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From Blue Economy to *Blue Marketing*: Linking Consumer Engagement and Corporate Strategy for Ocean Sustainability—Theoretical Foundations and Propositions

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ABSTRACT

Blue economy advocates the sustainable use of marine resources while fostering economic growth and environmental preservation. Yet many business sectors still pursue extractive practices that undermine marine ecosystems and disregard consumers' sensitivity. This gap between principles and practices underscores the need for approaches that reconcile market dynamics with imperatives of sustainability. Within this framework, sustainable marketing provides a foundation, and this study advances it by introducing the construct of *blue marketing*, defined as strategies that promote the responsible use of marine resources by reorienting consumption behaviors, redefining corporate value propositions, and strengthening stakeholder collaboration. The study adopts two analytical perspectives—the supply and demand sides—and draws on two sets of articles. These underpin a threefold methodological approach: a bibliometric analysis of the field's intellectual structure, a systematic review of theoretical frameworks and marketing implications, and six propositions on the future role of marketing in the blue economy.

1 | Introduction

Blue economy represents a key economic sector, sustaining over 100 million full-time equivalent jobs (OECD 2025). The concept of blue economy, also referred to as *ocean economy*, *coastal economy*, or *marine economy*, formally emerged in 2012 during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, where it was introduced as a growth model focused on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of the oceans (Yoshioka et al. 2020). As defined by UNECA (2016), the blue economy combines socioeconomic benefits with ecological conservation, promoting economic growth, social inclusion, and improved livelihoods while ensuring the environmental sustainability of aquatic ecosystems. Although this vision aligns with the principles of sustainable development, many blue economy sectors favor intensive short-term exploitation, threatening

the ecological balance and resilience of the oceans (Rayner et al. 2019). This tendency overlooks consumers' growing ecological sensitivity, which increasingly shapes purchasing choices and is a crucial lever for building long-term engagement. The literature shows that consumers reward firms with genuine environmental commitment (White et al. 2019), while those that ignore sustainability face reputational damage and eroding trust. In the blue economy, neglecting this dimension not only undermines environmental goals but also weakens the long-term competitiveness of firms operating in marine-based sectors.

Sustainability-oriented marketing has proven strategically relevant across several blue economy sectors. By adopting an eco-centric orientation, it helps reshape consumption patterns through transparent communication, redesigns value propositions around the triple bottom line, and fosters stakeholder

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collaboration to support marine conservation objectives (Bocken et al. 2019; Schmuck et al. 2018). These practices are especially valuable in ocean stewardship branding, circular economy initiatives, offshore renewable energy communication, and responsible tourism development (Brodie Rudolph et al. 2020; Konietzko et al. 2023; Mai and Truong 2024; Wang et al. 2025). However, the expanding use of sustainability marketing in marine industries does not resolve a more fundamental theoretical question: what is marketing specific role within the blue economy? Existing research has examined governance arrangements (Das et al. 2024; Raakjaer et al. 2014), sustainability transitions (Brodie Rudolph et al. 2020), and technological or industrial innovation (Lee et al. 2020). In parallel, marketing scholarship has developed robust frameworks—sustainable marketing (Kemper and Ballantine 2019), green marketing (Peattie and Crane 2005), CSR communication (Du et al. 2010), and regenerative business models (Konietzko et al. 2023). Yet these streams have largely evolved in isolation, leaving unresolved how institutional governance pressures translate into firm-level marketing strategies, how these strategies activate consumer participation, and how such interactions generate measurable socio-ecological outcomes in marine systems (Vargo and Lusch 2016).

The problem is not the absence of sustainability-oriented marketing practices in marine industries, but the lack of a conceptual framework that explains the governance-to-market mechanism through which governance arrangements, organizational marketing capabilities, and consumer engagement jointly contribute to ecosystem regeneration and long-term competitiveness. Existing constructs explain these elements separately, but none conceptualizes the mechanism linking them (Jaakkola 2020). Limits in current frameworks clarify this gap. Sustainable marketing provides a broad normative orientation but insufficiently addresses the governance complexity, common-pool resource dynamics, and multi-stakeholder tensions in marine systems (Kemper and Ballantine 2019). Green marketing focuses primarily on product-level environmental attributes and overlooks territorial embeddedness, cultural ecosystem services, and place-based legitimacy (Peattie and Crane 2005). CSR communication emphasizes reputational outcomes but tends to cast consumers as message recipients rather than active stewards of shared marine resources (Du et al. 2010). Regenerative business models prioritize ecological restoration but under-specify the market mechanisms of consumer engagement, value co-creation, and symbolic-territorial branding through which regeneration becomes economically viable (Konietzko et al. 2023).

The blue economy differs from conventional sustainability contexts in three ways. First, marine resources are common-pool resources, requiring governance arrangements that extend beyond traditional firm–consumer relationships (Ostrom 2009). Second, ocean-based industries are deeply embedded in territorial identities and cultural meanings, making place-based legitimacy a central strategic resource (Suchman 1995). Third, marine governance is multilevel and nested, involving local, national, and supranational institutions that both constrain and enable firm behavior (Ostrom 2009). These features alter core assumptions in marketing theory by making value creation contingent on the alignment of institutional, organizational, and consumer-level processes (Vargo and Lusch 2016).

Consequently, existing marketing frameworks do not provide a unified theoretical explanation capable of integrating these dimensions within a single analytical model. Accordingly, a new construct—*blue marketing*—should not be understood as a marine variant of sustainable marketing, but as a distinct theoretical construct. While existing frameworks offer valuable insights into sustainability-related market dynamics, they remain collectively insufficient to explain how governance pressures, firm-level strategic responses, and consumer co-creation processes interact within marine common-pool resource systems. *Blue marketing* conceptualizes marketing as the strategic interface connecting governance systems, organizational capabilities, consumer engagement, and ecosystem regeneration. As a middle-range construct, it explains how institutional and ecological pressures translate into market practices that generate competitive advantage, stimulate consumer participation, and build marine socio-ecological resilience.

In doing so, *blue marketing* addresses a missing integrative mechanism in the literature: a unit of analysis that explains how governance logics, market dynamics, and ecological outcomes coevolve in ocean-based contexts. Taken together, these limitations indicate that merely extending existing marketing frameworks would leave this governance-to-market mechanism theoretically under-specified. The development of *blue marketing* should therefore be regarded not as an incremental refinement of sustainable marketing, but as a necessary theoretical advancement that integrates previously disconnected streams of research (Jaakkola 2020). *Blue marketing* provides an integrative perspective that coherently connects governance, business strategy, marketing capabilities, consumer behavior, and ecosystem regeneration within a single theoretical framework.

This conceptual positioning motivates the following research questions:

- RQ1.** Which academic sources are most influential in the blue economy literature, and how do they address marketing?
- RQ2.** How does the blue economy literature examine consumer behavior and its implications?
- RQ3.** How does the blue economy literature examine corporate strategies and their implications?
- RQ4.** How does literature integrate managerial and consumer dimensions in shaping the blue economy?
- RQ5.** What future is envisaged for a blue economy concept that integrates corporate strategies and consumer behaviors, including marketing aspects?

The paper is structured as follows (Figure 1). The first section presents the theoretical background, addressing consumer and business perspectives in the blue economy. The second section details the methodology of the three studies. The third section presents the discussion, implications, and future research agenda. Finally, the fourth section concludes by summarizing the key contributions and highlighting the relevance of the proposed *blue marketing* framework for advancing sustainable practices in marine-based sectors.

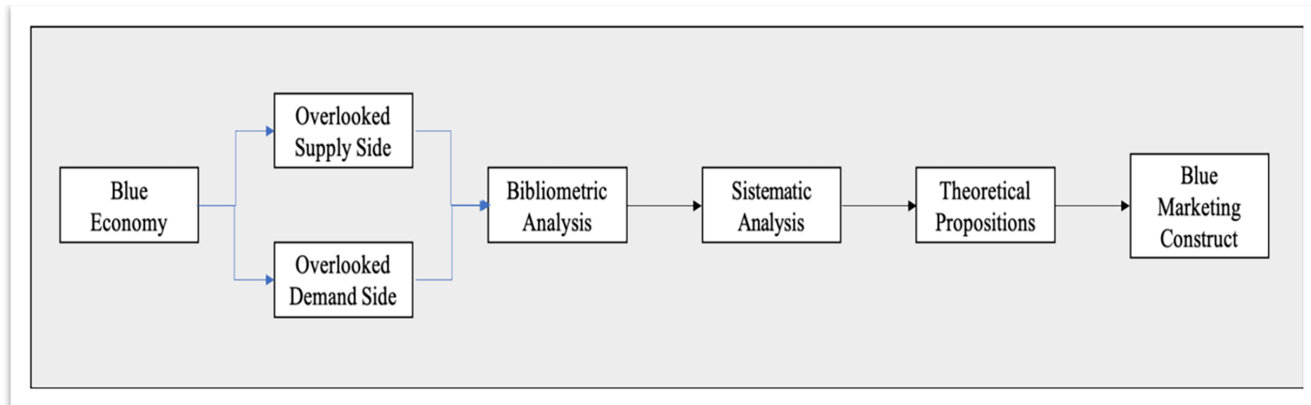


FIGURE 1 | Research design.

2 | Theoretical Background

2.1 | Consumer Perspectives in the Blue Economy

While the blue economy has gained attention as a model for sustainable ocean-based development, consumer behavior in this domain remains underexplored—especially how businesses interpret, communicate, and deliver blue economy values. Despite the proliferation of sustainability narratives in marine sectors, the literature has only partially addressed the link between blue policies and consumer perceptions. Recent studies indicate that food-related lifestyles, social influences, and participatory governance dynamics shape how individuals react to and engage with blue economy products and services (Das et al. 2024; Van Bussel et al. 2022). Research has largely focused on macro-level policy frameworks, often neglecting the micro-foundations of market demand, such as consumers' motivations, trust, and willingness to pay for ocean-friendly goods (White et al. 2019). From the consumer's perspective, the blue economy remains an abstract concept, poorly translated into everyday purchasing context. Brands in marine and coastal sectors often fail to articulate clear and credible value propositions grounded in ocean sustainability, contributing to low marine literacy and limited engagement (Wang et al. 2025). Even environmentally conscious consumers struggle to distinguish between greenwashing and authentic commitments to marine conservation due to vague labels, inconsistent standards, and fragmented communication (White et al. 2019). Moreover, while sustainable consumption research has expanded in terrestrial contexts (e.g., food, fashion, energy), its application to marine-based consumption (e.g., seafood, coastal tourism, or sea-based cosmetics) remains nascent and often lacks consumer-centered empirical studies (see Mai and Truong 2024). Without insights into consumer values and decision-making, firms risk misaligning their offerings with market expectations, undermining both environmental outcomes and competitive positioning. There is an urgent need for interdisciplinary research that bridges marketing science, behavioral economics, and marine studies to map consumer typologies, identify behavior change levers, and evaluate the effectiveness of *blue marketing* strategies. Advancing sustainable consumption in the blue economy requires the coevolution of consumer awareness and business transformation (Sharma et al. 2025).

