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SOCIAL MEDIA AS DETERMINANT OF GREEN PRODUCTS PURCHASE: THE MODERATING ROLE OF GREEN CONCERN

Društveni mediji kao determinanta kupovine zelenih proizvoda - Uloga ekološke svesti kao moderatora

Abstract:

This study aims to elucidate the relationship between various dimensions of social media and consumer behavior in the context of purchasing green products. By extending knowledge in the fields of sustainability and social media marketing, this research proposes a comprehensive model that integrates variables such as social media customer experience, green word-of-mouth (WOM), and greenwashing. Specifically, the research seeks to differentiate this relationship within the framework of local versus global green products, providing novel insights to the existing literature. The empirical investigation was conducted through a survey methodology, with hypotheses defined and data analysis performed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), reliability analysis via Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and structural equation modeling (SEM) in IBM SPSS and AMOS software. The results indicate that consumer experience on social media and green WOM positively influence attitudes toward the purchase of both global and local green products, while greenwashing exerts a negative influence only on attitudes toward local green products. Additionally, the study found that green concern positively moderates the relationship between social media customer experience and green WOM with consumers' attitudes toward both local and global green products. Conversely, green concern negatively moderates the relationship between greenwashing and consumer attitudes toward the purchase of local products. The primary contribution of this research lies in its examination of the relationship between various social media dimensions and consumer behavior toward green products, analyzed from the perspective of both local and global companies in a developing country, specifically the Republic of Serbia.

Keywords: *green marketing, social media customer experience, greenwashing, green WOM, green concern, local green products, global green products, sustainability*

Sažetak:

Ovaj rad ima za cilj da istraži odnos između različitih dimenzija društvenih medija i ponašanja potrošača u kontekstu kupovine zelenih proizvoda. Proširujući znanje u oblastima održivosti i marketinga na društvenim medijima, ovo istraživanje predlaže sveobuhvatan model koji integriše varijable kao što su iskustvo potrošača na društvenim medijima, zelena usmena propaganda (WOM) i greenwashing. Konkretno, istraživanje nastoji da diferencira ovaj odnos sa aspekta lokalnih i globalnih zelenih proizvoda, pružajući nova saznanja postojećoj literaturi. Empirijsko istraživanje sprovedeno je primenom metodologije ankete, sa definisanim hipotezama i analizom podataka korišćenjem konfirmativne faktorske analize (CFA), analize pouzdanosti pomoću Cronbach-ovog alfa koeficijenta i modeliranja strukturnih jednačina (SEM) u softverima IBM SPSS i AMOS. Rezultati ukazuju na to da iskustvo potrošača na društvenim medijima i zelena usmena propaganda pozitivno utiču na stavove prema kupovini globalnih i lokalnih zelenih proizvoda, dok greenwashing ima negativan uticaj samo na stavove prema lokalnim zelenim proizvodima. Dodatno, studija je pokazala da ekološka svest ima pozitivan moderacijski odnos između iskustva potrošača na društvenim medijima i zelene usmene propagande i stavova potrošača prema lokalnim i globalnim zelenim proizvodima. Nasuprot tome, ekološka svest ima negativan moderacijski uticaj na odnos između greenwashing-a i stavova potrošača u vezi sa kupovinom lokalnih proizvoda. Glavni doprinos ovog istraživanja se ogleda u analizi odnosa između različitih dimenzija društvenih medija i ponašanja potrošača prema zelenim proizvodima, posmatrano iz perspektive lokalnih i globalnih kompanija u zemlji u razvoju, konkretno u Republici Srbiji.

Ključne reči: *zeleni marketing, iskustvo korisnika na društvenim medijima, greenwashing, zelena usmena propaganda, ekološka svest potrošača, lokalni zeleni proizvodi, globalni zeleni proizvodi, održivost*

Introduction

In the contemporary landscape, social media is fundamentally reshaping interpersonal interactions and corporate engagement, significantly influencing perceptions of branding and marketing. With approximately 5 billion users globally [46], social media has emerged as the preeminent mode of communication with consumers. Given the critical role of social media in marketing and its overarching implications for business, alongside the imperative for sustainability in modern business practices, this study aims to investigate the relationship between these pivotal concepts, specifically from the perspective of companies operating in Serbia.

