

PROFILING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER LEADERS: SOCIOECONOMICS,
PERSONALITY, CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR, AND ETHICAL
CONSCIOUSNESS

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
CSR-	Corporate Social Responsibility
NEP-	New Ecological Paradigm
PCE-	Perceived Consumer Effectiveness
SCL-	Sustainable Consumer Leadership
SPR-	Socially Responsible Products

CHAPTER I

Profiling Sustainable Consumer Leadership

Introduction

Humans play many roles during their daily routines, although all roles are important, this project focuses on two main roles; citizen and consumer. As citizens, they find themselves identifying with and belonging to communities; neighborhoods, towns, state(s) and so forth. With the use of technological innovations, the citizens' ability to identify with and belonging to their communities continues to expand simultaneously with the global network; globalization. These technological innovations have shrunk the planet, alleviating all geographical boundaries, which once limited the flow of humans, goods, and services. With the use of technology, citizens now see themselves not simply belonging to a small group of communities, but rather, being a part of a global community and just like any other community, a citizen participates by purchasing goods and services; thus a global consumer.

As a global consumer, he/she is able to connect with others over vast regions, whether through purchasing goods from transnational corporations via internet or department stores. The products are transported across international and/or national boundaries, to a distribution center or store, where the product is placed on a shelf, waiting to be purchased. It was best stated by Heiskanen and Pantzar (1997), "consumption is the reason why anything gets produced, and consumption and production together are the source of all man-made stress on the natural environment".

Living in a world dependent on dwindling finite resources, combined with excessive consumption and waste, has aroused consumers' attention. As a result, consumers are left mending the ethical gap between conventional business practices, the environment, and social justice issues. Consumers recognize, the mounting social inequities with the

conventional system in place and have demanded businesses to produce and manufacture environmentally friendly, better quality products, which consume less materials; thus, sustainably innovative products.

What type of consumers initiates the demand for sustainable innovative products? What are characteristics of those who exude their natural ability to be leaders by fostering the demand for and further promote sustainable products to other consumers – named "sustainable consumer leaders" (Kang, Hustvedt, & Ahn, 2013).

The leadership role has been widely investigated within the corporate arena, with the emphasis on executive leaders, corporate social responsibility, and corporate sustainability; adopting sustainable business practices (Amernic & Craig, 2013; Du, Swaen, Lindgreen, & Sen, 2013; Kang et al., 2013; Pearce & Manz, 2011). Despite the critical role of consumers in creating demand for sustainable products and pressure on sustainable business practices, there is no previous study which examines such leadership in the individual consumer level (Kang et al., 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to create a profile for sustainable consumer leaders by examining socio-economics, personality, consumption behavior, and ethical consciousness which predicts sustainable consumer leadership. By providing a comprehensive profile of consumer leaders in the sustainability context, this research is to help practitioners who are interested in expanding and dispersing the concept of sustainability, sustainable products and sustainable business practices.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Sustainability, Sustainable Consumption, and Sustainable Products

The so called “shift” is the result of a change in values coupled with environmental changes, thus, changing the way consumers see the world. This shift constitutes a new paradigm, the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP), which “stems from the growing awareness that environmental problems are fundamentally social problems” (Dunlap & Marshall, 2007). In other words, consumers realize it is not possible to decouple themselves from the very thing which gives them life; the environment. Although consumers realize their individual impact may not be overall significant, they sense the significance of the monumental effects from all consumer consumption. Consequently, global consumption continues to increase, along with waste, thereby conflating the environmental crisis. As a result, consumer values are transitioning from individual centered values, to socially centered values (Dickson, 2000).

The socially centered values encompass a new element known as consumer responsibility (Hansen & Schrader, 1997). Consumer responsibility highlights the interconnected relationship between consumption of goods and services, which ultimately has adversely impacted social and environmental issues (Hansen & Schrader, 1997). Subsequently, consumers are now trying to consume (shop) the ethical gap away, by purchasing environmental and sustainable products. In other words, consumers want conventional business production practices to become accountable for environmental degradation, by accounting for the true cost (Costanza et al., 2014; Friedman, 2009; Hansen & Schrader, 1997; Hawken, 1993; Hawken, 1993) within the market.

The concept of responsibility for the environment has been shifted to the consumer, thus, consumers accept responsibility and understand the coupled relationship between themselves and the environment, which guides them to look for environmentally friendly products and services. As a result, consumers' goals are to decrease environmental degradation and to alleviate the global social issues brought on by environmental degradation. Therefore, the dual role of the citizen and consumer, simultaneously work towards a change in the structural framework of production, distribution and consumption, which ultimately affects consumer purchasing and waste, thus, sustainable consumption.

The term sustainability implies "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations" (Moxie Design Group Limited, August 2008). Therefore, sustainable consumption is guided by the concept of sustainability. Subsequently, sustainability guides the consumers' values to focus on socially centered values; social justice, global consumption, conventional business production practices and lifestyle motivations and behaviors. Consumers who are concerned with sustainable consumption are not limited to one type of person, rather sustainable consumers come from all walks of life, regardless of income, age, education, and location (Moxie Design Group Limited, August 2008).

Sustainable consumption is the desire to consume products or services through the process known as eco-efficiency, which takes precautionary steps by minimizing the natural resources from the beginning (e.g., design of the product) to the end (e.g., disposal), thus, limiting emissions and pollutants, thereby, lessening the negative societal impacts and decreasing environmental degradation (Hobson, 2002; Joachim & Lorek, 2002; Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008; McDonough & Braungart, 2002; Stretesky, Long, & Lynch, 2013). The eco

efficient process, helps to create a proper foundation for sustainable products, thus, focusing on “the needs of the future generations” (Hobson, 2002). Subsequently, the consumption of sustainable products takes on a function as a means of communication (nonverbal) and ownership (responsibility for the impacts of consumption). So, how does consumer leadership and sustainability work together?

Consumer Leadership

Consumer leadership is seen as a form of success since they adopt a new technology/product before others (early adopters). The consumer leaders’ successes with the early adoption helps to decrease any uncertainty, thus, other members in the social system admire and respect the consumer leaders, enhancing the consumer leaders’ role to their role model (Rogers, 2003).

“Leadership is a matter of degree” (Rogers, 2003), in other words, everyone has a certain level of leadership, however, leaders are more influential if they are actively seeking information which enhances their knowledge. Subsequently, the degree of leadership originates from the self, which does not require the traditional roles of leader, resulting in a self-imposed leadership role. The idea of self-leadership suggests the person has intrinsic motivation, self-influence, skill development and strategic oriented cognitions (Pearce & Manz, 2011).

