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CHANGING GLOBAL CONSUMER NEEDS AND THE EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING: A HUMAN-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

The international marketplace is undergoing significant changes as consumers become more informed, digitally connected and conscious of the value they receive from products and services. Globalisation, technological development, social media, e-commerce and changing lifestyles have created new expectations among consumers across countries. Consumers today are not concerned only with price and product quality; they also consider convenience, personalisation, sustainability, health, trust, privacy and overall customer experience. These changes have encouraged international businesses to move away from traditional product-oriented marketing towards more consumer-centred approaches. This paper examines the changing needs of global consumers and their influence on the evolution of international marketing. The study adopts a conceptual and literature-based approach and reviews recent developments in consumer behaviour, digital marketing, sustainability and technology-enabled marketing. Recent studies indicate that digital marketing, social media and personalised communication can influence consumer engagement, while sustainability and transparency are increasingly connected with consumer trust and responsible consumption. The paper argues that successful international marketing requires a balance between global consistency and local adaptation. It concludes that the future of international marketing will depend on understanding consumers as individuals with different cultural backgrounds, values, expectations and experiences. Technology can support this process, but human understanding and trust will remain central to building successful international brands.

Keywords: Global Consumer Needs, International Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Digital Marketing, Sustainability, Personalisation, Customer Experience.

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1. INTRODUCTION

International marketing has changed considerably with the development of globalisation and digital technology. Earlier, international marketing was mainly associated with exporting products, establishing distribution networks and promoting brands in foreign markets. Companies generally focused on identifying markets where their existing products could be sold. However, the modern international marketplace is more complex because consumers have greater access to information and a wider range of choices.

A consumer can now compare products from different countries, read reviews, watch demonstrations, communicate with brands and complete a purchase without visiting a physical store. Social media and e-commerce have made international brands accessible to consumers even when the companies have limited physical presence in a particular market.

At the same time, consumers are changing in terms of their expectations and priorities. Price remains important, but consumers also consider quality, functionality, convenience, health, sustainability and the overall experience associated with a brand. Euromonitor's global consumer research identifies quality, functionality, convenience and price as important factors influencing purchasing decisions and also highlights changing attitudes towards wellbeing, financial management and sustainability.

These developments have changed the role of international marketing. Businesses can no longer depend only on standardised advertising and product promotion. They need to understand the reasons behind consumer choices and develop strategies that are relevant to local markets while maintaining a consistent international identity.

The present paper therefore focuses on the relationship between changing global consumer needs and the evolution of international marketing. Particular attention is given to digitalisation, personalisation, sustainability, cultural differences, customer experience and consumer trust.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Consumer behaviour has traditionally been influenced by economic, social, psychological and cultural factors. In international markets, these factors become more complex because consumers from different countries may have different values, traditions, purchasing power and lifestyles.

Recent research shows that consumer behaviour is increasingly connected with digital environments. A 2026 systematic review of green consumer behaviour found that digital

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marketing is becoming increasingly important in sustainable consumption but also identified the need for more cross-cultural research across different regions and industries.

Digital marketing has also changed how companies communicate with consumers. A 2025 systematic literature review found that personalised messages, social media engagement, influencer collaboration and environmentally conscious branding can influence purchasing decisions. The same research emphasised transparency, emotional communication and ethical data practices as important factors in developing consumer trust.

Sustainability has become another important area of international marketing. A 2025 systematic review examining sustainability-oriented marketing found that authentic sustainable branding can strengthen long-term brand value, whereas misleading environmental claims can weaken consumer trust.

The growing use of artificial intelligence is also changing marketing practices. AI can assist companies in understanding consumer preferences, providing recommendations and developing personalised communication. However, technology does not remove the importance of human interaction. Consumers continue to expect transparency, security and trustworthy relationships with brands.

Therefore, the literature suggests that international marketing is moving towards an integrated approach in which technology, sustainability, consumer experience and human values are considered together.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Although considerable research has been conducted on consumer behaviour and international marketing, the changing global consumer requires continued investigation.

Much of the existing research focuses on individual areas such as digital marketing, sustainability, social media or artificial intelligence. There is comparatively greater scope to understand how these developments collectively influence the evolution of international marketing.

In addition, globalisation has not made consumers completely identical. Cultural differences continue to influence attitudes towards products, advertising, sustainability and technology. Recent research on digital green consumer behaviour also identifies a need for more diverse and cross-cultural research.

Another important gap concerns the balance between technology and human relationships. Businesses increasingly use AI and data analytics to personalise marketing, but consumer trust and privacy remain essential.

