

Strategic Integration of Green HRM and Sustainable Marketing : Aligning Vision, Culture and Environment Goals for Long-term Business Impact

A Bibliometric Analysis

Dr. Akanksha Rajora
Dr. Bhuvan Chittoria
Akshay Kumar

Abstract

In this study, an extensive bibliometric review will be performed to identify the strategic alignment and knowledge base related to Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and Sustainable Marketing (SM). By reviewing 486 academic articles published between 2006 and 2024 and contained within the Scopus database, trends in research publications, influential publications, and key topic clusters will be determined. Results indicate significant growth within the two areas after 2015, but little academic collaboration has been done regarding their integration. The four most dominant clusters to emerge are: (1) Employee green behaviours as an element of environmental performance; (2) The development of a green corporate culture as an aspect of employer brand; (3) The green consumerism phenomenon and greenwashing; and (4) The integration of Circular Economy principles into the business model of GHRM and SM. There exists a significant gap between GHRM's primary contributions of creating and developing a green corporate culture and building internal green capabilities, and SM's primary contributions of managing external green positioning through brand and marketing communication. This gap indicates a need for theoretical development to examine how GHRM and SM may be integrated into synergy via a GHRM-integrated brand. GHRM represents an authentic green culture that has credibility within its respective industry, which may mitigate risks associated with greenwashing and ultimately build greater long-term brand equity and environmental performance. This study identifies avenues for future research, which include defining metrics to measure cross-functional integration, and digital technologies' role in supporting the integration of GHRM and SM.

Keywords : *Green Human Resource Management, Sustainable Marketing, Bibliometric Analysis, Strategic Integration, Greenwashing, Green Corporate Culture, Circular Economy, VOSviewer*

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- * Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce and Management, Suresh Gyan Vihar University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, Email : akanksha34rajora@gmail.com
- ** Assistant Professor, Department of Accountancy and Business Statistics, Faculty of Commerce, Jai Minesh Adivasi University Ranpur, Kota, Rajasthan, India, Email : bhuvanchittoria@gmail.com
- *** Assistant Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Library and Information Science, Jai Minesh Adivasi University, Ranpur, Kota, Rajasthan, India, Email : ak540560@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the climate crisis and civil society's expanding call for corporate accountability have propelled environmental sustainability from a peripheral concern to a central strategic imperative (Elkington, 2018). Thus, two key functions have emerged as the primary conduits of organisations' strategic transitions: Human Resource Management (HRM) and Marketing. The development of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), which aims to integrate ecological concerns into HR policies and practices in order to develop an environmentally aware workforce (Renwick et al., 2013), represents a stark departure from traditional HRM. Similarly, Sustainable Marketing (SM) focuses on the creation, communication and delivery of value that is environmentally ethical and fulfils societal needs (Charter, 2017).

Despite their mutual goal of supporting sustainable organisational development, GHRM and SM have largely been developed independently by both academic and professional practitioners. This disconnect creates a significant strategic risk for both organisations and marketers. For example, marketing departments may successfully market their organisation's green credentials outwardly, while the internal human resource practices of the organisation have failed to foster an environmental culture, resulting in disillusionment among employees and credible accusations of green-washing (de Jong et al., 2020). Conversely, while HR can create a culture that encourages employees to behave in a green manner, the lack of effective external communications means that organisations will lose out on potential market advantages. Therefore, GHRM and SM must be strategically integrated in order to establish a legitimate, cohesive and impactful green corporate identity.

This research utilizes a bibliometric approach as a systematic and quantitative means of exploring the relationship between Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and Strategic Management (SM). The utilisation of bibliometric methods allows for rigorous analysis of a large amount of academic literature and provides insights into the intellectual structure of an area of study and how that area has evolved.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse the amount of literature produced; the rate at which it has grown; the types of journals that have published it; the types of authors that have contributed to it; and the countries contributing to it within this multidisciplinary field;
2. Map the conceptual landscape of GHRM and SM research;
3. Identify potential gaps and opportunities for collaboration;
4. Develop a framework to assist future researchers in integrating their findings

and a research agenda to support that integration. The findings of this research will provide a comprehensive basis for scholarly research and a guide for practitioners wishing to align their internal human resource philosophy with markets in order to achieve true sustainable competitive advantage.

