

Branding in Sustainability

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Abstract

Purpose: A recent report published by Shelton Group, Sustainability(*S*) is rated for as an important brand purchase decision (*P*) criterion for 60 percent of consumers. The objective of this research is to investigate how differences affect consumers' online and offline behaviors.

Design/methodology/approach: Through sentiment analysis of corporate website Brand Sustainability Strategies (BSS) is explored in the store level and in the social media platform level with a dedicated survey about *S* and the positive impact on their *P*.

Findings: This study demonstrates how the millennials generation experience through virtual interaction (*VI*) leverage on *P* and improve the Customer Brand Experience (*CBE*), focuses on Lego and Adidas

Originality/value: The paper contributes to study a topic more interesting in this period and in addition underlines the culture emerged among the online and the offline *P* in the relation with the strategies of the customer journey.

Keywords: brand, sustainability, digital transformation, social platform

1. Introduction

An increasing number of organizations are trying to adopt Sustainability (*S*) to make stakeholders aware of the important argument. All aspect concerning the internal analytical coherence, ideological value and deducing the most significant operational indications evolved Customer Brand Experience (*CBE*) “There are some emerging patterns that favor sustainable brands” (Forbes “Why Sustainable Branding Matters”, 2018).

S tools are used by organizations to signal the involvement of Corporate Strategy (Foxon et al., 2013; Patterson et al., 2017). Many managers invest in *S*, in product changes and market expansion to finalize in the long term (Slater & Olson, 2002). The next phase of *S*, we call “*market transformation*” is a model of business (Hoffman, 2018). The persistent challenges in the market are addressable through Innovation Strategy and encourage the participation of stakeholders to involve the development (Foxon et al., 2013; Kohler et al., 2019; Loorbach et al., 2020). The consumers make a choice (Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2017; Smilansky, 2018) through a variety of content *multidirectional* (Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015).

The companies are focused on create those decisions to enable new forms of *S* to involve the *brand purchase decision* (*P*). Each single transmission channel of the message is a new touchpoint, and the marketing communication takes place (Bajak, 2022).

This research ecosystem collects and analyzes consumers and business data, in the first stage, based on the literature review, above all “made in USA” regarding the study of the market orientation—Industry 4.0 and *S* and in the second part focuses instead on *CBE*.

The methodology research is the sentiment analysis on social media platform. The profound changes brought by the Digital and the Social transformation, the advent of companies—platform, namely new digital vision of company – allows the creation of business, models (Breibach & Maglio, 2016; West et al., 2018).

CBE categories create value and the platforms include providers and consumers (peer-to-peer platforms) in the direction of corporate strategies. In this framework, the companies need to include the participation of stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

The study contributes to the knowledge of *CBE* and explores the social media platforms to make matches between the users. In particular, the pragmatic attitude of the connections born to create value with a variety of business in the internet age: Alibaba, Amazon, and Etsy connect buyers and sellers through their online marketplaces. Uber, as social platform, creates logistic aspect for drivers and passengers with its matching and pricing technology (Cohen, Hanh, Hall, Levitt, & Metcalfe, 2016)

Digital Transformation (*DT*), is increasingly establishing as a constant in contemporary academic conversations (Hanelt, 2020) and the companies live this opportunity to grow up and increase the skills (Westereman, Bonnet, & McAfee, 2014)

This research aims to explore these following questions:

H1) Is Sustainability (*S*) a leverage for the consumers choice of goods?

H2) Do immersive reality monitors affect the consumer?

H3) How much the Brand Sustainability Strategies (*BSS*) affects Customer Brand Experience (*CBE*)?

2. Literature Review

The challenges around Covid 19 pandemic have further spurred organizations into action by increasing their awareness of the need to accelerate *DT* (e.g., McKinsey, 2020; Strategy, 2020). The extensive literature on *DT* offers a complete vision on *DT* reporting (Warner & Wager, 2019) and about the use of *DT* (Wessel et al., 2008). The study employs a sentiment analysis the measure the answer of the subjects on the social media platform. In fact, observers might find these attitudes, views, opinions, beliefs, comments from social media data. Offline and online are very close. A brand constitutes the most visible aspects of tangible and intangible attributes designed to create Brand Awareness, Brand Identity and to build the reputation of a product, service, person, place, or organization (Sammut Bonnici, 2014).

