

Modest Fashion and Ethical Business: A Bibliometric Mapping of Research Trends and Emerging Themes

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Abstract

The rapid growth of modest fashion has been accompanied by increasing attention to ethical production, sustainability, and business performance, yet the academic literature on this intersection remains fragmented across identity, culture, consumer behaviour, and sustainability themes. This study addresses that gap by conducting a bibliometric mapping of research on modest fashion and ethical business to identify dominant themes, conceptual linkages, the temporal evolution of issues, and emerging research gaps. Using a Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol, 1,039 Scopus-indexed journal articles were analysed through VOSviewer-based network, overlay, and density visualisations, supported by content analysis using Microsoft Excel 365. The results show that ethics, human, sustainability, and consumer behaviour are the most concentrated and historically dominant themes, while material innovation, cost efficiency, operational efficiency, brand competitiveness, and profitability remain relatively peripheral and underexplored. The overlay visualisation further reveals a temporal shift from normative ethical and human-centred concerns toward sustainability, consumer behaviour, innovation, and business strategy. These findings indicate that research on modest fashion has not yet sufficiently integrated ethical production with economic performance. The study contributes to the literature by proposing a conceptual model linking ethical production, sustainability, consumer value and trust, brand competitiveness, and profitability, and offers practical implications for modest fashion brands seeking to embed ethical and sustainable practices into their core business strategy rather than treating them as peripheral corporate social responsibility activities.

Keywords: modest fashion; ethical business; bibliometric mapping; sustainability; profitability

Introduction

The fashion industry is one of the creative economy sectors that has grown rapidly alongside changing lifestyles, rising consumption, digitalization, and the expansion of various identity- and value-based market segments. However, this industrial growth has also been accompanied by a range of environmental and social issues that have drawn increasing attention, particularly regarding resource use, textile waste, emissions, pollution, and labor conditions within global supply chains. The fast fashion business model, which relies on low-cost production, rapid product cycles, and high consumption levels, has intensified pressure on the environment and industry sustainability. Niinimäki et al. (2020) show that the environmental impact of fashion includes water use, chemical pollution, carbon emissions, and textile waste, requiring a fundamental shift toward more sustainable production and consumption models. These conditions have driven growing attention to ethical fashion and sustainable fashion as alternatives to industry practices oriented toward production volume and speed.

Amid these developments, modest fashion has emerged as a distinct fashion segment with its own characteristics and dynamics. Modest fashion does not merely refer to more covered clothing; it is also linked to identity, belief, culture, social values, and consumer self-expression. The evolution of modest fashion shows that dressing practices once understood primarily in religious and normative terms have become part of the modern fashion industry and global market. Sandikci and Ger (2010), for example, show how veiling practices have undergone a transformation from being viewed as stigmatized to becoming accepted and commodified fashion practices in the modern market. This illustrates the complex relationship among religion, identity, consumption, culture, and market forces in the evolution of fashion.

These characteristics give modest fashion relatively more complex ethical demands than the mere fulfilment of functional and aesthetic needs. Consumers may evaluate a brand not only on the basis of design, price, and product quality, but also on the basis of the product's alignment with the moral, cultural, religious, and social values they hold. The literature on modest fashion shows that fashion can serve as a medium for negotiating identity, belief, and social position within society (Sandikci & Ger, 2010; Lewis, 2013). Consequently, the modest fashion identity can create additional expectations regarding brand integrity, including how products are sourced, produced, marketed, and consumed. At the same time, demands for ethical and sustainable business practices continue to rise. Consumers are increasingly attentive to the origin of materials, production processes, environmental impact, labor conditions, and the consistency between the values a brand communicates and its actual business practices. In the context of modest fashion, this issue becomes even more relevant because the modesty and morality embedded in the product can create consumer expectations of broader ethical corporate behavior. Research on sustainable modest fashion shows that consumer attention extends beyond design and aesthetics to include material, environmental, and sustainability characteristics of the product.

