Management Decision

MORAL AVOIDANCE FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET: ANTI-CONSUMPTION DRIVERS

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MORAL AVOIDANCE FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET: ANTI-CONSUMPTION DRIVERS

Abstract

Purpose

This study examines a form of anti-consumption termed moral avoidance.

Design/methodology/approach

The study builds and tests a model of moral avoidance, using a sample (n = 457) of adults

aged 50-94 years.

Findings

Two distinct forms of this type of anti-consumption emerged, one based on exploitation of

eco-systems and one on exploitation of humans. Ecology concerns and perceived consumer

effectiveness are significant antecedents to both forms, while ethical ideology also impacts

anti-consumption for social reasons. Greater numbers practice this form of anti-

consumption for social reasons than for ecology reasons.

Practical Implications

The study uncovers new underlying reasons why people practice moral avoidance and in so

doing guides managers in their targeting and decision making.

Originality/Value

The study is the first to demonstrate that this form of anti-consumption has two different

perspectives: planet and people. Moreover, older adults are important ethical consumers,

but no previous study has explored them from an anti-consumption perspective.

Key Words

Anti-consumption; Moral Avoidance; Ecology Concerns; Ethical Consumption; Pro-

environmental behavior

Introduction

From paradigm shifts in corporate-consumer relations has emerged a conviction that

business should assume greater responsibilities towards society (Panwar *et al.,* 2014), and

exploit neither eco-systems nor humans (Caruana and Chatzidakis, 2014). Consequently,

corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical purchasing are now prominent concepts in

the management literature. However, research tends to focus on the positive aspects of CSR

and ethical brands (Kavaliauskė and Simanavičiūtė, 2015). Yet, anti-consumption reflects

stronger beliefs than ethical consumption (Kim *et al.,* 2013), and is more widely

disseminated through social networks (Allsop *et al.,* 2007). Understanding the drivers of

product avoidance can therefore give organizations a competitive advantage (Kavaliauskė

and Simanavičiūtė, 2015). The distinction between buying an ethical product and anti-

consumption is important. Organizational actions have an asymmetrical outcome, so

consumers may punish negative behavior (anti-consumption) but not necessarily reward

positive behavior via ethical purchasing (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). Moreover, greater

numbers of consumers engage in anti-consumption than ethical purchasing (Megicks *et al.*,

2008), while positive and negative social actions are conceptually distinct constructs that

research should not combine (Mattingly and Berman, 2006).

Types of anti-consumption include voluntary simplification, politically motivated brand

rejection (Sandıkcı and Ekici, 2009), anti-branding (Kucuk, 2008a; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk,

2009), boycotting, culture-jamming, complaining behavior, and various forms of brand

avoidance. Self-interest can motivate some forms of anti-consumption. Lee *et al.* (2009a)

identified three types of brand avoidance: experiential, identity, and moral avoidance.

Brand rejection can result from a failure to meet expected consumption experiences

(experiential avoidance), or because of symbolic incongruence with the individual's identity

(identity avoidance). Finally, motivated by "ideological incompatibility" (Lee *et al.,* 2009a, p.

175), moral avoidance results from a belief that there is a moral duty to avoid certain brands

because of its detrimental impact on society (Lee *et al.,* 2009a). Reactive because it is

externally driven (Lee, 2009) by, *inter alia*, corporate irresponsibility (Lee *et al.,* 2009b) it is a

conscious form of anti-consumption that aims to subvert or change the system (Makarem

and Jae, 2015). A dominant force for brand rejection (Duman and Ozgen, 2017), there have

been recent calls for more research into moral avoidance (Kavaliauskė and Simanavičiūtė,

2015; Rindell *et al.,* 2014). The current study answers these calls by investigating potential

antecedents of this form of anti-consumption.

The study is also unique in that it concentrates on one specific demographic group: aging

consumers. The relative wealth of this group has the power to drive consumption choices

(Sudbury-Riley *et al.,* 2012), and in comparison to their younger counterparts, older adults

have stronger ethical beliefs (Pan and Sparkes, 2012) and consume more ethical and

environmentally friendly products (Jayawardhena *et al.,* 2016). However, no anti-

consumption studies focus on older adults. The paper begins with a brief overview of our

conceptual model. It then discusses the potential antecedents to this form of anti-

consumption, from which emerge hypotheses used to empirically test the model. The paper

concludes with the implications of the study for research and practice.

