**Title**

Profile of the Consumer Activist: An International Comparative Study

**Abstract**

This study analyzes secondary data for a sample of 29,339 consumers from 30 countries to explain their differences in the level of consumer activism. The non-parametric CART (Classification and Regression Trees) technique is used for the analysis. Results identify consumer’s environmental concern as the main driving force behind consumer activism. Country of residence and consumer’s level of education are also discovered as relevant variables. A surprising finding is that consumers from less developed or developing countries seem to be more active with the global trend of increased awareness and consciousness about environmental issues.

**Keywords**

Consumer activism, consumer social responsibility, ethical consumption, political consumption, environmental awareness.

**Introduction**

The gravity of social problems, environmental degradation, and increasing citizen skepticism towards governments’ efficacy in addressing these critical concerns are propelling the rise of consumer activism (CA). This phenomenon is gaining in significance, with CA now being recognized as the second most common avenue for citizens to engage in political participation (Bradford, 2019).

CA is catalyzing the demand for fundamental changes in the way humans are living and, consequently, in production and consumption patterns. Achieving this necessitates more than just consuming less or differently (Lekakis, 2022). On the supply side, substantial alterations are required in corporate practices, coupled with the formulation of public policies to promote and facilitate these changes. Simultaneously, on the demand side, there is a pressing need for significant shifts in consumer behavior to align purchasing decisions with these evolving concerns.

Fortunately, ethical considerations linked to CA are increasingly shaping decision-making processes, purchasing choices, and individual behavior (Toti & Moulins, 2016). Consumers are awakening to the notion that each purchase can be considered an ethical decision, with their choices influencing a diverse array of interest groups and impacting society, companies, and the environment (Botha, 2018). This awareness has spurred a growing number of companies to embrace corporate social responsibility programs (D'Astous & Legendre, 2009). However, despite the increasing interest in ethics within the realm of consumer social responsibility, limited research attention has been devoted to its study, with scholars predominantly focusing on corporate social responsibility (Schlaile et al., 2018).

Contrary to the traditional view of people in the capitalist model merely satisfying individual needs, CA encourage consumers to make decisions that positively impact the world beyond their individual interests (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014; Thompson & Kumar, 2021). However, research highlights a discernible gap between consumers' declarations regarding the importance of ethical values in consumption and their actual behavior as consumer activists in the market. This intention-behavior gap is evident in a significant group of consumers who have not yet translated these values into their purchasing behavior or, more concerning, admit to behaving unethically (Belk, 1985; Crowe & Williams, 2001; Auger et al., 2003; Wheale & Hinton 2007; D’Astous & Legendre, 2009; Szmigin et al., 2009; Eckhardt et al., 2010; Carrington et al., 2010; White et al., 2012; Botha, 2018; El-Bialy, 2020; Smith & Kingston, 2021). Despite this gap, existing theory falls short in explaining why certain consumers are more predisposed to become activists and make decisions consistent with socially responsible consumption. A deeper cross-country investigation into the profile of consumers aspiring to drive social and environmental changes is imperative (Sargisson et al., 2020; Schwalb et al., 2023).

Moreover, there exists a sociocultural imbalance in the literature on global CA (Rasool & Ogunbode, 2015), with studies predominantly focusing on developed Western countries. These authors recognize that limited attention has been given to developing countries, necessitating a global perspective. Indeed, the evidence shows that the results of several consumer social responsibility studies carried out in developed countries do not always apply to the reality of developing ones, as reported by Rampedi & Ifegbesan (2022) in South Africa, Čater & Serafimova (2019) in Macedonia, Patel et al. (2017) in India, and Rasool & Ogunbode (2015) in Pakistan. In this context, this study aims to contribute to fill this gap by determining the variables that best characterize the varying levels of consumer activism across 30 countries, spanning different continents and development levels.

In the 21st century, with the proliferation of the Internet and the widespread use of social media to disseminate messages and stimulate participation, CA permeates almost every corner of consumer discourse addressing social and environmental problems. As noted in the Call for Papers of a forthcoming volume of the Journal of the Association for Consumer Research on the topic of consumer movement and activism (Handelman & Weijo, 2023), CA has become intricately intertwined with some of the most influential social change movements of our time. Consequently, in this study, CA extends beyond activities such as boycotting or buycotting products or brands (activism through consumption), encompassing other actions not strictly tied to consumption but significantly related. Examples include expressing opinions or protests on social media, supporting environmental or social causes through financial contributions or volunteering with NGOs, or organizing community interest groups aligned with these causes.

**Consumer activism**

Consumer Activism (CA) encompasses a spectrum of deliberate actions and decisions, particularly in the realm of purchasing and consumption, where consumers consciously and voluntarily strive to instigate change in either the public sphere, directing demands at governments, or the private arena, targeting companies or entire industries (Glickman, 2009; Li & Liu, 2021).  CA, driven by political, social, environmental, religious, or similar convictions, engages citizens in participation and positions the consumer -the demand side of the market, not the offer- as the agent for change (Oh & Yoon, 2014; Toti & Moulins, 2016; McGregor, 2016; Botha, 2018; Bradford, 2019; Crane et al., 2019; Robles-Avila, 2019).

At its core, CA serves as a socially transformative force, encapsulated in the notion of "being the change you want to see in the world" (De Moor, 2017). It represents actions aligned with what consumers perceive as "the right things to do," driven by a vision of how the world should ideally function (Quazi et al., 2016; Cabrera et al., 2017). Central to these definitions is the moral imperative placed on consumers to actively participate in implementing sustainability, recognizing that companies cannot implement social, environmental, or ethical changes without their involvement. CA involves then consumers posing a potential challenge by adjusting their consumption habits to bring about desired transformations (Wight, 2017). This ethical commitment becomes a key component of a deliberate and conscious CA (Crane et al., 2019). It requires a degree of sacrifice of the individual consumer well-being (Soni et al., 2021a), because activist consumers care about others and want to live in harmony with nature (Fazal, 2011).