2.2 | Business Perspectives in the Blue Economy

The relationship between the blue economy and business practice is receiving growing attention in sustainability debates, yet scholars still offer limited insight into how firms interpret and operationalize blue economy principles. While policy and environmental studies have extensively investigated ecological and governance dimensions (Voyer and van Leeuwen 2019), corporate and managerial implications remain underexplored. Bennett et al. (2025) highlight a persistent gap in understanding how companies engage with blue economy paradigms through innovation, business models, and market strategies. This gap is critical because businesses act as a primary vector for translating blue economy goals into practice. Rising public concern about ocean degradation and climate change is pressuring firms to adopt sustainability-oriented marketing approaches (White et al. 2019). In this sense, the emerging role of marketing in the blue economy provides an important bridge between sustainability objectives and corporate strategy. *Blue marketing* encompasses actions, narratives, and innovations that promote responsible marine resource use while enhancing brand equity and customer loyalty. Recent studies underscore the strategic value of storytelling, eco-labeling, and digital transparency in communicating commitments to ocean stewardship (Wang et al. 2025). Nonetheless, empirical applications remain fragmented. Few studies examine how companies integrate marine sustainability into value propositions, customer engagement, or product development. Most research gravitates toward environmental policy or general sustainable consumption, leaving a substantial managerial void (Bennett et al. 2025; Voyer and van Leeuwen 2019). This limits the operationalization of blue economy principles within firms and underscores the need for an integrative agenda that explicitly incorporates marketing and business strategy. Some sectors offer encouraging evidence: in fisheries and aquaculture, firms have implemented certification schemes and blockchain-enabled traceability systems to document sustainable sourcing, while coastal tourism operators promote low-impact experiences linked to marine biodiversity conservation (Mai and Truong 2024; Mileti et al. 2022; Penca et al. 2023). These practices appeal to ethically oriented consumers and strengthen ecological resilience. Transparency-driven strategies enhance brand credibility and competitiveness (Schmuck et al. 2018). Parallel insights from Bocken et al. (2019) emphasize the centrality of business model

TABLE 1 | Research questions and analytical framework.

Research question	Analytical focus	Expected contribution	Related study
RQ1. What are the most influential academic sources in the blue economy literature, and how do they address marketing-related aspects?	Identifying the most influential journals, authors, and thematic domains through bibliometric analysis	Mapping the academic landscape and highlighting the intersection between the blue economy and marketing/management research	1
RQ2. How does literature on the blue economy examine consumer behaviors and their implications?	Mapping conceptual evolution and thematic relationships in the demand-side literature in the blue economy	Identifying the main research themes and key drivers of consumer behaviors in the demand-side literature of the blue economy, highlighting their conceptual evolution and thematic relationships	1
RQ3. How does literature on the blue economy examine corporate strategies and their implications?	Mapping conceptual evolution and thematic relationships in supply-side literature in the blue economy.	Identifying the main research themes and key drivers of corporate strategies in the supply-side literature of the blue economy, highlighting their conceptual evolution and thematic relationships	2
RQ4. How does literature integrate managerial and consumer dimensions in shaping the blue economy?	Synthesizing the main supply-side and demand-side research themes identified in the blue economy literature.	Identifying the key drivers of marketing strategies in the existing blue economy literature, focusing on corporate approaches and consumer behaviors	2
RQ5. What future can be envisaged for a new concept of the blue economy that integrates corporate strategies and consumer behaviors, including marketing-related aspects?	Identifying underexplored areas and formulating new theoretical propositions	Introducing the conceptual framework of <i>blue marketing</i> as a bridge between sustainability and marine resource management	3

innovation in sustainability transitions, including circular initiatives using recycled ocean plastics, renewable marine energy integration, and support for ecosystem restoration. Konietzko et al. (2023) argue that technological innovation must be complemented by participatory processes involving communities, NGOs, and marine stakeholders. Significant barriers persist. Fragmented ocean governance, sectoral silos, uneven sustainability standards, and limited cross-sector dialogue constrain corporate engagement with blue economy principles (Rayner et al. 2019; Voyer and van Leeuwen 2019). Moreover, many marine industries remain dominated by extractive, short-term logics that conflict with regenerative, resilience-oriented strategies (Sharma et al. 2025).

3 | Methodology

3.1 | Procedure

The study examines two dimensions largely overlooked in the blue economy literature: (1) corporate strategies and supply-side dynamics, and (2) consumer behaviors and demand-side decision-making. To investigate these, we adopted a Bibliometric-Systematic Literature Review (B-SLR) approach (Marzi et al. 2025), integrating quantitative bibliometric network analysis with the qualitative depth of a systematic review. This method suits emergent constructs such as *blue marketing* by systematically mapping existing knowledge while enabling interpretative theory development. However, bibliometric indicators can overrepresent established streams and underrepresent emergent, interdisciplinary, or practice-oriented work (Zupic and Čater 2015). To mitigate this, we complemented the bibliometric analysis with a systematic review following PRISMA guidelines (Page et al. 2020) and conducted Google

Scholar searches to capture grey literature and emerging scholarship. We adopted a dual supply–demand lens to address fragmentation in the literature, while acknowledging that this distinction may oversimplify interconnected market dynamics. The B-SLR procedure comprised three steps. First, to explore the relationship between the blue economy and marketing practices, we conducted a bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer (Van Eck and Waltman 2010). We mapped co-citation and keyword co-occurrence networks across Scopus and Web of Science to identify thematic clusters and underexplored domains, following the inverted sequence validated by Li et al. (2025). Second, building on these insights, we performed a Systematic Literature Review according to the PRISMA protocol (Page et al. 2020). Third, based on the two previous studies, we developed six propositions to inform and improve marketing policies for the blue economy, promoting more sustainable use of marine products by consumers and companies. Table 1 summarizes the research questions and shows how each one aligns with the study's analytical dimensions.

3.2 | Study 1: Bibliometric Review

To build a robust knowledge base and map the current state of the literature, we carried out two parallel bibliometric studies. Bibliographic samples were retrieved from Scopus, EBSCO, ABI/INFORM, and PubMed. These platforms were selected for their complementary strengths: Scopus for extensive indexing in social sciences and management; EBSCO and ABI/INFORM for business and marketing coverage; and PubMed for ecological and environmental studies. This multi-source strategy ensures regularly updated data, broad interdisciplinary coverage, and high reliability (Page et al. 2020; Valenzuela et al. 2017).

TABLE 2 | Procedure for data collection from the supply side.

Step	Action	Number
1	Scopus query as of 09/09/2024: (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("blue economy") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("blue growth") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("sea economy") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("coastal economy") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("ocean economy") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("marine economy") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("firm") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("policy maker") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("company") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("organization") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("enterprise") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("venture") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("marketing") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("management"))	142
2	Time frame selection: 2012–2024, with the exclusion of 2025: AND PUBYEAR > 2011 AND PUBYEAR < 2025	137
3	Selection of articles published in the journal: AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "article"))	101
4	Selection of articles in English: AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"))	97

Keywords were developed iteratively. We first generated descriptors through exploratory searches (see Tables 2 and 3), then validated them by a marketing expert focus group to delimit the scope. For the blue economy corpus, we used *blue economy*, *ocean economy*, *sea economy*, *marine economy*, *coast economy*, and *blue growth* (Lee et al. 2020). For the supply-side perspective, we replaced demand-side terms with firm, policy maker, company, organization, enterprise, and venture to isolate research on the strategic roles of corporations, public bodies, and institutional actors in managing and marketing the blue economy. For the demand-side perspective, we replaced demand-side keywords with firm, policy maker, company, organization, enterprise, and venture to isolate research on the strategic role of corporations, public bodies, and institutional actors in managing and marketing the blue economy. These were combined using Boolean operators with demand-side keywords—*consumer*, *user*, *customer*, *end user*, *buyer*, *purchaser*—and with *marketing* and *management* to identify studies on consumption dynamics of blue economy products and services.

3.2.1 | Study Selection

The search strategy identified all studies in which the demand side first set of keywords appeared in the title, abstract, or author-provided keywords, yielding 63 articles that were then screened (Öztürk et al. 2024). The timeframe spans from 2012—when an earlier definition of the blue economy appeared (Yoshioka et al. 2020)—to 2024. Articles from 2025 were excluded to avoid distortions in citation counts (Khan et al. 2021). Additional filters limited the dataset to English-language,

TABLE 3 | Procedure for data collection from the demand side.

Step	Action	Number
1	Scopus query as of 09/09/2024: (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("blue economy") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("blue growth") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("sea economy") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("coastal economy") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("ocean economy") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("marine economy") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("consumer") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("user") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("end user") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("customer") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("buyer") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("purchaser") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("marketing") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("management"))	63
2	Time frame selection: 2012–2024, with the exclusion of 2025: AND PUBYEAR > 2011 AND PUBYEAR < 2025	60
3	Selection of articles published in the journal: AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "article"))	43
4	Selection of articles in English: AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"))	33

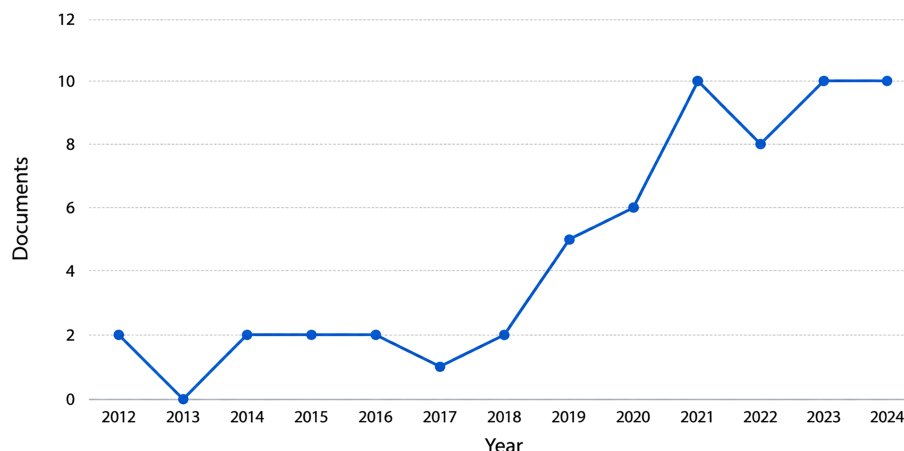
peer-reviewed journal articles. After screening, 33 articles were retained for the bibliometric analysis. This relatively small corpus underscores the underrepresentation of consumer-focused research and signals a priority area for future marketing and management inquiry in the blue economy (An and Choi 2025; Das et al. 2024).

