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## Visualization analysis of the impact of corporate social responsibility on corporate competitiveness based on Citespace

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### Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyze research hotspots and trends regarding the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on competitiveness, and to suggest recommendations for businesses and governments. The methodology of the study employs Citespace software to analyze articles related to "corporate social responsibility" and "corporate competitiveness" indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection from 2002 to June 2024, focusing on keyword co-occurrence analysis, keyword clustering, keyword bursts, timeline mapping, and author mapping. The findings indicate that the most frequent keywords are corporate social responsibility, performance, impact, financial performance, and management. Keyword clustering includes competitiveness, market share, corporate social responsibility, environmental management, sustainable development, and green innovation. The strongest keyword burst is environmental management, followed by business ethics, competitiveness, dynamic capability, and implementation. In terms of the timeline view, the research focus in this field was on image, reputation, and loyalty from 2015 to 2020. In this study, the authors with the highest number of publications were Isabel Sanchez-Hernandez, M., and Popescu, Cristina Raluca Gh., each publishing 4 papers. The conclusions indicate that scholars focus on aspects of customer trust and loyalty, brand image, corporate reputation, and green innovation to study CSR regarding research hotspots; the focus of CSR is the integration of stakeholder needs in CSR practices, and the focus of competitiveness is long-term indicators. The practical implications suggest that businesses can enhance their competitiveness by fulfilling social responsibilities and that governments can promote sustainable development policies.

**Keywords:** CiteSpace, Corporate competitiveness, Corporate social responsibility.

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**Transparency:** The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Data Collection

The data for this study were collected from Thomson Reuters Web of Science (WoS), which is one of the most commonly used scientific literature databases in many fields. Specifically, the authors searched the Web of Science Core Collection (WoSCC), where all cited references of the included publications are indexed and searchable. WoSCC is considered one of the key sources of scientific information [1]. The search terms used were "corporate social responsibility" and "corporate competitiveness," with the time frame limited to "January 1, 2000, to June 30, 2024."

The time frame (2000 to June 30, 2024) was selected because, since the 21st century, scholars have been exploring corporate social responsibility (CSR) from broader perspectives and proposing new insights into its concept [2]. In 2001, Lantos identified three forms of CSR: ethical, altruistic, and strategic [3]. In 2007, Jamali introduced a new CSR model, the "3+2" model, dividing corporate social responsibilities into two major categories: mandatory and voluntary, with further subdivisions under each [4]. Additionally, in recent years, scholars have shifted their focus to CSR. Kristin argued that CSR is an extension of corporate governance, where fiduciary duties extend beyond shareholders or owners to include a broader range of stakeholders [5]. Other researchers have moved from studying the concept and significance of CSR to exploring issues such as corporate social performance, stakeholder theory, business ethics, sustainability, and corporate citizenship. A substantial body of research has also attempted to examine the relationship between CSR and competitiveness [6].

The search terms included the following: TS (Topic Search) = "corporate social responsibility" and "corporate competitiveness." The selected language was "English," and the document type was limited to "articles." The file format was set to "plain text," and the record content selected was "full record and cited references." After screening and removing duplicate entries, a total of 818 documents were included. The data was exported in plain text format, with the record content being the full record and cited references.

### 1.2. Bibliometric Analysis and Tools

CiteSpace is a software package commonly used for bibliometric visualization analysis. It can visualize academic references, authors, or journals and create co-occurrence network maps of keywords, authors, countries/regions, and institutions within specific disciplines [7, 8].

