

THE IMPACT OF E-BUSINESS ON THE ADOPTION OF GREEN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES AMONG GENERATION Z IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL MARKET TRANSFORMATION

Ivana Pomorišac

University of Belgrade, Technical Faculty in Bor, Serbia

Abstract

The expansion of the digital economy has significantly transformed the way consumers access information, evaluate alternatives, and make purchasing decisions. Within this environment, e-business has become an important driver of sustainable consumption by enabling more effective promotion and greater accessibility of environmentally responsible products and services. Given that Generation Z represents a generation that has grown up with modern digital technologies, understanding the factors influencing the adoption of green products and services among this population has become increasingly important for both researchers and practitioners. The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of e-business on the adoption of green products and services among Generation Z consumers. Based on relevant literature in the fields of e-business, sustainable consumption, and consumer behavior, a conceptual research framework was developed and corresponding research hypotheses were formulated. The empirical study was conducted using a survey method on a sample of 198 respondents belonging to Generation Z in the Republic of Serbia. The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS software package through descriptive statistics, reliability testing of the measurement instrument (Cronbach's Alpha), and simple linear regression analysis. The results indicate that e-business has a positive impact on the adoption of green products and services among Generation Z consumers. The study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between digital business practices and sustainable consumer behavior while providing practical implications for organizations seeking to enhance the effectiveness of digital strategies aimed at promoting environmentally responsible consumption.

Keywords: *e-business, Generation Z consumers, green product adoption, sustainable consumption, digital economy, consumer behavior*

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of the market has fundamentally changed how modern consumers access information, form attitudes, and make purchasing decisions (Vial, 2019). E-business as a key driver of these changes, encompasses a wide range of activities conducted via digital platforms, including social media, e-commerce, and personalized online marketing (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Berman, 2012). In this dynamic environment, Generation Z (individuals born between 1997 and 2012) stands out as the first truly digitally oriented generation, spending an average of six to nine hours daily utilizing digital channels (Dimock, 2019; Turner, 2015). Such intensive exposure to digital

content significantly influences their value systems and behavior, with a particular emphasis on environmental awareness and sustainable consumption (Bùi et al., 2024).

In parallel with technological progress, global environmental challenges are becoming increasingly prevalent, motivating consumers to demonstrate greater interest in green products and services (Polas et al., 2025). However, despite positive attitudes, a key question arises for researchers and managers: how can e-business effectively stimulate the actual acquisition of green products among young consumers (Gomes et al., 2023). Today, digital platforms are not merely sales channels but spaces for creating new social meanings and building trust (Kim & Ko, 2012). Mechanisms such as influencer marketing and user-generated content (UGC) have a decisive impact on how Generation Z perceives the authenticity and environmental justification of products (Lopes et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, despite these trends, the potential of e-business in the domain of green consumption in the Republic of Serbia remains underutilized (Nikolić et al., 2022). There is a clear gap in the literature regarding the understanding of specific factors influencing the ecological behavior of Generation Z in transition economies, where barriers such as low awareness of eco-labels and price sensitivity are still highly pronounced (Kolović et al., 2023; Petrović, 2022). Accordingly, the aim of this research is to analyze the role of e-business in the acceptance of green products and services among members of Generation Z in Serbia, thereby contributing to the development of more effective digital strategies for sustainability promotion. Similar studies conducted on the younger consumer population in Asia (Bùi et al., 2024) also confirm the complexity of the green purchasing decision-making process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The digital transformation of the market entails the deep integration of digital technologies into all aspects of business, fundamentally altering how companies communicate with their consumers (Vial, 2019). According to Berman (2012), this process encompasses three key dimensions: the digitalization of internal processes, the development of innovative digital products and services, and the transformation of organizational culture toward openness and innovation. For members of Generation Z, who have not experienced a world without the internet, digital platforms do not merely represent a tool but a natural living environment. Turner (2015) and Dimock (2019) emphasize that this generation does not draw a clear distinction between “online” and “offline” life, perceiving this space as a unified entity. Research confirms that members of this population spend the most time on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, while perceiving Facebook as a platform intended for older generations (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

