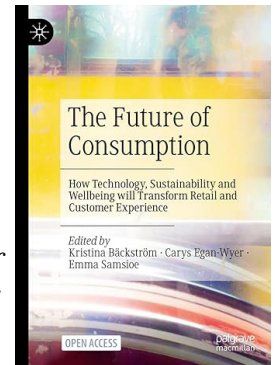


## NEW BOOKS

Anna Tikhomirova

# The Future We Live In

**Book Review:** Bäckström K., Egan-Wyer C., Samsioe E. (eds) (2024) *The Future of Consumption: How Technology, Sustainability and Wellbeing will Transform Retail and Customer Experience*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. 383 p.



**TIKHOMIROVA, Anna** — PhD, postdoctoral researcher, Laboratory for Studies in Economic Sociology, HSE University. Address: 20 Myasnitskaya str., Moscow, 101000, Russian Federation.

**Email:** [atikhomirova@hse.ru](mailto:atikhomirova@hse.ru)

### Abstract

The book “The Future of Consumption” offers the readers to take a look at the trends in the modern retail industry and their impact on the future of consumption. The editors, Kristina Bäckström, Carys Egan-Wyer, and Emma Samsioe, present the material in a deductive manner by first outlining the general topic of each part that provides the reader with the general idea. They guide the reader through technological, sustainable, wellbeing, and customer experience factors, all of which are closely interlinked and shape consumption practices. They further divide parts into smaller elements, with each reflecting on the crucial tendencies within the modern consumption practices, which are to determine the future of consumption. In each chapter, the authors unpack the integral elements of modern consumption discourse that by the end of the book helps the reader assemble the jigsaw puzzle and get a complete understanding of the future of consumption.

Even though the book presents a purely marketing standpoint and manifests itself as a guide for market researchers and practitioners, the reader can find a lot of evidence that the factors described have a much deeper societal nature beyond just consumption patterns. Modern consumption is no longer only about obtaining and utilizing goods and services. It is about self-identity and self-definition, when through consumption people tell who they are, what social stand they represent, and what values and beliefs they reflect. The role of the retailer is also undergoing certain transformations. Modern retailers and brands are seen as the transmitters of social and political ideas, those who are able to shape public opinion and significantly alter consumption behavior. All the players of modern retail are interconnected and affect one another.

**Keywords:** consumption; consumer; sustainability; technology; wellbeing; customer experience.

### Introduction

The book “The Future of Consumption” was published in 2024 and represents a collection of research works contributed by 42 authors from various countries and research fields. The book editors, being the lecturers at Lund University in Sweden, with diverse research interests, managed to tailor the book in the exquisite manner. Kristina Bäckström, a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Service Studies and Centre for Retail Research, specializes in the field of digitalization and consumer behavior; Carys Egan-Wyer, a senior lecturer at School of Economics

and Management, is interested in sustainable consumption; Emma Samsioe, an Associate Senior Lecturer at the Department of Service Studies and Centre for Retail Research, specializes on consumer culture and digital consumer practices, fashion, and food consumption. Most of the contributing scholars specialize in different aspects of marketing: digitalization; digital marketing and digital consumption; AI technologies; sustainability and sustainable consumption; consumer culture; service studies, psychological and sociological determinants of the consumption, etc. Among the practitioners there are specialists in business innovation and digital business practices; circular product management; sustainability; marketing management; consumer experience; customer experience strategies. The authors' backgrounds as both scholars and practitioners broaden the horizons of the book, enriching it with theoretical depth and rich practical insights. In their attempt to answer the central research question "What is the future of consumption?" the authors provide a detailed outlook on what future consumers will be like, how the consumption patterns and customer experience will transform under the permanently changing conditions, and how retailers can use this knowledge to respond to the emerging consumption trends.

The book has a very clear structure and consists of five major parts. It starts with the introduction which provides a brief outline and summary of each subsequent part of the book. There are four parts, each focusing on the key factors that transform consumption behavior. Within its framework, the book touches upon three major aspects: *technology*, *sustainability*, and *wellbeing*, which, the authors believe, are to shape the future of consumption. These themes are correspondently represented in each separate part of the book. The final section is devoted to *customer experience*. Each part is further subdivided into a series of chapters where the reader can find more in-depth research and insights into the domain. Even though each factor is examined in a separate chapter, it is clear from the general narration that those factors are closely interconnected and influence consumer behaviour in complex ways.

