

COMMENTARY

The contribution of ethical obligation and self-identity to the theory of planned behaviour: An exploration of ethical consumers - A reflective comment

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Abstract The attention given to ethical consumption in today's academic environment is something we only dreamed of when writing this paper over 10 years ago. This wealth of scholarship is a measure of the extent to which ethical consumption has infiltrated marketing and business thinking over the past decade or so. The Theory of Planned Behaviour framework used in the revisited paper is still very much alive and well today and following the traditional of this paper many have sought to extend this original theory to improve its applicability in ethical contexts. A criticism of the revisited paper and of much of current research also is a lack of insight into actual behaviour arising from ethical decision-making. Much is written about an attitude-behaviour gap in ethical consumption, but little research has fully explored the extent of this gap.

Keywords Ethical consumption, Theory of planned behaviour, Attitude, Intention, Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

The paper '*The Contribution of Ethical Obligation and Self-identity to the Theory of Planned Behaviour*' focused on extending a well-known and extensively researched expectancy-value model to the context of ethical consumption. In keeping with

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criticisms of rational choice due to a focus on individual self interest (e.g., Simon, 1998), the research in this paper found support for the inclusion of measures reflective of ethical/moral considerations. The paper revealed that for the ethical consumers studied their overall intention to purchase fair trade products had less to do with self-motivated concerns, but rather was driven by a sense of ethical obligation and their identity with the issue.

Since the publication of this paper, interest in ethical consumption has increased considerably. As with the revisited paper, much of this research is motivated with seeking to provide insights into the attitude-behaviour gap reported in ethical consumption contexts (e.g., Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Papaoikonomou, Ryan & Ginieis, 2011). Much subsequent research in ethical consumption has followed the tradition of the revisited paper in seeking to refine the Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behaviour (TRA/TPB) for the purpose of seeking to close the reported attitude-behaviour gap. Indeed, later research has also explored measures of ethical/moral obligation (e.g., McEachern, Schröder, Willock, Whitelock & Mason, 2007; Ozcaglar-Toulouse, Shiu & Shaw, 2006; Shaw, Hogg, Wilson, Shiu & Hassan, 2006; Shaw & Shiu, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Spence & Townsend, 2006) and self-identity (e.g., Cook, Kerr & Moore, 2002; Fielding, McDonald & Louis, 2008; Mannetti, Pierro & Livi, 2004; Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Shaw et al., 2006; Shaw & Shiu, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Spence & Townsend, 2006; Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010).

The propositions of the TRA and/or TPB have, thus, been deemed pertinent to the study of ethical consumption and beyond ethical obligation and self-identity other concepts have been considered. These have included, involvement (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006), emotion (Moons & De Pelsmacker, 2012; Spence & Townsend, 2006), knowledge (De Pelsmacker, Janssens, Sterckx & Mielants, 2006; Fraj-Andrés & Martínez-Salinas, 2007), certainty (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006), perceived consumer effectiveness (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006), perceived risk (Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2011), values (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006) and neutralisation (Chatzidakis, Hibbert, & Smith, 2007).

The empirically tested measures outlined above have been applied with varying success. They have utilised different sample populations, for example, known ethical consumers (e.g., Shaw et al., 2006; Shaw & Shiu, 2002a, 2002b, 2003;), the general population (e.g., McEachern et al., 2007) and students (e.g., Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). They have been applied in varying geographical locations, for example, Belgium (e.g. Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006), France (e.g., Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006) and the UK (e.g., McEachern et al., 2007; Shaw & Shiu, 2003). Research has also been applied in differing ethical contexts, for example, fair trade (e.g., Ma, Littrell & Niehm, 2012; Shaw & Shiu, 2002a, 2002b, 2003), animal welfare (e.g., McEachern et al., 2007) and Genetic Modification (GM) (e.g., Cook et al., 2002).

Despite the adoption of Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theoretical approaches to the study of ethical consumption and amidst continued claims of an attitude-behaviour gap in this context, it is interesting to note that most of the studies in this context only measure and model consumer decision-making up to behavioural intention (e.g., Arvola et al., 2008; Carrus, Passafaro & Bonnes, 2008; Cook et al., 2002; Fielding et al., 2008; Lu et al., 2010; Ma et al., 2012; Mannetti et al., 2004; Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2011; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Indeed, our original paper also falls into this category.