S has had a degree of signaling in the business areas. In recent years the growing awareness of the fact that many small and medium-sized enterprises carry out activities and lead to focus on this issue. In line with signaling aspect, given the orientation of the firm in the strategic context about *CBE*.

According to philanthropic approach, this strategic and business approach (OCSE guidelines) brings greater results to the *CBE*, therefore this topic generate engagement.

Brand Identity (*BI*) is the consistent set of combination online and in store, which forms an impression. Whitfield and Idris titled '*Swayed by the logo and name: does university branding work?*' explores the effect of corporate visual identity in influencing perceptions.

BI and brand soul work together to create worth and to define Brand (Heaney & Heaney, 2008). In the studies analyzed, it was found that the most cited theoretical approaches to explain the relationship between familiarity and performance. More specifically, some of the theories consolidated in the management literature (O'Boyle Jr. et al., 2012): the resource-based view (RBV) and stakeholder theory are interested in the implementation of an effective *CBE* signal.

While the literature invites to reconcile theories and decode in a complementary and multi-perspective prospect (Sciarelli, 2007), the complex framework of the report of these *CBE* signals requires the implementation of sustainable marketing strategies and techniques. The objective of *CBE* is to create brands with strategies and be different in the offline and online marketplace.

Branding strategies are built on the interdependent frameworks of competitive brand positioning, value chain development, and brand equity management (Tanya Sammut-Bonnici, 2015, ResearchGate).

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Framework and Participants

The research analyzed the posts commented mostly by Gen Y and Z and considering the results for Gen Y 50,2 % Gen Z 49,8 % . For Generation Y and Z, the most attractive social network to monitor is Instagram. The ability to establish an account for business has many advantages on this network: -provide different statistics, -promote products and -better feedback from fans. This study is divided into two parts:

- a *methodology survey study* on statistical sample (Table 2), H1, H2.
- a *methodology sentiment analysis* on two brands. The profiles and comments were public, and the monitoring was accessible to anyone.

The Table 1, questionnaire survey was conducted between March, 2022 and April, 2022 through Surveycake. As for

their educational background, most of them (72.3%) attended colleges and universities from European countries. The sample is divided into three classes for age and for educational background, whose reference values are listed in the Table 2

Table 1. *Demographic data of research participants*

Age survey	
Male	18–24 years
Female	18–24 years
Male	24–45 years
Female	24–45 years
Male	45–75 years
Female	45–75 years
Educational Background Survey	
Senior High School and Below	44.45%
Colleges and Universities	30.25%
Graduate School	25.30%

3.2 Business Cases

Lego Case

Lego Company is an iconic name in the corporate world of toys. Lego Company was founded by Ole Kirk Christiansen and it's famous for making plastic toys and small building blocks. The company is growing and has added as many as 2000 electronic brands, video games, training centers, parks, and jewelry. It also collaborated on the film Star Wars and Harry Potter (Crawford, 2014, p. 124). The present technology and globalization have driven the business world into a tough completion, branding as a marketing strategy has become gradually important than over the preceding years (Grensing-pophal, 2014, p. 73). The corporate branding method of Lego commenced in 1934 and since then, it has comprised significant architectural and building concepts of 'participate well'. Since the inception of this approach, Lego has maintained its values of constructive fun, versatility, and creativity. Consequently, the company adheres to its vision through the devotion to corporate values, and in doing so, attracted a mass following on generation-to-generation basis. From the beginning of the brand, Lego acquired today's motto that states, 'Only the Best is the Best'.