In this study, we used CiteSpace version 6.3.R3 with the following parameters: time slices (January 1, 2000, to June 30, 2024) and one year per slice. Depending on the type of analysis, different node types were selected. The selection criteria in CiteSpace were set as follows: g-index = 25, Top N = 50, and Top N% = 10%/100. In the parameter settings, the g-index is a metric used to measure the influence of literature, allowing for the efficient selection of impactful documents. Setting this parameter to 25 means selecting the top 25 groups of highly cited documents, with a total citation count of no less than 635. Top N = 25 indicates that, in each time slice, the top 25 nodes based on citation frequency or co-occurrence frequency are selected. Top N% = 50% means that, in each time slice, the top 50% of nodes are included in the analysis. The thresholding parameters included citation (c), co-citation (cc), and cosine coefficient thresholds (ccv), which were set at 2/2/20, 4/3/20, and 3/3/20, respectively. Additionally, the settings "Usage 180 = 50" and "Usage 2013 = 50" were applied. Pruning methods such as Pathfinder, pruning sliced networks, and pruning the merged network were also selected. The choice of pruning sliced networks is made because time segmentation is analyzed to avoid networks that are too dense in certain time segments. The choice of pruning the merged network applies to analyzing the overall structure of the merged network.

This study extracted literature data related to corporate social responsibility and corporate competitiveness from the WoSCC and analyzed it from various perspectives, including keyword co-occurrence, keyword clustering, timeline mapping, author mapping, and publication volume analysis.

## 2. Results and Discussion

### 2.1. Keyword Co-Occurrence

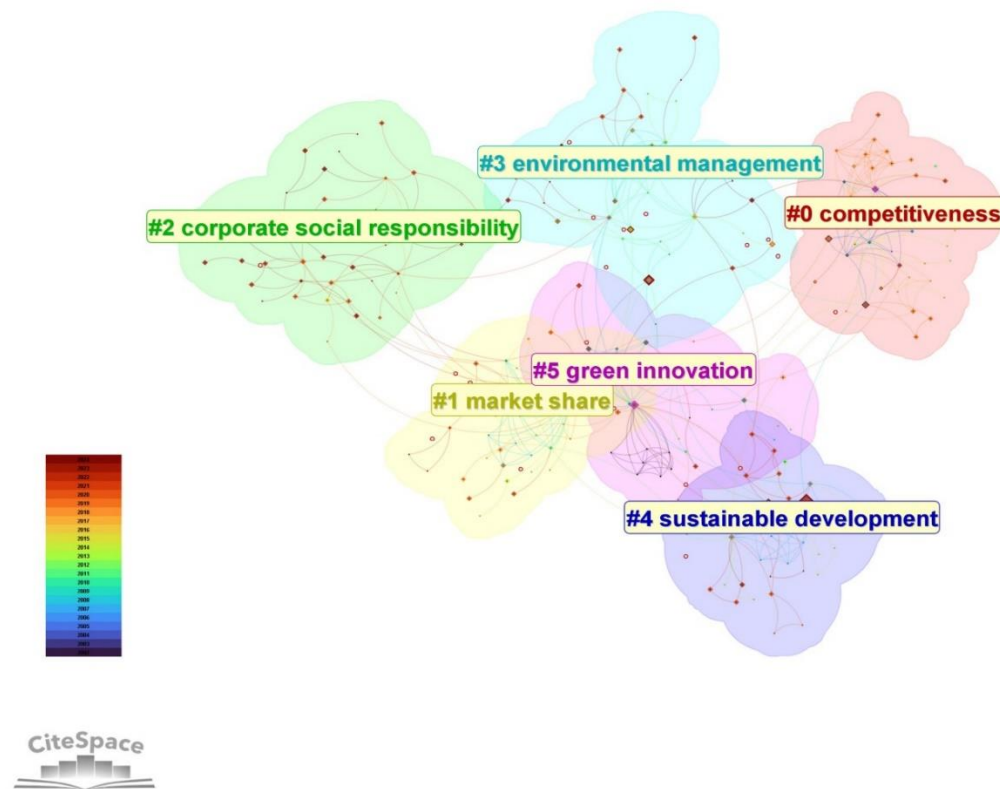
The keyword co-occurrence map displays frequently occurring keywords and their co-occurrence relationships, highlighting research hotspots and development trends in a specific field [9]. The visualization map of keyword co-occurrence intuitively demonstrates the relational network among keywords, facilitating an understanding of the structure and main research directions of the knowledge domain [7, 8].

