

# Enhance Ecological Behavior Through an Online Environmental Platform and Social Responsibility

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## ABSTRACT

This article highlights the crucial role of online environmental platforms in promoting consumers' green behaviors, while emphasizing the importance of environmental responsibility. Using a multidisciplinary approach that integrates elements of sociology, behavioral economics, and environmental studies, the research indicate that these platforms can act as catalysts to encourage sustainable behaviors. An exploratory survey conducted among eight users of these platforms reveals that consulting these communication tools is essential to support environmental responsibility and foster informed decisions. The results indicate that online platforms not only provide information but also play an active role in changing consumer behaviors, thus linking individual actions to collective practices in terms of sustainability, while taking into account social and technological influences.

**Keywords:**online environmental platforms, environmental responsibility, green consumption, ecological behavior.

## INTRODUCTION

With the increase of environmental problems in the 21st century, companies that use natural resources around the world are increasingly concerned about finding a balance between developing their economic activities and minimizing the environmental problems that arise (Yue et al., 2020). On the other hand, the severity of environmental problems has changed consumers' behavior and led them to focus more on green consumption (Cheng et al., 2020 ; Verma and Chandra, 2018). Environmental destruction is mainly caused by excessive consumption, which makes green consumption the key to sustainable development (Wu and Chen, 2014). This type of consumption based on the use of global resources within the limits of sustainability is a form of environmentally responsible consumption that seeks ways to reduce the damage that can harm natural life (Karalar and Kiracı, 2011).

According to Liang (2024), the manifestation of green purchasing behavior is considered a sophisticated form of ethical decision-making, representing a tangible expression of socially responsible conduct. Consumers engaged in green consumption transcend the boundaries of private consumption, considering the broader societal ramifications of their choices (Liang, 2024). Green consumption is a form of consumption that is part of environmental reform, which includes solving environmental problems by adopting environmentally friendly lifestyles to reduce environmental destruction caused by excessive consumption, and placing responsibility or joint liability (with producers) on consumers (Connolly and Prothero, 2008; Wu and Chen, 2014; Testa et al., 2020). Consumers' possession of green knowledge appears to be a key determinant affecting their attitudes toward products and subsequent purchase intentions (Wang et al., 2015).

The aim of this research, which is essentially exploratory in nature, is to understand ecological purchasing behavior through the use of online environmental platforms. After presenting the conceptual framework, we will present the methodological approach adopted for the empirical investigations. Finally, we will present and discuss the results obtained. At managerial level, recommendations will be made for improving consumers' environmental concern and adopting ecological purchasing behavior.

## Conceptual Framework

### Online environmental platforms :

Online environmental platforms are becoming crucial for consumers to make more environmentally friendly decisions (Rana et al., 2024). According to Zha et al. (2023), these means of communication can increase confidence in the market by providing consumers with information about companies' environmental practices. They provide several services such as online environmental protection, learning and sharing environmental knowledge and recommending environmental protection activities (Ranerup et al., 2016).

Researchers such as Yuen et al. (2023) and Usman et al. (2023) have specified the positive effects of using these online environmental platforms such as adopting eco-friendly behavior, recycling, using reusable products and creating a sense of community which leads to encouraging eco-friendly behavior. However, Jaeger and Weber (2020) have highlighted the negative effects that can be generated by the use of these online platforms, such as information overload, conflicting messages and skepticism about the credibility of the information provided.

The services of online environmental platforms can be divided into pleasant services, practical services and symbolic services (Millan and Reynolds, 2014). Pleasant services refer to environmentally-themed services that can promote users' positive emotions or sensory pleasure (Tobon et al., 2020). Practical services are fundamental services that offer users opportunities and channels to engage in green consumption (Ma and Liu, 2022). Symbolic services help users improve their self-image, acquire a social identity and a sense of belonging to a group (Ma and Liu, 2022).

### Green consumption:

According to Liang (2024), green consumption is an emerging consumption model that embodies a conscious approach in which consumers prioritize ecological protection and sustainable development throughout the life cycle of goods, from purchase to use. This type of consumption is part of environmental reform, and involves purchasing environmentally-friendly products while actively avoiding those that harm the environment (Chan, 2001).

Green consumption aims to solve environmental problems and reduce environmental destruction (Wu and Chen, 2014 ; Testa et al., 2020). Green purchasing is mainly evaluated through the **prism** of green purchasing intention and behavior (Liang, 2024).

### Environmental responsibility :

According to Durmaz and Akdogan (2023), the first research on environmental concerns in marketing literature dates back to the early 1970s. The concept of environmental responsibility has attracted the interest of several researchers, particularly with the popularization of environmentally sustainable development (Johan and Reyer, 2019). As a psychosocial variable, environmental responsibility represents the individual's sense of duty or obligation towards the environment (Hines et al., 1987).

