A re-examination of socially responsible consumption and its measurement

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Abstract

Socially responsible consumption is increasing and many companies are responding to the desires and, in some cases, demands of socially and environmentally responsible consumers. Theoretically, the domain of socially responsible consumption has changed over the years, as have socially responsible corporate programs in the marketplace. The Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD) scale is developed to reflect recent developments that have occurred in theory and practice. Three dimensions of socially responsible consumption emerge: (1) purchasing based on firms’ corporate social responsibility (CSR) performance; (2) recycling; and (3) avoidance and use reduction of products based on their environmental impact. The SRPD provides a tool for academicians and practitioners in the development of theory and marketing strategy. © 2007 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Much of the American public wants companies to be more socially responsible, and a number of corporations are responding to these desires. Although there are many companies that are socially responsible because they believe it’s the right thing to do, others are likely to be socially responsible only when they expect to be financially rewarded. One way for social responsibility to pay off financially is when consumers use CSR as a purchasing criterion. It is important, therefore, for companies to know whether social responsibility is important to target consumers. This paper explores the implications of socially responsible consumer behavior for researchers and practitioners and describes the development of a scale measuring it.

2. Relevant research

According to a recent Harris Poll (Taylor, 2004), only 12% of Americans have a great deal of confidence in the leaders of major companies. This is lower than the level of confidence in every other major institution measured except for law firms, and it is at a near all-time low for the Harris Poll. Research conducted by Yankelovich found that “60% of consumers have a much more negative opinion of marketing and advertising now than a few years ago” (Smith, 2004). Related to their low opinion of companies, consumers are demanding that companies be more socially responsible. According to the national survey conducted for the 2002 Cone Corporate Citizenship Study, support for social responsibility is at a record nine-year high. They report that “89% of Americans say that in light of the Enron collapse and WorldCom financial situation, it is more important than ever for companies to be socially responsible” (p. 1). Furthermore, this study found an increase in the proportion of Americans who are willing to be activists and punish companies that behave irresponsibly by, for example, switching brands or not buying the company’s stock.

Despite a diversity of opinion among corporate leaders, a number of studies have concluded that CSR does, on average,
pay off financially. Waddock and Graves (1997) analyzed 469 companies and concluded that corporate social performance and profitability are significantly, positively related. Although causal direction may go both ways, they speculated that corporate social performance can influence profitability through such factors as employee or customer loyalty, community goodwill, socially responsible investing, and fine avoidance. Margolis and Walsh (2001) reviewed the results of 95 studies on the CSR-profitability relationship and found the majority of studies (59%) revealed a significant positive relationship while only 4% found a significant negative relationship.

Most corporate executives need more than aggregate research results to convince them to embrace CSR — they need hard evidence that there will be financial payoffs for the company. A scale measuring consumer responsiveness to CSR would be a useful tool for evaluating the potential payoffs from a company’s target customers. The purpose of this study is the development and preliminary validation of a scale measuring socially responsible consumption. Once complete, this scale can be used to track consumer trends, determine which social issues affect purchasing most strongly, determine which consumers are most likely to respond to CSR programs, and help determine strategic directions with the highest payoff for all parties.

Researchers have developed several measures of socially responsible consumption, but none is an up-to-date measure of consumer behaviors in response to a full range of social issues. Several scales measure behavior in the more narrow environmental domain (e.g., Antil, 1984). Leigh et al. (1988) developed a scale measuring consumer reactions to product characteristics. While this scale goes beyond environmental issues it does not capture responses to other domains of CSR, such as employee treatment or philanthropy. Other researchers have measured attitudes rather than behavior (e.g., Antil 1984).

The most thorough work on this topic has been done by Roberts (1993), who developed a 40-item scale measuring socially responsible consumer behavior using two dimensions — societal and ecological concerns. Later publications use a shorter (18-item) version of the scale (e.g., Roberts, 1995, 1996). These scales provide an excellent starting point for our work because they measure behavior and include a range of social issues. However, as Roberts (1995) notes, the dynamic nature of socially responsible consumption makes continual refinement of its measurement necessary as our understanding of the domain evolves over time.

