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Consumer behavior under the infection of consumer responsibilities

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Abstract

Behavioral studies still focus heavily on increasing consumer purchase intention. This approach, though aimed at increasing business results, ignores environmental and social issues. While human activities are gradually moving towards sustainable aspects, increasing consumption also needs to take into account the issues of human responsibility in purchasing, using and discharging into the environment. From there, the article focuses on exploiting the aspect of consumer responsibility as well as its influence on purchase intention. By method of document research, the article confirms the relationship between perception of consumer responsibility and buying behavior. From there, posing issues, directing the attention of business activities to the goal of shaping consumer responsibility, towards sustainable consumption.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Consumer Responsibilities, Intention to buy

1. Introduction

The keyword "environment" in recent years has been mentioned quite a lot in global conferences, government agendas, in academic documents and from the public... moreover, many organizations and programs was built with the purpose of protecting the environment such as: Earth Summit, Wild Aid (Wildlife Relief), United Nations environmental program, world environment day... Thus, the environment is currently an issue. The topic receives the top attention of the world and Vietnam is no exception. With that wave, there have been environmental protection programs in Vietnam such as: Environmental Protection Fund, Cycling Club for the Environment, Green Seed, Earth Hour, etc. strong response from citizens, businesses, NGOs... Consciousness of consumers has a great impact on the environment, growth or decline is highly dependent on consumption and discharge behaviors.

Currently, many businesses have included sustainability criteria in one of their long-term development strategies, through specific green strategies such as green marketing, green human resource management, green logistics... and green customers. That awareness is becoming a trend and is spreading in many fields. However, the attention to the responsibility of consumers in research as well as the awareness of the society and consumers in the above issue has not been sufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to identify problems and measures to increase consumer responsibility.

2. Literature

2.1 Consumer responsibilities

More than a quarter of a century has passed since the official work on consumer responsibility/ethics was published by Vitell *et al* (Muncy and Vitell, 1992; Vitell *et al.*, 1991) ^[10, 11] but consumer responsibility is still an area nascent investigative field (Swaidan, 2012) ^[9]. The majority of previous studies have suggested that consumers are responsible when following appropriate principles or ethical standards (Barnett *et al.*, 2005; Giesler and Veresiu, 2014; Harrison *et al.*, 2005) ^[4, 7].

Thus, from an intrinsic point of view, consumers are responsible when their behavior ensures two criteria: (1) ethical standards guide consumption behavior by suggesting ways to help maintain it. Accountability in each consumer; (2) consumer responsibility through social concerns such as pollution and energy consumption.

Expanding the scope of responsibility, some authors refer to consumer responsibility through attention to ecological and environmental issues such as pollution and energy consumption (Antil, 1984; Davis, 1979) ^[1, 3]. For example, Steenkamp *et al.* (2010) also mention an analytical framework that focuses on social benefits.

Vitell and Muncy (2005) ^[13] also add an aspect of “doing well” which is related to environmental awareness and reflects growing interest in practicing positive consumption behaviour. Most generally, Vitell (2015) ^[12] argues that throughout the process of purchase, use and disposal, consumers have a responsibility to stakeholders, consumers have a responsibility to act according to ethical standards. At the same time, for society as a whole, it is the responsibility of consumers to avoid harm or even proactively act in the interests of society.

This perspective approaches the philosophy of sustainable development, which balances between economic benefits, social benefits and environmental protection. This is the final addition to the system of stakeholders influenced by consumer behavior, making the concept complete.

Through the theoretical review process, the concept of consumer responsibility is defined as the fact that consumers have to be responsible for their consumption behaviors throughout the decision process of purchase, use and disposal/disposal. Products/services. This responsibility is regulated by the standards/ethical and legal provisions on consumer responsibility. On the other hand, from the perspective of stakeholders, consumer behavior will be influenced as well as negatively affect the interests of the following three specific target groups:

- For suppliers of goods/services: ensure compliance with relevant legal and ethical standards.
- For other relevant social objects such as manufacturers, retailers, other consumers, the state...: ensure the interests of stakeholders, avoid causing damage and adversely affect the Stakeholders.
- For the ecological environment: be responsible for preserving and limiting the bad effects from consumption behavior.

The thesis agrees with the perspectives of approaching the concept of consumer responsibility that have been synthesized and considers this as the main approach of the thesis. Since then, the relevant arguments are based on the view that: Consumer responsibility is the fact that consumers are responsible for negative impacts on goods/service suppliers, social status and to the ecological environment due to the influence of their own behavior of buying, using and disposing of/disposing of products/services.

2.2 Consumer responsibility affects consumption intention

According to Griskevicius *et al* (2012) ^[5], pro-social behaviors are the intrinsic motivation to increase sustainable or green behaviors. Accordingly, when customers are motivated to perform social behaviors, they will tend to increase green consumption behaviors. A person who is aware of his or her responsibility to society in consumption behavior will tend to use more environmentally friendly products.

Conducting research on the same topic in the hotel business context, Gao and Mattila (2016) ^[6] find statistically significant evidence to confirm that consumers have a greater social relationship tend to stay at a green hotel more than

consumers with lower levels of social ties. The level of social relations in this context represents the constraints of consumers in a normative relationship with stakeholders in society. From the point of view of social responsibility theory, then consumers will have the responsibility to carefully consider their consumption behavior before doing it because of the binding interests between the parties involved. Not only from a cognitive perspective, when observing consumer behavior, Karmarkar and Bollinger (2015) ^[8] also found that in customers with environmentally friendly behavior, they also tend to continue to make consumer decisions. Green oriented. When observing the behavior of using shopping bags, Karmarkar and Bollinger (2015) ^[8] found that customers who reuse shopping bags will tend to increase the purchase and use of green products. In other words, an individual who is aware of responsible consumption may have a higher intention to buy green products. Obviously, these arguments still need to be verified by empirical studies. Therefore, the author proposes a hypothesis corresponding to this theoretical argument.

3. Conclusion

In a nutshell, consumer responsibility refers to standards as well as enforcement and assurance of consumer responsibility for the purchase, use and environmental emissions during use. With the arguments of the article, business planners should choose communication strategies that are suitable with policies, business goals and current business context, in order to positively influence consumer behavior. Not only in increasing levels or numbers, but focusing on aspects of behavioral and environmental norms. The article still has limitations in reviewing the literature and collecting empirical evidence. Hence future studies can develop research ideas in combination with experimental methods as well as increase the size of the study. Thereby increasing the persuasiveness of the research results.

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