Understanding Consumers' Ethical Decision-Making Process: Assessment of Antecedents and Consequences of Consumer's Explicit and Implicit Perception and Behavior Towards Ethical Consumption

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Abstract

Social and ecological concerns are becoming increasingly relevant in all exchange processes. When it comes to consumption, more and more people are paying attention to the ecological and social compatibility of products and brands they consume and want to set an example against unethical practices with their consumption behavior. Thus, consumption nowadays represents a means by which consumers are able to express and represent their ethical beliefs. While consumers consciously act in accordance with their ethical views in some contexts, the same ethical principles are given less importance in other contexts and are of little or no relevance to consumer decisions. Therefore, the question arises of whether the ethical consumer exists. Numerous companies are adapting to the ethical principles and expectations of their consumers and try to adapt their products and services to these expectations. Since it appears that the ethical beliefs of consumers alone are not a sufficient characteristic for taking the corresponding actions, a more distinct understanding of ethical consumer decisions and their determinants is required. This dissertation is dedicated to the aforementioned objective.

In the first module, which comprises three research articles, antecedents and consequences of ethical consumption are first identified and their relationship among each other is discussed. In particular, psychographic characteristics of consumers are discussed and product-, brand- and context-dependent factors are addressed. A connection is also drawn between luxury consumption and ethical consumption. The second module consists of two research articles and focuses on the promotion of ethical consumption. In this respect, particular attention is paid to the design of communication measures and channels, whereby the offline as well as the online environment is considered. The latter in form of an online shop for fair trade coffee. Since humans process information through explicit and implicit processes and decisions are often unconsciously made, neuroscientific methods are incorporated in module 2 to capture these unconscious processes and thus to be able to holistically understand the effects of the measures.

The results of the various research articles illustrate the diversity of factors affecting ethical consumer behavior. All antecedents have to be included in the investigation of ethical consumer behavior, depending on the use context. The findings provide valuable practical implications for both for-profit and non-profit organizations to better understand their target groups and to successfully design and efficiently implement their products and communication activities. The dissertation provides several potential approaches for future research directions. Particular attention should be paid to those that strive for a more holistic explanation of ethical consumption and address possible barriers for consumers. Especially the integration of

advanced neuroscientific methods can make a significant contribution to explaining the decision-making process more precisely.

Zusammenfassung

Soziale und ökologische Anliegen erfahren bei allen Austauschprozessen eine immer höhere Relevanz. Auch beim Konsum achten immer mehr Menschen auf die ökologische und soziale Verträglichkeit der konsumierten Produkte und Marken und wollen mit ihren Konsumentscheidungen ein Zeichen gegen unethisches Handeln setzen. Dadurch bietet der Konsum heutzutage ein Mittel, mit dem Konsumenten ihre ethischen Vorstellungen vertreten und repräsentieren können. Während Konsumenten jedoch in einigen Handlungsbereichen bewusst entsprechend ihren ethischen Vorstellungen nach handeln, geraten in anderen Handlungsbereichen die selbigen ethischen Grundsätze in den Hintergrund und erfahren kaum oder teilweise keine Relevanz bei der Konsumentscheidung. Daher stellt sich die Frage, ob es den ethischen Konsumenten überhaupt gibt. Zahlreiche Unternehmen passen sich den ethischen Grundsätzen und Vorstellungen der Konsumenten an und versuchen Ihre Angebote an diese Vorstellungen auszurichten. Da scheinbar allein die ausgesprochenen ethischen Vorstellungen der Konsumenten kein ausreichendes Merkmal sind, um entsprechende Handlungen zu tätigen, ist ein ausgeprägteres Verständnis ethischer Konsumentscheidungen und ihrer Determinanten erforderlich. Diesem Ziel widmet sich die vorliegende Dissertation.

Im ersten Modul, welches aus drei Forschungsartikeln besteht, werden zunächst Treiber und Folgen des ethischen Konsums identifiziert und Ihre Beziehung zueinander diskutiert. Hierbei werden insbesondere psychographische Merkmale der Konsumenten erörtert, sowie produkt-, marken- und kontextabhängige Faktoren adressiert. Zudem wird hier ein Bezug zwischen dem Luxuskonsum und dem ethischen Konsum hergestellt. Das zweite Modul besteht aus insgesamt zwei Forschungsbeiträgen und setzt sich mit der Förderung nachhaltigen Konsums auseinander. Hierbei wird insbesondere auf die Gestaltung von Kommunikationsmaßnahmen und Kanälen eingegangen, wobei das Offline- sowie das Online-Umfeld einbezogen wird. Letzteres in Form eines Online Shops für fair gehandelten Kaffee. Da Menschen Informationen über explizite und implizite Prozesse verarbeiten und Entscheidungen oftmals unbewusst getroffen werden, werden Methoden der neuroökonomischen Forschung in Modul 2 integriert, um eben diese unbewussten Prozesse zu erfassen und so die ganzheitliche Wirkung der Maßnahmen erfassen zu können.

Die Ergebnisse der verschiedenen Forschungsartikel veranschaulichen die Vielfältigkeit der Faktoren, denen ethische Konsumhandlungen unterliegen. Sämtliche Treiber müssen, je nach Anwendungskontext, in die Erklärung des ethischen Konsumentenverhaltens einbezogen werden. Die Erkenntnisse liefern für kommerzielle sowie nicht-kommerzielle Unternehmen

(Non-Profit-Organisationen) wertvolle praktische Implikationen, um ihre Zielgruppe besser zu verstehen und um ihre Produkte und Kommunikationsmaßnahmen effizient gestalten und wirksam umzusetzen zu können. Für zukünftige Forschungsrichtungen liefert die Dissertation mehrere potenzielle Ansätze. Besonders zu verfolgen sind jene, die eine ganzheitlichere Erklärung ethischen Konsums anstreben und mögliche Barrieren auf Seiten der Konsumenten adressieren. Hierbei kann die Einbindung modernen Methoden der Neuroökonomie einen erheblichen Beitrag zur Erklärung des Entscheidungsprozesses bieten.

Schlagwörter: Ethischer Konsum, Konsumentenpsychologie, Neuroökonomische Verhaltensforschung

To Mom

For her strength, her encouragement, her advice, her patience, and for my sister.

Preface

Ἐξ οὗ καὶ δῆλον ὅτι οὐδεμία τῶν ἠθικῶν ἀρετῶν
φύσει ἡμῖν ἐγγίνεται· οὐθὲν γὰρ τῶν φύσει ὄντων
[...]
οὕτω δὴ καὶ τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντες δίκαιοι γινόμεθα,
τὰ δὲ σώφρονα σώφρονες, τὰ δ' ἀνδρεῖα ἀνδρεῖοι.

And therefore it is clear that none of the moral virtues formed is engendered
in us by nature, for no natural property can be altered by habit.
[...]
Similarly we become just by doing just acts,
temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 350 B.C.

1. Motivation and Research Objectives

Responsible consumption is on everyone's lips. Repeatedly, terms such as the responsible use of natural resources, the protection of non-human beings, the species-appropriate husbandry of animals in the food cycle, the avoidance of laboratory experiments on animals and the maintenance of humane living and working conditions in manufacturing companies and countries are being mentioned. People are becoming increasingly committed to ethical criteria in consumption, and with the growing popularity of the Fridays for Future movement, the subject now has also reached children, who hit the streets to stand up and fight for an ecologically and socially responsible lifestyle that incorporates ethical consumption behavior.

Ethical consumption, which has overlapping references to sustainable consumption, means the avoidance of practices, that are detrimental to the society, which includes people, animals and the ecological environment (Ritch and Schröder, 2012). Accordingly, ethical consumption is characterized by consumers who consider the public consequences of their consumption and strive for a social change through their purchasing power (Webster, 1975; Follows and Jobber, 2000). Consumers actual purchasing of consumer packaged goods (CPG) shows the increasing demand of ethical products. According to a study conducted by the NYU Stern School of Business Center for Sustainable Business and IRi in 2019, sustainability-marketed products are accountable for more than 50% of the market growth from 2013 to 2018, even though they account for 16.6% of the market share (NYU Stern Center for Sustainable Business and IRI, 2019).

In contrast to the trend and stated interest towards ethical consumption, there are numerous examples of ethical misconducts being ignored and suddenly no longer being given a significant role in consumer decisions. One example is the FIFA World Cup. Even before the event was held in Brazil, it was reported that thousands of residents were forced to leave their homes in order to build the necessary infrastructure and stadiums (Watts and Gibson, 213). Despite this unethical practices that were criticized before and during the event, the world cup reached a high number of 3.2 billion viewer in 2014 (FIFA, 2015) and it remains unclear, how many people will watch FIFA 2022. Non-profit organizations and media are reporting about the dark side of the upcoming glittering venue in Qatar and raise awareness on issues such as exploitation of migrant workers, late or non-payment of wages and employers not giving workers proper identity documents, which leaves them exposed to arrest and forced labor (Amnesty International, 2016). Nonetheless, it remains open, whether the moral and ethical principles of consumers, who confess to act ethical, will apply in this context, while past behavior indicates that ethical criteria are of limited importance in media consumption.

Even in industries such as cosmetics, conventional products accounted for 82% of the total market share in 2019, compared to the 10.4% of sustainable alternatives (IKW, 2019). Likewise, the 20.360 tons of fair trade coffee, which is the most popular fair trade product in Germany (Transfair, 2019), accounted for only 4% of the market share of total consumption in 2018 (475.678 tons) (Statista, 2020). A recent study conducted by White *et al.* (2019) stated that 65% of the interviewees reported on the intention to buy purpose-driven brands that advocate sustainability, yet only about 26% actually do so. Hence, most consumers do not follow their beliefs at the check-out counters despite their expressed social and environmental concerns and ethical consumption intentions (Carrington *et al.*, 2014; Tran and Paparoidamis, 2019). An understanding of what consumers actually consume and what the antecedents and drivers for their ethical decision in terms of consumption are, holds significant benefits for several industries, academia and the society. Even though many researchers tried to explain ethical consumerism, consumers' intentions and drivers behind the purchasing of ethical products and avoiding of unethical ones as well as their perceived value of ethical alternatives remain poorly understood. Hence, it is crucial to get a deeper and more comprehensive understanding on the role of influencing factors in several contexts. One of the reasons for the lack of clarity in this area is the complexity of finding a definition of ethics in combination with an appropriate measurement for it. As a *„belief system which guides moral judgements and actions"* (Schlegelmilch, 1998, p. 6) ethics is determined by several factors such as childhood,

role models, religion, values as well as culture. Moreover, the perception of what is right is subject to considerable variations in concerns and issues for each individual (Schlegelmilch, 1998; Carrington *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, ethical consumers are driven by morals (Schwartz, 1977; Sachdeva *et al.*, 2015; Andorfer and Liebe, 2013; Shaw *et al.*, 2000; Sunderer and Rössel, 2012), personal norms (Moser, 2016), personality traits (Lu *et al.*, 2015) value orientations, environmental concerns and beliefs (Pagiaslis and Krontalis, 2014; Kim and Choi, 2005) and other motives, for choosing one product over another. Further, social aspects such as the signaling of status and the enhancement of one's own reputation take on a role in affecting ethical consumption choices (Griskevicius *et al.*, 2010). Thus, consumers' decision-making in general and ethical consumer behavior in particular have several predictors and outcomes, which cannot be captured in a universal framework that applies to all contexts.

Apart from the aforementioned influencing factors, it becomes evident that despite an ethical orientation of consumers in certain contexts and product categories, social and ecological factors represent a minor decision criterion in other sectors. In the food sector, for example, consumers have shaped stronger ethical market preferences compared to the fashion sector (Ritch, 2015), which is characterized by more impulsive purchases (Joung, 2014) with faster trend cycles and lower pricing (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006).

Companies are also reacting to the stated preferences, beliefs and the consumers' ethical awareness by increasingly trying to cover the ethical expectations of consumers in their businesses, who are voting with their dollars – often against unsustainable brands (Whelan and Kronthal-Sacco, 2019). At the same time, however, they face the challenge to remain economically profitable, ecologically (Munasinghe, 2008) and socially responsible (Ritch and Schröder, 2012) and simultaneously protecting their brand values and managing the interests of their investors (Lee and Sevier, 2008). The range of products and brands that incorporate environmental and social aspects (possibly responsible products and brands) is constantly growing faster in some sectors and less rapidly in others. However, in order to be successful and to be able to respond in a targeted manner to consumers changing preferences, companies need to gain a better understanding of ethical consumption behavior and its several drivers.

With reference to the aforementioned findings, analyzing different forms of ethical consumer behavior and identifying relevant influencing factors in more detail is crucial in order to understand on which basis customers make their decision. This comprises psychographic characteristics of consumers, contextual factors, but also product- and brand-related aspects.

The first module of this dissertation is a critical examination of numerous factors that contribute to ethical consumption. These factors will first be identified and discussed, and their relationship with each other will be examined.

Research objective 1: Identification of psychographic, as well as product- brand- and context-dependent antecedents and consequences of ethical consumption.

Obviously, fostering ethical consumption is a matter of responsibility of the suppliers and the consumers. Besides the variety of characteristics that affect consumers' consumption decisions, long-term measures can be implemented to encourage more ethical consumption choices or the avoidance of less ethical alternatives. Communicative measures are a suitable means of providing topics access to people. Different forms of advertising or communication messages can have significant impacts on consumer responses such as on the attitude formation towards brands (Mitchell and Olson, 1981), pro environmental intentions (Hartmann *et al.*, 2014) beliefs (Brechman and Purvis, 2015), behavioral changes (Hinyard and Kreuter, 2007) and behavioral intentions (Yoon and Kim, 2016). The same applies to digital distribution channels in e-commerce, which are becoming increasingly popular for ethical products. Ethical brands offer their products through multiple channels and online shopping provides an attractive and ubiquitous distribution channel that opens up many opportunities for promoting ethical consumption. The attractiveness of e-commerce is clearly illustrated by its sales volume. While global retail e-commerce sales worldwide amounted to 1.336 billion United State dollars (USD), its vale has been nearly tripled in 2019, to 3.535 billion USD and is predicted to rise up to 6.542 billion USD in 2023 (eMarketer, 2019). Although, the trend remains unclear due to the current pandemic. The overall sales volume has declined since March 2020 while only a few sectors are showing a strong growth (food, drugstores, home office supplies, and medicines) (BEHV, 2020). Regardless of an increase or decrease in the long term, the competition will be intense and hence companies need to establish their position in the online market and take appropriate actions to encourage preference for their ethical products. Also in this respect, following persuasive strategies in technology channels can lead to different degrees of persuasive effectiveness (Li and Chatterjee, 2010) and foster the preference for ethical products.

Despite the importance of efficiently communicating with consumers and promoting ethical issues, products and brands, it is important to keep in mind that consumers are hardly aware of their attitudes, thoughts and beliefs during the consensual decision-making process (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977; Zajonc, 1980). Reactions to any kind of stimuli as well as reasoning and decision-making underlies two types of processing. According to the dual-process theory of higher

cognition, type 1 processes are broadly intuitive, automatic, fast and unconscious, often based on past experience and encompasses *"[...](general) processes of implicit learning and conditioning*" (Evans and Stanovich, 2013, p. 236). Type 2 encompasses more explicit and reflective processes, which require higher working memory capacity due to the sequential processing and is therefore slow, controlled and rule based (Sloman, 1996; Barbey and Sloman, 2007; Wilson, 2004; Kahneman, 2012; Evans and Stanovich, 2013). While type 1 processes are continuously generating responses, unless intervened on more distinctive type 2 processes (Kahneman and Frederick, 2002; Evans and Stanovich, 2013) both processes affect perceptual and behavioral measures. Hence, in order to successfully target consumers and to efficiently communicate with them, both processes have to be taken into account in market research. In order to achieve a more holistic view of consumers' responses and to be able to predict the success of planned activities, methods of consumer neuroscience should be integrated into market research processes so that both the explicit and implicit reactions can be measured. Non-invasive methods such as the implicit association test (IAT) provide a simple and efficient integration in market research environments. Hence, in the present dissertation, different forms of offline and online communication measures are investigated using state-of-the-art research methods of consumer neuroscience and neural networks to unveil hidden unconscious effects and thus to be able to give answers on how ethical consumption can be encouraged.

Research objective 2: Providing new insights on the explicit and implicit effects of communication measures on ethical consumption in online and offline environments.

This dissertation is separated into two modules in order to address the research objectives. In the first module, three articles address research objective 1, while two articles in module 2 are dedicated to the second research objective. In the following section, the two modules and the corresponding research articles are presented.

2. Description of the Research Articles

2.1. Module 1: Identification of Antecedents and Consequences of Ethical Consumption

The research articles in the first module aim to identify different antecedents and consequences of ethical consumption. Different consumer groups are addressed based on their psychographic characteristics and value orientation. In order to generate holistic insights, product, brand and contextual factors are included and different industries are addressed.

Research article 1 provides a taxonomy, which classifies different consumers with reference to their environmental value orientation, and equally considers their perception of luxury as an important classification scheme. Research article 2 examines the value-based drivers of sustainable consumption in the context of fair trade products. In research article 3, a comprehensive framework of animal welfare in the beauty care industry is derived, in order to gain an understanding of underlying determinants and possible outcomes of ethical consumption.

Research article 1 "Anything Worth Doing: The Ambiguity of Values in Sustainable Luxury" addresses the question, whether the ethical consumer is nothing more than a myth. This article focuses on the luxury market, which has several parallels to the field of sustainability. In order to investigate the research questions psychographic predispositions of consumers and perceived luxury values of ethical products, brands and the environment in general are considered. In particular, the environmental value orientation of consumers is addressed, which can be categorized in egoistic, altruistic and biospheric facets. The perceived value addresses financial, functional, individual, and social value aspects. The combination of both concepts results in a taxonomy, which examines the role of values as a determinant of customer perceived sustainability excellence regarding luxury products along with internal drivers of environmentally conscious behavior. Consumers with an egoistic environmental value orientation are more likely to express concern for sustainability related issues, if the consequences could become costly for themselves. Personal benefits, social acceptance and status, pleasure-seeking experiences, exclusivity, and scarcity of used materials are main contributors of sustainable consumption in this customer segment. On the contrary, environmental altruists are driven by the desire to gain rewards or to avoid harmful consequences for others. Through fair treatment of others and benefitting them, they receive personal satisfaction and experience a feeling of well-being. By acting environmentally conscious, they aim at protecting other individuals and thus contribute to the improvement of

the common good environment. Biospheric oriented individuals are concerned of the complete ecosystem itself (the whole biosphere). By avoiding unnecessary buying and conserving natural resources, well-being and life satisfaction is experienced, which is also characterized by autonomy, personal growth, and connectedness to nature.

Research article 2 "The Luxury of Sustainability: Examining Value-Based Drivers of Fair Trade Consumption" provides a conceptual framework of value-based drivers of fair trade product perception against the backdrop of the luxury concept. The study integrates intrapersonal characteristics of consumers by measuring the intrapersonal fair trade orientation as well as the luxury and value perception of fair trade products, as antecedents of people's willingness to recommend fair trade alternatives. The results of an online questionnaire clearly indicate that consumers who perceive fair trade products as luxurious goods (in terms of exclusivity, extravagance, and preciousness) show a higher level of involvement and reassurance toward the idea of fair trade. Consequently, those customers reveal a higher level of perceived value of fair trade products (e.g., product quality) as well as the willingness to recommend those. With reference to the conducted study, being an active promoter of fair trade products is directly determined by the customers' perceived product value (benefit in relation to cost), but also directly and indirectly affected by the overall luxury product perception as well as the intrapersonal level of fair trade orientation. The findings emphasize the importance of consumers' intrapersonal orientation in supporting the idea of fair trade consumption and further stresses the value components of exclusivity, preciousness, and longevity in the creation and maintenance of a successful ethical brand with lasting competitive advantage.

Research article 3 "Do as You Would Be Done by: The Importance of Animal Welfare in the Global Beauty Care Industry" addresses the role of consumers regarding sustainable practices in the cosmetics industry. A comprehensive framework of animal welfare in the beauty care industry is derived, to gain an understanding of underlying determinants and possible outcomes of ethical consumption. Specifically, psychological factors (e.g. personality traits, empathy, self-identity and ethical obligation) and context-related aspects (e.g. ethical value perception, involvement, and the trade-off between ethical and conventional products) are discussed as antecedents of consumers consumption intention in terms of boycott, buycott and brand avoidance. The results indicate that ethical consumption is strongly influenced by consumers' psychological factors. Regardless of consumers' values and norms that guide their personality and intentions, ethical products simultaneously need to generate benefits in terms of social, functional, economic, and affective product values. Furthermore, numerous consumers will

probably not sacrifice aspects of product performance solely for ethical considerations. Hence, the trade-off between a given product's ethical features, its functional performance, and the price should be taken into account. The framework can be seen as a useful basis for companies to not only successfully market their products but especially to create products that represent ethical and environmental excellence.

2.2. Module 2: Explicit and Implicit Effects of Communication Measures on Ethical Consumption in Offline and Online Environments

While research module 1 investigates the antecedents and outcomes of ethical consumption, module 2 examines the extent to which communication measures succeed in promoting ethical consumption. Research article 4 examines the effect of anthropomorphic advertising on the attitude towards and buying intention of irresponsible brands, under consideration of dark and bright personality traits. Research article 5 concentrates on storytelling as an essential instrument for brand communication and for cause-related goals in the context of e-commerce. In particular, the research article investigates the effect of storytelling through parallax on shop- and brand-related KPIs and its efficiency in promoting ethical products in the case of fair trade coffee.

Research Article 4 "When Pain is Pleasure: Identifying Consumer Psychopaths" explores the effectiveness of anthropomorphic communication about cruel business tactics on the formation of explicit and implicit brand attitudes in the context of cosmetic brands. The findings of research article 3 are revisited, and the influential role of personality traits is investigated. The focus lies on the Dark Triad of personality traits named narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy and on the degree of empathy as the opposite pole. In order to assess both, conscious and unconscious effects, neuroscientific methods were applied and hence the conducted study includes an implicit association test. To increase the insights obtained from data analysis, neural networks were used. Since personality traits are particularly subject to non-linear and complex relationships, effects could remain unhidden when conventional linear analysis methods are used. The results clearly indicate that anthropomorphic communication about cruel business tactics affects the formation of explicit and implicit brand attitudes. Based on the results, *Consumer Psychopaths* were identified and defined, as the results clearly indicate that consumers loading high on the Dark Triad were positively stimulated by the sight of tortured, exploited, and mistreated animals, which consequently leads to a higher brand attitude towards the brand conducting cruel practices on animals. Empathetic consumers, on the contrary, show significantly negative reactions towards the brand that acts unethical.

Research article 5 "Storytelling in Online Shops: The Impact on Explicit and Implicit User Experience, Brand Perceptions and Behavioral Intention" investigates the efficiency of parallax storytelling in improving the online shop visitors user experience (UX). It further examines the effects on brand-related key performance indicators such as brand attitude, sustainability perception and behavioral intentions. Furthermore, this study analyzes the causal relationships between UX, brand attitudes and brand-related behavioral intentions in terms of purchase intention and price premiums. Explicit and implicit paths of human information processing are taken into account. Specifically, the active online shop of a new and unknown fair trade coffee brand was used to examine whether a storytelling-based shop with parallax techniques is more effective than a text based online shop. The results of an online experiment show, that parallax storytelling enhances the visitors' UX on explicit and implicit information processing levels and is able to increase the shop's overall perceived attractiveness. Storytelling with parallax motion enables an efficient transmission of brand-related associations in consumers' minds (here: three dimensional sustainability perception of the coffee brand), enhances explicit and implicit brand attitudes and increases their willingness to pay a higher price. Additionally, this study reveals a causal chain of effects from UX to online shop attractiveness and brand attitude and finally to behavioral intentions. This study provides novel insights into promoting ethical consumption through online channels by managing online shoppers UX, brand-related perceptions and behavioral-intentions with the optimal use of techniques to implement storytelling. Furthermore, it is one of the first studies to holistically analyze human perception of online shops by considering explicit and implicit information processing through the use of neuroscientific methods.

3. Conclusion and Implications

3.1. Main Contributions

Even though the relevance of ethical consumption is on everyone's lips and an increasing number of people tries to adapt to a more responsible behavior, at least literally, a holistic view on the determinants of ethical consumer behavior and how it can be influenced by means of communication measures is still very opaque. Existing research on ethical consumption primarily focuses on one research area and lacks the interdisciplinary integration of research fields, which is necessary for an attainment of deeper insights. Precisely the missing interdisciplinary is addressed in this dissertation. This involves the gradual provision of several contributions for a more holistic understanding of ethical consumption, drawing on theories and methods of psychology, marketing, consumer behavior, brand research, and consumer neuroscience. Based on the underlying research questions the main contributions of the thesis are twofold.

First, new insights on the impact of psychographic factors as well as product, brand and context-related aspects on ethical consumption were generated. In particular, it could be shown that consumers' personality type and internal value orientation determine the perceived value of ethical products, her/his overall perceptions and behavioral intentions. Different contexts and use cases as well as consumption and anti-consumption patterns were taken into account, e.g. in case of corporate social irresponsibility.

Under consideration of intrapersonal and context-related factors, it could be shown that customers perceived value of ethical products and their consumption motivation can differ. The most decisive factor is the consumer's psychological predisposition. It has been shown that the individual's degree of sustainability orientation, value orientation and the manifestation of personality traits as psychological predispositions prove to be particularly decisive. Furthermore, parallels between the concept of sustainability and the concept of luxury are revealed. The results confirm that consumers interpersonal orientation and the perception of luxury aspects in ethical products, (e.g. such as exclusivity, preciousness and longevity) enhance the perceived overall value of ethical products. Second, the impact of communication measures in promoting ethical consumption in an offline and online environment was highlighted in this dissertation. In particular, the results of the thesis provide new insights into how anthropomorphic communication contributes to the avoidance of unethical brands, with special emphasis on good and bad personality traits of consumers. It has been demonstrated

that the effect of anthropomorphism in the communication about cruel business practices is strongly dependent on the recipient's personality factors. People who have a tendency towards narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy show a more positive attitude towards irresponsible brands if they are exposed to and informed about animal abuse conducted by the brand. For this group of customers, which were defined as Consumer Psychopaths, different measures are necessary in order to successfully promote ethical consumption and to increase awareness about irresponsible and cruel behavior. Referring to the online context considered in this thesis, the implementation of storytelling in online shops of ethical brands, by means of modern technologies such as parallax scrolling, represents a suitable method to promote ethical consumption. First, it enhances visitor's user experience, in the sense of pragmatic and hedonic aspects, as well as the overall attractiveness of the online shop. Second, the desired brand associations and values, which offer a differentiation factor to ethical brands, are more efficiently transmitted to consumers through parallax storytelling and consequently increase the buying intention and the willingness to pay a higher price for ethical products. This applies to both explicit and implicit information processing and thus to consumers conscious and subconscious perception.

3.2. Implications for Management Practice

The present dissertation covers multiple research directions related to ethical consumption and hence, implications can be derived for a variety of sectors and product categories and for both for-profit and non-profit organizations. The implications refer to the development of products, to the management of brands and advertising communication, and to consumer awareness and awareness raising among consumers.

The results clearly indicate that marketing managers should take a holistic view on antecedents of ethical consumption throughout the whole product development and brand and communication management process, and not concentrate solely on functional product features. Even though the tradeoff between conventional and ethical products should be met and consumer are less willing to sacrifice on product performance, psychological as well as context related factors should be taken into account in all business activities. There are clear parallels between consumers' perception of luxury products and ethical products and especially the sustainability sector can learn from the management of luxury brands. Consumers who relate the concept of luxury with the idea of sustainability and ethicality in consumption, increasingly value shared characteristics of both concepts such as exclusivity, rarity and authenticity in each category, which leads to a stronger intention to buy and recommend ethical products. Hence, a comprehensive management approach dedicated to the creation and maintenance of a successful ethical brand with lasting competitive advantage should stress the value components of exclusivity, preciousness, and longevity and chase away a sole focus on a "do-gooder" image. This approach does not imply that there should be no activities to raise and sustain the public awareness of existing environmental and social concerns, but a healthy balance has to be achieved in order to not be a pure self-proclaimed moralizer and accuser, but also a provider of viable alternatives that can help overcome ethical and societal problems. However, since actions count and long-term success is based on actions, ethical orientation has to become part of the corporate culture and business model, and social and environmental strategies have to be translated into operational practices. In this context, it has to be stated that the perception of goods and products is situational contingent and depends strongly on consumers' psychological antecedents such as personality factors and internal (value) orientations. Hence, marketers should compare the core values expressed by their brand to the individual aspiration level of their actual and potential consumers, in order to develop appropriate marketing strategies and adequately respond to their customers' needs and values. Each management decision has to be reflected from the customer's perspective and the value that consumers attach to the

multifaceted product attributes, especially for the defined target group. To guarantee this, long-term market research must be carried out by using holistic frameworks that incorporate product-related and psychological factors, as well as explicit and implicit types of consumers information processing.