Conceptual framework

Definitions of sustainability and ethical purchasing stress society *and* environment (United

Nations, 2015: US Environmental Protection Agency, 2015). Social issues pertain to people:

movements such as the Fairtrade foundation aim to tackle human and social costs of worker

exploitation. Environmental issues focus on the planet, and incorporate green/eco products

that do less harm than alternatives. In 1995, Roberts argued that assessing a person's ethical

consumption on "only a social or ecological dimension would be akin to trying to solve a

puzzle with half of its pieces" (p. 104), and consumers have different reactions to these

different elements of ethical consumption (García-de-Frutos *et al.,* 2016). Consequently, our

model incorporates anti-consumption for social (people) reasons and ecology (planet)

reasons, and investigates potentially different antecedents for each type. While no model

can incorporate all potential antecedents, a review of the anti-consumption literature

reveals several potential drivers, including alienation, ecology concerns, ethical ideology,

and perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE). Figure 1 shows the model to be tested. This

section now discusses each of these potential drivers and the hypotheses that emerged

from the literature.

Figure 1: Research Model with Hypotheses
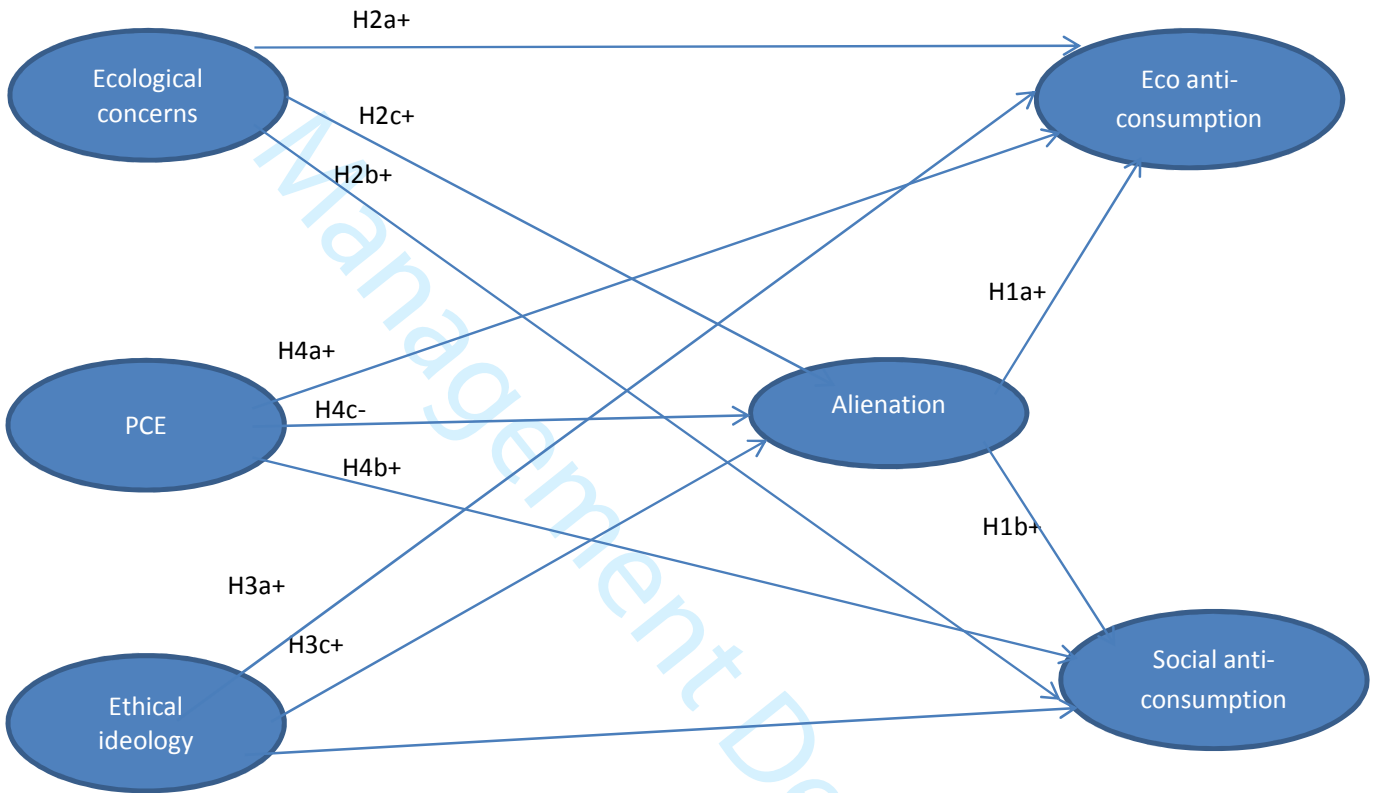
Note: Control variables age, gender, and SES not shown.

