

# **UCLA**

## **Electronic Green Journal**

### **Title**

Proposition of an Integrative Theory of Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour

### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6pz030h6>

### **Journal**

Electronic Green Journal, 1(39)

### **Author**

Ertz, Myriam

### **Publication Date**

2016

### **DOI**

10.5070/G313925904

### **Copyright Information**

Copyright 2016 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed

# Proposition of an Integrative Theory of Socially Responsible Consumption Behaviour

Myriam Ertz

University of Quebec in Montreal, Canada

## Abstract

This paper reviews the literature on Socially Responsible Consumption Behaviour (SRCB) measurement and proposes a framework of SRCB, based on the Model of Goal-Directed Behaviour (MGB). First, this theoretical paper provides a conceptualization of SRCB. Second, it discusses the measurement scales developed for measuring SRCB. Third, it provides an MGB-based integrative framework of SRCB aimed at narrowing the attitude-behaviour and intention-behaviour gaps, frequently encountered in the literature. The analysis highlights the bi-dimensional structure – social and environmental concern – of SRCB and acknowledges its modular and evolutionary nature, contingent on the contexts in which it is intended to be measured. It therefore offers tremendous research opportunities for academic researchers and useful guidelines for marketers aiming at the exploration of consumers' SRCB.

## Introduction

Evidence of ethical or SRCB dates back hundreds of years (Crane, 2001). However, academic scrutiny of this type of consumer behaviour began in the 1970s (François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006). Specifically, Socially Responsible Consumption (SRC) finds its origins in a sociological construct relating to “social consciousness” *i.e.*, an individual’s willingness to help other people even if there is no personal gain (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968). The nascent stream of Socially Responsible Consumption research therefore considered SRC as based upon social involvement (Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Anderson, Hénion & Cox, 1974; Brooker, 1976). Webster (1975) broadened that initial perspective by emphasizing that SR consumers are also aware of social problems, believes they have the power to make a difference, and must be active in their community.

The 1970s witnessed the growing development of marketing with an environmental perspective (Zikmund & Stanton, 1971; Hénion, 1972; Fisk, 1974; Perry, 1976; Hénion & Kinnear, 1976; Shapiro, 1978). Academic work on Socially-Responsible Consumption took therefore a strong environmental orientation (Tognacci, Weigel, Wideen & Vernon, 1972; Anderson et al., 1974; Kinnear, Taylor & Ahmed, 1974; Brooker, 1976; Arbuthnot, 1977; Buttel & Flinn, 1978a, 1978b; Van Liere & Dunlap, 1981). Even Webster’s (1975) *Socially Conscious Scale Index*, for example, focused mainly on environmental concerns (Webb, Mohr & Harris, 2008). Besides, the concepts of *green marketing* and *green consumer* gained momentum in the

1980s (Brundtland, 1987; Vandermerwe & Oliff, 1990; MORI, 1994). This shift emphasized the ecological viewpoint even more in SRC related research (e.g., Antil [1984]). The ecological perspective remained predominant in the early 1990s (see Ellen [1994]).

Several researchers recognized there was more to social responsibility than *environmental concerns*. Fisk (1973) considered two additional, although antagonistic perspectives to responsible consumption: *anti-growth perspective* and *economic development perspective*. Later, authors defined more precisely the consequences sought by socially responsible consumers - not only environmental but also social well-being (Engel & Blackwell 1982). In fact, the concept of “green consumer” was widened to that of “ethical consumer” when the range of moral concern was detected (Mintel, 1994). From then on, most authors adhered to a more global notion of Socially-Responsible Consumption consistent with Webster’s work, that is, an environmental concern and a more general social concern (Roberts, 1993, 1995, 1996; Mohr, Webb & Harris, 2001; François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006; Webb et al., 2008).

Several concepts associated with Socially Responsible Consumption (SRC) have been proposed such as “socially conscious consumption”, “socially responsible consumer behaviour” or “ethical consumption”. The act of consuming in a socially responsible way converges with what is recognized as “good” (Smith, 1990). As a consequence, a socially responsible consumer may be construed as an ethical consumer as well (François-Lecompte & Robert, 2006, p.52). Newholm and Shaw (2007) take a more integrative stance by arguing that “there has been a proliferation of ethical cultures and related concepts (e.g., voluntary simplicity, slow living, anti-consumption groups), but overall these concepts can be related to the individual projects of ethical consumption hence socially-responsible or responsible consumption” (p.259).

Several measurement scales have subsequently be developed in order to measure the level of responsible or ethical consumption. However, these measures suffer from serious flaws and drawbacks. First, in accordance with Churchill’s (1979), scale development paradigm, a concept domain has to be first well-defined in order for a researcher to develop a measurement of that concept. With regards to responsible consumption it is fair to say that the concept remains very fuzzy (Binniger & Robert, 2008). Second, there is a lot of variation regarding the unit of measurement across different scales, some focusing on attitudes (Antil, 1984), others on intentions (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2008) and others on a mixture between intentions and actual behaviour (Webb et al., 2008; Yan & She, 2011). Third, few studies take into account the ethical gap purchasing which underlies the sometimes abyssal difference between what people say or intend to do and what they actually do (Walker, Miemczyk, Johnsen, & Spencer, 2010). This is usually a result from the social desirability bias (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2008). Items of the intentional and non-behavioural type are

most likely to generate such bias. Finally, there has been a complete lack of stability in the results of the different research on Socially-Responsible Consumption over the past forty years, especially regarding the influence and significance of various exogenous variables such as Perceived Consumer Effectiveness or Collectivism. This was generally the result of the production of items specific to the context of the study (culture, size and nature of the sample) or type of products or services studied (Zaiem, 2008).