To analyze the keyword co-occurrence in the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate competitiveness, this study applied the pruning parameter (pruning: pathfinder), resulting in 144 nodes and 235 links, with a density of 0.0228 (Figure 1). Table 1 lists the top 10 keywords from January 2000 to June 31, 2024, ranked by co-citation frequency and centrality. The most frequent keywords are *corporate social responsibility* (493/0.02), *performance* (155/0.01), *impact* (142/0.04), *financial performance* (139/0.01), and *management* (121/0.04).

One of the key indicators for measuring corporate competitiveness is financial performance [10] which represents a dimension of corporate competitiveness [11]. In recent years, some scholars have explored financial performance as a dimension of corporate competitiveness, examining the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on corporate competitiveness [12]. Consequently, *corporate social responsibility*, *performance*, *impact*, and *financial performance* are the most frequently occurring keywords. *Management* appears as a high-frequency keyword because CSR is an essential component of corporate strategic management, and companies can enhance their competitiveness by fulfilling their social responsibilities [13].



protection and sustainable development [19]. Promoting green innovation helps companies reduce environmental impact, create new market opportunities, and enhance competitiveness [20].



**Figure 2.**  
Keyword Clustering Network Knowledge Map.

**Table 2.**  
Information on Six Keyword Co-occurrence Groups.

Cluster ID	Size	Silhouette	Mean (Year)	Label
#0	42	0.924	2012	competitiveness
#1	41	0.911	2013	market share
#2	39	0.687	2020	corporate social responsibility
#3	38	0.891	2015	environmental management
#4	34	0.937	2014	sustainable development
#5	34	0.867	2010	green innovation

### 2.3. Keyword Bursts

Keyword bursts are used to identify sudden changes or explosive growth in research hotspots within a specific area, revealing keywords that were frequently discussed during certain time periods and reflecting the dynamic evolution of the field. Figure 3 shows keyword bursts from 2002 to June 2024. The strongest keyword burst is environment management (8.16), followed by business ethics (4.23), competitiveness (4.19), dynamic capability (3.79), and implementation (3.18). The keywords with the longest burst durations are corporate social performance (10 years), business ethics (12 years), issue (6 years), perspective (6 years), corporate social responsibility (3 years), environmental management (3 years), stakeholders (3 years), implementation (3 years), and foreign direct investment (3 years).

In summary, the key factors through which corporate social responsibility (CSR) impacts corporate competitiveness are environmental management, business ethics, and corporate social performance. Environmental management is the strongest burst keyword in CSR research, indicating that it has become a vital component of CSR and is directly related to corporate competitiveness. Effective environmental management not only enhances corporate image but also reduces operational costs and strengthens market competitiveness.

Business ethics and corporate social performance have been long-standing areas of focus, reflecting the profound influence of CSR's ethical and performance aspects on corporate competitiveness. Fulfilling CSR responsibilities also promotes corporate dynamic capabilities and competitiveness. The burst keyword dynamic capability shows that CSR helps companies cultivate flexibility and adaptability in rapidly changing external environments. By undertaking CSR, companies



can identify new opportunities during transformations and maintain competitive advantages through enhanced dynamic capabilities.

The burst of competitiveness as a keyword further highlights the close relationship between CSR and competitiveness, emphasizing the critical role of strategic integration of CSR in boosting long-term corporate competitiveness. Keywords such as foreign direct investment, stakeholder management, and implementation indicate that the impact of CSR on corporate competitiveness has expanded from a single dimension to multidimensional practices. The long-term burst keywords corporate social performance and business ethics suggest that the relationship between CSR and competitiveness is not only a subject of temporary interest but also a continuously studied and practiced field.

### Top 23 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts



**Figure 3.**  
Keyword Burst.

#### 2.4. Timeline View

The main function of the timeline view is to lay out the keywords contained in different clusters over time, displaying their temporal distribution. The timeline view helps to track the evolution of research hotspots, providing a clear visualization of the emergence and development of key research themes and hotspots in a specific field over different periods [7]. As shown in Figure 4, the timeline view includes five keyword clusters on the right, each accompanied by several major keywords on the left. The timeline spans from 2002 to 2024.

