

Chapter 50

Sustainability Campaigns and Consumer Involvement: Effects of Altruism, Locus of Control, and Long-Term Orientation

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this chapter is to find out the effects of NGO campaigns on consumers in terms of attitude and behavior and discover any relationship between this effect and sustainable personality factors such as altruism, locus of control, and long-term orientation. A survey is conducted with 177 consumers who reside in Turkey for at least two years that are older than 18 years. Experimented with two popular environmental NGO campaigns, results reveal clearly that altruistic personality trait has a positive effect on consumers in terms of behavior. Locus of control and long-term orientation are not correlated with environmental behavior and attitude of consumers. In addition, only age is positively correlated with consumer behavior in one of the campaigns. Demographics are not found to be sufficient to explain consumer behavior in environmental campaigns.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of sustainability is relatively a new apprehension in developing economies (Mazlum, 2004). Awareness for sustainability problems are mostly created by the efforts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This article aims to find out how NGO sustainability campaigns affect behavioristic patterns of Turkish consumers. Most of the prior research reveals findings from developed countries. The current study is conducted in Turkey, a country of an important emerging market. Its rapid industrialization and concerted efforts towards modernization make it a significant context for observing the developments of sustainable consumption.

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While there are numerous examples to NGO initiatives for sustainability in Turkey, the effectiveness and cause effect relationships of these initiatives are not clearly comprehended. What are the reasons behind successful ones and unsuccessful ones? What are the best ways to increase consumer involvement in such initiatives? These are some of the many questions to be explored in order to understand consumer behavior and achieve more success in future developments.

The communication characteristics of a sustainability campaign that is derived by an NGO clearly play an important role in accomplishment of it. However, consumer behavior also play an important role to understand the underlying attributes of a successful campaign. This article aims to understand consumer personality and involvement in sustainability campaigns in terms of attitude and behavior. The correlation between personality factors of altruism, locus of control and long-term orientation and sustainability campaign attitude and behavior are investigated. The results of the research can give insight to create more successful campaigns in future.

BACKGROUND

Although the definition of sustainable development is discussed to be vague; it has different definitions in different contexts and changed over time since Brundtland Commission defined it in 1987 (Redclift, 2005). Established by the United Nations, Brundtland Commission united countries to define a map for the global environmental concerns. The commission released a report in 1987 which defined “sustainable development” and considered as the first definition of the sustainability concept. In his article, Redclift examines the development and evolution of sustainability concept from Brundtland Report’s definition onward. According to Redclift, by 2000s, sustainability concept refers to development of the world we live, by not only concerning the present time but also considering future generations. It has environmental, social and economic aspects which aim to achieve sustainability in all of them. Sustainable development involves governments, NGOs, corporations and consumers. In addition, since sustainable development is a broader subject which involves global problems, there is a need for managing sustainability globally.

The sustainable development concept has influenced the corporations with increasing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) engagements. Many business organizations are formed to support contributions of corporations to sustainable development (Smith, 2003). Some of the widespread organizations include World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) and Business in the Community (BITC). The CSR activities of firms have affected the consumers in terms of attitude and purchasing behavior in sustainability issues (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – another actor of sustainable development - play a significant role in political life and political changes in developing economies (Clarke, 1998). In his research, Clarke has analyzed NGOs and people organizations (Pos) in developing economies located mostly in Asia and Latin America. According to him, the recognition of NGOs and their involvement in socio-economic programs initiated after the recession in 1980. Many examples from India, Brazil, Bangladesh, Chile, Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand show that there is a correlation between political change and proliferation of NGOs and POs. The significant roles of NGOs are highly visible in promoting economic development and mobilizing broadly-based popular support for the governments. The democratization role of NGOs is ambiguous but yet it is significant that NGOs and POs strengthen civil society and the institutionalization between the society and the state. As much as for the developed world, the influential

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