Editorial

Consumer Behavior and Sustainable Marketing Development in Online and Offline Settings

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The changing dynamics of consumer behavior in today's digitally driven market presents opportunities and challenges for sustainable marketing development [1]. There is a growing awareness that consumer choices have a significant effect on the planet's health as society struggles with urgent environmental issues like deforestation, climate change, and plastic pollution [2,3].

In particular, how individuals, groups, or organizations purchase, utilize, or discard ideas, products, services, or experiences to fulfill their needs and demands is referred to as consumer behavior [4]. Before making decision on what to buy, consumers undergo a number of emotional, social, and psychological processes [5]. Creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers in a way that acknowledges and addresses the long-term effects of these practices on economic, environment, and societal well-being are all part of what are known as sustainable marketing practices [6]. Park et al. [7] stated that sustainable marketing merges elements of green, social, and environmental marketing. Additionally, it is a strategy that benefits both the environment and businesses by creating goods and services that are both socially responsible and environmentally friendly, as they have eco-friendly attributes [8]. These qualities help with fostering brand loyalty and ensuring optimal practices.

This Editorial examines the crucial nexus that exists between consumer behavior and sustainable marketing practices, highlighting the importance of having a strong grasp of how these practices appear in online and offline contexts. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the rise in online shopping, which has changed consumer expectations and behaviors [9,10]. This transformation of shopping in the digital realm provides an unparalleled opportunity for companies to develop sustainable marketing strategies such as using environmentally friendly packaging and carbon-neutral shipping methods and promoting digital merchandise [11]. Nevertheless, it also introduces new obstacles, including the rise in packaging waste and the environmental impact associated with the transportation of goods [12,13]. In this vein, creating effective sustainable marketing strategies that reduce a firm's environmental impact requires understanding consumer preferences and behaviors in the digital sphere [14,15].

On the other hand, the offline retail setting is still crucial for encouraging eco-friendly consumer behaviors. Offline stores provide customers with real-time experiences that can impact their decisions, such as the chance to interact with eco-friendly products or take part in recycling initiatives [16]. Additionally, retailers can utilize these interactions to impart knowledge to consumers about sustainability, thereby encouraging responsible consumption patterns [17,18]. Moreover, direct consumer behavior in an offline environment yields insightful information that can guide sustainable marketing strategies in both offline and online contexts [19–21].

Jo [22] emphasized that a comprehensive approach that takes into account the nuances of consumer behavior in both digital and physical domains is imperative for the development of sustainable marketing practices. It entails not only promoting sustainable goods and services but also developing an ecosystem that supports and makes making sustainable decisions easier. This entails using social media platforms to spread awareness of sustainability issues, tailoring marketing messages toward environmentally conscious consumers, and leveraging data analytics to understand consumer preferences [23,24].

Furthermore, companies need to understand the importance of authenticity and openness to gaining the trust of customers [25]. Customers' awareness is rising, and they are becoming less trusting of greenwashing strategies [26]. They demand an authentic dedication to sustainability, demonstrated by tangible deeds and quantifiable results [27]. As a result, businesses need to make sure that their marketing messages highlight their commitment to environmental sustainability and are consistent with their operational procedures. Due to the complex relationship between consumer behavior and sustainable marketing practices, a thorough investigation is necessary to assess the relationship empirically. This highlights the importance of having a nuanced understanding of how these practices appear in both online and offline contexts.

This Special Issue highlights the convergence between consumer behavior and sustainable marketing development in both online and offline contexts by examining various viewpoints and approaches. The first study in this Special Issue, conducted by Vilkaite-Vaitone (Contribution 1), uses the Attitude–Behavior–Context theory to explore the potential impact of social media influencers' attributes, such as alignment, credibility, expertise, homophily, and trustworthiness regarding eco-friendly values, on influencing environmentally conscious consumers' behavior in favor of sustainable consumption. By using structural equation modeling to thoroughly analyze data from 427 consumers, the study sheds light on the critical roles that influencers' perceived credibility and importance play in helping consumers to make more eco-friendly decisions. The study highlights the transformative potential of influencers in the broader quest for environmental sustainability and sustainable market development in both offline and online domains. It also enriches the discourse about green marketing and consumer engagement by tightly connecting influencer marketing to concrete actions performed to encourage sustainability. Additionally, the study shows the utility of leveraging digital platforms in fostering a more sustainable consumption landscape.