Consumer Alienation

Moral avoidance studies reveal a cynicism about corporate motives and current (lack of) CSR

strategies, and a particular distrust of larger and powerful organizations (Duman and Ozgen,

2017; Rindell *et al.,* 2014). Such pessimism is clearly akin to the concept of consumer

alienation, defined as feelings of separation from the norms and values of the marketplace,

and incorporates an inability to identify with conventional consumption (Allison, 1978). An

individual is alienated if they fail to accept the doctrine of consumption (Johnson, 1973).

Indeed, Freund (2015) suggests overconsumption is a reaction to powerlessness: as a result

a desire for omnipotence occurs, as mankind convinces itself that it owns the planet and can

somehow save itself by more growth. If true, the anti-consumer should feel marketplace

alienation.

A second compelling reason to incorporate alienation is due to an increasing recognition

that older adults feel particularly alienated by modern business practices (Euromonitor

International, 2015; Lloyd *et al.,* 2014). Older consumers witnessed the origins of mass

consumption, and "socialization into the new lifestyles of consumption has permeated the

lives...of the participants of post-war youth culture" (Jones *et al.,* 2008:39). It was also

during the 1960s that environmental concerns grew with a corresponding view that

consumption was a cause of environmental and social problems (Ingenbleek *et al.,* 2015).

Perhaps, then, anti-consumption among older consumers is a way of finding their

"liberatory potential in subverting the market rather than being seduced by it" (Firat and

Venkatesh, 1995: 251). For some consumers this means exiting the marketplace (Kucuk,

2008b).

While never studied in relation to anti-consumption, the literature searching for a

relationship between alienation and environmentally and/or socially conscious behavior is

inconclusive, though it does suggest that environmentally concerned consumers are more

alienated than socially conscious consumers (Kautish and Soni, 2012). Hence:

H1a: Marketplace alienation relates positively to anti-consumption for planet-protection

reasons (eco anti-consumption)

H1b: Marketplace alienation relates positively to anti-consumption for human/social

reasons (social anti-consumption).

A Concern for Ecology

Ethical consumption studies document a well-established attitude-behavior-gap in that

more consumers profess to care about ethical issues than actually purchase ethical products

(Eckhardt *et al.,* 2010). Hence, the link between claiming to be concerned about the

ecological environment and actually choosing to purchase eco-friendly products is tenuous.

Nevertheless, there is some support for the contention that ecological concerns do impact

both behavioral intentions and actual consumer behavior including moral avoidance (Rindell

et al., 2014). Paradoxically, however, while older adults are more likely to be green

consumers (Gilg *et al.,* 2005), younger adults report higher levels of environmental concern

(Olofsson and Öhman, 2006). Undoubtedly, there is a need to investigate the impact of

ecological concern on actual consumer behavior within age groups rather than between age

groups. Additionally there is some evidence that environmental activists tend to be

alienated individuals (Likar, 2011; Post, 2007), suggesting a possible positive relationship

between eco anti-consumption and marketplace alienation. Therefore:

H2a: Ecological concerns relate positively to eco anti-consumption

H2b: Ecological concerns relate positively to social anti-consumption

H2c: Ecological concerns relate positively to marketplace alienation

Ethical Ideology

Moralizing about consumption is not new. It was only the political efforts to rejuvenate

markets after World War II that mass consumption was normalized (Hilton, 2004). Perhaps

the number of anti-brand websites, often triggered by ideological dissatisfaction, is

testimony to this reemergence (Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009). Idealism, as a form of

ethical ideology, reflects an assumption that with the right actions, desirable consequences

result (Forsyth, 1980). Such ethical ideology is apparent in the anti-consumption literature