However, implementing ethical and sustainable production is not always easy for companies. The use of more environmentally friendly materials, improved labor standards, supply chain transparency, waste reduction, and the adoption of sustainable production technologies can require additional investment and costs. At the same time, companies continue to face pressure to offer competitive prices, respond to changing trends, maintain quality, increase sales, and generate profitability. These conditions create an ethical–profitability tension, that is, the need to balance social and environmental responsibility with the company's economic interests. The sustainability fashion literature shows that the shift toward a sustainable business model requires transformation not only in the product itself, but also in design, production, consumption, and the entire value chain (Niinimäki et al., 2020). This issue becomes even more important when sustainability is viewed not merely as an ethical obligation, but also as part of business strategy. Sustainability practices can create product differentiation, enhance reputation, build consumer trust, and strengthen long-term relationships with the market. Research on sustainable modest fashion consumption shows that altruistic values, personal values, attitudes, and religious aspects can be related to consumers' intention to purchase sustainable modest fashion products (Juliana et al., 2024). More recent studies also show that consumer decisions in the modest fashion market are influenced by a combination of attitudinal factors, digital communication, electronic word-of-mouth, and religiosity (Fathoni et al., 2026). These findings indicate that ethical and sustainability values have the potential to be translated into economic value through the relationship between business practices, consumer perception, and purchasing decisions.

Nevertheless, research on modest fashion still shows thematic fragmentation. Some studies focus on identity, religiosity, consumer behavior, and culture, while others address sustainability, materials, ethical fashion, or innovation. Research on consumer behavior in Islamic modest fashion, for instance, continues to grow and shows that social, spiritual, psychological, and digital factors are increasingly

integrated in explaining consumer decisions (Pardiansyah, 2026). Meanwhile, sustainability fashion research more broadly has extensively examined environmental impact, sustainable consumption, materials, and business model change (Niinimäki et al., 2020). A mapping is therefore still needed to show how these various themes relate to one another and how the direction of modest fashion research is moving from normative issues toward strategic and economic ones.

This gap is important because research needs not only to identify which themes are most discussed, but also to understand how the knowledge structure and the evolution of issues in modest fashion research have developed over time. Bibliometric mapping allows researchers to explore the intellectual structure of a field, identify dominant themes, map relationships among concepts, and discover emerging research areas (Donthu et al., 2021). Through keyword mapping and network visualization, research development can be analyzed based on thematic linkages, issue density, and the temporal shift from older to newer themes.

In the context of this study, such mapping is important for understanding whether modest fashion research remains dominated by issues of ethics, human aspects, culture, and consumer behavior, or has moved toward more strategic issues such as sustainability, material innovation, production efficiency, brand competitiveness, and profitability. Using network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization, this study identifies the structure of research clusters, the temporal development of keywords, and the degree of dominance of each issue. This approach also enables the identification of relationships among the social, environmental, and economic dimensions that shape the development of the modest fashion and ethical business literature.

Building on this context, this study seeks to fill the literature gap by conducting a bibliometric mapping of research on modest fashion and ethical business, specifically to identify dominant themes, relationships among concepts, the development of issues over time, and themes that remain relatively underexplored. In particular, this study pays attention to the relationships among ethical production, sustainability, consumer behavior, material innovation, cost efficiency, brand competitiveness, and profitability. This focus is important because the mapping results can not only show academic development in modest fashion research, but also illustrate a shift in the research agenda from a normative approach toward a more strategic one.

This study therefore aims to map the development and trends of research on modest fashion and ethical business, identify dominant thematic clusters, analyze the evolution of research issues, and uncover emerging themes and research gaps that can serve as a basis for future research agendas. The findings are expected to contribute academically by clarifying the structure and development of the modest fashion literature, while also offering implications for developing business models capable of integrating ethical production, sustainability, consumer value, innovation, operational efficiency, brand competitiveness, and profitability. From this perspective, modest fashion is no longer understood merely as a product category based on modesty and identity, but as a business field facing the demand to build an ethical, sustainable, innovative, and economically viable fashion business model.

Research Method

This study uses a Bibliometric Mapping approach to analyze the development of research on modest fashion, particularly the issues of ethical production, sustainability, and profitability. This approach is used to identify, organize, and map patterns, themes, relationships among concepts, the evolution of issues, and research gaps based on prior literature (Donthu et al., 2021). The focus of the study is directed at how modest fashion brands address demands for ethical production practices, such as fair labor, sustainable supply chains, the use of environmentally friendly materials, and social responsibility, while simultaneously facing pressure for cost efficiency, competitiveness, market growth, and profitability.

