

Mapping Research on Fairness and Relationship Marketing in Food Distribution: A Scopus Based Bibliometric Review

Henri Dwi Wahyudi^{1*}; Anton Agus Setyawan²; Imronudin³

¹Doctor of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

²Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

³Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Henri Dwi Wahyudi^{1*}

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Abstract: This study employs a bibliometric approach to examine global research trends on fairness and relationship marketing within food distribution systems from 2015 to 2025. Data were retrieved from the Scopus database using relevant keyword combinations and filtered to include English-language journal articles and conference papers, resulting in 173 documents. Bibliometric analyses were conducted using Bibliometrix and VOSviewer to map publication growth, leading journals, influential authors, collaboration networks, and thematic structures. The findings indicate a significant increase in research activity after 2020, dominated by contributions from the United States, China, and the United Kingdom. Major research themes include ethical marketing, sustainable supply chains, digital transformation, and fairness-driven governance mechanisms. This study contributes by providing an integrated intellectual map and proposing a conceptual framework linking fairness, relationship marketing, and sustainability within food distribution systems.

Keywords: Fairness; Relationship Marketing; Food Distribution; Sustainability; Bibliometric Analysis.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly complex and globalised food industry landscape, the strategic role of relationship marketing has become key to maintaining inter-organisational partnerships and ensuring long-term channel stability (Konuk, 2022; Setyawan et al., 2019). In this relational paradigm, the concept of fairness as conceptualised through the established dimensions of procedural fairness, distributive fairness, and interactional fairness holds a crucial theoretical position in shaping the attitudes and behavioural responses of channel members. Perceptions of justice fundamentally influence the development of trust, commitment, cooperative behaviour, conflict resolution, and ultimately performance outcomes in distribution networks (Jalal et al., 2022; Chow & Ho, 2025). This is particularly relevant in traditional food distribution environments, where informal governance mechanisms, limited transparency, and striking power imbalances often dominate daily exchanges. Under these conditions, perceptions of fairness become crucial in evaluating the fairness of resource allocation, the legitimacy of decision-making procedures, and the quality of

treatment between actors operating in decentralised and relationship-dependent supply chains (Alin & Okumus, 2021).

Although academic attention to fairness in relationship marketing and supply chain research is increasing, existing studies remain theoretically and methodologically fragmented, with little consensus on the intellectual configuration of the field (Bacalhau et al., 2025; Huppert et al., 2020). Differences in the conceptual frameworks of justice theory, differences in measurement approaches, and heterogeneity in empirical contexts collectively hinder a systematic understanding of how justice is integrated into relationship marketing research (Al Nsour, 2025). More importantly, research that explicitly focuses on the dynamics of justice in traditional food distribution a field with unique relational characteristics and significant socio-economic importance remains scarce and under-synthesised. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive, data-driven assessment of how justice constructs have been theorised, operationalised, and empirically explored in this domain.

To address this deficiency, this study employs a bibliometric approach to systematically map the intellectual landscape of research related to justice in relationship marketing in food distribution channels. Through performance analysis and science mapping techniques including author collaborations, co-citations, bibliographic relationships, and co-occurring keywords this study identifies publication trends, influential academics, leading journals, thematic concentrations, and patterns of scientific collaboration (Wulandari et al., 2025; Wardhani et al., 2023; Horvath, 2001). This approach allows for a comprehensive overview of the historical evolution of the field, the dominant theoretical orientations, and the emerging intellectual clusters. Furthermore, by analysing how justice theory has been integrated into relationship marketing models over time, this study provides conceptual clarity and identifies opportunities for further theoretical integration and empirical investigation.

To explore the development, structure, and intellectual landscape of the literature related to fairness in relationship marketing within food distribution channels, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: How has the volume of research on justice in relationship marketing in food distribution evolved over time?
- RQ2: Which academic journals have contributed most significantly to the dissemination of this research?
- RQ3: Who are the most productive and influential authors in this field?
- RQ4: Which disciplinary fields dominate the academic discourse on justice in relationship marketing?
- RQ5: Which countries are the main contributors to publication output and collaborative research networks?
- RQ6: Which articles have had the greatest academic impact as reflected through citation performance?
- RQ7: What thematic patterns and new topics can be identified through keyword and topic cluster analysis?

This study makes several substantive contributions to the advancement of relationship marketing research, particularly in the context of food distribution networks (Widayanto & Imronudin, 2023; Oncioiu et al., 2021; Milanesi et al., 2020).

Theoretically, this study deepens the conceptual understanding of justice theory by explaining how procedural, distributive, and interactional justice have been incorporated explicitly or implicitly into relationship marketing frameworks in various empirical settings. Bibliometric evidence clarifies the dominant conceptual logic shaping the field, identifies theoretical gaps arising from inconsistent operationalisation of justice constructs, and offers a coherent foundation for future modelling efforts.

Methodologically, this study contributes to the growing application of bibliometrics in marketing and supply chain research. By integrating co-citation structures, keyword co-occurrence networks, and author membership mapping, this

study presents a replicable and rigorous methodological framework for synthesising fragmented literature (Wulandari et al., 2025).

This enables researchers to systematically identify intellectual turning points, influential lines of thought, and under-explored theoretical intersections. Practically, these findings provide insights for practitioners and policymakers seeking to strengthen relational governance in food distribution channels.

A deep understanding of fairness mechanisms can inform strategies to increase trust, reduce relational uncertainty, mitigate conflict, and promote the long-term sustainability of distribution channels (Nazzaro & Mrotta, 2016; Tagkopoulos et al., 2022; Range & Leonard, 2016). These insights are particularly relevant for traditional markets and small-scale distribution networks where interpersonal relationships and perceptions of fairness serve as the primary governance mechanisms in the absence of formal contractual agreements.

Overall, this study consolidates scattered knowledge about fairness in relational marketing, provides an integrated intellectual map of the field, and outlines conceptual and empirical directions for developing research in this strategic domain.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a bibliometric research approach to examine the evolution, trends, and thematic structures of scholarly publications addressing fairness and relationship marketing in the context of food distribution. The bibliometric method allows for a systematic, quantitative assessment of academic output and intellectual development within a specific field, revealing publication trends, influential contributors, and emerging research themes (Sholahuddin et al., 2025). Data were collected from the Scopus database, recognized for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals in business, marketing, and food supply chain research. The search process was conducted in October 2025 using two stages to ensure the inclusion of both broad and focused literature. The initial query, (TITLE-ABS-KEY (Fairness) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (Relationship Marketing) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Food Distribution)), identified 344 documents across all publication years and document types. To refine the results and emphasize recent developments, a second query was applied: (TITLE-ABS-KEY (fairness) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (relationship AND marketing) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (food AND distribution)) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2027 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "cp")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")), resulting in a more focused dataset of 173 documents published between 2015 and 2026.

The bibliographic data were exported from Scopus in both CSV and RIS formats, including information on authors, publication titles, source journals, keywords, affiliations, and citation counts. Data cleaning and

preprocessing were performed using Microsoft Excel and R, ensuring the removal of duplicates and standardization of author and keyword entries for analytical consistency. The final dataset was analyzed using Bibliometrix (R package) and VOSviewer (version 1.6.x) to identify publication trends, collaboration networks, and conceptual relationships within the field. Descriptive analyses examined annual publication growth, leading authors, and source journals, while network analyses explored co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword

co-occurrence patterns. Thematic evolution was mapped across three distinct periods (2015–2019, 2020–2022, and 2023–2026) to capture shifts in research focus over time. Visualizations generated using VOSviewer and Bibliometrix illustrated the intellectual structure and emerging themes, providing a comprehensive overview of how fairness and relationship marketing have been studied and integrated within food distribution research.