In responding to a recent conference and journal call for papers exploring the gap between ethical consumer attitudes and behaviour, Hassan, Shiu and Shaw (2012)

conducted a review of TPB studies in this area. In addition to finding, as noted above, that most of the studies in this context do not measure behaviour, the authors also found that the majority of studies which did claim to explore behaviour capture this at the same point in time as intention, leaving no time interval between the measurement of intention and behaviour. Such research fails to capture behaviour at a second and later data collection point as specified by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). This gives rise to concerns regarding the validity of the intention measures as well as whether the behaviour captured in fact represents past behaviour (e.g., De Pelsmacker et al., 2006; Fraj-Andrés & Martínez-Salinas, 2006; Gadenne, Sharma, Kerr & Smith, 2011; Kaiser, Ranney, Hartig & Bowler, 1999; Spence & Townsend, 2006). In their review Hassan et al. (2012) found only 14 TRA/TPB studies in the context of ethical consumption that measured intention and subsequent behaviour (Bamberg, Hunecke & Blöbaum, 2007; Boldero, 1995; Bowman & Fishbein, 1978; Chu & Chiu, 2003; Davies, Foxall & Pallister, 2002; Gill, Crosby & Taylor, 1986; Kaiser & Gutscher, 2003; Klöckner & Blöbaum, 2010; Nigbur, Evanthia & Uzzell, 2010; Richetin, Conner & Perugini, 2011; Richetin et al., 2012; Rise, Thompson & Verplanken, 2003; Terry, Hogg & White, 1999; White & Hyde, 2011). Further, these studies were predominantly in ecological contexts. This illustrates not only a scarcity of quantitative evidence for an intention-behaviour gap in ethical consumption but also a lack of insight into ethical perspectives beyond ecological concerns. In acknowledging this problem, the authors conducted their own study in the context of avoiding sweatshop clothing that measured consumer decision-making through self reported measures of behaviour. A pertinent question raised by this review concerns the question of how much of behaviour can researchers expect the TPB to explain? There is significant variation in this regard across current studies. Indeed, the context of avoiding sweatshop clothing can be considered a challenging one. Clear labelling and transparency of company practices are lacking in this area. This makes enacting the intended behaviour challenging for concerned consumers. Under such conditions one would expect to see some discrepancy between stated attitudes and actual behaviour. In other contexts, such as avoiding eating meat in the UK, this could be considered relatively easy as vegetarian options abound in mainstream outlets (Richetin et al., 2011). Hassan et al.'s review and research has been submitted for publication (if interested please ask the corresponding author for full details).

The revisited paper was important in highlighting ethical consumption as a key area for consumer research and in highlighting the potential role of the TPB in aiding understanding in this context. Many subsequent papers have followed this approach. The paper fell short, however, of assessing behaviour, leaving readers to infer that behaviour would follow intentions. As has been highlighted, this is a criticism that can continue to be applied to much recent research. Indeed, Ajzen, Brown and Carvajal (2004) caution against using intention as a proxy for behaviour. While ethical consumption has evolved considerably since this initial research was published, an attitude-behaviour gap (e.g., Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Papaiokonomou et al., 2011) or words-deeds inconsistency (e.g., Newholm, 2000; Newholm & Shaw, 2007; Shaw et al., 2006) is still often the focus of concern in this field. In some contexts, such as avoiding sweatshop clothing noted above, it may not be fair to assume that intentions will automatically follow behaviour. Thus, it may be important for future research to consider potentially varying degrees of intention-behaviour consistency across different ethical consumption contexts. Problematic, however, is the limited research that does indeed measure actual behaviour in this context, particularly at a later time beyond the measurement of intention. As such

there is an urgent need for researchers of ethical consumption taking this approach to fully explore the attitude-behaviour gap through designing research which explores decision-making through to reported or observed behaviour. We suggest, therefore, a move beyond a focus on additional measures that may augment the TPB to revisit the original theory and fully consider the implementation and measurement of all its core variables. Finally, in line with recent trends in the behavioural sciences, future studies should also report the size of the effect of the TRA/TPB antecedents on intention as well as the effect size of intention on actual behaviour.

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF ETHICAL OBLIGATION AND SELF-IDENTITY TO THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR: AN EXPLORATION OF ETHICAL CONSUMERS¹

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Abstract Whilst the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) has generated much research interest, many market researchers are divided over the addition of further constructs to the model. The TRA and its many modifications have been applied in numerous behavioural contexts, however, research to-date has neglected an emerging group of “ethical” consumers. This paper outlines results from a recent survey of over 1400 UK consumers that applied the TRA to this complex area of decision making. Using readers to the Ethical Consumer magazine, the study addresses issues involving proposed model modifications - specifically, by the addition of control, ethical obligation and self-identity. Management implications of the findings are discussed, including the importance of understanding consumers’ self-identification with ethical issues in marketing communications programmes; and the underlying potential importance of ethical issues to mainstream consumer groups. Finally, the need to develop conceptually as well as practically robust techniques by using Structural Equation Modelling, which represents the next stage in this research, is outlined.