METHODOLOGY

A systematic, three-stage bibliometric analysis was conducted following established protocols (Donthu et al., 2021).

Data Collection and Screening

On 1st February 2024, data was taken from the Scopus database, because it has a broader representation of high-quality peer Reviewed Academic Literature, which is available in the areas of Business Management and Environmental Sciences. The search strategy used in this process has been developed to include core concepts within both areas of research (e.g., TITLE - ABS-KEY (i.e., "green hrm" OR "green human resource" OR "Environmental hrm") ABOUT TITLE - ABS AND - KEY). The focus of this article includes..... Sustainable Marketing " AND "Green Marketing", "Environmental Marketing", AND "Ecological Marketing"). The search is limited to articles published in English language and only journals and review articles: thus, an initial collection of 532 records has been collected. Duplicate entries have been removed from the final corpus; manually screened on both the title/ abstracts has resulted in the exclusion of Papers which are indirectly related (e.g., Technical Environmental Management OR General CSR with no Direct Link(s) to either human resource or Marketing). Therefore, the Final Submission is made upon a total of 486 articles published between 2006 and 2024.

Analytical Tools and Techniques

The Bibliometrix 4.0 software was utilized to create descriptive statistical summaries of the data that could be used to determine how publications are evolving, who is publishing them and what institutions are publishing them, as well as which countries are responsible for most of this research. VOSviewer 1.6.20 was used to visualize data as networks.

Science mapping has been used to chart out the progression of research and to provide a framework for analysing various research areas through a network of co-cited references (co-citation), the concurrent presence of author's keywords (co-word), and how the various themes have evolved and changed over specific periods of time (2006-2014, 2015-2019, and 2020-2024).

RESULTS

Performance Analysis

- Publication Trends and Growth :** Figure 1 exhibits a drastic upward change in trends of publication activity around 2015 correlating with the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) within the Global community. Prior to 2015, there were <10 articles published a year and afterwards, there was exponential growth with >92% of all published articles having been published within the last 10 years (2015-2024). As it stands, 2023 had a record number of published articles (78) demonstrating the vitality of this area of research.

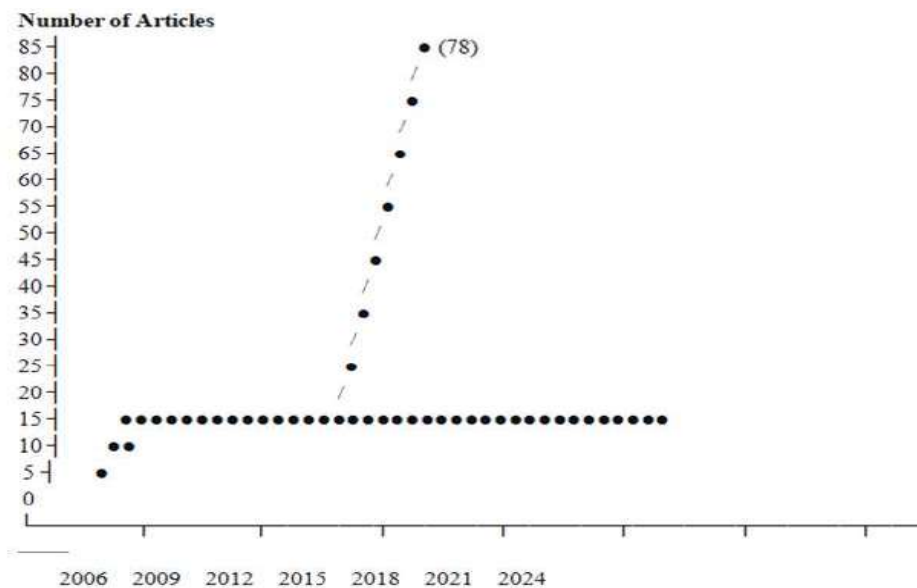


Figure 1: Annual Scientific Production (2006-2024)

*(A line graph would show a near-flat line until ~2014, then a steep, upward-curving trend peaking at 78 in 2023) *

Legend:

- Each • represents annual publication count
- Dotted line (.....) shows pre-2014 flat trend
- Solid line (_____) shows post-2015 exponential growth

Caption: *Figure 1. Annual scientific production in GHRM and Sustainable Marketing research (2006-2024). The graph shows a near-flat trend until approximately 2014, followed by a steep upward curve peaking at 78 publications in 2023. 2024* represents partial data (as of February 1, 2024).

