

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND CO-CREATION OF MESSAGES ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS: A CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

Referencial Teórico Para Compartilhamento de Conhecimentos e Co-Criação de Mensagens em Plataformas Digitais: Uma perspectiva de gestão de conhecimento do consumidor

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Abstract

Purpose: The main objective of this study was to develop and propose a comprehensive conceptual theoretical framework on the relationship between digital platforms, UGC, message co-creation, knowledge sharing, consumer decision-making and purchasing behavior and CKM discourse from an organisations-centered approach.

Design/methodology/approach: This study

Resumo

Objetivo: O principal objetivo deste estudo foi desenvolver e propor um quadro teórico conceitual abrangente sobre a relação entre plataformas digitais, UGC, cocriação de mensagens, compartilhamento de conhecimento, tomada de decisão do consumidor e discurso CKM de uma organização centrada aproximação.

Design/metodologia/abordagem: Este

entails a systematic literature review, adopting an exploratory and descriptive approach to obtain insights into the combined use of knowledge management (KM) and consumer behavioral theories. The focus is on the shift to metamodernism, an oscillation between modernity and postmodernity, as an interpretative framework.

Discussion: The main contribution of this study is that it emphasizes a constant oscillation between the following key theoretical constructs that should take place in the organisation to enhance the consumer decision-making and purchasing behavior process: digital platforms; knowledge sharing; consumer message co-creation; consumer decision making and behavior; and consumer knowledge management (CKM). As knowledge-based organisations realise the need to create, share and apply knowledge as the basis of corporate value creation and sustainable competitive advantage, the realisation of these organisational goals is arguably increasingly dependent on the activities related to the KM process.

Originality/value: The study's theoretical originality and value is reflected in the integrated theoretical framework which shows the integration, application and linking of consumer behavior theory to a knowledge-based view in a CKM perspective. This application highlights the role of knowledge sharing in message co-creation and UGC to enhance consumer decision-making and purchasing behavior from a CKM perspective.

Keywords: knowledge sharing; co-creation of messages; digital platforms; user-generated content; consumer knowledge management.

estudo envolve uma revisão sistemática da literatura, adotando uma abordagem exploratória e descritiva para obter *insights* sobre o uso combinado de gestão do conhecimento (GC) e teorias comportamentais do consumidor. O foco está na mudança para o metamodernismo, uma oscilação entre modernidade e pós-modernidade, como uma estrutura interpretativa.

Discussão: A principal contribuição deste estudo é enfatizar uma constante oscilação entre os seguintes construtos teóricos-chave que devem ocorrer na organização para potencializar o processo de tomada de decisão e comportamento de compra do consumidor: plataformas digitais; compartilhamento de conhecimento; cocriação de mensagens ao consumidor; tomada de decisão e comportamento do consumidor; e gestão do conhecimento do consumidor (CKM). À medida que as organizações baseadas no conhecimento percebem a necessidade de criar, compartilhar e aplicar o conhecimento como base da criação de valor corporativo e vantagem competitiva sustentável, a realização desses objetivos organizacionais é indiscutivelmente cada vez mais dependente das atividades relacionadas ao processo de GC.

Originalidade/valor: A originalidade teórica e o valor do estudo são refletidos no quadro teórico integrado que mostra a integração, aplicação e vinculação da teoria do comportamento do consumidor a uma visão baseada no conhecimento em uma perspectiva CKM. Este aplicativo destaca o papel do compartilhamento de conhecimento na cocriação de mensagens e UGC para melhorar a tomada de decisão do consumidor e o comportamento de compra de uma perspectiva CKM.

Palavras-chave: compartilhamento de conhecimento; cocriação de mensagens; plataformas digitais; conteúdo gerado por usuários; gestão do conhecimento do consumidor.

INTRODUCTION

The role of digital platforms (both online and offline) has become prevalent in motivating consumers to co-create messages and share knowledge of information about and experiences with brands and other consumers through consumer knowledge management (CKM). Arfi and Hikkerova (2019) suggested the need for research into knowledge sharing on digital platforms to augment to existing knowledge on organisational strategy and product innovation to connect with consumers through the co-creation of messages.

According to Imam and Jagodič (2021), innovation, the main financial motivational factor in the digital area, is linked to knowledge management (KM) and influences innovation in organisations significantly through KM processes such as knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation, knowledge storage, knowledge sharing and knowledge application to improve organisational knowledge assets and abilities. Concurring with this, Le and Tuamsuk (2021, p. 44) suggested that “regarding knowledge assets, organizational assets consist of tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge relating to expertise, know-how, best practices, and intellectual property” where “intellectual property includes human intellect such as innovative ideas, business processes, and unique methods that create valuable sources for the marketplace”.

According to Gabbott and Hogg (1994), consumers were not always able to obtain relevant information about products, services and organisations for the co-creation of messages during knowledge-sharing before the introduction of digital platforms. Hence, this article explores the knowledge sharing process postulating that consumers should become co-creators of messages to obtain relevant information about products, services, brands and organisations to improve organisational strategies and innovation.

Digital platforms refer to a “collection of online services that supports social interaction among users and allows them to co-create, find, share and evaluate the online information repository through Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61) and transform passive content readers to active content publishers. CKM on digital platforms thus becomes crucial to acquire, organise, share, transfer and manage knowledge related to consumers for the benefit of organisations and to ensure consumer satisfaction (Rowley, 1997). Notwithstanding recognition of the role of knowledge sharing on digital platforms on consumer behavior (Hollebeek, Clark, Hammedi & Arvola, 2021), limited research has been conducted into it.

Based on a thorough review of the literature, the main motivators for consumers to become co-creators in this knowledge-sharing process include knowledge acquisition; self-discovery; reputation; social identity; interaction and a sense of belonging; reciprocity or altruism; and entertainment (Ahmed, Ahmad, Ahmad, & Zakaria, 2019). Because limited research has been conducted linking consumer behavior to knowledge sharing (Carlson, Gudergan, Gelhard & Rahman, 2019), it is posited that a need exists to look at the consumer’s role in the co-creation of messages to create UGC through CKM to enhance consumer purchasing decisions and behavior.