In the context of green consumption, e-business manifests through two key aspects: the communicational aspect, where platforms serve to disseminate information regarding environmental issues and sustainable practices, and the transactional aspect, which enables the direct and efficient purchase of green products (Polas et al., 2025). Members of Generation Z are significantly more inclined to purchase green products if information is easily accessible and originates from reliable sources, primarily the influencers they follow (Ahmad et al., 2025; Kim & Ko, 2012). Additionally, user-generated content (UGC) exerts a stronger influence on this population compared to traditional advertisements, as it is perceived as more authentic and less commercial (Lopes et al., 2024). A key construct in this process is green purchasing intention (GPIN), defined as a consumer’s readiness to choose products that are environmentally friendly (Chen & Chang, 2013). According to

Kamalanon et al. (2022), this construct is most commonly measured through the willingness to switch brands for environmental reasons, the intention for future purchase, and the willingness to pay a higher price, theoretically relying on the Theory of Planned Behavior, according to which attitudes and subjective norms predict final intention.

In addition to intention, the key factors dictating green behavior in the digital age are environmental concern and perceived environmental knowledge. Environmental concern is defined as the degree to which individuals are aware of ecological problems and demonstrate a willingness to contribute to their resolution (Ahmad et al., 2025). On the other hand, perceived knowledge does not represent merely objective facts but the subjective feeling of consumers that they understand ecological symbols and the benefits of sustainable products (Nikolić et al., 2022). In Generation Z, these constructs are strongly linked to digital literacy, as constant exposure to information about ecological crises via social networks fosters concern, while educational content from influencers shapes their knowledge of sustainability (Ahmad et al., 2025; Petrović, 2022). It is precisely the interaction between what young people “feel” (concern) and what they “think they know” (knowledge) that forms the basis for their actual market actions.

A particular challenge for companies is the willingness to pay a premium price for green products. Studies conducted in Portugal, Indonesia, and across Europe confirm that Generation Z, despite high environmental awareness, exhibits pronounced price sensitivity and rarely accepts a price that is 10-15% higher than conventional products (Zajac & Szewczyk, 2025; Suci Amaliah et al., 2024; Gomes et al., 2023). In the Republic of Serbia, this issue is further emphasized by a low level of awareness regarding eco-labels and certificates (Kolović et al., 2023; Petrović, 2022). When consumers are uncertain about the meaning of a product's “green” status, they question the justification of a higher price, indicating significant room for educational activities through digital channels. Research conducted in the domestic context has confirmed that price sensitivity is a key barrier, especially among the student population (Nikolić et al., 2022).

Based on the presented theoretical framework and the specifics of the digital environment, the following hypotheses are defined in this paper:

H1: Environmental concern has a positive impact on the green consumer behavior of Generation Z.

H2: Perceived environmental knowledge has a positive impact on green consumer behavior of Generation Z.

H3: Green purchasing intention has a positive impact on green consumer behavior of Generation Z.

3. METHODOLOGY

The empirical research was conducted on a sample of 198 respondents belonging to Generation Z in the Republic of Serbia. Data were collected via an online questionnaire created on the Google Forms platform, which was distributed in person and through the digital channels most frequently used by this population: Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. This approach ensured methodological consistency, as the data collection process occurred precisely through those e-business channels whose role in environmental behavior is being investigated (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). After applying the listwise

deletion method for incomplete responses, the final sample for analysis consisted of 193 respondents.

The survey questionnaire was structured into two parts to ensure the comprehensiveness of the analysis. The first part covered the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, current status (predominantly a student population at 57.0%), and regional affiliation, with the most represented respondents being from Eastern Serbia (39.9%) and Central Serbia (32.1%). In addition to demographic characteristics, the study examined the basic attitude of Generation Z members toward their personal contribution to environmental protection. The second part of the questionnaire focused on the measurement constructs defined by the research model, which were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The measurement instrument was divided into four key groups of questions. The first group measured environmental concern (ENCO) through seven items examining personal contribution to environmental protection and the willingness to reduce consumption. The second group pertained to perceived environmental knowledge (PEKO) and included four items focused on the awareness of ecological symbols and the ability to select safe products. Green purchasing intention (GPIN) was measured through five items, including the willingness to pay a higher price and the influence on other consumers, while the final construct, green consumer behavior (GPBE), was analyzed through six items tracking concrete actions, such as checking ingredients on labels and the actual replacement of conventional products with ecological alternatives.