To enhance the transparency of the literature selection process, this study adopts the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, which includes the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion/exclusion. This framework is used to ensure that the article selection process is carried out systematically, consistently, and traceably (Sahoo, Saraf, & Uchil, 2024). The application of this procedure also helps produce a more accurate literature mapping in identifying research development and future research opportunities (Wiranatakusuma, Aprizal, & Kamil, 2024).

This study analyzes 1,039 Scopus-indexed journal articles using a bibliometric approach supported by content analysis. Bibliometric Mapping is used to map the structure and development of research based on themes, keywords, authors, and relationships among concepts, while content analysis is used to understand the substantive context of the themes identified (Aprizal et al., 2024). This mapping approach also enables the study to identify dominant themes, emerging issues, underexplored areas, and research gaps in the study of modest fashion, ethical fashion, sustainability, and business ethics (Zultaqawa, Alexandri, & Hardinata, 2019).

Literature Collection and Selection Procedure

The study began with a pre-identification of the research focus through an exploration of the literature on modest fashion, ethical fashion, sustainable production, ethical production, and profitability strategy. This stage was carried out to determine the scope of the research and formulate relevant keywords.

The identification stage was conducted through the Scopus database, using the keywords "modest fashion brand," "ethical production," "sustainable fashion," and "profitability." The search yielded 1,039 articles with variations in publication year, theme, and document characteristics.

The next stage was screening based on document type, publication language, and topic relevance. The study prioritized English-language journal articles related to modest fashion, ethical production, sustainability, or profitability. The eligibility stage was conducted by evaluating the relevance of titles, abstracts, themes, publication periods, and document completeness. Articles with no substantive relevance to the research focus were excluded. Articles that met all the criteria then proceeded to the inclusion stage and were used as the unit of analysis.

Data Management and Analysis

Selected articles were managed using Mendeley, after which the bibliographic data were exported in RIS format for analysis using VOSviewer. Microsoft Excel 365 and Publish or Perish were used to assist in data processing, chart preparation, and the identification of publication trends by year and theme. VOSviewer was used to map author networks, keywords, and thematic clusters, and to produce network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization. This analysis was used to identify dominant keywords, relationships among concepts, research clusters, and emerging issues and trends in the study of modest fashion and business ethics (Van Eck & Waltman, 2023).

The results of the VOSviewer mapping were further strengthened through content analysis and thematic classification using Microsoft Excel 365. This process was carried out to provide a substantive interpretation of the themes formed and to group them into several main issues, namely ethical production, sustainability practices, cost management, brand competitiveness, and profitability strategies. Content analysis was also used to identify issues that remain limited and new research opportunities (Zuhroh, 2022).

This study therefore employs VOSviewer-based Bibliometric Mapping supported by PRISMA and content analysis to map the development, dominance of themes, relationships among concepts,

emerging issues, and research gaps in the study of modest fashion. The mapping results are then used to formulate research trends and future research directions, particularly regarding the relationship among ethical production, sustainability, cost efficiency, brand competitiveness, and profitability.

Result and Discussion



Figure 1. Network Visualization of Modest Fashion and Ethical Business: A Bibliometric Mapping of Research Trends and Emerging Themes

Research on modest fashion over the past decade shows growing attention to issues of ethics, sustainability, consumer behavior, material innovation, and business strategy. Modest fashion is not only concerned with design and dress modesty, but also carries social, cultural, religious, and moral dimensions that influence how brands manage production and build relationships with consumers. This makes the balance between ethical production practices and profitability demands one of the key issues in the development of the modest fashion industry (Wilson, 2013; Henninger et al., 2017).

Based on the VOSviewer network visualization in Figure 1, the analyzed literature shows a multidimensional interconnection among ethics, sustainability, consumer behavior, culture, material, innovation, and governance issues. This network shows that research on modest fashion and business ethics does not develop along a single dimension, but is shaped through the interconnection of social, environmental, and economic aspects. The color structure in the visualization shows several research clusters representing thematic concentration and relationships among concepts.

The red cluster represents the ethical dimension and human-centered approach, marked by the emergence of keywords such as ethics, human, procedures, and medical ethics. In the context of this study, this cluster highlights the importance of moral aspects and responsibility toward people in discussions of production ethics. Issues such as worker protection, working conditions, transparency, and social responsibility are important parts of fashion business legitimacy. Production practices that neglect this dimension risk reputational damage and reduced consumer trust (Carrigan et al., 2004; Shaw et al., 2016).