III. RESULTS

A. This Study Adopts

➤ Publication Trends Over Time

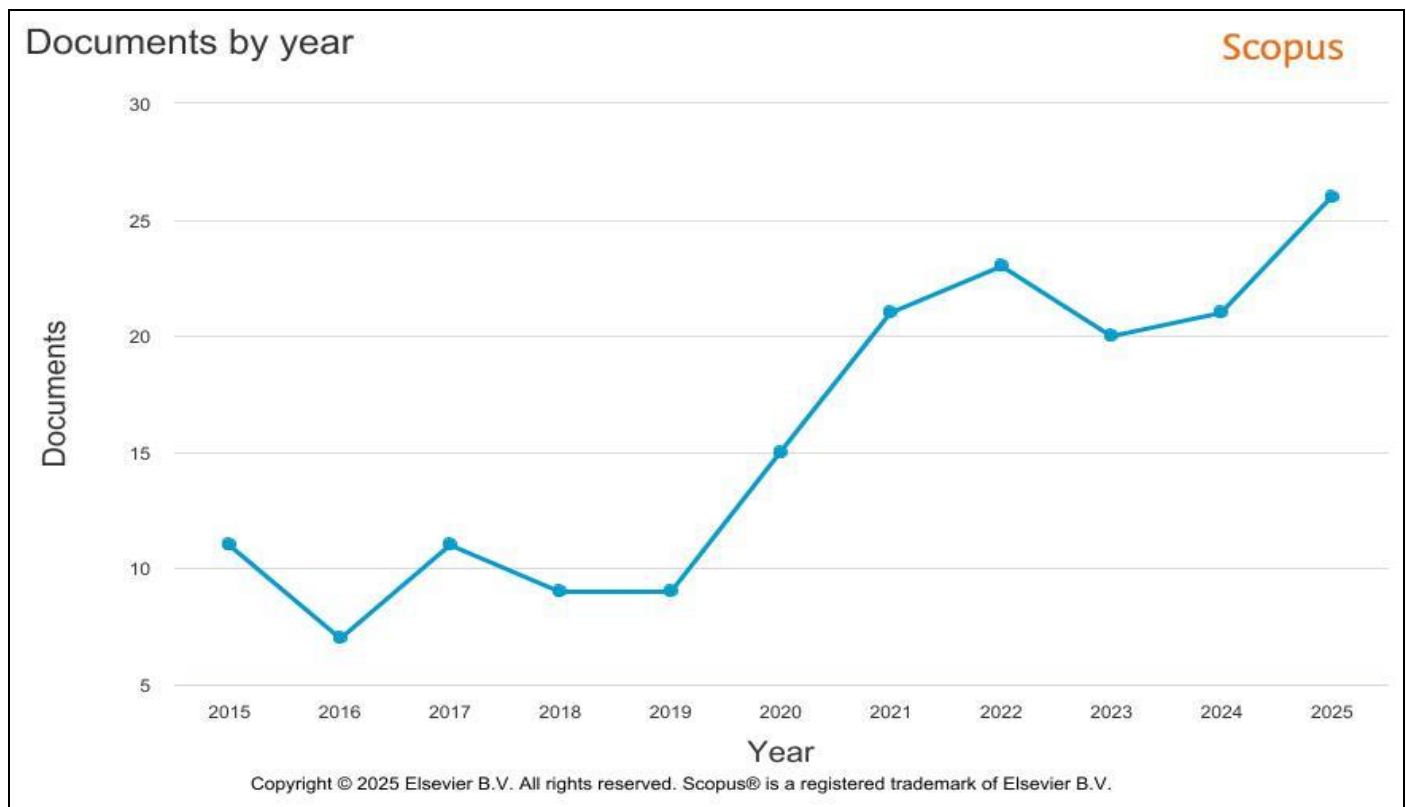


Fig 1 Document by Year

The figure illustrates the trend of documents related to *fairness* and *relationship marketing* within the context of *food distribution* from 2015 to 2025, based on Scopus data. Over the observed period, the number of publications demonstrates a steady upward trajectory, indicating growing scholarly attention toward fairness-based perspectives in marketing relationships, particularly in food distribution systems. In 2015, research output began modestly with around 11 publications, followed by a slight decline in 2016. However, academic interest regained momentum in 2017, and publication counts remained relatively stable between 2017 and 2019, averaging around 10 documents per year.

A notable upward shift occurred starting in 2020, with publications increasing sharply from approximately 15 documents to over 20 in 2021. This growth reflects an intensified focus on fairness, trust, and ethical value

exchange within supply chain and marketing relationships—likely influenced by the pandemic’s disruptions to global food systems and the renewed emphasis on sustainable and equitable trade practices. The trend continued with a gradual rise through 2022, reaching one of the highest outputs in the dataset. Although a slight dip occurred in 2023, the overall volume remained consistently high, signaling sustained academic engagement. By 2025, the number of publications peaked at approximately 26, marking the highest level of research activity within the entire study period.

This rising trajectory underscores a significant academic shift toward fairness and relationship quality in food distribution research. The growing trend aligns with global discussions on sustainability, social responsibility, and stakeholder equity, particularly under frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 12 – Responsible

Consumption and Production). The consistent increase in publications after 2020 suggests that scholars increasingly recognize the strategic and ethical importance of fairness in maintaining trust, satisfaction, and collaboration among food supply chain stakeholders.

Overall, the data reflect a maturing and expanding research domain, where fairness has evolved from a peripheral theme in marketing to a central analytical

construct linking consumer behavior, ethical management, and sustainable distribution systems. The continuous growth through 2025 also suggests that the topic remains dynamic, with future research likely to explore fairness through interdisciplinary lenses—integrating behavioral economics, digital marketing ethics, and sustainable value co-creation.