This article aims at providing several perspectives to an improved measure of SRC. It specifically points toward considering SRCB as a process. Drawing on the Model of Goal Directed Behaviour (hereafter, MGB), the article argues for a more dynamic approach to the study of SRCB integrating cognitive, affective and conative variables altogether. Prior to any modelling, how do we define socially responsible consumption behavior? What are the different scales have been developed so far to measure it? How to narrow the gap between SRC intentions and actions? To what extent is the profiling of socially responsible consumers relevant? This article answers to each of these questions in four different sections. The first section proposes a conceptualization of SRCB. The second presents the measures of it and its related concepts. The third part develops a theoretical explanation of the attitude, intention-action gap. The fourth part discusses the profiling of socially responsible consumers.

### **Conceptualizations of Socially Responsible Consumption Behaviour**

The socially conscious consumer, “takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social changes” (Webster, 1975, p.188). This definition does not precisely identify the direction of public consequences intended by socially responsible consumers. Without more precision, Webster’s view of socially responsible consumption includes all types of consumer behaviour whether the consequences for others are good or bad (François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006, p.52). Subsequent definitions gradually filled in that void. For Hénion (1976) and Antil (1984), SRC consists of consumer’s purchasing decisions relating to environmental resources problems. Roberts (1993, 1995) defined SRC as “the purchase of products and services perceived to have a positive (or less negative) influence on the environment or the purchase which patronizes businesses that attempt to effect related positive social change” p.140

Some authors advanced the idea of including perception of company ethical performance when making purchase decision and hence many studies focused on consumer behaviour based on perceptions of corporate social responsibility (Shaw & Clark, 1999; Webb & Mohr 1998; Carrigan & Attala 2001; Sen & Bhattacharya 2001; Sen, Gürhan-Canli & Morwitz 2001; Klein, Smith & John 2004). Boycott is the archetypal consumer action in this perspective (Smith, 1990; Gabriel & Lang, 1995). Mohr et al. (2001, p.47) extended this narrow approach and defined the socially responsible consumer as “a person basing his or her acquisition, usage,

and disposition of products on a desire to minimize or eliminate any harmful effects and maximize the long-run beneficial impact on society” (Webb et al., 2008). Later research followed in the same footsteps (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006; Yan & She, 2011).

From the variety of definitions developed so far it appears clearly that responsible consumers are not a mere niche to be catered for (Newholm & Shaw, 2007). First, socially responsible consumers are relatively heterogeneous in their motivations and display complex decisions and plans (Marks & Mayo, 1991; Roberts, 1996; Shaw & Newholm, 2002; Newholm, 2005; Ozcaglar-Toulouse, Shiu & Shaw, 2006). Second, there is not an everyday “unethical consumption” and a uniform, deliberate “ethical consumption” (Miller, 2001; Wilk, 2001). Rather, consumers present much ordinary consumption in moral terms (Thompson, 1996; Thompson & Haytko, 1997; Miller, 2001). Third, responsible consumption is not a political project (Pepper, 1993; Lantos, 2002). It is a deliberate consumer effort-taking place at fragmented individual (e.g. recycling) or collective levels (e.g. boycott) driven by personal values and beliefs (e.g. religiosity [Lau, 2010; Yan & She, 2011]), by people freed from basic needs (Hansen & Schrader, 1997). They become responsible for their behaviour by taking into account the consequence of their private actions (Harrison, Newholm & Shaw, 2005; Parkins & Craig, 2006; Newholm & Shaw, 2007). This has been facilitated by increased media coverage (Roberts, 1996; Strong, 1996), level of information (Smith, 1995; Strong, 1996) and availability of alternative products in the marketplace (Strong, 1996).

Since the literature emphasized SRBC is not only limited to minimize harmful effects and maximize beneficial impacts during purchase and consumption but also during post-consumption processes, and given that the environmental considerations are coupled with social ones. The author proposes a definition of a socially responsible consumer as *a consumer engaging in a deliberate effort to acquire, use and dispose of products in manners minimizing negative consequences and maximizing positive ones, on both environmental and social levels.*

### **Measures of Socially Responsible Consumption Behaviour and Related Concepts**

Consumption is usually comprised of three phases: acquisition - consumption - disposition (Jacoby, Berning & Dietvorst, 1977). Most scales aimed at measuring SRCB focused predominantly on acquisition. A recurring dimension in past research refers to consumers’ unwillingness to buy from companies behaving irresponsibly: the “organization dimension” (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006, François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006), which overlaps with Yan and She’s (2011) “resisting irresponsible businesses dimension”. Conversely, some researchers also identified dimensions related to consumer’s willingness to buy from companies behaving ethically: “Corporate Social Responsibility performance” (Webb et al., 2008) or “supporting socially responsible companies”

(Yan & She, 2011). Further, dimensions related to support of local and small enterprises (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006; Yan & She, 2011) which refer respectively to “local consumption” (Merle *et al.*, 2010) and “citizen consumption” (CREDOC, 1996a, 1996b), constitute two other important dimensions related to ethical behaviour during the acquisition phase.

Other dimensions related to the “usage” and “disposition” phases are somewhat less clear-cut in most scales. Anderson et al. (1974) were the first to identify a “recycling” dimension, which is an obvious reference to disposition practices. “Usage” is somewhat more frequently assessed. “Volume consumption limitation” (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006), “moderate consumption” and “energy consumption” (Yan & She, 2011), are examples of more usage-oriented dimensions, although they may not specifically refer to the usage of the product purchased but to broader resources from energy to shopping bags. Interestingly, Webb et al. (2008) developed a three-dimensional scale where each scale refers to one particular aspect of the consumption process: the “purchase based on Corporate Social Responsibility performance dimension” for acquisition, the “avoidance and use reduction of products based on their environmental impact” for usage and the “recycling dimension” for disposition. However, many of the items forming the usage-related subscale refer to avoidance behaviours instead of specific usage behaviours. Overall, it seems that ethical consumption is mainly a matter of acquisition or non-acquisition, based on perceived harm or beneficial impacts on society/nature welfare.

