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THE IMPACT OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ON COMPANY BRAND REPUTATION AND PERFORMANCE: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

This study investigates the intellectual landscape and research trends on the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on company brand reputation and performance, a topic of growing importance in both academic and corporate domains. Despite increasing global attention on CSR practices, there remains a limited consolidated understanding of how CSR influences brand equity and firm performance across diverse sectors and regions. To address this gap, we conducted a comprehensive bibliometric analysis using 933 peer-reviewed journal articles retrieved from the Scopus database through advanced search techniques, focusing on the keywords: “corporate social responsibility,” “brand reputation,” and “performance.” The data, spanning from 2001 to 2025, were first processed using Scopus Analyzer to generate descriptive statistics and trend visualizations. Next, Open Refine was employed to clean and harmonize keyword inconsistencies, ensuring dataset accuracy and coherence. To map the conceptual structure and collaborative networks, VOS viewer was used for co-occurrence, co-authorship, and country collaboration analyses. The results identified five major thematic clusters, with “corporate social responsibility,” “sustainability,” and “corporate reputation” as dominant keywords. The United States, China, and the United Kingdom emerged as the most prolific contributors, while the publication trend revealed a significant rise in output post-2015. Co-authorship mapping highlighted increasing international collaboration, especially among developed and emerging economies. The findings contribute to the scholarly understanding of CSR’s strategic role in enhancing organizational outcomes and offer direction for future research by identifying influential themes, authors, and geographic hubs. This study not only provides a comprehensive overview of existing literature but also serves as a valuable reference for academics and practitioners aiming to align CSR with branding and performance objectives.

Keywords:

Corporate Social Responsibility, Brand Reputation, Company Performance

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a pivotal element in the strategic management of companies, influencing not only their ethical standing but also their brand reputation and overall performance. In an era where consumers and stakeholders are increasingly conscious of corporate ethics and sustainability, CSR initiatives have become integral to building and maintaining a positive brand image. This paper explores the impact of CSR on company brand reputation and performance, delving into how CSR activities can enhance brand value, customer loyalty, and financial outcomes. By examining empirical studies and theoretical frameworks, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted effects of CSR on corporate success.

The relationship between CSR and brand performance has been extensively studied, with numerous findings indicating a positive correlation. CSR activities are shown to significantly enhance brand reputation, which in turn positively impacts brand performance. For instance, a study involving private banks demonstrated that CSR positively influences resource commitment, green creativity, and corporate reputation, all of which contribute to improved brand performance (Hesari et al., 2021). Similarly, research on Chinese companies found that CSR is significantly correlated with financial performance and brand value, with social capital playing a moderating role (Zhang & Liu, 2023). These findings underscore the importance of CSR in fostering a positive corporate image and driving financial success.

Moreover, CSR's impact extends beyond mere reputation enhancement. It also influences consumer perceptions and product evaluations. Research indicates that CSR activities, even those unrelated to a company's core business, can lead to better product evaluations by consumers (Chernev & Blair, 2015). This effect is attributed to the moral undertone of the company's motivations, suggesting that genuine CSR efforts can enhance consumer trust and loyalty. Additionally, CSR reporting quality has been found to amplify the positive effects of corporate social performance on reputation, further highlighting the importance of transparency and consistency in CSR initiatives (Pérez-Cornejo et al., 2020).

The mediating role of corporate reputation in the CSR-performance relationship is another critical aspect. Studies have shown that corporate reputation fully mediates the impact of CSR on supply chain performance, indicating that a strong reputation can translate CSR efforts into tangible business benefits (Nguyen et al., 2021). Furthermore, CSR activities are linked to increased customer loyalty and corporate performance, particularly in emerging markets where CSR is integrated with corporate brand building (Meru & Kinoti, 2022). This integration helps firms resonate with their core values and business activities, offering mutual benefits in both the short and long term.

