

"Socially Responsible Consumption: Concepts, Challenges, and Consumer Behavior"

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Abstract : Socially responsible consumption (CSR) consists of making purchasing choices taking into account the social and environmental impact of products. Consumers seek to positively influence society by purchasing environmentally friendly or ethically produced products, while boycotting companies with irresponsible practices. This growing concept aims to use purchasing power as a lever to promote sustainable and equitable practices. Although CSR remains difficult to define precisely, it represents a strong trend towards more conscious and ethical consumption.

The aim of our article is to explore and clarify the concept of CSR, Providing an in-depth understanding of what socially responsible consumption entails, with a focus on the social and environmental dimensions of purchasing choices then Identify the individual and collective actions that consumers take to express their ethical concerns and support responsible business practices. and finally Establish a link between socially responsible consumption and ethics, while exploring the nuances and differences between these concepts.

Keywords: Socially responsible consumption, ethics, boycott .

Introduction

Responsible, sustainable, ethical, civic-minded or engaged consumption has been attracting growing interest for several years (Marchand et al., 2005), considerably influencing consumer purchasing choices (Auger et al., 2003). This craze can be seen as a search for meaning on the part of consumers, who, after four decades of mass consumption, see their purchasing power as a lever to bring about social (Webster, 1975) and environmental change.

According to Agnès François Lecompte (2005), there are many signs that individuals are increasingly taking social and environmental considerations into account in their purchasing decisions, in addition to traditional economic criteria. This phenomenon is expanding rapidly, both in developed countries and in the rest of the world.

In academic circles, respecting ethical values when making purchases is referred to as socially responsible consumption (SRC). According to Agnès François Lecompte (2005), this concept involves considering the public repercussions of one's personal consumption and exercising one's purchasing

power to promote societal change. Generally speaking, researchers identify two main consumer concerns: those relating to the degradation of the physical environment, and those concerning social issues affecting other groups of people.

According to Pionniers and Webster, socially responsible consumption is defined by a consumer who is aware of social issues (Pontier & Sirieix, 2003), and is based on a rational approach. Furthermore, various studies have revealed that, in addition to traditional economic criteria, people's consumption choices are also influenced by ethical considerations (Burke, Milberg & Smith, 1993; Dowell, Goldfarb & Griffith, 1998; Thøgersen, 2000).

In 2005, Agnès François Lecompte used a qualitative approach to identify five dimensions of corporate behavior. Firstly, not buying from companies deemed irresponsible. Secondly, buying share products means acquiring items for which part of the price is earmarked for a charitable cause. Thirdly, it's important to support small businesses by avoiding buying exclusively from superstores, in order to help them survive. Fourthly, it's important to take into account the geographical origin of products in your community. Finally, reducing consumption implies that consumers strive to limit their purchases and adopt a more autonomous approach to their activities.

The article will be structured in three main parts, organized as follows: first, we will seek to define the notion of socially responsible consumption (SRP). Next, we will describe the different types of CSR, whether collective or individual, through actions to buy (Buycott) or refuse to buy (Boycott) responsible products. Finally, we'll take a closer look at the link between CSR and ethical consumption.

1. The conceptual framework of the research

From the existing literature, it appears that the concept of consumption has evolved in recent years into a subject of social debate, for researchers and specialists alike. The diversity of concepts and disciplines involved, such as economics, sociology, psychology, management sciences and history, underlines the complexity and plurality of meanings, making it difficult to establish a single, precise and universal definition for CSR or ethical consumption.

CSR themes are generally ignored by researchers, and are more limited and specific, such as product-sharing, boycotts, ecological consumption, fair trade, consumer reaction to corporate social responsibility initiatives and consumer reactions to purchases. The issues are prioritized and remain unexplored research targets. Nor is there a legal definition of socially responsible consumption. Few authors have explored the general and complex concept of CSR. Before looking at the prerequisites for establishing socially responsible consumption, we'll try to outline the difficulties of understanding this concept.

Difficulties in establishing the concept of CSR :

Few studies comprehensively address the concerns of responsible consumers, as manifested in their purchasing behavior. Historically, research on ethical consumption in marketing has often focused on the “entrepreneurial” dimensions of the relationship between consumer and company. Although the issue of socially responsible consumption (SRP) has been addressed sporadically, mainly by focusing on ecological consumption (Hénion, 1976; Antil, 1984), it is reasonable to think that CSR concerns go beyond simple green consumption. The latter represents only one aspect of CSR (Henion, 1976; Antil, 1984; Smith, 1990).