It has been stated in other studies, “shopping is an important socialization and engagement tool that provides consumers with opportunities to interact with others, which in turn satisfies their social needs” (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Kang & Park-Poaps, 2011). So how are consumers’ social needs meet when they are faced with the human pressures, such as, environmental degradation, rising population, industrial production and consumption?

We know throughout history, human consumption patterns have changed from basic necessities (food and housing) to luxuries (cars and appliances) and finally, to amenities (recreation, knowledge and leisure) (Hays, 2000). As a result, each new consumption pattern creates a substantial increase for the need of raw materials. Just as the pollution was fueled by the consumption factor, consumption was fueled by the increase of population.

As a result, environmental issues continue to increase in quantity and cost. The more people, the more consumption, the more waste. However, a shift is taking place among consumers, what was once was tolerated is now found to be intolerable, for consumers are now more concerned with the notion of “quality of life” (Adomaviciute, 2013; Bregman, Xiaosong Peng, & Chin, 2014; Hays, 2000; Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008; Oreg & Katz-Gerro, 2006; Steg, Dreijerink, & Abrahamse, 2005) for the many. This new focus on the quality of life has generated new values such as; beauty (aesthetics of their surroundings), health of the citizens, and finally, permanence of the intense industries (Hays, 2000).

Sustainable Consumer Leadership

As discussed earlier, consumers are closing the ethical gap between business practices (production) and excessive consumption and waste, which has led to adverse impacts on the environment. In recent years, environmental degrading practices; multiple oil spills in the Mississippi River, Lake Michigan, the Gulf of Mexico, along with chemical and coal ash spills dumping toxic chemicals in water ways, have made the news. These are just a few of the incidents which steam from poor corporate leadership by blatantly disregarding safety standards. In effect, trying to cut the cost by cutting corners, thereby, risking the safety of people and environment. Consequently, these incidents might not be the last avoidable accidents. Nonetheless, these incidents guide consumers and citizens to the ethic of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

CSR has a direct effect on consumers' perceptions towards a corporation such as how transparent and trustworthy it is. Once these questions are answered, the consumer spreads the founded information by word of mouth (Hustvedt & Kang, 2013; Kang & Hustvedt, 2013). But who within the corporation controls the CSR initiatives? How do consumers know the company is trustworthy? Who or what acts as the check and balance mechanism for corporations? According to Pearce and Manz (2011), corporate leaders usually portray the behaviors they expect others to follow. This includes ignoring, condoning, and/or even rewarding corruptive behavior. In other words, unethical behavior is acceptable as long as a select few benefit.

As earlier stated, consumers mend the ethical gap between conventional production practices and the mounting effects on environmental and social issues. Consequently, the consumer strengthens their dependent relationship between themselves and the environment by recognizing the need to rise and transform the products in use (Heiskanen & Pantzar, 1997). Or stated differently, the consumer feels a moral obligation to try to change the system by purchasing socially responsible products (SPR). But who produces socially responsible products?

There are companies, who acknowledge the perils of excessive human consumption, therefore, they too are focused on closing the ethical gap between their practices and consumers' wants and needs. "Corporate sustainability is seen as directly and indirectly meeting the needs of their stakeholders, without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders" (Lourenço, Callen, Branco, & Curto, 2014). Nevertheless, if the corporate leaders are prone to bend the rules, the company follows in their footsteps. Therefore, it's imperative for the corporate leader to lead ethically, thus, the companies need

to foster a transparent relationship, which highlights their attitude and behavior towards being social responsibility. These steps directly affect the consumers' perspective, which then stimulates the trust or non-trust of the consumer, who then spreads information (negative/positive) by word of mouth (Hustvedt & Kang, 2013; Kang & Hustvedt, 2013). If corporations have leaders who foster the notion of sustainability, do consumer leaders foster sustainability, too?

Theoretical Foundation

Based on the early adopters theory (Rogers, 2003) leaders serve as role models when compared to others in society, due to the embodiment of success when adopting new innovations and products. According to Rogers, leaders experience greater empathy, are willing to take risks, actively seek information and exhibit their ability by socially participating within their communities. The theoretical foundation of early adopters, along with the discussion on sustainability and sustainable consumption, sustainable consumer leadership are conceptualized as an individual's behavioral tendency to take an initiative in his/her daily life, by making a purchasing decision with environmentally and socially responsible considerations, along with influencing other people's decision making (Kang & Hustvedt, 2013).

Building on the discussion of early adopters, sustainability and sustainable consumption, sustainable consumer leadership, an individual's behavioral tendency to take an initiative in his/her daily life, is conceptualized by making a purchasing decision with environmentally and socially responsible considerations, along with influencing other people's decision making (Kang & Hustvedt, 2013).

Predictors of Sustainable Consumer Leadership and Hypothesis Development

Profiling sustainable consumer leadership highlights the direct relationships between antecedents and behavioral tendencies of sustainable consumer leaders. During the research four main categories emerged, providing a solid foundation to conceptualize the antecedents of sustainable consumer leadership; socioeconomics, personality, consumption behavior, and ethical consciousness.

First, the socioeconomic category consists of *age*, *education* and total combined annual household *income*. According to Roger's theory of early adopters, socioeconomic indices have a direct effect on the early adoption of an innovation (Rogers, 2003). While age does not have a direct effect on the adoption of an innovation (Rogers, 2003), formal education does (Rogers, 2003). Rogers goes on to say, consumer leaders have a greater ability at upward social mobility, thus, achieving a higher social status (Rogers, 2003). One way to measure social status would be income level (Andorfer, 2013). Therefore, the first set of hypotheses has been developed for this study as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: Age is not significantly associated with SCL.

Hypothesis 1b: Education is positively associated with SCL.

Hypothesis 1c: Income is positively associated with SCL.

The second category, personality, consists of *public individuation* and *empathy toward others*. The concept of public individuation embraces the personality of an individual who desires to maintain their autonomy by portraying their uniqueness through their ability to be "self-contained, self-determinant, self-sufficient and knowledgeable..." (Chan & Misra, 1990; Schultz, Kleine III, & Kernan, 1989). Public individuation is further supported by the

uniqueness theory, which theorizes a consumer is willing to show their uniqueness publically, thereby establishing their differences from others (Ronald E. Goldsmith & Ronald A. Clark, 2008; Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). Subsequently, the notion of public individuation displays uniqueness, high confidence and high self-esteem (Chan & Misra, 1990; Schultz et al., 1989), strengthening the consumer leader's courage, to reject criticism from those who misunderstand sustainability or underestimate the importance of sustainable consumption. Public Individuation is expected to be related to SCL, because the concepts of leadership and public individuation both encompass the act of differentiate one's self from the group, in other words, individuate themselves from others (Chan & Misra, 1990).

Hypothesis 2a: Public Individuation is positively associated with SCL.

