The Role of Marketing Strategies in Promoting Circular Economy and Sustainable Growth

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Abstract

What is needed now is a sustainable economic approach to climate change, finite natural resources and massive pollution. New development models must combine economic prosperity with environmental protection. The solution could be the circular economy, which promotes reusing resources and reducing waste. Marketing has a key role to play in popularizing this concept as it provides the tools to ensure that sustainable principles are widely accepted and integrated into consumer behaviour and business strategies. Accelerating the uptake of the circular economy can be achieved by raising awareness of the benefits of the circular economy model and stimulating responsible consumer behavior. In this way, marketing becomes a tool for transforming the collective mindset and influencing economic decisions, focusing on the social and environmental impact of products and services. To carry out this study we formed a Web of Science database for which we used the VOSviewer software to build a bibliometric map, exploring the relevant topics in recent academic papers in the field. This analysis has identified research trends in the fields of circular economy, sustainable marketing and sustainable development, as well as the interconnections between the keywords associated with these themes. The aim of this research is to identify the role of marketing strategies in promoting circular economy and sustainable growth. By visualizing bibliometric maps it is much easier to identify trends over time and topics of interest to understand the evolution of the research field.

Keywords: *circular economy, sustainability, environment, marketing strategies, climate change.*

JEL classification: M30, M31.

DOI: 10.24818/RMCI.2025.4.654

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1. Introduction

Climate change is undeniable and the adaptation process to respond to these changes is one of the most studied in the world (Crecente, Sarabia & del Val, 2021). Considering climate change and resource depletion, the circular economy is an important model for sustainable development. Melo et al. (2022) argued that a circular economy is a revised version of a linear economy that only attempts to stabilize economic markets. Circular economy offers policies and strategies to improve the circulation of materials based on the principles of reuse and recycling. Thus marketing strategies have an important role to play in promoting circular practices and supporting responsible economic growth. Sustainable business models contribute to circular economic development and improve the overall sustainability of a country (Albareda & Hajikhani, 2019).

Marketing enables a faster transition to the circular economy and supports sustainable growth, balancing profit, environment and society. By educating and persuading consumers to adopt sustainable products and services, marketing becomes a necessary tool for sustainable growth. Today's businesses are operating in a competitive and ever-changing world, so they need to incorporate sustainability into their strategic planning to facilitate long-term survival, growth and profitability (Sanoran, 2023). Awareness campaigns highlight the benefits of the circular economy, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency and responsible resource use. Consumers can be persuaded to opt for sustainable and recyclable products if green marketing strategies emphasize the importance of informed choices. Resistance to change can be a barrier to implementing the circular economy, but persuasive marketing strategies can help to change consumer behavior, encouraging them to adopt a more responsible lifestyle.

Interactive campaigns help to create an emotional connection with their audience, leading them to choose products and services that respect the principles of circularity. Economic growth must not be incompatible with environmental protection. Furthermore, organizations must also extend their attention to the supply chain network (Zhu et al., 2005; Krause et al., 2009). Integrating the circular economy into marketing strategies leads to balanced and sustainable development. Firms that adopt sustainable practices can reduce production costs, minimize environmental regulatory risks and access new market segments concerned with sustainability. The circular economy thus becomes a driver for innovation and competitiveness, contributing to a greener and more prosperous future. Valenturf & Purnell (2021) have expressed that the circular economy is the most appropriate system to support natural resource use efficiency.

Marketing strategies play an important role in the transition to a circular economy and in promoting sustainable growth. Through education, raising awareness and promoting responsible business models, marketing can influence consumer behavior and support companies in implementing innovative solutions. In an era of limited resources, sustainable marketing is not just a strategic choice but a necessity for a more balanced future.

Sustainability has recently been seen as a competitive advantage in most industries. It is therefore not surprising that there is no precise definition of sustainability (Kozlowski et al., 2015). Sustainability not only includes environmental protection but also involves economic and social dimensions. Thus, sustainable development requires a balance between economic growth, environmental protection and societal well-being. Adopting responsible practices such as: using renewable materials, reducing carbon emissions and promoting social equity are clear actions for companies in the move towards sustainability. Marketing can amplify these initiatives through educational campaigns, transparency and active involvement in communities.

