

MILLENNIAL GENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION: AN APPLICATION OF THE THEORY PLANNED BEHAVIOR

Inês Ferreira¹

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0337-6508>

E-mail: inesantropologia@gmail.com

Cláudia Andrade^{1,2,4}

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6601-9220>

E-mail: mcandrade@esec.pt

Joana Lobo Fernandes^{1,3}

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0511-9425>

E-mail: joanaf@esec.pt

¹Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra, Escola Superior de Educação, Coimbra, Portugal

²Centro de Psicologia da Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal

³Centro de Investigação em Recursos Naturais, Ambiente e Sociedade, Coimbra, Portugal

⁴Centre for Research and Innovation in Education, Porto, Portugal

Abstract

The present study aims to understand the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a factor influencing the purchase intention of Portuguese Millennials in the cosmetics sector, using the Theory of Planned Behavior. The study was developed based on a quantitative methodology, applied using an online questionnaire, answered by 193 Millennials. The results demonstrate that attitude, control, and concern are predictors of the intention to purchase socially responsible cosmetics and that CSR is an influencing factor of the purchase intention of Portuguese Millennials surveyed in the cosmetic industry sector. These results have implications for business performance, in a context where we are witnessing the emergence of a more aware and informed consumer market, in which

the Millennial Generation fits, and where the criteria of CSR are considered in consumption. It also has implications for scientific research on the subject in Portugal where studies are still relatively scarce.

Keywords: millennial generation; consumption; sustainability.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, combined with the technological revolution and the consequent dissemination of information, has triggered the emergence of a consumer market that is more aware of social and environmental issues, promoting a change in consumption patterns (Ayoun & Ghallab, 2017). Nowadays, consumers pay extra attention to the characteristics of the products they consume and the impacts they have on health and society in general (Ayoun & Ghallab, 2017). The fact that there is a more demanding and informed consumer market has challenged companies to adapt to new realities and driven the emergence of new consumer trends, namely sustainable consumption (Bengtsson et al., 2018).

According to the Guidelines for Consumer Protection (United Nations, 2016), sustainable consumption encompasses meeting the needs of current and future generations regarding goods and services to ensure economic, social, and environmental sustainability. This concept represents a global concern and is part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Niankara & Zoungrana, 2018), which highlights the importance of conscious and responsible consumption habits guided by ethical principles (Balderjahn et al., 2013).

Nowadays, product selection is not only based on traditional purchasing criteria (brand, price, quality, or convenience) (Liobikienė & Bernatoniene, 2017). Consumers also tend to consider that corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy (Barton et al., 2014) and consumer perceptions of CSR significantly influence product evaluation (Paliawadana et al., 2016). This becomes relevant when comparing similar products (He & Lai, 2014), particularly if they come from controversial sectors, such as the cosmetics industry (Chun, 2016; Vázquez-Burguete et al., 2017). This sector has constantly been associated with unethical practices relating to disrespect for animal rights, the use of chemicals and environmental pollution. This association has led the cosmetics industry to reflect on its impacts and review its actions based on a concern for CSR.

In line with the European Community (EC, 2011), CSR is understood as the responsibility of companies for the impacts they have on society. In this way, it is argued that a socially responsible company must voluntarily include social, environmental, and ethical concerns in its domain, in line with respect for human rights and consumer concerns (EC, 2011). By integrating these practices into their business strategies, companies will create value for all stakeholders (shareholders, employees, consumers, suppliers, among others) and for society in general, as well as identifying, mitigating, or preventing future negative impacts (EC, 2011). Thus, CSR is proving to be a powerful business differentiation strategy in the cosmetics industry, enabling companies and brands to build an ethical image, providing competitive advantages, and generating emotional ties and bonds with consumers (Castaldo et al., 2009; Chun, 2016).

Studies on new consumer trends, the Millennial Generation has been particularly analysed. This represents a powerful group of consumers with an increasingly significant interest in sustainable consumption (Bollani et al., 2019) and in buying products from companies and brands that incorporate CSR concerns (Barton et al., 2014). Given the relevance of the subject under discussion in the business and academic context, and the scarcity of studies in the Portuguese context, this study aims to contribute to the development of the debate on the importance of CSR as a factor influencing the purchase intention of Portuguese Millennials in the cosmetics industry sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Millennials as consumers

The Millennial Generation, or Millennials, refers to those born at the turn of the new millennium, currently between the ages of 19 and 39, and was first labelled this way by Howe and Strauss (2000). Considering that the concept of generation encompasses the idea of sharing characteristics such as date of birth and significant life events at critical times in their growth and development (Howe & Strauss, 2007), it is important to mention some of the aspects that studies reveal as characterising this generation. This generation has witnessed, among other things, the globalisation of the internet, pioneering the use of social media and smartphones, and technology is omnipresent in their lives (Harrington et al., 2015).