The developments in the conceptual domain, marketplace behaviors, and empirical methods over the past decade present the opportunity for four areas of refinement. First, both versions of the scale are heavily-weighted toward the environmental dimension, leading to incomplete coverage of the societal dimension. Since Roberts developed his scale, consumers’ attention to corporate social performance has increased dramatically. In the 2004 Cone Corporate Citizenship Study, eight in ten respondents (n = 1033) indicated that corporate support of causes wins their trust in that company. This represents a 21% increase since 1997. Second, nearly all of the items tapping societal concern ask about avoiding buying from irresponsible compa-

nies. As a result, the scales do not fully capture preference purchasing, which is seeking out responsible companies to patronize. The results from the Cone study indicate that not only are consumers willing to punish companies who behave irresponsibly, 86% are also likely to reward companies who are associated with a cause by switching – given parity in price and quality – representing a 20% increase since 1993. Third, some of the items have become outdated. Finally, past measures of socially responsible consumption have not been created using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) following currently advocated procedures.

3. Conceptual background

Webster (1975) defined the socially conscious consumer as “a consumer who takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or who attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change” (p. 188). He based this definition on the psychological construct of social involvement, arguing that the socially conscious consumer must be aware of social problems, must believe that s/he has the power to make a difference, and must be active in the community. In spite of this broad conceptualization, his measure, the Socially Conscious Consumer Index, focused narrowly on the environmental domain.

Roberts (1993) defined the socially responsible consumer as “one who purchases products and services perceived to have a positive (or less negative) influence on the environment or who patronizes businesses that attempt to effect related positive social change” (p. 140). This definition assumes two dimensions: environmental concern and a more general social concern.

Mohr et al. (2001) defined socially responsible consumer behavior based on the concept of CSR. One approach to defining CSR involves an attempt to list the major responsibilities of companies. Carroll (1991) delineates four domains of corporate responsibility: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. The perspective of stakeholder theory is that companies should consider the effects of their actions on all relevant constituencies (shareholders, customers, employees, suppliers, environment, and community) (Smith, 2003).

A second approach defines CSR based on Kotler’s (1991) societal marketing concept, which is doing business in a way that maintains or improves both the customer’s and society’s well-being. Mohr et al. (2001) use this concept to define CSR as “a company’s commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society” (p. 47). They go on to define socially responsible consumer behavior 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” (p. 47). We used this more recent definition as the starting point in developing a scale measuring socially responsible consumer behavior. We named our scale the Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD) scale to avoid confusion with the previously discussed scales and to reflect its comprehensiveness.
4. Methodology

Our literature review suggests socially responsible consumption is a multifaceted construct involving a variety of consumer behaviors. Following procedures advocated in the literature (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 1991; Ping, 2004), a multidimensional scale is developed and validated to measure individuals’ socially responsible consumption.

4.1. Construct domain and item generation

To determine the domain of our construct, we began by listing responsibilities of companies: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic (Carroll, 1991), enacted toward the organization’s stakeholders. Because socially responsible consumption is socially-oriented, not self-centered, we included consumers’ responses to companies’ philanthropy (community as stakeholder), economic, legal, and ethical behavior toward employees, and treatment of the environment in the domain to be measured. Because customer stakeholders and stockholders tend to have a more self-centered outlook, their concerns were not included in our scale. Suppliers were not included because we believe few consumers have knowledge about how companies treat suppliers.

Using Mohr et al.’s (2001) broad construct definition for socially responsible consumption behavior, a pool of items was generated to tap consumers’ socially responsible behaviors. Our goal was to be as inclusive as possible and as such included items that (1) capture consumer responses to products made by companies that are seen as more or less socially responsible as well as responses to products that can be determined at the point of purchase to be better or worse for the environment, (2) include both consumer avoidance of irresponsible companies or products as well as preference purchasing of responsible products and products made by responsible companies, (3) capture responses based on a variety of specific issues and stakeholders, and (4) capture consumer purchase, use, use reduction, and recycling behaviors.

