

Examining the evolution of a discipline through a longitudinal study of its key academic journal

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to explore an approach to examining the evolution of a discipline through a longitudinal study of its key academic journal. Specifically, it examines the evolution of the Textile, Apparel, and Merchandising (TAM) discipline through a longitudinal analysis of the Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, the flagship publication of the International Textile and Apparel Association, from 1982 to 2023. By categorising 990 articles, the research highlights how journal analysis can reveal developmental trends, strengths, and challenges in interdisciplinary fields. TAM's fragmented identity reflects the complexities of such disciplines. This study underscores journal analysis as a valuable tool for tracking disciplinary growth and offers a replicable model for other fields seeking coherence. By clarifying the structure of TAM, this study not only strengthens its foundation but also contributes to broader interdisciplinary scholarship, providing a pathway for fostering dynamic and forward-looking academic communities.

Keywords: Academic journal | clothing and textiles | discipline examination | higher education | longitudinal study

Article:

1. Introduction

The textiles, apparel, and fashion field is a dynamic field including many different areas, such as fashion design, technology, and education, that continuously evolve in response to societal changes, technological advancements, and shifting cultural paradigms. Studying a discipline's past, present, and future through its key journal can provide a comprehensive view of the field's evolution, revealing research trends, gaps, and shifts in identity (Mabe & Amin, 2001). It can highlight how the discipline has responded to societal and technological changes, aligning

research with professional standards and guiding future contributions (Garfield, 2006). This approach can be of great interest to many disciplines and journals, including the fashion field and the International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education, where the integration of historical context, technological advancements, and pedagogical innovation plays a crucial role.

This study focuses on a relatively small textiles, apparel, and fashion field. The International Textile and Apparel Association (ITAA) is one of the main professional organisations for many clothing and textiles-related educators and researchers in North America. It has been recognised as the premier association for textile and apparel educators worldwide (Lee, Lee, & Ulasewicz, 2011). ITAA Meta-goals provide a foundation for curriculum planning and assessment for textile and apparel programs in higher education to advance excellence in the textile and apparel profession. ITAA is ‘a professional, educational association composed of scholars, educators, and students in the textile, apparel, and merchandising disciplines in higher education’ (ITAA, n.d.). This study follows the ITAA’s current definition of this discipline with a specific focus on Textile, Apparel, and Merchandising (TAM). In order to examine the past, present, and future of TAM, the Clothing and Textiles Research Journal (CTRJ) is identified. CTRJ is the official journal of ITAA, and publishes original and peer-reviewed scholarship that shapes the TAM discipline. The journal began publishing in 1982 and has emerged as a premier international academic outlet and one of the most influential sources for TAM researchers and scholars over the past four decades.

Textile and Apparel Programs Accreditation Commission (TAPAC) is the accrediting organisation for programs in textiles, apparel, and content areas directly related to interests within ITAA (TAPAC, n.d.-a). Since the official founding of ITAA and TAPAC, CTRJ has served as the leading scholarly outlet for strengthening the research base and inspiring future research within the TAM discipline (Ha-Brookshire & Hawley, Citation2014). However, despite such a high level of academic prominence, prior attempts to assess CTRJ publications in relation to ITAA Meta-goals and TAPAC standards are surprisingly absent. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are: (1) to identify key research categories in CTRJ, (2) to explore the publication patterns and trends of CTRJ, (3) to compare the identified research categories with the current CTRJ categories, ITAA Meta-Goals, and TAPAC standards for similarities and differences, (4) to capture the core of the TAM discipline, and (5) to evaluate the need to redefine the identity of TAM in higher education. The ultimate goal of this study is to strengthen the academic foundation, foster a cohesive scholarly community, and help new researchers understand where they can make meaningful contributions, ensuring the discipline remains dynamic and impactful (Oliver & Mahoney, 1991).

This is the first study to present a comprehensive retrospective review of CTRJ, tracing its evolution from 1982 to 2023. Through this retrospective examination of the leading journal in this field, we can assess the progress of this profession and prepare for the TAM discipline’s future growth and development. Using this approach by conducting a longitudinal study of a discipline’s key journal to examine the past, present, and future of this discipline can further bring insight to other academic disciplines for strengthening their foundation, updating their identity, and ensuring they remain current, dynamic, and impactful.

2. Literature review

2.1. Importance of studying academic journals in disciplines

Academic journals always have a profound impact on disciplines by influencing the direction of research, defining/redefining the core of the discipline, and shaping the future of the discipline. Therefore, academic journals serve as a window to showcase not only the history of a discipline and the core knowledge base of the discipline, but also the current focus and the future trends for the discipline. Studying academic journals is a critical method to understand a discipline. Such analyses bring valuable insights to determine the research progress of the discipline, explore the curriculum evolution, and identify future directions and trends (Goldsmith, 1983). Many disciplines have published studies examining and analysing their discipline-specific academic journals. For example, Eckman, Demons, and Oliver (2001) conducted a study to research articles in the *Journal of Interior Design Education and Research* and *Journal of Interior Design* from 1975 to 1997 to explore the most often published areas and the opportunities for future studies in the academic discipline of interior design. Baker, Kumar, and Pandey (2021) presented a retrospective of the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* by examining its publications during the last five decades to identify the journal's central themes and its impact on the discipline.

Published by SAGE Publications, CTRJ serves as the official journal of the ITAA. Established in 1982, it has become a leading global academic journal, recognised for its significant influence among researchers and scholars focused on textiles, apparel, and related fields. However, CTRJ is not the only academic journal publishing studies in the TAM discipline. Table 1 shows other key academic journals listed chronologically based on their original publications. Even though CTRJ is not the oldest standing journal compared to *Textile Research Journal* with its original publication in 1931 and the *Journal of the Textile Institute* with its original publication in 1967, it is more comprehensive and captures more areas in TAM than these two journals. After CTRJ's establishment in 1982, more journals in the TAM discipline were launched, such as *International Journal of Clothing Science and Technology*, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, *Fashion Theory*, *Research Journal of Textile and Apparel*, *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, *Fashion Practice*, *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, and *Fashion, Style & Popular Culture*. Yet all of these newer journals have their specific focus and none of them covers a wide range of areas as CTRJ does. Another two journals from Table 1 have a similar wide scope of areas as CTRJ: *Fashion and Textiles*, and *International Journal of Fashion Studies*. However, both of them were established in 2014, much later than CTRJ. In addition, the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* is more focused on publications for non-English readers, and *Fashion and Textiles* is affiliated with the Korean Society of Clothing and Textiles.

There are another two journals publishing work in the TAM discipline: *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences* as the official publication of the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, and the *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*. However, none of these journals are only focused on TAM. Therefore, CTRJ is chosen because it has been identified as the most comprehensive, long-lasting, and focused journal option in the TAM discipline.

Looking into the articles that studied CTRJ, two are identified. The first one was conducted in 1991 by Oliver and Mahoney who examined volumes 1–7 of CTRJ from 1982 to 1991 and identified seven subject matter areas: apparel design and manufacturing, consumer issues, cultural/historical, merchandising, social/psychological, textile science, and educational (Oliver & Mahoney, [Citation1991](#)). Due to the limited sources, this study was only able to focus on the first seven volumes. About twenty years later, by using a domain of clothing and textiles

in the global supply chain developed by Ha-Brookshire and Hawley ([Citation2013](#)), Ha-Brookshire and Hawley ([Citation2014](#)) studied the CTRJ publications from 1993-2012. By examining 476 articles, this study covered a much longer time span than the first study, and the articles analysed are much more current than the first one. It also presented an innovative way to pull all the CTRJ publications together and place them in the global supply chain. However, after 2012 when the second article review ended, another eleven years of new studies have been published by CTRJ, which calls for another study examining CTRJ publications after 2012. More importantly, there has not been a comprehensive study done to examine the entire publications of CTRJ since its inception. Therefore, this study is the first attempt to fill this gap. Built on the previous literature, this study aims to address the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are the key research categories in CTRJ?

RQ2: What have been the research patterns and past trends of CTRJ in the identified categories?

