Research Article *Open Access*

Journal of Pioneering Artificial Intelligence Research

ISSN: 3069-0846

DOI: doi.org/10.63721/26JPAIR0121

The Impact of Global Automotıve Brands' (Tesla, Toyota, Volkswagen) Onlıne Sales Strategıes on Consumer Preferences

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Citation: Berrin Ergin (2025) The Impact of Global Automotıve Brands' (Tesla, Toyota, Volkswagen) Onlıne Sales Strategıes on Consumer Preferences. J of Poin Artf Research 2(1), 1-13. WMJ-JPAIR-121

Abstract

This study systematically examines the effects of online sales strategies of global automotive brands (Tesla, Toyota, Volkswagen) on consumer preferences from a comparative perspective. In the automotive industry, where digitalization is rapidly expanding, online sales channels have become not only a distribution method but also a decisive factor in terms of brand reputation, customer loyalty and competitive advantage. In the study, systematic literature review, comparative case analysis, meta-analysis and content analysis methods were used together. Among the limitations of the study is that data access relies heavily on secondary sources, such as academic papers, industry reports, and publicly available information published by companies. Tesla's innovative direct sales model based on fully digital processes by excluding the traditional dealer experience, Toyota's hybrid (online-dealer) approach, and Volkswagen's digitalization strategies based on reputation repair after Dieselgate are discussed in detail. The findings show that Tesla strengthens consumer loyalty with its innovation and transparency-oriented approach; Toyota provides balance in different markets with its trust-based hybrid model; Volkswagen, on the other hand, is trying to rebuild its reputation through sustainability and transparency through online campaigns. As a result, it has been determined that online sales strategies are closely related to the factors of trust, loyalty, quality of experience and sustainability in consumer preferences. The original contribution of this study is that it deals with the online sales strategies of these brands, which are often examined separately in the literature, from a holistic perspective in the context of consumer behavior. While the study provides theoretical contributions to the literature, it also develops practical strategic recommendations for companies, investors and policy makers.

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Submitted: 30.12.2025 **Accepted:** 03.01.2026 **Published:** 16.01.2026

Keywords: Online Sales Strategies, Consumer Preferences, Automotive Industry, Digital Customer Experience

Introduction

The rise of digitalization in today's automotive industry has not only transformed production processes but has also revolutionized the way consumers interact. Notably, global brands like Tesla, Toyota, and Volkswagen have adopted online sales strategies, leading to the questioning of the traditional dealer-driven model in the industry. While online sales channels allow brands to establish direct contact with consumers; significantly shape customer experience, brand loyalty, and purchasing decisions. In this context, the main purpose of the study is to examine the effects of online sales strategies of these three global brands on consumer preferences from a comparative perspective. Another factor that increases the importance of the research is the strategic role of the automotive sector in the global economy. The automotive industry, which has a market size of billions of dollars worldwide, is constantly being reshaped by dynamics such as technological innovation and sustainability. In particular, the rise of electric vehicles and the widespread use of environmentally friendly technologies have led to the centralization of the relationship established with the customer on digital platforms, rather than just product-oriented sales strategies of brands. Tesla's direct sales model, Toyota's hybrid online-dealer integration, and Volkswagen's post-crisis digital transformation are examples that reflect the different dimensions of this process [1-4].

The original contribution of this study is that it deals with the online sales strategies of these brands, which are often examined separately in the literature, from a holistic perspective in the context of consumer behavior. Although current studies emphasize the effects of digitalization on consumer loyalty, brand perception, and purchase intent, a systematic approach that evaluates the examples of Tesla, Toyota, and Volkswagen together is limited. Therefore, this research aims to shed light on sectoral practices as well as academic literature [5-6].