Sustainability, as a concept, has been the focus of academic research and business operations for many years. In recent years, green marketing and green products have garnered significant attention in both marketing literature and corporate practices. Green products are defined as those that can be recycled, require fewer natural resources, and do not pollute the environment, often featuring environmentally friendly packaging [17]. Contemporary business and marketing trends underscore the necessity of exploring the relationship between sustainability and social media, given their critical role in consumer communication.

Moreover, interdisciplinary research indicates that online technologies, such as Web 2.0 and social media, possess substantial potential to promote environmental action. The Technologies for Proenvironmental Action Model (TPAM) provides a framework that elucidates how various functions of Web 2.0 and social media can be leveraged to generate and facilitate environmental action [7]. Specifically, this model outlines how informational, relational, and experiential functions of these technologies can foster personal, social, and contextual pathways toward environmentally responsible behaviors, such as purchasing hybrid vehicles, recycling, and utilizing sustainable energy sources.

The scientific literature includes several studies examining the impact of social media customer experience [52], greenwashing [1] and green WOM [53] on attitudes and acceptance of green products. Additionally, some studies have investigated the influence of social media on consumer purchasing behavior concerning global luxury brands [20], [15]. However, there is a notable absence of research analyzing the impact of previously mentioned aspects of social media in relation to green products within the context of both global and local companies. This study aims to address this research gap by investigating the relationship between these variables. A unique contribution of this research is its focus on Serbia, a developing country, considering that sustainability as a concept is more prevalent in developed nations [13]. According to Đuričin et al. [12], achieving a sustainable development trajectory that aligns the Serbian economy with ecological principles necessitates a transition referred to as the "green transition," which represents a pathway toward a sustainable economy and society, ultimately contributing to a more environmentally sustainable planet. However, the same authors emphasize that the green economy remains a relatively new concept for the majority of Serbian companies. On the path toward a green economy, Lončar [32] analyzes the landscape of investment opportunities in Serbia through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals, identifying a potential investment volume of $8.3 billion over the next five years. This highlights significant opportunities for companies willing to invest in sustainable initiatives and ideas. Ultimately, findings of the aforementioned papers underscore the importance of sustainable business practices for Serbian companies and emphasize the integration of sustainability into business practices and marketing functions, which is the central subject of this paper.

Literature review

Green marketing and social media

Social media serves as a significant factor in influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable and environmentally friendly products. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and X (Twitter) facilitate the dissemination of information by companies and influencers, who highlight the features and benefits of green products. This process not only raises awareness of environmental

issues but also fosters the promotion of eco-conscious lifestyles. Additionally, social media enables consumers to conveniently access product reviews, endorsements, and sustainability-related campaigns, which subsequently affect their purchasing decisions [25]. In general, social media functions not only as a promotional tool for green products but also plays a crucial role in shaping a consumer culture that prioritizes sustainability. By fostering greater awareness and engagement with environmentally friendly practices, social media actively encourages more eco-conscious purchasing decisions among consumers.

Customer experience on social media

Customer experience is defined as the cognitive recognition or perception that arises from the motivated engagement of a customer who observes or participates in an event. This recognition or perception subsequently enhances the perceived value of products and services [44]. Furthermore, customer experience can be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that encompasses the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensory, and social responses of the consumer to the enterprise's products or services throughout the customer's buying journey [31]. In the realm of online platforms, customer experience is described as a holistic response to the stimuli within the website environment [35].

Schmitt [44] delineated five distinct categories of customer experiences that marketers can cultivate: sensory experiences, encompassing visual and auditory stimuli; affective experiences, which pertain to customers' internal sensations and emotions; creative cognitive experiences, facilitating innovative thinking; physical experiences, which involve behaviors, lifestyles, and physical activities; and social-identity experiences, which emerge from associations with a reference group or culture. These experiences are actualized through various "experience providers," including communications, visual and verbal identity, product presence, and electronic media.