We wrote most of the items based on theoretical conceptualizations offered in the literature, prior work done by the authors, and marketplace observation. In some cases we used or adapted items from prior scales (e.g., Ellen, 1994; Roberts, 1993). The authors met many times to discuss the emerging scale. We added, deleted, and rewrote items until the pool of items seemed complete. The resulting 147-item pool was sent to three expert judges for comments.

4.2. Content-validity judging

The three expert judges, marketing Ph.D.s conducting social and policy research, assessed the content validity of the items. Judges were asked to rate each of the 147 items as ‘very representative’, ‘somewhat representative’, or ‘not representative’ of the socially responsible consumer behavior construct (Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 1991). They were also asked to advise of any aspect of the domain not included in the item pool, and evaluate items for clarity and conciseness. A priori we agreed to only retain items rated either ‘very’ or ‘somewhat representative’ by at least two of the three judges. Based on the responses of the expert judges, we added, rewrote, and deleted items, leaving 72 items.

4.3. Study 1: measure purification and measurement model development

The 72 items were randomly ordered and incorporated into a questionnaire. Respondents were advised that the purpose of the study was to ‘learn if environmental and social issues are important to you when you buy products or services’. Respondents were instructed that we were interested in their actual behaviors not what they thought they should be doing. The 72 SRPD items were measured using a five-point rating scale anchored by ‘Never True’ and ‘Always True’ ranging from 1 to 5 respectively.

As an initial step in examining construct validity, a measure of self-assessed socially responsible consumer behavior was developed. It was based on four stages of change suggested by Andreasen (1995) and used as the basis for a typology of consumer responses to CSR by Mohr et al. (2001): Precontemplation, Contemplation, Action, and Maintenance. Respondents were asked to choose one of four statements that reflected socially responsible consumption at each level of change (Appendix).

Even though counterbiasing statements were used to acknowledge that environmental and social issues are important to some people when they make purchase decisions, but not to others, we measured social desirability to explore its role. Strahan and Gerbasi’s (1972) M-C 1, which is a short version of the Marlow–Crowne Social Desirability Scale, was used to measure social desirability. We chose this scale because it is only 10 items, and because Fischer and Fick (1993) rated it as the best of six short scales they tested, finding it reliable ($\alpha = .88$) and strongly correlated with the original scale ($r = .96$).

The sample consisted of 590 undergraduate and graduate students from many disciplines attending three southeastern schools including a large metropolitan university and two regional universities. Eighty percent of the participants had jobs with 31% employed full-time. Females comprised 65% of the respondents. Respondents ranged in age from 17 to 54 years with a mean age of 24.6 years. Political ideology was highly varied with 28% answering at the midpoint and 36% on either side of it. The median household income range was $40,000–$49,999.

After confirming that the data met the multivariate normal assumption, an exploratory factor analysis using principle axis factoring (PAF) and oblique rotation was performed on the 72 items. Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant at the <.001 level and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure (KMO) of sampling adequacy was very high at .97 (Hair et al., 1995). DeVellis (1991) suggests that using eigenvalues to determine the number of factors yields too many factors and recommends using Catell’s Scree Test instead. An examination of the scree plot suggested restricting the number of factors extracted to four, accounting for 56% of the variance. The first factor included items reflecting the influence of firms’ CSR performance (CSR) on consumers’ purchase behaviors. This factor includes firms’ philanthropic activities, hiring practices, and employee treatment. Instead of acquisition
behaviors, the second factor captures consumers’ recycling behaviors (RECYCLE). The third factor assesses consumers’ tradeoffs between traditional purchase criteria and social and environmental purchase criteria (TRAD). The items in the fourth factor address consumers’ avoidance and usage reduction of products that harm the environment (ENVIRON). Six items had cross-loadings greater than .35 and two items did not have a loading of at least .40 on any factor. These items were deleted leaving 64 items for the CFA.