When discussing *technology*, the authors refer to such trends as omnipresent digitalization, smart signage and its impact on retailer-customer communication, metaverse, trust in the context of digitalization, "buy now pay later" phenomenon.

The authors see *sustainability and sustainable consumption* as an integral part of modern society and its practices, which not only change consumption behaviour but also demand retailers to modify their business models in a more sustainable manner. Such trends as packaging-free initiatives, reducing food waste through sustainable food conversations, digitalization that leads to more sustainable consumption, and sustainable consumption in the clothes retail sector seem particularly meaningful for shaping the future of consumption.

In the context of customer *wellbeing*, it is worth mentioning slow consumption, personalized customer value, brand activism, and vegan consumption as the major driving forces that transform consumer attitudes and beliefs, altering the modes of consumption and potentially leading to the customer wellbeing.

Last but not least, the focus of the fourth part of the book is *customer experience*. This section examines the major changes in customer experience since the emergence of e-commerce and the way it co-exists with traditional offline stores. The authors concentrate greatly on in-store services as a vital component of the modern customer experience.

The more detailed discussion is unfolded in the subsequent parts of the article which is organized in line with the book structure.

## Technology

The fact that the authors place *technology* in the first part of the book is not accidental. It is the primary factor affecting consumers in various ways whose footprint can be traced in other factors as well. While other factors

affecting future consumption can be a matter of discussion, it is very hard to neglect the role of technology in people's lives.

The first chapter covers the linkage of technology and sustainability. Hassen and Akponah's research contributes to the analysis of mobile apps as facilitators of more sustainable modes of consumption in the context of the sharing economy. The idea of online app utilization in the sharing economy context to enhance sustainability has been very popular research focus in recent years. Previously, researchers investigated the effect of household energy apps [Paneru, Tosa, Tarigan 2023], sustainable food shopping apps [Fuentes, Cegrell 2021; Weber 2021; Samsioe, Fuentes 2022; Sharma, Joshi, Govindan 2023], carbon footprint tracking apps [Hoffmann et al. 2024]. In line with the previous studies, Hassen and Akponah advocate that in the age of digitalization, mobile apps can be used as a powerful tool to establish a communication channel with customers and guide them towards embracing sharing economy ideas and adopting sustainable and collaborative consumption models. They argue: "...that technology constitutes a key driver of achieving a sustainable-consumption society and, more specifically, that smartphone technologies are enabling a social and sustainable consumption lifestyle" [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 23]. "Consumers have become increasingly interested in expressing their orientations, desires, and motivations for participating in the circular economy using the digital platforms that are available in this space." [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 25]. The idea of such app implication not only affects consumption but also has a strong impact on peoples' norms, beliefs, and attitudes. It has the potential to transform the lifestyle and make it more collaborative providing people with a sense of belonging to a community with strong ideology.

Another interesting phenomenon described in the following chapter is related to an emerging type of advertising message called *smart signage*<sup>1</sup>. So far, this concept has not been widely addressed in academic research, which makes it a compelling object for scientific analysis and points the direction of future research. Prior studies have mostly concentrated on digital signage [Garaus, Wagner, Rainer 2021; Nakayama et al. 2023] without the integration of AI technologies. Smart signage is seen as a revolutionizing marketing tool that can deliver a unique personalized customer experience. "Retailers adopting smart signage are not only providing valuable information to consumers, but also interacting with them to solve their problems, build a rapport, and increase engagement" [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 39]. This new tool representing a combination of digital displays and AI is capable of creating two-way communication and provide a more personalized customer experience. Velasco and Marriott see it as a necessary element that may potentially affect customers' attitudes and beliefs, and ultimately, their decision-making process. The authors propose a model to analyse the potential effectiveness of smart signage. The model consists of several key elements such as signage design characteristics, psychological distance, privacy concerns, and consumer-product relationships. It is supposed that both psychological distance and privacy concerns may have a significant effect on the potential two-way communication. As the further direction for the research, the authors highlight another important phenomenon — *the metaverse*.