Interpretation in Text

As shown in Figure 1, publication activity remained relatively low (under 10 articles annually) until around 2014. Following 2015-coinciding with the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-research output increased exponentially, with over 92% of all articles published in the last decade (2015-2024). The peak year of 2023 recorded 78 publications, demonstrating the growing scholarly momentum in this interdisciplinary field.

- **Leading Sources and Influential Authors :** The Journal of Cleaner Production, mainly environmental management, dominates both outcomes of sustainability information research and environment-themed research output. As environmental management journals, Sustainability and Business Strategy and the Environment are also very strong contributors to the field.

Table 1: Top 5 Most Productive Journals

Rank	Journal	Articles	Cites
1	Journal of Cleaner Production	41	2,418
2	Sustainability (Switzerland)	33	887
3	Business Strategy and the Environment	18	1,120
4	Journal of Business Research	11	789
5	International Journal of Manpower	8	311

The author with the most citations is Charbel José Chiappetta Jabbour, who has been recognized for his influential writings about GHRM (Green Human Resource Management) in developing nations. The other most-cited authors are Douglas W.S. Renwick (a GHRM review article writer) and John Mendy (a green training and performance author). It can be seen from this literature analysis that there are two separate author networks with some overlapping areas of research; one network (GHRM/environmental psychology) and a second (SM/ consumer behaviour) - there are not many authors who publish within both networks.

- **Geographical Distribution :** China is the leading contributor by country affiliation (112 articles), followed by the United Kingdom (58), the United States (55), Malaysia (48), and India (42). This indicates a global interest with strong participation from both industrialized and rapidly industrializing nations facing significant environmental challenges.

Science Mapping and Thematic Analysis

Co-Word Analysis and Thematic Clusters : A minimum keyword occurrence threshold of 15 was set, resulting in 48 keywords forming four major clusters visualized in Figure 2 (VOSviewer network map).