In this Special Issue, Teixeira et al. (Contribution 2) considered the importance of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) for understanding how consumers interact with green cosmetics. The study explores the digital context to determine how brand content, influencer marketing, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) significantly influence consumers' intentions to buy environmentally friendly cosmetics. By questioning 151 participants via a carefully designed online survey, the study highlights the critical roles that brand content and e-WOM play in influencing consumer preferences. It also highlights the relatively small role that influencer marketing plays in this regard. This important investigation contributes to the conversation about sustainable consumption in the cosmetics industry and provides useful information for brands attempting to manage the complexities of online marketing strategies. The study also highlights the intricate relationships between consumer attitudes, the persuasive influence of online strategies, and changing sustainability paradigms.

Fu et al. (Contribution 3) conducted a study analyzing the complex relationships between cause-related marketing (CRM) messages presented visually and customer interaction, which are supported by the moderating effect of self-perception. The study reveals, through a series of carefully planned experiments, that in sharp contrast to product-focused messages, cause-focused CRM messages significantly improve consumer brand attitudes and increase their purchase intentions. This is mainly because they reduce the perception of self-serving motives among consumers. Interestingly, the lens of self-construal adds further nuance to this relationship, showing that people with an independent self-construal do not differ from those with an interdependent self-construal in that they both respond

more favorably to cause-focused messages. By incorporating insights from attribution theory, the study not only expands the theoretical horizons of CRM but also provides marketers with practical advice on how to create more memorable and successful CRM campaigns. Through the emphasis on the crucial function of visual style and its complex relationship with self-construal, the study significantly contributes to our understanding of how to leverage CRM to develop stronger customer relationships and propel long-term marketing success.

In the fourth study, Salah et al. (Contribution 4) undertake a detailed investigation of the dynamics controlling electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in Saudi Arabia's hotel industry. The study examines the critical roles that customer satisfaction (CS), positive emotional experience (PEE), and perceived quality (PQ) play in fostering positive word-of-mouth (eWOM) and how eWOM influences visitors' intentions to return. Via an online survey directed at individuals who have recently stayed in Riyadh's five-star environmentally conscious hotels and interacted with these establishments on TripAdvisor, the researchers discover that PQ is the most important predictor for creating positive eWOM, in turn greatly increasing the probability of revisiting. The study also highlights the role that CS plays as a mediator in the relationship between PQ, PEE, and eWOM, as well as the role that eWOM plays as a mediator in the relationships between PQ, PEE, CS, and the intention to revisit. The study's empirical rigor highlights the role that the crucial intersection between sustainable practices, guest experiences, and digital advocacy plays in determining the future trajectory of the hospitality industry. It also provides useful insights into the academic discourse on eWOM within the context of eco-friendly hospitality and offers practical strategies for hotel operators and marketers looking to leverage positive eWOM to strengthen revisit intentions.

In the fifth study, working against the backdrop of the European Union's push for sustainable mobility, Riverso et al. (Contribution 5) examine consumer attitudes toward buying electric vehicles (EVs), particularly battery electric vehicles (BEVs). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was utilized by the researchers to analyze the factors that impact BEV purchasing intentions. These factors include perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and attitudes. Additionally, the model was expanded to include the unique element of individual uncertainty. The study found that the intention to purchase BEVs is significantly influenced by consumer attitudes, societal influences, and a sense of control by conducting an online survey of 335 participants. It is noteworthy that this aim is indirectly undermined by uncertainty, as it influences the perception of behavioral control. This implies that consumers' concerns about EV technology and infrastructure constraints could prevent the adoption of BEVs. In addition to adding to the body of knowledge on the topic of sustainable vehicle adoption by integrating uncertainty with the TPB, this academic endeavor offers policymakers and marketers practical advice on how to decode EV technology and encourage the purchase of BEVs, thus promoting sustainable mobility.