### **Narrowing the Attitude/intention Action Gap**

Whereas some scales measuring SRCB have focused on *attitudes* (Antil, 1984), some have intended to measure *intentions* (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006). Others have specifically measured actual *behaviour* (Mohr et al., 2001; Webb et al., 2008; Yan & She, 2011). However, upon inspection of the items composing these scales, some ask about what consumers “try” or “avoid”, on Likert scales ranging generally from 1 to 5. Most scales merge therefore intentions with actual behaviour (*e.g.*, Webb et al., 2008; Yan & Shen, 2011) or intentions and attitudes (*e.g.* Antil, 1984). Consistent with prior Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Ajzen & Madden, 1986), *intentions* are antecedents to *actions*. However, there remains a gap between intentions and actual actions (Nuttin, 1987). Bagozzi (1993) identified this as a volitional process. At one end of the continuum some researchers argue that consumer responses will never provide reliable estimations of actual behaviour (Ulrich & Sarasin, 1995). At the other end, narrowing the gap is a matter of refining models and methods (Newholm & Shaw, 2007). This latter perspective is mostly in tune with models developed in social psychology so far.

A number of concepts have therefore been identified as forming part of this gap such as “intention to try” and “trying” (Bagozzi & Warshaw’s [1990] Theory of Trying [TT]) or the inclusion of “goal desire” prior to “goal intention” and “trying” (Bagozzi’s [1992] Theory of Self-Regulation [TSR]). Perugini and Bagozzi’s (2001) MGB represents an interesting step towards an integrative theory of consumer action. It builds on different theoretical developments (e.g., Theory of Reasoned Action, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Theory of Trying, Theory of Self-Regulation) by emphasizing the importance of “desires” in the volitional process between attitudes and intentions. Attitudes, perceived negative and positive emotions as well as subjective norms are antecedents to desires. This is consistent with what Shaw, Shiu, Hassan, Hogg and Bekin (2006) advanced about the fact that in addition to intentions, *desires* and *plans* are also pertinent precursors to ethically motivated intentions and hence behaviour.

The literature has identified a considerable number of *antecedents* of responsible intentions, which may directly impact attitudes and anticipated emotions, in a MGB perspective. Perceived Consumer Effectiveness refers to the belief that an individual can have a positive influence on resolving social and environmental problems, which is positively related to Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour (Webster, 1975; Antil, 1984; Roberts, 1996; Straughan & Roberts, 1999; Klein et al., 2004; François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; Webb et al., 2008). Collectivism refers to the focus on group goals and was found significantly related to Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour (McCarty & Shrum, 2001; Yan & Shen, 2011) but only partially related in other studies (Webb et al., 2008). The perceived trade-offs between Corporate Social Responsibility and corporate abilities also positively affected Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Webb et al., 2008). Additional variables such as Altruism (Straughan & Roberts, 1999), environmental concern (Roberts, 1995, 1996; Straughan & Roberts, 1999), Social Concern (Webb et al., 2008), Effort Willingness (Webster, 1975; Antil, 1984; François-Lecompte & Valette-François, 2006; François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006) or Religiosity (Ibrahim, Howard & Angelidis, 2008; Lau & Tan, 2009; Lau, 2010), are empirically and conceptually considered as important predictors of SRCB.

To further explain the gap between Socially Responsible Consumption intentions and actual behaviour, *Contingency Factors* such as budgetary constrain (de Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2005; François-Lecompte & Valette-François, 2006; François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006; Newholm & Shaw, 2007), product availability (Shaw & Clarke, 1999; François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; Newholm & Shaw, 2007) or uncertainty in terms of information available to aid consumer decision-making and the consequences of their decisions (Ellen, 1994; Newholm & Shaw, 2007), have tried to explain the intention-behaviour gap.

In accordance with a MGB for Socially Responsible Consumption Behaviour, *Subjective Norms* are also important because the individual will tend to align his or her behaviour based on what (s)he perceives to be socially desirable in terms of

consumption behaviour whether from media, institutional or private sources (Newholm & Shaw, 2007; Yan & She, 2011). Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) refers to “the person’s belief of how easy or difficult a behaviour is likely to be” (Ajzen & Madden, 1986, p.457). Hence, the more they perceive information asymmetry or unwillingness of companies to provide transparent information on their products and production processes and the inability of government or third-parties to enforce that (Newholm & Shaw, 2007; Yan & She, 2011), the more difficult it will become for consumers to perform SRCB. The *Perceived Power of Big Business* (Webster, 1975) is therefore a relevant variable for measuring PBC. Eventually, *recency of past SRCB* will impact desires, intentions and actions whereas *emergency of past SRCB* will impact actions. The consequences of SRCB are mainly related to self-actualization or moral self-realization (Kozinets & Handelman, 1998). Responsible consumers obtain a part of their identity through consumption (Thompson & Arsel, 2004; Cherrier, 2005) enables them to express themselves in view of others in terms of individual virtue (Barnett, Cloke, Clark & Malpass, 2005) and morality (Cherrier, Black & Lee, 2011). It also enables to find meaning and harmony in life (Cherrier, 2005; Yan & She, 2011). Figure 1 summarizes the resulting SRCB conceptual framework.