2. Literature Review

In an ever-evolving world, the concept of sustainability is necessary to ensure an economically, ecologically and socially balanced future. In recent years, environmental and social sustainability has become a key managerial issue (Bocken et al., 2014). Thus, sustainable growth is an economic model that aims to meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. With increasing awareness of sustainability, companies have started to work much more carefully on the processes and products they provide (Choi et al., 2012, Formentini & Taticchi, 2016).

Environmental degradation is a critical issue that has direct consequences on human existence and is one of the key causes of global warming (Zhao et al., 2022). Sustainable development is based on three pillars: economy, environment and society (Pricopoaia, O. et al, 2025). These dimensions need to be integrated into the development strategy to ensure a long-term balance. Basic principles of sustainability include responsible use of natural resources, reducing pollution and promoting a circular economy that minimizes waste and maximizes resource efficiency.

According to Ahmed & Sundaram (2012), although many organizations have committed to transforming their businesses through sustainable initiatives, they have failed to achieve their goal because they have followed traditional methods of business management, supporting only certain pillars of environmental, social and economic dimensions and making task-oriented decisions only. So they have continued to use traditional management methods instead of taking a truly integrated approach to sustainability. The success of sustainable initiatives requires a fundamental change in the way business is managed, not just isolated measures. Sustainable growth must include both economic expansion and balanced and inclusive development.

Sustainable growth is about investing in green technologies, promoting renewable energy and implementing public policies that support innovation and social responsibility (Cristache et al, 2019). Sustainable growth has been the focus of business operations for decades, involving social and environmental concerns integrated into business and organizational models (Lombardi et al., 2021). A

sustainable economy creates jobs, protects the environment and ensures the well-being of future generations. Firms have an important role in adopting sustainable practices. They must adopt appropriate strategies to reduce their carbon footprint, use recyclable materials and engage in social responsibility initiatives. These measures can significantly contribute to sustainable development. Effective policies must be implemented to incentivize sustainability through clear regulations, economic incentives and environmental education.

Thus, technological innovation has the potential to facilitate the achievement of sustainability goals by creating new solutions or technologies that exhibit enhanced environmental compatibility, improved resource use efficiency and promote sustainable economic progress (Zhang et al., 2019). Sustainable development leads to a better quality of life, reduced social inequality and the protection of biodiversity. Innovation and technological advances are essential to drive the transformation towards a circular economy (Srisathan & Naruetharadhol, 2022), providing economic benefits such as job creation, increased competitiveness and secure access to resources (Wu et al., 2021). The circular economy can contribute significantly to social goals by fostering social equity and community resilience (Walker et al., 2021).

Creating smart cities, managing resources efficiently and promoting responsible consumption are key to maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Educating the public about the importance of sustainability can have a positive impact on how the planet's resources are used. Soderholm (2020) emphasized that an important part of a green economic strategy is to promote the development and implementation of sustainable technologies. Technological innovation is considered as a driver of progress in modern society as it contributes to improved quality of life and sustainable economic development. Innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics and renewable energy support the efficiency of industrial processes and reduce negative environmental impacts.

Environment-related technology innovation is used against global pollution by significantly reducing carbon dioxide emissions (Hashmi & Alam, 2019; Hussain et al., 2022). Khan & Ulucak's (2020) study (Khan & Ulucak, 2020) revealed that environmental technologies have a positive impact on achieving green growth and sustainability goals. Creating a greener future requires the development of sustainable solutions that help to reduce the ecological footprint and increase resource efficiency. Thus technological innovation has a key role to play in protecting the environment in the face of climate change and pollution.

Adopting circular economy practices, which emphasize resource efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, addresses the environmental dimension of sustainability. The circular economy is an important step towards a sustainable future. Although there are various challenges in its adoption, the benefits are significant and long term. It requires the involvement of government authorities, businesses and citizens alike.

Investments in infrastructure, green education and the development of new technologies are necessary aspects to ensure a successful transition to a circular and

sustainable economic model. These practices are essential in various sectors, including supply chain management (Askoxylakis, 2018), construction (Shooshtarian et al., 2022) and food waste management (Babbitt et al., 2021). Investments in infrastructure, green education and the development of new technologies can ensure a successful transition to a circular and sustainable economic model.

Innovation is essential in today's digital world facilitating the exploitation of new business opportunities and encouraging the adoption of the circular economy (Oluleye et al., 2023). The role of innovation in the transition to the circular economy is significant, it addresses challenges related to resource efficiency, waste reduction and the development of sustainable solutions. Innovation includes both new ways of thinking, product design and supply chain organization as well as the use of efficient technologies.

