

Special Issue call for papers from *International Marketing Review*

Global Impact, Local Action: Understanding Consumer Responses to Sustainability in a Globalized World

Guest Editors

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About the special issue

In 2025, record-breaking temperatures, escalating global political unrest, and a looming economic recession have intensified consumer anxiety, increasing pressure and expectations around their purchasing decisions worldwide. As people face these global challenges, they are more frequently choosing sustainable options, which fundamentally transform the connection between consumption and societal well-being. Sustainability is defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 8). Although often linked to environmental issues, sustainability includes three interrelated dimensions: environmental (the natural world), social (people and communities), and economic (long-term prosperity) (Griffith, 2021; Kim et al., 2024). This framework is commonly referred to as the triple bottom line, or the “3Ps”: people, planet, and profit.

This growing consumer focus on sustainability is not merely a preference but a powerful market force. Increasingly, consumers are driving the business case for sustainability by signaling their preferences through purchasing decisions. A survey has shown that 68% of consumers in OECD Member countries are concerned about environmental impact when making purchasing choices (OECD, 2025). Notably, 80% of consumers are willing to pay an average premium of 9.7% for sustainable products (PwC, 2024), and products with sustainability-related advertising saw 2.0–8.5% higher sales growth compared to those without such messaging (McKinsey and NielsenIQ, 2023). This trend is especially strong among younger consumers, with 79% of Gen Z and 81% of millennials believing that companies should do more to support sustainable purchasing choices (Deloitte, 2024).

Given the growing demand from consumers to advancing sustainability goals (OECD, 2025), a deep understanding of their responses to sustainability initiatives is essential for firms aiming to contribute to a sustainable society (Chabowski et al., 2011; Hult, 2011; Kemper and Ballantine, 2019). Prior research has effectively demonstrated that consumer attitudes and behaviors are influenced by both individual characteristics (Cleveland et al., 2012; Hosta and Zabkar, 2021) and firms’ marketing strategies (White et al., 2019; Strizhakova et al., 2024). Additionally, scholars have explored negative consumer responses, such as skepticism and

perceptions of greenwashing (Leonidou and Skarmeas, 2017; Szabo and Webster, 2021). Despite these important contributions, much of this work has been conducted within domestic contexts. Consequently, there is a notable and pressing gap in our understanding of how consumer attitudes and behaviors toward sustainability are shaped across diverse markets and cultures.

This gap is particularly concerning because the global marketplace presents a complex frontier for sustainable consumption, offering opportunities to enrich both scholarly understanding of sustainable consumption and practical approaches to sustainable marketing (Varadarajan, 2014; Chabowski et al., 2025; İpek, 2025). Sustainable consumption is closely linked to consumers' values and identities, as well as to the regulations and institutions around them, all of which vary greatly across countries and cultures (Sharma et al., 2018; Leonidou et al., 2022; Hånell et al., 2024; Osburg et al., 2024). For instance, a product message deemed environmentally responsible in one country might be viewed as irrelevant or even wasteful in another (Griffith, 2021). Without addressing these cross-national and cross-cultural differences, a comprehensive understanding of sustainable consumption remains incomplete and fragmented.

Analyzing sustainable consumption in the international context offers valuable insights for both multinational corporations (MNCs) with global influence (Grinstein and Riefler, 2015; Salnikova et al., 2022; Marano et al., 2024) and for small- and medium-sized firms or exporters operating in developed and developing countries (Zeriti et al., 2016; Boso et al., 2017; Sinkovics et al., 2021). For instance, products from large MNCs may promise global standards but face skepticism about their local impact, while products from smaller exporters might seem more authentic but lack transparent supply chain information. This complexity is intensified by shifting geopolitical and economic forces, making it profoundly difficult for consumers to verify claims, assess trade-offs, and make choices aligned with their sustainable values. As a result, understanding how consumers navigate this environment is a vital and urgent priority for both marketing scholars and business leaders.

To advance sustainability research from a consumer-centric, international perspective, this special issue invites studies that explore the multifaceted nature of the global sustainable consumer. We particularly encourage submissions that approach this topic from two complementary angles: (1) applying established international marketing concepts to the sustainability domain and (2) extending sustainable consumption theories to the international context.

On one hand, international marketing researchers might address sustainable consumer behavior through the lens of established theories and constructs, exploring questions such as: How do consumer ethnocentrism and animosity influence evaluations of foreign versus domestic sustainable products? How do consumers' global versus local identities affect their responses to standardized versus locally adapted sustainability campaigns? On the other hand, sustainability researchers could extend theories of sustainable consumption to the complex international domain, investigating questions such as: How do pro-environmental behaviors and their motivations differ between consumers in developed and emerging markets? What

cultural values drive the adoption of or resistance to circular economy practices, such as purchasing remanufactured products or using reusable bags? We welcome contributions from both research streams, and especially from those working at their intersection, to illuminate how consumers navigate the challenges and opportunities of sustainable consumption in a globalized world.