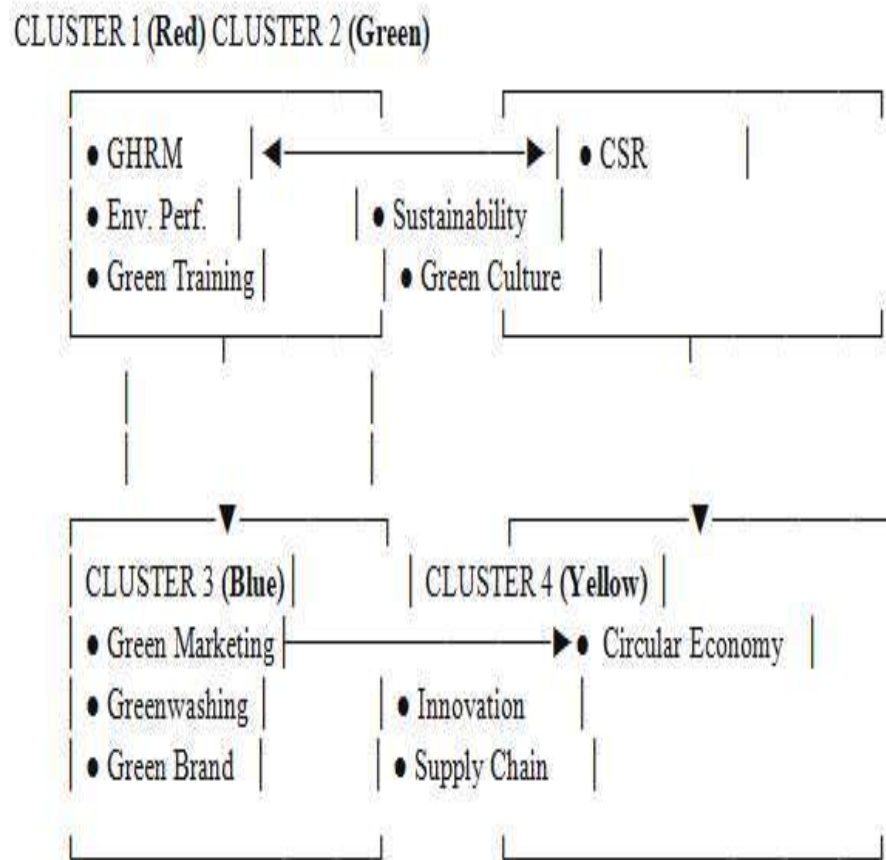


Figure 2: Network Visualization of Keyword Co-occurrence (Four Clusters)
(VOSviewer map would show:)

Cluster	Color	Theme	Top Keywords (with occurrence e" 15)	Approx. Frequency*	Research Focus
1	Red	Employee Green Behavior & Organizational Results	- o Green HRM (92) - o Environmental Performance (45) - o Pro-Environmental Behavior (38) - o OCBE (25) - o Green Training (18) - o Green Empowerment (16)	High (224+)	Micro-level GHRM impact on employee behavior and firm environmental outcomes.
2	Green	Green Corporate Culture & Ethical Identity	- o CSR (68) - o Sustainability (52) - o Green Culture (31) - o Corporate Reputation (22) - o Employer Branding (17)	High (190+)	Internal culture, ethical identity, and external reputation linkages.
3	Blue	Sustainable Consumer Engagement & Market Risks	- o Green Marketing (57) - o Sustainable Consumption (34) - o Green Purchase Intention (28) - o Green Brand Image (24) - o Greenwashing (21)	Moderate (164+)	Consumer psychology, green market drivers, and greenwashing risks.
4	Yellow	Circular Economy & Systemic Innovation	- o Circular Economy (39) - o Sustainable Development (33) - o Innovation (27) - o Supply Chain Management (19) - o Competitive Advantage (17)	Moderate (135+)	Macro systems view linking green innovation, circular models, and strategic advantage.

- **Cluster 1 (Red)** : Employee Green Behaviour and Organizational Results - Core Key Words: Green/Environmental Human Resource Management, Environmental Performance, Pro-Environmental Behaviour, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour for the Environment (OCBE), Green Training, Green Empowerment. This is the Largest Cluster, Built on Micro-GHRM Literature, That Looks to How HR Practices Impact Employee-Level Green Behaviour Which Ultimately Improve Company-Environmental Performance.
- **Cluster 2 (Green)** : Green Corporate Culture and Ethical Characteristics - Core Key Words: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Sustainability, Green Culture, Corporate Reputation, Employer Branding. This Cluster Serves as a Link Between Internal Organisational Ethics and Identity, to External Perception, Demonstrating GHRM's Role in Creating Authentic Cultures that Create Elevated Reputations and Attract Talent.
- **Cluster 3 (Blue)** : Sustainable Consumer Engagement and Market Risks - Core Key Words: Green Marketing, Sustainable Consumption, Green Purchase Intention, Green Brand Image, Greenwashing. This Cluster Is Primarily Positioned Within SM and Consumer Research. The focus of this Cluster is on Market Drivers, Consumer Psychological Factors and, most importantly, the Risk of Greenwashing, where External Claims Have No Internal Validation.
- **Cluster 4 (Yellow)** : Circular Economy and Systemic Innovation - Core Key Words: Circular Economy, Sustainable Development, Innovation, Supply Chain Management, Competitive Advantage. This New Cluster Demonstrates a Macro, Systems Point of View and Connects GHRM's Role in Developing Green Skills/Innovation Capabilities to SM's Role in Delivering Circular Value Propositions.