(Iyer and Muncy, 2009), with Cherrier (2009) arguing that resistance against mass

consumption undeniably reflects genuine idealism. Some consumers choose not to

purchase simply because they believe it is the right thing to do (Duman and Ozgen, 2017;

Shaw *et al.,* 2006). An idealistic ideology is also likely to impact feelings of alienation from a

marketplace characterized by materialistic values with insufficient regard for broader

environmental destructions (Carlisle *et al.,* 2009). Logically, then:

H3a: Ethical ideology relates positively to eco anti-consumption

H3b: Ethical ideology relates positively to social anti-consumption

H3c: Ethical ideology relates positively to marketplace alienation

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Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE)

Social dilemma theory suggests that perceived efficacy impacts behavior. Stemming from

this theory is perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), which proposes that consumers are

more likely to take action if they expect that action will remedy the problem (Cherrier *et al.,*

2012). Though PCE is distinct from environmental concerns (Ellen *et al.,* 1991), consumers

who are high in perceived efficacy or PCE are more likely to purchase environmentally

friendly products (Wells *et al.,* 2011), or engage in anti-consumption if they believe this

behavior makes a difference to those experiencing hardship (Hoffmann, 2013). Perhaps,

then, those consumers who feel they are helpless in the face of unethical business practices

would demonstrate low levels of PCE and be less likely to engage in anti-consumption

practices. Indeed, PCE is an important concept to include in the study of environmentally

significant consumer behavior, not least because "the concept captures the person's

perception of his or her ability to do something about a social problem" (Thøgersen, 1999:

446).

As for alienation however, the relationship may be different. Do people who feel they have

the power to make a change (i.e., people high in PCE) feel less or more alienated from the

marketplace? This is still an unanswered question, though a dated study (Berkowitz and

Lutterman, 1968) did find socially conscious consumers were low in alienation and high in

beliefs that they can make a difference, suggesting a negative relationship between

alienation and PCE. While at first glance this perspective may seem counterintuitive, if we

go beyond the management literature to Izberk-Bilgin's (2010) synthesis of anti-

consumption studies from sociology, anthropology, political economy, and cultural studies,

this perspective makes perfect sense. She identifies a discourse called 'manipulation and

enslavement', where "resistance to the dominance of the market is not possible" (p. 300).

Clearly, this discourse is suggestive of low levels of PCE. Consumer alienation is

conceptualized as feelings of powerlessness in the literature (Mady, 2011), hence it

becomes more apparent that high levels of alienation should be associated with low levels

of PCE. Therefore:

H4a: PCE relates positively to eco anti-consumption

H4b: PCE relates positively to social anti-consumption

H4c: PCE relates negatively to marketplace alienation

Method

Sample

A list of 5000 randomly-selected names and addresses of UK consumers aged 50+ was

purchased. A postal survey was chosen in an attempt to reduce social desirability bias.

Consequently the covering letter invited respondents to talk about shopping habits, rather

than ethical or environmental issues. Additionally, the sample comprised some very old

people, and with increasing internet adoption, 41% of over 75s are not recent internet users

(ONS, 2017).

In addition to older consumers being important targets for ethical products and services

(Jayawardhena *et al.,* 2016), this sample was chosen because it comprises an older or 'silent'

generation whose values include an instinct to help others and appreciate sacrifice for the

common good (Marston, 2015). The sample also includes 'baby boomers', who, according to

sociological literature, in its youth embraced social responsibility and communal values, and even when the many activists 'disappeared into families, guilds, and professions in every area of society' (Dickstein 1992: 18) a sense of communal responsibility still shapes their lives (Franz and McClelland, 1994). Age 50 is the cutoff because this is the starting point for the AARP in the US and Age UK in the UK which both offer products such as insurance to the over 50s (Sudbury-Riley *et al.,* 2015).