The major antecedents to SRCB have been identified so far in the past literature is generally related to personality traits and values (e.g. collectivism [Yan & Shen, 2011]). These determine anticipated emotions toward it as well as the actual attitude toward it (Webb et al., 2008). Subjective norms are largely constructed and influenced by the media, education, popular culture and possibly legal regulations (Newholm & Shaw, 2007; Yan & She,). According to the MGB desires are formed prior to intentions (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Applying the MGB of Perugini and Bagozzi (2001), to SRCB may result in the following process: anticipated emotions, subjective norms and attitude toward it, combine, to form desires to perform. Such desires will be more likely to emerge and may be more intense if consumers perceive a lower level of external control on their behaviours (PBC) and if they have a higher performed the SRCB at a higher frequency in the past (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). The stronger the desire the more likely is a consumer to elaborate Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour intentions and ultimately perform Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour on a conative level (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Experience of Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour and PBC do also impact SRCB intentions and the SRCB action (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Contingency factors influencing the relationship between SRCB intentions and SRCB can refer to product unavailability, accessibility problems, lack of product information or other environmental issues which may hamper the Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour (Shaw & Clark, 1999). It may also be more likely that a consumer having performed an SRCB recently will be more likely to perform another SRCB soon. The principle posits that consumers tend to remember their latest experiences and actions (d’Astous, Daghfous, Balloffet & Boulaire, 2010). If a Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour has been performed recently, consumers will be more likely to remember it and to reiterate it if the outcome of the last Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour was

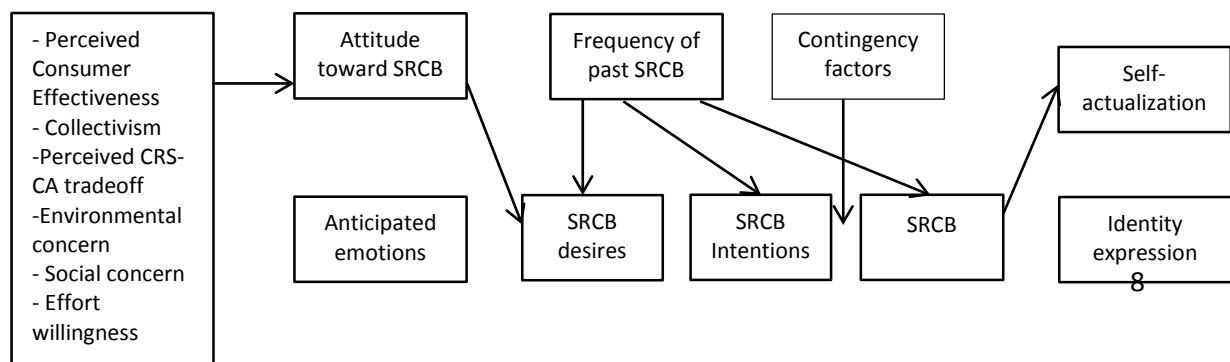


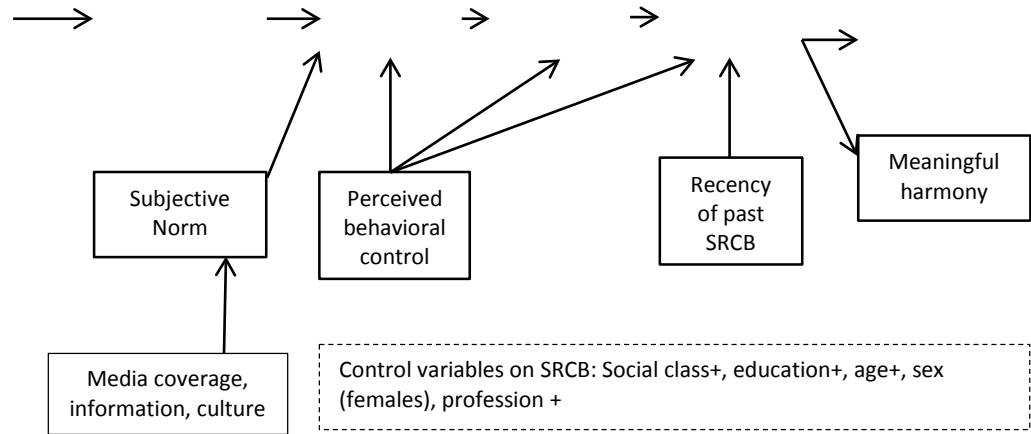
satisfactory, thus “incurred a positive confirmation” (Oliver, 1980). The Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour will ultimately generate various impacts on the consumer such as self-actualization, identity expression or the reaching of a meaningful harmony. This process might be somewhat different partially or in total given the consumers’ age, sex, and other meaningful consumer control variables.

### Profiling of Socially-responsible consumers

Roberts (1995) found that consumers high on social and environmental concerns were the “Socially responsible”, tantamount to the “Browns”, low on both dimensions; the “Middle Americans”, medium on both dimensions and the “Greens”, higher on environmental concerns and lower on social concerns. François-Lecompte and Valette-Florence (2006) developed a more detailed clustering of Socially-Responsible consumers (*non-concerned*: younger, less Socially-Responsible, students, do not favour any Socially-Responsible Consumption; *boycotters*: younger, more Socially-Responsible, employees, favour boycott and cause-related purchases; *sceptical*: older, less Socially-Responsible, workers, do not favour any Socially-Responsible Consumption; *anti-distribution*: middle-aged, more Socially-Responsible, merchants, women, favour small companies; *concerned*: older, more Socially-Responsible, retired, favour local products and diminish consumption volumes).

Research has shown that demographics are not as effective as attitudes (and thus their antecedents) in distinguishing between clusters of Socially-Responsible consumers (Antil, 1978, 1984; Pickett, Kangun & Grove, 1993; Roberts, 1995). Although thoroughly investigated in the 1970s and 1980s, these variables are now abandoned in favour of more meaningful psychographics (Roberts, 1995; Webb et al., 2008; Yan & She, 2011). When considering demographic variables it is preferable to conduct studies specifically dedicated to that purpose, such as Robert’s (1996) study of gender differences in Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour. This study confirmed a stream of previously inconclusive research which showed that although the sex variable is often insignificant (Tognacci et al., 1972; Brooker, 1976; Arbuthnot, 1977; Buttell & Flinn, 1978; Antil, 1984; Sandahi & Robertson, 1989; Pickett et al., 1993), overall, females are consistently more SR than males (Pedrini & Ferri, 2014; Luchs & Mooradian, 2014; Cherian & Jacob, 2012). Therefore, in accordance with Roberts (1995), demographic variables are presented as control variables in the model but not as specific predictors, mediators or moderators of a specific construct in Figure 1.