Thematic Evolution : The thematic evolution analysis (Figure 3) confirms the field's progression

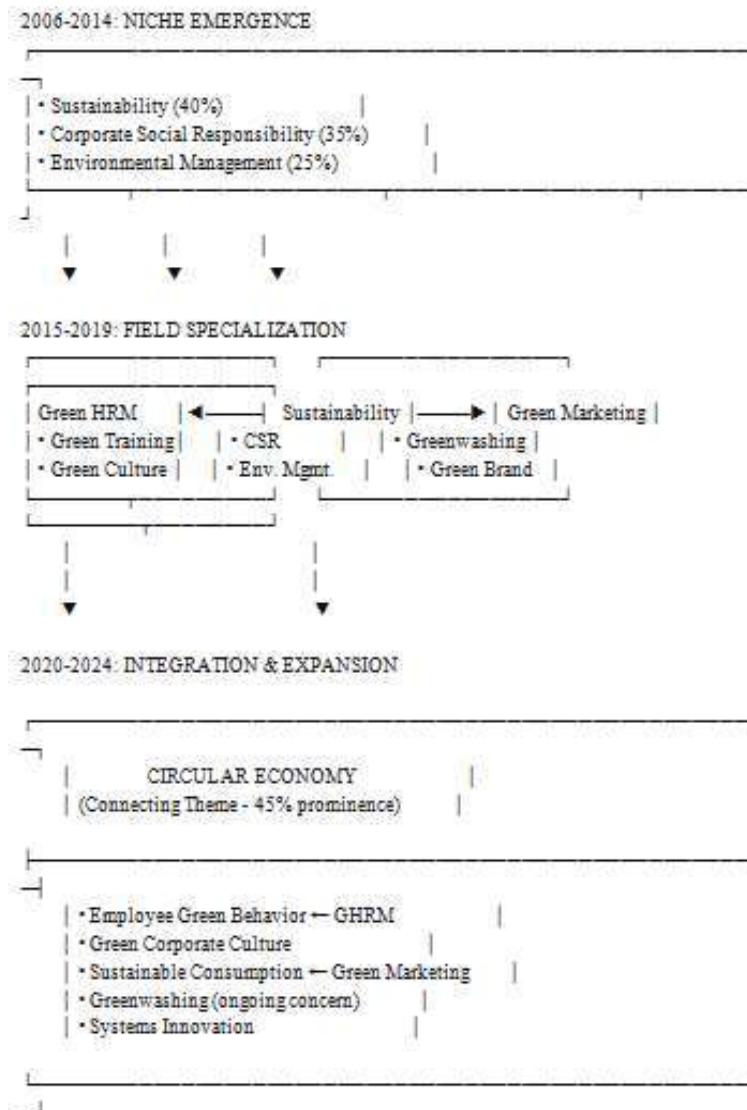


Figure 3 : Thematic evolution of GHRM and Sustainable Marketing research (2006-2024) visualized as a Sankey diagram. The field progressed through three distinct stages: (1) Niche Emergence (2006-2014) with broad sustainability themes; (2) Field Specialization (2015-2019) with bifurcation into GHRM and Green Marketing; and (3) Integration & Expansion (2020-2024) with Circular Economy emerging as a connecting theme requiring cross-functional integration.

Interpretation Paragraph

The thematic evolution analysis (Figure 3) reveals a clear progression in the field's intellectual development. During the initial "niche emergence" stage (2006-2014), research focused on broad constructs like sustainability, CSR, and environmental management. The period 2015-2019 marked "field specialization," with distinct research streams crystallizing around GHRM and Green Marketing, accompanied by growing attention to greenwashing risks. From 2020 onward, the field entered an "integration and expansion" phase, where the emerging theme of Circular Economy acts as a conceptual bridge, creating imperative for cross-functional alignment between HR, marketing, and operations. This evolution reflects the field's maturation from fragmented exploration toward systemic integration.

From 2006 to 2014, the "niche emergence" stage, the themes in the field were broad and basic in nature: "sustainability", "corporate social responsibility" and "environmental management". The concepts of Green Human Resource Management and Sustainable Marketing were still embryonic in development.

