

# **Because I'm Happy: Exploring the Happiness of Shopping in Social Enterprises and its Effect on Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – This research analyzes the role of happiness associated with sustainable purchases in social enterprises as a key precursor of prosocial behavioral responses through satisfaction with such purchases.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This paper studies the relationships between past purchase in a social enterprise, consumer happiness, satisfaction, and three indicators of loyalty: repurchase intention, word-of-mouth intention, and willingness to pay more. In addition, it analyzes the moderating role of altruistic motivation. A survey was designed to collect data from 380 consumers who had bought in a social enterprise.

**Findings** – Sustainable consumption is a source of happiness for ethical consumers to the extent that they feel that they meet a personal need or desire and they contribute to achieving a social objective with their purchasing behavior.

**Practical implications** – Social enterprises must appeal to the happiness of consumers as a strategic line to achieve their satisfaction and loyalty. Social enterprise practitioners and marketers should deploy organizational capabilities and resources in key performing areas such as communication, customer service, or shopping experience, with the purpose of maximizing the happiness of ethical consumers with whom the firm is interacting for the first time.

**Originality/value** – This research highlights the importance of the social enterprise in the commercial setting, since it has been proven that purchases in these companies generate happiness and satisfaction in consumers. In addition, satisfaction has a great impact on their loyalty, which is a direct advantage for this type of company and an indirect one for society as a whole.

**Keywords** – happiness; past behavior; satisfaction; loyalty; social enterprise; sustainable consumption

**Paper type** – Research paper

## 1. Introduction

In the field of sustainable development promoted by the United Nations 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015), Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 aims to mitigate the erosion in ecological and social systems caused by current production and consumption models. This implies committing to sustainable modes of production and consumption at three levels: macro (society), meso (organizational), and micro (individual). However, trying to find the point of equilibrium between such different interests for the parties involved can be extremely complex (Salimath and Chandna, 2021). From the individual perspective in particular, considering other needs beyond one's own can lead to psychological discomfort, such as a feeling of sacrifice (Sameer *et al.*, 2021); in contrast, if the individual focus is solely on self-wellbeing, the consumer behavior can harm others, the natural environment, and, by extension, society (Lindenberg and Steg, 2007). Ethical consumers emerge at this crossroads, since they consider environmental and societal issues in addition to their own needs and wants. The ethical commitment and responsibility of these consumers is reflected in their buying behavior (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Hosta and Zabkar, 2021) and they may experience positive emotions such as happiness because of a sense of 'doing the right thing' (Lin-Hi *et al.*, 2020; Sameer *et al.*, 2021).

Research on happiness in consumer society has been of great interest in the last decades (Veenhoven, 1996, 2012; Haybron, 2013), specifically in the framework of the emotional dimension deployed when consuming (Dutta and Mandal, 2021; Veenhoven *et al.*, 2021). In particular, the determinant capacity of happiness on customer decision-making and behavior is being explored in a major way, with special prominence of its influence on loyalty-, commitment-, trust-, or satisfaction-based behavioral responses (Bettiga and Lamberti, 2020; Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2021). The term "consumer happiness" does not have a unique definition in the literature (Dhiman and Kumar, 2022). Within the field of marketing, the term has been used interchangeably with well-being, life satisfaction, utility, and welfare (Barbosa, 2017). Our perspective in this paper is to consider both the eudemonic and the hedonic aspects of happiness (Sameer *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, the happiness or well-being of the consumer will be determined by the degree of fulfillment of the purchase objectives (e.g., buying the product in the desired time) and also by the joy experienced from making a contribution to creating a better world (e.g. buying environmentally responsible products). In terms of sustainable consumption, recent research has shed light on the confluence of happiness, sustainability, and consumption, a triad that up to now has remained largely obscure. Scholarly literature has explored the relationship between happiness and an ethical consumer predisposition toward sustainable behaviors through the consumption of sustainable products (i.e., those having positive social and/or environmental attributes) in purchasing (Fei *et al.*, 2022; Ramos-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2022) and repurchasing processes (Hwang and Kim, 2018).

This research focuses on social enterprises (SEs), those whose consumers satisfy their needs responsibly through sustainable consumption (Allen, 2005; Ferdousi, 2017; Barraket *et al.*, 2022). A SE is defined as an "operator of the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than to make a profit for its owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services to the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative way and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities" (European Commission, 2011, p.2).

In addition to their hybrid character, in which social value and market mechanisms are coupled, SEs are gaining prominence for their tractive capacity in boosting individual happiness (Ketprapakorn and Kantabutra, 2019) and social and environmental wellbeing (Littlewood and Holt, 2018) through the promotion of sustainable production and consumption models. Thus, the ability of SEs to reconcile the interests and happiness of individuals and society seems promising. Ethical consumers can find in SEs the necessary ally they need for responsible

consumption. The happiness experienced as a consequence of obtaining both an individual and collective value will foster positive post-purchase behaviors (repurchase intentions, willingness to pay more or WOW intentions), favoring these companies in the short and medium run, in terms of loyalty of current consumers and attraction of new customers. The development of such type of companies is consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) included in the 2030 Agenda of United Nations (UN, 2015).

In order to attain a deeper understanding of the economic rationale of SEs, it is critical to assess the extent to which responsible consumption can contribute to consumer happiness. If a feeling of happiness is obtained after consuming from SEs, it is likely that the consumer will want to repeat the experience, which will also contribute to the SDGs. However—and despite the transformative potential of these organizations—there is still little scholarly attention to the SE consumers' perspective, their decision-making process, and the emotional drivers and obstacles for purchase and repurchase intention of SEs' products in the framework of sustainable consumption (Chen *et al.*, 2021), even more so in a post-pandemic period.