	Name of the Journal	Focus	Starting year	Publisher
1	Textile Research Journal	Covers research on fiber science, textile technology, and textile design.	1931	SAGE
2	Journal of the Textile Institute	Covers topics on textiles, fibers, and clothing technology.	1967	Taylor & Francis/ Routledge
3	International Journal of Clothing Science and Technology	Covers research on clothing science and technology related to materials, design, and manufacturing processes.	1989	Emerald Publishing
4	Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management	Focuses on fashion marketing and management in the business context from an apparel perspective.	1982	Emerald Publishing
5	Fashion Theory	Explores the cultural and sociological aspects of fashion and clothing.	1997	Taylor & Francis
6	Research Journal of Textile and Apparel	Focuses on research with direct chemical and physical experiments, mathematical modelling, and theoretical analysis of textile and apparel systems.	1997	Emerald Publishing
7	International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education	Emphasises the educational and technological aspects of fashion design.	2008	Taylor & Francis
8	Fashion Practice	Covers contemporary design and manufacture in the fashion industry.	2009	Taylor & Francis
9	Journal of Global Fashion Marketing	Focuses on marketing theory, research, and practice in fashion, design, and culture.	2010	Taylor & Francis
10	Fashion and Textiles	Covers textile and clothing science and technology; fashion design and cultural study, and economics of clothing/textiles/fashion business	2014	Springer
11	Fashion, Style & Popular Culture	Focuses on fashion and popular culture in design, textiles, production, promotion, consumption, and appearance-related products and services.	2014	Intellect
12	International Journal of Fashion Studies	Covers topics within the field of fashion studies, including historical, cultural, and theoretical perspectives	2014	Intellect

2.2. Evolution of the TAM discipline

As shown in Figure 1, TAM began as Domestic Science. Beecher (Citation1841) sought to formalise domestic duties, emphasising the value of women's labour at home and its societal impact. After the Morrill Act of 1862, land-grant colleges developed programs in Agriculture for men and Domestic Science for women, focusing on sewing, clothing maintenance, child-rearing, food preparation, nutrition, and home management (Heggstad, Citation2014). This foundation shaped the early identity of the TAM discipline.

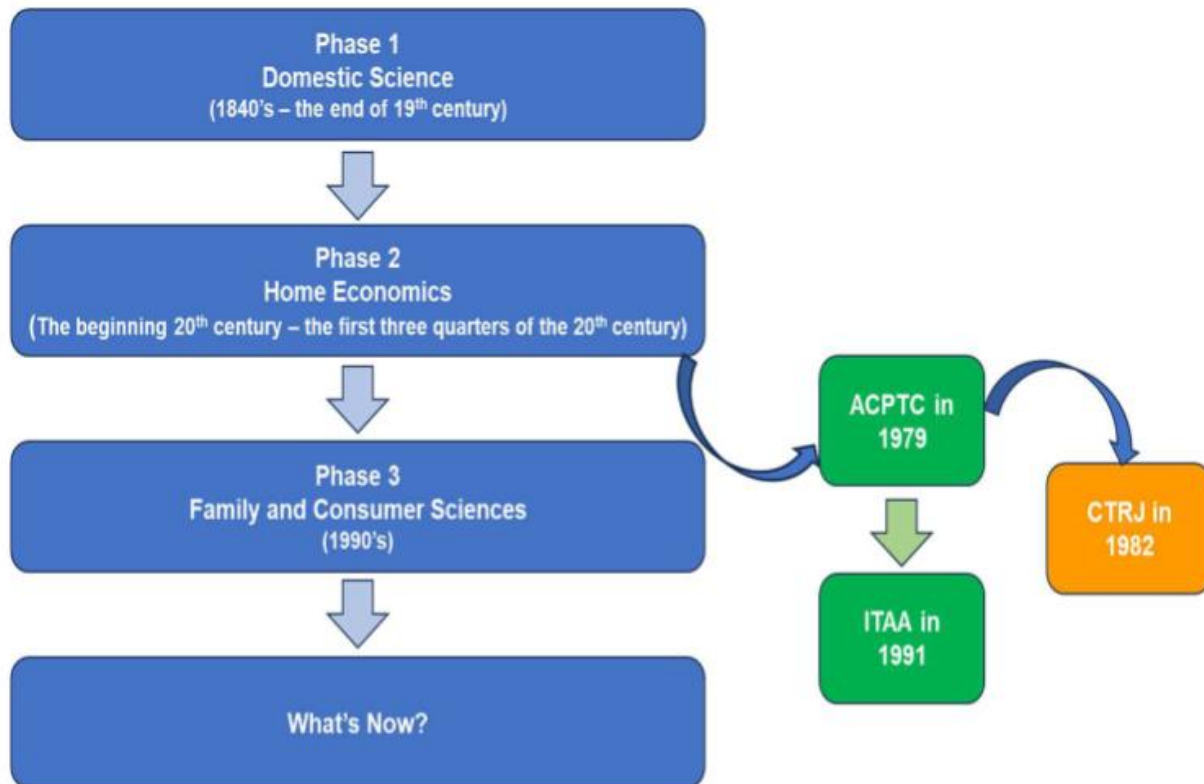


Figure 1. Evolution of TAM.

After 50 years as Domestic Science, American land-grant colleges renamed it Home Economics in the early twentieth century, following Ellen Swallow Richards' recommendations. The American Home Economics Association (AHEA) was founded in 1908, launching the *Journal of Home Economics*. Most graduates initially didn't work outside the home after marriage, but the 1970s women's movement shifted the focus toward career preparation in textiles, design, and fashion merchandising. In 1979, the Association of College Professors of Textiles and Clothing (ACPTC) was established, and in 1982, CTRJ became its official journal. ACPTC became ITAA in 1991 to reflect industry globalisation.

From the brief history of the TAM discipline, it is clear that it focused on women's home activities originally, such as clothing construction and laundering (Chowdhary & Meacham, 1983). By the 1960s and 1970s, social and psychological aspects of clothing were added as formal courses and research topics (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). Then after ACPTC was established in 1979 and CTRJ started its publications in 1982, TAM began to cover a much

broader range of fields of studies, such as design, product development, textiles, consumer behaviour, history, forecasting, merchandising, marketing, retailing, and much more. When ITAA replaced ACPTC in 1991 and the new emphasis on the globalisation of the industry was added, TAM became more interdisciplinary covering the entire global supply chain (Ha-Brookshire & Hawley, 2013).

In history, CTRJ was established at the end of Phase 2 as shown in Figure 1, and witnessed significant changes in the TAM discipline. At the beginning of CTRJ, Chowdhary and Meacham (1983) examined the articles within the field of textiles and clothing published from 1911 to 1980, and identified five main categories: Clothing Construction/Design, Consumerism, Historical Textiles and Costume, Sociological and Psychological Aspects of Clothing and Textiles, and Textiles. These categories guided CTRJ publications and shaped curriculum development, helping to define the discipline. Before ACPTC's formation, textiles and clothing were sub-disciplines within Home Economics. The establishment of ACPTC in 1979 and CTRJ in 1982 marked the official beginning of this discipline as a distinct field, solidified by academic journals, professional organisations, and conferences.

Forty years later from CTRJ's inception, CTRJ has expanded from the original five categories to the current nine categories including *Apparel Science and Technology*, *Consumer Behaviour*, *Design, Education and Pedagogy*, *History and Culture*, *Merchandising and Retailing*, *Social Psychology*, *Textile and Apparel industry*, and *Textile Sciences* (Sage Journals, 2024).

While being more interdisciplinary can be a strength, it has also created more challenges. When TAM was housed under Home Economics, then Family and Consumer Sciences, even though it was already interdisciplinary, there was a certain type of uniformity and safety. When TAM truly became an independent discipline with ITAA established as its own professional organisation, CTRJ as its official academic journal, along with its own annual conferences, the interdisciplinary nature of TAM became a challenge. Each program/department in higher education within the TAM discipline began to choose different focuses based on its history and strengths and is housed under different colleges, which has led to very diverse identities of this discipline. Laughlin and Kean (1995, 1996) conducted a comprehensive analysis of textiles and clothing academic programs in the United States and put forth a call to scholars in the field for the development of a common textiles and clothing identity (1995, p. 196). Without a clear, unified, and updated identity for this discipline, many programs, departments, researchers, faculty members, and students have been facing challenges and even hardship.