In addition to enhancing brand reputation and customer loyalty, CSR also contributes to financial performance. Empirical studies have demonstrated that CSR investments lead to improved financial outcomes, such as return on assets and market capitalization [(Zhukova &

Melikova, 2021)] . The positive effects of CSR on financial performance are often mediated by factors such as innovation and brand equity. For example, research on Spanish companies found that CSR positively affects both innovation and organizational performance, with innovation serving as a mediator in the CSR-performance relationship (Reverte et al., 2016). This highlights the role of CSR in fostering a culture of innovation, which can drive long-term business success.

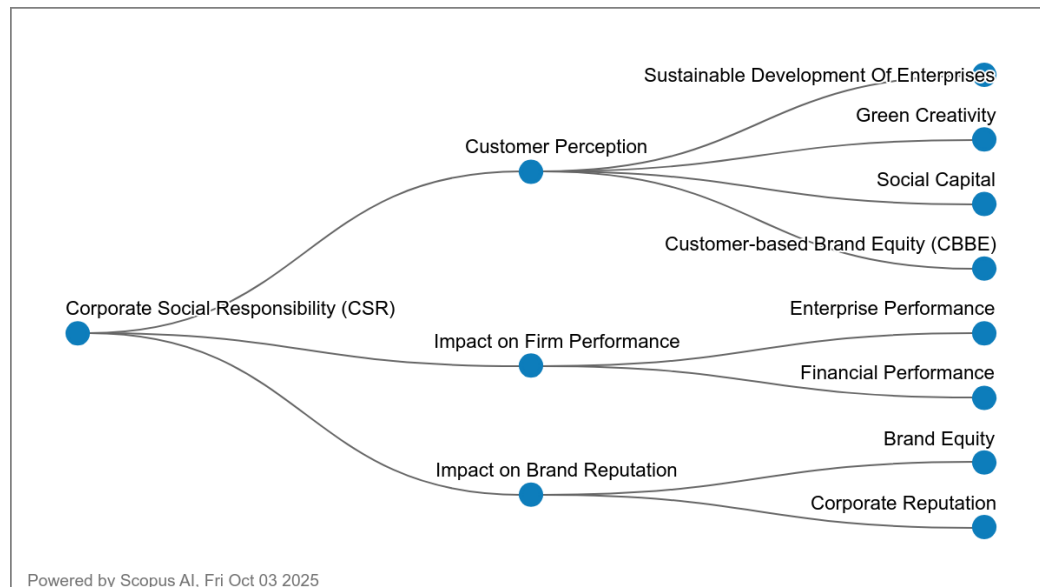


Figure 1: Concept Map the Impact of CSR On Company Brand Reputation and Performance

Figure 1 presents a concept map generated by Scopus AI on “*The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on Company Brand Reputation and Performance.*” The map demonstrates that CSR influences three core dimensions: customer perception, firm performance, and brand reputation. Through the lens of customer perception, CSR enhances factors such as sustainable enterprise development, green creativity, social capital, and customer-based brand equity (CBBE), highlighting how ethical initiatives shape consumer attitudes and trust. CSR also plays a pivotal role in improving firm performance, particularly in terms of enterprise-wide outcomes and financial metrics, reflecting a strong business case for socially responsible strategies. Simultaneously, CSR contributes directly to brand reputation by elevating brand equity and corporate reputation, key assets for long-term competitive advantage. This interconnected framework underscores that CSR is not merely a moral or regulatory obligation, but a strategic lever that shapes stakeholder perception, drives financial success, and strengthens brand value. Overall, the concept map reflects a holistic view of CSR’s multidimensional impact on both internal business metrics and external brand perception, reinforcing its role as a critical driver of sustainable corporate success.

Overall, the literature suggests that CSR is a valuable strategic tool for enhancing brand reputation and performance. By engaging in socially responsible activities, companies can build a positive corporate image, foster customer loyalty, and achieve better financial outcomes. The integration of CSR into corporate strategy not only benefits the company but

also contributes to broader societal and environmental goals, making it a win-win approach for all stakeholders involved.

Research Question

RQ1: What is the number of studies on CSR published in online learning studies according to the year of publication?

RQ2: What are the top 10 most cited articles?

RQ3: Where are the top 10 countries based on the number of publications?

