



Chickens, ants, grasshoppers and pigs: Proposed segmentation approach in the field of sustainability living

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ABSTRACT

The goal of the Paris Agreement reiterated climate change actions. On reflection, both levels, production and consumption, need to be considered to attain sustainability. Consumers play a pivotal role in creating demand and driving sustainable production and consumption. With this in mind, this research study aims to identify consumer segments who are sustainability concerned and committed to sustainability living. Qualitative research was undertaken using semi-structured depth interviews. Fifty-one consumers participated in this research. The research implemented a metaphor to get a deeper understanding of different consumer groups in the field of sustainability living. Two well-known fables were used as a metaphor, i.e. The Chicken and the Pig and The Ant and the Grasshopper. This research identifies four segments based on fable characters: Chickens, sustainability concerned consumers who contribute and are involved in sustainability living in their everyday life; Ants, 'dark green' consumers; Grasshoppers, resistant to sustainability living identity; and Pigs, sustainability entrepreneurs. With these fable characters, this research profiles the segments for the field of sustainability living using 4L's – Leaners/Learners (Chickens), Leaders (Ants), Lazars (Grasshoppers) and Lifters (Pigs). Although sustainability segments have been identified before, this research provides a different understanding of these unique segments and opens new avenues for marketers and researchers. The paper concludes with a discussion of implications and future research directions.

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CHINESE ABSTRACT

《巴黎协议》的宗旨是强化针对气候变迁采取措施。这需要考虑生产和消费量方面才能实现可持续性。消费者在创造市场需求和促进可持续性生产和消费方面扮演着一个重要角色。本研究基于这种考虑，旨在发现那些关注可持续性和倡导可持续性生活的消费者人群。这些定性研究采用半结构化深入采访方式，调查了51位消费者。调查采用了两篇著名寓言故事：鸡与猪，蚂蚁与蚱蜢。基于寓言故事中的角色，研究确定四个消费者人群：鸡代表关注可持续性的消费者，他们在日常生活中倡导和坚持可持续性生活；蚂蚁代表“深绿色消费者”；蚱蜢代表抵触可持续性生活的消费者；猪代表可持续性企业家。尽管以前曾经确定过这些可持续性人群，但此研究对这些独特人群提出不同理解，为市场推广和研究打开新的渠道。论文最后讨论了研究意义和未来研究方向。

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1. Introduction

It is fairly important for marketers to understand consumer needs and be able to identify and satisfy each of these needs. Sustainability consumer segmentation provides the bases for differing levels of separating those consumers who have a strong attachment to sustainability from those who don't. This focus on sustainability leads consumers to make decisions based on environment, economic, and social

impacts. When they select a product, sustainability is often taken into account at varying lengths. Some consumers may consider fair trade or environmental practices when choosing where to shop, or buy organic products (Euromonitor, 2008). These consumers can be identified as socially responsible, ethical, cultural, and/or environmentally responsible consumers.

Several attempts have been made to segment the green consumers or ethical consumers based on their characteristics (Mark et al., 2005; Patzelt and Shepherd, 2011). However, not much work has been conducted specifically on the sustainability consumer. More recently, the concepts of a single defining profile of the green consumer have been superseded. Today, we see shades of green – stretching from the darkest who are willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly products in order to help global warming to the lightest

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who are primarily interested in saving money on their energy bills, as opposed to saving the planet. While categorically these groups can be identified through their demographic status and purchase intent, little has been undertaken to specifically monitor the purchase intent of these groups. Understanding these consumer groups is the key to efficaciously marketing sustainability to the right target audience. Thus, the aim of this research is to contribute to developing a profile and a conceptual understanding of the different types of consumer groups in terms of sustainability living.

This paper focuses on understanding customer segmentation on sustainability living and the research proposes the four segmentation bases of field of sustainability living using 4L's – Leaners/Learners, Leaders, Lazers and Lifters. This opens up new avenues for marketers and researchers to identify consumer segmentation profiles in the field of sustainability living. The paper initially addresses the literature review, followed by the method and the findings of the analysis. Lastly limitations and future research directions are discussed.

2. Literature on sustainability consumer segmentation

Initial attempts to identify green consumers can be traced back to 1968, when Berkowitz and Lutterman (1968) studied the profile of socially responsible consumers. The study results described socially responsible consumers as female, pre-middle aged, with high level of education and above average socio-economic status. Later studies, however, approached different aspects and variables in segmentation to identify different consumer groups. Demographics (D'Souza et al., 2007; Jain and Kaur, 2006), psychographic (Mostafa, 2009) and behavioural (Akehurst et al., 2012; Sütterlin et al., 2011; Verain et al., 2012) are the main consumer segmentation variables in relation to environmental concerns, with some research profiling consumers on their degree of awareness (Weber, 2013). In socio-demographics, age, income, occupation, and education emerged as the main areas used to identify different consumer segments (Verain et al., 2012). Although demographics have been mainly used to differentiate these consumer groups, demographics are indeed poor predictors, and as such, they don't reveal much.

