

"Enhancing Green Consumerism through Virtual CSR Co-Creation: A Pathway to Sustainable Development"

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ABSTRACT

In the evolving landscape of corporate social responsibility (CSR), virtual platforms have emerged as a vital medium for engaging consumers in co-creative activities. This paper explores the influence of virtual CSR co-creation on green purchase intentions, an area of growing significance in the context of sustainable consumer behavior. By analyzing various virtual CSR initiatives, the study examines how the experiential value derived from these digital engagements translates into a commitment to environmentally friendly purchasing decisions. The research synthesizes findings from a comprehensive literature review, emphasizing the role of virtual environments in fostering a sense of community, awareness, and responsibility towards sustainability issues. The study posits that virtual CSR co-creation serves as a catalyst for green consumerism, enhancing participants' environmental consciousness and influencing their purchasing preferences. The findings suggest that virtual CSR initiatives not only benefit corporate entities in terms of brand loyalty and reputation but also contribute significantly to promoting societal sustainable development. Through this exploration, the paper aims to offer insights into how virtual CSR co-creation can be effectively leveraged to boost green purchase intentions, thereby driving consumer demand for eco-friendly products and encouraging sustainable business practices. The implications of this research extend beyond the corporate sphere, highlighting the potential for virtual CSR activities to play a pivotal role in the global movement towards environmental stewardship and sustainability.

Key Words: Virtual CSR Co-Creation, Green Purchase Intention, Sustainable Consumer Behavior, Environmental Consciousness, Corporate Social Responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives are no longer exclusively the responsibility of businesses due to the extensive development of online social media technology (Oliveira, 2021). Over time, the business ecosystem has evolved into a community with multiple stakeholders. The old "donation" charity model is giving way to the more recent "interactive" co-creation model (Fan et al., 2019). Online social media platforms offer businesses an easy way to carry out their social duties and significantly encourage customer participation in CSR initiatives (Jurietti, 2017). Products that have green associations or qualities, such as energy efficiency, environmental protection, harmlessness, health, etc., are referred to as green products (Lin & Huang, 2012).

In 2016, Alibaba's Alipay platform unveiled an activity for carbon accounts that is meant to be gamified. When they walk, take the bus or subway, pay online, or buy tickets online, they accrue virtual energy and plant greenery. In accordance with data from "Ant Forest", as of August 2021, Over 613 million people have used this virtual community, and over 326 million trees have been planted and maintained in total. Ant Forest "Community Brand" (AFBC) Utilises the "Internet + Charity" cause-related marketing model to effectively encourage user participation in CSR initiatives, or "virtual corporate social responsibility co-creation". Traditional corporate social responsibility, value co-creation, and social media give rise to virtual CSR co-creation. Enterprises attract multiple stakeholders to participate in corporate social responsibility activities through online community platforms(Korschun,2013).As of right now, the majority of studies on virtual CSR co-creation examine customer reactions from both the organizational and customer perspectives. Some research focuses on examining the relationship between social welfare and personal social responsibility from a social perspective.(Luo&Guo,2021).

Few research, nevertheless, have looked at how green product purchase intentions are affected by virtual CSR co-creation from a social standpoint. Furthermore, a significant shortcoming of current research is its failure to consider the mediating roles of behavioral control, community identification, green purchase attitudes, and personal attribute characteristics. The moral reinforcement theory states that when a person's moral identity is activated, their perception of themselves as a "ethical person" is strengthened, which encourages them to act more morally going forward.Due to the increasing public awareness of business ethics and sensitivity to social and environmental issues, corporate social responsibility, or CSR, has become a crucial part of overall corporate strategy in order to meet public expectations and gain a competitive advantage(Chaudhri,2016; Stanaland et al.,2011).If customers are unaware of a company's CSR initiatives, these benefits cannot be realized; for this reason, strategic CSR communications are nearly as crucial as CSR activity investments(Du et al.,2010).

Through social media, companies can directly promote their good deeds to consumers and other stakeholders and obtain feedback on business practices,thus promoting the spread of corporate social responsibility(Korschun&Du,2013).Social media's interactive nature also makes it possible for "virtual CSR conversations" to take place, wherein individuals are invited to share their values and collaborate with the company to create CSR initiatives.Public participation in CSR discussions fosters a feeling of community and goodwill for the organization and the cause. (Korschun&Du,2013).

