

## Consumer Behaviour and Fast Fashion: A Bibliometric Systematic Literature Review

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Submitted: September 30, 2025 Revised: October 15, 2025 Accepted: October 31, 2025 Published: November 04, 2025

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.17559402](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17559402)



### Abstract

Fast fashion has been part of the global fashion market for many years but recently it has grown rapidly. It is commonly observed that younger generations who follow new trends closely and often buy clothes quickly and frequently. While many studies now focus on the negative effects of fast fashion on the environment and the growing shift toward sustainable fashion, this paper looks at the original reasons why fast fashion became popular in the first place. This study explores consumer behaviour, especially what drives people to buy fast fashion. These drivers include impulse buying, fear of missing out (FOMO) and the influence of social media and digital advertisements. These areas still need more attention in research. To understand the current state of research, we used bibliometric systematic literature review. We followed the PRISMA guidelines to search, select and review 101 academic journal articles from the Scopus database in a clear and structured way. After collecting the studies, we grouped the findings into common themes to see which topics are well studied and which ones are still missing or underexplored. Our findings show that while sustainability is a widely discussed topic, many important behavioural factors like emotions, digital influence and post-purchase experiences are not studied enough. This review helps researchers and fashion marketers better understand how fast fashion consumption works and where future research should focus.

**Keywords:** *consumer behaviour, fast fashion, behavioural triggers, bibliometric systematic literature review*

### 1. Introduction

The fashion apparel industry has seen major transformations over the past two decades, largely shaped by the rise of fast fashion. This business model has redefined how clothing is produced and consumed by introducing new styles quickly and affordably while keeping pace with consumers' demand for trend-driven products (Guercini & Runfola, 2021). Fast fashion developed in response to broader market shifts such as the decline of traditional mass manufacturing, the introduction of seasonal fashion cycles, and the restructuring of production systems (Biana, 2020; Thatta & Polisetty, 2022). These changes allowed

brands to enter the market with lower costs, faster turnaround, and greater flexibility in trends and quality (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). Characterized by short product lifecycles, fast fashion merchandise frequently rotates on store shelves, fueling a consumption pattern where items are often worn only briefly before being discarded, reinforcing a “buy-use-dispose” mindset (McNeill & Moore, 2019; Birtwistle et al., 2003; Michon et al., 2015).

## **2. Rationale of Study**

The fast fashion sector has grown rapidly in financial terms. Its market worth was estimated at \$122.98 billion in 2023 and is projected to climb to \$197.05 billion by 2028, reflecting a compound annual growth rate of 8.5% (The Business Research Company, 2024). This expansion aligns with the behaviour of younger shoppers, especially Gen Z, who actively follow trends and purchase clothing more often than previous generations, making them a key driver of fast fashion’s success (Bjerre, 2022). Beyond fast fashion, the global fashion industry is a major contributor to the economy, generating high revenue and creating jobs. Forecasts predict that the industry’s revenues will hit US\$770.90 billion in 2024, with user penetration expected to reach 37.8% by 2029 (Smith, 2024).

The fashion buying patterns are influenced by both practical and emotional drivers, including pricing, appearance, social perception, and design (Castelo & Cabral, 2018; Hakim & Susanti, 2017; Forney et al., 2005). Fast fashion items provide not just functional utility but also symbolic and emotional value (Choo et al., 2012). Neuro-marketing research indicates that desirable clothing can activate the brain’s pleasure centers, highlighting the strong hedonic dimension of fashion purchases (Bain & Quartz, 2015). Clothing and accessories also serve as a form of self-expression, enabling individuals to communicate identity and personality (Solomon, 2019). Many young consumers therefore treat shopping as a tool of personal expression, rather than merely a way to acquire garments (Fontein, 2019).