The yellow cluster shows the linkage between sustainability and consumer behavior. The emergence of the keywords consumers and consumer behavior indicates that consumer behavior and preferences

have become an important part of the development of sustainable fashion research. Ethically conscious consumers tend to pay greater attention to production processes and the environmental impact of products, and under certain conditions are willing to pay more for products perceived as responsible (Joergens, 2006; Henninger et al., 2017). Sustainability is thus understood not merely as a cost consequence, but also as a source of value and brand differentiation.

The green cluster represents the social and cultural dimension, indicated by keywords such as culture, interview, adolescent, and child. This cluster shows that modest fashion research is closely linked to cultural context, identity, social norms, and the characteristics of consumer groups. Cultural and religious values can influence design preferences, marketing communication, and product acceptance in the market. Therefore, a brand's ability to integrate local values with global market demands is an important aspect in building the competitiveness of modest fashion (Sandikci & Ger, 2010; Wilson, 2013).

The blue cluster represents procedural aspects, governance, and research-based approaches, marked by keywords such as procedures, priority journal, and study. In the context of this study, this cluster can be linked to the growing need for evidence-based business management, performance measurement, operational efficiency, and risk management. Integrating sustainability into a company's core strategy can create both economic and social value, meaning ethical practices need not always be positioned as a barrier to profitability (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Lozano et al., 2015).

The purple cluster shows attention to animal, nonhuman, and material issues. This cluster indicates the growing discussion of raw material ethics, animal welfare, material sourcing, and the ecological impact of the fashion industry. Shifting toward more sustainable materials and reducing resource exploitation is an important strategy in building a more responsible fashion industry (Shen et al., 2013; Niinimäki et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, the orange and turquoise clusters show the emergence of issues related to innovation, technology, and production process transformation. Keywords such as regenerative, degradation, and dynamics indicate attention to material innovation, production processes, and environmental impact. Technological development has the potential to bridge the demands of sustainability and production efficiency, as it enables companies to reduce resource use, waste, and costs over the long term (Bick et al., 2018; Centobelli et al., 2022).

Overall, the network visualization shows that research on modest fashion and ethical business is moving from a purely product-oriented focus toward a more multidimensional approach, encompassing production ethics, sustainability, consumer behavior, culture, materials, innovation, and business strategy. The pattern of relationships among clusters also shows that ethical and sustainability issues are becoming increasingly integrated with issues of competitiveness and economic value creation. These findings indicate that the future research agenda needs to address not only how modest fashion brands implement ethical practices, but also how such practices can be translated into competitive advantage, efficiency, brand legitimacy, and sustainable profitability.