In the analysis of customer experience within the context of social media, Hsu and Tsou [23] identified that information credibility is essential for consumer experience, which subsequently enhances purchase intention. Additionally, increased blog engagement significantly amplifies the impact of customer experience on purchase intention. Chen and Lin [9] demonstrated that customer experience positively influences consumer satisfaction and perceived value. Furthermore, their research indicated that a sustainable social relationship is strongly and significantly affected by blog continuance intention and consumer satisfaction. A recent study by Wibowo et al. [52] established that customer experience significantly influences the quality of customer relationships, which in turn positively impacts customer behavioral outcomes, such as purchase intention, loyalty intention, and participation intention. Based on these findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Customer experience on social media has a positive and statistically significant effect on attitudes towards green products.

Green WOM on social media

When deciding to buy a product, consumers gather information about products and services, very often from other consumers. Recommendations and opinions of other people can have a great influence on the formation of attitudes and preferences of consumers, particularly in an online environment [29]. This concept, known as word of mouth (WOM) in marketing literature, is called green word of mouth (green WOM) in green marketing, and refers to the influence that the consumer has on his acquaintances, friends or family, through the dissemination of positive environmental information about the product or service [10]. This influence often results in the purchase of a green product, since it can have more credibility than other types of companies' promotional activities [16].

Green WOM has been researched from different perspectives in the green product literature, and the results of the studies so far are diverse. In their research on green products, Gupta and Syed [17] found that electronic WOM has a very strong influence on consumer attitudes towards these products. Zhang et al. [53] found that green WOM positively affects consumer purchase intentions regarding green products, in China. Lee et al. [30] found a similar impact of green WOM on consumer intentions when it comes to behaviour of professional sports teams fans on TikTok. Conversely, Román-Augusto and others

[42] did not find a statistically significant influence of electronic WOM on consumers' green purchase intention, since only green satisfaction and green trust have been found as antecedents of this variable. Bearing in mind that spreading positive green WOM can often lead to the purchase of products or services by other consumers, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Green WOM on social media has a positive and statistically significant effect on attitudes towards green products.

Greenwashing on social media

The concept of greenwashing can be examined within the broader framework of environmental psychology, which explores the interactions between individuals and their environment [1]. Greenwashing refers to the practice by brands of withholding, deceiving, or providing false information regarding their environmental commitments, product orientations, or process orientations [5], [53]. More specifically, Oppong-Tawiah and Webster [38] classify firms' greenwashing activities into two primary categories: those related to their products or services and those pertaining to their organizational policies and practices. Product/service greenwashing typically involves misleading or deceptive communications (e.g., advertising) about the sustainability of a specific product or service offered by a firm. In contrast, greenwashing related to organizational policies and practices is primarily characterized by incomplete or selective disclosure of information intended to mislead the firm's stakeholders [48], [33]. These actions are often undertaken to placate customers or enhance company profitability [19].

In the realm of social media, greenwashing has been the subject of several previous studies. Parguel et al. [40] analyzed the impact of greenwashing on consumer behavior, elucidating the psychological mechanisms involved. This study underscored the importance of understanding consumer perceptions and reactions to environmentally deceptive marketing practices. Oppong-Tawiah and Webster [38] investigated deceptive communication on Twitter (now X) under the guise of corporate social responsibility, finding that greenwashing is directly correlated with lower financial market performance. In a recent study, Adil et al. [1] demonstrated a direct negative impact of greenwashing on consumers' purchase intentions and a positive impact on green skepticism. Similar results were obtained by Zhang et al. [53]. Based on these findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Greenwashing on social media has a negative and statistically significant effect on attitudes towards green products.

Green products purchase behaviour

The purchase decision-making process posits that attitudes precede the intention to purchase certain products, as articulated by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) [3] and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [2]. These theories further propose that intentions lead to actual behavior, thereby serving as predictors of human behavior. This theoretical framework has been employed in previous studies aimed at predicting consumer behavior within the context of social media marketing [26] and the purchase of green products [41], [47]. In light of these theoretical considerations, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

H4: Green products attitudes have a positive and statistically significant effect on the intention to purchase these products.