The response rate of 9.6% is marginally greater than the average (Pew, 2015). Moreover, surveys comprising older adults tend to be lower than average, partly because some older people are afraid of scams and junk-mail (Sudbury and Simcock, 2010). Reminders were sent out, and comparisons made of early versus late respondents (i.e., before and after reminder letter). Analysis of the socio-demographic profiles of early and later respondents revealed differences in education and work status. In common with many postal surveys (Armstrong and Overton, 1977) better educated respondents tended to reply early. Hence these variables were excluded from data analysis. After data cleaning and the deletion of outliers, the remaining sample comprised 457 adults aged 50-94 years, 51.9% of whom are female.

Measures

Appendix 1 provides the questions used. Items from the ethically minded consumer behavior scale (Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher, 2016) measured anti-consumption; chosen because it measures anti-consumption for both ecological and social reasons. The scale also makes specific reference to social irresponsibility, making it appropriate for moral rejection.

A Likert-type 5-point response acknowledged the 'sliding scales' of sustainable consumption

(McDonald *et al.,* 2012).

The sub-scale 'eco crisis' from the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) scale (Dunlap *et al.,*

2000) measured ecological concerns. Multiple studies show the NEP is related to pro-

environmental behaviors and behavioral intentions (Sudbury-Riley *et al.,* 2014).

The idealism sub-scale from the Ethical Positioning Questionnaire (Forsyth, 1980) measured

ethical ideology. The scale is a reliable measure of an individual's moral philosophy (Swaidan

et al., 2003), so is central to moral avoidance.

Results

Structural equation modelling (SEM) using AMOS tested the hypotheses. Following

Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach, the measurement model was tested first

using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), before testing the structural model using SEM. For

both CFA and SEM, Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation was used to

deal with missing values. Scales were purified by dropping items with loadings smaller than

.6, which was only the case for NEP and alienation. The CFA using the purified scales

resulted in an acceptable fit (χ^2 = 285.62, df = 155; RMSEA = .043; CFI = .963). Each

measurement item had a significant loading on its expected latent construct at $p < .001$, and

all constructs, except for that of pro-ecological attitudes (.62), had a composite reliability of

.80 or greater, meeting reliability requirements (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012). The average

variance extracted (AVE) for all of the latent constructs except for pro-ecological attitudes

(.45) adequately ranged from .54 to .71, exceeding the threshold of .50 suggested by Fornell

and Larcker (1981). For pro-ecological attitudes the AVE was greater than the squared

correlations with all other constructs, indicating discriminant validity for all constructs in the

model.

Testing the structural model as per the research model (figure 1) resulted in an acceptable

fit ($\chi2$ = 288.01, df = 158; RMSEA = .042; CFI = .964). H1a and H1b are not supported: the

path coefficients from marketplace alienation to both eco anti-consumption and social anti-

consumption were not statistically significant. H2a and H2b are supported: Ecological

concerns relate positively to eco anti-consumption (.319, C.R.= 4.064) and social anti-

consumption (.226, C.R.= 3.041). H2c is also supported: ecological concerns relate positively

to marketplace alienation (.363, C.R.= 4.900). H3a is not supported: The path coefficient

from ethical ideology to eco anti-consumption was not statistically significant. H3b and H3c

are supported: ethical ideology relates positively to both social anti-consumption (.256,

C.R.= 4.469) and marketplace alienation (.190, C.R.= 3.471). H4a and H4b are supported:

PCE relates positively to both eco anti-consumption (.284, C.R.= 4.470) and social anti-

consumption (.278, C.R.= 4.437). H4c is also supported: PCE relates negatively to

marketplace alienation (-.251, C.R.= -4.464). Table 1 summarizes the findings in relation to

the hypotheses.

[Table 1 Here]

In terms of the control variables, age has a marginally significant positive effect on eco anti-

consumption (.081, C.R.= 1.670) but no effect on social anti-consumption. Being female has

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a positive effect on both eco (.133, C.R.= 2.610) and social anti-consumption (.116, C.R.= 2.305). SES does not have a statistically significant effect on eco or social anti-consumption. None of the three control variables has a statistically significant effect on marketplace alienation. Overall, the model explains 26.5% in the variance of eco anti-consumption, 30.1% in the variance of social anti-consumption and 23% in the variance of marketplace alienation.