Quazi et al. (2016) consider solidarity and altruism one of the six key dimensions of CA. Definitions of CA can be situated on a continuum between the greater good and consumers’ self-interest (Chen, 2020). CA can be either local or used worldwide, but the concern for the others and the promotion of a common interest “creates a form of long-distance solidarity among people who might not know or be located near each other” (Bradford, 2019:302). The concept of solidarity as a central theme in CA extends beyond individual actions to contribute to the reproduction and perpetuation of production and consumption structures that benefit society and the environment (Young, 2006; Barnett et al., 2011; Schlaile et al., 2018). This shared consumer social responsibility that guides CA comes from the interconnection that exists between human beings by “belonging together with others in a system of interdependent processes of cooperation and competition'' (Young 2006:119).

Lekakis (2022:14) broadens the scope of CA, defining it as any “highly or loosely organized, collective, or individual actions that employ the market as an area of contestation, broadening the field of consumption”. Recognizing both individual and collective dimensions, this inclusive approach underscores the diversity of actions consumers can take to drive positive change. Nøjgaard (2023) refers to these two dimensions as “sovereign-choice model” (the individual one) and “ideological-performance model” (the collective one). Actions related to each dimension of CA are different in the amount of personal effort and commitment required for their execution (Barry et al., 2022).

The individual dimension of CA encompasses consumption choices (practicing minimal or mindful consumption, bartering or other alternative economic practices, among others) and, mainly, actions like boycotts (refusing to buy a product or brand due to disapproval of certain company practices) and buycotts (actively supporting products or brands aligned with principles; for instance, buying green products, fair trade ethical products, etc.) (Holdman, 2017; Lekakis, 2022). In its simpler form of day-to-day individual purchasing decisions, CA has low barriers to participation because “anyone can be a consumer activist just by choosing where to spend or not spend whatever money or resources they have” (Bradford, 2019:302). Micheletti (2003) refers to this repertoire as “individualized collective actions” of CA, meaning that these individual actions, although performed privately, have a collective spirit in their origin, effects, and goals (Michelletti & Stolle, 2007, 2015). Some authors narrow CA to these market-driven actions. For consumers, CA would not involve “anything more than deciding where to spend their money” (Brafford 2019:307). However, this perspective disregards other forms of individual (or individualized collective) actions, such as donating to NGOs, clicktivism (using social media for activism), socially responsible investing and divesting, or petitioning the government, among others (Lekakis, 2022). Despite not directly tied to individual consumption choices, these actions share the common goal of effecting change in markets or social situations undesired by the consumer.

On the collective dimension, CA involves coordinated, group, and publicly performed actions (Muraro & Rifon, 2023). Expressions of this form of activism are generally linked with public protest or the promotion of interest groups to enhance or lobby a particular cause (public sit-ins, public marching, public temporary occupations of public spaces, or targeting and contesting some companies advertising campaigns in public spaces, among others) (Lekakis, 2022).

CA “has been explored by political science, sociology, development and international relations, critical marketing studies, communication, and cultural studies” (Lekakis, 2022:20), but this area of knowledge is still the most unexplored in the field of social responsibility (Soni et al., 2021a). Despite the recent gaining traction and increase of research in this field, to date there is not a general, consistent, and shared definition of key concepts for CA such as ethical consumption (Toti & Moulins, 2016) or sustainable consumption (Papaoikonomou et al., 2011). This lack of conceptual consistency and the interdisciplinarity of the study are an obstacle to the progress of knowledge in the field of CA. They lead to a series of problems for guiding the research and facilitating communication between researchers to compare results (McDonald et al., 2006; Sheth et al., 2011; Ríos-Rodríguez et al., 2021). To overcome this and define the limits of the field, there is a call for a clear and shared definition of CA that allows for precise identification of specific behaviors under study and the obstacles that activist consumers could encounter in practice (Valor, 2008; Ríos-Rodríguez et al., 2021).

In summary, from the review of the literature, five elements or characteristics that define CA have been found:

1. CA is guided by “which values matter”, that is, ethical principles and moral values (Oh & Yoon, 2014; Quazi et al., 2016; Toti & Moulins, 2016; Botha, 2018; Crane et al., 2019).
2. CA requires a conscious, responsible, socially committed, and well-informed consumer whose actions have the intention to achieve the greatest social welfare and the least possible damage (Quazi, et al., 2016; Botha, 2018; Schlaile et al., 2018).
3. CA needs a sensitive and concerned consumer about the environment, who prefers to consume nature-friendly products and services (D’Astous &Legendre, 2009; Ríos-Rodriguez et al., 2021).
4. CA is based on consumers’ solidarity and their willingness to sacrifice their individual well-being for the well-being of society (Soni et al., 2021a; Fazal, 2011).
5. CA means action; therefore, it needs a proactive consumer or “agentic subject” (El-Bialy, 2020) who participates in social action with other public or private groups so that social action materializes (Quazi et al., 2016; Schlaile et al., 2018).

Based on these elements, the following comprehensive definition of CA is proposed: *Consumer activism is any voluntary, conscious, and ethically motivated action taken by individual or group of consumers to support a socially, environmentally, or politically motivated cause.*

**Influence of socio demographics variables on consumer activism**

In this section the main socio-demographic variables that characterize the profile of an activist consumer are examined. This revision encompasses conventionally scrutinized variables such as gender, age, education, country of residence, or environmental concern. Going beyond, in alignment with Schwalb et al.'s (2023) recommendations, this study incorporates additional variables, namely political orientation, satisfaction with life, and level of solidarity to assess their relevance in profiling consumer activism (CA).

***Gender***

Literature consistently portrays women as more inclined toward CA than men. When consumers from developed economies are analyzed, most common findings reveal a trend of women having more environmental awareness, support to social and environmental causes, or greater propensity for environmentally and socially conscious purchasing compared to men (Zelezny et al., 2000; Laroche et al., 2001; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Hirsh, 2010; Swami et al., 2010; Witkowski & Reddy, 2010; Xiao & Hong, 2010; Koos, 2011; Burn et al., 2012; Luchs & Mooradian, 2012; Park et al., 2012; Kennedy et al., 2015; Xiao & McCright, 2015; Sánchez et al., 2016; Brochado et al., 2017; Liobikiene et al., 2017; Mueller & Mullenbach, 2018; Ríos-Rodríguez et al., 2021). This trend is also observable in a few studies on emerging economies such as India (Patel et al., 2017) or Pakistan (Rasool & Ogunbode, 2015).

