



Personal values in protecting the environment: The case of North America

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the environmental protection has become of utmost importance, not only by governments and authorities responsible for its supervision but also citizens are increasingly behaving respectfully with the environment. Economic growth, especially in emerging economies, entails greater environmental impacts, while more developed countries have a more "pro-environmental" attitude.

This paper aims to analyze the individual environmental values and behaviors of the citizens of the most developed economies of the world located in North America. The personal behaviors for the environment and their differentiation with respect to European countries are analyzed. The data provided by the World Values Survey Association, with a sample of more than 10,000 individuals belonging to The United States and Canada, have been used to conduct the study. The empirical analysis is addressed through a model of structural equations, where the different hypotheses can be contrasted. The work analyzes the relationships between attitudes, actions, and environmental proactivity of the individuals evaluated to compare it with previous studies conducted in Europe.

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1. Introduction

In the last decades of the 20th century, the environment has been considered one of the main problems affecting developed countries (Bord and O'Connor, 1997), which has somehow, intensified in recent years exponentially (Scott and Willits, 1994; Mondéjar Jimenez et al., 2010).

In the present century, a series of actions aimed at preserving the environment have been conducted with a wide range of initiatives. The last and most important action took place worldwide with the Climate Change Conference held in Paris in 2016, which sought to tackle global warming and avoid climate change. This type of action has been widely reported in the specialized literature, which concludes on the importance of such agreements and the generation of favorable environmental spaces (Geller, 2002; Mobley et al., 2010).

Most of these agreements have a direct influence on the economic growth and development of nations since they involve

redesigning some of the widely generalized production processes. These types of efforts are considered essential by most developed countries (Franzen and Meyer, 2010; Botetzagias and Malesios, 2012).

The positive relationship between the economic growth and the environmental concern is highlighted in many studies (Syme et al., 2002; Franzen, 2003; Garcia-Pozo et al., 2013). Although it should be noted that environmental awareness grows faster than personal attitudes, it is therefore increasingly important for citizens to incur the additional expenses of new sustainable production models (Franzen and Meyer, 2010; García-Pozo et al., 2016; Stanley et al., 2017).

Many of the studies in recent years are intended to analyze the environmental preferences and the most influential factors associated with them (Danielson et al., 1995; Cameron and Englin, 1997; Bulte et al., 2005; Hidano et al., 2005). Several authors (Naiman and Turner, 2000; Toren and Garcia-Valiñas, 2007; Chen, and Chai, 2010; Pisano, and Lubell, 2017) perform a task of compiling the variables analyzed in environmental studies and their relation with socio-demographic variables, or cross-curricular analysis. This work is based on the study of Mondéjar-Jiménez et al. (2012) using a new wave of WVS data v_2015-04 (World Values Survey Association, 2017), applied to North America, expecting to know

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the environmental attitude of the citizens since to this day, we know the exit of the USA from the last Climate Summit and the agreements adopted on it.

2. Hypotheses, data and methodology

The WSV database is used by many researchers (Mondéjar Jimenez et al., 2011; Mondéjar Jimenez et al., 2012; Lee-Ross, 2015), who highlight the enormous response rate obtained in different countries—the use of environmental variables for The United States and Canada—have returned 10,361 valid surveys, with the final objective of knowing the environmental attitudes and proactivity of the citizens of a given territory. The following table shows the items analyzed:

Based on these items analyzed, the following hypotheses have been proposed as a consequence of the previous work by Mondéjar Jimenez et al., 2012:

Hypothesis 1. Environmental values have a positive influence on the other latent factors.

- H1.1 Environmental values have a positive influence on environmental attitudes.
- H1.2 Environmental values have a positive influence on proactivity.
- H1.3 Environmental values have a positive influence on environmental actions.

Hypothesis 2. Environmental attitude has a positive influence on proactivity and on actions.

- H2.1 Environmental attitude has a positive influence on proactivity.
- H2.2 Environmental attitude has a positive influence on actions.

Hypothesis 3. Environmental proactivity has a positive influence on environmental actions.

