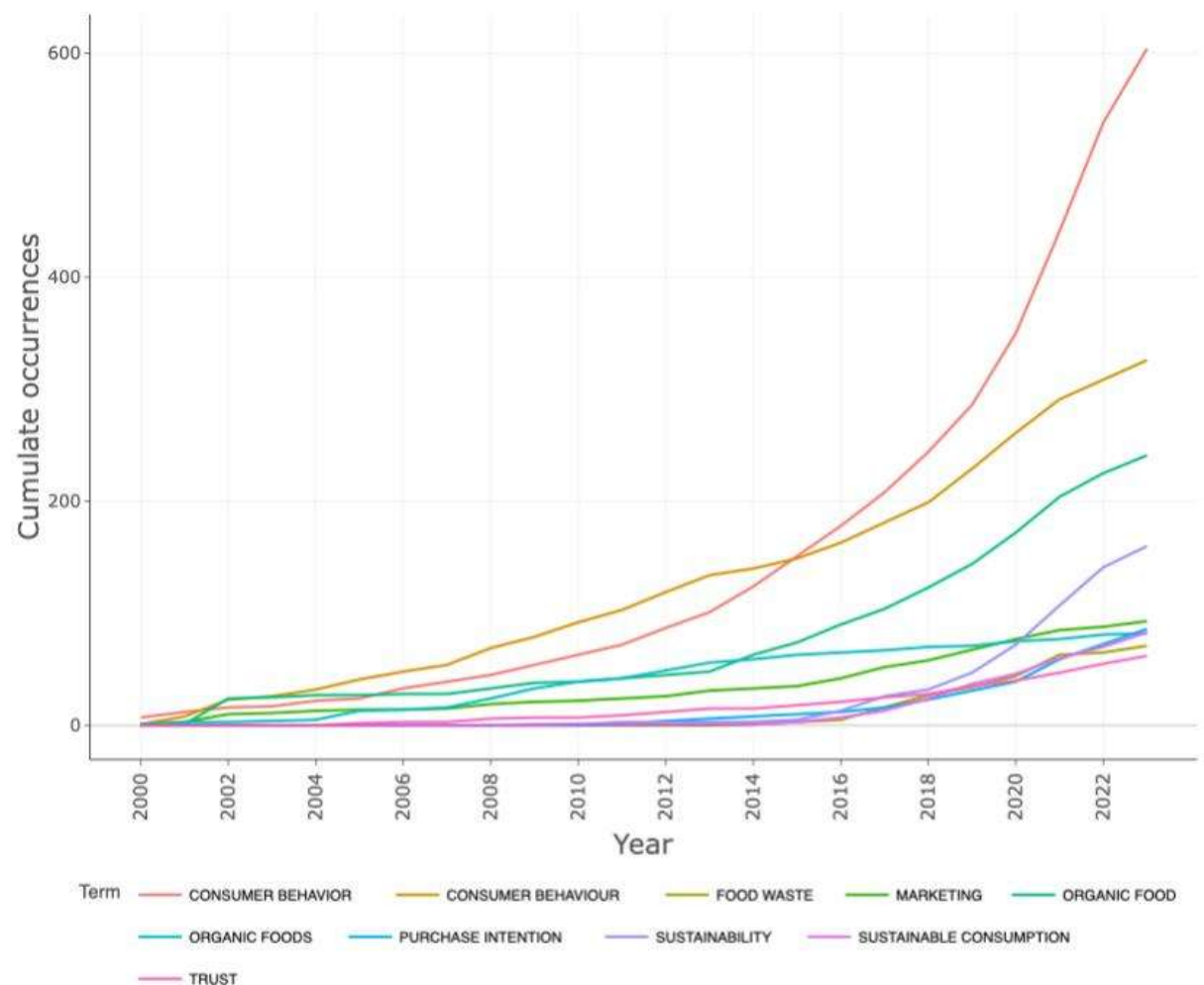
Figure 9 thematic evolution slice 2



Intellectual structure form keywords Cumulate occurrence

Figure shows the interconnection among several keywords, the cumulate occurrence of words from 2000-2022. It can be observed that consumer behaviour and consumer behaviour were occurred frequently and their use has been enhanced since 2000. The following terms: food waste, marketing, organic food, organic foods, purchase intention, sustainability, sustainable consumption and trust were occurred very frequently and found that occurrence of these terms have increased from 2000 to 2022. Figure indicates that consumer behaviour and behaviour were used more and more in comparison to other terms like food waste, marketing, organic food and foods, purchase intention etc. On the other hand, terms like food waste, marketing and organic food/foods were used more as compared to sustainability, sustainable consumption and trust etc. Consumer behaviour, Organic food and sustainability are on the top keywords which are in the trend of the research. These keywords are used in the most of the researches and research papers.

Figure 10 Cumulate occurrences of Author's keywords



CONCLUSIONS

Organic food and sustainable food habits are future research areas. As shown in the figure 10, the keywords reoccurrences are increasing exponentially from the period of 2000 to 2023. This is indicating the wide research on the three major areas. These areas are Consumer behaviour/behaviour, organic food/foods and sustainability. The progress of any field of study can only advance with prior understanding of literature in that field (Paul et al., 2021). In this study, we observed that consumer behaviour, organic food, sustainable food and consumer trust are aligning together and resulting into a new era of environmental friendly, sustainable food consumption behaviour of the consumer for organic food products. However, no study, to date, has reviewed the extant literature on consumer behaviour, organic food and sustainability. Without a review of the field, especially one as comprehensive as the present one where more than two thousand articles were considered, both early-career and established

scholars will find it challenging to gain a holistic understanding of the field (Donthu et al., 2021a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h). This highlights the importance and value of the present study, which is the first to shed light on the performance and intellectual structure of consumer buying for organic food and sustainability literature curated by Scopus indexed journals. There are several key takeaways from this study, which avail as a result of addressing RQ1 to RQ4. The perception of the consumers are modifying when we collectively observe the pattern of research of organic food, marketing, consumer behaviour, and sustainable food then we find all of these nearby (Figure 9 and figure 10). So, trust, organic food, environmental friendly, sustainable food, consumer behaviour are the keywords which are prominent in the word tree (Figure 5). These results are indicating that the decisions (purchase decisions) of the consumers are incorporating some new components like environmental friendly, health, trust, organic and sustainable, green waste (RQ1 to RQ4). This study represents the first objective assessment of sustainable organic food production and consumption shows environment concern among consumers and consumers are concerned about preference/choice and trust of the organic food products. Thus, this study should be useful to past and prospective authors, editorial board members, editors, readers and reviewers to gain a one-stop understanding about sustainability, consumer behaviour for organic food.

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