Webster (1975) was the first author to specifically address the concept of CSR. His approach was inspired by sociological research into the social responsibility of individuals, such as Berkowitz and Lutterman's social responsibility scale (1968).

This corresponds more or less to the individual's level of involvement in the community and sensitivity to others.

The socially responsible consumer is “a consumer who takes into account the public consequences of his private consumption, and who tries to use his purchasing power to bring about changes in society”. (Webster, 1975). Later measurement scales (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Webster, 1975; Belch, 1979; 1982; Antil, 1984) are dubious in that they replace CSR behaviors with environmental considerations. Roberts (1995, 1996) introduces for the first time a social dimension to the measurement of responsible consumption, and introduces the concept of seeking good points in purchasing behavior. Perhaps the most reliable tool for measuring CSR is the Roberts (1995) scale. This consists of two dimensions: environmental and social factors.

With it, CSR “uses its purchasing power to express social concerns by purchasing goods and services that they believe will have a positive impact on the environment”.

Finally, François Lecompte (2005) sums up this research by adopting a definition of socially responsible consumption as “the act of purchasing goods or services perceived as having a positive (or less bad) impact on one's environment and using purchasing power to express social and/or environmental concerns”. The definitions of Roberts (1995) and François Lecompte (2005) link consumption and purchasing behavior. Webb, Mohr and Harris (2007) take a broader view of socially responsible consumption and consider all detached and isolated practices of Heilbrunn (2005): Sourcing, Using and Disposing. These authors define socially responsible consumption as “Individuals who seek to eliminate all negative impacts on the environment. ,to eliminate all negative impacts on society and maximize positive long-term impacts on society when acquiring, using and disposing of certain products.

Various dimensions of CSR

Roberts (1995) highlights two aspects of socially responsible consumption. On the one hand, there is an environmental dimension, which involves refraining from buying products that have a negative impact on the environment. On the other, there is a societal dimension, which involves avoiding buying products from companies whose activities are detrimental to the well-being of society. More recently, the study of the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved into research into how consumers react to more or less responsible corporate behavior.

This research revolves around three themes :

The impact of corporate social responsibility initiatives on consumers: Brown and Dacin (1997), Murray and Vogel (1997), Handelman and Arnold (1999), and Swaen Maignan (2000), Thery-Seror (2000), Mohr, Webb and Harris (2001), Sen and Bhattacharya (2001), Thery and Jolibert (2003), Swaen, (2004). Boycotts, with work by Smith (1990), Kozinets and Handelman (1998), Friedman (1985, 1991, 1996), Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz (2001), and John Klein (2003), Klein, and John Smith (2004).

Consumer expectations of corporate social responsibility (Creyer and Ross, 1996, 1997, Carrigan and Attalla, 2001, Boulstridge and Carrigan, 2000, Maignan, 2001). In practice, CSR is therefore often equated with green consumption or purchasing, depending on the company's behavior. There therefore seems to be a gap between a very comprehensive theoretical definition of the concept of CSR and its application. In fact, the concerns of socially responsible consumers may extend beyond ecology and corporate behavior.

Based on this notion, François Lecompte and Valette-Florence (2004) suggested the creation of a new instrument for assessing corporate social responsibility (CSR), taking a holistic approach to the concept. Following a qualitative study and literature review, François Lecompte (2005) identified five distinct dimensions.

- Corporate behavior: refusing to buy from companies whose behavior is considered irresponsible.
- Buy-as-you-go: buying products for which part of the price is donated to a good cause.
- The desire to help small businesses: not buying everything in supermarkets and supporting small retailers”.
- Taking into account the geographical origin of products: the desire to give preference to products from one's own community”.
- Reduce the volume of consumption: “consumers avoid over-consumption and try as much as possible to do things themselves.”