As recommended for purifying and developing a good fitting measurement model (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988), the covariance matrix for the 64 items was subjected to CFA using LISREL 8.51 (Joreskog and Sorbom, 2001). A four factor model specified to represent the four correlated factors yielded a poorly fitting model. Items were trimmed through a conservative, iterative process driven first by theoretical considerations (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Gerbing and Anderson, 1988; Hair et al., 1995). The multivariate Lagrangian multiplier tests assisted in identifying items that were conceptually confounded by revealing cross-loading items. With a sample this large, modification indices and standardized residuals must be carefully interpreted since more large estimates

| Item                                                                 | Study 1 Factor Loading | Study 1 t-value* | Study 2 Factor Loading * | Study 2 t-value** | Study 3 Factor Loading | Study 3 t-value*
<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I try to buy from companies that help the needy.</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>19.49</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>17.18</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>15.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to buy from companies that hire people with disabilities.</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>20.71</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>16.31</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>14.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid buying products or services from companies that discriminate against minorities.</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>13.81</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>10.68</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When given a chance to switch to a retailer that supports local schools, I take it.</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>20.31</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>13.13</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>9.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to buy from companies that make donations to medical research.</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>23.55</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>15.39</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>14.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make an effort to buy from companies that sponsor food drives.</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>23.83</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>16.53</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>12.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When given a chance to switch to a brand that gives back to the community, I take it.</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>21.74</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>13.90</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>9.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid buying products made using child labor.</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>18.69</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>12.58</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>9.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When given a chance, I switch to brands where a portion of the price is donated to charity.</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>22.71</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>13.47</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>11.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid buying products or services from companies that discriminate against women.</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>20.55</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>12.25</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>11.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am shopping, I try to buy from companies that are working to improve conditions for employees in their factories.</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>23.40</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>14.84</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>13.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to buy from companies that support victims of natural disasters.</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>23.29</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>14.16</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>12.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make an effort to buy products and services from companies that pay all of their employees a living wage.</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>20.10</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>14.84</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>13.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recycle cardboard.</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>21.79</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>14.26</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>13.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recycle plastic containers.</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>23.88</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>17.96</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>14.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recycle magazines.</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>23.14</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>13.97</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>14.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recycle aluminum cans.</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>19.91</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>15.12</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>12.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recycle steel/tin cans.</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>20.60</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>14.43</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>14.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recycle paper.</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>22.07</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>13.72</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>14.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am shopping, I buy the lowest priced product regardless of the working conditions in the factory. (r)</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I buy the highest quality product, regardless of its impact on the environment. (r)</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>18.16</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am shopping, I buy the highest quality product regardless of the working conditions in the factory. (r)</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>18.38</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid buying from companies that harm endangered plants or animals.</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>19.20</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>14.27</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>12.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whenever possible, I walk, ride a bike, car pool, or use public transportation to help reduce air pollution.</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>13.01</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>6.84</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid using products that pollute the air.</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>22.19</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>12.48</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>12.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid buying products that pollute the water.</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>21.76</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>17.66</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>14.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make an effort to avoid products or services that cause environmental damage.</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>24.33</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>19.27</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>14.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid buying products that are made from endangered animals.</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>14.80</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>13.36</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>10.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I limit my use of energy such as electricity or natural gas to reduce my impact on the environment.</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>14.85</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>9.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All factor loadings are significant at p<.05

**All factor loadings are significant at p<.01
are likely due to random sampling error (Rigdon, 1998). Thus, while the rule of thumb suggesting examination of modification indices greater than five was followed, in addition to conceptual considerations, the evaluation incorporated a simultaneous examination of the associated standardized expected parameter change. CFA iterations continued until parsimony was attained for each factor. Model fit continued to improve throughout this process. As a result, 34 items were trimmed from the SRPD scale.