For a successful marketing of ethical products in an online environment, which is becoming increasingly important and frequented, ethical products must also respect the principles of successful technical and creative implementation. This will increase the UX of the shop and lead to long-term success of the online channel. The use of storytelling by means of stimulating technologies such as parallax scrolling, does not only improve the perception of the channel in terms of explicit and implicit hedonic and pragmatic UX and attractiveness. It also helps to effectively transmit the brand values and to enhance brand attitudes and related behaviors on an explicit and implicit level. To ensure that the website is attractive and stimulating to the target group and that the goals of the company will be achieved, marketing practitioners are recommended to carry out market research and to test the explicit and implicit attributes of their online shop. This can ensure the long-term success of their online presence and establish a competitive advantage in the saturated field of e-commerce.

Non-profit organizations also benefit from a holistic view of the influencing factors of ethical consumption. By choosing anthropomorphism as a mean to raise long-term awareness and foster avoidance of unethical and irresponsible brands, consumers with distinctive dark personalities show paralogous effects. Additionally, certain types of consumers were shown to have a tendency to overlook political and ethical malpractice or even to approve those actions. Hence, before finally creating and releasing a campaign its effectiveness should be tested by the use of appropriate research methods. It has to be measured – by the use of neuroscientific methods -, whether the planned awareness-raising campaign affects only those who are already empathetic and aware of those problems and/or also triggers reactance in many other individuals. Hence, the measures might not lead to the desired effects, because consumers perceive them as threats to their freedom, choice, or autonomy.

3.3. Implications for Future Research

The findings of this dissertation provide new insights for a stepwise approach to a more insightful framework of ethical consumption in diverse contexts. It combines several research areas and allows insights across different disciplines. Nevertheless, the new insights obtained provide further essential future research directions. In order to gain deeper insights into the effects of psychological predispositions, e.g. personality factors and value orientation, future studies should address different dimensions and facets of the discussed constructs and thus gradually generate a higher level of insights that encompasses further psychographic characteristics. This would allow defining consumer groups with different characteristics and resulting in a better prediction of their perceptions and behavioral intentions. Furthermore, the context should be expanded and cover further product categories and goods. While the cosmetics, luxury and food industries were considered in the present dissertation, further everyday products such as fashion, technology (e.g., smartphones) and mobility could be examined in the next step.

Moreover, certain types of consumers tend to overlook political and ethical malpractice or even approve those actions. Hence, deeper insights on the perception and behavior of consumers are needed with a special focus on the dark traits of consumer personality and the interplay between the dark and bright sides of consumer psychology. Apart from anthropomorphism, more awareness-building measures are to be tested, which might trigger concern among different consumer groups and could therefore be more suitable to create awareness for ethical consumption in the long term. This also raises the question of what the ideal contact frequency and amount of awareness building campaigns is. Since economic reality reveals that even highly controversial business actions and scandals that lead to protests and calls for boycotts are often forgotten on the long term, the long-term influence of awareness building campaigns should be tested in future research. Moreover, by the use of specific panel data the actual purchase behavior could be assessed in the long-term. This could generate valuable insights whether the ethical orientation of consumers that is often reported in self-assessment studies is translated into actual consumer behavior that occurs at the point of sale.

For all areas of application, whether for for-profit or non-profit organizations, the consideration of different cultures is recommended. It is expected that the relative impact of the antecedents on actual consumption behavior as well as the value perception of ethical business activities differ from one culture and their economic wealth to another. In addition, animals are widely known to experience different treatment in everyday life based on the current culture. For

example, animals that are served as meat in one society might be considered unclean or sacred in another cultural context. These differences could lead to different perceptions of ethical problems and their relevance as well as to different outcomes in terms of awareness and consumption behavior. Last but not least, differences might also occur between different consumer lifestyles and consumption patterns within national borders.

Even though this dissertation examines conscious and unconscious effects and uses neural networks (Neusrel) to measure non-linear causal relationships, the application of additional neuroscientific methods (e.g., electroencephalography, facial recognition) could also extend the knowledge in this field and increase the insights into hidden drivers of consumer behavior in diverse research contexts.

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Research Articles

Module 1: Identification of Antecedents and Consequences of Ethical Consumption

A1.   Hennigs, N., **Karampournioti, E.,** & Wiedmann, K. P. (2017). Anything Worth Doing: The Ambiguity of Values in Sustainable Luxury. In *Sustainable Management of Luxury* (449-466). Springer, Singapore.

A2.   Schmidt, S., Hennigs, N., Behrens, S., & **Karampournioti, E.** (2016). The Luxury of Sustainability: Examining Value-Based Drivers of Fair Trade Consumption. *In Handbook of sustainable luxury textiles and fashion* (121-136). Springer, Singapore.

A3.   Hennigs, N., **Karampournioti, E**., & Wiedmann, K. P. (2016). Do as You Would Be Done by: The Importance of Animal Welfare in the Global Beauty Care Industry. In *Green Fashion, Environmental footprints and eco-design of products and processes* (109-125). Springer, Singapore.

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   Karampournioti, E., Hennigs, N., & Wiedmann, K-P. (2016). Because They're Worth It: The Importance of Animal Welfare in The Global Cosmetics Industry. Paper presented at the 15th International Marketing Trends Conference, Venice, Italy, January 21-23, 2016.

Module 2: Explicit and Implicit Effects of Communication Measures on Ethical Consumption in Offline and Online Environments

A4.   **Karampournioti, E.**, Hennigs, N., & Wiedmann, K. P. (2018). When Pain is Pleasure: Identifying Consumer Psychopaths. *Psychology & Marketing, 35*(4), 268-282.

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A1:

Anything Worth Doing: The Ambiguity of Values in Sustainable Luxury

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Anything Worth Doing: The Ambiguity of Values in Sustainable Luxury

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Abstract The 21st century is believed to be the rise of the ethical consumer who is concerned about a broad spectrum of issues ranging from the environment and animal welfare to societal concerns, including human rights. Ethical and environmental consumerism is regarded as a mainstream phenomenon in contemporary consumer culture related to all product categories and continues to build momentum around the world. Existing research finds evidence that even the average consumer prefers e.g., fair trade coffee and chocolate, organic cotton and cosmetics produced without animal testing. The ethical buyer, who is "*shopping for a better world*", is increasingly concerned about the consequences of consumption and "*intents to make certain consumption choices due to personal and moral beliefs and values*". Since the consumption of luxury provides the possibility to *express the deepest values*, there appears to be a close association to the concept of ethical consumerism. Nevertheless, a critical perspective on the economic reality supports the assumption that there exists an enormous gap between articulated individual values and behavioral intention and actual shopping behavior. Against this backdrop, the following key question has arisen: *Is the ethical consumer little more than a myth?* To shed light on this important question with special focus on the luxury market, in our paper, we investigate the relationship between (a) the set of core values and norms guiding consumer behavior defined as "*desirable goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in peoples' lives*" (Schwartz in J Soc Issues 50(4):19–45, 1994, p. 21) with special focus on environmental orientation on the one hand and (b) dimensions of customer perceived value understood as the "*consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of what is received and what is given*" (Zeithaml in J Mark 52(3):2–22, 1988, p. 14) on the other hand. We suggest that customers' general ethical and environmental orientation is translated into actual consumer behavior as represented by the demand for sustainable excellence in all business practices. Only if

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consumers perceive superior value reflected in all respects of a certain brand or product, they are willing to bridge the gap between basic ethical value orientation and actual ethical consumption.

Keywords Environmental value orientation · Customer perceived value · Sustainability excellence · Luxury industry

1 Introduction

The issue of sustainability is one of the central challenges for all countries in the world and for companies in their production processes. The continuous population growth and rapid economic development demand innovative environmental and ethical solutions from both businesses and governments. With reference to the luxury industry, the concepts of luxury and sustainability, however, appear at first glance in contrasting relationship: While luxury is often associated with superficial pomp and extravagance, sustainability addresses responsible consumption, social justice and the protection of natural resources (Pascaud 2011; Brundtland 1987). In this context, luxury companies have been criticized for risky working conditions, local river pollution, deforestation, sourcing of blood diamonds and the use of hazardous chemicals what negatively impacts upon corporate reputation and brand image (Kapferer and Michaut 2015; Sarasin 2012; Konietzko et al. 2014). The consideration of sustainability is therefore an important aspect in order to ensure the survival of the brand and a long-term competitive advantage (Girón 2014; Kapferer 2015).

Reasoning that luxury consumers typically belong to a wealthy, cultured global elite that has increasing interest in the environment and society (Bendell and Kleanthous 2007), they "*want the brands they use to reflect their concerns and aspirations for a better world*" (Bendell and Kleanthous 2007, p. 5). As the consumption of luxury provides the possibility to express one's deepest values (Belk 1988; Jenkins 2004), there appears to be a close association of luxury to the concept of ethical and environmental consumerism. The ethical buyer demands products that meet his/her moral principles and boycotts companies involved in unethical practices (e.g., Barnett et al. 2005; Muncy and Vitell 1992). Expecting "*convincing answers to questions of environmental and social responsibility*" (Bendell and Kleanthous 2007, p. 8), consumers either reward or punish companies that stress or ignore the importance of social and environmental excellence (Grail Research 2010).

A critical perspective on the economic reality has led to the discussion if the ethical consumer is nothing more than a myth (e.g., Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Devinney et al. 2010). Global consumers tend to turn a blind eye to political and ethical malpractices of their favorite brands (BBC 2002) and believe the government, the market, companies or the overall system to be responsible for sustainability practices—not themselves (Devinney et al. 2010). Reflecting the enormous gap between articulated individual environmental values and actual shopping behavior, the present chapter investigates the relationship between

a. the set of core values and norms guiding consumer behavior defined as "*desirable goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in peoples' lives*" (Schwartz 1994, p. 21) with special focus on environmental orientation on the one hand and

b. dimensions of customer perceived value understood as the "*consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of what is received and what is given*" (Zeithaml 1988, p. 14) on the other hand.

We suggest that customers' general ethical and environmental orientation is translated into actual consumer behavior as represented by the demand for sustainable excellence in all business practices. Only if consumers perceive superior value reflected in all respects of a certain brand or product, they are willing to bridge the gap between basic ethical value orientation and actual ethical consumption.

The chapter is organized as follows: In the next paragraph, the theoretical background of the concept of environmental orientation and luxury value perception will be presented. After that, a taxonomy of value-based environmental orientation is discussed that links egoistic, altruistic and biospheric environmental orientation with the four dimensions of luxury value perception. This model is used for the evaluation of business practice in terms of sustainability excellence in the perspective of the customer. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of next research steps and managerial implications to help managers in the luxury industry improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their sustainability practices.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Environmental Value Orientation

Usually defined as abstract standards and goals with the ability to shape human lives, value orientation has been reported to be one of the most influential factors for the description and prediction of human environmental beliefs and behavior (Howard and Woodside 1984; Pitts and Woodside 1984; Rokeach 1973; Richins and Dawson 1992; McCarty and Shrum 1994). Values are "*centrally held, enduring beliefs which guide actions and judgments across specific situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate end-states of existence*" (Rokeach 1968, p. 161). Similar to the definition of Schwartz (1994) reflecting on values as guiding principles in peoples live, both definitions clearly illustrate that values go beyond the evaluation of specific objects or situations. Rather, they embody value specific modes of conduct and end states of existence (enduring goals in life). Accordingly, consumers' specific value system serves as a basis of individual behavior, the emergence of needs as well as of the formation of attitudes toward certain objects (Rokeach 1968).

The "*[…] inevitability of "limits to growth," the necessity of achieving a "steady-state" economy, the importance of preserving the "balance of nature," and the need to reject the anthropocentric notion that nature exists solely for human use*" (Dunlap and Van Liere 1978, p. 10) clearly describes the emergence of a new world view, in which the necessity of environmental protection and the reduction of degradation is of great importance along with a higher environmental concern and awareness—The New Environmental Paradigm (Dunlap and Van Liere 1978). Furthermore, environmental problems "*in which self-interest choice is detrimental to shared resources in the environment and environmentally cooperative choice is beneficial to the environment*" (Cho 2012, p. 22) is often considered as a social dilemma (Dawes 1980; Parks 1994; Steg 2003). As social beings, humans are often required to make decision whose consequences are not confined to oneself, but—as an essence of social interdependence (McClintock and Allison 1989)—affects the welfare of those around them (Messick and Brewer 1983; Cho 2012). In challenging phases of social conflicts—and the continuum between acting to one's own interests or the best interest of a reference group (Dawes 1980; Messick and Brewer 1983; Geller 1995; Parks 1994; Steg 2003)—altruism serves as a basis to "*value outcomes that benefit others and can be motivated to act to prevent harm to other*" (Stern et al. 1993, p. 324). By treating environmentalism as a form of altruism, pro-environmental behavior can occur as a secondary effect due to arising concerns regarding the welfare of other human beings (Stern et al. 1993). In everyday life, humans face numerous conflicting situations and take decisions, which could possibly have positive consequences for themselves but negative consequences for the environment and the society at the same time. To encourage consumers' ethical and environmental behavior, with regard to luxury consumption in particular, it is important to gain a deeper insight into specific value orientations which may influence their perception about products and behaviors and their willingness to act in a pro-environmental and pro-social manner.

2.2 Customer Perceived Value and Sustainability Excellence in the Luxury Industry

Understood as the responsible and efficient use of resources as well as the consideration of ethical values in the form of social justice, intergenerational responsibility and the observance of human rights (Fien and Tilbury 2002; Girón 2014; Kapferer 2010), sustainability and ethics in the value chain preserve a company's legitimacy and prevents from reputation threats (Cervellon and Wernerfelt 2012; Bhaduri and Ha-Brookshire 2011; Sarasin 2012). Once associated with "*indulgence, extravagance, sheer look-at-me bling—the antithesis of responsibility*" (Simpson 2012), the luxury industry has started to addresses various dimensions of

deeper value embodied in the companies' core business and reflected in the sourcing, manufacturing, marketing and distribution of luxury brands. With regard to consumption values that directly explain how consumers evaluate luxury brands and why they choose to buy or avoid them (Sheth et al. 1991), sustainability excellence is driven by the customer's subjective expectations and individual perceptions of luxury value. Based on the core elements of luxury value as proposed by Wiedmann et al. (2007, 2009) and the sustainability diamond of Hennigs et al. (2013), the key dimensions of value-based social and environmental excellence as perceived by the consumer can be specified as follows:

Financial Value: Addressing direct monetary aspects of a product such as the price and the resale price of the product, the discount or the investment made, luxury goods are generally associated with a premium price and a limited demand. The exclusivity and uniqueness of luxury products implies that fewer products are produced compared to mass market production and thus fewer resources are used (Kapferer 2010; Hennigs et al. 2013). Moreover, consumers often consider the purchase of luxury goods as a long term investment and since luxury goods have a long-lasting value, the possibility of resale at a secondhand (vintage) market exists (Bastien and Kapferer 2013; Kapferer 2010).

Functional Value: An important characteristic of luxury brands is the consistent premium quality and the long-term life of the products (Nueno and Quelch 1998; Blevis et al. 2007; Lim et al. 2012). Because durability is a core aspect of luxury and sustainability, the longevity reflects the important relationship of the luxury concept with sustainability excellence (Kapferer 2010; Hennigs et al. 2013). As stated above, the appreciation of a luxury product increases when it is perceived as rare and unique. Given that luxury products often rely on rare materials such as precious pearls or unique skins and leather, the luxury industry is highly dependent on preserving the earth's resources. Besides, craftsmanship, tailor-made and hand-made products differentiate luxury from mass production. Therefore, the entire supply chain has to be included in a promising sustainability strategy and refrain from the exploitation of workers in low-wage countries.

Individual Value: Focusing on the customer's identity, hedonistic and materialistic values, the ethical orientation of the consumer has a direct impact on the purchasing behavior (Tsai 2005; De Pelsmacker et al. 2005). In this sense, individuals who identify with the group of green consumers express their interest in environmental and social consumption. As consumers use brands to reflect their own concerns and aspirations (Bendell and Kleanthous 2007), they expect convincing information about the brand's environmental and social responsibility (Grail Research 2010).

Social Value: Considering that consumers use the symbolic meaning of brands to reveal their identity and their social status within society (Sarasin 2012; Husic and Cicic 2009), more ethical oriented consumers are expected to think not only about the effect a purchase has on themselves with reference to their social group(s), but also on the world around them (Harrison et al. 2005; Davies et al. 2012). Modern

customers are more concerned about sourcing practices and working conditions in the country of manufacture and demand that luxury brand companies improve environmental and social standards (Davies et al. 2012; Cervellon and Wernerfeldt 2012; Sarasin 2012).

In an attempt to combine both research streams, customers' general ethical and environmental value orientation on the one hand and customer perceived value reflected in all respects of a certain brand or product on the other hand, the following paragraph presents a taxonomy that forms the basis of the assessment of value-based environmental orientation.

3   A Taxonomy of Value-Based Environmental Orientation

The current paper specifically addresses the gap within existing literature on the nature of individual environmental value orientation combined with customer perceived value of sustainable luxury. Having reviewed the literature on what constitutes a luxury brand, greater attention is now required on how consumers' perception of luxury differs based on their individual value orientation. Accordingly, there is a need for a taxonomy, which classifies different consumers with reference to their environmental value orientation, and equally considers their perception of luxury as an important classification scheme. To reach this goal, the theories used for the classification will be represented to subsequently interlink and describe their characteristics.

3.1   Dimensions of Environmental Value Orientation

The values hold by an individual are thought to be a motivating force for the perception of one's environment as well as for specific decisions to engage in pro-environmental behaviors (De Groot and Steg 2008; Dietz et al. 2005). Several theories have categorized environmental values in different ways. Thompson and Barton (1994) for example distinguish between two value systems that significantly influence environmentally responsible behavior. Ecocentrism has its focus on intrinsic values of the ecosystem, whereas anthropocentric individuals' belief that humans wellbeing is a major importance and represents a main reason for environmental protection. In the current paper, we rely on the theory of Stern et al. (1993) which is based on Schwartz's (1977) theory of altruism. Since human behavior is not exclusively explained and predicted by altruistic orientations and individuals consider the consequences of their behavior for themselves as well as for nature, Stern et al. (1993) distinguish between three different types of value orientation:

1. The *altruistic value orientation* is about "*concern for the welfare of other human beings*" (Stern et al. 1993, p. 326).
2. The *biospheric value orientation* focuses on "*concern with nonhuman species and the biosphere*" (Stern et al. 1993, p. 326).
3. The *egoistic value orientation* addresses environmental protection as humans' self-interest.

3.2 Dimensions of Sustainability Value Perception

As stated above, customer perceived value generally combines functional, economic, emotional value and social aspects of a product (or service) (Sheth et al. 1991; Smith and Colgate 2007; Sweeney and Soutar 2001). With special focus on the performance of luxury brands and products, the financial, functional, individual and social dimension of luxury value constitute the customer's evaluation (Wiedmann et al. 2007, 2009). While the *financial value* refers to direct monetary aspects expressed in dollars and cents that one is willing to spend to obtain a product (e.g., value for money, price, discount) (Ahtola 1984; Monroe and Krishnan 1985), the *functional value* addresses basic utilities and benefits such as quality, uniqueness, usability, reliability, and durability (Sheth et al. 1991). In contrast to that, the *individual value* focuses on the arousal of affective states such as enjoyment, amusement and happiness, whereas the *social value* represents the human desire for social recognition, status and prestige and the willingness to impress their social group and to meet reference group-related expectations. In line with Hennigs et al. (2013), the aforementioned dimensions of luxury value form the customer's subjective expectations and individual perceptions of sustainability excellence in luxury brand management.

The taxonomy as presented in Table 1 combines both types of values (individual value vs. product/brand-related value perception) and forms the basis for the empirical application to the context of sustainable luxury in the next paragraph.

Given the widespread use of values in marketing research to understand beliefs, attitudes, motives and behaviors, the current taxonomy examines the role of values as a determinant of customer perceived sustainability excellence of luxury products as well as internal driver of environmentally conscious behavior. We assume that, based on their different manifestation of values (environmental orientation), consumers differ in their perception of luxury in general and the sustainable augmentation of luxury products in particular.

Table 1 Taxonomy of values

	Egoistic value orientation	Altruistic value orientation	Biospheric value orientation
Financial value perception	• Rarity leads to rising values of luxury products	• High pollution costs for the whole society/humanity	• Nature as a cultural capital of a country
Functional value perception	• Uniqueness • Improvement of durability • Health benefits of fair trade and organic products • Enhanced quality of life	• Threats to health for society • Enhanced quality of life for societal members	• Climate change • Extinction of animal and plant species • Destruction of Nature • Quality of life
Individual value perception	• Nature provides pleasure and recreation	• Satisfaction/Happiness from making others happy/Sharing Happiness and by enhancing societal well-being • Philanthropy	• Maintaining diversity of animal and plant life • Promoting welfare of the planet • Autarky
Social value perception	• Good standing, when considered as sustainable • Being part of a movement (veganism, new religions) • Standing out from the crowd	• Avoiding exploitation • Preference for fair trade/no child labor • Thinking of future generations	• Protecting animals • Standing out from the crowd • Being part of a movement

4 Empirical Application to the Context of Sustainable Luxury

4.1 The Value of Egoistic Environmental Orientation

Consumers with a strong egoistic tendency are primarily focused on their own advantage and wellbeing. Nevertheless, even this group of consumers may express concern for sustainability related issues, particularly when their own lives are affected or high costs occur to themselves (Pereira and Forster 2015). Their personality is characterized by authority, social power, wealth and being influential (Roobottom 2004). The increased (monetary) value of sustainable luxury products represents one aspect of customers' perceived financial value. As "*luxury value is based on its objective rarity—rare skins, rare leathers, rare pearls, rare materials, rare craftsmanship*" (Kapferer 2010, p. 41), the success of luxury is dependent on the sustainability of its resources, showing that the concepts of luxury and sustainability go hand in hand. The high price of rare materials and luxury products have a positive role in determining high quality

(Wiedmann et al. 2007) and as high quality materials are perceived as long lasting and durable, sustainable luxury products increase in value over time. Thus, the rarity and scarcity of resources and luxury products enhance the product value (Lynn 1991), whereby serving as a long-term benefit for selfish individuals.

The egoistic orientation has even an impact on the perception of a products functional value. The aforementioned rarity and scarcity, which is related to the uniqueness of a product, as well as the quality and durability of luxury products and brands, contribute to an increased value creation of luxury goods over time.

Even though, organic and fair trade products share characteristics of luxury goods (Campbell and Li 2003; Schmidt et al. 2016), quite diverse reasons for their consumption exist. The personal benefits derived from the consumption of sustainable products are of great importance for egoistic consumers. Among these are the increased personal health benefits of organic products (Botonaki et al. 2006; Chryssohoidis and Krystallis 2005; Harper and Makatouni 2002), the perceived safety of organic farming (Kouba 2003; Sangkumchaliang and Huang 2012), the absence of harmful chemical fertilizer and the believe to have a higher nutritional value (Tregear et al. 1994; Baker et al. 2004; Pino et al. 2012; Squires et al. 2001; Lea and Worsley 2005). Hence, all this factors increase the personal well-being and quality of life of the consumer (Schifferstein and Ophuis 1998; Williams and Hammitt 2001; Zanoli and Naspetti 2002) and lead to the satisfaction of egoistic motives.

Similar aspects account for individual values ascribed to a product, since recreational activities such as tourism, contributes to perceived hedonistic values of the natural environment. Nevertheless, even if recreational behaviors (e.g., snowmobiles, jet skis) increase the pleasure-seeking perspective of egoistic consumers, there is a simultaneous destruction of the natural environment (Schultz 2002). As egoistic consumers would "*[…] oppose protection of the environment if the personal costs are perceived as high*" (Stern and Dietz 1994, p. 70), the loss of nature and wildlife as a recreational area entails high costs as well and enhances its perceived value and individual conservation efforts.

Considering the social status and the need of admiration the social value plays a crucial role in shaping preference for a specific product. Hence, the usage of sustainable luxury products may have a positive influence on the societal status of its buyer and serves moreover as a communicator of altruism and pro-environmental behavior—as a strategy of forming good impressions (Griskevicius et al. 2010; Coste-Maniére et al. 2016). Additionally, consumer demand for socially and environmentally friendly products is motivated by the need of being part of a movement (see Fig. 1) or a specific lifestyle (just for the sense of belonging), such as in the case of a veganism.

4.2 The Value of Altruistic Environmental Orientation

Consumers with strong social-altruistic values judge environmental issues on the basis of costs to or benefits for other people: specific individuals such as family and friends, a neighborhood or community, a social network, a country, future

Fig. 1 Egoistic orientation in luxury product advertising: the desire to be appreciated. *Sources* http://38.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_m84xucpMDy1qc1vog.png; http://nadechedezwart.com/wp-content/up-oads/2015/05/11191616_428636800641370_2081907089_n.jpg

generations, or the humanity in general (Stern et al. 1993). As they focus on people other than self and perceive themselves as interconnected with others, they are driven by the desire to gain rewards or to avoid harmful consequence for others (Schultz 2000). Against this backdrop, altruism can be defined as a behavioral disposition that is aimed at the personal wellbeing of others, treating others fairly and maximizing others' benefits (Van Lange 2000)—regardless of demographic, biological, or personal characteristics (Corral-Verdugo et al. 2010). In the context of sustainability, altruism supports pro-environmental behaviors and promotes happiness (Corral-Verdugo et al. 2011). Driven by a "*warm glow of giving*" (Andreoni 1989, 1990; Boyce et al. 1992; Menges 2003; Nunes and Schokkaert 2003), social-altruistic consumers receive personal satisfaction and experience a feeling of well-being when acting environmentally conscious, protecting other individuals and thus contributing to the improvement of the common good environment (Ritov and Kahnemann 1997). Those actions aim at conditions that allow an equitable access to the use of natural resources (Ehrlich and Ehrlich 2004), moderate consumption of natural resources (De Young 1996; Iwata 2001), and assistance of others in need (Pol 2002).

In detail, altruistic environmental orientation focuses e.g., on effects of polluted air and polluted water on public health because it harms people all over the earth and reduces the quality of life for everyone, even for future generations. Moreover, social and ethical issues arising from poor labor standards, the use of sweatshops and child labor are in the focus of altruistic consumers' attention. Here, to preserve the rights and health of employees, codes of conduct for companies and their suppliers are of particular importance. In a luxury context, the mining of precious metals and stones and the use of blood diamonds to fund conflicts in Africa has been widely discussed. To reinforce consumer confidence in diamond, gold and platinum metals, the jewelry industry has set up an organization called the Responsible Jewellery Council (RJC). Certified membership aims to demonstrate the commitment to ethical, social, environmental, and human rights practices within the jewelry supply chain.

In sum, leading luxury brands (e.g., *Bulgari* supporting *Save the Children* or *Armani's Acqua for Life* charity campaign) have understood the importance of

Fig. 2 Altruistic orientation in luxury product advertising: the desire to benefit others. *Sources* http://www.patek.com/en/communication/news/product-advertising; http://www.luxurydaily.com/giorgio-armani-supports-unicef-tap-project-with-app/armani-3-420/

philanthropic or altruistic efforts as a powerful competitive differentiator and are more likely to align with the core values of increasingly critical customers (see Fig. 2). As a consequence, altruistic consumers are more likely to recommend and buy (even for a premium price) products or services from luxury brands that participate in philanthropic efforts, whereas brands that seem altruistically irresponsible are not trusted or even boycotted (American Express Publishing's Luxury Summit 2012). Even if corporate sustainability actions are often claimed to be greenwashing, it has to be stated that their ethical actions serve as a role model in the industry and in the customer perspective. Referring to the example of *Armani's Acqua for Life* program, over 880 million liters of clean water have been generated since the project started in 2011 (www.acquaforlife.org).