To address this problem, the main research objective of this study was to propose a comprehensive conceptual theoretical framework on the relationship between digital platforms, UGC, message co-creation, knowledge sharing, consumer decision-making and purchasing behavior and CKM in the organisation. Although attempts have been made to understand consumer behavior and numerous gaps have been identified in the literature, this study set out to address this gap and was aimed at advancing such understanding significantly by validating the need to deliberate the influence of knowledge sharing on the co-creation-based understanding of knowledge and information. Hence, this article starts from the assumption that KM in the organisation and consumer behavior are interconnected and conditioned. As such, they affect the organisational processes involved in consumer relationship building. It is argued that organisations could use the theories and subsequent proposed theoretical framework of the study as possible tools to manage the dynamics of digital platforms to retain a positive effect through CKM where these technologies and processes are regarded as most beneficial.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This exploratory and interpretivist study was based on a systematic literature review (SLR), which involves a process of reviewing, collecting, analysing and synthesising existing research literature relevant to a specific topic or research question systematically (Kitchenham, 2007). The purpose of an SLR is to be explicit and systematic and to identify research gaps in existing studies; to draw conclusions; make recommendations for further research; and to allow for better insight into and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being addressed (Snyder, 2019). According to Snyder (2019, p. 333), this method further “creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge and facilitating theory development” and is, as such, a key method for the creation of theoretical frameworks. For the purpose of this study, the authors broadly followed the process of a SLR outlined by Xiao and Watson (2019, p. 103) as indicated in Figure 1.

The sub-elements of each stage included the identification of review objectives; the formulation of a review protocol; the identification of inclusion and exclusion criteria; a review of selection procedures and strategy; quality assessment and data extraction; and the synthesis of evidence.

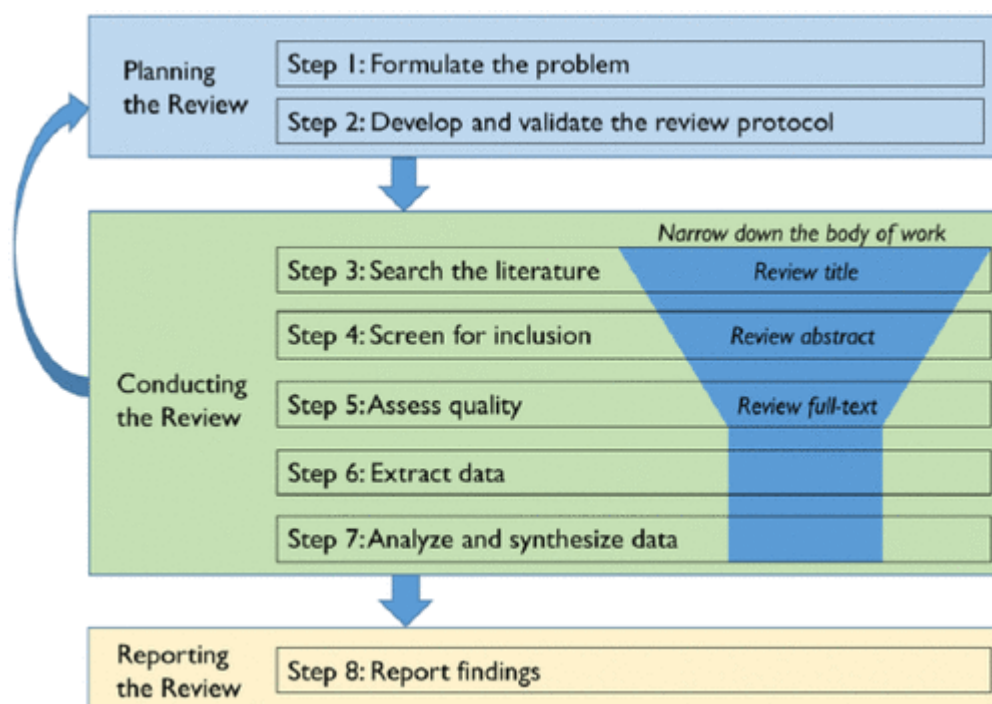


Figure 1. The process of a systematic literature review (Xiao & Watson 2019, p. 103)

For the purpose of this study, the inclusion criterion synthesised academic studies on the Web of Science, Google Scholar and other academic published information from two different disciplines that provided guidance on the methodology of conducting a literature review. A critical interpretive synthesis through an iterative and exploratory method was conducted from a meta-modernistic perspective in order to determine the constructs that oscillate during the consumer purchasing process from a strategic organisational knowledge management perspective. Data extraction was informal, and the literature was evaluated by different criteria and after forming synthetic constructs, criteria and sub-criteria were identified by the researchers (also referred to as synthetic constructs in critical interpretive synthesis).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Worldview

The literature reflects various acquiescent terminologies trying to describe an alternative era to postmodernity. Meyer (2021) summarises it as follows: antimodernist and para-modernist (Zavarzadeh, 1975); modernist-postmodernist (Gooding-Williams, 1987); reflexive modernism (Lash, 1993); post-postmodernism (Turner, 1995); trans-modernism (Epstein, 1999; post-millennialism (Gans, 1997); pseudo- and digi-modernism (Kirby, 2009); critical modernism (Jencks, 2007); premodernism (Burns, 2015); metamodernism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010); neo-modernism (Faye, 2012); and altermodernism (Jencks, 2007). Although pseudo- and digi-modernism seem appropriate for this study, Kirby (2009, p.2) argued that “pseudo- and digi-modernism is associated with the triteness and shallowness resulting from the instantaneous, direct, and superficial participation in culture made possible by online social media like the internet and interactive means”, saying that he had not seen any significant works coming out of pseudo-modernism. He also argued that where postmodernism called the real into question, pseudo-modernism defines the real indirectly as the self-interacting with its texts, signifying a corresponding change in the dominant intellectual framework. That means that some of these viewpoints may still have relevance to consumerism and knowledge sharing in the digital age. However, based on Kirby’s argument, this study adopted a metamodern worldview that is seen as a simple way of understanding a complex world (Anderson, 2019).

Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010) introduced the term metamodernism as an intervention in the postmodernism debates and conceptualised the epistemology and ontology of metamodernism in relation to modernism (faith in human ability to reason to ensure freedom and the believe that grand theory represents knowledge and information) and postmodernism (believe in faith, trust, dialogue, performance and sincerity, questioning the so-called truths of modernism and believing that knowledge is created through the multiplicity daily life and is therefore ever-changing) as a “both-neither” dynamic, explaining it as simultaneously modern and postmodern, as well as neither of these.

According to Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010, p. 4) “a metamodern worldview is thus created by the modernistic desire to make sense of the world and the postmodern skepticism about the sense of it all”. The prefix *meta* refers to Plato’s *metaxy*, which implies a movement between opposite poles and beyond. It is thus argued that a metamodernism worldview of knowledge sharing on digital platforms to co-create messages with consumers is an ontological oscillation between modernism and postmodernism and must be situated beyond these two worldviews where both perspectives are respected and believed depending on the issue on hand (Meyer & Barker, 2020; Meyer, 2021).