The second concept of personality includes the notion of empathy towards others, indicating humans' ability to understand and experience feelings of others. Empathy is a social constructed expression, which focuses on the emotional and cognitive components (Markowitz, Goldberg, Ashton, & Lee, 2012; Nica, 2013; Park & Ha, 2014; Tran et al., 2013; Webb, Green, & Brashear, 2000). As a result, empathy is the ability to remove their focus from themselves (individually centered) to focus on others (socially centered values). In addition to the supporting literature reviews, the early adopters theory, suggests leaders are more empathetic toward others. However, according to Naderi, altruism has no direct effect on pro environmental behavior {{313 Naderi,Iman 2011;}}. Similarly, Schumann et al. suggests the notion of empathy is challenged when limited by the person's reflexive nature {{312 Schumann,Karina 2014;}}. Subsequently, altruism and empathy are fluid and highly dependent on the social encounter context. Nonetheless, both altruism and empathy deal with a cognitive ability to understand the feelings transmitted through verbal and nonverbal

messages, thereby providing some type of support (emotionally or physically) to people in need (Holt & Marques, 2012). In reference to Rogers's early adopter's theory, empathy towards others is expected to be related to SCL.

Hypothesis 2b: Empathy is positively associated with SCL.

The third, consumption behavior, is composed of two variables, *exploratory consumption behavior and elaboration on potential outcomes of consumption*. The concept of exploratory consumption behavior focuses on the consumer's curiosity and the need for change (Markowitz et al., 2012; Park & Ha, 2014; Wood & Swait, 2002). Thus, exploratory consumption behavior has a cognitive component, which allows the brain to process information, formulate attitudes and perceptions, (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Dimofte, 2010; Haugtvedt, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1992; Nica, 2013; Venkatraman & Price, 1990) which is then illustrated in consumers' exploratory consumption behavior; browsing (e.g., window shopping, and reviewing catalogs) and seeking information (e.g., label reading and searching online for product information) (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 1996; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1992). Consequently, consumers are willing to take risks by exploring new products, thereby, satisfying their curiosity and need for change. Exploratory consumption behavior is expected to be related to SCL, since both concepts include innovativeness, risk taking, exploration through shopping, interpersonal communication, brand seeking and information seeking (Ruvio & Shoham, 2007).

Hypothesis 3a: Exploratory consumption behavior is positively associated with SCL.

The second variable for consumption behavior focuses on the elaboration on potential outcomes of consumption. The concept of elaboration on potential outcomes encompasses the concept of self-regulation, which allows the person to initiate, adjust or terminate certain

actions in order to achieve the intended outcome (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984; K. Haws, Bearden, & Nenkov, 2012; Slama & Tashchian, 1985). In order to do so, the standards in which to achieve should have a clear understanding of how something should be, the ability to compare the state of, to the desired state and finally the ability to override the undesirable state (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984; Nenkov, Inman, & Hulland, 2008). Therefore, the person who elaborates on the potential outcomes of their actions would be associated with SCL because they possess the cognitive ability to moderate the relationship between information and taking the necessary steps to achieve the desired outcome (Kearney & Gebert, 2009).

Hypothesis 3b: Elaboration of potential outcomes of consumption is positively associated with SCL.

The fourth and final category; ethical consciousness which includes three variables; *moral identity*, *green consumer values* (environmentalism), and *citizenship*. The first variable is the concept of moral identity, which is the person's sense of self, or stated differently, "the sense of who they are in relation to the actions" (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Moral identity is seen as a behavioral component of self-regulation, which is directly and indirectly affected by beliefs, attitudes and behaviors (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Boer & Fischer, 2013; Culiberg, 2014; Shultz, 2014). Moral identity also has a cognitive component, like that of empathy toward others, exploratory consumption behavior and elaboration of potential outcomes. Moral identity is expected to be related to SCL, based on leadership roles "are more likely to demonstrate moral behaviors" (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, 2012): Caring, Compassionate, Fair, Friendly, Generous, Helpful, Hardworking, Honest and Kind. Moral identity is expected to be related to SCL, since moral identity functions as a self-regulatory mechanism, the leaders should act in accordance to what it means to be a moral person (Mayer et al., 2012).

Hypothesis 4a: Moral identity is positively associated with SCL.

The second variable of ethical consciousness is the concept of green consumer values, also known as environmentalism. Green consumer values refers to consumers who have a tendency to contemplate the environmental impact of the purchase and consumption behaviors (K. L. Haws, Winterich, & Naylor, 2013). The internet, and social media have helped to establish a bridge mending the gap between conventional production practices; environmental degradation, excessive consumption and waste. Although, corporations have a social responsibility to the environment and their consumers via a social contract, consumers believe corporations have neglected to maintain their corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Hustvedt & Kang, 2013; Kang & Hustvedt, 2013) standards; thus the gap. Consequently, consumers have willingly taken the responsibility through their spending power in the realm of shopping (Hansen & Schrader, 1997), thereby, mending the effects of environmental degradation and becoming more environmentally conscious. As a result, consumer values are transitioning from individual centered values to socially centered values (Dickson, 2000; K. L. Haws et al., 2013; Moxie Design Group Limited, August 2008). Green Consumer values is expected to be related to SCL, since both green consumer values and leadership share a cognitive trait, the ability to contemplate the potential impacts on the environment.

Hypothesis 4b: Green consumer values are positively associated with SCLs.

The third variable of ethical consciousness focuses on the notion of citizenship, which implies a sense of community, thus, an individual is seen as a citizen within a said community. For instance, people are part of many communities; city, state, country, employment, education and many more spheres. However, the concept has extended from

small tribal affiliations to a much bigger concept known as a global citizen. This version of citizenship exists due to creating and improving technological innovations such as the internet, cell phones, social media outlets, and the global trade of commodities. Technology has virtually eliminated geographical boundaries, which once were difficult to cross, but now seem trivial.

It should also be noted, many phrases have been used interchangeably to describe the concept of citizenship; citizen consumer (Wells, Ponting, & Peattie, 2011), global citizenship (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013), socially conscious consumer (Webb, Mohr, & Harris, 2008), global consumers, ecological consumers, pro-environmental individuals and true green consumers (Baquer, 2012), and lastly, environmental citizenship (Markle, 2013).

Although many different phrases have been used, they all have a reoccurring theme, consumers see themselves as part of the whole, thus, identifying themselves as part of a global identity. It is expected citizenship is related to SCL, for both concepts encompass the notion of seeking information, thereby enhancing their knowledge and their place within the massive network; globalization.

Hypothesis 4c: Citizenship is positively associated with SCLs.

Based on the literature review and hypotheses, a conceptual model was developed (see figure 1).