The same inclusion criteria were applied to the second set of keywords (supply side), yielding a final dataset of 97 peer-reviewed articles. These studies analyze marketing and managerial approaches to the blue economy among suppliers of products and services. The bibliometric analysis proceeded in two stages. First, citation analysis identified the most prolific and most-cited sources addressing blue economy issues from both demand and supply perspectives within marketing and management. Second, science mapping detected thematic clusters in the field. This approach enabled a spatial representation of relationships among scientific themes and highlighted the main areas of scholarly inquiry (Mukherjee et al. 2022).

3.2.2 | Analysis of Demand-Side Factors in the Blue Economy Within Marketing and Management Contexts

To construct and visualize bibliometric maps and compute performance indicators, the two article sets were imported into VOSviewer (version 1.6.13; Centre for Science and Technology Studies, Leiden University). An analysis of sources identified the journals contributing most to the blue economy development. Figure 2 illustrates an increasing publication trend, with 26 journals publishing at least one relevant article. The mean citations per journal are 26, with a higher

Documents by year

**FIGURE 2** | The evolution of academic research on the blue economy from a demand-side marketing and management perspective.**TABLE 4** | The 10 most cited and the 10 most prolific sources in research on the blue economy from a demand-side marketing/management perspective.

Most cited sources	TC	Most prolific sources	TP
Ecosystem Services	97	Marine Policy	6
Marine Policy	79	Ocean and Coastal Management	4
Sustainability (Switzerland)	70	Journal of Coastal Research	3
Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries	61	Sustainability (Switzerland)	2
PLoS One	57	Frontiers in Marine Science	2
Frontiers in Marine Science	44	Journal of Operational Oceanography	2
International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law	41	Marine Pollution Bulletin	2
Axioms	33	Ecosystem Services	2
Journal of Operational Oceanography	23	Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries	1
Sustainable Technology and Entrepreneurship	21	PLoS One	1

Abbreviations: TC = total citations, TP = total publications.

standard deviation ($SD = 27$), indicating substantial variability and a skewed, nonuniform distribution of citations across journals.

A first notable finding is the absence of journals rated 3 or higher by the Chartered Association of Business Schools (ABS), as shown in Table 4 (infra), which reports the top 10 most cited and most prolific sources. *Ecosystem Services* has the highest number of cited sources (97), followed by *Marine Policy* (79) and *Sustainability* (70). *Marine Policy* published the most articles on the topic (6), followed by *Ocean and Coastal Management* (4) and *Journal of Coastal Research* (3). Most sources fall within the economic domain: *Marine Policy* addresses marine economics and policy; *Ocean and Coastal Management* focuses on managerial and economic aspects of coastal resources; *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* emphasizes economics in sustainable tourism; *Sustainability* centers on the sustainable economy; and *Journal of Coastal Research* spans coastal research, including geology, biology, geomorphology, climatology, coastal oceanography, hydrography, environmental resource management, and engineering.

A second phase of scientific mapping identified relationships between publications through *keyword co-occurrence analysis*. This approach detects conceptual linkages by examining how often two or more keywords appear together in the same documents (Donthu et al. 2021). The resulting network is interpreted through three dimensions: (1) node size, representing the keyword frequency and thus relative importance; (2) node color indicating the average publication year of documents containing the keyword and revealing temporal evolution (blue-green for earlier studies, yellow for more recent ones); and (3) spatial distance between nodes, reflecting the strength of co-occurrence and, by extension, thematic proximity. The overlay visualization (Figure 3) provides both temporal and structural perspective on the field's evolution. The map shows a dense network centered on the *blue economy*, *sustainable development*, *marine biodiversity*, and *marine policy*, the largest and most interconnected nodes—signaling established, mature research areas historically oriented toward environmental and ecological management of marine resources. In contrast, smaller, more peripheral nodes, such as *equity*, *social media*, *tourism management*, and *investments* (lighter yellow hues), indicate emerging, less

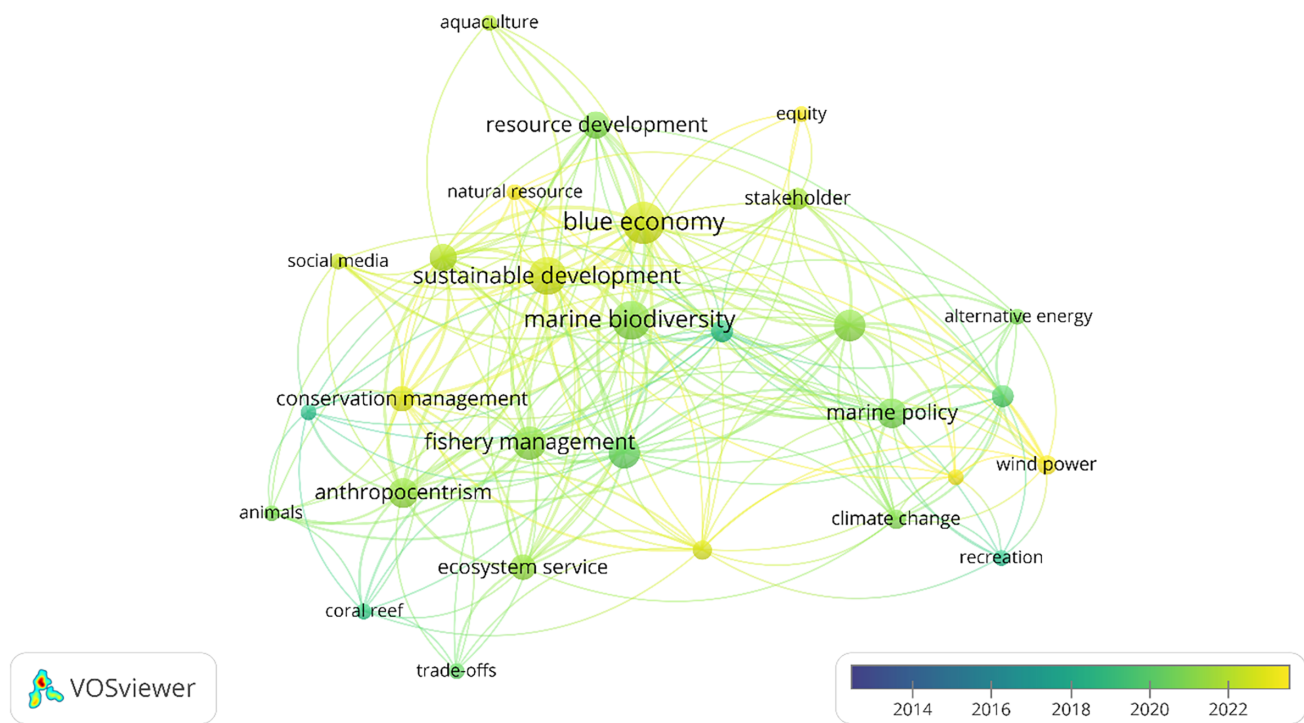


FIGURE 3 | Overlay visualization in the blue economy from a demand-side marketing and management perspective.

frequent topics. Although still limited in occurrence, their growing connections with core terms suggest a broadening of the blue economy paradigm toward social, behavioral, and value-oriented perspectives.

Table 5 reports the most frequently co-occurring terms (i.e., subtopics) within each theme identified by the co-occurrence network. Table 5 also documents the temporal span of related publications, distinguishing mature topics (average year ≤ 2019) from emerging ones (average year ≥ 2022), thereby outlining the field's development over time. Earlier studies emphasized biodiversity and the recreational use of marine services, whereas recent research integrates social justice, communication, and sustainable tourism management, linking consumer behavior and stakeholder engagement to marine sustainability. Together, the overlay map and the temporal profiling table indicate a gradual shift from ecological management frameworks to consumer-centered, participatory models of blue economy marketing.

The evolution of the *blue economy* literature shows a progressive expansion of its conceptual boundaries, shifting from ecological foundations to socioeconomic and governance dimensions. Early studies proposed an integrated economic–ecological framework for ecosystem-based fisheries management, linking biological productivity, fishing yields, and social welfare. The introduction of *cultural ecosystem services* (Jobstvøgt et al. 2014) broadened the focus to nonmaterial benefits derived from nature—such as identity, well-being, and experience—thereby strengthening the role of ecosystem valuation in environmental decision-making. Although initially framed within an anthropocentric paradigm, the ecosystem perspective marked a decisive shift toward a systemic, biocentric understanding of human-nature interdependence. A second consolidated theme concerns *recreation* and its

environmental implications. Ibabe et al. (2020) highlighted how recreational ports can act as sources of coastal pollution through emissions and species transfer. They argued that biodiversity protection should not rest solely with users but requires broad social responsibility and effective science-public communication to foster awareness and collective action.

More recent research indicates a thematic shift toward investments and tourism management. Rajakumar et al. (2021) emphasize innovative financing mechanisms for marine governance to channel capital toward sustainable ocean-based activities. Similarly, Machado and de Andrés (2023) identify offshore wind farms as key to climate goals, though such developments may adversely affect tourism and recreation by altering coastal landscapes and local well-being. Coastal destinations remain central to European tourism, underscoring the need for integrated management strategies that balance economic growth, ecosystem protection, and visitor experience (Spalding et al. 2023).