Another important aspect to support the transition to the circular economy is efficiency in their use. Resource efficiency and sustainability are two interrelated concepts that refer to the responsible use of natural resources. Zhao & Rasoulinezhad (2023) confirmed that natural resource use efficiency helps countries to decrease resource intensity, waste and environmental pollution, which leads to neutralizing the challenge of climate change. Resource efficiency reduces environmental impacts, conserves resources in the long term and ensures quality livelihoods for future generations.

In order to utilize natural resources efficiently, the concept of circular economy is necessary to expand globally (Xu et al., 2023). By adopting more efficient and responsible practices, it can not only ensure the conservation of resources for future generations, but also create a cleaner, more equitable and prosperous environment. Efficiency requires profound changes in individual and collective behaviors, technological innovation and the adoption of public policies that support a sustainable future.

Countries around the world are trying to combat global warming, it is negatively affecting the environment, leading to rapid weather changes, melting glaciers, rising sea levels and a rise in average temperatures (Destek & Sarkodie, 2019). Moreover, global warming is a major challenge, but sustainable solutions can make a significant contribution to combating it. There is a need to use renewable energy, make resource consumption more efficient, protect the environment and adopt responsible policies. Using renewable energy reduces the impact of climate change and ensures a healthier and balanced future for future generations.

The study of sustainability, circular economy and marketing strategies is therefore justified to develop viable solutions that support both the business environment and the protection of natural resources. These areas of research offer innovative insights for resource efficiency, sustainable development and adapting companies to market and consumer demands. These areas have direct implications for reducing negative environmental impacts, creating sustainable economic opportunities and educating consumers and businesses to adopt greener practices.

3. Research Methodology and Stages

Through bibliometric analysis the research will provide an objective, clear and comprehensive overview of the impact of marketing strategies in promoting circular economy and sustainable growth. Effective marketing strategies can influence companies to adopt green practices to meet the demands of environmentally conscious consumers. It should be emphasized that the circular economy can reduce production costs through resource efficiency and recycling of materials.

Moreover, brands with sustainable values are preferred by the public, which increases the need for effective marketing strategies in this area. Studying these strategies is not just a trend but a necessity for the future of the economy and the environment. Thus, this study explores how to address one of the greatest challenges of modern society, the balance between economic growth and environmental protection. By applying effective marketing strategies, companies can become drivers of change, educating consumers, reducing environmental impact and ensuring their long-term success.

The present study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how marketing strategies can influence consumer behavior by guiding companies towards responsible practices and supporting the transition towards a more sustainable economic model. In this context, the central research question is: *How do marketing strategies influence the promotion of circular economy and sustainable development?*

To collect scientific articles we used the Web of Science database. To build up the database we applied the following search filters: keywords (marketing strategies, circular economy, sustainability, environment, climate change), research fields (Business Economics, Environmental Sciences Ecology, Operations Research Management Science), year of publication (2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020), type of document (article), English and open access. After applying all the criteria we obtained a database consisting of 174645 articles. Table 1 shows the evolution of the number of scholarly articles. One can observe the high interest of researchers in sustainability, circular economy, sustainable marketing and sustainable development.

Filtering results of the Web of Science scientific publications database, distribution between 2020 and 2024

Table 1

Year of publication	Nr. of publications
2024	38012
2023	38190
2022	39390
2021	33638
2020	25415

Source: own processing based on data from Web of Science

We loaded the database of publications identified in the Web of Science in RIS format into VOSviewer, version 1.6.19. A bibliometric map was created in which keywords are grouped into distinctly colored clusters. This map highlights the links between important concepts such as circular economy, sustainability, performance, strategies, climate change, management and business models.

The size of the nodes and words on the map indicate the relevance of the key concepts identified. Words with prominent nodes appear more often in the authors' research, and the smaller distance between them signifies a stronger connection. The line joining two words suggests that they appear together in an article, representing the link between the two key concepts. The thickness of the line between keywords suggests strong connections and significant relationships between the concepts discussed in the analyzed publications. Larger distance between keywords suggests a weaker connection, while closer words indicate a stronger connection. Line thickness and color intensity reflect the type of frequency of two keywords in a publication.

