

**Essays on (Un-)Ethical Consumption and the Ethics of Consumption in a Global  
Marketplace**

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## 1. Synopsis

In times of climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, political unrest around the globe and ubiquitous corporate scandals, our consumerist and capitalist society is shaken. Mistrust in the political and economic system is widespread and the political debates in most of the democratic nations around the world have increasingly turned into an irreconcilable turmoil in which both ends of the political spectrums are incapable and unwilling to reach any form of consensus. This turmoil and chaos might threaten or at least hinder the development and implementation of the United Nations' sustainable development goals that aim at ending the world's poverty and inequalities, sustaining and conserving the world's resources, and protecting our planet and its inhabitants. Political philosopher Michael Sandel notes that "our politics is overheated because it is mostly vacant, empty of moral and spiritual content. It fails to engage with big questions that people care about" (Sandel, 2012, p. 13) and he summarizes that our society needs more morals in our political and societal discussion and that our rationalist economy (and economic and business research) needs more ethical and moral thinking to solve today's problems.

Against this background, the present dissertation tries to add more morality into the societal, political, and academic discussion to enrich the debate on how to overcome today's global problems. These problems are not going to be solved unless approached by a multi-faceted, international and interdisciplinary array of solutions. Specifically, the dissertation suggests that morality within the marketplace (the so called "marketplace morality") is essential to overcome today's problems and to shift our economic system towards more morality and sustainability and to increase its value for all the market agents across the globe, including companies and consumers. The concept of marketplace morality has evolved in recent years and is defined as "applying to all issues relating to the norms, values, practices, identities, institutions and psychological mechanisms and responses to interactions perceived by a consumer as relevant to questions of right and wrong within a marketplace or market exchange" (Campbell & Winterich, 2018, p. 169). Since most of today's environmental issues can be linked to consumption (Gardner, 2004), it becomes evident that a rethinking of our consumption (and production) patterns is necessary to be able to address today's problems and to play an active part in re-shaping our marketplace behaviors.

The present dissertation aims to shed light on a variety of highly relevant issues that are ubiquitous in our modern consumerist society, yet are rarely addressed in research so far. The essays within the dissertation focus on several aspects of marketplace morality and analyze



different stakeholders (i.e., consumers and corporations) that engage in market interactions and try (or don't try) to align their behaviors with some sort of ethical attitudes. The dissertation takes an interdisciplinary, multi-national standpoint that encompasses findings from consumer psychology, applied philosophy, consumer ethics, and cross-cultural marketing. The essays reflect contemporary issues that refer to a combination of research fields from the disciplines and have implications for academic research, practice, and policy. The dissertation applies various methods and methodological approaches to build a knowledge basis for future research on the interplay between (un-)ethical consumption behaviors and their normative backgrounds. The essays of the dissertation can be assigned to three major streams of research that are described in detail below. First, the differentiation between (un-)ethical consumption and the ethics of consumption allows us to vary the **ethical scope** of the research foci and analyze both normative foundations of consumers' ethical decision-making and their outcomes in the marketplace. Second, the essays vary in their **behavioral scope** and address different stakeholders (i.e., corporations and consumers) that translate (or don't translate) their responsibility into marketplace behaviors. Third, the essays address **consumers' decision-making** and analyze a variety of possible marketplace outcomes and determinants of consumers' ethical and non-ethical choices that are integrated in a global marketplace.

### **1.1. Theoretical Foundations and Main Research Areas of the Dissertation**

#### *Ethical Consumption and The Ethics of Consumption in a Global Marketplace*

The essays of the dissertation can be differentiated in terms of their ethical focus and address issues from two distinct, yet interrelated domains of research on consumer ethics. Two different streams of theoretical thinking on ethics dominate consumer research. The first is frequently called **ethical consumption** or political consumerism (Barnett et al., 2010; Hoffmann & Hutter, 2012; Micheletti, 2003; Sassatelli, 2006). This stream examines the political engagement of consumers and other consumer activities that seek to promote ethical consumer patterns (e.g., buying fair-trade products, engaging in boycotts, participating in sharing systems), sustainable lifestyles, and the translation of ethical attitudes into behaviors in the marketplace. Ethical consumption refers to the medium for moral and political action and most frequently looks at actual market outcomes of consumers' ethical attitudes (Barnett et al., 2005). While the definition of what is considered "ethical" might be vague and subject to individual preferences (Shaw & Clarke, 1999), researchers from consumer behavior and business ethics agree on the notion that "ethical consumers support prosocial consumption and sustainability by avoiding products and services offered by companies that violate human rights, exploit labor, degrade

environments, or trade unfairly” (Zollo, 2020, p. 1). This dissertation features three essays that address issues of ethical consumption. In the first essay, the authors analyze how unethical behavior of suppliers leads to boycotting tendencies among consumers and show that sourcing from hypocritical suppliers evokes strong negative responses from consumers around the globe as their ethical attitudes are endangered by companies’ wrongdoings. Further, the first essay applies expectancy violations theory and shows that consumers hold certain expectations regarding the ethical behavior of corporations and specifically react negatively when those ethical expectations are violated.

Evidently, corporations are not the only entities that can behave unethically in the marketplace. Therefore, Essay 3 analyzes how consumers themselves are allured to act unethically by corporate wrongdoings. The essay explains that under certain circumstances consumers adopt unethical behaviors of companies and express their disagreement by engaging in morally dubious acts themselves (i.e., lie to gain personal advantages and to damage the company). In Essay 5, the authors again look at issues of ethical consumption and address psychological barriers that counter certain consumer policy instruments (such as taxes on unethical, “sinful” products or nudges to foster pro-environmental behaviors).

The second dimension of the first research stream is labeled **The Ethics of Consumption** (Barnett et al., 2005) and emphasizes the moral obligations and moral values of individuals, such as autonomy, sustainability, freedom, and responsibility. It also considers philosophical or ethical traditions, such as virtues ethics, as the philosophical reflection and justification of morally right consumption. As such, it includes the application of ethical theories on consumer behavior (Barnett et al., 2005; Cafaro, 2001; Garcia-Ruiz & Rodriguez-Lluesma, 2014, 2017; Schwartz, 2017). In this stream, researchers are specifically interested in how normative attitudes and philosophical underpinnings guide and comprise consumer behavior and jointly build a foundation of consumers’ decision-making. Specifically, researchers are interested in how normative standpoints form a psychological and philosophical background for decision-making and ask the question on which normative basis consumers form their ethical evaluation of consumption activities. In contrast to research on (un-)ethical consumption, the second stream of research is not particularly interested in actual behavioral outcomes but rather on the ethical and normative causes of such behaviors. In this sense, Essay 2 analyzes how Western and Eastern traditions of virtue ethics build a foundation for consumers’ contemporary decision-making in the modern marketplace and shows that the application of ancient ethical theories is both highly relevant and promising to foster and promote ethical consumption. In applying virtue ethics to consumer research, it is possible to ask fundamental ethical questions regarding

our consumption behaviors. In the pursuit of happiness and the desire of living a good life, consumption can play a pivotal role if consumers act virtuously and, for example, do not overuse the world's resources, do not spend their money lavishly, and consume moderately. By analyzing the ethical foundations of consumption, researchers are also able to analyze what different kinds of ethical or normative arguments are used by consumers to justify their consumption behaviors and how consumers form their ethical judgments in general. In Essay 6, the authors introduce the Defining-Issues-Test (DIT) to consumer research and show the great potential of applying this method to contemporary issues of consumer research. The DIT, which has been mostly used in educational psychology and empirical philosophy, empirically tests Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of stages of moral development and is able to determine individuals' cognitive ability to process moral issues. By applying and transferring this method to consumer research, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of how consumers form their ethical judgments and how they associate ethical judgments to different forms of consumption activities (such as sharing). Further, this method helps in bridging gaps in empirical consumer research as it avoids asking morally or ethically sensitive questions in a direct way through applying dilemma-like decision tasks. With those dilemmas it is possible to avoid the problem of social desirability (Auger & Devinney, 2007) that is a fundamental fallacy of empirical research on ethical issues.

#### *Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Social Responsibility in a Global Marketplace*

The second major research stream that motivated the essays in this dissertation is the field of **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** and **Consumer Social Responsibility (ConSR)**. During the last decades, research in those fields has steadily evolved and research on CSR-related issues specifically has become one of the major foci from scholars of business ethics and many other related disciplines (for a review see Aguinis & Glavas, 2012 or Frynas & Yamahaki, 2016). Different approaches and definitions have since been proposed, but the most widely used definition of CSR is proposed by Aguinis (2011, p. 855) as "context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance." Although the field is highly fragmented and diverse, scholars generally agree that practicing CSR is beneficial for corporations in terms of increasing the reputation of the firm (Brammer & Pavelin, 2006), better evaluation of products and the companies themselves (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001), and a favorable perception of the firm (Lev et al., 2010).

Even if research has demonstrated that practicing CSR is highly beneficial for corporations, the failure to implement CSR into their business models is widespread and corporate scandals are ubiquitous in today's marketplace. Evidently, corporations not only fail to implement CSR strategies into their business models, but also act unethically or irresponsibly due to a variety of reasons. This ethical antagonist to CSR is described as corporate social irresponsibility (CSiR) and comprises corporate behaviors that show a lack of concern for communities, the environment, or other stakeholders (Lange & Washburn, 2012). Recent scandals, including Volkswagen's notorious manipulation scandal (Dans, 2015) or the most recent fraud scandal involving Germany's former Fintech star Wirecard (Davies, 2020), shake the foundation of consumers' trust in the economic system and lead to severe reprisals towards firms as consumers lose their brand trust (Kim et al., 2015), devalue the brand (Sweetin et al., 2013), or engage in consumer boycotts (Klein et al., 2004). Ultimately, recent psychological research suggests that CSiR may even promote consumers' own unethical behaviors (Newman & Brucks, 2018) as it allures and licenses them to act in a morally dubious way.

Essay 3 adds to this field of research and analyzes under which circumstances consumers of certain brands are contaminated by the unethical behavior of those brands and introduces boundary conditions as well as possible procedural mechanisms that explain this novel and unanticipated outcome of CSiR. Essay 1 utilizes recent findings in research on CSiR and analyzes how corporate irresponsibility of a firm's supplier may backfire onto the firm that sources from the supplier and ultimately leads to an increase in consumers' boycotting tendencies. In doing so, the essay expands the former dyadic relationship between CSiR and its outcomes to a triadic relationship that also takes the corporations' supply chains and suppliers into account.

Despite the substantial interest in research on CSR and CSiR in Western societies, very little is still known about consumers' perceptions of CSR and CSiR and practices in the emerging (Yin & Zhang, 2012) or developing countries (Frynas, 2006), ultimately leading to a Western-centric understanding of CSR and CSiR that does not truly acknowledge cultural or national differences (Ramasamy et al., 2010). Essay 1 addresses this gap in the literature in CSiR by analyzing reactions to CSiR of consumers from various cultural and national backgrounds, including consumers from two BRICS countries (i.e., China and South-Africa).

Following Iris Marion Young's social connection approach to responsibility (Young, 2011), corporations are not the only entities in the marketplace that can be attributed with some sense of responsibility. Young notes that "our responsibility derives from belonging together with

others in a system of interdependent processes of cooperation and competition” (Young, 2011, p. 105) and adds that “shared responsibility (...) is a personal responsibility for outcomes or the risks of harmful outcomes, produced by a group of persons. Each is personally responsible for the outcome in a partial way, since he or she alone does not produce the outcomes; the specific part that each plays in producing the outcome cannot be isolated and identified, however, and thus the responsibility is essentially shared” (Young 2011, p. 110). Brinkmann (2004) argues that ethical issues, such as child labor, social and environmental sustainability or related problems are best to be considered as a “shared responsibility of business and consumers” (Brinkmann 2004, p. 129). This adds to the understanding that the need to take into account the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance is not solely the task and obligation of corporations but of consumers as well. In this vein, scholars have developed the concept of **Consumer Social Responsibility** (ConSR) as an addition to CSR that uniquely focusses on ethical obligations of corporations (Schlaile et al., 2018). Recent research has tried to conceptualize ConSR and specifically addresses barriers that can hinder consumers from translating their felt responsibility into marketplace behaviors (Schlaile et al., 2018). Such barriers include the complexity of the marketplace and its consumption options (Schmidt, 2016) or consumers’ stupefaction that is the result of the constant exposure to moral issues and “the world’s misery” (Heidbrink 2008, p. 10). Essay 2 and 5 add to this stream of literature and show that competing normative beliefs (Essay 2) and psychological barriers (Essay 5), such as moral licensing effects, may hinder consumers to incorporate their sense of responsibility (and ethical beliefs) into marketplace behaviors.

### *Consumer Decision-Making in a Global Marketplace*

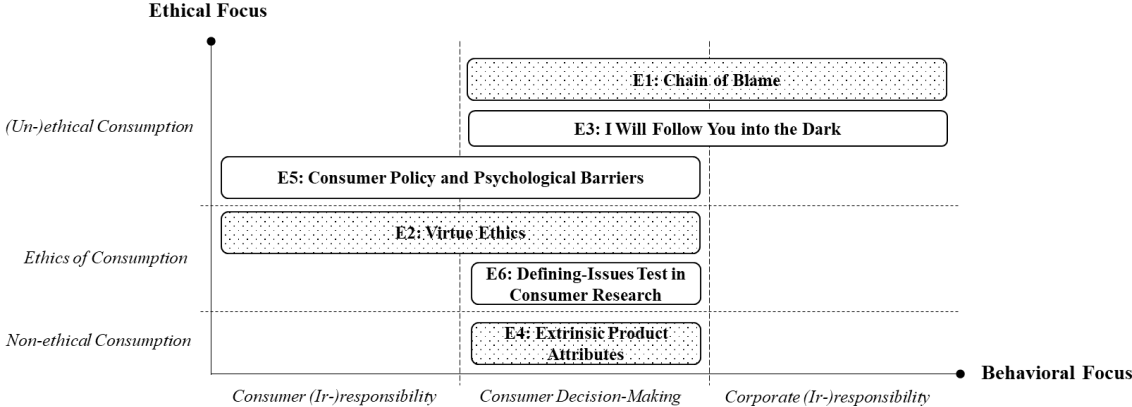
All essays included in this dissertation deal with different facets of consumer decision-making in a global and interconnected marketplace. Consumer decision-making comprises all sorts of marketplace behaviors in different markets around the globe and can be analyzed by a multitude of methodological and theoretical approaches. The heterogeneity of consumer decision-making is addressed in this dissertation by analyzing several possible market outcomes that can be seen as a consequence or antecedent of ethical, unethical, or non-ethical behaviors of corporations and consumers. For example, the essays analyze consumers’ boycott intentions (Essay 1), normative background of their consumption choices (Essay 2 and 6), lying behavior (Essay 3), and food choices (Essay 4 and 5). The aim of this dissertation is to apply a multi-faceted lens to contemporary issues in consumer research that allows for a variety of thematic foci and a multitude of behavioral outcomes in a broad and global marketplace. For example, Essay 4 analyzes determinants of consumers’ food decision-making and shows that, among others, the

country of origin of a product is a major and still increasingly important factor in shaping consumers’ decision-making.

**1.2. Dissertation Framework**

The six essays of this dissertation can be visualized by applying a two-dimensional matrix that captures the main research streams that were addressed within each essay (see Figure 1). The first dimension, the **ethical focus**, distinguishes between *(un-)ethical consumption*, *the ethics of consumption* and *non-ethical consumption*. (Un-)ethical consumption refers to actual consumption behaviors that reflect some kind of normative attitude that consumers reveal when participating in certain behaviors within the marketplace. For example, engaging in boycotts, as analyzed in Essay 1, is a prototypical example for ethical consumption behaviors as this behavior may be motivated by a violation of specific attitudes consumers may hold. To stand up for their own attitudes and to penalize the behavior of a company that does not act according to those attitudes, consumers may engage in boycotts. Likewise, consumers may also behave unethically themselves and, for example, shoplift, damage the property of corporations or, as shown in Essay 3, lie in a cheating game. While (un-)ethical consumption describes behaviors that consumers actually show within a marketplace, the second sub-dimension, the ethics of consumption, describes the normative background and the philosophical foundation of consumers’ decision-making. For example, Essay 2 analyzes how traditional Western and Eastern virtue ethics influence consumers decision-making. The essay focusses on the fundamental principles that guide consumers when making decisions in the marketplace and does not primarily analyze how consumers behave. Rather, it analyzes what ethical guidelines motivate consumers to behave in a certain way. The third sub-domain, non-ethical consumption, refers to consumption behaviors that do not necessarily imply any sort of ethical connotation.

*Figure 1: Dissertation Framework*



Notes: Shaded Areas represent Essays with a Focus on the Global Marketplace; E1-E6: Essay 1-6

The second dimension is labeled **behavioral focus** and is comprised of three sub-dimensions. While all the essays focus on *consumer decision-making*, the behavioral focus differs from others with regard to the agent that does or does not act responsibly within the marketplace. Essay 2 and Essay 5 focus on *consumer (ir-)responsibility* and analyze how consumers perceive their role within the marketplace and how consumers evaluate their responsibility when it comes to ethical questions of consumption.

Conversely, Essays 1 and 3 analyze the *(ir-)responsibility of corporations* as an agent in the marketplace and investigate the responsibility that corporations may (or may not) bear when making decisions. All the essays that analyze topics that can be associated with either “the ethics of consumption” or “(un-)ethical consumption” ask the question whether, how, and to what extent consumers and corporations are responsible for their actions within a marketplace and to what degree and based on which normative principles the responsibility can be attributed to them.

The essays can further be differentiated by their **geographical focus** within the two-dimensional space as Essay 1, 2 and 4 address global issues in consumer research and implement insights from cross-cultural research to account for national and cultural idiosyncrasies. In the course of the globalization and internationalization of our markets, the broadening of the scope of research from national and often Western-centric perspectives towards cross-cultural research is increasingly relevant. Today’s problems are global problems that cannot be solved on a national or regional level and urge for a holistic approach of problem solving. This requires a profound understanding of cultural idiosyncrasies and the acknowledgement of the fact that Western approaches might not be suitable to solve global problems in all parts of the world: cultural adaptation and sensibility is needed.

### **1.3. Contributions to Marketing Research, Practice, and Policy**

The essays of the dissertation have several implications for academia, marketing practice, and policy makers as well as non-governmental organizations. Scholars interested in CSR and CSiR might want to broaden the scope of their research and expand the proposed triadic relationship between customers, corporations and their suppliers to a more nuanced setting that is able to truly capture the complexity of today’s modern supply chain networks. By applying expectancy violations theory (Essay 1), the authors enrich the theoretical basis of international research of consumer behavior by taking into account the expectations of consumers from various nations regarding the quality of products and services from corporations from distinct countries of origin, such as Germany or China. Additionally, as suggested in Essay 3, scholars and

practitioners might want to look at the societal and economic impact of corporate irresponsibility that might, under certain circumstances, even promote unethical behaviors of consumers and thus, worsen the negative impact of corporate wrongdoings on the corporations themselves and the society as a whole. Policy makers might be interested in the arguments laid out in Essays 5 and 2 that reflect barriers to certain instruments and call for a rethinking and optimization of policy instruments that might, for example, guide consumer decision-making by communicating virtuous lifestyles that account for ethical traditions and are able to reframe consumption as a means to an end (i.e., living a purposeful and “good” life).

In general, the essays of the dissertation aim at bridging the gap between research on normative attitudes from disciplines such as philosophy, consumer ethics and applied philosophy and empirical consumer research in order to facilitate interdisciplinary research (Essay 2 and Essay 4). Further, from a methodological standpoint, Essay 6 offers insights to a new and promising method that could be utilized in future studies to analyze consumers’ normative moral background. This might help to overcome some methodological problems that are prevalent in empirical consumer research (i.e., social desirability bias).

#### **1.4. Notes on Co-Authors**

The doctoral candidate is the lead author of five essays included within the cumulative dissertation. The order of the authors represents the share of the participation in the conception of the essays. The second essay on virtue ethics in consumer research was written cooperatively with Guli-Sanam Karimova. Both Guli-Sanam-Karimova and the doctoral candidate contributed equally to this manuscript. The conception of the essays, the generation and analysis of the data were carried out by the doctoral candidate. The interpretation of the data as well as the preparation of the manuscript were supported by the co-authors. Essay 3 and Essay 5 were written solely by the doctoral candidate. See Table 1 for more details on the authors and for more information about the essays included in this dissertation.



## **1.5. Extended Abstracts**

### **1.5.1. Essay 1: Chain of Blame: A Multi-country Study of Consumer Reactions Towards Supplier Hypocrisy in Global Supply Chains**

#### *Research Question and Contribution*

Recent research identified firms' hypocritical behavior as a major threat to their reputation among consumers. This paper expands the dyadic relationship to a triadic relationship, integrating the hypocritical behavior of suppliers in global supply chains. Introducing a "chain of blame", this paper suggests that the hypocritical behavior of the supplier backfires on the firm, leading to loss of reputation and increased boycotting tendencies. The article makes several contributions to the literature on international business, and corporate social (ir)responsibility. First, we expand the dyadic firm–consumer relationship in hypocrisy research to a triadic supplier–firm–consumer relationship that considers the consequences of supplier hypocrisy for the reputation of the firm and consumers' boycott intentions. Second, by integrating expectancy violations theory, we explicate the relevance of corporate hypocrisy and illustrate that it is a very specific and most relevant case of CSiR. Third, we test and replicate the chain of blame in four different national settings and account for national idiosyncrasies along the chain of blame. Expectancy violations theory is utilized to show how consumers react to corporate scandals and explains how their reactions are contingent on their expectations of suppliers from different countries of origin and on individual factors, such as consumer ethnocentrism.

#### *Method and Data*

We test our proposed framework across one pre-study, one main study and two follow-up studies with consumers from two industrialized and two BRICS countries (Germany, US, China and South-Africa) and a total of 1238 respondents. We conduct experimental vignette studies and analyze the data using sampled t-tests, regression-based moderation and mediation analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Further, we test for measurement invariance using confirmatory factor analysis.

#### *Summary of Findings*

We report evidence for the chain of blame that describes the negative consequences of sourcing from hypocritical suppliers on the focal firm. Global supply chains incorporate business relationships that span the world and affect firms and consumers from various nations and from various cultural backgrounds. These supply chains include firms that source from hypocritical

suppliers and that face severe reprisals from consumers, as the sourcing from hypocritical suppliers lowers their reputation ratings, which can result in consumers intending to engage in boycotting the firm. This chain of blame is shown to be stable across four different countries with consumers from various cultural backgrounds. The analysis further identifies the origin of the supplier and consumer ethnocentrism as nationally-variant promoting factors of consumers' boycott intention and shows that the influence of those factors is contingent on consumers' expectations towards foreign vs domestic firms.

*Implications for Researchers, Marketers, and/or Policy Makers.*

We identify three major challenges for firms that source from domestic or foreign suppliers, and, based on our results, derive implications for managers and marketers in the global business-to-consumer space. First, precise and constant auditing of suppliers is particularly important given that our study shows that consumers even consider taking severe reprisals, such as boycotting the firm once their expectations are disconfirmed. Firms should incorporate their supplier's responsibility in their own code of conduct and communicate their successful controlling efforts to consumers. Second, managers should follow Grimm et al.'s (2014) 14 critical success factors for sub-supplier management to establish trustful relationships between suppliers and firms and their customers. Third, managers of firms that are embedded in international supply chains should incorporate the culturally or nationally variant factors that fuel the negative effects of the chain of blame.

**1.5.2. Essay 2: Virtue Ethics Between East and West: Review, Synthesis and Directions for Future Research**

*Research Question and Contribution*

This article calls for scholars to conduct more research on the role of virtue ethics in consumer behavior. Additionally, this paper calls for more cross-cultural research as two major traditions of virtue ethics have developed in two different cultural areas: early Chinese virtue ethics and ancient Greek virtue ethics. These ethics have different implications for ethical consumer behavior in the East and in the West. To set the stage for future research, this paper describes the state of the art of the application of virtue ethics in consumer research and identifies gaps in the research. The literature review covers the major articles and sources at the intersection of virtue ethics, consumer ethics, and cross-cultural consumer research. We show that, while the majority of existing empirical studies in consumer research specifically focus on Confucianism in early Chinese virtue ethics, relatively few studies consider ancient Greek virtue ethics, and the two ethical traditions are rarely analyzed within the same study.

The review revealed a substantive lack of empirical research, specifically research that applied Western virtue ethics. There is an urgent need for scholars to fill this void, as the integration of virtue ethics can improve our understanding of cross-cultural consumer behavior. Eastern and Western virtue ethics share similarities that are of fundamental interest in certain areas of consumer research, such as transformative consumption, anti-consumption, and simplicity movements.

### *Summary of Findings*

The article reveals several relevant gaps in the literature, such as the lack of research on other important schools of virtue ethics (Plato, Epicurus, Stoicism, Taoism, Buddhism etc.) or the extensive negligence of scholars to pursue studies that focus on Aristotelean virtue ethics. Additionally, we found that there is a growing body of literature on consumer ethics, transformative consumer behavior, and subjective wellbeing that could greatly benefit from considering virtue ethics and focusing on principles of the ‘good life’.

### *Implications for Researchers, Marketers, and/or Policy Makers*

The article yields several implications for researchers and policy makers that should be addressed in future research and public policy initiatives. First, we argue that the lack of empirical and theoretical research that tries to show the importance of virtue ethics in our everyday life as consumers is a major opportunity for researchers to analyze the societal importance of consumption from a new standpoint. The essence of virtue ethics is that individuals can live a purposeful and “good” life by acting virtuously and by behaving moderately across all kinds of behaviors. This can be transferred and applied easily to today’s modern societal, environmental, and ecological problems of our consumerist culture. A remembrance of ancient ethical theories and the application of historic philosophical wisdom to modern problems shows that many modern solutions can be solved with tools and ideas that accompanied our civilizations’ evolution throughout centuries. Researchers should address these opportunities and try to analyze how, for example, communicating virtues and educating consumers on the purpose of consumption for the Aristotelian “good life” is a worthy endeavor. Likewise, marketers and policy makers should think about communicating lifestyle alternatives that are grounded in philosophical ideas and provide basis for consumers to acknowledge that the steady need for more within our consumerist culture may not be the morally “right” thing to do and does not lead to a purposeful and happy life. Second, the article shows the importance of cross-cultural research and cross-cultural ethical research that spans national boundaries.

### **1.5.3. Essay 3: I Will Follow You into the Dark: How Unethical Brands Make Consumers Lie**

#### *Research Question and Contribution*

The present paper analyzes how corporate lies contaminate individual morality and shows that brands that lie, serve as a moral lesion that might worsen individuals' moral behavior and increase their own lying behavior. Recent psychological research addressed the process of moral contagion (i.e., how individual immorality contaminates the immorality of others) and addressed multiple avenues of research that show under which circumstances the immorality of some agents leads to more immorality among others. The paper introduces consumers' brand knowledge and their psychological self-brand-match with the unethical brand as highly relevant moderators that help to understand the process of contagious immorality and applying it to the realm of consumer research.

#### *Method and Data*

Across a series of experimental studies and two pre-tests, we apply experimental vignettes that manipulate the behavior of brands and analyze the data using sampled t-tests, regression-based moderation, moderated mediation analysis, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). With a pre-tested and self-developed priming-procedure, we manipulate consumers' self-brand-match to induce psychological bonds between brands and their customers. A total of 632 participants took part in the experiments.

#### *Summary of Findings*

This paper applies the concept of moral contagion to the marketing world and shows that the contamination effect is also observable between immoral brands and their potential customers. Across three experimental studies, the paper shows that brand knowledge (i.e., how well individual know the brand and are aware of the brands' activities) is a significant lever that determines whether consumers are contaminated by the brands' immorality or not. Further, the paper provides evidence for a double-edged sword of brand-customer-relationships that build on high psychological identification between brands and their customers and indicates that costumers that feel highly connected to a brand, react more harshly to immoral behaviors of brands and even engage in immoral behaviors themselves. This novel field of research is a first step in understanding the societal and economic consequences of corporate misbehavior that go far beyond a loss of reputation or short-term losses of revenues but that have major implications for the society at large and increase the normative role that companies play within a globalized

marketplace. Further, the paper shows evidence for the unique role of the negative emotions of disappointment and contempt in the process of contagion. While contempt decreases consumers' own lying behavior, disappointed consumers may take revenge and engage in recuperative actions towards the brand that lied to them. However, both processes only occur for consumers that do not have a high psychological bond with the brand.

#### *Implications for Researchers, Marketers, and/or Policy Makers*

If corporations establish and create brands that consumers identify with, they may have significant market advantages as highly identified consumers act in the interest of the brand they value and perceive as a part of their own personality. However, the positive affect can turn against those brands if the promises and expectations are willfully ignored and consumers are betrayed. Highly identified consumers react more strongly to negative behaviors of brands and the former advantage turns into severe disadvantages. Even loyal consumers might turn against their beloved brands, if their trust and commitment is abused. Further, practitioners need to be aware that immoral behaviors of their corporations might even alter the moral compass of their customers and increase their own immoral behaviors, highlighting the societal impact of corporate irresponsibility.

#### **1.5.4. Essay 4: The Influence of Extrinsic Product Attributes on Consumers' Food Decisions: Review and Network Analysis of the Marketing Literature**

##### *Research Question and Contribution*

The main objective of the paper is to outline and synthesize the efforts of marketing researchers in a highly fragmented scientific area by shifting the perspective from analyzing isolated drivers and partial explanations to developing a more complete picture about the interplay between product characteristics in consumers' food decision-making. To do so, we pursue three subobjectives: First, we categorize food consumption-related marketing research and identify central predictors that shape food decision-making of adults with a special emphasis on extrinsic product characteristics. We focus on four overarching aspects that are highly relevant in the marketing literature: brand, price, labeling, and country of origin. Second, using network analysis, we show how these factors are embedded in a broader network of different predictors, including intrinsic attributes (especially taste), policy-related influences, as well as aspects of the proximal and distal environment. With the help of the network analysis, we are able to shed light on this highly complex field and show which predictors of food decision-making have been jointly researched, and maybe even more importantly, which predictors have not been considered jointly in research on food decision-making yet. Therefore, as a third major

contribution the analysis helps to identify gaps in the literature of this seemingly well-explored field of research.

### *Method and Data*

The systematic literature review and network analysis is based on a set of 233 studies published in 103 different journals from various disciplines. The coding for the network analysis followed the DONE framework and resulted in 379 codings from 11 stem-categories. The analysis was performed using UCINET Software. We calculated various centrality and density measures (e.g., k-cores, degree, eigenvector centrality) to analyze the structure of the network.

### *Summary of Findings*

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to review systematically the predictors of food decision-making that were explored in empirical studies in the marketing literature between 1985 and 2019. The emphasis on extrinsic product attributes has revealed that brand, price, food labeling, and country of origin are well researched, also in conjunction with other specific categories of predictors. The observed relationships fit well with marketing theory. However, it also becomes apparent that the predictors that are not directly linked to these aspects in theory are barely considered by marketing researchers. Given that a large number of diverse factors shape consumer food decision-making in a highly complex fashion, it is also necessary to consider the potential boundary conditions and moderating and mediating effects. Our results generate several opportunities for future research, and we provide six specific directions for future research. We call for more marketing research to include factors that have been discussed primarily in other fields so far, including food technology, medicine, psychology, political science, etc.

### *Implications for Researchers, Marketers, and/or Policy Makers*

Marketing researchers should be open to cross-disciplinary research to detect the influences on consumer food choices and to conduct research outside paradigmatic thinking. With respect to food companies, policy makers, or consumer policies, this study enhances the general understanding of the predictors that guide consumer food decision-making, but more importantly the interplay between them.

### **1.5.5. Essay 5: Politische Lenkungsmechanismen und deren psychologische Grenzen**

#### *Research Question and Contribution*

This article aims at identifying psychological barriers that might endanger consumer policy instruments (e.g., taxes, nudging) and might even lead to detrimental effects that question the efficacy of certain policy tools. While it is commonly believed by economists and policy makers that a tax on certain products is a reliable and efficient tool to reduce its consumption and to make consumers switch to other products, the article provides evidence that this assumption is not always true and urges policy makers to anticipate psychological mechanisms that might counter the efficacy of certain policy instruments. Additionally, the article outlines psychological barriers of other policy instruments such as nudging.

#### *Method and Data*

The article is based on recent literature (including preliminary results of studies that were carried out by the doctoral candidate) and theoretical concepts on moral licensing, nudging, and consumer policy.

#### *Summary of Findings and Implications for Researchers, Marketers, and/or Policy Makers*

Based on the theory of moral licensing (Blanken et al., 2015; Merrit et al., 2010), the article provides an overview of recent research findings in consumer psychology and presents initial results of two empirical studies that outline conditions under which a tax on certain products does not lead to a decrease in demand but to an (at least) constant demand for the taxed product and, most importantly, to strong emotional responses among the consumers that might further endanger the intended effect of consumer policy instruments. The evidence suggests that consumers relieve themselves from their moral obligation by paying a tax (Hoffmann et al., 2018) and feel less regret after purchasing a morally dubious good (Hoffmann et al., 2020).

### **1.5.6. Essay 6: Der Defining-Issues-Test (DIT) in der wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Konsumforschung. Die empirische Analyse von Konsumdilemmata**

#### *Research Question and Contribution*

The Defining-Issues-Test (DIT) is a method based on Kohlberg's stages of moral development, which allows empirical statements about the moral judgement of individuals. This article describes the background and the approach of the DIT and shows that a transfer of the method, which has so far mainly been used in psychology and educational science, to business research has great potential. By applying and transferring this method to consumer research, it is possible

to gain a deeper understanding of how consumers form their ethical judgments and how they associate ethical judgments to different forms of consumption activities (such as sharing). Further, this method helps in bridging some gaps in empirical consumer research as it avoids asking morally or ethically sensitive questions in a direct way through applying dilemma-like decision tasks. With those dilemmas, it is possible to avoid the problem of social desirability (Auger & Devinney, 2007) that is a fundamental fallacy of empirical research on ethical issues. The application of the DIT to consumer research is a novel approach in marrying different disciplines such as philosophy and psychology with consumer research to gain a more complete picture of consumers' decision-making processes and the influence of consumers' normative attitudes on their actual behaviors in the marketplace.

#### *Method and Data*

The article is based on recent literature and theoretical concepts on moral philosophy and education psychology.

#### *Summary of Findings and Implications for Researchers, Marketers, and/or Policy Makers*

The DIT has great potential for business research and specifically for consumer research. While this method has so far been used almost exclusively in moral and educational psychological research, researchers from business and consumer research can benefit greatly from the sustainable and extensive knowledge that has been developed in over 1000 studies. Certainly, the DIT is not completely free of shortcomings and must always be questioned in future applications. Nevertheless, an expansion of the perspective of consumer research with the help of interdisciplinary approaches is highly recommended, as this could provide valuable insights for consumer research.



Table 1: Overview of Essays

	Essay 1 <sup>3, 4, a</sup>	Essay 2 <sup>1, b</sup>	Essay 3 <sup>6, c</sup>	Essay 4 <sup>5, d</sup>	Essay 5 <sup>1, 2, e</sup>	Essay 6 <sup>f</sup>
<b>Title</b>	Chain of Blame: A Multi-country Study of Consumer Reactions Towards Supplier Hypocrisy in Global Supply Chains	Virtue Ethics Between East and West in Consumer Research: Review, Synthesis and Directions for Future Research	I Will Follow You into the Dark: How Unethical Brands Make Consumers Lie	The Influence of Extrinsic Product Attributes on Consumers' Food Decisions: Review and Network Analysis of the Marketing Literature	Politische Lenkungsmechanismen und deren psychologische Grenzen („Consumer Policy and Psychological Barriers“)	Der Defining-Issues-Test (DIT) in der wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Konsumforschung. („DIT in Consumer Research“)
<b>Authors</b>	Nils Christian Hoffmann, Juelin (Lynn) Yin, Stefan Hoffmann	Guli-Sanam Karimova, Nils Christian Hoffmann, Ludger Heidbrink, Stefan Hoffmann	Nils Christian Hoffmann	Nils Christian Hoffmann, Claudia Symmank, Robert Mai, Harald Rohm, Marijn Stok, Stefan Hoffmann	Nils Christian Hoffmann	Nils Christian Hoffmann, Sebastian Müller
<b>Research Approach</b>	Experimental Vignette Study	Theoretical / Literature Review	Experimental Vignette Study	Network Analysis / Literature Review	Theoretical	Theoretical / Methodology
<b>Research Domain</b>	Corporate Irresponsibility, Hypocrisy, International Consumer Behavior	Ethics of Consumption / Virtue Ethics in Consumer Research, Philosophy, Consumer Ethics	Corporate Lies, Moral Contagion, Consumer Emotions	Food Decision-Making	Consumer Policy, Consumption Taxes, Consumer Psychology, Nudging, Moral Licensing	Ethics of Consumption, Consumption Dilemmas, Philosophy, Consumer Ethics
<b>Methods</b>	Moderated Mediation Analysis; ANOVA, Correlation Analysis	Conceptual / Theoretical	Moderated Mediation Analysis; ANOVA, Correlation Analysis	Network Analysis; Centrality Measurements	Conceptual / Theoretical	Conceptual / Theoretical
<b>Data</b>	n <sub>pre-test</sub> = 61 n <sub>Germany</sub> = 170 n <sub>China</sub> = 274 n <sub>South-Africa</sub> = 196 n <sub>US</sub> = 537 n <sub>total</sub> = 1238	-	n <sub>pre-test 1</sub> = 83 n <sub>study 1</sub> = 170 n <sub>pre-test 2</sub> = 66 n <sub>study 2a</sub> = 159 n <sub>study 2b</sub> = 154 n <sub>total</sub> = 632	n = 233	-	-
<b>Main Contribution</b>	Establishment and cross-national validation of a “Chain of Blame” that describes the backfire effect of hypocritical behavior of suppliers on the firm that sources from it. Nationally variant promoting factors of this chain of effects are shown across BRICS and highly-industrialized countries.	Comparison of virtue ethics in Western and Eastern cultures and of their influence on contemporary consumer behavior. Similarities and differences between the traditions are explained and avenues for future research are described.	Identification of unethical spillovers between corporations and consumers and analysis of moderators that distinguish individuals in their proneness to be contaminated by corporate wrongdoings.	Detailing and synthesis of the literature on predictors of consumers' food decision-making. Identification of gaps in the literature and suggestion of avenues for future research.	Identification of psychological barriers that might endanger consumer policy instruments (e.g., taxes, nudging) and might even lead to detrimental effects that question the efficacy of certain policy tools.	Theorizing and outlining the opportunities for consumer research to apply the Defining-Issues-Test to contemporary problems, including methodological fallacies of classical empirical research.