Webb, Mohr and Harris (2007) have developed a measure of consumer social responsibility based on an approach similar to that of François Lecompte (2005). However, their perspective on consumption is much broader. By integrating corporate social responsibility into the decision-making process, the authors include behaviors such as recycling and sustainable consumption patterns, such as the use of public transport and the promotion of eco-friendly products. To summarize all the scientific definitions of the concept of consumer social responsibility, we have drawn up the following table:

Table 1: Main definitions of CSR

Authors (year)	Concepts used	Definitions
Anderson and Cunningham (1972), Socially consiuous consumer	Socially conscious consumer	An individual concerned not only with personal satisfaction, but also with societal and environmental well-being. The individual who is willing to help others even if there is nothing in it for him or herself.
Anderson, Hénon and Cox (1974)	Socially responsible consumer	An individual willing to help others even if it means nothing to them.
Webster (1975)	Socially-conscious consumer	Consommateur qui prend en compte les conséquences publiques de sa consommation privée et qui essaie d'utiliser son pouvoir d'achat pour induire des changements dans la société.
Brooker (1976)	Socially-conscious consumer	Individual whose actions lead to an improvement in the quality of life in society
Belch (1979, 1982)	Socially concerned consumers	Individual concerned with both personal and social well-being.

Engel and Blackwell (1982)	Socially-conscious consumer	An individual concerned not only with personal satisfaction and well-being, but also with the social and environmental well-being of others.
Antil (1984)	Socially responsible consumer	Individuals whose purchases are linked to environmental issues and who are motivated not only by a desire to satisfy their personal needs, but also by concern for the potentially negative effects of their purchases.
Marks and Mayo 1990/vital, Shing hoppakdi et Thomas 1996	The consumer's ethical decision	Ethical consumers make their purchases according to the consequences of their actions Deontology Teleology
Roberts (1995, 1996)	Socially-responsible consumer behavior	Buy goods or services perceived as having a positive (or less negative) impact on the environment, and use your purchasing power to express your social concerns.
Moher, Webb and Harris (2001), (2008)	Socially responsible consumer	An individual who avoids buying from companies that harm society and actively seeks out products from companies that help society.
Agnés François Lecompte (2005)	Socially responsible consumer	Purchasing according to company behaviour: -purchasing share products

		<p>-Purchase according to product origin</p> <p>-purchase from local shops</p> <p>-reduction in consumption volume</p>
<p>Vermeirand Vebek (2006) ;(2008)</p>	<p>Consumptionsustainable</p>	<p>Sustainable consumption is initiated by a decision-making process that “takes into account the consumer's social responsibility as well as individual needs and wants”.</p>
<p>Omar El Amili (2017) Socially responsible consumption as a means of ethically regulating corporate practices.</p>	<p>Socially responsible consumption</p>	<p>.Scale 38 Items, Geographical origin, company behaviour, product sharing, local commerce, consumption volume</p>

Source:elaborated by author

Towards the adoption of the CSR definition :

However, more than 30 years after Webster's pioneering research (1975), the concept of socially responsible consumption (SRP) remains unclear. Researchers' work focuses more on themes such as green consumption, ethical consumption, or the more or less responsible behavior of companies. We adopt a global approach to consumer behavior, taking socially responsible consumption into account. According to the work of Webster (1975), Roberts (1995) and François Lecompte (2005), CSR is defined as follows: “Socially responsible consumption refers to the act of buying goods or services deemed to have a positive (or less negative) impact on the environment and/or society, and using one's purchasing power to make one's social and/or environmental concerns heard”.

2. CSR is a collective and individual phenomenon:

The definitions we adopt for CSR are reflected in our perception of the various actions. In brief, these fall into two categories:

The decision to buy or not to buy, taking into account social and environmental criteria, can lead to the refusal to acquire certain products or services, or on the contrary, can lead to the preference of certain goods over others. CSR is a behavior that can concern both individuals and groups.

By exploring these two dimensions, we can highlight the different currents of research that can be applied to CSR. Although not necessarily linked to CSR, these currents can be integrated into the theoretical field thanks to a global vision of this concept.

2.1 Individual CSR behavior:

Personal buying behavior can be reflected in purchasing, as it can often lead to refusals to buy.

- **Positive form of CSR: "Buy":**

In the first case, individuals buy products with specific social or environmental guarantees. This is the purchase of products that are manufactured, sold and distributed in conditions that respect the physical and human environment. In the literature, the goods in question are sometimes referred to as "ethical products" if adequate guarantees are provided (Canel-Depitre 2003). More specifically, "green products" refer to products whose production and consumption have a minimal impact on the environment. For example, the manufacturing of products should include sufficient quantities of clean and renewable raw materials that generate biodegradable or recyclable waste and are used for sustainable use (Boyer and Poisson, 1992).