Two key behaviours underpin fast fashion purchases—impulse buying and fear of missing out (FOMO). Impulse buying often arises from emotional triggers, social interaction, and the hedonic excitement of consumption, with buyers frequently feeling satisfied rather than guilty about spontaneous purchases (Rook, 1987; Dittmar et al., 1996; Hausman, 2000; Park et al., 2006). Retailers leverage these tendencies with marketing tactics such as scarcity-driven promotions and exclusive product releases, nudging consumers into quick purchase decisions (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010; Nichols, 2012). This urgency is amplified by FOMO, which refers to the anxiety of missing out on social experiences or opportunities (Przybylski et al., 2013). Fast fashion brands often deploy scarcity messages to present items as exclusive, further increasing impulse-driven buying (Hodkinson, 2016; Gupta & Gentry, 2016; Zhang et al., 2022).

Social media and digital advertising play equally significant roles. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram provide consumers with fashion inspiration, knowledge, and peer interaction (Rădoi et al., 2023; Panakaje & Madhura, 2022). Influencers act as important mediators, endorsing clothing and accessories via sponsored content, affiliate links, and brand collaborations (Khodabandeh & Lindh, 2021).

Their promotion directly boosts consumer demand, while virtual social communities enable users to exchange ideas and experiences around fashion (Le & Aydin, 2022; Chen & Shen, 2020).

Despite the volume of literature on supply chains, sustainability, and business practices in fast fashion, there remains a gap in research on consumer behavioural drivers (Gabrielli et al., 2013; McNeill & Moore, 2015). Although many shoppers today express an interest in sustainability, their purchasing behaviour continues to favour the affordability and variety offered by fast fashion (Jung & Jin, 2014). This ongoing discrepancy between sustainable aspirations and actual consumer behaviour—known as the *attitude-behaviour gap*—continues to present challenges for both marketers and advocates of ethical fashion practices. Given these behavioural dynamics and their growing importance, this paper presents a bibliometric systematic literature review of fast fashion consumption. It focuses on impulse buying, FOMO and social media influence as key drivers. Using the PRISMA framework, we review 103 academic journal articles indexed in Scopus to identify research themes, map knowledge structures and highlight gaps in the current understanding of fast fashion consumer behaviour.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study uses the Bibliometric Systematic Literature Review (B-SLR) approach following the 10-step framework of Marzi et al. (2025). It combines data-driven bibliometric analysis with a structured review of paper content to give both a broad and detailed understanding of the research area.

### 4. Discussion

#### Step 1: Research Questions and Boundaries

The aim of this review is to map and synthesize academic research on consumer behaviour in fast fashion, with a focus on three behavioural triggers: impulse buying, fear of missing out (FOMO), and the influence of social media and digital advertising. The research questions guiding this review were:

- **RQ1:** What is the current state of research on consumer behaviour in fast fashion?
- **RQ2:** What behavioural triggers (impulse buying, FOMO, and social media influence) dominate the discourse?
- **RQ3:** What gaps and future research avenues exist?

Table No. 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

No	Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
1	Database Source	Articles indexed in Scopus database.	Articles not indexed in Scopus database.
2	Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, dissertations, conference	Non-peer-reviewed articles, book chapters,

		papers and editorials.	dissertations, conference papers, and editorials
3	Language	Articles published in English.	Non-English publications.
4	Research Context	Studies explicitly examining consumer behaviour and fast fashion.	Studies exploring in other contexts not related to consumer behaviour and fast fashion.
5	Conceptual Focus	Studies where fast fashion and consumer behaviour are the primary construct, focusing on impulse buying, FOMO and social media influences.	Studies that don't have any connection between consumer behaviour and fast fashion.
6	Field of Study	Business, management, economics and other relevant social science disciplines.	Unrelated fields such as engineering or computer science.

### Step 2: Search Query Definition

The keywords were selected after careful consideration and brainstorming among the authors, and were classified into Sections A and B to optimize the search results. The discussion initially focused on fast fashion and consumer behaviour as the core concepts of the study. Subsequently, through a review of existing literature, identification of trends, research gaps and related studies, additional keywords relevant to the research objectives were determined. Based on this process, the following search strings were used:

- **A:** (“consumer behaviour” AND “fast fashion”)
- **B:** (“consumer behaviour” AND “fast fashion” OR “impulse buying” OR “FOMO” OR “social media”)

### Step 3: Database Selection

Scopus was selected as the primary database because of its extensive coverage of management, economics and social sciences research. It is one of the most recognized databases and is widely used in existing B-SLRs in business management research (Marzi et al., 2025).