The Chinese government work report proposed to accelerate the formation of green and low-carbon production and lifestyle. green purchase mainly includes three aspects: The first is to urge customers to choose environmentally friendly products that don't harm the environment or the public's health when they use them; the second is to remind customers to dispose of their trash properly when using products so as not to pollute the environment; and the third is to help customers modify their conceptions of consumption and support the environment, prioritize nature, pursue health while living comfortably, pay attention to environmental protection, conserve resources and energy, and engage in sustainable consumption. Because it helps protect the environment, green purchase is viewed as prosocial.(Lee,1999).

consumers are more likely to embrace sustainable consumption practices and are more concerned about the environment. (Kim & Park, 2020).Concern for the environment has given

consumers a good incentive to support green businesses manner. According to underpinning theory (Perugini,2001),Positive attitudes influence customers' behavioral intentions(Yadav & Pathak, 2017).consumers also tend to pay more to support green practices, according to research(Nicolau et al., 2020).consumers are consumers that care about the environment and have made progress in their knowledge, actions, and attitudes.extreme and noteworthy evolution (Laroche, 2001; Haque & Yaamoah, 2020). Currently, consumers are increasingly concerned about the environment, which directly affects changes in their personal values and lifestyles (Krizanová, 2013).As the environmental awareness of the Millennial generation gradually increases, they will obviously pay attention to the sustainable development of the environment. Over the years, most consumers have realized that their purchasing behavior and habits directly affect issues related to ecological balance (Laroche, 2001).

The Internet + new model for corporate social responsibility actively incorporates public participation into the process of creating value for the organization and invites users to co-create value for the organization. Virtual Corporate Social Responsibility Co-creation is a social media-based corporate social responsibility strategy that involves using social media strategically to use corporate social responsibility as a dialogue strategy between users and enterprises. A conversational communication strategy that co-creates social value relationships and allows users to proactively participate in corporate social responsibility initiatives.

By allowing users to participate in the design and implementation of corporate social responsibility, users can fully perceive relevant information about corporate social responsibility. Transforming from the consumer end of the value chain to a value co-creator provides a two-way conversational corporate social responsibility communication model between enterprises and users. It dispels users' doubts about the motivations of "corporate social responsibility" or "corporate hypocrisy" in corporate social responsibility behavior, and upgrades the traditional "benevolent-financial" corporate social responsibility to "experiential","cooperative" and "interactive" or "game-like" corporate social responsibility activities The process and results of corporate social responsibility participation have become more transparent and visible, breaking through the limitations of time and space. Realizing the sharing and co-creation of corporate social responsibility value.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Green purchase intention

The term "green purchase intention" describes a person's willingness or readiness to purchase sustainable or ecologically friendly goods. It displays the desire of the consumer to make decisions that support sustainability and have a positive effect on the environment. The intention to purchase environmentally friendly products can be influenced by a number of factors, including personal values, environmental awareness, the perceived benefits of eco-friendly products, and the availability of eco-friendly options in the market.

1.1 Definition of green purchase intention

Intention is a self-instruction to perform a specific action or obtain a specific result(Webb&sheeran,2008).Intention is thought to capture the motivational factors that influence behavior; intention indicates how much effort people are willing to expend and how much effort they plan to expend to implement the behavior (Ajzen,1999).Most consumers view

green products as health or cost-saving options, a pursuit of their environmentally friendly properties. This perception and consumption value are the basis for their choice of behavior (Biswas&Roy,2015).

The concept of purchase intention originated from the study of behavioral intention. Behavioral theory experts believe that willingness plays a decisive role in actual action, which is reflected in the possibility of an individual taking a specific behavior (Ajzen et al.,1980).On this basis, later scholars defined purchase intention as the probability or possibility that a consumer plans to purchase a specific brand of product at a specific time. Engel(1991) regards purchasing behavior as a series of steps in the decision-making process. He believes that the premise of behavior is that there is demand, then various plans are formulated, and finally the best plan is selected. Point out that purchase intention is the consumer's plan and decision to purchase at a certain moment Mental state when buying products. Spears and Singh(2004) believed that purchase intention is an individual's conscious plan to purchase a certain product.