Musova et al. (2021) argue that the motivation to be environmentally responsible is closely linked to consumers' personal commitment to environmental protection and their individual actions to improve environmental quality. For their part, Alibeli and Johnson (2009) specify that environmental concern presents the degree to which people are aware of environmental problems and indicate their willingness to support their

efforts to solve them or to contribute personally to their solutions. Environmental responsibility is a key variable guiding a person's intention towards green purchasing (Lee, 2011).

### Ecological purchasing behavior :

Ecological purchasing behavior is a form of sustainable consumption that significantly contributes to environmental protection and should be further encouraged (Zhang et al., 2024). It encompasses all actions aimed at purchasing environmentally-friendly products that reduce the environmental impact of their consumption patterns (Quershie et al., 2023). According to Joshi and Rahman (2015), green purchasing behavior is generally assessed in terms of the consumer's intention and willingness to buy green products (eco-friendly bags, recycled paper, energy-saving lamps and eco-friendly products). This intention is transformed into green purchasing behavior, which influences consumer behavior for the purchase of sustainable products (Joshi and Rahman, 2015).

Green purchase intention summarizes consumers' willingness to invest in environmentally friendly products, serving as a window into the motivational factors that significantly influence green purchase behavior (Ramayah et al., 2010). This intention reflects a proactive attitude towards environmentally friendly products, demonstrating an individual's commitment to aligning their consumption habits with sustainability goals (Liang, 2024).

### Empirical Framework

#### Methodological approach :

The aim of this exploratory research is to gain as comprehensive a view as possible of consumers' ecological purchasing behavior using online environmental platforms. Semi-structured interviews are one of the most effective methods for achieving this objective. To meet our objective, we conducted semi-structured interviews with respondents who had consulted these online environmental platforms. The interviews lasted 30 minutes, and we asked respondents via e-mail to answer a set of questions in a progressive manner. A thematic analysis of the collected data will shed light on the main motives and obstacles to green consumption, as well as the role of online platforms in facilitating more sustainable behaviors. From the outset, a total of N=8 respondents from two socio-professional categories participated in these interviews: students and professional executives. Our sample was made up of 70% women and 30% men. The age distribution of this sample shows that 50% of users are between 20 and 30 years old, 25% between 30 and 40 years old and 25% between 40 and 50 years old.

Once the interviews had been fully transcribed, a coding method based on themes as the unit of analysis was implemented. The various themes were then extracted into a grid of categories and sub-categories for further analysis, using complementary open coding and counting (Whittemore et al, 2001). Three main themes were highlighted:

#### Theme 1 : Use of online environmental platforms

Categories	Subcategories	Verbatims
Online environmental platforms	Environmental web sites	<i>"I regularly use websites to follow the latest news on environmental protection."</i>
	Mobile applications	<i>"The Tunisie recyclage app helps me make more sustainable consumption choices by scanning product barcodes."</i>
	Social networks	<i>"The citizenship and environment social network allows me to discover local initiatives and share information on environmental protection"</i>
Motivation for use	Awareness	<i>"I started using these platforms to better understand environmental issues like climate change."</i>

	Personal commitment	<i>"My goal is to reduce my negative impact on the environment and adopt a greener lifestyle."</i>
	Community	<i>"These platforms allow me to connect with other environmentally conscious people and exchange best practices."</i>
Impact behavior on	Lifestyle changes	<i>"Since using these platforms, I have reduced my meat consumption, bought an electric car and favor local and seasonal products."</i>
	Awareness	<i>"I have become much more aware of environmental issues and this influences all my consumption and lifestyle choices."</i>
	Community engagement	<i>"Thanks to the information found on these platforms, I actively participate in local clean-up and reforestation initiatives."</i>

## Theme 2 : Environmental responsibility

Categories	Subcategories	Verbatims
Responsible actors	Individuals	<i>" Every person has a role to play, even simple gestures can make a big difference."</i>
	Companies	<i>"Companies must take concrete steps to reduce their environmental impact, because they have a great influence on society".</i>
	Public authorities	<i>"Governments must establish strict regulations to force companies to act responsibly."</i>
Role of companies	Commitment to the ecological transition	<i>"Companies must actively engage in the ecological transition by adopting sustainable practices "</i>
	Innovation and responsibility	<i>"They should innovate and develop environmentally friendly products, while integrating sustainability into their business model."</i>
Reward and boycott	Reward for good practices	<i>"I am ready to support companies that make strong commitments to the environment."</i>
	Boycott irresponsible practices	<i>"I would not hesitate to boycott a company that does not respect its environmental commitments".</i>
Role of public authorities	Encouraged measures	<i>"Governments need to do more to encourage green behavior, such as subsidies for green businesses."</i>
	Measurement effectiveness	<i>"The measures put in place are often insufficient and lack clarity, which makes their application difficult."</i>

## Theme 3 : Ecological purchasing behavior

Categories	Subcategories	Verbatims
Motivations for green purchasing	-Personal values (ecology, health)	<i>"I choose eco-friendly products because I believe in protecting our planet."</i>