### Step 4: Data Screening and Cross-Checks

The initial search produced 144 records from Scopus. To ensure relevance we filtered studies based on subject categories including Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences, and Economics, Econometrics and Finance, which resulted in 103 records. We then applied a language filter for English publications, reducing the dataset to 101 records. Details of each step are presented in Fig. 1.

### Step 5: Data Cleaning and Export

We used a single database to avoid complications that can arise when combining records from multiple sources and selected Scopus for its extensive coverage. The final dataset of 101 papers was exported in .csv format from Scopus.

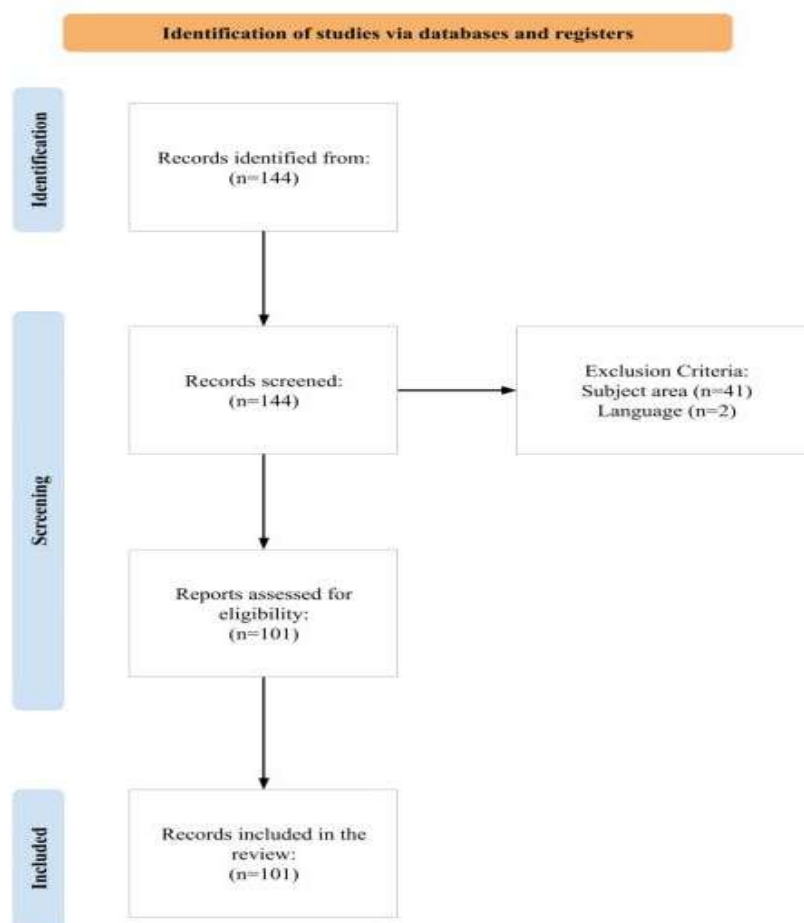


Fig. 1: The Prisma Flowchart

### Step 6: Bibliometric Approach

We used VOSviewer (v. 1.6.20) for the bibliometric analysis of 101 records. The annual publication of articles on fast fashion and consumer behaviour has significantly increased over time. From early 2010

there was only minor fluctuation in the number of articles and only a handful of records were available. As illustrated in Fig. 2, a steady growth in publications was visible from 2020 onwards, rising from 4 documents in 2020 to 10 in 2023, followed by a sharp increase in 2024 with 25 articles, more than double the amount of the previous year. This trend highlights the growing academic interest and focus on the consumer behaviour of fast fashion.