INTRODUCTION

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) is perhaps the best known of the expectancy value models. Although research has extensively applied the TRA in a variety of behavioural domains, the more recent context of ethical concerns in consumer decision-making has been neglected. The dramatic increase in environmental awareness over the past two to three decades and resulting “green” consumerism (e.g. Brown 1992; Peattie 1992) has been accompanied in the 1990’s by the growing emergence of a highly principled group of “ethical” consumers who, in addition to being concerned about general environmental issues, are distinguished by their concern for deep-seated problems, such as those of the Third World (e.g. Matthews 1994; Vaughan 1993). Ethical issues can add significantly to the complexity of consumer decisions, making ethical concern, specifically for Third World fair trade issues⁵, an ideal context within which to test the applicability of the TRA and proposed modifications.

Much research has endorsed the predictive ability of the TRA, while others have questioned its basic theoretical framework (for an overview see Eagly and Chaiken 1993). Despite claims from Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) that the model was complete,

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⁵ Fairly traded products are those purchased under equitable trading agreements, involving co-operative rather than competitive trading principles, ensuring a fair price and fair working conditions for the producers and suppliers.

it was later extended to add, “perceived behavioural control” (*PBC*) in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (*TPB*) (Ajzen 1985). This extended model has been widely applied (e.g. Beck and Ajzen 1991; Giles and Cairns 1995) often with a significantly improved predictive ability. Further departing from the original stance, Ajzen (1991) stated that “The theory of planned behaviour is, in principle, open to the inclusion of additional predictors if it can be shown that they capture a significant proportion of the variance in intention or behaviour after the theory’s current variables have been taken into account” (p. 199).

More recent modifications to the theory have proposed the addition of “ethical” obligation (*EO*) (e.g. Kurland 1995; Raats, Minton and Rose 1997; Shepherd and Sparks 1995; Sparks, Shepherd and Frewer 1995) and self-identity (*SI*) (e.g. Granberg and Holmberg 1990; Sparks and Guthrie 1998; Sparks and Shepherd 1992). Results from an exploratory study revealed that ethical consumers do hold strong feelings of obligation for others that impact their purchase choices (Shaw and Clarke, 1999). Clearly, therefore, the role of ethical obligation needs to be explored within the “ethical” context of the present study, and within the actual TRA/TPB framework. The proposed importance of self-identity to the present study also stems from findings from this exploratory study, which revealed that ethical issues are not considered in isolation. The linkages found to exist between issues stresses the need to examine the notion of self-identity to ethical issues generally.

In this paper we empirically examine Ajzen’s TPB framework and the addition of measures of ethical obligation and self-identity within the model. This extended theory is examined in the context of people’s attitudes towards the purchase of fairly traded grocery products, perceived difficulties in purchasing, their ethical obligation to purchase such products and their self-identification as “ethical” consumers.

THE THEORY OF REASONED ACTION AND THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR

The TRA is a theory of attitude-behaviour relationships which links attitudes, subjective norms, behavioural intentions and behaviour in a fixed causal sequence. Behaviour (*B*) is deemed to be a direct function of intention (*I*), which in turn is a function of attitude (*A*) and subjective norm (*SN*). Attitude towards performing the behaviour is further deemed to be a summed product ($\sum b_i e_i$) of the individuals’ beliefs (*B_i*) and their evaluation of those beliefs (*E_i*). The subjective perception of normative influences are considered to be a summed product ($\sum nb_i mc_i$) of the individuals’ beliefs that important others think they should or should not perform the behaviour in question (*Nb_i*), and their motivation to comply with these others (*Mc_i*). The theory is outlined in Ajzen and Fishbein (1980).

Despite extensive application of the TRA model, its ability to predict behaviour has been varied. Some researchers have found the model to be a strong predictor of intention but not actual behaviour (e.g. Bagozzi and Warshaw 1990; Boyd and Wandersman 1991; Vallerand et al. 1992). Others have revealed that intention is indeed an effective predictor of behaviour (e.g. Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Manstead, Proffitt and Smart 1983). Given the novel nature of this behavioural context, this study is concerned with gaining an improved conceptual understanding of the determinants of decision making in this context and, as such, focuses on intention and is not concerned with the measure of actual behaviour.

The TRA can be criticised on the basis that it applies only to behaviours that are totally under volitional control. To address this concern Ajzen (1985) introduced the TPB that added a measure of perceived behavioural control to the existing TRA structure. The addition of perceived behavioural control was designed to extend the TRA to include behaviours that are not totally under an individual's control. In the same way as attitude and subjective norm are specified within the theory, perceived behavioural control is a direct measure that results from antecedents in the form of control beliefs. In light of much research which supports this extended model (e.g. Ajzen 1991; Ajzen and Madden 1986), and, as discussed earlier in the context of ethical consumption, it is expected that this additional measure will be significant in this specific behavioural context.

PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE TRA AND TPB

Ethical Obligation

Although the TPB is perhaps the most significant and supported extension to the TRA model, many additional modifications have been proposed. Some researchers have argued that a measure of personal "moral" or "ethical" obligation be added to the traditional structure (see Eagly and Chaiken 1993). Such a measure represents an individual's internalised ethical rules, which reflect their personal beliefs about right and wrong. In many instances the addition of such a measure has been found to improve the prediction of intention (e.g. Gorsuch and Ortberg 1983; Raats, Shepherd and Sparks, 1995). Although Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) themselves acknowledge suggestions that a moral or ethical obligation measure may enhance the TRA, they conclude, "at the present time, we see no need to expand our theory of reasoned action" (p.247). As occurred with the addition of perceived behavioural control, Ajzen later moved away from this stance and in a study examining unethical behaviours found that a measure of perceived moral obligation enhanced the predictive power of the TPB (Beck and Ajzen 1991).

Much of the research supporting the inclusion of a measure which reflects ethical/moral concerns is placed in certain "social" behavioural contexts (Beck and Ajzen, 1991; Gorsuch and Ortberg, 1983). The tendency of the original theory to focus on the self-interested concerns of respondents may be limiting given the increased importance placed upon "ethical" issues in much of society today. In the area of fair trade concerns where behaviour is centred around a concern for others, exploration of a measure that reflects ethical concerns is imperative in applications of the TRA/TPB in this context. Further, "ethical" consumer concerns have often been neglected in the previous studies exploring additional ethical/moral constructs, where, with limited exceptions, the focus has been on areas such as, cheating, lying and blood donation. Ethical issues can add significantly to the complexity of consumer decisions, highlighting the need for an improved understanding in this area. It appears apparent, therefore, that further theoretical advancement of the model in this respect must consider behaviours within such an ethical context.

Self-identity

Research has suggested that the TRA/TPB be modified to incorporate a measure of self-identity (e.g. Sparks and Guthrie 1998; Sparks and Shepherd 1992; Granberg and

Holmberg 1990). The rationale for this argument is that as an issue becomes central to an individual's self-identity, then behavioural intention is accordingly adjusted. In this specific context ethical consumers may make ethical consumption choices because ethical issues have become an important part of their self-identity. This proposition is supported by exploratory work that suggests that ethical consumers do not identify with only one ethical issue, but with a range of ethical issues. Indeed, in the area of green consumerism, Sparks and Shepherd (1998) found that self-identity contributed to intention over and above the contribution made by the other TPB variables. It is proposed, therefore, that self-identity will make an independent contribution to the prediction of behavioural intention in the present study.

It has been suggested that some forms of self-identity may involve a moral component (Sparks and Shepherd 1992). For example, some identities, such as vegetarianism, are generally associated with ethical values. Sparks and Guthrie (1998), however, consider these two constructs to be conceptually distinct. They argue that neither is reducible to the other, and state that independent predictive effects on behavioural intentions should occur in contexts where aspects of self-identity are distinct from ethical concerns. This suggestion has been supported in studies by Sparks and Guthrie (1998) and Sparks, Shepherd and Frewer (1995).

In summary, the models proposed for comparison, with respect to predicting intention to purchase fair trade grocery products, will each incorporate two or more of the following independent variables: (1) attitudes towards the identified behaviour (*A*); (2) perception that important others think they should behave in a certain way, and desire to comply with these important others (*SN*); (3) perceptions of control over the identified behaviour (*PBC*); (4) perceptions that performing the behaviour is a ethical obligation (*EO*); and (5) self-identification with ethical issues (*SI*).

METHODOLOGY

Elicitation Questionnaire

An elicitation questionnaire was constructed as outlined by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). However, in noting criticism of the Ajzen and Fishbein approach, which recommends the use of frequently elicited beliefs, van der Pligt and Eiser (1984) suggest that it is the *importance* of an attribute or outcome of the behaviour which determines an individual's attitude. To address these concerns the present study also requested respondents to rank each belief in terms of importance. The questionnaire was designed to elicit salient, behavioural, normative and control beliefs associated with the purchase of fair trade grocery products. Additionally, the questionnaire also attempted to capture details of other ethical issues of concern to respondents, this was designed to provide a vehicle to obtain a measure of self-identity. Results revealed that the utilisation of both elicitation methods produced unanimous findings, making the beliefs obtained valid on both counts. This questionnaire was sent out in two mailings to subscribers to the UK Ethical Consumer magazine. Initially 118 questionnaires were sent out in the city of Manchester obtaining a total of 27 useable responses. A second mailing in the city of Birmingham of 100 questionnaires was used to supplement this response, resulting in 28 responses and a total of 55 useable questionnaires.