In terms of education, this is the most educated generation ever (Harrington et al., 2015), and they also share values of equality and sustainability at a social, economic, and environmental level (Bucic et al., 2012). Today, this generation is being informed about the importance of sustainable development issues from an early age (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2018; Ashton et al., 2017). Millennials are seen as digital influencers and opinion critics, mainly through social media, which contributes to influencing purchases, attracting potential customers, and even defining a brand's reputation (Barton et al., 2014).

This group of consumers is also receptive to external influences, especially from their primary and secondary socialisation groups (family and friends), which are reflected in their purchasing intentions and decisions (Barton et al., 2012; Barton et al., 2014). However, Millennials are not a homogenous generational group, and their purchasing intentions are determined by various factors, especially if the consumers under study come from different economic and cultural backgrounds (Bucic et al., 2012).

The Millennial Generation and sustainable consumption

The Millennial Generation matches with the increase in concerns about sustainable consumption, considering that the sharing of information at a global level has favoured greater awareness among this group of certain product characteristics that encompass environmental, social, and ethical issues (Bucic et al., 2012; Pomarici & Vecchio, 2014). As a result, Millennials tend to be a more attentive group of consumers in their purchasing decisions, seeking to ensure that these are aligned with the values they hold regarding sustainability (Barton et al., 2012; Bucic et al., 2012). The generation is increasingly interested in buying green products (Smith & Brower, 2012) and in buying products that incorporate CSR concerns (Pomarici & Vecchio, 2014). This can be seen in various industrial sectors (Barton et al., 2012).

This study focuses on cosmetics produced in accordance with CSR concerns. Although there is no universal definition of socially responsible cosmetics, a consensus has been established regarding a pattern of factors that need to be considered. A socially responsible cosmetic is generally a product whose life cycle respects the principles of sustainable development, showing improved environmental performance as well as ethical, social, and economic responsibility (Bom et al., 2019). These products are also produced and commercialised in accordance with fair trade standards (Castaldo et al., 2009) and respect for human rights (Balderjahn et al., 2013).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) argues that the intention to perform a certain behaviour depends on the attitude towards it, the subjective norm, and the perceived behavioural control. Attitude towards the behaviour represents the degree to which a favourable or unfavourable evaluation is made of the behaviour in question (Ajzen, 1991). It depends on an evaluation of the beliefs about the consequences that may result from that behaviour (behavioural beliefs) and an evaluation of those consequences (Ajzen, 1991).

The second dimension of the model concerns the subjective norm and corresponds to the individual's perception of whether social referents (particularly family and friends) consider that the behaviour should be carried out (Ajzen, 1991). Validating the importance of the opinion of these social

referents is always conditioned by the motivation one must agree with them (Ajzen, 1991). The third dimension corresponds to perceived behavioural control, which represents the individual's perception of their ability to carry out the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Both resources (money, time, individual abilities) and opportunities must be associated with the probability of carrying out the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Taken together, these three dimensions contribute to the formation of behavioural intention, which is a predictor of whether the behaviour will be carried out (Ajzen, 1991). Considering that each of the dimensions that act in the formation of behavioural intention represents an independent motivational factor, the TPB considers the antecedents of attitude (behavioural beliefs), subjective norm (normative beliefs) and perceived behavioural control (control beliefs) as antecedents that in the general context of the model determine both intentions and behaviours (Ajzen, 1991). Using the TPB, Askadilla and Krisjanti (2017) and Hsu et al. (2017) found that attitude significantly influences the intention to purchase green products. In the study by Maichum et al. (2016), attitude was the predictor with the largest influence on the intention to purchase these products.

These studies also show that subjective norm and perceived behavioural control significantly influence the intention to buy green products (Askadilla & Krisjanti, 2017; Hsu et al., 2017; Maichum et al., 2016). These authors validate the importance of using the planned behaviour model in shaping behavioural intention towards green products. The study by Maichum et al. (2016) extends the model by integrating two additional dimensions: environmental knowledge and environmental concern pointing out the importance of these two dimensions in forming the behavioural intention to purchase these products. Thus, the TPB is a theoretical model to be considered in the context of the formation of purchase intentions and, specifically, in the purchase intentions of green products. This model will therefore be used in this study.