Different from the above-mentioned scholars' view of purchase intention as a process, other scholars agree that purchase intention is the probability of purchase behavior. In his research, Ganesan(1981) regarded purchase intention as the probability that consumers are subjectively willing to take purchasing behavior. Dodds et al.(1991) pointed out that consumer purchase intention is the probability of choosing and purchasing the subjective intention. At the same time, they pointed out that the value and cost of the product are important indicators to measure whether consumers finally take purchasing behavior. Paul et al.(2016) also analyzed the impact of environmental awareness on green hotel visit intention. Rakov(2013) believed that green purchase behavior refers to consumer behavior in which consumers strive to reduce resource waste and reduce environmental pollution during the purchase, use and post-use disposal of products, thereby minimizing the harm caused by their consumption to the environment. Xu(2022) believed that green purchase behavior is a kind of pro-social behavior that is beneficial to the environment and an important way to promote the sustainable development of the environment and society.

1.2Theory of green purchase intention

There has been a cost associated with the rise of technology as a life-enabler. Pollution and climate change have an impact on the environment as society and the economy grow. As a result, it's essential to live a more responsible lifestyle and lessen the environmental damage caused by consumerism and technology. green purchase has emerged as a successful strategy for reducing this impact on the environment without compromising the quantity or quality of consumption.Groening,(2018) compiled all of the theories regarding green consumers that have been put forth in the literature and divided them into six groups: social confirmation, values and knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and motivations.

Joshi and Rahman(2015), who made a distinction between the individual and situational factors that influence green purchase intention and behavior, such as emotions, habits, self-efficacy, perceived consumer effectiveness, values and personal norms, trust and knowledge, etc., and the product attributes and quality, store-related attributes, price, product availability, subjective norms and reference groups, eco-labelling, and brand image. In social psychology research, intentions are considered the best predictor of actual behavior (Bagozzi et al., 1989; Chen &Lai, 2014); Sheeran(2022) Numerous other studies have validated the significance of

intentions in predicting actual behavior. Bae et al.(2014) claimed that attitudes, self-efficacy, and affiliation norms all affect intentions.

Researchers looked at how consumers' intentions to buy green products were affected by a number of variables, including their perceived efficacy, attitude, altruism, and ecological knowledge(Mostafa et al.,2006).Wu(2014) Research perceived risk, moral responsibility, normative belief, control strength, control belief, attitude, subjective norms, behavior control with the relationship of behavior intention by building models. The mediating effect of product quality perception and collective efficacy on green purchase intention. In addition, the moderating effect of power sense was confirmed (Sun et al,2023). Taking college students in Beijing as a sample, the green purchase behavior of college students was investigated from four aspects: green purchase cognition, green purchase attitude, green purchase intention, and green purchase behavior. It was found that the overall green purchase level of college students was low (Chen,2012).

The practice of purchasing environmentally friendly and resource-efficient products to meet personal consumption needs, enhance quality of life, and reduce the impact of individual consumption habits on the environment is known as "green purchase behavior." a novel method of consumption based on the three stages of creation, use, and disposal of things (Hou,2021). The potential for consumers to buy particular green brands or products out of concern for the environment is known as "green purchase intention." According to the theory of planned behavior, intention plays a significant role in shaping real behavior and can be used to gauge it. As a result, in related studies on the factors influencing green purchase behavior, many academics use the theory of planned behavior as a basis to measure green purchase behavior, with green purchase intention serving as the outcome variable(Sun,2018).

Kurtulus(2020) separated lifestyle into two dimensions: a balanced life and a healthy diet. It was discovered that there is a strong relationship between the two lifestyle dimensions and green purchasing intentions and attitudes, i.e., customers who prioritize these aspects of their lives. Possess a more optimistic outlook and intention when making green purchases. Huang(2014) believes that environmental protection awareness directly and positively affects green purchase behavior. Sheng et al.(2019) found that the informational influence and value expressive influence of the reference group can significantly increase consumers' green purchase intention, in which green trust and perceived value play a mediating role, while the utilitarian influence will not significantly affect green purchase intention.

2.participation in virtual CSR co-creation behavior

Value co-creation theory can be divided into customer participation and customer citizenship behavior (Grönroos,2008). Value co-creation from the perspective of customer experience defines the essence of value creation as customer experience, breaking away from the traditional view that product production is the essence of creating value. Value co-creation pays more attention to the interaction between enterprises and customers and regards it as value creation. and value-added channels. Every interaction and contact between an enterprise and its customers can be seen as an opportunity for value creation and value extraction, and is also the core of value co-creation.