Digital platforms

The rise of internet and internet computer technologies, alongside the development of the sharing economy, has enabled organisations to relate to suppliers, consumers and other actors through digital platforms that facilitate “online consumer communities”. Furthermore, the innovative conveniences and accessibility to knowledge that digital platforms offer consumers have metamorphosed the way consumers communicate with one another; share and access knowledge and information; and interact and co-create messages with organisations to benefit both the consumer and the organisation.

Digital platforms include online and offline connections that incorporate the following three perspectives: an engineering (product/software development) or technical perspective with the focus on combination of technical elements and processes to form a digital platform; a non-technical perspective that presents platforms as a commercial network or market that enables transactions in the form of business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C), or consumer-to-consumer (C2C) exchanges; and an organisational perspective that emphasises actors’ practices in relation to the technical architectures and the markets they establish and manage through innovation (Asadullah, Faik, & Kankanhalli, 2018; Knut, Lars & Arun, 2018). From an engineering perspective, De Reuver, Sørensen & Basole (2018, p. 126), defined digital platforms “as purely technical artefacts where the

platform is an extensible codebase, and the ecosystem comprises third-party modules complementing this codebase”.

Digital platforms can also be “characterised as a sociotechnical assemblage encompassing the technical elements (of software and hardware) and associated organisational processes and standards” (Tilson, Lyytinen, K & Sørensen [2012], as cited by De Reuver *et al.*, [2018, p.126]). De Reuver *et al.* (2018, p.127) further posited that “the recombability of digitised elements through digital convergence and associated generativity raises paradoxical relationships of change and control”. According to Tilson *et al.* (2010), that should imply the necessity for digital platforms to remain stable to form a solid basis for additional enrolment, and at the same time remain sufficiently flexible to support seemingly unbounded growth.

From the non-technical and organisational perspectives, the definition of Chang and Chuang (2011, p.10), namely that digital platforms are “the means of interactions between people in which they create, share, and exchange knowledge and ideas within virtual communities and networks” is specifically relevant to this study. The use of digital platforms for knowledge sharing thus comprises interactive digital tools permitting consumers to share knowledge and co-create messages or influence information and content to facilitate interactivity between an organisation and its consumers through ontological oscillation.

Ahmed *et al.* (2019) identified three main activities of knowledge sharing by consumers on digital platform applications. These are knowledge seeking, knowledge contributing and social interactivity. Thus it seems important to integrate knowledge sharing in the consumer behavior process to include message co-creation; UGC; information consumption; and purchasing decisions and behavior on digital platforms. That would enrich existing information on KM plans at an organisational strategic level for product innovation. The main driving forces for this knowledge sharing will, among other things, be influenced by the attitudes, subjective and/or reciprocal norms, altruism, expectations, motivation, social cognition, trust, self-interest, commitment, social capital, shared beliefs and perceived behavioral control of consumers of their knowledge-sharing-behavior intention (Nzowa, 2021). Hence, it is posited that, from a metamodern perspective of digital platforms, the consumer should play a dual role through oscillating between being a knowledge sender and a knowledge receiver. The duality of this consumer role further points to a process of knowledge seeking and contributing during the co-creation of messages for the purpose of enhancing information consumption in consumer decision making, as viewed from a KM perspective.

Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing derives when individuals transfer knowledge, or acquire it from others (Bilgihan, Peng & Kandampully, 2014; Chen and Hung, 2010). Hung and Cheng (2013, p. 8) perceived knowledge sharing as a “process or an activity of exchange between individuals, groups or organisations”. Ma and Chan (2014, p. 52) defined knowledge sharing as “the communication of knowledge from a source in such a way that it is learned and applied by the recipient”. The use of digital media platforms therefore suggests more possibilities for knowledge sharing to enhance the flow of knowledge between people working across different geographical areas than traditional tools (Panahi, Watson & Partridge, 2016).

Leading researchers in the field, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), argued that this innovative knowledge sharing process is considered as a continuous dialogue between tacit, explicit and implicit knowledge where explicit knowledge can be voiced and transferred through codification or written documentation. In terms of this perspective, consumers can generate, codify and transfer knowledge by reflecting framed experiences, values and contextual information. According to Silva, Delapiedra, Manoel and Cassiolato (2021, p. 403) “values can be distinguished through their content and structure: the content of values refers to their source of motivation, while the structure of values relates them to each other according to compatibility or contrariety”.

In this sense, personal values cognitively represent three types of universal human needs: (a) biological needs of the organism; (b) social interaction needs for the regulation of interpersonal relationships; (c) socio-institutional needs that aim group well-being and survival. Hence, the posting

of personal experiences of and comments on a product or service is considered as explicit knowledge which can include the content of values (the motivation of personal values) and/or the structure of values (actions taken in the search for each type of value based on psychological, practical and social consequences that may be conflicting or compatible with the search for other types of values). Hence it is posited that explicit knowledge postings on digital platforms could persuade other consumers, as such affecting their evaluation of alternatives and information seeking. Consumer experiences posted on digital platforms are therefore a form of knowledge sharing in explicit form that affects all or most stages in the purchasing decision process.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) also posited that tacit knowledge exists in the individual's mind and is connected to their experience based on subjectivity, faith and values. Although this subjective knowledge is difficult to capture, codify and transfer due to its inexpressible characteristics, knowledge creation and sharing are vital because they influence creativity, innovation and performance within an organisation. They further argued that in the knowledge transition process of socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation (SECI), tacit and explicit knowledge develop both as far as quality and quantity are concerned and move from an individual to a collective level. Accordingly, the SECI model is seen as a dynamic process in which explicit knowledge, which can be expressed easily in written form, and implicit knowledge, which is assimilated through experience, are exchanged and transformed, which is crucial for the innovation process.

It is argued that this approach presents a means to manage and control the messages that are acquired, transferred and assimilated proactively to ensure that knowledge is created, distributed and shared (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Lee, Leong, Hew & Ooi, 2013). Despite the realisation that tacit knowledge is necessary to enhance user-generated knowledge on digital platforms, the main disadvantage is that it can be impeded by perception, language, time, value and distance. This is emphasised by a study conducted by Zahratu and Hurriyati (2020) who found that consumers generally always rely on word of mouth (WOM) from relatives or friends to get a better understanding of known attributes and product quality, and that on digital platforms, consumers tend to use it through social media, which refers to electronic word of mouth (EWOM). EWOM therefore became a very important knowledge sharing medium influencing the consumer purchasing decisions on digital platforms.