Study goals, conceptual model, and research hypotheses

The aim of this study is to analyse the predictors of the intention to buy socially responsible cosmetics, using the TPB (Ajzen, 1991). Considering the extension of the model made in the study by Maichum et al. (2016), two additional dimensions were integrated into the conceptual model of the present study: knowledge about CSR and concern about CSR. The decision to complement the model is supported by the studies by Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) and Mohr et al. (2001). The latter (Mohr et al., 2001) found results showing that consumers with more knowledge about CSR tend to respond more positively to initiatives in this field.

Regarding the dimension of concern for CSR, consumer awareness of CSR (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004) and the importance they attach to it (Mohr et al., 2001) are two fundamental requirements for the response to CSR initiatives to be evaluated positively by consumers. Figure 1 represents the conceptual model of this study. The representation of the hypothesis (from 1 to 11) identifies the relationships between the possible predictors and the criterion variable in this study.

The exploratory factor analysis revealed the dimensionality of the constructs "knowledge about CSR" and "concern about CSR". Thus, the knowledge construct is made up of two factors. Factor 1 was labelled KNOF1 - information obtained through the media and training (academic/professional). Factor 2 was called KNOF2 - information obtained from online sources (websites, blogs, books/magazines). The concern construct is also made up of two factors. Factor 1 was labelled CONF1 - individual action - since the items that make it up focus on concern for CSR, which is reflected in the individual actions of individuals. Factor 2 was named CONF2 - need for change - because the items that make it up question individuals' opinions on the need for change in terms of social, environmental, and legislative policies that will boost CSR.

The dependent variable in the proposed conceptual model is the intention to buy socially responsible cosmetics. In turn, the possible predictors of the intention to buy socially responsible cosmetics include attitude towards buying socially responsible cosmetics, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, knowledge about CSR and concern about CSR. Considering the model proposed by Maichum et al. (2016), knowledge and concern about CSR are also considered antecedent variables of attitude, norm, and control.