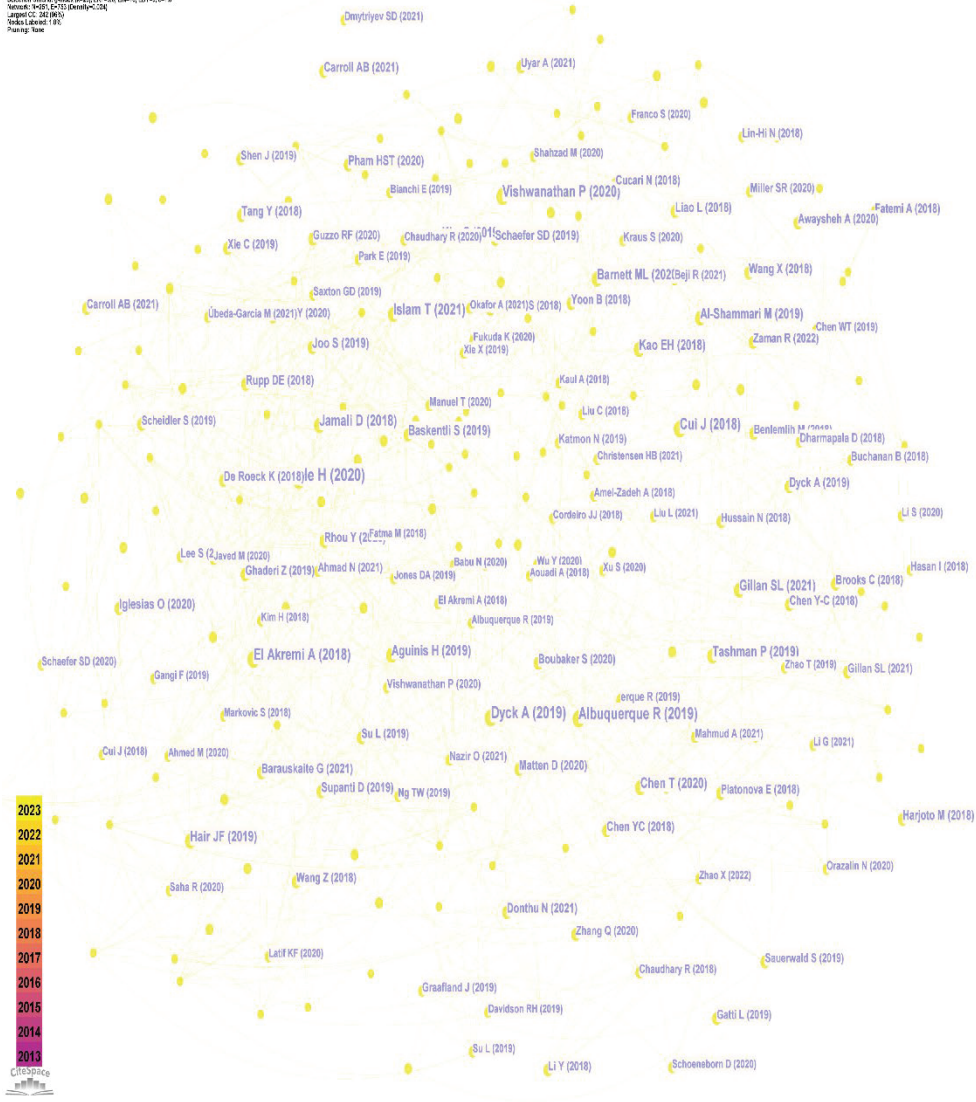


Figure 2.1 Knowledge Map of “Virtual CSR Co-Creation”

The essence of consumers actively participating in online CSR activities initiated by enterprises is to participate in the process of value co-creation. Value co-creation theory proposes that "consumer participation" refers to the joint production of value by consumers and service providers, (Grönroos, 2008) emphasizing the contribution of consumers as value creation subjects in value co-creation. Consumer participation behavior in virtual communities is divided into narrow sense participation and broad sense participation. Narrow sense participation only refers to participation in actual actions, and broad sense participation also includes emotional participation, but in the end it all boils down to participation in actual actions (Hu, 2016). Consumer engagement is a way to build valuable interactions and relationships between consumers and businesses (Hollebeek, 2017). As a basis for understanding participation Vivek, (2009) states that participation can be considered as the degree of engagement and bond that exists between customers and the products that the company sells, sparked by customer-initiated events or qualifications. The interactive experience with community members is referred to as consumer participation in the virtual trial zone (Brodie et al., 2013). This viewed as a highly context-dependent psychological state that can be observed and categorized from the commitments established by dynamic and on going interactions. Participation is a multidimensional concept with behavioral, cognitive and emotional dimensions as the basic dimensions. Yi & Gong, (2013), Jakola & Alexander, (2014), Jarvis et al., (2017) and Okazaki & Menendez, (2017) divide customer participation in CSR activities into resource (time, money, experience, skills, connections, emotions, etc.) investment behavior, social responsibility behavior, and interpersonal interaction behavior (including the interaction between customers and businesses as well as between customers).