The remaining 30 items were subsequently subjected to another CFA resulting in a very good fitting model with all factors loading significantly on their respective factors (Table 1). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), which provides a good measure of fit for large sample sizes was .07, falling within the acceptable range from .05 to .08 (Hair et al., 1995; Rigdon, 1998). Two other robust indices are the NNFI (Bentler and Bonett, 1980) and the CFI (Bentler, 1990) and at .90 and .91 respectively these indices met recommended levels for a good fitting model (Bentler, 1990). Given the large sample size, the chi-square test, goodness-of-fit (GFI) and adjusted goodness-of-fit (AGFI) indices are not as good at measuring model fit (Marsh, Balla, and McDonald, 1988) ($\chi^2$ 1350.63 (399), p < .01; GFI = .85; AGFI = .83). GFI and AGFI decrease as the model becomes more complex in terms of the number of observed variables or constructs (Ping, 2004). Since we are examining 30 items and 4 constructs, these are not the best measures to assess the model.

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, construct reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). All four factors met or exceeded accepted standards for Cronbach’s alpha (Nunnally, 1979): CSRP = .95; RECYCLE = .92; TRAD = .72 and ENVIRON = .88. Construct reliability offers a means of assessing internal consistency which does not assume unidimensionality like Cronbach’s alpha (Hair et al., 1995; Ping, 2004). The calculated construct reliability for each factor was exactly the same as its respective alpha, providing further support for the unidimensionality and internal consistency of each construct. The AVE provides an assessment of the amount of variance captured by the measurement of the construct relative to random measurement error. An AVE of .50 or higher indicates high internal consistency (Fornell and Larker, 1981). The calculated AVE for all but one of the factors exceeded .50: CSRP = .60; RECYCLE = .66; TRAD = .42 and ENVIRON = .52.

To test for discriminant validity we first compared the square of the phi coefficient to the AVE for the factors. The square of the phi coefficient was less than the AVE for all of the correlations except for the correlation between CSR-CA Beliefs and ENVIRON ($\phi^2 = .65$). To further examine discriminant validity, one factor (null) and three factor (alternative) models were also specified. Evidence of discriminant validity exists if the chi-square fit of the four factor model is better than the fit of the one and three factor models (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The one factor model combined all four factors, while the three factor model combined the highly correlated CSR-CA Beliefs and ENVIRON factors. The chi-square fit of the four factor model was significantly better than the fit of the one factor ($\chi^2$ difference (28, $n = 524$) = 24,949.97, p < .01) and three factor ($\chi^2$ difference (3, $n = 524$) = 833.00, p < .01) models, supporting discriminant validity.

The use of correlations to examine construct validity is in no way an attempt to show causality, but provides a test to determine if socially responsible consumption is related to other constructs suggested by the literature. In this first study, we performed an initial examination of construct validity using the self-identified socially responsible consumer behavior measure. Its correlation with each of the four factors was significant and positive: CSR-CA Beliefs $r = .49$, $\alpha = .01$; RECYCLE $r = .31$, $\alpha = .01$; TRAD $r = .32$, $\alpha = .01$; and ENVIRON $r = .48$, $\alpha = .01$. The higher the level of self-identified socially responsible consumer behavior, the more socially responsible consumption reported on the SRPD scale, supporting construct validity.

Not surprisingly, social desirability was correlated with all the dimensions of SRPD except traditional purchase criteria. While significant, the correlations with social desirability were relatively low for such a potentially powerful construct: CSR-CA Beliefs $r = .22$, $\alpha = .01$; RECYCLE $r = .10$, $\alpha = .05$; and ENVIRON $r = .20$, $\alpha = .01$.

4.4. Study 2: measurement model validation, reliability, and construct validity

The purpose of the second study was to validate the structure of the measurement model developed from the first data set and to further assess reliability and validity. The literature suggests several variables that are useful in assessing construct validity: Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE) (Antil, 1984; Ellen, 1994; Straughan and Roberts, 1999); CSR-CA Beliefs (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001); and Collectivism (McCarty and Shrum, 2001).

Straughan and Roberts (1999) report that the literature is fairly conclusive that PCE, or the belief that an individual can have a positive influence on resolving social and environmental problems, is positively correlated with environmentally conscious consumer behaviors. In fact, Roberts (1996) found PCE to be the single best predictor of environmentally conscious consumer behavior. Researchers have also found PCE to be a key variable associated with socially responsible consumption (e.g., Antil, 1984; Webster, 1975). Thus, H1. PCE will be positively related to socially responsible consumption.