This research seeks to shed some light on this gap by exploring the role of happiness in SEs' customers' decisions and behaviors. In particular, this work aims to determine the influence that happiness can ultimately have on stimulating prosocial behaviors (repurchase intention, WOM intention, and willingness to pay more) among SEs' customers when purchasing sustainable products, and based on the satisfaction experienced as a result. Therefore, this research contributes to the literature about the emotional facets of consumption with regard to SEs. To the best of our knowledge, previous literature has only focused on cognitive features. In addition, we take the three-stage customer journey model, applied to the retail sector (Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020), as a reference, focusing on consumer behaviors in the post-consumption stage.

The following section presents an overview of relevant literature on the topic, gathers the set of proposed hypotheses, and provides the corresponding conceptual framework. Section 3 describes the data and methodology used for the analysis. The association between consumption, happiness, and behavioral responses is explored in section 4, using structural equation analysis. Finally, section 5 discusses the results, draws conclusions, and outlines limitations and the potential for further research.

## **2. Theoretical background and hypothesis development**

During the last decades, rapid economic development has promoted a materialistic culture among consumers (Toti *et al.*, 2021), making excessive consumption behaviors or consumerism commonplace (Fei *et al.*, 2022). However, as society has become aware of the impossibility of maintaining these forms of production, distribution, and consumption, there is a need to promote an alternative type of development that is sustainable (Alsaad, 2021). This paradigm shift is driven not only by the supply side, but also and especially by the demand side. Thus, some consumers are attracted by the idea of experiencing 'conscious consumption', which allows them to contribute to solving the economic, social, and environmental problems facing the planet (Fei *et al.*, 2022).

Against this background, the figure of the ethical consumer emerges, understood as an individual who chooses products and services influenced by environmental, social, or ethical considerations (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). This type of consumer is "someone who carefully weighs up what he or she really needs and also considers how this will affect others (nature, society)" (Hosta and Zabkar, 2021, p. 275). In general, these consumers feel responsible toward society and express these feelings through their purchasing behavior (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Toti *et al.*, 2021; Fei *et al.*, 2022).

As a result, ethical consumption has become an increasingly important issue in marketing and business in general. Many studies have addressed this issue in various areas such as fair trade,

boycotting unethical products and businesses, selective purchases exclusively of ethical products, or the purchase of proximity products and services, among others (Becker, 2021; Toti *et al.*, 2021; Fei *et al.*, 2022).

In this context, this particular research focuses on SEs as promising vehicles when trying to reconcile the interests and happiness of individuals and society as a whole. The ethical consumer may find in an SE an ally to satisfy his or her need for responsible consumption. However, despite its importance, there is little research on specific purchases from SEs (Lin-Hi *et al.*, 2020; Tsai *et al.*, 2020; Lee, Mousa, *et al.*, 2021). Most of these studies have been developed from an organizational perspective, and few have adopted a consumer perspective (Tsai *et al.*, 2020; Lee, Zailani, *et al.*, 2021), although consumers are a key stakeholder with a real and determining impact on the outcome and survival of the SE (Gras and Mendoza-Abarca, 2014).

Thus, consumers of SEs seek, through their purchases, to obtain a double value: a personal or individual benefit (satisfaction of their needs) and a social benefit (positive social impact or reduction of negative impact). Thus, in the purchase of sustainable products in SEs, the achievement of emotional benefits, such as feeling good, avoiding feelings of guilt, and improving social position, are especially important. In other words, emotional benefits arise from 'doing the right thing' by contributing to social welfare (Lin-Hi *et al.*, 2020), so the study of positive emotions such as happiness derived from the consumption of sustainable products in SEs may be of great interest.

### 2.1. Relationship between past behavior and happiness

The pursuit of happiness is a key issue for the personal development of any individual, so it has attracted great interest in various disciplines within the social sciences (Helliwell and Aknin, 2018). Marketing is no stranger to this trend (Barbosa, 2017) with particular regard to the study of consumer behavior (Bagozzi, 1999). Individuals significantly strive to be happy, and one way to contribute to this goal is through the purchase of goods and services (Fei *et al.*, 2022). Thus, in the context of post-purchase behavior, happiness can be considered the positive emotional state after consumption (Nicolao *et al.*, 2009).

Despite its importance, Mogilner *et al.* (2012) highlighted a decade ago that there was limited knowledge about how happiness is experienced by consumers, and more research on this topic was needed to answer key questions—for example, how consumption affects consumer happiness and what are the consequences of making consumers happy (Nicolao *et al.*, 2009; Barbosa, 2017).

Based on this premise, the definition of happiness varies in the literature (Veenhoven, 2004) but there is consensus that it is a subjective wellbeing (Diener, 1984) and therefore it changes from one person to another (Nicolao *et al.*, 2009). Some research has emphasized the negative effects of marketing on wellbeing, especially those related to consumerism and exacerbated materialism. Some scholars note that while consumption can provide immediate pleasure and affect consumers' emotions, it may also be harmful for wellbeing in the long run. Consequently, greater consumption that is not oriented toward the interests of the individual beyond the immediate satisfaction of desires in the short term would be associated with less happiness (Quelch and Jocz, 2007).