In 1995, ITAA started to develop its Meta Goals to help university programs better develop and update their curricula (Kunz, 1995). Then the Mega Goals were reviewed and updated in 2008 (Frazier & Cheek, 2016). Another round of review took place in 2021 and the current Mega Goals serve as the guideline for most of the four-year baccalaureate programs for curriculum development and program learning outcome updates. TAPAC serves as the official accrediting organisation for programs in textiles and apparel in higher education to establish standards to support member programs in achieving excellence (TAPAC, n.d.-b). It was established in 2017 and the number of accredited programs is growing.

Both ITAA Meta-Goals and TAPAC have jointly created an umbrella to bring the textile and apparel programs together for excellence, uniformity, and protection. As the official publication of ITAA, CTRJ serves as a credible and consistent barometer to gauge concerns and interests within the TAM discipline and to identify the structure, interest, maturity, and future of this diverse field (Lakner, Paff, & Din, 1997). Based on the above literature review and

discussions, given CTRJ's progress and reputation over the four decades since its inception, the present study seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ3: How do the identified CTRJ categories and research patterns compare to the current CTRJ?

RQ4: How do the identified CTRJ categories and research patterns compare to the ITAA Meta-Goals?

RQ5: How do the identified CTRJ categories and research patterns compare to TAPAC standards?

RQ6: How to start redefining the identity of the TAM discipline?

3. Research method, data analyses and results

3.1. Preliminary

In the dataset, all the articles' titles, years of publication, volume numbers, issue numbers, and links were included. From 1982 to 2023, there were 990 articles published by CTRJ. Constant Comparative Method (CCM) was adopted for category development and coding process. In this process, as shown in Figure 2, five steps were followed.

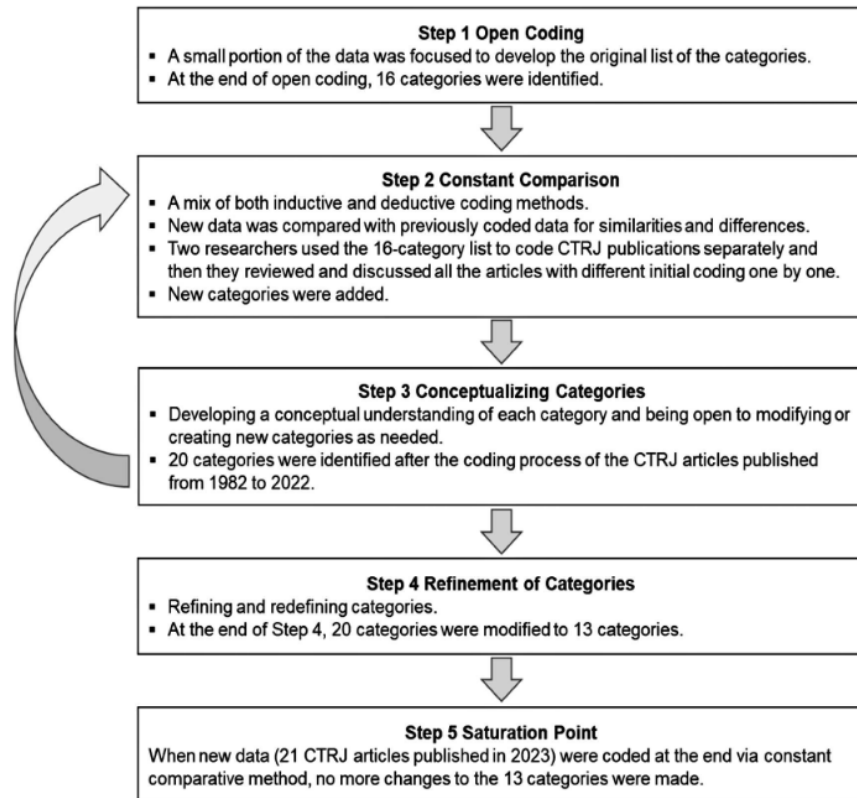


Figure 2. Coding process of CTRJ publications – constant comparative method (CCM).C

At step one – Open Coding, a small portion of data was initially analysed to develop categories. Specifically, forty early CTRJ articles were reviewed, resulting in 16 initial categories. In step two – Constant Comparison, new data was continuously compared with previously coded data to refine categories. Specifically, during each round of reviewing and coding, the two researchers coded 25% of CTRJ articles (10 out of 42 years), increasing consistency from 74.2% to 89.6%. Differences were resolved through detailed reviews, and 4 new categories were added. While repeating this second step through constant comparison, the third and fourth steps were conducted. In the third step of Conceptualising Categories, the researchers developed a deeper understanding of each category and modified them as necessary, merging and regrouping to enhance accuracy. Then in the fourth step of Refinement of Categories, as more articles were coded, the categories were further refined. Consistency improved, and the final 13 categories were defined. In the final step of Saturation Point, coding continued until no significant changes were found, marking the point of data saturation. By the end, all the articles published in 2023 were coded with the 13 final categories remaining stable.

Therefore, to answer RQ1 (What are the key research categories in CTRJ?), 13 key research categories in CTRJ are identified as listed in Table 2: *Textile Science* (C1), *Apparel Science and Technology* (C2), *Apparel Design* (C3), *History and Culture* (C4), *Social Psychology* (C5), *Consumer Behaviour/Psychology* (C6), *Retailing/Merchandising/Marketing* (C7), *International Trade/ Business/Industry* (C8), *US Textile and Apparel Industry* (C9), *Pedagogy/Curriculum/Assessment* (C10), *Discipline Study* (C11), *Discipline Methodology* (C12), and *Industrial Professional Development* (C13).

3.2. Reliability and validity

Ensuring reliability and validity within academic journals is essential. The present study acknowledged limitations in previous research. For example, Ha-Brookshire & Hawley's, 2014 review (2014) did not have multiple researchers code all 476 articles, which could result in lower reliability. Additionally, each article was placed into only one category, which may overlook the interdisciplinary nature of the field. In CTRJ, many articles, particularly recent ones, span multiple categories. For instance, Muhammad's, 2015 research (2015) on individual women microenterprise owners from an integrated black feminist perspective fits both the social/psychological (C5) and retailing/merchandising/marketing (C7) categories. Similarly, French & Reddy-Best's, Citation2023 study (Citation2023) on Czech folk costumes and the negotiation of ambivalence and white ethnicity in the Midwest belongs to both the cultural/historical (C4) and social/psychological (C5) categories.

This study addressed reliability and validity in several ways. The two researchers involved have over 25 years of experience in research and teaching within the TAM discipline, with multiple publications in CTRJ. To improve reliability, they thoroughly reviewed and coded every article, allowing for multiple category assignments to reflect the increasingly multidisciplinary nature of the field. Close collaboration and iterative discussions further ensured the reliability and validity of the coding process. Out of the 990 articles published in CTRJ, 24 Editor's Notes/Reports were excluded from the coding, resulting in a total of 1186 category assignments.

Table 2. The process of category refinement.