4.3 The Value of Biospheric Environmental Orientation

Despite egoistic and altruistic oriented consumers, whose aim for acting sustainably is the human welfare (either for themselves or other human beings), biospheric oriented individuals are concerned of the ecosystem and the biosphere as a whole (De Groot and Steg 2009). From a financial perspective, the cultural and natural heritage of a country is of high value and humans have the responsibility to protect them. The ideology of biospheric oriented consumers is often related with a frugal or simple lifestyle in which the conservation of natural resources is supported through the avoidance of unnecessary buying, expending and wasting of resources (De Young 1991). Functional benefits of their preferred products and brands result from the avoidance of environmental change and destruction of nature as well as the conservation of animal and plant species during the production and consumption process of products or even travel experiences (Radder and Han 2015). Hence,

biospheric consumers pay high attention to the social and environmental augmentation of specific products and brands and are highly engaged in actions for environmental protection (Van der Werff et al. 2013).

Feeling as a part of the broader natural world fulfills the individual and emotional needs of biospheric consumers, which goes along with a high quality of life and is strongly related to ecological behavior and anti-consumerism (Mayer and Frantz 2004). Since individuals "[...] view themselves as belonging to the natural world as much as it belongs to them" (Schultz 2002, p. 67) empathic reactions towards nature as well as the willingness to help increases as a result of perceived relationship closeness (Cialdini et al. 1997). Through connectedness to nature "the self is expanded to include the natural world, behavior leading to destruction of this world will be experienced as self-destruction" (Roszak 1995, p. 504). Further, perceived individual values from nature connectedness and a biospheric oriented value system and ideology is the experienced well-being and overall life satisfaction (Mayer and Frantz 2004; Howell et al. 2011), among others characterized by autonomy, personal growth and positive relatedness (Capaldi et al. 2014).

By choosing sustainable product alternatives, consumers satisfy their social need for an entirely protected biospheric system and simultaneously fulfill their necessity to belong to the broader natural world and to feel like a valued member of a community (Kellert and Wilson 1993; Myers 2000). At the same time, biospheric consumers want to stand out from the crowd and demonstrate their exclusiveness by their autonomy and partially self-sufficient lifestyle. They feel as being part of a

Fig. 3 Biospheric orientation in luxury product advertising: the desire to protect natural beauty. *Source* http://www.iwc.com/en/help-protect-the-galapagos-islands/

movement where luxury means to free themselves from the system and to live a life in harmony and unity with nature.[1] Hence, biospheric consumers would choose products and brands that reflect their connectedness to the entire biospheric system even if they tend to avoid overconsumption. Consumers are more likely to buy brands that meet their expectations connected to their very specific lifestyle and worldview and enhance the welfare of all living organisms in the world. The watch manufacturer *IWC Schaffhausen* for example is part of the *Charles Darwin Membership Program* which scientifically explores the fragile Galapagos biotope and supports the conservation of the stunning world natural heritage. As a program partner, they created a luxurious chronograph called *Galapagos Island* (see Fig. 3).

5 Conclusion

Against the backdrop of serious challenges such as counterfeiting, fast fashion, the democratization of luxury as well as increasingly conscientious consumers, luxury marketers have to accept sustainability excellence as a fundamental market responsibility. The focus of this chapter was on the value-based assessment of sustainability in the luxury industry. To empirically assess the relationship between environmental orientation and customer value perception, a taxonomy has been presented and explained against the backdrop of luxury consumption. Consideration of sustainability is a value-driving aspect that impacts upon the customer buying decision: Consumers increasingly demand environmental-friendly and socially responsible products and perceive that particular luxury companies as pioneers and trendsetters hold the responsibility to use their high profits for implementing sustainability in all aspects of the value chain.

As discussed in this chapter, consumers evaluate the sustainability performance of luxury brands based on financial, functional, individual, and social components and in line with their individual environmental value orientation: egoistic, altruistic or biospheric. To verify that the luxury industry's commitment to sustainability is far more than hypocrisy and a sheer response to outside pressure, each management decision has to be reflected from the customer's perspective and the value that consumers attach to the multifaceted product attributes.

In this context, it has to be stated that the perception of luxury goods and products is situational contingent and depends on consumer specific needs and experiences (Wiedmann et al. 2007). Therefore, the assessment of the depth and sincerity of sustainability initiatives has to be regarded from an individual and cultural value perspective. It has been shown in accordance to post-materialism theory that environmental concern increases as societies grow more prosperous

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[1]The *Free and Real* project serves as an example for this kind of lifestyle. Their «*Telaithrion Project*» hopes to put in actual perspective, that a self-sufficient sustainable society that is based on true incentives and selfless giving, can exist, and that can be applied to practice in everyday life, and that even if the entire culture of humanity adopted it could flourish. (Free and Real, n.d.).

(Inglehart 1995; Franzen and Meyer 2010). Consumers in wealthier nations are more willing to engage in global environment protection as compared to individuals that face pressing economic problems. In consequence, based on the taxonomy as presented in this chapter, cross-cultural studies focusing on the individual value orientation and the evaluation of the sustainability performance of luxury brands are a key challenge and useful direction for further research.

> We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.
> Winston Churchill

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A2:

**The Luxury of Sustainability:
Examining Value-Based Drivers of Fair Trade Consumption**

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The Luxury of Sustainability: Examining Value-Based Drivers of Fair Trade Consumption

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Abstract Green consumption has evolved into consumption that also addresses ethical factors. The twenty-first century is perceived to reflect the emancipation of the ethical consumer, who is "*shopping for a better world*" (Low and Davenport in J Consum Behav 6(5):336–348, 2007). The rising consumer demand for ethical alternatives is present in all product categories, and—reasoning that the concept of sustainability with aspects such as exclusivity and rareness shares similar values with the concept of luxury—the aim of our study is to examine the luxury of sustainability against the backdrop of the research questions concerning a proposed similarity of consumer associations between luxury and ethical products. As specific context, we have chosen the orientation to and acceptance of Fair Trade products. In detail, the present study empirically investigates a multidimensional framework of intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation, fair-trade-oriented luxury perception, and fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value with reference to the recommendation of Fair Trade products. The first contribution of our research is to provide a conceptual framework of value-based drivers of Fair Trade product perception against the backdrop of the luxury concept. Second, the empirical findings of the applied partial least squares equation modeling (PLS-SEM) contribute to the understanding of consequences of Fair-Trade-based perception. Customers who reveal a high luxury perception of Fair Trade products are strengthened in the Fair Trade idea which results in higher customer perceived value as well as the willingness to recommend Fair Trade products. Third, the data analysis of the applied PLS-SEM approach demonstrates that positive Fair Trade behavior is influenced by direct and indirect effects. With reference to the conducted study, being an active promoter of Fair Trade products is directly determined by the customers' perceived product value (benefit in relation to cost), but also directly and indirectly affected by the overall luxury product perception as well as the intrapersonal level of Fair Trade orientation.

Keywords Sustainable luxury · Fair Trade · Customer perceived value

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1 Introduction

Green consumption and the avoidance of products that are likely to "*endanger the health of the consumer or other; cause significant damage to the environment during manufacture, use or disposal; consume a disproportionate amount of energy; cause unnecessary waste; use materials derived from threatened species or environments; involve unnecessary use—or cruelty to animals; adversely affect other countries*" (Elkington and Hailes 1989, p. 5) have evolved into consumption that also addresses ethical factors (Strong 1996). The twenty-first century is perceived to reflect the emancipation of the ethical consumer (e.g., Nicholls 2002), who is "*shopping for a better world*" (Low and Davenport 2007, p. 336). That said, consumers show a higher level of sustainability awareness. Indeed, sustainability is a worldwide social movement that has its origin in the late 1970s (Peet and Watts 2002), which is closely related to the global solidarity movement and corporate responsibility movement (Kates et al. 2005). It can be stated that the ethical-oriented buyer demands that products are not only friendly to the environment but also friendly to the people who produce them (Rosenbaum 1993). Sustainability awareness includes ethical issues such as environmental, animal welfare and societal concerns.

As a result, marketing managers are beginning to realize the importance of customer ethics and values and how meeting ethical demands is critical if they wish to gain a competitive advantage (Browne et al. 2000). However, when dealing with ethical purchases, results reveal a substantial gap between consumer attitudes, buying intentions, and effective behavior (e.g., De Pelsmacker et al. 2005a; King and Bruner 2000; Strong 1996). Even if studies suggest that consumers prefer to buy ethical products (e.g., Creyer and Ross 1997; Mohr et al. 2001), only a niche actually buys them (Cowe and Williams 2000). Therefore, the question remains of how to meet the consumers' expectations toward sustainable and green products and realize the transfer of positive perception to actual buying behavior. Consequently, a more thorough understanding of consumer ethical orientation and related links to ethical buying behavior is necessary (Papaoikonomou et al. 2011).

The rising consumer demand for ethical alternatives is present in all product categories, and—reasoning that the concept of sustainability with aspects such as exclusivity and rarity shares similar values with the concept of luxury (Phau and Prendergast 2000; Janssen et al. 2013)—the aim of our study is to examine the luxury of sustainability along the following questions: *Are there co-existing consumer associations with regard to luxury and ethical products? Can the sustainability sector learn from the management of luxury brands?* As a specific context, we have chosen the orientation to and acceptance of Fair Trade products. In the area of ethical consumerism and among the different social, environmental, and organic labels, Fair Trade has been the fastest growing sector, with international sales that increase by more than 15 % per year (FLO 2010).

Against the backdrop of the aim of the present work, a multidimensional framework of intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation, fair-trade-oriented luxury perception, and fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value with reference to the

recommendation of Fair Trade products is conceptualized. In detail, partial least squares equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is applied to assess the introduced conceptual model empirically in order to contribute to the understanding of consequences of fair-trade-based perception.

The paper is structured as follows: First, a conceptual framework is derived and provided in the next paragraph. Particularly, the theoretical background of all core elements of the introduced model, namely fair-trade-oriented luxury perception, intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation, fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value, and fair-trade-oriented word of mouth (here recommendation intention captured by the Net Promoter Score), is introduced and discussed. Next, in the "Research Methodology" section, the measurement instruments and sample are outlined, followed by a discussion of the research findings. Finally, the paper closes with a discussion regarding research and managerial implications as opportunities to develop strategies that aim to form the basis of a structured understanding of perceived value and related consumer behavior in the context of ethical and green consumption. In sum, the main findings of this study underline that customers who reveal a high luxury perception of Fair Trade products are strengthened in the Fair Trade idea which results in higher customer perceived value as well as the willingness to recommend Fair Trade products.

2 Conceptualization and Hypotheses Development

Following a definition of sustainability as an approach to "*meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) based on attitudes such as durability, quality, and timelessness, inherent synergies to the concept of luxury become apparent (Kapferer and Bastien 2009). Instead of being two opposing perspectives, a closer look reveals that sustainability and luxury share common ideals (Cvijanovich 2011). Similar to sustainable goods, luxury is managed based on a long-term perspective, the respect for rare resources and authentic craftsmanship (Janssen et al. 2013; Cvijanovich 2011; Kapferer 2010). Existing literature suggests that sustainable and green consumption is determined by a whole variety of factors. For the purposes of this study, to advance the current understanding of customer value perceptions and effective behavior in view of Fair Trade products, we examine an integrated conceptual framework, as illustrated in Fig. 1. Fair Trade products have been chosen, reasoning that those specific product categories represent both sustainability (e.g., environmental protection) and luxury aspects (e.g., exclusivity).

The key constructs and related hypotheses are described below.

Fair-trade-oriented Luxury Perception: Traditionally, luxury products can be defined as those whose price and quality ratios are the highest in the market (McKinsey 1990), and even if the ratio of functionality to price might be low, the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is comparatively high (Nueno and Quelch 1998). The concept of luxury is used in diverse industry sectors and refers
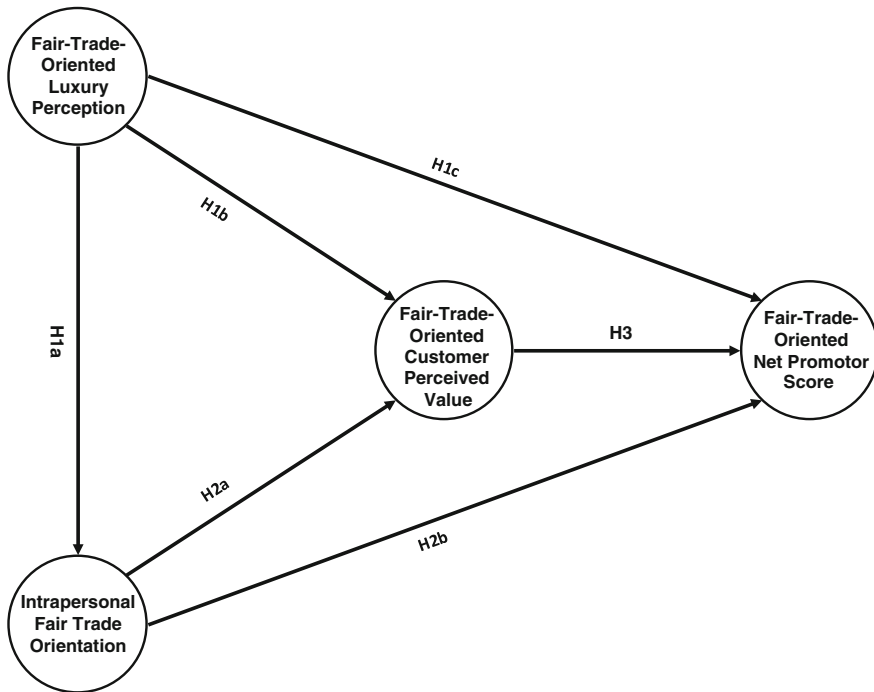
Fig. 1 Conceptual model

"*to a specific tier of offer in almost any product or service category*" (Dubois et al. 2005). In this context, and reasoning that the main factors distinguishing luxury from non-luxury products are the psychological benefits for the owner (Nia and Zaichkowsky 2000), it is reasonable to suggest that sustainable and green products can adapt a luxury strategy as well. If sustainable consumption is understood as the acceptance of limited availability and scarcity where consumers decide to buy less and better (Dubois and Paternault 1995), the connection to luxury products that are purchased based on exclusivity, durability, and rarity becomes evident. In order to analyze consumer perception and behavior with regard to sustainable and green products, we suggest that consumers who associate Fair Trade products with luxury qualities such as exclusivity and preciousness will have a positive attitude (*intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation*) and value perception of Fair Trade products (*fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value*) as well. Besides, we propose that consumers who value Fair Trade products will be more inclined to recommend the idea of Fair Trade to relevant others (*fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score*). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H₁ₐ Fair-trade-oriented luxury perception has a positive effect on intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation.

H₁ᵦ Fair-trade-oriented luxury perception has a positive effect on fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value.

H₁c Fair-trade-oriented luxury perception has a positive effect on fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score.

Intrapersonal Fair Trade Orientation: Buying environmentally friendly and fairly traded products are considered to be the two most typical examples of ethical buying behavior (Shaw and Shiu 2002; Shaw and Newholm 2002; Shaw et al. 2005). As manifestation of ethics in consumerism, Fair Trade "*aims to improve the position of poor and disadvantaged food producers in the Third World by helping them to become more advantageously involved in world trade, in many developed countries*" (Jones et al. 2004, p. 77). Based on socially responsible practices and a marketing system that "*bridges artisans' needs for income, retailers' goals for transforming trade, and consumers' concerns for social responsibility through a compatible, non-exploitive, and humanizing system of international exchange*" (Littrell and Dickson 1999, p. 4). Fair Trade organizations (FTOs) pay fair wages, provide safe working conditions, are environmentally friendly, offer training, and contribute to community development (Fairtrade 2011). Consumers of Fair Trade products feel responsibility toward society and demonstrate their feelings through their purchase behavior (De Pelsmacker et al. 2005b). Existing study insights on attitudes and behaviors of Fair Trade consumers reveal that consumer motivations and their degree of intensity and loyalty toward Fair Trade products vary (e.g., Shaw and Clarke 1999; Cherrier 2007; Newholm and Shaw 2007; Low and Davenport 2007). As shown in our conceptual model, the individual Fair Trade orientation understood as consumers' psychological and behavioral responses to Fair Trade products is suggested to have a positive effect on customer value perception (*fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value*) and the willingness to recommend Fair Trade products to others (*fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score*):

H₂a Intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation has a positive effect on fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value.

H₂b Intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation has a positive effect on fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score.

Fair-trade-oriented Customer Perceived Value: As a context-dependent (MBHolbrook 1994; Parasuraman 1997), highly personal, and multidimensional concept, customer perceived value creates a trade-off between product-related benefits and sacrifices, expected by current as well as potential customers in different phases of the purchase process (Woodruff 1997; Sweeney and Soutar 2001; Graf and Maas 2008). In an attempt to examine a customer's perceived preference for and evaluation of a certain Fair Trade product, the construct of *customer perceived value* understood as "*a consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given*" (Zeithaml 1988, p. 14) based on "*an interactive relativistic consumption preference experience*" (MBHolbrook 1994) is of particular importance. Concerning various sources of the customer's Fair Trade perception, a wide range of relevant present and potential motives that might explain why consumers choose to buy or avoid a

certain product should be taken into consideration (De Ferran and Grunert 2007; Renard 2003; Sheth et al. 1991). According to the customer perceived value framework by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) and incorporating the findings of the meta-analysis of value perceptions' research by Smith and Colgate (2007), well-known consumption values, which are commonly divided into the four types *affective*, *economic*, *functional*, and *social*, seem to drive Fair-Trade-oriented purchase attitude and behavior (De Pelsmacker et al. 2005a). Hence, globally perceived relevance, necessity, and meaningfulness of Fair Trade products, represented in our conceptual model by the Fair-Trade-oriented customer perceived value, are expected to have a positive effect on the willingness to recommend the idea of Fair Trade to relevant others (*fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score*):

H₃ Fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value has a positive effect on fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score.

Fair-trade-oriented Net Promoter Score: Dedicated to the question of how to measure the customer's loyalty to companies, Reichheld (2003) introduced the Net Promoter Score (NPS) in Harvard Business Review as "*The One Number You Need to Grow*": He claims that the word-of-mouth metric is the single most reliable indicator for sustainable firm revenue growth as only convinced consumers would recommend a company or, respectively, its products and services (Reichheld 2003, 2006a, b). Based on survey responses to one single question, asking for the likelihood to recommend on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 to 10, the firm's Net Promoter Score was designed to measure the number of people who are likely to provide positive comments (called "*promoters*"), rating the firm a 9 or 10, minus those likely to give negative comments (called "*detractors*"), rating the firm a 6 or less. Compared to models that refer on data from multiple survey items to predict firm growth, Reichheld (2006c) reported that NPS "*yields slightly less accurate predictions for the behavior of individual customers, but a far more accurate estimate of growth for the entire business*" and a 12-point increase in NPS leads to a doubling of a company's growth rate on average according to a study by Bain & Company (Reichheld 2006a).

Nevertheless, NPS has been severely critiqued in terms of its predictive validity in relation to company growth: "*The simple truth, however, is that these claims remained largely untested by the scientific community*" (Keiningham et al. 2008, pp. 82/83). In a longitudinal study of company performance and NPS measures across industries, Keiningham et al. (2007b) were unable to replicate Reichheld's (2003) findings. Another study, conducted by Keiningham et al. (2007a), showed that a multiple-item measure gave a better prediction of retention and recommendation so that Sharp (2008) criticizes NPS even as "*fake science*" (p. 30).

Reasoning the scientific discussion on the effective added value of the NPS, the present study aims to examine the relevant drivers of NPS as the indicator for consumer's willingness to recommend a certain Fair Trade product instead of focusing on possible outcomes such as company growth. In particular, we assume

that the applied fair-trade-oriented Net Promoter Score is driven by the already mentioned fair-trade-oriented luxury perception, the intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation, and the fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Questionnaire

Reflective global scales were developed and used to measure fair-trade-oriented luxury perception, intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation, and fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value. With specification to a Fair Trade context, all global items were rated on seven-point semantic differentials. Furthermore, a standard Net Promotor Score (NPS) measure as our chosen Fair Trade behavior performance success indicator was used by asking the original question "*How likely are you to recommend Fair Trade products to a friend, colleague or relative?*" on a scale from 0 (*not at all likely*) to 10 (*extremely likely*). The first version of the questionnaire was face-validated using exploratory and interviews with marketing experts from the field of business practice ($n = 5$) and science ($n = 5$), each with level of knowledge concerning sustainability aspects, as well as actual consumers of Fair Trade products ($n = 10$) to ensure an appropriate survey length and structure as well as the clarity of the items used.

3.2 Sample and Procedure

We conducted a Web-based survey in Germany to investigate the research model. In fact, Germany is a highly developed, competitive, and still growing market for sustainable products in general and Fair Trade products in particular with a high share of people demanding and consuming those products. Effectively, a strong increase in the consumption of Fair Trade products has been recorded for Germany with hitting a turnover over half a billion Euro in 2012 and indicating a growth of 33 % within one year (Fairtrade International 2013). Interviewees were recruited using the ethical and organic consumer research panel "green consumer" (this specific panel provides subjects who acknowledge to buy and consume various types of sustainable products on a regular basis) by *Toluna*, one of the leading global online market research panel companies. Survey participation was limited to consumers who had bought Fair Trade products during the last six months. In January 2013, after Fair Trade became really a mass market in Germany according to the statistics as noticed above, a total of 320 valid questionnaires were received. We used a quota sampling to select participants and to receive a well-balanced representation of any gender and age group referring to a Fair Trade-relevant target

Table 1 Demographic profile of the sample

Variable		n	%
Age	20–29 years	80	25.0
	30–39 years	80	25.0
	40–49 years	80	25.0
	50–59 years	80	25.0
Gender	Male	160	50.0
	Female	160	50.0
Marital status	Single	150	46.9
	Married	135	42.2
	Divorced	28	8.8
	Widowed	3	0.9
	No answer	4	1.3
Education	Not graduated from high school	1	0.3
	Lower secondary school	21	6.6
	Intermediate secondary school	116	36.3
	A-levels	89	27.8
	University degree	92	28.8
	No answer	1	0.3
Occupation	Full time	181	56.6
	Part-time	51	15.9
	Pensioner/retiree	12	3.8
	House wife/husband	24	7.5
	Job training	7	2.2
	Student	20	6.3
	Scholar	1	0.3
	Seeking work	23	7.2
	No answer	1	0.3
Household income	500 EUR or less	10	3.1
	501 EUR–1000 EUR	39	12.2
	1001 EUR–1500 EUR	49	15.3
	1501 EUR–2000 EUR	59	18.4
	2001 EUR–3000 EUR	89	27.8
	3001 EUR–4000 EUR	45	14.1
	4000 EUR or more	28	8.8
	No answer	1	0.3

group. Specifically, in our sample, the gender ratio was 50 % female and 50 % male with an age share of 25 % each for the sub-age group 20–29 years, 30–39 years, 40–49 years, and 50–59 years. The sample characteristics are shown in Table 1.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Analysis Technique

For examining the drivers and outcomes of a luxury-driven Fair Trade behavior and to check the postulated hypotheses, a partial least squares (PLS) structural modeling was employed in this exploratory study. PLS was considered as the appropriate method due to the facts that this analysis technique (a) places minimal specifications on sample sizes, (b) is suitable when the research objective involves theory building, (c) does not require a normal distribution of the manifest variables, and (d) evaluates the predictive power of the causal model. For that reason, we employed the software statistics package SmartPLS 2.0 (Ringle et al. 2005) with casewise replacement and a bootstrapping procedure (probing individual sign changes) to carry out the empirical PLS regression analysis. As illustrated in Fig. 1, the investigated PLS path model includes the reflective constructs of fair-trade-oriented luxury perception, intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation, fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value, and a fair-trade-oriented NPS measure. The result assessment is presented in the subsequent sections with reference to an outer and inner model discussion.

4.2 Evaluation of the Measurement Models

The manifest variables that are indicators for the measurement models of fair-trade-oriented luxury perception, intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation, and fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value are presented in Table 2. With regard to the assessment of the reflective measures as shown in Table 3, all factor loadings are statistically significant and well exceed the recommended value of 0.7, thus suggesting item reliability (Carmines and Zeller 1979; Hulland 1999).

Table 2 Manifest variables of the reflective measurement models

Fair-trade-oriented luxury perception	
LX_global_01	Not at all exclusive–extremely exclusive
LX_global_02	Not at all first-class–extremely first-class
LX_global_03	Not at all extravagant–extremely extravagant
LX_global_04	Not at all precious–extremely precious
Intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation	
FTO_economic_01	Not at all fair-trade-oriented–extremely fair-trade-oriented
FTO_economic_02	Not at all interested–extremely interested
Fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value	
CPV_global_01	Not at all relevant–extremely relevant
CPV_global_02	Not at all necessary–extremely necessary
CPV_global_03	Not at all meaningful–extremely meaningful

Table 3 Assessing the measurement models

	Factor loadings	Average variance explained (AVE) (%)	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Fornell–Larcker criterion (AVE > $Corr^2$)
Fair-trade-oriented luxury perception	0.790–0.876	69	0.854	0.900	0.69 > 0.38
Intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation	0.902–0.930	84	0.809	0.912	0.84 > 0.50
Fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value	0.888–0.908	81	0.880	0.926	0.81 > 0.58
Fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score	1.000	100	1.000	1.000	1.00 > 0.58

In addition, all reflective constructs exhibit satisfactory values in terms of internal consistency (Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Nunnally and Bernstein 1994): The average variance extracted (AVE) estimates range from 69 to 81 %, the Cronbach's alphas range from 0.809 to 0.880, and the composite reliability values range from 0.900 to 0.926. Moreover, the Fornell–Larcker criterion was used to assess discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). In this study, each latent variable passes the criterion requirements, thereby satisfying discriminant validity.

4.3   Evaluation and Discussion of the Structural Model

In a next step, the predictive quality of our introduced conceptual model was assessed after ensuring the reliability and validity of each measure. Therefore, the coefficients of determination of the endogenous latent variables (R^2) were first examined. As presented in Fig. 2, the calculated R^2 values are ranging from 0.38 to 0.65. In accordance with Chin (1998), these values reveal a moderate to substantial performance. Furthermore, Stone–Geisser Q-square values were assessed (Tenenhaus et al. 2005) using a blindfolding procedure (cross-validated redundancy). All Q-square values are clearly greater than zero with 0.32 being the smallest one, as shown in Table 4. According to the empirical results, the PLS structural equation model demonstrates a high predictive relevance.

4.4   Testing the Hypotheses

A nonparametric bootstrapping procedure (320 cases and 1600 subsamples; individual sign changes) was applied to assess the significance of the path coefficients
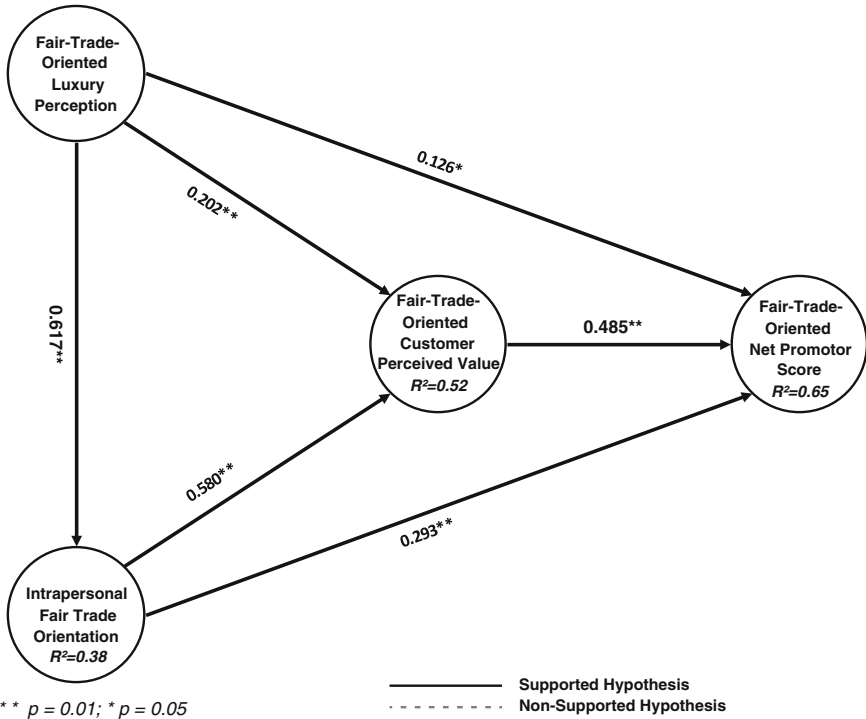
Fig. 2 Structural model

Table 4 Assessing the structural model

Endogenous LV	R^2	Q^2
Intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation	0.380	0.318
Fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value	0.521	0.411
Fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score	0.650	0.649

and to test the proposed hypotheses. Table 5 presents the following insights with reference to our initial hypotheses.