The guest editors welcome conceptual, review, and empirical papers that are methodologically rigorous. We are open to a wide array of approaches and are particularly interested in research that can illuminate the complexities of consumers and their sustainable choices in an international context. This may include rich qualitative studies (e.g., in-depth interviews, netnography), insightful quantitative analyses (e.g., cross-cultural surveys, experiments), and multi-method designs. We also encourage submissions that draw on diverse theoretical perspectives to advance our understanding of the global sustainable consumer.

Theme 1: International Marketing Concepts in Sustainable Consumption

This theme invites research applying established international marketing theories and constructs to understand the global sustainable consumer. We are particularly interested in studies that explore how these lenses can explain consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in the sustainability domain. Potential questions include, but are not limited to:

- **Consumer Identity and Orientation:** How do consumer identities—such as global, local, or cosmopolitan—influence the choice between global sustainable brands and local eco-friendly alternatives?
- **Country-of-Origin Effects:** How does a product's country of origin interact with its sustainability claims? How do consumers evaluate a "green" product from a country perceived to have a poor environmental or labor record?
- **Consumer Ethnocentrism and Animosity:** Beyond general product evaluations, how do ethnocentric or animosity-driven tendencies specifically affect consumer receptivity to foreign sustainable innovations or environmental campaigns?
- **Global vs. Local Brands:** Do consumers place more trust in the sustainability promises of global brands or local brands? How do consumers perceive and respond to local brands that use sustainability as a point of differentiation against multinational competitors?
- **Psychic Distance:** How does the perceived psychic or cultural distance to a foreign country influence a consumer's engagement with sustainability issues originating from that country (e.g., concern for distant labor practices or environmental disasters)?

Theme 2: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Sustainable Consumer Behavior

This theme invites research that extends theories of sustainable consumption to the complex international context. We encourage submissions that conduct cross-cultural or comparative

analyses of consumer behavior, especially those that uncover the cultural and institutional underpinnings of different choices and practices. Potential questions include, but are not limited to:

- **Pro-Environmental Behavior:** What are the key cross-cultural drivers of and barriers to pro-environmental behaviors? How do cultural values such as individualism/collectivism, long-term orientation, or uncertainty avoidance explain variations in consumer engagement?
- **Circular Economy Practices:** What cultural factors facilitate or hinder consumer participation in the circular economy as a customer, user, or end-of-life product holder? How do perceptions of hygiene, ownership, and waste influence the adoption of practices like renting, repairing, or buying secondhand or refurbished/reconditioned products across markets?
- **Sustainable Communication and Persuasion:** What is the cross-cultural effectiveness of different sustainability appeals (e.g., guilt, hope, social norms) in global advertising? How do consumers in high-context versus low-context cultures interpret green messaging?
- **Perceptions of Greenwashing:** Are consumers in some cultures more skeptical or adept at detecting corporate greenwashing? How does the level of institutional trust in a country affect consumer perceptions of the credibility of corporate sustainability claims?
- **Ethical Consumption Trade-offs:** How do consumers in different parts of the world prioritize and navigate trade-offs between different dimensions of sustainability (e.g., choosing between a locally produced product with more packaging versus an imported fair-trade product with a higher carbon footprint)?

Feedback opportunities prior to submission

1. **Virtual paper workshop:** To assist authors in developing their research, a virtual workshop will be held in June 2026. Up to 10 potential authors can present at this workshop and receive feedback from the guest editors. Research at any stage is welcome, from conceptualizing an idea to demonstrating an analysis. If you are interested in this workshop and would like to give a presentation, please contact the guest editors via email: sustainabilityIMR@gmail.com by May 15, 2026.
2. **Special session at the 2026 Global Fashion Management Conference, Madrid (Spain), July 16-19, 2026:** Papers focusing on sustainability issues in international marketing are welcome, even if they are not related to fashion. Submission deadline is January 15, 2026. Further details are available on the conference website: <https://2026gfmc.imweb.me>

Presenting or attending this workshop/special session does not guarantee publication in the special issue, nor is it a prerequisite for publication in the special issue. This workshop/special session allows authors to refine their manuscripts before the formal double-blind review process.

Submissions information

All paper submissions will be subject to a double-blind peer review process. For detailed information on formatting requirements, please refer to the “Author Guidelines” section on the journal’s official website. The guest editors aim to decide on manuscripts in *not more than two rounds of revision*.

Please submit the manuscript to: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/imrev>

Questions about the special issue can be directed at the guest editors via e-mail: sustainabilityIMR@gmail.com

Key deadlines

Deadline virtual paper workshop:	May 15th, 2026
Virtual paper workshop:	June, 2026
Submission window opens:	November 1st, 2026
Submission window closes:	January 31st, 2027

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