Given the finding for H1a and H1b and the significant gender effect on both anti-consumption constructs, further scrutiny proceeded with a post-hoc analysis to probe the relationship between marketplace alienation and anti-consumption. The sample was split into males (N=220) and females (N=237) and the model reran for each sub-sample separately. Both models achieved acceptable fit (male: χ^2 = 191.10, df = 145; RMSEA = .038; CFI = .973; female: χ^2 = 255.55, df = 145; RMSEA = .057; CFI = .938). For the male sub-sample, though the path coefficient from marketplace alienation to social anti-consumption is still non-significant (-.077, C.R.= -.827), marketplace alienation now has a statistically significant negative impact on eco anti-consumption (-.202, C.R.= -2.077). For the female sub-sample, marketplace alienation has a marginally statistically significant positive impact on both eco anti-consumption (.164, C.R.= 1.842) and social anti-consumption (.177, C.R.= 1.963). These differences between the male and female sub-samples seem to indicate that gender moderates the relationship between marketplace alienation and anti-consumption.

To formally test the moderation hypothesis, a multi-group SEM analysis was conducted using the male and female sub-samples. First, an unconstrained multi-group model that yielded a chi-square value of 446.642 (df =290) was ran. The path from alienation to eco

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anti-consumption was then constrained to be equal across the 2 groups, yielding a chi-

square value of 454.376 (df =291). The chi-square difference of 7.734 (df =1) is statistically

significant at p<0.01. Constraining the path from alienation to social anti-consumption to be

equal across the 2 groups yields a chi-square value of 450.696 (df =291). The chi-square

difference of 4.054 (df =1) is statistically significant at p<0.05. These results suggest the path

coefficients for both paths to be different between males and females, thus lending support

for the moderating role of gender in both cases. An inspection of the critical ratios (C.R.) for

differences in parameters as reported by AMOS confirms this finding (see table 2), lending

additional support for the statistical significance of the moderation effect.

[Table 2 here]

Finally, investigation turned to those who do practice moral avoidance compared to those

who do not. Analysis revealed that greater numbers consistently practice anti-consumption

for social reasons (13%) than for ecology reasons (5%). There is a great deal of overlap in

that the vast majority of those who practice eco anti-consumption also practice social anti-

consumption. Nevertheless, not all who practice eco anti-consumption consistently practice

social anti-consumption, and vice versa. Those who have taken action (demonstrated,

written to an organization, used an Internet forum, etc.) are significantly more likely to

engage in anti-consumption for both eco (t (449) = -3.82, p <.001) and social reasons (t (443) =

-4.50, p <.001). The same finding is true for those who have taken part in a demonstration

(eco anti-consumption: t (448) = -3.00, p<.01; social anti-consumption: t (443) = -2.57, p<.05),

and those who donate regularly to environmental charities (eco anti-consumption: t (447) = -

4.51, p<.001; social anti-consumption: t (441) = -4.19, p<.001).

Discussion

The most important finding to emerge is that moral avoidance for ecology reasons differs

from moral avoidance for social reasons. There are differences in the antecedents of each,

and shared antecedents have different levels of impact. Additionally, more people avoid

certain products for human reasons (social anti-consumption) than for planet reasons (eco-

consumption). Recently, there has been recognition of the need to incorporate both

ecological and social concerns in definitions of sustainability (UN, 2015), though this is the

first known study to empirically test this notion from an anti-consumption perspective. The

distinction between ecological and social concerns, and how they impact anti-consumption,

is important for several reasons. First, despite it being over two decades since Roberts

(1995:104) claimed that research that ignored one of these dimensions "would be akin to

trying to solve a puzzle with half of its pieces", numerous studies focus solely on one of

them. This study demonstrates the complexity of these phenomena, suggesting that both

dimensions should be included in future research. Second, managers must make positioning

and communicating decisions. Understanding different antecedents to anti-consumption

will better equip them to target audiences in the future. Finally, policy makers, who already

appear to recognize these distinct dimensions, need to ensure policy changes incorporate

both facets, with realistic guidelines to address both dimensions.

Greater numbers engage in anti-consumption for social purposes than for ecology purposes.

Perhaps moral avoidance is following a similar pattern to current ethical purchasing trends,

where spending on Fairtrade products (reflecting social concerns) is growing, while sales of

Rainforest Alliance products (reflecting ecological concerns) are stagnant (Ethical Consumer

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Markets Report, 2014). Whatever the reason, this finding too lends support for the need for

future research to keep the two facets (eco and social) distinct.