H₁ₐ to H₁c are confirmed. The first set of research hypotheses **H₁ₐ** to **H₁c** focused on the effect of fair-trade-oriented luxury perception on the subsequent latent variables: intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation, fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value, and fair-trade-oriented NPS. In detail, the results reveal significant positive impacts of fair-trade-oriented luxury perception on each latent variable. Thus, the empirical data provide full support for **H₁ₐ, H₁b,** and **H₁c.**

H₂ₐ and H₂b are confirmed. The second set of hypotheses postulates an influence of intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation on fair-trade-oriented customer

Table 5 Bootstrapping results for the structural relations

Exogenous LV → endogenous LV	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	Standard error	T statistics
Fair-trade-oriented luxury perception → intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation	0.617	0.619	0.044	0.044	13.903
Fair-trade-oriented luxury perception → fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value	0.202	0.205	0.055	0.055	3.652
Fair-trade-oriented luxury perception → fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score	0.126	0.125	0.054	0.054	2.312
Intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation → fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value	0.580	0.575	0.054	0.054	10.719
Intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation → fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score	0.293	0.291	0.069	0.069	4.271
Fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value → fair-trade-oriented Net Promotor Score	0.485	0.486	0.059	0.059	8.200

perceived value as well as on fair-trade-oriented NPS. With reference to the suggested effects, all path coefficients are significant and supportive of H_{2a} and H_{2b}.

H_3 *is confirmed.* Finally, hypothesis H_3 proposed an effect of fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value on Fair-Trade-oriented NPS. Accenting the critical role of customer perceived value as a key element for a successful product management and in support of H_3, the PLS-based results reveal a strong and significant influence of fair-trade-oriented customer perceived value on fair-trade-oriented NPS.

Taken all together, the findings stress that customers with a high luxury perception regarding Fair Trade products show a higher level of involvement and reassurance toward the idea of Fair Trade. As a consequence thereof, those customers reveal a higher level of customer perceived value of Fair Trade products (e.g., product quality) as well as the willingness to recommend (word of mouth) Fair Trade products. However, the current study only captured a single indicator, specifically the well-known Net Promoter Score, to assess the customer behavior toward Fair Trade products. In reality, customer behavior is more multifaceted. That said, the current results can only be regarded concerning the loyalty potential, but less with reference to other important behavior aspects like customer's willingness to pay a higher price (price premium) or cross-marketing potential (e.g., to buy products from other product categories).

5 Conclusion

5.1 Scientific Contribution

The first contribution of the research presented here is to provide a conceptual framework of value-based drivers of Fair Trade product perception against the backdrop of the luxury concept. Second, the empirical findings contribute to the understanding of consequences of fair-trade-based luxury perception. Customers who reveal a high luxury perception of Fair Trade products are strengthened in the Fair Trade idea which results in higher customer perceived value as well as the willingness to recommend Fair Trade products. Third, the data analysis of the applied PLS-SEM approach demonstrates that positive Fair Trade behavior is influenced by direct and indirect effects. With reference to the conducted study, being an active promoter of Fair Trade products is directly determined by the customers' perceived product value (benefit in relation to cost), but also directly and indirectly affected by the overall luxury product perception as well as the intrapersonal level of Fair Trade orientation.

5.2 Next Research Steps

For further research, our introduced conceptual model should be extended in two ways. First, the main value-based drivers fair-trade-oriented luxury perception as well as intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation should be refined in an expanded quantitative level of detail (e.g., hedonism driving luxury perception or social identification driving Fair Trade orientation), since both dimensions have a limited explanatory scope due to their global characteristics. Second, the impact of fair-trade-oriented luxury perception and intrapersonal Fair Trade orientation on a refined Fair Trade product perception (e.g., image or satisfaction) as well as Fair Trade product behavior (e.g., loyalty or price premium) should be explored. A model extension would provide managers with valuable information if and how the concept of luxury in relation to Fair Trade products enhances product's key performance indicators such as buying intention and actual behavior.

5.3 Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, our study may form the basis of a structured understanding of perceived value and related consumer behavior in the context of ethical and green consumption. Our results reveal that consumers who relate the concept of luxury based on aspects such as exclusivity, rarity, and authenticity with the idea of sustainability and Fair Trade orientation perceive higher value and are

more inclined to buy and recommend Fair Trade products. Therefore, a comprehensive management approach dedicated to the creation and maintenance of a successful sustainable brand with lasting competitive advantage chases away any "*granola-and-hemp clichés*" (McMillan 2012) and stresses the value components of exclusivity, preciousness, and longevity. In this context, one of the key challenges of a sustainable communication approach is to raise and sustain the public awareness of existing environmental and social concerns and keep generations of consumers informed about the exploitation of nature and producers as well as unfair trading practices. However, instead of being a self-proclaimed moralizer and accuser, marketing managers have to provide viable alternatives that can help to overcome these problems. In the trade-off between conventional and ethical products, present and future consumers are only willing to accept these products as sustainable opportunities when the perception of deeper values is satisfactory. As shown in this study, the sustainability sector can learn from the management of luxury brands where a rich history of value-based marketing exists and has been successful for generations of consumers.

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A3:

Do as You Would Be Done by:
The Importance of Animal Welfare in the Global Beauty Care Industry

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Do as You Would Be Done by: The Importance of Animal Welfare in the Global Beauty Care Industry

Nadine Hennigs, **Evmorfia Karampournioti** and **Klaus-Peter Wiedmann**

Abstract Nowadays, the concept of sustainability is discussed in almost every product category. In this context, companies commit themselves to advancing good social, environmental, and animal-welfare practices in their business operations, including sustainable sourcing practices. Nevertheless, even if many companies in the global beauty care industry have embraced such claims, common practices such as water pollution, the use of pesticides in the production of fibers, poor labor conditions, and animal testing are omnipresent. According to the European Commission, 11.5 million animals were used in the European Union for experimental or scientific purposes in 2011. Worldwide this figure rises to 115 million animals annually (Four Paws International 2013). In the rising tension between "greenwashing" and the use of ethical/environmental commitments that are nothing more than "sheer lip service," the question arises of the role of the consumers with regard to sustainable practices in the cosmetics industry. Are consumers increasingly conscious of the adverse effects of ethical and environmental imbalances? And what effect does this knowledge have on their buying behavior? On the divergent poles of hypocrisy and true commitment, to advance current understanding of sustainability and related links to consumer perception and actual buying behavior related to ethical issues, the aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive framework of animal welfare in the personal care industry. Based on existing theoretical and empirical insights it becomes evident that psychological determinants, such as personality traits, empathy, ethical obligation, and self-identity, as well as context-related determinants in terms of one's ethical value perception of products, the trade-off between ethical and conventional products, and an individual's involvement, represent antecedents of ethical consumer behavior, which can be expressed through the avoidance of specific products and brands and/or consumer boycott and buycott towards cosmetics using

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animal-tested ingredients. Our concept provides a useful instrument for both academics and managers as a basis to create and market successfully cosmetics that represent ethical and environmental excellence.

Keywords Animal welfare · Ethical and environmental practices · Global beauty care industry

1 Introduction

> The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.
>
>   Mahatma Gandhi

Driven by rising consumer incomes, changing lifestyles, and a higher demand for luxury products, especially cosmetics, the global beauty care industry is forecast to reach an estimated $265 billion in 2017 (Lucintel 2012). Due to an increased consumer awareness concerning natural and organic products in combination with rising concerns for health safety, the global demand for organic personal care products—the fastest growing segment of the global personal care industry—was noted at $8.4 billion in 2013 and is expected to reach $15.7 billion by 2020 (Transparency Market Research 2015). Apart from consumer's awareness about harmful substances, consumers show rising concerns for animal testing of ingredients and/or finished products. As a consequence, as outlined above, the personal care industry has started to offer organic products without the use of pesticides, synthetic chemicals, and animal testing. However, even if companies commit themselves to advancing good social, environmental, and animal-welfare practices in their business operations, still water pollution, the use of pesticides in the production of fibers, poor labor conditions, and animal testing are omnipresent.

In the rising tension between "greenwashing" and the use of ethical or environmental commitments that are nothing more than "sheer lip service," the question arises of the role of consumers with regard to sustainable practices in the cosmetics industry. Are consumers increasingly conscious of the adverse effects of ethical and environmental imbalances in this market? And what effect does this knowledge have on their buying behavior? On the divergent poles of hypocrisy and true commitment, to advance current understanding of sustainability and related links to consumer perception and actual buying behavior related to ethical issues, the aim of our chapter is to provide a comprehensive framework of animal welfare in the global beauty care industry. To reach this objective, the chapter is structured as follows: first, the theoretical background is provided in the next section, which addresses ethical and environmental consumerism in general and ethical issues in the global beauty care industry in particular. Based on these specifications, a conceptual model of antecedents and outcomes of ethical consumption is derived. Particularly, the framework considers a combination of personality factors

and context-related factors as antecedents of brand avoidance and consumer boycott/buycott behavior. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion of possible future research approaches and managerial implications as opportunities to develop appropriate marketing strategies and adequately respond to their customers' needs and values. In sum, our concept provides a useful instrument for both academics and managers as a basis to create and market successfully personal care goods that represent ethical and environmental excellence.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Ethical and Environmental Consumerism

During the last decades, ethical and environmental consumerism has moved from a niche market to a mainstream phenomenon in contemporary consumer culture (Doane 2001; Low and Davenport 2007). The twenty-first century is perceived to be a time of the emancipation of the ethical consumer (e.g., Nicholls 2002), who is concerned about a broad spectrum of issues ranging from the environment and animal welfare to societal concerns, including human rights (Mintel 1994). Strongly related to consumer awareness of conditions in developing countries and the fact that his or her own purchases are connected to social issues (De Pelsmacker and Janssens 2007), the ethical buyer is "shopping for a better world" (Low and Davenport 2007, p. 336) and demands that products are not only friendly to the environment but also to the people who produce them (Rosenbaum 1993). In this context, ethical consumption is related to the purchase of products that concern a certain ethical issue (e.g., human rights, labor conditions, animal well-being, or the environment), the boycott of companies involved in unethical practices, or post-consumption behavior, such as recycling (Jackson 2006; Newholm and Shaw 2007). Consequently, marketing managers in all industries have realized the importance of customer ethics and values and how meeting ethical demands is critical if they wish to gain a competitive advantage (Browne et al. 2000).

2.2 Ethical Issues in the Global Beauty Care Industry

Environmental concern, consumer health orientation, and lifestyle changes have led to a rising demand for green cosmetics and beauty care products without animal testing and harmful substances such as pesticides and synthetic chemicals (Cervellon et al. 2010; Diamantopoulos et al. 2003; Manaktola and Jauhari 2007; Paladino 2006; Papadopoulos et al. 2009; Peter and Olson 2009; Prothero and McDonagh 1992; Pudaruth et al. 2015; Tsakiridou et al. 2008; Zanoli and Naspetti 2002). Prominent brands such as *Aveda, Bare Escentuals, Burt's Bees, Kiehl's, Origins, and The Body Shop* have incorporated the emergence of ethical

and environmental consumerism in their business activities by ensuring high environmental standards with emphasis on natural and organic ingredients and animal welfare.

With special focus on animal testing, public resistance to the use of animal studies in the development of cosmetics created the market for products labeled as "animal-free cosmetics" and "non-animal-tested" (see Fig. 1).

Due to the fact that consumers perceived animal tests to be no longer legitimate and referring to a resulting testing and marketing ban in the European Union, the cosmetics industry has to find suitable replacements for animals in cosmetic testing. In particular, cosmetic testing on animals refers to the test of finished products, individual ingredients, and the combination of ingredients on animals. However, even if some cosmetic companies use the claim "not tested on animals", this can be misleading: an ingredient that was once tested and proved to be not harmful can be included in a new product without further tests. Therefore, "non-animal tested" often means "previously animal tested," a fact most consumers are unable to realize (McNeal 2005).

Fig. 1 The rise of cruelty-free cosmetics. (*Sources* http://www.nzavs.org.nz/nz-passes-cosmetics-animal-testing-ban; http://mumbrella.com.au/animal-rights-group-behind-banned-graphic-violence-ad-parts-ways-with-agency-work-deemed-not-shocking-enough-107638; http://action.peta.org.uk/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=5&ea.campaign.id=15529; http://www.picturequotes.com/thank-you-eu-for-banning-cruel-cosmetics-quote-25128; http://www.thebodyshop.com/values/EU_Against_Animal_Testing.aspx; http://www.leapingbunny.org/downloads; http://www.peta.org/living/beauty/beauty-without-bunnies/; http://www.novenamaternity.com/certifications/; http://www.tierschutzbund.de/information/hintergrund/tierversuche/kosmetik.html)

In fact, even though testing cosmetics on animals is banned in many countries, it is still omnipresent in the personal care industry. In China, animal testing is mandatory; in the United States, animal testing for cosmetics products or ingredients is not required, but "animal testing by manufacturers seeking to market new products is often necessary to establish product safety" (FDA 2000). Cosmetic products that have not been adequately tested for safety must have a warning statement on the front label "WARNING—The safety of this product has not been determined" (FDA 2000). Even though experiments on animals are cast in a negative light (see Fig. 2) and governmental regulations try to reduce their implementation, it is estimated that approximately 115 million animals are used for laboratory experiments worldwide (HIS 2012). However, there is criticism that data are not fully covered. In the United States, for example, nearly 90 % of used animals are not covered by official statistics so that the number of 834,453 reported cases for 2014 (USDA 2015) may be far higher than estimated (HIS 2012).
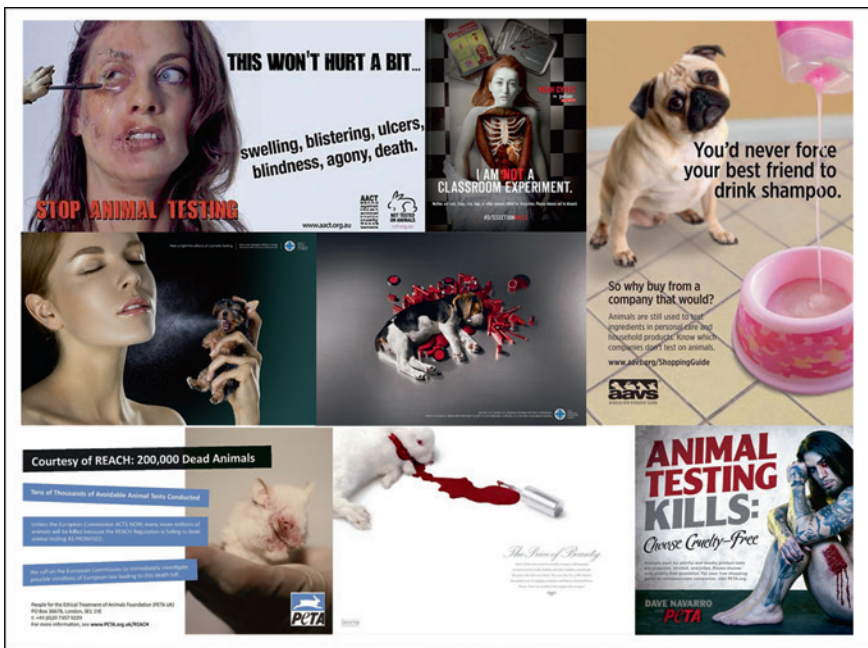
Fig. 2 Campaigns against animal testing. (*Sources* http://mumbrella.com.au/animal-rights-group-behind-banned-graphic-violence-ad-parts-ways-with-agency-work-deemed-not-shocking-enough-107638; http://www.peta2.com/heroes/noah-cyrus-dissection-kills/; https://www.pinterest.com/pin/224617100138736978/; http://de.adforum.com/creative-work/ad/player/34454904; http://blog.peta.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/PETA.pdf; http://www.sanjeev.net/printads/l/lavera-the-price-of-beauty-695.html; http://www.peta.org/features/dave-navarro-cruelty-free/)

3 Conceptual Model

Ethical blunders of companies such as the acceptance and conducting of experiments on animals result in significant impacts on consumer behavior. Therefore, and against the backdrop of the challenges as discussed above, companies need to gain an understanding of underlying determinants and possible outcomes of ethical consumption. Because components of consumption behavior are not exclusively limited to the purchase or consumption of specific products or brands but are focusing on resistant or "against consumption" behavior as well (Lee et al. 2009; Varman and Belk 2009), the present work focuses on behavioral outcomes such as boycott/buycott and brand avoidance.

To reach this objective, psychological consumer traits as well as context-related issues are summarized within a shared model. For a structured and comprehensive overview, the conceptual framework in Fig. 3 considers a combination of *personality factors* (i.e., personality traits, empathy, ethical obligation, and self-identity) and *context-related factors* (i.e., ethical value perception, involvement, and the trade-off between ethical and conventional products) as antecedent's of *brand avoidance and consumer boycott and buycott* towards cosmetics using animal-tested ingredients.
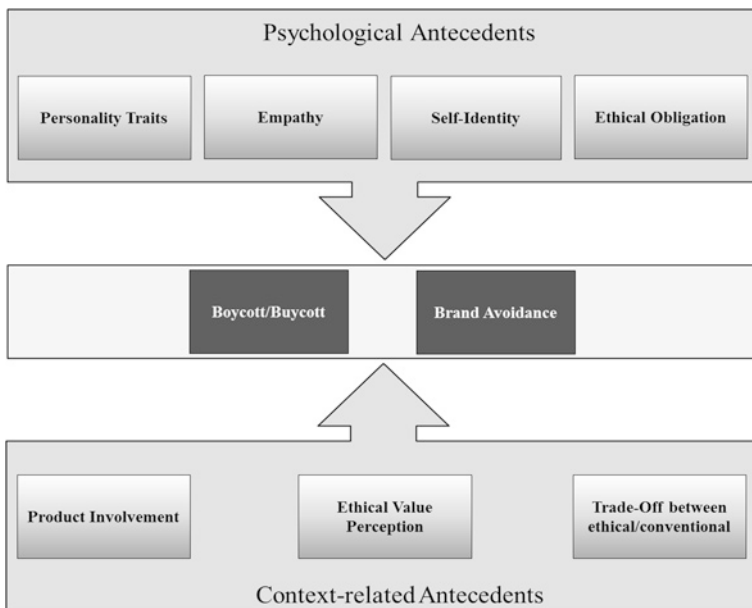

Fig. 3 Conceptual model

3.1 Personality Factors

- *Personality Traits*: In an attempt to explain consumer behavior in general and ethical consumption in particular, consumers' personality traits are often related to purchases or nonpurchases of specific products or brands. Therefore, consuming in a particular manner is largely determined by personality characteristics and ethical decision making grounded on personal characteristics of individuals (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967, Hunt and Vitell 1986, 1992; Ferrell and Gresham 1985). In spite of the fact that "there appears to be as many definitions of personality as there are authors" (Pervin 1990, p. 3), the term is subject to several definitions and understandings of its meaning. Based on the assumption of a temporal stability (Peck and Whitlow 1975), personality represents "generalized patterns of response or modes of coping with the world …" (Kassarjian 1971, p. 409). In contrast, Triandis (2001) conceptualized personality as "a configuration of cognitions, emotions, and habits activated when situations stimulate their expression" (p. 908) and reveals that one's personality undergoes continuous changes and is to a high degree influenced by the external environment.

  Some studies have examined the role of personality traits for attitudes towards animal testing in general. Broida et al. (1993) reveal that extraverted and conservative personality traits are positively correlated with animal testing. Furthermore, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness, belonging to the big five personality traits, are consistently and logically related to animal welfare and have a strong predictive power for negative attitudes towards animal testing (Furnham et al. 2003). Additionally, Goldsmith et al. (2006) focused on animal-tested cosmetics and discovered that higher levels of anticonformity were associated with opposition to animal testing as well. Hence, we propose that the receiveability of ethical dilemmas, such as practices against animal welfare, and the willingness of individuals to act against them, largely depends on personality factors (Vitell and Muncy 1992; Munch et al. 1991).

- *Empathy*: At its core, empathy refers "in various ways to the experiencing of another's affective or psychological state and has both affective and cognitive components" (Zahn-Waxler and Radke-Yarrow 1990, p. 108). Although the cognitive component "entails understanding or identifying with another individual's response" (McPhedran 2009, p. 1) and is therefore sometimes labeled as "perspective taking," the affective component puts emphasis on an individual's emotional response "that is congruent with and stems from the apprehension of another's emotional state or condition" (Zahn-Waxler and Radke-Yarrow 1990, p. 108) and involves sharing (empathic concern) as well as reacting to (personal distress) emotional experiences (Davis 1980; McPhedran 2009; Signal and Taylor 2007; Eisenberg and Strayer 1987). The ability to empathize is not limited to human-to-human interactions but comprises those to animals as well (Apostol et al. 2013). Due to the reason that individuals capable of empathy are able to experience the consequences of their actions on others, it is more likely

that harmful behaviour will be avoided (McPhedran 2009) and that consumption behavior will be adjusted to solve ethical issues regarding the execution of animal experiments for the production of cosmetics.

- *Ethical Obligation*: A sense of ethical or moral obligation constitutes a driver for decision making in the context of ethical consumerism (Shaw and Shiu 2002) and represents "an individual's ethical rules, which reflect their personal beliefs about right or wrong" (Shaw et al. 2000, p. 882). Increasing numbers of consumers intend "to make certain consumption choices due to personal and moral beliefs" (Crane and Matten 2004, p. 341). Considering ethical and moral issues when choosing products and services is "used to cover matters of conscience such as animal welfare" (Cowe and Williams 2000, p. 4) and because for some consumers "it is the right thing to do" (Carrigan et al. 2004, p. 402). Thus, it is expected that consumers who perceive the obligation to show moral concern for animals may avoid products/cosmetics with animal-tested ingredients.
- *Self-Identity*: Consumerism is not only a way to satisfy physiological needs, because consumers try to express themselves and to define their identities through the use or the avoidance of specific products and brands (Carrigan et al. 2004; Aaker 1999; Solomon 1983; Hogg et al. 2000). Self-identity refers to *"relatively enduring characteristics that people ascribe to themselves,"* and is synonymously used with self-concept or self-perception (Sparks and Guthrie 1998, p. 1396; Hustvedt and Dickson 2009). Despite an individual's real self, imaginary selves exist, often classified in desired (positive) and undesired (negative) selves (Ogilvie 1987; Markus and Nurius 1986). To avoid identification with the undesired self, consumers tend to avoid specific products or services and the representation of one's desired self-concept can be promoted through consumption (Banister and Hogg 2004; Wright et al. 1992; Freitas et al. 1997; Karanika and Hogg 2010). Hence, if ethical issues, as represented by animal welfare concerns, have become an important part of an individual's self-identity, consumption choices and antichoices will be adjusted based on them (Shaw et al. 2000).

3.2 Context-Related Factors

- *Product Involvement*: Involvement can be seen as "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests" (Zaichkowsky 1985, p. 342) and is understood as an internal "motivational state" (Mittal 1989) or unobservable "state of motivation" (Rothschild 1984) that indicates the intensity of arousal or interest. Further research demonstrated that this construct has strong predictive power for consumers' behavior (Celsi and Olson 1988; Zaichkowsky 1985, Dholakia 2001). In the specific case of

ethical consumerism, involvement is not limited to specific products or brands, but is additionally related to their ethical augmentation (Crane 2001; Bezençon and Blili 2010). Accordingly, a high level of involvement in ethical issues in general and in animal welfare issues in particular influences the consumers' search for ethical information of specific products or brands as well as their receptivity to them which consequently affects behavioral intentions (Celsi and Olson 1988; Greenwald and Leavitt 1984; Zaichkowsky 1985).

- *Ethical Value Perception*: The value of ethical consumption as perceived by consumers and subsequently the importance of meeting ethical demands has a considerable impact on the achievement of competitive advantages (Browne et al. 2000). To investigate the question of what really adds value, it is essential to consider the multidimensionality of the customer's perceived value based on "consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (Zeithaml 1988, p. 14). According to previous research on customer-perceived value by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) as well as by Smith and Colgate (2007), well-known consumption values can be commonly divided into the four types *economic, functional, affective, and social*. The *economic value* refers to direct monetary aspects of the product expressed in dollars and cents that one is willing to spend to obtain a product (Ahtola 1984; Monroe and Krishnan 1985). The basic utilities and benefits of the product such as quality, uniqueness, usability, reliability, and durability are part of the *functional value* (Sheth et al. 1991). The *affective value* describes the perceived subjective utility attained through the consumption of a product and the related arousal of feelings and affective states to ethical consumers who assign high importance to aspects such as altruism, equality, and peace (Littrell and Dickson 1999). Recently, the *social dimension* of customer-perceived value mentions the desire of ethical consumers to try to impress and to meet the expectations of their social group and to influence the perception of others' judgment of one's own behavior. However, even if individuals lack intrinsic value to consume ethically, they would still behave ethically through the pressure of social norms (Starr 2009). With reference to cosmetics, it is expected that consumers who have a high value perception of ethical product characteristics and business practices are less willing to purchase products/cosmetics tested on animals.
- *Trade-Off Between Ethical and Conventional Products*: By means of their consumption choice, consumers try to satisfy their immediate consumption needs and conscience as well (Ehrich and Irwin 2005). Furthermore, "consumers will probably not sacrifice aspects of product performance for ethical considerations alone" (Auger et al. 2008, p. 190). Hence, the individual choice decision between ethical and conventional cosmetics is influenced by the trade-off between a given product's ethical features such as consideration of animal rights and avoidance of animal experiments, its functional performance (Luchs et al. 2007), and the price of cosmetics free from animal testing (Auger et al. 2010).

3.3 Related Outcomes

- *Boycott*: In a boycott, which constitutes a typical expression of ethical consumption, consumers desist from buying certain products or brands. Their resistance is based upon an ideological displeasure with an organization (Friedman 1985; Hirschmann 1970) and represents "an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace" (Friedman 1985, p. 97). Accordingly, boycott behavior intends "to benefit one or more people other than oneself behaviors such as helping, comforting, sharing, and cooperation" (Batson 1998, p. 282) and is used to punish undesirable business behavior (Hofmann and Hutter 2012) and to protest against unfair company practices of social, ethical, moral, or environmental nature (Delacote 2006; Diermeier and van Mieghem 2005). Whereas boycotts represent a useful means to punish companies for their misbehavior, *buycotts* follow the opposite approach and serve as a reward system for past good deeds (Hawkins 2010) which "attempt to induce shoppers to buy the products or services of selected companies in order to reward them for behavior which is consistent with the goals of the activists" (Friedman 1996, p. 440). Both forms of activism can occur simultaneously; this is partly because consumers participate with a higher probability to boycotts if the targeted product has satisfactory substitutes (Sen et al. 2001). Although consumers may boycott cosmetics accepting experiments on animals, concurrent preferment of those products and brands might occur, which refrain from such cruel business practices.
- *Brand Avoidance*: The targeted rejection of a brand can be defined as brand avoidance. According to Lee et al. (2009) reasons for the avoidance can be the perceived incongruence between the brand and the customer's desired or actual self-concept (*identity avoidance*; Englis and Soloman 1997; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Hogg and Banister 2001; Sirgy 1982), dissatisfaction through negative brand consumption experiences (*experiential avoidance*; Folkes 1984; Oliver 1980) and the "belief that it is a moral duty to avoid certain brands" (Lee et al. 2009, p. 7) due to the existence of an ideological incompatibility between consumer and brand (*moral avoidance*). Boycotters of animal-tested cosmetics provide the probability to rebuild the relationship if certain conditions are met (Hirschman 1970), however, the avoidance of a brand offers no guarantee for a possible reconstruction (Lee et al. 2009).