Notes: <sup>1</sup>Presented at the AMA Winter Conference 2018, New Orleans, US; <sup>2</sup>Presented at the ICAR Symposium 2018, Almeria, Spain; <sup>3</sup>Presented at the AMA Winter Conference 2019, Austin, US; <sup>4</sup>Presented at the AIB Conference 2019, Copenhagen, Denmark; <sup>5</sup>Presented at the AMA Winter Conference 2020, San Diego, US; <sup>6</sup>Will be Presented at the AMA Winter Conference 2021, Florida, US (Online)  
<sup>a</sup>Published in *Management International Review*; <sup>b</sup>Published in *Journal of Business Ethics*; <sup>c</sup>under review; <sup>d</sup>Published in *Journal of Marketing Management*; <sup>e</sup>Published in “*Consumer Social Responsibility. Zur gesellschaftlichen Verantwortung von Konsumenten*”, Ludger Heidbrink & Sebastian Müller (Eds.), Metropolis; <sup>f</sup>Published in *Wirtschaftswissenschaftliches Studium*.

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## **2. Chain of Blame: A Multi-country Study of Consumer Reactions Towards Supplier Hypocrisy in Global Supply Chains**

**Authors:** Nils Christian Hoffmann, Juelin Yin, Stefan Hoffmann

### **Abstract:**

Recent research identified firms' hypocritical behavior as a major threat to their reputation among consumers. This paper expands the dyadic relationship to a triadic relationship, integrating the hypocritical behavior of suppliers in global supply chains. Introducing a chain of blame, this paper suggests that the hypocritical behavior of the supplier backfires on the firm, leading to loss of reputation and increased boycotting tendencies. We test our proposed framework across one main study and two follow-up studies with consumers from two industrialized and two BRICS countries (Germany, US, China and South-Africa) and a total of 1177 respondents. results show that consumers from various countries consistently hold firms responsible for their suppliers' hypocritical behavior, consequently lower their reputation ratings, and intend to engage in boycotting the firm. The analysis further identifies the origin of the supplier and consumer ethnocentrism as nationally-variant promoting factors of consumers' boycott intention and shows that the influence of those factors is contingent on consumers' expectations towards foreign vs domestic firms. Implications for managers and marketing-managers are given.

### **Keywords:**

Global supply chains, Corporate hypocrisy, Corporate reputation, Boycott intention, Consumer ethnocentrism, Expectancy violations theory

### **Citation:**

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## 2.1. Introduction

In the contemporary competitive marketplace, where consumers are increasingly demanding better quality and services, building a sustainable relationship with consumers poses a key challenge for companies. Research suggests that engaging in corporate social responsibility (CSR) (e.g. Aguinis and Glavas 2012) is becoming an essential channel for firms to attract and retain customers (Sen et al. 2006) and for marketers to improve brand reputation (Bolton and Mattila 2015). Despite this well-documented trend, corporations do not always act according to set standards and can even engage in corporate social irresponsibility (CSiR) (e.g. Lin-Hi and Mueller 2013; Kotchen and Moon 2012; Murphy and Schlegelmilch 2013). Consumers react to such incidents with moral outrage (Antonetti and Maklan 2016) and engage in a variety of damaging activities, such as spreading negative information to friends and families (Antonetti and Maklan 2018), suing the company (Voliotis et al. 2016), devaluing the brand (Sweetin et al. 2013), and engaging in protests (Grappi et al. 2013) or consumer boycotts (Klein et al. 2004).

A specific case of CSiR—and, from a moral standpoint, a particularly severe type of CSiR—is corporate hypocrisy. Wagner et al. (2009, p. 79) defined corporate hypocrisy as “the belief that a firm claims to be something that it is not.” The firm’s observable actions differ from its observable statements (Janney and Gove 2011) and it “does not practice what it preaches” (Monin and Merritt 2012, p. 170), thereby violating its own communicated ethical or moral standards. In other words, firms strive to uphold a reputation of being socially or environmentally responsible, yet act in the opposite manner. Recent cases of corporate hypocrisy gained broad media coverage around the world (e.g., Siano et al. 2017). For example, the CSR-leading German car manufacturer, Volkswagen, persistently claimed to care for environmental issues and positioned itself as a world leader in green technology, while simultaneously manipulating its emissions test results to bypass environmental regulations and increase sales. Since then, Volkswagen is increasingly facing legal consequences (Elgot 2018) and having to deal with a plummeting reputation (Mansouri 2016). Another example is Walmart’s use of child labor at two factories in Bangladesh despite the company’s claimed leadership in ethical supply chain management (Torres et al. 2012), which has resulted in a public outcry and a decline in their stock prices.

Previous studies that examined the dyadic relationship of consumers’ reactions to corporate hypocrisy have focused on CSR claims (Arli et al. 2017; Kim et al. 2015) and on the egregious behaviors of firms (Wagner et al. 2009). However, firms rarely act as a single agent in the global economy. In the course of the ongoing globalization of trade and business, there is a growing

need for firms to manage complex supply chains that span the globe, and to interact with suppliers of various cultural backgrounds (Ganesan et al. 2009). They are increasingly exposed to alarming incidents of non-compliance with CSR and sustainability in their upstream supply chains, which has subjected them to significant reputational risk and damaged performance (Gereffi and Lee 2016; Paulraj and Blome 2017). For example, the US tech giant Apple was exposed to harsh criticism regarding the exploitative working conditions of their Chinese supplier, Foxconn (Enderle and Niu 2012). As one of the world's largest technology suppliers, Foxconn explicitly breached its own promises and responsibility claims, and acted hypocritically (Clarke and Boersma 2017), which resulted in many Western consumers boycotting Apple (Josephs 2012).

While some preliminary research has started to consider CSR-related issues extending beyond firm boundaries in inter-organizational structures, such as buyer–supplier relationships (Brammer et al. 2011; Homburg et al. 2013; Thornton et al. 2013), limited research has examined whether and how the hypocritical behavior of suppliers backfires on the firm that relies on such suppliers, especially in an international context. The triadic relationship that encompasses the CSR claims of the firm, the irresponsible behavior of the supplier, and consumer reactions to this firm-supplier hypocrisy has been under-examined thus far. This is surprising given that—as demonstrated by the Apple–Foxconn example—many firms claim to engage in CSR in their consumer communication, while neglecting to monitor the claims and irresponsible activities of their suppliers. This, in the end, can harm their reputation and evoke reprisals from consumers around the globe. Moreover, the CSR and CSiR literature indicates that consumers of various cultures and national backgrounds react differently to corporate transgressions, just as they perceive CSR differently (Kolk et al. 2015; Williams and Zinkin 2008), which influences their attitudes and consumption decisions towards firms. Thus far, the literature is silent on how international consumers differ in their reactions to corporate hypocrisy, especially along the global supply chain.

To fill these voids, the present research makes the following contributions to the literature of global supply chains, corporate social (ir)responsibility, and hypocrisy. First, we expand the dyadic firm–consumer relationship in hypocrisy research to a triadic supplier–firm–consumer relationship that considers the consequences supplier hypocrisy has on the reputation of the firm and on consumers' boycott intentions. Contributing to the literature on chain liability and responsibility attributions in global supply chains (Hartmann and Moeller 2014) and supply chain contamination (i.e., the contaminating effect of supplier's misbehavior on different stakeholders, Fracarolli Nunes 2018), we introduce a “chain of blame” that describes a backfire

effect of the hypocritical behavior of the suppliers on the firm. Second, we integrate expectancy violations theory (Burgoon and Hale 1988, Burgoon 1993) to explicate the relevance of corporate hypocrisy and illustrate that it is a very specific and most relevant case of CSiR. Third, we test and replicate the “chain of blame” in different country settings and offer explanations for national deviations in consumers’ reactions along the “chain of blame.” Building on expectancy violations theory (Burgoon and Hale 1988, Burgoon 1993), we show that consumers’ reactions to corporate scandal is contingent on their expectations of suppliers with different countries of origin and on individual factors (i.e., consumer ethnocentrism).

We tested our proposed framework across one main study and two follow-up studies with consumers in four countries and a total of 1.177 respondents. We analyzed how sourcing from a hypocritical supplier affects the reputation of the firm and how this shapes consumers’ intention to boycott the firm. Further, we tested how the supplier’s country of origin influences the effect on the firms’ reputation and how consumers’ ethnocentrism moderates the relationship between the reputation of the firm and consumers’ boycott intention. In the main study, we contrast the reactions of consumers from one highly industrialized and developed country (Germany) to those of one BRICS country (China). We run a 2 (hypocritical supplier vs supplier with integrity)  $\times$  2 (foreign vs domestic supplier)  $\times$  2 (Chinese vs German respondents) cross-national between-subjects vignette study. The follow-up studies then analyze another BRICS country (South-Africa) and an additional industrialized country (US). The rich and diverse datasets enable us to test our proposed “chain of blame” in a multi-country setting with economically and socially heterogeneous consumers.

## **2.2. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses**

### **2.2.1. Corporate Hypocrisy**

Corporate hypocrisy has become a growing field of research in the last decade. With increasing media attention devoted to corporate scandals and irresponsible behavior, academics have investigated the antecedents and effects of corporate hypocrisy in relation to a variety of variables, such as CSR beliefs and attitudes towards firms (Wagner et al. 2009), perceived corporate reputation (Arlı et al. 2017), and brand trust (Kim et al. 2015). Corporate hypocrisy is a specific case of CSiR (Grappi et al. 2013; Murphy and Schlegelmilch 2013; Sweetin et al. 2013) because hypocritical behavior requires a specific ethical or responsibility statement of the corporation prior to or after a transgression.

Drawing on expectancy violations theory (Burgoon and Hale 1988; Burgoon 1993), we distinguish between CSiR and hypocrisy by considering how consumers’ expectations differ



during individuals' impression formation processes (Lin-Hi and Blumberg 2018). Expectancy violations theory posits that the predictive and normative functions which expectations fulfill (Burgoon 1993) become particularly relevant if they are significantly violated. Hence, a violation (positive and negative) of individuals' expectations exhibits stronger (positive or negative) impressions than a mere confirmation of expectations. For example, the collapse of the textile factory, Rana Plaza, in Bangladesh in April 2013 (Turker and Altuntas 2014), which killed approximately 1100 textile workers, was a horrific tragedy, yet was not specifically a case of corporate hypocrisy, because the companies that produced clothing in this facility (at least, not all of them) had not stated special care for their workers, nor that they engaged in workplace safety enhancing activities; consumers, therefore, had not developed specific expectations that were either confirmed or disconfirmed. However, the recent scandal involving the German car manufacturer, Volkswagen (Dans 2015), does represent an incident of corporate hypocrisy because Volkswagen for long publicly claimed to be a world leader in "green mobility" and engaged in huge marketing campaigns to establish this image. Thus, consumers had very high expectations that were violated, which resulted in stronger negative impressions of the firm.

### **2.2.2. The Chain of Blame**

The growth of global supply chains is a core feature of globalization (Yi 2003). Currently, supply chains span the entire globe and foster international trade and collaboration. However, the internationalization of trade comes at a price, and certainly influences the ethical or unethical behavior of companies. Many view the Rana Plaza textiles factory building's collapse as an illustration of the negative consequences of international production. For example, critics argue that relocating production processes in global supply chains could lead to a "race to the bottom" in terms of working conditions, labor standards, and environmental standards (Rudra 2008). This is amplified by the possibility of the corporations denying or diffusing their responsibility along global supply chains (Egels-Zandén 2017). As supply chains span borders and often include multiple tiers, corporations can withdraw or compromise their responsibility for their suppliers' compliance with ethical standards (Egels-Zandén 2017; Eriksson and Svensson 2016), and thus morally disengage from responsibility at the lower end of the supply chain (Bandura et al. 2000).

Literature on supply chain management offers valuable insight into this phenomenon by indicating what firms risk when they stop taking responsibility for their suppliers. These studies mainly consider dyadic relationships between firms and consumers, and mostly aim at

developing strategies and frameworks that foster sustainability and responsibility along supply chains (Carter 2000; Carter and Rogers 2008; Ciliberti et al. 2008; Seuring and Mueller 2008). They investigate how organizational managers' risks are best managed when they interact with unethical suppliers (Hajmohammad & Vachon, 2014). Only a few studies have investigated the direct effect of suppliers' misbehavior on the firm that sources from them, as well as its indirect effect on consumer attitudes and behavior (Hartmann and Moeller 2014). In their study on consumers' perceptions of unsustainable supplier behavior Hartmann and Moeller (2014) identified a "chain liability" effect that describes the phenomenon of consumers holding firms responsible for the behavior of their upstream suppliers, and of them even reacting emotionally towards the focal firms. Consumers around the world demand that corporations engage in CSR activities (Öberseder et al. 2013; Tian et al. 2011); however, because they are often unaware of the circumstances in which particular products are manufactured (Clarke and Boersma 2017), they need to trust companies to monitor their supply chains adequately. As consumers become aware of recurring corporate scandals and hypocritical behavior, "their moral sense of duty may lose its edge" (Heidbrink 2008, p. 10). Schlaile et al. (2018) described this "moral or emotional stupefaction" to be a consequence of consumers' constant exposure to corporate scandals, such as the 2013 meat adulteration scandal in Europe (Lawrence 2013) and the reports on Amazon's dubious workforce policies in Germany (Lasarov et al. 2016).

Corporate hypocrisy as a specific type of CSiR along global supply chains has not been sufficiently investigated. Recent studies show that in a global supply chain setting, the misbehavior of suppliers can have a contamination effect and bring a loss in market value for suppliers (Fracarolli Nunes 2018). However, how the hypocritical behavior of suppliers influences other factors, such as the corporate reputation of the focal firm, has not been investigated yet. This is surprising, given the fundamental function of a strong corporate reputation, which is often built with considerable investment in terms of time, energy, and financial resources (Fracarolli Nunes 2018). Supplier hypocrisy with its potential reputation risk and associated consumer responses has particularly significant implications for firms in international markets (Swoboda et al. 2018). To remain competitive, such firms need to maintain a positive reputation, often while managing complex supply chains (Hoejmose et al. 2014). To fill this research gap, we argue that consumers confronted with hypocritical suppliers care about this issue because they realize that they incautiously placed their trust in the wrong company; their expectations of both the focal firm that sources from the hypocritical supplier and the supplier itself, are not met, but in fact are negatively violated. Following and expanding the literature on the "chain liability effect," we argue that the behavior of the supplier influences

consumers' perceptions of the firm that sources from the hypocritical supplier, such that consumers attribute irresponsibility to the focal firm and lower their reputation ratings of the firm. We propose that this loss of reputation initiates a "chain of blame" (Muolo and Padilla 2010), along which the hypocritical behavior of the supplier can backfire on the focal firm, even if the firm itself does not act hypocritically. Thus, we posit:

*H1: Hypocritical behavior of the supplier negatively affects the reputation of the firm.*

Consumers are increasingly aware of corporate scandals and incidents (Dans 2015; Lawrence 2013) that involve hypocritical corporate behavior (Arli et al. 2017; Fassin and Buelens 2011; Wagner et al. 2009). This awareness influences consumers' perceptions of the economy in general, and of businesses in particular. In Edelman's Trust Barometer, Bush (2014) indicated that only 61% of the global population still views businesses as trustworthy. For many specific industries, this number is even lower, which indicates a decreasing level of consumer trust towards businesses (Wood 2004) and brands (Lidstone 2005). Consequently, many consumers engage in boycotts. Previous research has identified factory closures and relocations along the global supply chain as frequent causes of consumer boycotts (Klein et al. 2004; Hoffmann and Mueller 2009).

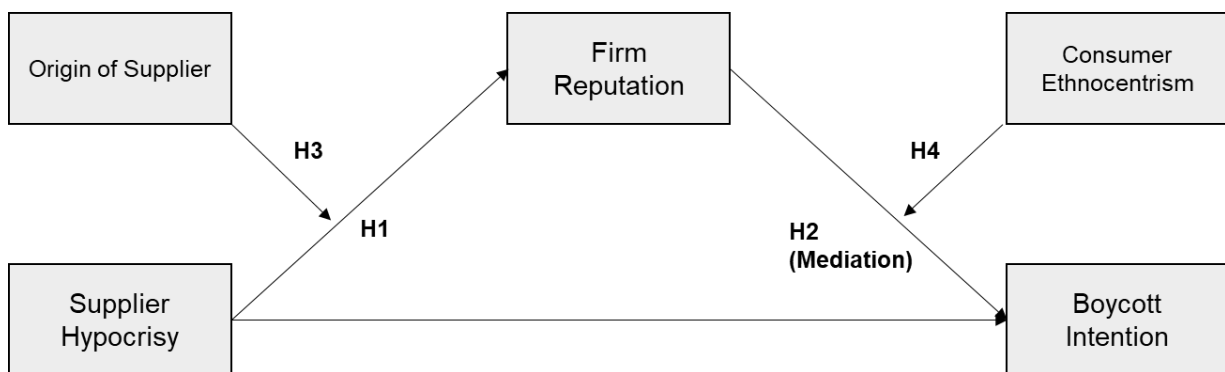
Consumer boycotts—defined as "an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making specific purchases in the marketplace" (Friedman 1985, p. 97)—have been described as a powerful tool of consumer engagement in CSR and ethical issues (Klein et al. 2004; Sen et al. 2001). Previous studies have analyzed what motivates consumer participation in boycotts and indicated that boycott decisions are based on an interplay between triggers (e.g., perceived egregiousness), promoters (e.g., self-enhancement), and inhibitors (e.g., subjective costs because of no substitutes, or disbelief in boycott efficacy) (e.g., Klein et al. 2004; Sen et al. 2001). Extant studies show that a firm's positive reputation is a boycott inhibitor because it buffers against consumers' intention to participate in a boycott, while a negative reputation is a promotor that enhances consumers' tendency to boycott (Hoffmann and Mueller 2009). Integrating these previous findings in our reasoning, we argue that the "chain of blame" that the firm initiates by sourcing from a hypocritical supplier and that leads consumers to lower their reputation rating of the focal firm, increases consumers' willingness to boycott it. We thus propose a mediating hypothesis:

*H2: The relationship between sourcing from hypocritical suppliers and consumers' intention to boycott the focal firm is mediated by the focal firm's reputation.*

### 2.2.3. Moderators Along the Chain of Blame

The literature on corporate hypocrisy, albeit growing, is still in its infancy. In particular, cross-national approaches to the phenomenon of corporate hypocrisy are significantly lacking. This is surprising, given the rich research on CSR in different cultures and countries (Tian et al. 2011; Tran 2011; Ramasamy and Yeung 2009) other than the US or Europe. Corporate irresponsibility, corporate hypocrisy, and specifically consumers' reactions to hypocritical behavior appear only recently to have been introduced as research topics in contexts outside the Western world (e.g., Chen and Chang 2013; Guo et al. 2017). To address this, we analyze how the proposed chain of blame holds true in different country settings, including industrialized and BRICS countries. We suggest that the basic model as suggested in H1 and H2 is stable cross-nationally. Yet, we expect that different moderators influence the strength of the relationships. First, we analyze how the supplier's country of origin influences consumers' reactions towards a firm that sources from either a foreign or a domestic supplier (that acts with integrity or with hypocrisy). Second, we consider individual values to analyze how ethnocentric tendencies influence the relationship between the firm's reputation and consumers' intention to boycott it. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model of this research.

Figure 1: Conceptual model



#### The Suppliers' Country of Origin

The country of origin influences consumers' perceptions of brands and products in multiple ways (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, and Palihawadana 2011; Petersen and Jolibert 1995). However, only a few studies have analyzed the country-of-origin effect in a global supply chain context (Andersen and Chao 2003; Insch 2003), and none that investigate this phenomenon in a triadic setting that also accounts for consumer reactions. In the following paragraph, we bring the country of origin effect and expectancy violations theory together to show that managing consumers' expectations is crucial for firms that operate in international supply chains.

Expectancy violations theory has been used in a variety of fields, such as organizational trustworthiness (Lin-Hi et al. 2014), conflict management (Deng and Xu 2014), or corporate reputation (Rhee and Haunschild 2006), and more recently also CSR (Lin-Hi and Blumberg 2018). In summary, whenever individuals' expectations are not met, the violations create emotional responses and evoke behavioral reactions. In the context of CSR in global supply chains this gives rise to the question of whether different countries' consumers hold specific expectations of companies based on the companies' origin and how the (dis-)confirmation of those expectations influences the consumers' reactions to corporate hypocrisy. We argue that when consumers have high expectations of a specific country's suppliers (e.g., Chinese consumers have high expectations of firms and products from Germany), violating those expectations evokes strong reactions in the consumers and devalues the reputation of the firm that sources from those suppliers. In contrast, merely confirming the expectations will not evoke strong reactions. Further, what consumers expect from suppliers can vary across countries of origin of the supplier and could specifically differ between foreign and domestic suppliers, in such a way that sourcing from foreign (vs domestic) suppliers might strengthen the negative effect of supplier hypocrisy on the focal firm's reputation if consumers' expectations of foreign suppliers are disconfirmed. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H3: The supplier's country of origin moderates the relationship between the supplier's hypocritical behavior and the firm's reputation.*

### **Consumer Ethnocentrism**

Consumer ethnocentrism can be defined as an attitude of consumers who judge others according to their own cultural beliefs about "the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products" (Shimp and Sharma 1987, p. 280). It is a specific form of ethnocentrism that captures economic motives for in-group bias, such as the fear that preferring foreign products threatens the domestic industry and causes unemployment (Verlegh 2007). Therefore, home-country bias primarily occurs because of anti-out-group motives (Zeugner-Roth et al. 2015). For example, consumers avoid buying products from foreign countries because they do not want foreigners to profit from their purchases (Klein et al. 1998). At the same time, ethnocentric consumers want to protect their economy by purchasing domestic products (e.g., Sharma 2011; Supphellen and Rittenburg 2001), which shows ethnocentrism to be a pro-in-group and anti-out-group construct (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2004). Research has shown that consumer ethnocentrism influences attitudes towards companies and their products, which in turn is contingent on consumers' culture (Watson and Wright 2000).

Literature on how consumer ethnocentrism is reflected in culture (Hamin 2006; Kaynak 1989; Klein et al. 2006; Kwak et al. 2006) suggests that due to their social identity primarily being shaped by their in-group, consumers from Asian countries with a collectivistic orientation demonstrate higher ethnocentric tendencies than most Western consumers. Specifically, research suggests that consumer ethnocentrism is particularly high in China (Ishii 2009) and in emerging economies generally (Sharma 2011). High levels of consumer ethnocentrism found in Western countries such as Poland (Siemieniako et al. 2011) or the United States (Tsai, Yoo and Lee 2013), have been shown to correlate with high levels of patriotism, nationalism, a national history of oppression, or conservatism (Shankarmahesh 2006). These ethnocentric tendencies correlate with attitudes that go against foreign firms, regardless of other variables such as product quality (Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000). Put differently, consumers with high ethnocentric tendencies prefer domestic products to foreign products and domestic firms to foreign ones. In today's globalized world, firms source from international suppliers around the globe and consumers generally accept the fact that not all components of the end product are produced locally. However, as Fernández-Ferrín et al. (2018) show, ethnocentric consumers strongly prefer locally sourced products and reward companies that source locally by buying their products.

Expectancy violations theory posits that a disconfirmation of expectations evokes strong negative reactions. Applying the theory to the context of global supply chains once again prompts consideration of national variation along the chain of blame. Specifically, we suggest that consumers high in ethnocentric tendencies expect the focal firm that sources from a foreign or a domestic supplier to act in accordance with their CSR claims, which implies monitoring their supply relationships. Highly reputable firms do not face the threat of negative actions like boycotts because the consumer is given no reason to do so. Due to their clear preferences, if ethnocentric consumers' expectations are disconfirmed, they are specifically prone to penalize domestic firms. Such consumers specifically condemn domestic firms with a very low reputation because of the implication that they did not live up to the high expectations and probably did something wrong. Therefore, we argue that highly ethnocentric consumers typically intend to penalize domestic firms that have a low reputation by boycotting the firm. Formally, we propose that:

*H4: Consumer ethnocentrism strengthens the effect of the firm's reputation on consumers' intention to boycott the firm.*

### **2.3. Main Study: The Chain of Blame in China and Germany**

In the main study, we tested the chain of blame (i.e., the effect of sourcing from a hypocritical supplier through the reputation of the firm on consumers' boycott intention towards the firm) in China and Germany. The two countries are among the world's largest exporters actively involved in global investment and trade (Reuters 2017). Still, China and Germany vary significantly in terms of the cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism, with China described as more collectivist in terms of Hofstede's (2001) individualism/collectivism index (China: 20 vs Germany: 67), GLOBE's in-group collectivism practices (China: 5.8 vs Germany: 4.5 [East], 4.0 [West]), and institutional collectivism practices (China: 4.8 vs Germany: 3.6 [East], 3.8 [West]) (House et al. 2004). Further, while Germany is characterized by low power distance (Germany: 35) and high individualism, China is associated with high power distance (China: 80) and low levels of individualism. Recent research shows that, more than any other cultural dimensions, power distance and individualism influence consumers' CSR perceptions and beliefs (Choi et al. 2016; Hur and Kim 2017; Husted and Allen 2008; Yin, Qian and Singhapakdi 2018). Also, contrasting China and Germany can shed light on differences between Eastern and Western cultural orientations and their influence on consumer behavior. In recent decades, China has become a major player in the global economy and has become Germany's most important trade partner, superseding the US. Moreover, German exports to China are at an all-time high. A comparison of these two culturally and economically diverse, yet actively interacting, trade partners will provide interesting insight into the dynamics of managing global supply chains, and also avoid US bias in investigating economic and business issues on a global level (Overby and Servais 2005).

Regarding consumers' expectations of firms established in the other country, the literature suggests that Chinese consumers favor German firms and products (Wang and Yang 2011). For example, there is evidence that consumers in China perceive German products and firms as highly prestigious and of high quality (Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu, and Hyder 2000). Further, Chinese consumers associate German firms with good CSR (Held and Bader 2018) and would therefore have high expectations of them. The (dis-)confirmation of the expectations by firms that act hypocritically should, according to expectancy violations theory, trigger severe reactions from consumers. Conversely, many German consumers view Chinese products and companies as inferior compared to products and companies from more developed countries (Schniederjans et al. 2017), and therefore are not likely to have high expectations of them.

### 2.3.1. Vignette Development

We ran a cross-national online experiment with a 2 (behavior of supplier)  $\times$  2 (origin of supplier)  $\times$  2 (nationality of respondent) between-subjects design. While the origin of the supplier and hypocrisy were experimental factors manipulated by text vignettes, the national background of the respondent was a quasi-experimental factor. We adapted the environmental scenario of Wagner et al.'s (2009) study to fit our research purpose. The firm is a retailer active in the consumer electronics sector. Accordingly, we designed four vignettes that systematically varied in respect of the content of the environmental performance (hypocritical behavior vs integrity) and provenience of the supplier (China vs Germany). After we had designed the vignettes (see Appendix A for the wording of the vignettes), and discussed them with two independent business researchers, we successfully pre-tested them with a student sample ( $N = 61$ ) using the five-item corporate hypocrisy scale (Cronbach's alpha:  $\alpha = .97$ ) of Wagner et al. (2009) to check whether our vignettes induced the assumed perceptions of corporate hypocrisy. On average, participants confronted with the hypocritical scenario evaluated the behavior of the supplier as significantly more hypocritical ( $M = 5.83$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) than did participants confronted with a supplier that acted with integrity ( $M = 2.45$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ,  $t[59] = -12.41$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

### 2.3.2. Measures and Data Collection

We gathered data from 170 German ( $M_{\text{age}} = 43.36$ ; 48.2% female) and 274 Chinese ( $M_{\text{age}} = 36.42$ ; 59.2% female) consumers from the urban population in the respective countries. All participants from each country were randomly assigned to one of four conditions, as described above. We used scales from previous research that were adjusted to fit the content of the study. Please see Appendix B for the exact wording and statistics of the items we used. We measured the corporate hypocrisy of the supplier using the original five items of Wagner et al. (2009). Additionally, following Arli et al.'s (2017) adaptation of Brown and Dacin's (1997) original scale, we measured perceived corporate reputation with four items. We measured consumer ethnocentrism using Klein et al.'s (1998) shortened version of Shimp and Sharma's (1987) CETSCALE. All items and constructs were measured on seven-point Likert-type scales, ranging from "totally disagree" to "totally agree." See Table 1 for the Pearson correlations of all the variables that were included in the further analyses.



*Table 1: Correlation table of the main constructs of the main study*

	Reputation of the Firm				Consumer Ethnocentrism			
	GER	CH	SA	US	GER	CH	SA	US
Consumer Ethnocentrism	-.011	0.056	-.105	.102*				
Boycott Intention	-.657**	-.490**	-.591**	-.427**	.080	.236**	.127	.297**

Notes: Pearson correlations; level of significance: \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 (2-tailed); \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 (2-tailed).

Sociodemographic variables (age, income, education, and gender) were also measured to meet the criteria of the sampling quota. We included two manipulation checks to determine whether the participants read and understood the vignettes correctly. A total of 83.4% of the Chinese respondents and 90.9% of the German respondents answered the check correctly. The respondents that failed the check were excluded from the analyses. All scales and items were first translated from English to German and to Chinese. Bilingual researchers then verified the translations and back-translated them (Brislin 1970) to ensure validity. Additionally, we renamed the brand names of the firm and supplier (Power-Mart and Techgy) in the Chinese sample and translated them to Chinese to enhance credibility and mitigate potential problems with unintended country-of-origin effects.

### 2.3.3. Validity and Measurement Invariance

To assess the validity and measurement invariance of the multi-item constructs at the individual level we ran an initial confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (with AMOS 25.0), which demonstrated a satisfactory level of model fit ( $\chi^2[34] = 127.362$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 3.746$ , comparative fit index [CFI] = .969, root mean square of sample approximation [RMSEA] = .078). We confirmed discriminant validity because the average variance extracted ( $AVE_{REP} = .896$ ,  $AVE_{CET} = .708$ ) was greater than the squared root of correlations ( $r^2_{REP,CET} = .000$ ) of latent variables (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

We used multi-group CFAs to measure invariance through several steps (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998). The initial analysis indicated that the same subset of indicators aligned well with the same constructs in the German and Chinese sample, thereby confirming configural invariance ( $\chi^2[68] = 198.694$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.922$ , CFI = .959, RMSEA = .066). We then constrained the measurement weights ( $\chi^2[76] = 207.008$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.724$ , CFI = .959, RMSEA = .062,  $\Delta\chi^2[8] = 8,314$ , n.s.), indicating metric invariance.

We ran Harman's (1967) single-factor test to check whether common method variance could bias the results (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The first unrotated factor explained 32.72% of the shared variance of the indicators and manipulation checks, which was significantly less than

the critical threshold of 50%. Taken together, the results indicated that the measurement was reliable and valid.

#### 2.3.4. Results

We tested the first hypothesis regarding the effect of supplier hypocrisy on the firm's reputation using sampled t-tests, with the supplier's behavior as the independent variable and the firm's reputation as the dependent variable. German and Chinese participants confronted with the hypocritical behavior of the supplier evaluated the reputation of the firm significantly worse ( $M_{\text{German}} = 3.57$ ,  $SD_{\text{German}} = 1.14$ ;  $M_{\text{Chinese}} = 3.73$ ,  $SD_{\text{Chinese}} = 1.24$ ) than did participants confronted with a supplier that acted with integrity ( $M_{\text{German}} = 4.69$ ,  $SD_{\text{German}} = 1.14$ ;  $M_{\text{Chinese}} = 5.19$ ,  $SD_{\text{Chinese}} = 1.25$ ,  $t[168]_{\text{German}} = 6.42$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ,  $t[272]_{\text{Chinese}} = 9.68$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). Thus, H1 is supported.

To test the mediation effect of supplier hypocrisy on consumers' boycott intention via the firm's reputation, we conducted mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes 2018) (bootstrap sample  $N = 5,000$ ). All variables were centralized ( $x - M$ ) before including them in the analysis. The analysis confirmed that the mediation was significant in both countries, thereby supporting H2. Specifically, for the German dataset, the results indicated a significant direct effect of supplier behavior on boycott intention ( $b_{\text{direct}} = 1.078$ ,  $t = 5.013$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). There was full mediation, as the influence of supplier hypocrisy ( $b = .26$ ,  $t = 1.33$ , n.s.) was not significant when we included the firm's reputation as a mediator ( $b = -.73$ ,  $t = -9.54$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). Further, as indicated by the fact that the lower limit (LL) and upper limit (UL) of the bootstrapping results did not include zero, the indirect effect of the supplier behavior on boycott intention through the firm's reputation was significant ( $b = .82$ ,  $LL = .56$ ,  $UL = 1.10$ ).

For the Chinese dataset, the results indicated a significant direct effect of supplier hypocrisy on boycott intention ( $b_{\text{direct}} = 1.14$ ,  $t = 6.34$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). There was partial mediation, as the influence of supplier hypocrisy ( $b = .48$ ,  $t = 2.45$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) remained significant when we included the firm's reputation as a mediator ( $b = -.46$ ,  $t = -6.83$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). Further, as indicated by the fact that the lower limit (LL) and upper limit (UL) of the bootstrapping results did not include zero, the indirect effect of the mediation of the supplier behavior–boycott intention relationship through the firm's reputation was significant ( $b = .67$ ,  $LL = .40$ ,  $UL = .94$ ).

We tested H3 using a 2 (hypocritical supplier vs supplier with integrity)  $\times$  2 (German vs Chinese supplier) ANOVA, with the supplier's behavior and supplier's origin as independent variables, and the firm's reputation as the dependent variable. Table 2 displays the reputation ratings of the tested groups.

*Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the studies*

<b>Dependent variable: Firm reputation</b>			<i>Descriptive statistics</i>		
Country	Behavior of supplier (BHS)	Origin of supplier (ORS)	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Germany	Integrity	Germany	4.69	1.18	33
		China	4.70	1.12	44
	Hypocrisy	Germany	3.73	1.22	49
		China	3.38	1.02	44
		Total	4.08	1.27	170
China	Integrity	China	5.06	1.42	56
		Germany	5.30	1.09	71
	Hypocrisy	China	3.92	1.37	72
		Germany	3.55	1.07	75
		Total	4.41	1.44	274
South-Africa	Integrity	South-Africa	4.89	1.30	38
		China	4.40	1.25	38
	Hypocrisy	South-Africa	3.80	1.47	63
		China	3.79	1.57	57
		Total	4.13	1.49	196
US	Integrity	US	5.53	1.00	80
		South-Africa	5.33	1.18	62
		Germany	5.33	1.05	69
		China	5.24	1.12	52
	Hypocrisy	US	4.02	1.53	72
		South-Africa	4.06	1.44	62
		Germany	3.91	1.34	77
		China	3.53	1.37	63
		Total	4.61	1.47	537

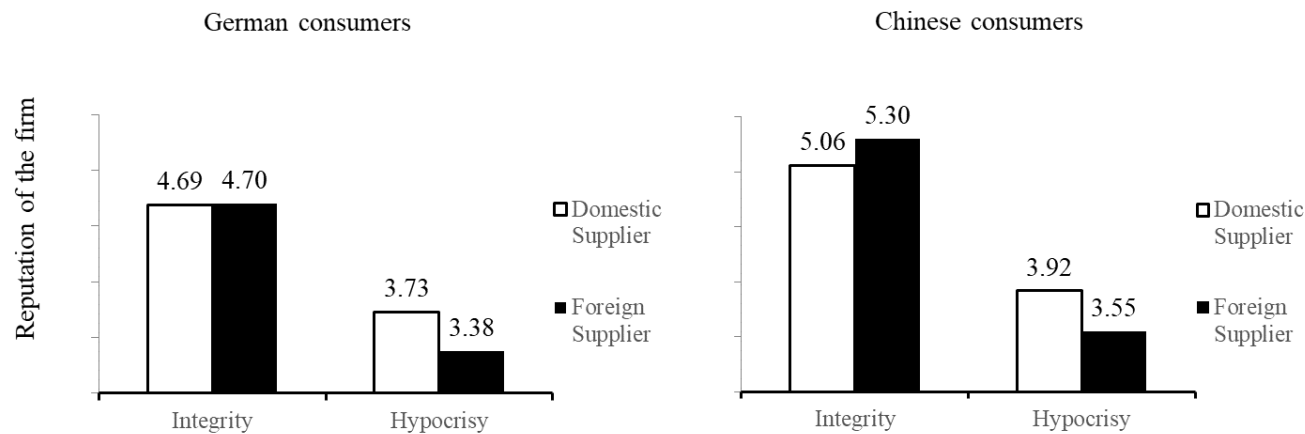
As shown in Table 3, the two-way ANOVA confirmed the suggested hypothesis H3 in the Chinese dataset, including the proposed two-way interaction between supplier hypocrisy and the supplier's origin ( $F[3, 270] = 4.13, p < .05$ ). Figure 2 displays the interaction effect of supplier hypocrisy and supplier origin on the firm's reputation.