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The present paper addresses these issues through a human-centred perspective that connects changing consumer needs with contemporary international marketing practices.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the changing needs and expectations of global consumers.
2. To identify the major factors influencing contemporary consumer behaviour.
3. To examine the evolution of international marketing in response to changing consumer needs.
4. To understand the role of digitalisation, social media and artificial intelligence in international marketing.
5. To examine the growing importance of sustainability, trust and customer experience.
6. To suggest suitable marketing approaches for responding to changing global consumer expectations.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study follows a conceptual and descriptive research approach based on secondary sources. Recent academic literature, research articles and credible consumer trend reports were considered to understand developments in international marketing and consumer behaviour.

The literature was examined thematically under the following major areas:

- Changing consumer preferences
- Digitalisation
- Personalisation
- Sustainability
- Customer experience
- Cultural adaptation
- Consumer trust
- Artificial intelligence

The study does not use fabricated primary data or statistical results. The conclusions are derived from the synthesis of existing literature and contemporary developments in the international marketing environment.

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6. CHANGING GLOBAL CONSUMER NEEDS

6.1 Value and Price Consciousness

Consumers continue to consider price when making purchasing decisions. However, the modern consumer is increasingly interested in value for money rather than simply choosing the cheapest product.

Value may include quality, durability, functionality, convenience and after-sales service. Economic uncertainty has also encouraged consumers to become more careful and intentional in their purchasing decisions. Euromonitor's 2025 consumer trends research describes this development through greater financial awareness and more deliberate purchasing behaviour.

For international marketers, this means that pricing strategies should be combined with clear communication of product value.

6.2 Demand for Convenience

Convenience has become a major consumer expectation. Online ordering, mobile applications, digital payments and home delivery have made purchasing faster and easier.

Consumers increasingly expect businesses to reduce the effort required to search for information, compare products and complete transactions.

Therefore, international marketing is no longer limited to promotional communication. The entire purchasing process has become part of the marketing experience.

6.3 Personalisation

Consumers increasingly expect companies to provide information and offers that are relevant to their interests.

Personalisation can involve product recommendations, customised offers, targeted communication and individualised customer service.

However, personalisation also creates concerns about privacy. Consumers may appreciate relevant recommendations but become uncomfortable when companies appear to know too much about their personal behaviour.

International marketers must therefore balance personalisation with responsible data management.

6.4 Sustainability

Sustainability has become increasingly important in consumer markets. Consumers are paying attention to packaging, production methods, environmental impact and responsible sourcing.

Recent research indicates that sustainable digital marketing can influence consumer behaviour when communication is transparent and supported by credible business practices.

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However, sustainability cannot be treated only as an advertising message. If consumers believe that environmental claims are exaggerated or misleading, brand trust can decline. Research on sustainability-oriented marketing similarly emphasises the importance of authentic practices and warns about the damaging effect of misleading sustainability claims.

6.5 Health and Wellbeing

Consumers are also becoming more interested in health and wellbeing. This is influencing demand for healthier food, fitness products, wellness services and products designed to improve quality of life.

For international companies, the growing importance of wellbeing provides opportunities for product innovation and new forms of consumer engagement.

6.6 Trust and Transparency

Trust has become especially important in digital markets. Consumers want reliable product information, secure payment systems, genuine reviews and responsible use of personal information.

A global brand can have significant visibility but still lose customers if consumers do not trust its claims or practices.

Therefore, trust should be considered a long-term marketing asset rather than simply a communication objective.

7. EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

The evolution of international marketing can be understood through several stages.

Traditional Product Orientation

The company produced a product and attempted to sell it to consumers.

Market Orientation

Businesses began studying customer requirements and market conditions before developing marketing strategies.

Global Brand Orientation

Companies developed global brands and attempted to maintain consistency across countries.

Digital Marketing Orientation

Websites, e-commerce, social media and mobile platforms became important channels for marketing communication.

Consumer-Centred Orientation

Businesses began focusing on individual needs, customer experience and long-term relationships.

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Human-Centred and Responsible Marketing: The current stage combines technology with consumer wellbeing, sustainability, cultural sensitivity, trust and social responsibility.

Thus, international marketing has moved from:

Product → Market → Brand → Digital → Consumer → Human-Centred Marketing

This transformation demonstrates that the modern international marketer must understand both technology and people.

8. DIGITALISATION AND THE GLOBAL CONSUMER

Digital technology has fundamentally changed the relationship between companies and consumers.

Previously, marketing communication was largely one-directional:

Company → Advertisement → Consumer

Today, communication is more interactive:

Company ↔ Digital Platform ↔ Consumer ↔ Consumer Community

Consumers can comment on products, share experiences and influence the purchasing decisions of others.

Social media has therefore changed the balance of power between businesses and consumers. A positive customer experience can quickly strengthen a brand, while a negative experience can spread across digital platforms.

Research on digital marketing and sustainable consumption shows that social media engagement, personalised communication and online experiences can influence consumer responses.

International companies must therefore monitor not only sales but also consumer conversations.

9. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND PERSONALALISED MARKETING

Artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly important in international marketing.