**Figure 1.** MGB-built conceptual framework of Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour

### Research implications

This paper defined SRCB as a deliberate behaviour which may be declined in a variety of consumption behaviours. It draws on the MGB, to present the underlying mechanism of SRCB. In line with Shaw et al. (2006), it takes into account *Desires* as meaningful predecessors of *Intentions* and thus SRCB. It also considers the impact of *Subjective Norms* perceived by consumers regarding what is “good” and “ethical” and thus desirable, and what is not. *Frequency* and *recency* of past SRCB also relevant variables more broadly related to the notion of habit and experience which are important predictors of behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000; Ajzen, 2002; Kim, Malhotra & Narasimhan, 2005). By considering psychographic variables as predictors of *attitudes* and anticipated emotions which in turn trigger, *desires*, *intentions* and *Socially Responsible Consumption Behavior*, this model answers therefore the call in the literature for a better understanding of the attitude-behaviour gap (Roberts, 1996; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). It also takes into account *environmental factors* (e.g. budget constrains), identified as impediments of Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006), which moderate the impact of *intentions* on *SRCB*.

The article presents several theoretical insights in the SRCB studies. Antecedents have been predominantly analyzed as independent variables on SRCB. This model provides a framework for explaining the specific mechanism between these antecedents and this behaviour. It also emphasizes the role of *desires* preceding *intentions*, constituting therefore an attempt to narrow the attitude-behaviour gap. The environmental contingent factors moderating the intentions on SRCB attempts to explain the intention-attitude gap. A several number of research avenues drawing on the limitations of current SRCB measurement scales, are worth mentioning.

First, although measurement scales exist for most of the constructs in this model, several need to be updated or developed. Attitude toward SRCB has been measured by Antil (1984). However this measure might be out-dated and a newer version should be developed. François-Lecompte and Valette-Florence (2006) argue that their scale measures intentions yet resembles in its items formulation to other scales measuring actual behaviour, which are thus also relatively close to measuring intentions (Webb et al., 2008; Yan & She, 2011). A reformulation of items should be conducted in these scales in order to focus on desires, intentions and actual behaviour. The choice of a SRCB measurement scale is also sensitive. Webb et al.'s (2008) scale, investigates acquisition, usage and disposition. Yan and She (2011) scale has a similar allocation of items but not in well-defined dimensions and mainly applies to the Chinese context. However, some of their dimensions lie in juxtaposition of other present Socially-Responsible Consumption scales (Roberts, 1995, 1996; Crane, 2001; François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006) especially regarding consumer support to small and local business and attention to organization ethical behaviour. Overall, a scale measuring Socially-Responsible Consumption Behaviour consists of two major categories – social and environmental concerns – and can be segmented into more or fewer dimensions as well as incorporate cultural adaptations (Yan & She, 2011). Also, the field of SRCB evolves quickly and scales need to be upgraded accordingly.

Second, it may be interesting to investigate whether a higher frequency and recency of SRCB may lead to a form of *Power Law of Practice* (Kollers, 1975). In fact, when a behaviour is repeated, less efficient methods of accomplishing the behaviour are abandoned in favour of more efficient methods as more efficient methods are discovered (Crossman, 1959). Johnson, Bellman and Lohse (2003) for example have demonstrated that having learned to use a site raises its attractiveness relative to competing sites for the consumer, and all other things being equal (e.g. fulfillment), the site will be more likely to be used in the future than a competitor. In fact, they showed it is used more often but with decreasing visit times as a result of increased effectiveness (Johnson et al., 2003). Since policy-makers and marketers are seeking to render SRCB more prevalent among their populations, this might be a fruitful avenue for research. It may be expected that consumers who become more familiar with it will perceive to be more attractive than less responsible consumption forms which will increase the recourse to their behaviours while possibly diminishing the time spent performing socially responsible interactions (Klemperer, 1995). Ultimately this process will create a *cognitive lock-in* over time because perceived switching costs increase the more times a favourite behaviour is performed, just as firms can lock in customers with high physical switching costs (Williamson, 1975). Future research could seek to replicate this pattern in the realm of SRCB. It may also be interesting to examine whether such differences exist between different forms of SRCB. A faster learning curve may be more easily reached via consumption forms that draw on the Internet such as Locavore or French local food movements (Associations pour le Maintien de l' Agriculture Paysanne [AMAPs]) which enable to order fresh product boxes

online, than say converting a house with classic electricity circuit into a green energy manufacture (e.g., adding solar panels).

Third, consequences of SRCB are all supposed to be relatively positive., Exploratory studies might investigate whether that assumption holds. It may be that SRCB actually leads to frustration, the impression of doing much for little results, regret or dissatisfaction. In fact, most studies about it assume that it is an intrinsically positive way of consuming and that it can only positively impact consumers. It should be noted that “values and norms systems are part of privileged objects in social sciences because the understanding of collective life is not understandable without them [...] the researcher needs to investigate reality in terms of analysis and not in terms of moral judgement” (Quivy & Van Campenhoudt, 1995, p.30). Future research should therefore also focus on these counterintuitive although realistic negative outcomes of SRCB on the consumer level. The identification of such negative impacts will also enable marketer to improve their responsible consumption offerings and market them more effectively to consumers.