The moderating effect of green concern

The level at which individuals are concerned about the environment and its problems is referred to in the literature as green or environmental concern [21]. In other words, green concern refers to the awareness that individuals have regarding environmental problems and their willingness to contribute to solutions to such issues [4]. This concern further causes individuals to feel a sense of personal responsibility towards the environment and to practice behaviors such as recycling, conscientious consumption of energy and buying green products [53].

Certain authors investigated green concern as a direct predictor of attitudes and intentions to purchase green products [36], [24]. However, the concept of green concern has not been extensively researched in the context of the influence of social media on the purchase of green products. Chi [11] found that consumers` green

concern moderates the relationship between social media and green consumption intention. In a more recent study, Ummar et al. [50] found that green concern has a positive moderating effect on the relationships between informativeness, persuasiveness and perceived usefulness of social media campaigns, and attitudes towards green tourism. Furthermore, Zhang et al. [53] determined a moderating effect of green concern in the relationship between greenwashing and purchase intentions towards green products. Based on previous theoretical claims and research, the following hypotheses can be defined:

H5a: Green concern has a moderating effect on the relationship between social media customer experience and consumer attitudes towards green products.

H5b: Green concern has a moderating effect on the relationship between E-WOM and consumer attitudes towards green products.

H5c: Green concern has a moderating effect on the relationship between greenwashing and consumer attitudes towards green products.

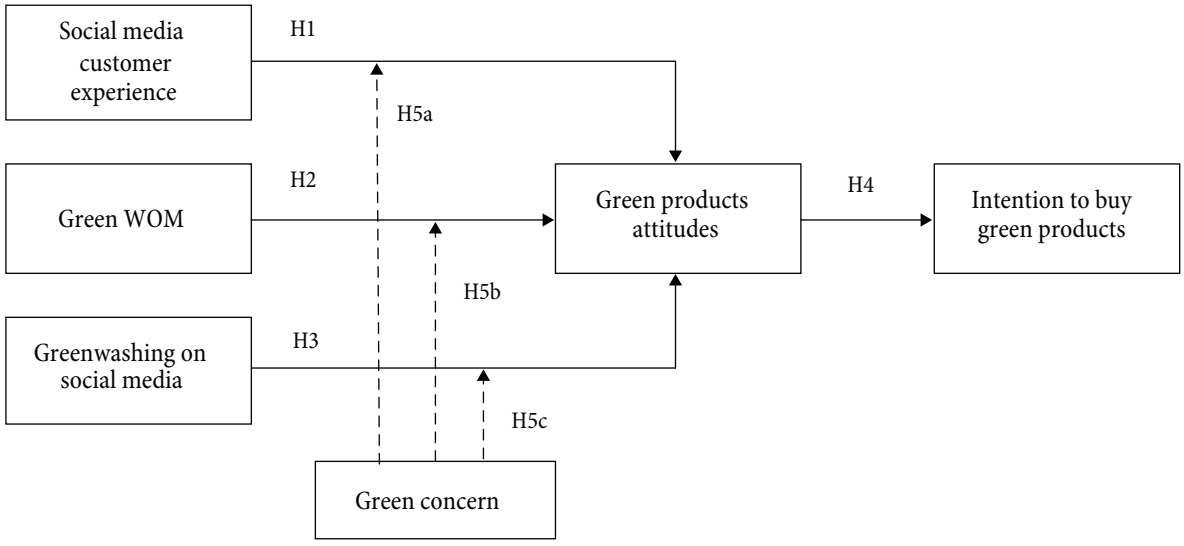
The research model and the relationships among the variables are illustrated in Figure 1.