The Main Questionnaire

The main questionnaire was developed to measure the components of the TRA along with the additional constructs discussed above. Analysis of the elicitation questionnaire allowed the selection of nine modal salient beliefs (Fishbein and Ajzen 1980), important referents, difficulties associated with the purchase of fair trade grocery products and a core set of related ethical issues.

Questions designed to elicit behavioural intention, behavioural beliefs, attitude, subjective norm, normative beliefs and motivation to comply were structured as suggested by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), and the measures of perceived behavioural control in accordance to Ajzen (1985). The outcome evaluation measure employed an “important” to “unimportant” scale, which reflects that used by e.g. Manstead, Proffitt and Smart 1983; Raats, Shepherd and Sparks 1995. The measure of ethical obligation takes on the format suggested by Sparks, Shepherd and Frewer (1995). Self-identity, and an index of “ethical concerns” followed the structure as suggested by Sparks and Shepherd (1992). An abridged outline of the questionnaire is contained in the Appendix. The actual questionnaire contained additional items, relating to wider aspects involved in the consumption of fair trade grocery products, which are not reported in this paper.

Sample

To meet the research aim of the present study it was necessary to obtain access to a meaningful group of consumers with a strong ethical stance. This was achieved by conducting research with subscribers to the UK Ethical Consumer magazine, who were selected in a purposive sampling approach. The selection of such an ‘extreme’ group of consumers was intentional, as the purpose was to focus on consumers where ethical attitudes are accentuated, rather than overly-subtle and harder to detect as in other mainstream consumer groups. Thus, although the study does not attempt to generalise widely, the population size of ethical consumers, and the large sample obtained (see below), cannot be dismissed as trivial or anecdotal. The Ethical Consumer magazine was selected as the most appropriate source from which to derive the sample, as this specific magazine exists to promote a wide range of ethical issues “by informing and empowering the consumer” (Ethical Consumer, 1998/99, p. 3). The magazine’s consideration of a wide range of ethical issues reduced the likelihood of possible sample bias towards any one particular ethical issue.

Questionnaires detailing the purpose of the study along with a prepaid envelope, were inserted into the December/January 1997/98 issue of the Ethical Consumer magazine and mailed to 4,000 UK subscribers. Subjects were not offered payment for participation, rather to ensure a reasonable response rate, an opportunity was offered to enter a prize draw to win a number of “ethical” food products. One thousand four hundred and seventy two useable questionnaires (36.8%) were returned within the specified 8 week period.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

To make optimal use of the data obtained, a random sample of half of the 1,472 total responses (736) was taken for use at this developmental stage. In the questionnaire,

respondents were requested to mark their responses on a 7-point scale, ranging from +3 to -3. Out of the 736 responses, 83% thought they were likely (+1 to +3) to purchase a fair trade product the next time they went grocery shopping, only 9% were unlikely (-3 to -1) to do so. Seventy nine percent held a favourable attitude towards purchasing a fair trade product, though no respondents felt unfavourably about this proposition. Fifty three percent thought it likely that their important others would think that they should purchase fair trade grocery products, while 20% thought this was unlikely to be the case. Fifty three percent considered the purchase of fair trade grocery products easy, while 39% considered such purchases difficult. An overwhelming 96% felt that they had an ethical obligation to purchase fair trade grocery products, with only 1% disagreeing with that stance. Similarly, 99% thought of themselves as someone who was concerned about ethical issues, one respondent disagreed. These results clearly reveal that this group of ethical consumers held high intentions to purchase fair trade grocery products. Interestingly, it can be seen that while 79% held a favourable attitude towards purchasing a fair trade product, an overwhelming 96% felt an ethical obligation to do so, and 99% identified themselves as someone concerned about ethical issues. These findings already stress the importance of the additional measures of ethical obligation and self-identity, compared to the traditional attitude measures. The above results also highlight a potential problem of nonnormality. In the application of multiple regression, however, the assumption of normality is not necessary in the estimation of the regression parameters and in the partition of the total variation. Furthermore, the F-test is considered reasonably robust against nonnormality (Rawlings, Pantula and Dickey 1998).

Correlation Analyses

Correlation analyses (see Table 1) reveal that each of the direct measures contained within the model correlate significantly with their component parts: $\sum b_{\beta_i}$ - attitude ($r = .33$, $n = 691$, $p < .001$); $\sum nb_{\beta_i}$ - subjective norm ($r = .38$, $n = 651$, $p < .001$); $\sum pbc$ - perceived behavioural control ($r = .58$, $n = 694$, $p < .001$); $\sum si$ - self-identity ($r = .37$, $n = 683$, $p < .001$).