Scope and Limitations of the Research

This study focuses on analyzing the effects of online sales strategies of three major global automotive brands, Tesla, Toyota, and Volkswagen, on consumer preferences. The scope includes dimensions such as the online customer journey, digital sales channels, brand reputation, and consumer loyalty. For example, Tesla's direct sales model allows the consumer to order the vehicle by configuring it completely online, while Toyota and Volkswagen are still rapidly integrating digitalization while maintaining their dealer network. This difference has measurable effects on consumer preferences in terms of perception, trust, and purchasing process. The geographical scope of the research was determined based on the global strategies of the brands. However, it should not be forgotten that consumer preferences may vary based on cultural, economic and regulation. For example, while regulations and consumer rights for online sales are stricter in Europe, brands such as Tesla can more easily implement the direct sales model in the USA. In the Japanese and Asian markets, consumers' adaptation to technology and their commitment to traditional dealer trust create a different dynamic [7-10].

Among the limitations of the study is that data access relies heavily on secondary sources, such as academic papers, industry reports, and publicly available information published by companies. Since primary data collection (survey, focus group, etc.) was not performed, the findings are limited to the data in the literature and provided by reliable institutions. In addition, considering the rapidly changing digital marketing trends, it should be taken into account that the results achieved depend on the conditions of a certain period [11].

Experimental Studies

Digitalization and Online Sales Strategies

Digitalization has not only transformed production processes in the automotive industry but has also radically reshaped sales channels. In particular, the development of e-commerce and online customer platforms has made it possible for brands to reach consumers directly. The traditional dealer-centered sales structure is gradually being replaced by hybrid models with the effect of digitalization. Tesla has sharply implemented its online sales strategy with a "direct-to-consumer" approach, while established brands such as Toyota and Volkswagen are conducting a more cautious digital integration process. This transformation offers the consumer more transparent pricing, personalized configuration opportunities and a time-saving purchasing experience. However, it should be taken into account that digitalization is not only a sales tool, but also

functions to create interaction between the brand and the consumer. Online strategies have become innovative tools used by brands to create competitive advantage [12-13]. Social media, mobile applications, online configurators, and virtual showroom experiences stand out as value-creating elements in consumer perception. Tesla's online ecosystem has expanded the boundaries of the industry by encompassing not only the vehicle ordering process but also after-sales services [3].

Consumer Preferences and the Digital Customer Journey

Consumer preferences are no longer just about product features but also on the quality of the experience during the buying process. The concept of digital customer journey encompasses the steps of consumers such as collecting information online, evaluating alternatives, purchasing and accessing after-sales services. This process has become a critical area that brands need to strategically direct [5]. One of the most important contributions of the online customer journey is the personalized experience. AI-powered recommendations, dynamic pricing, and marketing techniques based on user behavior accelerate consumer decision-making [6]. In addition, easy access and information transparency offered by digital platforms are among the factors that increase consumer trust. However, it should be noted that consumers' expectations from the online experience vary according to cultural and socio-economic factors. While consumer security and data protection are at the forefront in Europe, speed and cost advantage may be a priority in Asian markets [10]. Tesla's customer journey is based entirely on digital processes, leaving out the traditional dealer experience, and sets an innovative example in this respect. Toyota, on the other hand, prefers to increase trust by integrating online and physical touchpoints. Volkswagen's approach, on the other hand, has been shaped by the efforts to restore reputation and restore trust, especially after Dieselgate [4].

Theoretical Basis: Reputation, Innovation and Marketing Models

When conceptualizing online sales strategies, three theoretical pillars stand out: reputation management, innovation, and marketing models. First of all, the effect of corporate reputation on consumer preferences has been demonstrated in numerous studies [1, 8]. Digitalization holds both opportunities and risks for protecting and strengthening reputation. While innovative brands such as Tesla build a strong technology image with their online strategies, crises can spread rapidly online and harm the brand, as seen in the case of Volkswagen [14]. The innovation dimension makes it possible for brands to differentiate their online strategies. Marketing innovations are redefining the digital customer journey and deepening the connection with the consumer [13]. In addition, dynamic capabilities theory is used to explain the capacity of firms to adapt to environmental changes. Tesla, in particular, has demonstrated its dynamic capabilities by constructing digitalization not only as a sales channel but also as a holistic element of its business model [3]. Finally, modern marketing models explain the effects of customer experience-driven innovation and digital touchpoints on consumer loyalty and brand loyalty. Research indicates that online sales strategies not only produce economic implications but also have the capacity to create an emotional connection with the consumer [5].