- From 2015 to 2019, the second stage of the evolution of the field, "field specialization", saw the themes in the field bifurcate into two separate but well-defined niches: Green Human Resource Management and Green Marketing. In this period Greenwashing gained momentum as well.
- From 2020 to 2024, we begin to see integration and expansion of the specialized themes. While many of the specialized themes continue to exist separately, we also begin to see growth in the interconnectedness of several specialised themes. The most prominent development within the field is the emerging "circular economy", which creates a growing need for integration of HR disciplines (for worker-base reskilling) operations and marketing. Figure 3 represents the evolution of themes over time, and visually it flows from broad base themes in 2006 - 2014 to two distinct but parallel themes in 2015 - 2019 with the addition of "circular economy" as a connecting theme in 2020- 2024 through the Sankey diagram.

DISCUSSION: A FRAMEWORK FOR STRATEGIC GHRM-SM INTEGRATION

The bibliometric study shows a growing pattern for many different areas of research. The research areas represent a high degree of similarity to each other in concept; however, there is not much evidence that researchers are citing or linking them together through their own publications. There is also a significant gap in our understanding of how to effectively integrate these areas of research together from a strategic standpoint. Therefore, we have created the Authentic Green Integration (AGI) Framework (see Figure 4).

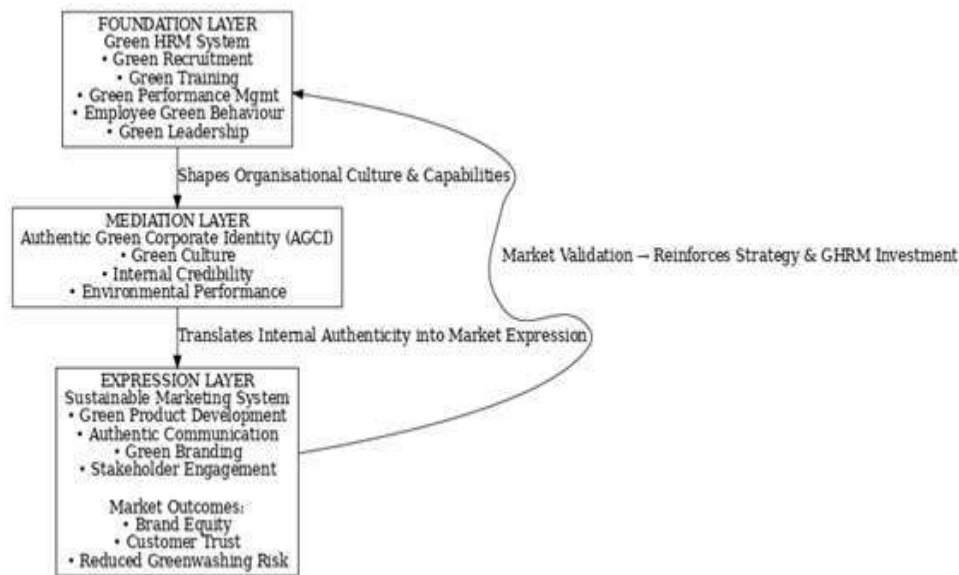


Figure 4. The Authentic Green Integration (AGI) Framework showing how GHRM practices build internal green capabilities that form an Authentic Green Corporate Identity, which mediates Sustainable Marketing strategies and market outcomes, with a feedback loop reinforcing strategic investment and innovation.

The mediation layer is where the internal culture and performance coalesce into the authentic green corporate identity, which is the "strategic linchpin" that gives substance and credibility to the authentic identity.

- The expression layer is where the authentic identity informs sustainable marketing strategy (green product development, authentic communication, and green branding) and how the authentic identity drives market performance (green brand equity and customer trust and loyalty) and mitigates risk of greenwashing.
- The feedback loop describes the positive effects of market performance on the reinforcement of the strategic vision and justifies further investment in GHRM; this creates a virtuous cycle of improvement and innovation that contribute to the transition to a circular economy.

