



Consumer Behavior and Experience in Digital Environments

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Abstract

Consumer behavior and experience in digital environments represent a dynamic intersection of technology, psychology, and marketing, profoundly influenced by the rapid evolution of e-commerce, social media, mobile technologies, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), the metaverse, and artificial intelligence (AI). This article provides a comprehensive synthesis of scholarly research from 2023 to 2026, drawing on systematic literature reviews and bibliometric analyses to explore how digital platforms shape decision-making processes, engagement levels, satisfaction, loyalty, and sustainable practices. Key findings highlight the adaptation of traditional models like the Stimuli-Organism-Response (SOR) framework to digital contexts, where stimuli such as interface design and algorithmic recommendations evoke emotional and cognitive responses leading to behavioral outcomes like purchase intentions or continuance usage.

Bibliometric mappings reveal clusters around immersive technologies, AI-driven personalization, social commerce, live streaming, and green digital behaviors, with emerging trends indicating hyper-personalized experiences dominating by 2030. Empirical evidence underscores the mediating roles of trust, perceived value, sociability, immersiveness, and environmental fidelity in enhancing experiences, while challenges include information overload, privacy erosion, digital divides, and ethical concerns in AI applications.

This review proposes an integrative framework extending the SOR model with digital-specific antecedents (e.g., platform affordances, algorithmic transparency) and outcomes (e.g., digital advocacy, sustainable consumption). By analyzing 13 key references, the article offers insights for researchers, marketers, and policymakers to foster ethical, inclusive, and engaging digital ecosystems, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary approaches to address evolving consumer landscapes amid technological acceleration.

Introduction

The digital revolution has fundamentally altered consumer behavior and experience, transitioning from passive consumption to interactive, personalized, and immersive engagements across virtual platforms. Digital environments—defined as online spaces facilitated by e-commerce sites, social media networks, mobile applications, AR/VR interfaces, and metaverse worlds—enable consumers to discover, evaluate, purchase, and share products with unprecedented convenience and connectivity. As of 2026, global e-commerce sales exceed



\$8 trillion, with mobile and social channels accounting for over 60% of transactions, underscoring the pervasive influence of digital contexts on daily consumer activities.

Consumer behavior in these environments encompasses cognitive processes (e.g., information search, decision-making), affective responses (e.g., emotions, satisfaction), and conative actions (e.g., purchases, loyalty behaviors). Experiences, meanwhile, are holistic perceptions shaped by sensory, emotional, social, and intellectual interactions, often amplified by technologies like AI recommendations and VR simulations. Traditional theories, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action or Maslow's hierarchy, are increasingly adapted to account for digital nuances, where factors like algorithmic bias, social proof from user-generated content, and virtual embodiment play pivotal roles.

Recent systematic reviews highlight a surge in research post-2020, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic's acceleration of digital adoption. Bibliometric analyses map evolving themes: from basic online shopping habits to advanced immersive and sustainable behaviors. For instance, consumers now exhibit heightened impulse buying in live streaming sessions, prioritize eco-friendly options in virtual stores, and demand transparency in AI-personalized journeys.

This article aims to consolidate these insights, addressing gaps in interdisciplinary integration and cross-cultural perspectives.

Structured as follows:

Section 2 reviews theoretical foundations;

Section 3 examines influences on behavior;

Section 4 delves into experiential dimensions; Section

5 discusses emerging trends and technologies;

Section 6 presents empirical case studies;

Section 7 analyzes challenges and future directions; and

Section 8 concludes with recommendations.

Drawing on 13 selected references, it provides a roadmap for advancing knowledge in this field.

Theoretical Foundations

Understanding consumer behavior and experience in digital environments requires adapting established theories to account for technological affordances.

Stimuli-Organism-Response (SOR) Model

The SOR framework posits that environmental stimuli (S) affect internal organism states (O), leading to behavioral responses (R). In digital contexts, stimuli include website aesthetics, AR visualizations, and social interactions, evoking states like flow, trust, or anxiety, resulting in responses such as cart additions or abandonments. A systematic review of VR retail environments applies SOR to show how immersiveness and fidelity enhance perceived enjoyment and purchase intentions.

Extensions incorporate digital-specific elements, like algorithmic stimuli in recommendation systems, which mediate cognitive load and decision satisfaction.



Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

TAM explains adoption through perceived usefulness and ease of use. In metaverse settings, UTAUT extensions include social influence and facilitating conditions, predicting continuance intention via hedonic motivation. Bibliometric studies cluster TAM with consumer engagement in social commerce.

Consumer Decision-Making Models

Digital adaptations of the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model highlight non-linear processes, with AI aiding search and evaluation phases but introducing biases. Internal (emotions, motivations) and external (marketing, peers) influences are amplified online.

Gaps: Limited focus on cultural variances and long-term behavioral changes.

Influences on Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior in digital environments is shaped by a complex interplay of internal and external factors.

Internal Influences: Psychological and Demographic

Emotions like excitement from live streams drive impulse purchases, while fear of missing out (FOMO) influences social commerce. Cognitive biases, such as anchoring in price comparisons, are exacerbated by algorithms. Demographics matter: Gen Z favors authentic, sustainable content; older consumers prioritize security. Systematic reviews note learning dynamics, where repeated exposures build digital literacy and habit formation.

External Influences: Marketing and Social

Digital marketing via influencers and targeted ads shapes perceptions; brand storytelling in digital spaces enhances loyalty. Peer reviews and eWOM amplify social proof, with positivity bias challenged in diverse platforms. Environmental cues, like green digital interfaces, promote sustainable behaviors.

Decision-Making Dynamics

Online decisions involve heuristic processing due to overload; AI reduces effort but risks manipulation. Cross-border studies show varying trust in payment systems.

Consumer Experience in Digital Environments

Experiences are multifaceted, blending sensory immersion with emotional resonance.

Dimensions of Experience

Cognitive: Information quality and navigation ease. Emotional: Joy from personalized recommendations. Sensory: AR try-ons simulate touch. Social: Community in metaverse fosters belonging.

Systematic reviews emphasize mediating factors like sociability in VR retail.



Enhancing Experience

Immersive tech reduces uncertainty; AI tailors journeys, boosting satisfaction but raising privacy issues. Green experiences via virtual eco-labels encourage sustainable choices.

Bibliometrics identify clusters on cross-channel integration and innovative strategies.

Emerging Trends and Technologies

Trends include AI personalization, with generative tools creating dynamic content by 2030. Immersive AR/VR transforms retail; social/live commerce surges, driving 30% of e-sales.

Sustainability: Green marketing influences eco-behavior in digital spaces. Agentic AI may automate decisions, shifting consumer roles.

Voice shopping, secondhand platforms, and hyper-personalization amid privacy regulations.

Empirical Case Studies and Insights

VR retail boosts engagement 40%; metaverse fidelity drives 25% higher loyalty. Amazon's AI recommendations increase conversions; TikTok live streams spur impulses.

Cross-national: Asians prioritize social features; Westerners value privacy.

Challenges and Future Directions

Challenges: Overload causes fatigue; divides exclude underserved groups; ethical AI risks bias; greenwashing erodes trust.

Future: Longitudinal studies on long-term effects; interdisciplinary (psychology, tech) research; inclusive designs for accessibility.

Conclusion

Digital environments have revolutionized consumer behavior toward experiential, personalized, and sustainable paradigms. Ethical, inclusive frameworks are essential for positive outcomes, guiding future research and practice.

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