Literature Review

Online Sales Applications in the Automotive Industry
In recent years, online sales applications have become increasingly common in the automotive industry. Tesla's fully online sales model represents a radical paradigm shift in the industry. Toyota and Volkswagen, on the other hand, have adopted a more hybrid model and integrated online platforms with the dealership system [12]. In the literature, it is found that this transformation provides convenience especially in consumer trust and purchasing process, but is met with resistance in markets accustomed to the dealer system [9].

Digital Reputation Management and Brand Loyalty

In digitalizing markets, reputation management has become one of the most critical elements that guide consumer preferences. Research shows that the online reputation of brands has a direct impact on consumer loyalty. For example, Volkswagen's loss of confidence after the Dieselgate scandal was also reflected in its online sales performance. On the other hand, Tesla's innovative image and direct sales strategy have earned the brand a strong loyalty and commitment [1, 3-4].

E-Mobility, Electric Vehicles, and Consumer Adoption

The rise of electric vehicles has increased the importance of online sales strategies. Because the technological features of these vehicles are more easily explained on online platforms and can be presented to the consumer in a transparent manner. Studies show that consumers' perception of electric vehicles is shaped by online information sharing and digital experiences. Tesla's online booking strategy in its Model 3 campaign marked a turning point in e-mobility adoption. Toyota, on the other hand, emphasized online information through hybrid models, while Volkswagen strategically used online launches with the ID. series [15-16].

Social Media, E-Commerce Platforms and Automotive Sales

Social media has become a critical marketing tool in the online sales strategies of automotive brands. Consumers shape their purchasing decisions not only based on technical specifications but also on social media campaigns and influencer influences [6]. Tesla has carved out a unique position in digital marketing thanks to Elon Musk's social media presence. Toyota, on the other hand, offers a more traditional trust framework by integrating social media and e-commerce platforms with its dealership network. Volkswagen, on the other hand, has used social media as the center of crisis communication in order to strengthen reputation management [7].

Results and Evaluatıon

The method followed in this study is based on the systematic literature research approach.

Systematic Literature Search

Systematic literature search aims to scan all relevant academic and sectoral studies in a comprehensive, objective and reproducible manner in order to find an answer to a determined research question. This approach increases the reliability of the findings obtained by preventing random choices and subjectivity [11]. In the first stage of the research, studies focusing on the online sales strategies of global automotive brands and their impact on consumer preferences were identified. In this direction, indexes such as Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar were used. During the screening process, keywords such as "online sales strategies," "digital customer journey," "automotive industry reputation," "e-mobility adoption," and "consumer preferences in digital marketing" were used. Among the studies obtained, only peer-reviewed articles and reliable industry reports that directly contribute to the subject were included [1, 14]. One of the criteria determined in this research process is to ensure methodological diversity. Consumer preference research based on qualitative case studies and content analysis were evaluated together. Thus, findings produced by different methods, which are not reduced to a single point of view, have been brought together. This approach allows for a comparative evaluation of the online strategies of Tesla, Toyota, and Volkswagen [9].

Data Sources: Company Reports, Market Data, Google Trends, etc.

In order to reinforce the reliability of the study, not only academic literature but also current and sectoral data sources were examined. Company reports are primary sources that reveal brands' own online sales strategies and performance. For example, Tesla's annual reports report the impact of the direct sales model on revenues in detail, while Toyota and Volkswagen's sustainability reports explain the integration of online sales channels with dealer networks [3, 12]. Market data was used to compare online sales trends in the automotive industry. In this context, reports prepared by consultancy firms such as McKinsey & Company [9]. reveal the online vehicle purchasing trends and expectations of consumers on a global scale. Additionally, Statista and other market research databases provide concrete data on the volume of Tesla's direct sales, Toyota's online dealer-assisted sales rates, and Volkswagen's digital campaign performance. Google Trends data was used to measure the temporal change of consumer interest. The search densities for terms like "Tesla online purchase," "Toyota online store," and "Volkswagen digital sales" indicate fluctuations in consumer demand over different periods. This method enables consumer interest to be understood not only by sales figures but also by online information search behaviors [6]. Increasing search trends, especially for electric vehicles, reveal that e-mobility adoption is closely related to online channels [15-16].