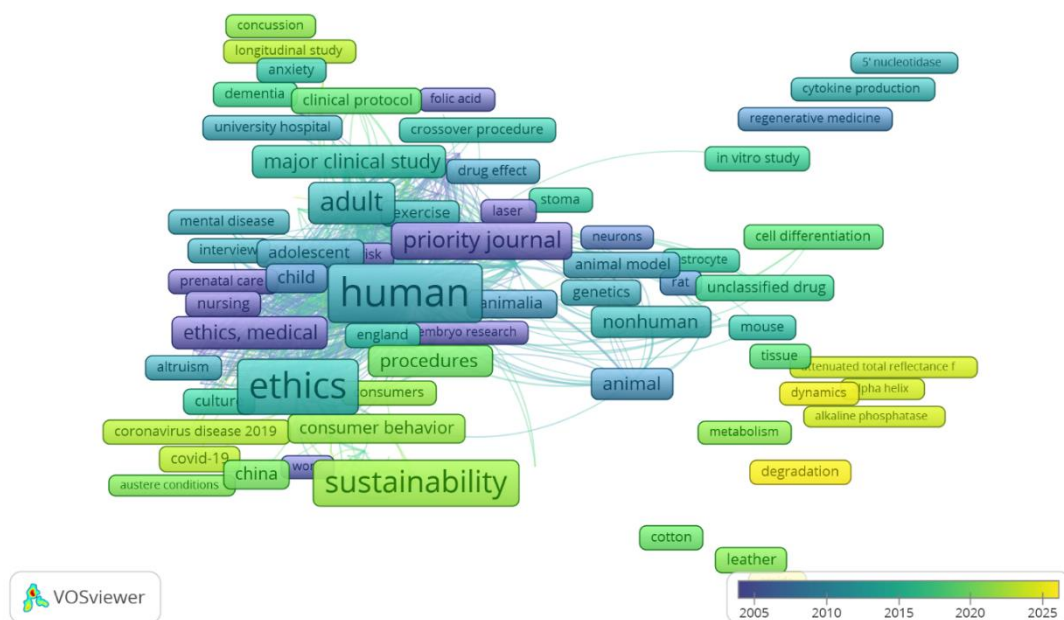


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization of Modest Fashion and Ethical Business: A Bibliometric Mapping of Research Trends and Emerging Themes

The overlay visualization in Figure 2 shows the temporal evolution and development of research issues on modest fashion and ethical business. The color gradient in the visualization reflects the publication timing of keywords, with bluish colors indicating relatively earlier themes, while green to yellow colors indicate issues that have emerged more frequently in more recent periods. This visualization helps identify the shift in research focus from ethics and social responsibility toward sustainability, consumer behavior, innovation, and business strategy (Donthu et al., 2021).

Early trend: ethics and the human dimension. In the earliest period, shown through blue to bluish-purple colors, much of the research was related to keywords such as ethics, human, and procedures. This theme reflects early attention to production practices, social responsibility, labor rights, and moral aspects in the fashion industry. In the context of modest fashion, this dimension is important because the industry is connected not only to economic aspects, but also to consumers' social, cultural, and identity values (Joy et al., 2012; Lundblad & Davies, 2016). At this stage, profitability had not yet emerged as a dominant focus, as research attention was directed more toward establishing responsible business practices.

Shift toward consumers and sustainability. In the following period, the visualization color begins to shift toward green, indicating growing attention to consumer behavior, sustainability, and the relationship between ethical values and market response. This shift shows that research began moving from the question of "is production conducted ethically?" toward "how do consumers respond to these ethical and sustainability practices?" Consumers increasingly became an important part of shaping the economic value of sustainability practices, particularly when transparency, social responsibility, and sustainability are used as the basis for brand differentiation (Han et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2021).

Current trend: sustainability, innovation, and business strategy. In the more recent period, marked by bright green to yellow colors, there is increasing attention to sustainability and its linkage to consumers, materials, innovation, and business strategy. This development shows that sustainability is increasingly positioned not merely as an ethical demand, but as part of a strategy for value creation

and competitiveness. Practices such as the use of sustainable materials, resource efficiency, waste reduction, and supply chain management can support long-term value creation while strengthening the relationship between the brand and consumers (Brydges, Henninger, & Hanlon, 2020; Niinimäki et al., 2020).

Synthesis of research trends. Overall, the overlay visualization shows a shift in research focus from normative issues toward a strategic approach. Early research placed greater emphasis on ethics, human aspects, and procedures as its foundation, then developed toward consumer behavior and sustainability, before moving in the most recent period toward the integration of sustainability, innovation, materials, and business strategy. This pattern shows that the issue of ethical production is increasingly examined in relation to value creation, competitiveness, and business sustainability.

The overlay visualization findings thus show that sustainability has become one of the issues connecting the ethical dimension with economic interests. For modest fashion, this development opens further research opportunities on how ethical production practices can be translated into competitive advantage, increased brand value, cost efficiency, consumer loyalty, and ultimately long-term profitability. This development also shows that the modest fashion research agenda is increasingly moving from a discussion of mere modesty and identity toward an ethical, sustainable, innovative, and economically viable business model.