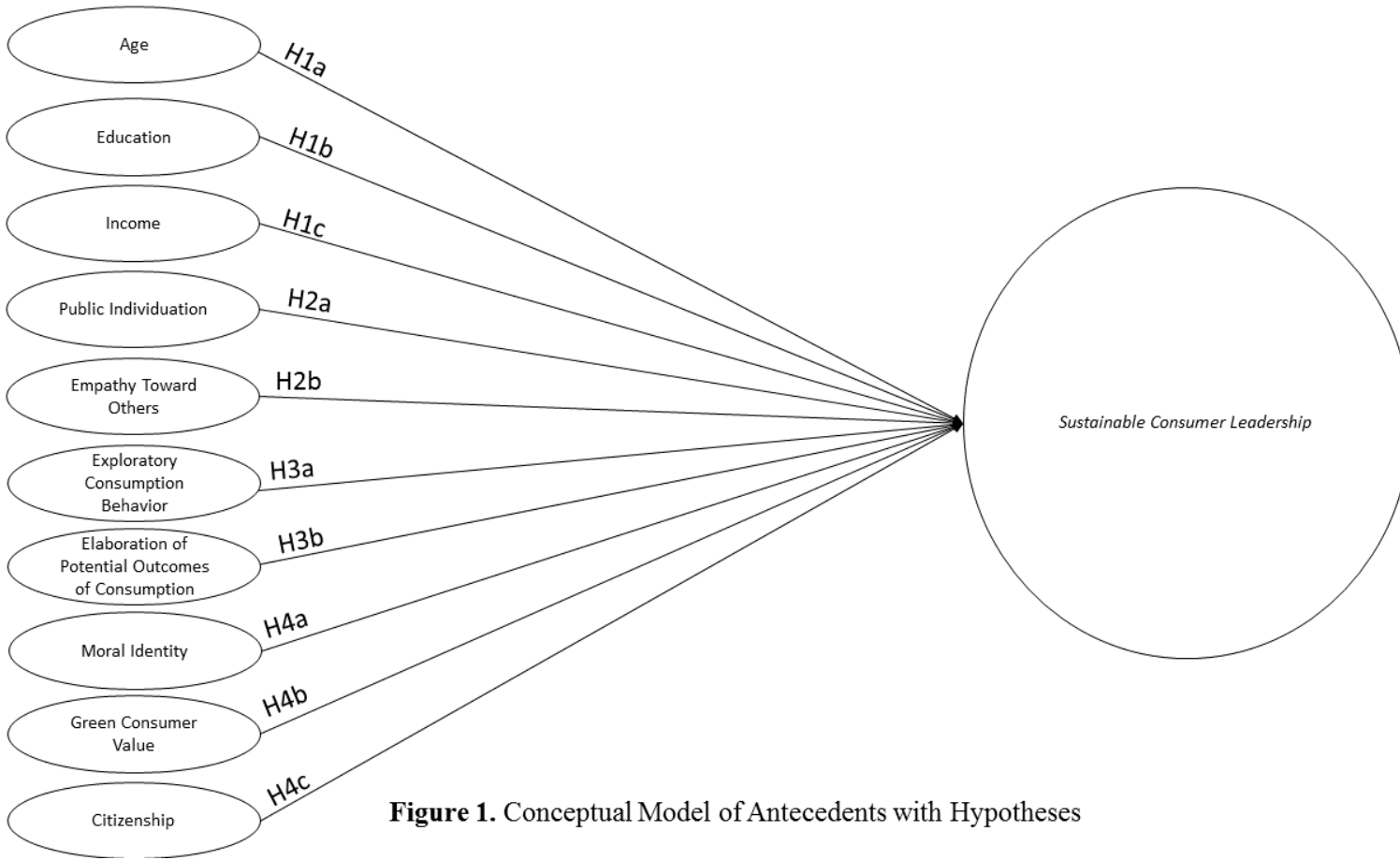


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Antecedents with Hypotheses

CHAPTER III

Survey Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

In an effort to test the hypotheses, data collection was conducted using an online survey. Before collecting empirical data, the research received an IRB exemption approval using category 2 exemption status. To ensure the quality and validity of each respondent and to generalize the comprehensive model testing results, the target sample size was determined as a nation-wide, 400 adult consumer panel sample, which was purchased from a large data company (Qualtrics). The comprehensive conceptual model of Antecedents of Sustainable Consumer Leadership Model (shown in Figure 1.) was tested with the final sample of 439 adult consumer panels.

The adult consumer panel sample was a random sample of general consumers, 235 women and 204 men, which provided a general overview, representing the nation's population. The panels participated in the online survey by answering the questionnaire pertaining to their general behavior and consumption tendencies, as well as attitudes and behavioral tendencies, specifically related to sustainable products. They were informed of the research purpose and contribution of the study. The participants were also informed all of their responses are confidential and only used for research purposes, without identifying individual respondents.

Instruments

A questionnaire was developed and consisted of multiple items to measure variables of antecedents for sustainable consumer leadership: socioeconomic (3 variables), personality (2 variables), consumption behavior (2 variables), and lastly, ethical consciousness (3 variables).

The questionnaire also included the items to measure sustainable consumer leadership (Kang, et al, working paper).

Socioeconomics: The measure of socioeconomics used in the study was adapted from Roger’s theory of early adopters. The role of demographics variables may have a significant effect on the initial purchase of sustainable products. Each measure for age, education and income is shown in Table 1, along with other demographic information of the final sample.

Table 1 Socioeconomics	N	%
GENDER		
Male	204	46.5
Female	235	53.5
AGE		
18-25	22	5.00
26-35	69	15.7
36-45	66	15.0
46-55	107	24.4
56-65	111	25.3
66+	64	14.6
ETHNICITY		
Euro-American	350	79.7
African American	44	10.0
Hispanic/Latino	24	5.5
Asian	10	2.3
Other	11	2.5
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	108	24.9
Married or Living as Married	250	57.6
Divorce, Separated, or Widowed	76	17.5
EDUCATION		
No Schooling Completed	4	0.9
High School Graduate or Equivalent School	108	24.6
Some College	139	31.7
College Graduate	134	30.5
Graduate School (Masters Degree or Equivalent Degree)	39	8.9
Graduate School (PhD. Degree or Equivalent)	15	3.4
(Continued)		

Table 1 Socioeconomics (Continued)	N	%
EMPLOYMENT		
Full-time Work	169	38.5
Part-time Work	67	15.3
Unemployed/retired	203	46.2
TOTAL COMBINED ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
Under \$15,000	53	12.1
\$15,000 to just under \$24,999	45	10.3
\$25,000 to just under \$34,999	59	13.4
\$35,000 to just under \$49,999	73	16.6
\$50,000 to just under \$74,999	97	22.1
\$75,000 to just under \$99,999	50	11.4
\$100,000 to just under \$149,999	49	11.2
Over \$150,000	13	3.00

To measure the internal consistency of the independent variables, Cronbach's Alpha α , was used to ensure the reliability of each measure. An α of .70 and higher indicates high internal consistency (Webb et al., 2008). The α for all of the variables exceeded .70, ranging from .80 to .94. Each α for each variable is reported in Table 3.