Consumer knowledge management (CKM)

An emerging area of interest in KM research and practice involves CKM, which refers to KM strategies pertaining to the management of organisational knowledge obtained through interactions between organisations and their consumers (Chua & Banerjee, 2013). CKM has become an important strategic organisational resource that improves marketing results and innovation positively, enables the discovery of new market opportunities and supports long-term consumer relationship management (Fidel, Schlesinger & Cervera, 2015). This is a result of the ever-changing complex and high-level preferences of consumers that have led to a paradigm shift in KM towards a dynamic consumer-centric approach. Subsequently, digital platforms have transformed online consumers from content readers to content publishers, thereby enhancing their role in the process.

In line with the focus of this study, CKM is seen as crucial to capture, organise, share, transfer and control knowledge related to consumers on digital platforms for the benefit of organisations as well as the satisfaction of consumers. It is thus posited that CKM is a strategic resource for organisations to improve innovation and organisational performance (management of knowledge *for* consumers), enables the discovery of new market opportunities through UGC to design knowledge with consumers (management of knowledge *from* consumers), and to build long-term consumer relationship management through CKM strategies (management of knowledge *about* consumers).

In terms of the management of knowledge *for* consumers, CKM allows attaining new and retaining current consumers, providing an organisation with a competitive advantage to improve consumer value, which could influence organisational performance significantly (Zanjani, Rouzbehani, & Dabbagh, 2008). From this perspective, continuous knowledge flow directed from organisations to consumers is a prerequisite to assist consumers in their decision making and behavior buying cycles

(García-Murillo & Annabi, 2002). In terms of KM *from* consumers, CKM ensures that knowledge acquired from consumers assists organisations in using UGC and co-created messages to enhance the quality of their products and services, and to develop new products and services (García-Murillo & Annabi, 2002; Salomann, Dous, Kolbe & Brenner, 2005; Zanjani *et al.*, 2008). The main advantage of this is that knowledge could be incorporated for innovation, idea generation and evaluation. Knowledge from consumers is therefore essential for organisations to realise the concept of “design with consumers”.

To ensure the management of knowledge *about* consumers, organisations could use CKM strategies to manage knowledge flow among consumers, because knowledge about consumers, such as their preferences and past transactions, encompasses analysing consumers’ present needs, future requirements, changing perceptions and tendencies (Gebert, Geib, Kolbe, & Brenner, 2003). It therefore involves exploring consumers’ perceptions of products and services to identify their preferences and concerns to acquire a better understanding of their attitudes and emotional responses. That would facilitate serving consumers and service quality in their preferred ways (Salomann *et al.*, 2005) which is confirmed by a study conducted by Nzowa (2021) in which it was found that consistent improvement of service quality is crucial to retain existing consumers but that it might differ from organisation to organisation.

Because knowledge is critical in market and organisational environments, especially in knowledge-based organisations, it is argued that knowledge must be created, shared and applied in the organisational context, that extends to the consumer decision-making process, to ensure optimal information consumption. These processes are arguably dependent on CKM which can be achieved through a “knowledge path” (Akbar & Tzokas 2013, p. 1592) created from the stages of product development to consumer decision-making and purchasing.

Therefore, it is argued that, according to the CKM approach, consumer purchasing behavior is influenced by either externally stimulated or controlled motivation, or by internally provoked inducements or pressures or autonomous motivation.

Consumer decision making and behavior

From a consumer purchasing perspective, consumer behavior involves a process resulting in buying activity after preceding and subsequent mental and social processes following the identification of a need, a product or service that would satisfy that consumption-related need (Panwar, Anand, Ali & Singal, 2019). After purchase and consumption, assessment of the degree of gratification takes place, followed by disposal of the goods or service (Panwar *et al.*, 2019; Ramya and Ali, 2016; Oke, Kamolshotiros, Popoola, Ajagbe & Olujobi, 2015; Jisana, 2014; Joubert, 2013). According to Mishra, Singh & Koles (2020), the consumer behavioral process is grounded in a psychological process that includes cognitive, affective and conative dimensions. The thinking and understanding process is reflected in the cognitive dimension; evaluation or judgement as emotional facets are evident in the affective dimension; and choice and action associated with purchase are part of the conative dimension.

In line with the focus of this article that argues for wider consideration of consumer behavior from a CKM perspective, the process allows for information consumption and knowledge sharing during decision making and the co-creation of messages in addition to typical consumer behavior concepts like product and service consumption, emotions, situational factors and personal influences (Panwar *et al.*, 2019). Hence, the core argument is that a consumer’s “desire to share knowledge” could be motivated by external and internal motivational factors. In the context of an individual, that would include individual abilities and a sense of trust, and in an organisational context it would refer to regulations, organisational justice, commitment, information systems, organisational willingness and organisational culture.

Furthermore, the resultant commitments or activities of a consumer behavioral process are important in determining the relationship between knowledge sharing, consumer message co-creation and UGC to enhance information consumption during consumer decision making and behavior on digital platforms. Joubert (2013) identified four commitments or activities that result from a consumer

behavioral process, namely physical, psychological, emotional and cognitive engagement. Physical engagement typically refers to a consumer visiting a store or buying a product after a decision-making process. Psychological engagement refers to mental processes involving the identification of needs and the presence of knowledge, experience and opinions about a brand or product, while emotional engagement refers to experiences, attitudes and predispositions (Joubert 2013; Mingione & Leoni 2020).

In the context of this article, Joubert's (2013) psychological and emotional commitments or activities apply in that the role of knowledge sharing in consumers' message co-creation to enhance information consumption during decision making is explored. It is posited that psychological activities like acquiring knowledge and experience and forming opinions, as well as emotional processes involving the manifestation of attitudes, predispositions and experiences underwrite consumers' message co-creation, UGC and knowledge-sharing processes. Therefore, CKM processes that organise and control knowledge are considered important in consumer purchasing decisions and behavior. Accordingly, psychological activities and emotional processes are at the center of the consumer behavior process where the decision-making process follows these processes to ultimately affect behavior in terms of product or service consumption (Joubert, 2013).

This article also addresses the enhancement of information consumption during a consumer decision-making process based on message co-creation and knowledge-sharing behavior. To this end, the decision-making process in terms of product determination and buying is recognised and used to provide a theoretical underpinning for application from an information consumption perspective. This emphasises the argument that the processes of consumer decision making and embedded message co-creation, UGC and information consumption are important. The consumer decision-making process is motivated by tension caused by an unsatisfied need. As such, it is a purely emotional and mental process connected to a perceptual state (Panwar *et al.*, 2019; Oke *et al.*, 2015; Jisana, 2014; Joubert, 2013).