Original category number	Original categories	Category adjustment during the process	Final categories	Final category number
C1	Textile Science	Textile Science	Textile Science	C1
C2	Apparel Science and Technology	Apparel Science and Technology	Apparel Science and Technology	C2
C3	Apparel Design	Apparel Design	Apparel Design (C3 + C4 + C20)	C3
C4	Product Development	Product Development		
C5	History	History	History and Culture (C5 + C6)	C4
C6	Culture	Culture		
C7	Social Psychology	Social Psychology	Social Psychology	C5
C8	Consumer Behaviour/Psychology	Consumer Behaviour/Psychology	Consumer Behaviour/Psychology	C6
C9	Retailing/Merchandising	Retailing/Merchandising	Retailing/Merchandising/Marketing (C9+ C18)	C7
C10	International Trade	International Trade	International Trade/ Business/Industry(C10 + C12)	C8
C11	US Textile and Apparel Industry	US Textile and Apparel Industry	US Textile and Apparel Industry	C9
C12	International Business/Industry	International Business/Industry		
C13	Sustainability/Social Responsibility			
C14	Pedagogy	Pedagogy	Pedagogy/Curriculum/Assessment (C14+ C15)	C10
C15	Consumer/Assessment	Consumer/Assessment		
C16	Discipline Study	Discipline Study	Discipline Study	C11
C17		Discipline Methodology	Discipline Methodology	C12
C18		Marketing		
C19		Industrial Professional Development	Industrial Professional Development	C13
C20		Creative Design/Exhibit – short design articles		

3.3. Bibliometric analysis

After CCM was used to develop the categories, bibliometric analysis was conducted to analyse the data further. Bibliometrics is widely used in academia for research assessment, funding allocation, and decision-making in academic and scientific communities (Khan, Ali, & Ashraf, 2020; Khan et al., 2021). The bibliometric approach involves applying statistical and mathematical techniques to bibliographic data to gain insights into patterns and trends within a specific field of research. It has multiple key indicators, such as publication counts, citation analysis, authorship patterns, institutional analysis, and co-citation analysis (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, Pandey, & Lim, Citation2021). Each indicator has its purpose. The number of publications measures productivity and the number of citations measures the influence (Donthu et al., Citation2021). In Baker et al.'s study (2021), bibliometric analysis was adopted to explore questions, such as what is the development pattern of Journal of Consumer Affairs' publications? And what are the Journal of Consumer Affairs' central themes? One of the strengths of this method is its various applications, such as identifying publication trends (Martínez-López, Merigó, Valenzuela-Fernández, & Nicolás, 2018) and conducting thematic analysis (Burton,

Kumar, & Pandey, Citation2020; Kumar, Spais, Kumar, & Sureka, Citation2020). Another strength is its ability to handle large amounts of bibliographic data (Baker et al., Citation2021). Following this approach, one key objective of this study after the identification of the research categories of CTRJ and coding all the publications by using these categories is to further explore the research trends and patterns of CTRJ by using the publication counts and percentages as the key indicators.

The 13 categories are listed in Table 3 from the biggest category to the smallest category in order based on the article counts and percentages in the last 42 years. As shown in the first column in Table 3, all 13 categories are put into 3 general groups. Group 1 includes the biggest five categories: Consumer Behaviour/Psychology (C6), Social Psychology (C5), History and Culture (C4), Apparel Design (C3), and Textile Science (C1) in order. The next group is composed of another five categories: Pedagogy/Curriculum/Assessment (C10), Discipline Study (C11), US Textiles and Clothing Industry (C9), Retailing/Merchandising/Marketing (C7), and International Trade/Business/Industry (C8) in order. Group 3 includes the smallest three categories: Apparel Science and Technology (C2), Industrial Professional Development (C13), and Discipline Methodology (C12).

Table 3. Summary of the categories in frequency and percentage.

	Category (Category number)	Frequency	Percentage
Group 1 – Biggest 5 categories	Consumer Behaviour/Psychology (C6)	235	23.7%
	Social Psychology (C5)	204	20.6%
	History and Culture (C4)	177	17.9%
	Apparel Design (C3)	106	10.7%
	Textile Science (C1)	92	9.3%
Group 2 – Middle 5 categories	Pedagogy/Curriculum/Assessment (C10)	85	8.6%
	Discipline Study (C11)	85	8.6%
	US Textiles and Clothing Industry (C9)	65	6.6%
	Retailing/Merchandising/Marketing (C7)	53	5.4%
	International Trade/Business/Industry (C8)	44	4.4%
Group 3 – Smallest 3 categories	Apparel Science and Technology (C2)	24	2.4%
	Industrial Professional Development (C13)	8	0.8%
	Discipline Methodology (C12)	8	0.8%

Note. Total frequency = 1186 (there are 1186 codes in total as some articles were coded into more than one category). Total CTRJ articles = 990 (1982–2023). Percentage = Frequency of each category / 990.

To better capture the evolving trends and patterns of each category, the articles were further processed in two steps. First, the whole timespan of CTRJ from 1982–2023 including 42 years was grouped into five decades: 1982–1989, 1990–1999, 2000–2009, 2010–2019, and 2020–2023. Data was further analysed following each decade rather than by each year. During the last 42 years, CTRJ has had 18 focus issues. The year when a focus issue was published, the articles in that particular category always had a peak in that year. These peaks may interfere with the true trends and patterns of publications in that particular category. Examining each decade rather than each year may cancel out the interference of focus issues.

Second, the percentage of each category was calculated and used rather than the total count of articles in each category. Specifically, the percentage was calculated by the number of articles in each category divided by the total number of articles published. In each year, the total number of articles published by CTRJ varies. For example, when only six articles were published in 1982, 41 articles were published in 1992. If we use Textile Science as an example, during 1982–1989, 18 articles were published in this category, whereas 24 articles in the same category were published during 1990–1999. The article counts show a higher focus on Textile Science during 1990–1999 than in 1982–1989. However, during 1982–1989, there were a total of 154 articles published and during 1990–1999, a total of 304 articles were published. Therefore, 11.7% of articles published during 1982–1989 and 7.9% of articles published during 1990–1999 are in this category, and these two percentages show a higher focus on Textile Science during 1982–1989 than during 1990–1999. Therefore, the publishing trends and patterns of each category can be more accurately captured by the percentage of the articles than the number of articles. Figure 3 shows the percentage of the articles in each category in each decade.

To answer RQ2 (What have been the research patterns and past trends of CTRJ in the identified categories), Table 4 was created to show the identified six patterns based on the past trends of the percentage of articles in each category in each decade. The first group shows an overall increasing trend when the category started with a low percentage and then gradually grew to be a more important and dominating category for CTRJ. International Trade/Business/Industry (C8) and Discipline Methodology (C12) are in this group. The second group has an opposite pattern with an overall decreasing trend. The categories in this group include Social Psychology (C5), Retailing/Merchandising/Marketing (C7), and US Textile and Clothing Industry (C9). The third group shows a stable pattern over the years, which includes History and Culture (C4), and Consumer Behaviour/Psychology (C6). The fourth group is opposite to the third group because it has gone through an unstable path over the years and the path follows the shape of the letter W. The categories in this group include Pedagogy/Curriculum/Assessment (C10) and Discipline Study (C11). The fifth group follows the shape of the letter V with a low point in the middle. The categories in this group include Textile Science (C1), Apparel Science and Technology (C2), and Industrial Professional Development (C13). The last group follows an opposite pattern as the fifth group with a peak in the middle and the category in this group is Apparel Design (C3).

3.4 Comparison with CTRJ, ITAA, and TAPAC

To answer RQ3 (How do the identified CTRJ categories and research patterns compare to the current CTRJ), RQ4 (How do the identified CTRJ categories and research patterns compare to the ITAA meta goals?), and RQ5 (How do the identified CTRJ categories and research patterns compare to TAPAC standards?), Table 5 is created to show the comparison between the original CTRJ, the current CTRJ, the findings from this study, ITAA Meta Goals, and TAPAC

standards. In the 2nd column of Table 5, the original 5 categories of CTRJ are listed. The 3rd column shows the current 9 categories of CTRJ. In the 4th column, the 13 categories identified in this study are listed. In the 5th column, we focus on ITAA’s Meta Goals, specifically on Meta Goal 1, because Goal 1 emphasises the core knowledge content in the TAM discipline with three areas A, B., and C. The last column in Table 5 shows TAPAC Standard 7.02 because this is the specific TAPAC standard with a clear focus on the core knowledge of this discipline as well.