- Buy labeled products:

It is not always easy for consumers to distinguish between products with environmental and social guarantees. This is why social labels exist. The term is defined in the European Commission Green Paper of 2001 as follows:

Social labelling is "words or symbols affixed to a product whose purpose is to influence the purchasing decision of consumers by providing a guarantee on the social or ethical impact of a business process on other stakeholders concerned".

These labels guarantee that products are manufactured according to standards of respect for nature and labor, thus facilitating ethical purchasing for consumers.

- Buying products - Sharing:

The term refers to the commitment of a company to purposes related to consumer purchases (Varadarajan-Menon, 1988). More precisely, this relevance is manifested in the form of financial contributions made by companies for specific purposes with each purchase or receipt sent by a consumer (Thierry and Jolibert, 2003). These processes are also called product-sharing or promotion-sharing.

- **Negative form of CSR: “Non-purchase”:**

In the absence of calls for boycott, consumers have negative attitudes towards companies labeled “non-citizen”, regardless of the quality of the products (Folkes and Kamins, 1999). Similarly, Brown and Dacin (1997) show that consumers who have a negative image of the social impact of a company are more likely to evaluate the product negatively. This positive association between social civic engagement and consumer purchase intentions has also been demonstrated by other studies, such as Creyer and Ross (1997). Civic behavior is sometimes manifested in a social perspective (Berkowitz and Lutterman, 1968; Anderson and Cunningham, 1972) and even more by the combination of the two dimensions, social and environmental (Webster, 1975, Roberts, 1995, 1996). Several studies on this topic aim to measure the importance that consumers attach to the ethical aspects of products. Despite different approaches, the results remain the same. The average level of ethical concern is relatively low, with high ethical concern among a minority of consumers (Sirieix and Pontier, 2003). Thøgersen (1999) studied the relationship between environmentally friendly packaging standards and consumers' personal choices. This shows that the strength of individual norms depends on social norms, consumer awareness and confidence in the effectiveness of the behavior.

2.2 Collective behaviors of the CSR:

Similarly, collective CSR behaviors can be expressed in the form of a "boycott" to buy or a "boycott" to refuse to buy.

Friedman introduced the concept of boycott in 1996. It is the collective mobilization of consumers towards a company's products in order to reward their activities.

There are various reasons that provoke such movements: low prices, high quality, respect for minorities, respect for the environment and even fair wage practices. In practice, these campaigns often have much broader objectives than the objectives of the company. Friedman (1996) cites these "Buy American" campaigns to encourage Americans to buy local products to support their economy. In 1995, New Zealand encouraged its citizens to consume national brands, essentially hoping to protect itself from various boycotting states. It participates in the resumption of nuclear testing outside its territory.

- **Collective refusal to purchase: Boycott:**

Indeed, CSR is most often manifested by a refusal to purchase, and consumers seem to express social or environmental concerns by sanctioning companies rather than rewarding them (Creyer and Ross, 1996, Friedman, 1996), Mohr, Webb and Harris, 2001).

The boycott is therefore the most common CSR practice. "It is an attempt by one or more parties to achieve a specific objective by encouraging consumers to refrain from making certain purchases in the market" (Friedman, 1991). Consequently, it becomes a collective act of not buying certain products to achieve a goal.

Boycotts have two objectives: Economic or ethical in nature (Friedman, 1991). For example, in the first case, the goal is to protest and counter a price increase for a particular product. In the second case, consumers react to the denunciation of commercial practices. Boycotts seem to be increasingly considered a second aspect. A boycott is a form of corporate social control and a mechanism for promoting corporate social responsibility (Smith, 1990).

In fact, consumers seem to use boycotts more often than boycotts. Indeed, several studies have shown that consumers are more likely to refuse to buy certain products from companies they consider "irresponsible" in order to support "responsible" companies (Mohr, Webb, Harris, 2001).