However, other authors defend the idea of consumption as an agent of social change focused on improving individual and collective wellbeing. In this line, Dunn *et al.* (2008) demonstrated that spending money on other people can have a greater impact on the happiness of individuals than spending money on oneself, which emphasizes the benefits of prosocial spending. The happiness experienced in these cases would stimulate helping behaviors and altruistic actions, as already anticipated by Bagozzi (1999). The explanation for this dilemma could lie in the fact that, within the field of psychology, wellbeing has been approached from two perspectives: the hedonic tradition and the eudemonic tradition (Deci and Ryan, 2006).

The hedonic perspective focuses on pleasure and enjoyment, while the eudemonic perspective focuses on meaning, purpose, and personal growth (Sameer *et al.*, 2021). Hedonism has traditionally been associated with materialism, where hedonic wellbeing reflects the positive feelings that arise from possessing the material goods one desires (Waterman, 1993). For decades there has been a debate about whether the emphasis on pleasure or enjoyment resulting from consumerism causes individuals to consume more or consume less responsibly (Veenhoven, 2004). Consequently, if individuals focus only on their own enjoyment, they may harm society and the environment. In other words, irrational hedonism could lead to socially irresponsible behavior (Sameer *et al.*, 2021).

However, from an ethical or sustainable consumption perspective, a person whose values are more eudemonic rather than hedonic should be more responsible towards the environment (Sameer *et al.*, 2021). According to Sameer *et al.* (2021) sustainable or responsible consumption would be the result of a balanced hedonic approach which includes both hedonic and eudemonic aspects. Thus, the responsible consumer could even have higher wellbeing than the irresponsible consumer because he/she adds to the pleasure of the function covered (hedonic) the enjoyment of the contribution to his/her vital personal development (eudemonic). Thus, there may be, for example, happy 'green' consumers who feel pleasure and enjoyment while contributing to sustainability. In conclusion, ethical purchasing behaviors can elicit positive emotions and increase consumers' happiness (Ganglmair-Wooliscroft and Wooliscroft, 2019); that is, consumers can derive happiness from the consumption of ethical products over time (Fei *et al.*, 2022). In this line, Ketprapakorn and Kantabutra (2019) state that customers tend to be comparatively happier with those companies that are known to be environmentally and socially friendly, which leads us to pose the first hypothesis of our research in the field of SEs:

H1. Past purchasing behavior of sustainable products in SEs has a positive effect on consumer happiness.

## *2.2. Relationship between customer happiness and satisfaction*

The emotional state of the consumer is decisive in the post-purchase stage (Barbosa, 2017). Thus, rewarding experiences with purchased products and services make the consumer feel good and happy, which can translate into brand loyalty (Barbosa, 2017; Núñez-Barriopedro *et al.*, 2021). However, consumers' behavioral responses cannot be fully explained without including the cognitive aspect of satisfaction (Liljander and Strandvik, 1997).

Satisfaction refers to consumers' expectations of a product or service. If the product or service meets or exceeds consumer expectations, consumers will be satisfied with it, as has been demonstrated for decades (Kotler, 1999). Satisfaction has been related to behavioral aspects of consumption (such as the happiness associated with shopping), but also to other aspects of life that promote well-being, such as volunteering (Binder, 2015) or philanthropy (Naskrent and Siebelt, 2011). In relation to volunteering, Binder (2015) affirms, even if done only seldom, it has a positive influence on satisfaction with social life and the use of leisure time. In the case of philanthropy, Naskrent and Siebelt (2011) found indirect relationships between satisfaction with donations and donor retention, through donor trust and commitment. The relationship between emotions (including happiness) and consumer satisfaction has been analyzed in previous research (Philips and Baumgartner, 2002; Schmitt *et al.*, 2015), resulting in great diffusion and acceptance of a structure of emotions with several positive or negative dimensions (Watson and Tellegen, 1985; Calvo-Porrall *et al.*, 2018). Happiness is one of the positive dimensions identified by Laros and Steemkamp (2005).

Understanding consumer emotions is an extremely complex subject of study, but one that has great implications for understanding the competitive advantage and success of a company in general and of SEs in particular. The consumer's relationship with the company is characterized by various emotional responses (I am happy, content, proud, I feel good about myself). The intensity of these emotions can be used as a decision heuristic: if consumers feel happy about their purchase (because it satisfies their own needs and at the same time contributes to the wellbeing of society), this positive emotion leads to a feeling of satisfaction with it. In the specific case of SEs, the consumer is expected to manifest hedonic and eudemonic happiness by combining the achievement of their own needs with the contribution to a social goal through their purchasing behavior. Consumer satisfaction could derive from the pleasure of fulfilling one's own need and, at the same time, from the contribution to the common good. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H2. Consumer happiness derived from purchases from SEs has a positive effect on consumer satisfaction.

Based on the sequence 'past purchase - happiness - satisfaction', this research highlights the key role of happiness as a mediating variable between past purchases in SEs and the response variable (in this case, satisfaction). In other words, the mere fact of shopping from SEs does not directly translate into a state of satisfaction with the enterprise. Previously, consumers have seen their happiness activated in terms of pleasure, enjoyment, and pride in contributing to social welfare while at the same time meeting their own needs. Therefore, an indirect link is expected between past purchases and satisfaction through the happiness that the consumer experiences with them. This leads us to expect that:

H3. Consumer happiness mediates the relationship between past behavior with SEs and consumer satisfaction.