	-Social influence -Environmental awareness	<i>"My friends and family encourage me to buy more responsibly."</i>
Purchasing Criteria	-Environmental impact -Product quality and sustainability Certification and eco-labels	<i>"I always check if the product is recyclable or if it has an eco label".</i>  <i>"Sustainability is important to me, I want to invest in a product that lasts"</i>
Obstacles to purchasing green products	-Costs of ecological products -Availability of products -Lack of clear information	<i>"Ecological products are often more expensive, which puts me off."</i>  <i>"It is sometimes difficult to find ecological alternatives in stores."</i>
Influence of information on ethics and sustainability	-Sources of information (advertising, online reviews) -Transparency of brands	<i>"Product sustainability information strongly influences my purchasing decision."</i>  <i>"I prefer to buy from brands that are transparent about their practices."</i>
Perceived impact of purchasing behavior	-Sense of personal responsibility -Collective impact on the environment	<i>"I believe that every little bit counts and that my purchasing choices can make a difference."</i>  <i>"I'm not sure that my purchases have a significant impact, but I try to do my part."</i>

## FINDINGS/ DISCUSSION

The analysis of the results concerning the use of online environmental platforms reveals several key aspects that influence user behavior. Indeed, these platforms allow the sharing of ecological information and practices, thus strengthening community engagement. The motivations behind the use of these platforms are varied and many users seek to adopt a more ecological lifestyle. In addition, the impact of the use of these platforms is manifested by concrete changes in user behavior. Users become more aware of environmental issues, which influences their consumption choices and lifestyle. Thanks to the information and resources available on these platforms, users become actively involved in local initiatives, such as clean-up or reforestation efforts.

Regarding environmental responsibility, we noted that respondents attach great importance to individual awareness and personal commitment to preserving the environment. Most consumers are increasingly motivated by ecological and social values, but they face practical obstacles that limit their ability to purchase sustainable products. Governments play a crucial role in establishing strict regulations to encourage businesses to act responsibly. Similarly, public authorities should encourage green behaviors through incentives, such as subsidies for businesses engaged in sustainable practices. The results show that consumers play an important role in promoting environmental responsibility through their purchasing choices.

Green purchasing behavior highlights the motivations, criteria, barriers, and perceived impact of consumers' purchasing choices. The majority of respondents choose green products because of their strong beliefs about protecting the planet. In addition, increased awareness of environmental issues is pushing consumers to favor products that minimize their environmental impact. Three criteria are taken into consideration by consumers when making green purchases: environmental impact, quality, and certification and eco-labels. Despite the positive motivations, respondents indicate that several obstacles hinder the purchase of ecological products :

- *"I am ready to pay a little more for ecological products, but the additional cost must not be too high".*



- *“When I look for sustainable products, I often have to turn to specialized stores that are far from my home”.*

- *“Product labels do not provide enough information on their environmental impact, it is frustrating”.*

### Research Limitation/Implication

Online environmental platforms play a crucial role in raising awareness and engaging individuals towards more sustainable practices, while facilitating the creation of active communities around these issues. Everyone has a role to play and collaborate between actors is important to achieve common goals in terms of sustainability and environmental protection. Environmental awareness and social influence are powerful drivers for responsible purchasing, while costs and availability remain major challenges.

We propose that the company integrate environmental approaches into all stages of their projects that must comply with environmental regulations and meet consumer expectations in terms of sustainability. Develop communication strategies that highlight their sustainability efforts and environmental impact reduction. The company must innovate to develop more environmentally friendly products and services, by integrating environmental issues from the design stage. Purchasing represents a major lever for action. By selecting committed suppliers and favoring green products, the company can reduce its indirect environmental footprint. In order to encourage more responsible consumption, it is essential to improve brand transparency, reduce the costs of ecological products and increase their availability. Online environmental platforms can play a key role in providing clear and accessible information on sustainable products, as well as in strengthening social standards around responsible purchasing.

A collaborative approach between consumers, brands and platforms can promote a transition towards more sustainable consumption.

This research work is not without limitations. Indeed, the sample size is very small. We limited ourselves to dealing with green purchasing behavior only in online environmental platforms.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of online environmental platforms in promoting consumers' green behaviors and underscores their role as catalysts for environmental responsibility. The results of the exploratory user survey show that these communication platforms are essential for supporting informed decisions and encouraging sustainable practices. By integrating perspectives from sociology, behavioral economics, and environmental studies, this research contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics between individual actions and collective practices regarding sustainability. The results suggest that online platforms do not simply provide information but actively influence consumer behavior. . We therefore propose as future avenues to conduct comparative studies between different countries to understand how cultural and economic contexts influence the effectiveness of environmental platforms in promoting green consumption. It would also be possible to investigate the role of emerging technologies (artificial intelligence and big data) to improve the user experience on online environmental platforms and to better target awareness messages.

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