*The metaverse* is an extremely intriguing emerging phenomenon that is believed to have a dramatic effect on people's lives including their consumption experiences. Without doubt, it requires a thorough scientific assessment and comprehension. Despite its relative novelty, the metaverse and its possible societal effects have already provoked significant research interest and have been subjected to thorough analysis. First introduced in 1992 by Neal Stephenson in his science fiction novel, the metaverse was originally depicted as a parallel universe in which the main character of the book was able to adopt different identities and live them through as part of his daily life [Johri et al. 2024]. Today it is no longer science fiction, it is the reality we live in. The metaverse represents a virtual reality where users are able to communicate with each other and perform vari-

---

<sup>1</sup> "Media for which existing digital signage is given upgraded information technologies such as thinner and clearer liquid crystal displays, iris recognition technologies, augmented reality (AR), and/or object recognition, with multiple devices capable of being controlled remotely. Networking has enabled two-way or interactive content and services" [Kim, Lee 2015: 2911].

ous daily activities including shopping, taking avatar identities and having the possibility to experience things they have always dreamed of but have never had such an opportunity in the physical world. It is worth mentioning that the pandemic was somehow a facilitator of the wider metaverse application when many fashion brands provided a virtual opportunity for customers to experience and try on their products. Shahriar argues that the metaverse has the potential to shape marketing and retail strategies. “As a new medium, the metaverse is different from those preceding it, because it enables a fully immersive experience in virtual realms, potentially engendering a fundamental shift in how we view the world and experience embeddedness in multiple realities.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 63]. Employing McLuhanian (1992) perspective, the author attempts to analyse the modifications that the metaverse enforces on society, culture, and individuals. Shahriar provides a techno-political matrix that describes four potential scenarios for the metaverse evolution within social discourse: the Californian ideology represents a free-market ideology and consumer culture and encourages further technological development; democratized information society stands for the freedom of expression in the decentralized democratic cyberspace; algorithmic and surveillance culture is centred around privacy concerns and data protection; technological governance system leads to the stricter governmental control over big tech companies. Like any other technological development, the metaverse and its implementation present certain threats to consumers, with privacy concerns being a key issue. The author calls for marketers and retailers to establish “people-centric digital propositions” that prioritize the human element.

The concept of *trust*, which was briefly mentioned in the previous chapters in regard to privacy concerns, is explored in more detail in the following chapter. Due to technological advances, retailers nowadays are able to collect and analyze a vast amount of consumer behavioural data to make shopping experiences more personalized. Larsson and Haresamudram argue that the fast-spreading datafication of the consumption process should be explored from the perspective of consumer trust. The issue of trust in both offline and online consumption is not new and has drawn a lot of scholarly attention. Trust is considered a key element of human interaction and “the main prerequisite for functioning markets per se” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 81].

On the one hand, the datafication process can make customer experiences more personalized, benefiting both customers and retailers. On the other hand, the datafication process involves third parties collecting private data. This fact is closely related to the non-transparent user agreement of personal data utilization, mixed feelings of consumers and trust issues, potentially becoming a significant barrier to future interactions and purchasing decisions. The authors mention that many customers are reluctant to read through user agreements and often rely on intuition when deciding whether to accept them. Depending on the level of trust, the process of data collection may be seen either as personification when the level of trust is high or surveillance when the trust level is low. The authors advocate for prioritizing “trust, transparency, and agency as key consumer needs in the creation of healthy datafied retail” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 86].

The concluding chapter of the *Technology* part introduces one more interesting and revolutionizing concept: “Buy Now, Pay Later” (BNPL). This concept, first introduced by Chinese AntGroup in 2017, is currently fast spreading and represented by Affirm in the United States, Klarna in Sweden, Afterpay in Australia, and Ant and Tencent in China [Ji et al. 2023]. Despite being a fast-spreading tool, the impact of BNPL on the consumption has not been sufficiently analysed yet. Participants of the BNPL program have an opportunity to purchase a product and pay for it over a predetermined time period, typically spanning weeks or months. Without a doubt, this phenomenon affects and will further modify consumption patterns as it provides consumers with the opportunity to purchase something that they cannot afford at a certain period of time or provide them with free liquid resources that they can utilize for some other purposes. Nowadays it is particularly popular among Millennials and Gen Z, although little is known about the attitudes of older generations towards the BNPL payment model. It is supposed that engaging consumers with BNPL can make consumption more affordable and habitual. Moreover, it should make consumption more pleasant by reducing the feeling of financial constraint. The BNPL scheme involves three sides: the consumer, the retailer, and the third-party BNPL service