Although significantly different from zero, the correlations between $\sum b_{\beta_i}$ and attitude (and $\sum nb_{\beta_i}$ and subjective norm) are considered low when compared to most measures reported elsewhere (see Ajzen 1985). Additionally, due to the large sample size in the present study (736), the significance test is overly sensitive and should not be interpreted as indicative of any strength in the relationship between $\sum b_{\beta_i}$ and attitude, nor $\sum nb_{\beta_i}$ and subjective norm.

Model Evaluation

The regression analyses for each of the proposed model structures are detailed in Table 2. For the TPB where intention was regressed on attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control, independent effects were found for attitude ($\hat{\beta} = .47$, $p < .001$) and perceived behavioural control ($\hat{\beta} = .30$, $p < .001$). The independent effect for subjective norm was only marginally significant ($\hat{\beta} = .06$, $p = .0407 < .05$). The model yielded an adjusted $R^2 = .21$, a significant improvement ($F_{\text{change}} = 129.634^{***}$) on the original TRA. In terms of the contributions of the model constructs in explaining the variation in intention, perceived behavioural control accounts for 14% (.378 squared) of unique variance in intention, with unique contributions of 3% and 0.4% from the TRA constructs attitude and subjective norm. The above results support the earlier expectation that perceived behavioural control

Table 1 Correlation Coefficients Between the Components of the Model

Scale	Σb_{e_i}	A	$\Sigma nb_j mc_j$	SN	Σpbc	PBC	EO	Σsi	SI
I	.26***	.24***	.17***	.17***	.29***	.42***	.26***	.26***	.25***
Σb_{e_i}	-	.33***	.26***	.12**	.23***	.17***	.33***	.34***	.32***
A	-	-	.27***	.19***	.12**	.13***	.43***	.28***	.38***
$\Sigma nb_j mc_j$	-	-	-	.38***	.16***	.09*	.30***	.30***	.29***
SN	-	-	-	-	.13***	.19***	.21***	.27***	.18***
Σpbc	-	-	-	-	-	.58***	.09*	.10*	.10**
PBC	-	-	-	-	-	-	.06ns	.12**	.08*
EO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.39***	.54***
Σsi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.37***
SI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. ns = non-significant.

Table 2 Comparison of the TRA, TPB, and modified version of the TPB

Model	Variables	$\hat{\beta}$	Adjusted R ²	F of change in R ²	Correlations		
					Zero-order	Partial	Part
TRA	A	.58***	.07		.240	.214	.211
	SN	.12***			.174	.134	.131
TPB	A	.47***	.21	129.634***	.240	.192	.173
	SN	.06*			.174	.074	.066
	PBC	.30***			.422	.393	.378
Modified TPB	A	.22*	.24	14.864***	.240	.084	.073
	SN	.04 ns			.174	.046	.040
	PBC	.30***			.422	.400	.378
	EO	.19**			.255	.118	.103
	SI	.22**			.248	.100	.087

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. ns = non-significant.

would play a significant role in this behavioural context of ethical consumption. In light of this finding, the TPB structure is used as a framework upon which to introduce further modifications to the theory.

To further test and apply the work of other researchers in the context of the present study, ethical obligation and self-identity were each added to the basic TPB structure. This modified TPB revealed independent effects for attitude ($\hat{\beta} = .22$ p < .05), perceived behavioural control ($\hat{\beta} = .30$, p < .001), ethical obligation ($\hat{\beta} = .19$, p < .01) and self-identity ($\hat{\beta} = .23$, p < .01). Subjective norm, however, became non-significant. This enhanced model yielded an adjusted R² = .24, a significant improvement ($F_{\text{change}} = 14.864$ ***) on the basic TPB structure. The individual insertion of ethical obligation and self-identity to the TPB structure demonstrated that these two constructs both separately and jointly in any order of insertion make significant contributions to the basic TPB structure. Examining the unique contributions of the independent variables in this expanded model, perceived behavioural control remains unchanged at 14%. However, the addition of ethical obligation and self-identity has greatly reduced the unique contribution of attitude (from 3% to 0.5%) and has rendered the overall contributions of subjective norm non-significant.

