
Editorial: Integrating SDGs into business and trade research: progress, challenges and the contributions of the *Journal of Trade Science*

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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal framework to eradicate poverty, protect the environment, combat climate change and ensure prosperity and well-being for all (Mishra *et al.*, 2023; United Nations, 2015). Since their establishment, the SDGs have generated substantial scholarly momentum. A review by Mishra *et al.* (2023) demonstrated that research output related to the SDGs has increased substantially. By 2022, over 12,000 publications in nearly 2,000 journals have addressed various aspects of the SDGs, involving contributions from more than 45,000 authors. Despite this significant scholarly activity, consistent real-world progress remains limited. According to Khot *et al.* (2026), most countries are not on track to achieve the 17 SDGs outlined in the 2030 Agenda. This gap between academic engagement and practical implementation underscores the need for a more precise understanding of which goals have been adequately researched and where crucial knowledge gaps persist.

Within the business and trade disciplines, the integration of the SDGs into research agendas has been notably uneven. Raman *et al.* (2023) found that only 25% of business research publications directly correspond to one or more SDGs, with SDG 3 (Good health and well-being) and SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy) being the most frequently addressed within business scholarship. In the marketing field, Voola *et al.* (2022) found that most studies have engaged significantly with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). However, several goals remain significantly underrepresented. SDG 1 (No poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero hunger) have received limited attention in research on inclusive business models, food supply chain resilience and sustainable agriculture in emerging markets (Chandel *et al.*, 2025). SDG 4 (Quality Education) is another underexplored goal in marketing research (Voola *et al.*, 2022). SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) offers a rich opportunity to investigate urban retail transformation, sustainable last-mile logistics and business-driven sustainable urbanization, especially in rapidly developing regions of Asia and Africa (Raman *et al.*, 2023; Meschede, 2020). Although SDG 13 (Climate action) is most frequently examined in environmental science outlets, the business and trade literature offers potential for further investigation into how corporate sustainability strategies, carbon management practices and green supply chain initiatives can advance climate mitigation objectives. In addition, SDG 5 (Gender equality) remains insufficiently studied in organizational and entrepreneurial contexts, with limited research on women's entrepreneurship, ethical sourcing, fair labor practices and the institutional determinants of gender equity (Chandel *et al.*, 2025). Addressing these gaps requires not only expanding inquiry into specific understudied SDGs but also adopting integrative frameworks that recognize the interconnectedness of sustainable development challenges since achieving one goal can create synergies or trade-offs with others (Pradhan *et al.*, 2017; Raman *et al.*, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the *Journal of Trade Science (JTS)* supports interdisciplinary, high-quality research aligned with the United Nations' SDGs, with particular emphasis on developing and emerging economies that face significant sustainability challenges. As part of Emerald's responsible management collection, *JTS* aligns with several SDGs, including SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities), SDG 11, SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and SDG 13. In addition, *JTS* seeks research that addresses important gaps in business and trade scholarship, particularly those related to underexplored



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SDGs such as poverty reduction, food security and urban sustainability. This focus not only reflects the journal's core commitment to business sustainability and social impact but also positions *JTS* to help close the gap between scholarly attention and practical progress on the SDGs most relevant to the economic development and sustainability challenges of developing countries.

A review of recent *JTS* publications reveals that the journal has already made meaningful contributions across its aligned SDGs and several underexplored goals. For SDG 4 (Quality education), the journal has examined the transformative role of technology in learning, such as the application of generative artificial intelligence in business education (Sabani *et al.*, 2026), which provides students with opportunities to access rich learning materials. Another study by Nguyen *et al.* (2024) highlights the importance of higher education service quality (including academic and non-academic aspects) and student satisfaction for the sustainable growth of higher education institutions. In line with SDG 7, Le *et al.* (2025) seek to promote energy-efficient appliances through exploring factors that affect consumer behavioral loyalty. To address SDG 8, several studies examine employee turnover intentions and performance (Bui *et al.*, 2024), career orientation in family businesses (Birgach, 2025) and the impact of international trade dynamics on export-led economic growth in Vietnam (Dang *et al.*, 2024). The study by Dang *et al.* (2024) is also related to SDG 10 through examining how trade realignments create uneven opportunities across industries and economies. SDG 9 and SDG 12 have been addressed jointly through research on digital technologies in the circular economy (e.g., Le-Dinh *et al.*, 2025), which maps how innovations such as the internet of Things, artificial intelligence and blockchain can support circular business models. Similarly, studies on social media's influence on organic food consumption (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2025) and viral street food trends among young consumers (Luong *et al.*, 2025) contribute to both SDG 3 and SDG 12 by examining how digital platforms shape sustainable consumption patterns. A systematic review of business sustainability measurement frameworks also provides theoretical and methodological foundations that span multiple SDGs (Yasmin *et al.*, 2025). In addition, emerging work on environmental taxation and trade development in sub-Saharan Africa (Danquah and Pavis-Djre, 2026) extends the journal's reach to SDG 13 and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

JTS believes that research on the circular economy offers a promising pathway to advance multiple SDGs. Moving from linear "take-make-dispose" production models to circular systems that focus on reuse, repair, remanufacturing and recycling supports numerous goals, notably SDG 9, SDG 12 and SDG 13. It also carries implications for SDG 8 through new forms of economic activity and employment, and for SDG 11 through sustainable urban resource management (Geissdoerfer *et al.*, 2017). A study by Le-Dinh *et al.* (2025) demonstrated *JTS*'s capacity to contribute to this field by mapping the digital-circular economy nexus. The journal is also hosting a special issue on "The circular economy paradox: strategy, consumer value, and market trade-offs" to advance the field (Emerald Publishing, 2026). This special issue highlights the importance of an integrative perspective that combines business strategy and consumer research to address the paradoxical nature of circular economy strategies and initiatives. It also aligns with *JTS*'s support for developing and testing integrated theoretical frameworks to examine SDG interactions in the circular economy, moving beyond reliance on existing disciplinary paradigms (Pizzi *et al.*, 2020).

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