Emerging contributions connect sustainable development with technology (e.g., social media) and justice (e.g., equity). The notion of *blue equity* (Das et al. 2024) reflects this evolution, advocating inclusive, participatory, and decentralized governance models that recognize the agency of marginalized actors and the influence of global stakeholders within the blue economy framework.

3.2.3 | Analysis of Supply-Side Factors in the Blue Economy Within Marketing and Management Contexts

Similarly, analysis of supply side academic output confirms an upward trend in recent years (Figure 4). Integrating the supply- and demand-side datasets strengthens the study's robustness

TABLE 5 | Temporal profiling of key topics in the demand-side literature on the blue economy.

Mature themes (avg. year ≤ 2019)				
Topic	Subtopic	First year	Last year	Authors
Biodiversity	Ecosystem-based fisheries management; ecosystem service; cultural ecosystem service values; operational coastal service	2012	2022	Rendle and Rodwell (2014), Jobstvagt et al. (2014), Le Heron et al. (2016), Sangiuliano (2018), Mariani et al. (2018), Green et al. (2021), Schutter et al. (2021), Daly et al. (2021), Islam et al. (2022)
Recreation	Recreational users; recreational ports; coastal and maritime tourism and recreation areas.	2014	2023	Jobstvagt et al. (2014), Ibabe et al. (2020), Machado and de Andrés (2023)
Emerging themes (Avg. year ≥ 2022)				
Topic	Subtopic	First year	Last year	Authors
Investments		2021	2024	Green et al. (2021), Islam et al. (2022), Machado and de Andrés (2023), Bodwitch et al. (2024), Permani et al. (2024), Das et al. (2024)
Tourism management	Maritime tourism; nature-dependent tourism; tourist-focused conservation.	2021	2024	Schutter et al. (2021), Machado and de Andrés (2023), Spalding et al. (2023), Chen et al. (2024), Das et al. (2024)
Sustainable development	Renewable energy development; sustainable economic development; sustainable development goals; sustainable coastal and marine resource development; sectoral development, aquaculture sector	2015	2024	Young (2015), Grafeld et al. (2017): Waiti and Lorrenij (2018), Mariani et al. (2018), Daly et al. (2021), Geraldini et al. (2021), Green et al. (2021), Islam et al. (2022), Mello et al. (2023), Spalding et al. (2023), Das et al. (2024), Permani et al. (2024)
Social media	Local social media platforms	2020	2024	Ibabe et al. (2020), Chen et al. (2024)
Equity	Equitable spatial allocation solutions; equitable benefit sharing; equitable fisheries exploitation; blue equity	2019	2024	Lombard et al. (2019), Schutter et al. (2021), Islam et al. (2022), Hornborg (2023), Das et al. (2024)

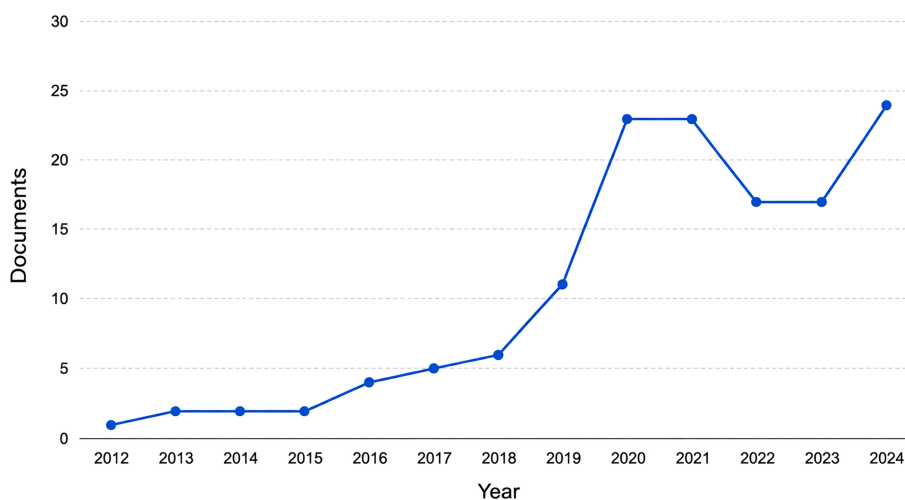
Documents by year**FIGURE 4** | The evolution of academic research on the blue economy from a supply-side marketing and management perspective.

TABLE 6 | The 10 most cited and the 10 most prolific sources in research on the blue economy from a supply-side marketing and management perspective.

Most cited sources	TC	Most prolific sources	TP
Marine Policy	534	Marine Policy	19
Ocean and Coastal Management	120	Journal of Coastal Research	11
Sustainability (Switzerland)	77	Ocean and Coastal Management	6
Renewable Energy	64	Sustainability (Switzerland)	6
Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society: Biological Sciences	42	Frontiers in Marine Science	3
Maritime Studies	37	Polish Maritime Research	3
Frontiers in Marine Science	33	Journal of Marine Science and Engineering	2
Polish Maritime Research	32	Coastal Management	2
Journal of Coastal Research	20	Renewable Energy	1
Journal of Coastal Conservation	18	Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society: Biological Sciences	1

Abbreviations: TC = total citations, TP = total publications.

by triangulating corporate strategies and consumer behaviors, ensuring that observed patterns reflect systemic dynamics in the blue economy rather than artifacts of a single perspective (Breslin and Gatrell 2023; Marzi et al. 2025). In total, 53 journals were identified with at least one publication on the topic, accounting for 97 articles, 38 of which received at least one citation. The mean citations per journal are approximately 30, with a standard deviation exceeding the mean ($SD = 87.40$), indicating a highly skewed distribution and the presence of a small number of particularly influential sources compared to the overall sample.

The analysis shows that, on the supply side, journals exhibit more citations and published articles than on the demand side, indicating a more consolidated body of research (Table 6). As on the demand side, no journal is rated ABS 3 or higher, suggesting that the debate unfolds in specialized, non-top-tier outlets. Among the leading journals, *Marine Policy* stands out with the highest number of cited sources and published papers, followed by *Ocean and Coastal Management* and the *Journal of Coastal Research*. While most of the journals examine the *blue economy* from an economic perspective, considerable thematic heterogeneity emerges: some focus on regulatory and policy implications, others on sustainable resource management, and another group adopts a technical-scientific approach, investigating the environmental and physical dynamics of marine and coastal systems.

The overlay map (Figure 5, below) visualizes the conceptual evolution of the blue economy from a supply-side perspective, highlighting the growing engagement of marketing and management research with marine topics over time. The limited presence of early (blue) nodes suggests that the intersection between the blue economy and management disciplines consolidated only after 2016. The central position of *blue economy*, in interaction with *decision-making*, *innovation*, and *industrial economics*, indicates that early work focused on structural and managerial dimension—governance, technological advancement, and production systems. Over time, new associations with *blue*

finance and *blue growth* (yellow) reflect a conceptual expansion toward strategic investment, financial innovation, and sustainable growth policies in the maritime sector.

Table 7 lists the most frequent co-occurring terms within each thematic cluster identified in the co-occurrence network, complementing the overlay visualization. Findings indicate a shift from traditional managerial concerns (e.g., efficiency, industrial organization, and decision-making) to a more strategic emphasis on finance, innovation, and sustainable growth. Within mature themes, *decision-making* is central: integrating Marine Cultural Heritage (MCH) into evidence-based decision-making enhances informed, sustainable governance across marine sectors (Henderson 2019). Similarly, Cobacho et al. (2020) propose an evidence-based framework for conserving and sustainably managing shellfish reefs as ecosystem services. Another consolidated area, *industrial economics*, highlights the role of marine industrial clusters in fostering innovation, competitiveness, and balanced growth between economic and environmental outcomes. Although mature, the *innovation* theme continues to evolve, with studies advocating eco-innovation strategies that unite organizational efficiency with ecological responsibility (Cappelletto et al. 2018; Sheth and Parvatiyar 2021), signaling greater integration of marketing principles into sustainability-oriented industrial practices. Emergent themes—*blue finance* and *blue growth*—reflect a recent financial and policy turn. *Blue finance*, has become a catalyst for innovation in marine industries (Sheng et al. 2021), while blue bonds (Thompson 2022) and public–private financial collaborations (Bennett et al. 2025) illustrate expanding use of financial instruments to support ocean sustainability. The *blue growth* framework (Abdelwahed and Bhat 2025; Bosmans and de Mariz 2023; Cappelletto et al. 2018) captures this transition by promoting innovation, employment, and environmental accountability. Overall, the overlay map and temporal analysis confirm a paradigmatic shift from operational and managerial models toward financially and strategically driven frameworks. Early studies prioritized governance and efficiency, whereas recent work emphasizes sustainable finance, innovation ecosystems, and long-term growth—positioning the

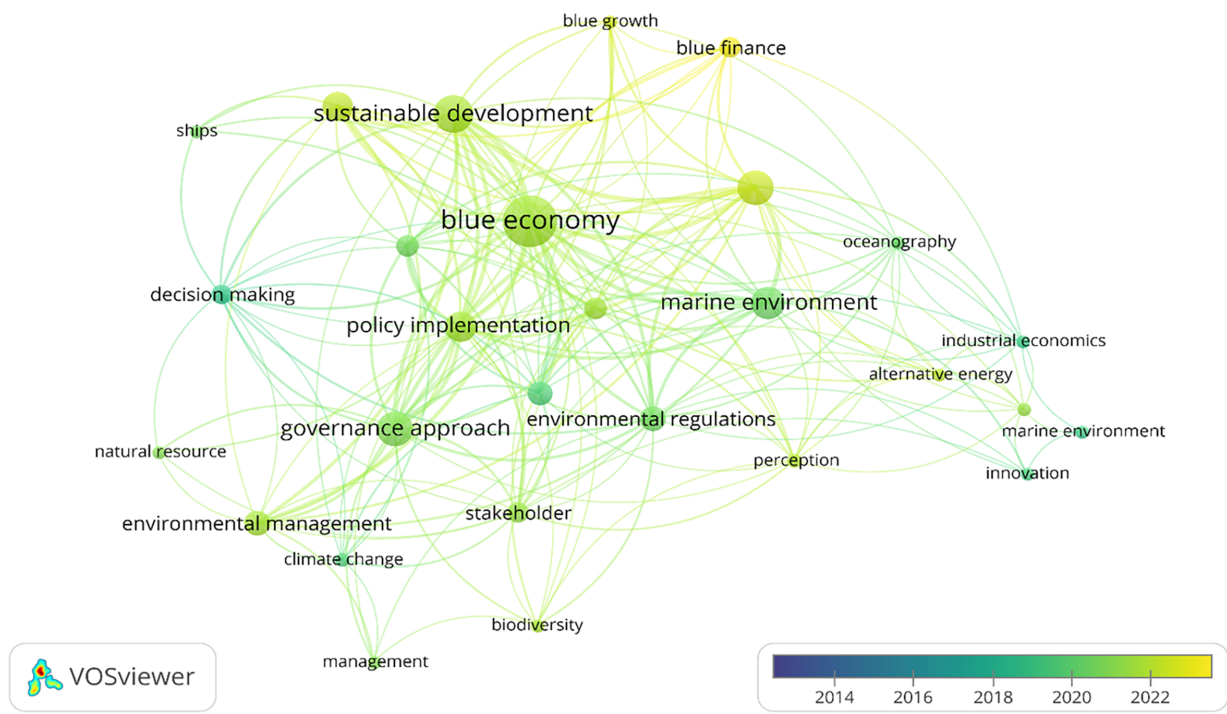


FIGURE 5 | Overlay visualization in the blue economy from a supply-side marketing and management perspective.

supply side of the blue economy as a key driver of systemic transformation and marine sustainability.