provider. It is supposed that the scheme should be beneficial for all three participants. Within the research framework, Relja, Zhao, and Ward outline several possible scenarios: *mutualism* which is beneficial for all the participants; *commensalism* —mix of win-neutral relationship; *parasitism* —mix of win-lose outcome, *amensalism* —mix of lose-neutral outcomes, and *synnecrosis* —lose outcomes for all the three participants. All in all, the authors state that BNPL is «more than just a payment ecosystem, generating environments that seek to transform the consumer experience and reshape the value proposition into one where retailers are a necessary, but no longer primary, constituent.». Furthermore, they highlight that BNPL «offers both an incentive to spend, fostering potentially unsustainable patterns of consumption, and a safety net regarding access to goods through deferred payment or installments.» [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 113–114].

## Sustainability

Over the past decade, the issue of sustainability and sustainable consumption has been an integral part of scientific discourse. It is therefore unsurprising that the authors of the book position sustainability as a key factor that is already reshaping, and will continue to reshape, consumption patterns in the future. As the authors state, “...the cry for sustainability has begun to be heard in all areas of life.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 128]. In this case the response to this “cry” for sustainability is twofold.

On the one hand, in modern society, especially in developed countries, there is a significant demand for sustainability that has become intertwined with people’s identities. Environmentally conscious consumers expect retailers to be responsible and sensitive to the environment, causing less or no harm to it. Retailers have to adapt to this demand in various ways. “Retailers are attempting to be environmentalists in every imaginable area, from building environmentally-friendly stores to designing decor, materials, activities, suppliers, products, and promotions.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 133]. An adoption of sustainable practices by retailers offers numerous advantages: “They provide the opportunity to attract consumers who want to buy environmentally-friendly products, also improving brand equity, building customer loyalty, attracting investment, cutting the cost of packaging, waste disposal, warehousing, electricity, and water, and, perhaps most importantly, offering a means of differentiation and competitive advantage” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 133]

At the same time, the authors see retailers as the key players who are not only responsible for the reduction of overproduction and overconsumption but are also seen as agents capable of adding value to products and services. “Retailers are taking the dominant aspects of sustainability and turning them into market actions that can be taken within existing structures and can find sufficient support and acceptance among consumers in order to continue their businesses economically and sustainably.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 140].

Within the realm of sustainability, it is worth mentioning that not all countries perceive environmental problems equally and, therefore, the demand for sustainable development at all levels differs dramatically across countries. Shih compares the perception of sustainability ideas in Taiwan and China. In the framework of this comparison, he presents a model of sustainable consumption which is affected by two major groups of factors. The first group of institutional factors includes culture, regulation, and state. The second group encompasses individual factors that consist of education, materialism, and information.

As discussed earlier in the article, digitalization is expected to benefit sustainable consumption, in line with the general shift in consumption practices. However, the authors debate that in regard to sustainable consumption and virtualization of consumption, there is a dearth of reliable data so far, and this area still requires further analysis. “Digitalization can in equal measures be the friend or foe of sustainable consumption.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 200].

There are several specific sustainability-related issues covered in the book. The first issue of sustainable consumption discussed by the authors is *packaging*. Being an inseparable part of both the product and the brand, today packaging is one of the major sources of plastic waste. Consequently, in the context of sustainability, package-free consumption is getting more and more attention as a constitutive element of building a more sustainable society. “Packaging-free shopping is a form of sustainable business model that meets the demands and needs of environmentally-sensitive consumers, reduces the harm that consumption causes to the environment, and contributes positively to a better world.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 139].

Sustainable consumption supposes a considerable change in food consumption practices, potentially resulting in the establishment of new behaviours. Therefore, within the sustainability framework, there is a growing interest in *plant-based foods*. In the second chapter of this part, the authors refer to seaweed as an alternative food source. “Research and industry have high expectations regarding seafood and algae as sustainable food alternatives.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 147]. Fredriksson et al. argue that as consumers feel rather open towards new types of plant-based foods, retailers play a crucial role in introducing these new products and facilitating their adoption by consumers. It once again highlights the significance of retailers in delivering the value message to consumers and driving further modifications in consumption patterns.