Managerial interest is growing in SRCB and therefore measurement scales relating to the different variables of the MGB-based framework should be made easily operational because it would facilitate managers' assessment of those constructs among their consumers. Heterogeneity between constructs should be maximized especially between very close variables such as desires and intentions, while intra-concept variance should be minimized because otherwise consumers' actual behaviour cannot be accurately predicted. Wording of items should therefore be carefully done and ideally not reverse-scored in order to facilitate practitioners' usage of these tools. In fact, managers but also scholars tend to prefer handy measurement scales that do not require much computations or transformation before and/or after data collection. Studies which aim at developing such scales should seek to replicate their findings via several additional studies in order to rigorously assert the scale's reliability and validity forms. A minimum of two additional studies is required in order to assess validity. This is also what Churchill (1979) recommends in his classic measurement scale development paradigm. An interesting approach is to investigate different exogenous variables such as contingency variables (e.g., ethical product unavailability, eco-labeling presence) which may act as mediator or moderator on the relationships between the scales representing the variables of interest. Practitioners may also develop their own specific scales for each of the variable presented in Figure 1. In doing so, wording must be concise and precise enough to distinguish items about desires from items about intentions or actions. Organization-specific contingency variable may also be included in the model for more nuanced and meaningful results. The type of industry in which a company operates, or any other relevant variable, may have an effect on the relationship between SRCB intentions and actual SRCB. For example, consumers' intentions to act responsibly may be higher toward manufactured products (cars, furniture) since such goods typically require heavy resource extractions and processing, and impacting the environmental

component. On the other hand, consumers might be less sensitive to purchasing socially-responsible services such as telecommunications or banking services since these companies may be less perceived as heavy resource extractors and polluters. Overall, various company have a significant influence on consumers' responsibly behaviours.

## Conclusion

In this article the author developed a conceptualization of SRCB by reconciling previous views and definitions. She also discussed the different measurement scales that have been developed so far in order to measure the SRCB by outlining their limitations for the current examination, especially regarding the attitude/intention-action gap. Third, the author developed an approach based on the Model of Goal-Oriented Behaviour (MGB) in order to address the major qualifications observed in research on it such as the attitude/intention-action gap, among others. The article emphasized the volitional process taking place between attitudes and actual behaviour and the central role of desires as antecedents of intentions. It discussed the relevance of profiling socially-responsible consumers and on which preferable base. The author considered all the different variables studied over the past forty years as direct backgrounds of SRCB, to be factors of attitudes and anticipated emotions related to it. Then she discussed the research implications of her exploration and proposed future avenues and specific guidelines regarding the development of measurement scales.

## References

- Ajzen, I. (1985). *From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behaviour*. Berlin: Springer.
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. *Organizational behaviour and human decision processes*, 50(2), 179-211.
- Ajzen, I. (2002). Constructing a TPB questionnaire: Conceptual and methodological considerations. Retrieved from [http://chuang.epage.au.edu.tw/ezfiles/168/1168/attach/20/pta\\_41176\\_7688352\\_57138.pdf](http://chuang.epage.au.edu.tw/ezfiles/168/1168/attach/20/pta_41176_7688352_57138.pdf) (accessed 22-05-2014)
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behaviour*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (2000). Attitudes and the attitude-behaviour relation: Reasoned and automatic processes. *European review of social psychology*, 11(1), 1-33.
- Ajzen, I., & Madden, T. J. (1986). Prediction of goal-directed behaviour: Attitudes, intentions, and perceived behavioural control. *Journal of experimental social psychology*, 22(5), 453-474.

- Anderson Jr, W. T., & Cunningham, W. H. (1972). The socially conscious consumer. *Journal of Marketing*, 36(3), 23-31.
- Anderson Jr, W. T., Henion, K. E., & Cox III, E. P. (1974). Socially vs. ecologically responsible consumers, In *AMA Combined Conference Proceedings* (Vol. 36, pp. 304-311). Association for Consumer Research.
- Antil, J. H. (1984). Socially responsible consumers: profile and implications for public policy. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 4(2), 18-39.
- Arbuthnot, J. (1977). The roles of attitudinal and personality variables in the prediction of environmental behaviour and knowledge. *Environment and Behaviour*, 9(2), 217-232.
- Bagozzi, R. P. (1992). The self-regulation of attitudes, intentions, and behaviour. *Social psychology quarterly*, 55(2), 178-204.
- Bagozzi, R. P. (1993). On the neglect of volition in consumer research: A critique and proposal. *Psychology & Marketing*, 10(3), 215-237.
- Bagozzi, R. P., & Warshaw, P. R. (1990). Trying to consume. *Journal of consumer research*, 17(2), 127-140.
- Barnett, C., Cloke, P., Clarke, N., & Malpass, A. (2005). Consuming ethics: articulating the subjects and spaces of ethical consumption. *Antipode*, 37(1), 23-45.
- Berkowitz, L., & Lutterman, K. G. (1968). The traditional socially responsible personality. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 32(2), pp. 169-185.
- Binninger, A. S. & Robert, I. (2008). Consommation et développement durable : vers une segmentation des sensibilités et des comportements. *La Revue des Sciences de Gestion*, 229(1), 51-59.
- Brooker, G. (1976). The self-actualizing socially conscious consumer. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 3(2), 107-112.
- Brundtland, G. (1987). Report of the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development: "our common future". United Nations.
- Buttel, F. H., & Flinn, W. L. (1978a). Social class and mass environmental beliefs a reconsideration. *Environment and Behaviour*, 10(3), 433-450.
- Buttel, F. M., & Flinn, W. L. (1978b). The Politics of Environmental Concern The Impacts of Party Identification and Political Ideology on Environmental Attitudes. *Environment and Behaviour*, 10(1), 17-36.
- Carrigan, M., & Attalla, A. (2001). The myth of the ethical consumer—do ethics matter in purchase behaviour? *Journal of consumer marketing*, 18(7), 560-578.
- Cherian, J. & Jacob, J. (2012). Green marketing: A study of consumers' attitude towards environment friendly products. *Asian Social Science*, 8(12), 117-126
- Cherrier, H. (2005). using experiential phenomenological interviewing to explore meanings of consumption. In H.R., Newholm & T. D. Shaw (Eds), *The Ethical Consumer* (pp. 125-136). London: Sage Publications.
- Cherrier, H., Black, I. R., & Lee, M. (2011). Intentional non-consumption for sustainability: Consumer resistance and/or anti-consumption? *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(11-12), 1757-1767.
- Churchill Jr, G.A. (1979). A paradigm for developing better measures of marketing constructs. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 16(1), 64-73.