Table 3: Main study: the effect of sourcing from hypocritical suppliers on the reputation of the focal firm in Germany and China

	Germany					China				
	df	Mean Squares	F	p	$\eta^2$	df	Mean Squares	F	p	$\eta^2$
Corrected model	3	18.82	14.49	***	.21	3	50.58	33.01	***	.27
Constant	1	1832.30	2181.08	***	.93	1	5375.94	3508.65	***	.93
Behavior of the supplier (BHS)	1	53.72	41.37	***	.20	1	140.23	91.52	***	.25
Origin of the supplier (ORS)	1	1.23	0.95	n.s.	.01	1	0.28	0.18	n.s.	.00
<i>Interaction</i>										
BHS × ORS	1	1.37	1.06	n.s.	.01	1	6.32	4.13	*	.02
Error	166	1.30				270	1.53			
R <sup>2</sup>	.208					.268				
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adjusted</sub>	.193					.260				

Notes: Two-way ANOVA; dependent variable = reputation of the firm. n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$

Figure 2: Effects of supplier’s behavior on firm reputation in the main study



Using the Hayes (2018) PROCESS Model 1, we analyzed the interaction effect of consumer ethnocentrism on the relationship between the firm's reputation and consumers' intention to boycott. We included age and gender as covariates, and report the results in Table 4. While we find a significant direct effect of consumer ethnocentrism on boycott intention ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $t = 5.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and, most notably, a significant interaction effect in the Chinese sample ( $\beta = -.085$ ,  $t = 2.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ), we do not find a significant direct effect ( $\beta = .092$ ,  $t = 1.17$ , n.s.), nor a significant interaction effect between consumer ethnocentrism and the firm's reputation in the German sample ( $\beta = -.013$ ,  $t = -.25$ , n.s.).

As a robustness check, we tested the full process of the mediation in the effect of the supplier's behavior on consumers' boycott intention via the firm's reputation. Again, we conducted mediation analysis (Hayes 2018) (PROCESS Model 21, number of bootstrap samples = 5,000). The supplier's behavior was the independent variable, the firm's reputation (REP) was the mediator, and boycott intention was the dependent variable. In the first-stage moderation (Pieters 2017), we added the supplier's origin as the moderator and included consumer ethnocentrism as the second-stage moderation. All variables were centralized before including them in the analysis. The analysis confirmed the previous results and indicated that the mediation was significant. The results can be found in the Online Resources.

Table 4: Consumers' boycott intention towards focal firm across Germany and China

	Germany						China					
	Model A			Model B			Model A			Model B		
	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p
<i>Predictors</i>												
Reputation of the firm (REP)	-.77	.070	***	-.77	.069	***	-.56	.056	***	-.61	.056	***
Consumer ethnocentrism (CET)	.098	.077	n.s.	.092	.078	n.s.	.34	.063	***	.33	-.072	***
<i>Interaction</i>												
REP x CET	-.015	.051	n.s.	-.013	.051	n.s.	-.085	.040	*	-.085	.041	*
<i>Controls</i>												
Gender				.14	.16	n.s.				-.13	.16	n.s.
Age				.013	.007	*				.001	.001	n.s.
R <sup>2</sup>	.44			.46			.32			.38		
$\Delta R^2$				.02						.06		
F	42.89			26.99			42.51			30.34		

Notes: Process model 1; dependent variable = consumers' boycott intention. n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$ ; gender: 0 = female; 1 = male.

## 2.4. Discussion

The findings provide evidence for the chain of blame and show that sourcing from a hypocritical supplier increases consumers' intention to boycott the firm that sources from it; also, we find that the firm's reputation mediates this effect. The effect is shown to be stable across German and Chinese consumers. As already explained, German products and firms are seen as highly prestigious among Chinese consumers, who therefore have high expectations of them. In line with expectancy violations theory, results show that Chinese consumers indeed do show strong reactions to German suppliers if the German firm disconfirms their expectations. The results introduce at least three novelties to research on expectancy violations theory and supply chain management in an international context.

First, robust results show that, independent of the supplier's origin, the dynamics of the chain of blame always lead to strong consumer reactions and an increase in consumers' boycott intention through a loss of reputation. In particular, expectations play a major role for firms that cooperate with foreign suppliers, as disconfirmation of the expectations creates such strong reactions that a foreign supplier's misbehavior can even backfire on the firm that sources from it, even if the firm itself does not act hypocritically. These findings support H1 and H2 and demonstrate that the relationships are stable across nations.

Second, regarding H3, we find a home-country-bias in China, that is, a more positive evaluation of the domestic hypocritical supplier than of the foreign hypocritical supplier. In contrast, due to the high expectations the Chinese have of German suppliers based on the positive image and favorable quality perception they have of German firms and products, hypocritical supplier behavior can backfire on the focal firm, particularly if those expectations are negatively violated.

Third, the study shows cross-national differences in the role of the moderating variables across the chain of blame. Confirming H4, consumer ethnocentrism does play a major role in the formation of consumers' boycott intention. However, this effect is contingent on the national and individual variation of the ethnocentric tendencies. While we find low levels of consumer ethnocentrism among German consumers, Chinese consumers exhibit strong tendencies that influence their boycott intentions. An alternative explanation for both the country of origin effect and the effect of consumer ethnocentrism may lie in other differences between consumers from industrialized countries and those from BRICS nations. Therefore, validation from different BRICS and industrialized countries with different economic and cultural profiles can help exclude the alternative explanation.

## **2.5. Follow-Up Studies: Validation of the Chain of Blame in different Country-Settings**

In two follow-up studies, we tested the chain of blame in South-Africa and the United States. The objectives of the follow-up studies were twofold. First, we aimed to replicate the chain of blame in different country settings to validate the results of the main study. Second, studying different country settings could yield several advantages. For example, by adding a second set of consumers from an emerging economy and an industrialized country, we could increase generalizability and test our proposed “chain of blame” in a multi-country setting with economically and socially heterogeneous consumers, thus shedding light on national (or even cultural) differences among consumers from different countries. By varying the suppliers’ origin, we addressed the dynamics and complex trade relationships in modern global supply chains and could account for differences in consumers’ expectations of different countries. The carefully selected differences between the countries in the main study and the follow-up studies should constitute a robust test for the assumption that consumer expectations of firms from specific countries influence the negative effect of sourcing from hypocritical suppliers.

### **The South-African Case**

The first follow-up study used a South-African dataset to test how sourcing from a Chinese supplier (vs domestic) affects the focal firm’s reputation. We chose South-Africa as it is also a BRICS nation, yet the level of individualism (65) is higher than in China (20) and almost on the same level as in Germany (67). South-Africa’s cultural profile is shaped by multiple ethnicities, and the consequences of 40 years of Apartheid oppression (Thomas and Bendixen 2000), and is generally less straightforward and more ambiguous than (e.g.) China (Rawwas 2001). Further, China is one of the biggest export markets of South-Africa (World Bank 2017) and is heavily engaged in direct foreign investment in South-Africa (Reuters 2017, Torrens 2019). Additionally, there is no evidence suggesting that any of the suppliers’ countries of origin would specifically raise high or low expectations.

### **Measures, Data Collection and Validity**

We gathered data from 196 South-African ( $M_{\text{age}} = 45.5$ ; 40.9% female) consumers from the urban population. As in the main study, all participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. We used the same measurements and scales as in the main study, and included the same two manipulation checks as in Study 1 to determine whether the participants read and understood the vignettes correctly. A total 93.3% of the South-African respondents answered the check correctly. The respondents that failed the check were excluded from the analysis. We



provided a bilingual survey (Afrikaans and English) as many South-Africans use Afrikaans as their first language. We did not find any significant differences in the results between the participants that answered the survey in Afrikaans compared to the participants that answered in English.

## Results

To test the hypotheses in the South-African case, we followed the exact same procedures as in the main study. Sampled t-Tests revealed that South-African consumers rated the reputation of firms that sourced from hypocritical suppliers lower ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) than that of firms who sourced from suppliers with integrity ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ,  $t[194] = 4.01$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ).

Mediation analyses revealed a significant direct effect of supplier behavior on boycott intention ( $b_{\text{direct}} = 1.38$ ,  $t = 5.52$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). There was partial mediation, as the influence of supplier hypocrisy ( $b = .82$ ,  $t = 3.77$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ) remained significant when we included the firm's reputation as a mediator ( $b = -.65$ ,  $t = -9.07$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). Further, as indicated by the fact that the lower limit (LL) and upper limit (UL) of the bootstrapping results did not include zero, the indirect effect of the mediation of the supplier behavior–boycott intention relationship by firm's reputation was significant ( $b = .56$ ,  $LL = .27$ ,  $UL = .88$ ).

The results of the ANOVA show a non-significant interaction effect between supplier hypocrisy and the origin of the supplier ( $F[3, 192] = 1.36$ , n.s.). Further, PROCESS Model 1 reveals that the direct effect of consumer ethnocentrism on boycott intention is not significant ( $\beta = .097$ ,  $t = 1.18$ , n.s.), whereas the interaction between consumer ethnocentrism and the reputation of the firm is significant ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $t = 2.41$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Again, we performed a robustness check using PROCESS Model 21 with the same specifications as in the main study. The results confirm the full model and support the mediation of supplier hypocrisy on boycott intention through the reputation of the firm. Please refer to the Online Resources for the full report of the calculations.

## Discussion

The first follow-up study replicates the chain of blame in a second BRICS country. Results indicate that the chain of blame is valid in the South-African setting, and they indicate that the increase in consumers' boycott intention that is initiated by sourcing from a hypocritical supplier and mediated by the reputation of the firm, is stable across countries, which supports H1 and H2. Regarding H3, we found that in South-Africa, a country with a more individualistic profile, there is no home-country-bias for hypocritical domestic suppliers. Regarding H4,

consumer ethnocentrism plays a major moderating role among South-African consumers, complementing research on the influence of a history of oppression on ethnocentric tendencies (Gold and Huddleston 1995).

### **The US-American Case**

The second follow-up study used a US-American dataset to analyze how sourcing from South-African, Chinese, and German (vs domestic) suppliers influences the focal firm's reputation. In the light of the recent series of trade disputes between China and the US since the election of Donald Trump as president (Chong and Li 2019), the potential effects of these political disputes on consumer reactions to firms engaged in bilateral trade between the two countries, are particularly interesting. Therefore, we expect American respondents to show exceptionally strong reactions to Chinese suppliers.

### **Measures, Data Collection and Validity**

We gathered data from and 537 US-American consumers ( $M_{\text{age}} = 39.94$ ; 48.8% female) on Mechanical Turk (MTurk). We followed the same procedure as in the main study and follow-up study 1 and included only participants that answered the manipulation check correctly (82.8%).

### **Results**

Sampled t-Tests reveal that US consumers rated the reputation of firms that sourced from hypocritical suppliers lower ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ) than that of firms who source from suppliers with integrity ( $M = 5.37$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ,  $t[535] = 14.80$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). Mediation analyses reveal a significant direct effect of supplier behavior on boycott intention ( $b_{\text{direct}} = 1.56$ ,  $t = 10.94$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). There was partial mediation, as the influence of the supplier hypocrisy ( $b = 1.041$ ,  $t = 6.52$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ) remained significant when we included the firm's reputation as a mediator ( $b = -.35$ ,  $t = -6.50$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). Further, as indicated by the fact that the lower limit (LL) and upper limit (UL) of the bootstrapping results did not include zero, the indirect effect of the mediation of the supplier behavior–boycott intention relationship by a firm's reputation was significant ( $b = .34$ ,  $LL = .73$ ,  $UL = .88$ ).

To test the moderation effect of the supplier's origin on the relationship between supplier hypocrisy and the firm's reputation, we conducted three ANOVAs that compare sourcing from a domestic supplier with a South-African, German or Chinese supplier. The direct effect of supplier hypocrisy on the firm's reputation is significant in the case of domestic vs South-African suppliers ( $F[3, 272] = 77.95$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ), domestic vs German suppliers ( $F[3, 294 =$

102.53,  $p \leq .001$ ), and domestic vs Chinese suppliers ( $F[3, 263] = 103.67$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). The interaction effect between the supplier's origin and supplier hypocrisy is not significant in any of the three ANOVAs. Therefore, in these cases we cannot support H3. Remarkably, in the case of domestic vs Chinese suppliers, the ANOVA further reveals a significant direct effect of the country of origin on the firm's reputation ( $F[3, 263] = 6.09$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ), which indicates that US consumers already devalue firms that source from Chinese suppliers, regardless of supplier behavior.

Further, PROCESS Model 1 reveals that throughout all three groups, the direct effect of consumer ethnocentrism on boycott intention is significant ( $\beta = .044$ ,  $t = 9.54$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ), as is the interaction between consumer ethnocentrism and the firm's reputation ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $t = 5.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Again, we performed a robustness check using PROCESS Model 21 with the same specifications as in the main study. The results (shown in the Online Resources) confirm the full model.

## Discussion

The second follow-up study replicated the chain of blame in a second industrialized country and supported the negative effect of sourcing from hypocritical suppliers via a loss of reputation on the intention to boycott the firm. Thus, H1 and H2 are confirmed again. Regarding H3, we find a significant direct effect of sourcing from Chinese suppliers on the reputation of the firm, regardless of the actual behavior of the supplier. This indicates that US consumers penalize domestic firms that cooperate with Chinese firms. This supports recent research on US consumers' feelings of animosity towards Chinese firms (Klein 2002). According to Klein (2002), consumer animosity is comprised of consumer feelings towards a specific country which result in decreased preferences for products or firms of this specific country. Adding to this delineation, our results show that US consumers do not exhibit negative attitudes towards foreign firms per se, but towards Chinese firms in particular, which indicates consumer animosity (Grappi et al. 2019). Additionally, we find strong evidence for a moderating effect of consumer ethnocentrism on the relationship between firm reputation and boycott intention, which again supports H4. In line with previous research, this result supports the strong influence of consumer ethnocentrism among US-Americans (Tsai, Yoo and Lee 2013).

### 2.6. General Discussion

In this study, we investigated the potential backfiring effects of the hypocritical behavior of a supplier on the reputation of, and consumer boycott intention towards, a firm that sources from the supplier. Confirming the suggested chain of blame in a multi-country setting, our results

indicate that sourcing from hypocritical suppliers initiates a chain of blame that damages the reputation of the firm (H1) and increases consumers' boycott intention towards the firm, even if the firm itself does not act hypocritically (H2).

Firms from both BRICS and industrialized countries that source from hypocritical suppliers face a similar risk of damaged reputation and boycott, thereby indicating that consumers do hold firms responsible for the behavior of their upstream suppliers, and expect them to monitor and audit their suppliers adequately. As illustrated by the anecdotal example of Apple and Foxconn at the beginning of this paper, our research underscores the assumption that firms are viewed as inherently liable for their suppliers' misdemeanors, which highlights the "chain liability effect" (Hartmann and Moeller 2014). We found a universal (culture-free) "chain of blame" effect, which refers to the attribution of responsibility for hypocritical behavior along the supply chain towards the endpoint of the chain.

Recent research suggests that consumers generally seek a "scapegoat" that they can blame for certain corporate transgressions (Gao et al. 2012), specifically when difficulties arise from having to process too much or asymmetric information (Schlaile et al. 2018), or from the need to reduce overly complex relationships (e.g., our triadic approach that incorporates multiple corporate stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds) to more conveniently processable dyads (Gao et al. 2012). Additionally, as consumers are largely aware of the complexity of global supply chains and their domestic firms' international trade relations, they demand and value reliable information about the firms' responsibility claims (Pivato et al. 2008). If consumers' trust in reliable information (Schmidt 2016) is misused, or the information is contradictory, as when firms source from hypocritical suppliers, consumers might feel even more betrayed than otherwise, and lose their faith in the economic system. This loss of trust could increase consumers' cynicism (Abraham 2000) and lead to general skepticism towards international corporations, or to marketplace withdrawal behavior, such as boycotts (Helm et al. 2015). Such actions can decrease sales and permanently damage the companies' reputations.

Our general model (H1 to H2) was shown to be stable across multiple country settings, as we found evidence that consumers from both industrialized and BRICS nations establish a "chain of blame." Additionally, we found country- and culture-bound effects subsequent to this "chain of blame." These findings add to the extensive literature on standardization and adaptation (Schmid and Kotulla 2011), and show that international firms should take threats which are driven by different culturally dependent variables, into account (e.g., when firms manage their communication strategies after an incident of corporate hypocrisy or corporate irresponsibility).

Our study indicates the significance of this debate in the context of international CSR and reputation management, highlighting the importance of cultural sensitivity for international firms (Table 5).

More specifically, the results indicate that loss of reputation is moderated by the provenience of the consumers (H3). Chinese consumers are more lenient towards firms that source from hypocritical suppliers in their home country than towards those with foreign hypocritical suppliers, which indicates a salient preference for their home country (home-country bias). While the descriptive statistics tend towards the same effect in Germany, our results show that the proposed interaction effect is only significant among Chinese consumers. We argue that this asymmetry occurs due to Chinese consumers' expectations of German firms being disconfirmed. When the high expectations were disconfirmed, the positive country of origin image Chinese had of German suppliers reversed and turned into a liability for Chinese firms that source from German suppliers. This finding extends existing research that aimed to identify a preference for domestic companies acting responsibly (Choi et al. 2016; Zeugner-Roth et al. 2015).

Table 5: Consumers' boycott intention towards focal firm across South-Africa and the US

	South-Africa						US					
	Model A			Model B			Model A			Model B		
	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p
<i>Predictors</i>												
Reputation of the firm (REP)	-.77	.074	***	-.77	.074	***	-.58	.044	***	-.58	.044	***
Consumer ethnocentrism (CET)	.090	.082	n.s.	.097	.082	n.s.	.44	.045	***	.43	.046	***
<i>Interaction</i>												
REP x CET	.12	.051	*	.12	.052	*	.15	.028	***	.14	.029	***
<i>Controls</i>												
Gender				.001	.21	n.s.				-.029	.13	n.s.
Age				.011	.016	n.s.				-.009	.005	†
R <sup>2</sup>	.37			.38			.33			.34		
$\Delta R^2$				.01						.01		
F	37.94			23.37			88.82			53.95		

Notes: Process model 1; dependent variable = consumers' boycott intention. n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$ ; gender: 0 = female; 1 = male.

This finding also complements recent research on cultural differences in perceptions of socially responsible companies (Swaidan 2012) which has argued that collectivists more readily accept these companies because they are supposed to be suited to collectivist cultural traits (Huang and Lu 2017). For instance, Choi et al. (2016) indicated that the attitudes of consumers from a collectivist culture towards the socially responsible behavior of a domestic firm are more positive than attitudes towards foreign firms. However, our research demonstrates that the notion of cultural difference might not hold for a company cooperating with a hypocritical supplier. In such cases, consumers' reactions backfire on the domestic firm, with this effect being stronger and statistically significant for Chinese consumers. Moreover, we demonstrate that the home-country bias also applies in cases in which the supplier acts hypocritically. This indicates that consumers favor domestic companies for better or for worse, which subsequently increases the stakes and potential risks for companies that internationalize their business models.

Our analysis further indicates that firms that source from hypocritical suppliers may face severe consequences, as consumers' ethnocentricity (H4) increases their boycott intention towards the firm. We found these amplifying effects in China, South-Africa, and the US, but not in Germany. These findings shed further light on the drivers of boycotting behavior, thereby additionally expanding this line of research to the proposed triadic setting that incorporates global supply chains.

### **2.6.1. Managerial Implications**

We identify three major challenges for firms that source from domestic or foreign suppliers, and, based on our results, derive implications for managers and marketers in the global business-to-consumer space (Table 6). First, our results indicate that consumers follow a "chain of blame" and hold firms responsible for their hypocritical suppliers; thus, thorough supplier auditing (Egels-Zandén 2017), ideally in situ (Grimm et al. 2016), is necessary to ensure that the supplier keeps its communicated promises. This precise and constant auditing is particularly important given that our study shows consumers even consider taking severe reprisals, such as boycotting the firm. Firms should incorporate their supplier's responsibility in their own code of conduct (Torres et al. 2012) and, most importantly, need to manage and monitor their supplier relationships constantly. Also, they should communicate their successful controlling actions to consumers (Pedersen and Andersen 2006).

*Table 6: Challenges arising from managing global supply chains and solutions for managers and marketers based on empirical evidence*

Challenge	Supporting Evidence from this Study	Implications for Managers	Implications for Marketers
<p><b>Hypocritical suppliers</b> <i>The behavior of the supplier does not align with its promises</i></p> <p>When engaging in trade and supply relationships that stretch around the globe, firms may face severe consequences when interacting with hypocritical suppliers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers follow a “chain of blame” and hold firms responsible for their hypocritical suppliers. (H1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thorough supplier auditing, ideally in situ, is necessary to ensure that the supplier keeps its communicated promises.</li> <li>• Create a shared mission and common values to ensure compliance throughout the supply chain.</li> <li>• Implement critical success factors for sub-supplier management and, most importantly, build trustful relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of expectancy violations along the supply chain and communicate (and act) accordingly to fulfill or exceed consumers’ expectations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>National and Cultural idiosyncrasies</b> <i>Arising along global supply chains among consumers and corporations</i></p> <p>Along global supply chains, managers need to be aware of cultural idiosyncrasies among consumers and corporations from different cultural backgrounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers are more lenient toward firms that source from domestic hypocritical suppliers than they are toward foreign hypocritical suppliers. Consumers from collectivistic cultures (i.e., China) specifically condemn domestic focal firms that source from hypocritical foreign suppliers. (H3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In case of doubt about the credibility of foreign suppliers, firms may consider selecting their suppliers accordingly to increase their possibilities of controlling them and to make use of the home-country bias.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the measures to increase CSR along the supply chain that are most important for the consumer group with regard to their cultural and individual values. Stress home-country-sourcing if possible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Threat of boycotts</b> <i>Particularly high with regard to ethnocentric consumers</i></p> <p>Consumers’ reactions to corporate misbehavior may trigger consumer activism and may increase the threats to companies engaging in global trade relationships. Specifically, firms that are already very much engaged in CSR and are perceived as extraordinarily responsible may face severe consumer reprisals after one single dubious act (“one shot and you’re out”). For those consumers who find this ethical information relevant (high green consumer values), one piece of negative information can have devastating consequences for the moral image of the brand in question.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers may consider taking severe reprisals, such as boycotting the firm. (H2)</li> <li>• Consumer ethnocentrism significantly increases intention to boycott of consumers from China, South-Africa, and the US (H4).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authenticity is key to consumer trust. Building long-lasting relationships with suppliers increases chances that the supplier keeps its communicated promises.</li> <li>• Corporations highly engaged in CSR must be devoted to it throughout their supply chain, anticipating higher risks and stronger consumer reactions if case of expectancy violation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of your consumers’ profile with regard to ethnocentrism (esp. in collectivistic markets) and green consumer values (esp. in individualistic markets).</li> </ul>



Second, we note Grimm et al.'s (2014) recent paper on sustainable food supply chains that identified 14 critical success factors for sub-supplier management which are also applicable to the consumer electronics setting in our study. Among these factors, the most relevant for managers of the triadic relationships concern trustful relationships between firms and their suppliers. Naturally, trust serves as an enabler for long-term relationships; it increases the quality of the collaboration and prevents, or at least diminishes, the threat of suppliers' irresponsible behavior. However, as our study shows, this trust can be misused when suppliers do not behave according to their communicated CSR statements; therefore, it is crucially important for the firm to involve their suppliers in their concepts of responsibility and to create a shared mission that will ensure compliance throughout the supply chain.

Third, our results indicate that consumers are more lenient towards firms that source from domestic hypocritical suppliers than they are towards foreign hypocritical suppliers. Chinese consumers specifically condemn domestic focal firms that source from hypocritical foreign suppliers. From a managerial perspective, and in case of doubt about the credibility of foreign suppliers, firms should consider selecting their suppliers in ways that increase their possibilities of controlling them and that make use of the home-country bias, as our study has described. Of course, a reselection of suppliers is only possible if the supplied goods are substitutable.

Furthermore, our study underlines the importance of both suppliers' and firms' consistent and reliable behavior, as hypocritical behavior can motivate consumers to boycott and damage the firm. For example, there has been a very recent public outcry and calls for boycotting Krombacher—one of Germany's largest private breweries that was considered a leading national firm for environmental sustainability—after they announced their intention to collaborate with Nestlé, who is infamous for its rather dubious sourcing practices (Coombs and Holladay 2012). This indicates that even firms that are perceived as extraordinarily responsible can face severe consumer reprisals after one single dubious act. The notion of "one strike and you're out" (Brunk and Blümelhuber 2011, p. 134) seems applicable to this case, which shows a major risk for renowned and responsible firms. Our research suggests that even highly prestigious firms from countries with a very positive country-of-origin image (i.e., Germany) can face severe reprisals if they do not meet consumers' high expectations.

### **2.6.2. Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Our research is not without limitations. We focused on the firm and supplier relationship in the consumer electronics industry, given the high global interdependency of and growing need for CSR and sustainability for this specific industry (Ganesan et al. 2009). However, from a cross-

cultural perspective, it could also be interesting to examine different sectors and goods that are traded along global supply chains, such as food (Genovese et al. 2017) or textiles (Gardetti and Torres 2017), because the consumption of such goods might be motivated by cultural values and contextual factors different to those in electronics. The influence of such cultural values on consumers' reactions to supplier hypocrisy, and their influence on the different steps along the chain of blame should be considered in future research. Specifically, analyzing cultural difference in consumers' reactions to corporate failure to practice what they preach, could deepen our understanding of consumer reactions to hypocrisy along global supply chains. As Effron et al. (2018) show, individuals from different cultural backgrounds can have significantly different understandings of hypocrisy and of the misalignment of practicing and preaching due to culturally diverse models of the self (i.e., independent vs. interdependent models). In this vein, future research should also investigate whether the chain of blame is replicable in different country-dyads. So far, we have analyzed the effects of sourcing from domestic vs foreign suppliers (specifically from German or Chinese suppliers) on the perception of consumers from Germany, China, South-Africa, and the US. Given the dynamics of global policy and global trends, such as the current trade war between the US and China, analyzing additional country dyads that could shed light on contemporary effects of global policy on consumer behavior, would be important.

Further, with our proposed triadic supplier–firm–consumer relationship, we have investigated a two-level supply chain that includes a firm and the adjacent step of the supply chain (supplier). Given the complexity of global supply chains and international supply networks, it is clear that our triadic relationship which integrated companies and consumers from four countries only, is far from comprehensive. Our framework could be further enriched by including next-level suppliers that, again, can behave hypocritically or with integrity.

Dealing with corporate hypocrisy is a very challenging task for managers. As our results suggest, sourcing from hypocritical suppliers bears major risks for firms, even if the firm itself does not act hypocritically. The loss of reputation for those firms is a major threat to their business success and needs to be avoided. How exactly managers can avoid this and how specific managerial actions and initiatives influence consumers' perceptions in the long run, is still largely unknown. Therefore, the long-term effects of sourcing from hypocritical suppliers should be addressed in future research. Will consumers calm down after a while and consequently improve their reputation ratings of the firms? How forgiving are consumers of hypocritical suppliers? Specifically, future research should address the consequences on consumers' perceptions of cutting ties with a hypocritical supplier and its replacement with a

supplier that practices what it preaches. We need to analyze whether consumers really apply a “one shot and you’re out” heuristic, or are easily convinced of the integrity of the new supplier.

This paper has drawn on expectancy violations theory to explain the moderating effects of country of origin and consumer ethnocentrism on consumers’ intentions to boycott a firm. Disconfirmed expectations evoke strong emotional reactions and, in turn, lead to behavioral reactions among those whose expectations were disappointed. In this line, our study solely focusses on single incidents of hypocrisy and on the immediate effects of disconfirmed expectations. The long-term effects of disconfirmed expectations and the process of expectation formation and their sensitivity to corporate irresponsibility have yet to be explored.

Lastly, we find evidence of strong consumer reaction in the Chinese dataset, and specifically that Chinese consumers condemn German firms that act hypocritically and so do not live up to their high expectations. Future research should also address the effects of a positive disconfirmation of expectations in our global supply chain context, to ask how suppliers that suffer from very low expectations can disproportionately benefit from positively disconfirming their expectations.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

The present article has proposed and tested the chain of blame that describes the negative consequences of sourcing from hypocritical suppliers on the focal firm. Global supply chains incorporate business relationships that span the world and affect firms and consumers from various nations and from various cultural backgrounds. These supply chains include firms that source from hypocritical suppliers and that face severe reprisals from consumers, as such sourcing lowers their reputation ratings, which can result in consumers intending to engage in boycotting the firm. This chain of blame is shown to be stable across four different countries with consumers from various cultural backgrounds. However, we find national idiosyncrasies between the countries and show, among other things, that Chinese consumers react particularly negatively when a German supplier does not practice what it preaches and acts hypocritically. Such Chinese consumers have high expectations of German suppliers, of which disconfirmation leads to strong emotional and behavioral reactions. The article makes several contributions to the literature on international business, and corporate social (ir)responsibility. First, we expand the dyadic firm–consumer relationship in hypocrisy research to a triadic supplier–firm–consumer relationship that considers the consequences of supplier hypocrisy for the reputation of the firm and consumers’ boycott intentions. Second, by integrating expectancy violations theory, we explicate the relevance of corporate hypocrisy and illustrate that it is a very specific

and most relevant case of CSiR. Third, we test and replicate the chain of blame in four different national settings and account for national idiosyncrasies along the chain of blame. Expectancy violations theory is utilized to show how consumers react to corporate scandals, and explains how their reactions are contingent on their expectations of suppliers from different countries of origin and on individual factors, such as consumer ethnocentrism.

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## 2.9. Appendix

### Appendix A: Text vignettes used in main study<sup>1</sup>

The provenience of the firm and supplier was manipulated according to the country in which the study was conducted, such that Chinese consumers responded to the corporate hypocrisy of a (either foreign or domestic) supplier of a Chinese retailer of consumer electronics, and German consumers responded to the corporate hypocrisy of a (either foreign or domestic) supplier of a German retailer of consumer electronics.

<b>Vignette</b>
<p>Power-Mart is one of the largest national vendors of consumer electronics. The chain operates stores all across <i>China/Germany</i>, offering an attractive selection of electronic goods, such as home entertainment systems, personal computers, and digital cameras. Power-Mart sells its goods at very competitive prices in an attractive store environment and in their online shop; thus, their stores and online shop tend to be quite popular. You shop regularly at your local Power-Mart store and online shop.</p> <p>Power-Mart works closely with the <i>domestic/foreign</i> supplier, Techgy, that is located in <i>China/Germany</i>. Many of Techgy's components and products are produced in <i>China/Germany</i>. Despite the strong economic connections of both firms, they work as individual entities, do not share a joint management, and are independently responsible for their operations.</p> <p>Power-Mart and the supplier Techgy are well known for engaging in large-scale CSR campaigns that should assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on environmental and social wellbeing. Those campaigns explicitly aim to improve and preserve the ecological footprint of their operations. Power-Mart and Techgy recently announced their superior dedication to preserving the natural environment and engaging in recycling activities.</p> <p>Today, when browsing through your local newspaper, you come across the following item in the business section:</p>
<p><b>Techgy is an industry leader in recycling (integrity manipulation)</b></p> <p><i>Chinese/German</i> supplier Techgy follows the highest standards when it comes to recycling. The company has all its excess packaging material processed by professional <i>Chinese/German</i> recycling companies. This exemplary recycling behavior makes Techgy the industry leader in protecting the natural environment.</p>
<p><b>Environmental scandal involving Techgy (hypocrisy manipulation)</b></p> <p><i>Chinese/German</i> supplier Techgy has been dumping large loads of excess packaging material in a local <i>Chinese/German</i> landfill that is filled beyond its capacity. Runoff from the landfill has polluted the local water supply.</p>

<sup>1</sup> We provide all Chinese, German and Afrikaans translations of the materials and the vignettes that were used in South-Africa and the United States in the Online Resources.

*Appendix B: Measures and scales of the study*

Construct	Items (English)	Germany			China			South-Africa			US			Source(s)
		M	SD	$\lambda$	M	SD	$\lambda$	M	SD	$\lambda$	M	SD	$\lambda$	
Corporate hypocrisy (German sample: $\alpha = .966$ ; Chinese sample: $\alpha = .937$ ; South-African sample: $\alpha = .957$ ; US sample: $\alpha = .951$ )	• <i>Techgy acts hypocritically.</i>	4.64	1.942	.965	4.04	1.754	.891	4.76	1.987	.930	4.15	2.165	.941	Wagner et al. (2009)
	• <i>What Techgy says and does are two different things.</i>	4.63	1.942	.936	4.06	1.853	.931	4.85	1.983	.939	4.17	2.162	.945	
	• <i>Techgy pretends to be something that it is not.</i>	4.57	1.871	.957	4.04	1.824	.939	4.71	1.964	.952	4.10	2.159	.937	
	• <i>Techgy does exactly what it says (inverse).</i>	4.57	1.842	.891	4.15	1.806	.811	4.79	1.846	.904	3.96	2.007	.863	
	• <i>Techgy puts its words into action (inverse).</i>	4.47	1.843	.945	4.16	1.822	.898	4.67	1.847	.894	3.81	2.002	.882	
Corporate reputation (German sample: $\alpha = .944$ ; Chinese sample: $\alpha = .937$ ; South-African sample: $\alpha = .950$ ; US sample: $\alpha = .958$ )	• <i>What Power-Mart did is morally right.</i>	3.87	1.466	.876	4.41	1.677	.870	3.87	1.679	.868	4.42	1.621	.895	Arli et al. (2017)
	• <i>Power-Mart is reliable.</i>	4.25	1.297	.930	4.46	1.524	.833	4.28	1.558	.951	4.73	1.520	.953	
	• <i>Power-Mart is trustworthy.</i>	4.05	1.377	.962	4.45	1.545	.953	4.10	1.584	.965	4.60	1.589	.964	
	• <i>Power-Mart is dependable.</i>	4.14	1.337	.941	4.33	1.527	.918	4.26	1.562	.949	4.71	1.534	.958	
Boycott intention	• <i>I will start boycotting Power-Mart.</i>	2.95	1.491		3.10	1.593		3.33	1.831		3.11	1.830		Own

*Appendix B: Measures and scales of the study (continued)*

Construct	Items (English)	Germany			China			South-Africa			US			Source(s)
		M	SD	$\lambda$	M	SD	$\lambda$	M	SD	$\lambda$	M	SD	$\lambda$	
Consumer ethnocentrism (German sample: $\alpha = .885$ ; Chinese sample: $\alpha = .854$ ; South-African sample: $\alpha = .866$ ; US sample: $\alpha = .928$ )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>German (CH/SA/US) products first, last, and foremost.</i></li> </ul>	4.19	1.432	.664	4.40	1.672	.574	4.57	1.492	.718	4.43	1.632	.822	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Purchasing foreign-made products is un-German (CH/SA/US).</i></li> </ul>	2.56	1.323	.802	3.88	1.779	.592	3.44	1.668	.816	3.26	1.666	.882	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts Germans (CH/SA/US) out of jobs.</i></li> </ul>	2.53	1.346	.853	2.97	1.536	.867	3.55	1.668	.836	3.42	1.670	.903	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We should purchase products manufactured in Germany (CH/SA/US), instead of letting other countries get rich off us.</i></li> </ul>	2.99	1.521	.874	3.19	1.721	.892	4.48	1.702	.832	4.18	1.678	.865	Klein et al. (1998)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country.</i></li> </ul>	3.81	1.650	.772	3.21	1.734	.833	4.97	1.572	.642	4.21	1.566	.776	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Germany (CH/SA/US) consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow Germans (CH/SA/US) out of work.</i></li> </ul>	2.52	1.423	.825	2.72	1.607	.810	3.16	1.798	.790	3.38	1.760	.889	



## 2.10. Online Resources

### Online Resource 1: Results of the full model across countries (PROCESS Model 21)

	Mediator variable model (dependent variable: reputation of the firm)											
	Germany			China			South-Africa			US		
	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p
<i>Predictors</i>												
Behavior of the supplier (BHS)	-1.15	.18	***	-1.46	.15	***	-.86	.21	***	-1.48	.11	***
Origin of the supplier (ORS)	-.19	.18	n.s.	-.087	.15	n.s.	-.19	.20	n.s.	-.20	.12	n.s.
<i>Interactions</i>												
BHS x ORS	-.36	.35	n.s.	-.61	.30	*	.49	.42	n.s.	.042	.24	n.s.
R <sup>2</sup>	.21			.27			.089			.26		
F	14.49			33.012			6.25			62.20		
	Dependent variable model (dependent variable: boycott intention)											
	Germany			China			South-Africa			US		
	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p
<i>Predictors</i>												
Behavior of the supplier (BHS)	.24	.19	n.s.	.40	.18	*	.88	.22	***	.91	.15	***
Reputation of the firm (REP)	-.73	.077	***	-.48	.069	***	-.69	.074	***	-.42	.050	***
Consumer ethnocentrism (CET)	.091	.077	n.s.	.33	.078	***	.12	.80	n.s.	.43	.044	***
<i>Interactions</i>												
REP x CET	-.013	.051	n.s.	-.082	.040	*	.13	.050	**	.13	.028	***
R <sup>2</sup>	.44			.33			.42			.38		
F	32.65			33.53			34.93			81.12		
<b>Indirect effects</b>	$\beta$	Boot SE	CI	$\beta$	Boot SE	CI	$\beta$	Boot SE	CI	$\beta$	Boot SE	CI
Domestic supplier x low CET	.75	.22	[.33, 1.23]	.43	.13	[.19, .70]	.94	.28	[.44, 1.52]	.91	.18	[.60, 1.29]
Domestic supplier x medium CET	.77	.22	[.35, 1.21]	.55	.14	[.28, .85]	.76	.23	[.34, 1.23]	.64	.13	[.40, .93]
Domestic supplier x high CET	.78	.23	[.33, 1.25]	.67	.18	[.33, 1.058]	.57	.22	[.20, 1.065]	.37	.13	[.15, .64]
Foreign supplier x low CET	.97	.21	[.59, 1.42]	.66	.17	[.34, 1.009]	.52	.25	[.022, 1.031]	.88	.12	[.65, 1.14]
Foreign supplier x medium CET	.99	.19	[.64, 1.39]	.85	.16	[.54, 1.16]	.42	.21	[.018, .84]	.62	.093	[.45, .81]
Foreign supplier x high CET	1.006	.20	[.64, 1.43]	1.027	.20	[.63, 1.42]	.32	.18	[.012, .69]	.36	.11	[.15, .57]

Notes: n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$ ; CI = confidence interval; low CET = -1SD; medium CET = mean value; high CET = +1SD.