Another important food-related topic discussed is *food waste*. Sutinen and Närvänen argue that the minimization of food waste allows retailers combine several aspects of sustainability such as economic, social, and environmental. Engaging in public debate on sustainability issues is identified as one of potential tools that can lead to more sustainable consumption and food waste reduction. The authors suggest that retailers may address their customers and affect their consumption behaviour patterns by participating in discussions in both traditional and social media platforms. They identify several approaches adopted by retailers. First of all, retailers publicly report about food waste reduction. Second, they assist and advise consumers on food waste reduction, which is seen as the potential tool of consumption transformation. Third, an invitation to participate in public debate on social media is seen as another extremely powerful tool, since anyone can join such debates and share their opinion.

## Wellbeing

The third part of the book is related to the concept of wellbeing. Nowadays, being at the peak of its prioritization, wellbeing refers to something ultimately good for a person. It usually consists of mental, physical, economic, and emotional wellbeing that are closely interconnected. The authors broaden the concept by including additional elements into the concept: “The dimensions of wellbeing are defined as physical health, mental health, financial wellbeing, marginalization, discrimination, literacy, inclusion, access, capacity-building and decreased disparity.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 236]. Undoubtedly, when consumers prioritize wellbeing, it inevitably influences their consumption modes. People become more conscious about various aspects of the goods and services they consume.

As previously discussed, one of the integral components of wellbeing is mental health. With the increasing prioritization of mental health in today’s fast-paced world, a lot of people opt for online mental health consultancy services. Jeunemaître addresses consumer wellbeing from the digital mental health service perspective, highlighting both advantages and disadvantages of these services. It is worth mentioning that the advantages in this domain are extremely contextual. The range of disadvantages is rather wide: “Certain ethical issues, for example, consumer privacy, the competence of therapists, or the ability of counterparts to build a therapeutic relationship.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 236].

Another technological development aimed at enhancing peoples’ wellbeing and making life more convenient is embodied technologies. Following the transhumanist philosophy, the movement of biohackers emerged in

2008 [Meyer, Vergnaud 2020]. That small group of people believed that the human body has limitations in fulfilling all necessary functions and the implantation of microchips will boost bodily functions. So far, the leading microchip producer in this field has sold over 10,000 microchips.

The authors suggest that the implication of microchips is “a wide range of biotechnological self-experiments, or hacks, intended to further human wellbeing (e. g., increased cognitive capacity, happiness, and morality).” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 253]. From the consumption perspective, this technology is supposed to modify the modes of consumption, making it a simpler and more positive experience. However, this technological development raises also a range of issues to be discussed and solved in the future. First of all, the existing microchips have a significant technological drawback, notably their expiration date, after which the implanted microchip should be removed and replaced. Second, there is a lot of ethical debate regarding the experiments involving human body modification. Third, along with other novel digital products, there is a great debate about privacy concerns and governmental control over personal data obtained through microchips.

Due to the unexpanded nature of biohacking, it is hard to foresee and analyze whether such technological innovation, which involves interference in human body, will be broadly accepted by the public and have the potential to significantly alter the habitual ways of life and consumption patterns as part of this broader transformation.

Another novel concept introduced in the modern world is the notion of *brand activism*. The Lewis and Vredenburg describe it as a construct of the consumer wellbeing, where “brands deliver value to consumers through emotional and self-expression benefits that can impact consumer wellbeing. Further, brands help consumers to construct both their identities and their sense of self through the consumption of brands, and the broader values these are aligned with.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 265].

In the current climate, society demands brands to take a strong standpoint on socio-political issues. Recent studies show that an overwhelming majority of consumers (86%) anticipate brands to be socially active [Ahmad, Guzmán, Al-Emran 2024]. Brands today have a great ability to deliver extremely powerful ideas, values, and morals to their customers. Despite the consumer brand identification theory, which suggests that the stronger brand identification leads to a higher possibility of repeat purchases, brands are not always willing to state their political or social views. The reaction of consumers may be hard to foresee.