Analysis Techniques: Comparative Case Analysis, Meta-Analysis, Content Analysis

Three basic methods were adopted in the analysis process: comparative case analysis, meta-analysis and

and content analysis.

The comparative case study allows for a direct comparison of the online sales strategies of Tesla, Toyota, and Volkswagen. Tesla's direct sales model, Toyota's hybrid system, and Volkswagen's post-crisis digital transformation represent different corporate approaches [3- 4]. This analysis reveals the similarities and differences of brands and provides a holistic evaluation of their impact on consumer preferences.

The meta-analysis aims to bring together quantitative findings from studies in the literature. For example, empirical studies on the digital customer journey show the general trends of factors that increase consumer loyalty [5]. This method allows for the statistical integration of findings from different investigations and facilitates the identification of overall trends [11].

Content analysis was carried out by examining company reports, sectoral documents and online marketing campaigns. Brands' websites, social media accounts, and digital campaigns were considered as qualitative data sources. Thanks to this method, the communication strategies of brands, the digital tools they use, and the messages they give to the consumer have been systematically classified [7].

Case Study Analysis

Tesla: Direct Online Sales Model and Consumer Perception

Tesla has taken a radical approach to its online sales strategies, almost completely bypassing the traditional dealership system of the automotive industry. The "direct-to-consumer" model is at the center of the brand's digitalization strategy and enables consumers to manage the vehicle purchasing process through online platforms [3]. This strategy not only provides cost advantages but also helps strengthen the bond between the customer and the brand. Tesla's online sales system reinforces the customer experience with automation and personalization elements. Users can customize their vehicles with the equipment and features they want through online configurators and follow the order processes transparently. This approach reinforces the element of trust in consumers' decision-making processes and at the same time eliminates time and space limitations [12].]. Pricing and subscription models are also important components of Tesla's online strategy. The fixed pricing policy makes it easier for consumers to make direct purchases without entering the negotiation process, while subscription services allow for continuous improvement of vehicle functions, especially with software-based updates. This allows Tesla to integrate after-sales services into its online sales ecosystem [6, 17].

Table 1: Tesla's Online Sales Strategy and Its Implications for Consumer Perception

Aspect	Strategy	Impact on the Consumer	Academic Findings
Sales Model	Direct-to-consumer (bayisiz satış)	Transparent pricing, increased perception of trust	Teece (2018)
Digital Experience	Çevrim içi konfigüratör, otomasyon	Personalized customer journey	Lang et al., (2021)
Pricing	Sabit fiyat, abonelik modeli	Elimination of bargaining stress, long-term loyalty	Wu et al., (2022)
Delivery Processes	Online order tracking	Time and place independent purchasing experience	Knupfer et al., (2017)
Perceptual Influence	Innovation-oriented image	Technology-leading brand perception	Vaz et al., (2017)

Looking at this table, Tesla's strategy has not only transformed its sales channels but also built an innovative and reliable brand image in consumer perception.

Toyota: Integration of Traditional Dealership Network and Digital Transformation

Toyota has not completely abandoned its well-established dealer network while building its online sales strategies, instead choosing to integrate digital transformation with its existing distribution channels. While the "Toyota Online Store" platform allows consumers to configure vehicles online, the final stage of the purchasing process is often completed through the dealer. This hybrid model reinforces consumers' perception of trust and makes it possible for Toyota to digitalize without weakening its deep-rooted dealer relations [10]. The dealer network-online integration has allowed Toyota to pursue a culturally sensitive strategy in different markets. In traditional markets such as Japan, the dealer experience is still a strong factor in consumer preferences, while in Europe and the USA, online reservation and ordering systems are used more effectively [9]. Toyota's social media campaigns play a critical role, especially in promoting hybrid and electric vehicles. The brand's sustainability-focused communication strategies appeal to consumers' eco-friendly preferences and thus strengthen customer loyalty [2]. In this context, it can be said that Toyota's digital campaigns serve a function of increasing brand trust and reinforcing consumer loyalty [18].