Based on the holistic understanding of the psychological and context-related determinants as well as related outcomes as described above, our comprehensive framework is a basis to gain a structured understanding of underlying determinants and possible outcomes of consumer behavior in the global beauty care industry. However, it has to be stated that consumers often tend to act differently depending on whom they are interacting with and the situation they are in. In addition, taking into account that consumers' positive attitudes towards green cosmetics and against animal testing do not necessarily transfer into consumption behavior, an

attitude–behavior gap often exists between consumer claims and actual behavior (Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Bhattacharya and Sen 2004; Öberseder et al. 2011). Therefore, even if consumers report positive perceptions of the psychological and context-related determinants as proposed in our model, it is not possible to predict how consumers will behave in a real purchase situation and if the attitude–behavior gap can be minimized or overcome.

In addition to these considerations, apart from the positive attitude towards green cosmetics and animal rights protection, existing studies give evidence to concentrate on the "dark side" of the consumer personality as well. As can be seen in previous research, *Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy*—collectively known as the *Dark Triad* of personality traits—play an increasingly important role in society. This importance becomes particularly evident through the overemphasis of the self and the self-promotion through social media as well as through the increasing research effort concerning the workplace behavior of "snakes in suits" and "bad bosses" (for a detailed overview see Furnham et al. 2013; Garcia and Sikström 2014; Buckels et al. 2014). With special focus on animals, Kavanagh et al. (2013) detected that individuals with high levels of *Dark Triad traits* demonstrated less positive attitudes towards animals and have even practiced violence against them.

Characteristics of the *Dark Triad* include "entitlement, superiority, dominance (i.e., narcissism), glib social charm, manipulativeness (i.e., Machiavellianism), callous social attitudes, impulsivity, and interpersonal antagonism (i.e., psychopathy)" (Jonason et al. 2015, p. 6). Even if the individual characteristics have different origins, "all three entail a socially malevolent character with behavior tendencies toward self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness" (Paulhus and Williams 2002, p. 557). Because individuals with high levels of Dark Triad scales, value the "self" over "other", these traits are often associated with reduced or dysfunctional morality (Campbell et al. 2009; Glenn et al. 2009) which could have a considerably high impact on the perception and evaluation of ethical and moral issues and subsequently on their consumption behavior in general and on the cosmetics industry in particular.

Taken as a whole, based on the preceding insights and related discussion, several implications for further research and managerial practice can be drawn as presented in the concluding remarks.

4 Conclusion

Confronted with criticisms on irresponsible business activities such as the use of animal testing, chemical pollution, unethical sourcing, and unsustainable ingredients, the global beauty care industry has realized the importance of ethical and environmental business practices. The adoption of corporate social responsibility activities is reflected in efficient use of energy and water, avoidance of animal testing and unethical ingredients, reduction of packaging, use of environmentally

friendly packaging material, distribution via ethical supply chains, and fair trade (Organic Monitor 2010). From a consumer perspective, rising concerns, associated with health-related issues and ethical or environmental qualities of the products they buy, have led to an increased demand for natural and organic products. With special focus on the global beauty care industry, consumers increasingly value organic products that are free from harmful substances and animal testing.

Referring to the antecedents and outcomes of consumer perception and behavior in the context of green cosmetics, the aim of this chapter was to present a holistic framework of psychological consumer traits as well as context-related issues and related outcomes. Our model can be seen as a useful basis to create and market personal care goods successfully that represent ethical and environmental excellence.

Focusing on future research, the determinants included in the framework have to be empirically tested with reference to different consumer groups and product-specific contexts. It is expected that the relative impact of the antecedents on actual consumption behavior differs in consideration of the variety of cultures across the world as well as different consumer lifestyles and consumption patterns within national borders.

Based on a better knowledge of relevant drivers and outcomes of ethical consumption, marketers in the global beauty care industry can compare the core values expressed by their brand and compare them to the individual aspiration level of their actual and potential consumers to develop appropriate marketing strategies and adequately respond to their customers' needs and values. To verify that the commitment to ethical values and animal welfare is more than a clever promotional gimmick and to refute accusations of greenwashing, ethical orientation has to become part of the corporate culture and business model. Each management decision has to be reflected from the ethical perspective and the responsibility that consumers expect inherent in the multifaceted product attributes. To separate hypocrisy and true commitment clearly, companies in the global beauty care industry have to redefine their products and production processes, examine the supply chains, and translate social and environmental strategies into operational practices. Instead of considering ethical obligations as a threat to corporate profits, incorporating ethical and environmental excellence has to be regarded as a successful business opportunity in a promising way to reconcile financial, ethical, and ecological values:

> Our task must be to free ourselves … by widening our circle of compassion, to embrace all living creatures in the whole of nature and its beauty.
>
> Albert Einstein

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A4:

When Pain is Pleasure: Identifying Consumer Psychopaths

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Psychology & Marketing

RESEARCH ARTICLE

When pain is pleasure: Identifying consumer psychopaths

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Abstract

In almost every product category, companies have incorporated the emergence of ethical and environmental consumerism into their business activities. Although ethical consumers are supposed to be concerned with a broad spectrum of ethical issues and demand that products and business practices meet their moral principles, a critical perspective supports the assumption that a dark side of consumer personality also exists. Consequently, the role of consumers has become a top priority, especially in the specific ascription of bright and dark personality traits when evaluating cruel business practices and unethical behavior. The paper aims to investigate whether anthropomorphic communication about cruel business tactics affects the formation of explicit and implicit brand attitudes and to shed light on the role of consumers' personality traits in perceiving anthropomorphic cues and in forming brand attitudes. Referencing the Dark Triad of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy in relation to animal cruelty in the cosmetics industry, the results of an empirical study ($N = 610$) provide evidence that perceptions of brands or companies conducting cruel practices differ between consumers with more distinct Dark Triad traits and those with stronger empathetic traits.

KEYWORDS

animal testing, anthropomorphism, cosmetics industry, Dark Triad, empathy, explicit and implicit attitudes, IAT

1 | INTRODUCTION

He who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men. We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals.
Immanuel Kant

For decades, researchers and practitioners have focused on ethical and environmental consumerism, which is regarded as a mainstream phenomenon in contemporary consumer culture (e.g., Doane, 2001; Low & Davenport, 2007). In this context, the ethical consumer is presumed to be concerned about a broad spectrum of issues, ranging from the environment and animal welfare to societal concerns, such as human rights. By "shopping for a better world" (Low & Davenport, 2007, p. 336), the ethical buyer demands products that meet his/her moral principles and boycotts companies involved in unethical practices (e.g., Barnett, Cloke, Clarke, & Malpass, 2005; Muncy & Vitell, 1992). However, a critical perspective on economic reality has led to the discussion of whether the ethical consumer is nothing more than a myth (e.g., Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Devinney, Auger, & Eckhardt, 2010). When referring to their favorite brands, global consumers are willing to turn a blind eye to political and ethical malpractice (BBC, 2002), and from a general perspective, they shift social responsibility

to the government, the market, companies or the overall system—but never to themselves (Devinney et al., 2010). In addition, a *dark side* of consumer personality also exists. For example, psychologists have examined the overemphasis on the self and self-promotion through ongoing media trends, such as a whole generation's *selfie obsession*, in connection with personality traits known as the *Dark Triad*: Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. In a business context, substantial research is dedicated to investigating the dark side of management decisions and the behavior of the *organizational psychopath* (e.g., Boddy, 2006), *snakes in suits*, and *bad bosses* (e.g., Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014; Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013; Garcia & Sikström, 2014). Focusing particularly on the treatment of animals, research has shown that individuals with high levels of Dark Triad traits have less positive attitudes toward animals and that they even engage in more acts of animal cruelty (Kavanagh, Signal, & Taylor, 2013). Consequently, proclaiming this period to be the age of the ethical consumer is not sensible. To provide a holistic picture of contemporary consumer behavior, personality-based factors related to unethical behavior must also be specifically considered.

In the current study, the growing literature on the Dark Triad of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy is considered in the context of animal cruelty, with a focus on anthropomorphism and

consumer evaluation of products and brands. Against this backdrop, dark personality traits are predicted to have a significant impact on consumer awareness and reaction to cruel business practices. The remainder of the manuscript is organized as follows. The theoretical foundation of bright and dark personality traits as well as anthropomorphism is described in the next section. The conceptual model and related hypotheses are subsequently presented. The methodology section outlines the methods and sample used for the empirical study, and then the results are presented and discussed.

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 | Personality traits and consumption behavior

Personality traits are understood as "[…] generalized patterns of response or modes of coping with the world […]" (Kassarjian, 1971, p. 409) or "a configuration of cognitions, emotions, and habits activated when situations stimulate their expression" (Triandis, 2001, p. 908), and such traits are often related to consumption behavior in general and ethical decision making in particular (e.g., Ferrell & Gresham, 1985; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). In accordance with general theories of consumer behavior (e.g., Engel, Blackwell, & Kollat, 1978; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Hunt & Vitell, 1986, 1993), consumers' ethical judgments are considered a key driver of their intention to engage in ethically questionable practices (e.g., Van Kenhove, De Wulf, & Steenhaut, 2003; Vitell, Singhapakdi, & Thomas, 2001).

In this context, consumers capable of empathy, defined as a "tendency to apprehend another person's condition or state of mind" (Johnson, Cheek, & Smither, 1983) and the "*ability to understand and share in another's emotional state or context*" (Cohen & Strayer, 1996), are more likely to experience the consequences of their actions toward others and therefore to avoid harmful behavior (McPhedran, 2009). As a combination of sharing (empathetic concern) and reacting (personal distress) to emotional experiences (Davis, 1980; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; McPhedran, 2009; Signal & Taylor, 2007), empathy is not limited to humans; it also involves animal welfare (Apostol, Rebega, & Miclea, 2013).

In contrast to empathetic consumers, individuals with limited empathy value the *self* over the *other* and often score high on *Dark Triad* factors (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). As a system of three socially undesirable personality traits that have been studied in the context of consumer acceptance of unethical behavior, the Dark Triad includes characteristics such as "entitlement, superiority, dominance (i.e., narcissism), glib social charm, manipulativeness (i.e., Machiavellianism), callous social attitudes, impulsivity, and interpersonal antagonism (i.e., psychopathy)" (Jonason, Baughman, Carter, & Parker, 2015, p. 6). Specifically, narcissism as a personality trait refers to an overly enhanced view of the self that devalues others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993, 2001) combined with extreme vanity, self-absorption, arrogance, and entitlement (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Machiavellian personalities pursue manipulative social strategies in a *whatever it takes attitude* that can include various unethical behaviors (e.g., Christie & Geis, 1970; Gunnthorsdottir, McCabe, & Smith, 2002; Jonason &

Webster, 2012; Rauthmann, 2012). Similar to narcissists and Machiavellians, psychopaths lack empathy and demonstrate interpersonal manipulation and antisocial behavior (Hare, 2003; Mullins-Nelson, Salekin, & Leistico, 2006; Williams, Nathanson, & Paulhus, 2003). Even if the origins of Dark Triad traits differ, in combination they "entail a socially malevolent character with behavior tendencies toward self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness" (Paulhus & Williams, 2002, p. 557) and are often associated with dysfunctional or reduced morality (Campbell et al., 2009; Glenn, Iyer, Graham, Koleva, & Haidt, 2009).

As an important aspect of consumption behavior, an individual's degree of empathy has been shown to influence that person's responses to marketing stimuli. In this context, the ability to perceive humanlike attributes in communication efforts—so-called anthropomorphism—is of major importance, as shown in the following section.

2.2 | Seeing through the human lens–anthropomorphism

People are everywhere. We perceive them, build social ties with them, and respect, love, and hate them. In some people, we perceive similarities; we can identify with them, develop positive feelings, and feel emotional concern. Others are given lower priorities in our lives and are less relevant. These perceptions and feelings are not limited to human beings; they may also describe feelings toward nonhuman entities, such as animals or even objects. People tend to humanize trees and clouds (Guthrie, 1993); they refer to the planet as the *mother earth* and to the environment as *mother nature*. They tend to humanize animals and pets, perceive faces in products (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007), describe financial markets as anxious or delirious, or talk to their plants. The tendency to create humanlike agents appears to be infinite (Waytz, Cacioppo, & Epley, 2010).

Anthropomorphism refers to a prevalent tendency to perceive and interact with nonhuman agents as one would with humans (Guthrie, 1993; Mithen & Boyer, 1996). It describes "[…] the tendency to imbue the real or imagined behavior of nonhuman agents with humanlike characteristics, motivations, intentions, or emotions" (Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007, p. 864). In its whole spectrum, anthropomorphism comprises both physical aspects, such as perceiving humanlike forms, and mental capacities, e.g., ascribing emotions, intentions, and consciousness to nonhuman entities (Waytz et al., 2010). The tendency to anthropomorphize is rooted in psychological antecedents, often separated into one cognitive and two motivational dimensions. One of these motivations—*effectance motivation*—is grounded in humans' need to make sense of the surrounding world and particularly to explain and understand the behavior of nonhuman agents (Epley et al., 2007; Epley, Waytz, Akalis, & Cacioppo, 2008) in order to interact effectively in the prevailing and often complex environment. Effectance motivation particularly aims to reduce uncertainty and risk (Kim & McGill, 2011), to permit understanding and predictions of the surrounding world, and to increase controllability (Averill, 1973; Connell, 2013; Epley et al., 2007; Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982). *Sociality*, the second motivational factor, is defined as "[…] the motivation for social contact,

social connection, and social approval from other agents (human or otherwise)" (Epley et al., 2007, p. 871). Sociality enhances anthropomorphic thinking when social motivation or the need for interaction with nonhuman entities is high (Hart, Jones, & Royne, 2013). Humans who lack social connections are more likely to humanize surrounding nonhuman agents (e.g., pets or technological gadgets) in order to address their unmet social needs (Hende & Mugge, 2014). From the cognitive point of view, existing knowledge about humans or about the self serves as an easily accessible and applicable anthropocentric basis for determining and evaluating unknown objects. This implies that humans have immediate access to the experience of *being human* but have no points of contact with an animal's life "[…] simply because humans' sensory experiences are in here, not in there" (Epley et al., 2007, p. 868). Ultimately, the goals of anthropomorphic thinking are understanding, predicting, and controlling another's behavior as well as developing social connections (Epley et al., 2007). Moral consideration is also closely intertwined with the concept of humanization. Consequently, if humans experience a lack of mind attribution to other species, the moral status of perceived entities decreases along with the feeling of guilt in case of caused harm (Čehajić, Brown, & González, 2009). Accordingly, the presence of humanlike characteristics in communication campaigns may be presumed to foster support for social causes (Ahn, Kim, & Aggarwal, 2014) and the avoidance of harmful actions and abuses (Williams, Masser, & Sun, 2015) through experienced feelings of anticipatory guilt. However, guilt is a feeling to which not everyone can be exposed; this is particularly applicable to people who score high on Dark Triad personality traits (Gramzov & Tagney, 1992; Larson & Buss, 2006). Thus, studying anthropomorphic effects in relation to personality traits that are geared toward exploiting others has high theoretical value.

3 | CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The purpose of the present study is threefold. The first goal is to investigate whether anthropomorphic communication about cruel business tactics affects the formation of brand attitudes. In doing so, the study recognizes the explicit and implicit information processing of humans and thus considers a combination of explicit and implicit brand attitudes. Second, this study analyzes how explicit and implicit brand attitudes affect brand performance (brand perception and brand-related behavior). The third goal is to shed light on the role of consumers' personality traits in perceiving anthropomorphic cues and forming brand attitudes. In particular, this study investigates whether consumers with more distinct Dark Triad traits differ from those with stronger empathetic traits.

The cosmetics industry is a context in which cruel production processes are widely discussed. Therefore, from the numerous ethical dilemmas related to consumption behavior, the underlying study focuses on animal testing for cosmetic purposes. Testing cosmetics on animals is banned in many countries, and many prominent brands such as *Aveda, Bare Escentuals,* and *Burt's Bees* have incorporated the emergence of ethical and environmental consumerism into their business activities by ensuring high environmental standards with an

emphasis on natural and organic ingredients and animal welfare. However, the cruel business activity of animal testing remains ubiquitous in the personal care industry (Hennigs, Karampournioti, & Wiedmann, 2016). While animal testing is obligatory in countries such as China, this practice is not required in the United States, but "animal testing by manufacturers seeking to market new products is often necessary to establish product safety" (FDA, 2000). If this testing is not conducted, cosmetic products must have a warning statement on the front label: "WARNING—The safety of this product has not been determined" (FDA, 2000). Although experiments on animals are cast in a negative light and government regulations try to reduce their implementation, approximately 115 million animals are used for laboratory experiments worldwide (HSI, 2012). However, those data have been criticized for being incomplete, and nearly 90% of the animals used may not be included in official statistics; therefore, the number of reported cases (e.g., 834,453 for the USA in 2014) (USDA, 2015) may be far higher than estimated (HSI, 2012).

In an attempt to assess individual reactions to anthropomorphic cues related to animal cruelty in the beauty business on a holistic level, the fundamental characteristics of human information processing that are rooted in explicit and implicit paths must be considered. According to dual process models incorporating explicit and implicit information processing pathways, individuals possess two distinct attitudes toward the same object—an automatic, implicit attitude and an explicit attitude (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). While "implicit attitudes are introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate favorable or unfavorable feeling, thought, or action toward social objects" (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 8) that can be accessed spontaneously, explicit attitudes are formed by a more systematic and conscious consideration of the weaknesses and benefits of specific objects (Fazio & Olson, 2003). Whether the explicit or implicit attitude is approved in different situations depends on the accessibility of cognitive capacity and the motivation to recall the explicit (deliberative) attitude and to override the implicit (automatic) (Wilson et al., 2000, p. 102). By considering both the explicit and implicit paths of information processing, the conceptual model includes both types of formation of attitudes toward brands that conduct experiments on animals.

In accordance with the research insights mentioned above, Figure 1 shows the conceptual model that guides the corresponding theoretical developments with the suggested hypothesized relations discussed below.

3.1 | Effect of personality traits on anthropomorphic reception and brand perception

The perception of ethical dilemmas and individuals' acceptance of unethical consumption activities are strongly influenced by individual characteristics, such as the individual personality traits of consumers (Shen & Dickson, 2001). A consumers' ability to "vicariously 'experience' the consequences of his/her actions towards others" (McPhedran, 2009, p. 2) by being altruistic and avoiding destructive behavior toward others is associated with empathetic personality traits (McPhedran, 2009; Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990).
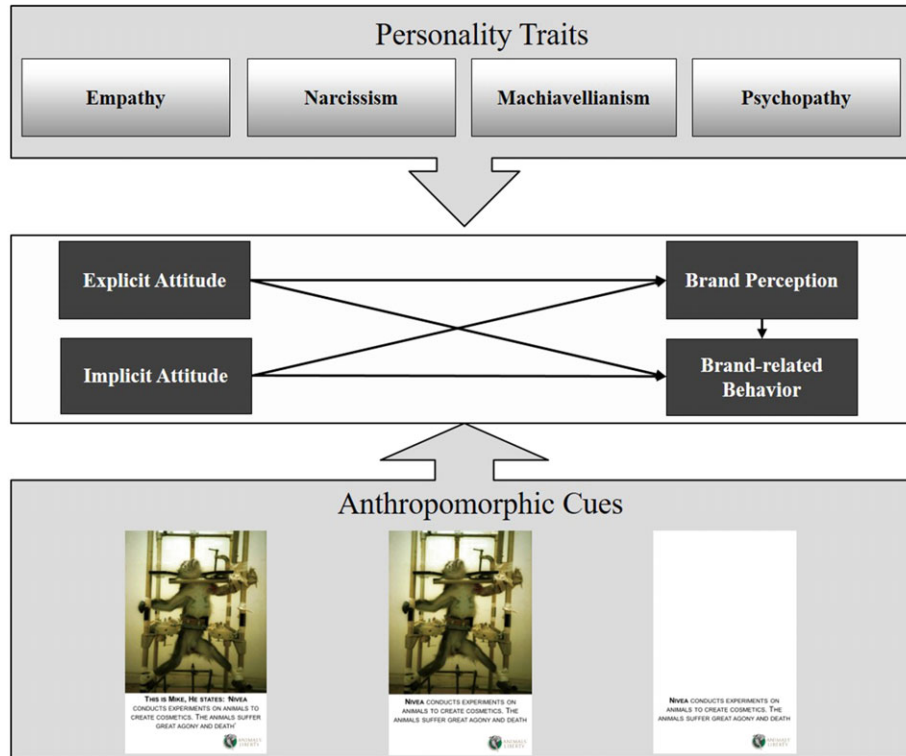
FIGURE 1 Conceptual framework [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Empathy for ethical concerns and issues, which may be "guided by a sense of obligation to others" (Shaw & Shiu, 2002, p. 114), has been shown to be connected to more positive attitudes toward animals and a higher probability of engaging in animal welfare and animal protection activities (Signal & Taylor, 2007). In contrast to the bright side of personality characteristics, the dark side, known as the Dark Triad of personality traits and associated with bad characters (Furnham et al., 2013), has a demonstrated relationship with less positive attitudes and behaviors. Associated with the acceptance of unethical consumption activities (Shen & Dickson, 2001), social aversion (Leary, Saltzman, & Georgeson, 1997), low levels of empathy (Hare, 2003; Paulhus, 2001), bullying behavior (Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco, & Vernon, 2012; Williams, McAndrew, Learn, Harms, & Paulhus, 2001), and the execution of sexual or revenge deviant fantasies (DeLongis, Nathanson, & Paulhus, 2011; Williams, Cooper, Howell, Yuille, & Paulhus, 2009), the multiple facets of the Dark Triad lead to quite diverse behaviors. In a previous study examining the associations between dark personality traits and attitudes and behaviors toward animals, Kavanagh et al. (2013) confirmed that individuals scoring higher on Dark Triad traits exhibited more negative attitudes toward animals in general, leading to greater engagement in animal cruelty. Individuals with high psychopathy scores were particularly linked to killing animals or hurting animals with the objective of causing pain. Given that individuals with darker personality traits demonstrate a higher tendency to disengage from ethical principles than others and are thus able to form unethical consumer attitudes (Egan et al. 2015), these individuals are less likely to "evaluate ethically questionable situations as inappropriate" (Steenhaut, 2006, p. 276). By contrast, moral and ethical reasoning is greatly influenced by the ability to experience empathy (Han-

son & Mullis, 1985). Therefore, we suppose that the attribution of personality traits may influence the explicit and implicit attitudes toward brands that conduct animal experiments for the creation of cosmetics, which results in:

H_{1a}: The expression of personality traits moderates the effect of anthropomorphic communication on explicit brand attitude.

H_{1b}: The expression of personality traits moderates the effect of anthropomorphic communication on implicit brand attitude.

3.2 | Consequences of anthropomorphic reasoning on brand attitudes

Analyzing existing research clearly reveals that anthropomorphic thinking accounts for a variety of phenomena, ranging from religious artifacts and social and natural paradigms, such as the behavior of non-human agents and meteorological conditions, to humanized marketing campaigns to advertise products or create awareness of ethical issues.

Evidence from previous research accentuates the powerful synthesis between anthropomorphism and consumers' evaluations of products and brands. Hence, humanizing products, such as by naming cars or providing human shapes and forms to products, has the potential to improve product evaluation in general and to increase product liking in particular, thus leading to better treatment of specific products (Aaker, 1997; Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Brown, 2010; Delbaere, McQuarrie, & Phillips, 2011; Fournier, 1998; Levine, 2009). Moreover, anthropomorphizing products facilitates a stronger bond between consumer and brand, which enhances commitment and loyalty and lowers consumers' willingness to replace products (Chandler & Schwartz, 2010).

In an advanced state, consumers tend to develop love toward brands, which is expressed by stronger purchase intentions and a higher likelihood of engaging in positive word of mouth (Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014). By placing priority on the social value of products rather than their functional characteristics—or by shifting pragmatic thoughts to personal ones in a metaphorical sense—"[…] anthropomorphizing a product could be expected to increase the product's personal value by increasing a consumer's perceptual fluency, effectiveness in interacting with the product, and feeling of social contact" (Hart et al., 2013, p. 109).

The findings mentioned above exemplify the variety of effects that anthropomorphism can have on consumers' perception, judgment, and behavior with respect to brands. The genesis of strong bonds is not limited to specific humanized products or brands; instead, it can occur in a variety of contexts, such as nature and pets (Downey & Ellis, 2008). Previous research has found that anthropomorphism leads to the perception that laboratory animals are able to experience humanlike emotions (Morton, Burghardt, & Smith, 1990). Moreover, being perceived as having humanlike attributes allows nonhumans to become worthy of moral consideration (Waytz et al., 2010). Thus, individuals who attribute human characteristics to animals show more positive attitudes toward animals and express greater support for animal welfare and animal rights (Butterfield, Hill, & Lord, 2012; Clayton, Fraser, & Burgess, 2011). Finally, perceiving a nonhuman as having a mind and an ability to consciously experience the surrounding world is related to "moral patiency and hence to rights and privileges" (Gray, Gray, & Wegner, 2007, p. 619). Thus, we suggest that perceiving animals used in experiments in cosmetics laboratories as humanlike could lead to a more intense perception of the atrocious and painful experiences of those animals and make them "worthy of empathic care and concern" (Waytz et al., 2010, p. 222). This perception subsequently influences explicit and implicit attitudes toward the brands involved in those cruel practices. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{2a}: The degree of anthropomorphism used in communication about cruel practices has a negative impact on explicit brand attitude.

H_{2b}: The degree of anthropomorphism used in communication about cruel practices has a negative impact on implicit brand attitude.

3.3 | Brand attitudes and brand performance

As introduced in the conceptual model of the underlying research investigation, individuals can have two distinct attitudes toward the same object: explicit and implicit. Defined as an "individual's internal evaluation of an object" (Mitchell & Olson 1981, p. 318), brand attitude "[…] endures for at least a short period of time and presumably energizes and directs behavior" (Eagly & Chaiken 1993, p. 7). Therefore, in the current study of the influence of anthropomorphism on explicit and implicit attitude associations, we also address the impact of brand attitudes on the nontangible, psychological perception of the brand by consumers (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) and the link between attitude and behavioral intent. We do so by following a common practice

in marketing research (e.g., Batra & Ray, 1986; MacKenzie & Spreng, 1992; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Spears & Singh, 2004). As illustrated in Figure 1, we analyze the transfer from an explicit and implicit attitude association to brand performance in terms of *brand perception* (H_{3a-b}) and *brand-related behavior* (H_{3c-d}):

H_{3a}: The explicit brand attitude is positively related to brand perception.

H_{3b}: The implicit brand attitude is positively related to brand perception.

H_{3c}: The explicit brand attitude is positively related to brand-related behavior.

H_{3d}: The implicit brand attitude is positively related to brand-related behavior.

An individuals' perception regarding a brand, e.g., in terms of trust, image, reputation, and especially satisfaction, can predict future behavioral intentions such as loyalty, purchase intentions, and the willingness to pay a price premium (Anselmsson, Bondesson, & Johansson, 2014; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2001; Taylor, Celuch, & Goodwin, 2004; Zboja & Vorhees, 2006). Thus, brand perception may lead to brand-related behavioral outcomes:

H_4: Consumer brand perception has a significantly positive effect on brand-related behavior.

4 | METHOD

4.1 | Study design

To investigate the effects of anthropomorphic cues in communication activities, an experimental study was conducted. The level of anthropomorphism was varied by using three experimental conditions and one control. A specific stimulus was used to inform the participants of the animal tests conducted by a well-known German cosmetics brand. The experimental conditions differed in their extent of their anthropomorphism. To clearly exemplify the consequences of animal tests, the following message was shown in each of the three experimental conditions: "*Nivea conducts experiments on animals to create cosmetics. The animals suffer great agony and death.*" Furthermore, the stimulus contained a picture of a monkey fixed to a holding device to be used for experiments. To vary the degree of anthropomorphism, the *high anthropomorphic condition* contained the picture of the monkey with the addition of a label with the name "Mike," as the assigning of human names to animals also represents a form of anthropomorphism (Epley et al., 2007). Thus, the following message was displayed on the picture: "*This is Mike. He states: 'Nivea conducts experiments on animals to create cosmetics. The animals suffer great agony and death'.*" The *low anthropomorphic condition* contains (merely) the picture and the communication message without naming the animal, whereas in the third condition, only the communication message was visible. In contrast to consumers in other countries, German consumers are very familiar with a drastic form of anthropomorphic communication that is typical in the country, where consumer critique is apparent in almost all product categories. Agriculture, animal farming, fur trade, smoking, the pharmaceutical sector,

energy suppliers, the car industry, and sweets manufacturers, among others are confronted with heavy criticism using shocking arguments and pictures. The message and the anthropomorphized stimuli were used to provoke a direct response to the brand, which makes use of animal testing, by creating greater awareness of the painful and atrocious procedures that those animals face.