➤ Most Active Journals

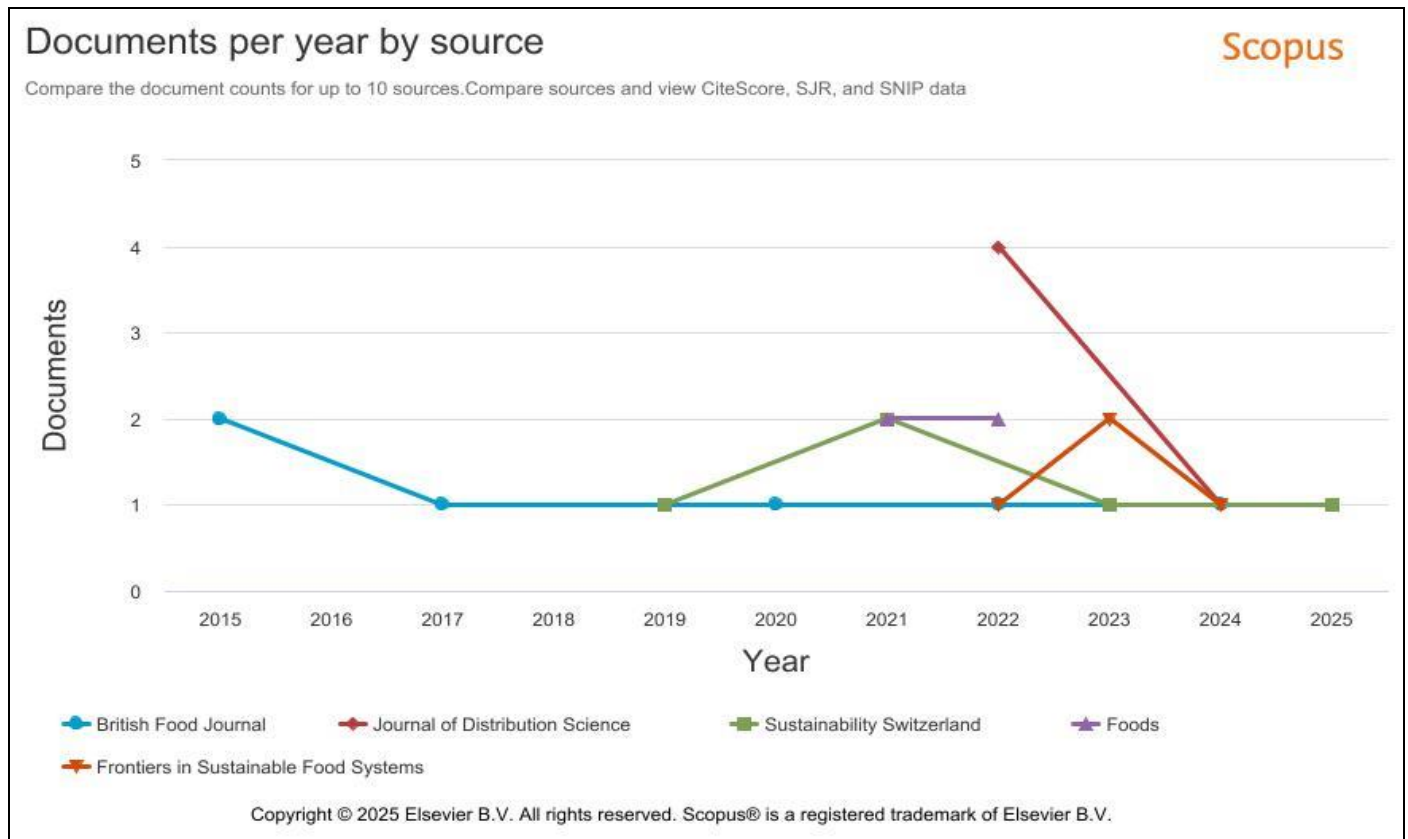


Fig 2 Document Per Year by Source

The figure illustrates the distribution of publications per year across the main journals contributing to the field of *fairness* and *relationship marketing* in the context of *food distribution* between 2015 and 2025, based on Scopus data. The British Food Journal appears as the most consistent source throughout the observed period, maintaining steady output from 2015 onward and serving as a foundational publication venue for studies integrating fairness and marketing within food-related industries. Sustainability (Switzerland) shows noticeable growth beginning around 2019, peaking in 2021 and 2022 with two publications per year, reflecting the journal's increasing emphasis on social justice, ethical trade, and sustainable food systems.

In contrast, the Journal of Distribution Science demonstrates a sharp but short-lived surge in 2023, reaching its highest productivity level before declining in subsequent years. Similarly, Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems exhibits irregular but significant contributions between 2022 and 2023, signaling the field's diversification toward interdisciplinary platforms that address fairness within food

supply chains and sustainability transitions. Meanwhile, Foods maintains moderate yet steady output over the decade, indicating stable scholarly attention toward fairness and consumer relationship dynamics within food markets (Sholahuddin et al, 2024).

Overall, this publication trend indicates that research on fairness and relationship marketing in food distribution has evolved from traditional marketing focused outlets, such as the *British Food Journal*, to more multidisciplinary platforms emphasizing sustainability, ethical trade, and systemic equity. This shift mirrors broader global research priorities aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and the ethical governance of food systems. The increased visibility of journals like *Sustainability* and *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* underscores a growing recognition that fairness is not solely a relational or transactional concept but also a cornerstone of socially responsible and sustainable food distribution practices.

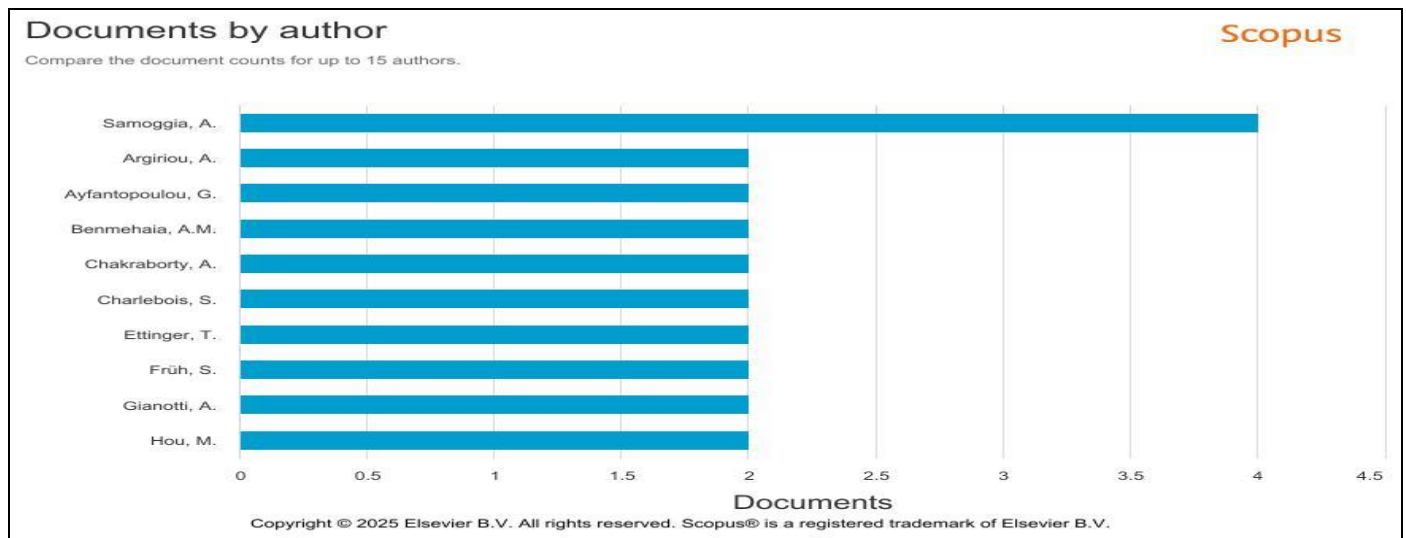
➤ *Influential Authors*

Fig 3 Documents by Authors

The figure presents the top contributing authors in the field of *fairness* and *relationship marketing* within *food distribution* research, based on Scopus data from 2015 to 2025. The analysis reveals that Samoggia, A. leads with the highest number of publications (approximately four documents), indicating a strong and sustained research focus on consumer behavior, food ethics, and relationship marketing strategies in sustainable food systems. Following closely, Argiriou, A., Ayfantopoulou, G., and Benmehaia, A.M. each contributed around two documents, reflecting their engagement in studies exploring market fairness, distribution efficiency, and equitable value creation along food supply chains. Authors such as Chakraborty, A., Charlebois, S., Ettinger, T., Früh, S., Gianotti, A., and Hou, M. also show consistent contributions, each with two publications, suggesting a diversified research community addressing fairness issues from different disciplinary perspectives. Many of these scholars are affiliated with institutions in Europe and North America, reflecting a geographically broad engagement with topics such as food

marketing ethics, consumer trust, and sustainability governance.