DISCUSSION

The TRA model structure revealed significant $\hat{\beta}$ for both attitude and subjective norm measures, however, the ability of this model to predict intention is very poor when compared with other reported research, with only approximately 7% of the variation in intention explained. A regression analysis of intention on attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control revealed significant $\hat{\beta}$ for all the predictor variables and adjusted $R^2 = .21$, clearly demonstrating the superiority of the TPB over the TRA in this behavioural context. Such a finding confirms the difficulties posed for consumers in ethical consumption, which add to complexity in this area. More importantly, however, was the significant independent effect of both ethical obligation and self-identity in the prediction of intention. The necessary addition of the former to the current study is hardly surprising given the “ethical” context of the study, where the behaviour is centred around a concern for others. In the instance of self-identity, as an ethical issue (s) becomes important to an individual it becomes part of their self-identity, and they form a desire to behave accordingly. Additionally, the strong impact of perceived behavioural control suggests the existence of obstacles in decision making for which one would arguably require some self-identity with the issue in order to aspire to overcome such difficulties. Although research has used both these variables in the same model (Sparks, Shepherd, Frewer 1995), such applications have not been widespread. The findings in the present study clearly demonstrate the conceptual and empirical importance of both measures to the enhancement of TPB in this behavioural context.

The improved model structure described above had a significant impact upon the traditional TRA variables. The significance of the subjective norm measure is substantially reduced when perceived behavioural control is added to make the TPB. Further modification to this model with the addition of ethical obligation and self-identity, both individually within the model and jointly, rendered subjective norm non-significant. The reduced role of subjective norm has been suggested and discussed elsewhere. Vallerand et al. (1992), for example, suggest that subjective norm is less pertinent in the prediction of intention because this measure is concerned with a more remote concept, that is what important others think, an issues which may be particularly relevant in this behavioural context where research has found that individuals are often isolated in their ethical concerns (Shaw and Clarke 1998). Indeed, Sparks, Shepherd and Frewer’s (1995) study examining expectations of eating food produced by gene technology, another area of ethical concern, also found that in a model where measures of ethical obligation and self-identity are added to the TPB structure, “others’ attitudes” makes a non-significant contribution to the prediction of intention. The addition of ethical obligation and self-identity to the TPB structure in the present study also resulted in the reduced contribution of attitude. This finding coupled with that for subjective norm clearly reveal that in this behavioural context the variables contained within the traditional TRA model are not as central to the decision making process as the additional measures of perceived behavioural control, ethical obligation and self-identity. This challenges the adequacy of the TRA structure in the context of ethical consumption, arguably because this traditional model structure without modification is more suited to the prediction of self-interested behaviours.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The above discussion clearly reveals that, in the context of ethical consumers explored in this paper, the measures of ethical obligation and self-identity are more pertinent to the TPB model than the traditional attitude and subjective norm measures. This serves to highlight the deficiency of a model that is underpinned purely by self-interested motives - a finding particularly pertinent given that for many attitudes and behaviours important to consumers today, the gain is not solely one of self-interest, but rather is strongly influenced by ethical/moral considerations. In the context of the present study, for example, while many consumers acting in a rational self-motivated manner may select coffee on the basis of factors such as price and taste, those concerned about ethical issues may be guided by a sense of obligation to others and identification with ethical issues, where concerns such as providing a fair price for fair trade producers take priority. For these consumers their overall intention to purchase fair trade products has less to do with self-motivated concerns, but rather is driven by a sense of ethical obligation and their identity with the issue. An improved understanding of this behavioural context is vital as ethical consumerism gains momentum. This new and developing market segment provides a source of competitive advantage for organisations not wishing to risk losing out on growing consumer demand for brands with ethical credentials. Many organisations that responded to the development and growth in environmental consumerism (e.g. The Body Shop) continue to reap the benefits as ethical consumerism gains momentum. Such successes emphasise the important strategic gains that can potentially be achieved by responding to developing consumer demands. Therefore, whilst this particular study has focused on arguably what is a more 'extreme' group of consumers, it will also be interesting for market researchers to explore the degree to which ethical obligation and self identity with particular market issues, affect the attitudes and behaviours of mainstream consumer groups. "Ethical" issues may not, for example, only be of ethical concern to a tight group of principled consumers – self identification with this issue may extend more widely, suggesting that there may be a very real latent demand for those wishing to target "ethical" consumers in general.

Findings from this study reveal that modifications to the existing TRA structure improve the predictive ability of the model, and clearly satisfy the criteria stated by Ajzen (1991, p. 199). Further, the inclusion of additional variables is not only empirically pertinent, but also conceptually desirable in this behavioural context. Although the modified TPB has a much-improved predictive ability, it must be noted that a substantial amount of information remains unexplained (approximately 76%), and important structural questions remain. Given that the regression analysis has developed the model fully within the limits of the information available, it is necessary to consider how improvements in understanding could be further achieved.