Methodology

The questionnaire was developed through a thorough review of pertinent literature and tailored to address the specific requirements of green product research. Items pertaining to customer experience on social media were derived from the works of Chen and Lin [9], Homburg et al. [22], and Schmitt [44]. The items associated with the green WOM construct were adapted from the research of Molinari et al. [34], while the measurement scale for greenwashing was adapted from Singh et al. [45]. The construct measuring consumers' green concerns was developed based on the studies by Lee [28] and Paladino and Ng [39]. Variable concerning attitudes toward green products was compiled based on studies of Gupta and Syed [17] and Kim and Hyun [27], while the construct related to purchase intentions for green products was sourced from the research of Kim and Ko [26]. Furthermore, all questionnaire items, with the exception of those addressing green concern, were specifically modified to reflect the context of local and global green products offered by companies operating in the Republic of Serbia.

At the outset of the questionnaire, participants were informed about the nature of the research and asked to indicate whether they had previously purchased green products from either local or global companies. Additionally, respondents were queried about their use of social media as a source of information regarding companies and their green products. Only the responses from individuals who confirmed their experience with purchasing such products and their engagement with social media were included in the subsequent analysis.

Figure 1. Conceptual research model



Source: Authors` research

The survey was administered between November 2023 and January 2024. Questionnaires were collected in person within the city of Kragujevac and other major cities in Central Serbia. The final sample comprised 327 valid responses. Descriptive statistics were employed to determine the sample structure, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for respondents' characteristics

Demographic characteristic		% respondents
Sex	Male	48.3
	Female	51.7
Age	18-24	28.2
	25-34	19.6
	35-44	19.8
	45-54	23.5
	55 and older	8.9
Education	High school	48.7
	Undergraduate study	14.1
	Graduate and postgraduate study	37.2
Occupation	Manager, entrepreneur	14.6
	Professor, doctor, engineer	15.2
	Clerk, worker	35.4
	The student	24.9
	Other occupations	9.9

Source: Authors` research

Respondents evaluated all statements on a five-point Likert scale. Statistical data processing was carried out in IBM SPSS and AMOS programs. Descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis, and SEM analysis were used to test the relationships in the research models, as well as the analysis of the moderating effect of the green concern on the selected relationships in the models.

Research results

As an initial step in the analysis, research models were constructed, followed by an assessment of their validity. Given the focus of this research on green products from both global and local companies operating in Serbia, two distinct models were developed. Table 2 outlines the validity indicators associated with these models. Specifically, the χ^2/df ratio should be less than 3, as recommended by Bagozzi and Yi [6]. Additionally, the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) should each exceed 0.9, in accordance with Byrne [8]. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value is required to be below 0.08, as stated by Hair et al. [18]. The observed values for these indicators confirm that all validity criteria have been met for both models.

Table 2. Model validity analysis

Indicators of model validity	Research model – Local green products	Research model – Global green products	Recommended value
χ2/df	1.769	1.854	<3
GFI	0.914	0.903	>0.9
IFI	0.928	0.907	>0.9
TLI	0.910	0.904	>0.9
CFI	0.926	0.915	>0.9
RMSEA	0.049	0.058	<0.08

Source: Authors` research

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 3. In line with the guidelines established by Fornell and Larcker [14], the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should surpass the threshold of 0.50. In both models, all variables satisfy this requirement, thereby supporting the convergent validity of the constructs. Additionally, Fornell and Larcker [14] recommend that the Composite Reliability (CR) exceeds 0.70, and the analysis demonstrates that all variables conform to this criterion. Similarly, Nunnally [37] advocates for a minimum Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70. The results indicate that all examined variables achieve sufficient levels of reliability.

The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 4. For local green products, all variables exhibit a statistically significant influence on attitudes towards green products, thereby confirming hypotheses H1, H2, and H3. Consumer experience on social media exerts a very strong and positive influence on attitudes towards green products (β=0.412, p<0.001). Besides, green WOM has a positive significant influence on consumer attitudes (β=0.313, p<0.001), as anticipated. Conversely, greenwashing negatively influences attitudes towards local green products (β=-0.167, p<0.001).