Interpreting the Framework Through the Clusters

Cluster 1 to Cluster 3: The framework directly connects (via Authentic Green Corporate Identity) Employee Green Behavior (Cluster 1) to the mitigation of

Greenwashing (Cluster 3). This means that credible marketing claims will only be credible if they stem from legitimate employee actions, as well as organizational outcomes.

- Central Role: Green Corporate Culture (Cluster 2) is a critical mediating element, not just an outcome. It is the socially complex, path-dependent asset that competitors cannot easily replicate. It provides a sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).
- Unifying Potential: The Circular Economy (Cluster 4) provides a unifying strategic objective that requires increased integration. GHRM must develop competencies around circular design and reverse logistics. SM must develop corporate narratives to support product life extension, servitization, and material circularity.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

Theoretical Implications

This research presents a consolidated overview of the fragmented area of interdisciplinary studies. It contributes to our understanding of RBV theory by stating how the company should use its RBV in relation to sustainability while using the lens of integrated functional strategies (e.g. How GHRM and SM contribute to building a Green Identity). A Green Identity that has been established via synergising GHRM and SM is an important resource that has value, rarity and the inability to substitute it with another resource. Additionally, this research advances signalling theory because it demonstrates that in order for green signals to have credibility, they need to be supported by behavioural (e.g. GHRM practices) investments of time, effort and cost from within the firm.

Practical Implications

The AGI Framework highlights for the practitioner importance of a strategy that supports collaboration across disciplines in order to be successful in greening an organisation.

- Leadership must create a vision for the organisation and develop governance structures that include leaders from each discipline such as an environmental sustainability steering committee composed of the head of human resources and the head of marketing as an example.
- Human resources managers should develop green competencies for human resources and create performance management systems that reward eco-efficient operational behaviours and external brand promise behaviours.

- Marketing managers should build their marketing strategies using verifiable internal success stories as the basis for the execution of marketing campaigns, should co-develop content with employees, and should promote to customers their green employer branding within their messaging.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The findings of this study have been constrained due to a reliance on Scopus as the sole source of data collection and also because all material utilized was in English. To advance future research opportunities, the following should occur:

1. **Conduct Empirical Investigation:** Formulate and test hypotheses based upon the AGI Framework, using a combination of quantitative methodology (surveys) and qualitative methodology (case studies).
2. **Investigate Cross-Cultural Dynamics:** Examine how national cultural values and how institutional arrangements mediate the success of GHRM-SM integration.
3. **Investigate the Digital Facilitation:** Study how technology, specifically Human Resource Technology applications such as platforms for collating green skills, as well as Digital Marketing applications such as Blockchain platforms for evidencing traceability, may facilitate and provide transparency for integration efforts.
4. **Investigate GHRM and Circular Economic Integration:** Study the specific GHRM practices (e.g., training for repair and remanufacturing) and SM communication strategies (e.g., promotion of product-as-service models) that are necessary to execute a transition towards Circular Economy.
5. **Develop Metrics of Integration:** Create a tool (i.e., a "Green Integration Index") to assess the degree of congruence between external SM communications and internal GHRM systems.

CONCLUSION

This paper provides a thorough bibliometric examination of the relationships between GHRM and SM through their development over time to understand how they relate to each other and are both responding to sustainability. The evidence presented indicates that, although both GHRM and SM play an important role in regards to sustainability, neither has engaged in sufficient strategic dialogue with one another in their development. The clusters of employee behaviours, green culture, consumer engagement, and circular economy identify major elements of the creation of a comprehensive corporate sustainability strategy. The Authentic Green Integration (AGI) Framework suggests that long-term positive impacts in both the environmental

and business aspects are not achieved by simply being excellent in each of the functional disciplines separately; rather, they are achieved through the creation of synergies between these two areas of expertise (i.e. the internal and external alignment between the GHRM and SM disciplines in creating corporate sustainability). This synergy shifts sustainability from a potential negative, i.e. a corporate reputation risk (greenwashing), to a positive, i.e. a true competitive advantage for the company in building brand equity and contributing positively to the ecological environment. The actualisation of corporate sustainability will be through this integrated framework.

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