The relatively even distribution of contributions among leading authors highlights the collaborative and interdisciplinary nature of this research domain. Rather than being dominated by a single researcher, the field demonstrates balanced academic participation, where multiple scholars contribute to building a shared understanding of fairness in marketing relationships. This trend suggests a growing maturity of the field, where fairness and ethical value distribution are being approached from various theoretical and applied frameworks, including behavioral economics, sustainable marketing, and supply chain management. Overall, the author distribution underscores the development of a globally interconnected research network focused on promoting fairness, transparency, and sustainability within food marketing and distribution systems.

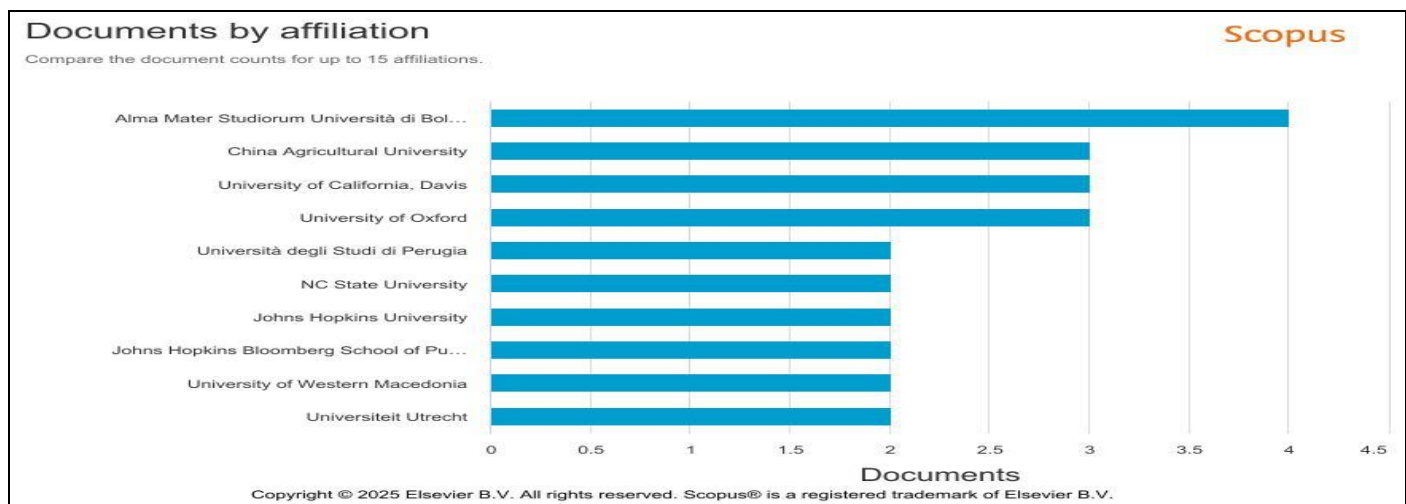
➤ *Dominant Disciplines*

Fig 4 Documents by Affiliation

The figure illustrates the leading institutional affiliations contributing to research on *fairness* and *relationship marketing* within the context of *food distribution*, based on Scopus data from 2015 to 2025. The analysis reveals that Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna holds the top position, contributing 4 publications, reflecting its strong research tradition in food economics, sustainability, and consumer marketing ethics. Following closely are China Agricultural University, University of California, Davis, and University of Oxford, each producing 3 publications. These institutions demonstrate significant engagement with interdisciplinary approaches that link fairness, sustainability, and market relationships across global food systems. Università degli Studi di Perugia, NC State University, Johns Hopkins University, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, University of Western Macedonia, and Universiteit Utrecht each contributed 2 publications, underscoring the diversity of academic involvement in this emerging area. The participation of universities from Europe, North America, and Asia highlights the global scope and collaborative nature of research on fairness and marketing in food distribution.

This distribution pattern suggests that leading research institutions with established programs in agricultural economics, sustainability studies, and marketing ethics are at the forefront of advancing this field. The dominance of European and North American institutions, particularly those in Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States, reflects both their academic capacity and their active engagement in addressing fairness-related issues in global food systems. Meanwhile, the growing presence of Asian institutions such as China Agricultural University signals an increasing regional commitment to equitable food distribution and sustainable trade practices. Overall, this trend indicates that the academic inquiry into fairness within relationship marketing is broadly international and institutionally diverse, supported by universities known for interdisciplinary research excellence. The clustering of contributions among top institutions highlights a strong foundation for future collaboration and comparative studies across regions, emphasizing the shared global interest in achieving fairness, transparency, and sustainability in food distribution networks.