The stages of this process, which usually has a physical outcome, are repetitive, sequential and linear (Panwar *et al.*, 2019; Karimi, Papamichail & Holland, 2015), commencing with perception and ending with post-purchase behavior (Joubert, 2013). The first "problem- and-need-recognition" stage of the consumer decision-making process is perceptual in that consumers perceive an existing need. Consequently, consumers proceed to a stage where they *search for information* from both *internal and external* personal, public, commercial and experiential sources (Jisana, 2014) to address the identified problem and make an informed decision (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016; Karimi *et al.*, 2015; Oke *et al.*, 2015; Joubert, 2013).

The second stage of the consumer decision-making process is the main focus of this article, since the aim is to explore the role of knowledge sharing during consumer message co-creation to enhance information consumption during the purchasing decision-making process. Information consumption is thus prominent as it is argued that knowledge sharing, message co-creation and UGC are information dependent. Furthermore, the search for information is an internal and/or external activity supported by a learning process that inherently suggests involvement from the consumer (Joubert, 2013). Based on the argument that knowledge sharing aligns closely with the manner in which information is processed, the latter constitutes a further pertinent consideration. Information processing involves the acquisition, organisation and utilisation of information. It is furthermore dependent on how consumers learned to process information (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2011).

De Mooij and Hofstede (2011) found that social interaction results in communication among individuals, hence initiating unconscious knowledge acquisition. This argument aligns with the view that knowledge sharing plays a role in consumer co-creation of messages, particularly to enhance information consumption during decision making. Mauser, Klepper, Rice, Schmalzbauer and Hackman (2013) refer to this as the process for the co-creation of knowledge that focuses on three important stages through which academia and stakeholders should be involved to various extents which include co-design, co-production and co-dissemination.

Following information-seeking in the decision-making process, the consumer *evaluates alternatives* against certain criteria to obtain resolutions to the problem identified initially, responds by making a purchase decision and proceeds to post-purchase evaluation or response (Jisana, 2014;

Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016; Karimi *et al.*, 2015; Oke *et al.*, 2015; Joubert, 2013). Zuschke (2020) confirmed that knowledge is transferred in the decision-making process as a result of the movement between these stages or phases.

Decision-making processes change (Kumar, Mangla, Luthra, Rana & Dwivedi, 2018) due to technological advancements and digitisation (Ewerhard, Sisovsky & Johansson, 2019; Wang & Yu, 2015), such as digital communication and online consumer behavior. Hence, the possibility exists that the traditional stages of the decision-making process mentioned above would be inadequate to explain decision making in an online environment (Ewerhard *et al.*, 2019). Suggestions of how to adapt the decision-making process for the online environment include acknowledging the validity of current decision-making models, but adapting them to accommodate interactive, participatory digital platforms (Ewerhard *et al.*, 2019), as consumers now expect interactivity, two-way communication, and cooperative relationships with other consumers and social experiences (Wang & Yu, 2015).

Ewerhard *et al.* (2019) suggested adaptation in terms of how repetition, flexibility (Karimi *et al.*, 2015), enhancement and the omission of steps are expressed on digital platforms, proposing non-linear decision making. Such non-linearity may also refer to consumers' expectations of social interaction while sharing knowledge (Wang & Yu, 2015). Of particular importance is the ability of online consumers to generate and provide information, as opposed to the traditional paradigm wherein the organisation is the only source of information (Ewerhard *et al.*, 2019).

This in itself points to non-linearity, as proper sequential behavior evident in the traditional decision-making paradigm is replaced with prioritising information and knowledge resulting from increased interaction and social behavior. Hence, organisations have less power and control over messages and less impact on consumer behavior (Ewerhard *et al.*, 2019). Therefore it is argued that knowledge sharing during message co-creation and the process of UGC to enhance information consumption during decision making on digital platforms have become important stages in the purchase decision-making process. This is in line with Ewerhard *et al.*'s (2019) argument that the online purchase decision-making process model needs an adaptation during the search and decision-making stages.

Another perspective involves the application of behavioral economics in the context of consumer decision making and behavior. That implies rationality in terms of maximising utility and independent actions as a result of the acquisition of information (Panwar *et al.*, 2019; Frederiks, Stenner & Hobman, 2015). Central to an economic behavioral perspective is the notion that consumers make choices that yield optimal results and provide them with more information and more choices to optimise behavior (Frederiks *et al.*, 2015). However, the psychology and behavioral economics theory adopts a conflicting view by rejecting the notion of more effortful information processing (Frederiks *et al.*, 2015), suggesting more irrational decision making and behavior. Hence, psychology and behavioral economics suggests a resistance to change by maintaining the status quo and *satisficing* to achieve satisfactory rather than optimal results.

Arguments include that although *loss* in terms of risk and cost weighs heavier than gain, consumers are more *risk averse* when their gain is considered to be good enough and that *persistence* in terms of decision making and behavior is observed once resources such as time and money have been invested; however, *persistence* is insignificant when the only benefit is long term (Frederiks *et al.*, 2015). In line with this theory, it is argued that consumers aim to conform to *social norms* that afford them social approval, especially if *intrinsic* and *extrinsic incentives* and *rewards* are in alignment; furthermore that decision making is based on *trust* and *information* that can be obtained easily (Frederiks *et al.*, 2015).

As emphasised previously, decision making in online environments shows a paradigm shift away from linearity towards non-linearity in terms of sequential processes, emphasising information consumption and knowledge sharing during social interaction and the creation of UGC. Wang and Yu (2015) emphasised that UGC is perceived to be more reliable than traditional media as it is produced and disseminated through social interaction on digital platforms in a timely manner. It is therefore important to note the change in consumer behavior and decision making because of UGC and message co-creation.

Knowledge sharing, digital platforms, UGC, co-creation of messages and consumer behavior

Based on the preceding discussion, it is posited that digital platforms facilitate interactivity and co-creation of information and knowledge that allow for the development and sharing of UGC among and between organisations and consumers. Co-creation is mainly addressed from a beneficiary-centric perspective; that is, from the view of the value recipient(s) (e.g. organisation and consumer), which may be diverse in reflecting the concept's wide-ranging, ecosystem actor-centered nature. From an organisational perspective, co-creation reflects the organisation's perceived value, which may include reinforced consumer relationships. From the consumer's perspective, co-creation implies the perceived value accruing from organisation-based interactions that are built on trust, which is a significant predictor of tacit knowledge sharing and commitment that mediate consumer relationships positively (Umar, Sial, Ali, Bari, & Ahmad, 2021).