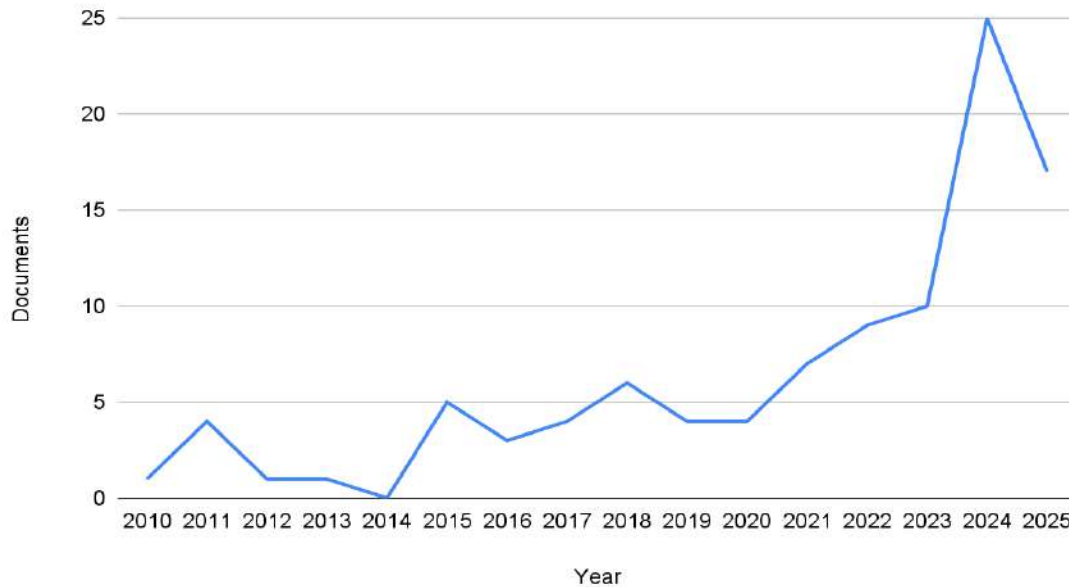


Fig. 2 Publication by Year Source: Scopus

Table No. 2 presents the leading publications on consumer behaviour in fast fashion research. Sustainability Switzerland has the highest number of publications with 8, followed by the Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management with 7, both contributing significantly to the field.

Table No. 2. Publication Source

Journals	Number of articles published
Sustainability Switzerland	8
Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management	7
Journal of Global Fashion Marketing	4
International Journal of Consumer Studies	3
Eco Friendly and Fair Fast Fashion and Consumer Behaviour	3

Production Planning and Control	2
Journal of Cleaner Production	2
International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management	2
Global Impacts and Sustainable Practices in Fast Fashion	2
Fibres and Textile in Eastern Europe	2
Fashion Theory Journal of Dress Body and Culture	2
Fashion Style and Popular Culture	2
Developments in Marketing Science Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science	2
Cleaner and Responsible Consumption	2
Other publications with a publication	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>

Fig. 3 presents the overall frequency of records published by the top 10 countries that contributed to this field of research. The leading country was the USA with 22 publications, followed by the UK with 14, China and India with 10 each, Italy with 7, Spain with 6, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Poland with 5 each. These contributions collectively form an important part of the research landscape.