RQ4: What are the popular keywords related to the study?

RQ5: What is the co-authorship by countries?

Methodology

Bibliometric analysis has become an indispensable tool in modern research, offering a systematic approach to collecting, organizing, and interpreting bibliographic data from scholarly publications (Alves et al., 2021; Assyakur & Rosa, 2022; Verbeek et al., 2002). While foundational metrics such as journal sources, publication chronology, and prolific authors offer initial insights (Wu & Wu, 2017), advanced bibliometric techniques like document co-citation analysis provide a deeper understanding of the intellectual foundations and emerging trends within a research domain.

A rigorous literature review demands more than mere data retrieval; it requires a deliberate, iterative strategy involving the careful selection of keywords, comprehensive database searches, and critical evaluation of relevant literature. This structured methodology ensures the development of a robust, evidence-based bibliography and enhances the credibility of analytical outcomes (Fahimnia et al., 2015).

To maximize relevance and scholarly impact, this study concentrated exclusively on high-impact publications that offer substantive theoretical contributions to the field. Data collection was conducted through Elsevier's Scopus database, renowned for its extensive, multidisciplinary coverage and indexing integrity (Al-Khoury et al., 2022; di Stefano et al., 2010; Khiste & Paithankar, 2017). In pursuit of academic precision and quality assurance, the review was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2000 and October 2025. Non-journal sources such as books, conference proceedings, and lecture notes were intentionally excluded to maintain methodological rigor and focus (Gu et al., 2019).

Data Search Strategy

To ensure a rigorous and comprehensive review of relevant literature, a systematic search was conducted using the advanced search feature of Elsevier's Scopus database, renowned for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed academic journals. The search strategy was designed to capture research at the intersection of corporate social responsibility (CSR), brand, reputation, performance, and customer perception. The Boolean search string applied was: TITLE-ABS-KEY (corporate social responsibility) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Brand" OR "Reputation") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Performance) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (customer perception) AND PUBYEAR > 1999 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) as shown in Table 1 .

This query was intentionally structured to identify literature where the core terms appeared in the title, abstract, or keywords, increasing the likelihood that selected studies were directly relevant to the research focus.

The search was executed in October 2025, and the final output yielded 933 articles. A set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was applied to refine the results. Only publications written in English were included, while non-English sources were excluded to ensure consistency in interpretation. The timeline was limited to 2000–2025, capturing contemporary research while excluding outdated or speculative content. The literature type was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles (“ar”), excluding books, conference proceedings, and reviews, to maintain a high standard of academic rigor. Additionally, only items at the final publication stage were considered, deliberately omitting in-press papers to ensure data stability and full editorial completion. Details as shown in Table 2.

By adhering to this systematic and structured search protocol, the study ensured that only high-quality, thematically aligned, and methodologically sound publications were included. This dataset of 933 articles provides a solid foundation for further bibliometric mapping and content analysis, offering critical insights into how CSR shapes brand reputation, customer perception, and corporate performance across disciplines.

Table 1

The Search String.

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (corporate social responsibility) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Brand” OR “Reputation”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Performance) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (customer perception)) AND PUBYEAR > 1999 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , “ar”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , “j”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , “final”))
Access date: October 2025	

Table 2

The Selection Criterion Is Searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	2000 – 2025	< 2020
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book, Review
Publication Stage	Final	In Press

Data Analysis

VOS viewer, developed by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University, Netherlands (van Eck & Waltman, 2010, 2017), has emerged as one of the most prominent and user-friendly software applications for bibliometric analysis. Widely acclaimed for its capacity

to visualize and interpret scientific literature, VOS viewer offers a comprehensive suite of features, including network visualization, item clustering, and density mapping. Its core strength lies in uncovering structural relationships through co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence analyses, thereby enabling researchers to explore, map, and interpret the intellectual architecture of a given research field with precision.

The software's intuitive graphical interface, enhanced by regular updates, supports both novice and experienced users in navigating complex bibliographic datasets. With its ability to compute bibliometric indicators, generate customizable visualizations, and seamlessly integrate data from leading bibliometric databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, VOS viewer stands out as a versatile and indispensable tool for research evaluation and scholarly mapping.