AI can support businesses in:

- Understanding consumer preferences
- Predicting purchasing behaviour
- Providing product recommendations
- Automating customer service
- Analysing market information
- Personalising communication

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AI can make marketing more efficient, but efficiency alone does not guarantee consumer acceptance.

Recent research on AI-driven sustainability marketing shows that AI is increasingly being connected with sustainable branding and consumer perceptions.

The important issue is therefore not whether companies should use AI, but how they should use it responsibly.

Human support remains important when consumers have complex questions, complaints or sensitive concerns.

The most effective future model may therefore be:

Artificial Intelligence for Efficiency + Human Interaction for Empathy

10. CULTURAL ADAPTATION IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

Global consumers may share certain digital habits, but cultural differences continue to influence purchasing behaviour.

Language, religion, family structure, traditions, values, food preferences and social norms can affect consumer decisions.

A marketing message that is successful in one country may not be successful in another.

International companies therefore need to maintain a balance between global brand consistency and local adaptation.

A useful principle is:

Think globally, understand locally.

A global brand should have a clear identity, but its products, communication and customer experience should be adapted when local conditions require it.

11. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Modern consumers evaluate a company through the complete customer journey.

Before Purchase

Information, reviews, advertisements and recommendations influence awareness.

During Purchase

Price, convenience, payment options and service influence the buying decision.

After Purchase

Delivery, product quality, customer support and complaint handling influence satisfaction.

Therefore, marketing does not end when a consumer purchases a product.

Customer experience can influence repeat purchases, recommendations and loyalty.

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Recent research on sustainable digital marketing also shows the importance of online customer experience in connecting digital communication with sustainable purchase intentions.

12. DISCUSSION

The changing global consumer has transformed the objectives of international marketing.

Earlier, the primary question was:

“How can the company sell more products?”

The modern question is increasingly:

“How can the company create meaningful value for the consumer?”

This change is important because consumers are not motivated by price alone. Their decisions can be influenced by convenience, quality, emotions, social values, environmental concerns and trust.

Technology has made it easier for companies to understand consumers, but it has also increased consumer expectations.

Consumers now expect quick responses, personalised information and convenient purchasing. At the same time, they expect companies to protect their data and communicate honestly.

This creates a central challenge for international marketers: how to use technology without losing the human side of marketing.

The answer lies in combining digital capabilities with empathy, cultural understanding and responsible business practices.

13. MAJOR OBSERVATIONS

The literature and contemporary developments considered in this study lead to the following observations:

1. Consumers are becoming more informed and selective.
2. Value for money remains important in purchasing decisions.
3. Convenience has become a major part of customer expectations.
4. Digital platforms influence product discovery and consumer communication.
5. Personalisation can improve relevance but must respect privacy.
6. Sustainability is becoming increasingly important to consumers.
7. Authenticity is essential for maintaining trust in sustainability marketing.
8. Cultural differences remain important despite globalisation.
9. Artificial intelligence is changing marketing processes but cannot completely replace human interaction.

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10. Customer experience is becoming an important source of competitive advantage.
11. International marketing is increasingly moving towards a human-centred approach.

14. SUGGESTIONS

International companies should consider the following strategies:

Businesses should adopt a consumer-centred approach and understand the actual needs of customers before developing marketing strategies. International brands should balance global standardisation with local cultural adaptation. Companies should improve digital customer experiences and make online purchasing simple and convenient. Personalisation should be used responsibly with clear attention to privacy and data protection. Sustainability should be integrated into actual products, operations and supply chains rather than being used only as promotional content. Companies should provide evidence for environmental and social claims to avoid damaging consumer trust. Artificial intelligence should be combined with human customer service. Businesses should focus on long-term relationships instead of short-term sales alone.

15. CONCLUSION

The changing needs of global consumers are transforming international marketing from a product-centred activity into a more comprehensive and human-centred process.

Consumers today have greater access to information and greater freedom of choice. They expect value, convenience, quality and personalised experiences. At the same time, many consumers are paying greater attention to sustainability, wellbeing, trust and responsible business behaviour.

Digital technology has provided international businesses with new opportunities to communicate with consumers across geographical boundaries. Social media and e-commerce have made international markets more accessible, while artificial intelligence is creating new possibilities for personalisation and consumer analysis.

However, technology alone cannot guarantee marketing success. Consumers remain human beings with emotions, cultural identities, values and expectations. Companies that focus only on data may understand what consumers purchase but may not fully understand why they purchase it.

The future of international marketing therefore lies in combining technology with human understanding.

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International businesses that can provide value, build trust, respect cultural differences, create convenient experiences and demonstrate genuine responsibility will be better positioned to compete in the global marketplace.

The evolution of international marketing is consequently not merely a technological change. It represents a fundamental change in how businesses understand consumers. The most successful international brands of the future will not simply ask consumers to buy their products; they will seek to understand consumer needs and create meaningful value in people's everyday lives.

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