3.3 | Study 2: Systematic Literature Review

The SLR employed qualitative thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and interpret key themes and concepts, enabling a critical analysis of the knowledge base on blue-economy marketing and management and delineating gaps for future research (Post et al. 2002).

3.3.1 | Study Selection

The two article sets from the bibliometric phase formed the basis for the SLR. The methodological framework followed PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol (Page et al. 2020). After removing duplicates, 130 publications underwent titles-abstracts screening by two independent researchers. Inclusion required: (1) A sustainability-oriented perspective on the blue economy; (2) Marketing and/or management themes as strategic levers on the demand or supply side; and (3) Explicit marketing/management implications for promoting sustainable products, services, or strategies tied to responsible use of marine resources. Each title was classified as: (a) *definitely eligible*, (b) *probably eligible*, or (c) *not eligible*. The researchers reconciled assessments, with a senior reviewer resolving disagreements, yielding a preliminary pool of 64 publications (categories a and b). Full texts were then screened against content-based criteria, retaining 52 articles. Supplementary searches in Google Scholar identified five additional studies, for a final SLR sample of 57 articles. Figure 6 presents the PRISMA flow diagram.

3.3.2 | Results

Five main thematic clusters emerged from the PRISMA-based systematic analysis, aligned with the research questions outlined in Section 1—specifically RQ3 and RQ4. These clusters map the principal research themes in the blue economy and show how marketing and management strategies intersect with demand- and supply-side dynamics (Table 8): (1) *Consumer perceptions*, (2) *Blue finance and investments*, (3) *Sustainable innovation and economic growth*, (4) *Management of environmental issues*, and (5) *Governance and policy*. Across these thematic domains, the literature demonstrates substantial depth in ecological, financial, technological, and policy perspectives. However, it consistently underrepresents implications for marketing theory, firm strategy, and consumer behavior. The role of businesses in translating sustainability initiatives, technological innovation, and governance frameworks into marketable offerings and meaningful consumer engagement remains insufficiently examined, indicating a critical avenue for future research in the blue economy.

This marginalization of marketing perspectives can be attributed to several factors. First, disciplinary silos often prioritize ecological and policy analyses, relegating marketing and business strategy to a secondary concern (Testa et al. 2019). Second, normative biases in sustainability research tend to favor regulatory and ecological imperatives over market-oriented interventions, limiting attention to how firms operationalize sustainability in consumer-facing contexts (White et al. 2019). Third, persistent skepticism regarding the legitimacy and effectiveness of marketing in environmental domains has historically constrained scholarly focus on marketing-based approaches to sustainability (Eze 2025). By acknowledging these underlying reasons, the review moves beyond merely identifying research gaps and managerial implications. It provides a clearer theoretical rationale for

TABLE 7 | Temporal profiling of key topics in the supply-side literature on the blue economy.

Mature themes (avg. year ≤ 2019)				
Topic	Subtopic	First year	Last year	Authors
Decision-making	Decision-making system; inclusive decision-making; evidence-based decision-making; decision-making authorities; decision-making process; local expert decision-making	2014	2024	Raakjaer et al. (2014), Riniwati (2016), Bennett et al. (2025), Henderson (2019), Cobacho et al. (2020), Fanning et al. (2021), Yalama et al. (2022), Jattak et al. (2023), deManuel-López et al. (2024), Gambino et al. (2024), Sun et al. (2024)
Climate change	Predicted climate change; climate change scenarios; climate change impacts; climate change funds; climate change consequences	2015	2023	Moore and Davis (2015), Henderson (2019), Cobacho et al. (2020), Paolotti et al. (2022), Yu and Chu (2022), Bosmans and de Mariz (2023), Mahadeo and Del Savio (2023), Sarangi (2023), Bennett et al. (2025)
Industrial economics	Industrial agglomeration; industrial cluster; industrial linkage; industrial structure of marine economy; industrial ecology; industrialization of coastal areas	2016	2024	Wenwen et al. (2016), Liu (2020), Kothari and Poongavanam (2019), Luo et al. (2020), Paolotti et al. (2022), Nyaundi et al. (2023), Wasik et al. (2024)
Innovation	Innovation blue job; innovation capability; economic management innovation; innovation of information technology; innovation efficiency; financial innovation	2018	2024	Cappelletto et al. (2018), Shepherd (2018), Xu et al. (2019), Ye (2020), Ma and Pu (2020), Duan (2020), Liu (2020), Sheng et al. (2021), Thompson (2022), Khan and Emon (2024)
Emerging themes (avg. year ≥ 2022)				
Topic	Subtopic	First year	Last year	Authors
Blue finance	Conservation finance; marine industry finance; blue bonds; blue bond market; blue tokens	2020	2024	Satizábal et al. (2020), Sheng et al. (2021), Thompson (2022), Sarangi (2023), Bosmans and de Mariz (2023), Bennett et al. (2025), Khan and Emon (2024)
Blue growth	BLUEMED; economic growth; sustainable growth; growth in marine protected areas; blue growth strategies; blue capital; growth of sustainability; blue growth initiatives	2018	2024	Cappelletto et al. (2018), Bennett et al. (2025), Katila et al. (2019), Satizábal et al. (2020), Sheng et al. (2021), Faiyaz and Al Arif (2022), Bosmans and de Mariz (2023), Gambino et al. (2024), Abdelwahed and Bhat (2025), Khan and Emon (2024)

why marketing-related investigations remain underdeveloped, and underscores the need for frameworks such as *blue marketing* to bridge these disciplinary and practical divides.

3.3.3 | Consumer Perceptions, Behavioral Shifts, and Stakeholder Engagement

Growing awareness of sustainability is reshaping consumer perceptions and behaviors in line with blue economy principles. Although prior research underscores the relevance of consumer and stakeholder perceptions in enabling sustainable transitions, most studies conceptualize these dynamics through ecological, governance, or socio-economic lenses, giving limited attention

to implications for corporate marketing strategies and firm-level decisions. The ecosystem approach to fisheries management offers an integrated economic–ecological framework that links biological resources, user behavior, and economic incentives. Yet, while it emphasizes the need to balance ecological and economic objectives, it does not address how such insights could inform marketing practices or shape consumer engagement. Similarly, Jobstvogt et al. (2014) highlight the spiritual, recreational, and aesthetic value that visitors attribute to marine protected areas, and Grafeld et al. (2017) show how consumer behavior relates to the visibility of resource flows. However, both contributions stop short of examining how these perceptions might guide firms in designing consumer-oriented strategies or promoting sustainable products.

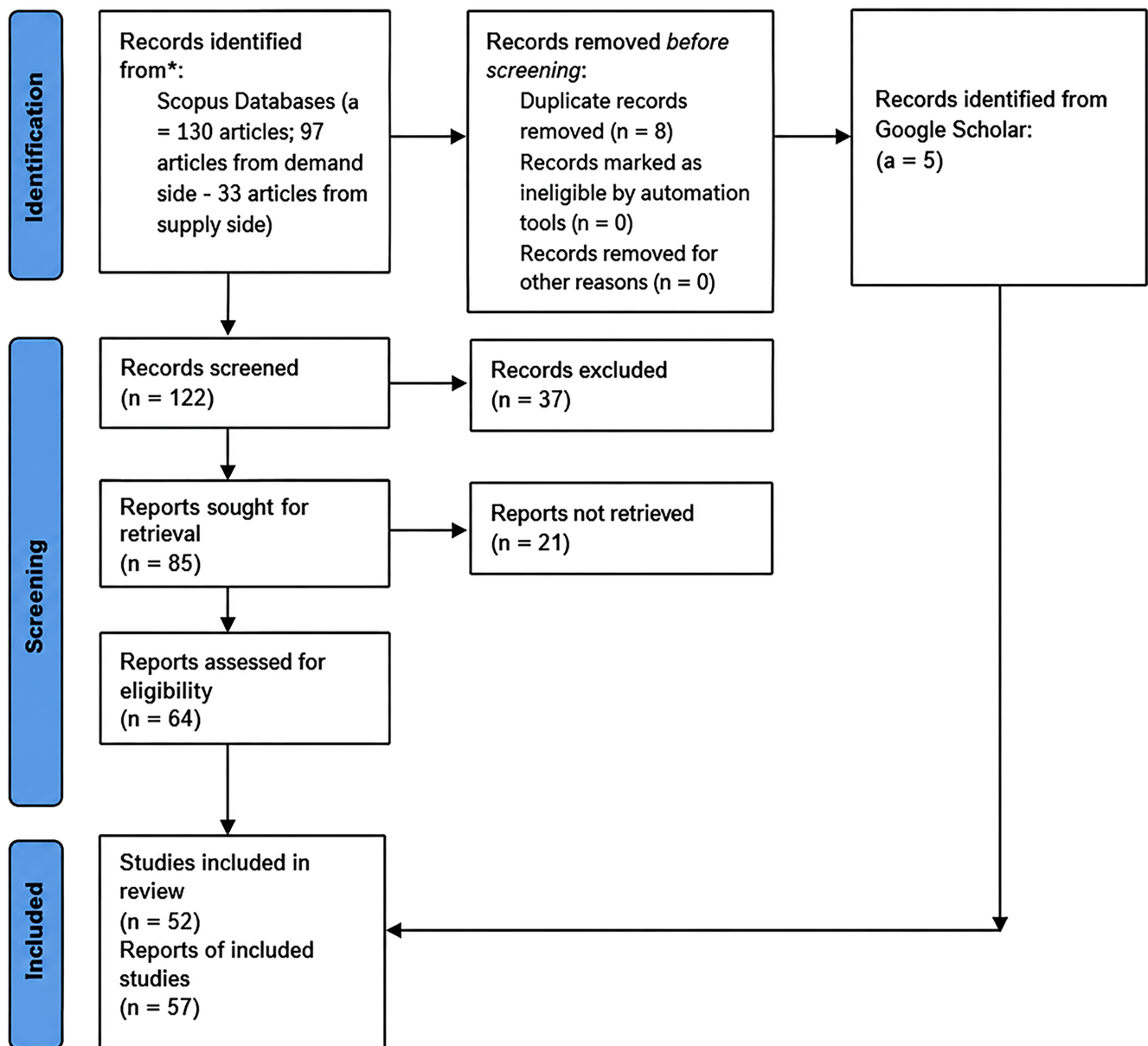


FIGURE 6 | PRISMA flow chart representing the research process. *Source:* Authors' elaboration based on the PRISMA 2020 model (Page et al. 2020).