On the other hand, some research presents a more nuanced picture, suggesting a weak correlation between gender and environmental variables (Sargisson & Steg, 2020) or, even more, no significant relation (Digby, 2013; Čater & Serafimova, 2019; Okumah et al., 2021). Schwalb et al. (2023) also found than gender doesn´t contribute to explain the differences in political consumption as a form of CA. It is important to notice that several of these studies are recent and correspond to emerging economies such as Macedonia (Čater & Serafimova, 2019), Ghana (Okumah et al, 2021), and Brasil, Indonesia, México, Perú and Rusia (Schwalb et al, 2023), among others.

***Age***

Findings from the literature indicate more presence of mixed results. Some studies report a positive relationship between age and several forms of CA, asserting that older individuals exhibit stronger environmental concern and ecologically conscious behavior (Rowlands et al., 2003; Oerke and Bogner 2010; Chen et al., 2011; Pavalache-llie & Unianu 2012; Digby, 2013; Wiernik et al., 2013; Brochado et al., 2017; Patel et al., 2017; Smith & Kingston, 2021).

Conversely, other studies have found a negative relationship, emphasizing that consumer activists are often younger (Zimmer et al., 1994; Roberts and Bacon 1997) and marked by a proactive stance on climate change, utilizing social networks for environmental activism (Getzner & Grabner-Kräuter 2004; Rasool & Ogunbode, 2015).

A third group of studies have found higher levels of socially responsible consumption or pro environmental behavior among middle aged consumers than among younger and older consumers (Costa et al., 2011; Mohr & Schlich, 2016; Patel et al., 2017; Čater & Serafimova, 2019; Ríos-Rodriguez et al., 2021).

Finally, other studies report no relationship between age and pro environmental behavior (Kheiry & Nakhaei 2012), or with the perception of the severity of the climate change (Rasool & Ogubode, 2015; Sargisson et al., 2020) or with the level of political consumption (Schwalb et al., 2023). To explain these findings, Smith & Kingston (2021) suggest that the differences in pro-environmental attitudes regarding age are disappearing due to the growing awareness that different generations are taking of the increasingly evident and serious consequences of climate change.

***Education***

Education is the demographic variable most consistently linked to environmental behavior (Chen et al., 2011; Samarasinghe, 2012) and the one that has received the most attention from researchers (do Paço & Raposo, 2009; Patel et al., 2017). Ample evidence in the literature reveals that the higher the consumers educational level, the higher the level of their environmental concern and practicing of different forms of CA (Torgler & García-Valiñas, 2007; Koos, 2011; Digby, 2013; Fiorillo, 2013; Zsóka et al., 2013; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Zhao et al., 2014; Zen et al., 2014; Telešiene & Balžekien, 2015; López-Mosquera et al., 2015; Patel et al., 2017; Smith & Kingston, 2021; Smith & Kingston, 2021; Rampedi & Ifegbesan, 2022; Schwalb et al., 2023).

It is generally assumed that education is a facilitator factor for environmental consciousness to arise (Rasool & Ogunbode, 2015). Highly educated individuals gained knowledge about environmental issues through schooling (Chen et al., 2011). Thus, they are more prone to display a pro-environmental behavior (Patel et al., 2017), willing to pay to protect the environment (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; do Paço et al, 2009; Zhao et al., 2014) and to buy products that have environmental labels (Koos, 2011). This pattern of behavior transversally appears in well-educated consumers from countries with different levels of development, such as Germany (Noth & Tonzer, 2022), Ghana (Okumah et al., 2021), India (Patel et al., 2017), Macedonia (Čater & Serafimova, 2019), Pakistan (Rasool & Ogunbode, 2015), Taiwan (Digby, 2013), Turkey (Ergen et al., 2014), the United States of America (Matsuba et al., 2017; Smith & Kingston, 2021; Memmott et al., 2021; Latkin et al., 2022), or South Africa (Rampedi & Ifegbesan, 2022), among others.

Some studies, however, report mixed results. In an international comparative study, Schwalb et al., (2023) conclude that education does not contribute to explain the level of CA in every analyzed country, but when it does, it seems to influence in the expected direction. The authors state that a possible explanation of this finding could be that the effect of education seems to be mediated by the country’s position in the consumerism life cycle. In the same line, few studies have found no relationship between educational level and environmental concern (Dutcher et al., 2007; Kennedy et al., 2015) or even apparently contradictory results. For instance, Ríos-Rodriguez et al., (2021) found that citizens with university studies exhibit lower levels of sustainable consumption than consumers with secondary school.

***Country of residence***

Home country conditions -geographical, economic, societal, and political issues- influence CA (Zorell, 2019; 2020). According to Schwalb et al., (2023), three variable categories have a direct relationship with the level of CA in a country: organization of political life, social capital, and the position of the country in the consumerism life cycle model**.** They assume that the greater the robustness of a country in these variables, the higher the level of CA in that country.

The organization of the country’s political life includes variables such as level of material prosperity, level of democracy and political trust, quality of public institutions, citizens’ view about the appropriate role of the state, among others. The social capital is the trust, norms and networks that characterize the country’s social organization and facilitate the coordinated actions (Putnam, et al., 1993). It includes the level of institutionalized relationships among the community’ members (Bourdieu 1986; Zasuwa 2019). Finally, the position of the country in the consumerism life cycle model includes variables such as the development of consumer organizations and their influence to protect them, the regulation and institutions that look after the consumers’ cause, the availability of public resources and government support for the consumerism movement, consumers’ awareness about the problems they face, consumers’ trust or distrust toward the business sector, or consumers’ access to relevant information about the companies’ performance, among other variables (Nwaizugbo & Ogbunankwor, 2013; Sadovnikova, et al., 2014; Zorell, 2019; 2020).

Public perception of action and support from the government or companies (Gravante & Poma, 2020; Ergen et al., 2014; Lopes de Sousa, 2019) or from society in general (Lopes de Sousa, 2019; Xie, 2011; Gravante & Poma, 2020; Soni et al., 2021b), and the presence of NGOs are factors that encourage CA. Indeed, citizens believe that more intervention by the government is needed to promote CA (Vukelic & Stanojevic, 2012; Pearson et al., 2018; Lopes de Sousa, 2019; Gravante & Poma, 2020; Smith & Kingston, 2021). Citizens assume that if there are no laws that prohibit unethical behavior, so it is allowed (D'astous & Legendre, 2009; Botha, 2018).