### *2.3. Loyalty indicators as consequences of customer satisfaction*

Numerous studies have related satisfaction to consumer loyalty in different domains (Meesala and Paul, 2018; Ahmed *et al.*, 2022). One of the most promising areas is sustainability in general (Chang and Fong, 2010; Lam *et al.*, 2016), and SEs in particular (Choi and Kim, 2013; Lobato-Calleros *et al.*, 2016). Among those who use the SE as a unit of analysis, there is a tendency to study loyalty with a single indicator. The theory of reasoned action proposes that the best predictor of a consumer's actual behavior is intention (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Therefore, this research differentiates three sub-dimensions of medium- or long-term loyalty based on consumer intentions (Andreu *et al.*, 2006): repurchase intention, WOM intention, and willingness to pay more.

Thus, repurchase intention has been used in marketing as a measure of subsequent purchase behavior (e.g., what product or brand will you buy next time?) (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996; Ferdousi, 2017). Previous studies have affirmed that intentions to purchase again from a company increase if the outcome of previous transactions has been satisfactory—i.e., if it has met consumers' expectations (Choi and Kim, 2013; Cha and Lee, 2021). WOM communication is for the consumer a more credible source of information than mass media advertisements (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). The likelihood of recommending or speaking well of a company is higher if the customer is satisfied with the relationship (Szymanski and Henard, 2001; Konuk, 2019). The last loyalty indicator analyzed is price tolerance, since those customers who are more satisfied

will be willing to pay more for that product or service (Saldivar and Zolfagharian, 2022). This behavioral intention is of particular interest in the field of SEs, since consumers have the perception that prices are higher than those of conventional companies (Wu *et al.*, 2022). In short, the satisfied customer will be willing to pay a little more, to give up looking for bargains, or to give up buying from conventional companies whose prices are usually lower. Accordingly, it is proposed that:

H4. Consumer satisfaction derived indirectly from purchases from SEs is positively related to (a) repurchase intention, (b) WOM intention, and (c) willingness to pay more.

#### *2.4. The moderating influence of altruistic motivation on the effects of satisfaction on loyalty indicators*

Taking self-determination theory as a reference, two types of motivation are distinguished based on the different sources for initiating an action: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is seen when the consumer performs an action driven by a goal—i.e., it is performed solely for the purpose of achieving an outcome. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is seen when people do not expect a reward in exchange for carrying out an action, but rather the pleasure comes from the simple fact of performing the action.

In the specific field of sustainability, an increasing number of studies refer to the concept of purchase motivation (Birch *et al.*, 2018; Prakash *et al.*, 2019; Kumar and Yadav, 2021). In particular, the academic literature has been paying attention in recent years to the ethical and responsible dimension of consumption, and how this appears to be an important determinant of consumer behavior (Yadav, 2016). These ethical and responsible aspects of consumption are related to extrinsic consumer motivation, so in this research we consider a single motivational orientation underlying purchase motives (Birch *et al.*, 2018; Prakash *et al.*, 2019): altruistic consumer motivation.

Altruism refers to the practice related to the wellbeing of others, although it is true that there are numerous definitions of altruistic motivation. Most of the definitions that emphasize the motivational aspect of altruism relate to deliberately benefiting another person or society without expecting a reward (Berkowitz, 1972), to empathizing with the needs of other people or society (Cohen, 1972), and to engaging in prosocial consumption behaviors (Ali *et al.*, 2020).

In line with Birch *et al.* (2018), this study considers environmental and ethical aspects of consumption through altruistic motivation. Such motivation is related to consumers' environmental concern, as consumers often choose to buy from SEs or companies with a marked social responsibility because they consider it a pro-environmental behavior (Kumar and Yadav, 2021). On the other hand, ethical consumption is also linked to altruistic motivation, given that some of the motives behind ethical consumption are concern for human and animal welfare, fair prices, etc. (Michaelidou and Hassan, 2008). Given the inherent nature of SEs, both environmental and ethical aspects are fundamental when studying purchase motivation in this type of enterprise. Purchasing from such companies, as opposed to buying from conventional companies, denotes a concern for others and for society as a whole.

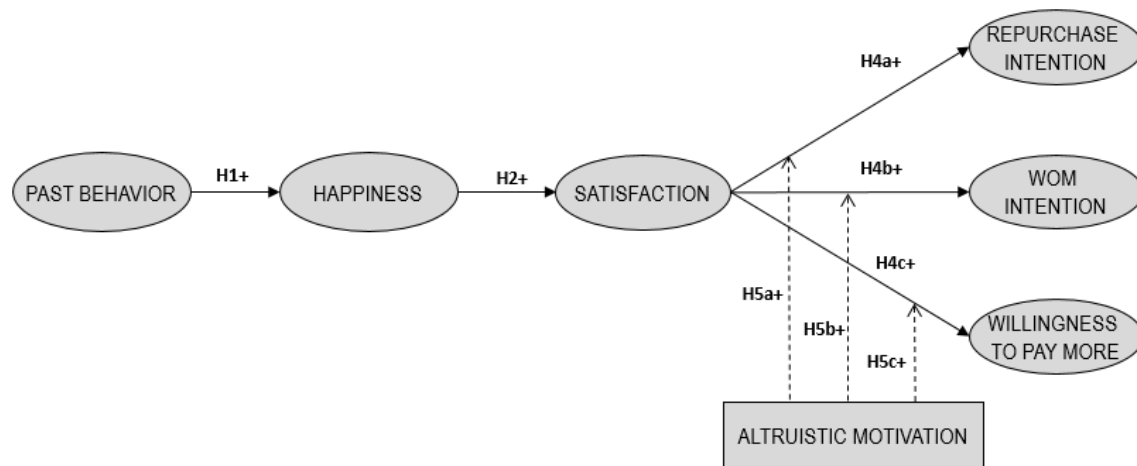
There are no studies so far that take into account the interaction of altruistic motivation in the satisfaction-loyalty relationship. Given the scope of study of the present research, it is interesting to study whether the altruistic motivation that an SE consumer manifests (driven by ethical and environmental benefits) indeed intensifies the effect of satisfaction on loyalty. A stronger relationship could bring benefits to companies in terms of repeat purchases, positive



comments received, or even greater willingness to pay more for a product from this type of company compared to other products from conventional companies. Thus, the last hypothesis is proposed in the following terms:

H5. The influence of satisfaction derived indirectly from purchases from SEs on (a) repurchase intention, (b) WOM intentions, and (c) willingness to pay more is greater in consumers with strong altruistic motivations than in consumers with weaker altruistic motivations.