4. Bibliometric Research Results

The Network Visualization map graphically illustrates the links between the keywords found in the publications analyzed. Moreover, the Network Visualization Map provides an overview of the keywords in the selected database, facilitating an objective analysis of the scientific data. It can be seen in the figure below that four clusters have been identified. Clusters are groups of words clustered around common topics or themes.

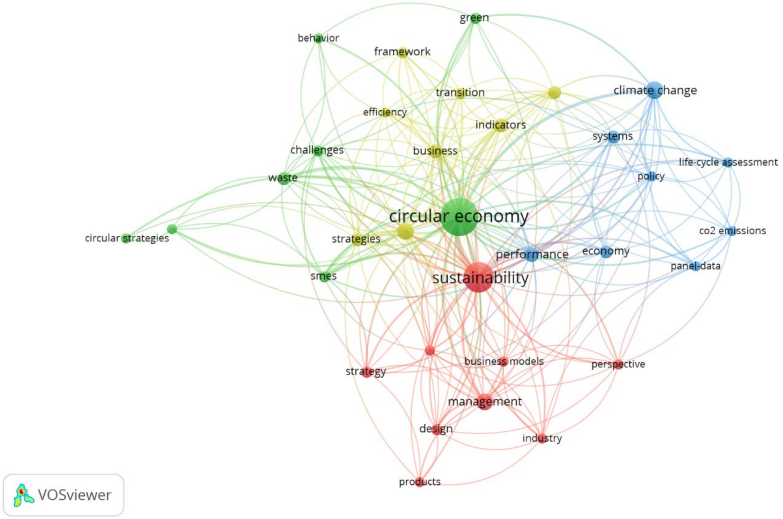

Figure 1.
Source: output soft VOSviewer version 1.6.19

In figure 1 we observe four different clusters, the first cluster is red, the second green, the third blue and the fourth yellow. In the first cluster the largest nodes are represented by the keywords: sustainability, management, strategy, business models and insights. In the second cluster the circular economy, challenges, circular strategies and waste stand out. In the third cluster we observe the following words with a higher frequency of occurrence: climate change, economy, performance, systems and CO2 emissions. The fourth cluster contains the following significant nodes: barriers, strategies, sustainable development, efficiency and indicators.

The figure below shows the publication network overlay. The colors blue, green and yellow reflect the frequency of occurrence of the keywords in the articles in the trained publication base. The color blue indicates a lower score, i.e. a low number of occurrences of keywords in the articles. Green color suggests a medium occurrence and yellow is used for high frequency occurrences. It can be seen that the interest in studying the field of circular economy has started to grow since 2022, and the current focus is on studying measures to mitigate the effects of climate change, limiting waste and carbon dioxide.

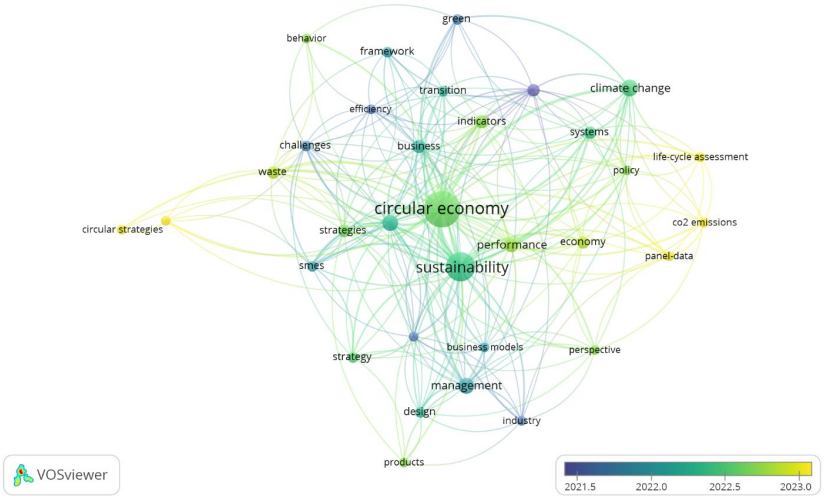

Figure 2. Overlay visualization

Source: output soft VOSviewer version 1.6.19

Figure 3 shows the item density visualization. Item density represents the authors' interest in a particular research topic. The keyword that is represented by a yellow node suggests a high density of articles around that concept. If the keyword is represented by a blue node then the density of articles around that topic is lower. The figure below shows that the highest densities are found around the terms:

circular economy, sustainability, performance, climate change, management and strategies.