2.2 Theory of participation in virtual CSR co-creation

"A cognitive and emotional commitment to building a positive relationship with a brand, which is manifested through a website or other computer-mediated entity designed to communicate brand values" is what it means for consumers to participate in online brand communities (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). This study studies consumer participation behavior in online brand communities embedded in social media, and explains seven sub-dimensions of consumer participation, namely enthusiasm, enjoyment, attention, attraction, sharing, learning and recognition. Emotion is the summary and persistence level of emotions experienced by consumers regarding the focus of their participation; enthusiasm is the degree of intrinsic excitement and interest in consumer participation; enjoyment is the sense of pleasure and happiness that consumers have when interacting with participating objects; Cognition is the cognitive possibility and time absorption of a series of sustained and active attention and attention that consumers experience on their objects; behavior is the behavioral performance focused on participation; sharing is the focus on participation The act of providing content, information, experience, ideas or other resources; learning is the act of actively or passively seeking content, information, experience, ideas or other resources to achieve the purpose of participation; recognition is the act of supporting recommendations (Dessart et al., 2015). The level of consumer support and financial or in-kind resources that they are willing to contribute to address corporate social responsibility issues is known as customer engagement (O'Brien et al.,

2015). Consumer participation in CSR mainly includes customer citizenship behaviors such as consumers' time resource contribution and material resource contribution (Jarvis et al., 2017). Consumer participation in CSR activities is a key form of fulfilling social responsibility and an important prerequisite for consumers and companies to achieve value co-creation (Okazaki & Menendez, 2017). The traditional concept of consumer participation has reference significance for its understanding in virtual scenarios (Brodie et al., 2013). Based on the above point of view, this article believes that consumer participation in virtual CSR co-creation is the specific behavior of consumers voluntarily participating in online corporate social responsibility activities for the benefit of others or society, including consumers' efforts, involvement and emotional experience.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

The term "virtual corporate social responsibility" (CSR) co-creation describes the partnership that exists between consumers and businesses when it comes to developing and executing CSR programs in the digital sphere. Consumers, who are recognized for their environmental awareness and inclination towards socially conscious brands, have been the main audience for this type of co-creation in recent times. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of virtual CSR co-creation on millennial consumers' intentions to make green purchases.

Customers' willingness to purchase sustainable or eco-friendly goods is referred to as their "green purchase intention." Numerous elements, such as social influences, one's own values, and perceived advantages, have an impact. Customers can be actively involved in the development and promotion of CSR initiatives by participating in virtual CSR co-creation.

Being digital natives, consumers are more likely to interact with brands online and are very active on social media. Companies can engage consumers in CSR initiatives, foster a sense of ownership and loyalty towards sustainable products, and connect with them through virtual CSR co-creation.

According to research, consumers' intentions to make green purchases are positively influenced by virtual CSR co-creation. Companies can boost consumer trust, establish a feeling of shared purpose, and improve their reputation as socially conscious brands by involving consumers in the co-creation process. Conversely, consumers are more inclined to support and patronize businesses that share their values and actively participate in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Additionally, virtual co-creation for CSR can raise consumer awareness and knowledge of sustainability-related issues. Consumers can better understand how their consumption decisions affect the environment by actively engaging in CSR initiatives. As consumers become more aware of the need for sustainable products and actively seek them out, there may be an increase in the intention to make green purchases as a result of this increased awareness.

Regarding the relationship between corporate social responsibility and green consumption, it will also be an issue of the sustainable development of the relationship between the government, enterprises, and society. The factors that drive consumer participation in social responsibility will be issues worthy of further exploration in the future.

In conclusion, consumers' intentions to make green purchases are significantly influenced by virtual CSR co-creation. Businesses can build a feeling of common purpose, improve consumer trust, and improve their reputation by enlisting consumers in the design and marketing of sustainable products. Furthermore, virtual CSR co-creation can increase consumer knowledge and awareness of sustainability issues, which in turn encourages consumers to make green purchases.

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