Fatima and Khan (Contribution 6) explore the changing landscape of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the Indian retail banking industry in this Special Issue's sixth study. They pay particular attention to how CSR initiatives affect consumer trust, purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. By using structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis to analyze 357 questionnaires, the study highlights the powerful influence of CSR on building consumer trust, in turn boosting WOM and purchase intentions. This investigation highlights the critical role that CSR plays in consumer behavior and provides important insights into how consumers form opinions and decisions about businesses based on their CSR actions. It also emphasizes the strategic significance of CSR in marketing, arguing that banks can greatly gain from implementing a well-designed CSR strategy, as it fosters better customer relations and loyalty. The study makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of the influence of CSR on consumer behavior and its practical implications for banking managers who want to create more effective consumer-oriented strategies. It also proposes an integrative model to evaluate the effectiveness of CSR initiatives in relation to consumer responses.

The seventh study, conducted by Jo (Contribution 7), is a thorough investigation of the variables affecting loyalty and recommendation intentions in the context of online for offline (O4O) commerce platforms. Using partial least squares structural equation modeling, this novel research framework analyzes data from O4O customers to investigate the proposed relationships. Relative advantages are found to be highly influenced by channel accessibility, perceived multichannel quality, and customization; however, it is surprising that relative advantages have no direct effect on recommendation intention or loyalty. Fairness in pricing is a crucial factor involved in determining both loyalty and the intention to recommend, and a company's reputation greatly increases loyalty, highlighting its importance in building customer trust. The study offers crucial insights for omnichannel businesses that operate primarily in physical stores by differentiating between O4O models and traditional O2O models by incorporating contextual variables. The study makes significant scholarly contributions and offers useful practical implications by highlighting the distinctive dynamics of O4O commerce and offering a road map for improving customer engagement and loyalty in the quickly changing digital commerce environment.

Ao et al. (Contribution 8) conducted the eighth study, a meta-analysis of 176 effect sizes from 62 separate studies with 22,554 participants, which thoroughly investigated the impacts of social media influencers' attributes on customer engagement and purchase intention. Eight crucial social media influencer traits were found through analysis: homophily, knowledge, reliability, credibility, product congruence, entertainment value, informative value, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. These traits show moderate to strong correlations with both customer engagement and intention to buy. The study indicated that credibility had the greatest influence on purchase intention, but influencer entertainment value had the strongest correlation with customer engagement. By offering empirical clarity regarding the direction and strength of these relationships, the study makes a significant contribution to the field of influencer marketing and helps marketers to select influencers whose qualities are in line with their brand's goals. Furthermore, to maximize customers' engagement and purchase intention, marketers should prioritize influencers viewed as credible and entertaining. These findings provide actionable insights that can be utilized to shape influencer marketing strategies.

Using Attitude–Behavior–Context theory, Chen et al. (Contribution 9) examine the complex connections between brand awareness (BA), green customer value (GCV), green marketing (GM), environmental concern (EC), and eco-conscious consumer behavior (ECB). Surveying 700 customers in Karachi and Lahore, Pakistan, the study reveals how GM and GCV improve BA and EC, in turn encouraging ECB through the purchasing of eco-friendly products. It also reveals the moderating influence of 'felt obligation' on the relationship between BA and ECB while emphasizing the partially mediating roles of EC and BA in the GM, GCV, and ECB linkage. This investigation into the environmental consciousness of Pakistani consumers offers important new knowledge of the dynamics of green consumerism in developing nations. It highlights how important it is for green marketing tactics to raise consumer awareness of and concern for environmental issues to promote sustainable environmentally friendly behaviors. The results highlight the significance of encouraging consumers to adopt an eco-conscious mindset to support a sustainable environment. They also have numerous implications for marketers who want to create successful green marketing strategies.