Lego still renews the format of its stores and does so starting from New York, two floors of experiences between the bricks that hold together physical and digital Located within the Rockefeller Center, the store is designed to be modular and flexible so as to be adapted to all other Lego retail outlets and its retail partners, whatever their size Among the different elements, which will be applied to over 100 stores in the course of 2022, the main attraction is the 'Brick Lab', a thematic experience of 20 that applies an innovative technology to bring on walls, floor and ceiling space interactive and animated content and allow the over 5 years to play with bricks in a virtual space. There is also a customization studio, a tree of discovery in the center of the store—consisting of 880,000 bricks reminiscent of the company's commitment to a positive impact on society and the planet—and a 'Storytelling Table', designed for adult fans who show prototypes and the first products of the '60s. After a refitting, the LEGO Certified Store in Milan-San Babila reopens to the public. Among the many novelties, the "Minifigure Factory" arrives for the first time in Italy. In essence, with just a few steps from a touchscreen, customers can create a custom Lego character, with a name imprinted on a brick, processed in real time by a 3D printer. In addition to this, the spaces that allow the interaction of children (and great fans) with the bricks, such as tables to create buildings or display cases, which were previously closed, have been increased, while now allow you to touch the newest 3D creations.

Adidas Case

Adidas is another brand. The study carried out on the layout of the stores and on the design; size has included aesthetic elements and has created an excellent customer shopping experience. The sport stores dive into the world of sport, in that context. Adidas has more than 53,731 people in over 160 countries and produces more than 660 million units of product each year and generates a turnover of 14.5 billion euros (2014). Adidas Group is very complex. Adidas has an excellent distribution network, as well as product quality and its BE. It has 2400 stores in the fashion with \$4.3 billion in revenue (2014 data). To join the community, he has sponsored many world sports events such as FIFA, UEFA, NBA, Cricket, and the Olympics. The Adidas store in Milan reproduces the model of a stadium where the customer becomes an absolute protagonist. A creator. The

customer visits the store as if it were a museum and the name of this store is “The Home of creators”, 1300m where the customers challenge themselves with football running and training activities. Registration took place on the Spotify website (www.homeofcreators-spotify.it). The industrial materials are iron, metal and wood. It has been seen that the new consumer is active, informed, demanding and interested in the quality (Stuart Menteth, Wilson, & Baker, 2006, p. 41). The consumers are variable. The consumers or prosumers are the protagonists of their own destiny, the choices, and the success of that product (Florès, 2008, p. 79). Remarkable studies have shown that in-store displays pay attention to products and far increase the number of brand sales (Hyllegard, Ogle, & Yan, 2016; Bemmar & Mouchoux, 1991; East, Eftchiadou, & Williamson, 2003; Turley & Milliman, 2000; Spence et al., 2014).

Loyalty to the brand marks an emotional attachment to a brand and to the same self-determination (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000) also introduces the concept of authenticity as a driver (Gilmore & Pine, 2007).

The value of the consumer extends the analysis of the brand. The dimensions of the in-store customer shopping experience of sports stores propose engagement, entertainment, education and conviviality (Bonfanti, 2021).

The brand community for the experiential customer is a fabric of relationship.

The interesting relationships are between the customer and the brand, between the customer and the firm, between the customer and the product and among customers. The development of relationship marketing has been studied (O'Malley, Patterson, & Kelly-Holmes, 2008) as an example of interpersonal relationships between customers and companies. Transformative Services Research has been called as “new sector” in both consumer research and services (Rosenbaum et al., 2011, p. 5). Is “the integration of consumer and service research: individuals (consumers and employees) communities and the ecosystem” (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 3) and compares its facets with the more established concept of the service-dominant logic (SDL). The services play a significant role in our world and can impact the lives and well-being of individuals, groups, and society. The focus on well-being in the services and in the store is based on co-creation of value (Echeverri & Skarlin, 2011).

The Table 2, two brands study divided in the demographic characteristic and explores through the analysis of variables: immersion (*Imm*), interaction (*Int*), engagement (*Eng*) the push to *P*. Among the respondents, 75.2% were females and 24.8% were males.

Table 2. *Demographic characteristic of the survey sample*

DEMOGRAPHICS	ADIDAS	LEGO
MALE	50.98%	74.23%
FEMALE	49.02%	25.77%

4. First Results

4.1 CBE in the Two Dimensions

The Figure 1 is the H2 and outlines two aspects of CBE. The H2 analysis Adidas in Milan with the keyword #adidasstoremilano, Lego in Milan with the keyword #legomilanstore by searching for keywords and user comments matched to interviews with managers.