The conceptual framework is depicted in Fig. 1.



**Figure 1. Theoretical approach**

Note: Solid lines represent direct effects; dashed lines represent moderating effects.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Data collection

In order to contrast the hypotheses summarized in Figure 1, this research focuses on SEs' consumer behavior. The authors conducted a pretest before proceeding with the dissemination of the final questionnaire. A total of 12 anonymous volunteers verified the clarity of the questionnaire. Thanks to this pretest, small changes were made in the items that enhanced comprehension of the questionnaire. It is really difficult to reach consumers of SEs. For this purpose, we used different methods: 1) online contact with consumers extracted from databases, 2) open publication on social networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.), 3) distribution of the questionnaire through business associations related to local commerce and sustainable consumption, 4) physical distribution of the questionnaire. Each interviewee analyzed an SE in which they had made a purchase. The authors received 429 questionnaires. After eliminations (49 incomplete questionnaires), the sample consisted of 380 people from several cities in Spain. As can be seen from Table 1, the sample of respondents appears to be rather homogeneous for each of the indicated characteristics. The demographic characteristics of the sample are as follows: 56.3 percent of the respondents were female; with regard to age, 18.1 percent were between 18 and 24 years; 33.4 percent were between 25 and 40 years; 32.1 percent were between 41 and 54 years; and 16.4 percent were aged over 54 years. In terms of education, about 47 percent of the consumers had a Master's degree, PhD, or professional degree. Finally, in relation to income, 35 percent of the respondents had a monthly household income of less than 2,000 euros; 29 percent of between 2,000 and 2,999 euros; and 36 percent of more than 3,000 euros. The data collection was carried out in the period from 23 March 2022 to 21 July 2022.

**Table 1. Sample description**

VARIABLE	DISTRIBUTION SAMPLE (N=380)
Gender	43.7%male
	56.3%female
Age	18.1%aged 18–24
	33.4 aged 25–40
	32.1%aged 41–54
	16.4%aged more than 54
Education	3.3%elementary school
	10%high school diploma
	39.7%Bachelor’s degree
	47%Master’s degree, PhD, or professional degree
Monthly household income (in euros)	6.6%<1,000
	28.4%1,000–1,999
	29%2,000–2,999
	24%3,000–4,999
	12%more than 5,000

### 3.2. Measurement of variables

A questionnaire was drawn up for a sample of consumers to indicate their opinions on past behavior, happiness, satisfaction, and three indicators of loyalty (repurchase intention, WOM intention, and willingness to pay more). The general format of the scales was a Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strong disagreement) to 7 (strong agreement). Existing measures were used, all of them adapted to the context of an SE. Respondents’ past behavior was measured using three items adapted from de Cannière *et al.* (2009). To measure happiness, we incorporated the hedonic and eudemonic approaches (Fredrickson, 2016). That is why we have taken into account the scales used in the studies by Huta and Ryan (2010) and Cuesta-Valiño *et al.* (2021). Three items for satisfaction were modified from Oliver (1980). Repurchase intention in SEs was measured with three items adapted from Wu *et al.* (2014). Three items for WOM intention were adapted from the works of Zeithaml *et al.* (1996). Finally, we used the three items from the work of Castaldo *et al.* (2009), based on an adaptation of the Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) scale, to measure willingness to pay more. However, and to avoid problems related to the set of answers, the items were ordered randomly. To solve the problems of method bias (self-reported data and a single key respondent), a psychological separation between the variables was included to make it appear that the measurement of the predictor variable was not connected or related to the measurement of the outcome variable (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).

## 4. Analysis and results

### 4.1. Measurement assessment

In order to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the measurement model, a confirmatory factorial analysis was conducted (using EQS 6.4). The fit measures suggested a reasonable fit: BBNNFI=0.93, CFI=0.94, RMSEA=0.07, with convergent validity (standardized loading factor greater than 0.6) (Table 2). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were all higher than 0.7, the composite reliability was greater than 0.7, and the AVE was higher than 0.4. There was also discriminant validity (Table 3) since the confidence intervals of all correlations between the concepts analyzed did not contain the unit value and their squared value did not exceed the AVE of the considered measurement scales. The psychometric properties were adequate, so we continued with the estimation of the structural model.