Personality: The measure for public individuation used in the study was adapted from the Tian, Bearden, and Hunter's (2001) survey. Out of the 31 items used by Tian et al. (2001), three items were adapted for the purpose of the study. Using a 7 point Likert scale, 1= strongly disagree -7= strongly agree. Given the high reliability of the multi-item measure (α of .80), these items were combined to create the public individuation "AVE_PI", which was the average score of the three items.

The second variable of personality: empathy toward others used in the study was adapted from the Webb, Green and Brashear's (2000) survey. Four items were adapted for the purpose of the study, using a 7 point Likert scale, 1=strongly disagree- 7= strongly agree. Given the high reliability of the multi-item measure (α of .89), these items were combined to

create the empathy towards others “AVE_ETO”, which was the average score of the four items.

Consumption Behavior: The measure of exploratory consumption behavior used in the study was adapted from two surveys; the original study from Baumgartner & Steenkamp (1996) survey, and the Wood & Swait survey (2002). A 7 point Likert scale was used on all six items, 1=strongly disagree- 7=strongly agree. Given the high reliability of the multi-item measure (α of .87), these items were combined to create the exploratory consumption behavior “AVE_ECB”, which was the average score of the six items.

The second consumption behavior variable known as elaboration on potential outcomes of consumption was originally adapted from Nenkov, Inman, and Hulland’s (2008) survey. Four items were adapted for the purpose of the study, using a 7 point Likert scale, 1=strongly disagree -7= strongly agree. Given the high reliability of the multi-item measure (α of .92), these items were combined to create the elaboration of potential outcomes of consumption “AVE_EPOC”, which was the average score of the four items.

Ethical Consciousness: The measure of moral identity used in the study was adapted from the Aquino & Reed (2002) survey. 7 point Likert scale was used, 1=strongly disagree -7 strongly agree. The six items generated from the original survey provided a foundation to evoke a response from the participants by asking questions that pertained to the notions of Caring, Compassionate, Fair, Friendly, Generous, Helpful, Hardworking, Honest and Kind. Given the high reliability of the multi-item measure (α of .87), these items were combined to create moral identity “AVE_MI”, which was the average score of the six items.

The second category of ethical consciousness is known as green consumer values used in the study, was adapted from Haws, Winterich, and Naylor’s (2010) survey. Like the other

items, a 7 point Likert scale was used, 1= strongly disagree -7= strongly agree. Given the high reliability of the multi-item measure (α of .94), these items were combined to create green consumer values “AVE_GCV”, which was the average score of the six items.

The third and final category, known as citizenship used in the study was adapted from Markle (2013) survey. Three items were adapted for the purpose of the study, using a 7 point Likert scale, 1= never -7= at every opportunity. Given the high reliability of the multi-item measure (α of .87), these items were combined to create citizenship “AVE_C”, which was the average score of the three items. All the measurement items are shown in Table 2.

Sustainable consumer leadership was measured with 47 items that were developed by Kang, Hustvedt and Ahn’s (working paper) (Kang et al., 2013). The reliability was, α of .99, thus, the average score was used in the following regression analysis for the hypothesis testing.

Table 2 Construct and Instrument Items

Construct	Descriptive Definition	Coding	Items	References
Public Individuation:	A person who desires to maintain their autonomy by portraying their uniqueness through their ability to be knowledgeable, self determinant, self contained and self sufficient.	PI_1	I actively seek to develop my personal uniqueness by buying special products of	Tian, K. T., Bearden, W. O., & Hunter, G. L. (2001)
		PI_2	I avoid products or brands that have already been accepted and purchased by the average consumer.	
		PI_3	Often when buying merchandise, an important goal is to find something that communicates my uniqueness.	

(Continued)

Table 2 Construct and Instrument Items (Continued)

Construct	Descriptive Definition	Coding	Items	References
Empathy Towards Others:	The emotional and cognitive ability to remove focus from one's self (individually centered) to focus on others (socially centered values).	ETO_1	People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate.	Webb, D. J., Green, C. L., & Brashear, T. G. (2000)
		ETO_2	Helping troubled people with their problems is very	
		ETO_3	People should be more charitable towards others in society. People in need should	
		ETO_4	receive support from others.	
Exploratory Consumption Behavior:	Consumers willingness to take risks by exploring new products, thereby, satisfying their curiosity and need for change.	ECB_1	When I see a new and different brand on the shelf, I often pick it up just to see what it is like.	Baumgartner, H., & Steenkamp, J. E. M. (1996) and Wood, Stacy L. & Swait, Joffre (2002)
		ECB_2	I like introducing new brands and products to my friends.	
		ECB_3	I enjoy taking chances in buying unfamiliar brands just to get some variety in my purchases.	
		ECB_4	I often read information on the packages of products just out of curiosity.	
		ECB_5	I get bored with buying the same brands even if they are	
		ECB_6	I shop around for products just to find out more about the latest innovations.	

Table 2 Construct and Instrument Items (Continued)

Construct	Descriptive Definition	Coding	Items	References
Elaboration on Potential Outcomes of Consumption:	Encompasses the concept of self-regulation, which allows the person to initiate, adjust or terminate certain actions in order to achieve the intended outcome.	EPOC_1	Before I purchase, I consider what I will gain or lose in the future as a result of my actions.	Nenkov, G., Inman, J. J., & Hulland, J. (2008)
		EPOC_2	I try to anticipate as many consequences of my consumption as I can.	
		EPOC_3	Before I make a purchase decision, I consider all possible outcomes.	
		EPOC_4	I always try to predict how likely different consequences of my purchase decisions might be.	
Moral Identity:	Seen as a behavioral component of self-regulation, which is directly and indirectly affected by beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.	MI_1	I desire to have these characteristics.	Aquino, K., & Reed, A.,II. (2002)
		MI_2	I often buy products that communicate the fact I have these characteristics.	
		MI_3	I often wear clothes that identify me as having these characteristics.	
		MI_4	It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics.	
		MI_5	Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am.	
		MI_6	A big part of my emotional well-being is tied up in having these characteristics.	