Participatory approaches—such as the scenario-based experiments involving coastal communities, industry actors, and consumers in New Zealand (Le Heron et al. 2016)—enhance governance acceptance through coproduced socio-ecological knowledge. Nevertheless, such insights rarely translate into actionable marketing or branding directions. Studies on consumer and business preferences for ecosystem services (Schutter et al. 2021) further demonstrate the cultural and context-dependent nature of these preferences, but they do not assess how firms could leverage them to encourage sustainable consumption.

Technological innovations also influence behavioral change: environmentally friendly fishing gear increases profitability and well-being among Indonesian fisherfolk (Yulisti et al. 2024), while emotional and aesthetic bonds with marine environments promote citizen engagement (Ibabe et al. 2020). Yet even here, implications for marketing strategies,

communication campaigns, or consumer-targeted interventions remain underexplored.

3.3.4 | Blue Finance and Investments

Blue finance represents a strategic pathway for transitioning to a sustainable ocean economy by directing resources toward marine conservation, technological innovation, and inclusive economic development (Shiiba et al. 2022). Instruments such as blue bonds exemplify the potential to mobilize private capital for projects with positive environmental outcomes, though greater standardization and transparency in measuring and verifying their benefits are needed (Thompson 2022). Empirical cases in the Seychelles and Belize illustrate their capacity to catalyze marine ecosystem protection while generating socio-economic returns (Bosmans and de Mariz 2023). In addition, blue finance supports

TABLE 8 | Main thematic clusters emerged from the PRISMA-based systematic analysis.

Cluster	Focus/themes	Key insights	Key authors
Consumer perceptions, behavioral shifts, and stakeholder engagement	Demand-side research on consumer perceptions, attitudes, and stakeholder participation	Sustainability awareness shapes consumer behavior; ecosystem-based management links economic, ecological, and social outcomes; participatory approaches enhance equity and engagement.	Jobstvogt et al. (2014), Grafeld et al. (2017), Le Heron et al. (2016), Schutter et al. (2021), Green et al. (2021), Yulisti et al. (2024), Ibabe et al. (2020)
Blue Finance and Investments	Financial instruments supporting a sustainable marine economy; innovation funding	Blue bonds and finance mechanisms mobilize capital for conservation, innovation, and inclusive growth; effectiveness relies on transparency and reporting.	Thompson (2022), Bosmans and de Mariz (2023), Xu et al. (2019)
Sustainable innovation and economic growth	Technological innovation, digitalization, ecosystem-friendly production	Digital tools improve traceability and governance; innovative fishing gear enhances sustainability; tourism benefits from integrated approaches; environmental risks require regulation and tech solutions.	Ha (2024), Zhang et al. (2023), Mariani et al. (2018), Yulisti et al. (2024), Spalding et al. (2023), Sharma et al. (2025)
Management of environmental issues	Marine spatial planning, ecosystem-based fisheries management, ecosystem services, cultural heritage	Environmental management balances resource use and ecosystem preservation; participatory and ecosystem-service-based approaches strengthen local sustainability.	Lombard et al. (2019), Islam et al. (2022), Green et al. (2021), Ibabe et al. (2020), Wenwen et al. (2016), Henderson (2019)
Governance and Policy	Multilevel governance, policy coherence, climate responsiveness, and social justice	Adaptive, inclusive governance is essential; coordination across sectors and scales, stakeholder engagement, and environmental justice underpin effectiveness.	Raakjaer et al. (2014), Das et al. (2024), Daly et al. (2021), Permani et al. (2024), Lombard et al. (2019), Bennett et al. (2025)

technological innovation in maritime sectors. Xu et al. (2019) show that targeted financial support enhances the innovative efficiency of firms in the Chinese marine industry, accelerating ecological and digital transitions. While these studies elucidate the financial mechanisms underpinning sustainability, they do not explicitly examine how blue finance shapes consumer demand, influences market behavior, or guides corporate marketing strategies. Accordingly, a key dimension at the intersection of finance, market engagement, and consumer-oriented business strategies remains largely unexplored. When effectively regulated, monitored, and aligned with innovation, blue finance can integrate economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity, serving as a strategic nexus for sustainable development.

3.3.5 | Sustainable Innovation and Economic Growth

Sustainable innovation is a strategic pillar for blue economy growth, integrating economic competitiveness, environmental protection, and social inclusion. Digital technologies are increasingly central to this transformation. Ha (2024) shows that the

digital transformation of living marine resources enhances traceability, operational efficiency, and sectoral governance. Zhang et al. (2023) identify a nonlinear relationship between digitalization and firm-level economic performance in China, suggesting outcomes depend on digital maturity. Innovative tools such as underwater imaging systems (Mariani et al. 2018) enable real-time assessment of interventions, improving transparency and governance efficiency.

Environmentally friendly fishing practices, as shown by Yulisti et al. (2024), improve fisherfolk's well-being and support responsible fish stock management, strengthening coastal community resilience. Integrated coastal tourism approaches (Spalding et al. 2023) leverage big data and local knowledge to enhance ecosystem services and promote participatory development. Emerging environmental risks, such as microplastic contamination (Sharma et al. 2025), underscore the need for regulatory and technological solutions to sustain marine production. Despite these insights, little work examines how these technological and ecological advances could be strategically leveraged by firms to shape consumer perceptions, promote sustainable consumption, or strengthen brand positioning.

3.3.6 | Management of Environmental Issues

Environmental management is fundamental to a sustainable blue economy, aiming to harmonize marine resources use with ecosystem preservation. Marine spatial planning (MSP) enables multipurpose use of marine spaces, with Lombard et al. (2019) emphasizing adaptability, participation, and alignment of environmental and economic objectives. Ecosystem-based fisheries management (EAFM) promotes biological sustainability and socio-economic well-being (Islam et al. 2022). Community-based management approaches and the incorporation of local user perceptions (Ibabe et al. 2020) demonstrate the value of inclusive governance. Marine industrial clusters and the integration of cultural heritage (Henderson 2019) further reinforce sustainable management, while fisheries protections—such as habitat conservation and catch limits—support biodiversity and sustainable tourism. Nevertheless, the literature rarely examines how environmental management practices can inform marketing planning, influence consumer choice, or support firm-level sustainability strategies.

3.3.7 | Governance and Policy

Transitioning to a sustainable blue economy requires governance structures capable of addressing the socio-ecological complexity of marine systems. Nested, multilevel frameworks integrate local, national, and regional policies, ensuring coherence between environmental conservation and economic development (Raakjaer et al. 2014). Case studies—such as stakeholder perceptions in Bangladesh (Das et al. 2024), climate responsiveness in Canada (Daly et al. 2021), and regulatory gaps in Indonesia (Permani et al. 2024)—illustrate both challenges and potential pathways for adaptive management.

Marine spatial planning is framed not only as a technical instrument but also as a political process requiring transparency, participation, and accountability (Lombard et al. 2019). Effective governance must be inclusive, adaptive, and justice-oriented to ensure legitimacy and sustainability (Bennett et al. 2025). Despite detailed insights into policy frameworks and governance mechanisms, the literature seldom addresses how these institutional arrangements could shape firm strategy, marketing practices, or consumer engagement.

3.3.8 | Synthesis of Thematic Domains and Identification of the Integrative Gap

Taken together, the five thematic domains reveal a consistent pattern that extends beyond the individual findings of each stream. Although the literature has advanced knowledge on governance, environmental management, technological innovation, finance, consumer behavior, and sustainable business development, these dimensions have largely evolved as parallel research trajectories rather than as components of an integrated theoretical explanation. Governance studies predominantly examine institutional coordination and policy effectiveness (Das et al. 2024; Raakjaer et al. 2014), whereas research on sustainable innovation and environmental management emphasizes technological solutions and ecosystem conservation (Ha 2024; Lombard et al. 2019).

Similarly, studies on consumer perceptions and behavioral change mainly focus on environmental awareness and sustainable consumption (Ibabe et al. 2020; Schutter et al. 2021), while investigations into corporate sustainability strategies and blue finance primarily address organizational or financial mechanisms (Bosmans and de Mariz 2023; Konietzko et al. 2023). Across these domains, marketing is generally treated as a supporting managerial function or communication tool rather than as the strategic mechanism through which governance objectives, organizational capabilities, and consumer participation are aligned to generate socio-ecological outcomes. Consequently, the principal gap is not the absence of sustainability-oriented practices in the blue economy but the lack of an integrative theoretical framework explaining how these fragmented dimensions interact through market processes. This synthesis provides the conceptual foundation for the framework developed in the next section.