**Table 2. Item descriptive and convergent validity**

CONSTRUCT	FACTOR LOADINGS	CR	AVE	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
<b>PAST BEHAVIOR (PB)</b>		<b>0.776</b>	<b>0.546</b>	<b>0.757</b>
I used to purchase from the SE	0.776			
I spend little time purchasing from the SE	0.521			
My number of purchases from the SE is high	0.878			
<b>HAPPINESS (HAP)</b>		<b>0.934</b>	<b>0.740</b>	<b>0.933</b>
I am pleased with my decision to purchase from the SE	0.919			
I am happy with my decision to purchase from the SE	0.909			
Purchasing from the SE is gratifying to me	0.911			
Purchasing from the SE makes me feel proud	0.789			
Purchasing from the SE makes me feel good about myself	0.761			
<b>SATISFACTION (SAT)</b>		<b>0.923</b>	<b>0.799</b>	<b>0.921</b>
I am satisfied with my decision to purchase from the SE	0.858			
My choice to purchase from the SE was a wise one	0.919			
I think I did the right thing when I decided to purchase from the SE	0.904			
<b>REPURCHASE INTENTION (RI)</b>		<b>0.852</b>	<b>0.659</b>	<b>0.827</b>
I will purchase from the SE again	0.716			
I will consider the SE offer as my first option for purchasing in the future	0.794			
If I had to do it over again, I would choose to purchase from the SE	0.913			
<b>WOM INTENTION (WOM)</b>		<b>0.911</b>	<b>0.773</b>	<b>0.906</b>
I will encourage my friends and relatives to purchase from the SE	0.836			
I will say positive things about my purchase from the SE	0.881			
I will recommend purchasing from the SE to anyone who seeks my advice	0.919			
<b>WILLINGNESS TO PAY MORE (WTP)</b>		<b>0.905</b>	<b>0.761</b>	<b>0.902</b>
Purchasing from the SE seems smart to me even if it costs more	0.844			
I'm ready to pay a higher price for SE products	0.886			
I'd still buy from the SE if other brands reduced their prices	0.886			
<b>Goodness-of-fit measures</b>				
<b>S-B<math>\chi^2</math>(155)=450.91 (p=0.00)</b>		<b>BBNNFI=0.93</b>	<b>CFI=0.94</b>	<b>RMSEA=0.07</b>

**Table 3. Discriminatory validity**

FACTOR	CORRELATION COEF. (CONFIDENCE INTERVALS)	FACTOR	CORRELATION COEF. (CONFIDENCE INTERVALS)
PB-HAP	0.158–0.374	HAP-WTP	0.472–0.632
PB-SAT	0.113–0.337	SAT-RI	0.791–0.879
PB-RI	0.285–0.493	SAT-WOM	0.739–0.835
PB-WOM	0.141–0.361	SAT-WTP	0.649–0.769
PB-WTP	0.260–0.468	RI-WOM	0.721–0.829
HAP-SAT	0.583–0.715	RI-WTP	0.844–0.920
HAP-REP	0.500–0.656	WOM-WTP	0.680–0.796
HAP-WOM	0.478–0.634		

#### 4.2. Structural model and hypothesis testing

The data obtained from the questionnaires were processed with the software EQS 6.4, using covariance-based structural equation modeling for reflectives variables. When using structural equations, we must ensure that the sample size is sufficient to test the hypotheses robustly. This can be done by performing a power test with GPower software (Faul *et al.*, 2007). This study complies with the value greater than 0.80. Structural model analysis (Table 4) yields good fit statistics (BBNNFI=0.93; CFI=0.94; RMSEA=0.07). The results indicate that past behavior directly and positively influences happiness (H1: $\beta_1=0.272$ ), thus confirming hypothesis 1. Happiness directly and positively influences satisfaction (H2: $\beta_2=0.653$ ), which corroborates hypothesis 2.

Finally, consumer satisfaction positively influences repurchase intention (H4a: $\beta_{4a}=0.894$ ), WOM intention (H4b: $\beta_{4b}=0.773$ ), and willingness to pay more (H4c: $\beta_{4c}=0.894$ ), so we can verify total acceptance of hypothesis 4.

**Table 4. Model fit and structural coefficients**

CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS	T_VALUE*	ESTIMATE COEFFICIENT	SUPPORTED
H1:Past behavior→Happiness	4.794	0.272	Yes
H2:Happiness→Satisfaction	11.246	0.653	Yes
H4a:Satisfaction→Repurchase intention	14.462	0.894	Yes
H4b:Satisfaction→WOM intention	11.201	0.773	Yes
H4c:Satisfaction→Willingness to pay	12.202	0.851	Yes
Goodness-of-fit measures			
S- $B\chi^2(164) = 479.93$ (p = 0.00)	BBNNFI = 0.93	CFI = 0.94	RMSEA = 0.07

\*p<0.001

### 4.3. Mediation and moderation test

Once the structural model and the direct effects had been proposed, we proceeded to analyze the mediating effect of happiness in the past behavior-satisfaction relationship (H3). For this, the indirect effects were analyzed using the bootstrap procedure of Preacher and Hayes (2004), implementing it in the SPSS macro developed by Hayes (2018). Table 5 shows the indirect effects, the standard errors, and the 95% confidence intervals obtained by applying the bootstrap estimation. The mediation model included past behavior as the independent factor, satisfaction as the dependent variable, and happiness as the mediator. Past behavior had a direct effect on satisfaction (b=0.190, SE=0.041, p<0.01). When happiness was included in the regression on satisfaction, the effect of past behavior disappeared (b=0.0481, SE=0.0333, p=0.1500) and happiness was shown to have a significant effect (b=0.5162, SE=0.0344, p<0.01). The bootstrap results (sample=5,000) for the indirect effect revealed mediation by happiness, given that the zero value was not included in the 95% confidence interval (effect=0.1309, boot SE=0.0299, confidence interval 0.0727–0.1890). These results support H3.