Brown and Dacin (1997) divided consumers’ corporate associations (i.e., what they know about a company) into those related to the company’s level of CSR and corporate ability (CA). They define CSR associations as those that “reflect the organization’s status and activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations” (p. 68). CA associations are “related to the company’s expertise in producing and delivering its outputs” (p. 68). Both were found to influence consumers’ evaluations of the company. CSR’s influence on product evaluations was through its influence on company evaluations.

Sen and Bhattacharya (2001, p. 239) found that “consumers’ beliefs about the tradeoffs, if any, that a company makes between its CSR and CA efforts (CSR-CA Beliefs) can play a key role in their reactions to CSR.” Their work indicates that CSR-CA Beliefs influence consumers’ evaluations of the company and its products, as well as, identification with the
company. When consumers believe the CSR-CA relationship is win-win, responses will be more positive to CSR efforts than when they believe CSR comes at the expense of other corporate abilities. Therefore, 

**H2.** Individuals who believe CSR comes at the expense of other corporate abilities will be less socially responsible in their consumption than those who do not.

McCarty and Shrum (2001) found collectivism to be related to recycling. Those who were more collectivistic were more likely to recycle. They believed recycling was more important and this belief led to recycling behavior. Thus, 

**H3.** Collectivism will be positively related to socially responsible consumption.

The 30-item SRPD scale was administered to another student sample similar to the one in the first study. In addition to the SRPD scale, respondents were asked to answer four items measuring PCE adapted from Straughan and Roberts (1999) and Ellen (1994). Four of the 9 items in Sen and Bhattacharya’s (2001) CSR-CA Beliefs scale were modified and used to measure beliefs about CSR-CA tradeoffs. Collectivism was measured using three items adapted from McCarty and Shrum (2001) (Appendix).

The sample was diverse in terms of gender, age, political ideology, and household income ($n=295$). Females comprised 61% of the sample. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 54 with a mean of 24.1 years. With a mean of 3.89 on a 7-point scale, respondents were slightly conservative. The median household income range was $30,000–$39,999.

CFA was performed with the four factors found in Study 1. Once again, the traditional purchase criteria factor had a low construct reliability of 0.61 and a low AVE of 0.36. More importantly, theoretically, the four items comprising this factor were different from the other items. These items required consumer tradeoffs between traditional purchase criteria and socially and environmentally responsible behaviors, while the other items required no tradeoff. These four items were dropped.

The remaining 26 items were subjected to another CFA resulting in a good fitting three factor model. All items loaded significantly on their respective factors (Table 1). The RMSEA of .08 met acceptable standards. While measures sensitive to sample size were relatively poor ($\chi^2=848.49$ (296), $p<.01$; GFI=.80; AGFI=.77), the robust NNFI and CFI were .88 and .89 respectively indicating a good fit. Construct reliability and alpha supported unidimensionality and internal consistency and were the same for each of the factors: CSRP=.94; RECYCLE=.90; ENVIRON=.87.

All AVEs were .50 or above supporting convergent validity (CSRP=.55; RECYCLE=.60; ENVIRON=.50). Again, the square of the phi coefficient for CSRP and ENVIRON ($\phi^2=.64$) was greater than the AVE for either of the factors. However, the three factor model outperformed the two factor model combining these two factors ($\chi^2$ difference $(2, n=269) = 439.64, p<.01$) and the null model ($\chi^2$ difference $(20, n=269) = 8836.87, p<.01$), supporting discriminant validity.

To further assess construct validity we examined the correlations between each factor and the variables discussed above. As hypothesized, PCE was significantly, positively related to all three factors: CSRP $r=.37$, $\alpha=.05$; RECYCLE $r=.12$, $\alpha=.05$; and ENVIRON $r=.33$, $\alpha=.01$. The more respondents believed their actions made a difference, the more likely they were to be influenced by CSRP and environmental impact in their purchase and usage decisions and to recycle. In support of H2, we found CSR-CA beliefs were significantly, positively related to all three factors: CSRP $r=.22$, $\alpha=.01$; RECYCLE $r=.21$, $\alpha=.01$; and ENVIRON $r=.26$, $\alpha=.01$. While all the correlations between collectivism and each factor was positive, the only significant relationship observed was with CSRP ($r=.13$, $\alpha=.05$) offering partial support for H3.