3.4 | Study 3: Toward a Conceptual Framework of Blue Marketing

Building on the comprehensive bibliometric and systematic analysis of the blue economy literature, Study 3 addresses a notable gap. Although the literature extensively explores sustainability, technological innovation, and governance, it has largely neglected the role of consumers and the integration of marketing-related strategies into corporate decision-making. To tackle this gap, Study 3 advances a new conceptualization of the blue economy that explicitly links corporate strategies with consumer behaviors, including marketing dynamics. The study identifies underexplored areas by formulating six theoretical propositions and introduces the concept of *blue marketing* as a strategic interface between the blue economy and strategic business–consumer interactions. Figure 7 presents an integrative conceptual model of *blue marketing*. It illustrates how governance and environmental pressures act as key drivers, shaping corporate strategies and marketing practices aimed at promoting the sustainable use of marine resources. These practices, in turn, influence consumer engagement, enabling individuals to progress from awareness to collective action and participatory behaviors. This process ultimately generates socio-ecological outcomes and hybrid legitimacy, combining economic, social, and ecological approval. The model synthesizes the six propositions, highlighting the systemic connections among drivers, practices, consumer behaviors, and outcomes, and offering a visual tool to enhance the clarity and practical relevance of the *blue marketing* construct.

3.4.1 | P1—Blue Marketing as a Governance Interface

P1. *Blue marketing positively influences the effectiveness of blue economy governance by fostering multi-stakeholder participation in value co-creation; this relationship is mediated by organizational legitimacy and stakeholder trust.*

The literature on marine resource management emphasizes that multi-stakeholder governance is essential for achieving ecological and economic sustainability (Le Heron et al. 2016; Lombard et al. 2019). However, marketing is rarely



FIGURE 7 | Integrative framework of blue marketing.

conceptualized as a coordination mechanism that connects institutions, firms, consumers, and local communities within blue economy systems. Although studies on consumer perceptions and the cultural value of ecosystem services show that participation enhances legitimacy and support for conservation initiatives (Grafeld et al. 2017; Jobstvogt et al. 2014), these insights remain disconnected from business strategies and market-based value creation. In fragmented and resource-intensive blue sectors (Rayner et al. 2019), *blue marketing* functions as a strategic interface that translates governance objectives into stakeholder engagement, shared value creation, and trust-building processes. By aligning corporate practices with institutional expectations and stakeholder needs, *blue marketing* contributes to organizational legitimacy and more resilient governance outcomes

(Suchman 1995; Vargo and Lusch 2016). Empirically, this proposition could be tested by measuring *blue marketing* orientation, stakeholder participation, organizational legitimacy, trust, and perceived governance effectiveness.

3.4.2 | P2—Blue Marketing and the Transformation of Consumers Into Collective Agents of Change

P2. *Blue marketing positively influences consumers' collective agency by transforming individual environmental awareness into participatory behaviors—such as advocacy, community-based consumption, and co-creation initiatives which, in turn, strengthen firms' legitimacy and sustainability-oriented market transformation.*

Within the blue economy, consumer behavior can evolve from individual awareness to collective agency capable of shaping market legitimacy and institutional expectations. However, consumers are still largely conceptualized as final recipients of sustainable offerings rather than as active participants in shaping marine sustainability transitions.

Existing studies show that blue consumers can become social and political actors by promoting responsible behaviors, supporting transparency mechanisms, and influencing business and policy decisions (An and Choi 2025; Ibabe et al. 2020; Schutter et al. 2021). Drawing on consumer culture theory and political consumerism, collective consumer action grounded in shared meanings, practices, and advocacy can reshape market norms and sustainability expectations (Reppmann et al. 2025). *Blue marketing* provides the mechanism through which individual environmental awareness is converted into collective engagement by enabling consumer participation, knowledge sharing, and value co-creation. Through these mechanisms, consumers become collective agents capable of influencing firms' legitimacy and accelerating sustainability transitions in marine sectors. Empirically, this proposition could be tested by measuring *blue marketing* practices, consumer empowerment, collective efficacy, participation in sustainability communities, advocacy behaviors, and perceived corporate legitimacy.

3.4.3 | P3—Blue Marketing and Hybrid Legitimacy in Socio-Ecological Systems

P3. *Blue marketing positively influences hybrid legitimacy by enabling firms to align economic objectives, stakeholder expectations, and socio-ecological commitments; this alignment enhances trust and recognition among multiple stakeholder groups.*

The effectiveness of the blue economy depends on firms' ability to achieve hybrid legitimacy, namely the simultaneous recognition and approval of consumers, investors, local communities, and socio-ecological systems. However, existing legitimacy approaches have rarely examined how marketing mechanisms help align heterogeneous stakeholder expectations within marine socio-ecological contexts. The success of the blue economy should be assessed not only through economic performance, but also through firms' capacity to integrate broader socio-ecological systems into their value creation processes (Grafeld et al. 2017; Le Heron et al. 2016; Yulisti et al. 2024). Hybrid legitimacy requires credible narratives grounded in transparency, participation, and stakeholder engagement, enabling firms to build trust across multiple audiences (Wang et al. 2025; White et al. 2019). Without such alignment, sustainability initiatives risk being perceived as symbolic or superficial (Bennett et al. 2025). From a *blue marketing* perspective, legitimacy is not merely a reputational outcome but the result of a strategic process through which firms translate sustainability commitments into shared meanings, stakeholder relationships, and socio-ecological value propositions. By connecting corporate practices with stakeholder expectations and ecosystem outcomes, *blue marketing* facilitates the development of hybrid legitimacy across economic, social, and ecological dimensions (Wang et al. 2016). Empirically, this proposition could be tested using multidimensional legitimacy scales capturing economic credibility, social

acceptance, ecological responsibility, stakeholder trust, and perceived authenticity of blue economy initiatives.

3.4.4 | P4—Blue Marketing and the Creation of Symbolic and Territorial Value

P4. *Blue marketing positively influences firm legitimacy by translating the symbolic and territorial value of marine ecosystems into meaningful consumer experiences, stakeholder engagement, and socio-ecological value co-creation; this relationship is mediated by perceived place attachment and symbolic brand value.*

The perceived symbolic, identity-related, and territorial value of marine resources can strengthen the legitimacy of firms operating in blue economy sectors by transforming sustainability practices into meaningful relationships with consumers and local communities. However, existing sustainability approaches have paid limited attention to how marketing mechanisms translate the cultural and territorial dimensions of marine ecosystems into shared value creation. Cultural, aesthetic, and emotional perceptions of marine ecosystems represent important resources for building corporate reputation and trust (Grafeld et al. 2017; Ibabe et al. 2020; Jobstvogt et al. 2014). The blue economy can enhance these symbolic and territorial dimensions by transforming connections among businesses, the sea, and local communities into experiences, narratives, and value propositions that resonate with stakeholders (Brodie Rudolph et al. 2020; White et al. 2019). Drawing on experiential marketing, transformative service research, and value co-creation, symbolic meanings constitute key resources through which firms and consumers jointly create socio-ecological value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). From a *blue marketing* perspective, symbolic and territorial value is not merely a communication outcome but a strategic mechanism through which marine identities, local heritage, and sustainability commitments are integrated into credible market relationships. By linking sustainability practices with place attachment and shared meanings, *blue marketing* enhances the perceived authenticity and legitimacy of firms operating in marine contexts. Empirically, this proposition could be tested by measuring *blue marketing* practices, perceived place attachment, symbolic brand value, stakeholder engagement, and their mediating effects on perceived firm legitimacy.

3.4.5 | P5—Blue Marketing and Transformative Engagement Through Regenerative Storytelling

P5. *Blue marketing positively influences transformative consumer engagement by integrating transparency, experiential learning, and regenerative storytelling; this process reduces the attitude-behavior gap and strengthens consumers' psychological ownership and sustainable behaviors.*

The blue economy requires new forms of transformative engagement capable of overcoming the attitude-behavior gap and involving consumers as active stewards of marine resources. However, existing approaches often prioritize the provision of sustainability information rather than explaining how firms can convert awareness into meaningful participation and long-term behavioral change. Research indicates that transparency tools and

experiential technologies can stimulate sustainable behaviors and ecological responsibility (Ha 2024; Mariani et al. 2018; Sharma et al. 2025; Spalding et al. 2023). In this context, transparency, storytelling, and participatory experiences function as mechanisms through which the blue economy can foster trust, consumer involvement, and socio-ecological transformation (White et al. 2019). Building on transformative service research, experiential marketing, and value co-creation, consumer engagement is better understood as a process of shared value creation rather than a mere outcome of sustainability communication (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). From a *blue marketing* perspective, regenerative storytelling and experiential engagement enable firms to move beyond informational persuasion by cultivating emotional connections, psychological ownership, and shared responsibility for marine resources. Through these mechanisms, consumers evolve from aware individuals into active comanagers contributing to sustainability transitions. Empirically, this proposition could be tested by measuring *blue marketing* practices, perceived transparency, experiential learning, psychological ownership, consumer engagement, and actual sustainable consumption behaviors.

3.4.6 | P6—From Blue Economy to Blue Marketing as a Distinct Theoretical Construct

P6. Blue marketing constitutes a distinct theoretical construct that explains how fragmented sustainability-related mechanisms—including governance coordination, consumer empowerment, legitimacy creation, territorial value formation, and transformative engagement—are integrated within a unified framework for blue economy value creation. The blue economy requires a marketing framework capable of translating sustainability principles into market practices that simultaneously generate economic value, consumer engagement, and socio-ecological benefits. Existing approaches—such as sustainable marketing, green marketing, and CSR-oriented communication—offer important insights into sustainability-related market dynamics, but they do not fully capture the specific challenges of marine socio-ecological systems characterized by common-pool resources, territorial embeddedness, and multilevel governance. *Blue marketing* addresses this theoretical gap by conceptualizing marketing as the strategic mechanism that connects corporate strategies, stakeholder expectations, consumer participation, and ecosystem outcomes. Defined as the set of marketing practices aimed at promoting the sustainable and responsible use of blue resources, *blue marketing* creates shared value by improving transparency, strengthening consumer engagement, and enhancing firms' socio-ecological legitimacy (Prete et al. 2024, 2025; Schmuck et al. 2018). Through value co-creation and trust-building processes, it provides a strategic interface between blue economy principles and organizational practices (Sharma et al. 2025; White et al. 2019). From an institutional and service-dominant logic perspective, *blue marketing* aligns corporate actions, stakeholder expectations, and socio-ecological value creation within shared governance contexts (Suchman 1995). Unlike green marketing, which primarily focuses on product-level environmental attributes, or CSR-driven branding, which emphasizes corporate reputation (Du et al. 2010), *blue marketing* operates in contexts where firms depend on fragile, shared resources and

on legitimacy granted by communities, consumers, and institutions. Accordingly, value creation is not only economic but also symbolic, territorial, and ecological, making hybrid legitimacy a central outcome (see Table 9).