4.2 | Pretest

Before the final study was distributed, a pretest was conducted to examine whether the selected stimulus with the monkey was appropriate to trigger different degrees of anthropomorphic associations. Therefore, we used the 5-item Individual differences in anthropomorphism questionnaire (IDAQ) scale developed by Waytz et al. (2010), which asks whether the monkey has a free will, consciousness, intentions, emotions, and a mind of its own. In sum, 38 respondents participated in the online questionnaire and were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions containing the monkey. The results reveal that both stimuli cause anthropomorphic evaluations of the monkey. Moreover, significant differences exist between the two groups, as the name condition demonstrated a significantly higher anthropomorphic perception (3.990 > 3.289, $p < 0.05$), which confirms the appropriateness of the stimuli for the present research goal.

4.3 | Measurement instrument

Well-established and validated scales were used to investigate whether anthropomorphized communication activities have significant effects on implicit and explicit attitude formation and whether these effects are dependent on consumers' personality traits. To measure an individual's *empathy*, we used a short form of Davis's (1980) *interpersonal reactivity index* (IRI), which was translated into German by Paulus (2009) and whose scientific validity has been confirmed on several occasions. *Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy*, which form the Dark Triad of personality traits, were measured by the *Dirty Dozen* (Jonason & Webster, 2010), which is a valid instrument that is still practical (for a detailed overview, see Jonason & Krause, 2013; Jonason, Slomski, & Partyka, 2012; Rauthmann & Kolar, 2013). Based on exploratory factor analyses of a 22-item pool, Jonason and Webster (2010) identified three 4-item subscales (12-item questionnaire), each of which represents one of the well-known facets of the Dark Triad (Paulhus & Jones, 2014). The questionnaire items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

The same rating scale was used for the conscious evaluation of the *explicit attitude*. For the evaluation of the *implicit attitude* toward a brand, a reaction time measurement was employed using the latency-based tool i² BrandREACT (eye square, 2014), which resembles a single category implicit association test (SC-IAT) (Karpinski & Steinman, 2006). This procedure was chosen to capture the implicit attitude based on a more automatic and spontaneous assessment. Both measures used identical items for the measurement of brand attitude (specifically, nice, good, kindly, great, smart, lovely) to ensure direct comparability of the explicit and implicit information processing path (e.g., Aaker, 2000; Karpinski & Hilton, 2001).

To assess *brand perception*, as a result of the experimental setting, well-established reflective scales were used. Specifically, we created an analog factor by measuring the brand's image, trust and satisfaction (Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wuestefeld, 2011). The same procedure was applied for *brand-related behavior* by evaluating the loyalty, price premium and purchase intention related to the brand (Wiedmann et al., 2011). Finally, all items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

4.4 | Data collection and sample

The respondents were recruited in July 2015 via a web-based survey based on a snowball sampling method via email messages as well as links on selective web pages (e.g., Facebook, Forums). Participants were assigned randomly to one of the four conditions (as described above, three anthropomorphic conditions and one control group without any stimulus). In total, 654 subjects responded to the questionnaire. According to several studies, attitudes and preferences are not merely transmitted through language but also shaped by it (Ogunnaike, Dunham, & Banaji, 2010). To avoid biases in the implicit attitude measure due to the participants' language, data for all the respondents who were not native German speakers were deleted from the dataset. As a result, a total of 44 cases were deleted, resulting in 610 valid questionnaires. The respondents' average age was approximately 30 years, with an overrepresentation of female (71%) and single (79.7%) respondents. Of the respondents, 38.2% mentioned that they preferred conventional forms of cosmetics, while 26.9% preferred cosmetics not tested on animals. Even if the sample is not representative of the German population, the data offer a suitable basis for the empirical assessment of the underlying research aims due to the study's special focus on the cosmetics industry, which is dominated by younger and female consumers.

5 | ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1 | Research method

To analyze the data and to test the proposed hypotheses, universal structure modeling (USM) was used. In recent years, partial least squares (PLS) and covariance-based structural equation modeling (CVSEM) have become popular methods in marketing research, and they have been employed using applications such as SmartPLS or LISREL. Although these methods are powerful and widely used to test suspected relationships and research models, some researchers have mentioned that alternative methods lead to more accurate and effective estimations and results (Rust & Schmittlein, 1985; Buckler & Hennig-Thurau, 2008). Recent research by Dhar and Weinberg (2016) indicates that "non-linear models provide a richer set of results than linear interaction models" (p. 392) and thus provide a more multifarious and holistic view of consumer-oriented research. Moreover, nonlinear research approaches have shown their efficiency in providing incremental details in personality-oriented research. Even though nonlinear effects (Agustin & Singh, 2005) and interactions are common

TABLE 1 Validity and reliability of constructs

Brand Attitude Measures					
	Factor Loadings	Average Variance Explained (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha	Split-half Reliability	Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient
Explicit attitude	0.740–0.908	74.62%	0.929	n/a	0.768***
Implicit attitude	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.869	0.671***
Interpersonal Reactivity Index					
	Factor Loadings	Average Variance Explained (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha	Split-half Reliability	Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient
Fantasy seeking	0.654–0.845	60.12%	0.765	n/a	n/a
Empathetic concern	0.661–0.772	51.94%	0.691	n/a	n/a
Perspective taking	0.669–0.793	54.30%	0.713	n/a	n/a
Personal distress	0.778–0.838	66.91%	0.752	n/a	n/a
Dark Triad Personality Traits					
	Factor Loadings	Average Variance Explained (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha	Split-half Reliability	Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient
Narcissism	0.620–0.868	62.81%	0.802	n/a	n/a
Machiavellianism	0.687–0.853	62.49%	0.793	n/a	n/a
Psychopathy	0.647–0.798	56.80%	0.615	n/a	n/a
Brand Outcomes					
	Factor Loadings	Average Variance Explained (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha	Split-half Reliability	Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient
Brand perception	0.931–0.940	87.62%	0.929	n/a	n/a
Brand-related behavior	0.879–0.921	80.86%	0.879	n/a	n/a

Note: n/a = not applicable; significance: *** = 0.01, ** = 0.05, * = 0.1

occurrences in marketing (related to personality-oriented factors, e.g., LaHuis, Martin, & Avis, 2005; Manley & Mobbs, 2004; Vasilopoulos, Cucina, & Hunter, 2007), CVSEM and PLS methods overlook these important effects and allow them to remain hidden and unexplored. Because the present approach combines a) personality-oriented factors with b) implicit associations that are expected to reveal nonlinear effects, the relevance of alternative research methods becomes apparent. To meet these demands, USM was applied through the use of NEUSREL V8 software for hypothesis testing that "[…] combines the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach with a Bayesian neural network involving a multilayer perceptron architecture […]" (Buckler & Hennig-Thurau 2008, p. 50). Data calculation with NEUSREL requires a systematic process and stepwise calculation procedure for data analysis, which is conducted in three steps. First, the latent variables are defined and calculated. In the second step, measurement models and structural models are estimated to conclusively investigate the strength, significance, and shape of the relationship between the constructs of the inner model in the final step. Graphical interpretations of the explored relations are also created (Buckler & Hennig-Thurau, 2008). Because the initial step requires the identification and formation of clusters based on consumers' dark and bright personality traits, the present analysis is based on a combination of SPSS V24 and NEUSREL V8.

5.2.1 | Reliability and validity

To avoid a methodological discontinuity within the analysis, the evaluation of the measurement model, the cluster analysis and the forma-

tion of clusters and constructs were performed with SPSS. A factor analysis was conducted via principal components with varimax rotation to evaluate the selected measures. Factor loadings of less than 0.6 were deleted from the data analysis. Following this approach, one item from the personal distress scale (empathy) and the psychopathy measure was deleted. As summarized in Table 1, the psychographic measures, explicit and implicit brand attitudes, and brand outcomes reveal satisfactory values in terms of item reliability (factor loadings and average variance explained), internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha and split half reliability for implicit measures), and external validity (Spearman's rank correlation related to a feeling thermometer as a global attitudinal factor with a rating on a scale ranging from 0 = very cold to 10 = very warm).

5.3 | Cluster analysis and descriptive statistics

To identify possible clusters grounded in the factor scores of the aforementioned psychographic factors (empathy and Dark Triad), a two-step approach using both hierarchical and nonhierarchical clustering algorithms was conducted (e.g., Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009). First, a hierarchical procedure using Ward's method of minimum variance was performed to determine the most appropriate number of clusters. The results strongly suggested the presence of two clusters. Then, a nonhierarchical clustering procedure was applied to validate the results and optimize the allocation of subjects into the two clusters. This analysis also revealed two different consumer groups that differed in the peculiarity of the bright and dark sides of their

TABLE 2 Results of the cluster analysis

Dimensions of Personality Traits	Cluster 1 ($n = 240$)	Cluster 2 ($n = 370$)	F^a
Dark Triad			
Narcissism	0.22254	−0.14435	20.214
Machiavellianism	0.53917	−0.34973	141.576
Psychopathy	0.77661	−0.50375	391.767
Empathy			
Fantasy scale	−0.64557	0.41875	225.762
Empathetic concern	−0.82226	0.53336	476.325
Perspective taking	−0.46355	0.30068	98.654
Personnel distress	−0.24701	0.16023	25.098

[a] All reported F-values are significant at 0.000

TABLE 3 Explored interaction effects

Interaction	Interaction Effect	t-Value
Anthropomorphism × Personality → Explicit brand attitude	0.1809	1.8049
Anthropomorphism × Personality → Implicit brand attitude	0.3163	2.4758
Explicit × Implicit brand attitude → Brand perception	0.1384	3.7013

personality traits. Next, a discriminant analysis provided support for the identified segmentation by confirming that 97.4% of the cases were assigned to the correct segment. With regard to the results of this final cluster analysis, which are displayed in Table 2, the first identified cluster of consumers was labeled *Consumer Psychopaths* due to its tendency to score higher on Dark Triad traits and lower on empathetic factors compared to the mean scores of the second cluster, the *Empathetic Consumers*. With a mean age of 27 years and 42.1% male respondents, the *Consumer Psychopaths* constitute approximately 40% of the sample. Individuals in this group rate significantly higher on all Dark Triad factors (i.e., narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy) and agree with statements such as "*I enjoy watching video clips with people fighting and realistic blood spurts,*" "*I tend to be callous or insensitive,*" and "*I tend to manipulate others to get my way.*" In contrast to these subjects, the group of *Empathetic Consumers* is more supportive of all levels of empathy-related statements, such as "*When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me,*" "*When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them,*" and "*I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.*" This respondent group has a mean age of 28 years, is 80.3% female and constitutes approximately 60% of the sample.

In the following sections, the test results for the suggested hypotheses will be discussed with a special focus on these two disparate groups. Therefore, the neural network technique will be employed using NEUSREL as a software solution.

5.4 | Hypothesis testing and interpretation

To test the proposed interactions and relationships between the constructs and to discover nonlinear relationships and interactions, USM was used. Through the structural model specification matrix that was created in the first step, the latent variables and their interrelations were represented and determined. To estimate the paths between the latent variables, NEUSREL uses a Bayesian neural network with a multilayer perceptron (MLP) architecture. Furthermore, the evidence framework used for the MLP (for more information, see MacKay, 1992) effectively detects irrelevant paths and prevents overfitting (Buckler & Hennig-Thurau, 2008). The variance explanation parameters, coefficients of determination, simulated effects, and interaction

effects are calculated next in order to gain valuable insights into the strength, significance, and character of the relations between the latent constructs. Because path coefficients can be calculated only in linear relationships between constructs, NEUSREL relies on the overall explained absolute deviation (OEAD) and average simulated effects (ASEs) as criteria indicating the strength of construct relations. The OEAD criterion specifies the latent variables' amount of variance, which is influenced by another latent variable. The closer the OEAD is to the coefficient of determination, the more significant the effect of the causative variable is on the influenced variable. Furthermore, the ASE expresses the average expected impact of the causative variable on the affected variable (Buckler, 2016). Additionally, for all the aforementioned measures, a bootstrapping routine (Mooney, Duval, & Duvall, 1993) with 200 subsamples was used to facilitate analysis of the statistical significance of the observed relationships. Specifically, the use of this multicriteria approach aims to increase the meaningfulness of the model and the results as well as their validity. The data calculation lasted nearly five days due to the complex calculations, the relatively large dataset for an USM estimation, and the high number of bootstrap subsamples.

5.4.1 | Effects on explicit and implicit brand attitudes

To gain insights into the direct effects of anthropomorphic cues on explicit and implicit brand attitudes, the ASEs and their significances were analyzed. In accordance with the ASEs, the degree of anthropomorphism clearly exerts a significant influence on explicit (ASE $= -0.2029$; $p < 0.01$) and implicit attitudes (ASE $= -0.1116$, $p < 0.01$) toward the brand. Hypotheses H_{2a} and H_{2b} can thus be confirmed.

5.4.2 | Moderating impact of personality traits

The interaction effects among model constructs and their significances were analyzed using the bootstrapping procedure. Based on the effect strengths and their significances as well as the graphical representation of the interaction effects, existing interactions can be discovered and meaningfully interpreted. According to the results of the calculated interaction effects (IE), as displayed in Table 3, the attribution of personality traits moderates the effect of anthropomorphism on explicit und implicit brand attitudes. The interaction of personality traits and anthropomorphism confirms effect strengths of 0.3163 ($p < 0.01$) on *implicit* and 0.1810 ($p < 0.05$) on *explicit* brand attitude. Accordingly, Hypotheses H_{1a} and H_{1b} can be confirmed.
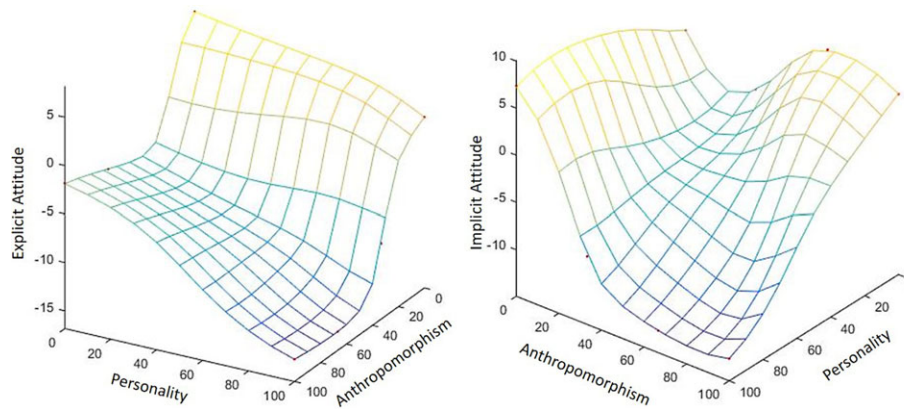
FIGURE 2 Interaction effect of anthropomorphism and personality traits on explicit and implicit brand attitudes. **Explicit/Implicit Attitude**: Affected latent variable (y-axis); always scales around zero. It shows the variation in the y-variable caused by the interactive variables. **Personality**: Unaffected variable; 0 = Consumer Psychopaths; 100 = Empathetic Consumers. **Anthropomorphism**: Unaffected variable; the higher the value, the higher the degree of anthropomorphism. Zero indicates the control group [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

TABLE 4 Average simulated effect and overall explained absolute deviation for the structural relations

Exogenous LV → Endogenous LV	Average Simulated Effect (ASE)	T Statistics	OEAD
Anthropomorphism → Explicit brand attitude	0.2029	2.8549	0.0575
Anthropomorphism → Implicit brand attitude	0.1116	2.4192	0.0367
Explicit brand attitude → Brand perception	0.5954	5.3584	0.3883
Implicit brand attitude → Brand perception	0.3105	5.6009	0.2153
Explicit brand attitude → Brand-related behavior	0.0667	1.8577	0.0395
Implicit brand attitude → Brand-related behavior	0.0350	1.1939	0.0824
Brand perception → Brand-related behavior	0.6866	17.7061	0.6709

To gain deep insights based on the differences between the observed groups, Figure 2 illustrates the 3D representations of the interaction to provide a graphical comparison between the groups for both explicit and implicit brand attitudes. Specifically, weak information is sufficient to activate an appropriate awareness of ethical issues such as animal welfare for *Empathetic Consumers*. This result could also be caused by their predispositions; *Empathetic Consumers* have previously dealt with the corresponding topics, leading to a higher awareness in advance and a more sensitive response to any kind of stimulus.

While anthropomorphism leads to a more negative attitude for *Empathetic Consumers*, the reverse trend is visible for *Consumer Psychopaths*. The results of the experimental conditions clearly demonstrate that *Consumer Psychopaths* have a more positive attitude toward the brand when the stimulus of the abused animal is shown, whereas their brand attitude clearly worsened in the text-only condition. This result confirms the ethically questionable "*the other exist for me*" illusion (Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, Elliot, & Gregg, 2002) of *Consumer Psychopaths*, as well as their tendency to use others to satisfy their own needs (Jonason & Kavanagh, 2010).

5.4.3 | Effect of explicit and implicit brand attitudes on brand performance

Hypotheses H$_{3a}$ and H$_{3b}$ argued that explicit and implicit brand attitudes influence brand perception. The USM estimations support

these hypotheses and show a positive and statistically significant nonlinear effect with ASEs of 0.3883 ($p < 0.00$) for explicit attitudes and 0.2153 ($p < 0.00$) for implicit attitudes (Table 4). Hence, consumers' perception of a certain brand can be influenced by implicit and explicit information processing. In sum, 70.3% of the variance in the response variable can be explained by the explanatory variables. According to the OEAD values, a high proportion of the variance can be explained by the explicit (OEAD: 0.3883) and implicit brand attitudes (OEAD: 0.2153). Thus, the combination of explicit and implicit brand attitudes enhances the explanatory power of brand perception. This result is supportive of the results obtained by Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji (2003), p. 200), who assumed that "[…] association strength is a latent component of both the implicit and explicit measures."

The plot in Figure 3 represents the nonlinear and positive degressive relationship between explicit attitude and brand perception. Furthermore, the graphical interpretation of the implicit brand attitude effect on brand performance may lead to the confirmation of a linear effect. This is not exactly true since the resulting variations in the additive plots around the lines are caused by hidden and unexplored interactions rather than by residuals (Buckler, 2016). A more detailed analysis of these hidden structures reveals a strong interaction of explicit and implicit brand attitudes on brand perception (IE: 0.1384, $p < 0.00$), which also becomes visible in the 3D plot in Figure 4.
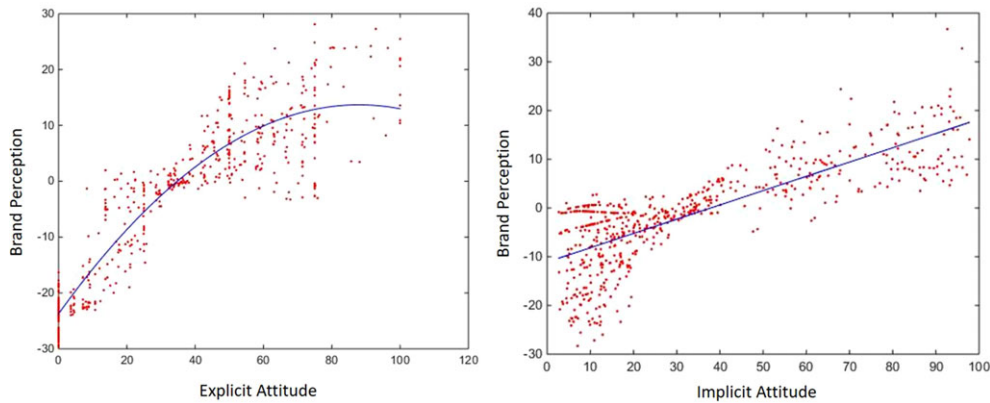
FIGURE 3 2D Plot: average simulated effect of explicit and implicit brand attitudes on brand perception. The vertical axis is the affected latent variable and always scales around zero. It shows the variation in the y-variable caused by the x-variable [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
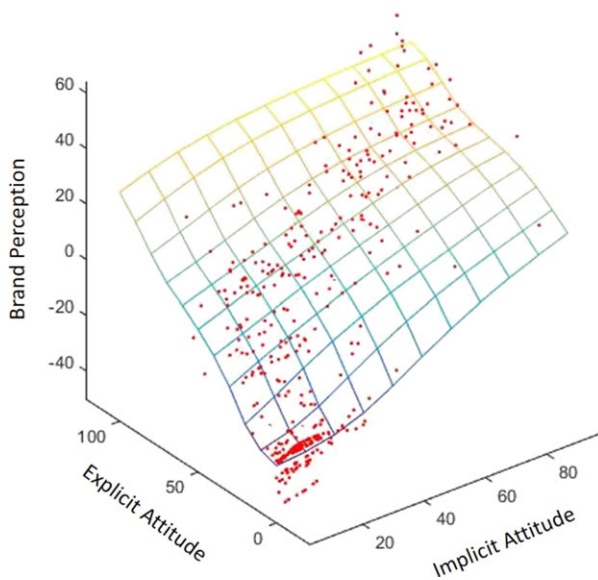

FIGURE 4 3D Plot: hidden interaction effect of explicit and implicit brand attitudes on brand perception. The vertical axis is the affected latent variable and always scales around zero. It shows the variation in the y-variable caused by the interactive variables [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Hypotheses H_{3c} and H_{3d} address the relationship between explicit and implicit brand attitudes and brand-related behavior. Empirical evidence of a significant impact of explicit attitude ($ASE = 0.0349$, $p < 0.05$) and implicit attitude ($ASE = 0.0667$, $p < 0.15$) is not adequate. The average incremental change is very low in both cases. Even though the explicit attitude represents significant simulated effects, its impact is not substantial. Accordingly, the empirical results do not support H_{3c} and H_{3d}.

Hypothesis H_4 proposes a positive relation between brand perception and brand-related behavior. The results indicate a strong and significant ASE of brand perception on brand-related behavior ($ASE = 0.6866$, $p < 0.00$). The OEAD attains a high value at 0.6709, while the model accounts for 81.6% of the variance, which can be considered satisfactory (Chin, 1998). Therefore, H_4 is supported and provides evidence for the assumption that the anthropomorphic reception

of cruel tactics in production processes significantly impacts consumer brand perception, which in turn impacts actual brand-related behavior. In addition, these effects are mediated by individual personality characteristics on the diverging poles between empathetic and Dark Triad traits. Table 5 provides an overview of the presumed hypotheses and the results of their empirical testing.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

6.1 | Contribution

Numerous studies on topics such as CSR and ethical consumerism have created a backdrop of an ever-growing research stream on ethical business behavior from both corporate and consumer perspectives. A closer look into whether these principles are more than simply words seems reasonable. Despite discussions about ethical commitment, the economic reality reveals countless examples of unethical business behavior: labor exploitation and human rights abuses, child labor, animal testing, tax loopholes, bribery and corruption, toxic materials, pollution incidents, and many others. Given the variety of cruel business practices and unethical behavior, more attention needs to be focused on the dark side of business and consumer personality. Existing research reveals that dark personality traits are certainly present in individual behavior at the micro level and in society's behavior at the macro level.

The main contribution of the present manuscript is to provide a deeper understanding of consumers' inner structure with regard to good and bad personality traits. Referencing the Dark Triad of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy in relation to animal cruelty, the study results provide evidence that anthropomorphic communication about cruel business tactics affects the formation of explicit and implicit brand attitudes. Moreover, a resulting impact from explicit and implicit brand attitudes on related brand perception and behavior was shown. In addition, the role of consumer personality traits in processing anthropomorphic cues and forming brand attitudes was investigated. In this context, the specific expressions of empathetic and dark tendencies were shown to have a significant impact on the perception

TABLE 5   Results of hypothesis testing with NEUSREL

No.	Hypotheses	Method	Result
H_{1a}	The expression of personality traits moderates the effect of anthropomorphic communication on explicit brand attitude.	Interaction effect	Supported
H_{1b}	The expression of personality traits moderates the effect of anthropomorphic communication on implicit brand attitude.	Interaction effect	Supported
H_{2a}	The degree of anthropomorphism used in communication about cruel practices has a negative impact on explicit brand attitude.	ASE	Supported
H_{2b}	The degree of anthropomorphism used in communication about cruel practices has a negative impact on implicit brand attitude.	ASE	Supported
H_{3a}	The explicit brand attitude is positively related to brand perception.	ASE/OEAD	Supported
H_{3b}	The implicit brand attitude is positively related to brand perception.	ASE/OEAD	Supported
H_{3c}	The explicit brand attitude is positively related to brand-related behavior.	ASE/OEAD	Not supported
H_{3d}	The implicit brand attitude is positively related to brand-related behavior.	ASE/OEAD	Not supported
H_4	Consumer brand perception has a significantly positive effect on brand-related behavior.	ASE/OEAD	Supported

of anthropomorphized stimuli, which is capable of influencing human behavior to a great extent.

The results can be considered somewhat worrying, as they clearly indicate that *Consumer Psychopaths* are positively stimulated by the sight of tortured, exploited, and mistreated animals. For this group of consumers, anthropomorphized communication activities might not cause the desired effects of raised long-term awareness, brand avoidance, or even reduced consumption. Instead, a paralogous effect could appear, leading *Consumer Psychopaths* to satisfy their desire for manipulation, exploitation, and superiority when exposed to tortured anthropomorphized animals. Because every person has individual personality characteristics, it remains doubtful whether dark tendencies are the basis of societal and cultural strife, craving for glory, possessions, power, and money. This effect is leading to the continuous emergence of megalomaniacal and self-centered societal members and consumers whose impaired conscience regarding cruelty actually enhances unethical business practices. Nevertheless, empathetic values and individuals remain present in society; empathetic individuals provide a balance between good and bad and continuously provide importance and necessity to socially and ethically acceptable businesses. However, the question remains as to who these individuals are in our everyday lives and whether they are easily identifiable: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

actions and scandals that lead to protests and calls for boycotts are often forgotten on the long term. In our study, we identified the *Consumer Psychopath*—but do all consumers who (in)directly support business malpractice with their individual purchase decisions exhibit the dark personality traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy? As noted above, an individual assessment of unethical business actions is situationally contingent. Even if they are aware of possible unethical business practices or unhealthy consequences, employees continue to support their company, brand advocates still love their favorite brand, luxury lovers buy counterfeits, heavy smokers will not quit smoking, and patients take their pills. The present study focused on the effect of anthropomorphic cues on consumer perception and behavior. In addition, even if *Empathetic Consumers* were shown to react to anthropomorphism and cruel business practices, we have not assessed their actual purchase behavior in the long term. A question also arises concerning the general value of awareness-raising campaigns if they impact only those who are already empathetic while triggering reactance in many other individuals? The example of shocking visuals on cigarette packets demonstrates that these tactics may not have the desired effects because consumers perceive them as threats to their freedom, choice, or autonomy (LaVoie, Quick, Riles, & Lambert, 2015).

6.2 | Managerial implications

From the viewpoint of companies and political and nongovernmental institutions, valuable insights can be discussed based on our empirical results addressing how individual traits can lead to different perceptions of brands or companies involved in cruel practices. First, certain types of consumers were shown to have a tendency to overlook political and ethical malpractice or even approve those actions. The assumption that consumers reject brands that are involved in unethical practices cannot be accepted unequivocally. The myth of the ethical consumer is widely discussed in the rising tension between the ethical orientation of consumers that is often reported in self-assessment studies and the actual consumer behavior that occurs at the point of sale. Economic reality reveals that even highly controversial business

6.3 | Future research

Deeper insights into the perception and behavior of *Consumer Psychopaths* are needed with a special focus on the dark traits of consumer personality and their impact on the consumer evaluation of products and brands as well as reactions to cruel business practices. Further studies and research efforts should address the core of their specific consumption behavior without being restricted to the analysis of human relationships in general or workplace behavior. Focusing on and empowering those kinds of consumers would imply a tragic shift by businesses, especially because both consumers and businesses have a certain responsibility for ethical and social challenges and need to meet the obligations of a society in which violent tactics against living beings must be avoided. Therefore, the interplay between the dark and

bright sides of consumer psychology needs to be better understood. As stated above, proclaiming this period the age of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the ethical consumer is not useful. A holistic picture of contemporary business behavior must include the consideration of unethical behavior.