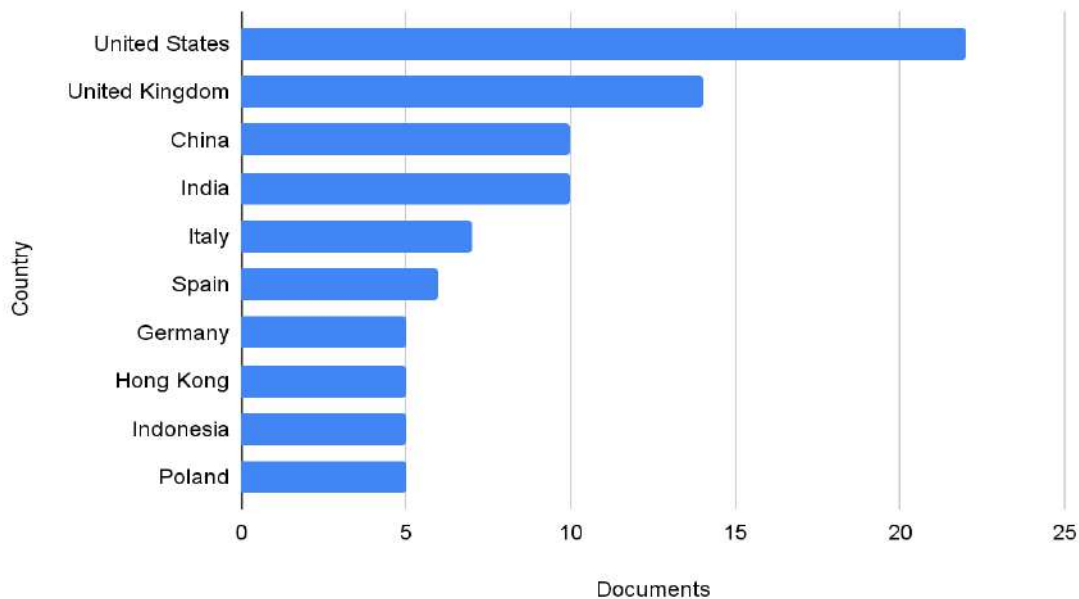


Fig. 3 Countries production of publication (Source: Scopus)

### Step 7: Cluster Topic Identification

VOSviewer (v1.6.20) was used to identify relationships and patterns within the dataset. Two main analyses were conducted. First, keyword co-occurrence analysis was used to determine the most frequently studied topics and their interconnections. Second, bibliographic coupling identified clusters of papers that share common references and therefore thematic similarities. Minimum thresholds for inclusion were set at five citations per document and two keyword occurrences. The results of the keyword co-occurrence analysis are presented in Fig. 4, while Fig. 5 shows the bibliographic coupling of documents.