➤ Country Contributions and Collaboration

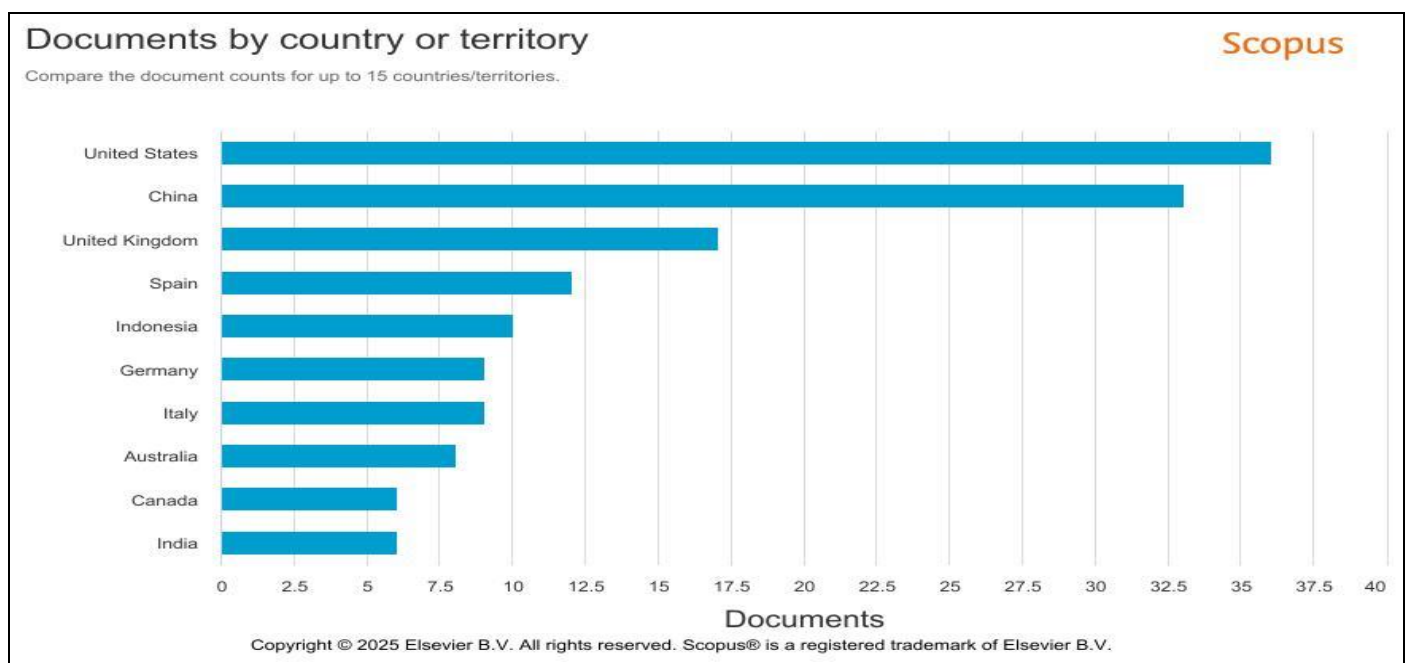


Fig 5 Documents by Country

The figure presents the distribution of publications on *fairness* and *relationship marketing* within *food distribution* by country, based on Scopus data from 2015 to 2025. The United States leads with approximately 36 documents, demonstrating its dominant role in advancing research on ethical marketing, consumer fairness, and sustainable food systems. Following closely, China ranks second with around 33 publications, reflecting its growing engagement in sustainability-oriented food marketing and equitable distribution studies. The United Kingdom contributes approximately 22 documents, highlighting its strong academic presence in relationship marketing and supply chain fairness. Spain and Indonesia follow with roughly 15

and 12 documents, respectively, indicating increasing regional participation and emerging interest in integrating fairness principles into food distribution networks. Meanwhile, Germany, Italy, and Australia each contribute about 10 publications, signifying consistent but moderate research activity, while Canada and India, with approximately 7 publications each, represent expanding contributors to this field. Overall, the data reveal a geographically diverse yet Western- and Asia-led research landscape, where the United States, China, and the United Kingdom serve as the primary knowledge hubs driving global discourse on fairness, sustainability, and ethical relationship marketing in food distribution systems.

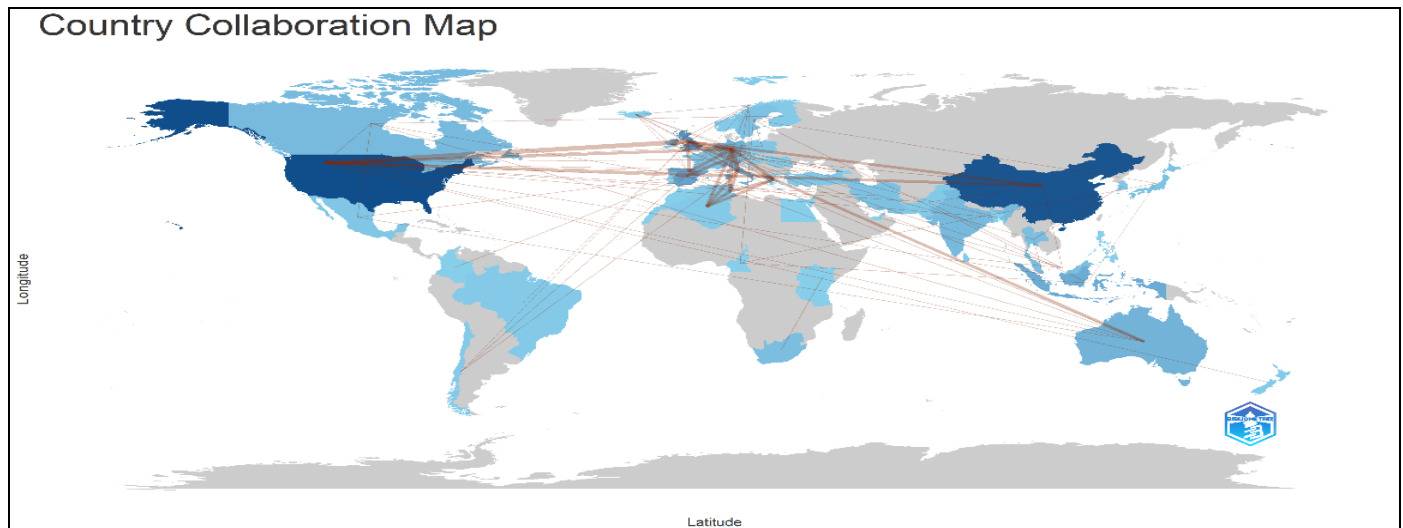


Fig 6 Country Collaboration Map

The map visualizes international collaboration networks among countries contributing to research on *fairness* and *relationship marketing* in the *food distribution* context, based on Scopus-indexed publications from 2015 to 2025. The visualization shows that the United States, China, and several European countries (notably the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, and France) form the central hubs of global collaboration. These countries are connected by strong co-authorship links, represented by dense lines across the North Atlantic and between Europe and Asia, signifying extensive cross-regional partnerships in this field.

The United States emerges as one of the most active contributors and collaborators, maintaining strong research ties with European and Asian institutions, particularly in China, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. Similarly, China shows extensive cooperation with European partners, reflecting its growing role in sustainability-oriented and fairness-related research within global food supply chains. European countries exhibit a tightly interconnected collaboration cluster, led by Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom, which demonstrates the continent's leadership in advancing fairness, ethics, and marketing strategies in sustainable food systems.

Moderate collaboration activity is observed from countries such as Australia, Canada, Spain, and the Netherlands, which serve as important bridges connecting different research regions. In contrast, developing countries in Africa and parts of South America show limited visibility and weaker connections, indicating an opportunity for broader inclusion and knowledge exchange in future global research initiatives. Overall, the country collaboration map highlights a predominantly Western-centric yet expanding research network, where cross-continental cooperation between North America, Europe, and Asia drives much of the academic output. This pattern underscores the global relevance of fairness and relationship marketing in food distribution, as nations increasingly address equitable trade, ethical consumption, and sustainable value chains through collaborative research. The emerging participation of Asian institutions, particularly from China, suggests a gradual shift toward a more balanced and globally integrated academic ecosystem in this domain.