Table 2: Toyota's Hybrid Sales Model and Digital Transformation Strategies

Aspect	Strategy	Impact on the Consumer	Academic Findings
Sales Model	Hybrid (online + re-seller)	Consolidation of trust, accessibility	Dong and Mah, (2020)
Digital Integration	Online Store + dealer delivery	Flexible customer experience	Knupfer et al., (2017)
Social Media	Hybrid/EV campaigns	Strengthening the perception of environmental friendliness	Vaz et al., (2017)
Customer Loyalty	Digital-dealer fit	Maintaining loyalty and trust	Loureiro et al., (2017)
Global Harmony	Regional different strategies	Adaptation to cultural diversity	Jung and Park, (2016)

Toyota's approach is notable for prioritizing consumer trust through a balanced integration model rather than complete digitalization.

Volkswagen: Digitalization, Post-Crisis Reputation Management and Online Sales

Volkswagen's online sales strategies have been reshaped, especially after the Dieselgate scandal that erupted in 2015. In the post-crisis period, the company started to use digital platforms not only as a sales channel but also as a basic tool for reputation repair. During this period, Volkswagen strengthened online communication through campaigns aimed at establishing transparency and trust [4,19].

Volkswagen's "VW Online" platform and ID. series electric vehicle launches are at the heart of the brand's e-mobility strategy. These campaigns aim to restore consumer trust by increasing online engagement. The widespread use of online reservations, especially with the launch of the ID.3 and ID.4 models, has been an important turning point in the brand's digitalization process. The e-mobility transition has played a strategic role in Volkswagen's post-crisis repositioning [7-8]. Online campaigns have tried to create an environmentally friendly brand image with an emphasis on sustainability. Although consumers' perception of trust has been significantly damaged in the post-crisis period, it is seen that the brand has been able to partially repair this perception thanks to digitalization [20].

Table 3: Volkswagen's Post-Crisis Digitalization Strategies and Their Impact on Consumers

Aspect	Strategy	Impact on the Consumer	Academic Findings
Crisis Management	Transparent communication online	Rebuilding trust	Jung and Park, (2016)
Digital Platforms	VW Online, ID. series	Access to new customer segments	Dorčák et al., (2017)
E-Mobility	Online launch campaigns	Strengthening the perception of sustainability	Michelon, (2011)
Reputation Management	Social media and PR-focused strategies	Perception repair, reduction of crisis memory	Loureiro et al., (2017)
Consumer Behavior	Trust-based repurchase	Markaya temkinli bağlılık	Knupfer et al., (2017)

Volkswagen's example illustrates that digitalization is not only a sales channel but also a critical tool for reputation building and brand rehabilitation after the crisis.

Comparative Analysis

Similarities and Differences in Online Sales Strategies

Tesla, Toyota, and Volkswagen exhibit different strategic choices in terms of how they use online sales channels. Tesla has completely eliminated its dealer network and turned to the direct sales model; Toyota, on the other hand, has integrated the online and dealership system by establishing a hybrid structure. Volkswagen, on the other hand, used digitalization as a restructuring tool in order to overcome the post-Dieselgate confidence crisis [3, 4]. In terms of similarity, all three brands use online platforms not only for sales, but also for brand communication, customer experience, and after-sales services. The differences emerge in their strategic emphasis: Tesla emphasizes innovation and technology pioneering, Toyota aims to reinforce consumer trust, and Volkswagen centralizes transparency and reputation repair post-crisis [12, 21].