*Online Resource 2: Text vignettes used in the main study in Chinese*

The provenience of the firm and supplier was manipulated according to the country in which the study was conducted, such that Chinese consumers responded to the corporate hypocrisy of a (either foreign or domestic) supplier of a Chinese retailer of consumer electronics, and German consumers responded to the corporate hypocrisy of a (either foreign or domestic) supplier of a German retailer of consumer electronics.

<b>Vignette (Example of integrity manipulation and domestic supplier)</b>
<p>博尔玛电器是全国最大的电子消费品供应商之一。它的连锁店遍布全中国，为大家提供一系列受人喜爱电子产品，包括家庭娱乐系统、个人电脑和数码相机。博尔玛电器销售的产品性价比高且购物环境宜人，因此不管是线上还是线下商店，都深受消费者青睐。您经常光顾博尔玛的门店与网店。</p> <p>博尔玛电器与中国本土供应商泰科奇电子紧密合作。泰科奇电子的很多零部件和产品都在国内生产。即使两家公司经济层面紧密合作，但它们相对独立，分开管理，各自对自身的运营负责。</p> <p>博尔玛电器与它的供应商泰科奇电子因为积极参与大型的社会责任活动而享有美誉，承担着对环境和社会的应尽责任。这些社会责任活动有着明确的目标，即旨在降低它们运营中对生态系统所产生的不良影响。博尔玛电器与泰科奇电子最近宣布：它们会进一步致力于保护自然环境、从事产品回收活动。</p> <p>今天，您在阅读本地报纸的时候，在商业专栏读到以下信息：</p> <p>泰科奇电子引领行业废品回收</p> <p>泰科奇电子在实施回收工作时，遵循业内最高标准。公司所有过量的包装材料都由国内专业的回收企业处理。高标准的回收行为让泰科奇成为行业内保护环境的引领者。</p>
<p><b>Hypocrisy manipulation and domestic supplier</b></p> <p>今天，您在阅读本地报纸的时候，在商业专栏读到以下信息：</p> <p>泰科奇电子卷入环境丑闻</p> <p>本土供应商泰科奇电子把它过剩的包装材料倒入国内的填埋场，但是超出此填埋场的负荷。从填埋场溢出的材料污染了公司所在地的供水。</p>
<p><b>Hypocrisy manipulation and foreign supplier</b></p> <p>今天，您在阅读本地报纸的时候，在商业专栏读到以下信息：</p> <p>泰科奇电子卷入环境丑闻</p> <p>德国供应商泰科奇电子把它过剩的包装材料倒入德国的填埋场，但是超出此填埋场的负荷。从填埋场溢出的材料污染了德国当地的供水。</p>
<p><b>Integrity manipulation and domestic supplier</b></p> <p>今天，您在阅读本地报纸的时候，在商业专栏读到以下信息：</p> <p>泰科奇电子引领行业废品回收</p> <p>泰科奇电子在实施回收工作时，遵循业内最高标准。公司所有过量的包装材料都由国内专业的回收企业处理。高标准的回收行为让泰科奇成为行业内保护环境的引领者</p>
<p><b>Integrity manipulation and foreign supplier</b></p> <p>今天，您在阅读本地报纸的时候，在商业专栏读到以下信息：</p> <p>泰科奇电子引领行业废品回收</p> <p>德国供应商泰科奇电子在实施回收工作时，遵循业内最高标准。公司所有过量的包装材料都由德国专业的回收企业处理。高标准的回收行为让泰科奇成为行业内保护环境的引领者。</p>

*Online Resource 3: Text vignettes used in the main study in German*

<b>Vignette</b>
<p><b>Bitte lesen Sie sich den nachfolgenden Text aufmerksam durch!</b> Es handelt sich hier um fiktive Unternehmen.</p> <p>Power-Markt ist einer der größten nationalen Händler für Elektronik-Artikel. Die Kette ist in ganz Deutschland aktiv und bietet eine attraktive Auswahl an elektronischen Produkten, wie beispielsweise Digitalkameras, Heimkino-Systeme oder Computer und Laptops, an. Power-Markt bietet seine Produkte zu sehr marktfähigen Preisen an und zeichnet sich durch eine attraktive Gestaltung seiner Geschäfte und des Online-Shops aus und ist insgesamt sehr bekannt. Sie kaufen regelmäßig im örtlichen Laden sowie im Online-Shop von Power-Markt ein.</p> <p>Power-Markt arbeitet eng mit dem <i>deutschen/chinesischen</i> Zulieferer Techgy zusammen. Viele der Komponenten und Teile von Techgy werden in <i>Deutschland/China</i> produziert. Trotz der engen wirtschaftlichen Zusammenarbeit sind beide Firmen vollkommen unabhängig für das jeweils eigene operative Geschäft zuständig und teilen beispielsweise kein einheitliches Management.</p> <p>Power-Markt und der Zulieferer Techgy sind für ihre umfangreichen CSR-Kampagnen bekannt, die insbesondere auf den Schutz der Umwelt abzielen. Derartige Kampagnen und Initiativen sprechen die Folgen des unternehmerischen Handelns auf die Umwelt und auf die Gesellschaft an und betonen die Verantwortung der Unternehmen. Power-Markt und Techgy haben sich erst kürzlich dazu bekannt, ihr Engagement im Umweltschutz und dort insbesondere auf dem Gebiet des Recyclings noch stärker auszubauen.</p> <p>Heute lesen Sie Ihre tägliche Lokalzeitung und stoßen dabei auf folgenden Artikel im Wirtschaftsteil:</p>
<p><b>Techgy zeigt außerordentliches Engagement im Recycling (integrity manipulation)</b>  <b>Wirtschaft.</b> Der <i>deutsche/chinesische</i> Zulieferer Techgy berücksichtigt die höchsten Standards in Bereichen des Recyclings und ist in der gesamten Industrie führend. Das Unternehmen lässt alle ihre überschüssigen Verpackungsmaterialien durch professionelle Recycling-Unternehmen verwerten und beweist dadurch seine Vorreiterrolle in der Industrie in Fragen des Umweltschutzes.</p>
<p><b>Techgy in Umweltskandal verwickelt (hypocrisy manipulation)</b>  <b>Wirtschaft.</b> Der <i>deutsche/chinesische</i> Zulieferer Techgy wurde dabei beobachtet, große Mengen überschüssiges Verpackungsmaterial in einer eigentlich bereits überfüllten lokalen Mülldeponie illegal entsorgt zu haben. Die Überanspruchung der Deponie hat nun dazu geführt, dass Ablagerung aus der Deponie in die lokalen Wasserversorgungssysteme eingedrungen sind und diese dadurch verschmutzt wurden.</p>

*Online Resource 4: Text vignettes used in the first follow-up study in Afrikaans*

<b>Vignette</b>
<p><b>Lees asseblief die volgende teks met aandag deur!</b> Dit is fiktiewe maatskappye.</p> <p>Power-Mark is een van die grootste nasionale verkopers van elektroniese produkte. Die ketting maatskappye is in die hele Suid-Afrika aktief en bied 'n aantreklike keuse van elektroniese produkte, soos bevoorbeeld digitale kameras, tuis teater sisteme of rekenaar en laptops, aan. Omdat Power-Mark sy produkte vir baie bemerkbare pryse in 'n aantekiewe uitleg van sy besighede en in sy online-winkels aanbied, neig die winkels en sy online-shop daartoe, baie gewild te wees. Jy koop gereeld in die plaaslike winkel van Power-Mark as ook in sy online-winkel.</p> <p>Power-Mark werk nou met die inheemse <i>Suid-Afrikaanse/Chinese</i> verskaffer Techgy saam. Baie van die komponente en dele van Techgy word in Suid-Afrika produseer. Ten spyte van die sterk ekonomiese konneksies van albei maatskappye, werk hulle as individuele eenhede en deel nie gemeenskaplike bestuur nie en is onafhanklik verantwoordelik vir hulle aktiwiteite.</p> <p>Power-Mark en die verskaffer Techgy is wel bekend vir hulle grootskaalse CSR-veldtog, wat eksplisiet die omgewingsbewaring verbeter wil. Power-Mark en Techgy het kortliks hulle verpligting bekend gegee, die omgewingsbewaring te verbeter en daar spesifiek herwinning te ondersteun.</p>

Vandag lees jy jou plaaslike koerant en jy sien die volgende teks in die sake afdeling:

**Techgy is n bedryfsleier in herwinning (integrity manipulation)**

**Business.** Die *Suid-Afrikaanse/Chinese* verskaffer Techgy volg die hoogste standaard in herwinning. Die Maarskappy laat al die oorskoot verpakkings-materiaal deur professionele herwinnings-maatskappye verwyder en wys daardeur sy voorbeeld rol in die industrie in vrael van omgewingsbewaring.

**Techgy is in omgewingsskandaal betrokke (hypocrisy manipulation)**

**Business.** Die *Suid-Afrikaanse/Chinese* verskaffer Techgy het n groot deel van oorskoot materiaal vir verpakking onwettiglik in n oorvol plaaslike strotingsterrein in Suid-Afrika verwyder. Die oorbenuiting van die terrain het nou die plaaslike watervoorsiening ststeme besoedel.

### **3. Virtue Ethics Between East and West in Consumer Research: Review, Synthesis and Directions for Future Research**

**Authors:** Guli-Sanam Karimova, Nils Christian Hoffmann, Ludger Heidbrink, Stefan Hoffmann

**Abstract:**

This literature review systematically synthesizes studies that link consumer research to differences and similarities in virtue ethics between the East and the West, with a focus on early Chinese and ancient Greek virtue ethics. These two major traditions provide principles that guide consumer behavior and thus serve as a background to comparatively explain and evaluate the ethical nature of consumer behavior in the East and the West. The paper first covers Eastern and Western theoretical and normative approaches of virtue ethics in the field of consumer research. The subsequent systematic literature review then synthesizes empirical works in this field. Since only a few papers adopt a cross-cultural consumer research perspective, one of the main aims of this review is to encourage scholars to pursue both theoretical and empirical cross-cultural consumer research on virtue ethics. To this end, the paper closes by suggesting some fruitful directions for future research to stimulate this relatively under-researched area.

**Keywords:**

Ancient Greek virtue ethics, Cross-cultural consumer research, Early Chinese philosophy, East and West, Literature review, Virtue ethics

**Citation:**

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### 3.1. Introduction

The field of business ethics has recently devoted considerable conceptual and empirical research to consumer ethics (Barnett et al. 2005; Vitell 2003, 2009; Murphy 2017; Brinkmann and Peattie 2008; Holbrook 1994). Yet, the majority of these studies have focused primarily on ethics and consumer behavior without taking into account the influence of culture and moral values within the different traditions of ethics between the East and the West. This is surprising given that culture is “considered to be antecedent to the process of ethical reasoning” (Vitell et al. 2016, p. 148). Relatively few studies have examined consumer ethics from the perspective of comparative cross-cultural consumer research; the few exceptions include Belk et al. (2005), Devinney et al. (2010), Swaidan (2012), and Vitell et al. (2016).

In recent years, the field of consumer ethics has shown a growing interest in the application of the most prominent Western ethical theories, which include deontology, teleology, and virtue ethics (Barnett et al. 2005; Cafaro 2001; Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma 2014). The ethical paradigms of deontology and teleology are also dominant within consumer ethics research (Barnett et al. 2005; Schwartz 2017; Vitell 2003), whereas virtue ethics is more sparsely represented therein. This is a relevant gap in the literature, since there is a growing body of literature on consumer ethics, transformative consumer behavior, and subjective well-being (Hoffmann and Lee 2016; Mick et al. 2012) that could greatly benefit from considering virtue ethics and focusing on principles of the ‘good life’. The present article calls for scholars to conduct more research on the role of virtue ethics in consumer behavior. Additionally, this paper calls for more cross-cultural research as two major traditions of virtue ethics have developed in two different cultural areas: early Chinese virtue ethics and ancient Greek virtue ethics. These ethics have different implications for ethical consumer behavior in the East and in the West.

Re-actualizing both early Chinese and ancient Greek philosophy, Thompson (2010, p. 71) characterized virtues as “essentially about living the good and wise life; they are traits of character that require cultivation and practice and are a touchstone for human appeals for justice and harmony in human relationships”. To provide a common understanding of virtue ethics across different cultural traditions, we use a working definition of virtue ethics as a doctrine of morally right virtues and their practices, and this doctrine is interdependent on influences of historically embedded traditions within specific cultures. To set the stage for future research, this paper describes the state of the art of the application of virtue ethics in consumer research

and identifies gaps in the research. The literature review covers the major articles and sources at the intersection of virtue ethics, consumer ethics, and cross-cultural consumer research.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. We first provide an overview of the theoretical work on virtue ethics in consumer research in the East and the West. We explore the similarities and differences between early Chinese virtue ethics and ancient Greek virtue ethics in respect of the promoted virtues. We focus primarily on Confucian virtue ethics, because it is considered the most prominent tradition in Chinese virtue ethics. Subsequently, we systematically review the empirical studies in the field. Our literature review shows that while the majority of existing empirical studies in consumer research specifically focus on Confucianism in early Chinese virtue ethics, relatively few studies consider ancient Greek virtue ethics, and the two ethical traditions are rarely analyzed within the same study. Synthesizing the findings of our overview, we reveal several pertinent gaps in the literature, such as the lack of research on other important schools of virtue ethics (Plato, Epicurus, Stoicism, Daoism, Mohism etc.) or scholars' relative neglect of Aristotelian virtue ethics. Building on this, we suggest some potentially fruitful directions for future research. We call for studies to explore the cultural differences in the perception of virtues between the East and the West and the behavioral consequences of these differences.

## **3.2. State of the Art of Theoretical Works**

### **3.2.1. Ethical Consumption Versus Ethics of Consumption**

Two different streams of theoretical thinking on ethics and virtues dominate consumer research. The first is frequently called ethical consumption or political consumerism (Barnett et al. 2010; Hoffmann and Hutter 2012; Micheletti 2003; Sassatelli 2006). This stream examines the political engagement of consumers and other consumer activities that seek to promote ethical consumer patterns (e.g., buying fair-trade products, participating in boycotts) and sustainable lifestyles. Ethical consumption refers to the medium for moral and political action (rather than moral evaluation of consumer behavior with regard to notions of the 'good life') (Barnett et al. 2005).

The second research stream, the ethics of consumption (Barnett et al. 2005), emphasizes the moral obligations and moral values of individuals, such as autonomy, sustainability, freedom, and responsibility. It considers virtues in the context of ethics as the philosophical reflection and justification of morally right consumption. This stream involves reflection on the practice of the good life with the help of virtues that relate to consumption. As such, it includes the application of ethical theories on consumer behavior (Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma

2014, 2017; Barnett et al. 2005; Schwartz 2017; Cafaro 2001). While the literature review below chiefly builds on this second research stream, the two streams are interrelated in terms of their substantial contributions.

### 3.2.2. Virtue Ethics in Consumer Research

Virtue ethics is a relevant but often neglected aspect of the ethics of consumption. Although there are various traditions of virtue ethics across cultures, we have chosen Chinese and Greek virtue ethics for our cross-cultural approach as they are the most prominent traditions. In our review, we ask whether both traditions demand of consumers the same lists of virtues.

*Table 1. Theoretical discussion of virtue ethics in the East and the West in the context of consumption*

Authors	Context	Mentioned virtues	Theoretical contribution
<i>Western Focus</i>			
<b>Barnett et al. (2005)</b>	Aristotelian approach consists of identifying non-virtuous consumption with animality and false pleasures of the instincts.	Justice Compassion Tolerance Courage Patience Persistence Intelligence Imagination Creativity	Virtues foster the good life; appropriate consumption brings true satisfaction/pleasure from the reasonable life.
<b>Cafaro (2001)</b>	Ethical virtues of consumption have their justification in philosophy of Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, and Epicurus.	Pleasure Excellence Knowledge	Overconsumption harms the nature of the person and his/her character; ancient Greek philosophy contributes to development of environmental virtue and consumer ethics; virtues are necessary to rule the good life.
<b>Gambrel and Cafaro (2010)</b>	Aristotelian virtue ethics is considered to foster sustainable consumer behavior.	Simplicity Temperance Frugality Prudence Self-control Practical wisdom	Virtue ethics contributes to individual flourishing, societal flourishing, autonomy, acquisition of knowledge, living meaningfully, and preserving and protecting nonhuman beings.
<b>Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014, 2017)</b>	MacIntyre's neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics integrated in different domains of practices.	Constancy Humility Simplicity Generosity	Consumption virtues are based on the Aristotelian moderation of the doctrine of the mean for the reason of the practice of the excellence of standards.
<b>Palmer (2017)</b>	Aristotelian virtues in the context of community praxis.	Integrity Honesty	To promote consumers' virtues, it is important to integrate marketing ethics on a community level with producers and consumers.

*to be continued*

*Table 1. Theoretical discussion of virtue ethics in the East and the West in the context of consumption (continued)*



<b>Authors</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Mentioned virtues</b>	<b>Theoretical contribution</b>
<i>Eastern Focus</i>			
<b>Thomson (2010)</b>	Chinese indigenous virtues as well as classical virtues were influenced by Daoism, Confucianism.	Humaneness Benevolence Compassion Righteousness Propriety Filial piety Politeness Respectfulness Earnest Truthfulness Love	Traditional (indigenous) as well as classical virtues have impact on Chinese consumerism.
<b>Yau (1988)</b>	The interrelationships between Confucianism and traditional Chinese values.	Modesty Self-effacement Doing favors Integrity of character	Chinese cultural virtues and values are based on the analysis of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) value-oriented cultural model, which retain a connection to both Confucianism and Buddhism.
<i>Cross Comparison</i>			
<b>Lu Wang and Lin (2009)</b>	Traditional Chinese cultural values in the context of Confucianism, and their influence on consumers.	Thriftiness Frugality	The influence of Western lifestyles on consumers and increasing value for hedonism despite the high impact of traditional Chinese values.
<b>Provis (2016)</b>	Confucianism with relevance to theoretical reflection and wisdom of knowledge as basis for practice of virtues.	Compassion Harmony Reciprocity Filial piety Reliability Trustworthiness Willingness to learn Sensitivity to others	Confucianism and Aristotelianism have substantial similarities in ethics (e.g., the doctrine of the mean).
<b>Zhou (2006)</b>	Chinese philosophy of Confucius, Mozi, and Lao Tze build core ethical fundamentals for traditional Chinese consumer values and virtues.	Frugality Thriftiness Modesty	The global commodity system under capitalism predisposed the development of hedonic/materialistic values by consumers in both China and the West.

We discuss the origins of ancient Greek and early Chinese virtue ethics, exemplifying the most relevant virtues. We refer to the recent literature summarized in Table 1 to discuss the implications of such virtues for consumer research.

### 3.2.3. Ancient Greek Virtue Ethics and Consumption

Virtue ethics is among the oldest normative traditions in Western philosophy, with its roots in Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. According to virtue ethics, happiness is the end of human endeavors, and a virtuous character is ruled by practical goals that lead to a fulfilling and flourishing life. In order to assign characteristics to virtue ethics, Aristotle distinguished between “actions in accordance with virtue” (i.e., when someone merely acts in conformity with virtue, because a particular situation requires this, namely to act according to a virtue that she has learnt to perform on an occasion that requires a specific virtue) and “actions in a possession of virtue” (i.e., when someone acts virtuously or from virtue, because she has cultivated a particular virtue as a result of rational judgments) (Nicomachean Ethics, 1105a25–1105b15). In the latter, possessing the corresponding virtue requires the cultivation of virtue. This might imply that, for Aristotle, possessing virtue has priority in the definition of ethics, which depends on the cultivation of virtues to act for the right reason (see MacIntyre 2007, Chapter 12). As our review of the relevant literature demonstrates (Table 1), the majority of articles on virtue ethics from the perspective of Western philosophy are dedicated to Aristotle and his major works on ethics, namely, the ‘Nicomachean Ethics’ and the ‘Politics’. Aristotle’s virtue ethics is the dominant tradition within business ethics (Alzola 2012; Murphy 1999; Bragues 2013), and it serves as the main source for Western virtue-based consumer ethics (Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma 2014, 2017; Cafaro 2001; Gambrel and Cafaro 2010).

According to Aristotle, a virtue (from the Greek ἀρετή (*arête*)) is an excellent character trait, such as integrity, self-control, friendship, honesty, humility, and patience, that helps individuals in a community to achieve a good life, which is a life in accordance with reason (Nicomachean Ethics, 1116a–1118b). The virtues of character are based on dispositions. Aristotle differentiated between good actions and bad actions that influence the cultivation of virtues (Nicomachean Ethics, 1103a–1104a). Only by performing virtuous actions does the individual cultivate the virtues. From the perspective of Aristotelian ethics, the most important task of consumer ethics is to determine the purpose of consumption and its role in the search for the good life. Consumption cannot be the purpose in itself; by contrast, happiness may be considered the purpose: “So happiness appears to be something complete and self-sufficient, it being an end of our actions” (Nicomachean Ethics, 1097b20). Hence, consumption is only an instrumental good for happiness (e.g., to satisfy human needs in order to reach the supreme good). Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, 1102a5) emphasized that human happiness is “a certain activity of the soul in accordance with complete virtue”. Complete virtue is a distinctive trait of a human being. Complete virtue in relation to happiness is the activity of the soul, not of the

body (Nicomachean Ethics, 1102a5). Human reason can control passions, which animals cannot do. The practices of moral virtues are necessary to control passions.

Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, 1103a5) distinguished between intellectual virtues and moral virtues: “for we say that some of the virtues are intellectual, others are moral: wisdom, comprehension, and prudence being intellectual, liberality and moderation being moral”. Both moral and intellectual virtues belong to the rational part of the soul. Intellectual virtues are a combination of learning and nature. In Book 6 of the ‘Nicomachean Ethics’, Aristotle distinguished various kinds of intellectual virtues: theoretical wisdom (*sophia*); practical wisdom (e.g., prudence or *phronésis*); science (*epistêmê*); intuitive understanding (*nous*); and craft expertise (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 6, Chapters 3–5).

Aristotle further distinguished between ‘external goods’ and ‘internal goods’ that are related to happiness (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1, Chapter 8). He characterized happiness as virtuous life; however, happiness and virtuous life depend on some external goods (Nicomachean Ethics, 1099a30–1099b5): “Nonetheless, it manifestly requires external goods in addition, just as we said. For it is impossible or not easy for someone without equipment to do what is noble: many things are done through instruments, as it were—through friends, wealth, and political power”. That is, the attainment of some set of external goods, and having them in the right way, is necessary to live the good life. Nevertheless, happiness, according to Aristotle, cannot consist merely in ‘external goods’ such as wealth, power, and honor. Happiness cannot consist merely in the goods of the body such as health, good looks, and physical strength. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that, for Aristotle, consumption of external goods as an end in itself worsens the nature of human life (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1, Chapter 5). Internal goods are the goods of the soul; they concern the excellence of the soul. They are the goods that can be achieved by participating in the practice itself (e.g., if someone wants to be just or wants to consume justly, it is necessary for her to practice the virtue of justice by an activity, or by the practice of consumption).

Aristotle divides the soul into a rational and a nonrational part, which consist of three divisions or faculties (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1, Chapter 13, 1102a–b): a nutritive/plant-like (governing growth), appetitive (governing desires), and rational (governing reason) division. The first two are non-rational, but this does not make them bad. Furthermore, the appetitive division participates in reason insofar as it obeys reason. However, in a vicious person, the appetitive part does not obey reason. In this light, consumers ought to consume goods for the sake of happiness (*eudaimonia*) rather than consuming them for their own sake or stimulating

desires of the body not obedient to reason. Someone who stimulates desires of the body contrary or not obedient to reason is perceived as an insufficient person who lacks training in and control over the practice of deliberative choice by satisfying desires. Aristotle characterized deliberation, accompanied by reason and thought, as a prerequisite for making a ‘voluntary choice’ (Book 3, Chapter 3, 1121a15–20). Therefore, desires of the nonrational part of the soul are controllable with the help of deliberative choices. Consumers may satisfy bodily pleasures in moderation (e.g., a person who consumes alcohol in moderation decides on how much alcohol she can consume to not get drunk). The consequence of an inability to control the non-rational desires of the body may result in overconsumption, conspicuous consumption, or underconsumption. Prudence might help consumers to deliberate nobly about the manufacturing process behind consumer goods (e.g., to differentiate unethical and unsustainable consumer goods from ethical and sustainable ones), and what is advantageous for consumers about the sorts of goods conducive to living well.

Based on the classical Aristotelian approach, Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014, 2017) build on MacIntyre’s (2007) ‘goods-virtues-practices-institutions’ framework and Beabout’s (2012) concept of a ‘domain-relative practice’ to develop a framework for virtuous consumption practices. According to MacIntyre’s neo-Aristotelian ethics, virtues are crucial for the achievement of the good life in the domains of practices, individual life narratives, and communities. Virtues are traits of character to avoid the corruption of practices by the institutions in which they are housed (Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma 2014, 2017). MacIntyre (2007, p. 193f) explains that without the virtues of justice, courage, and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions. Indeed, virtues based in institutions are necessary for individuals to provide external goods (e.g., some individuals could not exercise virtues to become excellent violinists without institutions of education, or without enough money to consume necessary resources such as violins). Individuals fail to develop virtue in corrupt communities or institutions. Virtuous practice should be understood as a type of interrelationship between individuals and institutions.

As Cafaro (2001) states, if one extends ancient Greek philosophy to the realm of consumer ethics, the end of consumption ought to be the good life, and virtues should contribute to the development of excellence, personal skills, and society. Ancient philosophical reflection on the good is a precondition to practicing virtues that are necessary for the good life (Cafaro 2001; Gambrel and Cafaro 2010). Cafaro (2001) further notes that if consumers were to take up the practice of virtue ethics in the tradition of Aristotle, Plato, and the Stoics, it would lead to better outcomes on the macro level, such as reducing harmful effects on nature and decreasing the use

of resources needed to produce consumer goods, and would foster more environmentally-minded consumption. In the next section, we elaborate on the principal doctrines of Greek virtue ethics, such as the concept of the doctrine of the mean, the virtues of justice, liberality, moderation, truthfulness, and their application to consumer research in the theoretical literature.

### **Doctrine of the Mean**

Ethical virtues of character ought to follow the doctrine of the mean (from the Greek μεσότης (mesótēs)) (Nicomachean Ethics, 1138b20). A moral virtue of the mean is understood as the intermediate state between two extremes: the state of deficiency and the state of excess (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 2, Chapter 6). For example, liberality (or generosity) is a virtue between two vices—prodigality (the state of excess) and meanness (the state of deficiency) (1107b9–20); moderation is the mean between excess and deficiency—licentiousness and insensibility (1109a5–20); justice is the mean between doing injustice and suffering from the unjust acts of others (Book 5, Chapters 4–5).

In Aristotelian ethics, each entity has its own natural order. Aristotle develops the doctrine of the mean (or the golden mean) defining virtue as a type of excellent activity via some of our organs' functions (Nicomachean Ethics, 1106a5–10). Similarly, for individuals, virtue is that characteristic as “a result of which a human being becomes good and as a result of which he causes his own work to be done well” (Nicomachean Ethics, 1106a20–25). In this sense, the doctrine of the mean makes the goal right; it leads to the goal with the help of practical wisdom (Nicomachean Ethics, 1144a7–8).

In the next subsections, we discuss the virtues of moderation, justice, liberality, and truthfulness, as well as their relevance for the ethics of consumption with reference to the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean.

### **Moderation**

Consumers' overconsumption and wasting of resources are against the natural order. In possession of practical reason (Nicomachean Ethics, 1098a), individuals can acquire virtues that help them consume according to harmonic laws of nature—not too much and not too little—in order to fulfill the purpose of the good life. Against this background, ethical virtues of character ought to follow the doctrine of the mean (Nicomachean Ethics, 1138b20). As noted above, the virtue of the mean is situated between an excess of vices and a shortage of vices. When applying Aristotelian ethics to the consumption context, ethical consumers ought to cultivate the virtue of moderation (Nicomachean Ethics, 1107b). Moderation (or temperance)

is the mean between excess and deficiency—licentiousness and insensibility (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 7). Moderation regulates excess and deficiency by way of human pains and pleasures. Moderation concerns human behavior with regard to food, sex, and drink, or in relation to our animality and body.

Moderate consumers avoid both excess and deficiency by consuming the right proportions of goods. This enables them to control their own consumption behaviors rationally, and to fulfill their necessary human needs, regulating pleasures and pains for the reason of the telos (from the Greek *τέλος*, meaning ‘purpose’, ‘goal’) of the good life. Moderate consumers would benefit from consuming in a way that cares for their health. There is no exact calculation of the mean (e.g., by drinking and eating) in Aristotelian ethics. According to Aristotle, a moderate consumer should control her pleasures and pains so that she neither enjoy things that she should not, nor enjoys them to excess.

Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014) note some examples in the field of consumption that illustrate the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 2, Chapter 6). A non-virtuous character is a ground for overconsumption, and such a consumer would prefer material goods, gluttony, prodigality, wastefulness, and lavishness. In contrast, those who consume too little have a character that results in avarice, meanness, stinginess, etc. Virtue is relative to the particulars of the situation (Nicomachean Ethics, 1106a36–b7). A virtuous or proportionate amount of goods can vary from one person to the next. What might be considered ‘too much’ or ‘too little’ for some people may be seen as virtuous consumption for others. As Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014, p. 520) write: “To achieve excellence moderation needs the help of practical wisdom because the mean between the two extremes is not the same or every consumer. A proportionate—that is, virtuous—amount of food for an athlete would mean gluttony for others.” That is, some kinds of internal goods that Aristotle deemed to comprise the excellence of the soul (e.g., capabilities to perform excellence as professional activity) may result in different conceptions of proportionality for a virtuous life.

If consumption is to be understood as an ethical virtue, subjected to the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, then to consume ‘too little’ or ‘too much’ might be interpreted as a voluntary act of free will under conditions (e.g., satisfaction of basic needs) that do not prevent the person from living a good life and help to cultivate the self (or capabilities) with the help of virtues. However, if someone wants to act virtuously, she must first be socialized in a right community in order to learn the virtues and their practice. This kind of ‘moral socialization’ depends on, as previously mentioned, external goods. Furthermore, Aristotle emphasized that the attainment

of some external goods depends on luck to some extent, since these goods are external to our own free will (Nicomachean Ethics, 1099b). If someone has learned virtues but does not practice them, then she may voluntarily consume ‘too much’ or ‘too little’—i.e., resulting in excess and deficiency. However, if a person does not live in circumstances that enable her to learn virtues, or if she lacks a noble birth, then she will have restricted opportunities to live a virtuous life (Nicomachean Ethics, 1099a30–1099b5). In this case, ‘too little’ or ‘too much’ consumption may be the result of restricted freedom and a lack of external goods.

In Book 7, Chapter 9 of ‘Nicomachean Ethics’, Aristotle distinguished individuals with a high degree of self-restraint who do what is ‘right’ from those who are neither excessive nor defective. An ascetic person—such as the moderate person—does not act contrary to reason; however, an ascetic person is indifferent to base desires. In contrast, a moderate person can control base desires so that she will not be dictated by them. Unlike the moderate person, the indifference of an ascetic person results from the fact that she has no base desires and therefore the ‘doctrine of the mean’ is not necessary for her. For a monk or a nun, an ascetic life does not mean that he or she makes an immoral choice. Following Aristotle in Book 3, Chapter 12 of ‘Nicomachean Ethics’ (1119a5–10), the problem of asceticism is that it might be “not characteristically human” (1119a6–7), and those who deny all bodily pleasures and become insensible “would be far from human” (1119a9–10). It follows that the Aristotelian ethic of the ‘golden mean’ is adequate in the case of correcting ‘too little consumption’ (e.g., if parents do not feed their child or provide them with insufficient levels of consumption, the child can, as a result, develop the vice of ‘too little consumption’ which may—in turn—lead to health problems because the parents lack the means), but inadequate in the case of ‘asceticism’.

### **Liberality**

In Aristotle’s ‘Nicomachean Ethics’ (Book 4), particular significance is given to the theme of money, wealth and virtues, i.e. the mean concerned with giving and taking money. Liberality (or generosity) is a virtue between two vices – prodigality and stinginess (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 4, 1119b-1121b). Prodigality characterizes someone “who has one vice, namely, ruining his own resources” (Book 4, 1120a). Hence, such a person gives/spends too much money (Book 4, 1120b32-33): “he who spends in accord with his resources and on what he ought is liberal, whereas he who exceeds these is prodigal.” According to Aristotle, it follows that consumers who spend money excessively lack self-restraint and lavishly destruct their resources – they are prodigal and may have huge desire for luxuries.

Liberality characterizes someone who knows how to deal with wealth and money properly so that it belongs to “give to whom he ought than to take from whom he ought or to refrain from taking from whom he ought not” (Book 4, 1120a10-11); those consumers who give generously and take properly are virtuous in dealing with money and wealth. Liberality characterizes consumers who do not spend too much and not too little money. They follow the mean inasmuch as they equalize and balance it between too much and too little consumption. For a liberal consumer, lavishly spending money is an excess, because such a consumer will destroy his or her household and ruin a good life; as a result, he or she might not be able to satisfy his or her basic economic needs. Wasteful consumers may have little time for other important things, such as health, family or friendships, because spending money for consumption plays an important role in the lives of such excessive consumers. This sort of life contradicts the idea of a good life in the virtue ethics tradition. For a liberal consumer, spending too little money is a defect, because he or she will undersupply his or her household so that he or she will not be able to consume goods that are necessary for a good life.