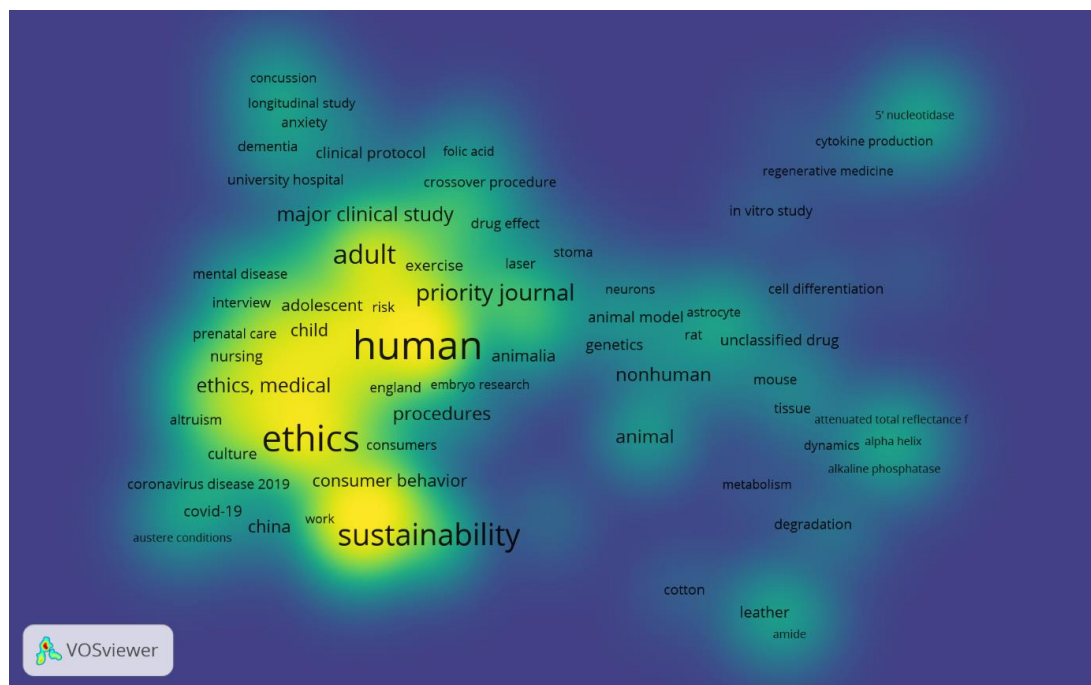


Figure 3. Density Visualization of Modest Fashion and Ethical Business: A Bibliometric Mapping of Research Trends and Emerging Themes

Figure 3 shows the density visualization depicting the level of density and dominance of keywords in the literature on modest fashion and ethical business. In VOSviewer, areas with brighter colors indicate keywords with relatively high occurrence frequency and interconnection, while areas with darker colors indicate themes that appear less frequently or have weaker linkages. This visualization is used to identify the most dominant issues as well as themes that remain relatively underexplored.

The areas with the highest density are found around the keywords "ethics," "human," and "sustainability." The dominance of these three themes shows that the research discourse remains heavily focused on the dimensions of ethics, human aspects, and sustainability. In the context of modest fashion, this issue relates to responsible production practices, labor protection, social justice,

and the alignment of business activities with moral and cultural values. These findings show that ethics is one of the main foundations in the development of responsible fashion research (Joy et al., 2012; Mukendi et al., 2020).

The relatively high density around "consumer behavior" and the ethics theme indicates a strong relationship between ethical practices, sustainability, and consumer response. This suggests that ethics and sustainability are viewed not only as a company's moral obligation, but also as factors that can influence consumer trust, preference, loyalty, and purchasing decisions. Ethically oriented consumers may attach greater economic value to products perceived as responsible, especially when sustainability claims are communicated credibly (Henninger et al., 2016; Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012).

In contrast, areas with lower density, shown in green to blue colors, include keywords such as "animal," "nonhuman," "procedures," and material-related terms such as cotton and leather. Although these themes remain connected to ethical fashion, their density level shows that material issues, nonhuman welfare, and technical aspects of production have not yet become a central focus within the mapped literature network. This creates opportunities to expand research toward sustainable material innovation, textile alternatives, environmental impact reduction, and animal welfare within the modest fashion value chain (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

The density visualization findings also reveal an imbalance in research focus. The literature is relatively concentrated on the dimensions of ethics, human aspects, consumers, and sustainability, while aspects more closely related to profitability, such as production cost optimization, supply chain efficiency, economical material innovation, and productivity improvement strategies, appear relatively less dominant. This indicates room for research connecting the normative dimension of ethical production with the economic and managerial dimensions.

Overall, Figure 3 confirms that ethics, human aspects, sustainability, and consumer behavior are the most concentrated issues in the literature, while material aspects, production technology, cost efficiency, and profitability still have room for development. This research gap reinforces the importance of research that not only examines whether modest fashion production meets ethical and sustainability principles, but also how such practices can be managed efficiently to generate competitive advantage and sustainable profitability. Future research therefore needs to move toward integrating ethical production, sustainability, consumer value, operational efficiency, innovation, and profitability within the modest fashion business model.