To ensure precision in measuring the abstract constructs defined within the conceptual model, the variables were operationalized through specific sets of statements. The measurement instruments were used to examine environmental concern, perceived environmental knowledge, green purchasing intention, and green consumer behavior. All aforementioned instruments were adapted to the subject of the research and formulated as statements to which respondents replied using a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 - “strongly disagree” to 7 - “strongly agree”). This approach provided high data resolution and an adequate statistical basis for testing the established research hypotheses.

This methodological framework enabled the testing of the defined research model (Figure 1), which examines the direct influences of environmental concern, knowledge, and intention on the actual behavior patterns of young consumers in the digital environment.

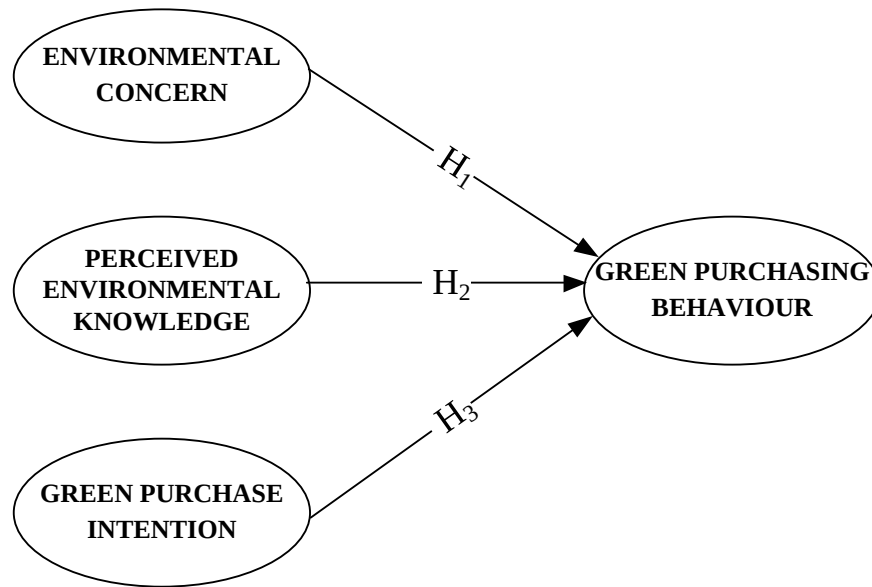


Figure 1. Research model

4. RESULTS

The analysis of the results provides a detailed insight into the collected data and the statistical analyses conducted to test the validity of the established hypotheses. The data processing included descriptive statistical analysis, reliability testing of the measurement scales via the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, and regression analysis to determine the causal relationships between the defined environmental constructs. High coefficient values confirm the stability of the measurement instrument, which is in accordance with recommendations for psychological testing (Kline, 1999). All calculations were performed on the final sample of 193 respondents, ensuring high precision and representativeness of the derived conclusions.

The first step in the data analysis involved defining the demographic profile of the respondents to understand the structure of the Generation Z population in the Republic of Serbia that participated in the research. The analysis of demographic characteristics allows for the contextualization of environmental attitudes and behaviors, taking into account factors such as gender, employment status, and regional affiliation, which often play a role in forming consumer habits. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	64	33.2
	Female	129	66.8
Status	Employed	39	20.2
	Self-employed	6	3.1
	High school student	33	17.1
	University student	110	57.0
	Unemployed	5	2.6
Region	Eastern Serbia	77	39.9
	Central Serbia	62	32.1

	Vojvodina	13	6.7
	Western Serbia	11	5.7
	Southern Serbia	30	15.5

Following the description of the sample, a descriptive statistical analysis of the measurement constructs was performed. The results of the descriptive statistics for the analyzed groups of questions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the analyzed question groups