**Table 5. Assessing the indirect effects**

MEDIATION EFFECT	DIRECT EFFECT	INDIRECT EFFECT	STANDARD ERROR	95%BIAS-CORRECTED CI	RESULT
H3:PB→HAP→SAT	Not significant	0.1309	0.0299	0.0727–0.1890	Partial mediation

To carry out analysis of the moderation of altruistic motivation in the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, model 1 of PROCESS by Hayes and Preacher (2014) was used, since there was a single moderating variable. As show in Table 6, altruistic motivation acts as the moderator in all of the cases. The results show that for altruistic motivation, the conditional impacts of satisfaction in repurchase intention are significant (effect=0.0875, 95%CI=0.0371–0.1379). In the case of WOM intentions, the effect is also significant (effect=0.1254, 95%CI=0.0711–0.1796). Finally, the same happens in the case of the willingness to pay more (effect=0.0702, 95%CI=0.00371–0.1368). Upon further probing the interaction, the conditional process analysis shows that altruistic motivation positively moderates the association between satisfaction and indicators of loyalty among users with medium and high levels of altruistic motivation. Thus, it can be concluded that H5 is supported.

**Table 6. Results of moderation results**

STRUCTURAL PATH	ESTIMATE COEFFICIENT	STANDARD ERROR	P-VALUE	95%BIAS- CORRECTED CI	RESULT
H5a:SAT*AM→RI	0.0875	0.0256	0.0007	0.0371–0.1379	Supported
H5b:SAT*AM→WOM	0.1254	0.0276	0.0000	0.0711–0.1796	Supported
H5c:SAT*AM→WTP	0.0702	0.0338	0.0386	0.0037–0.1368	Supported

## 5. Discussion

Once the main results obtained in the research have been presented, a discussion of these is presented below. As Dunn et al. (2008) anticipated, prosocial spending can lead to consumer benefits in terms of happiness. The SE consumer is aware that their purchase in this type of company can contribute to social welfare. In this way, this research demonstrates with hypothesis 1 that consumers experience happiness through the purchase in social companies. One reason may be because it adds up to the pleasure of its own already-met need of contributing to the social or environmental well-being. In the same way, and in line with what was proposed by Philips and Baumgartner (2002), direct and significant effects of happiness are observed in satisfaction (Hypothesis 2). The happiness derived from a purchase in SEs also gives brings the consumer a feeling of satisfaction. In addition, this research highlights the role of happiness as a total mediator between purchasing behaviour and satisfaction (hypothesis 3), which represents a significant contribution to the field of study of happiness associated with consumption. That is, merely purchasing does not bring consumer satisfaction, but to purchase in this type of company and its inherent feeling of happiness is what does, in fact, produce satisfaction.

Regarding the loyalty indicators studied (hypothesis 4), our study confirms the propositions of Choi and Kim (2013) and Lobato-Calleros et al. (2016). In the field of SEs, satisfaction has a great relationship with the loyalty indicators analysed. It should be noted that the influence of satisfaction is greater for repurchase intentions than for other loyalty indicators. This is a strong point in their favour, since expressing an intention to buy again is the best indicator for future purchasing behaviours (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). It's all about turning satisfied customers into loyal customers. The second indicator that shows a stronger relationship with satisfaction is willingness to pay more. Regarding this, it is important for a SE to know that their consumers have a higher propensity to pay more for their products willingly. Consumers are willing to make greater monetary sacrifices because they understand that their purchasing behaviour is more sustainable and respectful, which has positive implications beyond personal benefit (Wu et al., 2022).

Finally, the last of the hypotheses (H5) confirms the moderating role played by altruistic purchase motivations in the 'satisfaction-loyalty' relationship. In the case of SEs, this type of motivation is more likely to be a driver in their consumers, considering the prosocial nature that this type of company tends to have. Thus, the more altruistic the target the company manages to reach to, the more intense the satisfaction-loyalty relationship will be. In this case, consumers will show greater repurchase intentions in the establishment, a greater willingness to pay a higher price for the products of these companies and, in addition, greater intentions to recommend to others to purchase in this type of company. These results may favour the development of a greater number of SEs, with the consequent benefit for society in terms of social improvements and/or greater environmental protection promoted by these companies.

## 6. Conclusion

This research examines the extent to which happiness can influence the decisions and behaviors of SE customers. More specifically, this study determines the influence of happiness in generating prosocial behaviors among SE customers when purchasing sustainable products, through the feeling of satisfaction experienced with such purchases.

### *6.1. Theoretical Implications*

This research contributes to happiness literature in several ways. Our results expand the research stream concerning the emotional dimension of consumption; more specifically, the results evidence the capacity of happiness to influence on customers' decisions and behaviors, preceding loyalty responses. In this sense, this study sheds light on the analysis from consumers' perspective of SEs' sustainable products, an approach weakly addressed within the specialized literature.

Firstly, our results confirm that happiness plays a pivotal role as a precursor of loyalty toward SEs, since happiness positively intermediates between prior behaviors and satisfaction, the latter preceding loyalty responses. This research therefore supports existing literature which points to the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in sustainable consumption practices in SEs (Choi and Kim, 2013; Lobato-Calleros *et al.*, 2016). These insights highlight the relevance of customers experiencing pleasing emotions from the very first purchase or interaction with SEs, as these emotions will activate positive feelings (i.e., happiness) that, in turn, will dispose them toward satisfaction in relation to the purchase. In other words, an ethical consumer who, having experienced gratifying emotions when making a first purchase from an SE and feeling happy about it, will experience satisfaction with it.