Table 2 Construct and Instrument Items (Continued)

Construct	Descriptive Definition	Coding	Items	References
Green Consumer Values:	Green Consumers promote environmental consumers through their spending power, thereby, mending the effects of environmental degradation.	GCV_1	It is important to me the products I use do not harm the environment	Haws, K. L., Winterich, K. P., & Naylor, R. W. (2014)
		GCV_2	I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions.	
		GCV_3	My purchase habits are affected by my concern for our environment.	
		GCV_4	I am concerned about wasting resources of our planet.	
		GCV_5	I would describe myself as environmentally	
		GCV_6	I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more	
Environmental Citizenship	Implies a sense of community, thus, an individual is seen as a citizen within a said community.	C_1	I sign a petition for environmental	Wells, V. K., Ponting, C. A., & Peattie, K. (2011)
		C_2	I take part in protest or demonstration for environmental concerns.	
		C_3	I give money to environmental	

CHAPTER IV

Results

Correlation coefficients were computed among the eleven variables. To measure the strength of the correlated coefficients, the measure of 0.1-0.3 is used to indicate a weak correlation. A moderate strength correlation is measured from 0.4-0.6 and 0.7-0.9 is a strong correlation. A perfect correlation is measured as 1.

The results of the correlation analyses presented in Table 4 shows 31 out of 55 correlations were statistically significant and were greater than .35. Among the age variable all correlations revealed a negative relationship, with one strong correlation .82, three moderate strength correlations and 6 weak correlations. The education variable also had one negative relationship, with seven correlations statistically insignificant and one correlation with a .35.

The income variable had a positive relationship, however, out of the eight correlations, all were weak in strength, with the highest .16. The public individuation variable also has a positive relationship with, one weak correlation, five moderate strength correlations and one strong correlation. 70. The empathy toward others variable, has a positive relationship, although three of the six possible correlations were weak in strength, while the other three were moderate in strength.

The exploratory buying behavior variable revealed a positive relationship, with four moderate strength correlation and one strong correlation .60. The elaboration of potential outcomes of consumption variable also had a positive relationship, although one of the four possible correlations revealed a weak strength correlation, while the remaining three showed a moderate strength correlation. The moral identity variable revealed a positive relationship,

with two of the three possible correlations showing a moderate strength correlation and one weak correlation. The green consumer values variable also revealed a positive relationship, with only two possible correlations, one was weak in strength and one was moderate. Finally, the citizenship variable revealed a positive relationship and moderate strength in correlation. The results suggest just over half of the 55 correlations have a moderate to strong correlation to Sustainable Consumer Leadership behavior.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS statistical software, evaluating how well the independent variables predicted Sustainable Consumer Leadership. The predictors were 10 independent variables, while the criterion variable was sustainable consumer leadership. The multiple regression analysis was significant, $F(10,428) = 197.3$, $p = .000$. In addition, the sample multiple correlation coefficient was .91, indicating the approximately 82% of the variance of the sustainable consumer leadership in the sample can be accounted for by the linear combination of 10 independent variables ($R^2 = .82$, $p < .01$).

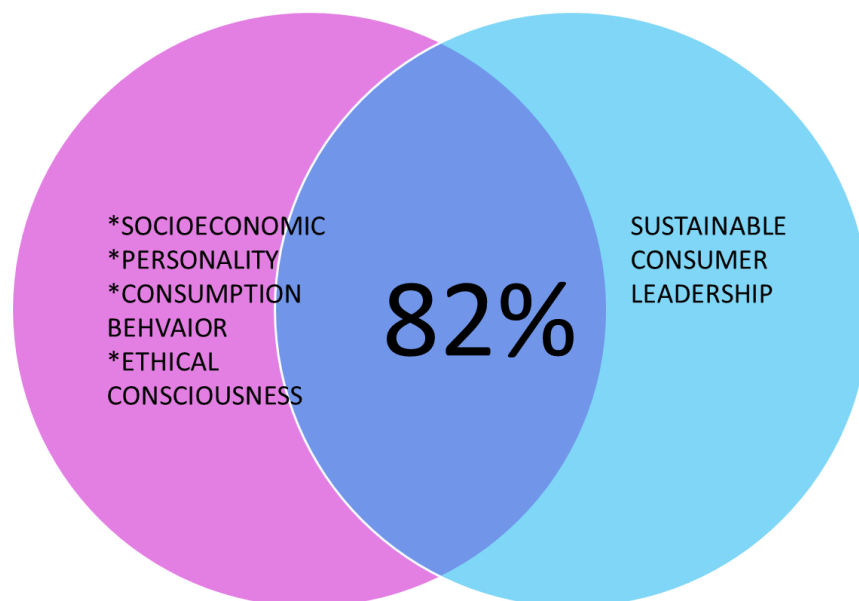


Figure 2. Variance Model

In Table 5, the results show age ($\beta = .003$, $p = .902$), education ($\beta = .014$, $p = .518$) and income ($\beta = -.04$, $p = .869$) are not significant predictors for Sustainable Consumer Leadership.

Next, public individuation ($\beta = .062$, $p < .05$) has a significant positive relationship with SCL. However, empathy toward others was not significantly related to SCL ($\beta = -.043$, $p = .103$). Exploratory consumption behavior ($\beta = .106$, $p < .001$) and elaboration of potential outcomes of consumption ($\beta = .130$, $p < .01$), both have a significantly positive relationship with SCL. The variables moral identity ($\beta = .081$, $p < .01$), green consumer values ($\beta = .571$, $p = .000$) and citizenship ($\beta = .190$, $p = .000$), all have a significantly positive relationship with SCL.

Based on the literature review and construct of domains for Sustainable Consumer Leadership (Kang, Hustvedt, and Ahn (working paper)) a conceptual model was developed (see figure 3).