Interactivity on digital platforms, including social media and EWOM, and the resultant empowerment of consumers to collaborate, co-create and share knowledge, opinions, feelings and concerns (Meneghello, Thompson, Lee, Wong & Abu-Salih, 2020) require management of knowledge, information and content to enhance information consumption during decision making. Brand content is more accessible due to consumers gathering and sharing content and views, resulting in extensive influence on co-consumers' decision making in terms of attitudes and purchase intention, brands and organisations (Kim & Johnson, 2016). Hence, digital platforms augment active generation and distribution of messages and information that culminate in a change in behavior and decision-making processes.

Kim and Johnson (2016, p. 98) further found that UGC facilitates consumer interaction on social media and defined it as "media content created by members of the general public and includes any form of online content created, initiated, circulated, and consumed by users". Therefore, UGC has a significant influence as it is created by individuals on the same social network where the opinions and behaviors of fellow consumers are shaped. While organisations have limited control over UGC, knowledge sharing and co-creation, new insights (Meneghello *et al.*, 2020) that are beneficial to organisations are shared. Consumers are therefore afforded opportunities to gain and share knowledge about a product, service or organisation (Kim & Johnson, 2016, p. 98), leaving possibilities for CKM, KM and extraction (Meneghello *et al.*, 2020) while being motivated by external and internal factors.

It is posited that information and knowledge are at the core of the UGC and co-creation processes, hence the focus on the importance of managing the knowledge and information shared among consumers on digital platforms through CKM. Managing knowledge on digital platforms through CKM enhances the quality, trustworthiness, value and credibility of the content, information, knowledge and actionable intelligence (Meneghello *et al.*, 2020). It is furthermore argued that these processes would enhance information consumption during the consumer behavioral process and improve decision making. In this regard, Kim and Johnson (2016) referred to a consideration set that comprises all information and knowledge gathered during the decision-making process, underlining the importance of quality of information to enhance consumers' cognitive responses to UGC. They identified two prevalent external stimuli, namely rational and emotional UGC.

Rational UGC is information that allows for functionality, detail and practicality in describing the effectiveness of a product, service or organisation, while emotional UGC features feeling-based, perceptual and entertaining messages to enable consumer emotive connectivity to products, services and organisations. Emotional connections are enhanced by the entertainment value of the messages that could, in turn, warrant "positive behavioral intentions". Hence, it is posited that increased information and knowledge consumers are exposed to indeed present multivocal and multifaceted qualities that organisations have to confront.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 reflects the study results as synthesized according to key theoretical criteria and sub-criteria identified subsequent to the SLR. The key theoretical criteria include digital platforms;

knowledge sharing; CKM; consumer decision making and behavior; and co-creation of messages/UGC. In addition, the following inclusive sub-criteria were formulated through synthesis of the evidence obtained by way of cross-sectional comparison and the SLR: knowledge and information; innovation; consumer orientation; information and knowledge consumption; consumer relationship management; and motivational factors.

Table 1
Comparison of the key theoretical criteria and sub-criteria

Key theoretical criteria and sub-criteria	Digital platforms	Knowledge sharing	CKM	Consumer decision making and behavior	Co-creation of messages/UGC
Knowledge and information	Provide platforms for knowledge seeking, knowledge contributing and social interactivity. Importance of EWOM.	Through knowledge acquisition and transfer.	Capture, organise, share, transfer and control knowledge related to consumers.	Cognitive dimension and psychological commitment or activities refer to mental processes involving knowledge.	Consumers are afforded opportunities to gain and share knowledge and information about a product, service or organisation, leaving possibilities for CKM, KM and extraction.
Innovation	Comprise interactive digital tools, allowing users to share knowledge and co-create or influence information and content and facilitate interactivity between the organisation and individuals (consumers). Enrich existing knowledge about organisational strategy and product innovation to connect with consumers through the co-creation of messages. Linked to KM that influence innovative KM strategies to improve organisational knowledge assets and abilities significantly.	Focus on tacit, explicit and implicit knowledge. Implementation of digital platforms to enrich existing knowledge about KM strategies and product innovation.	Include strategies pertaining to the management of organisational knowledge obtained through interactions between organisations and their consumers.	Interactivity, two-way communication and cooperative relationships with organisations.	Strategic organisational adoption of digital communication. Organisations have limited control over UGC, knowledge sharing and co-creation. However, new organisational insights are gained that are beneficial to organisations in enhancing innovation.
Consumer orientation	Transform online consumers from content readers	Co-creation of messages through consumer	Create a dynamic consumer-centric	Cognitive, affective and conative dimensions	UGC is created by individuals on the same social network whereby opinions and

	to content publishers.	motivational factors: -knowledge acquisition, - self-discovery, - reputation, - social identity, - interaction, - sense of belonging, - reciprocity or altruism, -entertainment, etc.	approach.	based on need recognition following a non-linear process on digital platforms: - internal and external information seeking - evaluation of alternatives - purchase decision - post-purchase evaluation and response.	behaviors of fellow consumers are shaped. Empowerment of consumers to collaborate, co-create and share knowledge, opinions, feelings and concerns.
Information/knowledge consumption	It is prominent in that knowledge sharing, message co-creation and UGC are information dependent.	Knowledge sharing, co-creation of messages and UGC are information dependent. Information seeking is internal and/or external and underwritten by a learning process, inherently suggesting involvement by the consumer. Information processing involves the acquisition, organisation and utilisation of information and is dependent on how the processing of information was learned.	A strategic resource for organisations to improve innovation and organisational performance through the management of knowledge <i>with, from</i> and <i>about</i> consumers. It involves exploring consumers' perceptions of products and services, identifying their preferences and concerns and acquiring a better understanding of their attitudes and emotional responses to serve consumers in their preferred ways.	Internal and/or external information and underwritten by a learning process, suggesting involvement by the consumer. Knowledge sharing aligns closely with the manner in which information is processed. A process involving the acquisition, organisation and utilisation of information, depending on how processing of information was learned.	Consideration set that comprises all information and knowledge that was gathered and consumed during the decision-making process while co-creating messages and UGC. It underlines the importance of information quality that should enhance consumers' cognitive responses on UGC.
Consumer relationship management	The explicit knowledge shared on digital platforms could persuade other consumers, affecting their evaluation of alternatives and information seeking. The consumer experience through	The consumer experience through knowledge sharing affects all or most stages in the relationship-building and purchasing decision process.	To build long-term consumer relationship management through CKM strategies.	Decision-making processes on digital platforms result in consumers expecting cooperative relationships with other consumers and organisations.	Interactions are built on trust, which is a significant predictor of tacit knowledge sharing and commitment that mediate consumer relationships positively.