Among the factors that hinder CA is the lack of trust in the government effectiveness and its institutions to address environmental problems (Rasool & Ogunbode, 2015, Rampedi & Ifegbesan, 2022), the perception of the institutionalization of corruption in public and private institutions (Rasool & Ogunbode, 2015), and the repression and censorship from the government against CA (Xie, 2011; Vukelic & Stanojevic, 2012; Lopes de Sousa, 2019; Gravante & Poma, 2020).

Market conditions of the country where consumers interact (price levels, product quality, products and services availability, accessibility to relevant information, among others) are another group of obstacles that can hinder CA. Limited availability of options in the market is a significant obstacle to CA (Brochado et al., 2017; Patel et al., 2017; Gravante & Poma, 2020; Smith & Kingston, 2021; Soni et al, 2021b). For instance, the lack of ecological products (Ergen et al., 2014), the lack of access to waste management services (Patel et al., 2017), and the lack of ethical options in rural areas (Carrigan et al., 2011) have been reported as important obstacles to pro-environmental behavior. The lack of information available on the market (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004; Shaw et al., 2005; De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007; Toti & Moulins, 2016), information overload and information complexity (Smith & Kingston, 2021), and lack of trust on the displayed information on companies practices (Soni et al., 2021b), are all relevant market conditions that impact on CA (Pearson et al., 2018; Noth & Tonzer, 2022).

***Environmental concern***

Concern for the environment and awareness of environmental problems mean seriously considering the environmental issues, respect for nature, and the willingness to improve the environmental situation (Hoffmann et al., 2018). This pro-social characteristic is positively related to pro-environmental behavior (Laroche et al., 2001; Bartiaux, 2008; Vukelic & Stanojevic, 2012; Ergen et al, 2014; Vicente-Molina et al., 2018; Wi & Chang, 2019; Noth & Tonzer, 2022; Rampedi & Efegbesan, 2022) and is one of the critical drivers of boycotts and buycotts (Schwalb et al., 2023). Individuals who consider climate change and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions important issues, tend to be more consumer activists (Memmott et al., 2021).

Several studies report that environmental awareness is key to addressing the climate crisis and other environmental problems (Digby, 2013; Ergen et al., 2014; Matsuba et al., 2017; Patel et al, 2017; Pearson et al., 2018; Čater & Serafimova, 2019; Gravante & Poma, 2020; Okumah et al., 2021; Smith & Kingston, 2021). Individuals who value the environment and are more aware of environmental problems tend to exhibit greater environmental and CA in the market (Ergen et al., 2014; Matsuba et al., 2017; Patel et al., 2017; Schwalb & García-Arrizabalaga, 2019; Smith & Kingston, 2021).

Concern for the environment is linked to the individual's willingness to make the sacrifice to adopt a pro-environmental behavior. Therefore, if individuals are not willing to make the sacrifice that involves changing habits, spending more money, devoting time, accepting a less efficient product than the regular one, etc., they will not act sustainably even when they are concerned about the environment (Smith & Kingston, 2021). The willingness to sacrifice and commit for the environment is one of the main factors that influence consumer behavior and could explain the intention-behavior gap (Botha, 2018) that occurs when the intentions of ethical consumers are not reflected in their purchase behavior (Carrington et al., 2010)**.**

On the other side,the optimism about the environmental situation, promoted in large part by the media that minimizes the seriousness of the environmental situation, is a barrier to environmental activism (Jiménez-Castillo & Ortega-Egea, 2015). If individuals do not perceive the environmental threat as serious and as an issue that essentially requires immediate attention (Tan et al., 2016; in Soni et al., 2021a), they are not motivated to adopt a pro-environmental behavior.

***Political orientation***

Little attention has been paid to the study of the potential influence of this variable on the level of CA. In general, it is assumed that people who identify themselves with progressive political orientations and leftist attitudes tend to be more consumer activist than people aligned with the conservative ones (Noth & Tonzer, 2022). Jiménez-Castillo & Ortega-Egea (2015) posit that people who identify with a conservative political group that opposes pro-environmental policies tend to underestimate the severity of the environmental threat and overestimate the ease with which problems can be addressed. In an international study comparing seven European countries, Sargisson et al. (2020) report that political orientation along with gender are the only demographics that correlate with environmental values. They found that right-wingers exhibited weaker altruistic and biospheric values, and higher egoistic values than left-wingers, so they are less prone to exhibit a pro-environmental behavior.

***Satisfaction with life***

Very scant attention has been paid to the study of this variable in its potential influence on CA. People who are happy with their lives are not motivated to change. Studies report that, at the individual level, those who have had negative experiences related to the environment affecting their lives -for example, because they have lived in highly polluted areas, have experienced environmental disasters, or other damages- tend to be more sensitive to environmental issues, exhibit a more sustainable behavior (Sargisson et al., 2020) and have stronger motivation to engage in pro-climate action (Latkin, et al., 2022).

From an indirect perspective, Ríos-Rodríguez et al. (2021) state that for some consumers the awareness of the severity of the environmental or social problems -even if they do not suffer them- can result in feelings of discomfort with their lives. According to these authors, this affective commitment has a positive and significant relationship with socially responsible consumption as a form of CA.

***Solidarity***

It is not until recently that research has shown interest on the study of this variable (Swami et al., 2010). According to the literature, solidarity positive influences CA. Individuals with higher willingness to sacrifice for the environment and, consequently, for the others, are more likely to exhibit environmentally responsible behavior and pro-environmental CA (Rampedi & Ifegbesan, 2022). Several researchers (van der Werff et al., 2013: Martin & Czellar, 2017; Bouman et al., 2020; Sargisson et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021) have also found that individuals who identify themselves with altruistic and biospheric values (values linked to solidarity, that find it important to care about nature and the others) tend to exhibit more pro-environmental CA than those who are guided by egoistic values.

**Methodology**

***Data source***

This study was based on secondary data provided by GlobeScan for 30 countries. Data were originally collected in each country by surveying representative online samples as part of a wide research program called *GlobeScan Radar[[1]](#footnote-1)*. Fieldwork for the online surveys was done in June and July 2021 (GlobeScan, 2021). Sample sizes for each country are shown in Table 1.