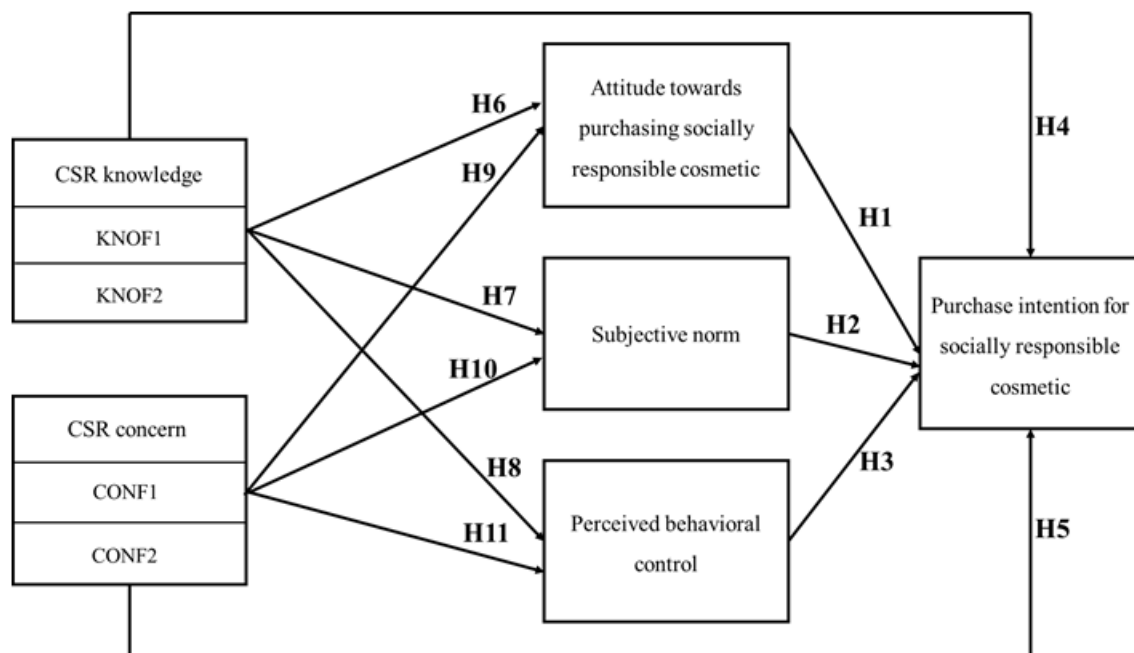


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of the study

METHOD

To carry out this exploratory study, we a quantitative methodology using a questionnaire was used. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) allowed to test for the validity of the questionnaire's constituent constructs. Extracting factors using the principal components method, followed by Varimax orthogonal rotation was performed. This analysis is justified by the fact that the instruments were translated and adapted from their original version, making it necessary to test them on a sample of young Portuguese people. The EFA demonstrated the one-dimensionality of the attitude, norm, control, and intention constructs, thus confirming the original structure of the CPT model.

The factor structure of the items that make up the CSR knowledge construct is explained by two latent factors. The first factor, called KNOF1 - information obtained through the media and training, explains 45.59% of the total variance. The second factor, called KNOF2 - information obtained from online sources, explains 14.68% of the total variance. The factor structure of the items that make up the CSR concern construct is also explained by two latent factors. The first factor, called CONF1 - individual action, explains 44.36% of the total variance. The second factor, called CONF2 - need for change, explains 30.03 % of the total variance. The data collected was statistically processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 25) software, and correlation and regression analyses were carried out to verify the study's hypotheses.

Instrument

The first part of this study's questionnaire was composed of questions relating to sociodemographic data, including age, gender, occupational status, area of residence, academic qualifications, monthly disposable income, and preferred place of purchase for cosmetic products. The second part of the questionnaire contains 28 items relating to the 6 constructs that make up the conceptual model. The items relating to the attitude (AT), norm (NO), control (CO) and intention (INT) constructs were adapted from the study by Maichum et al. (2016).

With regard to the CSR knowledge construct (KNOF1 and KNOF2), 4 items were adapted from the study by Niankara and Zoungrana (2018) on the proactive search for information on CSR in the

media and through online sources (websites, blogs, books/magazines) and the remaining 4 items, referring to CSR knowledge acquired through academic/professional training, were developed by the researchers based on the articles by Alonso-Almeida and Llach (2018) and Ashton et al. (2017).

Regarding the CSR concern construct (CONF1 and CONF2), 2 items were adapted from the study by Smith and Brower (2012) on product characteristics (labelling and packaging) that communicate environmental sustainability to the consumer and 2 items from the study by Balderjahn et al. (2013) on respect for fair trade standards and workers' rights. We also adapted 2 items from the study by Maichum et al. (2016) and 1 item from the study by Palihawadana et al. (2016), which asked respondents about the need for change in social, environmental, and legislative policies to encourage companies to adopt CSR practices, respectively. All 28 items were translated from English into Portuguese. A five-level Likert scale (1 - totally disagree to 5 - totally agree) was used for responses.

The Cronbach's alpha values (α) show that all the scales in this study have acceptable reliability, KNOF1 ($\alpha=.79$), KNOF2 ($\alpha=.70$), CONF1 ($\alpha=.84$), CONF2 ($\alpha=.89$), AT ($\alpha=.76$), NO ($\alpha=.78$), CO ($\alpha=.81$) and INT ($\alpha=.93$).

Procedure

Data collection for this study was based on an online questionnaire using the Google Forms electronic tool. Before starting the data collection phase, the questionnaire was subjected to a pre-test, which consisted of checking for problems or difficulties in understanding that the respondents might have in answering the items and was carried out online with 7 individuals belonging to the Millennial Generation. The questionnaire link was sent via email and the Facebook social network, accompanied by a message explaining the purpose of the study and informed consent to take part. The information provided was guaranteed to be strictly anonymous and confidential.

Sample

This study was based on a non-probabilistic convenience sample. 193 young people from the Millennial generation took part in the study (60.1 per cent female and 39.9 per cent male), aged between 19 and 30, with an average $M=23.23$ ($SD=2.576$) and mode of 24 years. Regarding education level, the majority had higher education degree: a bachelor's degree accounted for 44.6%, a master's degree for 15.0% and a postgraduate/specialization degree for 9.8%. It was also found that secondary education (12th grade) or equivalent represents 27.5% of the respondents' education, while basic education (9th grade) represents only 2.1% and 1% refer to another situation. Regarding residence, 47.2 % live in urban areas, 31.1 % in rural areas and 21.8 % in semi-urban areas.