A stingy consumer takes too much money from improper sources (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 4, 1121b20-30). Concretely, stinginess (or meanness) characterizes consumers who spend money for consumer goods in such a way that they become greedy and buy goods for little money or at the cheapest prices (e.g., at sales) for themselves so that they consequently have more goods and wealth by spending little money for unnecessary amounts of goods. Such consumers may take stolen and expensive gifts from non-virtuous people with the aim of acquiring more wealth; the liberal consumer would refrain from doing this. In contrast, the liberal consumer would spend money for services and goods, which might also contribute to the development of others’ virtues (e.g., donating money and supporting a talent when a musician performs a beautiful piece of music).

## **Justice**

The virtue of justice represents a middle ground between doing injustice and suffering from the unjust acts of others. Justice is respect for equality, understood as the proportionality of sorts, with fairness involving equitable distributions and the correction of what is inequitable. Someone who practices the virtue of justice must act proportionally, whereas injustice implies disproportionality by defect or excess (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 5, Chapter 5). Justice in the sense of equality, consists, in Aristotelian Ethics, of distributive justice and commutative justice. The first is exhibited in the act of ‘distributing’ certain matters in a proportional way between two or more persons. (Nicomachean Ethics, Book 5, Chapter 4). Distributive justice is



an attitude that encourages a just person not to take too much for himself and not to leave too little for others. It involves the distribution of things in proportion to merit.

Equality by commutative justice implies that the value of what is purchased (traded) is equal to the value of the compensation, such that no one is left worse off by the transaction (Nicomachean Ethics, 1132b20). Commutative justice ignores the rank of the persons involved. Here, equality is defined as the mean in terms of a purely arithmetical ratio between excess and defect, for “the just in transactions is a certain equality, and the unjust, a certain inequality, yet not in accord with the proportion just indicated but in accord with an arithmetic one” (Nicomachean Ethics, 1132a). Transferred to consumer ethics, commutative justice may imply that consumers should pay a just price<sup>2</sup> for consumer goods and get accustomed to a practice of consuming just proportions of consumer goods without harming the environment or overusing resources to produce consumer goods. Distributive justice may imply that certain consumer goods should be distributed by institutions or procedures (e.g., social standards, fair trade, free market, welfare state) according to the persons' efforts, needs, or merits.

### **Truthfulness**

In the ‘Nicomachean Ethics’ Aristotle mentioned the virtue of truthfulness (1108a20-25-1127b) as a mean between boastfulness and irony, which can be interpreted in marketing as integrity (Zakhem 2017). Truthfulness and integrity should be integrated in marketing strategies. Zakhem (2017) and Palmer (2017) mentioned virtues and Aristotelian virtue ethics in the context of advertising and marketing ethics, exemplifying the notion that marketing practices in a contemporary globalized commodity system lack ethics and virtues. Aristotle valued virtues as common goods (Politics, 1263a). However, as Palmer (2017) highlights, materialism dominates in a modern society. In pursuit of maximizing profits in business, marketing promotes consumers' excessive vices and an immoral character through manipulative advertising, unfair price politics etc.

Marketers may also influence consumer behavior when they themselves engage in virtuous practices or refrain from them. This influence can either be ethically positive when they promote consumer virtues (e.g., by advocating the virtue of moderation or truthfulness) and engage in ‘sustainable marketing’ (Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis 2012) or ethically negative when they foster vices, such as overconsumption and excessive consumption (Kilbourne et al.

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<sup>2</sup> The discussion about just prices is complex and calculations of just prices are almost impossible in practice, because too many aspects have to be considered. According to Cordero (1988), Meikle (1994), and Elegido (2015) justice in the Aristotelian tradition primarily implies using the principles of equality and fair exchange for price-building.

1997). Virtuous marketers are those who help consumers obtain what is best for them in terms of useful, pleasant goods, i.e. those goods that help consumers in their own search for a good life. By doing this, truthful marketers help consumers be wise and moderate.

### 3.2.4. Chinese Early Virtue Ethics and Consumption

In many Asian countries, the ethical evaluation of consumption originates from early Chinese virtue ethics. A large number of virtues played an important role in the history of early Chinese philosophy, including *rén* 仁 (humaneness or benevolence), *yì* 義 (righteousness), *lǐ* 禮 (propriety), *zhì* 智 (wisdom), *zhōng* 忠 (loyalty), *xiào* 孝 (filial piety) etc. (Van Norden 2007). Early Chinese philosophers – including Confucius, Mozi, and Laozi – influenced traditional cultural approaches to ethical consumption in China and other Asian countries, such as Singapore, Korea, Japan, and everywhere where the Chinese diaspora is. The most prominent philosopher of virtues in the East – also referred to as China’s Aristotle – was Confucius (or Kongzi). In the next subsection, we will focus on the most relevant virtues of Confucianism and their implications for the ethics of consumption.

#### Rén, Yì, Lǐ

The combination of the virtues around *rén*, *yì*, and *lǐ* build the core of Confucian virtue ethics (MacKinnon and Fiala 2014). Politeness, respectfulness, earnest, truthfulness, love and other virtues construct the synthesis of *rén*, *yì*, and *lǐ*.

Two central aspects of *rén* (humaneness, benevolence) are dutifulness and reciprocity (Cokelet 2016; Van Norden 2007). Self-restraining and returning to the rites constitute humaneness. However, in contrast to Western conceptions, the Confucian understanding of benevolence involves the relationships of *reciprocity* within the family and community rather than individual obligation or individual duties towards society. In the Analects of Confucius, *rén* refers to perfect virtue, considered the principle of “what I do not wish men to do to me, I also wish not to do to men” (Analects, V, xi, XV, xxiii). This principle of the Confucian ‘golden rule’ (Romar 2002) implies standards of behavior in the process of reflecting about the forthcoming consequences of decisions, which should also relate to reciprocal relationships in a society. This rule might also relate to the Confucian understanding of ‘harmony’ (Provis 2016). For consumers, the golden rule might imply that they ought to reflect about different aspects of consumption before consuming. Furthermore, they need to consider reciprocal effects of their consumer behavior and which responsibilities they need to take within social relationships in a community before buying consumer goods.

Furthermore, *rén* is not a single virtue but a category of virtues in itself. It comprises of a set of different virtues such as reliability, trustworthiness, willingness to learn, and sensitivity towards the meanings of others' actions (Cokelet 2016; Provis 2016; Thompson 2010). *Rén* also implies compassion towards others. A good heart is a characteristic of compassion. Only in a social context *rén* is of relevance. When applying the Confucian virtue of *rén* to the consumption context, consumption practices need to be embedded in a society, with emphatic moral feelings towards people in need of benevolence etc. (e.g., in the form of charity).

*Yì* (righteousness) is a virtue of doing the appropriate act. A person who has learned to apply the virtues of *rén*, *yì*, and *lǐ* is considered a noble man, entitled *jūnzǐ* (君子). For a noble man, the desirable meaning of the good life is 'way' (Dào 道) (Analects, XI, xix). The meaning of *Dào* (or *Tào*) relates to the Aristotelian eudaimonia (happiness). The meaning of the term 'way' in the sense of a path was extended to include the 'way' of doing something, especially the right way to live and to organize society (Van Norden 2007). Thompson (2010) illustrated the usage of the Confucian *jūnzǐ* in business ethics, exemplifying *jūnzǐ* as gentleman-leader. *Jūnzǐ* is a desirable moral model precisely to the extent that by following the *Dao*, a noble man progressively liberates himself from greed and enables himself to practice virtues, especially *rén* and *yì* (McCann 2010). The noble man should know how to behave so that inappropriate situations or negative outcomes are eliminated. Applying appropriate speech helps avoid offending others. The core of the virtue of *yì* is reflection about the appropriate action and the rightness of decisions (McCann 2010; Thompson 2010). For consumers, *yì* may imply that they ought to reflect about different aspects of consumption, such as what is the right aim of consumption and what is the right consumption.

*Lǐ* (propriety) is a virtue related to senses. By observing others, individuals realize what is wrong and what is right, and in this way, they learn to avoid wrong actions (McCann 2010). The most widespread translations of *lǐ* are rite, ritual, and propriety (Van Norden 2007). Individuals who behave in accordance with rituals choose the action that suits a certain situation. Social codes and rituals exemplify how individuals should behave. The virtue of *lǐ* unites knowledge and practice. For consumers, this virtue implies that they should learn through their observations of right and wrong consumption practices.

As *rén* does, *lǐ* constitutes its own category of virtues rather than being just a single virtue. Among other things, this category comprises *filial piety* (*xiào*), which is responsible for community-based engagement in social life (Provis 2016; Thompson 2010). The manifestation of *rén* is also a part of *lǐ* that can be exemplified with the virtue of social sensitivity (Provis

2016). Filial piety plays an important role in Confucian ethics. It symbolizes harmony, and it comprises the relationships with social reciprocity (Provis 2016; Thompson 2010). Compared to Western societies, which have a more individualistic cultural profile, most Eastern countries are influenced by Confucianism and display a more collectivistic profile. Filial piety is one important virtue that determines this collectivism. Filial piety requires respect for hierarchy in the family, the acceptance of authority as the virtuous order of family and society, and respect for the role of family in social harmony (Provis 2016). If consumers strived for filial piety, they would integrate reciprocity and respect for each other depending on hierarchies in market transactions and relationships with market actors. It may also imply support for family in understanding the supreme role of consumer goods and their distributive function according to hierarchies.

Yau (1988) considers the virtue *li* as ‘propriety’ and illustrates it with the principle of ‘doing favors’ as an interdependence in a form of social reciprocity. ‘Doing favors’ implies that honoring one another is a reciprocal behavior. For consumer behavior, it also implies that giving gifts and presents as well as reciprocal help to one another are socially desirable habits. The most important implication of ‘doing favors’ consists of abandoning contracts for economic transactions. Therefore, legal obligations would lead to the denial of moral virtues.

### **Frugality, Modesty and Moderate Consumption**

Frugality is considered a virtue that contrasts with luxury, which is considered a vice (Zhongzhi 2001, 2006). Thriftiness is a morally right virtue because it restricts human desires, while extravagance is considered a morally wrong character trait. Extravagance leads to an increase in desires whose fulfillment is not necessary – or is even harmful – for the good life. Luxury consumption is considered a form of evil. The principle of frugality in early Chinese philosophy is related to Aristotelian moderation. In the traditional interpretation of the role of consumption in China, the function of frugality is to control desires. Zhongzhi (2006) pinpoints that *moderate consumption* is a part of Chinese culture. However, in the course of the ongoing process of globalization, the consumption patterns of Chinese customers are steadily changing and adapting to Western standards of consumption. The historical development of both China and European countries before the rise of capitalism demonstrates that in both areas, the leading moral frameworks influenced the principles of thriftiness and modest consumption (Zhongzhi 2006). Religious views as well as the influence of philosophers determined moderate consumption as a moral norm in China. However, the rise of capitalism provoked changing values and virtues in both China and Western countries (Zhongzhi 2006).

Thompson (2010) examined Chinese values and virtues in the context of Chinese consumerism and business ethics. Thompson states that despite the dominance of traditional cultural Chinese values (or *indigenous* values, such as thrift and face), in the ‘habitus’ of routine consumption or in the field of business, there is proof of the presence of the roots of classical ethical virtues (e.g., Confucianism or Daoism) in the traditional virtues of Chinese consumers and in Chinese business fields. Thompson (2010) emphasized that there are differences between traditional virtues and classical virtues. The latter comprise the teachings of classical Chinese philosophers (Confucius etc.). Nonetheless, Thompson (2010) concludes that both traditional cultural virtues and classical virtues are still present and even dominant in marketing communication strategies directed towards consumers.

### **Traditional Cultural Values and Virtues**

The traditional cultural values mentioned by Thompson (2010) were formerly examined by Yau (1988) based on the value-orientation model of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). Five dimensions emphasize traditional cultural values of Chinese culture. Man-nature orientation involves ‘harmony with nature’ and ‘yuarn’ (karma). Yuarn has its roots in Buddhism and refers to predetermined relation with other things. For consumers, yuarn implies finding goods that elicit satisfaction.

Man-to-himself orientation involves the processes of education and socialization in the family, in which each member of the family should legitimate his own role towards others. Among these processes, ‘modesty’ and ‘self-effacement’ are the two most important virtues that should be cultivated beginning in childhood in a Chinese family.

Relational orientation comprises different subcategories, including respect for authority, interdependence, group orientation, and face (Sun et al. 2014). Face (face saving) (Yau 1988; Monkhouse et al. 2013), a unique part of cultural heritage in Chinese tradition, consists of two identities: *lian* and *mianzi*. *Lian* represents integrity of character within the norms of the society, whereas *mianzi* represents reputation in society in relation to achievements. *Lian* has a similar meaning to moral duties in a society. Having integrity is necessary for being a morally right person. However, if a person loses *lian*, he/she can never retrieve it again. In contrast, a lost reputation based on achievements could be easier to retrieve (Yau 1988).

Time orientation involves ‘continuity’ and ‘past-time orientation’, which imply for consumers respect for past traditions and history as well as brand loyalty. Personal-activity orientation

involves the ‘doctrine of the mean’ (Confucius), which implies regulation of passions to achieve inner harmony and ‘harmony with others’.

### **3.2.5. Comparing Greek and Chinese Virtues in Consumer Research**

Summarizing the results of the theoretical literature review on the different virtue ethics between the West and the East in consumer research leads to the conclusion that there is a comprehensive list of virtues that may stimulate consumer research. Aristotle distinguished between theoretical virtues and practical virtues. According to Aristotle, intellectual virtues have priority over moral virtues. Confucius, however, neither defined any priority nor did he distinguish between theoretical and practical virtues. Despite several striking differences, the Aristotelian doctrine of virtues overlaps with the Confucian doctrine of virtues in some respects. In both philosophies, the cultivation of character is the core of virtue ethics. In the Aristotelian tradition, the cultivation of virtues is necessary for the good life. Cultivation of the self and self-development (Provis 2016; Cokelet 2016) are important factors that characterize Confucian virtue ethics. Provis (2016) highlights the similarities by comparing the concept of the *mean*. In both traditions, the doctrine of the mean requires avoiding shortages and excesses. With regard to consumer ethics, this principle asks consumers to cultivate virtues that are necessary to avoid vices by consumption.

We will now consider the empirical studies that have applied Western and/or Eastern virtue ethics as their theoretical underpinning.

## **3.3. State of the Art of Empirical Research**

### **3.3.1. Research Methodology**

We conducted a systematic literature review of publications in peer-reviewed academic journals. Fink (2005, p.3) defines this method as a “systematic, explicit, and reproducible design for identifying, evaluating, and interpreting the existing body of recorded documents”.

In the first step of our analysis, we conducted a thorough keyword search in several online databases, such as Google Scholar, PhilPapers.org, JSTOR, SpringerLink, Web of Science, and EBSCOhost, to identify relevant literature on virtue ethics and consumer behavior. We used both single and combined keywords, such as ‘consumer behavior’ and ‘Aristotle’, ‘Confucianism’ or ‘Confucian virtues in consumer behavior’. The list of keywords was validated by two researchers separately and further refined.

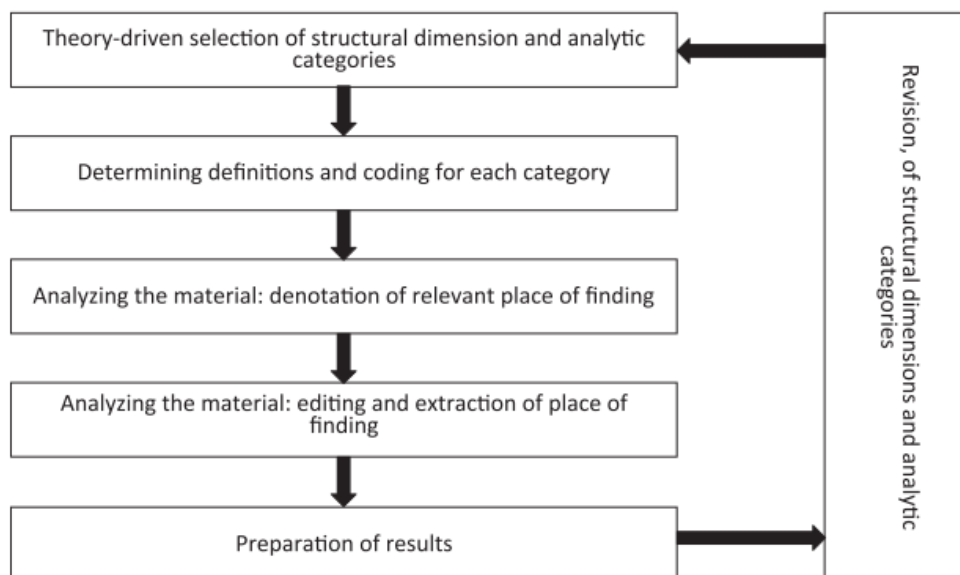
In the second step, we defined a set of mandatory requirements that every paper had to meet to be included in the final analysis. Those requirements stated the following:

1. The paper had to address consumer behavior and the influence of virtue ethics on it. Specifically, virtues in general or virtue ethics in particular needed to be addressed as a fundamental part of the research itself. Although at the heart of research on consumer behavior, we excluded articles that focused on consumers' choice of vice and virtue products (van den Bergh et al. 2011, van Doorn and Verhoef 2011), as those papers did not focus on individual virtues.
2. The paper had to be empirically oriented, either qualitative or quantitative.

Those adjustments led to a reduced final set of 18 articles from 12 journals. In the third step, we followed Zhu and Sarkis' (2016) flow process of a structured literature review, as shown in Figure 1. The application of this process led to a coding scheme that included 30 dimensions and categories.

In the following segment, we will analyze this material systematically and describe the characteristics, the thematic foci, the specific virtues used in the studies and the design of the studies. We start with studies on Western virtue ethics and then continue on to the articles on Eastern virtue ethics. This rigorous procedure helps to highlight differences and similarities between the application of Western and Eastern virtue ethics in empirical consumer research and to identify gaps in the current literature.

*Figure 1. A graphic flow process diagram of the structured literature review methodology used in this study (following Zhu and Sarkis 2016).*



### **3.3.2. Characteristics and Descriptive Analysis of the Studies**

Table 2 summarizes the authors, the publication year, the journal outlets and the research methods and shows information on the operationalization of the specific virtues, the sampling and further characteristics of the reviewed articles.

Of the 18 reviewed articles, the Journal of Business Ethics contains the most, with a total of five articles. Two articles were published in the Journal of Consumer Marketing. The other journals published one article each. Despite indicating diversity in this research field, the majority (16) of the journals are in the field of marketing, business research, and business ethics. Over the years, a slight trend towards an increasing amount of publications is observable, indicating growing interest in this specific field of research.



Table 2. Characteristics of the reviewed empirical studies

Authors	Journal	Quant./Qual.	Method of Analysis	Virtues as	Samples in	Sample Sizes	Cross-cultural	Research Teams	Citations
Ackerman et al. 2014	JBE	Quant.	(M)ANOVA	Theor. contr.	China	1440	No	Mixed	18
Chung and Pysarchik 2000	MIP	Mixed	SEM	Moderator	China	300	No	Eastern	47
Grappi et al. 2013	JBR	Quant.	Regression analysis	Moderator	Italy	280	No	Western	86
Jin and Kang 2011	JCM	Qual.	SEM	Ind. variables	China	747	No	Eastern	71
Koubaa et al. 2011	APJML	Quant.	SEM	Ind. variables	Singapore	370	No	Mixed	7
Kwong et al. 2016 <sup>a</sup>	Conf.	Quant.	CFA	Object of study	China	289	No	Eastern	0
Liu et al. 2010	JCM	Quant.	Regression analysis	Moderators	China	441	No	Eastern	26
Liu et al. 2015	JBE	Qual.	Content analysis	Object of study	China	45	No	Mixed	6
Monkhouse et al. 2012	IMR	Mixed	MGCFA, Regression	Ind. variables	East-Asia	70/8/443	Yes	Western	46
Monkhouse et al. 2013	APBR	Mixed	MGCFA	Object of study	East-Asia	443	Yes	Mixed	15
Park et al. 1998	PM	Mixed	ANOVA	Ind. variables	Korea, US	280/232	Yes	Eastern	98
Shanahan and Hyman 2003	JBE	Mixed	FA	Object of study	US	445	No	Western	96
Song and Kim 2016	JBE	Quant.	CFA, CART	Object of study	US	400	No	Western	0
Sun et al. 2011	APACR	Quant.	Regression analysis	Object of study	China	100	No	Mixed	12
Sun et al. 2014	IJCS	Quant.	SEM	Ind. variables	China	425	No	Western	12
Wan et al. 2009	JBE	Quant.	SEM	Moderators	China	300	No	Eastern	47
Williams et al. 2015	Appetite	Qual.	Content analysis	Object of study	Australia	33	No	Eastern	7
Yau et al. 1999	JICM	Qual.	Content analysis	Mediators	China	96	No	Eastern	74

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Kwong et al. (2016) was not published in a peer-reviewed journal but as a conference paper.

Abbreviations are as follows: JBE: Journal of Business Ethics; MIP: Marketing Intelligence & Planning; JBR: Journal of Business Research; JCM: Journal of Consumer Marketing; APJML: Asia-Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics; IMR: International Marketing Review; APBR: Asia Pacific Business Review; PM: Psychology & Marketing; APACR: Asia-Pacific Advances in Consumer Research; IJCS: International of Consumer Studies; JICM: Journal of International Consumer Marketing; (M)ANOVA; (multivariate) analysis of variance; SEM: structural equation modeling; MG/(C)FA: Multigroup/(confirmatory) factor analysis; CART: classification and regression tree; Ind.: Independent

Table 3. Empirical research on virtue ethics in the West and the East

Authors	Thematic focus	Virtue and values	True virtues <sup>1</sup>	Categories	Main findings
<b>Liu et al. 2015</b>	(Un-)ethical consumption	Guanxi Face-saving	✓ ✓	C-F; C-O	Development of a Framework for unethical consumption behavior (UCB) in relational Society. UCB deeply influenced by guanxi-oriented culture.
<b>Song and Kim 2016</b>	(Un-)ethical consumption	Frugality Empathy Fairness Wisdom Spirituality Empathy Courage Altruism Self-control Self-efficacy	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✗ ✗ ✗ ✗	A-M; A-O	Results indicate that the virtuous traits of self-efficacy, courage, and self-control, as well as the personality traits of openness and conscientiousness, predict socially responsible purchases and disposal behavior.
<b>Wan et al. 2009</b>	(Un-)ethical consumption	Face-saving Other-orientation	✓ ✓	C-F; C-C	Face consciousness increased materialism and risk aversion, thereby producing a favorable deontological judgment of pirated CDs. Face consciousness also has a direct effect on the amount of social benefits perceived in pirated CDs.
<b>Williams et al. 2015</b>	(Un-)ethical consumption	Public virtues (well-being of the community) Private virtues (self-interest)	✓ ✓	A-O	The findings reveal the manner in which virtue ethics affects foodways and highlights the contingent and challenging nature of practising ethical eating.
<b>Monkhouse et al. 2012</b>	Luxury consumption	Face-saving Group orientation	✓ ✓	C-F; C-C	Across all four markets, face-saving has the strongest influence on the conspicuous and hedonistic dimensions of luxury, meanwhile group orientation is the strongest predictor of the quality, extended self and exclusivity dimensions of luxury.
<b>Sun et al. 2011</b>	Luxury consumption	Face-saving Harmony	✓ ✓	C-F; C-C	Face positively influences the desire for luxury products through materialism; harmony moderates the relationship between materialism and the desire for luxury products in such a way that the relationship is stronger for those lower, rather than higher, in harmony.

Notes: <sup>1</sup> True virtues are those that are operationalized as virtues; they refer to the virtues mentioned in the theoretical part of the paper.

✓ indicates a virtue derived from the ethical doctrines of virtue ethics.

C: Confucianism, A: Aristotelianism; B: Buddhism; D: Daoism; -C: Cardinal virtues (Rén, Yì, Lì); -F: Concept of face; -FR: Frugality, modesty, and moderation; -M: Moderation; -J: Justice; -O: Other.

Table 3. Empirical research on virtue ethics in the West and the East (continued)

Authors	Thematic focus	Virtue and values	True virtues <sup>1</sup>	Categories	Main findings
<b>Sun et al. 2014</b>	Luxury consumption	Face-saving Harmony Guanxi	✓ ✓ ✓	C-F; C-C; C-O	Traditional Chinese cultural values (face, harmony, and guanxi) and political ideology (Maoism vs. Deng's theory) influenced materialistic aspirations and interest in luxury products.
<b>Liu et al. 2010</b>	Gift-giving behavior	Interdependent relationship Group orientation Hierarchy Conformity with norms Frugality Belief in fate Conformity with nature	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	C-FR; C-C; B; D	Traditional Chinese cultural values have significant moderating effects on gift-buying intention (accords with gift-giver's image) and purchase intention (accords with gift-receiver's image). Consumers with higher value orientation are more careful about a gift's consistency with self-image and/or the receiver's image.
<b>Park et al. 1998</b>	Gift-giving behavior	Face-saving Group conformity Altruism Self-interest Obligation	✓ ✓ ✗ ✗ ✗	C-F; C-C; C-O	Confucian collectivistic and individualistic values as significant in explaining differences in cross-cultural gift-giving.
<b>Yau et al. 1999</b>	Gift-giving behavior	Face-saving Reciprocity Guanxi	✓ ✓ ✓	C-F, C-C; C-O	Gift-giving among Hong Kong consumers is mediated by Chinese cultural values as face-saving, reciprocity, and guanxi.
<b>Kwong et al. 2016</b>	Scale development	Rén, Lǐ, Yì (Jūnzǐ)	✓	C-C	Jūnzǐ is completely measurable and manageable. It is a concept that can be objectively measured by a set of 16 scale-typed items to reflect the perceptions of Chinese consumers towards rén, yì, and lǐ exhibited by a firm.
<b>Monkhouse et al. 2013</b>	Scale development	Face-saving Humility Group orientation Hierarchy Reciprocity	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	C-F; C-C	Reciprocity has the relatively highest overall mean and lowest SD. Hierarchy also has similar results across the dataset. Meanwhile humility has the lowest overall mean value. Face concept is particularly salient for people of a Confucian culture. Group orientation is also important. However, there are national differences.

Notes: <sup>1</sup> True virtues are those that are operationalized as virtues; they refer to the virtues mentioned in the theoretical part of the paper.

✓ indicates a virtue derived from the ethical doctrines of virtue ethics.

C: Confucianism, A: Aristotelianism; B: Buddhism; D: Daoism; -C: Cardinal virtues (Rén, Yì, Lǐ); -F: Concept of face; -FR: Frugality, modesty, and moderation; -M: Moderation; -J: Justice; -O: Other.

*Table 3. Empirical research on virtue ethics in the West and the East (continued)*

Authors	Thematic focus	Virtue and values	True virtues <sup>1</sup>	Categories	Main findings
<b>Shanahan and Hyman 2003</b>	Scale development	Empathy	✓	A-O	Development of a virtue ethics scale with six stable factors. The six factors entail empathy, Protestant work ethic, piety, respect, reliability, and incorruptibility.
		Piety	✓		
		Reliability	✓		
		Respect	✓		
		Incorruptibility	✓		
		Protestant work ethic	✗		
<b>Ackermann et al. 2014</b>	Brand perception	Loyalty to superior	✓	C-O	Consumers perceive functional products of government-related business as more desirable and show greater preference and engagement towards them.
		Separation of response	✓		
		Meritocracy	✗		
<b>Chung and Pysarchik 2000</b>	Purchase intention	Face-saving	✓	C-F; C-C	Face-saving and group conformity were found to be significant predictors for domestic products, but not for imported products.
		Group conformity	✓		
<b>Grappi et al. 2013</b>	Consumer actions	Social Justice	✓	A-J; A-O	Negative consumer responses due to irresponsible corporate actions. Impact of felt emotions is regulated by consumers' virtues.
		Equality	✗		
		Helping	✗		
		Cooperation	✗		
<b>Jin and Kang 2011</b>	Purchase behavior	Face-saving	✓	C-F; C-C	Face-saving and group conformity did not directly affect purchase intention at all, and face-saving only influenced purchase intention indirectly via an increase in feelings toward US brand apparel.
		Group conformity	✓		
<b>Koubaa et al. 2011</b>	Purchase intention	Face-saving	✓	C-F; C-O; B;D	Confucianism has a strong impact on skin fairness and whitening. Buddhist values have moderate impact on skin smoothness and on willingness to buy skin smoothening and whitening cosmetics.
		Discipline	✓		
		Kindness	✓		
		Predestination	✓		
		Modesty	✓		
		Status	✗		
		Equity	✗		

Notes: <sup>1</sup> True virtues are those that are operationalized as virtues; they refer to the virtues mentioned in the theoretical part of the paper.

✓ indicates a virtue derived from the ethical doctrines of virtue ethics.

C: Confucianism, A: Aristotelianism; B: Buddhism; D: Daoism; -C: Cardinal virtues (Rén, Yì, Lǐ); -F: Concept of face; -FR: Frugality, modesty, and moderation; -M: Moderation; -J: Justice; -O: Other.

The first article was published in 1998, and the latest publication appeared in 2016. Of the 18 studies identified, half (9) applied a quantitative approach, four studies used a qualitative approach, and five studies used a mixed-methods approach. Only four articles addressed Western virtue ethics, and 14 articles focused on Eastern virtue ethics.

### **3.3.3. Thematic Foci and Fields of Application**

The reviewed articles cover a wide range of topics. (Un-)ethical consumption behavior, luxury consumption, gift-giving behavior, and scale development were the most prominent thematic foci of the articles. Table 3 summarizes the thematic foci, the specific virtues and the conceptual integration of the virtues of the 18 studies.

#### **(Un-)ethical Consumption**

Out of the four studies on (un-)ethical consumption behavior, two studies applied Aristotelean (Song and Kim 2016; Williams et al. 2015) and two applied Confucian (Wan et al. 2009; Liu et al. 2015) virtue ethics. The specific topics of the articles varied from sustainable purchase behavior to ethical food consumption and the purchase of counterfeit products.

In their recently published article, Song and Kim (2016) built upon the theory of virtue ethics and developed a decision tree predictive model to explore the driving factors of socially responsible purchase behavior. The authors differentiated between virtuous traits (as either ‘other-regarding virtues’ or ‘self-regarding virtues’) and personality traits, and their results showed that socially responsible consumption is predicted by the virtuous traits of self-efficacy, courage, and self-control and by the personality traits of openness and disposal behavior.

Williams et al. (2015) examined in their qualitative study with attendees at a Slow Food festival the experiences and underlying motives of consumers participating in ethical consumer projects. The authors reported evidence that both public (altruistic motivations) and private (personal wellbeing) virtues play a significant role in consumers’ behavior towards ethical consumption. Interestingly, both Western studies explicitly investigated the influence of virtuous traits on ethical consumption behavior.

Conversely, both Eastern studies focused on unethical consumption behavior. Wan et al. (2009) technically did not include the theory of virtue ethics in their theoretical framework when they investigated whether Chinese traditional values nourish the market for pirated CDs. However, they argue in their discussion that the definition of *group orientation* is indeed connected to Confucian virtue ethics.

In their qualitative study, Liu et al. (2015) developed a comprehensive framework for the developmental process of unethical consumer behavior. They showed that Chinese culture is deeply influenced by *guanxi*, understood as hierarchically structured social relationships, and that unethical consumer behavior in a relational society, such as China's society, cannot merely be considered a result of individualistic choice.

### **Luxury Consumption**

Sun et al. (2011, 2014) and Monkhouse et al. (2012) quantitatively investigated the effect of Chinese virtues on the consumption and the perception of luxury brands. Until now, no Western studies on luxury consumption were found. The virtues of *face saving*, *harmony*, *group orientation* and *guanxi* were found to influence the perception of luxurious products. Monkhouse et al. (2012) extended their research to 4 East Asian countries and found that their measures for both face saving and group orientation were measurement-invariant and significantly influenced consumers' perceptions of luxury across all four countries.

### **Gift-giving Behavior**

Yau et al. (1999) developed a model of Chinese cultural values and their influence on gift-giving. The concepts of reciprocity, face, and *guanxi* were found to form a construct of Chinese cultural values that influences (product) involvement, gift-giving occasions, and the symbolism of a gift. The topic of gift-giving behavior is very suitable to the application of Chinese virtues as it has major cultural implications. A Chinese gift-giver is *doing a favor* and thereby indebting the receiver, who is then challenged to reciprocate the favor. As gift giving is also a 'tool for enhancing interpersonal relationships' (Yau et al. 1999, p. 99), the concept of face and the concepts of *guanxi* are also highly relevant.

A different approach was used by Liu et al. (2010) in their study on the moderating effect of cultural values on decision-making and gift-giving. Drawing on self-congruity theory, the authors measured the impact of not only Confucian values (e.g., *group orientation*, *hierarchy*) but also Buddhist and Daoist values as the other two major influences on Chinese value systems. The study, which applied hierarchical regression, revealed significant moderating effects of all of these values on gift-giving intention.

As the only study that we found during our systematic search, Park (1998) comparatively investigated both Western and Eastern virtues simultaneously, operationalized as people's motivation for gift-giving. The author showed that the different motivations differ significantly between Korean and American participants and highlighted the complex differences between

Western and Eastern cultures. While Americans project rather individualistic characteristics, such as individual freedom and behavior regulation, which enable them to exert more control in gift-giving, Koreans feel stronger *face saving* and *group-conformity* motivations, which determine their gift-giving behavior.

### **Scale Developments**

Drawing on seminal conceptual works by Murphy (1999) and Solomon (1999), Shanahan and Hyman (2003) developed a virtue ethics scale in a Western context. The results from 445 US American respondents revealed six distinguishable factors, i.e., empathy, Protestant work ethics, piety, reliability, respect, and incorruptibility, which can be used to measure people's beliefs about the virtuous qualities of businesspeople. As the authors note in their conclusion, Eastern philosophy (i.e., Confucianism) seems to favor virtue ethics over Western ethical approaches, specifically deontology or utilitarianism, and further research about cross-cultural applications of the established scale is suggested (Shanahan and Hyman 2003). To the best of our knowledge, this appeal has still not been addressed by researchers, leaving space for future research.

Kwong et al. (2016) were one of two research groups that developed a scale that tries to measure Eastern virtue ethics in the business context. In their conference article, the authors developed a measurement for the concept of *jūnzǐ* that is embodied in the three Confucian cardinal virtues of *rén*, *yì*, and *lǐ*. While not directly observable, *jūnzǐ* is said to incorporate the three Confucian cardinal virtues and is relevant to all situations in human life. *Jūnzǐ* is defined and operationalized as a higher-level construct that is constructed by all three of the distinct but interrelated cardinal virtues, *rén*, *yì*, and *lǐ*. The authors showed in their results, with a sample of 289 Chinese consumers, that the concept of *jūnzǐ* is indeed measurable by a set of 16 scale-typed items and applicable to a business context. However, the researchers described and theorized *jūnzǐ* at the firm level, specifically, as possible virtues that can be exhibited by a firm and are then perceived by consumers. The individual effects of *jūnzǐ* and the three Confucian cardinal virtues on consumer behavior remain unknown.

Monkhouse et al. (2013) applied a different approach to establish a valid and reliable measurement instrument to measure Confucian values. The authors developed measures for certain Confucian values (face saving, humility, group orientation, hierarchy and reciprocity) and extended this framework to four East Asian countries (Japan, Vietnam, China and Singapore). The results from 400 respondents from big urban areas across those four countries revealed that East Asian consumers are highly influenced by those Confucian values and share

more similarities than discrepancies with respect to those values. As with Kwong et al. (2016), Monkhouse et al.'s (2013) scales are yet to be applied in large-scale quantitative studies on consumer behavior in Western cultures.

The other publications covered a wider range of topics, including the influences of Confucianism on brand perception (Ackermann et al. 2009), the influence of Confucian virtues on purchasing behavior (Chung and Pysarchik 2000; Jin and Kang 2011), and Western virtues and their impact on consumer actions, such as word-of-mouth or protest behavior (Grappi et al. 2013). Similar to the study of Park (1998), but with a different thematic focus, Koubaa et al. (2011) also added Buddhism and Daoism to Confucianism in their analysis. Using structural equation modeling, the authors investigated how ethnic (Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian) and national (Singaporean) cultures might interact to influence consumers' attitude towards skin beauty products and their willingness to buy skin care products

### **3.4. Review and Synthesis**

#### **3.4.1. Theoretical focus on Confucius and Aristotle**

In the theoretical part, our review demonstrated that the majority of research on Western virtue ethics and consumer behavior is dedicated to Aristotle, research on Eastern virtue ethics is largely dedicated to Confucius. However, there is less research concerning other virtue ethics traditions, such as those discussed by Plato, Epicurus, and Stoicism, from ancient Greek philosophy as well as virtue ethics such as Daoism and Mohism from early Chinese virtue ethics. Additionally, there are no research findings concerning the comparative normative frameworks of both virtue ethics (ancient Greek virtue ethics and Chinese early virtue ethics) from the perspective of cross-cultural consumer research. No study in comparative cross-cultural consumer research jointly examines historically embedded traditional virtues and the influence of classical virtue ethics on them.