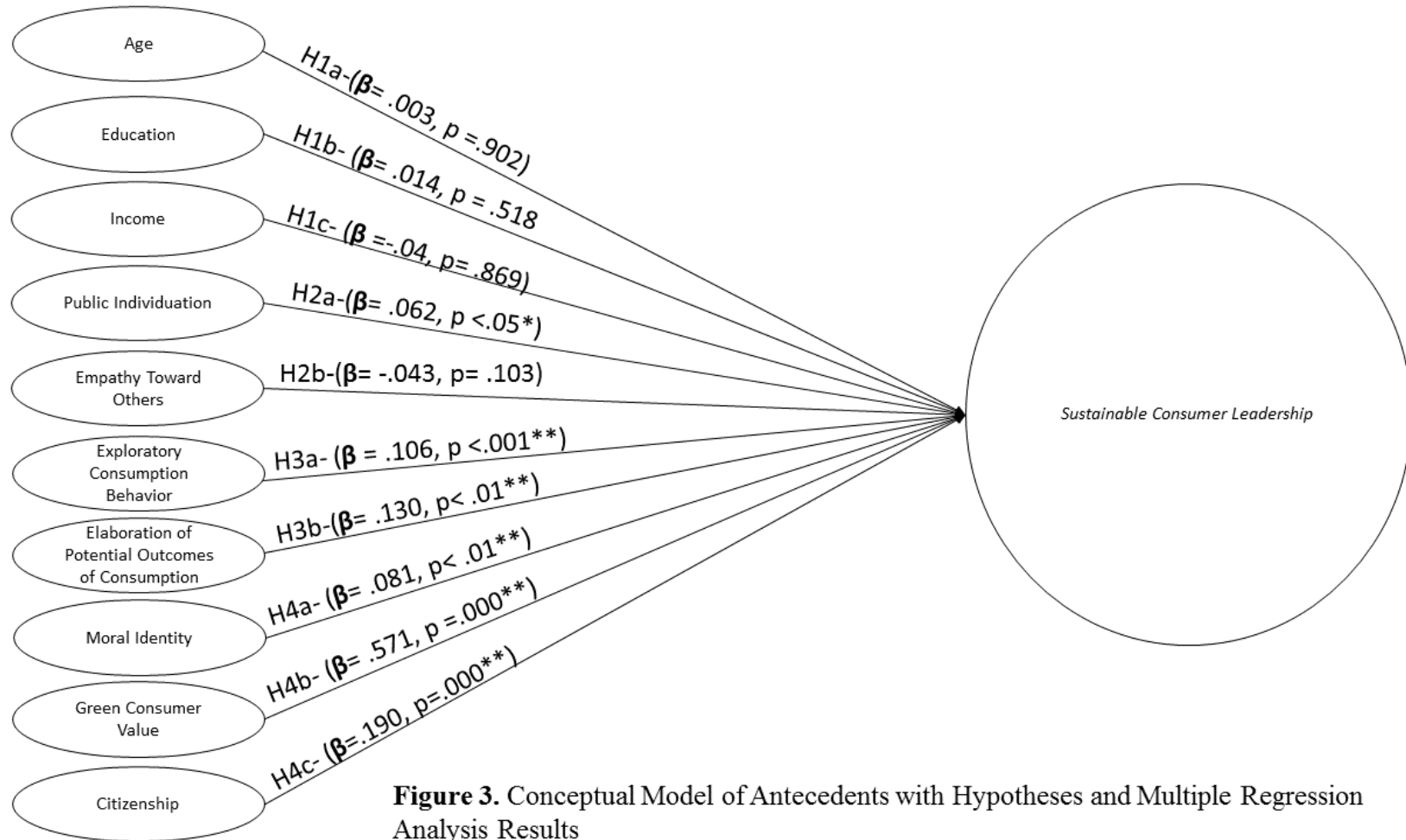


Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Indicator	Mean	SD	α
Public Individuation	PI_1	4.08	1.77	0.80
	PI_2	2.80	1.49	
	PI_3	4.15	1.77	
Empathy Towards Others	ETO_1	5.88	1.08	0.89
	ETO_2	5.17	1.32	
	ETO_3	5.67	1.07	
	ETO_4	5.59	1.08	
Exploratory Consumption Behavior	EBB_1	5.22	1.38	0.87
	EBB_2	4.56	1.64	
	EBB_3	4.43	1.66	
	EBB_4	5.07	1.57	
	EBB_5	3.61	1.68	
	EBB_6	4.48	1.72	
Elaboration of Potential Outcomes on Consumption	EPOC_1	4.50	1.52	0.92
	EPOC_2	4.54	1.55	
	EPOC_3	4.66	1.60	
	EPOC_5	4.25	1.57	
Moral Identity	MI_1	6.04	1.03	0.87
	MI_2	4.63	1.42	
	MI_3	4.32	1.55	
	MI_4	5.96	1.08	
	MI_5	5.55	1.23	
	MI_6	5.40	1.30	
Green Consumer Values	GCV_1	5.20	1.41	0.94
	GCV_2	4.64	1.54	
	GCV_3	4.42	1.58	
	GCV_4	5.19	1.43	
	GCV_5	4.94	1.39	
	GCV_6	4.56	1.50	
Environmental Citizenship	C_1	2.95	1.86	0.87
	C_2	1.87	1.47	
	C_3	2.42	1.66	

Table 4 Bivariate Linear Regression

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
AGE											
EDUCATION	-0.49										
INCOME	-0.47	.354**									
AVE_PI	-.40**	.35**	.11*								
AVE_ETO	-0.22	0.07	0.01	.18**							
AVE_ECB	-.32**	0.03	.12*	.70**	.31**						
AVE_EPOC	-.25**	0.06	0.07	.52**	.27**	.23**					
AVE_MI	-.10*	0.00	.11*	.41**	.59**	.49**	.42**				
AVE_GCV	-0.08	0.05	.11*	.42**	.50**	.48**	.50**	.60**			
AVE_C	-.21**	.10*	.16**	.45**	.32**	.43**	.40**	.39**	.60**		
AVE_SCL	-.18**	0.08	.13**	.56**	.43**	.60**	.60**	.60**	.85**	.67**	

*p<.05. **p < .01

Note: 1= Age, 2 = Education, 3= Income, 4= Public Individuation, 5= Empathy toward others, 6= Exploratory Consumption Behavior, 7= Elaboration of potential outcomes of consumption, 8= Moral identity, 9= Green consumer values, 10= Citizenship, 11=

Table 5 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

	B	SE	β
AGE	0.002	0.020	0.003
EDUCATION	0.017	0.026	0.014
INCOME	-0.002	0.015	-0.004
AVE_PI	0.056	0.028	0.062 *
AVE_ETO	-0.056	0.034	-0.043
AVE_ECB	0.108	0.032	0.106 **
AVE_EPOC	0.118	0.024	0.130 **
AVE_MI	0.104	0.038	0.081 **
AVE_GCV	0.564	0.031	0.571 **
AVE_C	0.163	0.023	0.190 **

*p<.05, **p<.01

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

Discussion

Through different studies Webb et al. (2008), Wells et al. (2011), Makowitz et al. (2012), Kang et al (2013) and many others, all illustrate a noteworthy transition in consumer cognition. Consumers see themselves as part as a global community and empathize with others plight around the globe, thus, they're using their purchasing power to combat environmental degradation created by conventional production/ manufacturing practices, excessive consumption and all the waste associated with the system.

The purpose of this study was to develop and test a model examining the socio-economic, personality, consumption behavior and ethical consciousness, thereby, creating a profile of sustainable consumer leadership. Compared to Rogers's theory of early adopters, the model collaborates Rogers's notion, age is not significantly associated with SCL. As a result, *H1a* was supported. Roger's theory also suggest education and income influences early adopters purchasing, however, the regression results for this study suggest there is not a significant relationship with education and income. Thus, *H1b* and *c* are not supported. As a result, socioeconomic indices are not seen as a barrier, instead the results suggest all walks of life can engage in pro environmental behavior regardless of their social economic level.