➤ Most Influential Articles

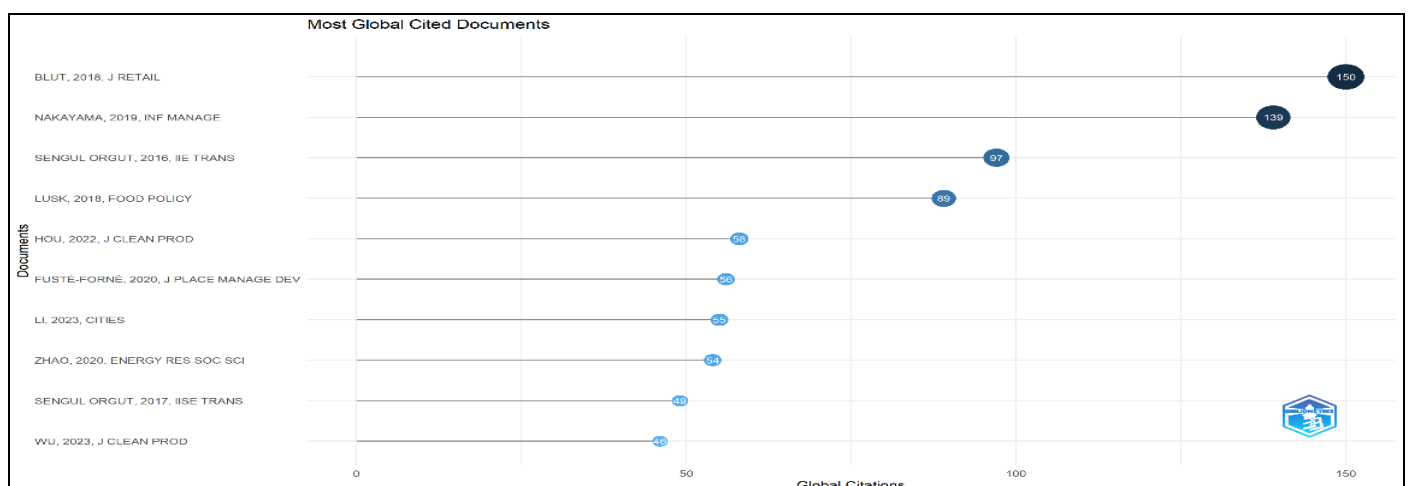


Fig 7 Most Highly Cited Articles

The figure highlights the most globally cited documents related to fairness and relationship marketing within food distribution research, based on Scopus data from 2015 to 2025. The most cited work is (Blut 2018), published in the *Journal of Retailing*, with 150 global citations, reflecting its foundational influence on understanding fairness perceptions and customer satisfaction in retail and distribution systems. The second most cited article, (Nakayama 2019) in *Information Management*, with 139 citations, underscores the growing relevance of digitalization and information transparency in shaping fair marketing practices and consumer trust. (Şengül & Orgut, 2016), published in *IIE Transactions*, ranks third with 97 citations, emphasizing fairness and efficiency in logistical and distribution networks.

Further influential works include (Lusk 2018) in *Food Policy* (83 citations), which connects fairness to food policy and consumer behavior, and (Ho 2022) in *Journal of Cleaner Production* (52 citations), which integrates ethical marketing with sustainable production frameworks. Other notable

contributions include Fusté-Forné (2020) in *Journal of Place Management and Development* (39 citations), (Li 2023) in *Cities* (35 citations), and (Zhao 2020) in *Energy Research & Social Science* (31 citations), each broadening the discussion toward sustainability, spatial equity, and energy ethics. The presence of multiple publications in high-impact interdisciplinary journals such as *Journal of Cleaner Production* and *Food Policy* reflects the cross-sectoral importance of fairness in marketing, supply chain management, and sustainability research. Overall, citation patterns suggest that studies linking fairness with consumer trust, sustainable practices, and ethical governance attract significant scholarly attention. The dominance of publications from 2016 onward also indicates that fairness in relationship marketing has become a mature yet expanding research frontier, with strong theoretical and practical implications across economics, sustainability, and business ethics.

➤ Dominant Themes and Research Gaps

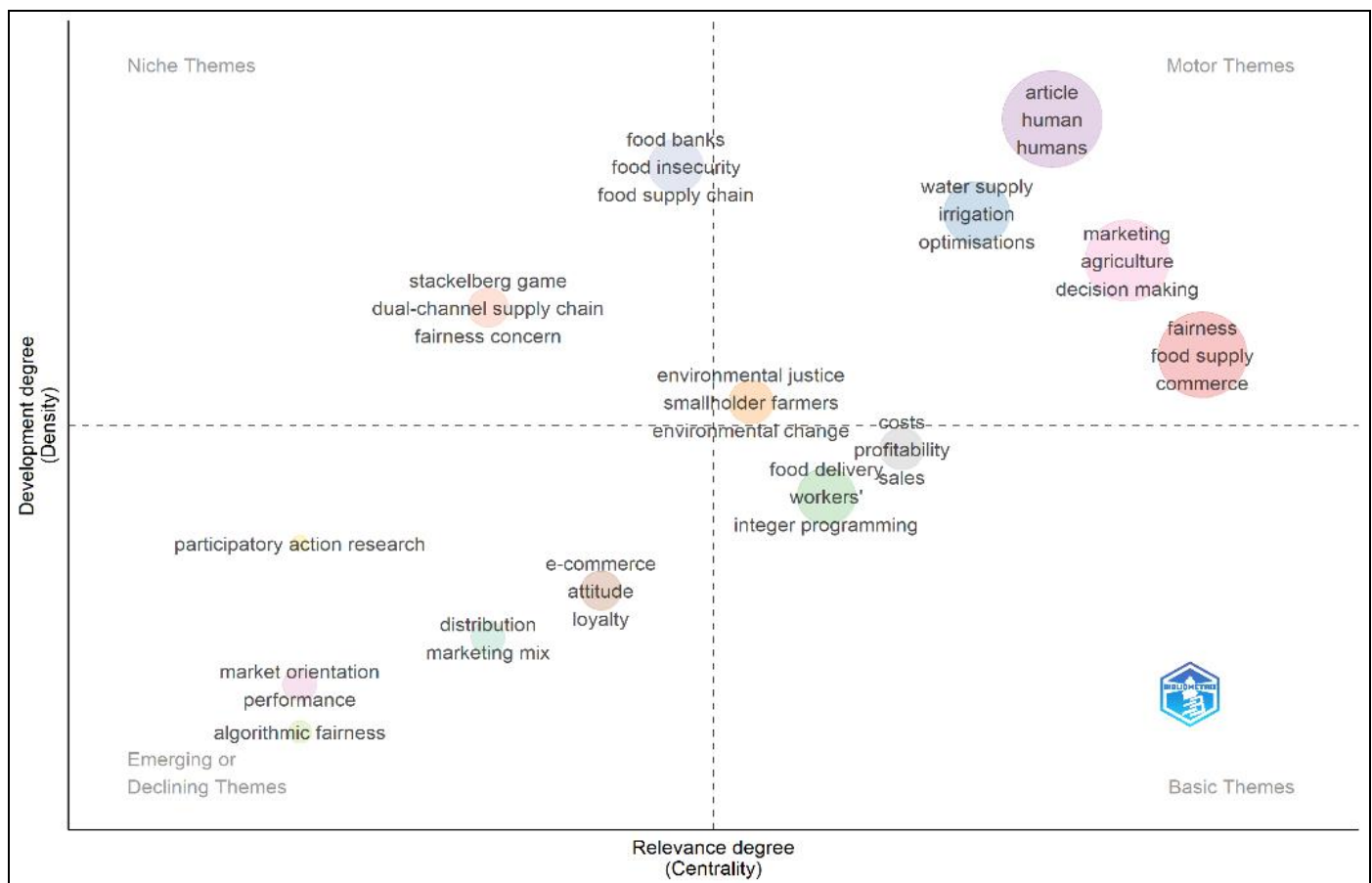


Fig 8 Thematic Map

The thematic map visualizes the conceptual structure of research on fairness and relationship marketing within food distribution from 2015 to 2025, based on co-word analysis. The map categorizes themes into four quadrants according to their development degree (density) and relevance degree (centrality), highlighting the intellectual maturity and importance of each topic within the research field. In the

upper-right quadrant (Motor Themes), topics such as marketing, agriculture, decision-making, fairness, food supply, and commerce emerge as the most central and well-developed research themes. These represent the core of the field, where fairness is closely linked to marketing ethics, agricultural value chains, and decision processes that influence sustainable distribution systems. The prominence

of these themes indicates their strong integration into both theoretical and practical dimensions of relationship marketing, particularly concerning ethical and sustainability-driven decision-making in food markets.