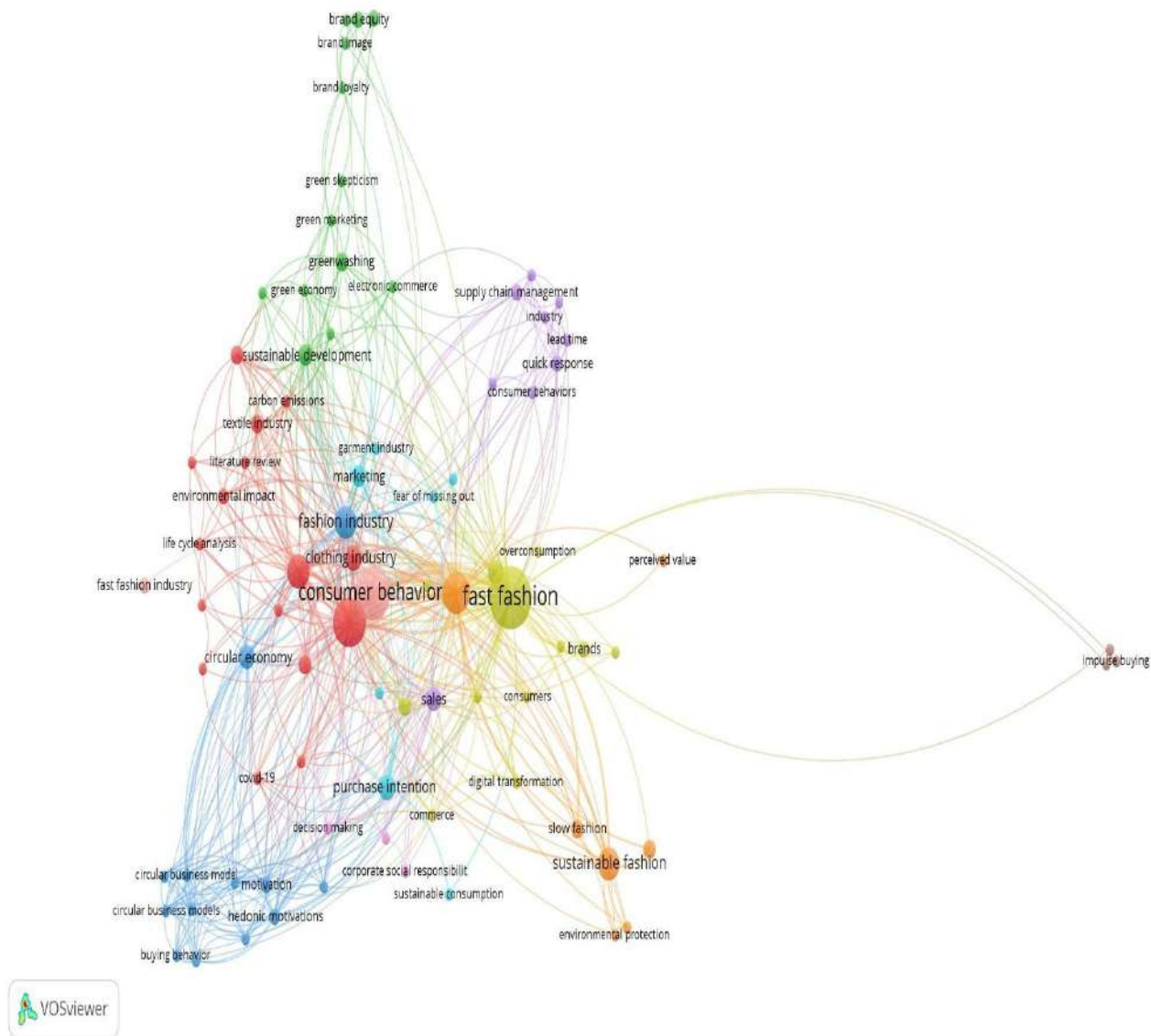


Fig. 4 Keyword co-occurrence

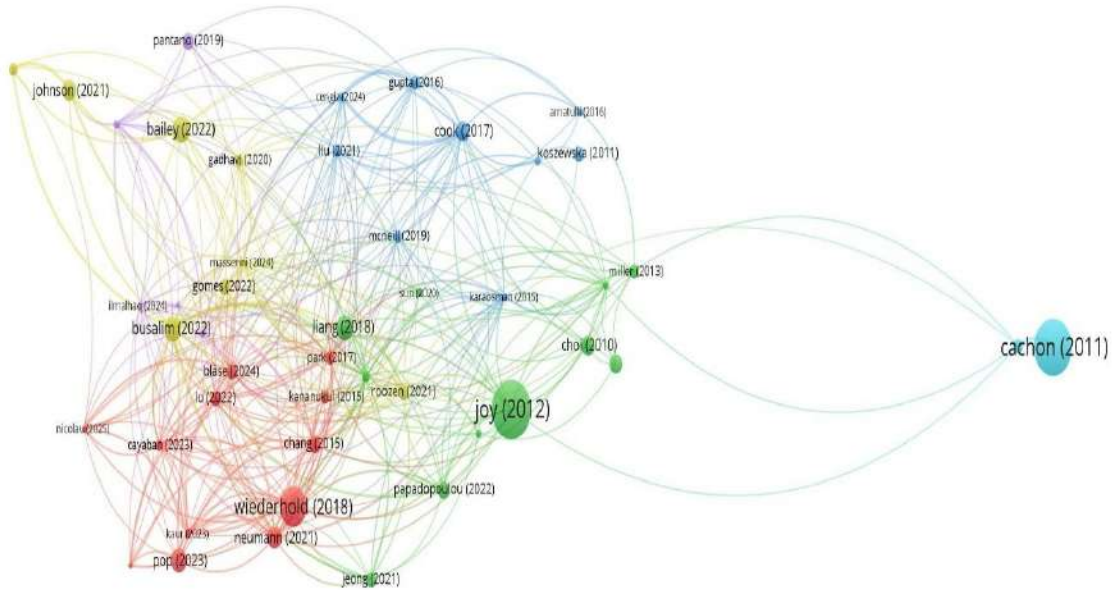


Fig. 5: Bibliographic coupling of documents

### Step 8: Sample Ordering and Selection

Following the identification of clusters, the dataset was ordered according to the representativity of documents within each cluster. Representativity was determined using normalized citation counts to ensure that both highly influential and thematically relevant works were prioritized. This ordering allowed for a balanced inclusion of seminal contributions and recent advances in each thematic area. As the number of documents in the final dataset (101) was manageable, no further reduction of the sample was required. This ordered set of documents formed the basis for the subsequent qualitative content analysis and synthesis.