Discussion

The bibliometric mapping results show that research on modest fashion and ethical business has shifted from normative issues toward a more strategic, value-creation-oriented approach. Based on the network, overlay, and density visualizations, there is a strong connection among ethics, human aspects, sustainability, consumer behavior, culture, material, innovation, and business strategy. These findings show that modest fashion can no longer be understood merely as a fashion category emphasizing dress modesty, but as a business ecosystem that brings together social, cultural, environmental, and economic dimensions. This perspective is consistent with Wilson (2013) and Henninger et al. (2017), who show that the development of modest fashion is linked to changing consumption patterns, identity, values, and demands for more responsible business practices.

From Normative Ethics Toward Strategic Ethics

The dominance of the keywords ethics and human in the network and density visualizations shows that the human dimension is one of the main foundations of modest fashion research. This includes issues of working conditions, labor rights, social responsibility, transparency, and non-exploitative

production practices. These findings show that ethics in the fashion industry is related not only to regulatory compliance, but also to brand legitimacy and trust. Consumers are increasingly considering how a product is made, who produces it, and whether the production process aligns with the social values communicated by the company (Carrigan et al., 2004; Shaw et al., 2016).

In the context of modest fashion, this dimension becomes even more important because the product is connected to religious, cultural, identity, and moral values. Sandikci and Ger (2010) explain that the development of fashion related to religious practice reflects a process of negotiation among religious values, identity, and consumption. There is thus an expectation that modest fashion brands not only offer products that meet modesty standards, but also demonstrate consistency between the values they communicate and their business practices.

The overlay visualization findings reinforce this argument. The themes of ethics, human, and procedures appear as earlier-developing issues, while more recent research increasingly connects them with sustainability, consumer behavior, and innovation. This indicates a shift from the question "has the company acted ethically?" toward the more strategic question, "how can ethical practices create value for the company and its stakeholders?" This shift reflects a growing integration between business ethics and corporate strategy.

Sustainability as a Bridge between Ethics and Economic Value

One important finding from the mapping is the high density of the keyword sustainability. The position of sustainability close to ethics and consumer behavior shows that sustainability has developed into a concept bridging moral demands and economic interests. Sustainability is no longer viewed merely as a corporate obligation to reduce environmental impact, but also as a source of value creation and brand differentiation.

In the fashion industry, this shift is important because conventional production models face issues of resource use, waste, emissions, pollution, and overconsumption. Niinimäki et al. (2020) emphasize that fashion sustainability requires change across the entire production and consumption system. For modest fashion, therefore, sustainability should not be limited to material selection alone, but should be integrated into design, production, distribution, marketing, and consumption.

These findings also reveal a shift in perspective regarding the cost of sustainability. Ethical and sustainable practices can indeed increase costs in the short term, for example through the use of more expensive materials, improved labor standards, certification, or technology investment. In the long term, however, sustainability can generate resource efficiency, reduce waste, strengthen reputation, and increase consumer loyalty. Porter and Kramer (2011) explain that social value creation can be integrated with economic value creation through the concept of shared value. Therefore, the relationship between sustainability and profitability is not always a trade-off, but can be complementary when managed as part of business strategy.

Consumer Behavior as a Value-Creation Mechanism

The strong linkage between sustainability and consumer behavior in the network visualization shows that consumers serve as an important mechanism connecting ethical practices with a company's economic performance. Consumers are not merely recipients of products, but actors who determine whether ethical and sustainability values can be converted into market value.

Research on fashion consumer behavior shows that ethically conscious consumers may consider environmental aspects, labor conditions, and social responsibility when making purchasing decisions (Joergens, 2006; Henninger et al., 2017). In the modest fashion market, these factors can interact with religious values, identity, culture, and perceptions of brand authenticity.

The implication is that ethical production practices must be accompanied by credible communication. If a company claims to use sustainable materials or implement responsible production but cannot provide adequate evidence, consumers may question the brand's credibility. Supply chain transparency and sustainability communication are therefore increasingly important in building trust and reducing the risk of greenwashing.

Consumer behavior can thus be regarded as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between ethical production and profitability: ethical production practices → increased perceived value and trust → increased consumer preference or loyalty → strengthened brand position → potential improvement in economic performance. This conceptual framework can serve as a direction for future empirical research.