	knowledge sharing affects all or most stages in the relationship-building and purchasing decision process.				
Motivational factors	Externally induced motivation (controlled). Internally evoked incentives or pressures (autonomous).	Psychological and emotional commitment.	Manage knowledge flow with consumers. Share information/ knowledge through CKM to enhance product purchase decisions.	Psychological process. Cognitive, affective and conative dimensions.	Rational UGC is an external, information-based stimulus that allows for functionality, detail and practicality in describing the effectiveness of a product, service or organisation. Emotional UGC is an external stimulus featuring feeling-based, perceptual and entertaining messages to enable consumer emotive connectivity and commitment to products, services and organisations. Both could warrant positive behavioral intentions and consumer commitment.

The relationship between the criteria and sub-criteria in Table 1 are subsequently indicated and discussed in the conceptual theoretical framework.

CONCEPTUAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The criteria and sub-criteria discussed in Table 1 are also presented in Figure 2 to enhance the theory on organisational management of knowledge sharing on digital platforms in which CKM is particularly useful to increase consumer-generated knowledge in decision-making processes.

Based on the notion of CKM, this study examined how and why particular consumer purchasing behavior such as knowledge sharing is stimulated through digital platforms. According to this approach, consumer purchasing behavior is shaped either by externally induced motivation or by internally evoked incentives or pressures. It is suggested that external and internal motivation could impact the knowledge-sharing behavior of consumers significantly. Therefore, it is argued that organisations could enhance the co-creation of messages and UGC while simultaneously building strong consumer relationships that could lead to increased introjected motivation and a stronger feeling that they must share knowledge among consumers.

It is posited that this study contributes to consumer behavior theory and a knowledge-based view by applying these two well-known theories to the field of CKM. It is argued that the proposed theoretical framework is specifically relevant with the advent of the knowledge economy where business organisations have to convert their operations to knowledge-based systems as an asset as well as a strategic resource, not only for the organisation, but also to improve organisational capabilities to co-create messages and UGC with consumers. It is therefore important for organisations to realise that, for them to be more competitive in the marketplace, they need to exploit and explore more knowledge and information with consumers to build strong relations and enhance performance. The proposed framework might be useful for management and practitioners, since it suggests a digital platform that differs somewhat from traditional physical channels; plays a significant role in shaping

consumer behavior where knowledge sharing spreads more rapidly; affects culture and triggers innovative ideas to enhance organisational performance; and builds long-term consumer relationships ensuring a competitive advantage.

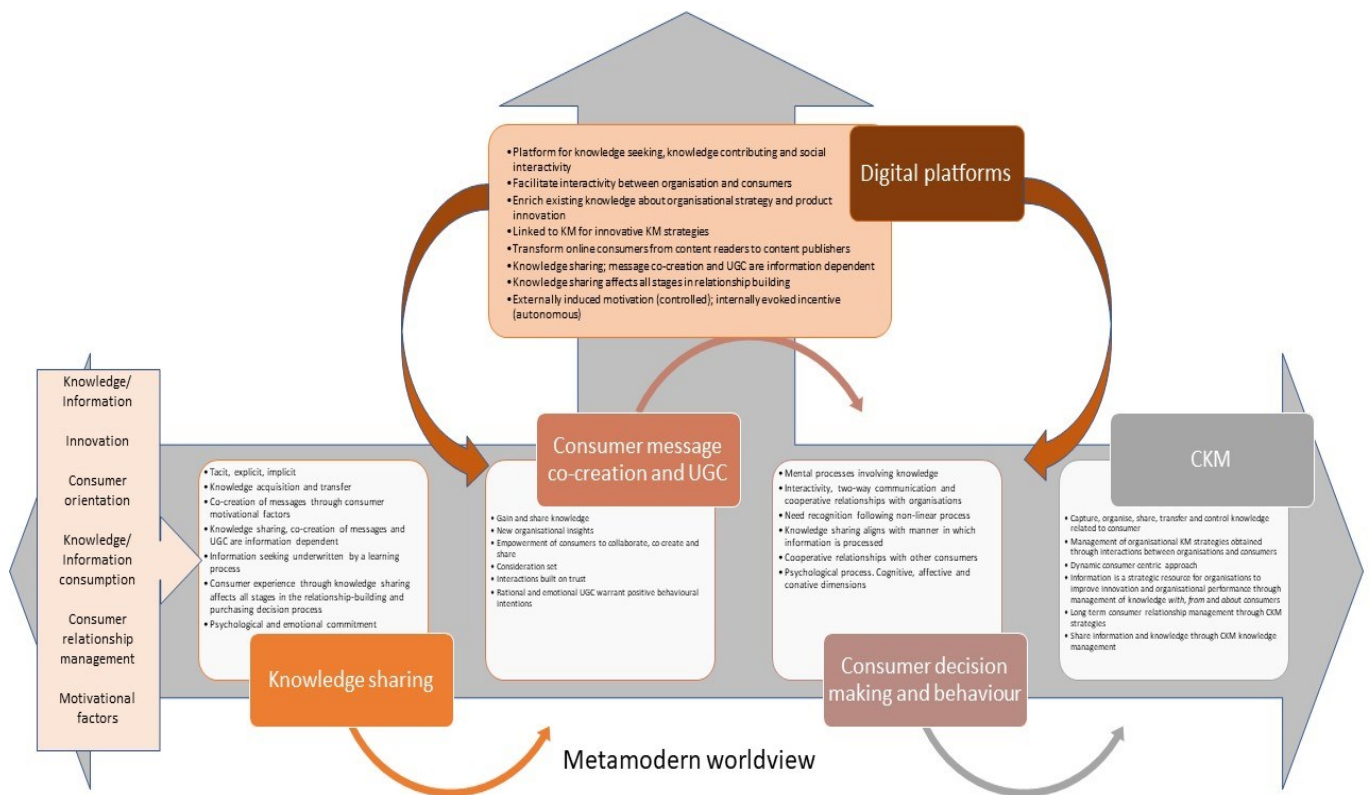


Figure 2. Theoretical framework for knowledge sharing and co-creation of messages on digital platforms from a consumer knowledge management (CKM) perspective

Digital platforms further result in non-linear consumer decision-making processes due to the differences between them and traditional physical channels that result in increased knowledge sharing, message co-creation and UGC processes. It is maintained that this re-emphasises the need to adopt digital platforms to enhance engagement with consumers and resultant user-generated knowledge, especially in line with the danger pointed out by Gabbott and Hogg (1994) that the pursuing of provider-orientated (or organisation-generated) solutions can endanger the actual nature of the consumer purchasing decision process. As such, organisations should focus on the three identified CKM strategic resources to improve innovation and organisational performance in terms of KM *for*, *from* and *about* consumers.