4.5. Study 3: external validity

Reliability and AVE have unknown sampling distributions, which makes it necessary to collect different samples to assess the generalizability of the results (Ping, 2004). In Studies 1 and 2 the samples were comprised of college students. In Study 3 we collected data from a random national sample of American adults to examine the external validity of the scale and to re-examine the influence of social desirability.

The 26-item SRPD scale was included as part of a larger national study. A cover letter and questionnaire were mailed followed by a reminder postcard one week later. Of the 1997 questionnaires mailed, 51 were returned as undeliverable. Of the remaining 1946 questionnaires, 194 were returned for a 10.0% response rate. Fifty-four percent of the sample were male. The mean age was 53 with a range from 19 to 94. Respondents were slightly conservative with a mean of 3.6 on the 7-point political ideology scale. Almost half (47.7%) had completed at least a four-year college degree, while only 19.2% had not attended any college. The modal household income category was $40,000–$59,999 annually. Forty-three U.S. states were represented. The sample was slightly more male and slightly older than the overall U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). It also had somewhat higher income and education levels. Social desirability had low, but significant correlations with CSRP ($r=.25$, $\alpha=.01$) and environmental impact ($r=.20$, $\alpha=.01$), but not recycling.

The CFA resulted in a good fitting model with all items loading significantly on their respective factors (Table 1). The RMSEA of .10 fell slightly below acceptable standards. Again measures sensitive to sample size fell below acceptable standards ($\chi^2=883.23$ (296), $p<.01$; GFI=.74; AGFI=.69). The more robust NNFI and CFI were .86 and .87 respectively indicating a good fit. High alphas (CSRP=.95; RECYCLE=.93; ENVIRON=.89) and construct reliabilities (CSRP=.94; RECYCLE=.93; ENVIRON=.89) supported the unidimensionality and internal consistency of each factor.

All AVEs were above .50 supporting convergent validity (CSRP=.57; RECYCLE=.69; ENVIRON=.54). As in the student samples, the square of the phi coefficient for CSRP and ENVIRON ($\phi^2=.79$) was greater than the AVE for either factor. But, again, the three factor model outperformed the two factor model ($\chi^2$ difference $(2, n=194)=361.69, p<.01$) and the null...
model ($\chi^2$ difference (2, $n=194)=361.69, p<.01) indicating discriminant validity. These results indicate the scale is reliable and valid for this national sample.

5. Discussion

With consumers’ confidence in the leaders of major corporations at an all-time low, individuals want and expect corporations to behave more socially and environmentally responsibly. This has led more Americans to engage in socially responsible consumption. Over the years researchers have developed measures of socially responsible consumption based on current conceptual understanding and marketplace practice. It is necessary for measures of socially responsible consumption to be refined and updated due to its dynamic nature and our evolving understanding of the construct (Roberts, 1995).

A decade has passed since Roberts (1993, 1995, 1996) developed measures of socially responsible consumption. Since that time Mohr et al. (2001) have offered a broader definition of the socially responsible consumer and practitioner research indicates significant changes in consumers’ sentiments concerning socially responsible consumption (2004 Cone Corporate Citizenship Study). This research re-examined socially responsible consumption and described the development and preliminary validation of the updated SRPD scale to measure it.

In the development of the new scale we focused on four primary areas of refinement to Roberts’ measure. First, based on the expansion of the domain (Mohr et al. 2001), we sought more balance between the environmental and societal dimensions. Second, we updated the measure to reflect preference purchasing rather than just boycotting given consumers’ reported willingness to reward and punish companies based on CSR. Third, we updated the measurement to reflect current social and environmental concerns. Finally, we employed currently advocated procedures using CFA.