#### **3.4.2. Lack of Empirical Research on Virtue Ethics and Consumer Behavior**

Our review revealed a substantive lack of empirical research about the influence of virtue ethics on consumer behavior. While there are some studies on Eastern virtue ethics, we could identify only four articles in the area of consumer behavior that addressed Western virtue ethics. We argue that there are several reasons for this shortage of literature:

First, several of the empirical articles on Western virtue ethics are about scale developments. This could be an indicator that the research field is in itself in a very early stage, as researchers are still trying to find ways to operationalize virtue ethics for later use in empirical studies. This



observation is very much in line with Vitell's (2003) description of early research on consumer ethics. In analogy to the early empirical research on consumer ethics, the reviewed studies on Western virtue ethics in consumer research are still at this stage of development.

Second, the lack of empirical research on the influence of virtue ethics on consumer behavior in a Western context could also be explained by the predominant occurrence of deontological and utilitarian ethics in Western consumer ethics. This is rooted both in the society itself and also in a considerable negligence of this particular research stream. Chinese society is much more influenced by Confucian virtues, as they are essential determinants of Chinese culture and Chinese religion. Aristotelean virtues are not that strongly embedded into Western culture and religion. However, some virtues (the doctrine of the mean, moderation, frugality) are indeed relevant for analyzing consumer behavior in both Western and Eastern societies.

Third, most of the current empirical literature on virtue ethics is focused not on consumer behavior but on marketing management, business ethics or organizational science. The virtues themselves are often operationalized not as moderators or as independent variables but as conceptual or theoretical underpinnings of specific research questions.

Fourth, it should be emphasized that empirical research in the field of virtue ethics has its limits (Alzola 2012). The operationalization of virtues is open to criticism and several factors may reveal that. These include the substantial nature of virtues (such as their complexity and the difficulty in relation to observational methods), their dependence on an external environment (such as society), as well as the motives, desires and emotions of individuals who perform virtuous acts. Two different approaches to the notion and measures of virtue can be distinguished (Alzola 2015): a reductive and a non-reductive approach. The reductive approach entails developing dispositions to act according to moral principles. In the reductive account, virtues are merely behavioral dispositions to act in conformity with certain rules of action. This method has been criticized for being based on an inappropriate and inaccurate understanding of the concept of virtues, which separates virtues from a person's character (Alzola 2015). The method fails to capture the fundamental concept of virtues in the virtue ethics tradition, i.e. the meaning of virtue as an excellence of character. Regarding the operationalization and the possibility to measure virtues empirically, the reductive approach poses several problems that can be illustrated by considering the differences between being virtuous and acting like a virtuous person. For instance, a consumer who acts generously and lavishly, and who tips the waiter at a restaurant, is considered to act virtuously. Empirical researchers may measure the consumers' tipping behavior and may infer that he or she is a virtuous character, because he or

she exhibits virtuous behavior. However, this measurement does not capture the person's character. That which constitutes an act of virtue, exemplified by the act of generosity, is “the motive from which it is done, that is, the intellectual, emotional, and motivational qualities of the person, besides his or her behavior” (Alzola 2015, p. 305). The consumer in the restaurant might demonstrate virtuous behavior without being virtuous, since his or her behavior may be driven by non-virtuous motivations, such as trying to impress his or her date, and not by Aristotelian dimensions of virtue. Therefore, the non-reductive approach is more suitable to measure virtues. Here, virtue and character are treated holistically, i.e. without the separation of virtue from character that should involve intellectual, emotional, motivational, and behavioral components (Alzola 2015, p. 293). It follows that virtues for empirical research should be operationalized as traits of character that cannot be reduced to mere behavioral dispositions.

Our literature review concerning empirical consumer research underlines Alzola's (2015) observation that the majority of the researchers follow the reductive approach when trying to operationalize virtues. In order to accurately account for the fundamentals of the traditions regarding virtue ethics, researchers must go beyond merely measuring observed behavior and account for the differences between inner and outer states.

### **3.5. Suggestions for the Future**

#### **3.5.1. Propositions for Future Theoretical Research**

The following paragraph will outline several propositions for future theoretical research on virtue ethics in consumer research between Eastern and Western cultures. First, there are positions and research findings in consumer ethics that examine both virtue ethics and deontological ethics and teleology in the tradition of Western philosophical ethics (Barnett et al. 2005; Schwartz 2017). Combining different types of ethical reasoning and theories on the virtue ethics of the East and the West and applying these theories on consumer behavior would lead to a more systematic comparison of differences and similarities in the moral reasoning of Eastern and Western consumers in normative as well as descriptive ethics research.

Second, a combination of different research fields such as marketing ethics and consumer ethics would lead to a more systematic approach to fostering sustainable consumer behavior in a globalized economy. Economic globalization influences the change in cultural values and virtues. The similarities of virtues derived from both traditions may imply universal values for consumers in the East and the West, which might help develop virtue-based global marketing strategies across cultures.

Third, research should combine the classical virtues derived from the ethical concepts of philosophers and the traditional virtues of consumers in the East and the West. Against this background, and based on how we define virtue ethics in our introduction, it is important to stimulate consumer research that tries to combine historically embedded virtues across cultures and virtue ethics.

Fourth, to identify exact differences and similarities between Eastern and Western virtue ethics, virtues, and their relationships to consumers, it seems important to combine normative with descriptive findings. This helps reveal descriptive explanations if the virtues from a normative standpoint are followed across Eastern and Western cultures. These future research findings might enrich our understanding of consumer behavior in the context of globalization and the impact of it on the changes in consumer values and virtues across cultures.

Fifth, Aristotle distinguished between theoretical virtues and practical virtues. According to Aristotle, intellectual virtues have priority over moral virtues. Confucius, however, neither defined any priority nor did he distinguish between theoretical and practical virtues. It would be interesting to consider how different priorities of virtues would influence consumer behavior.

### **3.5.2. Propositions for Future Empirical Research**

The following paragraph will outline several propositions for future research on cross-cultural-virtue ethics in consumer research between Western and Eastern cultures. First, research on virtue ethics has thus far predominantly focused on business ethics, organizational research, and marketing management. As this review indicates, literature on consumer behavior is very scarce. We strongly encourage researchers to pursue projects that aim at identifying Western and Eastern virtues in the context of consumer behavior.

Second, our analysis showed that out of the 18 reviews papers, only three applied a cross-cultural approach. Thorough cross-cultural research needs to be conducted. The study of Park (1998) illustrates a prime example for further research. With a cross-cultural sample from Korea and the U.S., Park (1998) showed that the concept of face saving exerts its influence on gift-giving behavior only in Korea and not in the U.S. Despite the seniority of this article, this comparative approach did not initiate much further consumer research. We argue that it is of crucial importance to perform cross-cultural comparative studies to improve our understanding of cross-cultural research in marketing. In this domain, we strongly suggest applying rigorous methods of ensuring cross-cultural equivalence and measurement invariance (for a substantive review of the literature on measurement invariance, see Vandenberg and Lance 2000).

Third, complementary to cross-cultural research, scholars should engage in comparative philosophical research and analyze both Western and Eastern traditions of virtue ethics. Using cultural priming approaches (Zou et al. 2008), researchers could investigate culture-specific behaviors in specific consumption scenarios.

Fourth, virtue ethics is applicable to very specific areas of consumer research. Many studies on anti-consumption practices (Black and Cherrier 2010) mention Aristotle, and specifically the virtue of moderation (or the ‘golden mean’), as theoretical underpinnings, but there is hardly any qualitative or quantitative research that tries to empirically test the direct influence of virtues and virtue ethics on consumption behavior. Conceptual works on Western virtue ethics and its application in certain domains of consumer behavior, such as more conscious consumption (Gambrel and Cafaro 2010), or social movements such as the ‘Voluntary Simplicity Movement’ (Alexander and Ussher 2012), could provide a meaningful basis for further research for both Western and Eastern scholars, specifically given the relative absence of studies on anti-consumption in Eastern societies. Given the theoretical resemblances between Western virtues of moderation and Eastern concepts of frugality, modesty and moderate consumption (see 2.4.), anti-consumption research could benefit significantly from integrating virtue ethics in empirical studies.

Fifth, complementing the last suggestion, virtue ethics could prove particularly relevant in transformative consumer research and consumer- and societal wellbeing (Davis and Pechmann 2013) because in Aristotelian tradition, the cultivation of virtues is necessary for the good life, which increases wellbeing. Also in Confucianism, the virtue of frugality and the concept of moderation and moderate consumption (Zhongzhi 2006) could foster further research on transformative consumer research, unlocking potential for cross-cultural research.

Sixth, to foster cross-cultural collaboration and competencies, and to account for cultural heterogeneity, we strongly advise scholars to seek and build research teams that consist of researchers from diverse cultural backgrounds. This cross-cultural teambuilding strongly enhances cross-cultural research as it brings together culture-specific insights, avoids stereotyping and increases sensitivity to the object of study (see Holzmueller et al. 2006 for a review on methodological and analytical issues in cross-cultural research).

Seventh, as stated in the theoretical part of this review, the differentiation between the ethics of consumption and ethical consumption is rarely addressed in the empirical papers we found. This is a substantive gap in the recent literature that should be filled in the next few years from both a theoretical and an empirical point of view.

### 3.6. Conclusion

The aim of this literature review consisted of identifying gaps in consumer research with a focus on virtue ethics in the East and the West, particularly concerning similarities and differences in virtues derived from ethical doctrines of early Chinese virtue ethics and ancient Greek virtue ethics as well as culturally embedded traditional virtues of consumers in both cultures. The gaps identified in both the normative and empirical literature reviews will hopefully encourage researchers in the business ethics field to pursue new research findings in the future.

The interdisciplinary review of studies on the influence of virtue ethics in consumer research revealed a substantive lack of empirical research, specifically research that applied Western virtue ethics. There is an urgent need for scholars to fill this void, as the integration of virtue ethics can improve our understanding of cross-cultural consumer behavior. Eastern and Western virtue ethics share similarities that are of fundamental interest in certain areas of consumer research, such as anti-consumption or simplicity movements.

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#### **4. I Will Follow You into the Dark: How Unethical Brands Make Consumers Lie**

**Author:** Nils Christian Hoffmann

This paper analyzes how consumers react to corporate lies and how those lies might even contaminate consumers to lie themselves. Across two pre-tests and three experimental studies that manipulate the moral behavior of different brands (Adidas, Nike, and Patagonia), we show that consumers feel disappointment and contempt in response to corporate lies. Study 1 shows that consumers alter their moral standards and engage in lying themselves if they have high knowledge of the immoral brand (Study 1). Study 2a and Study 2b introduce consumers' psychological match between the brand and themselves (i.e., self-brand match) as a crucial moderator for the process of moral contagion. Consumers' self-brand match strengthens their emotional responses to corporate lies and distinguishes between consumers who are contaminated by corporate lies and those who are not. The unique psychological characteristics of disappointment and contempt play a major role in explaining how corporate lies affect consumers' lying behavior. We also provide implications for future research and for managers.

**Keywords:**

Corporate lies, Moral contagion, Consumer emotions, Self-brand match

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#### **4.1. Introduction**

Corporate lies are ubiquitous in today's marketplace (Soltani, 2014). They manifest in various forms and range from scandals on a national level, such as the Chinese milk scandal (Ghazi-Tehrani & Pontell, 2015), to scandals that affect stakeholders from all around the globe, such as the Volkswagen emission scandal in 2015 (Siano et al., 2017). What the abovementioned incidents have in common is that they severely impacted both individuals and the corporations that were responsible for the scandals. For example, in the aftermath of the Chinese milk scandal, six infants died due to the contaminated milk they were fed and another 300,000 fell severely ill. The Volkswagen emission scandal did not pose a threat to life and limb of the victims, but Volkswagen's customers nevertheless faced a significant loss of monetary value of their purchases. For the corporations that were responsible for the scandals, the immoral behavior had consequences too, as many Chinese consumers lost their trust in firms in the dairy sector and several firms went bankrupt due to the sharp decline in demand for their products (Pei et al., 2011). The German car manufacturers that were involved in the emission scandal faced severe criticism and losses in reputation in addition to harsh financial penalties from governments around the globe (Li et al., 2018). Hence, immoral actions of corporations pose major threats to both the corporations themselves and to their customers. However, corporate immorality might evoke a third consequence that has been largely neglected in research thus far: the contaminating effect of unethical corporate behavior on the (im-)moral behavior of individuals. The objective of this paper is to shed light on this third consequence and to report results of a series of experiments that investigate how corporate lies affect the lying behavior of individuals—a process that can be labeled as contagious unethicality (Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009a).

Scholars from business ethics, consumer psychology, and marketing have just recently started to address this issue by analyzing psychological and behavioral consequences of corporate misbehavior. The concept of “marketplace morality” has evolved in recent years and is defined as “applying to all issues relating to the norms, values, practices, identities, institutions and psychological mechanisms and responses to interactions perceived by a consumer as relevant to questions of right and wrong within a marketplace or market exchange” (Campbell & Winterich, 2018, p. 169). Within a marketplace, consumers and corporations constantly interact and their actions often involve morally relevant issues. Research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) has brought about an increase in publications in the last decades and this increase in publications shows that the morality of corporate actions has gained strong relevance for consumer research (Hoffmann, Frederick, & Schwartz, 2014). Scholars generally agree that

consumers demand corporations to behave responsibly toward the society, the environment, and other stakeholders. However, if CSR is preached, but not practiced by the corporations, and if consumers are aware of this word-deed misalignment (Effron et al., 2018), the consumers perceive the corporations as being hypocritical. As a result, the consumers lower their reputation ratings and even intend to boycott the firms that breached their promises (Hoffmann et al., 2020). A vast body of literature analyzes how consumers react to corporate wrongdoings and shows that consumers reprise moral shortcomings of corporations with consumer activism (Antonetti & Maklan, 2018), such as boycotts or anti-brand activism (Grappi et al., 2013, Sweetin et al., 2013), to express their discomfort and disapproval. Less research, however, has analyzed if corporate immorality has the power to turn law-abiding citizens into immoral agents themselves.

Specifically, limited research has analyzed under which circumstances consumers might engage in immoral behaviors to take vengeance for the initial immorality and steer their anger and frustration toward the corporations by committing immoral or illegal actions, through injurious falsehoods (Brinkmann, 2005), or by seeking revenge in imitating the corporations' immoral actions. Initial research from psychology identified mechanisms that allow unethical behavior of individuals, such as lying, to be transmitted to other individuals and showed that the violation of explicit norms (e.g., lying, dishonesty, etc.) can contaminate the moral compass of others and lead to more immoral behavior (Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009). However, research has remained silent on the question if corporate lies can initiate the contamination of immorality as well. Moreover, scholars still do not understand the psychological process that explains when and how immoral behavior of corporations influences the morality of consumers negatively and the boundary conditions of this process are still unclear.

This paper aims to fill this gap and analyzes how consumers react to corporate lies. Moreover, this paper specifically investigates if and how corporate lies lead to an increase in individuals' lying behavior, thereby contaminating the individuals' moral beliefs and spreading immoral behavior further. Building on recent literature on contagious immorality (Gino, Gu, & Zhong, 2009b) and corporate immorality (Newman & Brucks, 2018), we investigate how consumers react emotionally and behaviorally to corporate lies and show that brand knowledge (Study 1) and consumers' psychological match with the transgressor (Study 2a and Study 2b) are major drivers of individuals' lying behavior.

## **4.2. Literature Review and Theoretical Background**

### **4.2.1 Contagion of Immorality**

The contamination of unethical behaviors is a fundamental issue because it limits the proper operation of the society and the economy (Gino et al., 2009b). Research on moral contagion addresses the question of "whether unethical behavior such as cheating, stealing or dishonesty can be contagious" (Gino et al., 2009a, p. 397). In recent years, academics have proposed several mechanisms that explain the contamination effect of others' immoral behavior on the moral behavior of observing individuals. For example, Allingham and Sandmo (1972) and Becker (1968) propose a cost-benefit approach (i.e., the rational crime theory) that explains why certain individuals copy the immoral behavior of others if the immoral behaviors are not punished or remain undetected. The observation that immoral behavior is not penalized can change the perceived likelihood of being caught among those who observe the immoral behavior, increasing the benefits of immoral actions. Hence, individuals observe relatively beneficial immoral behavior and recalculate their internal ratio between costs and benefits and engage in the same immoral behavior themselves (see Gino et al., 2009a for a detailed review). For example, if individuals observe that someone lies and that the liar personally benefits from it, the individuals might have the impression that lying increases their personal benefit and that it is relatively cost-effective, and therefore copy this behavior and lie in an appropriate situation themselves. A second theoretical approach is based on the notion that individuals change their understanding of specific social norms that are related to (im-)moral actions when they observe immoral behaviors. Through social learning (Cialdini et al., 1990, 1998) or observational learning (Bandura, 1965) processes, individuals may change their understanding of certain norms and, contingent on the social context of the observation, either adhere to the beliefs they hold or change their beliefs such that their changed beliefs fit the observed descriptive norm (Gino et al., 2009a).

### **4.2.2 Corporate Immorality as Moral Lesion**

Most of the existing literature on contagious unethicality focuses on individual behavior contaminating others' individual behavior. Corporate immorality's contamination effect on the general moral behavior of consumers remains largely unexplored. Corporate immorality is defined as "scandals and other irresponsible behaviors, such as environmental pollution or abuses of human rights" (Voliotis, Vlachos, & Epitropaki, 2016, p. 1) and explicitly includes corporate lying and deception (Carson, 2003). Among very few others, Newman and Brucks (2018) investigated how corporate immorality influences the general morality of individuals.

The authors assumed that consumers who strongly identify with a company, perceive actions as if they had taken them themselves (Newman & Brucks, 2018). The authors observed that a company's positive CSR behavior can later license immoral behavior of consumers if the consumers identify closely with the brand. Furthermore, the authors recognized that corporate immorality causes consumers to act more morally during a subsequent action, a process labeled as vicarious moral cleansing. Conversely, other scholars have highlighted how corporate wrongdoings affect consumers' morally dubious actions, such as intentions for unethical punishment (Rotman, Khamitov, & Connors, 2018) or consumer revenge (Romani, Grappi, & Zarantonello, 2015), to restore justice (Grégoire, Laufer, & Tripp, 2010). In this stream of literature, consumers, fueled by their negative emotional distress, are even motivated to engage in anti-brand activism or aggressive actions within the marketplace. Overall, these studies show that the immoral behavior of companies can indeed lead to a contagion of immorality and motivates individuals to behave badly as well.

However, the literature lacks approaches that try to determine how the psychological and emotional processes concerning the contamination of corporate immorality affect the immorality of consumers. Specifically, scholars have not systematically analyzed the role of consumers' emotional reactions as a key variable to determine whether consumers are contaminated by corporate immorality or not.

#### **4.2.3 Consumers' Emotional Reactions to Corporate Immorality**

The idea of an ideal marketplace involves transactions and relationships between companies and consumers that are fair and acceptable to both sides (Komarova, Haws, & Bearden, 2018). However, mutually undesirable behavior occurs constantly in real life. Recent research on corporate immorality indicates that consumers react emotionally to immoral corporate behavior and show moral outrage (Antonetti & Maklan, 2018), feel contempt (Xie & Bagozzi, 2019; Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2013), are disappointed (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004), or intend to punish the corporation for their wrongdoings (Lindemeier, Schleier, & Pricl, 2012; Sweetin et al., 2013). Theoretical studies in marketing highlight the importance of consumer emotions, including disappointment (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 1999; Tsiras & Mittal, 2000) and contempt (Grappi et al., 2013; Xie & Bagozzi, 2019). Moreover, these studies show that negative emotions play a pivotal role in explaining consumers' reactions to negative market outcomes, including immoral behaviors of corporations. In this study, we specifically focus on the negative emotions of disappointment and contempt since scholars have studied both emotions extensively in the context of marketing and corporate immorality and because these two

negative emotions have unique behavioral outcomes. Both emotions share overlaps in their characteristics, as individuals generally experience these emotions if they observe negative or immoral behaviors and then compare the observed behaviors to their own norms and values (Getty, 2015). However, these two negative emotions can and should be distinguished with regard to their “appraisals, antecedent events, and their probable behavioral responses” (Ekman, 1992, p.170).

#### **4.2.4 Antecedents and Behavioral Consequences of Disappointment and Contempt**

Disappointment is considered a direct result of a disconfirmation of individuals’ expectations (Zeelenberg et al, 2000). Individuals, therefore, experience disappointment if they hold certain expectations toward someone and these expectations are disconfirmed and violated (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004). The feeling of disappointment can be differentiated in three kinds of disappointment (Getty, 2015). An individual experiences disappointment for the self if he or she does not live up to his or her own expectations of the self (van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002). Disappointment for others, however, mirrors an individual's emotional responses toward the violation of others’ expectations, such as when a friend expects himself or herself to excel at a task, but fails (Carroll et al., 2007; Petrocelli & Smith, 2005). The third kind of disappointment, disappointment in others, is experienced when individuals fail to meet the expectations others hold of them (De Cremer, 2006; Patrick & Gibbs, 2012). For example, consumers experience this third kind of disappointment if they expect corporations to be honest and sincere but discover that the corporations lied to them. Research shows that disappointment can lead to several behavioral tendencies, such as disciplinary actions that aim at correcting the wrong behaviors (Getty, 2015) or recuperative responses (De Cremer, 2006), to make up for the disappointment the individuals felt.

Contempt, on the other hand, is often felt when individuals experience a violation of a certain code within a community (Rozin et al., 1999) or if someone violates a moral code and is therefore regarded as morally inferior (Ekman, 1994). If others interfere with our desired outcome and hinder us from achieving our goals or outcomes, we react by feeling contempt (Ekman, 1994). Contempt is strongly associated with feelings of moral or intellectual superiority (Getty, 2015) and leads to distinctive behavioral outcomes, such as avoidance and withdrawal from the violator or the social group (Roseman, 1996) in order to restore the ability to achieve our own goals. For example, if a person or an institution lies to us, we perceive this lying behavior as a violation of the moral code of honesty and feel contempt because a societal code that we value has been violated. Taken as a whole, we argue that corporate immorality



fuels consumers' emotional responses and increases their disappointment and contempt. Hence, we hypothesize:

*H1a: Corporate lies (vs. corporate morality) leads to higher disappointment.*

*H1b: Corporate lies (vs. corporate morality) leads to higher contempt.*

Furthermore, we argue that due to the negative emotional responses, corporate immorality contaminates consumers, and the consumers react by engaging in the same immoral behavior themselves. We differentiate between the unique behavioral outcomes of the two analyzed emotions and argue that consumers who are disappointed try to compensate for their felt disappointment by taking disciplinary action and engaging in the same immoral behavior themselves, ultimately leading to an increase in immorality among consumers who feel disappointed by corporate immorality. Conversely, due to the unique nature of the negative emotion of contempt, we argue that consumers who feel contempt after a corporation had violated a certain norm, react with withdrawal or avoidance and try to distance themselves from the violator. Hence, we argue that consumers are not contaminated by corporate immortality through contempt because they want to distance themselves from the violator by not following their immorality. We hypothesize:

*H2: Consumers react to corporate lies with disappointment and, in turn, translate their disappointment into increased lying behavior on their part: Consumers' disappointment mediates the relationship between corporate lying and consumers' lying behavior.*

#### **4.2.5 Consumer-Brand Relationships**

Consumers build long-lasting relationships with brands that they like and value. Those relationships are highly beneficial for the corporations, as loyal and psychologically committed customers are financially rewarding (Tuškej, Golob & Podnar, 2013). Cheng, White, and Chaplin (2012) argue that prior brand knowledge and strong brand relationships serve as a buffer to negative corporate actions, as consumers with stronger brand knowledge “process more nuanced information about what is or is not typical of the brand” (Cheng et al., 2012, p. 281) and are therefore less prone to bad news about their preferred brand. More recent research, however, has highlighted the ambivalent effects of brand knowledge on consumer reactions and argues that the moral history of a brand is a fundamental variable that determines whether consumers are more lenient or more harsh toward brands they know, independent of their identification with the brand. Consequently, Brunk and de Boer (2020) argue that consumers' knowledge of ethical or unethical actions of brands and corporations might result in more

ambiguous reactions toward the brands, as higher knowledge increases the ambivalence of consumers' perceived ethicality of the brand. Put differently, consumers who know a lot about the corporations' moral history are highly susceptible and sensitive to future moral issues. As before, we differentiate between the two emotional responses and argue that consumers who are disappointed increase their tendency to replicate the immoral behavior of corporations, whereas consumers who feel contempt are not contaminated. We hypothesize:

*H3: Consumers' brand knowledge moderates the effect of consumers' disappointment on their own lying behavior such that high (vs. low) brand knowledge strengthens (attenuates) the positive effect of disappointment on their lying behavior.*

Moreover, brand relationships also serve certain higher-order identity goals, can provide self-enhancement opportunities, and enable consumers to pursue and accomplish life projects and tasks (Bagozzi, Romani, & Grappi, 2020). The mutually beneficial relationship between brands and their customers plays an integral role in building brands and business models that can create psychological bonds with their customers. However, once individuals identify themselves with other individuals, groups, or institutions, they become highly susceptible to norm violations within the group and strongly react to deviant behaviors (Hutchinson et al., 2008; Focella et al., 2016). In this paper, we measure consumers' psychological bond with a brand (i.e., their self-brand match) by measuring the psychological match between their own personality traits and the brand's traits. Highly bonded customers who match with a certain brand and share parts of their personality with it (Aaker, 1997, Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998) are specifically prone to react emotionally toward the brand's wrongdoings as well (Rotman, Khamitov, & Connors, 2018). Hence, we hypothesize that consumers react stronger to corporate lies if they are psychologically attached to the brand and share important parts of their personality with it.

*H4a: Consumers' self-brand match moderates the effect of corporate immorality on consumers' disappointment. A high (low) self-brand match between a consumer and a brand increases (decreases) their disappointment if a brand lies (acts morally).*

*H4b: Consumers' self-brand match moderates the effect of corporate immorality on consumers' contempt. A high (low) self-brand match between a consumer and a brand increases (decreases) their contempt if a brand lies (acts morally).*

As Newman and Brucks (2018) show, consumers who have significantly integrated a brand into their self-scheme, may license socially responsible corporate behavior on behalf of the company. They regard the brand's moral actions as their own actions and are more likely to

behave more unethically in the future. Likewise, if highly identified consumers observe corporate immorality, they try to rebalance the immorality by engaging in moral cleansing. Moral cleansing refers to the observation that individuals may respond with moral behavior after they observed immoral behaviors of others (Newman & Brucks, 2018). Other individuals, however, might want to take revenge for initial wrongdoings (Grégoire, et al., 2010) and engage in revengeful activities to account for the immoralities they had experienced.

We argue that consumers' self-brand match serves as the moderator that distinguishes consumers who are contaminated and who translate their negative emotional responses into immoral behaviors from those who do not change their behavior (or even engage in moral cleansing). Following Newman and Brucks (2018), we specifically argue that consumers who are psychologically close to a brand that behaves immorally are less likely to be contaminated by the brand's immoral behaviors. Conversely, consumers who are psychologically distant are more likely to be contaminated and to translate their emotional responses into actual behaviors. Again, we differentiate between disappointment and contempt and argue that the unique psychological characteristics of disappointment lead to distinct behavioral outcomes, whereas contempt leads to withdrawal and avoidance. Thus, we hypothesize:

*H5: A low (high) self-brand match amplifies (does not affect) the contaminating effect of corporate lies through disappointment on consumers' own lying behavior.*

Conversely, we theorize that consumers' self-brand match does not influence how consumers' contempt affects their lying behavior because the unique behavioral outcomes of contempt do not indicate that contemptuous individuals take active reprisals against the transgressor—they react with behavioral withdrawal instead.

### **4.3. Research Overview**

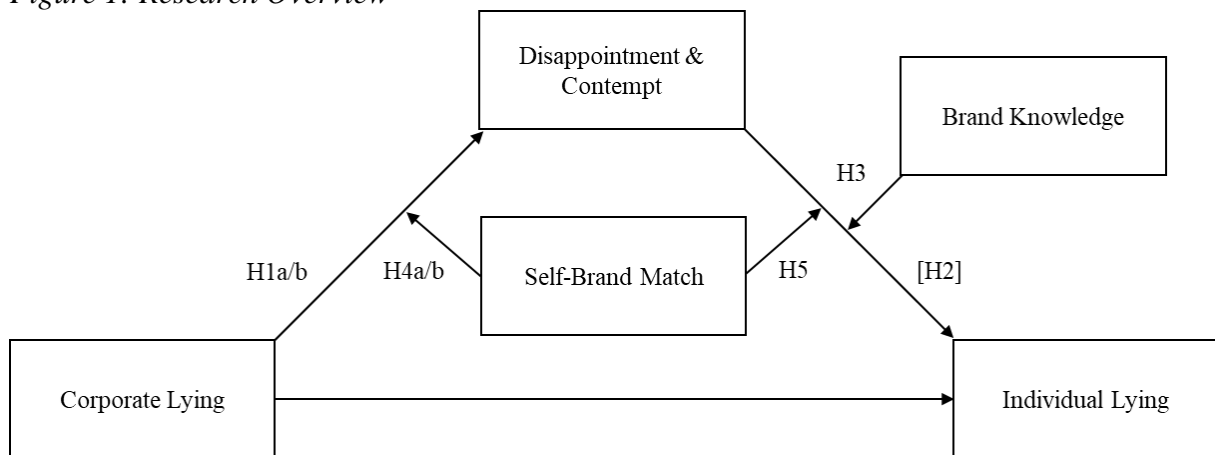
Ultimately, extant research indicates that consumers react emotionally to brand transgressions and condemn immoral behaviors. Consumers who possess much information about a brand and those who share important parts of their personality with a brand are specifically prone to emotional reactions, albeit the extent to which consumers translate their emotional reactions into behaviors and the valence of the behaviors have not been systematically analyzed thus far.

This paper analyzes how corporate lies might motivate consumers to relax their moral standards and engage in lying behavior themselves. Figure 1 shows the research model of the present research. We introduce consumers' brand knowledge as a first moderator that distinguishes contaminated consumers from consumers who do not change their lying behavior after they

have observed corporate lies. Moreover, we account for the unique psychological characteristics of consumers' disappointment and contempt and introduce consumers' self-brand match as a second pivotal moderator in the process of contagious immorality. Consumers' self-brand match unanimously strengthens consumers' emotional responses to corporate lies but unfolds a more nuanced pattern when differentiating between consumers' disappointment and contempt. Specifically, we suggest that disappointed consumers take actions against the unethical brand if they are psychologically distant from a brand (i.e., have a low self-brand match), whereas consumers' contempt does not lead to a contamination of their lying behavior.

As shown in Table 1, prior research has rarely addressed and measured consumers' actual behavioral reactions as a direct consequence of corporate wrongdoings and primarily focused on the measurement of intentions or attitudes. Furthermore, we explicitly focus on individuals' lying behavior. Previous research only focused on general moral behavior that is unrelated to the domain of the company's wrongdoing. For example, Newman and Brucks (2018) analyzed individual immorality by applying a dictator game, a game that usually mirrors fairness behavior or an individual's adherence to social norms (Krupka & Weber, 2013) and is not in the same moral domain as the company's wrongdoings. By analyzing individual immoral behavior within the same domain as the companies' wrongdoing (i.e., lying), we are confident to solve a number of the methodological problems that have been detected in prior studies.

Figure 1: Research Overview



*Table 1: Relevant Prior Works on the Effects of Corporate (Im-)Morality*

Authors	Lesion	Moderators	Mediators	DVs	Priming	Pos. Valence	Behavioral DV	Same Domain
Antonetti & Maklan (2016)	CSiR	-	Moral outrage	NWOM	×	×	×	×
Romani et al. (2015)	CSiR	Empathy	Feelings of hate	Anti-brand activism	×	×	×	×
Xie & Bagozzi (2019)	CSiR	Social cognitions	Attitudes toward the corporation Contempt & anger	Negative behavioral responses (Complaining, Boycott, NWOM)	×	×	×	×
Newman & Brucks (2018)	CSR / CSiR	Self-brand overlap	Hubristic pride & guilt	Individual fairness (Dictator game)	●	●	×	×
Rotman, Khamitov, & Connors (2018)	CSiR	Harmfulness of transgression	Moral worth	Intentions to punish the brand Individual lying behavior	×	●	●	×
This study	Corporate lying	Brand knowledge Self-brand match	Disappointment & contempt	Individual lying behavior	●	●	●	●

*Notes: Lesion: Origin of the contamination; DVs: dependent variables; Priming: Does the study manipulate the moderator(s) with a priming procedure?; Pos. Valence: Immoral corporate behavior increases individual immoral behavior; Behavioral DV: Does the study include a behavioral dependent variable?; Same Domain: Is the dependent variable in the same behavioral domain as the lesion?; CSiR: Corporate Social Irresponsibility; CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility; NWOM: Negative word-of-mouth; ● = yes. × = no.*

#### **4.4. Study 1**

In the first study, we explore the process that leads to a contamination of consumers' moral behavior through corporate lies. We introduce a first moderator (i.e., the knowledge of the brand that behaves immorally) that distinguishes between individuals whose moral behavior is contaminated by corporate lies and those whose behavior is relatively stable. We measure consumers' immoral behaviors with a cheating task. The application of the cheating task is beneficial in at least three manners. First, as shown in Table 1, most of the current studies on the effects of corporate wrongdoings do not directly measure individual behaviors but limit themselves to the investigation of behavioral intentions or attitude changes. Second, in applying a task that explicitly approximates and tests individuals' cheating behavior, we can measure immediate responses in the same moral domain as that of the corporation's immoral behavior. Third, by introducing a behavioral dependent variable, we explore the process of moral contagion from corporate lies to individual lies by implementing consumers' emotional reactions as mediators.

##### **4.4.1 Pre-Test**

In a pre-test, we let 83 (53% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.9$ ) students give their opinions about ten different prominent brands in Germany and asked how they evaluate their honesty, their CSR efforts, their propensity to scandals, and a few other indicators that reflect whether the brand is believed to be a well-known and respected brand. In this pre-test, we found that the students particularly like the German sports brand Adidas; however, we also found that the students have mixed feelings about the morality and honesty of Adidas's business model, as many of them mentioned Adidas's refusal to pay rent for their shops shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic hit Germany. Hence, we chose Adidas as the protagonist of our stories to measure the impact of the behavior of a well-liked, well-known brand that is at the same time capable of moral wrongdoings.

##### **4.4.2 Participants, Procedure, and Stimuli of the Main Study**

A total of 250 students (54.7% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.7$ ) participated in an online experiment. The participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (CSR, CSiR, Lying, Control) in which we manipulated the behavior of the brand by introducing a fictional scenario. We adapted the corporate immorality manipulations from Newman and Brucks (2018) and told the participants in the CSR group that Adidas joined a global coalition that aims at reducing the use of toxic chemicals in their products. In the CSiR manipulation, we told the participants that Adidas refused to join the coalition, whereas Adidas openly lied to the public in the Lying condition. The Control condition did not specifically mention Adidas but mentioned that the

whole textile industry wants to join the coalition to reduce the use of toxic chemicals. After the manipulation, we asked the participants to participate in a task in which they were paid according to their performance. This task served as an indicator of the participants' individual lying behavior, an approach that academics have used extensively in psychological research in recent years. In this task, which we adapted from Mazar et al. (2008), the participants had to solve matrices. The test consisted of 20 matrices, each based on a set of 12 three-digit numbers. In every matrix, two of those three-digit numbers add up to ten. The participants had to find the pairs that add up to ten and only had five minutes to do so. After each matrix, the participants had to answer a yes/no question whether they successfully found the matching pair of numbers within each matrix. We told the participants that they have a chance to be randomly selected and be paid \$1 per matrix they indicated as solved. The percentage of the solved matrices (the number of times the participants answered yes) served as the dependent variable and as an indicator of lying behavior. Owing to the difficulty of the task and the time constraint, the task proved to be suitable for measuring the participants' lying behavior (Fischbacher & Foellmi-Heusi, 2013).

Next, we asked the participants to indicate, using multi-item 7-point Likert scales (1 = not at all, 7 = very much), how disappointed they were (e.g., "After I read the article about Adidas, I felt disappointed," Zeelenberg & Pieters, 1999) and how much contempt they felt (e.g., "After reading the article, I felt contempt," Xie et al., 2015). These two variables served as the mediating variables in our model and ought to reflect emotional responses to corporate wrongdoings. After a distraction task, we measured consumers' brand knowledge using an adapted version of Cheng et al's (2011) three-item scale (e.g., "Compared to other people, I know a lot about the Adidas brand.") and the participants reported their sociodemographics. Lastly, we asked the participants if they guessed the purpose of the study (none of them did) and debriefed them. Please see the Appendix for the measures of the study and the text vignettes.