Secondly, evidence shows that ethical customers' satisfaction with sustainable purchases from SEs positively influences their repurchase intentions, WOM intentions, and willingness to pay more, favoring loyalty toward SEs. Insights derived here are consistent with prior literature that makes loyalty contingent on earlier satisfaction experienced by customers (Cha and Lee, 2021; Saldivar and Zolfagharian, 2022; Wu *et al.*, 2022). In this vein, satisfaction will activate (in happy consumers) intentions involving loyalty through 1) repurchasing, 2) prescriptions via WOM, and 3) price insensitivity, the latter being of significant relevance for SEs, since SEs' prices are perceived as higher compared to those of usual for-profit businesses. The findings at this point place the happiness-satisfaction link in the spotlight for SEs interested in transforming current customers into recurrent ones. There are two strong reasons why recurrent consumers are of critical importance: 1) amplifying the consumer base by incorporating new customers, and 2) increasing revenue in the short term.

Thirdly, this research has supported that altruistic motivations positively affect customer satisfaction and loyalty when the orientation toward common good causes among customers is substantial. Our results endorse the influence of (purchase) motivations on customer behavior, and corroborate prior literature concerning sustainable consumption (Birch *et al.*, 2018; Prakash *et al.*, 2019; Kumar and Yadav, 2021). Ethical consumers seem to consider purchasing options based on the greater or lesser alignment between their own socio-ecological concerns and the socio-ecological orientation and mission of firms and brands, this being very significant in the case of SEs. In this sense, our results underpin the moderating influence of altruism (extrinsic motivation) on customers' satisfaction and intentions—i.e., purchase intention, WOM intention, and willingness to pay more (Yadav, 2016; Birch *et al.*, 2018; Ali *et al.*, 2020). However, a major contribution of this research consists in broadening the analysis field, since the positive moderating influence of altruism on customer loyalty is proved. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first attempt to investigate the moderating capacity of altruistic motivation in SEs' ethical customers' satisfaction-loyalty relationship.

### *6.2. Managerial Implications*

Relevant managerial and practical implications emerge for SEs aiming at increasing their ethical customer bases, customers' purchase expectations and, as a consequence, customer loyalty; whether in physical or online environments.

In this sense, SEs practitioners and marketers with the purpose to attract (and retain) potential ethical customers should deploy organizational capabilities and resources in key performing areas, with the purpose of maximizing the happiness of ethical consumers with whom the firm is interacting for the first time. Shopping experience, for instance, should incorporate mechanisms such as a friendly and high-quality customer service, in pleasant atmospheres, where potential customers could receive attractive incentives that trigger their buy button. Additionally, the communication activity should be built on the design of appealing effective narratives, activated with the help of essentially visual advertising tools. In particular, the investment in effective communication strategies should be conveniently considered, especially when pretending to disseminate the social mission of SEs, as this is mandatorily aligned to ethical customers' altruistic orientation. Dissemination actions can be very effective to (re)activate the satisfaction and subsequent loyalty of real customers, while also benefiting other intangible assets like brand image and product competitiveness, which may positively influence the purchase expectations of potential new customers.

Practical implications also emerge for SEs interested in building and reinforcing ethical customers loyalty among those satisfied, as well as obtaining benefits in terms of (potential) sales, brand equity reinforcement, reputational enhancement, or product/brand (re)positioning. In this line, SEs must be able to consistently disseminate attributes about their products, services, and shopping experiences through all available channels and favorable touchpoints, with a special emphasis on the hedonic and eudemonic benefits that ethical customers will perceive -and subsequently prescribe via WOM-, laying the groundwork for future repurchases for which they will be willing to pay more. However, risks emerge here too, arising from unethical SEs' performance in relation to their business dimension, but also to their socio-environmental mission and orientation. The existence of bad practices or irresponsible behaviors in terms of competence and effectiveness -via social/greenwashing-based advertising-, may generate a misalignment between consumers' altruistic orientation and the assumed SE social orientation, causing distrust and disaffection among ethical customers, resulting in unhappiness.

### *6.3. Limitations and Future Research*

In spite of the abovementioned findings, this research is not without relevant limitations; these, however, may be the starting point for future research.

Firstly, although intention has shown a significant potential to predict ethical customers' behavior (Montano and Kasprzyk, 2015) in the field of sustainability in general (Grimmer and Miles, 2017; ElHaffar *et al.*, 2020) and in the SE context in particular (Lee, Mousa, *et al.*, 2021; Lee, Zailani, *et al.*, 2021), a gap remains between these variables. Ethical consumers voice sustainable attitudes and behavioral intentions; however, they fall short of transforming those into actual sustainable behavior (Echegaray and Hansstein, 2017).

A second limitation relates to the measurement approach employed, and lies with the fact that ethical consumers' happiness was retrospectively analyzed, using the recall-based method. Future analyses could employ neuro-marketing techniques and tools, guaranteeing a more accurate and clear measurement of this dependent variable, enriching the results and therefore the derived findings in this line of research.

Another limitation identified relates to the scope of emotions analyzed, since only ethical consumers' happiness in relation to SE purchases has been considered. Further research could

use other emotional states, such as guilt or pride (Antonetti and Maklan, 2014), with interesting applications in the sustainability field.

The last limitation is derived from the geographical dependence of the results, since the sample used has a national range, composed only of SE customers in Spain, a country with a moderately high baseline perception of happiness according to Helliwell *et al.* (2022) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2022). Future research could explore the influence of happiness in the context of the purchase and post-purchase of SEs' products by ethical consumers from other countries, considering different aspects such as the social and institutional orientation toward sustainability, the level of implementation and sectorial development of SEs, and the happiness self-perception among the target population.



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