In terms of occupational status, the majority are students (53.4%), 30.6% work, 14.0% are student-workers and 2.1% say they are in another situation. About monthly income, the majority of respondents (45.1%) have less than €500 a month, 40.9% say their income is between €500 and €1,000 and only 14.0% say they have more than €1,000. Regarding the preferred location for the purchase of cosmetic products, over half of the respondents (64.2%) make purchases at large retail outlets, 26.4% prefer to buy cosmetics in specialty stores, 8.3% purchase online, and 1.0% mention buying cosmetics at fairs and local markets.

RESULTS

Research hypotheses were tested using correlational analysis and multiple linear regression analysis.

Correlational Analysis

With reference to the previously defined research hypotheses, it is possible to observe that there is a significant correlation between AT and INT ($r=0.521$, $p<0.01$), NO and INT ($r=0.289$, $p<0.01$), CO and INT ($r=0.660$, $p<0.01$), KNOF2 and INT ($r=0.281$, $p<0.01$), CONF1 and INT ($r=0.371$, $p<0.01$), and CONF2 and INT ($r=0.528$, $p<0.01$).

Regarding the influence of knowledge variables (KNOF1 and KNOF2) and concern variables (CONF1 and CONF2) on AT, NO, and CO, it is noted that there is a significant correlation between

KNOF1 and NO ($r=0.329$, $p<0.01$), KNOF2 and NO ($r=0.290$, $p<0.01$), KNOF2 and CO ($r=0.245$, $p<0.01$), CONF1 and NO ($r=0.307$, $p<0.01$), CONF1 and CO ($r=0.343$, $p<0.01$), CONF2 and AT ($r=0.456$, $p<0.01$), and CONF2 and CO ($r=0.351$, $p<0.01$).

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Through multiple linear regression analysis, it was possible to verify that attitude (AT) positively and statistically significantly influences the intention to purchase socially responsible cosmetics (INT) ($\beta=0.174$; $t=2.920$; $p<0.05$). On the other hand, subjective norm (NO) shows a negative and statistically non-significant influence on INT ($\beta=-0.012$; $t=-0.223$; $p>0.05$). Additionally, perceived behavioral control (CO) was found to have a positive and statistically significant influence on INT ($\beta=0.417$; $t=6.889$; $p<0.05$). Regarding knowledge, KNOF1 – information obtained through media and training ($\beta=0.023$; $t=0.376$; $p>0.05$) and KNOF2 – information obtained from online sources ($\beta=0.089$; $t=1.454$; $p>0.05$) had a positive but statistically non-significant influence on INT. Regarding concern, it is observed that CONF1 – individual action ($\beta=0.124$; $t=2.287$; $p<0.05$) and CONF2 – need for change ($\beta=0.273$; $t=4.961$; $p<0.05$) had a positive and statistically significant influence on INT.

The correlational analysis demonstrated that there is no significant correlation between the variables KNOF1 and AT ($r=-0.118$, $p>0.01$) and KNOF2 and AT ($r=0.043$, $p>0.01$). Consequently, multiple linear regression was not performed, as none of the knowledge-related factors are significantly correlated with attitude. Regarding the influence of knowledge factors on norm and control, it is observed that KNOF1 had a positive statistically significant influence on NO ($\beta=0.244$; $t=3.026$; $p<0.05$) and has a negative and statistically non-significant influence on CO ($\beta=-0.139$; $t=-1.675$; $p>0.05$). On the other hand, KNOF2 had a positive but statistically non-significant influence on NO ($\beta=0.159$; $t=1.970$; $p=0.05$) and had a positive and statistically significant influence on CO ($\beta=0.320$; $t=3.852$; $p<0.05$).

Regarding the influence of concern factors on attitude, norm, and control, it is evident that CONF1 had a positive but statistically non-significant influence on AT ($\beta=0.049$; $t=0.747$; $p>0.05$) and had a positive and statistically significant influence on NO ($\beta=0.285$; $t=4.079$; $p<0.05$) and CO ($\beta=0.287$; $t=4.345$; $p<0.05$). In turn, CONF2 had a positive and statistically significant influence on AT ($\beta=0.447$; $t=6.806$; $p<0.05$) and CO ($\beta=0.297$; $t=4.499$; $p<0.05$) and had a positive but statistically non-significant influence on NO ($\beta=0.120$; $t=1.716$; $p>0.05$).