[TABLE 1 GOES HERE]

***Operational variables***

* **Consumer activism** was the dependent variable to be explained. It was measured with the following questions: “In the past year, have you done any of the following to make a difference on an economic, environmental, social or political issue that you care about?”. The considered relevant actions, presented to the sample in a random order, were the following: (a) Expressed my opinion online; (b) Changed my purchase choices; (c) Donated money or volunteered my time; (d) Protested publicly at events and rallies; and (e) Organized support in my community for the issue. For each action, respondents should answer “yes” (coded as 1) or “no” (coded as 0). Following Barry et al.’s (2022) suggestions, the authors considered that each action could imply different levels of personal effort, commitment, and intensity in consumer activism. A panel of fifty experts were consulted to check this hypothesis. They were university professors, from Europe and Latin America, in the fields of Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Social Responsibility and Sustainability, Sociology, Business Strategy, or Economics. Panelists agreed on the face validity of these five items to measure the two dimensions of CA. The individual dimension was represented by the first three actions, and the collective dimension with the final two. Panelist were then invited to score each action according to the perceived intensity of consumer activism that taking that action implied. They used a scale from 0 (the lowest perceived level of consumer activism) to 10 (the highest perceived level of consumer activism). The average scores and standard deviations obtained for each action were:
	+ Expressed my opinion online: 5.16 (2.28)
	+ Protested publicly at events and rallies: 6.82 (2.10)
	+ Donated money or volunteered my time: 7.32 (1.96)
	+ Changed my purchase choices: 7.58 (1.71)
	+ Organized support in my community for the issue: 8.12 (2.34)

As a result of the homogeneity of the scores, we calculated for each consumer the weighted average of these five actions and created the new “Consumer Activism” quantitative variable, which would rank from 0 (for those who took part in none of the five possible actions) to 1 (for those who took part in the whole set of possible actions).

* Consumer age was a quantitative variable directly measured in years.
* Consumer gender was provided as a dichotomic variable.
* Consumer country of residence was a nominal variable.
* Consumer level of education was an ordinal variable created with the answer to the question “What is the highest level of education that you have completed?”. It originally had different names and levels in each country, so for each respondent we recoded it into a new ordinal variable ranking from 1 to 4, considering educational levels completed: 1=Not having completed high or secondary school, 2=Having completed only high or secondary school, 3=Having completed high or secondary school, plus some vocational training or some college or university, and 4=Having completed university studies.
* Consumer satisfaction with life was the answer to the question “Thinking about all aspects of your life, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life?”. It was measured with a Likert 5-point scale, ranking from 1 (“Very dissatisfied”) to 5 (“Very satisfied”). It will be considered as a quantitative variable.
* Consumer political orientation was the answer to the question “Would you say that your political opinions tend to be more conservative (Right) or progressive (Left)?”. It was measured with a Likert 5-point scale, ranking from 1 (“Very conservative”) to 5 (“Very progressive”). It will be considered as a quantitative variable.
* Consumer level of solidarity was measured with two variables. The first one, ordinal, measured the consumer intention to be solidary: “How much would you like to change your lifestyle to be more helpful to others, like your friends/family, your community, and/or people around the world”. Possible answers scored 3=A great deal, 2=Moderately, 1=A little, and 0=Not at all. The second variable measured the reality of solidary actions taken by the consumer: “Have you made any changes to your lifestyle in the past year to be more helpful to others, like your friends/family, your community, and/or people around the world”. Possible answers scored 3=Yes, major changes, 2=Yes, some changes, 1=Yes, minor changes, and 0= No. Based on the experience of a previous panel, where behavioral intentions and real behaviors were combined and weighted to create a new quantitative variable (Schwalb et al., 2023), real solidarity behavior was weighted with a weight of 3. Finally, an additional point was added to this result when the solidary behavior intention score is strictly higher than the real solidary behavior score. Thus, the intention of those consumers who wanted to be more solidary and who, for whatever reason, have not been so much in their real behavior was also recognized. Consumer level of solidarity will finally be a quantitative variable ranking from 0 (for the only situation in which consumers rank 0, both in real solidary behavior and in intention of having it) to 9 (for those consumers who have introduced major changes in their lifestyles last year, whatever the rank of the intentional variable is).
* Consumer environmental concern was measured with a process very similar to the one followed with consumer level of solidarity. The intentional variable was measured with the answer to the question: “How much would you like to change your lifestyle to be more environmentally friendly, reducing your impact on the environment and climate”. Possible answers scored 3=A great deal, 2=Moderately, 1=A little, and 0=Not at all. The real behavior variable was measured with the answer to the question: “Have you made any changes to your lifestyle in the past year to be more environmentally friendly, reducing your impact on the environment and climate”. Possible answers scored 3=Yes, major changes, 2=Yes, some changes, 1=Yes, minor changes, and 0= No. Following the same procedure as in the previous variable, real behavior was weighted with a weight of 3, and an additional point was added to this result when the environmental behavior intention score was strictly higher than the real environmental behavior score. Consumer level of environmental concern will finally be a quantitative variable ranking from 0 (for the only situation in which consumers score 0, both in real environmental behavior and in intention of having it) to 9 (for those consumers who have introduced major changes in their lifestyles last year, whatever the score of the intentional variable is).

Table 2 presents the main descriptive results of the operational variables crossed by country.

[TABLE 2 GOES HERE]

**Results**

This study explores which independent variables best characterize the dependent variable “Consumer activism”. Given the quantitative nature of the dependent variable, and the categorical or quantitative nature of the independent variables, the CART (Classification and Regression Trees) technique (Breiman et al, 1984) is selected to show these potential characterizations. As previously done in Schwalb et al. (2023), the choice of this non-parametric technique is based on its ability to reveal relationships between variables that could not be discovered using more rigid, parametric techniques, as they assume a priori that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is of a certain nature (e.g., linear in the multiple linear regression case).

In figure 1 we present a first CART 3-level-depth model with 2x2x2=8 final nodes, presented by the program as the optimal solution.

[FIGURE 1 GOES HERE]

In this first model (called model A) it is observed that:

* The “Environmental Concern” independent variable is used to split node 1 (initial sample) into nodes 2 and 3; node 2 into nodes 4 and 5; and node 6 into nodes 12 and 13.
* The “Country of residence” independent variable is used to split node 3 into nodes 6 and 7; node 4 into nodes 8 and 9; and node 5 into nodes 10 and 11.
* The “Consumer level of education” independent variable is used to split node 7 into nodes 14 and 15.
* No other independent variable appears in this first model A.

