

ABSTRACT

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Me or the others? An empirical investigation into egoistic and altruistic drivers of ethical consumption

Submitted by: Ann-Kathrin Seemann
 Organisation: University of Freiburg, Economics, Germany
 Author(s): Jörg Lindenmeier Henrike Andersch Ann-Kathrin Seemann
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Abstract:

Purpose: Ethical consumerism has gained particular interest in the last two decades due to consumers' concern over societal and environmental issues. Discussions concerning corporate and environmental scandals or poor working conditions are omnipresent within the media. Thus, consumers increasingly question the resulting consequences of their own actions for themselves as well as for others.

The contingent four-component model of ethical decision-making has been widely used to investigate moral intent and is also applicable to ethical consumption. This study extends the model by including decision-relevant information on neglected product safety. The consideration of perceived health risk offers insight whether ethical consumption is still determined by ethics and morality or whether altruistic motives get alternated by self-centered aspects such as health protection. Additionally the study aims on identifying possible mediation effects of negative affect on behavior intention and explores gender differences.

Design: The starting point for the current study is the Greenpeace 'Detox Catwalk' campaign. The German adult population represents the basic population of the current study. A quota sampling procedure was applied and gender and age were considered as quota criteria. The data collection took place in November and December 2015. This procedure yielded a sample of 301 respondents. The sample was reduced to 284 cases due to deletion of unusable answers. The

proposed model and hypotheses were tested using partial least squares (PLS) which is a variance-based structural equation modeling approach.

Findings: Regarding the mean values and standard deviations it can be stated that respondents rate moral equity, relativism, contractualism, moral obligation and behavioral intent rather high. The health risk of wearing apparel of “Greenwasher” companies is perceived to be moderate. Gender-specific descriptive statistics show that the females’ emotional reaction to the allegations is stronger. Moreover, females show a more unfavorable ethical judgment, have a higher perceived health risk and stronger feelings of moral obligation. Finally, the mean values indicate that females have a stronger inclination to switch to a more ethical product alternative.

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