A distinguishing feature of the VOS viewer is its ability to transform voluminous and intricate bibliographic data into interpretable network maps and density visualizations. These visual outputs reveal thematic clusters, central research nodes, and evolving scholarly trends. By focusing on low-dimensional spatial positioning, the software ensures that the distance between any two items accurately reflects their level of relatedness, a methodological principle that aligns with, yet improves upon, traditional Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) techniques (van Eck & Waltman, 2010), (Appio et al., 2014).

For this study, bibliographic data were extracted from the Scopus database in Plaintext format, encompassing key attributes such as publication year, title, authorship, journal name, citation count, and keywords. The dataset spans the period from 2000 to October 2025 and was processed using VOS viewer version 1.6.20. Through the application of VOS clustering and mapping algorithms, the software generated visual networks that reveal the structural and thematic configuration of the literature.

Unlike MDS, which commonly employs similarity indices like cosine and Jaccard coefficients, VOS viewer utilizes a more refined normalization technique—association strength (AS_{ij})—to measure the relatedness between items. The formula is defined as:

$$AS_{ij} = \frac{C_{ij}}{w_i w_j}$$

where C_{ij} denotes the number of co-occurrences between items i and j , and $w_i w_j$ represent the total occurrences of each item, respectively. This calculation captures the ratio between the observed and statistically expected co-occurrences, assuming independence between items (Van Eck & Waltman, 2007). As such, association strength provides a more accurate representation of inter-item connections, reinforcing the analytical rigor of the VOS viewer in bibliometric research.

In sum, VOSviewer's capacity to distil complex bibliographic data into meaningful, interactive visualizations makes it a cornerstone for scholars engaged in systematic literature reviews, domain mapping, and research trend analysis.

Findings and Discussion

What is the Number of Studies on CSR Published in Online Learning Studies According to The Year of Publication?