[TABLE 3 GOES HERE]

Each row in Table 3 presents the main statistics (size, mean, and deviance) for each parent node before and after its splitting into the resulting child nodes. The last column in each row presents the deviance reduction in the child nodes with respect to their parent node. The total deviance for the dependent variable in the initial node (the whole sample) is 1,519.385, while the sum of the deviances in the eight terminal nodes (nodes 8 to 15) is 1,269.485. Thus, this model A explains 16.45% of the total initial deviance of the dependent variable.

[TABLE 4 GOES HERE]

Table 4 calculates the mean squares and performs an F test to determine whether the explained deviance in each node split is significant. We can conclude that all the node splits reduce deviance in the parent node in a significant way (p<0.001).

[TABLE 5 GOES HERE]

 As a summary of this first model A, table 5 presents the relative contribution of each independent variable to the deviance reduction. Environmental Concern appears as the most contributing variable, as it explains 72.25% of the deviance reduction, Country of residence accounts for an intermediate 22.59% and, finally, Level of Education accounts for only 5.16%.

To achieve the emergence of new explanatory variables for the differences in the CA level, it was decided to force the optimal model into an additional division of nodes. This is reflected in model B, a CART 4-level-depth model with potentially 2x2x2x2=16 final nodes, resulting from the splitting of each terminal node of model A into two new nodes. Thus, this new model is more complex and difficult to manage than model A, but it allows to explore whether new independent variables appear in the deviance reduction of the initial node. In figure 2 we present this new model B.

[FIGURE 2 GOES HERE]

In a comparison of this model with the previous model A, it is observed that:

* The only node that has not been split by the system into two new nodes, and remain again as terminal node, is node 9.
* The “Environmental Concern” independent variable is used again to split node 15 into nodes 30 and 31.
* The “Country of residence” independent variable is used again to split node 14 into nodes 28 and 29.
* The “Consumer level of education” independent variable is used again to split node 12 into nodes 24 and 25.

Three new independent variables appear in this model B:

* The “Consumer age” independent variable appears to split node 8 into nodes 16 and 17; and node 10 into nodes 20 and 21.
* The “Consumer level of solidarity” independent variable appears to split node 11 into nodes 22 and 23.
* The “Consumer political orientation” independent variable appears to split node 13 into nodes 26 and 27.
* No other independent variable appears in this second model B.

[TABLE 6 GOES HERE]

Table 6 presents the main statistics (size, mean, and total deviance) of the terminal nodes of Model A before and after its division into the two resulting nodes of the new model B (except node 9, that it is not divided). The sum of the last column (25.514) indicates the additional deviance reduction in Model B from that of Model A. Thus, the global deviance reduction in Model B is 249.900+25.514=275.414, which accounts for 18.13% of the total initial deviance of the dependent variable. This is 1.68% more than Model A.

[TABLE 7 GOES HERE]

Table 7 calculates the mean squares and performs an F test to determine whether the reduced deviation in each division of the new nodes of Model B is significant. Although all of them reduce deviation in the parent node in a significant way (p<0.001), one could ask him/herself if such reduction in deviances from Model A to Model B really justifies increasing the complexity (from 8 nodes to 15).

[TABLE 8 GOES HERE]

Finally, as a summary, table 8 presents the relative contribution of each independent variable to the deviance reduction in the Model B. Environmental Concern appears as the most contributing variable, as it explains 69.10% of the deviance reduction, and Country of residence as the second most important (20.92%), while Consumer Level of Solidarity accounts for only 0.79%.

**Analysis and discussion**

This study aims to determine which variables best characterize the different levels of consumer activism (CA) taken by consumers from different countries.

A first relevant outcome to comment is that, from the eight independent variables used for that purpose, we have found two -*Gender* and *Satisfaction with life*- that do not contribute in a significant way to explain any differences in the levels of consumer activism (see tables 5 and 8).

The finding concerning gender is in contradiction with the wide extended view that predominates in the literature for the so called “reversed gender gap in politically motivated consumption” (Gundelach and Kalte 2021), in the sense that women have a more sensitive attitude than men towards environmental problems (Oerke & Bogner, 2010; Xiao & Hong, 2010; Plazas et al., 2010; Rasool & Ogunbode, 2015; Patel et al. al, 2017), have stronger pro-environmental behavior (Ríos-Rodríguez et al., 2021), and are more responsible as consumers (Čater & Serafimova, 2016), probably because they are more identified with altruistic and biospheric values (Sergusson & Steg, 2020). However, the lack of influence of gender on the differences in levels of CA is not new and matches with the results of recent studies that report no relationship between gender and pro-environmentalism (Serafimova, 2019; Okumah et al., 2021), or gender and political consumer behavior (Schwalb et al., 2023). The lack of relationship between gender and level of consumer activism appeared in this study, contrary to the dominant literature, should be confirmed in further research.

Concerning satisfaction with life, no specific studies have been found that link this variable with the level of consumer activism. In our study, the average grade of consumers satisfaction with their lives for the whole sample is 3.31 (in a 1 to 5 scale). This means that people seem to be relatively happy with their lives. Only one country has an average score below 3.00 (Italy, 2.58). On the contrary, Netherlands has the highest average value, 3.74. However, no significant differences in the level of consumer activism have been found in any case. Latvin et al. (2022) state that happy people are not motivated to change. According to this, we should have found significant lower levels of CA in countries with the higher levels of satisfaction with their lives (as it is the case of Netherlands), but this has not occurred. On the contrary, Sargisson et al. (2020) express that those more dissatisfied and worried tend to be more pro environmentalists, or to exhibit a more responsible consumption behavior (Ríos-Rodriguez et al, 2021). According to this, we should have found significant higher levels of CA in countries with the lower levels of satisfaction with their lives (as it is the case of Italy), but this has not occured either. This absence of relationship between consumers satisfaction with their lives and the level of consumer activism should be also confirmed in further research.

A second relevant outcome to comment is the weak influence of several variables to explain the differences in the level of CA. This is the case of consumer’s level of solidarity, political orientation, age, and level of education (see tables 5 and 8).