From 2002 to 2005, the research focus in this field was on *sustainability*, *management*, and *competitive advantage*. This shift was influenced by the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa, which marked a new stage of global attention to sustainable development [21]. Companies gradually realized that integrating sustainability into business strategies was not only a necessary response to the global agenda but also a crucial pathway to enhancing competitiveness. Researchers began exploring how sustainable development strategies could achieve long-term corporate benefits [22]. Traditional competitive advantage primarily focused on short-term financial gains, but during this period, the focus shifted towards long-term value indicators such as brand reputation, employee loyalty, and innovation capabilities [23]. From 2005 to 2010, the focus shifted to *economic performance* and *environmental sustainability*. The 2008 global financial crisis triggered a worldwide economic downturn, putting pressure on companies to survive. Research began to focus on how CSR could directly impact economic performance [24]. Shareholders and investors increasingly emphasized the connection between CSR and economic performance, with CSR being viewed as a crucial indicator for assessing a company's risk resilience and long-term investment value [25]. From 2010 to 2015, the focus shifted to *business performance* and *stakeholders*. During this period, CSR was regarded as an important means to improve corporate performance, rather than merely a moral obligation [26]. Research concentrated on how CSR positively impacted corporate performance by enhancing corporate image, strengthening brand loyalty, and improving competitiveness [27, 28]. In 2011, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) released the ISO 26000 guidelines for social responsibility, emphasizing that CSR practices should comprehensively consider stakeholder needs. Companies began systematically integrating stakeholder management into CSR strategies [29]. From 2015 to 2020, the focus shifted to *image*, *reputation*, and *loyalty*. With intensified market competition, especially in industries with abundant consumer choices, corporate image and reputation became key factors for brand differentiation. CSR practices helped companies build a positive and credible brand image [30]. During this period, consumers became increasingly concerned about corporate social and environmental responsibilities, tending to

support companies that practiced CSR. CSR initiatives fostered emotional identification among consumers, thereby enhancing brand loyalty [31].