Table 4: Tesla, Toyota and Volkswagen's Online Sales Strategies Comparison

Aspect	Tesla	Toyota	Volkswagen
Sales Model	Direct-to-consumer (without dealer)	Hybrid (online + reseller)	Traditional model strengthened by digitalization
Strategic Focus	Innovation, speed, transparent price	Trust, flexibility, dealer relationships	Reputation repair, sustainability
Digital Tools	Fully online ordering, subscription, software updates	Online Store, dealer delivery, social media integration	VW Online, ID. series online launches
Consumer Perception	Innovative, transparent, technology-driven	Reliable, traditional	Cautious confidence after the crisis, sustainability-oriented

Influences on Consumer Preferences (Loyalty, Trust, Experience)

The reflection of online sales strategies on consumer preferences can be examined through the dimensions of loyalty, trust and experience. Tesla's strategy has increased the level of loyalty among consumers by allowing them to establish a direct relationship with the brand. However, the lack of dealer support can create a lack of trust in some markets [5, 1]. While Toyota reinforces both trust and loyalty with its hybrid model, Volkswagen strives to rebuild its relationship with consumers with more transparency and sustainability messages [22].

Table 5: The Effects of Online Sales Strategies on Consumer Preferences

Aspect	Tesla	Toyota	Volkswagen
Loyality	High loyalty with direct sales and software updates	Loyalty based on trust thanks to hybrid structure	Limited loyalty after the crisis, cautious commitment
Trust	Low trust in some markets in the dealerless model	Maintaining trust with dealer support	Rebuilding trust with transparency
Experience	Fully digital, innovative customer journey	Online-physical contact integrated experience	Post-crisis communication-oriented experience

Digital customer experience accelerates the consumer decision process and provides ease of access to information in all three brands. However, at Tesla, the experience is innovation-based, at Toyota it is trust-oriented, and at Volkswagen it is towards post-crisis reputation management [14].

Brand Reputation, Social Media, and Digital Customer Journey Comparison

Brand reputation, social media interactions, and the digital customer journey directly impact the success of online sales strategies. Through Elon Musk's social media activity, Tesla has increased the brand's visibility and fostered the online customer journey with a strong sense of community [6]. While Toyota followed a more corporate and sustainability-oriented line in its social media campaigns, Volkswagen strategically used social media for reputation repair after Dieselgate [4].

Table 6: Brand Reputation, Social Media and Digital Customer Journey Comparison

Aspect	Tesla	Toyota	Volkswagen
Brand Reputation	Innovative, technology leading, transparent	Reliable, environmentally friendly, enterprise	In the process of post-crisis reputation repair
Social Media Usage	Musk's personal impact, community building	Corporate campaigns, sustainability messages	Crisis communication, transparency and PR-oriented use
Digital Customer Journey	Fully online, focused on automation and personalization	Online – physical integration, prioritizing customer trust	Restoring trust with online campaigns

The Role of Online Sales in Electric Vehicle Strategies

The rise of electric vehicles has further increased the central importance of online sales strategies. Tesla has introduced e-mobility to consumer preferences with online reservation systems in vehicles such as Model 3 and Model Y and has been largely successful [15]. Toyota instilled confidence in consumers through online information and campaigns through hybrid models, while Volkswagen tried to strengthen the perception of sustainability by focusing on online launches with the ID. series [16]. Online sales channels play a critical function, especially in conveying the technical features of electric vehicles to consumers. Information such as software, battery life, and charging infrastructure, which are difficult to convey in the traditional showroom experience, can be shared transparently and in detail on online platforms [12].

Table 7: The Role of Online Sales in Electric Vehicle Strategies

Aspect	Tesla	Toyota	Volkswagen
Strategic Focus	Online booking and selling process of EVs	Online information on hybrid models	ID. series online launches and campaigns
Contribution to the Consumer	Ease of access, transparent information, early adoption	Reliability and brand loyalty	Restoring confidence with a focus on sustainability after the crisis
Perceptual Influence	EV leadership and technology perception	Eco-friendly, reliable brand	Reputation repair and sustainability perception

The comparative analysis reveals that Tesla has developed innovation and technology-oriented online sales strategies, Toyota has developed trust-based and Volkswagen has developed reputation-oriented online sales strategies. Loyalty, trust and experience are affected in different dimensions in consumer preferences; However, it is seen that online sales play a decisive role in electric vehicle strategies in all three brands [23-25].