The second category consists of two variables; public individuation and empathy toward others. The public individuation variable was built on the foundation of Consumer's Need For Uniqueness Scale (Kelly Tepper Tian, William O. Bearden, & Gary L. Hunter, 2001). However, for this study, thirty one items were adapted from the CNFU scale, which was

reduced to three items. Reducing the items refocused the consumers need for uniqueness to public individuation, emphasizing their individual need to differentiate themselves.

According to the regression analysis for this study, public individuation is a moderate predictor, which supports *H2a*.

The second variable; empathy toward others, was adapted from the original scale, Attitudes Influencing Monetary Donations to Charitable Organizations (Webb et al., 2000). The scale had eight items, however for this study, only four items were used. Comparing the two scales, we changed the name to empathy towards others, hypothesizing individuals would be more empathetic to others plight. Although the regression results for this study suggests empathy toward others is a weak predictor, *H2b* was supported.

The third category; consumption behavior encompassed the notion of exploratory consumption behavior and elaboration of potential outcomes of consumption. The concept of exploratory consumption behavior was initially built off the scale Exploratory Buying Behavior Tendencies (EBBT) (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 1996), which had twenty items focusing on Exploratory Acquisition of Products (EAP) and Exploratory Information Seeking (EIS). Although the concept of exploratory behavior is relevant, the survey created by Cacioppo and Petty (1982), Need for Cognition conceptually fit better in this study, when compared to EBBT.

Consequently, after further research, Wood and Swait (2002) adapted a survey from Cacioppo and Petty, naming it Need for Change. In comparison, need for change focused on the individuals need for risk and rewards associated with innovation behavior (Wood & Swait, 2002), while need for cognition centered on the individual's ability to engage and enjoy thinking (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Therefore, the concept of exploratory behavior

was adapted for the survey, along with the items from the Need for Change survey. Thus, the variable encompasses both the Exploratory and Need for Change concepts, hence, exploratory consumption behavior. According to the regression analysis for this study, *H3a* was supported.

The second variable; elaboration of potential outcomes of consumption was built on the Elaboration on Potential Outcomes, known as the EPO scale (Nenkov et al., 2008). The EPO scale had thirteen items, however for this study, the items were reduced to four items. The wording was also adapted to encompass the notion of consumption. According to the regression results for this study, *H3b* was supported.

The fourth category consists of three variables; moral identity, green consumer values, and citizenship. The moral identity variable was adapted from the Aquino and Reed (2002) survey, Moral Identity. Aquino and Reed's version of the survey had ten items, however, for this study, six items were adapted. It was hypothesized, moral identity influenced the consumer's behavior to act morally. *H4a* was supported by the regression analysis for this study.

The green consumer values variable was adapted from the scale GREEN Consumer Values scale (2010) (K. L. Haws et al., 2013). The Green Consumer Values scale had six items and all six items were used for the study. It was hypothesized consumer's behavior was influenced by their values, thus, green consumer values fit perfectly into the study. The regression analysis for this study supported *H4b*.

The third and final variable, citizenship was adapted from Environmental Citizenship section of the Pro- Environmental Behavior Scale (Markle, 2013). Even though the items from the Environmental Citizenship portion of the scale intrigued us, we reworded the items

to focus on the advocacy behavior of the individual towards the environment. According to the regression analysis for this study, *H4c* was supported.

Overall the model was supported, even though, the influence of age, education, income are not predictors of SCL. Although the variable empathy toward others is a predictor, it is significantly weak. The results of the study add to the mounting evidence; consumers feel the effects of their consumption directly and indirectly, thereby changing their purchasing behavior and their sense of belonging to a global community. In other words, consumers believe they can reduce the impact from conventional production processes, along with reducing the impact from their own and other consumer consumption and waste, thus, overall reducing the societal inequities created by the conventional system.

Implications

The results of the study suggest, consumers across the globe are responding to the growing environmental issues. The model illustrates 7 out of 10 variables directly effects the consumer's purchasing behavior. Although socioeconomic variables are helpful in other studies, age, income and education are not significantly relevant for the present study. Subsequently, consumers are not limited by the socioeconomic indices. In fact, the results suggest sustainable consumer leadership is not limited to those who have access to financial resources. As a result, global consumers from all walks of life have a unique opportunity to partake in helping to change the world by purchasing sustainable products regardless of their socioeconomic level.

The notion of Public Individuation, Exploratory Consumption Behavior, Elaboration of Potential Outcomes of Consumption, Moral Identity, Green Consumer Values and Citizenship combined play a significant role in the concept of Sustainable Consumer

Leadership. As stated earlier, the variables suggest an 82% variance, which is significant. Given the significant relationship among the variables, consumers can be leaders in sustainability. The results also suggest cognitive thinking and long-term perspective should be emphasized. As a result, I suggest corporations utilize this research in managerial practices, product design, marketing advertisements, and customer service outreach, thereby, reaffirming their values as socially responsible.

Academia could also utilize the research, for it is those who are students today, are the CEO's of tomorrow. Thus, the academic implications are unlimited. By utilizing the research students, professors and practitioners are in a unique position to encourage consumers to act as leaders. We are all part of the global consumer community, thus, the research not only gives us insight into ourselves, but the world around us.

Limitations

The present study was limited in a couple of ways. First, with respect to age and ethnicity, with 25% of the respondents were between the ages of 56-65. Future research focuses on the millennial generation may produce different results. Ethnicity may also produce different results. For this study, out of 439 respondents, 79.7% were Euro-American. Future research aimed at understanding the consumption differences by comparing ethnicities may provide a more in-depth analysis of sustainable consumer leadership in different regions nationally and countries worldwide.

Another limitation, respondents who participated in the survey may have given socially acceptable responses to the questions, therefore, future research should focus on measuring alternative measures; direct observation and peer review (Markowitz et al., 2012). In addition, the contribution of this research provides academia and practitioners who are

interested in future studies, by expanding and dispersing the concept of sustainable consumer leadership at the individual level, sustainability as a whole, sustainable products and sustainable business practices.

APPENDIX SECTION

Appendix A

6/6/2014

Texas State University-San Marcos | IRB Online Application



Institutional Review Board

Request For Exemption

Certificate of Approval

Applicant: Jennell Rayos

Request Number : EXP2014A494831C

Date of Approval: 06/06/14

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Blanks", written over a horizontal line.

Assistant Vice President for Research
and Federal Relations

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Lane", written over a horizontal line.

Chair, Institutional Review Board

[Return to IRB Home](#)

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