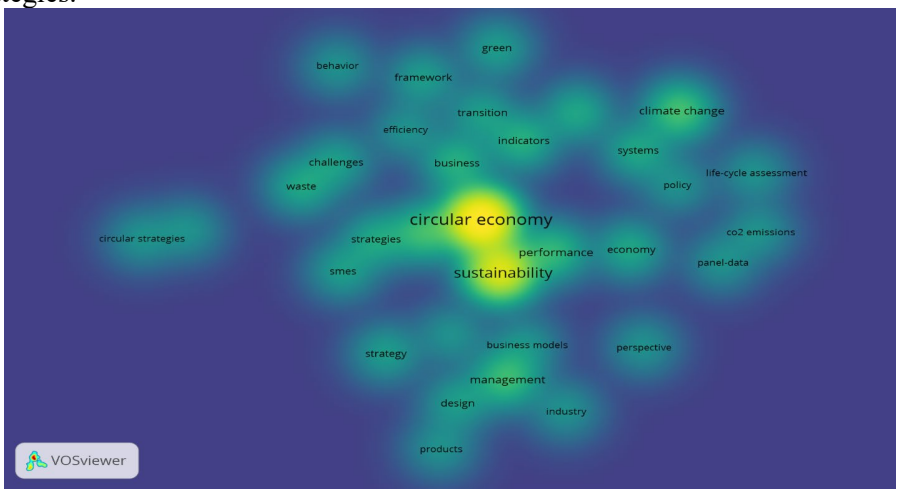

Figure 3. Item density visualization.
Source: output soft VOSviewer version 1.6.19

All keywords have been organized in clusters, allowing visualization of the density of each cluster. The individual representation of each cluster highlights the frequency of occurrence of keywords and their links in different publications. The figure below shows that each cluster contains a keyword with a high weight: sustainability (cluster 1 - red), circular economy (cluster 2 - green), climate change (cluster 3 - blue) and strategies (cluster 4 - yellow).

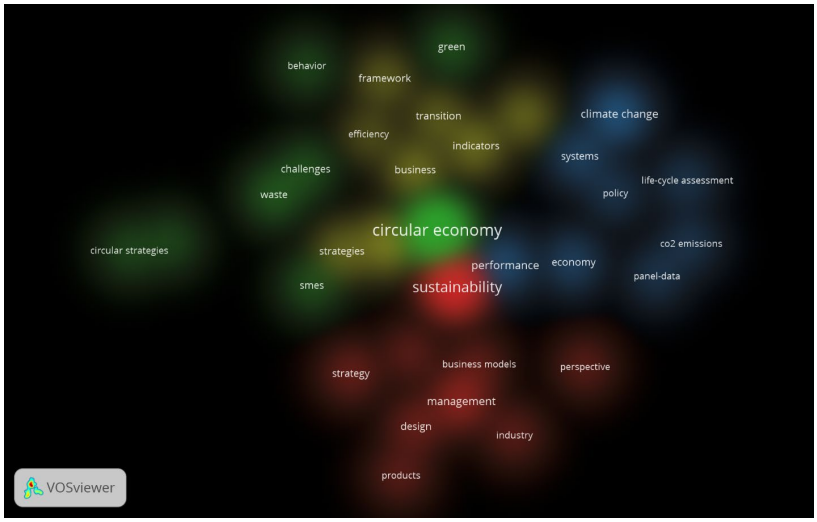

Figure 4. Density visualization cluster.
Source: output soft VOSviewer version 1.6.19

Key elements are organized into distinct clusters. A cluster is a collection of elements brought together in a bibliometric map based on common concepts. Key words within a cluster are closely related through similar research themes, specific terminology and semantic connections. This organization makes it possible to highlight relationships between terms and to identify relevant patterns in the field of study. In the following, the identified clusters and representative keywords for each of them are presented.

In cluster 1, strong connections can be observed between business models, strategy, management, sustainability and industry, suggesting that the circular economy requires a profound transformation in the way business strategies are conceived and implemented. Sustainability has the strongest links with other keywords indicating that the literature places particular emphasis on integrating sustainability into business models and marketing and organizational strategies.