From the perspective of communication and information processing, the reception of anthropomorphized stimuli and its possible impacts on consumer perception and behavior are of interest. For *Empathetic Consumers*, anthropomorphism seems to provide an efficient means to draw attention to cruel business practices and existing societal challenges. Nevertheless, even if comprehending the world through one's own humanity is natural and commonplace (Epley et al., 2007; Guthrie, 1993), anthropomorphic reasoning may be an error and anthropocentric bias in human thinking, as has long been suggested (Fisher, 1991, Karlsson, 2012; Mameli & Bortolotti, 2006), because it permanently makes analogies to one's own species-specific traits (Karlsson, 2012). This notion assumes a direct relation to Epley et al. (2007) cognitive determinant of anthropomorphic thinking by raising the question of whether moral and ethical obligation is also affected by anthropocentric bias and whether humankind has the ability to broaden its perspective and to expand its moral concern to nonhuman species as well. Ethical theorists assume that anthropomorphism undermines the justification of animals' moral status (Regan, 1985) while also blurring the line between humans and animals, leading to a misallocation of empathy toward animals (Ruether, 1983; Taylor, 1996). More recently, Karlsson (2012) suggested that by continuously thinking outside the human perspective and making analogies to their own species-specific traits, humans could be morally obligated to consider the plight of nonhuman animals. Against this backdrop, future research efforts should focus particularly on the long-term impact of anthropomorphism on consumer awareness in the context of different business categories and different cultural backgrounds. The effect of anthropomorphic cues can reasonably be assumed to vary depending on the perceived individual importance of the given situation. For example, the case of a critically ill patient who needs his medication even if animals were used in testing is a very different circumstance than a choice between two types of cosmetic products, and this distinction will definitely lead to different effects of anthropomorphic reception. Animals are widely known to experience different treatment in everyday life based on the current culture. For example, animals that are served as meat in one society might be considered unclean or sacred in another cultural context. Therefore, the culturally bound treatment of animals might also affect the impact of anthropomorphism. Furthermore, changes in actual consumer behavior and consumption choices are valuable research objectives. A higher contact frequency might influence long-term consumer reactions to anthropomorphic communication in a positive (e.g., awareness and change of behavior) or negative way (e.g., reactance and refusal). This also raises the question of what the ideal amount of anthropomorphic manipulation is. For shocking vs. subtle nuances, what is the best stimulation vis-à-vis different types of consumers and with reference to different product categories? In general, the conditions for eliciting intentions to comply with a social campaign and change behavior are still widely unknown. This also applies to the effect of anthropomorphizing

cues (Williams et al., 2015). Therefore, what is the optimal balance between substantiated awareness that leads to ethical behavior and a moralizing undertone that fosters defiance? What nurtures the dark side and what encourages the bright side of consumer personality?

> *A Native American elder once described his own inner struggles in this manner: Inside of me there are two dogs. One of the dogs is mean and evil. The other dog is good. The mean dog fights the good dog all the time. When asked which dog wins, he reflected for a moment and replied, the one I feed the most.*
> George Bernard Shaw

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A5:

Storytelling in Online Shops: The Impact on Explicit and Implicit User Experience, Brand Perceptions and Behavioral Intention.

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Internet Research

Under Review

STORYTELLING IN ONLINE SHOPS: THE IMPACT ON EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT USER EXPERIENCE, BRAND PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTION

Purpose

This paper examines in detail how the use of storytelling with parallax technology can influence the user experience (UX) in online shops as well as brand- and behavior-relevant variables. Furthermore, this study analyzes the causal relationships between UX, brand attitudes and brand-related behavioral intentions in terms of purchase intention and price premiums. Explicit and implicit paths of human information processing are taken into account.

Design/methodology/approach

A sample of 266 respondents completed a web-based survey with two conditions (storytelling-based vs. text-based online shop). The causal relationships were assessed using partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). To measure implicit information processing an implicit association test (IAT) was added.

Findings

By applying the storytelling technique with parallax scrolling, the online shop increased visitors' UX on explicit and implicit information-processing levels and increased the shop's overall perceived attractiveness. Storytelling with parallax motion enables an efficient transmission of brand-related associations in consumers' minds, enhances their explicit and implicit brand attitudes and increases their willingness to pay a higher price. Additionally, through PLS-SEM, this study reveals a causal chain of effects from UX to online shop attractiveness and brand attitude and finally to behavioral intentions.

Originality/Value

Science and practice are increasingly emphasizing that storytelling emotionalizes content, which helps to communicate effectively and build strong relationships with customers. Little evidence exists about its efficient implementation in an online shopping context and in fulfilling hedonic and pragmatic needs throughout the online journey. This study provides novel insights into managing online shoppers UX, brand-related perceptions and behavioral-intentions with the optimal use of techniques to implement storytelling. Furthermore, it is one of the first studies to consider human perception of online shops holistically by considering explicit and implicit information processing in terms of hedonic and pragmatic UX and brand-related measures.

1. Introduction

The population of internet users has grown at remarkable rates worldwide during recent decades. According to the International Telecommunications Union, the percentage of the population using the internet in developed countries reached 80.9 percent in 2018. Additionally, retail e-commerce sales worldwide reached 2304 billion US dollars in 2017 and is forecasted to increase to 4.878 billion by 2021 (eMarketer, 2018). This development presents tremendous opportunities for companies that sell their products online since consumers are becoming increasingly active in the online environment, and even for small and mid-size merchants, an e-commerce presence is no longer a "nice to have" but a necessity (Siok, 2018). On the other hand, the rise of online shopping and the concurrent increase in online shops has created challenges for marketers to gain customers' attention, attract customers and convert shoppers into paying customers (Hassan, 2017). Due to the rapidity with which consumers are moving and interacting online, companies are facing challenges in catching consumers' attention and in leaving an impression on them. Company survival in the competitive e-commerce environment, where competitors are only one click away (Bilgihan, 2016), requires the creation of user experiences (UX) that fulfill pragmatic qualities in terms of e.g. efficiency and perspicuity but at the same time emphasizes users subjective reactions and emotional aspects such as the uniqueness and stimulation (Rauschenberger *et al.*, 2013; Wang *et al.*, 2015; Zhou and Salvendy, 2018). However, companies need to find efficient ways to effectively communicate and interact with consumers throughout the digital touchpoint and beyond. In order to achieve this, online shops must be designed in such a way that they attract consumer's attention, communicate and transmit the values and virtues of a brand and its products. Storytelling has gained particular importance in research as well as in practice that is presented as an efficient means of brand communication, and which represents a timeless skill for every company to inspire and motivate their audience (Snow, 2014; Da Costa, 2019). By telling stories, brands are able to create

valuable experiences for their audience, to differentiate themselves from their competitors and reinforce positive brand associations (Lundqvist *et al.*, 2013; Fog *et al.*, 2010). Stories make ideas stick, and they help persuade.

Science and practice are increasingly emphasizing that stories and content need to be emotionalized. Stories should be used in order to evoke emotional reactions and build emotional relationships with the consumer and companies can thus be anchored in the minds of consumers in a sustainable persistent way (Gutjahr, 2015; Leventhal and Papadatos, 2006; Merchant *et al.*, 2010; Delgado-Ballester and Fernández-Sabiote, 2016; Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010; Hasford *et al.*, 2015). The discipline of storytelling has become a veritable hype. However, storytelling is more than a mere emotionalization. Especially in the online context, practitioners need to holistically satisfy UX, which means that in addition to hedonic needs, utilitarian needs also need to be met, so there are several factors they need to cope with (see UX criteria above) (Laugwitz *et al.*, 2008; O'Brien, 2010; Bridges and Florsheim, 2008).

Rarely, however, do research and practice address the question of which method can be used to implement storytelling efficiently in an online context, and hence very little empirical evidence exists. Even a good story in terms of content does not offer the necessary effect if certain techniques are not implemented and online shoppers are no longer satisfied with simple text-based websites through which they can scroll; they demand unique designs and experiences. Here, parallax can be a solution. Through parallax interactive and three-dimensional effects are implemented, thereby creating depth of images to users (Wang and Shyu, 2014). Advocates of the parallax technique claim that in addition to engaging users, it improves the overall UX on a website (Frederick *et al.*, 2015), directs the course of visitor attention, makes the site easily navigable and helps creating a

compelling narrative (Wang and Sundar, 2018; Rutherford, 2014). Through parallax, stories can be interactively designed and conveyed and brought to life.

It is precisely this gap, the targeted design and implementation of storytelling in online shops, that is addressed in this paper. The paper examines in detail how the use of storytelling with parallax technology can influence UX with an online shop, and to identify brand- and behavior-relevant variables. In doing so, a combined measurement approach that examines both implicit and explicit information processing was applied, in order to holistically assess consumers' UX and brand associations evoked by storytelling techniques. The remainder of the manuscript is organized as follows. The theoretical foundation of storytelling and explicit and implicit perceptions is described in the next section. The conceptual model and related hypotheses are subsequently presented. The methodology section outlines the methods and sample used for the empirical study, and then, the results are presented and discussed.

Theoretical Background

2.1 The essence of storytelling

Throughout the ages, all aspects of life in societies and cultures have been influenced by stories that form human values and dreams. As the oldest and most effective form of passing knowledge, wisdom and beliefs between generations (Ellington, 2014; Hurlburt and Voas, 2011), the art of storytelling represents the way people perceive and interpret past, present and future events. According to Denning (2001), storytelling is natural, easy, entertaining, and energizing, and it helps humans understand complexities and enhance or change their perceptions. Stories are easy to remember, engage feelings and enable individuals to see themselves in a different light. Consequently, they can make decisions and change their behavior in accordance with these new perceptions, insights, and identities. Hence, the art of storytelling has survived because *"Stories*

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are how we explain, how we teach, how we entertain ourselves, and how we often do all three at once. They are the juncture where facts and feelings meet. And for those reasons, are central to civilization – in fact civilization takes form in our minds as a series of narratives" (Fulford, 1999, p. 9). Furthermore, humans think in narrative structures and mostly remember facts in story form meaning that stories mirror human thoughts (Mileski *et al.*, 2015).

Humans have always used stories as a means to understand the world. Although the historical origins of storytelling cannot be traced to a particular time in the past, it can be stated that the desire to hear and tell stories existed even before humans had the capacity of speech. Cavemen drew story pictures in a time long before languages and writing existed (Beamish and Beamish, 2015). Throughout the years, stories moved from caves to campfires to library floors and have become a "communication tool" embraced by corporate leaders, gurus of knowledge management, and practitioners of strategy and design (Sametz and Maydoney, 2003). Especially in marketing and communication, stories have become a powerful tool to create value. A company's story is stored in memory in multiple ways – factually, visually and emotionally – which makes it memorable in the consumer's mind (Mossberg and Nissen Johansen, 2006). A creative, authentic story that is told and shared allows the creation of a bond between a brand and consumers, and this bond represents a key success factor in a competitive environment (Escalas, 2004a; Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012). Particularly in marketing and management, storytelling has received increasing interest in offline and especially in online communication as a way to convey brand values (Lundqvist *et al.*, 2013), create desirable images and foster consumer-brand interaction.

2.2 UX

UX is a broad concept that describes qualities of interactive products that customers have experienced throughout their usage and interaction with these objects (Raptis *et al.*, 2017). Earlier studies in human computer interaction (HCI) focused solely on usability as an important aspect of

interaction between consumers and digital products. The emphasis in research and in practice was on performance, efficient accomplishment, and goal achievement (Lee *et al.*, 2018). According to ISO - International Organization for Standardization (2010) and its standard 9241-210, *usability focuses on the "extent to which a system, product or service can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use"*. Since interactive products should not solely be usable and useful, a sole focus on criteria that enhance product usability is not sufficient in today's times (Hassenzahl and Tractinsky, 2006; Garrett, 2011). UX goes beyond the instrumental understanding of usability (Bargas-Avila and Hornbæk, 2011) and encompasses *"a person's perceptions and responses that result from the use and/or anticipated use of a product, system or service"* (ISO, 2010). Due to the broad spectrum of possible consumer "responses and perceptions", scholars have attempted to identify different components of UX. Hedonic qualities and criteria related to joy of use, beauty, originality, affective and experiential aspects have become essential as technology has matured (Hatscher, 2001; Preece *et al.*, 2015; Hassenzahl and Tractinsky, 2006). Recent research studies have highlighted the importance of usability, affective responses, value, aesthetic pleasure, emotional response, attribution of meaning (Desmet and Hekkert, 2007), usefulness (Kim, 2015), utility, availability and aesthetics (Hiltunen *et al.*, 2002). Summing up the proposed and identified dimensions, it becomes obvious that UX is composed of pragmatic and hedonic key elements that occur due to the interaction between humans and digital products (Rauschenberger *et al.*, 2013; Laugwitz *et al.*, 2008). Nevertheless, creating a common definition of UX has proven difficult (Coursaris and Kim, 2011; Law *et al.*, 2014; Sauro and Zarolia, 2017). The highly competitive online environment demands that online shops focus on both pragmatic and hedonic aspects of their online presence in order to remain competitive within their marketplace. A positive UX is related to the intention to return to a website (Koufaris, 2002) and to increase consumer loyalty (Gabisch, 2011; Bilgihan *et*

al., 2016). It compels consumers to buy products on the marketplace and provides enjoyment in the online shopping experience (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2014; Bilgihan and Bujisic, 2015; Loiacono *et al.*, 2002).

2. Conceptual Model

The purpose of the present study is twofold. The first goal is to investigate whether a text-based or storytelling-based online shop (implemented with parallax) design is more efficient to target and improve online shop-specific and brand-specific key performance indicators (KPIs). In an online shop, hedonic and pragmatic aspects of UX as well as the overall attractiveness of the shop are considered meaningful KPIs. With regard to brand-related KPIs, we focus on the perception of communicated brand values (here, sustainability perception), brand attitude and brand-related behavior (behavioral intentions: paying a higher price, or price premium, and purchase intention). Second, structural equational modelling is used to detect causal relationships between the UX with the online shop and brand-related KPIs. Hence, this study analyzes how UX affects brand attitudes and how brand attitudes influence brand-related behavioral intentions in terms of purchase intention and price premiums. In doing so, the study recognizes the explicit and implicit information processing of humans and thus considers a combination of explicit and implicit facets of all perceptual measures, UX, online shop attractiveness, brand values and brand attitude. The expected causal relationships are represented in *Figure 1*.

Insert Figure 1 about here

3.1 The explicit and implicit effect of storytelling on brand-related KPIs

Since "Human memory is story-based" (Schank, 1999, p. 12) emotional stories aim to construct a particular mental representation of a brand and remain in long-lasting memory. Stories catch consumers' interest (Escalas, 2004b; Mossberg and Nissen Johansen, 2006) and enable them to experience a transformative immersion that leaves them changed (Escalas, 2004b; Green and Brock, 2000; van Laer *et al.*, 2014). Hence, a story is no longer simply seen; rather, consumers experience *"a feeling of entering the world evoked by the narrative" (van Laer et al., 2014, p. 798)* or take a journey into the story world (Escalas, 2004b; Green and Brock, 2000). Furthermore, stories help entertain and engage the audience and strengthen emotional relationships between brands and their customers (Escalas, 2004a; Woodside, 2010; Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012). Usually, companies use storytelling to communicate their brand values and what the companies stand for (Fog *et al.*, 2005). Stories provide meaning to brands (Halliday, 1998; Salzer-Mörling and Strannegård, 2004; Simmons, 2006), help customers understand the benefits of the brand (Kaufman, 2003; Akgün *et al.*, 2015; Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012) and positively affect brand perceptions (Guber, 2007; Kelley and Littman, 2008). Through storytelling, brand values are illustrated in a unique and meaningful way (Lundqvist *et al.*, 2013). This helps to add favorable associations to a brand and to create and reinforce a certain image in the minds of the audience, which in turn fosters brand building and brand communication (Gálvez, 2011; Fog *et al.*, 2010) and increases customer brand equity (Keller, 1993; Leone *et al.*, 2006; Wood, 2000). In the created story world, the communicated advantages are perceived more strongly. Furthermore, consumers are able to intensively imagine the consumption of the advertised products/brands and the resulting consequences more realistically (Mattila, 2000; Boller, 1990; Boller and Olson, 1991).

Explicit and implicit processing of stories

To provide a holistic picture of contemporary consumer behavior and human-machine interaction, it must be considered that the perception and processing of everyday information and sense making of the surrounding world, such as that created by stories, occurs through two different routes. These two different modes of mental processing are labelled as (implicit) system 1 and (explicit) system 2 (Kahneman and Frederick, 2005; Stanovich and West, 2000). System 1 is automatic, fast, associative, parallel, independent of working memory and non-conscious (Evans and Scheer, 2002; Frankish, 2010). Information that is primarily processed through this route results in evaluations that can be accessed spontaneously and represents *"[…] introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate favorable or unfavorable feeling, thought, or action toward social objects"* (Greenwald and Banaji, 1995, p. 8). System 2, on the other hand, is rule based, analytical, and limited by working memory capacity (Evans and Scheer, 2002; Frankish, 2010; Megehee and Woodside, 2010), and evaluations are formed by a more systematic and conscious consideration of the weaknesses and benefits of specific objects (Fazio and Olson, 2003). Whether the explicit or implicit evaluation is approved in different situations depends on the accessibility of cognitive capacity and the motivation to recall explicit (deliberative) evaluation and to override implicit (automatic) evaluation (Wilson *et al.*, 2000). During interaction with a story, brand-related information and knowledge is processed and stored through verbal and non-verbal (e.g., objects, images, smells, feelings) representations that can function on both conscious and unconscious levels (Paivio, 1990; Wilson, 2002). Hence, online shop visitors who are exposed to the contents provided by companies consciously or subconsciously use both paths to process information and to form an overall association and evaluation. Therefore, the consideration of both information-processing paths is required for a holistic picture. Based on the statements mentioned above, it is assumed that storytelling in online shop design allows favorable

brand-related associations and brand attitudes on explicit and implicit information-processing

levels:

> *H$_{1a}$: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on explicit brand-related associations.*
>
> *H$_{1b}$: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on implicit brand-related associations.*
>
> *H$_{2a}$: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on explicit brand attitude.*
>
> *H$_{2b}$: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on implicit brand attitude.*

Furthermore, brand-related information that is retrieved throughout a story leads to a strong

acceptance of beliefs that are consistent with the story, which in turn influences listeners' behavior

(Green and Brock, 2000). Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

> *H$_3$: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on brand-related behavior.*
>
> *H$_{3a}$: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on consumers' intention to buy a brand.*
>
> *H$_{3b}$: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on the willingness to pay a higher price for a brand.*

3.2 Effect of parallax storytelling on UX and online shop attractiveness

Brands offer their products in a very competitive online environment, where potential users can

choose among many existing products, solutions and providers in a couple of seconds. Too many

details on a brand's or product's presentation sites might make it too hard for potential customers

to get involved in and easily informed through the online setting. Hence, the information about a

brand, product or company provided on an online shop is not merely the driving force in capturing

the interest of potential customers. As stated in the theoretical background section, pragmatic/goal-

oriented aspects as well as hedonic characteristics of the online setting are highly necessary.

According to Mileski *et al.* (2015), customers who are exposed to stories in an online environment

are more emotionally intrigued by a product's presentation and more likely to take a deeper look into the product details. Furthermore, storytelling *"has the advantage of describing the problem, narrating the process, implying emotions and value in user experience design"* (Peng and Matterns, 2016, p. 117). Therefore, UX designers and brands should do their best to leverage the storytelling technique when designing their digital contact points. A possible and favorable way to leverage storytelling in the online environment is the parallax technique, which is very well received by consumers (Shepherd, 2011). This technique creates illusory 3D effects through the combination of different online interaction techniques, such as clicking, scrolling, sliding, dragging, and zooming (Wang and Shyu, 2014; Wang and Sundar, 2018; Sundar *et al.*, 2014). Thus, the objects and different contents of the webpage move at different speeds. The different modalities of interaction (modality interactivity) provide an illusion of depth and a feeling of presence (Oh *et al.*, 2013) and influence consumers' perceptual bandwidth; thus, the modalities involve a higher number of sensory channels throughout the interaction between a medium and its users (Reeves and Nass, 2000). Visitors of parallax scrolling websites report more engaging experiences during interaction (Yamin and Jaafar, 2013), an improved perception of coolness, vividness, ease of use, and user engagement (Wang and Sundar, 2018) and higher overall attractiveness of a website (Frederick *et al.*, 2015; Yamin and Jaafar, 2013; Wang and Sundar, 2018). Increased user engagement is in turn associated with positive attitude and behavioral intentions toward both the website and the product (Wang and Sundar, 2018). In sum, it can be stated that storytelling implemented by parallax motion is positively associated with the overall attractiveness of a website and both hedonic and pragmatic aspects of UX. Considering explicit and implicit information processing, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₄: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on explicit and implicit UX.

H_{4a}: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on explicit hedonic aspects of UX.

H_{4b}: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on explicit pragmatic aspects of UX.

H_{4c}: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on implicit hedonic aspects of UX.

H_{4d}: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on implicit pragmatic aspects of UX.

H_5: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on the explicit and implicit attractiveness of the online shop.

H_{5a}: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on the explicit attractiveness of the online shop.

H_{5b}: Storytelling in online shop design has a significantly positive effect on the implicit attractiveness of the online shop.

3.3 The causal chain between UX, brand attitudes and brand-related behavior

Experiences create memorable events (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) that can result in favorable attitudes. These attitudes are easily and rapidly accessible from memory, are held with confidence, and are predictive of subsequent behavior (Berger and Mitchell, 1989). Hedonic (non-goal directed) as well as pragmatic (goal directed) aspects of users' experience with the online setting form the overall impression of the online shop. A result of an averaging process from the perceived pragmatic and hedonic qualities is the overall attractiveness of the online shop (Laugwitz *et al.*, 2008; Mahardika *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, an enhanced UX affects numerous psychological outcomes, such as the visitors' information processing and memory, brand attitudes, and brand relations (Fransen and Lodder, 2010), and induces behavioral intentions (Oh *et al.*, 2013; Liu and Shrum, 2009; Sundar *et al.*, 2014; Sands *et al.*, 2008; Xu and Sundar, 2014). Given the aforementioned research results, a causal relationship between the identified factors of explicit and implicit UX, overall online shop attractiveness, brand attitudes and explicit brand-related behavior is expected. It is assumed that pragmatic and hedonic UX affect the overall attractiveness of an

online shop and subsequently affect brand attitudes, which induce behavioral intentions towards

the brand. Hence, we expect the following causal relationships, which are represented in *Figure 1*:

H6: Explicit hedonic UX has a positive effect on the (a) explicit and (b) implicit attractiveness of the online shop.

H6: Implicit hedonic UX has a positive effect on the (c) explicit and (d) implicit attractiveness of the online shop.

H7: Explicit pragmatic UX has a positive effect on the (a) explicit and (b) implicit attractiveness of the online shop.

H7: Implicit pragmatic UX has a positive effect on the (c) explicit and (d) implicit attractiveness of the online shop.

H8: The explicit attractiveness of the online shop has a positive effect on (a) explicit and (b) implicit brand attitudes.

H8: The implicit attractiveness of the online shop has a positive effect on (c) explicit and (d) implicit brand attitudes.

H9: (a) Explicit and (b) implicit brand attitudes have a positive effect on brand-related behaviors in terms of purchase intention and willingness to pay a higher price.

3. Method

4.1 Study design

To investigate the effects of storytelling in an online shop context, an experimental study was

conducted. The design of the online shop, and hence the storytelling design vs. text-based design,

was varied using two different conditions (*see Figure 2*). An existing operational online shop for

coffee and coffee-related products (e.g., machines and filters) was used for this purpose. The brand,

Coffee Circle, uses a text-based page that describes the brand's vision and mission and focuses

specifically on environmental and social aspects of sustainable coffee production and distribution.

In addition to the text-based page, Coffee Circle created a parallax page with interactive and

entertaining elements to implement the storytelling technique (also called scrollytelling) in their

online shop. By scrolling down the page, visitors of the online shop are informed about the brand's

vision and mission through interactive elements that describe Coffee Circle's quality requirements, the need for transparency throughout the whole production process, the company's strong relationship with the farmers and their families, fair payment conditions, etc. Additionally, the company provides information about its philanthropic projects in coffee-growing regions; these projects support access to clean water, electricity, education and hygiene education. Hence, the same information is provided in both conditions (the text-based page about the company's vision and mission and the storytelling (parallax) page), and Coffee Circle uses both pages to elicit sustainability-related associations with and perceptions of its brand.

Insert Figure 2 about here

4.2 Measurement instrument

Well-established and validated scales were used to examine the effects of storytelling in an online shopping context. To measure UX*,* we used the *User Experience Questionnaire* (UEQ) by Laugwitz *et al.* (2008); this scale is available in German and English languages, and its scientific validity has been confirmed on several occasions. This measure combines hedonic and pragmatic aspects of UX with digital products. The pragmatic characteristics of UX consist of efficiency, dependability, and perspicuity dimensions, while the hedonic characteristics of UX are aesthetics and stimulation. Furthermore, the UEQ is used to measure the overall attractiveness of online shops. For the measurement of brand-related associations, we focused on brand sustainability, since Coffee Circle aims to foster a sustainability-oriented image and has defined environmental and social aspects as its core brand values. Brand-related sustainability perception, as a result of the experimental setting, was measured using a measurement instrument by (Schmidt *et al.*, 2017) and an extension of this instrument by Karampournioti *et al.* (2018b); these instruments capture social,

ecological and economic aspects of sustainability and offer a holistic approach to measuring brand-related sustainability perception without ignoring any of the three dimensions. Brand attitude was assessed by six items (nice, good, kindly, great, smart, and lovely) that have been used in different research approaches (Aaker, 2000; Karpinski and Hilton, 2001; Spruyt *et al.*, 2007; Karampournioti *et al.*, 2018a). To assess *brand-related behavior*, well-established reflective scales were used. Specifically, we created an analog factor by measuring purchase intention and the willingness to pay a higher price for the brand (Wiedmann *et al.*, 2011). All explicit items named above were rated on a five-point Likert scale (*1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree*).

For the implicit evaluation of UX, overall online shop attractiveness, brand-related sustainability perception and brand attitude, the same items as in the explicit evaluation were used in order to ensure the direct comparability of explicit and implicit information processing. While explicit evaluation was measured by a five-point Likert scale, implicit evaluation was assessed based on a reaction time measurement using the latency-based tool i² BrandREACT (eye square, 2014), which resembles a Single Category Implicit Association Test (SC-IAT) (Karpinski and Steinman, 2006). This procedure was chosen to capture implicit attitude based on a relatively automatic and spontaneous assessment.

4.3 Data collection and sample

The respondents were recruited in January 2017 through the snowball sampling method. A web-based survey was distributed via email messages and links on selected web pages (e.g., Facebook and forums). Participants were randomly assigned and redirected to one of the two conditions (text-based page vs. storytelling page) of Coffee Circle's online shop. They then read the story about the brand's vision and mission and clicked through the page to become familiar with the brand. To ensure that participants concentrated on their task and carefully read the content on the pages,

questions about Coffee Circle's activities in development projects and one specific question about its most popular coffee product were asked. Participants who did not give correct answers to these questions were eliminated from the dataset.

In total, 343 subjects responded to the questionnaire. According to several studies, perceptions and preferences are not only transmitted through language but shaped by it (Ogunnaike *et al.*, 2010). To avoid biases in the implicit measures due to the participants' language, data of all respondents who were not native German speakers were deleted from the dataset. As a result of the task and language check, a total of 77 cases were deleted, resulting in 266 valid questionnaires. The respondents' average age was approximately 37 years. The sample included a well-balanced distribution between females (49%) and males (51%) and an overrepresentation of singles (52%). Of the respondents, 21.1% had a monthly household net income of more than 4,000 euros, while 34.6% earned more than 2,500 euros monthly. Since sustainable products tend to be more expensive, the intention to buy or to prefer sustainable alternatives is strongly related to one's income. According to the data provided, our respondents had the financial ability to buy sustainable alternatives in the German market. Nevertheless, 65.2% of the respondents mentioned that they preferred conventional coffee, while 28% preferred fair-trade coffee.