The absence of normality and the predictive orientation of the proposed model recommend the estimation of this model of structural equations under the partial least squares (PLS) methodology (Chin et al., 2003; Becker and Rosnita, 2016). This is one of the most used methodologies when the cause-effect relationships need to be analyzed (Cordente Rodriguez et al., 2010; Fritzsche and Oz, 2007) since it informs us of the sign and intensity of these relationships.

3. Results

For the estimation of the structural model, the SmartPLS 2.0 software is used.

Fig. 1 shows the main results of the analysis, we can see that the environmental values have a reduced direct effect and not significant on the environmental actions, although the total effect (direct + indirect) is very consistent. For its part, environmental proactivity is the one that has a greater influence on environmental actions, this environmental proactivity can be influenced by cultural values of the country itself. They can be the cause of the difference in results with other previous studies conducted in Europe (Mondéjar Jimenez et al., 2012) (see Tables 1 and 3).

The validation of the models and the scales can be seen in Table 2, obtaining values higher than those recommended in most cases:

The table below shows the correlation existing between latent

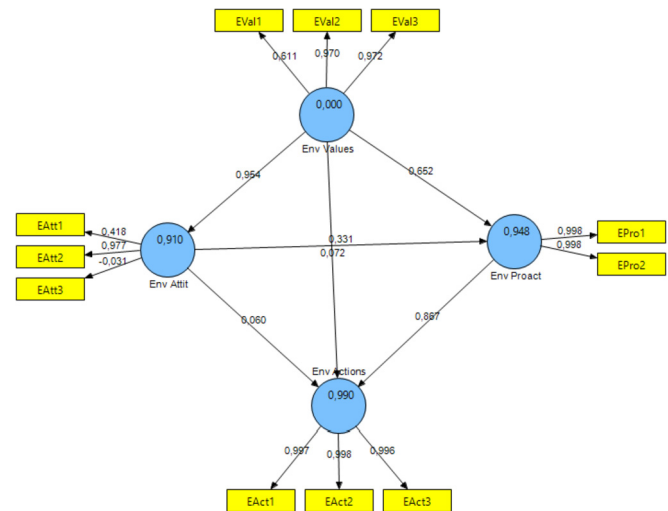


Fig. 1. Estimation of the structural equation model.

factors:

Table 4 shows the direct and total effects between each of the latent factors. All the effects are positive, but the environmental attitudes of individuals have a very direct effect on environmental actions, although the total effect reaches the value of 0.348. On the other hand, proactivity is the one that has a stronger direct effect, even though the greater total effect is registered in the environmental values.

Table 5 verifies the theoretical assumptions and, for that purpose, the direct effect is included. Their t-statistics and p-values, estimated by bootstrapping with 5000 samples. All the hypotheses are contrasted except for the influence of the environmental values of individuals in their proactivity and their attitude.

4. Conclusions

The present work attempts to ratify the environmental behavior of the North American individuals, in comparison with the previous studies conducted in Europe. For that aim, data from the WVS have been used—in its wave of 2015—. The recruitment process has been conducted through a structural equation model, where the environmental values, proactivity, and the environmental attitudes of individuals affect all of their actions.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from this work is that the relations of the values, with respect to their proactivity and the attitudes of individuals, are not significant. It is true, however, that they have positive and good intensity, but this fact is one of the differentials between Europeans and American people.

If we analyze each one of the hypotheses, we must highlight the following aspects: every hypothesis has a direct and positive effect, being the environmental attitudes the ones that have a lower intensity. On the other hand, the environmental proactivity is the one that represents a greater intensity. At this point, it can be appreciated another differential element—although the sign is the same in both population groups (Europe & North America),—in the case previously analyzed (Mondéjar Jimenez et al., 2012), such element is the fact that individuals with an environmental attitude have a greater impact on environmental actions, as opposed to proactivity. These differences may be due, in large part, to cultural factors not analyzed in the present study, whereas in the old continent, the individuals with better attitudes imply a better defense of the environment. In North America, it is precisely the individuals who show a greater proactivity those who have a greater influence on

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