### Step 9: Systematic Literature Review

A qualitative content analysis of all 101 papers was undertaken. Each paper was read in detail to extract its main themes, which were categorized under Consumer behaviour and fast fashion with sub-topics such as impulse buying, fear of missing out (FOMO) and the influence of social media. Theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the Stimulus–Organism–Response model and Social

Comparison Theory were recorded, along with the research methods used, which included quantitative surveys, experiments and mixed-methods approaches. This stage provided deeper insight into the conceptual and methodological foundations of the field. Furthermore, to enhance the understanding of the gap topics, some of the important papers we analysed it more for a better grasp of knowledge:

The study by Li et al. (2025) examined the role of social media marketing activities in shaping consumer purchase intentions in the fast fashion industry. Their research identifies five key dimensions of social media marketing activities, namely entertainment, interaction, customization, trendiness, and electronic word of mouth, and investigates how these influence brand awareness, brand image, and perceived brand value. The findings show that these brand-related outcomes “enhance customer-based brand equity and, in turn, repurchase intentions.” While their primary focus is on planned purchasing and long-term brand engagement, the mechanisms identified, particularly those related to trendiness and interactive engagement, can also stimulate conditions that lead to impulsive buying. When combined with time-limited campaigns or exclusive product launches, the same tools used to build sustained brand loyalty may also generate urgency and quick purchase decisions. In this sense, the work of Li et al. is significant in demonstrating how social media functions not only as a brand-building channel but also as a potential facilitator of rapid, emotionally driven consumption in fast fashion.

Cengiz and Şenel (2023) provided a direct examination of the psychological and behavioural processes underpinning impulse buying in the sector. Their study explores the influence of perceived scarcity on impulse buying tendencies, with the fear of missing out (FOMO) as a mediating factor. They conclude that “perceived scarcity has a positive effect on impulse buying tendency and fear of missing out partially mediates this effect,” a relationship that holds for both limited quantity scarcity and limited time scarcity conditions. The results indicate that perceived scarcity can drive impulse buying independently, but that the presence of FOMO intensifies and accelerates the effect. In the fast fashion context, where products are deliberately offered in short runs and styles change rapidly, this mechanism becomes particularly relevant. Social media platforms further magnify these effects by broadcasting scarcity messages to large audiences in real time, increasing both perceived scarcity and the emotional urgency associated with FOMO. This work outlines a clear behavioural sequence, moving from scarcity cues to perceived scarcity, to FOMO, and ultimately to impulse buying tendencies.

The findings of Bläse et al. (2024) expanded the discussion by examining the role of FOMO not only as a driver of purchase intention but also as a factor that influences how consumers evaluate brand credibility. They report that “the positive effect of brand credibility on purchase intention is significantly weaker when FOMO is high”, suggesting that heightened FOMO shifts attention away from long-term evaluative factors such as brand trustworthiness or sustainability practices. In the context of fast fashion, where many brands face reputational scrutiny over environmental and ethical practices, this is a critical observation. Under high-FOMO conditions, even consumers with strong attitudes toward brand credibility or sustainability may prioritize immediate participation in a trend over their stated values. The authors also note that in slower fashion contexts, where urgency is lower, brand credibility continues to hold significant

influence, which further emphasises the unique susceptibility of fast fashion consumption to FOMO-driven decision-making.

### **Step 10: Theoretical Contribution Development**

Consumer behaviour in fast fashion is shaped by a unique combination of speed, trend-driven design, and constant digital connectivity. The fast fashion model depends on rapid product turnover and sustained consumer engagement, encouraging frequent purchases to keep up with shifting styles. This environment fosters both deliberate, repeat buying and unplanned, emotionally driven consumption. Within this space, impulse buying, the fear of missing out (FOMO), and social media influence are not isolated phenomena but interconnected forces that together drive much of the sector's growth. Impulse buying in fast fashion thrives because the short product lifecycle creates a sense of urgency. Consumers know that an item available today may not be available tomorrow, which leads to purchase decisions made with minimal deliberation. FOMO amplifies this tendency by adding a social and emotional dimension. It is not only the scarcity of the product that motivates the purchase but also the perception that others are participating in a trend that the consumer risks missing. In fast fashion, this perception is continuously reinforced through digital channels. Social media, with its real-time updates, influencer endorsements, and algorithm-driven visibility, makes it easier than ever for scarcity cues and trend signals to reach consumers instantly and repeatedly.