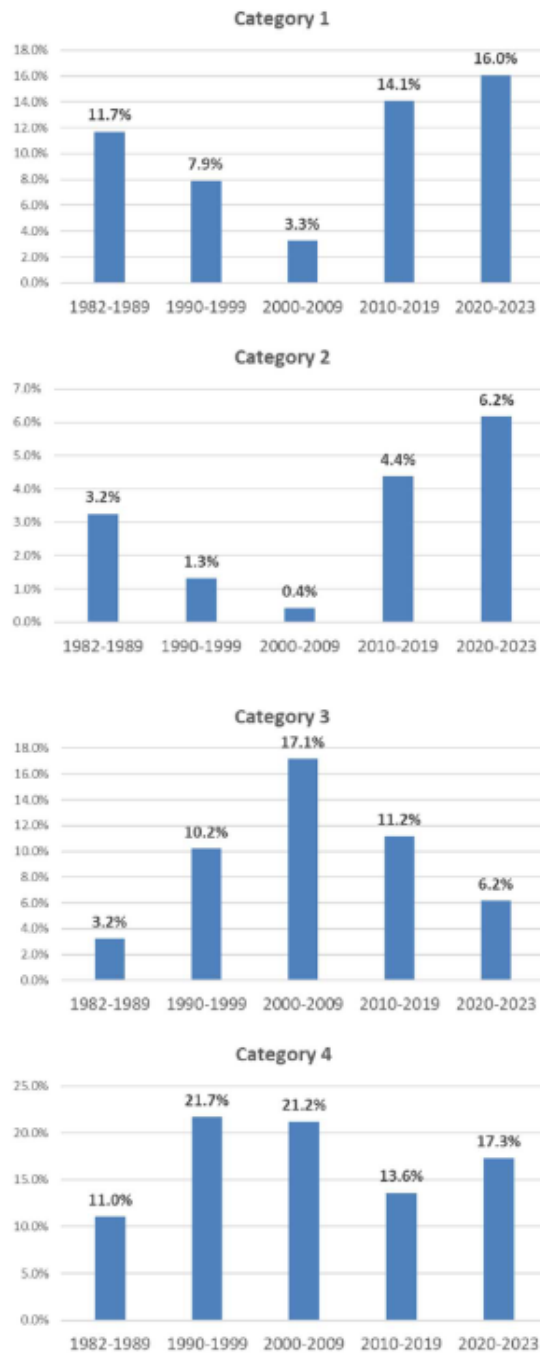


Figure 3. Percentage of the articles in each category in each decade.

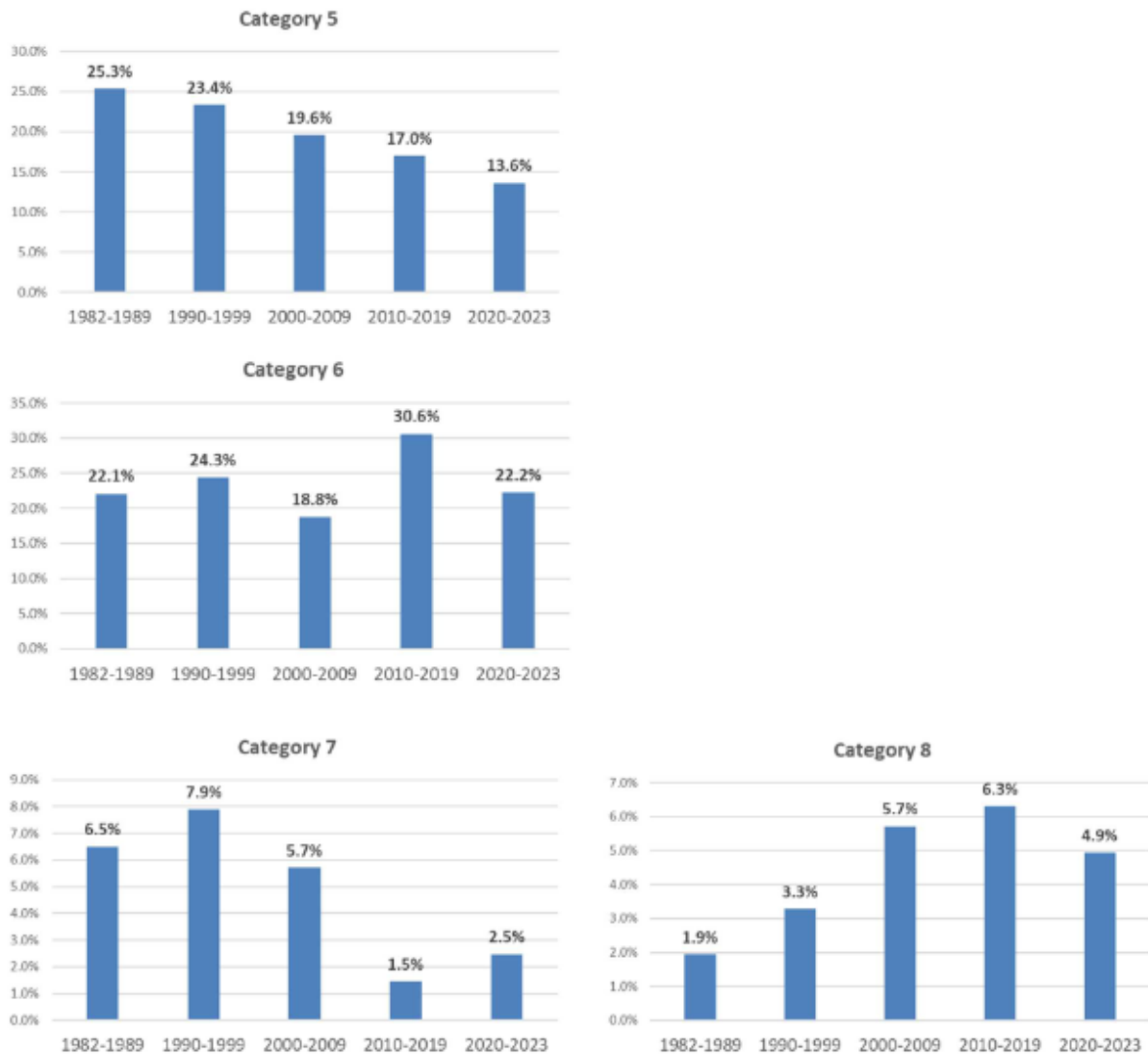


Figure 3. Continued

When comparing the 5 biggest categories in Group 1 in Table 3 to the original 5 areas of CTRJ in the 2nd column in Table 5, they align well. When we compare the 3rd column to the 2nd column, between the current 9 tracks of CTRJ and the 5 tracks of the original CTRJ, obviously four more tracks have been added, which are Apparel Science and Technology, Merchandising and Retailing, Textile and Apparel Industry, and Education and Pedagogy. Three of these four tracks are included in Group 2 in Table 3 and have shown an appropriate percentage of publications in CTRJ. However, one track, Apparel Science and Technology (C2), is one of the smallest categories in Group 3 in Table 3 which has not received enough publications.

In Table 5 in the 4th column, the 13 categories identified in this study are listed. Compared to the current 9 categories of CTRJ, 4 new categories are added: Discipline Study (C11), International Trade/Business/industry (C8), Industrial Professional Development (C13), and Discipline Methodology (C12). Why are these 4 new categories recommended? First, since 1982 the original publication of CTRJ, there have been a total of 18 focus issues published and 3

of them (1984, 2007, and 2008) focused on Discipline Study (C11). The publications in this category have a clear focus on our discipline: the history of TAM, the challenges of TAM, and the future of TAM. According to Table 3, C11 is in Group 2 – the middle 5 categories. There have been a good number of CTRJ publications focusing on the TAM discipline, especially the future of TAM. Adding this category can reflect its importance in CTRJ.