- Crane, A. (2001). Unpacking the Ethical Product. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 30(4), 361-373.
- Crossman, E.R.F.W. (1959). A Theory of the Acquisition of Speed-Skill. *Ergonomics*, 2(February), 153-166.
- D'Astous, A., Daghfous, N., Balloffet, P. & Boulaire, C. (2010). *Comportement du Consommateur 3<sup>ème</sup> édition*. Montreal: Chenelière Education.
- De Pelsmacker, P., Driesen, L., & Rayp, G. (2005). Do Consumers Care about Ethics? Willingness to Pay for Fair- Trade Coffee. *Journal of consumer affairs*, 39(2), 363-385.
- Ellen, P. S. (1994) Do we know what we need to know? Objective and subjective knowledge effects on pro-ecological behaviours. *Journal of Business Research*, 30, 1, pp. 43-52.
- Engel, J. F., & Blackwell, R.D. (1982). *Consumer Behaviour*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behaviour: An introduction to theory and research*. MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fisk, G. (1973). Criteria for a theory of responsible consumption. *The Journal of Marketing*, 37(2), 24-31.
- Fisk, G. (1974). *Marketing and the ecological crisis*. New York: Harper & Row.
- François-Lecompte, A. & Roberts, J.A. (2006). Developing a measure of socially responsible consumption in France. *Marketing Management Journal*, 16(2), 50-66.
- François-Lecompte, A. et Valette-Florence P. (2006). Mieux connaître le consommateur socialement responsable. *Décisions Marketing*, 41(January-March), 67-80.
- Gabriel, Y., & Lang, T. (1995). *The Unmanageable Consumer: Contemporary Consumption and its Fragmentations*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hansen, U., & Schrader, U. (1997). A modern model of consumption for a sustainable society. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 20(4), 443-468.
- Harrison, R., Newholm, T., & Shaw, D. (2005). *The ethical consumer*. London: Sage Publications.
- Henion, K. E. (1972). The Effect of Ecologically Relevant Information on Detergent Sales. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 9(1), 10-14.
- Henion, K. E. (1976). *Ecological marketing*. Columbus: American Marketing Association.
- Ibrahim, N. A., Howard, D. P., & Angelidis, J. P. (2008). The relationship between religiousness and corporate social responsibility orientation: are there differences between business managers and students? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 78(1-2), 165-174.
- Jacoby, J., Berning, C. K., & Dietvorst, T. F. (1977). What about disposition? *The Journal of Marketing*, 41(2), 22-28.
- Johnson, E.J., Bellman, S. & Lohse, G.L. (2003). Cognitive Lock-In and the Power Law of Practice. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(April), 62-75.
- Kim, S.S., Malhotra, N.K. & Narasimhan, S. (2005). Two Competing Perspectives on Automatic Use: A Theoretical and Empirical Comparison. *Information Systems Research*, 16(4), 418-432.

- Kinney, T. C., Taylor, J. R., & Ahmed, S. A. (1974). Ecologically concerned consumers: who are they? *Journal of Marketing*, 38(2), 20-24.
- Klein, J. G., Smith, N. C., & John, A. (2004). Why we boycott: consumer motivations for boycott participation. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(3), 92-109.
- Klemperer, P. (1995). Competition when consumers have switching costs: an overview with applications to industrial organization, Macroeconomics and International Trade. *Review of Economic Studies*, 62(4), 515-539.
- Kolers, P.A. (1975). Memorial consequences of automatized encoding. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Learning and Memory*, 1(November), 689-701.
- Kozinets, R. V., & Handelman, J. M. (2004). Adversaries of consumption: Consumer movements, activism, and ideology. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(3), 691-704.
- Lantos, G. P. (2002). The ethicality of altruistic corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 19(3), 205-232.
- Lau, T. C. (2010). Towards Socially Responsible Consumption: An Evaluation of Religiosity and Money Ethics. *International Journal of Trade, Economics & Finance*, 1(1), 32-35.
- Lau, T.C. and Tan, B.C. (2009). Religiosity as antecedent of attitude towards green products: An exploratory research on young Malaysian consumers. *Asian Marketing Journal*, 1(1), 33-41.
- Luchs, M. G. & Mooradian, T. A. (2012). Sex, personality, and sustainable consumer behaviour: Elucidating the gender effect. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 35(1), 127-144.
- Marks, L. J., & Mayo, M. A. (1991). An Empirical Test of a Model of Consumer Ethical Dilemmas. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 18(1), 720-728.
- McCarty, J. A., & Shrum, L. J. (2001). The influence of individualism, collectivism, and locus of control on environmental beliefs and behaviour. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 20(1), 93-104.
- Merle, A., Piotrowski, M. and Prigent-Simonin, A.H. (2010). La consommation locale: pourquoi et comment? Article presented at the 13<sup>e</sup> Journées de Recherche en Marketing de Bourgogne, Dijon, France, pp. 1-18.
- Miller, D. (2001). The poverty of morality. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 1(2), 225-243.
- Mintel (1994). *The Green Consumer*. London: Mintel Market Intelligence.
- Mohr, L. A., Webb, D. J., & Harris, K. E. (2001). Do consumers expect companies to be socially responsible? The impact of corporate social responsibility on buying behaviour. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 35(1), 45-72.
- MORI (1994). *The Green Consumer: Consumer Attitudes to Green Issues*. London: MORI.
- Newholm, T. (2005). Case studying ethical consumers' projects and strategies. In R.Harrison, T.Newholm & D.Shaw (Eds.), *The Ethical Consumer* (pp. 107-124).
- Newholm, T., & Shaw, D. (2007). Studying the ethical consumer: A review of research. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 6(5), 253-270.