Groups	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	Variance
ENCO	5.26	5.28	6.43	1.32	1.73
PEKO	4.47	4.5	4.25	1.42	2.02
GPIN	4.63	4.6	4.2	1.5	2.25
GPBE	3.93	4	4	1.61	2.61

Based on Table 2, which displays the descriptive statistics for the analyzed question groups, it can be observed that most groups have a mean value greater than 4.00, with the exception of the GPBE construct, whose average value is slightly below this threshold (3.93). The median and mode for these groups ranges from 4.00 to 6.43. Standard deviation values range from 1.32 to 1.61, while variance values range from 1.73 to 2.61. Simple linear regression analysis was applied to the calculated mean values of each factor to examine the individual influences of the defined measurement constructs on green consumer behavior (GPBE).

Summary reliability results for all analyzed groups (ENCO, PEKO, GPIN, GPBE) are presented in Table 3. In statistics, the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient is most commonly used to assess the reliability of measurement scales, allowing for reliability estimation via the α coefficient (Cronbach, 1951). Prior to applying the regression analysis, a reliability test of the measurement scales was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Values above 0.7 indicate acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally, 1967). As shown in Table 4, all constructs achieved high Cronbach's Alpha values: environmental concern (0.905), perceived environmental knowledge (0.907), green purchasing intention (0.938), and green consumer behavior (0.947). This confirms the high reliability of the measurement instrument and the internal consistency of the respondents' attitudes within each group of questions.

Table 3. Reliability test results of the measurement scales (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
ENCO	0.905	7
PEKO	0.907	4
GPIN	0.938	5
GPBE	0.947	6

Based on the data in Table 4, it can be concluded that all observed groups of questions are methodologically sound. Specifically, the values range from a minimum of 0.905 for environmental concern to a maximum of 0.947 for green consumer behavior. Given that all values are significantly higher than the recommended 0.7, the internal consistency of all question groups is confirmed, thereby fulfilling the prerequisites for further regression analysis and hypothesis testing.

Simple linear regression analysis is one of the most frequently used statistical methods in social research, used to explain the relationship between two variables using a straight line (Gocić & Trajković, 2013). The primary objective of this method is to determine the nature of the relationship, i.e., the form of dependency between the observed phenomena through defined regression models. Although correlation and regression are closely related concepts, as both explain the relationship between variables, correlation primarily serves to determine the magnitude and direction of that relationship, while regression allows for the prediction of the value of one variable based on the knowledge of another (Ho, 2006).

The coefficient of determination, R^2 (R-square), is used as a key indicator of the representativeness of the calculated linear equation, showing the proportion of explained variability in the total, i.e., measuring the extent to which variations in the dependent variable Y are explained by the influence of the independent variable X. The value of this coefficient ranges from 0 to 1. The task of regression analysis is to approximate the function representing the link between the observed variables, where the influence of independent variables on dependent ones is tracked through two key parameters: The Beta coefficient (β) and statistical significance (t-value).

The interpretation of the obtained data is based on three scenarios that determine the outcome of the established hypotheses. In the first case, if the Beta coefficient is positive and the statistical significance is greater than the threshold value of 1.96 ($t > 1.96$), the hypothesis is confirmed, indicating that the independent variable exerts a statistically significant positive influence on the dependent variable. The second scenario involves a situation where the Beta coefficient is positive, but the statistical significance is less than 1.96, in which case the hypothesis is neither confirmed nor rejected. The third possibility occurs when the Beta coefficient is negative and the statistical significance is below the recommended threshold, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis.

The results of the regression analysis examining the impact of environmental concern on actual green consumer behavior are presented below (Table 4). Based on the theoretical framework, it was assumed that a higher level of concern for the environment directly encourages users toward more responsible product selection.

Table 4. Simple linear regression results for the relationship between ENCO and GPBE

Coefficients				Conclusion
H1: ENCO $\rightarrow$ GPBE	Standardized Beta Coefficient	t	Sig.	Accepted
	0.630	11.211	0.001	

Based on the results presented in Table 4, it is observed that the Beta coefficient is positive and amounts to 0.630, indicating that environmental concern has a significant positive impact on green consumer behavior. The statistical significance of $t=11.211$ is considerably higher than the threshold value of 1.96, with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, thereby confirming that hypothesis H1 can be fully accepted.