Independent sustainability focused organisations and research agencies also provide insights to identify different consumer groups in sustainability. The prominent group found in the literature that demonstrates well defined segments is the Natural Marketing Institute (NMI). The Natural Marketing Institute (NMI) identified five segments which categorise the greenness of the US adult population based on attitudes and behavioural traits towards health, wellness and sustainability and these segments are LOHAS Consumers (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability), naturalites, drifters, conventionals and unconcerned (Natural Marketing Research Institute, 2010). LOHAS is a recognised and rapidly growing market segment in North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australia. They categorise consumers who care deeply about the environment, health, sustainability and social justice. They are also known as 'Lohasians', 'cultural creatives', 'conscious consumers' and 'solution seekers' (French and Rogers, 2010).

These consumer groups can be referred to as green consumers. They can be described as those who look to protect themselves and their world through the power of purchasing decisions (Ottman, 1993). However, there are reports that consumers generally don't follow what they report, for instance, consumers who claimed to have green values adopted in their everyday life did not demonstrate this in their actual purchases. This may be due to the fact that consumer behaviour is complex to understand as there are a number of influences affecting consumer decision making and consumers do not always walk the talk (Sharpley, 2001). A number of factors encompassing cost, purpose, availability, and alternative options also influence green consumerism (Moisander, 2007), which is why just

depending on demographic profiling may not be representative of a green consumer profiling.

Since consumers are challenged with complex choices, when adopting a sustainable lifestyle (Fraj and Martinez, 2006), to assist with deriving homogenous segments, segments are identified by segmenting consumers based on a wide range of variables. Fraj and Martinez (2006) investigated which values and lifestyles best predicted ecological behaviour. The two segments found are price oriented segment and a production-method-oriented segment (Fraj and Martinez, 2006). Verain et al. (2012) attempted to identify consumer groups in sustainable living, resulting in the three segments: 'greens', 'potential greens' and 'non-greens'. Green consumers were mainly characterized by values belonging to the domain of self-transcendence and openness to change (Verain et al., 2012). In addition, potential greens were identified as one or more consumer segments between green consumers and non-green consumers. This segment was concerned not only with environmental factors, but importance was attached to other factors such as price, health and nature as well. Non-greens were characterized by the lowest concerns and knowledge among all segments and the lowest attitudes towards green purchases (Williams et al., 2014).

The following pays particular attention to consumer resistance. Since research on consumption behaviour should seek to investigate all the aspects of consumption behaviour, not just an increase in consumption (Lee et al., 2009), it has become increasingly important to understand consumer resistance. Drawing from Price and Penaloza's (1993) seminal work, consumer resistance is a growing field of research and this has been explored, in various contexts, including the reactions displayed by consumers towards companies and their influences and practices. As the term is used, 'consumer is a person, or persons, definable as a consumer, or consumers, acting within, but sometimes attempting to escape, the marketing system and resistance forms of variable oppositional responses to a practice of dominance within the market place such as commercial pressure, influence, strategies, logic or discourses that are perceived, by the consumer/person, as dissonant and antagonistic to their beliefs' (Lee et al., 2011, p. 1680). Consumer resistance emphasizes consumers opposing the products, practices and partnerships associated with a structure of dominance. Anti-consumption is concerned with consumption issues while consumer resistance is concerned with power issues (Lee et al., 2011). Anti-consumption and resistance has been researched in consumer behaviour but not much research has been conducted on sustainability resistant identity. This research identifies sustainability resistant consumers' characteristics for the purpose of segmentation.

We also explore sustainability entrepreneurs in this segmentation study as they play a vital role as sustainability consumers who go to more extensive measures, and combine consumption with entrepreneurship that enables others' sustainable consumption. Sustainability entrepreneurship draws on two founding principles – namely ecopreneurship and social entrepreneurship. Sustainability entrepreneurship is a balancing act of strategically managing and orienting environmental, social objectives and considerations, with an aim to achieve specific financial goals towards the business objective (Bell and Stellingwerf, 2012). They improve the quality of their processes while ensuring their environmental and social impact is limited and minimised (Choi and Gray, 2008). They grow from very high consumer concern. It differs from Ecopreneurship which does not incorporate the development of non-economic gains for individuals, communities and societies at large (Patzelt and Shepherd, 2011). Sustainability Entrepreneurship includes social entrepreneurship's core objectives, creating social impact, solving societal problems and enhancing social wealth (Bell and Stellingwerf, 2012). Social entrepreneurs are not profit oriented and aim to use their profit on specific disadvantaged group (Leadbeater, 1997). Societal development is expected to improve and contribute to

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