#### **4.4.3 Results**

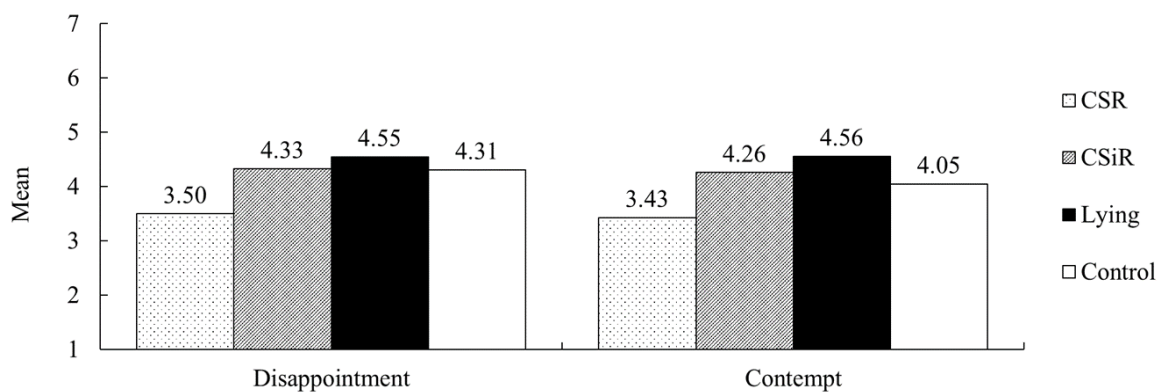
The first study examines whether and how corporate misbehavior influences consumers' emotional reactions toward the brand (i.e., disappointment and contempt) and how those reactions further influence consumers' lying behavior. Specifically, we compare corporate lies with other immoral behaviors of a corporation (i.e., corporate irresponsibility) to distinguish these two forms of corporate immorality and to show the unique effects of corporate lies on consumers' lying behavior. Furthermore, we investigate the moderating effect of consumers'

brand knowledge on the relationship between corporate lies and the emotional reactions toward the brand and also on the relationship between the consumers' emotional reactions and their lying behavior.

*The Effects of Corporate Wrongdoing on Consumer Emotional Responses*

To analyze the effects of corporate wrongdoings on consumers' emotional responses, we conducted two separate 1 x 4 (CSR, CSiR, Lying, Control) ANOVAs with the brands' behavior as the independent variable and the consumers' emotional reactions as dependent variables. The ANOVAs indicated a significant direct effect of the manipulation on the dependent variables (see Table 2). Figure 2 illustrates the mean values of the dependent variables. As shown in Figure 2, a post-hoc analysis revealed a more nuanced picture and showed that the difference between the CSR and the Lying manipulation is the most prominent one. Specifically, the participants in the Lying group showed higher levels of disappointment than the participants in the CSR group ( $M_{CSR} = 3.50$  vs.  $M_{Lying} = 4.55$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ) and higher contempt ( $M_{CSR} = 3.43$  vs.  $M_{Lying} = 4.56$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ). Table 3 shows the full results of the post-hoc analyses.

*Figure 2: Main Effects of the Manipulation on Disappointment and Contempt*



*Note: See Table 3 for full results of the post-hoc analyses.*



Table 2: Results of the ANOVA (Study 1)

	Dependent Variable: Disappointment					Dependent Variable: Contempt				
	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
<i>Corrected model</i>	3	15.95	9.63	***	.08	3	16.66	11.01	***	.10
<i>Constant</i>	1	5420.01	3271.84	***	.91	1	5176.50	3422.30	***	.92
Behavior of the Corporation (BEH)	1	15.95	9.63	***	.08	1	16.60	11.01	***	.10
<i>Error</i>	246	1.66				246	1.51			
R <sup>2</sup>	.08					.10				
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adjusted</sub>	.08					.09				

Notes: One-way ANOVA; n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$ .

Table 3: Post-hoc Analyses of Disappointment and Contempt (Study 1)

Dependent Variable: Disappointment					Dependent Variable: Contempt				
Group (I)	Group (J)	$\Delta$ Mean (I-J)	CI	p	Group (I)	Group (J)	$\Delta$ Mean (I-J)	CI	p
CSR	CSiR	-0.83	[-1.36, -0.31]	***	CSR	CSiR	-0.83	[-1.33, -0.33]	***
	Lying	-1.05	[-1.61, -0.49]	***		Lying	-1.13	[-1.67, -0.59]	***
	Control	-0.81	[-1.33, -0.30]	***		Control	-0.62	[-1.11, -0.12]	**
CSiR	CSR	0.83	[0.31, 1.36]	***	CSiR	CSR	0.83	[0.33, 1.33]	***
	Lying	-0.22	[-0.77, 0.33]	n.s.		Lying	-0.31	[-0.83, 0.22]	n.s.
	Control	0.18	[-0.48, 0.52]	n.s.		Control	0.21	[-0.27, 0.69]	n.s.
Lying	CSR	1.05	[0.49, 1.61]	***	Lying	CSR	1.13	[0.59, 1.67]	***
	CSiR	0.22	[-0.33, 0.77]	n.s.		CSiR	0.31	[-0.22, 0.83]	n.s.
	Control	0.24	[-0.31, 0.78]	n.s.		Control	0.52	[-0.00, 1.03]	n.s.
Control	CSR	0.81	[0.30, 1.33]	***	Control	CSR	0.62	[0.12, 1.11]	**
	CSiR	-0.18	[-0.52, 0.48]	n.s.		CSiR	-0.21	[-0.69, 0.27]	n.s.
	Lying	-0.24	[-0.78, 0.31]	n.s.		Lying	-0.52	[-1.03, 0.00]	n.s.

Notes: Tukey's HSD; n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$ ;  $\Delta$ : Difference; CI: Confidence Interval (95%).

*The Moderated Mediation Effect of Individual Disappointment and Contempt on the Relationship between Corporate Lies and Individual Lying Behavior*

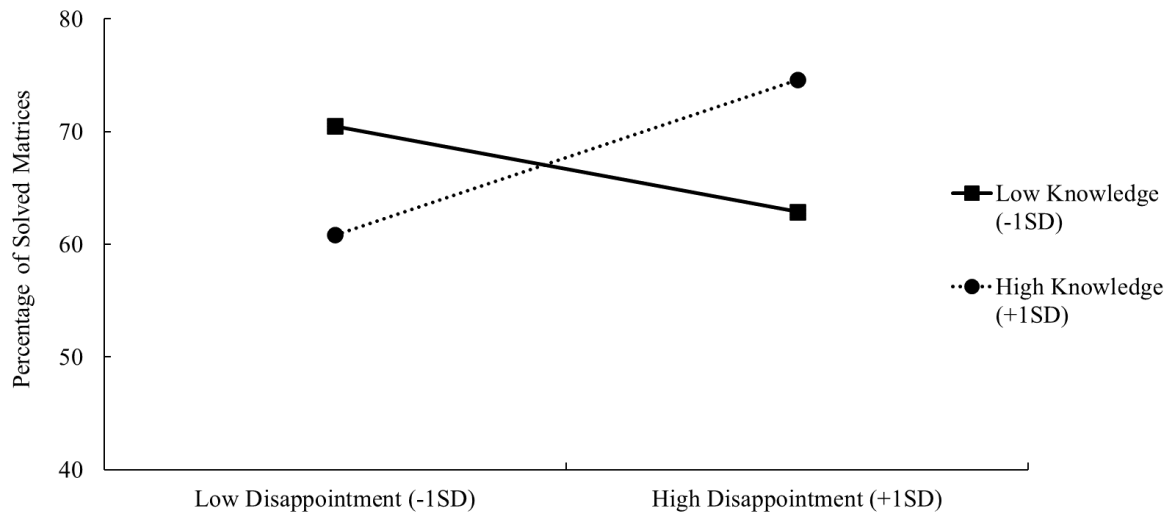
To test how corporate behavior affects the individuals' lying behavior and to explore potential moderating effects of consumers' brand knowledge, we used PROCESS model 58 (Hayes, 2017) with brand knowledge as the moderating variable, the behavior of the brand as independent variable, consumers' emotional response as mediating variable, and the percentage of solved matrices as the dependent variable that indicates the magnitude of individuals' cheating behavior. We indicator-coded the corporation's behavior and coded the CSR behavior as the baseline to compare the effects of the different kinds of behavior. Again, and as in the analysis before, we conducted these analyses for both mediators, i.e. disappointment and contempt.

*Disappointment*

The analysis validates the results of the ANOVA and shows a significant direct effect of the manipulation on consumers' disappointment. We found no interaction effects between the type of behavior and no interaction effects of consumers' brand knowledge on consumers' disappointment. In the next step of the model, we analyzed how consumers' disappointment (the mediator) interacts with their knowledge of the brand and influences their lying behavior. The analysis reveals a significant direct effect of consumers' disappointment on the number of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.07$ ,  $t(243) = -2.23$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) and of brand knowledge on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.12$ ,  $t(243) = -2.60$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ), and a significant interaction effect of disappointment and brand knowledge on the number of solved matrices ( $\beta = 0.03$ ,  $t(243) = 2.72$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). Moreover, the manipulation of the company's behavior does not influence the percentage of solved matrices directly.

Analyzing the conditional effects of consumers' disappointment at different values of brand knowledge revealed that for consumers high in brand knowledge (mean values of brand knowledge above 3.39) we found a significant positive effect of consumers' disappointment on the number of solved matrices ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $t(243) = 2.33$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ). This result indicates that higher disappointment leads to more cheating among consumers who know the brand well. Figure 3 depicts the results of the analysis.

Figure 3: Interaction Effect between Disappointment and Brand Knowledge on Percentage of Solved Matrices



We also tested for mediation effects between the behavior of the company and the number of solved matrices. As indicated by both the lower and the upper limit of the bootstrapping results not including zeros, we find a significant indirect effect of the Lying condition (versus CSR) on the cheating behavior through disappointment for individuals with high brand knowledge ( $b = 0.06$ ,  $LL = 0.004$ ,  $UL = 0.13$ ). We did not find significant mediation effects when comparing the other conditions (CSiR, Control) to the baseline condition (CSR).

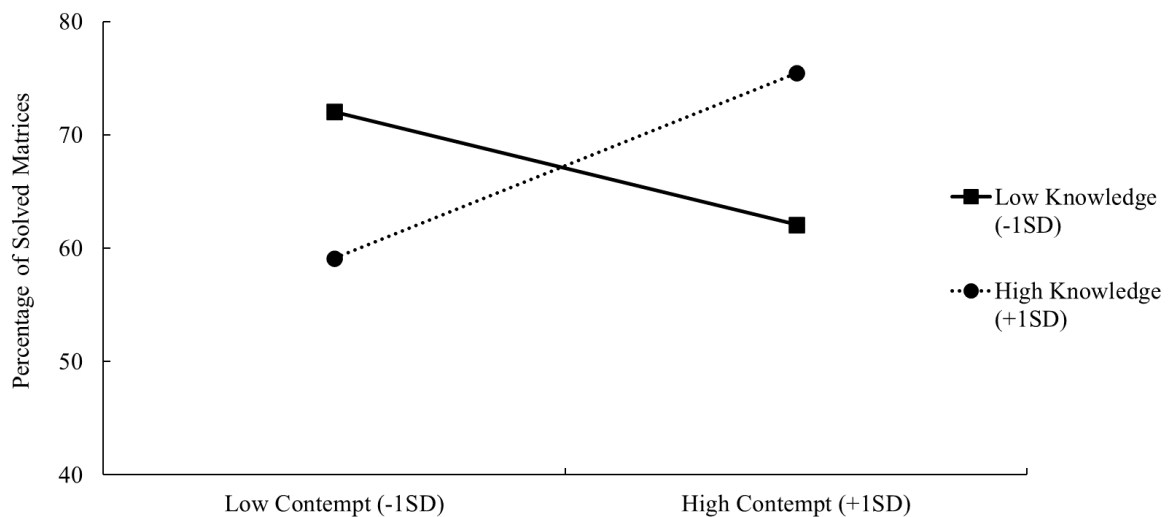
### Contempt

We conducted the same analysis with PROCESS Modell 58 (Hayes, 2017) but changed the mediator variable to consumer contempt. The analysis reveals a significant direct effect of consumers' contempt on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.09$ ,  $t(243) = -2.85$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ) and of brand knowledge on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $t(243) = -3.32$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ), and a significant interaction effect of contempt and brand knowledge on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = 0.04$ ,  $t(243) = 3.48$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ). Furthermore, the manipulation of the company's behavior does not influence the percentage of solved matrices directly.

The analysis of the conditional effects of consumers' contempt at different values of brand knowledge revealed that for consumers low in brand knowledge (mean values of brand knowledge below 1.31) there was a significant negative effect of contempt on the percentage of solved matrices, indicating lower cheating behavior. For consumers high in brand knowledge (mean values of brand knowledge above 3.13), we found a significant positive effect of consumers' contempt on the percentage of solved matrices, indicating that higher contempt leads to more cheating among consumers who know the brand well.

We also tested for mediation effects between the behavior of the company and the percentage of solved matrices. As indicated by both the lower and the upper limit of the bootstrapping results not including zeros, we find a significant indirect effect of the Lying condition (versus CSR) on the cheating behavior through contempt for individuals with high brand knowledge ( $b = 0.06$ ,  $LL = 0.03$ ,  $UL = 0.12$ ). The results of the analyses are depicted in Figure 4. Again, we did not find significant mediation effects when comparing the other conditions (CSiR, Control) to the baseline condition (CSR), strengthening the assumption that corporate lies are a specifically potent form of corporate immorality.

*Figure 4: Interaction Effect between Contempt and Brand Knowledge on Percentage of Solved Matrices*



#### 4.4.4 Discussion

In Study 1, we outlined how corporate immorality influences consumers' emotions and their lying behavior. We show that individuals who feel high contempt or high levels of disappointment because a company that they know very well did something unethical, cheat more often in a cheating task than individuals who have little knowledge about the company or than individuals who feel low levels of contempt or disappointment. In other words, if consumers know a brand well that acts unethically, they react emotionally and increase their unethical behavior. Therefore, we find evidence to support Hypothesis 1a, Hypothesis 1b, and Hypothesis 3. In contrast to our predictions, we find evidence for mediation effects of disappointment and contempt. Both disappointment and contempt mediate the effect of corporate lying on individual lying, but only for individuals with a high brand knowledge. Hypotheses 2 is therefore partially confirmed. Moreover, we only found evidence for the mediation of corporate lies through disappointment and contempt when contrasting the CSR

condition to the Lying condition. Hence, corporate lies are a unique form of corporate immorality that is specifically potent in initiating a process of contamination.

The results of this initial study add to the vague understanding of how corporate wrongdoings influence the morality of individuals. If a company that is well known to the individuals behaves irresponsibly or flagrantly lies to the public, consumers react emotionally to these incidents and, most importantly, might even engage in immoral behavior themselves. This finding offers great potential for future research and has various important implications for practitioners and the public. If big companies misuse their trust that consumers put into them, the companies not only lose their image as a (moral) ambassador of certain normative values and principles, they actively erode consumers' morality and contaminate consumers with their, i.e. the companies', immorality. However, scholars still do not understand the exact contamination process whereby corporate immorality contaminates the consumers' morality very well. In the first study, we focused on Adidas, a very well-known company that had just faced harsh scrutiny for an ethical transgression during the Corona pandemic. This could influence our results, as the participants might still remember Adidas's wrongdoings very clearly and use this as an internal excuse for their, i.e. the participants', transgression. Hence, the influence of consumers' brand knowledge on the mechanism that details the contamination of individuals' moral behavior might be explained due to consumers who score high in brand knowledge being more aware of the scrutiny that Adidas faced and acknowledging Adidas's morally dubious image. Similarly, it is possible that individuals who know a lot about a certain brand are those individuals who might identify strongly with this brand. For this reason, we broaden our analysis and include alternative explanations that might be able to explain the process of moral contamination more clearly.

#### **4.5. Study 2a**

In Study 2a, we vary the brand to control for the various brands' moral history, to understand the boundary conditions of these effects more clearly, and to generalize the results of Study 1. Moreover, we introduce a second moderator that can capture the complex dynamics between brands and their customers. Specifically, we test how consumers' self-brand match with the immoral brand influences and shapes the process of contagion. Study 2a introduces a novel means to analyze the effects of consumers' identification with a brand by applying a psychological priming procedure. Thereby, we expand the existing research by manipulating consumers' psychological states instead of only measuring them. Following Harding and Humphrey's (2010) assumption that consumers can only truly identify with a brand if they

perceive the brand as a person who has similar attitudes to a variety of topics, we develop a priming procedure that induces a self-brand match between the consumer and a specific brand. Based on the well-documented assumption that consumers use brands to actively construct their self-identity (Newman & Brucks, 2017) and even integrate certain brands into their self-concept (Belk, 1988; Trump & Brucks, 2012), we manipulate consumers' mental and psychological connection with a brand. In this procedure, we adapt and refine Trump and Brucks's (2012) approach to construct and explain overlapping mental representations between consumers' self and a brand and evoke either a perception of a psychological fit (a match between self-identity and brand identity) or a psychological misfit (a mismatch between self-identity and brand identity).

#### **4.5.1 Pre-Test**

We recruited 68 German adults to complete an online experiment through Prolific in exchange for a small financial incentive. Two participants were excluded because they failed an attention check, resulting in a final sample of 66 participants (50.8% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 31.44$ ). We randomly assigned the participants to one of two tasks (adapted from Aron et al., 1991 and Trump & Brucks, 2012) that manipulate consumers' self-brand match (high match vs. low match). First, all the participants had to look at various advertisements of the sports brand Nike and had to state if they know the brand. In both conditions, the participants subsequently had to select 10 out of 20 personality attributes (e.g., confident, emotional, creative, sustainable, etc.) that fit to their perception of their own personality. According to Aaker (1997), brands can be attributed with a personality that can be described through human personality traits and characteristics. Therefore, a brand personality can be described by using human characteristics. To induce the perception of a self-brand match (i.e., a match between consumers' personality attributes and those of a brand), we asked the participants in the high-match condition to indicate five characteristics out of the ten they chose before that also apply to Nike, whereas the participants in the low-match condition had to pick five characteristics that did not apply to Nike. To further increase the match (or mismatch), we asked the participants in the high-match (or low-match) condition to list three other characteristics that they have in common (or that they do not have in common) with Nike. To confirm the effectiveness of the manipulation, the participants completed an adapted version of Aron et al.'s (1991) version of the Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (IOS) and answered five items on a seven-point Likert scale (e.g., "Nike and I have a lot in common"). A t-test found that the participants in the high-match condition reported a higher self-brand match than those in the low-match condition ( $M_{\text{high-match}} = 3.72$  vs.  $M_{\text{low-match}} = 2.88$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ), indicating a successful manipulation of consumers' self-match with the brand.

#### 4.5.2 Participants, Procedure, and Stimuli of the Main Study

A total of 166 individuals participated in an online experiment through Prolific in exchange for a small financial compensation. Seven participants failed an attention check and were removed from the data set, resulting in a final sample of 159 individuals (43.9% female,  $M_{age} = 29.21$ ). In this second study, we manipulated consumers' self-brand match with the priming procedure that we established in the pre-test. To investigate the joint effects of corporate lies in combination with consumers' self-brand match, we randomly assigned the participants to one of four conditions that manipulated the company's behavior (CSR vs. Lying) and the consumers' self-brand match (high match vs. low match). After the participants were confronted with the self-brand-match priming task, they had to read a fictional text vignette that was based on the one used in Study 1 but with various changes to exclude alternative explanations for the results in Study 1. First, we changed the protagonist of the stories and chose Nike because Nike did not face similar scrutiny during the Covid-19 crisis like Adidas and is still a very prominent and well-known brand in the same retail sector (i.e., sports fashion). Second, we eliminated both the Control condition and the CSiR condition and only focused on contrasting CSR behavior with corporate lies. Hence, the participants were either assigned to a CSR condition or a Lying condition in which Nike explicitly lied to the public. Next, we asked the participants to complete the same cheating task that was used in Study 1. This cheating task consisted of matrices that the participants had to solve. However, instead of 20 matrices, we only presented 15 matrices to prevent the participants from becoming tired after they already had to participate in the priming task and had to read a rather lengthy text vignette. Again, we told the participants that they have a chance to be randomly selected and be paid \$1 per matrix they indicated as solved. The percentage of the solved matrices served as the dependent variable.

Next, we asked the participants to indicate how disappointed they were (e.g.,: "After I read the article about Nike, I felt disappointed," Zeelenberg & Pieters, 1999) and how much contempt they felt (e.g.,: "After reading the article, I felt contempt," Xie et al., 2015) using multi-item seven-point Likert scales (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). As in Study 1, these variables served as the mediating variables in our model and ought to reflect emotional responses to corporate wrongdoings. After a distraction task, we measured consumers' self-brand match as a manipulation check with the five items that we used in the pre-study ("Nike and I have a lot in common"). After the participants reported their sociodemographics, we asked them if they guessed the purpose of the study (again, none of them did) and debriefed them.



### 4.5.3 Results

Study 2a examines how corporate wrongdoings affect consumers' emotional reactions toward the brand and analyzes if consumers' self-brand match with the brand attenuates or strengthens the contamination effect on the individuals' moral behavior. First, we report the results concerning the analysis of how corporate wrongdoings and individuals' self-brand match jointly affect consumers' emotional responses. Subsequently, we report the results of a moderated mediation analysis that explores the effects on individual morality.

#### *Consumers' Self-Brand Match Amplifies Emotional Responses*

To analyze the effects of corporate wrongdoings on consumers' emotional responses, we conducted 2 x 2 ANOVAs with the brands' behavior (CSR vs. Lying) and the self-brand match (high match vs. low match) as the independent variables and consumers' emotional reactions (disappointment and contempt) as dependent variables. In terms of consumers' disappointment, the ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of corporate lies on consumers' disappointment (see Table 4). If consumers face corporate lies, they report higher levels of disappointment ( $M_{CSR} = 2.48$  vs.  $M_{Lying} = 4.50$ ;  $F(1, 155) = 84.21, p \leq .001$ ). The main effect of the self-brand match was not significant ( $F(1, 155) = .83, n.s.$ ). However, there was a significant interaction between consumers' self-brand match and corporate lies ( $F(1, 155) = 6.35, p \leq .05$ ; see Figure 5).

Regarding consumers' contempt, the ANOVA indicated a significant direct effect of corporate lies on consumers' contempt ( $M_{CSR} = 2.48$  vs.  $M_{Lying} = 4.00$ ;  $F(1, 155) = 46.60, p \leq .001$ ). The results indicate evidence for a significant main effect of consumers' self-brand match on consumers' contempt ( $M_{High-match} = 2.92$  vs.  $M_{Low-match} = 3.38$ ;  $F(1, 155) = 4.24, p \leq .05$ ). However, the interaction effect between self-brand match and Nike's behavior was not significant ( $F(1, 155) = 0.80, n.s.$ , see Figure 5).

Table 4: Results of the ANOVA (Study 2a)

	Dependent Variable: Disappointment					Dependent Variable: Contempt				
	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
<i>Corrected model</i>	3	58.01	30.72	***	.37	3	34.11	17.24	***	.25
<i>Constant</i>	1	1900.01	1006.21	***	.87	1	1643.45	830.80	***	.84
CSiR (Lying)	1	159.01	84.21	***	.35	1	92.18	46.60	***	.23
Self-brand-match (SBM)	1	1.57	0.83	n.s.	.01	1	8.39	4.24	*	.03
<i>Interaction</i>										
Lying $\times$ SBM	1	11.98	6.35	*	.04	1	1.58	0.80	n.s.	.01
<i>Error</i>	155	1.89				155	1.98			
$R^2$	.37					.25				
$R^2_{\text{adjusted}}$	.36					.24				

Notes: Two-way ANOVA; n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$ . A robustness check (Appendix 4) with age and gender as control variables confirms the results.

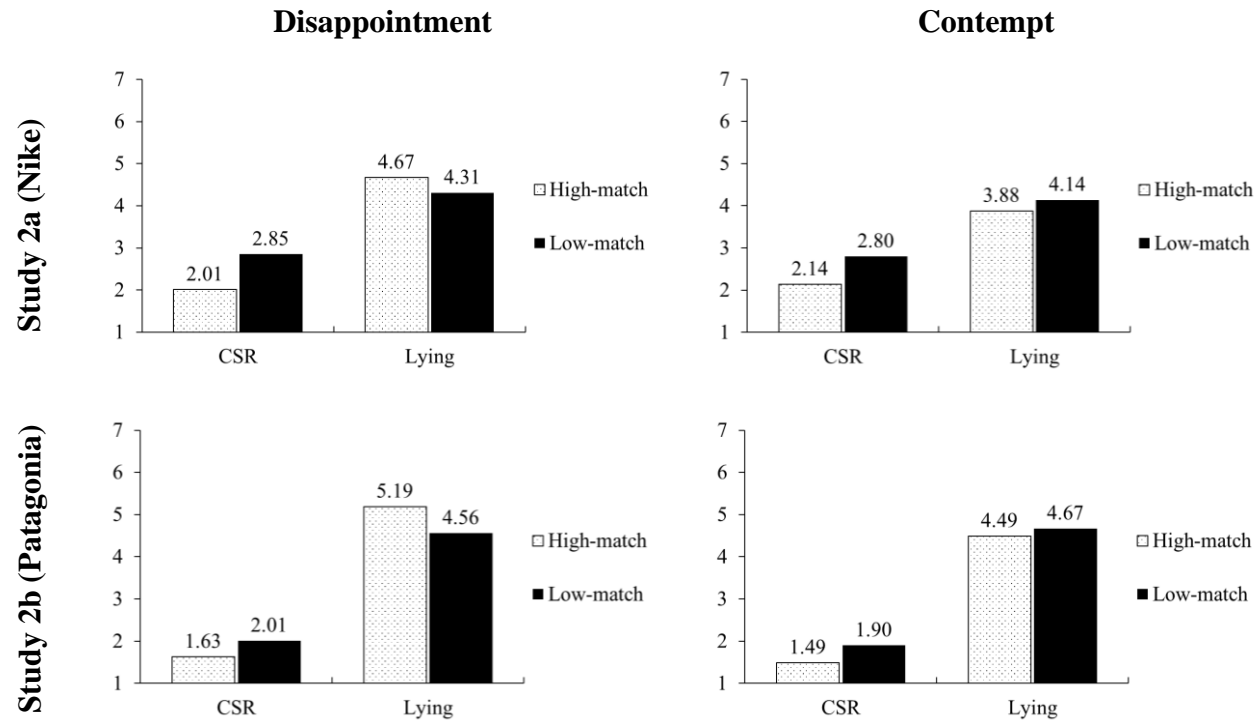
*Moderated Mediation Effects of Corporate Wrongdoings and Consumers' Self-Brand Match*

To test how corporate behavior affects the individuals' lying behavior and to explore potential moderating effects of the self-brand match, we used PROCESS model 58 (Hayes, 2017) with self-brand match as the moderating variable, Nike's behavior as independent variable, consumers' emotional response as the mediating variable, and the percentage of solved matrices as the dependent variable that indicates the magnitude of individuals' lying behavior. Again, and as in the analysis before, we conducted these analyses for both mediators (i.e., disappointment and contempt). We present the results of the calculations in Table 5.

*Disappointment*

The analysis reveals a marginally significant effect of consumers' disappointment on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.03$ ,  $t(154) = -1.90$ ,  $p \leq 0.1$ ), no effect of self-brand match on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.02$ ,  $t(154) = -0.48$ , n.s.), and no significant interaction effect of disappointment and self-brand match on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = 0.02$ ,  $t(154) = -0.66$ , n.s.). Furthermore, the manipulation of the company's behavior does not influence the number of solved matrices directly ( $\beta = -0.01$ ,  $t(154) = -0.23$ , n.s.).

Figure 5: Interaction Effects of Self-brand match and Corporate Behavior (Study 2a: Nike, Study 2b: Patagonia) on Disappointment and Contempt



### Contempt

The analysis reveals no significant effect of consumers' contempt on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.02$ ,  $t(154) = -0.99$ , n.s.) and no significant effect of self-brand match on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.02$ ,  $t(154) = -0.47$ , n.s.), but a significant interaction effect of contempt and self-brand match on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $t(154) = -2.02$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ , see Figure 6). Moreover, the manipulation of the company's behavior does not influence the number of solved matrices directly ( $\beta = -0.05$ ,  $t(154) = -1.01$ , n.s.). The analysis concerning the conditional effects of consumers' contempt across the two experimental conditions revealed that for consumers in the low self-brand match condition there was a significant negative effect of contempt on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.04$ ,  $t(154) = -2.09$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ), indicating lower Lying behavior. For consumers in the high self-brand-match condition, we did not find a significant effect of consumers' contempt on the percentage of solved matrices. Furthermore, we tested for mediation effects between the behavior of the company and the percentage of solved matrices. For individuals in the low self-brand-match condition and as indicated by both the lower and the upper limit of the bootstrapping results not including zeros, we find a significant and negative indirect effect of Nike's behavior on individual lying behavior through contempt ( $b = -0.06$ ,  $LL = -0.13$ ,  $UL = -.01$ ). We found no mediation effect for individuals in the high self-brand-match condition. Figure 6 depicts the effects of the interaction between self-brand match and consumers' contempt on the percentage of solved matrices.

Figure 6: The Effects of the Interaction Contempt and Self-Brand Match on Individual Lying Behavior

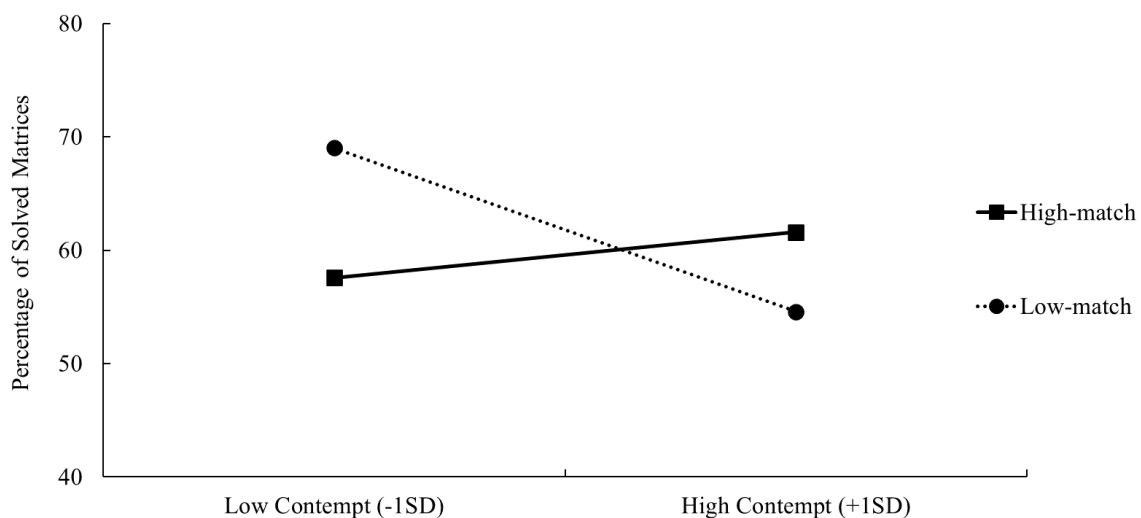


Table 5: Results of Mediation Analysis (Study 2a)

	Mediator Variable Model					
	Disappointment			Contempt		
	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Predictors</i>						
CSiR (Lying)	2.02	0.22	***	1.54	0.22	***
Self-brand match (SBM)	-0.26	0.22	n.s.	-0.49	0.22	*
<i>Interactions</i>						
Lying x SBM	1.11	0.44	*	0.40	0.45	n.s.
R <sup>2</sup>	.61			.50		
F	30.72			17.24		
	Dependent Variable Model (Dependent Variable: Percentage of Solved Matrices)					
	Disappointment			Contempt		
	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Predictors</i>						
CSiR (Lying)	-0.01	0.06	n.s.	-0.05	0.05	n.s.
Contempt/Disappointment (Med)	-0.03	0.17	†	-0.02	0.02	†
Self-brand match (SBM)	0.02	0.05	n.s.	-0.20	0.05	*
<i>Interactions</i>						
Med x SBM	0.02	0.03	n.s.	-0.06	0.03	*
R <sup>2</sup>	.20			.22		
F	1.59			1.91		
<b>Indirect effects</b>	$\beta$	<i>Boot SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Boot SE</i>	<i>CI</i>
Low self-brand match	-0.06	0.04	[-0.14, 0.01]	-0.06	0.03	[-0.13, -0.01]
High self-brand match	-0.06	0.05	[-0.15, 0.04]	0.02	0.04	[-0.06, 0.10]

Notes: n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$ ; CI = Confidence Interval, variables were mean-centered. CSR = 0, Lying = 1; low-match = 0, high-match = 1.

#### 4.5.4 Discussion

Study 2a adds to our understanding of the process of moral contamination. If a brand (i.e., Nike) behaves unethically and lies in public, consumers react emotionally to it and feel higher levels of disappointment and contempt. The results further add to the evidence in support of Hypothesis 1. As the results depicted in Figure 5 illustrate, consumers' emotional reactions to corporate lies are contingent on individual self-brand match. If consumers have a high self-brand match, they react more strongly to corporate lies and feel more disappointment than consumers who do not feel the same about the brand. Similarly, a high self-brand match lowers the disappointment ratings if the company behaves ethically, confirming Hypotheses H4a. Inducing a high self-brand match therefore increases consumers' negative reactions toward unethical brands but simultaneously attenuates negative emotions if the brand behaves ethically. Hence, creating a brand that helps consumers identify themselves with the brand serves as an inoculation strategy (Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz, 2009) if the brand behaves ethically, but backfires if the company acts unethically. Interestingly, and in contrast to our assumptions from Hypothesis 4b, consumers' contempt is not equally influenced by corporate lies and self-brand match. The self-brand match does not moderate the effect of corporate lies on consumers' contempt.

In Study 2a, we identified self-brand match as an important moderator of the process of moral contagion. We also identify unique effects of different consumer emotions (i.e., disappointment and contempt). However, we did not find support for Hypothesis H5, which states that consumers' self-brand match with the unethical brand increases their immorality through their disappointment. Consumers' self-brand match did not moderate the relationship between consumers' disappointment about Nike's lies and their own lying behavior. If consumers feel disappointed about Nike's lies, they are not more likely to cheat than consumers who are not disappointed, independent of their identity match with Nike. However, the results indicate that when it comes to consumers' contempt, the consumers' identification with the Nike brand and the psychological match between their personality and Nike's brand personality indeed influence the relationship between the consumers' emotional reactions and their lying behavior. Interestingly, consumers who have a low self-brand match with Nike lie less if they feel more contempt. In other words, the results indicate a negative effect of consumers' contempt on the magnitude of their lying behavior in the low-match condition, whereas there is no effect among high-match individuals. In other words, consumers who are not psychologically close to Nike cheat less if they feel contempt and engage in vicarious moral cleansing.

## **4.6. Study 2b**

The objective of Study 2b is to replicate the effects that we found in Study 2a and to test if the process of contagious immorality is contingent on specific brands or is found across a large variety of structurally different brands. Therefore, we aim to replicate the findings with a third brand from the sports fashion industry, namely Patagonia. Patagonia is a well-known brand in the fashion industry, but in contrast to Nike and Adidas, Patagonia is considered as a brand that scores very high in terms of environmental consciousness (Sekhon & Armstrong Soule, 2020) and, as our first pre-test in Study 1 found, is considered to be particularly fair and sustainable. This difference could create opportunities to identify brand characteristics that might attenuate or strengthen the contagious effects of corporate lies and help create opportunities for future research. Specifically, consumers' expectations toward Patagonia and their ethical behavior should be higher than the consumers' expectations toward Nike and should therefore drive consumers' disappointment if those expectations are disconfirmed.

### **4.6.1 Participants, Procedure, and Stimuli**

A total of 156 individuals participated in an online experiment through Prolific in exchange for a small financial compensation. Two individuals failed an attention check and were excluded from the final sample, resulting in a total of 154 complete responses (37.5% female,  $M_{age} = 29.94$ ). As in Study 2a, the participants had to complete the priming task and read one of two fictional text vignettes that manipulated the companies' behavior. Everything was the same as in Study 2a, except that we replaced Nike with Patagonia.

### **4.6.2 Results**

As in Study 2a, we ran the same models and analyses to analyze consumers' emotional responses to corporate wrongdoings and to unravel the moderating effects of self-brand match on the process of contagious immorality. First, we report the results of the ANOVAs before we report the results concerning the interaction effects of consumers' self-brand match on the relationship between consumers' emotions and their lying behavior.

#### *Replication of the Interaction between Consumers' Self-Brand-Match and Corporate Wrongdoings on Consumers' Emotional Responses*

To analyze the effects of corporate wrongdoings on consumers' emotional responses, we conducted 2 x 2 ANOVAs with the brands' behavior (CSR vs. Lying) and the self-brand match (high match vs. low match) as the independent variables and the consumers' emotional reactions (disappointment and contempt) as the dependent variables. In terms of consumers'



disappointment, the ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of the corporation's behavior on consumers' disappointment (see Table 6). If consumers are confronted with corporate lying, they report higher levels of disappointment ( $M_{\text{CSR}} = 1.80$  vs.  $M_{\text{Lying}} = 4.89$ ;  $F(1, 150) = 201.49$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). The main effect of the self-brand match was not significant ( $F(1, 150) = 0.13$ , n.s.). However, there was a significant interaction between consumers' self-brand match and corporate behavior ( $F(1, 150) = 6.55$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ; see Figure 5). Regarding consumers' contempt, the ANOVA indicated a significant direct effect of corporate lies on consumers' contempt ( $M_{\text{CSR}} = 1.64$  vs.  $M_{\text{Lying}} = 4.57$ ;  $F(1, 150) = 217.62$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). There was no significant direct effect of self-brand match on consumers' contempt ( $F(1, 150) = 2.32$ , n.s.) and no significant interaction effect between self-brand match and Patagonia's behavior ( $F(1, 150) = 0.33$ , n.s., see Figure 5).