Yang et al. (Contribution 10) adopt the Protective Action Decision Model (PADM) to analyze data from 517 participants for investigating the psychological mechanisms underlying panic buying during the Omicron-variant-related lockdowns in China. It demonstrates how different types of media exposure affect people's perceptions of risk. While social media amplifies both cognitive and affective risk perceptions, it also reduces affective risk perceptions, in turn encouraging panic buying. According to the study, panic buying is directly predicted by affective and cognitive risk perceptions, indicating that emotional reactions to risk have a greater influence on panic buying than reasoned evaluation. Additionally, it examines the roles of protective and stakeholder perceptions and concludes

that although protective perception promotes panic buying, stakeholder perception lessens it. This thorough analysis highlights the need for sophisticated communication strategies to effectively manage public reactions, as it illuminates the complex nature of consumer behavior during times of crisis.

Zhang and Peng (Contribution 11) explore the influence of prior altruistic actions on subsequent charitable decisions. It shows that people frequently show a decreased inclination to participate in charitable activities after previous similar deeds, emphasizing a psychological phenomenon called the licensing effect. The types of donations made, whether they be in cash or kind, have no bearing on this outcome. Remarkably, the study also reveals that people's memories of their past charitable deeds, whether concrete or abstract, as well as whether they attribute these deeds to individual or group efforts, moderate the effect's magnitude. More specifically, thinking about the specifics of previous charitable endeavors or emphasizing individual donations tends to stifle enthusiasm for future charitable involvement more than thinking back on the broad objectives of such endeavors or viewing them as group efforts. These observations broaden our understanding of the licensing effect with regard to philanthropic conduct. Furthermore, they provide significant recommendations for the development and advancement of enduring charitable initiatives, implying that emphasizing group contributions and their overall objectives could potentially encourage the continuous involvement of the general public in these endeavors.

Fan et al. (Contribution 12) develop a cross-border e-commerce brand-specific international evaluation index system to support a firm's long-term growth and competitive advantage in the global market. The study carefully examines online reviews to map customer perceptions of the Kano model's categories using an innovative method that combines Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) training. The utilization of this innovative methodology enables a fluid understanding of consumer inclinations and reveals that brand managers should prioritize service metrics associated with anticipated factors while simultaneously meeting necessary criteria and striving to attract customers with charm factors. To effectively advance brand internationalization, it is important to account for indifference factors, which can be delicately noted. The study not only provides a novel approach to for cross-border e-commerce brand positioning internationally by utilizing online consumer feedback within an organized analytical framework but also establishes a standard for utilizing sophisticated data analysis techniques to uncover consumer insights critical for brand development.

Pinto et al. (Contribution 13) examine how Portuguese consumers' preferences for private-label food products have been affected by management strategies and the COVID-19 pandemic. With a sample of 300 customers, the study uses a quantitative approach with multiple linear regressions to reveal notable loyalty towards private labels, influenced by factors such as customer satisfaction, the perceived value of private labels, the shopping experience, and changes in purchasing behavior brought on by the pandemic. The results underscore the significance of favorable consumer perceptions of private labels, the perceived level of risk attached to these products, and the revolutionary impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumers' attitudes toward private labels. Store satisfaction and private label loyalty emerge as key factors influencing customer retention and competitive advantage. The study emphasizes how important it is to modify marketing tactics to increase private-label purchase intentions for maintaining profitability and winning over customers in the cut-throat retail market. The study adds to the wider conversation on consumer behavior in the face of global crises by highlighting the need for retailers to stay flexible and responsive to changing consumer preferences and market dynamics, as well as offering food retailers practical advice on how to best implement their private-label strategies.

Finally, given growing consumer desire for natural ingredients and sustainable practices, Ribeiro et al. (Contribution 14) examine the growing interest in cannabis-based skincare products within the cosmetics industry. The study uses structural equation modeling to test a set of nine hypotheses with regard to the influence of individual values,

environmental consciousness, and attitudes toward cannabis-based products and their industrial application on consumers' purchase intentions. The study's analysis of 230 participants from Portugal is thorough. Its results highlight the direct impact of environmental awareness on purchasing behaviors, as well as the indirect but crucial role that personal values related to conservation and openness to change play in influencing consumers' acceptance of cannabis-derived cosmetics. The study emphasizes the importance of using focused communication tactics that take consumer values and environmental factors into account while providing marketers with insightful information. In addition to adding to the body of literature, the study helps practitioners to navigate the changing landscape created by the cosmetic industry's shift toward sustainability and the use of natural ingredients by identifying the demographic data of potential customers and stressing the influence of income, gender, and age.

