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Green purchase intention of young Turkish consumers: Effects of consumer's guilt, self-monitoring and perceived consumer effectiveness

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Abstract

This research introduces the results from a quantitative study of young Turkish consumers regarding how the consumer guilt, self-monitoring and perceived consumer effectiveness influence their green consumption intention. The purpose of this research was to provide an empirical study to explain the direct and indirect effects of three special factors on the green consumption; as well as the first two factors' impact on the perceived consumer effectiveness. In this context, a conceptual model has been proposed and subjected to empirical verification with the use of a survey data collected from 172 university students. The study revealed that perceived consumer effectiveness is the most influential construct on green purchase intention. Consumer guilt has been found to have both direct and indirect enhancing effects on green purchase intention of young consumers. While more empirical research is required to test the long term engagement of the young consumers, the future research would be focused on the daily green consumption habits of consumers.

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1. Introduction

Growing consumer sensitivity to social and environmental problems and its great pressure on marketers and public policy makers are addressed even by works in 1970s (e.g. Kassarijian, 1971; Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Kinnear, James, & Sadrudin, 1974). Consumers' belief in that their personal consumption decisions can help maintain the environment or induce its deterioration and consequently improve quality of life in society change the way many goods and services are marketed (Kinnear, James, & Sadrudin, 1974; Brooker, 1976). Moreover, marketing and consumer behavior researchers also focus on understanding the dynamics of the consumption described as socially conscious, sustainable, pro-environmental or green. During the last four decades, the consideration over green

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consumption has been enlarged by the contributions of the academics from different scientific disciplines who intended to discover the antecedents of sustainable consumption (Prothero, Dobscha, Freund, Kilbourne, Luchs, Ozanne, & Thøgersen, 2011).

While early works (e.g. Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Webster, 1975) mainly focus on identifying the characteristics of socially conscious consumers more recent works have centered on the identification of consumer motivation underlying pro-environmental behaviors and the explication of the relationship between cognitive or motivational factors and environmentally conscious behavior (Kim & Choi, 2005). Nevertheless, as reported by Prothero, Dobscha, Freund, Kilbourne, Luchs, Ozanne, & Thøgersen (2011), the problems related to unsustainable consumption are growing, despite all the work in academia addressing the need of additional research.

In this context, this research focuses on understanding the “green consumption” which is a subset of sustainable consumption and refers to willingness to buy ecologically friendly products or services (whose contents and methods of production) have least damage to the environment (Young, Hwang, McDonald, & Oates, 2010). Through an individualistic perspective centering the needs, values and attitudes, the research focuses on the process through which intention for green consumption is significantly explained. For this purpose, the roles of personal states (consumer guilt and perceived effectiveness), personal traits (self-monitoring) in the process leading to green purchase intentions are investigated. The study begins with describing the green consumption and giving literary background of the proposed direct and indirect effects of the personal factors on green purchase intention. Next, the research model is tested; the results are reported and discussed. Finally, suggestions for implications and future research are provided.

2. Literature Review And Hypotheses

The environment-related behavioral terms have been used with different terms stating the behavior that has a positive impact on the environment: Ecologically concerned consumption, environmentally conscious behavior, environmental activism, pro-environmental behavior, sustainable consumption behavior and green consumption behavior (Kinnear, James, & Sadrudin, 1974; Roberts, 1996; Antonetti & Maklan, 2014; Lee, Kim, Kim & Choi, 2014). The green purchase intention-willingness to consume with the minimal damage to the environment- dates back to early 1970s (e.g. Anderson and Cunningham, 1972, Kinnear, James, & Sadrudin, 1974, Brooker 1976). In an attempt to explain green consumption behavior some group of works focused on determining the characteristics of so-called “green consumer”, (Kinnear, James, & Sadrudin, 1974; Webster, 1975; Roberts, 1996; Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaio-Forleo, 2001; Lu, Chang & Chang., 2015) while another groups of work mainly concentrate on the consumers’ environmental knowledge, concern and environmental attitude and environmental consciousness (Roberts, 1996; Minton & Rose, 1997; Roberts & Bacon, 1997; Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaio-Forleo, 2001; Diamantopoulos, Schelegelmilch, Sinkovics & Bohlen, 2003; Lu, Chang & Chang, 2015) as main drivers of green purchasing. The personal values (e.g. perceived importance; perceived inconvenience; individualism/ collectivism, conspicuous consumption) the personal and social norms were also studied to explain the green consumer behavior (Roberts, 1996; Roberts & Bacon, 1997; Chan, 2001; Goldstein, Cialdini & Griskevicius, 2008; Griskevicius, Tyburg & Van den Bergh, 2010). External influences such as the role of price and quality, eco-labels and consumers’ beliefs about the environmental performance were also investigated as related with the green consumption as reported by Sima (2014).

Unlike the previous works on green consumption, this research focuses on both effects of state of guilt and self-monitoring trait on green purchase intention directly and indirectly through promoting perceived consumer effectiveness. Consistent with the previous findings regarding very strong relationship between constructs (Kinnear, James, & Sadrudin, 1974; Roberts, 1996) perceived consumer effectiveness is considered as a key antecedent of green purchase intention.

2.1. Perceived Consumer Effectiveness

Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE), is a concept that dates back to 1970s, described as the ability to affect outcomes captures the stable beliefs about the effectiveness of consumer choices in general (Kinnear, James, & Sadrudin, 1974; Ellen, Weiner, & Cobb-Walgren 1991; Roberts, 1996; Kim & Choi, 2005; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006;

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