

# An Improved Framework for Predicting Socially Responsible Consumption Behavior: The Development of a Processual Approach

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## Abstract

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

**Keywords:** socially-responsible consumption behaviour, model of goal-directed behaviour, intention-action gap, environmental concern, social concern, conceptual research

## 1. Introduction

Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior (hereafter, SRCB) is currently a relatively well-studied and researched area. This heightened interest in SRCB matches rising concerns regarding environmental degradation and social well-being in the public arena. In the topical literature, the construct of SRCB has usually been identified as a standalone concept with multidimensional properties (Roberts, 1993, 1995, 1996; Mohr, Webb & Harris, 2001; François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006; Webb, Mohr & Harris, 2008). However, considering SRCB as such led to several important issues and notably the famous intention-action gap or the attitude-behavior gap (Walker *et al.*, 2010; François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2008). In an attempt to narrow those multiple gaps, the business sciences have come to favour the elaboration of processual models in which a given construct, say SRCB, is considered as a phenomenon consisting of well-investigated cognitive, affective and conative constructs which lie at the cornerstones of marketing scholarship such as emotions, attitudes, intentions or beliefs (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Fullerton, 2011). Each construct is then adapted to reflect the specific theme under study (e.g. SRCB). Therefore, instead of a monolithic SRCB construct which reduces multiple dimensions and perspectives of SRCB to a single variable, a more dynamic framework would be more reflective of reality and provide a practical solution to overcome the several gaps and nuances that exist inherently between different aspects of behavior (e.g. affect and action), but which are flattened when mixed up into a single standalone construct.

This article aims therefore at providing several perspectives to an improved prediction of Socially-Responsible Consumption. It specifically points toward considering Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior (SRCB) from a processual viewpoint. Drawing on the Model of Goal-Directed Behavior (hereafter, MGB), this article argues indeed for a more dynamic approach to the study of SRCB, integrating cognitive, affective and conative variables altogether.

More specifically, the article aims at answering the following research questions: (1) how to define Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior? (2) What are the different conceptualizations and scales that have been developed so far to investigate Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior? (3) How to narrow the gap between Socially-Responsible Consumption cognitive, affective and conative variables? And, (4) to what extent is the profiling of socially-responsible consumers relevant?

This article answers to each of these questions through conceptual analysis delineated into four different sections. The first section proposes a conceptualization of Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior. The second deals with the measures of Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior and its related concepts. The third part develops a theoretical explanation of the attitude/intention-action gap. The fourth part discusses the profiling of socially-responsible consumers. The author concludes by discussing the implications of this research.

## 2. Historical Review of Socially Responsible Consumption Behavior

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

The 1970s witnessed the growing development of marketing with an environmental perspective (Zikmund & Stanton, 1971; Hénon, 1972; Fisk, 1974; Perry, 1976; Hénon & Kinnear, 1976; Shapiro, 1978). Academic work on Socially-Responsible Consumption took therefore a strong environmental orientation (Tognacci *et al.*, 1972; Anderson, Hénon & Cox, 1974; Kinnear, Taylor & Ahmed, 1974; Brooker, 1976; Arbuthnot, 1977; Buttell & Flinn, 1978a, 1978b; Van Liere & Dunlap, 1981). Even Webster’s (1975) *Socially Conscious Scale Index*, for example, focused mainly on environmental concerns (Webb, Mohr & Harris, 2008). Besides, the concepts of *green marketing* and *green consumer* gained momentum in the 1980s (Brundtland, 1987; Vandermerwe & Oliff, 1990; MORI, 1994). This shift emphasized the ecological viewpoint even more in SRC-related research (*e.g.*, Antil [1984]). The ecological perspective remained predominant in the early 1990s (see Ellen [1994]).

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

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

Several measurement scales have subsequently be developed in order to gauge the level of responsible or ethical consumption. However, these measures suffer from serious flaws and drawbacks. First, in accordance with Churchill’s (1979), scale development paradigm, a concept domain has to be first well-defined in order for a researcher to develop a measurement of that concept. With regards to responsible consumption it is fair to say that the concept remains very fuzzy (Binninger & Robert, 2008). Second, there is a lot of variation regarding the unit of measurement across different scales, some focusing on attitudes (Antil, 1984), others on intentions (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2008) and others on a mixture between intentions and actual behavior (Webb, Mohr & Harris, 2008; Yan & She, 2011). Third, few studies take into account the ethical gap purchasing which underlies the sometimes abyssal difference between what people say or intend to do and what they actually do (Walker *et al.*, 2010). This is usually a result from the social desirability bias (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2008). Items of the intentional and non-behavioural type are most likely to generate such bias. Finally, there has been a complete lack of stability in the results of the different research on Socially-Responsible Consumption over the past forty years, especially regarding the influence and significance of various exogenous variables such as Perceived Consumer Effectiveness or Collectivism. This was generally the result of the production of items specific to the context of the study (culture, size and nature of the sample) or type of products or services studied (Zaiem, 2008).