The conceptual integrated theoretical framework further describes how knowledge and information are enhanced on digital platforms in that knowledge seeking, knowledge contribution and social interactivity are supported. In line with the enhancement of knowledge and information, in digital platforms, EWOM is heightened, in concurrence with the co-creation of messages and UGC. EWOM provides an opportunity for consumers to gain and share knowledge and information about an organisation's products, services and brands when CKM is applied. Digital platforms further allow for knowledge processes through cognitive and psychological commitment during which knowledge is acquired and transferred.

From a CKM perspective, which aligns knowledge sharing and message co-creation and UGC in digital platforms, innovation points to interactivity which enriches existing tacit, explicit and implicit knowledge about organisational strategy and product innovation. Interactivity, two-way

communication and cooperative relationships with organisations manifest in the strategic organisational adoption of digital communication. In digital platforms, online consumers co-create and generate messages and subsequently transform from content readers to content publishers, thereby enhancing a consumer orientation and dynamic consumer-centric approach in the theoretical framework. When approached from a CKM perspective and taking place in digital platforms, consumer decision-making and behavior follow a non-linear process, subsequently deviating from the traditional linear approach to decision-making and behavior.

Knowledge sharing, message co-creation and UGC are information dependent, hence underwritten by a learning process and comprising a consideration set that comprises all information and knowledge that was gathered and consumed during the decision-making process. The theoretical framework further points to the enhancement of consumer relationship management in digital platforms where consumers expect cooperative long-term relationships. The relationships are mediated positively by tacit knowledge sharing and commitment, and are managed through CKM strategies. In addition to the mediation of relationships, psychological and emotional commitment and cognitive, affective and conative dimensions are present to ensure motivation.

The study described a comprehensive and multidisciplinary literature overview of constructs in an integrated manner to evaluate the co-creation of knowledge, including the different fields of CKM. The different criteria and sub-criteria were also derived from the evaluation of the literature from general perspectives already documented in the literature, but mostly in a fragmented manner. Furthermore, the SLR reveals significant constructs which contributes to the KM and behavior theories where the ontological oscillation between the five main criteria have been highlighted: digital platforms; knowledge sharing; CKM; consumer decision-making and behavior; and co-creation of messages/UGC. It was shown what can be deduced from existing research and how it is envisaged that it should further be developed.

It is posited that organisations and researchers should focus mostly on these criteria and sub-criteria as significant in the consumer relationship building process. This infers that these criteria are important in knowledge sharing and the co-creation of messages on digital platforms, especially through CKM. It is concluded that the applicability of this theoretical framework might differ in different contexts and organisations, but that in practice it has become a reality to ensure positive attitudes and consumer purchasing behavior in future. Therefore this study calls for further research on these constructs to confirm its implementability in practice and to formalize the process of 'co-creation of messages or knowledge' more profoundly.

In addition this study contributes to existing consumer behavior and CKM literature and confirms results of a study by Huang, Kim and Kim (2013) that emphasised the need for consumers' information-seeking behavior during decision-making to motivate them to co-create messages and share knowledge while the knowledge is managed in a consumer behavior context.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It is realised that the study is limited in that it is based on an SLR only. However, it is submitted that it nonetheless contributes significantly to the KM and leadership literature in the following ways: It addresses an under-researched area and emphasises that more studies are needed to validate its results and to develop and test its theoretical constructs empirically. It furthermore makes a distinctive contribution to the KM and consumer behavior disciplines by proposing a new theoretical framework to contextualise the mediating role between the different constructs from a metamodern perspective to foster knowledge-sharing and co-creation behavior, which has hardly been investigated.

Based on the theoretical discussion above, the following assumptions which can be used in future research are proposed: the theoretical framework provides a valuable understanding of how organisations could improve knowledge-sharing behavior among consumers through CKM to enhance consumer relationship building; and, secondly, it suggests how organisations should involve consumers in the purchasing decision-making process to nurture a sense of motivation for knowledge sharing by developing UGC through a collaborative approach. However, it is also suggested that

further studies be conducted to test the oscillation between these constructs empirically in different organisations and industries to redefine the theoretical framework and ultimately develop a practical conceptual model.

Further research will arguably enhance the quality, replicability, reliability, and validity of this study and the SLR process, including an advanced literature search, data extraction and analysis, and reporting, that could be duplicated by other researchers to address existing gaps in the literature. Another interesting topic for future research is best described by Delapiedra and Silva (2021, p. 108) who differentiated between the concepts 'buycott' and 'boycott' in which they argue that organisational buyers could "boycott sellers who adopt myopic positions regarding stakeholders' social and environmental well-being".

CONCLUSION

This article aimed to interpret the relationship between knowledge sharing, CKM and consumer purchasing behavior by proposing a theoretical framework comprising digital platforms and consumer motivation under the umbrella of consumer behavior theories and a metamodern worldview. Although descriptions of KM and CKM are prevalent in the literature, this study set out to gain insight into the key theoretical constructs through integration with a new theoretical framework to include the main categories and sub-categories by way of cross-sectional critical analysis. However, it is realised that it is difficult to measure tacit knowledge and that organisations' main challenge stems from the absence of a sharing culture and consumers' lack of understanding KM and its benefits. Therefore, it is suggested that organisations address these challenges by creating a digital platform for information and knowledge as a primary component of CKM initiatives.

Using these guidelines could determine the stage of CKM development and adoption by organisations and consumers through an ontological oscillation, as is emphasised by a metamodernistic perspective. Five key theoretical criteria were extracted, namely digital platforms; knowledge sharing; CKM; consumer decision-making and behavior; and co-creation of messages/UGC. It has been concluded that organisations and researchers should focus mostly on these criteria, as well as the identified sub-criteria (knowledge and information; innovation; consumer orientation; information/knowledge consumption; consumer relationship management; and motivational factors) to maintain and develop consumer relationship management. The main contribution of the study is best described by Handzic and Hasan (2003, p. 4) who emphasised the "need to develop frameworks that can help practitioners to understand the sorts of KM initiatives or investments that are possible and to identify those that make sense in their context".

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