The second regression table (Table 5) analyzes the extent to which perceived environmental knowledge, specifically the understanding of symbols and eco-certificates, influences the final decision to purchase green products.

Table 5. Simple linear regression results for the relationship between PEKO and GPBE

Coefficients				Conclusion
H2: PEKO → GPBE	Standardized Beta Coefficient	t	Sig.	Accepted
	0.650	11.816	0.001	

A review of Table 5 reveals that perceived environmental knowledge exerts a positive influence on the behavior of the respondents, with a Beta coefficient of 0.650. The statistical significance is $t = 11.816$, which is significantly above the recommended value; thus, based on the obtained data, hypothesis H2 is accepted. These results suggest that awareness directly contributes to more frequent practicing of green habits during purchase.

The final regression analysis in this part of the research, presented in Table 6, focuses on the link between purchasing intention and the actual implementation of that intention into action, which represents a key indicator of consumer consistency.

Table 6. Simple linear regression results for the relationship between GPIN and GPBE

Coefficients				Conclusion
H3: GPIN → GPBE	Standardized Beta Coefficient	t	Sig.	Accepted
	0.421	6.420	0.001	

The results shown in Table 6 confirm that green purchasing intention has a positive and statistically significant impact on actual green behavior. The Beta coefficient is 0.421, while a t-value of 6.420 confirms the strength of this relationship, thus hypothesis H3 is accepted. Although this influence is somewhat weaker compared to the knowledge and concern factors, it still represents a relevant factor in the model of green consumer behavior for Generation Z.

5. DISCUSSION

Statistical processing of the data collected through the research confirmed all three hypotheses defined by the research model, thereby proving that ecological factors have a decisive influence on shaping the green consumer behavior of Generation Z in the Republic of Serbia. Prior to the impact analysis, high Cronbach's Alpha values (above 0.90 for all constructs) confirmed the exceptional reliability of the measurement instrument and the internal consistency of the respondents' attitudes.

The strongest influence in the model was observed in hypothesis H2, proving that perceived environmental knowledge directly and significantly determines actual green behavior ($\beta=0.650$, $t=11.816$). This data is crucial as it suggests that young people in Serbia make their consumer decisions based on their subjective feeling of being informed about products. As noted by Petrović (2022) and Kolović (2023), the low recognition of eco-labels on the domestic market is a barrier that can be overcome precisely through digital e-business channels, where platforms assume the role of educators rather than just sellers.

The confirmation of hypothesis H1 ($\beta=0.630$, $t=11.211$) indicates that environmental concern is the second strongest predictor of behavior. This means that the emotional and cognitive relationship of young people toward environmental issues is not merely a passive belief but a powerful internal driver leading to the selection of sustainable alternatives. These findings are complementary to research by Ahmad et al. (2025), who emphasize that

awareness of the environmental crisis among young consumers directly shapes their market preferences in the digital age.

Although hypothesis H3 was also confirmed ($\beta=0.421$, $t=6.420$), it is observed that the influence of green purchase intention on actual behavior is statistically weaker compared to knowledge and concern. This result indicates the existence of a certain “intention-behavior gap” between “planning” a purchase and “executing” it. The reason for the lower coefficient may lie in external factors such as the higher price of green products or their reduced availability in local e-commerce stores, which is supported by the findings of Gomes et al. (2023) regarding the price sensitivity of Generation Z.

The synthesis of these results clearly indicates that the e-business sector in Serbia should not focus solely on advertising a “green image”, but on providing concrete, transparent information. Given the strong influence of knowledge (H2), companies that educate consumers about certificates and product origin via social media and web platforms directly influence the increase in green product sales. The digital transformation of the market in Serbia, therefore, must be guided by a strategy of radical transparency to convert high environmental concern (H1) and intention (H3) into continuous consumer behavior.