## 3. Methods

This paper constitutes a conceptual analysis into the concept of SRCB. The analysis is based on a thorough review of 90 papers related to the topic of SRCB from the 1960s to the years 2000s. The papers were selected from databases ProQUEST, EBSCOHost, and SCIENCE DIRECT using keywords such as SRCB, socially responsible consumption,

ethical consumption, citizen consumption or green consumption for the SRCB conceptualization and modelling sections. Keywords such as ethical consumer, socially conscious consumer or responsible consumer were used for the section about profiling of socially responsible consumers. Some articles dealt about both aspects simultaneously (e.g. François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006). The criterion for paper selection was based on the focus of the paper. SRCB or ethical / green / citizen consumption needed to be the central theme of the paper, not a sideline issue, such as for example, a secondary variable, or control variable or a background issue in a broader framework. Importantly, this is not a meta-analysis since no systematic coding procedure was used in order to classify and evaluate articles based on some pre-defined criteria. The results of the thorough literature review as well as the conceptual analysis are presented in the following sections.

#### **4. Conceptualizations of Socially-responsible Consumption Behavior**

To Webster (1975), the socially conscious consumer, “takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social changes” (p.188). This definition does not precisely identify the direction of public consequences intended by socially responsible consumers. Without more precision, Webster’s view of Socially-Responsible Consumption includes all types of consumer behavior whether the consequences for others are good or bad (François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006, p.52). Subsequent definitions gradually filled in that void. For Hénon (1976) and Antil (1984), Socially-Responsible Consumption consists of consumer’s purchasing decisions relating to environmental resources problems. Roberts (1993, p.140, 1995) then defined SRC as “the purchase of products and services perceived to have a positive (or less negative) influence on the environment or the purchase which patronizes businesses that attempt to effect related positive social change”. Some authors advanced the idea of including perception of company ethical performance when making purchase decision and hence many studies focused on consumer behavior based on perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (Shaw & Clark, 1999; Webb & Mohr 1998; Carrigan & Attala 2001; Sen & Bhattacharya 2001; Sen, Gürhan-Canli & Morwitz 2001; Klein, Smith & John 2004). Boycott is the archetypal consumer action in this perspective (Smith, 1990; Gabriel & Lang, 1995). Mohr, Webb and Harris (2001, p.47) extended this narrow approach and defined the SR consumer as “a person basing his or her acquisition, usage, and disposition of products on a desire to minimize or eliminate any harmful effects and maximize the long-run beneficial impact on society” (in Webb, Mohr & Harris, 2008). Other studies took a similar stance (François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006; Yan & She, 2011).

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

In essence, since the literature emphasized that socially-responsible consumption behaviors are not only limited to minimize harmful effects and maximize beneficial impacts during purchase and consumption but also during post-consumption processes, and given that the environmental considerations are coupled with social ones, we propose this definition of a socially-responsible consumer as “*a consumer engaging in a deliberate effort to acquire, use and dispose of products in manners minimizing negative consequences and maximizing positive ones, on both environmental and social levels*”.

#### **5. Measures of Socially-responsible Consumption Behavior and Related Concepts**

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

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

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

## 6. Narrowing the Attitude/Intention-action Gap

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

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

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

To further explain the gap between Socially-Responsible Consumption intentions and actual behavior, *Contingency Factors* such as budgetary constrain (de Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2005; François-Lecompte & Valette-François, 2006;

François-Lecompte & Roberts, 2006; Newholm & Shaw, 2007), product availability (Shaw & Clarke, 1999; François-Lecompte & Valette-Florence, 2006; Newholm & Shaw, 2007) or uncertainty in terms of information available to aid consumer decision-making and the consequences of their decisions (Ellen, 1994; Newholm & Shaw, 2007), have tried to explain the intention-behavior gap.