Across three studies the multidimensional SRPD scale provides a reliable and valid measure for use in future research and practice. Three unidimensional and reliable dimensions of socially responsible consumption behavior emerge. The first factor reflects the influence of firms’ CSR performance on consumers’ purchase behaviors (e.g., philanthropy, employee treatment). The second factor captures consumers’ recycling behaviors. The third factor assesses consumers’ avoidance and usage reduction of products that harm the environment.

The ability to measure this increasingly popular means of consumption creates the opportunity to study it theoretically and develop models to enhance our understanding. We began the process of demonstrating construct validity and identifying variables belonging in the nomological net of socially responsible consumption. Our findings support prior work indicating that PCE is a key determinant of socially responsible consumption. We also found support for Sen and Bhattacharya’s (2001) results indicating consumers’ beliefs about tradeoffs between CSR and traditional corporate abilities can affect consumers’ responses to CSR. Surprisingly, collectivism was only related to CSR performance on purchasing. The process of identifying the relationship between socially responsible consumption and other variables needs to be continued. Altruism (Straughan and Roberts, 1999), environmental concern (Roberts, 1995, 1996; Straughan and Roberts, 1999) and social concern are also likely to help in understanding the socially responsible consumer.

Research aimed at answering the following questions could prove interesting and insightful: When a company is socially responsible, do socially responsible consumers have more positive corporate associations, higher firm evaluations, and stronger purchase intentions than their less socially responsible counterparts? Does social responsibility change over the course of a consumer’s life? How do more conventional purchase criteria, such as price, quality, and convenience, factor into purchasing decisions compared to perceptions of socially responsible corporate behavior?

As business leaders increasingly participate in socially and environmentally responsible behaviors, the SRPD scale can be used to segment customer markets, estimate the size of these markets, track consumer trends, determine which dimensions of SRPD affect purchasing most strongly, and identify consumers most likely to respond to socially responsible corporate behaviors. Managers should find this information helpful in making strategic decisions.

With the passage of time, the SRPD scale will need to be refined to reflect the evolving understanding of socially responsible consumption and current market practice. When the time comes to update the measure, perhaps using qualitative methods with consumers to generate items in addition to the methods used here would provide additional insight. Until then, we hope the scale will motivate future research aimed at understanding socially responsible consumption and serve managers as they strive to develop socially responsible corporate programs.

Appendix A

Self-identified socially responsible consumer behavior.

Please take a moment to think about the part played by one or both of the following issues when you are deciding what to buy: (1) how companies behave toward their employees, the community, and the environment and (2) the environmental impact of the products themselves. Please select one of the following statements that most closely describes, overall, the extent to which these are considerations for you.

(Place an “X” next to one statement.)

1. I base my purchase decisions on product and service quality, price, and convenience. I am not concerned with these issues and I don’t think about them when deciding what to buy.

2. I believe that these issues are important, but it is too difficult and time-consuming to base my purchase decisions on them.

3. When it is easy to do, I use information on these issues in my purchase decisions.

4. I make an effort to learn about these issues, and I am willing to pay more or sacrifice product quality in order to use these issues in my purchase decisions.

PCE ($\alpha=.64$) Strongly disagree 1; Strongly agree 5
1. What I purchase as a consumer has an effect on the nation’s environmental problems.
2. Each consumer’s behavior can have an effect on how companies treat their employees.
3. Since one consumer cannot have any effect on how companies behave toward the community, it does not make any difference what I do. (r)
4. Each consumer can have a positive effect on society by purchasing products sold by socially responsible companies.

CSR-CA Beliefs ($\alpha=.53$) Strongly disagree 1; Strongly agree 5

1. Socially responsible behavior reduces a company’s ability to provide the highest quality products. (r)
2. Socially responsible behavior is a drain on a company’s resources. (r)
3. Socially responsible companies are likely to have higher prices than companies that are not socially responsible. (r)
4. A company can be both socially responsible and make products of high quality at a fair price.

Collectivism ($\alpha=.65$) Not at all important 1; Extremely important 5

1. Working hard for the goals of a group, even if it does not result in personal recognition.
2. Doing what is good for most of the people in the community, even at a personal cost.
3. Helping others in the community who are in need.

References

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