Regarding global green products, the variables influencing attitudes towards these products are consumer experience on social media (β=0.602, p<0.001) and green WOM (β=0.215, p<0.001), whereas greenwashing does not exert a significant influence (β=0.015, p - not significant). These results indicate that hypotheses H1 and H2 are

Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Variables	Local green products	Global green products
Customer experience on social media	**AVE=0.669 CR=0.909 α=0.800**	**AVE=0.654 CR=0.904 α=0.787**
The online social media posts of my preferred green products try to engage my senses.	0.864	0.791
The online social media of my preferred green products makes me respond emotionally.	0.882	0.878
The online social media of my preferred green products stimulates my curiosity.	0.789	0.754
The online social media of my preferred green products reminds me of activities I can do.	0.691	0.703
I can relate to other customers through the online social media of my preferred green products.	0.849	0.901
Green WOM	**AVE=0.660 CR=0.886 α=0.713**	**AVE=0.653 CR=0.883 α=0.725**
I would highly recommend my preferred green products to others because of their environmental image.	0.826	0.824
I would positively recommend my preferred green product to others because of its environmental functionality.	0.831	0.812
I would encourage others to purchase my preferred green products because they are environmentally-friendly.	0.809	0.798
I would say good things about my preferred green products to others because of their environmental performance.	0.784	0.799
Greenwashing on social media	**AVE=0.629 CR=0.835 α=0.707**	**AVE=0.630 CR=0.836 α=0.713**
The green products I frequently encounter tend to make exaggerated environmental claims on social media platforms.	0.796	0.840
It is my belief that many of green products engage in misleading eco-friendly marketing practices within social media.	0.811	0.772
I remain skeptical about the authenticity and sincerity of the environmental claims promoted by green products through their social media channels.	0.771	0.768
Green concern	**AVE=0.657 CR=0.884 α=0.746**	**AVE=0.661 CR=0.886 α=0.763**
I am worried about the worsening of the quality of environment.	0.801	0.822
The environment is a major concern for me.	0.823	0.807
I am passionate about environmental protection issues.	0.785	0.797
I often think about how the condition of the environment can be improved.	0.832	0.826
Attitudes towards green products	**AVE=0.641 CR=0.842 α=0.766**	**AVE=0.621 CR=0.830 α=0.779**
I am willing to make a special effort to buy preferred green products.	0.725	0.845
I prefer green products over other products, if they are of similar quality.	0.768	0.784
I prefer green products over other products, even when their price is slightly higher.	0.899	0.731
Intention to buy a green product	**AVE=0.630 CR=0.773 α=0.773**	**AVE=0.739 CR=0.850 α=0.853**
I would like to buy a preferred green product.	0.791	0.874
I would like to recommend my preferred green product to others.	0.797	0.845

Source: Authors` research

confirmed, while hypothesis H3 is not supported, in the case of global green products.

Hypothesis H4 is supported across both models, with the results indicating that attitudes toward green products exert a statistically significant influence on purchase intentions for both local ($\beta = 0.868$, $p < 0.001$) and global products ($\beta = 0.852$, $p < 0.001$). These findings provide empirical validation for the application of the Theory of Reasoned Action within the context of the research models.

To examine whether green concern acts as a moderating variable, several methodological steps are undertaken. First, to ensure that the variables contribute equally to the analysis, despite being measured on different scales, the independent variables and the moderator are standardized. An interaction terms are then created by multiplying the standardized independent variables and the moderator. Third, the interaction terms of the standardized independent variables and the moderator are included in the model, to estimate the interaction effects. This approach is applied

Table 4. SEM analysis

Hypotheses		Local green products	Hypothesis testing	Global green products	Hypothesis testing
H1:	Social media customer experience → Attitudes toward green products	0.412***	Supported	0.602***	Supported
H2:	Green WOM → Attitudes toward green products	0.313***	Supported	0.215***	Supported
H3:	Greenwashing on social media → Attitudes toward green products	-0.167***	Supported	0.015ns	Not supported
H4:	Attitudes towards green products → Intention to buy a green product	0.868***	Supported	0.852***	Supported

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<.001, ns- not significant
Source: Authors` research

Table 5. SEM analysis – Moderation effects

Hypotheses		Local green products	Hypothesis testing	Global green products	Hypothesis testing
H5a:	Social media customer experience × Green concern	0.532***	Supported	0.712***	Supported
H5b:	Green WOM × Green concern	0.421***	Supported	0.342***	Supported
H5c:	Greenwashing on social media × Green concern	-0.297***	Supported	0.074ns	Not supported

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<.001, ns- not significant
Source: Authors` research

to address the issue of multicollinearity, which can arise when interaction effects are calculated.