The interaction between these factors creates a cycle in which social media serves as both a brand-building tool and a trigger for immediate purchases. Marketing activities on these platforms strengthen brand awareness and loyalty, which keep consumers within a brand's ecosystem. At the same time, the same platforms deliver scarcity messages and visual evidence of trends, stimulating FOMO and encouraging quick decisions. When FOMO is high, consumers often deprioritize other considerations such as sustainability, product quality, or brand credibility, focusing instead on securing the desired item before it is gone. This explains why fast fashion consumers may act in ways that contradict their stated values regarding ethical consumption. The studies reviewed in this field, including recent work on social media marketing, scarcity cues, and the moderating role of FOMO, each illuminate parts of this behavioural picture. However, the research remains fragmented. Some studies focus on the cognitive pathway, where brand engagement leads to repeated purchasing, while others analyse the affective pathway, where urgency and emotional triggers drive impulsive behaviour. Very few address how these pathways interact or how they coexist within the same consumer in the same shopping environment. This lack of integration limits our ability to fully understand how fast fashion marketing strategies work in practice. The present bibliometric systematic literature review addresses this gap by mapping the academic landscape of consumer behaviour in fast fashion with a particular focus on impulse buying, FOMO and social media influence. By analyzing the breadth of existing studies, the review identifies these three as central drivers of fast fashion consumption but also reveals that they are often studied in isolation. The contribution of this work lies in bringing these elements together within a single analytical framework, showing how they interact to shape purchasing patterns in the fast fashion context.

This review advances the discussion on consumer behaviour in fast fashion in three key ways. First, it demonstrates the dual role of social media as both a sustained driver of brand engagement and loyalty, and as a rapid trigger of impulse buying through the widespread dissemination of scarcity messages and trend-based cues. Second, it identifies FOMO as a central behavioural mechanism that links these processes, transforming sustained engagement into purchase urgency and reducing the influence of other decision factors, such as brand credibility or sustainability considerations, when it is heightened. Third, it reinforces the need to examine cognitive drivers of planned purchases and affective triggers of impulsive behaviour together rather than separately, since the evidence shows that they frequently operate in parallel and interact in real purchasing environments. By synthesizing findings from across the literature, this review provides a connected and more comprehensive understanding of how impulse buying, FOMO and social media influence work collectively to shape fast fashion consumer behaviour. It positions these as interdependent forces rather than isolated variables, showing how marketing practices and consumer responses are bound together in a cycle of brand engagement and purchase urgency. This perspective offers a foundation for future research that moves beyond single-variable approaches to investigate how these dynamics combine in real-world digital marketing contexts. Such an approach is necessary for capturing the complexity of decision-making in a market defined by rapid product turnover, high visibility of trends and constant novelty.

## **5. Future Research**

The synthesis of performance analysis and content analysis resulted in the development of a conceptual framework linking behavioural triggers—impulse buying, FOMO, and social media influence—to fast fashion consumption outcomes. It also revealed key research gaps, such as the scarcity of longitudinal studies, the limited examination of generational comparisons beyond Gen Z, and the minimal attention given to post-purchase emotional responses. Based on these gaps, a future research agenda was proposed, emphasising the need to explore cross-cultural perspectives, the role of emerging platforms like TikTok, and strategies to bridge the attitude–behaviour gap in sustainable fashion.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the consumption patterns that sustain the fast fashion industry cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the interplay between impulse buying, FOMO and social media influence. Together, these drivers create a market environment in which consumers are persistently encouraged to act quickly, follow emerging trends and maintain ongoing interaction with brands. The bibliometric systematic literature review presented here contributes to the field by identifying the centrality of these behavioural drivers, exposing the lack of integration in existing research and offering a consolidated perspective that reflects the realities of fast fashion marketing and consumption in the digital era.

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