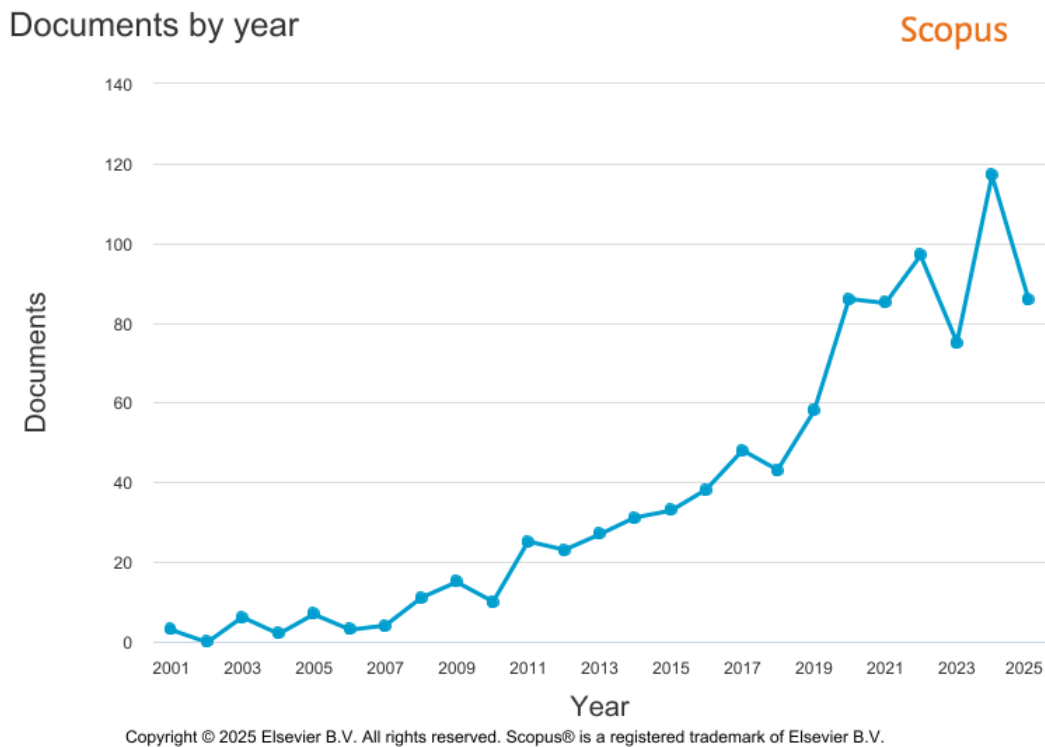


Figure 2: Number Of Documents Based on Year of Publication

Figure 2 demonstrates the publication trend on the topic “*The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Company Brand Reputation and Performance*” from 2001 to 2025, revealing a compelling trajectory of scholarly attention. The early 2000s witnessed minimal academic output, with fewer than 10 documents annually between 2001 and 2007. This limited activity can be attributed to the relatively nascent stage of CSR as an integrated strategic concept during that period often viewed more as a philanthropic gesture than a driver of business value. From 2008 to 2015, a gradual increase is observed, with annual outputs ranging between 10 and 33 documents. This moderate growth phase aligns with the global financial crisis aftermath, which spurred heightened interest in ethical business practices, stakeholder trust, and reputational management. The increase during this phase reflects a growing realization that CSR can influence both brand image and performance outcomes, particularly during periods of economic and institutional uncertainty.

The most significant surge in publications occurs from 2016 onwards, marking the era when CSR became strategically embedded in corporate governance, marketing, and sustainability frameworks. Starting with 38 publications in 2016, the numbers show a consistent upward trend, peaking at 117 in 2024. This escalation is likely driven by three main factors: (1) increasing regulatory and investor pressures for ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) transparency, (2) the rapid expansion of stakeholder capitalism frameworks, and (3) growing

consumer demand for ethical and responsible brand behaviour. The spike from 2020 to 2025, where publication numbers remain consistently above 75 documents per year also reflects intensified academic interest post-COVID-19, as companies faced pressure to rebuild trust and redefine their reputational positioning through CSR. The all-time high in 2024 indicates a culmination of these converging pressures and the maturity of CSR as a field of inquiry directly linked to corporate branding and performance. This rising trend demonstrates that CSR is no longer peripheral but central to scholarly debates on sustainable competitive advantage, reputation management, and stakeholder engagement.

What Are the Top 10 Most Cited Articles?

Table 3: Most Cited Author

No.	Authors	Year	Cited by
1	Orlitzky et al., (2003)	2003	5140
2	Branco & Lima Rodrigues, (2006)	2006	1386
3	Kim et al., (2012)	2012	1372
4	Saeidi et al. (2015)	2015	1138
5	Dyer & Whetten (2006)	2006	841
6	Brammer & Millington (2005)	2005	730
7	Orlitzky & Benjamin (2001)	2001	704
8	Agus Harjoto & Jo, (2011)	2011	668
9	Walsh & Beatty (2007)	2007	657
10	Lai et al., (2010)	2010	619

Table 3 shows the top 10 most cited articles on the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on company brand reputation and performance, underscoring the foundational and evolving contributions to this field. Leading the list is Orlitzky et al. (2003) with an exceptional 5,140 citations, a meta-analysis establishing the strong positive correlation between corporate social and financial performance. Its prominence stems from offering empirical generalizability, methodological rigor, and its early influence in framing CSR as strategically valuable. Other highly cited works, such as Branco & Rodrigues (2006) and Kim et al. (2012), continue this momentum by integrating resource-based views and earnings quality analysis, respectively demonstrating that CSR is no longer peripheral but integral to financial accountability and organizational value creation. Additionally, Saeidi et al. (2015) emphasized mediating factors like competitive advantage and customer satisfaction, advancing CSR discourse beyond direct impact to include indirect brand-enhancing pathways, which likely contributes to its high citation count of 1,138.