In examining the moderating role of green concern on the relationships within the proposed model, the findings are presented in Table 5. The analysis reveals that green concern exerts a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between consumer experience on social media and consumer attitudes for both local and global brands. Consequently, Hypothesis H5a is supported, demonstrating that consumers' green concerns positively enhance the impact of their social media experiences related to green products on their attitudes regarding the purchase of such products.

Similarly, a comparable moderating effect was observed concerning the relationship between green WOM and consumer attitudes. Specifically, the results indicate that consumers' green concerns amplify the positive influence of green WOM on their attitudes, thereby confirming Hypothesis H5b for both local and global green products.

Lastly, green concern also moderates the relationship between greenwashing and consumer attitudes. This moderating effect is particularly notable in the case of local green products, where green concern strengthens the negative impact of greenwashing on consumer attitudes. However, for global green products, the moderating effect of green concern on the relationship between greenwashing and consumer attitudes is not statistically significant. Consequently, hypothesis H5c is confirmed only in the context of local green products.

Discussion

The conducted analysis showed numerous conclusions regarding the predictors of green product purchases. Namely, customer experience on social media is a very good predictor of user attitudes about green products, in the case of both local and global products. However, that effect is stronger in the case of the global products. Similar results were obtained in previous studies [52], [9]. A recent study conducted in Serbia revealed that in the digital economy, internet users' purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by promotional content delivered through advanced digital marketing techniques, while their overall user experience is shaped by the quality and efficiency of online services provided [49]. It is clear that the way in which the company`s activities on social media in the domain of green marketing affect the senses of users and their curiosity, their emotional reactions and how much the company's posts encourage them to certain activities, significantly affects the formation of their attitudes about green products. Therefore, companies should concentrate on creating green marketing campaigns focusing on the aforementioned aspects of the customer experience, such as evoking positive emotional reactions, encouraging customer interactions on social media, or encouraging green consumer activities. This should encourage consumers to positively evaluate green products and to want to buy them, as a result.

Green WOM exerts a positive and significant influence on purchase intentions for both local and global green

products, with the effect being more pronounced for local products. Similar findings have been observed in previous studies [17], [53]. Specifically, WOM communication regarding green products appears to be crucial for consumers, as it fosters trust and credibility, while also mitigating perceived risks associated with purchasing these products. Additionally, given that consumers may have limited familiarity with green products and their specific attributes, green WOM likely enhances their sense of security in product selection. This is facilitated through the exchange of opinions and experiences with other users of green products, such as friends or family members.

The finding that green WOM exerts a stronger influence on purchase intentions for local products, while user experience on social media has a more pronounced effect for global products, leads to several insights. It can be inferred that consumers tend to have a more positive experience engaging with the social media platforms of global companies, likely due to the greater marketing efforts these companies invest in reaching consumers and shaping their purchasing decisions. Conversely, when it comes to local green products, consumers appear to rely more heavily on recommendations and information from fellow consumers, which may stem from their greater familiarity and experience with the specific characteristics of local green products.

The most significant divergence in attitudes toward local and global green products was observed concerning greenwashing as a predictor. Specifically, while greenwashing exhibits a negative and statistically significant effect on consumer attitudes toward local green products, no such effect was detected for global products. In the case of local products, the negative influence of greenwashing corroborates the findings of previous studies [1], [53]. The absence of a similar impact on global green products suggests that consumers may place greater trust in global companies and their social media campaigns, potentially due to the companies' strong reputations, extensive resources, or experience. Local companies could leverage these factors in their marketing strategies to foster more positive consumer attitudes toward their green products.