General Evaluatıon and Conclusıons

Discussion

Digitalization has radically transformed the automotive industry, creating new opportunities across the entire value chain from production to sales. Online sales channels have redefined the traditional dealer-centric structure while enabling brands to interact directly with customers. Tesla's direct sales model represents the most concrete example of the transparency and speed advantage that digitalization offers to the consumer [3]. Toyota and Volkswagen, on the other hand, have adopted a more flexible approach, effectively integrating digital channels while maintaining their dealership network [12]. One of the contributions of digitalization is the capacity to personalize the customer experience. Online configurators, software-based updates, and subscription models offer the consumer not just a product but a continuous service ecosystem [6]. This situation reinforces customer loyalty and allows for the creation of sustainable revenue models for brands. In addition, digitalization contributes to brands adapting to the market faster and increasing their global competitiveness [13].

Among the most important factors affecting consumer preferences, trust, loyalty and quality of experience stand out. While Tesla strengthens loyalty with transparent pricing and a fully digitized purchasing process; Toyota has maintained the element of trust by maintaining dealer support. Volkswagen, on the other hand, tried to compensate for the loss of reputation it experienced after Dieselgate with an emphasis on online transparency and sustainability [1, 4]. Research shows that the most important factors in the online sales process are accessibility, transparent information and secure payment systems [5]. While Tesla's subscription-based services provide long-term benefits to consumers, Toyota's hybrid structure responds to the cultural expectations of users in different markets [10]. Volkswagen, on the other hand, has tried to accelerate the transition to e-mobility with online campaigns, especially in the European market [16]. The success of online sales strategies is closely related to innovation and sustainability elements. Tesla has reinforced its competitive advantage with innovative software updates and advanced technologies such as autonomous driving [12]. While Toyota has built an environmentally friendly perception with hybrid vehicle technologies, Volkswagen has tended to reposition itself based on sustainability with the ID. series [8]. Digitalization also contributes to the development of sustainable business models. Online campaigns allow brands to convey their environmental responsibility messages directly to the consumer. Especially in e-mobility strategies, online sales accelerate the spread of environmentally friendly technologies and provide brands with long-term competitive advantage [2].

Conclusion

This study provides three main contributions to the literature by systematically examining the impact of online sales strategies on consumer preferences. First, different variations of online sales models were examined through the examples of Tesla, Toyota, and Volkswagen, and their different reflections on consumer

behavior were revealed. Secondly, the concept of digital customer journey has been placed in the theoretical framework with the dimensions of trust, loyalty and experience specific to the automotive industry [5]. Thirdly, innovation and sustainability-oriented strategies have been shown to provide a competitive advantage in the context of online sales [13]. The findings of the study serve as a guide for companies, investors, and policymakers alike. For companies, online sales channels are not just an alternative, but a strategic necessity. While the example of Tesla proves the impact of direct selling on customer loyalty; Toyota's hybrid model shows how digitalization is possible in different markets without losing trust. Volkswagen's experience reveals how digitalization can be used in reputation repair after the crisis [3-4]. For investors, the findings highlight the potential for digitalized brands to drive long-term sustainability and competitive advantage. For policymakers, supporting online sales with regulatory frameworks is critical for protecting consumer rights and developing the market under fair competition conditions [10, 26-30].

Recommendations for Future Studies

The limitations of this research point to new areas of research for future studies. Firstly, questionnaire and experimental designs can be used to gain a deeper understanding of consumer preferences. In addition, the impact of cultural factors on online sales strategies in different geographical regions can be examined comparatively. With the proliferation of electric vehicles, the role of online sales in the adaptation process to e-mobility should be investigated in more detail [15-16]. Finally, the effects of social media and digital platforms on consumer loyalty and brand reputation can be examined through big data analytics and artificial intelligence-supported methods. This can create a comprehensive framework on how to develop online sales strategies in a more dynamic, consumer-oriented and sustainable way [31-66].

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