The key words "business models" and "strategy" show that the success of the circular economy depends on a restructuring of traditional business models to incorporate sustainable principles from the "design" and "implementation" phase. The term management, likewise, has a significant number of connections and suggests that the transition to sustainability is not only a conceptual change, but also one that requires effective leadership, innovative practices and the ability to manage change in organizations. Cluster 1 thus emphasizes that sustainable strategies are not just an option but a necessity for the future of business. Through a redefinition of business models, effective implementation management and a strategic vision on sustainability, companies can adopt practices that enable them to remain competitive and environmentally responsible.

Cluster 1 (red)

Table 2

Keyword	Cluster	Links	Total link strength	Occurrences
business models	1	11	15	3
design		12	17	4
implementation		14	20	3
industry		11	16	3
management		18	31	8
perspective		12	16	3
products		7	9	3
strategy		11	17	4
sustainability		31	105	27

Source: own processing based on data from VOSviewer software version 1.6.19

Cluster 2 highlights important concepts such as: circular economy, circular strategies, waste, small and medium enterprises, challenges, survey and behavior. This cluster underlines that the transition to a circular economy model is not only a structural problem, but also involves behavioural, organizational and strategic

challenges. Circular economy is a central concept in the literature. The terms "challenges" and "behavioural" suggest that the adoption of circular strategies faces obstacles related to the perceptions and behaviours of organizations, consumers and policy makers.

The keyword "waste" indicates that waste reduction is a key objective of the circular economy. At the same time, the presence of SMEs shows that they contribute significantly to this transition but face challenges in implementing sustainable strategies. Furthermore, the term green emphasizes the strong link between the circular economy and green strategies. Cluster 2 therefore highlights that the success of the circular economy depends not only on policies and strategies, but also on behavioral changes at individual and organizational level. Educational measures, legislative support and support mechanisms for SMEs are needed so that circular strategies can be implemented effectively and widely.

Cluster 2 (green)

Table 3

Keyword	Cluster	Links	Total link strength	Occurrences
behavior	2	6	8	3
challenges		15	22	4
circular economy		32	135	42
circular strategies		3	6	3
green		10	15	4
smes		14	24	4
survey		8	11	3
waste		14	20	5

Source: own processing based on data from VOSviewer software version 1.6.19

Cluster 3 shows the connection between climate change, CO_2 emissions, economics, performance, life cycle assessment and policy, suggesting a systemic approach to sustainability and circular economy. The term 'climate change' has a high frequency, suggesting that the literature reviewed places a major emphasis on the impact of climate change on economic and sustainability strategies. It can be seen that there is a central concern in circular economy studies. The term 'economics' suggests that the research includes a macroeconomic perspective, analyzing how sustainability strategies influence economic performance.

This is reinforced by 'performance', which shows a concern for assessing the impact of circular strategies on economic and environmental efficiency. The impact of sustainability on the environment and the economy can be measured through analytical tools such as life-cycle assessment and panel-data. Also, "public policy" plays a key role in facilitating the transition to a circular economy, and

"systems" indicates that systems approaches are frequently used to understand the complexity of interactions between economy, environment and performance.

Cluster 3 therefore suggests that effective sustainability and circular economy strategies need to be integrated into public policies, take into account impacts on the economy and be evaluated using rigorous methods. Combating climate change and reducing CO_2 emissions are not only environmental challenges, but also critical factors in shaping the global economic future. Cluster 3 emphasizes that effective sustainability and circular economy strategies need to be integrated into public policies, take into account the impact on the economy and be evaluated by rigorous methods.

Cluster 3 (blue)

Table 4

Keyword	Cluster	Links	Total link strength	Occurrences
climate change	3	14	32	9
co2 emission		9	12	3
economy		12	21	5
life-cycle assessment		10	14	3
panel-data		11	15	3
performance		19	29	7
policy		14	18	3
systems		13	24	5

Source: own processing based on data from VOSviewer software version 1.6.19

Cluster 4 highlights important concepts for the implementation of the circular economy, such as: barriers, strategies, efficiency, performance indicators and the transition to sustainable development. The term "barriers" has a high frequency of occurrence in the literature, which indicates that the literature pays particular attention to the obstacles that hinder the adoption of sustainable strategies in the business environment. Barriers can be economic, technological, institutional or behavioural in nature and influence the ability of organizations to make the transition to a circular model.