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

The major antecedents to Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior that have been identified so far in the past literature are generally related to personality traits and values (e.g. collectivism [Yan & Shen, 2011]). These determine anticipated emotions toward Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior as well as the actual attitude toward Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior (Webb, Mohr & Haris, 2008). Subjective norms are largely constructed and influenced by the media, education, popular culture and possibly legal regulations (Newholm & Shaw, 2007; Yan & She, 2011). According to the Model of Goal-Directed Behavior, desires are formed prior to intentions (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Applying the MGB of Perugini and Bagozzi (2001), to SRCB may result in the following process: anticipated emotions, subjective norms and attitude toward Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior combine to form desires to perform a Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior. Such desires will be more likely to emerge and may be more intense if consumers perceive a lower level of external control on their behaviors (Perceived Behavioral Control) and if they have performed the Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior at a higher frequency –hence experience- in the past (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). The stronger the desire the more likely is a consumer to elaborate Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior intentions and ultimately perform Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior on a conative level (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). Experience of Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior and Perceived Behavioral Control do also impact Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior intentions and the SRCB action (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Contingency factors influencing the relationship between SRCB intentions and SRCB can refer to product unavailability, accessibility problems, lack of product information or other environmental issues which may hamper the Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior (Shaw & Clark, 1999). It may also be more likely that a consumer having performed an SRCB recently will be more likely to perform another SRCB soon. In fact, the recency principle posits that consumers tend to remember their latest experiences and actions (d’Astous, Daghfous, Balloffet & Boulaire, 2010). If a Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior has been performed recently, consumers will be more likely to remember it and to reiterate it if the outcome of the last Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior was satisfactory, thus “incurred a positive confirmation” (Oliver, 1980). The Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior will ultimately generate various impacts on the consumer such as self-actualization, identity expression or the reaching of a meaningful harmony. This process might be somewhat different partially or in total given the consumers’ age, sex, and other meaningful consumer control variables.

## 7. Profiling of Socially-responsible Consumers

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

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

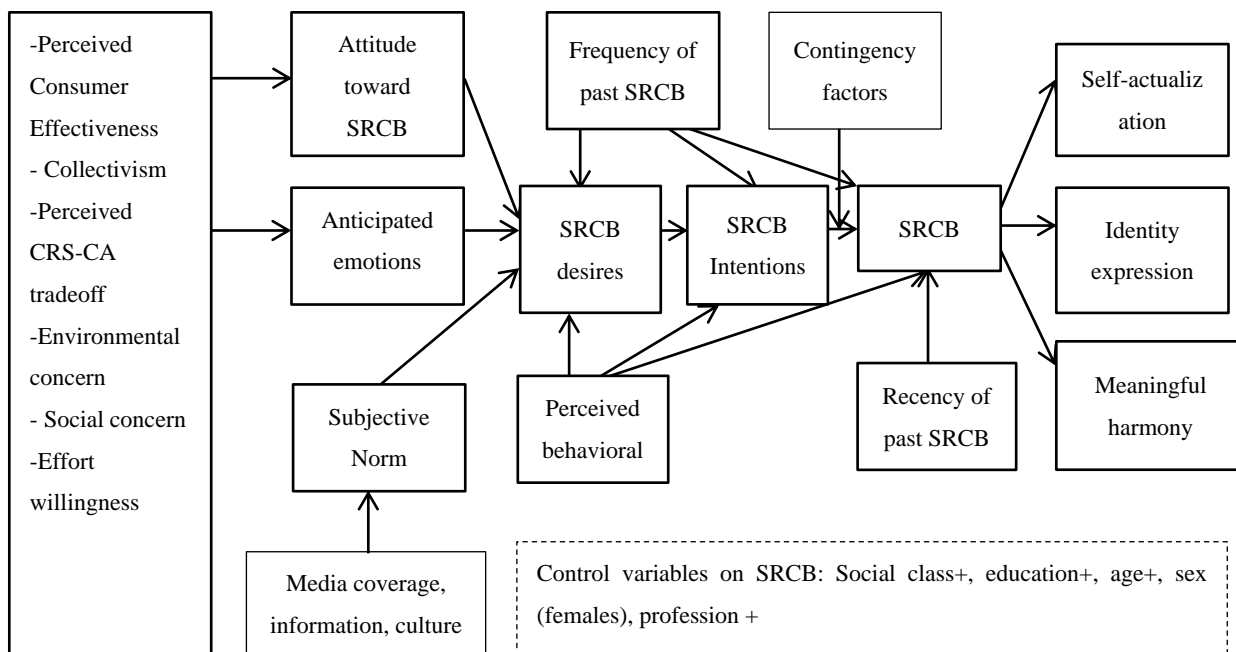


Figure 1. MGB-built conceptual framework of Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior

### 8. Research Implications

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

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

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

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

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

## 9. Conclusions

In this article we developed a conceptualization of Socially Responsible Consumption Behavior (SRCB) by reconciling previous views and definitions of that concept. We also discussed about the different measurement scales that have been developed so far in order to measure the Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior by outlining their limitations for the current examination of Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior especially regarding the attitude/intention-action gap. Third, we developed an approach based on the Model of Goal-Oriented Behavior (MGB) in order to address the major caveats observed in research on Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior so far, such as the attitude/intention-action gap, among others. To that end, we emphasized the volitional process taking place between attitudes and actual behavior and the central role of desires as antecedents of intentions. We also discussed

about the relevance of profiling socially-responsible consumers and on which preferable base. We considered all the different variables studied over the past forty years as direct antecedents of Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior, to be factors of attitudes and anticipated emotions related to Socially-Responsible Consumption Behavior. We then discussed the research implications of our research and proposed future research avenues that our study could have by especially providing specific guidelines regarding the development of measurement scales.

## 10. Practical Recommendations

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

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