DISCUSSION

Using the multiple linear regression model, the influence of attitude, norm, control, knowledge (KNOF1 and KNOF2), and concern (CONF1 and CONF2) on the intention to purchase socially responsible cosmetics was examined. The results obtained reveal that, as predicted by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), attitude and control significantly influence the intention to purchase socially responsible cosmetics. However, contrary to the assumptions of the Theory of Planned Behavior, subjective norm does not influence the intention to purchase socially responsible cosmetics. A possible explanation for this result can consider the characteristics of the generation under study and the specificities of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Portuguese context. According to Pomarici and Vecchio (2018), Millennials are the first generation to grow up with increasing concerns about sustainable consumption. Thus, they are the consumers in this study who will seek to raise awareness and encourage their older generations, especially their families, to adopt conscious and responsible consumption practices. Regarding the influence of friends, it should be noted that CSR in Portugal is still in its early stages, and Portuguese society is not fully familiar with the discussed theme (Lopes & António, 2016).

The study results demonstrate that none of the knowledge-related factors (KNOF1 and KNOF2) influences the intention to purchase socially responsible cosmetics. This finding is interesting and reveals that, in this study, CSR is an influencing factor without proper anchoring in knowledge about the topic. This lack of anchoring occurs both in proactive information-seeking through media and online sources and as a result of academic and professional education. A possible explanation for the observed results should consider the characteristics of CSR in the Portuguese context, which, as

mentioned earlier, is in its early stages of development in the business and academic environments (Lopes & António, 2016). Additionally, CSR does not hold a prominent place in the communication strategies of companies operating in the national market. The lack of public information on the topic may be one of the main reasons for the limited knowledge about CSR observed in the surveyed Portuguese Millennials.

In terms of concern, the results obtained in the present study show that both factors (CONF1 and CONF2) significantly influence the intention to purchase socially responsible cosmetics. These findings align with the study conducted by Maichum et al. (2016) and reveal that the demonstrated concern for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) among the surveyed Portuguese Millennials translates into a positive behavior towards initiatives associated with this domain.

In a second step, two multiple linear regressions were conducted to examine the influence of knowledge-related factors (KNOF1 and KNOF2) on norm and control. As observed earlier, the correlational analysis indicated no significant correlation between KNOF1 and AT, as well as KNOF2 and AT. Consequently, a multiple linear regression was not performed to assess the influence of knowledge-related factors on attitude. A potential explanation for this result may consider the limited knowledge about CSR among the surveyed Portuguese Millennials, indicating that this factor alone is not sufficient to form a favorable attitude towards the purchase of socially responsible cosmetics.

The results of the conducted study demonstrate only a significant influence of KNOF1 – information obtained through media and education – on subjective norm. According to Carrigan and Attalla (2001), media serve as a powerful source of information on ethical issues and have a significant impact on consumers' perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Therefore, the explanation for this result should consider that, unlike information resulting from proactive online research (KNOF2), information from media and education (KNOF1) tends to generate collective debate presenting different viewpoints. This allows respondents to retain external opinions that may influence their normative beliefs regarding the purchase of socially responsible cosmetics.

The results obtained in this study reveal only a significant influence of KNOF2 – information obtained through online sources – on perceived behavioral control. These findings are in line with the arguments of Barton et al. (2014), highlighting that the internet is the preferred way for the studied consumer group to seek information about consumption. While information obtained through media and education (KNOF1) tends to be more focused on CSR in general, proactive online research allows for detailed knowledge about the products under study (Barton et al., 2014). This significantly influences respondents' perceived control over the purchase of socially responsible cosmetics.

Subsequently, three multiple linear regressions were conducted to examine the influence of concern-related factors (CONF1 and CONF2) on attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. The results obtained show only a significant influence of CONF2 – the need for change – on attitude towards the purchase of socially responsible cosmetics. These findings align with the arguments presented by Barton et al. (2012) and indicate that respondents are motivated by the belief that collective action can make a difference in building a better world, thus supporting one of the most emphasized characteristics of the Millennial Generation in the literature.

Regarding the influence of concern-related factors on subjective norm, only CONF1 – individual action – shows a significant influence. Consistent with Ajzen (1991), the success of a normative belief depends on the individual's motivation to agree with the social referent's opinion, translating into their personal willingness to perform the behavior. The results highlight this point by demonstrating that concern for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), reflected in the individual actions of the respondents, significantly influences subjective norm regarding the acquisition of socially responsible cosmetics. Finally, the study results indicate that both concern-related factors (CONF1 and CONF2) significantly influence perceived behavioral control. These findings are consistent with the study by Maichum et al. (2016) and underscore that concern for CSR is a factor contributing to strengthening the perceived control of surveyed consumers over the purchase of socially responsible cosmetics.