The presence of articles spanning from 2001 to 2015 among the most cited reflects both the maturity and evolution of CSR scholarship. Earlier works such as Orlitzky & Benjamin (2001) and Brammer & Millington (2005) laid theoretical and empirical foundations linking CSR with firm risk and philanthropic reputation, respectively. Meanwhile, articles from the 2010s onward, like Harjoto & Jo (2011), Lai et al. (2010), and Saeidi et al. (2015), reflect a shift toward integrated stakeholder-based frameworks, emphasizing CSR's impact on governance, brand equity, and consumer perception. The consistent citations across these works suggest that CSR is increasingly analysed through multidisciplinary lenses, including finance, marketing, ethics, and strategic management. Overall, the high citation counts can be attributed to these articles' methodological robustness, empirical depth, and their ability to influence both academia and corporate practice. They serve as seminal references for researchers and practitioners exploring how socially responsible behaviour not only fulfils ethical imperatives but also drives measurable business performance and strengthens corporate reputation.

Where Are The Top 10 Countries Based On The Number Of Publications?

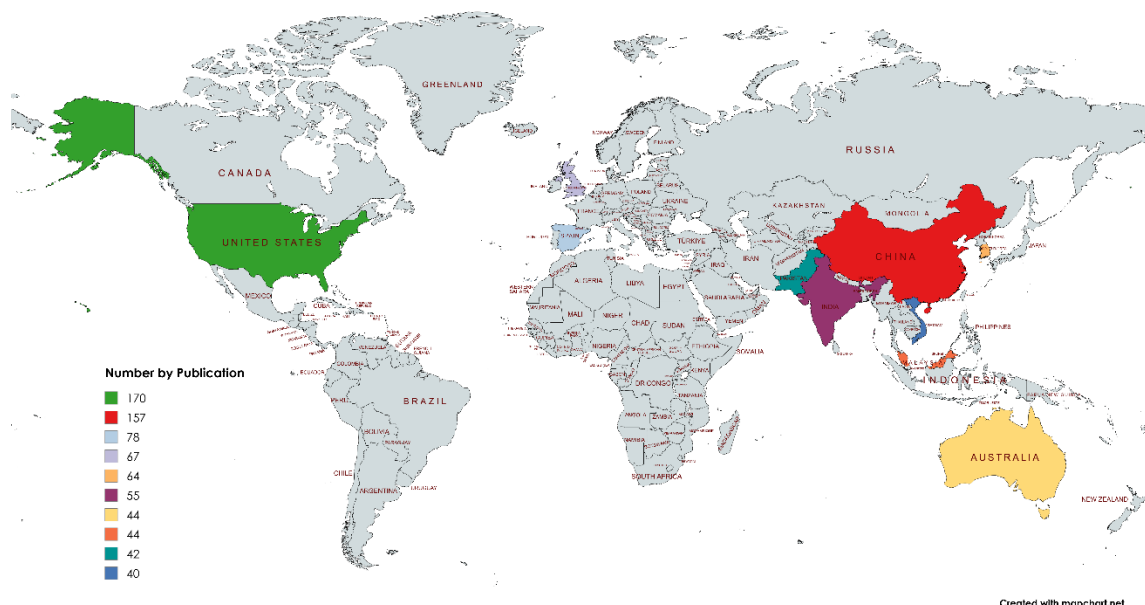


Figure 3: Top 10 Countries Based on The Number of Publications

Figure 3 shows the distribution of publications by country on the topic “*The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on Company Brand Reputation and Performance*”, demonstrating a clear global engagement, led by economically dominant and research-intensive nations. The United States tops the list with 170 publications, followed closely by China with 157. This leadership is not surprising, as both countries have vast academic infrastructures, high research funding, and corporate sectors where CSR practices are deeply integrated into strategic management and brand development. The prominence of CSR in American companies is often driven by consumer activism, investor expectations, and regulatory requirements, while China's rapid industrial expansion and increasing focus on sustainability and reputation management in the global marketplace have driven CSR research as part of its modernization agenda. The significant contribution from Spain (78) and the United Kingdom (67) also reflects a strong European focus on sustainability reporting, stakeholder