Concerning the moderating effect of green concern on the relationships within the models, it is evident that this consumer characteristic exerts a significant influence on relationship between social media customer experience and green WOM on one side, and consumer attitudes for both global and local green products. Similar effect was found in the studies by the authors Chi [11] and Ummar et al. [50]. This moderating effect suggests that consumers with heightened green concern are more susceptible to these influences from social media, in shaping their purchasing decisions regarding green products. Also, it indicates that consumers who express strong green concerns represent a key segment for the purchase of green products. Moreover, educating consumers on sustainability issues and the value of green products has the potential to substantially enhance the sales of these products.

The concern for environmental sustainability, however, accentuates the detrimental effects of greenwashing on consumer perceptions of locally produced green products. Similar effect was found in the study by Zhang et al. [53]. This implies that the greater the level of a consumer's environmental concern, the stronger their intention to refrain from purchasing products when they perceive greenwashing behaviors. Consumers with heightened environmental concern tend to be more discerning regarding the actual environmental impact of products and are more adept at differentiating between substantive and superficial green practices. This elevated concern also reflects their perceived sense of environmental responsibility, prompting them to engage in responsible consumption by refraining from purchasing from companies involved in greenwashing. In contrast, this impact is not observed with regard to global green products.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide valuable theoretical and practical contributions. Specifically, the research sought to investigate and analyze the effects of customer experience, green WOM, and greenwashing on social media, along with the moderating role of green concern in shaping consumers' attitudes toward green products from both local and global companies in Serbia. Considering that consumers have the option to choose between products from local and global brands when purchasing different

types of green products, understanding the underlying determinants of consumer behavior is of critical importance.

The findings of this study suggest that customer experience on social media and green WOM exert a strong, positive influence on consumer attitudes towards both local and global green products. Conversely, greenwashing negatively affects consumer attitudes only towards local green products. Furthermore, the study reveals that environmental concern positively moderates the relationships between social media customer experience and green WOM with consumer attitudes toward both local and global green products. In contrast, environmental concern negatively moderates the relationship between greenwashing and consumer attitudes toward the purchase of local products. Overall, social media not only functions as a promotional tool for green products but also cultivates a consumer culture that values sustainability, thereby encouraging more environmentally conscious purchasing decisions.

This research has several implications, particularly for the business activities of local and global companies. These implications primarily concern social media communication strategies and the selection of appropriate market segments for green products. In the era of the digital economy and new capitalism, companies engaged in brand development should place a strategic emphasis on sustainability by implementing measures to reduce their environmental footprint, such as adopting recycling and reuse practices. Additionally, it is crucial for these companies to maintain a strong presence on social media platforms and provide user-friendly websites that enhance the customer experience, particularly by facilitating seamless online purchasing options [43]. Companies should prioritize their social media strategies, as social media and networks have revolutionized the roles of both consumers and businesses in the contemporary business environment and have strong influence on consumers' decisions. Local companies should focus on building trust with consumers to mitigate the negative effects of greenwashing on attitudes towards their green products. Both local and global companies can focus on improving communication and consumer education regarding sustainability and environmentally friendly products. By doing so, they can foster greater environmental awareness and concern among consumers. This, in turn, can lead to the development of more favorable attitudes toward green products, ultimately increasing their purchase frequency.

The research presented has several limitations. Firstly, the study was conducted within the region of Kragujevac and Central Serbia. Future research could extend the scope to a broader geographic area or include multiple countries to explore potential differences in consumer behavior. Additionally, a limitation exists in the selection of variables analyzed within the research model. Future studies could incorporate additional variables, such as social media marketing activities or green knowledge, to investigate their direct or moderating effects. A significant trend at the intersection of digital marketing and sustainability is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI), which possesses the transformative potential to fundamentally reshape interactions between companies and consumers, mediated by digital content or formats. By leveraging AI, these interactions can be rendered more personalized and efficient, thereby enhancing user experiences while addressing sustainability objectives [51].

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