According to Lewis and Vredenburg, “consumers evaluate activism authenticity as part of their consumption process.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 267]. The authors advocate that the perception of authenticity or inauthenticity of brand activism affects the feeling of brand alignment and, therefore, influence the overall brand experience for the consumer. When consumers perceive the brand’ socio-political standpoint as inauthentic, they express scepticism and lack of desire to interact further with the brand.

Veganism is another movement related to sustainable consumption that potentially results in the consumer wellbeing. Lamarche-Beauchesne argues that amidst environmental problems, consumers seek the feeling of agency by reconstructing their consumption, with veganism emerging as one of the potential forms of this reconstruction. The author believes that by reconstructing their consumption, people can achieve the sense of wellbeing not only for themselves but also for others. The author addresses the issue through the theory of the consumption-driven market emergence that highlights the vital role of consumers in the new market emergence. “It is then suggested that, for ideologically driven consumer movements such as veganism, traditional markets may play a role in reducing stigmatization and lifestyle legitimation through the development of visible and compliant products.” [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 282–283]. Lifestyle movements such as veganism influence peoples’ daily lives and lead to identity transformation and adoption of new practices including the transformation of the regular consumption decision-making. Such lifestyle movements not only

have the ability to affect consumption on its outer level but also bring significant cultural, ethical, and social transformations.

## Customer Experience

The final part of the book is devoted to the analysis of the customer experience within the dynamically changing retail context. A lot is said about the role of physical stores and the experiences customers may get there in the age of digitalization. As the world is changing extremely fast, retailers have no other option but to adapt to the constant and ongoing changes. In recent decades many alternative retail channels have emerged, which puts traditional offline shops under considerable threat. However, contemporary studies show that the emergence of new channels, such as e-commerce, does not exclude traditional stores from customers' options but highlights the need to create and master the practice of integrated channels that can provide customers with a smooth consumption experience. The development of such a channel change consumption patterns. There is a strong demand for traditional stores to meet customers' needs and expectations. Nowadays, the role of the physical store has changed greatly, as customers visit them not only for the purpose of making purchases but also to get a valuable customer experience [Wang, Goldfarb 2017].

According to Nilsson, the combination of both online and offline consumption has created several new consumer behavior patterns. For instance, showrooming allows people experience the product they want to purchase in a physical store, before making a final online purchase. Webrooming is a totally opposite action when consumers check the information online before purchasing in a physical store. The "buy online pick up in store" pattern (BOPS) also provides a combination of both channels. It is argued that taking into consideration the mixed consumption approach, modern consumers do not have clear boundaries between online and offline consumption. According to the author, there is a very small segment of consumers who opt for exclusively online consumption mode. The majority prefers the online-offline combination whereas consumers mostly visit physical stores for inspiration and service. That literary makes prior analysis of consumer behavior in purely online or purely offline contexts irrelevant in the modern environment and requires scientific comprehension of omnichannel consumption.

Vredenburg et al. emphasize that so far traditional physical stores have the possibility to provide customers with unique experiences that online stores cannot do. They are able to "create moments of delight, when customer expectations are exceeded" [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 324]. The authors state that one of the important tools that can create a unique experience is "the concept of employee-to-customer improvisation—a combination of creativity and quick-thinking in order to create unique value both for and with the customer."

That brings us to another tool — personal service encounters. Egan-Wyer argues that "the successful retail stores of the future will be the ones that can answer the following question: When is it worth investing in the personal service encounter and when are self-service technologies more appropriate?" [Bäckström, Egan-Wyer, Samsioe 2024: 346]. The authors highlight that not all customers require personal service and today, especially after pandemic, many prefer self-service technologies.

## Major Limitations of the Book

The book has several significant drawbacks. First of all, when analyzing the utilization of new technological advances, the authors mainly refer to two generations — Millennials and Gen Z. Such examples are evident in articles "The Intersection of Sustainability and Technology in the Context of the Digital Marketplace" by Hassen and Akponah; "Smart Signage: Towards a Transformative Model that Effectively Generates Consumer-Product Relationships" by Velasco and Marriott; "Friend or



Foe? How Buy-Now-Pay-Later Is Seeking to Change Traditional Consumer-Retailer Relationships in the UK” by Relja, Zhao and Ward. It is a well-known fact that younger consumers adapt to new technologies and start implementing them in their daily practices much faster than older generations [Morris, Venkatesh 2000; Trocchia, Janda 2000]. When talking about the future of consumption, researchers are more interested in younger generations as the driving force of future change. However, neglecting the experience of older people may introduce bias into the research. It can be potentially interesting to analyse and compare the peculiarities of older consumers and create for them a certain adaptability mechanism.