Figure 4 explains Co-occurrence analysis of author keywords in VOS viewer is a bibliometric technique that identifies how frequently specific terms appear together within the same set of publications, revealing the conceptual and thematic relationships across the research field. In this case, the analysis examines 1,820 author keywords related to corporate social responsibility (CSR), brand reputation, and performance. Using the full counting method, where each occurrence of a keyword is counted equally, a minimum occurrence threshold of five was set to filter out infrequently used terms, resulting in 210 keywords included in the map. A minimum cluster size of five was also applied, leading to the generation of five distinct clusters representing core themes in the literature. Each colour on the map corresponds to one of these clusters, visually grouping related keywords together to highlight different research directions or focal areas within CSR studies. The size of each node reflects the frequency of a keyword's occurrence, meaning that larger nodes such as "*corporate social responsibility*" (640 occurrences) or "*sustainability*" (172 occurrences) represent central concepts in the field, while smaller nodes like "*reputation risk*" or "*greenwashing*" denote more niche or emerging topics.

The findings from this co-occurrence analysis provide meaningful contributions to the body of knowledge by mapping the intellectual structure of CSR research and its connections to brand reputation and organizational performance. For example, the prominence of keywords like "*corporate social responsibility*", "*sustainability*", "*corporate reputation*", and "*financial performance*" indicates that these topics dominate current discourse, confirming CSR's strategic role in shaping business outcomes and brand equity. Meanwhile, the appearance of emerging terms such as "*ESG*", "*green marketing*", "*transparency*", and "*competitive advantage*" suggests an evolution of CSR research from purely ethical or philanthropic undertakings toward performance-driven and stakeholder-centred approaches. The clustering of related keywords also shows how the field integrates concepts from diverse disciplines such as marketing, finance, and governance, offering a multidimensional view of CSR's impact. This structured visualization helps researchers identify established areas, emerging themes, and potential gaps, thereby guiding future studies to refine theoretical models, explore under-researched topics, and deepen understanding of CSR's influence on brand and organizational performance.

What is the Co-Authorship by Countries?