4. Analysis and results

5.1 Effect of storytelling on brand-related KPIs (H_1-H_5)

To test the hypotheses and to determine whether storytelling affects UX, online shop attractiveness, the efficient transmission of brand-related associations (here, brand-related sustainability perception), brand attitude on explicit and implicit information-processing paths, and price premium and purchase intentions, significant differences between the two conditions were analyzed in the first step. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test $H_1 - H_5$. Before doing so,

to ensure clarity and better comparability, all explicit and implicit attitude scores were rescaled from zero to 100, with a greater (lower) score indicating a higher positive (negative) association. We compared the two online shop design groups (text-based vs. storytelling-based) with regard to 22 dependent variables, since some of these dimensions were checked twice on explicit and implicit levels. H_{1a} and H_{1b} refer to explicit and implicit brand-related associations in terms of ecological, social and economic brand sustainability; H_{2a} and H_{2b} refer to explicit and implicit brand attitudes; H_{3a} and H_{3b} refer to explicit brand-related behavior in terms of purchase intention and price premiums; and H_{4a} - H_{4d} refer to explicit and implicit hedonic and pragmatic UX. The ANOVA results partly support H_{1a} and H_{1b}. Storytelling via parallax has a significant impact on the transmission of brand associations in terms of implicit and explicit brand-related sustainability perception. This accounts for explicit social sustainability (ΔM_{exp} = 5.31, $F_{1.266}$ = 5.327, p = 0,022, η^2 = 0.020) and explicit implicit ecological sustainability (ΔM_{exp} = 4.51, $F_{1.266}$ = 4.553, p = 0,034, η^2 = 0.0170; ΔM_{imp} = 4.74, $F_{1.266}$ = 7.801, p = 0,006, η^2 = 0.029). For implicit social sustainability (ΔM_{imp} = 2.5342, $F_{1,266}$ = 1.684, p = 0.196, η^2 = 0.006) and both explicit and implicit economic sustainability (ΔM_{exp} = 2.9056, $F_{1,266}$ = 1.318, p = 0.252, η^2 = 0.005; ΔM_{imp} = 3.5508, $F_{1,266}$ = 2.234, p = 0.129, η^2 = 0.009), no differences between the text-based and the storytelling condition are observed. H_{2a} and H_{2b} address the effect of the text-based and storytelling condition on implicit and explicit brand attitudes. Empirical evidence of a significant impact on implicit brand attitude (ΔM_{imp} = 7.6360, $F_{1,266}$ = 10.098, p = 0.002, η^2 = 0.037) and explicit brand attitude (ΔM_{exp} = 5.0576, $F_{1,266}$ = 3.558, p = 0.060, η^2 = 0.013) emerges. Thus, the storytelling condition significantly enhances the overall implicit and explicit brand attitudes relative to the text-based condition. Accordingly, the empirical results support H_{2a} and H_{2b}.

H$_{3a}$ is supported, providing evidence for the assumption that storytelling positively affects the willingness to pay a higher price for the brand (ΔM = 4.8886; $F_{1,266}$ = 3.165, p = 0.076, η^2 = 0.012). Furthermore, empirical evidence for a significant difference between the text-based and storytelling condition is not found for purchase intention (ΔM = 3.0102; $F_{1,266}$ = 0.883, p = 0.348, η^2 = 0.003). Hence, *H$_{3b}$* is not supported.

H$_{4a}$-H$_{4d}$ address the differences in UX between the text-based and storytelling conditions. The results show that participants significantly differ in their perception of the pragmatic UX on explicit and implicit information-processing levels. Significant differences in perspicuity (ΔM_{exp} = 15.2966, $F_{1,266}$ = 31.412, p = 0.000, η^2 = 0.106 / ΔM_{imp} = 10.4766, $F_{1,266}$ = 25.406, p = 0.000, η^2 = 0.088), dependability (ΔM_{exp} = 15.8802, $F_{1,266}$ = 30.399, p = 0.000, η^2 = 0.103 / ΔM_{imp} = 11.9932; $F_{1,266}$ = 28.435, p = 0.000, η^2 = 0.097) and efficiency (ΔM_{exp} = 8.2470, $F_{1,266}$ = 9.270, p = 0.003, η^2 = 0.034; ΔM_{imp} = 5.7438, $F_{1,266}$ = 7.805, p = 0.006, η^2 = 0.029) are observed, with the storytelling condition obtaining better evaluations for pragmatic qualities. The same empirical evidence is observed for hedonic UX on both the novelty (ΔM_{exp} = 12.5762, $F_{1,266}$ = 22.072, p = 0.000, η^2 = 0.077; ΔM_{imp} = 8.2612, , $F_{1,266}$ = 13.401, p = 0.000, η^2 = 0.048) and stimulation (ΔM_{exp} = 13.7346, $F_{1,266}$ = 30.801, p = 0.000, η^2 = 0.104; ΔM_{imp} = 9.0611, $F_{1,266}$ = 17.718, p = 0.000, η^2 = 0.063) dimensions. Hence, *H$_{4a}$ – H$_{4d}$* are supported.

Finally, the overall explicit and implicit attractiveness of the website obtain higher evaluations in the storytelling condition (ΔM_{exp} = 8.8078; $F_{1,266}$ = 13.438, p = 0.000, η^2 = 0.048; ΔM_{imp} = 5.2064, $F_{1,266}$ = 7.553, p = 0.006, η^2 = 0.028), supporting H$_{5a}$ and H$_{5b.}$

5.2 Testing the causal relationship between the factors (H$_6$-H$_9$)

To empirically test the assumed model and the hypotheses related to the causal relationship between the factors, structural path modelling using PLS-SEM was used. This approach allows

simultaneous assessment of the measurement and structural models and is an appropriate and applicable method for testing both formative and reflective measurements in one model (Chin *et al.*, 2003; Hair *et al.*, 2013). In more detail, a recommended two-step approach for PLS analysis was conducted (Henseler *et al.*, 2009; Hair *et al.*, 2012) using SmartPLS 3.0. Hence, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated first before the structural model (inner model) was assessed.

5.2.1 Evaluation of the measurement model

For a reliable and valid measurement of the latent variables, we followed the suggestions of (Chin, 1998) and his catalog of criteria for assessing partial model structures. Only if the measurement models exhibit a satisfactory degree of validity and reliability can the assessment of the structural model's properties be worthwhile and deliver meaningful/conclusive results (Henseler *et al.*, 2009).

5.2.2 Formative constructs

With regard to the evaluation of the formative measurement models and explicit and implicit dimensions of pragmatic and hedonic UX (*see Table 1*), *Table 2* represents the results of the reliability and validity assessments of these manifested variables. Given that formative measures cannot be assessed using conventional statistical evaluation criteria for reflective measures (Hair *et al.*, 2011), we followed the recommendations of Diamantopoulos *et al.* (2011). Understood as the indicators' relative importance with respect to forming the summed scale that represents the latent variable, the outer weights explain the latent variables with a small to high impact. As shown in *Table 2*, nearly all formative indicator weights are significant and higher than .1. Only the indicators for explicit and implicit dependability do not meet the requirements. Since all factors are necessary to cover all relevant facets of UX from a theory-driven perspective (Cenfetelli and

Bassellier, 2009) and central components of a construct can be lost if items are deleted (Bollen and Lennox, 1991), neither indicator was omitted.

Insert Table 1 about here

With reference to the measurement challenge of avoiding multicollinearity (indicator collinearity), the maximum variance inflation factor (VIF) for the formative measures is 1.585 for explicit perspicuity, as shown in *Table 2*. These findings indicate that multicollinearity is not likely to negatively affect the results against the background of the widely recommended and accepted cut-off value criteria of 10 (e.g., (Kleinbaum *et al.*, 1988; Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001).

Insert Table 2 about here

5.2.3 Reflective constructs

Table 3 reports the manifest variables of the corresponding reflective constructs. With .717 being the lowest factor loading, the results reveal sufficient indicator reliability for all six constructs. In addition, the PLS model estimation presented in *Table 4* exhibits satisfactory results in terms of internal consistency (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988): The estimated average variance extracted (AVE) ranges from 57% to 88%, Cronbach's alphas range from .85 to .95, and the composite reliability values range from .88 to .96. Furthermore, all tested latent variables satisfy the Fornell-Larcker criterion requirements (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), thus indicating discriminant validity.

Insert Table 3 about here

Insert Table 4 about here

5.2.4 Evaluation of the structural model

The inner model was assessed with respect to the variance accounted regarding the predictive relevance of the exogenous latent variables. As shown in *Table 5*, the calculated coefficients of determination of the endogenous latent variables (R^2) range from .318 (explicit attitude) to .710 (explicit attractiveness). According to Chin (1998), these values range from moderate to satisfactory. Additionally, all Stone-Geisser's Q^2 values (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974) are higher than zero for all endogenous latent variables, with .184 being the minimum Q^2 value, indicating adequate predictive power for the introduced conceptual model.

Insert Table 5 about here

Finally, a nonparametric bootstrapping procedure (5,000 re-samples) was run to test the proposed hypotheses between the latent variables of our model. The estimated path coefficients are provided in *Table 6*. The data analysis and the corresponding results reveal the following insights with regard to our initial hypotheses:

Insert Table 6 about here

Referring to the effect of UX on the overall attractiveness of the online shop, our results verify that explicit and implicit hedonic UX are significantly positively related to explicit and implicit online shop attractiveness, providing full support for *H6a, H6b, H6c,* and *H6d.*

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Focusing on the pragmatic qualities of the online shop, the results reveal that explicit and implicit pragmatic UX significantly affect the implicit and explicit attractiveness of the shop. This applies with the exception of the effect of implicit pragmatic UX on explicit attractiveness. Hence, H_{7a}, H_{7b}, and H_{7d} are confirmed, and H_{7c} is rejected.

The next set of hypotheses focuses on the transfer of online shop characteristics to brand-related measures, which is represented by the effects of explicit and implicit online shop attractiveness on explicit and implicit brand attitudes. The results support H_{8a}, H_{8b}, and H_{8d}, which represent the effects of explicit attractiveness on explicit and implicit brand attitudes and the effect of implicit attractiveness on implicit brand attitude. The effect of implicit attractiveness on explicit brand attitude is not supported, leading to the rejection of H_{8c}.

H_{9a} and H_{9b} argued that explicit and implicit brand attitudes influence brand-related behaviors in terms of purchase intention and the willingness to pay a higher price. Empirical evidence of a significant impact of explicit and implicit attitudes on brand-related behavior is provided. Accordingly, the empirical results support H_{9a} and H_{9b}. Overall, the results reveal that ten out of fourteen hypotheses receive full empirical support, so a causal chain of direct and indirect effects from UX to behavioral intention is detected (see Figure 3).

Insert Figure 3 about here
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5. Conclusion and Implications

Numerous studies on topics such as UX, online shopping and storytelling have created a backdrop of an ever-growing research stream on consumer behavior in an online context. In this study, we explored how the design of an online shop and the presentation of relevant content influence

visitors' UX, brand perceptions, brand attitudes and behavioral intentions. In general, the main contribution of the present manuscript is that it provides a deeper understanding of the efficiency of storytelling in influencing consumers' UX with online shops. Moreover, we examined the ability of storytelling to transmit relevant and appropriate brand-related associations (here, brand sustainability) in forming brand attitudes and triggering related behaviors, such as purchase intention and willingness to pay a higher price. To provide a deeper understanding of the interrelations between UX and brand-related KPIs, structural equation modelling was used to detect the interaction mechanism between these variables.

The results show that through the storytelling technique with parallax scrolling, online shop visitors' UX increases on explicit and implicit information-processing levels. This effect is driven by both pragmatic and hedonic aspects of UX as well as the overall perceived attractiveness of the online shop. Although prior results have revealed that users encounter usability problems when interacting with parallax scrolling websites (Frederick *et al.*, 2015; Yamin and Jaafar, 2013), this finding does not hold true in the present study; efficiency, perspicuity, and dependability as well as stimulation and novelty (hedonic dimensions of UX) are rated higher for the storytelling condition. Furthermore, storytelling enables an efficient transmission of brand-related associations in consumers' minds, enhances their explicit and implicit brand attitudes and increases their willingness to pay a higher price. Significant differences in the purchase intention between the text-based and storytelling conditions are not observed in the present study.

In addition, the PLS-SEM provides new insights into the transfer of online shop characteristics (UX) to brand-related constructs (explicit and implicit) and KPIs. More specifically, explicit and implicit UX have a significant impact on the overall perceived attractiveness of the online shop. It becomes apparent that hedonic attributes (characterized by the uniqueness and stimulation of an online shop) exert a stronger influence than pragmatic characteristics (dependability, efficiency,

and perspicuity). Subsequently, the explicit and implicit perceived online shop attractiveness positively influences explicit and implicit brand attitudes, which in turn positively trigger users' purchase intention and willingness to pay a higher price. Overall, the study reveals a causal chain of several effects from UX to online shop attractiveness and brand attitude and finally to behavioral intentions.

6.1 Theoretical implications

As digital content continues to proliferate and the number of online shops rapidly increases, researchers have become increasingly interested in understanding how to enhance UX and how UX affects perceptions, brand-related attributes and behavioral intentions. The main contribution of this manuscript is that it provides a deeper understanding of how experiences in online shops affect brand-related measures and behavioral intentions, but it also shows how storytelling is able to enhance and significantly improve visitors' online UX. Traditional studies related to online consumer behavior often rely on the theory of planned behavior (TPB), the theory of reasoned action (TRA), or the technology acceptance model (TAM) as the underlying mechanisms and methods to influence behavior. These approaches do not allow conclusions about the particular aspects of stimuli that are responsible for outcomes. For example, the results cannot tell us which aspects of a technology or an online shop are responsible for enhancing perceived ease of use. Through the multimethod approach used (experiment, explicit and implicit measures and SEM), the current study addresses this theoretical limitation and allows accurate statements on how storytelling affects the most important aspects of the causal chain and how it is a factor of success in communication in an online shop context.

Furthermore, this study provides an important contribution to the research stream of storytelling in an online shopping context. Further research approaches have focused on the effects of storytelling

on entertainment potential and immersion/transportation, e.g., in a video game context (Lugrin *et al.*, 2010), for educational uses (Robin, 2008), and for social movements (Dimond *et al.*, 2013). Some studies have analyzed the importance of story plots, archetypes, narrative structure, and consumer identity as structured by narratives and its effects on brands (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998; Escalas and Bettman, 2000; Fournier, 1998; Schembri *et al.*, 2010; Murray, 2002; Thompson and Haytko, 1997; Woodside *et al.*, 2008; Megehee and Woodside, 2010). Moreover, research on storytelling and online UX has focused solely on product-related outcomes (Mahardika *et al.*, 2018) or on website UX per se (Frederick *et al.*, 2015; Wang and Sundar, 2018) and has overlooked the transfer to brand-related KPIs and behavioral intentions. Hence, the present results add significant and empirical insights to the literature on the underlying mechanisms of storytelling in an online shopping context, which is related to UX, brand-related outcomes and the interrelation between these variables.

In addition, the research approach that combines implicit and explicit associations is unique in this context and shows how storytelling in the online shopping context works in both information-processing paths (system 1 and system 2). This refers to both the perception of an online shop's UX and brand-related measures.

6.2 Implications for practice

Major practical implications can be derived from the findings of the present study. Because both implicit and explicit UX and online shop attractiveness are found to be strongly relevant, marketing managers need to perform well on both information-processing paths. Neglecting this influence on explicit or implicit levels can result in a negative impact on the online shop's attractiveness and adversely affect brand-related and behavior-relevant variables. Referring to the formative constructs of UX, hedonism represents the most relevant influencing factor, and

it can be driven by stimulation and uniqueness in an online shop. An efficient way to enhance these aspects is to implement storytelling using the parallax technique. As a result, pragmatic qualities of an online shop can be explicitly and implicitly increased in terms of efficiency, dependability and perspicuity, and online shops can simultaneously perform better on hedonic qualities such as stimulation and uniqueness. Furthermore, telling stories and implementing this communication technique in online shops helps companies and brands transport the desired brand associations to visitors and anchor these associations in consumers' minds in explicit (conscious) and implicit (unconscious) ways, thus forming the core of the brand. Hence, visitors must be able to enjoy their visit to online shops but also be able to easily gather information in order for the shop to have the chance to anchor relevant associations in their mind. To ensure that the website is attractive to the target group and that the goals of the company are achieved, marketing practitioners are recommended to carry out marketing research and to test the explicit and implicit attributes of their online shop. This can ensure the long-term success of their online presence and represent a competitive advantage in the saturated online shop field.

6. Limitations and further research

This study faces several limitations that provide future research opportunities. The study has shown that brand associations can be transmitted effectively through storytelling, but this finding applies to sustainability-related associations that were triggered in the study. Therefore, future research should examine whether digital storytelling in online shops is also an efficient means of communication to trigger associations related to functional brand characteristics such as the selection of materials for products, the technical production processes, the functional characteristics and performance of products or the overall perceived value of the brand and its products. Some researchers argue that parallax scrolling is more

suitable to improve the efficiency of a website with a hedonic nature (Ku, 2016), and some have shown that it enhances ease of use (Wang and Sundar, 2018) and reduces cognitive effort (Mahardika *et al.*, 2018) during online shopping; therefore, the effects on UX and especially brand-related measures in different hedonic and non-hedonic contexts should also be investigated in the future. Another important limitation is that the present study covered one single coffee brand from the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG). Therefore, investigations of other brands and products from the FMCG and from other branches are needed. Furthermore, our study uses a combination of explicit and implicit research methods and therefore assesses individual perception and reactions on a holistic level. Nevertheless, other methods can be used to provide deeper insights; e.g., through attention tracking, it would be possible to measure visitors' visual attention during online shop exposure (Bednarik and Tukiainen, 2007; Jansen *et al.*, 2003). The application of additional neuromarketing methods (e.g., electroencephalography, facial recognition) could also extend the knowledge in this field and increase the insights into consumer behavior in an online context.

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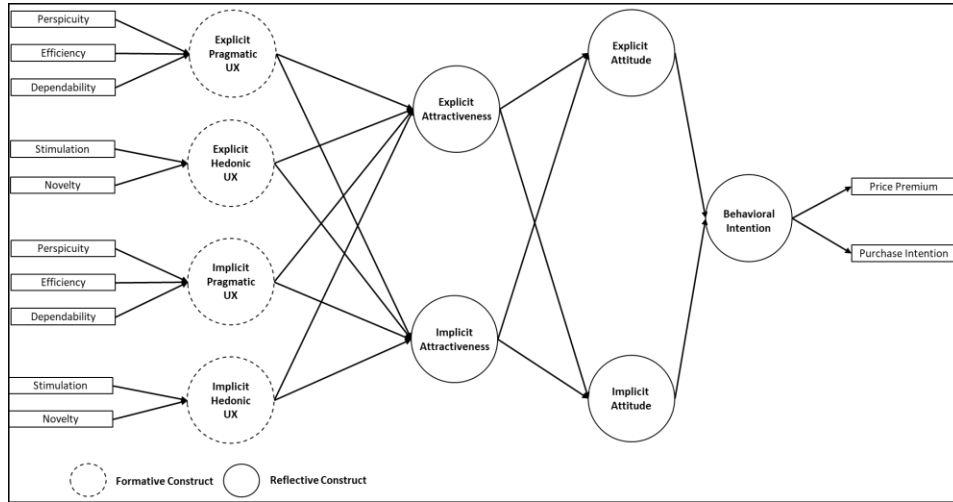## FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL

FIGURE 2: EXPERIMENTAL CONDITIONS

TABLE 1: VARIABLES OF THE FORMATIVE MEASUREMENT MODELS

Explicit and Implicit Hedonic and Pragmatic User Experiences

UX_Perspicuity	*"The online shop is very clear."*
UX_Efficiency	*"The online shop is very useful/efficient."*
UX_Novelty	*"The online shop is very inventive."*
UX_Stimulation	*"The online shop is very inspiring."*
UX_Dependability	*"The online shop is very predictable."*

TABLE 2: ASSESSING THE FORMATIVE MEASUREMENT MODELS

Formative Indicator → LV	Original Sample	Sample Mean	SD	T Statistics	p-value	VIF
UX_Perspicuity Implicit → Implicit Pragmatic UX	0.388	0.386	0.110	3.542	0.000	1.208
UX_Efficiency Implicit → Implicit Pragmatic UX	0.770	0.762	0.082	9.399	0.000	1.194
UX_Dependability Implicit → Implicit Pragmatic UX	0.059	0.060	0.090	0.653	0.514	1.018
UX_Novelty Implicit → Implicit Hedonic UX	0.500	0.497	0.092	5.420	0.000	1.158
UX_Stimulation Implicit → Implicit Hedonic UX	0.701	0.698	0.081	8.666	0.000	1.158
UX_Perspicuity Explicit → Explicit Pragmatic UX	0.226	0.225	0.089	2.533	0.011	1.585
UX_Efficiency Explicit → Explicit Pragmatic UX	0.850	0.848	0.064	13.274	0.000	1.488
UX_Dependability Explicit → Explicit Pragmatic UX	0.019	0.015	0.065	0.289	0.773	1.084
UX_Novelty Explicit → Explicit Hedonic UX	0.468	0.467	0.084	5.559	0.000	1.533
UX_Stimulation Explicit → Explicit Hedonic UX	0.650	0.648	0.079	8.266	0.000	1.533

TABLE 3: MANIFEST VARIABLES OF THE REFLECTIVE MEASUREMENT MODELS

Explicit and Implicit Online Shop Attractiveness

"The online shop is...

appealing"

pleasant"

attractive"

Explicit and Implicit Brand Attitude

"The brand is...

nice"

good"

kindly"

great"

smart"

lovely"

Brand Outcomes

Price Premium	*"I am willing to pay a higher price for products of this brand compared to average products"*
Purchase Intention	*"I plan to buy products of this brand in the future"*

TABLE 4: ASSESSING THE REFLECTIVE MEASUREMENT MODELS

	Factor Loadings	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Fornell-Larcker-Criterion
Implicit Brand Attitude	0.717 - 0.810	0.572	0.850	0.889	0.756 > 0.677
Explicit Brand Attitude	0.852 - 0.908	0.799	0.950	0.960	0.894 > 0.677
Implicit Attractiveness	0.784 - 0.828	0.646	0.727	0.846	0.804 > 0.622
Explicit Attractiveness	0.852 - 0.902	0.784	0.862	0.916	0.885 > 0.678
Behavioral Intention	0.937 - 0.947	0.888	0.874	0.940	0.942 > 0.589

TABLE 5: COEFFICIENT OF DETERMINATION

Endogenous Latent Variables	R^2	Q^2
Implicit Attitude	0.350	0.184
Explicit Attitude	0.318	0.240
Implicit Attractiveness	0.523	0.317
Explicit Attractiveness	0.710	0.528
Behavioral Intention	0.364	0.306

TABLE 6: BOOTSTRAPPING RESULTS FOR THE STRUCTURAL RELATIONS

Exogenous LV → Endogenous LV	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	p-value
Implicit Hedonic → Implicit Attractiveness	0.311	0.310	0.062	5.050	0.000
Implicit Hedonic → Explicit Attractiveness	0.103	0.102	0.043	2.396	0.017
Implicit Pragmatic → Implicit Attractiveness	0.149	0.153	0.055	2.698	0.007
Implicit Pragmatic → Explicit Attractiveness	0.042	0.042	0.044	0.948	0.343
Explicit Hedonic → Implicit Attractiveness	0.299	0.298	0.058	5.161	0.000
Explicit Hedonic → Explicit Attractiveness	0.475	0.476	0.050	9.443	0.000
Explicit Pragmatic → Implicit Attractiveness	0.141	0.142	0.056	2.526	0.012
Explicit Pragmatic → Explicit Attractiveness	0.374	0.374	0.047	8.011	0.000
Implicit Attractiveness → Implicit Attitude	0.357	0.359	0.086	4.157	0.000
Implicit Attractiveness → Explicit Attitude	-0.024	-0.021	0.075	0.314	0.754
Explicit Attractiveness → Implicit Attitude	0.281	0.280	0.082	3.421	0.001
Explicit Attractiveness → Explicit Attitude	0.581	0.580	0.077	7.556	0.000
Implicit Attitude → Purchase Decision	0.177	0.175	0.073	2.436	0.015
Explicit Attitude → Purchase Decision	0.469	0.473	0.073	6.422	0.000

FIGURE 3: EMPIRICAL MODEL
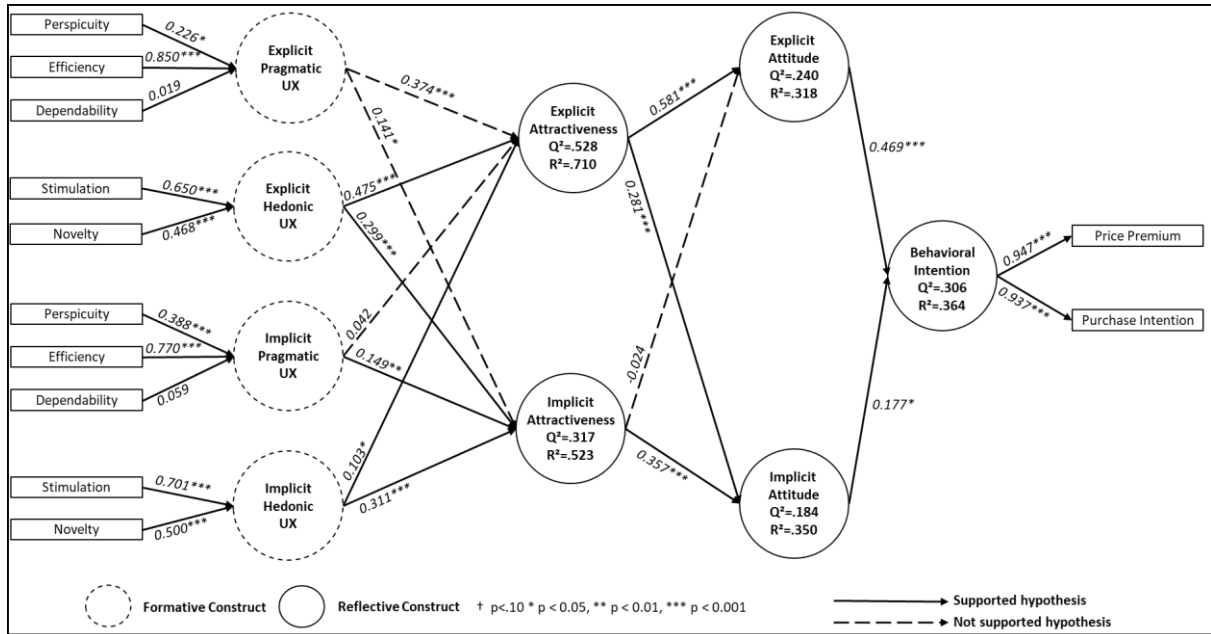
Evidence of Co-Authorship and Definition of Responsibilities

The presented research articles were jointly developed by co-authors. All content is completely based on collective and collaborative elaboration, whereby the following responsibilities were defined within the respective modules:

Module 1: Identification of Antecedents and Consequences of Ethical Consumption

Responsibilities of *"Anything Worth Doing: The Ambiguity of Values in Sustainable Luxury"*: Nadine Hennigs: Introduction, empirical application, conclusion; Evmorfia Karampournioti: Theoretical background, taxonomy of value-based environmental orientation, empirical application; Klaus-Peter Wiedmann: Supervision.

Responsibilities of *"The Luxury of Sustainability: Examining Value-Based Drivers of Fair Trade Consumption"*: Steffen Schmidt: Conceptualization and hypotheses development (H1a, H1b, H1c), research methodology, results and discussion; Nadine Hennigs: Introduction, scientific contribution, next research steps; Stefan Behrens: Introduction; Evmorfia Karampournioti: Conceptualization and hypotheses development (H2a, H2b, H3), managerial implications, revision.

Responsibilities of *"Do as You Would Be Done by: The Importance of Animal Welfare in the Global Beauty Care Industry"*: Nadine Hennigs: Introduction, conclusion; Evmorfia Karampournioti: Theoretical background, conceptual model; Klaus-Peter Wiedmann: Supervision.

Module 2: Explicit and Implicit Effects of Communication Measures on Ethical Consumption in Offline and Online Environments

Responsibilities of *"When Pain is Pleasure: Identifying Consumer Psychopaths"*: Evmorfia Karampournioti: Theoretical background, conceptual model, method, analysis and results, future research; Nadine Hennigs: Introduction, discussion, managerial implications; Klaus-Peter Wiedmann: Supervision.

Responsibilities of *"Storytelling in Online Shops: The Impact on Explicit and Implicit User Experience, Brand Perceptions and Behavioral Intention"*: Evmorfia Karampournioti: Introduction, theoretical background, conceptual model, method, analysis and results, conclusion and implications, limitations and further research; Klaus-Peter Wiedmann: Supervision.

Further Publications

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