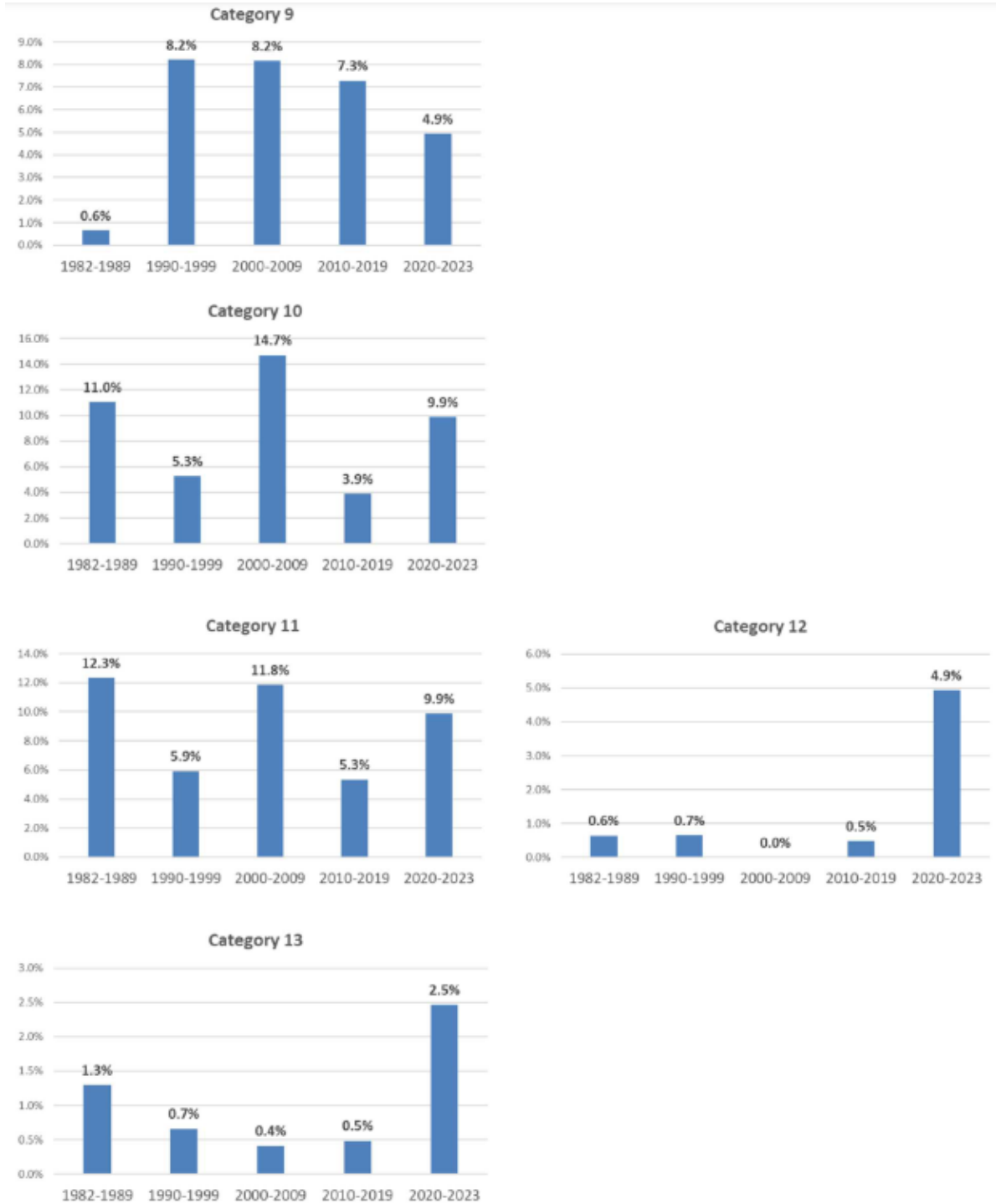


Figure 3 Continued

Table 4. Evolving patterns of the categories

	Evolving patterns	Categories
1	Increasing pattern	International Trade/Business/Industry(C8), Discipline Methodology (C12)
2	Decreasing pattern	Social Psychology (C5), Retailing/Merchandising/Marketing (C7), US Textile and Clothing Industry (C9)
3	Stable pattern	History and Culture (C4), Consumer Behaviour/Psychology (C6)
4	Up and down pattern – Pattern shapes like W	Pedagogy/Curriculum/Assessment (C10), Discipline Study (C11)
5	Pattern shapes like V	Textile Science (C1), Apparel Science and Technology (C2), Industrial Professional Development (C13)
6	Pattern shapes like an upside-down V – ^	Apparel Design (C3)

The second category added is International Trade/Business/Industry (C8). This category includes all the CTRJ publications with a clear focus on international trade, business, and industry. We pull this group of research from the track of Textile and Apparel Industry and name the original track ‘US Textile and Clothing Industry’ to align better with the global emphasis of CTRJ and ITAA. In Table 3, C8 is also in Group 2 – the middle 5 categories, showing a good number of publications focusing on international trade and international business and industries. When the publication pattern was examined, C8 showed an overall increasing trend in CTRJ publication (Table 4). In addition, two CTRJ focus issues (2002 and 2009) were designated to international trade and business. More importantly, TAPAC has included Global Interdependence (GI) in its Standard 7.02 (7.02.4). In ITAA's current Meta-Goals, even though there is no separate goal for the international focus, the international and global nature of our discipline is folded into Meta-Goals 1. A, B, and C. To better align with TAPAC’s standards and ITAA Meta Goals, and to reflect the importance of the articles published in CTRJ in this area, International Trade/Business/industry (C8) should be added.

The other two categories identified and added in this study, Industrial Professional Development (C13) and Discipline Methodology (C12), are both in Group 3 (Table 3) with the smallest 3 categories meaning the CTRJ articles in these categories are very limited. Then why should they be added? First, Table 4 shows that Industrial Professional Development (C13) has followed an increasing publishing trend in CTRJ in recent years following the shape of the letter V. All the publications in this category focus on how to help undergraduate students better prepare for their career and their industrial professional development. Even though the main contributors and audience of CTRJ are not undergraduate students, the key foundation of this discipline is the undergraduate programs. That’s why ITAA established the Meta-Goals in 1995 and went through revisions in 2008 and 2018 to provide a foundation for curriculum planning and assessment for our undergraduate programs. TAPAC also adopted the Meta-Goals for program accreditation. The ultimate goals of these undergraduate programs are not just to get students to graduate and prepare them for their first job. Rather, students need to be equipped with knowledge and skills before graduation on how to stay current and how to advance their careers to ensure long-term career success. That’s why both ITAA Meta Goals – Goal 1. B and

TAPAC Standard 7.02.4 have a clear focus on the entire industry processes and the roles, functions, and interdependence of various sectors in these processes. As a result, research on industrial professional development should be expanded in this discipline and its own category added to CTRJ can encourage more studies and eventually more publications in this category.

Table 5 Comparison between the original CTRJ, the current CTRJ, the findings from this study, ITAA meta goals, and TAPAC standards.

Categories in original CTRJ	Categories in current CTRJ	Findings from this study –category number	Meta goals Goal 1	TAPAC-Standard 7.02
1 Clothing Construction/Design	Design	Apparel Design – C3	Goal 1. A	7.02.3
2 Consumerism	Consumer Behaviour	Consumer Behaviour/Psychology– C6	Goal 1. C	7.02.2
3 Historical Textiles and Costume	History and Culture	History and Culture – C4	Goal 1. C	7.02.2
4 Sociological and Psychological Aspects of Clothing and Textless	Social Psychology	Social Psychology – C5	Goal 1. C	7.02.2
5 Textiles	Textile Science	Textile Science – C1	Goal 1. A	7.02.3
6	Apparel Science and Technology	Apparel Science and Technology– C2	Goal 1. A	7.02.3
7	Merchandising and Retailing	Retailing/Merchandising/ Marketing – C7	Goal 1. B	7.02.1
8	Textile and Apparel Industry	US Textile and Clothing Industry –C9	Goal 1. B	7.02.1
9	Education and Pedagogy	Pedagogy and Curriculum/Assessment – C10		
10		Discipline Study – C11		
11		International Trade/Business/Industry – C8	Folded into Goal1. A, B, & C	7.02.4
12		Industrial Professional Development – C13	Goal 1. B	7.02.1
13		Discipline Methodology – C12	Missing	Missing

The other small category added to the list is Discipline Methodology (C12). Why? TAM is a discipline and within this discipline, researchers can focus on various sub-disciplines presented in different categories of CTRJ, such as apparel design, textile sciences, and social psychology. What makes a discipline? An academic discipline is defined by some key components, such as its subject matter, body of knowledge, academic journals and conferences, professional associations, and curriculum and degree programs (Becher & Trowler, 2001). One of the necessary key components is its own methodologies because any academic discipline needs to establish methodologies and approaches for conducting research and analysis within its field (Becher & Trowler, 2001). As shown in Figure 1, this discipline was housed under Family and Consumer Sciences started in the 1990s, and Research Method in Family and Consumer Sciences has been a common course in many TAM programs till today. But if TAM wants to be a robust and distinct discipline, the establishment of its own methodologies is a must. It is not only needed for the undergraduate curriculum to replace the research method course in Family and Consumer Sciences, but also critical for TAM to demonstrate it as a discipline. Therefore, even though the number of CTRJ publications in this category falls in the smallest group as shown in Table 3, it is critical to add this category for CTRJ to call for more studies to explore the diverse, latest, innovative methodologies unique in this discipline. Table 4 shows that Discipline Methodology (C12) has had an increasing publishing trend in CTRJ in recent years. But far more attention is required from TAM researchers in this area.