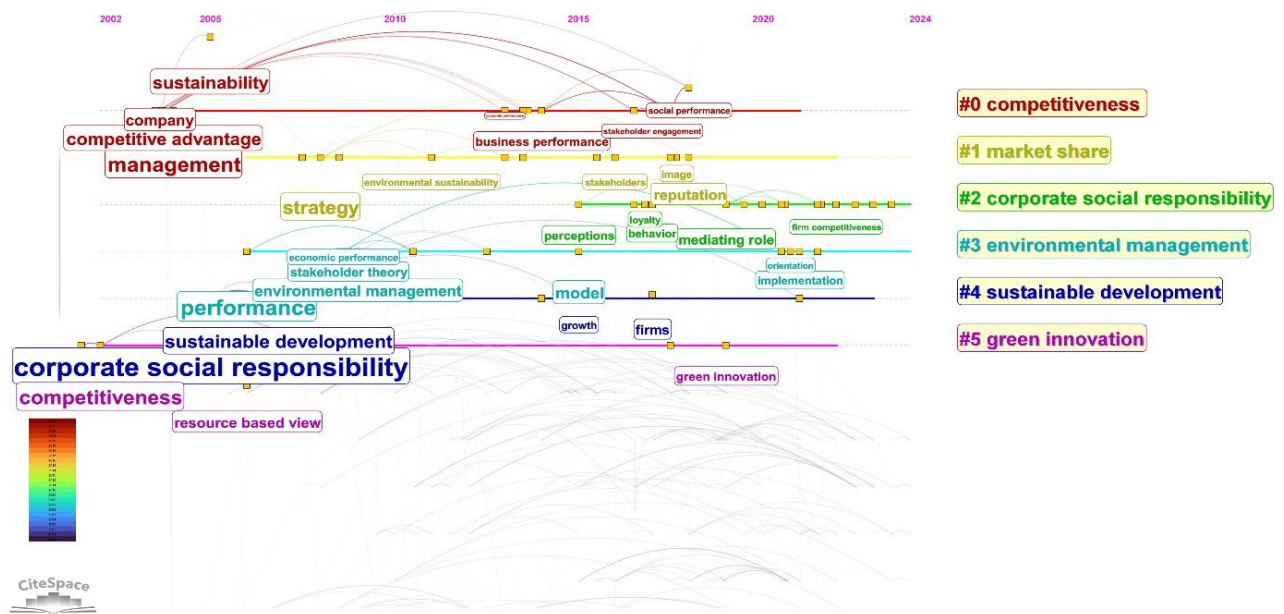


Figure 4.  
Timeline Map.

## 2.5. Author Map

In the author map, each node represents an author. The larger the node, the greater the number of papers published or citations received by that author within the selected time frame, indicating greater influence [32]. To analyze information about authors in this research field, this study used CiteSpace software, setting the time span to 2002–2024, the time slicing to 1, selecting “Author” as the node type, and applying the “Pathfinder” and “Pruning the merged network” trimming options. After running the analysis, the map produced 485 nodes, 242 links, and a network density of 0.0021, as shown in Figure 5. In this study, the authors with the highest number of publications were Isabel Sanchez-Hernandez, M, and Popescu, Cristina Raluca Gh, each publishing 4 papers. According to Table 3, there are 60 authors who published 2 or more papers, collectively contributing 133 publications. Combining Figure 5 and Table 3, it can be observed that the collaboration network density among authors is 0.0021, indicating limited collaboration among authors. The network is relatively dispersed, with most works being solo publications. This suggests that a core group of authors or research teams has not yet formed, and the field is still in its early stages, with limited collaboration among scholars.



Figure 5.  
Author Map.

**Table 3.**  
Statistics of Core Authors' Publication Counts.

No.	Author	Year	Number of Publications	No.	Author	Year	Number of Publications
1	Isabel sanchez-hernandez, M	2017	4	31	Dvorakova, Lilia	2014	2
2	Popescu, Cristina Raluca Gh	2019	4	32	Fontoura, Pedro	2022	2
3	Afum, Ebenezer	2020	3	33	Frey, Marco	2012	2
4	Agyabeng-mensah, Yaw	2020	3	34	Gallardo-vazquez, Dolores	2019	2
5	Ahmad, Naveed	2022	3	35	Gheorghe, Stefan	2012	2
6	Coelho, Arnaldo	2017	3	36	Jansova, Marketa	2010	2
7	Das, Debadyuti	2017	3	37	Kolcava, Dennis	2021	2
8	Del baldo, Mara	2013	3	38	Kucharcikova, Alzbeta	2018	2
9	Kunz, Vilem	2010	3	39	Li, Shuangjie	2021	2
10	Urbancova, Hana	2021	3	40	Lu, Jintao	2020	2
11	Vrabcova, Pavla	2021	3	41	Managi, Shunsuke	2022	2
12	Acquah, Innocent Senyo Kwasi	2020	2	42	Miciak, Martin	2018	2
13	Adamek, Pavel	2013	2	43	Miotto, Giorgia	2017	2
14	Adomako, Samuel	2022	2	44	Polo-lopez, Marc	2017	2
15	Anwar, Muhammad	2021	2	45	Popkova, Elena	2021	2
16	Apospori, Eleni	2012	2	46	Prskavcova, Martina	2010	2
17	Baah, Charles	2022	2	47	Ren, Licheng	2020	2
18	Bagur-femenias, Llorenc	2015	2	48	Rom-rodriguez, Josep	2017	2
19	Barrena-martinez, Jesus	2015	2	49	Scholderer, Joachim	2021	2
20	Battaglia, Massimo	2012	2	50	Srpova, Jitka	2010	2
21	Bejtkovsky, Jiri	2015	2	51	Streimikis, Justas	2020	2
22	Ben lahouel, Bechir	2022	2	52	Taleb, Lotfi	2022	2
23	Ben zaied, Younes	2022	2	53	Turtureanu, Anca	2012	2
24	Bernauer, Thomas	2021	2	54	Ullah, Zia	2022	2
25	Bianchi, Lara	2012	2	55	Usmani, Muhammad Shahjahan	2022	2
26	Boehe, Dirk Michael	2008	2	56	Valeri, Marco	2021	2
27	Camilleri, Mark Anthony	2022	2	57	Veloso, Claudia Miranda	2021	2
28	Chramostova, Ivana	2010	2	58	Vrontis, Demetris	2020	2
29	Christofi, Michael	2020	2	59	Walter, Cicero Eduardo	2021	2
30	Cruz, Luciano Barin	2008	2	60	Zak, Ondrej	2010	2