The finding that ecological concerns positively impact eco anti-consumption was expected.

Importantly, however, these concerns also extend to social anti-consumption. Given the

attitude-behavior gap, it is conceivable that ecological concerns are better indicators of anti-

consumption than they are indicators of consumption of ethical and green products. This is

an important finding worthy of further research. The positive relationships between PCE

and both forms of anti-consumption supports the contention that some "older consumers

are convinced that their purchasing behavior contributes to collective action that will make

a difference in the end" (Carrigan *et al.,* 2004: 412).

In contrast to PCE which had an almost identical impact on each type of moral avoidance,

ethical ideology emerged as an antecedent of social anti-consumption but not of eco anti-

consumption. Moreover, PCE has less impact on social anti-consumption than eco anti-

consumption. These findings lend further support to the need to keep environmental and

social issues as separate constructs. The ethical ideology construct relates to other human

beings, particularly the welfare of others. Past research has found a gap between people

who profess to care about such issues and those whose beliefs translate into purchasing

behavior (Eckhardt *et al.,* 2010). Here, at least, is a group of people who translate beliefs

into behavior.

The incorporation of marketplace alienation into the model has produced some interesting

findings. Rather than alienation having a direct impact on anti-consumption, results show

that strong concerns about the environment and high ethical ideology lead to feelings of

marketplace alienation. These findings make perfect sense: those individuals who strongly

believe that humans are severely abusing the environment are more likely to feel alienated

from a marketplace crammed with products that can contribute to this abuse. Likewise,

people who feel strongly about potential damage to the welfare of others are more likely to

feel alienated from a marketplace dominated by high street chains recently exposed as

engaging in sweatshop labor practices (Kuenssberg, 2014). Clearly, these aging consumers

who do feel alienated from the marketplace do so because they are cynical and distrustful

of many companies, as is reflected in the alienation construct used here. This cynicism and

mistrust are not the same as feelings of powerlessness. Indeed, the negative relationship

between alienation and PCE suggests that people with higher feelings of distrust and

cynicism towards many firms also believe that their conservation efforts can make a

difference. Evidently, these individuals feel rebellion against businesses is worthwhile.

Turning to the control variables, previous research often reports a positive relationship

between age and ecological behavior (Fisher *et al.,* 2012), though Otto and Kaiser (2014)

contend that it is learning, rather than maturation, which accounts for such findings. This is

the first known study to identify such a relationship for anti-consumption. Age had only a

marginally significant positive effect of eco anti-consumption and no effect on social anti-

consumption, suggesting potential cohort differences in types of anti-consumption, which

are worthy of further investigation.

There was no significant effect for SES: perhaps maturity supersedes it. Price premiums act

as barriers to green consumption (McEachern *et al.,* 2010). It is interesting, therefore, to

find that anti-consumerists come from different SES bands, as here price premiums are irrelevant as the focus is on not purchasing the product at all. Finally, important gender differences emerged. Females are significantly more likely to engage in anti-consumption behavior than males, which mirrors previous literature demonstrating that females have a stronger ethical orientation than males (Smith *et al.,* 2001), and more importantly have been found to participate in more boycotts (Klein *et al.,* 2004). Equally interesting is the finding that gender moderates the relationship between alienation and anti-consumption, it is positive for females and in the case of eco anti-consumption it is negative for males. Clearly, the results found here demonstrate that alienation and gender are ripe for further investigation in relation to anti-consumption behaviors.

Finally, this research has identified a group of older activists (in that they have demonstrated, or complained, or joined a forum about an environmental or social issue) who are significantly more likely to engage in anti-consumption than their non-activist counterparts. Likewise, members of environmental groups and regular donors to environmental charities are significantly more likely to practice anti-consumption. At the same time, the research finds a substantial number of older adults who do not engage in any anti-consumption behavior whatsoever. This is not to say these adults are not avid consumers of green products and fairtrade produce. Clearly, there are distinct segments of older adults whose anti-consumption behavior differs considerably, and practice needs to better use such segmentation variables in order to improve targeting, positioning, and communication strategies.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The research would benefit from duplication with a larger sample size and inclusion of other

age groups to make comparisons between cohorts. The results relating to alienation and the

important gender differences suggest these variables are fruitful for future research to

better understand underlying motivations and belief systems.