When the 13 categories identified in this study are compared to the ITAA Meta-Goals – Goal 1 and TAPAC Standard 7.02, these 13 categories together show an improved alignment than the current CTRJ's 9 categories do. One of the four new categories identified, International Trade/Business/Industry (C8), is actually aligned with both ITAA Meta-Goals and TAPAC Standards. It should be noted that TAPAC Standard 7.02.4 (Global Interdependence) is not aligned with any of the current CTRJ 9 categories. Yet, the number of CTRJ publications in international trade, business, and industry has presented an increasing pattern shown in Table 4. Therefore, it is reasonable that the CTRJ category classification should add International Trade/Business/Industry (C8).

Three categories, Pedagogy and Curriculum/Assessment (C10), Discipline Study (C11), and Discipline Methodology (C12), are not aligned with any ITAA Meta-Goals and TAPAC Standard 7.02. Two of them, Pedagogy and Curriculum/Assessment (C10) and Discipline Study (C11) are more aimed at the faculty, scholars, administrators, and researchers in this discipline than the students. Therefore, it is reasonable to not align them with ITAA Meta-Goals and TAPAC Standard 7.02. However, Discipline Methodology (C12) should be added to the ITAA Meta-Goals and TAPAC Standard 7.02 as explained previously.

3.5. Core and structure of TAM

In this study, the CCM process and analysis generated 13 categories in CTRJ. When the identity of the TAM discipline is examined for RQ6 (How to start redefining the identity of the TAM discipline?), four of the 13 categories are not directly associated with the body of knowledge in our discipline, which are Pedagogy/Curriculum/Assessment (C10), Discipline Study (C11), Industrial Professional Development (C13), and Discipline Methodology (C12). Pedagogy/Curriculum/Assessment (C10) and Discipline Study (C11) are more aimed at the faculty, researchers, administrators, and scholars. Industrial Professional Development (C13) is more focused on how to better prepare students for long-term career success. Discipline

Methodology (C12) is about methodologies and approaches for conducting research and analysis in this discipline rather than a specific body of knowledge. Even though these four categories are extremely critical for the development of the TAM discipline and should be included in CTRJ, the remaining 9 categories are more direct contributors to the body of knowledge in this discipline. Therefore, these 9 categories can help answer RQ6 (How to start redefining the identity of the TAM discipline?).

These nine categories emerged from the 42 years of CTRJ publications, and naturally, these nine areas of study together should present the basic structure and foundation of the TAM discipline because CTRJ is the official publication of ITAA. Figure 4 illustrates the nine categories that emerged from CTRJ publications and represent the distinctive body of knowledge in TAM. The size of each circle represents the percentage of publications in each category in the last 42 years.



Figure 4. The nine categories emerged from the CTRJ publications (42 Years) and used as the key foundation for TAM.

Both Figure 4 and Table 4 combined can present a whole picture of the TAM discipline today and the possible direction of where it might be heading in the future. Figure 4 shows that Consumer Behaviour/Psychology (C6) and Social Psychology (C5) have been the biggest two sub-disciplines in TAM. Will these two sub-disciplines continue to take a more dominating position in TAM? If the answer is Yes, CTRJ, ITAA, and TAPAC need to continue to put enough

emphasis on them. If the answer is No, what other categories need to receive more attention? Table 4 indicates that while Consumer Behaviour/Psychology (C6) has maintained a stable pattern in CTRJ publications, Social Psychology (C5) has followed a decreasing publication trend. Will Social Psychology (C5) lose its leading role in TAM in the future following the current trend? Or more effort is needed to change the decreasing trend and bring its leading role back? The answers to these questions could be Yes or No depending on how the TAM academic community decides to define or redefine the identity of this discipline.

Figure 4 shows that the biggest 5 categories, Consumer Behaviour/Psychology (C6), Social Psychology (C5), History and Culture (C4), Apparel Design (C3), and Textile Science (C1), together form the main core of our discipline. Among them, the smallest two sub-disciplines are Apparel Design (C3) and Textile Science (C1): one is more associated with creative art and the other is more associated with nature science. It is obvious that TAM is interdisciplinary with multiple sub-disciplines ranging from social science to natural science and creative art, and with subject matter derived from a variety of root disciplines, such as economics, psychology, and sociology (Winakor, Citation1988). If this is the identity the TAM community decides to continue with for the future, these two smallest categories will need more attention, especially for Apparel Design (C3) when it has shown a decreasing trend in recent years indicated in Table 4. More importantly, how does TAM differentiate it from fashion schools, such as Parsons School of Design and Fashion Institute of Technology? Or does TAM want to differentiate from them? If not, how does the TAM community encourage their involvement and participation in the CTRJ publications, ITAA annual conferences, and TAPAC review standards? Also, compared to the other categories, both Apparel Design (C3) and Textile Science (C1) tend to be more expensive due to the nature of the required teaching resources, equipment, labs, and class size. If they continue to be the core of this discipline, how to expand or at least maintain them while many TAM programs have been facing budget challenges from their campuses?

Next, if we examine the other four categories associated with specific sub-disciplines, including Retailing/Merchandising/Marketing (C7), International Trade/Business/Industry (C8), Apparel Science and Technology (C2), and U.S. Textile and Clothing Industry (C9), as shown in Figure 4, their relative sizes are significantly smaller than the five core categories. This is particularly evident in Apparel Science and Technology (C2), which appears underdeveloped despite its potential to drive technological innovation in the TAM field. Given the rapid technological advancements in areas such as smart textiles, wearable technology, and sustainable manufacturing processes, the TAM community may need to prioritise this category to remain competitive and forward-thinking. Strengthening the focus on Apparel Science and Technology could also address shifts in the global labour market, where the demand for highly skilled professionals in fields like textile engineering, fashion technology, and data-driven retail is growing. Integrating advancements like artificial intelligence, blockchain for supply chain transparency, and digital fabrication techniques into TAM programs could better prepare graduates to meet the evolving needs of a globalised industry. Similarly, expanding research in Retailing/Merchandising/Marketing (C7) and International Trade/Business/Industry (C8) could help address changes in industrial structure, such as the rise of e-commerce, omnichannel retail strategies, and cross-border trade dynamics, which are reshaping how goods are marketed, sold, and distributed. The relatively small emphasis on the U.S. Textile and Clothing Industry (C9) may also reflect a need to address challenges and opportunities unique to domestic markets. This includes fostering innovation in localised production, navigating shifts in manufacturing due to

automation, and responding to consumer demand for ethically sourced and sustainably produced goods. A more balanced focus on these smaller categories could better align the TAM discipline with the current and future demands of the global labour market, where competition for talent skilled in both traditional and emerging technologies is intensifying.

The TAM community faces a critical decision: Should it strive to further strengthen its interdisciplinary identity by distributing more balanced attention across these smaller categories, or should it maintain its focus on the dominant five categories? Broadening the scope to include more robust research and education in underrepresented areas would require a concerted effort to attract resources, collaborations, and industry partnerships. On the other hand, continuing to focus on the core categories may preserve the established identity of the field while potentially overlooking transformative opportunities in areas like technological innovation and global industry adaptation. Ultimately, these strategic choices will shape the future of TAM, requiring a collective and deliberate effort from its scholars, educators, and industry stakeholders.

4. Conclusions, discussions, and contributions

Being the first to investigate all 42 years of CTRJ publications to examine the past, present, and future of the TAM discipline, this study aims to identify key research categories reflected in CTRJ articles, explore the publication patterns and past trends of CTRJ, compare the identified categories with the current CTRJ journal tracks, ITAA Meta-Goals, and TAPAC standards for similarities and differences, and evaluate the need to redefine the identity of this discipline in higher education.