Another significant limitation is the selection of the countries under research focus when addressing sustainability issues. Most of the respondents and observations in the book are from developed countries, where sustainability topics are more prominent, people are aware of potential environmental threats and have adopted sustainable consumption to some degree. However, in many countries the issue of sustainability is not a primary concern, citizens may not experience a shortage of natural resources or food, and, therefore, ignore or simply are not aware of potential threats. Consequently, as a potential for further research it is worth exploring consumer behavior in countries where sustainability is not that widely popularised. By pointing out some common tendencies, it would be possible to suggest new developments that may potentially enhance transformation in social norms, beliefs and attitudes, resulting in more sustainable consumption practices.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The book “The Future of Consumption” sheds light on the modern trends that are currently transforming or are to transform future consumption. The book mainly takes a marketing standpoint. However, the majority of the trends outlined have the capacity to cause not only marketing transformations but can also transform social discourse at a deeper level of norms, attitudes, and beliefs.

Even though a separate part of the book is devoted to technology, it is obvious that the technological factor is the core element of the future transformations, intricately linked with sustainability, wellbeing, and customer experience. Since the emergence of the Internet, peoples’ lives are undergoing constant changes. The modern society we live in is dominated by digitalization. Some technologies such as online shopping are already an integral part of peoples’ lives. We feel their presence, can already measure their effects and observe transformations happening within society. As it was stated by the authors, we can witness behavioral transformations among consumers, for instance, the emergence of new retail channels that transform consumption patterns. Other technologies such as microchips and metaverses are still somewhere at the edge of reality and science fiction. Even if it is hard to observe their impact now, these phenomena have immense potential to enhance significant social changes.

Researchers and practitioners place significant hope in the power of digitalization to drive the development of sustainable consumption. Indeed, social media and mobile apps are crucial tools used by brands and retailers to communicate their messages and ideas to consumers. Digital technologies are widely applied in the promotion of sustainable ideas, as well as the creation of arenas for public discussion that enhance sustainable consumption. A similar role of retailers can be seen when addressing the concept of brand activism. In this context, retailers act not only as sellers who are seeking mere profits but more as agents who create values and deliver life-changing ideas to their customers.

Consumers, in their turn, affect retailers by creating a diverse set of demands. Firstly, consumers expect brands not only to perform their basic function by producing goods and services. Brands are obliged to articulate their political and social stand. Consumption is no longer just a process of buying and utilizing goods and services. It is closely related to consumers’ self-identification and self-definition. Secondly, consumers are those who actively participate in the establishment of new lifestyle markets. They dictate to retailers what they need, and

retailers have to reflect. Therefore, the relationship between consumers and retailers is a two-way exchange where both players affect each other and collectively construct the future of consumption.

With the further spread of digitalization and datafication of consumption, the issues of consumer trust and privacy concerns will remain at the forefront of attention. Given that they are the core elements of adopting and applying new technologies, there is a clear demand for their careful and transparent management.

To draw the conclusion, the book is beneficial for both researchers and practitioners. First, it outlines valuable directions for future research and raises important questions for further discussion. Second, by describing modern trends and tendencies, it provides a rich material for practitioners to reflect on and apply in their practice to be able to meet the needs and demands of modern consumers.

## Acknowledgements

The results of the project “Russians’ Daily Social Practices under Exogenous Shocks,” carried out within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University) in 2024, are presented in this work.