### 3. Findings and Conclusions

Based on bibliometric analysis of the Web of Science (WOS) and the visualization capabilities of CiteSpace software, this study analyzed the literature on the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and competitiveness from 2002 to June 2024. Through knowledge mapping, it examined the research hotspots and content on the relationship between CSR and competitiveness, leading to the following findings and conclusions.

#### 3.1. Findings

The most frequent keywords are corporate social responsibility, performance, impact, financial performance, and management. Keyword clustering includes competitiveness, market share, corporate social responsibility, environmental management, sustainable development, and green innovation. The strongest keyword burst is environmental management, followed by business ethics, competitiveness, dynamic capability, and implementation. The keywords with the longest burst durations are corporate social performance, business ethics, issue, perspective, corporate social responsibility, environmental

management, stakeholders, implementation, and foreign direct investment. In terms of timeline view, the research focus in this field was on sustainability, management, and competitive advantage from 2002 to 2005; from 2005 to 2010, the focus shifted to economic performance and environmental sustainability; from 2010 to 2015, the focus shifted to business performance and stakeholders; from 2015 to 2020, the focus shifted to image, reputation, and loyalty. In this study, the authors with the highest number of publications were Isabel Sanchez-Hernandez, M., and Popescu, Cristina Raluca Gh., each publishing 4 papers.

### 3.2. Conclusions

From the perspective of research hotspots, scholars explore CSR from perspectives such as customer trust and loyalty, brand image, corporate reputation, and green innovation. Fulfilling CSR enhances customer trust and loyalty, improves brand image and corporate reputation, and promotes green innovation, thereby strengthening corporate competitiveness.

From the perspective of research trends, the content of research on CSR and competitiveness is evolving. The key factors through which corporate social responsibility (CSR) impacts corporate competitiveness are environmental management, business ethics, and corporate social performance. The role of CSR in enhancing corporate competitiveness has expanded from a single dimension to multidimensional practices. The focus of CSR research has shifted from its impact on economic performance to enhancing corporate image, and subsequently to the integration of stakeholder needs in CSR practices. Meanwhile, research on competitiveness has transitioned from traditional financial gains to long-term indicators such as employee loyalty and innovation capabilities.

## 4. Implications

Since the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on competitiveness may vary at different stages of a company's development, future research could explore the relationship between CSR and competitiveness from a dynamic perspective. Additionally, scholars could investigate the effects of CSR from both short-term and long-term perspectives, focusing on the interplay between digitalization and sustainable development and examining the role of CSR in the process of digital transformation.

For businesses, corporate social responsibility (CSR) serves as a strategic tool for enhancing competitiveness. CSR drives companies to develop sustainable products or services, contributing to the creation of differentiated competitive advantages. As international markets increasingly demand higher CSR standards, companies need to proactively plan and implement CSR strategies to secure a favorable position in global competition. For policymakers, governments can encourage businesses to actively undertake CSR, promoting the coordinated development of the economy, society, and environment while advancing sustainable development policies. By guiding companies through policies to practice CSR, a win-win scenario for businesses and society can be achieved, creating synergistic effects in addressing social issues.

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