Future empirical research could validate this construct using multidimensional scales that capture transparency, place embeddedness, consumer participation, stakeholder engagement, and perceived socio-ecological impact.

4 | General Discussion

This paper aimed to systematically analyze the scientific literature on the blue economy, identify the most explored research areas, highlight under-investigated topics, and propose new directions for inquiry. Five research questions were formulated and grouped into three main themes: (1) the structure and evolution of the scientific debate on the blue economy, with particular reference to marketing and management perspectives; (2) corporate strategies adopted within the blue economy and their influence on consumer behavior; and (3) emerging conceptual and methodological gaps that can guide future research and support the development of new theoretical constructs. To address these questions, three complementary studies were conducted. The first study employed a bibliometric approach to map the literature published between 2012 and 2024. Temporal mapping revealed the evolution of research priorities over time: while topics such as sustainable marine resource management and corporate social responsibility have remained central, more recent themes—including consumer engagement, sustainable marketing strategies, and value co-creation—have gained increasing attention. Cluster analysis identified five clusters that can be grouped into three main thematic domains: (1) environmental sustainability and marine resource management; (2) governance, policy, and economic development; and (3) marketing, business strategies, and consumer behavior. The second study examined the content of the selected articles in greater depth. It confirmed the thematic clusters identified in the bibliometric analysis while providing greater operational detail. Specifically, it highlighted the emergence of strategies oriented toward sustainable communication, responsible product innovation, transparency mechanisms, and experiential marketing approaches. Furthermore, the review showed that consumer responses to sustainable corporate strategies remain a critical yet fragmented dimension of the blue economy literature, underscoring the need to integrate marketing and management perspectives.

Based on these findings, five theoretical propositions were developed to stimulate future research on the relationships among governance, firms, consumers, and marine socio-ecological systems. A sixth proposition was then introduced to advance the concept of *blue marketing* as a distinct theoretical construct. Rather than a simple extension of sustainable marketing to marine contexts, *blue marketing* addresses a specific theoretical gap by explaining how governance mechanisms, organizational strategies, consumer participation, and ecosystem outcomes interact within blue economy systems. In this sense, *blue marketing* is conceptualized as the strategic interface through which institutional expectations and ecological imperatives are translated into market practices and shared value creation. Consistent with

TABLE 9 | Conceptual positioning of blue marketing among sustainability-oriented marketing approaches.

Concept	CSR-driven branding	Green marketing	Sustainable marketing	Regenerative marketing	Blue marketing
Core focus	Corporate responsibility communication	Environmental attributes of products	Balance of economic, social, and environmental goals	Restoration and renewal of socio-ecological systems	Sustainable use of marine and coastal socio-ecological systems
Resource context	Mainly terrestrial and product-related impacts	Broad socio-ecological systems	Firm-level social and environmental issues	Natural and social ecosystems	Common-pool, ocean-based resources with ecological interdependence
Primary unit of analysis	Firm	Product/firm	Firm/market system	Ecosystem/firm	Socio-ecological territorial system
Key theoretical logic	Reputation and legitimacy	Ecological impact reduction	Triple Bottom Line	Regeneration and net-positive impact	Hybrid legitimacy in common-pool resource contexts
Role of consumers	Passive recipients of CSR claims	Ethical consumers	Responsible consumers	Cocreators of regenerative value	Collective agents shaping market transformation
Role of territories	Marginal	Limited	Contextual	Relevant	Central and identity-based
Governance dimension	Low	Low	Medium	Medium–high	High (multilevel, multi-actor)
Distinctive mechanism	Image-based legitimacy	Product-level environmental performance	Long-term value co-creation	System restoration logic	Governance-driven, territorially embedded, common-resource marketing logic

stakeholder theory (Freeman and Phillips 2002) and legitimacy theory (Suchman 1995), *blue marketing* recognizes that firms operating in marine and coastal contexts must simultaneously respond to multiple stakeholder expectations, including those of local communities, regulators, consumers, and ecological systems. However, existing frameworks have generally examined these dimensions separately. *Blue marketing* therefore extends previous perspectives by providing an integrative mechanism that connects stakeholder alignment, consumer engagement, organizational legitimacy, and socio-ecological value creation (Du et al. 2010). Rather than introducing an additional sustainability label, the proposed construct offers a theoretical lens capable of explaining how fragmented dimensions of the blue economy coevolve through marketing processes.

Finally, it is important to specify its boundary conditions. Blue marketing is most theoretically relevant and practically effective: (1) in sectors characterized by common-pool marine resources requiring collective stewardship; (2) in contexts where firms are embedded in territorial identities and cultural meanings that shape stakeholder expectations; and (3) in governance settings characterized by multilevel institutional arrangements that create both constraints and opportunities for market strategy. Under different conditions—for example, in purely private-good marine sectors or in contexts with weak institutional governance—the applicability of the blue marketing framework may be limited, and the propositions developed in this study may require modification.

4.1 | Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This study provides several theoretical contributions to the blue economy literature by confirming, extending, and in some respects challenging existing frameworks. First, it contributes to stakeholder and legitimacy theories by demonstrating that marketing can function as an interface mechanism connecting governance expectations, corporate strategies, consumer participation, and socio-ecological outcomes. More specifically, the contribution of *blue marketing* lies in identifying the missing mechanism through which institutional pressures and ecological imperatives are translated into market practices capable of generating shared value. The study extends existing sustainability-oriented frameworks by showing that consumers should not be conceptualized only as recipients of sustainable offerings but also as potential comanagers of marine resources. Although consumers increasingly demonstrate ecological awareness, their participation in governance processes and sustainability transitions remains limited. *Blue marketing* addresses this gap by conceptualizing consumer agency as a collective process involving participation, knowledge sharing, advocacy, and value co-creation (An and Choi 2025; Ibabe et al. 2020). From the corporate perspective, the findings reinforce the importance of sustainable business models highlighted by Bocken et al. (2019) and Konietzko et al. (2023), while advancing *blue marketing* as a distinct strategic framework that integrates sustainability, marketing, and management. The six propositions developed in this study connect governance coordination, consumer agency, hybrid legitimacy, territorial value creation, and transformative engagement, providing a coherent and operationalizable framework for future empirical research.

From a managerial perspective, the results support firms in designing strategies aligned with both sustainability objectives and evolving consumer expectations. Understanding consumer perceptions and motivations enables companies to strengthen reputation, trust, and competitive differentiation through eco-centric, circular, and regenerative business models that enhance both ecosystem resilience and market positioning (Yulisti et al. 2024). Moreover, *blue marketing* highlights the strategic importance of symbolic and territorial value by transforming connections among firms, marine ecosystems, and local communities into credible experiences and relationships. For example, in fisheries, *blue marketing* can leverage transparency and traceability platforms to communicate the sustainability of marine products and strengthen consumer trust. In tourism, it can enhance territorial and symbolic value by integrating local culture, heritage, and immersive experiences into responsible offerings. More broadly, firms can implement transparency initiatives, participatory campaigns with local communities, and experiential educational programs to engage consumers as cocreators of socio-ecological value.

Finally, the study highlights the importance of public policies that facilitate collaboration among businesses, institutions, and local communities. Participatory governance frameworks can align ecological, economic, and social objectives, supporting more systemic approaches to marine resource management (Le Heron et al. 2016; Lombard et al. 2019). When supported by incentives, educational initiatives, and participatory tools, consumers can contribute to the legitimacy of both firms and marine policies, accelerating the transition toward more sustainable and resilient blue economy models.

4.2 | Limitations and Future Research Agenda

This study opens several promising avenues for future research. First, although the bibliometric and systematic analyses relied on Scopus and Google Scholar—ensuring broad coverage of peer-reviewed and emerging scholarship—they may have excluded policy documents, practitioner reports, and region-specific studies that could further enrich the understanding of blue economy dynamics. Future reviews should therefore integrate additional databases and qualitative sources to provide a more comprehensive evidence base. Second, this study adopts a conceptual orientation: the proposed *blue marketing* framework and related propositions require empirical validation. Future studies should develop and test measurement scales for constructs such as *blue marketing* orientation, stakeholder participation, consumer empowerment, hybrid legitimacy, territorial embeddedness, and ocean stewardship across different blue economy sectors. Because *blue marketing* is introduced as a new theoretical construct, subsequent studies should also assess its discriminant validity relative to established concepts such as sustainable marketing, green marketing, CSR communication, and regenerative business models.

Third, while the dual supply and demand-side perspective adopted here provides an integrated view of blue economy interactions, it does not fully capture institutional and cultural asymmetries between public and private actors or between developed

and emerging economies. Multilevel and comparative research designs would therefore help identify contextual factors influencing the implementation and effectiveness of *blue marketing* strategies. Finally, emerging technologies—including artificial intelligence, blockchain (Mileti et al. 2022), and the Internet of Things (Sestino et al. 2020)—offer promising opportunities for future research. These technologies may enhance transparency, traceability, consumer participation, and stakeholder engagement, becoming important enablers of *blue marketing* practices.

5 | Conclusions

This study provides a novel contribution to the blue economy literature by adopting a dual analytical perspective encompassing both the supply side—focused on corporate strategies and organizational behaviors and the demand side, centered on consumer attitudes and decision-making processes. Through this integrated approach, the study advances *blue marketing* as a distinct theoretical construct that explains how governance mechanisms, organizational capabilities, consumer engagement, and ecological objectives can be connected within marine socio-ecological systems. *Blue marketing* redefines the role of marketing beyond the promotion of ocean-related products by conceptualizing it as a strategic interface capable of translating sustainability commitments into stakeholder relationships, consumer participation, and socio-ecological value creation.

Ultimately, this study suggests that the future of the blue economy depends on the convergence of strategic corporate action, participatory governance, and informed consumer engagement. By integrating these dimensions, *blue marketing* provides a framework through which marketing can evolve from a mechanism of resource exploitation to an instrument of ecological regeneration, social legitimacy, and long-term economic resilience.

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