## References

- Ahmad F., Guzmán F., Al-Emran Md. (2024) Brand Activism and the Consequence of Woke Washing *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 170 (January), art. 114362. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114362> (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Bäckström K., Egan-Wyer C., Samsioe E. (eds) (2024) *The Future of Consumption*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Feng L., Teng J.-T., Zhou F. (2023) Pricing and Lot-Sizing Decisions on Buy-Now-and-Pay-Later Installments through a Product Life Cycle. *European Journal of Operational Research*, vol. 306, pp. 754–763.
- Fuentes C., Cegrell O. (2021) Digitally Enabling Sustainable Food Shopping: App Glitches, Practice Conflicts, and Digital Failure. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, vol. 61, July, art. 102546. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102546> (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Garaus M., Wagner U., Rainer R. C. (2021) Emotional Targeting Using Digital Signage Systems and Facial Recognition at the Point-of-Sale. *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 131, July, pp. 747–762. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.10.065> (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Hoffmann S., Lasarov W., Reimers H., Trabandt M. (2024) Carbon Footprint Tracking Apps. Does Feedback Help Reduce Carbon Emissions? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, vol. 434, January, art. 139981. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2023.139981> (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Johri A., Sayal A., Chaithra N., Jha J., Aggarwal N., Pawar D., Gupta V., Gupta A. (2024) Crafting the Techno-Functional Blocks for Metaverse — A Review and Research Agenda. *International Journal of Information Management Data Insights*, vol. 4, iss. 1, April, art. 100213. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jjime.2024.100213> (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Ji Y., Wang X., Huang Y., Chen S., Wang F. (2023) Buy Now, Pay Later as Liquidity Insurance: Evidence from an Early Experiment in China. *China Economic Review*, vol. 80, August, art. 101998. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chieco.2023.101998> (accessed 17 May 2024).

- Kim H. S., Lee B. G. (2015) An Empirical Analysis of Smart Signage and Its Market Delimitation. *KSII Transactions on Internet and Information Systems*, vol. 9, no 8, pp. 2910–2927.
- Meyer M., Vergnaud F. (2020) The Rise of Biohacking: Tracing the Emergence and Evolution of DIY Biology through Online Discussions. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, vol. 160, November, art. 120206. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120206> (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Morris M. G., Venkatesh V. (2000) Age Differences in Technology Adoption Decisions: Implications for a Changing Work Force. *Personnel Psychology*, vol. 53, no 2, pp. 375–403. Available at: [10.1111/j.1744-6570.2000.tb00206.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2000.tb00206.x) (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Nakayama M., Uchino K., Nagao K., Fujishiro I. (2023) HYDRO: Optimizing Interactive Hybrid Images for Digital Signage Content. *Virtual Reality & Intelligent Hardware*, vol. 5, no 6, pp. 565–577.
- Paneru C. P., Tosa C., Tarigan A. K. M. (2023) Exploring Digital Narratives: A Comprehensive Dataset of Household Energy App Reviews. *Data in Brief*, vol. 51, December, art. 109835. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2023.109835> (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Samsioe E., Fuentes C. (2022) Digitalizing Shopping Routines: Re-Organizing Household Practices to Enable Sustainable Food Provisioning. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, vol. 29, January, pp. 807–819. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2021.07.019> (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Sharma M., Joshi S., Govindan K. (2023) Overcoming Barriers to Implement Digital Technologies to Achieve Sustainable Production and Consumption in the Food Sector: A Circular Economy Perspective. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, vol. 39, pp. 203–215. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2023.04.002> (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Trocchia P. J., Janda S. (2000) A Phenomenological Investigation of Internet Usage among Older Individuals. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, vol. 17, no 7, pp. 605–616. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363760010357804> (accessed 17 May 2024).
- Wang K., Goldfarb A. (2017) Can Offline Stores Drive Online Sales? *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol. 54, no 5, pp. 706–719.
- Weber A. (2021) Mobile Apps as a Sustainable Shopping Guide: The Effect of Eco-Score Rankings on Sustainable Food Choice. *Appetite*, vol. 167, 1 December, art. 105616. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2021.105616> (accessed 17 May 2024).

**Received:** April 4, 2024

**Citation:** Tikhomirova A. (2024) The Future We Live in. Book Review: Bäckström K., Egan-Wyer C., Samsioe E. (eds) (2024) *The Future of Consumption: How Technology, Sustainability and Wellbeing will Transform Retail and Customer Experience*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. 383 p. *Journal of Economic Sociology = Ekonomicheskaya sotsiologiya*, vol. 25, no 3, pp. 247–257. doi: [10.17323/1726-3247-2024-3-247-257](https://doi.org/10.17323/1726-3247-2024-3-247-257) (in English).