The key words 'business' and 'strategies' indicate that the literature explores in detail how companies can overcome these barriers through appropriate strategies. Long-term strategies may include innovation in business models, improving value chains and adopting sustainable policies. Efficiency is a key term as it is a significant factor in sustainability decision-making. The high frequency of occurrence of the term "indicators" suggests that there is a growing interest in the use of clear metrics to assess progress in the transition to the circular economy. The

term 'framework' indicates that the literature proposes relevant conceptual frameworks and optimal methodologies for implementing sustainable strategies.

Moreover, the terms "transition" and "sustainable development" confirm that this change is a long-term process that requires the involvement of all economic and political actors. Cluster 4 therefore reflects the importance that researchers attach to the study of the transition towards circular economy and sustainable development. This transition is not without challenges, but it can be facilitated by well-defined strategies, measuring effectiveness and creating robust implementation frameworks.

Cluster 4 (yellow)

Table 5

Keyword	Cluster	Links	Total link strength	Occurrences
barries	4	23	44	8
business		17	28	6
efficiency		15	16	3
framework		9	12	4
indicators		15	26	6
strategies		19	27	5
sustainable developement		19	26	5
transition		12	17	4

Source: own processing based on data from VOSviewer software version 1.6.19

5. Conclusions

In this research we used the VOSviewer software, a bibliometric analysis tool to identify the main concepts, relationships and trends related to the role of marketing strategies in the circular economy and sustainable growth. The results are highlighted in four thematic clusters. The key words in each cluster identified summarize the connections between circular business models, sustainability, implementation strategies and economic performance.

Through the use of the VOSviewer software, the research domain can be visualized, facilitating an understanding of how the right strategies can support the transition to a circular economy and sustainable development. Through this study, an integrated perspective based on scientific evidence and emerging trends has been obtained, contributing to strengthening knowledge in the field of sustainability. Marketing strategies have an important role to play in promoting the circular business model, emphasizing sustainable products, effective design and communication strategies and consumer education.

For large corporations and industrial enterprises, social orientation and environmental projects are not only a duty or a challenge, but also an opportunity that gives new impetus to business (Austin et al., 2006). In recent years, the idea of

circular economy has developed (Kirchherr et al., 2017), which is based on separating the concept of business growth from the need for additional resources. Companies have the opportunity to increase the acceptance of circular products by changing consumption behaviors and supporting the adoption of green strategies, so appropriate promotion is needed. Intensive promotion and effective marketing strategies directly influence consumer and business behavior.

Sustainability should not just be a choice, it should become a necessity in business strategies. By applying marketing strategies, perceived barriers are reduced and the perception of and trust in sustainable products and services is improved. Although marketing contributes significantly to accelerating the transition to a circular economy, barriers such as the high costs of sustainable production, consumer resistance to change, the lack of clear regulatory frameworks and the difficulty of measuring the impact of circular strategies.

However, the right data analysis tools can help identify solutions to overcome these challenges. This research contributes to advancing the field of circular economy, sustainability and marketing by providing an integrated perspective on how marketing can support the circular economy, identifying key strategic directions for sustainable growth. Within the circular economy, the priority is to address socially significant issues: renewable energy, green buildings, natural food, carbon emissions, etc. (Dean & McMullen, 2007).

Furthermore, the results from this analysis highlight challenges and solutions for implementing circular strategies, providing a basis for future research by using bibliometric analysis to explore emerging trends. Through this bibliometric analysis we aimed to understand how the application of marketing strategies contributes to the promotion of sustainable products and to changing consumer mindsets, accelerating the transition towards a more responsible and efficient economic model.

By using the VOSviewer software we obtained an overview of the circular economy field, identifying emerging concepts and future research directions. This study addresses two of today's biggest challenges: sustainability and the circular economy, thus marketing plays a key role in changing consumer behavior. Proper promotion can change consumer mindsets, turning sustainability into a competitive advantage.

The transition to a circular economy cannot happen without the active involvement of consumers and companies. Thus marketing strategies have an important role to play in educating the public, creating demand for sustainable products and strengthening brands that promote the circular economy. Through awareness campaigns, technological innovation and the promotion of responsible consumption patterns, marketing can become a key factor in building a sustainable future. The success of the circular economy depends not only on policies and innovations, but also on how companies communicate and influence consumer choices.

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