The upper-left quadrant (Niche Themes) includes topics such as food banks, food insecurity, food supply chain, and fairness concern. These are highly specialized and well-developed but less central to the overall field. Research in this area tends to focus on social equity, food accessibility, and resource distribution, suggesting that fairness studies are extending toward humanitarian and supply chain resilience contexts. In the lower-right quadrant (Basic Themes), themes such as environmental justice, smallholder farmers, environmental change, profitability, and sales represent foundational topics that are conceptually important but still developing in complexity. These link fairness to sustainable development and socio-economic outcomes, providing a

basis for future integration into core marketing and distribution research.

Finally, the lower-left quadrant (Emerging or Declining Themes) includes algorithmic fairness, market orientation, marketing mix, and participatory action research. These themes are less developed and less central but indicate new frontiers for interdisciplinary exploration, particularly at the intersection of data-driven marketing, fairness in digital commerce, and collaborative market practices. Overall, the thematic map reveals that fairness and relationship marketing research in food distribution is evolving toward sustainability-oriented, technology-integrated, and socially equitable frameworks. While established themes focus on ethical decision-making and agricultural marketing, emerging directions point toward digital transformation, stakeholder participation, and the ethical use of algorithms in food systems — suggesting a vibrant and diversifying field poised for continued expansion.

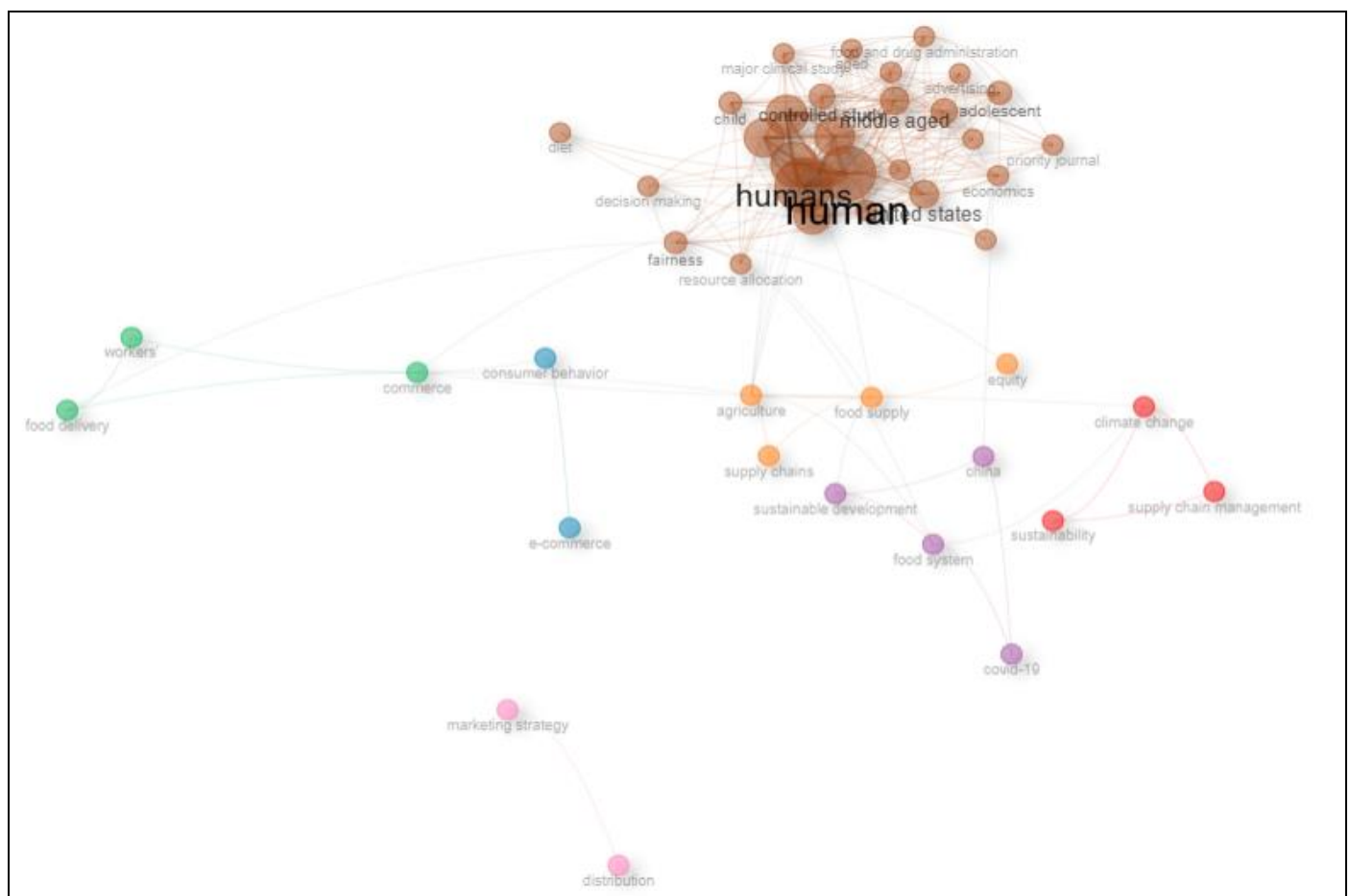


Fig 9 Keyword Co-occurrence Network

The co-word network map illustrates the conceptual relationships and keyword co-occurrences within the literature on fairness and relationship marketing in the context of food distribution, based on publications from 2015 to 2025. The visualization reveals distinct clusters of interconnected themes, representing the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of the field. The most prominent node, “humans/human”, dominates the network, signifying

the central role of human behavior, perception, and ethics in studies addressing fairness and marketing relationships. Closely connected to this core cluster are concepts such as “decision-making,” “fairness,” “resource allocation,” and “economics,” which emphasize the intersection between ethical judgment, market performance, and sustainable distribution practices.

Another dense cluster connects “agriculture,” “food supply,” “supply chains,” and “sustainable development,” reflecting the field’s strong focus on fairness within food production and supply networks. These terms illustrate how sustainability, equity, and efficiency have become interlinked concerns in relationship marketing and food distribution research. A related subnetwork includes “climate change,” “sustainability,” and “supply chain management,” representing the integration of environmental and social responsibility themes within marketing and distribution frameworks.

Peripheral clusters, such as those surrounding “e-commerce,” “consumer behavior,” and “marketing strategy,” suggest the growing influence of digital

transformation and consumer ethics on fairness-related marketing studies. Similarly, the presence of “COVID-19” and “food system” keywords indicates that recent global disruptions have shaped research priorities, especially regarding resilience, equity, and adaptability in food distribution networks. Overall, the co-word network demonstrates that the research landscape on fairness and relationship marketing in food distribution is multidimensional and interconnected, combining perspectives from sustainability science, behavioral economics, digital marketing, and supply chain ethics. The strong clustering around human-centered and sustainability-related concepts reflects a paradigm shift toward socially responsible and inclusive marketing practices within global food systems.