Conclusion

Changes in lifestyle and consumption behaviors are necessary for sustainability. In

comparison to ethical purchasing literature, few studies examine anti-consumption.

Yet, the moral avoidance of certain products that have a detrimental impact on humans

(social anti-consumption) or the planet (eco anti-consumption) may have a major impact on

sustainability. Policy makers have recently recognized that sustainability incorporates both

social and environmental issues (UN, 2015; US Environmental Protection Agency, 2015). This

is the first study to empirically test the suggestion that ecological and social concerns drives

anti-consumption in different ways. Hence, policy makers are leading the way, and future

research needs to consider the potential differences between the two facets.

Higher feelings of PCE and greater ecology concerns result in higher levels of both eco and

social anti-consumption. Interestingly, ethical ideology impacts anti-consumption for social

purposes but not for ecology purposes, supporting earlier research that suggests the two

strands - people (social) and planet (eco) – are separate. This distinctiveness appears to be

true for anti-consumption as well. Finally, important gender differences emerge; suggesting

females are significantly more likely than males to engage in anti-consumption behaviors. Gender also moderates the relationship between alienation and anti-consumption.

The study also focuses on aging consumers. Given that the United Nations (2012) describes rapid population aging and a steady increase in human longevity that is changing the demographic make-up of the world as one of the greatest social, economic, and political transformations of our time, research into aging adults will become increasingly important, and management decision makers need to heed the wishes of this potentially important demographic.

Overall, the research has contributed to our understanding of anti-consumption in general and the specific form of anti-consumption known as moral avoidance in particular. The study specifically demonstrates the need to measure anti-consumption for different reasons. The study uses validated measures (Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher, 2016) to examine the different forms of anti-consumption, lending practical insight to inform segmentation and targeting strategies. The research also makes an important contribution to knowledge pertaining to aging consumers, and current social and demographic trends suggest businesses must take note of this important group of adults (Sudbury-Riley *et al.,* 2015).

 For too long, marketers treated older adults as a homogenous mass (Moschis, 2012). This research lends support to a limited but nevertheless burgeoning knowledge base pertaining to older adults which clearly demonstrates that within these cohorts there are viable

segments that require different targeting strategies (Kohlbacher and Chéron, 2012; Sudbury

and Simcock, 2009; Sudbury-Riley *et al.,* 2015). Hence, the study has important practical

implications that can help policy makers to devise better approaches to consumer education

in the realm of sustainability. The results are also beneficial to business and public policy

because it provides a practical insight into the ways in which both sustainable and

unsustainable consumers can be approached (Seegebarth *et al.,* 2016).These are important

findings that can be used to better educate and persuade more consumers that by not

consuming products that are detrimental of the environment or the workers that make

them they can enhance the society in which they live.

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Table 1: SEM Estimates

( ): C.R.

NS: not significant at C.R.=1.96 (alpha = .05 level)

From	Path To	Hypotheses	Standardized Estimate (C.R.)
Marketplace Alienation	Eco anti-consumption	H1a	NS
	Social anti-consumption	H1b	NS
Ecological Concerns	Eco anti-consumption	H2a	.319 (4.064)
	Social anti-consumption	H2b	.226 (3.041)
	Marketplace alienation	H2c	.363 (4.900)
Ethical Ideology	Eco anti-consumption	H3a	NS
	Social anti-consumption	H3b	.256 (4.469)
	Marketplace alienation	H3c	.190 (3.471)
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	Eco anti-consumption	H4a	.284 (4.470)
	Social anti-consumption	H4b	.278 (4.437)
	Marketplace alienation	H4c	-.251 (-4.464)

Table 2: Multi-group SEM Estimates

( ): C.R.

Path		Standardized Estimate (C.R.) MALES	Standardized Estimate (C.R.) FEMALES	C.R. of difference
From	To			
Marketplace alienation	Eco anti-consumption	-0.202 (-2.077)	0.164 (1.842)	2.775
	Social anti-consumption	-0.077 (-0.827)	0.177 (1.963)	2.043

As a matter of fact, no other path coefficients are statistically significantly different at p < 0.1 between males and females, with the exception of the path from age to social anti-consumption (NB: the path is not significant in either group).