CONCLUSION

At present, a more conscious and informed consumer market is emerging, encompassing the Millennial Generation, where Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) criteria are considered in consumption. This exploratory study sought to understand the importance of CSR as a influencing factor in the purchasing intention of Portuguese Millennials in the cosmetic industry, using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Overall, the study results indicate that CSR significantly influences the purchasing intention of surveyed Portuguese consumers belonging to this generation in the cosmetic industry.

It was also observed that attitude, control, and both concern-related factors (CONF1 and CONF2) predict the intention to purchase socially responsible cosmetics. This underscores that the favorable attitude of surveyed Portuguese Millennials towards cosmetics produced by companies/brands incorporating CSR concerns in their business strategies, combined with the resources enabling them to acquire these products and their demonstrated concern for CSR, are crucial factors significantly contributing to strengthening the intention to purchase socially responsible cosmetics. The obtained results support arguments presented in the literature review by revealing that surveyed Portuguese Millennials show a growing interest in sustainable consumption and purchasing products from companies and brands adhering to the concept of CSR.

This study revealed that despite the limited knowledge of the surveyed Portuguese Millennials on the discussed topic, CSR is an influencing factor in their purchasing intention in the cosmetic industry. To contribute to increasing knowledge and awareness among young Portuguese individuals regarding CSR, it is crucial for this theme to be an integral part of the academic and professional development of new generations and future consumers. Educational institutions play a crucial role in this regard as they can drive activities related to CSR and sustainable development. Like initiatives in various countries, it is extremely important for Portugal to establish protocols between the academic and business sectors to educate professionals who are conscious of this theme. Regarding CSR communication, it is crucial for companies to invest in dialogue with the community and focus all efforts on authentic and transparent communication to cultivate the trust of different stakeholders, especially consumers.

Despite the relevant contribution of the empirical study to the debate on the importance of CSR as an influencing factor in the purchasing intention of Portuguese Millennials in the cosmetic industry, it has some limitations that affect the interpretation of the results. It is important to note that this study was developed based on a non-probabilistic convenience sample, making it impossible to validate the model as a whole and generalize the results to the entire target population of the study, namely, the Portuguese Millennial Generation.

Future research is recommended to use a larger sample based on a probabilistic selection method, enabling the generalization of results and validation of the model. Similarly, this study was conducted solely based on a quantitative methodology, restricting a deeper analysis of the results obtained. In future research, it is suggested that quantitative studies be complemented with qualitative methodologies. This approach will provide a more detailed understanding of the importance Portuguese Millennial consumers attribute to CSR, with an opportunity to clarify results related to the knowledge construct.

Research ethic statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the local legislation. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contribution statement

The authors contributed equally to the paper.

Funding

The authors declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

We thank all the participants of this research.

References

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179-211.
- Alonso-Almeida, M. D. M., & Llach, J. (2018). Socially responsible companies: Are they the best workplace for millennials? A cross-national analysis. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 26(1), 238-247. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1675>.
- Ashton, W. S., Hurtado-Martin, M., Anid, N. M., Khalili, N. R., Panero, M. A., & McPherson, S. (2017). Pathways to cleaner production in the Americas I: bridging industry-academia gaps in the transition to sustainability. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 142(P1), 432-444. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.03.116>.
- Askadilla, W. L., & Krisjanti, M. N. (2017). Understanding Indonesian Green Consumer Behavior on Cosmetic Products: Theory of Planned Behavior Model. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 15(2), 7-15.
- Ayoun, S., & Ghallab, N. (2017). Les déterminants de la consommation verte: une exploration théorique et proposition de modèle. *Revue Dirassat Iqtissadiya*, 2(4), 1015- 1036. <https://doi.org/10.46317/1423-004-002-021>.
- Balderjahn, I., Peyer, M., & Paulssen, M. (2013). Consciousness for fair consumption: conceptualization, scale development and empirical validation. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 37(5), 546-555. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12030>.
- Barton, C., Fromm, J., & Egan, C. (2012). *The Millennial Consumer – Debunking Stereotypes*. The Boston Consulting Group.
- Barton, C., Koslow, L., & Beauchamp, C. (2014). *How Millennials Are Changing the Face of Marketing Forever – The Reciprocity Principle*. The Boston Consulting Group.
- Bengtsson, M., Alfredsson, E., Cohen, M., Lorek, S., & Schroeder, P. (2018). Transforming systems of consumption and production for achieving the sustainable development goals: moving beyond efficiency. *Sustainability Science*, 13(6), 1533–1547. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-018-0582-1>.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2004). Doing Better at Doing Good: When, Why, and How Consumers Respond to Corporate Social Initiatives. *California Management Review*, 47(1), 9-24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41166284>.
- Bollani, L., Bonadonna, A., & Peira, G. (2019). The Millennials' Concept of Sustainability in the Food Sector. *Sustainability*, 11(10), 2984-3002. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11102984>.
- Bom, S., Jorge, J., Ribeiro, H. M., & Marto, J. (2019). A step forward on sustainability in the cosmetics industry: A review. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 225, 270-290. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.03.255>.
- Bucic, T., Harris, J., & Arli, D. (2012). Ethical Consumers Among the Millennials: A Cross-National Study. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 110(1), 113-131. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-1151-z>.
- Carrigan, M., & Attalla, A. (2001). The myth of the ethical consumer - do ethics matter in purchase behaviour? *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 18(7), 560-578. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363760110410263>.