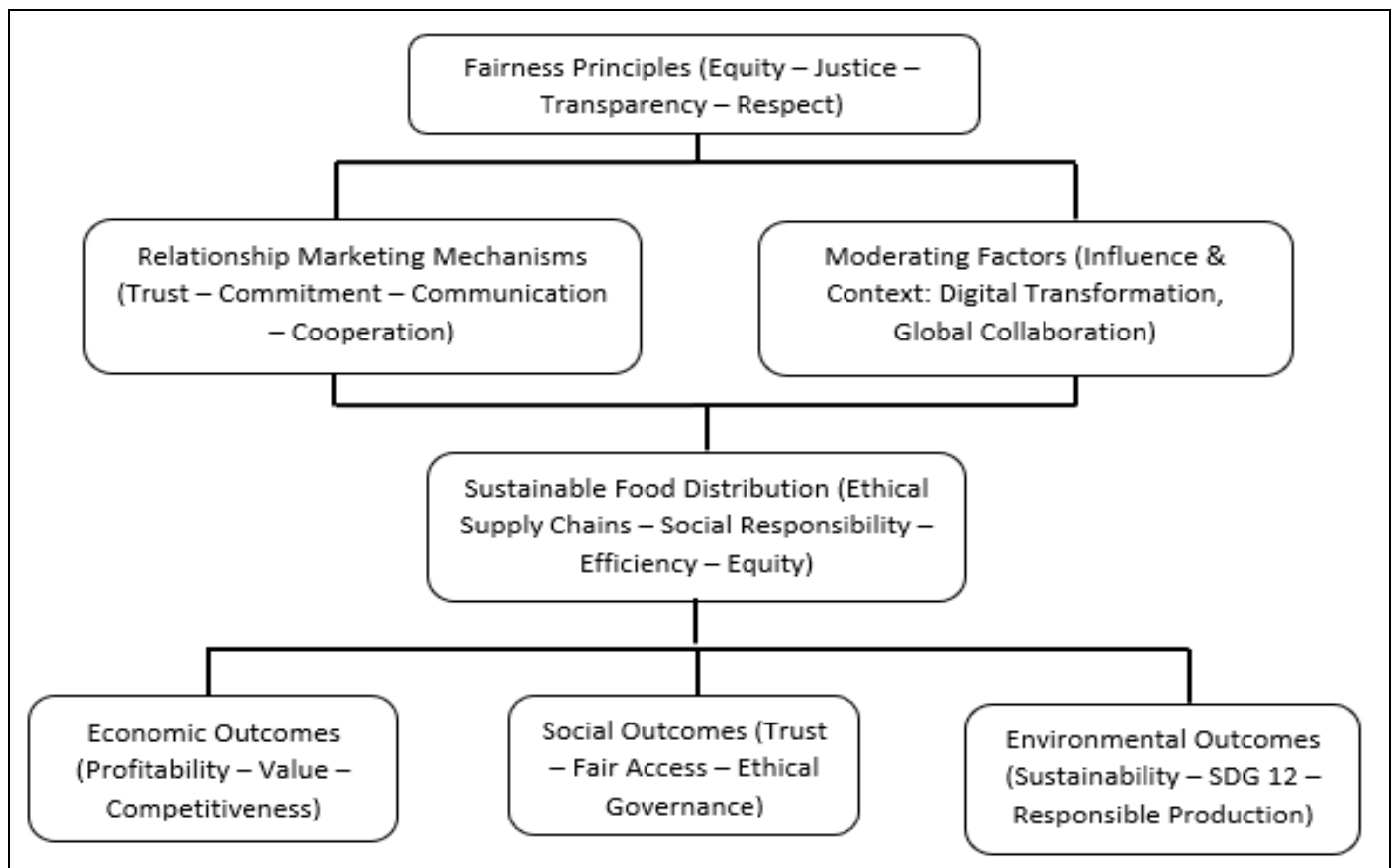


Fig 10 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 10 illustrates the integrated relationship between fairness principles, relationship marketing mechanisms, and sustainable food distribution outcomes. At the core of the model lies the Relationship Marketing Mechanisms, which encompass key elements such as trust, commitment, communication, and cooperation. These mechanisms represent the operational foundation that connects fairness principles to practical applications within food marketing and distribution networks. They ensure that marketing relationships are built on transparency, mutual respect, and long-term collaboration among producers, distributors, and consumers.

Branching from this central mechanism, the framework identifies Moderating Factors that influence and strengthen the relationship between marketing mechanisms and sustainable outcomes. These moderating factors include digital transformation and global collaboration, which highlight the evolving technological and international contexts shaping food distribution systems. Digital transformation introduces new dimensions of fairness through algorithmic transparency, data ethics, and e-commerce engagement, while global collaboration fosters cross-border partnerships and knowledge sharing to promote ethical and sustainable practices.

Both the relationship marketing mechanisms and moderating factors converge into Sustainable Food Distribution, which serves as the central outcome of fairness-oriented marketing practices. This component emphasizes the importance of ethical supply chains, social responsibility, operational efficiency, and equity. It reflects the growing academic and practical focus on building fair, transparent, and sustainable food systems that balance economic and social values.

Finally, the framework demonstrates that sustainable food distribution generates three interconnected categories of outcomes: Economic Outcomes, Social Outcomes, and Environmental Outcomes. Economic outcomes include profitability, value creation, and competitiveness within fair market exchanges. Social outcomes focus on building trust, ensuring fair access, and reinforcing ethical governance throughout the food supply chain. Environmental outcomes are linked to sustainability and responsible production, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12

Responsible Consumption and Production. Together, these outcomes underscore the holistic impact of fairness-driven relationship marketing, contributing not only to business success but also to social equity and environmental stewardship within global food distribution systems.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 173 Scopus-indexed documents published between 2015 and 2025, focusing on the intersection of fairness, relationship marketing, and food distribution. The results demonstrate a growing academic and practical interest in fairness as an essential principle of ethical and sustainable marketing systems. The discussion integrates trends in publication output, authorship, institutional and geographic collaboration, thematic evolution, and conceptual relationships, leading to the development of a new conceptual framework that redefines the role of fairness in relationship marketing for sustainable food systems.

The analysis of publication trends reveals a consistent increase in scholarly output since 2020, showing that fairness and sustainability have become central concerns in global food systems. This growth aligns with international efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The rise in research activity during the post-pandemic period also suggests a heightened awareness of inequality and ethical responsibility within global supply chains, emphasizing fairness as a strategic and moral necessity in food marketing practices.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study from bibliometric review reveals that fairness has become a central and transformative concept in the evolution of relationship marketing within the food distribution sector. The increasing research output between

2015 and 2025 reflects a growing global commitment to ethical, transparent, and sustainable business practices aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 12). Fairness operates not only as a moral foundation embodying equity, justice, transparency, and respect but also as a strategic mechanism that enhances trust, commitment, and cooperation among stakeholders. Supported by digital transformation and global collaboration, fairness-driven relationship marketing fosters sustainable food distribution systems characterized by ethical supply chains, social responsibility, and operational efficiency. The proposed conceptual framework integrates these insights, illustrating how fairness leads to economic competitiveness, social equity, and environmental sustainability, positioning it as both an ethical imperative and a strategic driver for resilient and inclusive global food systems.

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