Interacts in the two dimensions, store and social, both start from the variable and continue for *Imm* and *Eng* in the store dimension.

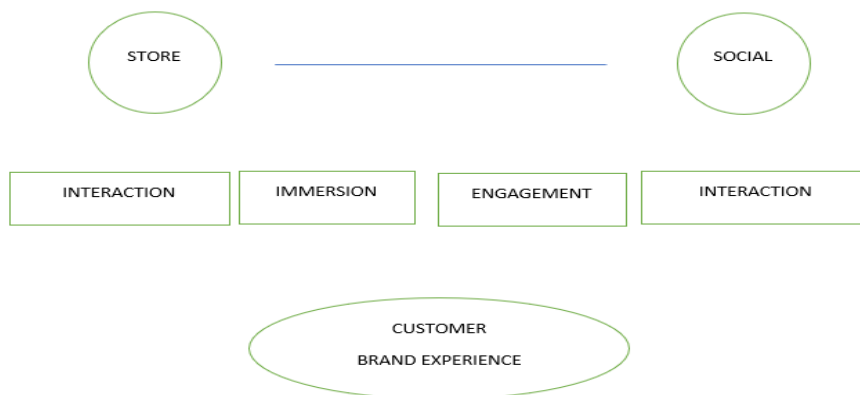


Figure 1. Customer brand experience

The H2 study for two brands the steps of the Interaction reach the *CBE* and this is in store and in the social platform.

Adidas brand subscribes the stadium idea with a creation of an immersion feeling as in a stadium” (Bonfanti, 2021). Could be interesting in this study to introduce the concept of *BI*, pillar in the Brand Equity and developed by Keller and common to the entire American school of Brand Management (Keller, 2003). If take this case H2, with the concept of *BI*, this is built in a phase prior to exposure to the public, who will then receive the stimuli coming from this—along with external factors such as word of mouth, direct experience and will rework them within the image of the brand. The need for companies to clearly define their own *BI* is due to several factors peculiar to the modern competitive context: the oversaturation of communications, the strong competition between similar products between the convergence of technologies linked to the need for equate the performance of competitors (Keller, 2004). Among *BI* components are Physique: the physique of a brand is linked to the tangible and visible aspects that characterize it, and thus give it an immediate image. Between they find the design, specifications, materials, finishes, packaging, etc. Physical appearance is the first thing a consumer notices and evaluates compared to a product, and consequently what in the first instance generates the image of the brand, in the store.

4.2 *BI > Imm; E*

The H2 study allows a tendency from the pole of emotionality to the growth of Immersivity (*Imm*). *BI* is a central factor in store *Imm* strategy and analysis. It’s easier to have a passionate and available customer than not passionate and little available. The emotional element (*E*) is fundamental in conveying the contents.

E is a pillar and transmits the contents. Reflecting the image of the sport stadium allows you to convey some content: social responsibility, leadership, sustainability, sport and health, well-being, team play.

Participation in video games and the gaming contest has become the fastest growing form of human recreation (Richard et al., 2006)

Attesting to this, annual revenues from video games have surpassed those of Hollywood (Yi, 2004), making them the world’s largest entertainment medium. Some scholars have argued that psychological benefits can be derived from game experiences (e.g., Jones, 2002).

P is a value most important for the companies but need more important when is in the immersive emotional scale. Lego has no importance of the emotional path. *S* does not have a high cost the product and don’t stimulate the customer to *P*.

4.3 Final Results

The H2 aspects argue the concepts about *P* and *S* (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001) and used RBT to construct a formal model of “profit-maximizing” *CSR* - corporate social responsibility (Bagnoli & Watts, 2003).

The innovative activity of *CBE* is considered as a social good and the positive externalities are the impact of an economic agent’s actions on the well-being (Link & Siegel, 2007).

The externality can be a positive or a negative example, the pollution is an example of a negative externality about *S*, while Innovation (*I*) is a positive externality about *S*. *CBE* projects must be brand driven and have an impact within the company. *S* brings the brand closer to the heart of the business and inserts in *CBE*.