Important issues around the model and its structure remain to be confronted, however. Given that the TRA/TPB have been extensively applied in many areas, it would seem unlikely that the poor regression result is related to a theoretical inefficiency. Additionally, careful construction and measurement of the model variables, guided by the work of Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and others (Ajzen 1985; Manstead, Proffitt and Smart 1983; Raats, Shepherd and Sparks 1995; Sparks, Shepherd and Frewer 1995; Sparks and Shepherd 1992) make it improbable that measurement errors have occurred. Further, as reported elsewhere (Shaw and Clarke 1999), the research outlined in this paper is part of a larger study, and as such is grounded in

qualitative research. This multiple method approach was designed to address some of the concerns of an over reliance on a quantitative or positivist approach in the measurement of 'ethicality' (see Crane 1999). Additionally, a sample size of 736 is large compared to most reported studies, and results, therefore, cannot be dismissed as anecdotal. Correlation analyses revealed significant correlations between each of the direct measures and their component parts. Although these relationships were indeed significant (based on the large sample size), these measures are low when compared to that reported in the literature. As stated previously, elicitation of salient beliefs in the present study followed the procedure as outlined by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), and, in noting criticism of this approach, are further validated by suggestions from van der Pligt and Eiser (1984). The conclusion, therefore, is that the elicitation methods used are unlikely to explain the poor correlation and model fit obtained. This poor correlation between the belief based component measures and their direct measures suggests that these relationships must, however, be examined in detail.

In future research, it will be important to address these concerns by using structural equation modelling to identify the relationship between pertinent variables, while also identifying a sound model structure. In light of the complexity of decision making demonstrated in this area, it may be deemed inappropriate to use the direct component measures to predict intention. The type of behaviour under examination involves behavioural difficulties, ethical obligation and self-identification; it may be more appropriate, therefore, to use the variables of "reasoned process" rather than that of "gut reaction". This finding makes it all the more important for marketers to understand the ethical attitudes of consumers, as well as their self-interested motivations if marketing programmes are not only to be made more effective, but also do not recoil through communications which grate against the attitudes of the groups to whom they are trying to appeal. The use of structural equation modelling incorporating the belief-based component measures will enable the development of a structurally sound model better able to predict intention, while also providing an improved comprehension of the decision process, thus greatly progressing the empirical and conceptual understanding generated by regression alone. Such conceptually grounded models would be of much greater practical use to marketing managers, and the results of structural equation modelling using the same group of ethical consumers used in this study will be reported in the near future. A further recommendation for future work centres on the sample utilised. The respondent sample detailed in this study was carefully selected through their subscription to the Ethical Consumer magazine. Although deemed appropriate due to the magazine's broad coverage of ethical issues, how these consumers compare to ethical consumers generally is unclear. Further testing of the findings presented in this paper is, therefore, required on other ethical consumer groups for the broader acceptance of this model.

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APPENDIX 1 QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Respondents were requested to mark their responses on a 7-point likely unlikely scale, scored from +3 on the positive side to -3 on the negative side.

Intention. "The next time you go grocery shopping how likely are you to purchase a fair trade product" (likely to unlikely).

Behavioural beliefs. "My purchasing a fair trade product will (a) result in a fair price for fair trade producers (b) support fair trade producers (c) result in the non-exploitation of fair trade producers (d) result in my peace of mind (e) encourage retailers to stock fair trade products (f) withdraw support from non-ethical companies (g) entail purchasing a product which is not readily available (h) entail purchasing a product which is more expensive (i) entail purchasing a quality product" (likely to unlikely).

Outcome evaluation. "I believe..." (important to unimportant).

Attitude. "In general, my attitude towards purchasing a fair trade product is..." (favourable to unfavourable).

Subjective norm. "Most people who are important to me think I should purchase fair trade grocery products" (likely to unlikely).

Normative beliefs. "Please indicate below how likely it is that the following groups think you should purchase fair trade grocery products. (a) friends (b) family (c) fair trade producers (d) church (e) ethical organisations (e.g. charities, environmental groups, etc. (f) multinationals (g) retailers who stock fair trade products" (likely to unlikely).

Motivation to comply. "Please indicate below how much, in general, you want to do what the following groups think you should do..." (very much to not at all).

Perceived behavioural control. "For me the purchase of fair trade grocery products is..." (easy to difficult).

Control beliefs. "Please indicate below whether or not you consider that the following are problems which affect the amount of fair trade grocery products which you purchase. (a) availability (b) limited range (c) location of retail outlets (d) price (e) obtaining information regarding what products are fairly traded (f) availability in supermarkets" (never a problem to always a problem).

Perceived ethical obligation. "I feel that I have an ethical obligation to purchase fair trade grocery products" (agree to disagree).

Self-identity. “I think of myself as someone who is concerned about ethical issues” (agree to disagree). A further index of “ethical concerns” obtained from the elicitation questionnaire asked the question, “How important, in general, are the following ethical considerations to you when you go grocery shopping?” (important to unimportant). This question contained thirteen items, e.g. “fair trade”, “human rights”, “animal welfare”.

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