
The role of emotions in ethical food products purchase

Riadh Ladhari

Faculty of Business Administration
Laval University, Quebec, Canada

Keywords

Emotions; Personal values; Food products purchase; Fair-trade products; Organic products

Abstract

Socially responsible and ethical consumption is a growing area of interest for both academics and practitioners. Today, many consumers' purchase decisions express societal norms, community concern, personal morals, and ecological standards. The literature emphasizes the role of attitudes, personal values (e.g., social justice values, universalism values, and environmental values), and socially conscious behavior as motives of responsible and ethical consumption. Many studies support the role of rational attributes such as price and product features.

Consumption is mostly regarded as a functional, utilitarian or rational activity. However, many studies report that consumption experience is both a rational and a hedonic activity. In fact, emotions play a key role in buying decisions and post-purchase evaluations/behaviors. In the domain of ethical consumption, studies on the role of emotions are scarce. This study intends to fill this gap by examining the effect of emotions and personal values on attitudes and purchase behaviors of fair-trade and organic food products.

Data are collected using a survey among Canadian consumers. Personal values are measured using a short version of the Schwartz SVS scale. The short scale includes 10 dimensions (e.g., self-direction, universalism, tradition, conformity) and 30 items (e.g., curious, unity with nature, broad-minded, honest, helpful, and respect for tradition). Emotions related to food product purchase were measured using discrete emotions such as pride, enthusiasm, and happiness. The survey measures also attitudes, consumers' purchase intentions, and purchase behavior of fair-trade and organic food products.

The preliminary data analysis provides support for the significant effects of emotion on attitudes, purchase intentions, and purchase behavior. For instance, pleasure and pride are positively and significantly related to purchase of fair-trade and organic food products. The results also support the effect of personal values on ethical purchase. For example, personal values such as protecting the environment (preserving nature), unity with nature, curiosity (interested in everything, exploring), and help (working for the welfare of others) have all positive significant effects on ethical food products purchase.