- Castaldo, S., Perrini, F., Misani, N., & Tencati, A. (2009). The Missing Link Between Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Trust: The Case of Fair Trade Products. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9669-4>.
- Chun, R. (2016). What Holds Ethical Consumers to a Cosmetics Brand: The Body Shop Case. *Business & Society*, 55(4), 528-549. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650313520201>.
- Comissão Europeia. (2011). *Responsabilidade social das empresas: uma nova estratégia da UE para o período de 2011-2014*. Comunicação da Comissão ao Parlamento Europeu, ao Conselho, ao Comité Económico e Social Europeu e ao Comité das Regiões.
- Harrington, B., Deussen, F. V., Fraone, J. S., & Morelock, J. (2015). *How Millennials Navigate Their Careers: Young Adult Views on Work, Life and Success*. Boston College Center for Work & Family.
- He, Y., & Lai, K. K. (2014). The effect of corporate social responsibility on brand loyalty: the mediating role of brand image. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 25(3-4), 249-263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14783363.2012.661138>.
- Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*. Vintage Books.
- Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2007). The Next 20 Years: How Customer and Workforce Attitudes Will Evolve. *Harvard Business Review*, 85(7-8), 41-52.
- Hsu, C. L., Chang, C. Y., & Yansritakul, C. (2017). Exploring purchase intention of green skincare products using the theory of planned behavior: Testing the moderating effects of country of origin and price sensitivity. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 34, 145-152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2016.10.006>.
- Liobikienė, G., & Bernatoniene, J. (2017). Why determinants of green purchase cannot be treated equally? The case of green cosmetics: Literature review. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 162, 109-120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.05.204>.
- Lopes, M. M. C., & António, N. J. D. S. (2016). Responsabilidade Social Empresarial em Portugal: do Mito à Realidade. *International Business and Economics Review*, 7, 110-138.
- Maichum, K., Parichatnon, S., & Peng, K. C. (2016). Application of the Extended .Products among Thai Consumers. *Sustainability*, 8(10), 1077-1096. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8101077>.
- Mohr, L. A., Webb, D. J., & Harris, K. E. (2001). Do Consumers Expect Companies to be Socially Responsible? The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Buying Behavior. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 35(1), 45-72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6606.2001.tb00102.x>.
- Niankara, I., Zoungrana, D. T. (2018). Interest in the biosphere and students environmental awareness and optimism: A global perspective. *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 16, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2018.e00489>.
- Palihawadana, D., Oghazi, P., & Liu, Y. (2016). Effects of ethical ideologies and perceptions of CSR on consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(11), 4964-4969. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.060>.
- Pomarici, E., & Vecchio, R. (2014). Millennial generation attitudes to sustainable wine: an exploratory study on Italian consumers. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 66, 537-545. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2013.10.058>.
- Smith, K. T., & Brower, T. R. (2012). Longitudinal study of green marketing strategies that influence Millennials. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 20(6), 535-551. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2012.711345>.
- United Nations. (2016). *Guidelines for Consumer Protection*. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Geneva.
- Vázquez-Burguete, J. L., Sahelices-Pinto, C., & Lanero-Carrizo, A. (2017). Corporate social responsibility and consumer behavior in the cosmetics sector: a study in the Spanish context. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 14(3), 375-390. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-017-0178-y>.