By providing this rich overview through the lens of consumer behavior, this Special Issue shows that the role of sustainability in consumer behavior is multifaceted and significantly influenced by digital platforms and business practices (Figure 1). Three main conclusions can be highlighted:
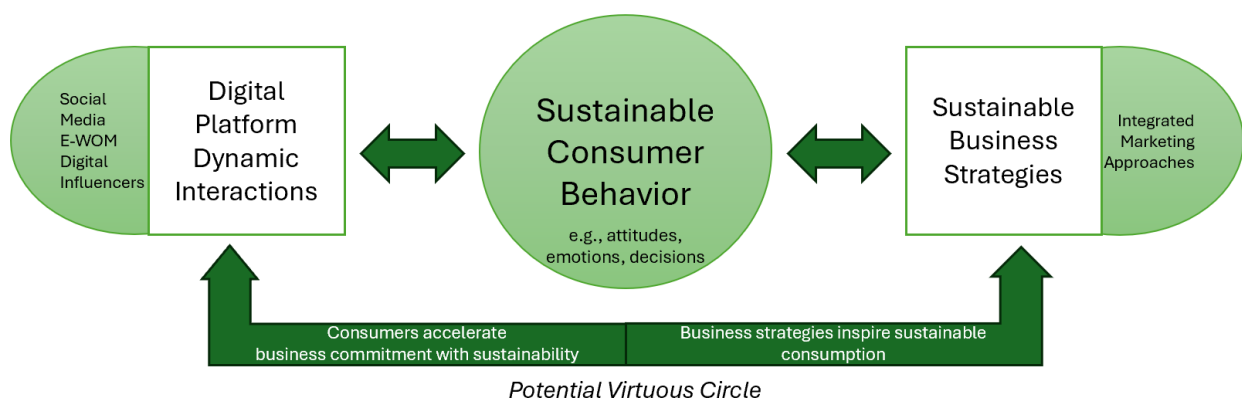
Figure 1. Suggested interplay between digital platforms, sustainable consumer behavior, and business strategies.

- Digital platforms are fundamental to nurturing sustainable behavior. Several digital platforms, especially social media websites, along with interactions with other individuals, including digital influencers and electronic word-of-mouth, impact consumers' decisions and behaviors regarding sustainability. As demonstrated in this Special Issue, digital stimuli and interactions can nurture consumer attitudes, trust, and emotions. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of relationships between users and content on digital platforms is essential for crafting effective strategies to promote sustainable consumption.
- CSR and other sustainable marketing strategies are essential catalysts for sustainable behavior. Business strategies can significantly influence consumers' perceptions and behaviors towards sustainability. Brands are expected to promote sustainable practices among other stakeholders, including consumers. Nevertheless, the success of sustainable business strategies depends on consumers' responses, particularly with regard to the positive effects on brand image, trust, and loyalty.
- The changing landscape of sustainable consumer behavior demands integrated approaches to sustainable marketing. Corporations are increasingly adopting sustainable practices and strategies to meet consumer expectations. Effectively integrating online and offline strategies enables firms to broaden the social reach and impact of sustainability initiatives and ensures that messages deeply resonate with consumers at all touchpoints. Furthermore, consumers can leverage online platforms to accelerate a business' commitment to adopting sustainable practices, thus driving a collective shift toward more sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles.

Interestingly, the complementary perspectives provided by the sustainable consumer behavior studies featured in this Special Issue indicate that digital settings may facilitate a reciprocal influence, where consumers promote sustainable practices among businesses and, conversely, business strategies and communications inspire sustainable consumer behaviors. This potential virtuous cycle fosters cautious optimism but requires dedication from all stakeholders to forge a brighter future.

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