

ICT as a driver of sustainable business models: the moderating role of AI in retail.

Friday, 5 June 2026 13:00 (15 minutes)

Background. The retail sector is being transformed by the rapid development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the growing demand for sustainable business models. In this context, Sustainability-Oriented Service Innovation (SOSI) has emerged as an approach integrating innovation and sustainability in service activities [1].

Aim. This study analyses the influence of ICT on Sustainability-Oriented Service Innovation (SOSI) in retailing and examines the impact of SOSI on brand equity and customer satisfaction. It also investigates the moderating role of AI use in these relationships.

Methods. An ad hoc survey was conducted among 1,746 customers of retail establishments in Spain during April and May 2025. Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. A multigroup analysis (PLS-MGA) was additionally performed to test the moderating effect of AI use.

Results. Findings show that ICT positively enhances SOSI perceptions among retail consumers. In turn, SOSI positively influences both brand equity and customer satisfaction, while brand equity significantly contributes to satisfaction. The multigroup analysis indicates that the ICT–SOSI relationship is stronger among consumers who have not interacted with AI-based chatbots, suggesting that familiarity with AI shapes perceptions of sustainable innovation practices.

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Session Classification: Environmental Humanities & Societal Futures: Narratives That Shape Transitions

Track Classification: General sessions: Environmental Humanities & Societal Futures: Narratives That Shape Transitions