Culture, Identity, and Brand Differentiation

The cultural cluster observed in the network visualization shows that modest fashion has characteristics distinct from fashion that is not based on a particular identity. Keywords such as culture, adolescent, child, and interview show that research addresses not only the product itself, but also how fashion is constructed through identity and social context.

Sandikci and Ger (2010) and Lewis (2013) show that fashion related to modesty and religiosity can serve as a means of identity expression while also being part of modern consumption. Modest fashion brands therefore need the ability to balance local values with global market demands.

From a business perspective, this can become a source of brand differentiation. Brands that succeed in combining modern design, modesty values, ethical practices, and sustainability have the potential to create a value proposition distinct from conventional fashion brands. Identity and cultural values thus function not only as social aspects, but can also become strategic assets that strengthen brand competitiveness.

Material and Technology Innovation as an Emerging Theme

The overlay visualization shows that themes related to material, innovation, and technology are more recent than the themes of ethics and human aspects. Meanwhile, the density visualization shows that terms such as animal, nonhuman, cotton, and leather still have relatively lower density. This indicates that material and technology issues have not yet become the primary focus of research compared to ethics and consumer issues.

This finding represents an important research gap. The fashion industry faces the need to develop materials that are more environmentally friendly, durable, recyclable, and have a lower ecological impact. Niinimäki et al. (2020) show the importance of material innovation and changes in the production system in achieving fashion sustainability.

For modest fashion, material innovation also carries an economic dimension. More sustainable materials must not only meet environmental standards, but also possess the quality, comfort, aesthetics, availability, and price that match market needs. Future research can therefore develop studies on sustainable material innovation that connect environmental aspects with cost efficiency and profitability.

Ethical Production and Profitability: From Trade-off to Strategic Alignment

One of the most important findings from the overall mapping is the still relatively limited direct connection between ethical production and profitability. The literature is more concentrated on ethics, sustainability, human aspects, and consumer behavior. Meanwhile, keywords directly representing

economic aspects such as cost management, operational efficiency, productivity, and profitability have not yet become central to the network.

This condition indicates a gap between the ethical discourse and the business performance discourse. Many studies explain why companies need to act ethically, but relatively fewer studies explain how companies can manage the cost consequences of such practices while still generating profit.

From a strategic management perspective, ethical production should not be viewed merely as an added cost. When properly managed, ethical practices can generate several economic benefits, such as reduced reputational risk, increased consumer trust, customer loyalty, product differentiation, and resource efficiency. Porter and Kramer (2011) emphasize that companies can create shared value when social and economic interests are designed in an integrated manner.

The core issue for modest fashion brands is therefore not simply choosing between ethics versus profit, but how to build a strategic alignment between ethics and profitability. This perspective offers stronger research opportunities for developing business models that empirically link ethical production practices with economic performance indicators.

Conclusion

This study shows that research on modest fashion has shifted from issues of ethics, culture, identity, and consumer behavior toward sustainability, innovation, brand competitiveness, and profitability. Sustainability and consumer behavior serve as the bridge between ethical practices and economic value, while cost efficiency, material innovation, and profitability remain relatively limited. This study contributes by affirming the importance of integrating social, environmental, and economic aspects in developing a sustainable modest fashion business model. Modest fashion players need to make ethical practice and sustainability part of their business strategy through supply chain transparency, the use of sustainable materials, resource efficiency, decent working conditions, and innovation. These practices need to be communicated credibly to enhance consumer trust, brand competitiveness, and the company's economic value. This study is limited to Scopus-indexed articles and bibliometric analysis, and therefore cannot explain the causal relationship among ethical production, sustainability, and profitability. The results are also influenced by the quality of metadata, keywords, and VOSviewer parameters, and have not been supported by empirical testing on modest fashion companies. Future research is recommended to expand the database and empirically test the relationship among ethical production, sustainability, consumer trust, brand competitiveness, and profitability, with innovation and cost efficiency as supporting factors. Approaches such as SEM, panel data, case studies, or mixed methods can be used to generate a more comprehensive understanding.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualisation, Wiyandi.W.; Methodology, Nurul, H.R.; Investigation, Wiyandi.W.; Analysis, Mahfuz, M.; Original draft preparation, Wiyandi.W.; Review and editing, Wiyandi.W.; Visualization, Wiyandi.W.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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