Sen, Gurhan-Canli and Morwitz (2001), in their study of boycotts, highlighted some important factors that can influence the decision to participate in a boycott. These factors are: Expectations or projections regarding the success of the boycott, "pro-boycott" communications and perceived effectiveness. According to the authors, consumers' expectations regarding the probability of success of a boycott (the probability that social problems will be solved) will be the main data for assessing the value of participating in a boycott. Collective behaviors of the CSR:

3. The need to distinguish between ethical consumption and CSR

In academia, the terms social responsibility and consumer ethics seem to coexist and are often confused. Thus, for some authors, ethical consumption (Smith, 1990) corresponds to the concept of CSR as we have defined it. However, we will want to clarify the relationship between these two concepts in order to understand whether it is justified to use the two terms interchangeably.

3.1 Ethical consumption

Ethics is understood as the set of codes of action and values that act as norms in society. Ethical consumption means consuming according to societal principles (Smith, 1990). Individuals increasingly express moral values in their consumption decisions regarding their contribution to the social or environmental well-being of others (Engel and Blacwell, 1982). In addition to traditional economic criteria, individuals are also influenced by ethical criteria in their consumption (Burke, Milberg, Smith,

1993; Dowell, Goldfarb, Griffith, 1998; Thogersen, 2000). Ethical consumption requires altruistic motivations and actions directed solely towards others (Holbrook, 1994 and Cooper-Martin and Holbrook, 1993). According to Cooper-Martin and Holbrook (1993) identified two factors: Egoism/Altruism and Activity/Passivity. The dimension of Egoism/Altruism is very dominant in the distinction between good and bad, right and wrong. "Ethically good" consumption experiences such as not buying products tested on animals, feeding the poor, and recycling waste can be found in the altruistic/activist domain. Ethical consumption is more likely to be altruistic and even more active. On the other hand, "unethical" consumption becomes irresponsible and selfish.

Smith (1996) rejects Holbrook's (1994) view that ethical consumption is selfless. Furthermore, even if socially conscious behavior may appear to be motivated by purely selfless desires, since the society that benefits from it includes the individual, then the individual benefits as well. Both authors Ziegler and Sojka (1986) motivated by both social and personal interests. However, many consumer behaviors are considered ethical behaviors that do not affect the happiness of those around the consumer, such as alcohol consumption etc. (François Lecompte, Valette-Florence, 2004). An individual's moral stakes do not necessarily have a negative effect on society. The concept of "ethical consumption" refers to another field of research like ours, presented by Muncy and Vitell (1992) and specifies "the moral principles and standards that guide the behavior of individual or collective consumers in their purchases, uses and disposal of goods and services". The scale developed by these two authors (Consumer Ethics Scale) describes all the behaviors of individuals in the field of consumption that can be contrary to good ethics, for example copying a disc instead of buying it, consuming a product in a supermarket without paying, or lying about the age of children to benefit from a reduction. It concerns first the conduct and honest behavior of individuals in all their actions.

3.2 Socially responsible consumption

The definition that we have adopted of the concept of CSR shows us that this behavior is close to an altruistic act, either by integration into the consumption of happiness by other groups of people, or by respect for the environment. Responsible consumers are concerned not only with maximizing personal well-being in their consumption, but also with the fate of other stakeholders. It can be described a priori as altruistic and therefore ethical in the vision of Holbrook (1994) and Cooper-Martin and Holbrook (1993). The field of ethics is broader than CSR and does not correspond to the concept of CSR. However, any act of CSR is ethical: seeks to protect the interests of those around us that are compatible with the expectations of our society (Velasquez and Rostankowski, 1985).

This first section helps to clarify the concept of CSR and to show the link between ethical consumption

and CSR. More precisely, socially responsible consumption can be thought of as ethical, on the other hand, ethical consumption explores a broader field than ours. To better understand this concept, we want to look at how, based on stakeholder theory which is the foundation of corporate social responsibility, we can compare CSR and CSR.

Conclusion

Marketing researchers have generally overlooked the importance of socially responsible consumption, a somewhat abstract notion. They have instead focused on more specific and tangible themes of study, such as ecological consumption, boycotts or consumer reactions to ethical corporate initiatives. The growing importance of socially responsible consumption (SRC) on a global scale, as well as the persistent concern about it, are elements to be taken into account.

In this article we have offered the opportunity to explore the concept of socially responsible consumption. First, we have presented an academic approach to our subject. Among the various definitions of socially responsible consumption, we have chosen to adopt a more global perspective, drawing on the works of Webster (1975), Roberts (1995) and F. Lecompte (2005).

we have provided clarifications on the concept of SRC, and the various visions adopted by researchers on this theme.

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