6. CONCLUSION

The digital transformation of the market in the Republic of Serbia has brought radical changes to how the youngest consumer group, Generation Z, perceives sustainability and environmental responsibility. The primary objective of this paper was to identify and analyze the key determinants shaping the actual green consumer behavior of this generation within a digital environment. By testing three fundamental hypotheses, the research provided a profound insight into the decision-making mechanisms of Generation Z in the domestic market.

The research results unequivocally confirm that green behavior is not a random process but a direct consequence of cognitive and emotional factors. By synthesizing the confirmed hypotheses, it is concluded that perceived environmental knowledge and environmental concern represent the primary drivers of action, exerting a significantly stronger influence on behavior compared to green intention alone. The fact that knowledge dominates the model indicates that Generation Z in Serbia no longer responds to superficial “green marketing” but instead places its trust in information perceived as credible and transparent.

The theoretical contribution of this work lies in filling a significant gap in the domestic literature dealing with e-business and ecological behavior. Through the validation of the measurement instrument, which demonstrated excellent reliability, a solid foundation has been established for future research on the digital aspects of sustainable consumption in Serbia.

The practical contribution of the study offers clear guidelines for the e-business sector, suggesting that companies must transform their digital platforms from sales channels into educational channels. Given that knowledge is the strongest predictor (H2), market success will be achieved by those companies that manage to educate consumers about the actual benefits of green products through interactive content, certifications, and digital transparency.

The limitations of the research primarily relate to the sample structure, which is dominated by the student population, herefore, the results cannot be fully generalized to all members of Generation Z in the Republic of Serbia. *Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported data, which leaves room for social desirability bias in the responses.* Future research should focus on longitudinal monitoring of these trends and including a broader age base within the generation itself to examine the impact of purchasing power and income levels on the gap between environmental intention and the final realization of the purchase.

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UTICAJ ELEKTRONSKOG POSLOVANJA NA PRIHVATANJE ZELENIH PROIZVODA I USLUGA OD STRANE GENERACIJE Z U USLOVIMA DIGITALNE TRANSFORMACIJE TRŽIŠTA

Ivana Pomorišac

Univerzitet u Beogradu, Tehnički fakultet u Boru, Srbija

Izvod

Ekspanzija digitalne ekonomije značajno je transformisala način na koji potrošači pristupaju informacijama, procenjuju alternative i donose odluke o kupovini. U takvom okruženju, elektronsko poslovanje (e-business) postalo je važan pokretač održive potrošnje, omogućavajući efikasniju promociju i dostupnost ekološki odgovornih proizvoda i usluga. Imajući u vidu da Generacija Z predstavlja generaciju koja je odrastala uz savremene digitalne tehnologije, razumevanje faktora koji utiču na usvajanje zelenih proizvoda i usluga od strane ove populacije postaje sve značajnije kako za istraživače, tako i za praktičare. Cilj ovog rada je da ispita uticaj elektronskog poslovanja na usvajanje zelenih proizvoda i usluga među potrošačima Generacije Z. Na osnovu relevantne literature iz oblasti elektronskog poslovanja, održive potrošnje i ponašanja potrošača razvijen je konceptualni okvir istraživanja i formulisane odgovarajuće istraživačke hipoteze. Empirijsko istraživanje sprovedeno je metodom anketiranja na uzorku od 198 ispitanika koji pripadaju Generaciji Z u Republici Srbiji. Prikupljeni podaci analizirani su primenom softverskog paketa SPSS, korišćenjem deskriptivne statistike, testiranja pouzdanosti mernog instrumenta (Cronbach's Alpha) i jednostavne linearne regresione analize. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na to da elektronsko poslovanje ostvaruje pozitivan uticaj na usvajanje zelenih proizvoda i usluga među potrošačima Generacije Z. Rad doprinosi boljem razumevanju odnosa između digitalnih poslovnih praksi i održivog potrošačkog ponašanja, istovremeno pružajući praktične smernice organizacijama koje nastoje da unaprede efikasnost digitalnih strategija usmerenih ka promociji ekološki odgovorne potrošnje.

Ključne reči: elektronsko poslovanje, potrošači Generacije Z, usvajanje zelenih proizvoda, održiva potrošnja, digitalna ekonomija, ponašanje potrošača

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