- Nuttin, J. M. (1987). Affective consequences of mere ownership: The name letter effect in twelve European languages. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 17(4), 381-402.
- Oliver, R.L. (1980). A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 17(4), 460-469.
- Ozcaglar- Toulouse, N., Shiu, E., & Shaw, D. (2006). In search of fair trade: ethical consumer decision making in France. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 30(5), 502-514.
- Parkins, W., & Craig, G. (2006). *Slow living*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Pedrini, M. & Ferri, L. M. (2014). Socio-demographic antecedents of responsible consumerism propensity. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 38(2), pp. 127-138.
- Pepper, D. (2002). *Eco-socialism: from deep ecology to social justice*. London: Routledge.
- Perugini, M., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2001). The role of desires and anticipated emotions in goal-directed behaviours: Broadening and deepening the theory of planned behaviour. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40(1), 79-98.
- Pickett, G. M., Kangun, N., & Grove, S. J. (1993). Is there a general conserving consumer? A public policy concern. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 12(2), 234-243.
- Quivy, R. & Van Campenhoudt, L. (1995). *Manuel de recherche en sciences sociales*. Paris: Dunod.
- Roberts, J. A. (1993). Sex differences in socially responsible consumers' behaviour. *Psychological Reports*, 73(1), 139-148.
- Roberts, J. A. (1995). Profiling levels of socially responsible consumer behaviour: a cluster analytic approach and its implications for marketing. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 3(4), 97-117.
- Roberts, J. A. (1996). Green consumers in the 1990s: profile and implications for advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, 36(3), 217-231.
- Sen, S., & Bhattacharya, C. B. (2001). Does doing good always lead to doing better? Consumer reactions to corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 38(2), 225-243.
- Sen, S., Gürhan- Canli, Z., & Morwitz, V. (2001). Withholding consumption: a social dilemma perspective on consumer boycotts. *Journal of Consumer research*, 28(3), 399-417.
- Shapiro, S.J. (1978). Marketing in a consumer society. *Business Horizons*, 21(2), pp. 3-13.
- Shaw, D., & Clarke, I. (1999). Belief formation in ethical consumer groups: an exploratory study. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 17(2), 109-120.
- Shaw, D., & Newholm, T. (2002). Voluntary simplicity and the ethics of consumption. *Psychology & Marketing*, 19(2), 167-185.
- Shaw, D., Shiu, E., Hassan, L., Hogg, G. and Bekin, C. (2006). Intending to be ethical: an examination of consumer choice in sweatshop avoidance. *Advances in Consumer Research*, conference, Florida.
- Smith, N.C. (1990). *Morality and the Market: Consumer Pressure for Corporate Accountability*. Routledge: London.

- Smith, N.C. (1995). Marketing Ethics for the Ethics Era. *Sloan Management Review*, 36(4), 85-98.
- Straughan, R. D., & Roberts, J. A. (1999). Environmental segmentation alternatives: a look at green consumer behaviour in the new millennium. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 16(6), 558-575.
- Strong, C. (1996). Features contributing to the growth of ethical consumerism-a preliminary investigation. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 14(5), 5-13.
- Thompson, C. J. (1996). Caring consumers: gendered consumption meanings and the juggling lifestyle. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(4), 388-407.
- Thompson, C. J., & Arsel, Z. (2004). The Starbucks brandscape and consumers' (anticorporate) experiences of glocalization. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(3), 631-642.
- Thompson, C. J., & Haytko, D. L. (1997). Speaking of fashion: consumers' uses of fashion discourses and the appropriation of countervailing cultural meanings. *Journal of consumer research*, 24(1), 15-42.
- Tognacci, L. N., Weigel, R. H., Wideen, M. F., & Vernon, D. T. (1972). Environmental quality: how universal is public concern? *Environment and Behaviour*, 4(1), 73-86.
- Ulrich, P. & Sarasin, C. (1995, Eds.). *Facing public interest*. Springer: New York.
- Van Liere, K. D., & Dunlap, R. E. (1981). Environmental Concern Does it Make a Difference How it's Measured? *Environment and behaviour*, 13(6), 651-676.
- Vandermerwe, S., & Oliff, M. D. (1990). Customers drive corporations. *Long Range Planning*, 23(6), 10-16.
- Walker, H., Miemczyk, J., Johnsen, T. & Spencer, R. (2012). Sustainable Procurement: past, present and future. *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*, 18(4), 201-206.
- Webb, D. J., & Mohr, L. A. (1998). A typology of consumer responses to cause-related marketing: From skeptics to socially concerned. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 17(2), 226-238.
- Webb, D. J., Mohr, L. A., & Harris, K. E. (2008). A re-examination of socially responsible consumption and its measurement. *Journal of Business Research*, 61(2), 91-98.
- Webster Jr, F. E. (1975). Determining the characteristics of the socially conscious consumer. *Journal of consumer research*, 2(3), 188-196.
- Wilk, R. (2001) Consuming morality. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 1(2), 245-260.
- Williamson, O.E. (1975). *Markets and Hierarchies: Analysis and Antitrust Implications*. New York: The Free Press.
- Yan, J., & She, Q. (2011). Developing a trichotomy model to measure socially responsible behaviour in China. *International Journal of Market Research*, 53(2), 253-274.
- Zaiem, I. (2008). Le comportement écologique du consommateur: Modélisation des relations et déterminants. *La Revue des Sciences de Gestion*, 214-215, 75-88.
- Zikmund, W.G. & Stanton, W.J. (1971). Recycling solid wastes: a channel of distribution problem. *Journal of Marketing*, 35(3), 34-39.

---

Myriam Ertz <ertz.myriam@courrier.uqam.ca> is a Doctoral Student,  
Department of Marketing, University of Quebec in Montreal, Canada.

**Electronic Green Journal, Issue 39, Fall 2015, ISSN: 1076-7975**