This study provides significant insights into understanding the trajectory and current state of the TAM discipline through an in-depth, longitudinal examination of CTRJ. By analysing all 42 years of CTRJ publications, it maps out the evolution of TAM, highlights gaps, and sets a roadmap for future development within the field. The study is unique in its comprehensive scope, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse 990 CTRJ articles categorised into 13 distinct research areas, exploring patterns across different decades. These insights form the basis for discussions about aligning the TAM discipline with the evolving academic and industry standards, which this study examines through comparisons with CTRJ journal tracks, ITAA Meta-Goals, and TAPAC standards.

The study identifies a critical gap in TAM's methodological and theoretical foundations. While the applied nature of TAM has traditionally emphasised practical skills, there is a pressing need for methodological and theoretical research to reinforce the discipline's body of knowledge. In comparison with fields like interior design, which has developed a strong methodological backbone, TAM's lack of formalised methods and theories presents a limitation that could impact its academic legitimacy. Therefore, this study urges scholars to explore discipline-focused methodologies and theories, ensuring that TAM evolves beyond practical applications to address larger conceptual and theoretical challenges.

By establishing a foundation rooted in both past trends and future needs, this study contributes a model for examining and adapting the TAM discipline in response to global and industry shifts. By recommending new areas for research, such as international trade/business/industry (C8) and industry professional development (C13), it highlights emerging trends that TAM scholars and programs should address. The integration of technological innovation skills required by the industry for our students is critical in this adaptation, as advancements such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, 3D design software, blockchain

for supply chain transparency, and automation are rapidly transforming the industry. Research into these technologies and their application within the TAM is essential to ensure the discipline not only remains relevant but also positions itself as a leader in driving innovation. Another key element of this forward-looking approach is addressing the supply and demand for highly skilled human resources in TAM. The global labour market increasingly seeks professionals with expertise in both traditional areas (such as textiles, apparel design, and merchandising) and cutting-edge skills in data analytics, digital marketing, and advanced manufacturing technologies. By recommending research into international trade and industry-specific professional development, this study highlights the importance of cultivating a workforce equipped to navigate the complexities of a globalised industry. This forward-looking approach can help TAM anticipate changes, remain relevant, and align more closely with the industry's evolving demands.

The findings from this study also call attention to TAM's fragmented identity, presenting an opportunity for the discipline to unify around its core sub-disciplines. With interdisciplinary roots, TAM encompasses fields as diverse as social psychology, international trade, and industry development, as shown in Figure 4. However, this diversity risks causing identity issues that could hinder the discipline's growth, especially in terms of competition for resources and attracting students. This study recommends that TAM could benefit from a structured identity framework, similar to frameworks used in other disciplines like marketing (the 4Ps) or interior design's People, Problem, Process, and Practice model. Such a framework would not only help unify TAM's sub-disciplines but also create a recognisable identity to strengthen its presence in academia and industry.

The study suggests that aligning CTRJ, ITAA, and TAPAC in terms of research categories and standards can lead to a consistent framework for TAM programs across institutions. This alignment provides a unified identity and guides curriculum design, encouraging TAM departments and programs to integrate all core sub-disciplines while allowing flexibility based on their unique strengths and histories. Such a structure would enable programs to reflect a cohesive TAM identity while adapting to local or institutional contexts, ultimately strengthening the discipline's presence in higher education and giving students a more comprehensive education that reflects TAM's interdisciplinary nature.

This study makes a pivotal contribution to the future of fashion studies and fashion-related education by offering a replicable model for examining the developmental trajectory of interdisciplinary disciplines through academic journal analysis. By identifying key research categories and uncovering evolving trends within CTRJ, this research provides a structured framework that can guide curriculum development, foster innovative research, and align academic pursuits with industry demands. The insights gained underscore the importance of addressing gaps in methodology, theoretical foundations, and global trade research, ensuring that the field remains relevant and adaptable. Moreover, by bridging historical perspectives with emerging challenges, this study equips scholars and educators with the tools to shape a dynamic, forward-thinking fashion discipline that meets the needs of both academia and industry in a rapidly changing world.

Finally, this study's contributions not only enrich TAM's future, but also establish a framework for similar longitudinal studies in other interdisciplinary fields. This study exemplifies how academic journal analysis can offer deep insights into a field's development, helping identify its trajectory, strengths, and areas needing further exploration. Academic journals often reflect the dynamic nature of interdisciplinary fields by capturing how they adapt

to changing societal needs and technological advancements. This study on TAM highlights how CTRJ's publication history reflects shifts within the discipline, from technical skill development to broader theoretical and methodological concerns. Such insights are instrumental in guiding academic and curriculum decisions, as longitudinal journal studies can reveal gaps and suggest new directions for research and teaching. By examining TAM's past and present through CTRJ publications, this study showcases the utility of journal analysis as a method for tracking the evolution of interdisciplinary fields, which frequently struggle with defining clear identities and theoretical foundations (Rafols, Leydesdorff, O'Hare, Nightingale, & Stirling, Citation2012). As interdisciplinary fields continue to expand, studies like this offer a model for other fields seeking to establish coherent identities and adapt to new challenges. Therefore, this study not only strengthens TAM but also underscores the importance of journal analysis in interdisciplinary research, demonstrating how a detailed, longitudinal examination of academic journals can clarify a field's developmental trajectory, spotlight its strengths, and identify future directions. This approach sets a valuable precedent, illustrating how longitudinal studies of journals can contribute to building cohesive, responsive, and forward-looking disciplines across the academic spectrum.

5. Limitations and future studies

Notwithstanding the retrospective and prospective value that we strive to deliver in this study, we acknowledge that this study is not without its limitations. The first limitation is the scope of the study itself. The authors make no claim that the review provided here is an exhaustive list of all publications in our discipline. As a matter of fact, many TAM publications have been shown in other academic journals. The scope of interpretation and analysis in this paper is strictly within CTRJ. We only focused on CTRJ articles in our examination of TAM research activities. We made an assumption that CTRJ publications represented the status of TAM research activities among TAM scholars and researchers. Considering the fact that there are other major journals in the TAM discipline summarised in Table 1, and many researchers published their articles in a wide range of journals outside of the TAM discipline, the study may not provide a complete picture of the evolution trends of TAM scholarship. Thus, the results and discussion should not be generalised without the CTRJ context.

Second, there exist inherent biases associated with the coding and categorisation process in the study. Both authors of this study have conducted a lot of TAM research and are familiar with the TAM research, education, and resources. Although the two researchers independently and carefully coded the CTRJ articles one by one, conducted thorough constant comparisons in the iterative coding process, and engaged in close and detailed discussion for every coding discrepancy to minimise the subjectivity and bias, given the nature of inherent research biases, caution is needed when generalising the study findings.

Third, our review is limited to the type of analysis that we employed. The aim of the present study was not to provide an in-depth summary of the journal's detailed content and we concede that we didn't conduct in-depth bibliometric analysis and content review of each individual category. The study mainly focused on examining the research categories reflected by all CTRJ publications from 1982 to 2023, thus we assessed the TAM research at a relatively macro level. We should recognise this limitation of the findings.

Finally, the future directions proposed by this study focus on the TAM discipline. This study underscores the need for more research on methodologies and theoretical frameworks, as

the discipline remains underdeveloped in both areas. Additionally, the study calls for an urgent, comprehensive discussion within the academic community to establish a clear, updated, and systematically developed identity for the TAM discipline. Addressing these gaps will require concerted efforts from scholars in future studies. Another future study will focus on the examination of other academic journals publishing TAM research listed in Table 1. As stated above, this study only focused on CTRJ and may not provide a full picture of the evolution trends of TAM scholarship. In order to develop a more comprehensive picture of TAM, more journals need to be examined, such as the International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education. This approach can provide a more comprehensive look at this discipline for its past, present, and future. Another future study is related to the statistical methods used for data analysis. New methods, such as topic modelling and text mining, can be adopted to conduct further analyses for CTRJ and other academic journals to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of these academic journals.

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Correction Statement

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

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