CBE relates to an organization and communicates with external stakeholders, produces products, services to develop the creation of sense for multiple aspects (Blomkvist, 2012). This will contribute to enhanced reputation of the brand; in fact the organizations have the responsibility towards society (Hatch & Mirvis, 2018). The H2 answers reflect interests in *S* for the Millennial's generation.

Table 3 is the average variance extracted (AVE) was used to examine the average variation between the variables (Fornell & Lacker, 1981). The variables are Interaction in the store (*Ist*), Immersion (*Imm*), Engagement (*Eng*), Interaction in the social platform (*Isp*) with H1, H2, H3.

Table 3. Variables description table

	Ist	Imm	Eng	Isp
H1	19.2%	13.2%	18.3%	49.3%
H2	29.3%	20.5%	16.7%	33.5%
H3 L	32.5%	33.4%	22.8%	11.3%
H3 A	25.6%	32.1%	23.6%	18.7%

AVE=0.573, CR=0.799; *Ist*, AVE=0.700, CR=0.843; *Imm*, AVE=0.736, CR=0.887; *Eng*, AVE=0.524, CR=0.767; *Isp*, AVE=0.516, CR=0.778. All exceeded the standard values indicating good convergent validity.

The Figure 2 is H1 and H2 divided into age, as quantitative variable and then divided in three blocks (X1, X2).

P is the result about the interaction of *S* and *VI*.

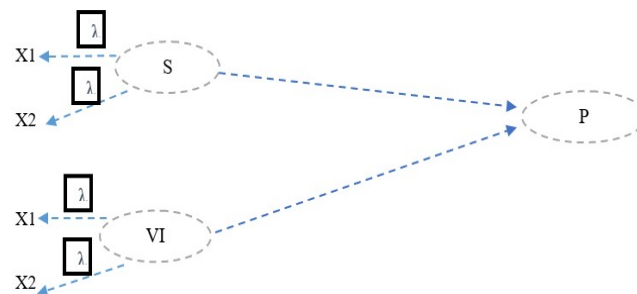


Figure 2. The results of brand purchase decision (P)

The relationship between the two variables expressed in the question H1 and H2 are *S* and *VI*. Two variables are strongly correlated without having any casual relationship. $S = +0.3$ (low correlation); $VI = +0.5$ (moderate correlation).

Table 4. Company results - CSR

Company	New Brand Message	CSR Expression
Lego	Digital Experience	S, partnership with Unicef, WWF, BuildtoGive, Renewable Energy, Alternative Materials, Recycling, Reducing Carbon, Installation Solar Panels, Cut Water, LegoReplayScheme.
Adidas	Digital Experience	S, Recycled Plastic (to do Shoes) S materials, Human Rights, EmployeeDevelopment Program

5. Conclusion

This research serves as an introduction to this special topic, the dimensions of *CBE* and *S* in the retail. his research presents an extensive process study of two methodological analyses about three research questions. The collected responses showed great interest in the sample of Millennials (H1, H2).

In this study would have been interesting to see and to analyze the data with a small survey in store, to submit to sellers and customers with questions about the immersion design, sensorial ambient elements, and social relationships in the experience.

It might be interesting to conduct a study about the drivers as engagement and interactivity and to capture the

data and tendencies. The H1—aspect of weakness is the quantitative phenomenon and the H2—aspect of weakness is close to gaming and *VI* aspects, reaches high interest and needs more in depth.

This research finds in the stores the strong aesthetic, the sensory and emotional effects to create shopping experience (Verhoef et al., 2009). These structures are built to create the feelings of evasion, immersion, promotion among customers (e.g., Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Hsiao Wang, Surendra, & Gupta, 2012).

The Millennials don't buy goods for *S*, while people aged 45–75 yes. The advanced study could be this question: how did the company give that message?

The trialability in relation to *I* and *S*, describes the focus to explore and is a value not investigate in literature (Roggeveen et al., 2020).

In the study of H1 and H2, the conclusion with the statistic contribution, appears to be the importance of *CBE* in the *S* for the Gen X and Y (Mackenzie, 1981).

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