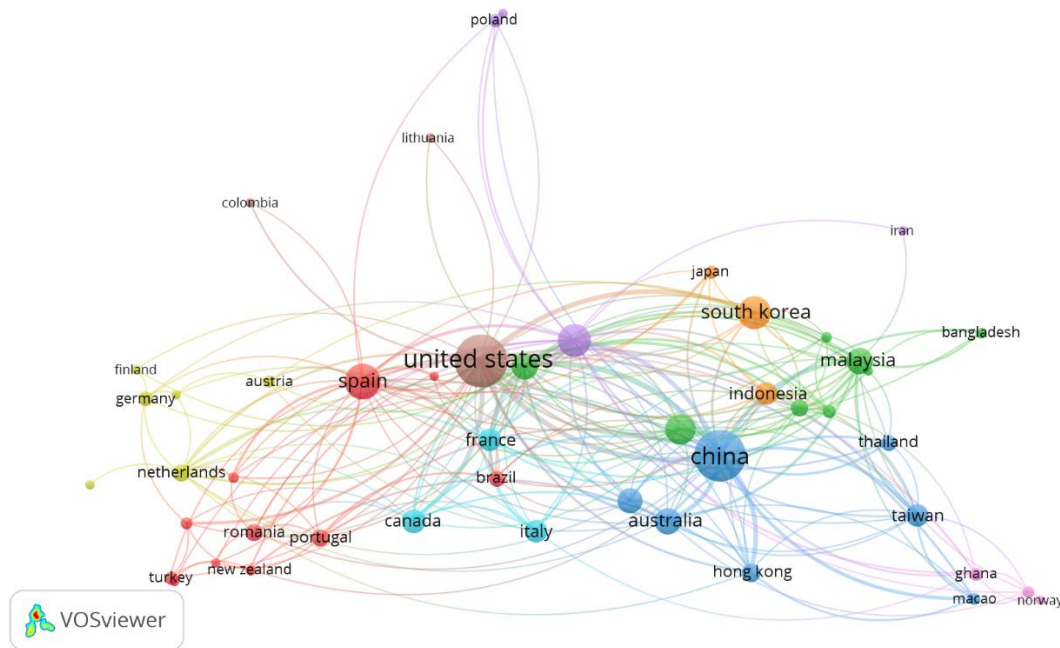


Figure 5: Network Visualization Map of Co-Authorship by Countries' Collaboration

As shown in Figure 5, the co-authorship analysis by country, as visualized through VOS viewer, reveals the patterns of international research collaboration within the domain of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its relation to brand reputation and performance. This type of bibliometric analysis maps how often researchers from different countries co-author publications, thereby highlighting global knowledge exchange and research partnerships. In this analysis, the full counting method was used, where each co-authored publication is fully counted for all contributing countries. The minimum threshold for inclusion was five documents, resulting in 48 out of 84 countries meeting the criterion. Additionally, a minimum cluster size of five was applied, which led to the formation of five distinct clusters of countries. In the network visualization, each colour represents a different cluster, indicating a group of countries that tend to collaborate more frequently with one another. The node size reflects the number of documents attributed to each country, while the links between nodes represent collaboration strength, with larger total link strength values indicating more frequent or impactful cross-country partnerships.

The visualization and data reveal several important insights into the international landscape of CSR research. The United States (169 documents, 18,807 citations) and China (156 documents, 5,636 citations) emerge as the most prolific contributors, with notable collaboration strength (90 and 115, respectively), showing both strong individual output and high engagement with other countries. The United Kingdom, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Spain also show significant collaboration levels, forming bridges between developed and emerging economies. Countries like Australia (8,394 citations) and France have lower document counts but high citation impact, indicating influential research. The presence of developing nations such as Pakistan, Vietnam, and Indonesia in the clusters reflects a rising engagement in CSR research from the Global South, likely driven by increased integration into global supply chains and pressure to

adopt sustainable practices. The five color-coded clusters reflect regional and linguistic collaborations such as Anglo-American networks, European alliances, and Asia Pacific linkages, offering a visual representation of scholarly globalization. These findings enhance the body of knowledge by illustrating how CSR-related academic discourse transcends borders and becomes a collaborative, globally evolving field, driven by both Western thought leadership and emerging market participation.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the intellectual structure, publication trends, and research dynamics surrounding the topic of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its impact on company brand reputation and performance. By analysing a curated dataset of 933 peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in the Scopus database between 2000 and 2025, the aim was to map the thematic development, identify influential contributions, and assess global research collaboration through a comprehensive bibliometric approach.

The analysis uncovered several key findings. A consistent upward trajectory in publication output was observed from 2016 onwards, highlighting growing academic engagement with CSR as a strategic business function. Core themes centred around CSR, sustainability, corporate reputation, financial performance, and stakeholder engagement. The United States, China, and the United Kingdom emerged as the most prolific contributors, while co-authorship mapping revealed robust international collaboration, particularly between developed and emerging economies. Keyword co-occurrence analysis indicated that research is increasingly interdisciplinary, incorporating concepts from marketing, finance, and strategic management. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by offering an integrative overview of the CSR–brand–performance nexus and identifying key academic clusters and geographical hubs of activity. The mapping of influential keywords and highly cited articles offers guidance to scholars seeking to deepen their understanding of this research area. Moreover, the analysis highlights the evolving nature of CSR from a philanthropic concept to a strategic enabler of brand differentiation and performance enhancement.

The findings hold practical relevance for business leaders, policymakers, and sustainability practitioners by emphasizing CSR's measurable link to organizational outcomes. However, this study is limited by its reliance on a single database (Scopus) and the exclusion of non-journal literature, which may restrict the breadth of the dataset. Future studies could benefit from multi-database comparisons, longitudinal citation analysis, or qualitative content evaluation to deepen insight into the CSR discourse.

In conclusion, this bibliometric analysis illustrates the expanding role of CSR in academic and practical contexts, offering a structured understanding of how socially responsible initiatives contribute to corporate branding and performance. It reinforces the value of bibliometric tools in uncovering research patterns and supports further inquiry into the evolving intersections of CSR, brand equity, and organizational effectiveness.

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