Consumer’s level of solidarity accounts for only 0.79% of the explained deviation in consumer activism (see table 8). It appears only in model B, but not in model A. When this variable splits node 11 into nodes 22 and 23, it is true that we find that node 23 (consumers with higher level of consumer solidarity than those of node 22) also has a significant higher level of CA comparing to node 22 (consumers with lower level of solidarity). The findings reported by Rampedi & Ifegbesan (2022) coincide with those obtained in this node: a significant positive relationship is observed between the level of solidarity and pro-environmental consumer behavior as part of CA. But this finding is present only in one node of the model: consumers with low to medium level of environmental concern (between 2 and 5) from less developed or developing countries (mainly Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam). Why this pattern is not observed, for instance, in consumers with the lowest (<2) and highest (>7) levels of environmental concern should be the focus of further research.

The case of consumer political orientation is very similar. This variable also appears only in model B, but not in model A, and it accounts for only 1.51% of the explained deviation in CA (see table 8). When it splits node 13 into nodes 26 and 27, it is true that we find that node 27 (consumers that consider themselves as more progressive) also has a significant higher level of CA comparing to node 26 (where consumers consider themselves as more conservative). These results align with the findings of North & Tonzer (2022), that report that the most conservative consumers show a lower level of citizen activism compared to consumers who define themselves as more progressive. But in this study, this is only true in certain circumstances and in certain countries: in one node of consumers with the highest level of environmental concern (≥7) and from well developed countries (mainly Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, UK, and USA). Why this pattern is not observed, for instance, in consumers with lower levels of environmental concern (<7) or in consumers from less developed or developing countries should, again, be the focus of further research.

Regarding consumer age, this variable also appears only in model B, but not in model A. It accounts for only 1.87% of the explained deviation in CA (see table 8). It splits node 8 into nodes 16 and 17, and node 10 into nodes 20 and 21. In general, this variable appears to explain significant differences only for consumers with very low (<2) and medium (≥2 but <5) levels of environmental concern and, in general, coming from well developed countries (mainly, Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy. Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, UK, and USA). In all these cases it is observed that the older the consumer, the greater the level of consumer activism, which is consistent with some literature (Wiernik et al., 2013; Ganglmair-Wooliscroft & Wooliscroft, 2016; Čater & Serafimova, 2019; Smith & Kingston, 2021). But the absence of relationship between age and the level of CA detected in the rest of the nodes is also consistent with the findings of some studies (Patel et al., 2017; Sargisson & Steg, 2020; Schwalb et al., 2023). In short, age has very little influence on CA, but when it does it seems to influence in the direction stated by the literature. Why this pattern is not observed, for instance, in consumers with the highest (>7) levels of environmental concern, or in consumers from less developed or developing economies should be further researched.

Consumer level of education is a relevant variable to explain the level of CA in both models, A and B. In Model A it accounts for 5.16% of the explained deviation (see table 5), while in Model B it accounts for 5.80% (see table 8). In Model A, consumer level of education splits node 7 into nodes 14 and 15 and, in Model B it splits node 12 into nodes 24 and 25. In all these cases the results are in line with what the literature reports: the node with higher level of education is also the node with higher level of CA. These results are coherent with most of the finding of literature that reports that this relationship appears in well-educated consumers around the world, regardless of their level of economic development, such as Germany (Noth & Tonzer, 2022),  Ghana (Okumah et al., 2021), India (Patel et al., 2017), Macedonia (Čater & Serafimova, 2019), Pakistan (Rasool & Ogunbode, 2015), Taiwan (Digby, 2013), Turkey (Ergen et al., 2014), the United States of America (Matsuba et al., 2017; Smith & Kingston, 2021; Memmott et al., 2021; Latkin et al., 2022), or South Africa (Rampedi & Ifegbesan, 2022), among others. However, in this study consumer education only influences the level of CA when consumer’s environmental concern is from medium to high (>5). Why this pattern is not observed in consumers with medium to low levels of environmental concern (≤5) should be further researched.

A third and last relevant outcome to comment is the great influence of the main variables to explain the differences in the level of consumer activism. This is the case of consumer country of residence and consumer environmental concern (see tables 5 and 8).

Consumer's country of residence appears as a very relevant variable in both models, A and B. In Model A, it accounts for 22.59% of the explained deviation, while in Model B it accounts for 20.92%. This means that the differences in the level of activism shown by consumers are influenced by the organization of the country's political life, social capital, and country's position in the consumerism life cycle model. However, the results of this study seem to contradict what Zorell (2019; 2020) and Schwalb et al. (2023) indicate. According to these authors, it was expected that countries with a higher organization of political life, greater social capital, and a more advanced position in the consumerism life cycle would have higher levels of CA. This study observes just the opposite: in the division of node 4, it is observed that, in general, economically more developed countries, with higher levels of social capital and more advanced positions in the consumerism life cycle remain in node 8, while the rest are in node 9. Surprisingly, node 9 has a significantly higher level of CA than node 8. This is even clearer in the division of node 5 into nodes 10 and 11 (with significantly higher levels of CA in node 11), and in the division of node 3 into nodes 6 and 7 (with significantly higher levels of CA in node 7).

Searching a possible explanation for this finding, it might be found in a potential bias due to the sample composition for less developed or developing countries: consumers with home internet access and, in general, with high educational levels. Another possible explanation for this finding, more conceptual, could reflect what several authors (Rampedi & Ifegbesan, 2022 in South Africa; Čater & Serafimova, 2019 in Macedonia; Patel et al. 2017 in India; and Rasool & Ogunbode, 2015 in Pakistan) state: results of consumer social responsibility studies carried out in developed countries do not always apply to the reality of developing ones. In this study, it seems as if consumers in these developing or less developed countries may be increasingly aware that globalization is taking place in a way that comparatively harms their countries. Therefore, they may be more willing to act, and be more active, in correcting this inefficiency. Evidence supporting this idea can be found in the recent COP28 (United Nations Climate Change Conference) summit held in the United Arab Emirates in November and December 2023. It has been officially recognized that climate change disproportionately affects the poorest and most vulnerable countries, which, at the same time, contribute the least to it (UNDP, 2023). In such summits, the outcry of poor countries had never been so loudly heard, seeking assistance from wealthier countries to address the severe economic consequences of climate change, which they consider themselves the main victims of. In any case, it is surprising that Schwalb et al. (2023) did not obtain these same findings in a recent international comparative study of 10 countries with different levels of development. Whether this is an isolated finding or indicates a trend change should be confirmed in future international comparative studies.

Lastly, environmental concern is the variable that contribute the most to explain the differences in the level of CA. In model A, it contributes to the 72.25% of the deviance explained by the whole model, and 69.11% in the case of model B (see tables 5 and 8). Therefore, it is concluded that environmental awareness has a significant positive relationship with the level of CA. This is observed very clearly in the division of node 1 into nodes 2 and 3, node 2 into nodes 4 and 5, and node 6 into nodes 12 and 13. In all these cases, whatever the level of consumer environmental concern is, the conclusion is always the same: the greater the consumer’s environmental concern, the greater his/her level of CA. This important finding aligns well with what it is stated by several authors that also report significant positive relationship between environmental awareness and environmental activism (Vicente-Molina Et al., 2018; Wi & Chang, 2019; Memmott et al., 2021; Smith & Kingston, 2021; North & Tonzer, 2022; Schwalb et al., 2023). This finding also matches with Rampedi & Ifegbesa (2022), that posit that environmental concern is the factor that most influences environmental behavior, or with Schwalb and Garcia-Arrizabalaga (2019) and Schwalb et al. (2023), that conclude that environmental awareness is the variable that most contributes to explain the behavior of boycotters and buycotters. In summary, this study reveals that environmental concern is the main driving force behind consumer activism. As people become more aware of the ecological challenges facing the planet, they seek ways to align their purchasing decisions with their values, fostering a more sustainable and environmentally conscious marketplace.

**Conclusions**

This study aims to determine which variables best characterize the varying levels of consumer activism across 30 countries, spanning different continents and development levels. Most of studies about CA have taken place on developed countries, and very little has been searched on developing ones. Therefore, this study helps to reduce the sociocultural imbalance found in the literature on global CA by paying attention also to developing countries. To contribute to a better characterization of the levels of CA in different countries, this study adds, to the classic sociodemographic variables of consumer age, gender, and education, new variables that could help explain this construct: consumer environmental concern, country of residence, level of solidarity, satisfaction with life, and political orientation.

The first relevant conclusion is that consumer gender and satisfaction with life do not contribute significantly to explain the different levels of CA.

A second important conclusion is that there is a set of variables (consumer level of solidarity, political orientation, age, and level of education) that has a weak influence on the different levels of CA. Besides, this influence does not appear in all the analyzed nodes. However, when this influence appears, it acts in the sense explained by the literature: the higher the level of solidarity, or the more progressive political orientation, or the older the consumer, or the higher the level of education, then, the higher the level of CA.

Country of residence is the second most important independent variable that influence the level of CA. This means that the differences in the level of consumer activism are influenced by the organization of the country's political life, country´s social capital, and country's position in the consumerism life cycle model. But the results of this study do not coincide with what other authors report (Zorell, 2019; 2020; Schwalb et al., 2023). Contrary to what is expected, this study finds that, in general, developed countries -countries with a higher organization of political life, greater social capital, and a more advanced position in the consumerism life cycle- do not have the highest level of CA. Surprisingly, this top position is mainly occupied by developing countries.

Finally, the environmental concern is the independent variable that most contributes to explain the different levels of consumer activism, and it has a significant positive relationship with the level of CA: the greater the consumer´s environmental concern, the greater his/her level of consumer activism. The results of this study are in accordance with what is stated in the literature, that considers environmental concern as the main driving force behind the consumer activism.

The results of this study reinforce what was concluded in a recent study by Schwalb et al. (2023) from 10 countries on the same four continents: there is no one-size-fits-all international profile for consumer activists, and the characteristics of consumer activism in developing countries cannot be assumed to be the same as those of consumers in developed countries.

**Managerial implications**

In a society in which consumers can easily share positive or negative information about brand and corporations, companies should be aware of consumer activism because it not only affects their image and reputation, but also has direct implications for their financial performance and competitiveness in a market increasingly driven by conscious consumer choices.

Companies and organizations working in international environments should be aware of the differences in the level of implementation of consumer activism and in the profile of the activist consumer in the countries in which they operate. This study reveals that consumer activism is everywhere fueled mainly by environmental concerns, because consumers everywhere have become very conscious of the gravity of environmental problems.

Businesses need to understand and respond to this worldwide concern that mainly motivates consumer activism, demonstrating a commitment to responsible business environmental practices, with clear and honest communication. Business failure to align with this societal expectation, with consumer values that demand companies to contribute positively to societal and environmental well-being, will mean higher levels of consumer activism. This will mean more social skepticism towards business or, even worse, an increasingly hostile environment towards business practices and towards corporations’ license to operate (Russell et al. 2016).

**Limitations and orientation for further research**

The first limitation of the study is the set of 30 countries included in the sample. This selection is based on the availability of the provided secondary data for the country. If other countries were included in the sample, the groupings found could change.

A second limitation is the lack of theoretical explanation found in the literature to explain the relationship of some of the independent variables with the different levels of CA. This is the case of satisfaction with life, level of solidarity, and political orientation.

The third limitation is the way country of residence has been measured. The multivariate characteristic of this variable requires to understand and measured its three different dimensions: the organization of the country's political life, its social capital, and the country's position in the consumerism life cycle model. All of them have not been measured in this study.

Finally, the nature of the sampling is another limitation. Only consumers with access to internet have been interviewed. Differences in the profile between interviewed consumers and consumers with no access to Internet is a potential bias of this study.

Concerning opportunities for further research, this study opens several questions. Among others, the null influence of gender and the weak influence of consumer age and education on the level of consumer activism; the determinant influence of environmental concern on the level of CA; the surprising higher level of CA in developing countries compared to developed ones.

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1. According to the GlobeScan web page, “GlobeScan Radar is a global public opinion research program of evidence and insights that helps influential organizations understand their material issues, societal trends, and public expectations. This research program consists of comparative and representative online surveys of 1,000 people in each of 25+ countries and draws on more than 20 years of global longitudinal research. Since 1997, GlobeScan Radar has explored how concerns about economic, environmental, and social issues are changing, and how different sectors are seen to be fulfilling their responsibilities to society” (for further details, visit https://globescan.com/trends/globescan-radar/). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)