### *Moderated Mediation Analysis*

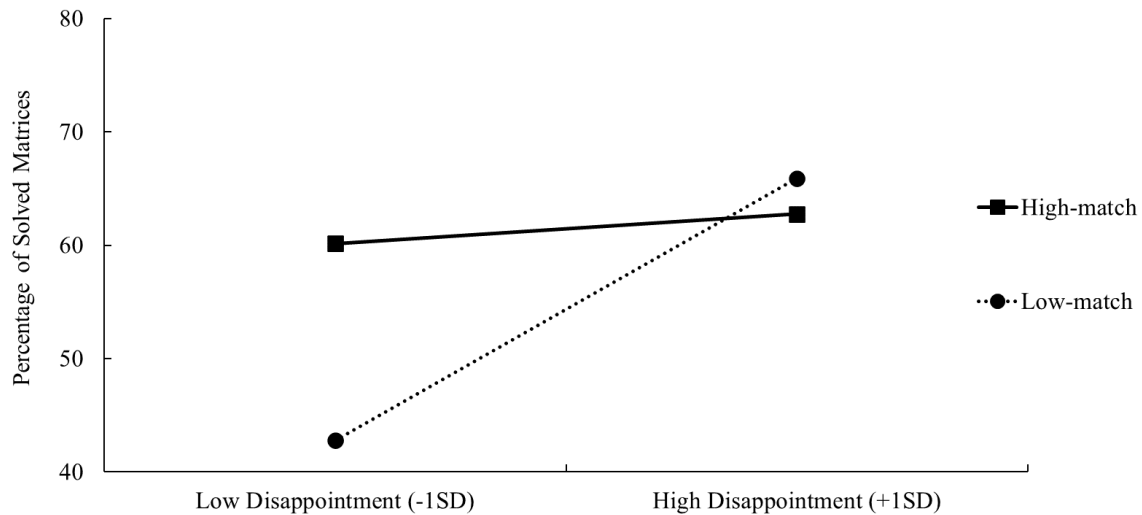
As in Study 2a, we ran PROCESS model 58 (Hayes, 2017) to test for the mediation effect of consumers' emotional responses on individual lying behavior. Similar to Study 2a, we included self-brand match as a moderator for the relationship between the independent variable and the mediator and also for the relationship between the mediator and the dependent variable.

### *Disappointment*

The analysis revealed a marginally significant effect of consumers' disappointment on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = 0.03$ ,  $t(149) = 1.69$ ,  $p \leq 0.1$ ) and of self-brand match on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = 0.07$ ,  $t(149) = 1.67$ ,  $p \leq 0.1$ ), and a significant interaction effect of disappointment and self-brand match on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.05$ ,  $t(149) = 2.31$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ , see Figure 7). Furthermore, the manipulation of the company's behavior does not influence the number of solved matrices directly ( $\beta = -0.06$ ,  $t(149) = -0.90$ , n.s.). Again, we further analyzed the conditional effects of consumers' disappointment at the two levels of self-brand match. The analysis revealed that for consumers in the low self-brand-match condition, there was a significant positive effect of disappointment on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $t(149) = 2.60$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating higher cheating behavior. For consumers in the high self-brand-match condition, we did not find a significant effect of consumers' disappointment on the percentage of solved matrices. Moreover, we tested for mediation effects on the relationship between the behavior of the company and the percentage of solved matrices. For individuals in the low self-brand-match condition, and as indicated by both the lower and the upper limit of the bootstrapping results not including zeros, we find a significant positive indirect effect of Patagonia's behavior on the cheating behavior through disappointment ( $b =$

0.14, LL = 0.03, UL = .26). We found no mediation effect for individuals in the high self-brand-match condition.

Figure 7: The Effects of Disappointment and Self-Brand Match on Individual Lying Behavior



### Contempt

The analysis does not reveal a significant direct effect of consumers' contempt on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = 0.00$ ,  $t(149) = 0.05$ , n.s.) and of self-brand match on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = 0.07$ ,  $t(149) = 1.61$ , n.s.), and no significant interaction effect of disappointment and self-brand match on the percentage of solved matrices ( $\beta = -0.02$ ,  $t(149) = -0.74$ , n.s.). No mediation effect was found. Table 7 shows the results of the mediation analysis for both mediators

Table 6: Results of the ANOVA (Study 2b)

	Dependent Variable: Disappointment					Dependent Variable: Contempt				
	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
<i>Corrected model</i>	3	125.12	75.96	***	.60	3	110.67	78.81	***	.61
<i>Constant</i>	1	1663.55	1009.90	***	.87	1	1442.86	1027.51	***	.87
CSiR (Lying)	1	331.91	201.49	***	.57	1	305.59	217.62	***	.59
Self-brand match (SBM)	1	0.21	0.13	n.s.	.00	1	3.25	2.32	n.s.	.02
<i>Interaction</i>										
Lying $\times$ SBM	1	10.79	6.55	*	.04	1	0.46	0.33	n.s.	.00
<i>Error</i>	150	1.65				150	1.40			
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.603					.612				
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> <sub>adjusted</sub>	.595					.604				

Notes: Two-way ANOVA; n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$ . A robustness check (Appendix 3) with age and gender as control variables confirms the results.

Table 7: Results of Mediation Analysis (Study 2b)

	Mediator Variable Model					
	Disappointment			Contempt		
	$\beta$	SE	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	SE	<i>p</i>
<i>Predictors</i>						
CSiR (Lying)	3.11	0.21	***	2.91	0.19	***
Self-brand match (SBM)	0.02	0.21	n.s.	-0.31	0.20	n.s.
<i>Interactions</i>						
Lying x SBM	-1.10	0.42	*	0.22	0.39	n.s.
R <sup>2</sup>	.78			.78		
F	75.96			78.81		
	Dependent Variable Model (Dependent Variable: Percentage of Solved Matrices)					
	Disappointment			Contempt		
	$\beta$	SE	<i>p</i>	$\beta$	SE	<i>p</i>
<i>Predictors</i>						
CSiR (Lying)	-0.06	0.07	n.s.	0.01	0.07	n.s.
Contempt/Disappointment (Med)	0.03	0.02	†	0.00	0.02	n.s.
Self-brand match (SBM)	0.07	0.04	†	0.07	0.04	n.s.
<i>Interactions</i>						
Med x SBM	-0.05	0.02	*	-0.02	0.02	n.s.
R <sup>2</sup>	.25			.14		
F	2.49			0.76		
<b>Indirect effects</b>	<i>B</i>	<i>Boot SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	$\beta$	<i>Boot SE</i>	<i>CI</i>
Low self-brand match	0.14	0.06	[0.03, 0.26]	0.03	.06	[-0.09, 0.16]
High self-brand match	0.02	0.07	[-0.11, 0.15]	0.03	.07	[-0.15, 0.11]

Notes: n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$ ; CI = Confidence Interval, variables were mean-centered. CSR = 0, Lying = 1; low-match = 0, high-match = 1.

### 4.6.3 Discussion

Study 2b replicates the moderating effects of consumers' self-brand match on the relationship between corporate lies and consumers' emotional reactions that were found in Study 2a and hypothesized in H1, H2, and H4a. As illustrated in Figure 5, individuals with a high self-brand match show stronger emotional responses to corporate lies than individuals with a low self-brand match. Inducing and creating a high self-brand match between a brand and its customers is a double-edged sword, as extant research shows that consumers who strongly identify with a brand generally show positive reactions toward the brands (Tuškej et al., 2013) because they are more loyal (Kim, Han & Park 2001; Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Hermann, 2005), they are more willing to pay a price premium (Del Rio, Vazquez, & Inglesias, 2001), they have a higher possibility to repurchase (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2008), and they engage in positive word of mouth (Kim et al., 2001). However, as our results indicate, those who strongly identify with a brand react more strongly to negative behaviors of brands as well. Therefore, establishing a high self-brand match between a company and its customers is beneficial if corporations behave morally and confirm consumers' expectations. If corporations do not behave morally and disconfirm consumers' expectations, the corporations face severe reprisals. Expectancy violations theory (Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Burgoon, 1993) helps in understanding the double-edged sword of high self-brand-match consumers, as the theory posits that the violation of individual expectations exhibits stronger consequences than the mere confirmation of expectations. Hence, consumers who have a high self-brand match with a firm have high expectations regarding the brand's performance. If these expectations are violated, these consumers react emotionally stronger than individuals without expectations toward a brand. Overall, the results of Study 2b replicate how self-brand match and corporate lies jointly affect consumers' disappointment of Study 2a. Moreover, as in Study 2a, we were not able to find evidence in support of Hypothesis H4b that describes the moderating effect of self-brand match on the relationship between corporate lies and consumers' contempt.

Our results of the analysis concerning how the interaction effects between consumers' emotional responses and their self-brand match influence their moral behavior show effects that contrast with the results of Study 2a. While the results of Study 2a indicate that consumers' contempt interacts with self-brand match and decreases consumers' lying behavior, we did not find support for this claim in Study 2b. However, as proposed in Hypothesis 5, the analysis of consumers' disappointment yielded a significant interaction effect between self-brand match and the consumers' disappointment on the magnitude of individuals' cheating behavior. As shown in Figure 7, consumers who have a low self-brand match with Patagonia, cheat more if

they feel more disappointed. For consumers with a high self-brand match, there is no relationship between their emotional responses and their cheating behavior. We argue that inducing a high self-brand match alleviates the negative effect of disappointment on individual cheating behavior. However, a high self-brand match does not eradicate individuals' tendency to cheat. Furthermore, given that Patagonia is a brand that is highly known for its ethical business practices, corporate immorality might increase consumers' behavioral reactions to these incidents, as their high expectations are disconfirmed. Obviously, consumers' disappointment is even translated into immoral behavior if consumers have a low self-brand match with Patagonia. As stated before, disappointment is an emotion that is contingent on the disconfirmation of former held beliefs and expectations. If a brand that relies on its ethical image acts immorally, consumers might feel more betrayed, are more prone to take revenge, and are more likely to be contaminated by immorality.

#### **4.7. General Discussion and Conclusion**

Across two pre-tests and three experimental studies, we showed evidence for the effects of corporate lies on consumers' emotions and their individual lying behavior. Table 8 shows the main results across the three experiments. We show that consumers react emotionally to corporate lies, as the consumers feel disappointed and contemptuous. Moreover, we identify consumers' brand knowledge (Study 1) as an important moderator of consumers' lying behavior. Consumers who know the Adidas brand well and are confronted with Adidas's lies are more prone to alter their moral standards and engage in lying themselves. We provide evidence that corporate lies might, under certain circumstances, increase consumers' propensity to lie. We, furthermore, show that inducing a high self-brand match with a brand (Study 2a and Study 2b) increases the magnitude of consumers' disappointment—for the better and the worse, as consumers who strongly identify with a brand that lies are more disappointed than consumers who do not identify themselves with a brand. The replicated evidence for this double-edged sword of consumer-brand-identity matches sheds light on possible negative consequences of the notion that creating strong psychological bonds between brands and customers is beneficial for both parties involved. If consumers sense that they share a certain part of their personality with a brand, they might be more loyal, have higher repurchase rates, or buy more products of the brand, but as soon as the brand behaves in contradiction to the consumers' expectations, the former advantage of a highly matching consumer turns into a disadvantage.

*Table 8: Main Results Across the Experiments of this Study*

<b>Study</b>	<b>Brand</b>	<b>Lesion</b>	<b>Moderator</b>	<b>Mediator</b>	<b>Contaminated Behavior</b>	<b>Main Results</b>
Study 1	Adidas	Corporate lying	Brand knowledge	Contempt and disappointment	Individual lying behavior	Consumers with high <b>brand knowledge</b> increase their lying behavior after corporate lies. Contempt and disappointment mediate.
Study 2a	Nike	Corporate lying	Self-brand match	Contempt	Individual lying behavior	High self-brand match strengthens effect of corporate lying on consumers' disappointment. <b>Contempt</b> mediates and <b>decreases</b> lying among consumers with <b>low</b> self-brand match.
Study 2b	Patagonia	Corporate lying	Self-brand match	Disappointment	Individual lying behavior	High self-brand match strengthens effect of corporate lying on consumers' disappointment. <b>Disappointment</b> mediates and <b>increases</b> lying among consumers with <b>low</b> self-brand match.

*Notes: Lesion describes the brand's type of behavior that initiates the process of moral contagion. Mediator: Only significant mediators are reported.*

Regarding the process of contagious immorality, our studies provide mixed evidence that requires further investigation in future research. Table 9 gives an overview of the results of our hypothesis testing. While we report evidence that the immorality of brands contaminates the moral behavior of individuals under certain circumstances, the process is still not understood well enough to spare future research endeavors. Specifically, scholars have not clearly established how the brand's characteristics interact with the consumers' emotional responses to influence individuals' moral behaviors. While we found evidence that consumers' knowledge about Adidas influences their lying behavior, we did not control for the mental connections between the Adidas brand (Study 1) and Adidas's wrongdoings during the Corona-pandemic.

Future studies should take into account the moral history of brands and include them explicitly in their analyses. Furthermore, we show that different brands trigger different consumer emotions and different brands play different roles in starting the process of moral contagion. While Nike's lies (Study 2a) attenuate consumers' lying behavior through contempt, Patagonia's lies (Study 2b) fuel consumers' disappointment and increase their lying behavior. However, both effects only occur if consumers have a low psychological bond with the brand. Future studies should therefore disentangle the complex dynamics of consumers' expectations toward brands, their psychological attachment to the brands, and the consequences for those brands and their consumers if the brands act unethically.

Moreover, we do not find conclusive evidence to replicate the moral balancing effects of Newman and Brucks (2018). The authors show that consumers who are psychologically attached to a brand use the brand's behavior as a legitimation to license their own immoral behaviors and offset negative brand behavior with their own moral behaviors. Likewise, psychologically distant consumers engage in moral cleansing to compensate for the brands' immorality. However, we cannot find conclusive evidence for either direction, as our results only provide evidence for moral cleansing for Nike consumers with low self-brand match. Instead, we provide initial evidence for contagious immorality in Study 2b, underpinning the problems of research on moral licensing to provide clear and replicable results (Blanken et al., 2014; Kuper & Bott, 2019) and also emphasizing the problems of psychological research to show conclusive evidence that is replicable across time and context (Open Science Collaboration, 2015).



*Table 9: Overview of Hypotheses*

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>Supported</b>
<i>H1a</i> Corporate lies (vs. corporate morality) lead to higher disappointment.	1, 2a, 2b	●
<i>H1b</i> Corporate lies (vs. corporate morality) lead to higher contempt.	1, 2a, 2b	●
<i>H2</i> Consumers' disappointment mediates the relationship between corporate lying and consumers' lying behavior.	1, 2a, 2b	○
<i>H3</i> High (vs. low) brand knowledge strengthens (attenuates) the positive effect of disappointment on consumers' lying behavior.	1	●
<i>H4a</i> A high (low) self-brand match increases (decreases) consumers' disappointment if a brand lies (acts morally).	2a, 2b	○
<i>H4b</i> A high (low) self-brand match increases (decreases) consumers' contempt if a brand lies (acts morally).	2a, 2b	✕
<i>H5</i> A low (high) self-brand match amplifies (does not affect) how corporate lies influence consumers' lying behavior through disappointment.	2a, 2b	○

Notes: ○ = *partially*; ● = *yes*; ✕ = *no*.

### *Implications for Future Research*

The results of the three experimental studies open plenty of directions for future research. First, while we show initial support for the process of moral contagion and the negative effects of corporate lies through consumer emotions, academics still do not understand the process sufficiently. Second, it would be very interesting to know what lesions that initiate the process of moral contagion scholars can identify. While there is evidence—to a certain extent—from psychology that the initial act of moral contamination is quite diverse (Gino et al., 2009a), differences in the psychological connection between consumers and certain brands (Bagozzi et al., 2020) might influence the severity and the contagiousness of certain wrongdoings. Moreover, we only considered consumers' brand knowledge and their self-brand match to explain boundary conditions of the process of contamination. However, individual psychological characteristics of consumers, such as their proneness to vengeance (Coelho et al., 2018) or their individual sensitivity to justice and injustice (Schmitt et al., 2010), might help in understanding under which circumstances individuals refrain from their moral values and engage in unethical behaviors.

Future studies might also consider different motivations that consumers follow and these motivations might explain the consumers' unethical behaviors. For example, literature on consumer revenge (Romani et al., 2015) and betrayed consumers (Baghi & Gabrielli, 2020) indicates that corporate wrongdoings might initiate a variety of anti-brand actions that consumers use to free themselves from their emotional distress. Future research should also address the unique behavioral outcomes of different consumer emotions. In this study, we only focused on disappointment and contempt but the emotional responses to corporate immorality are much more diverse and their behavioral outcomes yield unique opportunities to understand possible contamination effects more clearly.

### *Managerial Implications*

Needless to say, corporations that act unethically face severe reprisals from consumers. The studies that we reported in this paper highlight the need for corporations to act responsibly, ethically, and according to the consumers' expectations. If corporations establish and create brands that consumers identify with, they may have significant market advantages, as highly identified consumers act in the interest of the brand they value and perceive as a part of their own personality. However, the positive affect can turn against those brands if the promises and expectations are willfully ignored and consumers are lied to. Highly identified consumers react more strongly to negative behaviors of brands and the former advantage turns into severe

disadvantages. Even loyal consumers might turn against their beloved brands if their brands abuse their trust and commitment. Therefore, corporations must ensure that their promises are well kept, fulfilled, and never broken. Corporations need to ensure that they implement a certain set of values and virtues (Moore, 2005; Alzola, 2008, 2015) that guide their behaviors and prevent unethical behaviors from happening. Additionally, our results indicate that consumers that are disappointed by corporate lies turn their negative emotions into actual immoral behaviors that might even threaten the corporations themselves. Consumers might want to take revenge and engage in a variety of damaging activities. For example, it is very much possible that disappointed consumers turn to the online realm and start to write fake reviews (Zhao et al., 2013) that falsely accuses the corporation of other wrongdoings. The negative emotions that are elicited by corporate immorality and their unique behavioral consequences should therefore be considered by practitioners as well.

#### 4.8. References

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#### 4.9. Appendix

##### *Appendix 1: Main Measures used Throughout the Studies*

Construct	Items (English)	Study 1			Study 2a			Study 2b			Source(s)
		M	SD	$\lambda$	M	SD	$\lambda$	M	SD	$\lambda$	
Disappointment (Study 1: $\alpha = .874$ ; Study 2a: $\alpha = .895$ ; Study 2b: $\alpha = .952$ )	• <i>After reading the article (about the brand), I felt disappointed.</i>	4.35	1.47	.900	3.74	2.07	.914	3.35	2.25	.963	Adapted from Zeelenberg & Pieters (1999)
	• <i>After reading the article (about the brand), I felt that my expectations were not confirmed.</i>	4.26	1.54	.918	3.43	1.91	.935	3.30	2.13	.970	
	• <i>After reading the article (about the brand), I felt betrayed.</i>	3.88	1.49	.862	2.93	1.68	.885	2.91	1.95	.936	
Contempt (Study 1: $\alpha = .918$ ; Study 2a: $\alpha = .960$ ; Study 2b: $\alpha = .977$ )	• <i>I feel contemptuous.</i>	4.03	1.43	.830	3.31	1.78	.925	3.03	2.00	.937	Adapted from Xie et al. (2015)
	• <i>I feel scornful.</i>	3.90	1.53	.878	3.01	1.68	.917	2.82	1.90	.960	
	• <i>I feel angry.</i>	3.91	1.58	.885	2.99	1.69	.918	2.76	1.85	.958	
	• <i>I feel disgusted.</i>	3.99	1.55	.801	2.96	1.79	.870	2.84	1.97	.933	
	• <i>I feel disdain.</i>	4.58	1.50	.848	3.53	1.93	.919	3.25	2.20	.950	
Brand Knowledge Intentions (Study 1: $\alpha = .893$ )	• <i>Compared to other people, I know a lot about the Adidas brand.</i>	3.09	1.44	.876							Cheng et al. (2011)
	• <i>My friends and family think I am an expert on Adidas.</i>	2.17	1.29	.883							
	• <i>I think I am very experienced with the Adidas brand.</i>	2.62	1.47	.915							

## *Appendix 2: Vignettes used in Study 1*

The vignettes were originally developed from Newman & Brucks (2018) and slightly adapted to fit the purpose and content of our study. The cases depicted in the vignettes are fictional. English translations are available upon request.

### **CSR Manipulation**

#### **Adidas tritt Koalition zum Verbot der Verwendung von Formaldehyd bei**

*Hamburg, 3. Juli 2020, Reuters / Associated Press*

Verbraucher werden wahrscheinlich begeistert sein, dass Adidas der erste große Bekleidungshersteller ist, der sich der sogenannten „Sustainable Apparel Coalition“ angeschlossen hat. Diese Koalition hat das Ziel, die Verwendung von Formaldehyd in allen seinen Produkten zu verbieten. Adidas hat sich für diesen Schritt entschieden, obwohl mehrere andere führende Textilhersteller explizit dazu aufgefordert haben, dieser Koalition nicht beizutreten.

Die Gesamtaufgabe der Koalition besteht darin, die negativen sozialen Auswirkungen der Bekleidungs- und Schuhherstellung zu reduzieren. Zu diesem Zweck fördert und unterstützt sie nachhaltige Innovationen und Praktiken an jedem Punkt der Lieferkette - einschließlich der Untersuchung der Auswirkungen der bei der Herstellung verwendeten Chemikalien. Eine dieser Chemikalien, Formaldehyd, die am häufigsten mit der Konservierung von Leichen in Verbindung gebracht wird, wird auch verwendet, um Kleidung ein frisches, faltenfreies Aussehen zu verleihen und Schimmelbildung während des Transports zu verhindern. Die Hersteller von Kleidung, die in Deutschland verkauft wird, sind nicht verpflichtet, die Verwendung der Chemikalie auf ihren Etiketten anzugeben.

Trotz mehreren Tests in Neuseeland, bei denen Formaldehydgehalte in einigen chinesischen Kleidungsexporten entdeckt wurden, die bis zu 900 Mal höher waren als der vorgeschriebene Grenzwert, wurden an ähnlicher Kleidung, die in Deutschland verkauft wird, keine Tests durchgeführt. Formaldehyd, ein hochgiftiges, farbloses Gas wird mit Hautreizungen und allergischen Reaktionen in Verbindung gebracht. Noch beunruhigender ist, dass die Chemikalie von der Internationalen Agentur für Krebsforschung als Humankarzinogen eingestuft wird.

Alex Lancy, ein Public-Relations-Experte bei McKinsey, nennt die von Adidas getroffene Entscheidung, der Koalition zum Verbot der Verwendung von Formaldehyd beizutreten, lobenswert und ein gutes Geschäft, vor allem wenn man die moralische Verpflichtung von Adidas berücksichtigt, Produkte herzustellen, die die Verbraucher weder schädigen oder verletzen. Lancy fährt mit den Worten fort: „Ich denke, dass Fragen der Produktsicherheit von größter Bedeutung sind - ein gesunder Mensch ist ein gesunder Verbraucher“.

## **CSiR Manipulation**

### **Adidas weigert sich Koalition zum Verbot der Verwendung von Formaldehyd beizutreten**

*Hamburg, 3. Juli 2020, Reuters / Associated Press*

Verbraucher werden wahrscheinlich schockiert sein, wenn sie feststellen, dass Adidas einer der letzten großen Bekleidungshersteller ist, der sich der sogenannten „Sustainable Apparel Coalition“ nicht angeschlossen hat. Diese Koalition hat das Ziel, die Verwendung von Formaldehyd in allen seinen Produkten zu verbieten. Adidas weigert sich diesen Schritt zu gehen, obwohl mehrere andere führende Textilhersteller explizit dazu aufgefordert haben, dieser Koalition beizutreten.

Die Gesamtaufgabe der Koalition besteht darin, die negativen sozialen Auswirkungen der Bekleidungs- und Schuhherstellung zu reduzieren. Zu diesem Zweck fördert und unterstützt sie nachhaltige Innovationen und Praktiken an jedem Punkt der Lieferkette - einschließlich der Untersuchung der Auswirkungen der bei der Herstellung verwendeten Chemikalien. Eine dieser Chemikalien, Formaldehyd, die am häufigsten mit der Konservierung von Leichen in Verbindung gebracht wird, wird auch verwendet, um Kleidung ein frisches, faltenfreies Aussehen zu verleihen und Schimmelbildung während des Transports zu verhindern. Die Hersteller von Kleidung, die in Deutschland verkauft wird, sind nicht verpflichtet, die Verwendung der Chemikalie auf ihren Etiketten anzugeben.

Trotz mehreren Tests in Neuseeland, bei denen Formaldehydgehalte in einigen chinesischen Kleidungsexporten entdeckt wurden, die bis zu 900 Mal höher waren als der vorgeschriebene Grenzwert, wurden an ähnlicher Kleidung, die in Deutschland verkauft wird, keine Tests durchgeführt. Formaldehyd, ein hochgiftiges, farbloses Gas wird mit Hautreizungen und allergischen Reaktionen in Verbindung gebracht. Noch beunruhigender ist, dass die Chemikalie von der Internationalen Agentur für Krebsforschung als Humankarzinogen eingestuft wird.

Alex Lancy, Public-Relations-Experte bei McKinsey, nennt die von Adidas getroffene Entscheidung, der Koalition zum Verbot des Einsatzes von Formaldehyd nicht beizutreten, angesichts der moralischen Verpflichtung von Adidas, Produkte herzustellen, die weder Verbraucher schädigen oder verletzen, alarmierend und schlecht für das Geschäft. Lancy fährt mit den Worten fort: „Ich denke, dass Fragen der Produktsicherheit von größter Bedeutung sind - ein gesunder Mensch ist ein gesunder Verbraucher“.

## **CSiR\_Lying Manipulation**

### **Adidas weigert sich Koalition zum Verbot der Verwendung von Formaldehyd beizutreten**

*Hamburg, 3. Juli 2020, Reuters / Associated Press*

Verbraucher werden wahrscheinlich schockiert sein, wenn sie feststellen, dass Adidas einer der letzten großen Bekleidungshersteller ist, der sich der sogenannten „Sustainable Apparel Coalition“ nicht angeschlossen hat. Diese Koalition hat das Ziel, die Verwendung von Formaldehyd in allen seinen Produkten zu verbieten. Adidas weigert sich anscheinend diesen Schritt zu gehen, obwohl Adidas schon mehrere Male beteuert hat, dieser Koalition beizutreten. Offensichtlich hat Adidas gelogen.

Die Gesamtaufgabe der Koalition besteht darin, die negativen sozialen Auswirkungen der Bekleidungs- und Schuhherstellung zu reduzieren. Zu diesem Zweck fördert und unterstützt sie nachhaltige Innovationen und Praktiken an jedem Punkt der Lieferkette - einschließlich der Untersuchung der Auswirkungen der bei der Herstellung verwendeten Chemikalien. Eine dieser Chemikalien, Formaldehyd, die am häufigsten mit der Konservierung von Leichen in Verbindung gebracht wird, wird auch verwendet, um Kleidung ein frisches, faltenfreies Aussehen zu verleihen und Schimmelbildung während des Transports zu verhindern. Die Hersteller von Kleidung, die in Deutschland verkauft wird, sind nicht verpflichtet, die Verwendung der Chemikalie auf ihren Etiketten anzugeben.

Trotz mehreren Tests in Neuseeland, bei denen Formaldehydgehalte in einigen chinesischen Kleidungsexporten entdeckt wurden, die bis zu 900 Mal höher waren als der vorgeschriebene Grenzwert, wurden an ähnlicher Kleidung, die in Deutschland verkauft wird, keine Tests durchgeführt. Formaldehyd, ein hochgiftiges, farbloses Gas wird mit Hautreizungen und allergischen Reaktionen in Verbindung gebracht. Noch beunruhigender ist, dass die Chemikalie von der Internationalen Agentur für Krebsforschung als Humankarzinogen eingestuft wird.

Alex Lancy, Public-Relations-Experte bei McKinsey, nennt die von Adidas getroffene Entscheidung, der Koalition zum Verbot des Einsatzes von Formaldehyd nicht beizutreten, angesichts der moralischen Verpflichtung von Adidas, Produkte herzustellen, die weder Verbraucher schädigen oder verletzen, alarmierend und schlecht für das Geschäft. Besonders brisant ist das Verhalten von Adidas, da das Unternehmen in der Vergangenheit mehrere Male angekündigt hat, diesen Schritt zu tätigen. Es habe also offensichtlich gelogen. Lancy fährt mit den Worten fort: „Ich denke, dass Fragen der Produktsicherheit von größter Bedeutung sind - ein gesunder Mensch ist ein gesunder Verbraucher“.

## **Control Manipulation**

### **Die Textilindustrie gründet Koalition zum Verbot der Verwendung von Formaldehyd**

*Hamburg, 3. Juli 2020, Reuters / Associated Press*

Verbraucher werden wahrscheinlich daran interessiert sein, dass eine Reihe von Bekleidungsherstellern die sogenannten „Sustainable Apparel Coalition“ gegründet haben, um die Verwendung von Formaldehyd in ihren Produkten zu verbieten. Diese Koalition hat das Ziel, die Verwendung von Formaldehyd in allen seinen Produkten zu verbieten.

Die Gesamtaufgabe der Koalition besteht darin, die negativen sozialen Auswirkungen der Bekleidungs- und Schuhherstellung zu reduzieren. Zu diesem Zweck fördert und unterstützt sie nachhaltige Innovationen und Praktiken an jedem Punkt der Lieferkette - einschließlich der Untersuchung der Auswirkungen der bei der Herstellung verwendeten Chemikalien. Eine dieser Chemikalien, Formaldehyd, die am häufigsten mit der Konservierung von Leichen in Verbindung gebracht wird, wird auch verwendet, um Kleidung ein frisches, faltenfreies Aussehen zu verleihen und Schimmelbildung während des Transports zu verhindern. Die Hersteller von Kleidung, die in Deutschland verkauft wird, sind nicht verpflichtet, die Verwendung der Chemikalie auf Etiketten anzugeben.

Trotz mehreren Tests in Neuseeland, bei denen Formaldehydgehalte in einigen chinesischen Kleidungsexporten entdeckt wurden, die bis zu 900 Mal höher waren als der vorgeschriebene Grenzwert, wurden an ähnlicher Kleidung, die in Deutschland verkauft wird, keine Tests durchgeführt. Formaldehyd, ein hochgiftiges, farbloses Gas wird mit Hautreizungen und allergischen Reaktionen in Verbindung gebracht. Noch beunruhigender ist, dass die Chemikalie von der Internationalen Agentur für Krebsforschung als Humankarzinogen eingestuft wird.

Alex Lancy, Public-Relations-Experte bei McKinsey, bezeichnet die von der Bekleidungsindustrie getroffene Entscheidung, die Koalition zum Verbot der Verwendung von Formaldehyd zu gründen, als wichtig und Teil des heutigen Geschäfts. Man müsse vor allem die moralische Verpflichtung der Bekleidungsindustrie betrachten, Produkte herzustellen, die weder die Verbraucher schädigen noch verletzen. Lancy fährt mit den Worten fort: „Ich denke, dass Fragen der Produktsicherheit von größter Bedeutung sind - ein gesunder Mensch ist ein gesunder Verbraucher“.

### *Appendix 3: Vignettes used in Study 2a and Study 2b*

The vignettes were originally developed from Newman & Brucks (2018) and slightly adapted to fit the purpose and content of our study. The cases depicted in the vignettes are fictional. English translations are available upon request.

#### **CSR Manipulation**

#### **Nein zu Giftstoffen in unserer Kleidung: Nike/Patagonia wird Teil der Sustainable Apparel Coalition!**

*Hamburg, 2. September 2020, Reuters / Associated Press*

Verbraucher\*innen werden begeistert sein, dass Nike/Patagonia der erste große Bekleidungshersteller ist, der sich der sogenannten „Sustainable Apparel Coalition“ angeschlossen hat. Die Koalition verfolgt das Ziel die negativen sozialen Auswirkungen der Bekleidungs- und Schuhherstellung zu reduzieren. Zu diesem Zweck fördert und unterstützt sie nachhaltige Innovationen und Praktiken an jedem Punkt der Lieferkette - einschließlich der Untersuchung von Auswirkungen der bei der Herstellung verwendeten Chemikalien.

Eine dieser Chemikalien ist Formaldehyd. Sie wird häufig mit der Konservierung von Leichen in Verbindung gebracht und auch verwendet, um Kleidung ein frisches, faltenfreies Aussehen zu verleihen und Schimmelbildung während des Transports zu verhindern. Dabei handelt es sich bei Formaldehyd um ein hochgiftiges, farbloses Gas, das Hautreizungen und allergische Reaktionen verursacht. Noch beunruhigender ist, dass die Chemikalie von der Internationalen Agentur für Krebsforschung als Humankarzinogen eingestuft wird und damit sowohl Kleidungshersteller\*innen als auch die Verbraucher\*innen gesundheitlich schädigt.

Die Hersteller von Kleidung, die in Deutschland verkauft wird, sind nicht verpflichtet, die Verwendung der Chemikalie auf ihren Etiketten anzugeben. Trotz der Feststellung hoher Formaldehydhalte in einigen chinesischen Kleidungsexporten, die bis zu 900 Mal höher waren als der vorgeschriebene Grenzwert, wurde an ähnlicher, in Deutschland verkaufter Kleidung, keine Prüfung der Giftstoffe durchgeführt.

Alex Lancy, Gründerin der NGO Fashion Revolution, nennt die von Nike/Patagonia getroffene Entscheidung, der Koalition zum Verbot der Verwendung von Formaldehyd beizutreten, lobenswert, vor allem wenn man die moralische Verpflichtung von Nike/Patagonia berücksichtigt, Produkte herzustellen, die den Menschen und die Umwelt weder schädigen noch verletzen. Lancy fährt mit den Worten fort: „Es reicht nicht, nur nach Qualität in unseren Produkten zu suchen. Wir müssen dafür sorgen die Qualität in unser aller Leben zu sichern!“

## **CSiR\_Lying Manipulation**

### **Ja zu Giftstoffen in unserer Kleidung? Nike/Patagonia weigert sich Teil der Sustainable Apparel Coalition zu werden!**

*Hamburg, 2. September 2020, Reuters / Associated Press*

Verbraucher\*innen werden wahrscheinlich schockiert sein, wenn sie feststellen, dass Nike/Patagonia einer der letzten großen Bekleidungshersteller ist, der sich der sogenannten „Sustainable Apparel Coalition“ nicht anschließt. Nachdem die Marke einige Male öffentlich beteuerte Teil der Koalition werden zu wollen, zeigt sich nun, dass die Marke ihre Kund\*innen damit offensichtlich belogen hat.

Die Sustainable Apparel Coalition verfolgt das Ziel die negativen sozialen Auswirkungen der Bekleidungs- und Schuhherstellung zu reduzieren. Zu diesem Zweck fördert und unterstützt sie nachhaltige Innovationen und Praktiken an jedem Punkt der Lieferkette - einschließlich der Untersuchung von Auswirkungen der bei der Herstellung verwendeten Chemikalien.

Eine dieser Chemikalien ist Formaldehyd. Sie wird häufig mit der Konservierung von Leichen in Verbindung gebracht und auch verwendet, um Kleidung ein frisches, faltenfreies Aussehen zu verleihen und Schimmelbildung während des Transports zu verhindern. Dabei handelt es sich bei Formaldehyd um ein hochgiftiges, farbloses Gas, das Hautreizungen und allergische Reaktionen verursachen kann. Noch beunruhigender ist, dass die Chemikalie von der Internationalen Agentur für Krebsforschung als Humankarzinogen eingestuft wird und damit sowohl Kleidungshersteller\*innen als auch die Verbraucher\*innen gesundheitlich schädigt.

Die Hersteller von Kleidung, die in Deutschland verkauft wird, sind nicht verpflichtet, die Verwendung der Chemikalie auf ihren Etiketten anzugeben. Trotz der Feststellung hoher Formaldehydgehalte in einigen chinesischen Kleidungsexporten, die bis zu 900 Mal höher waren als der vorgeschriebene Grenzwert, wurde an ähnlicher, in Deutschland verkaufter Kleidung, keine Prüfung der Giftstoffe durchgeführt.

Alex Lancy, Gründerin der NGO Fashion Revolution, nennt die von Nike/Patagonia getroffene Entscheidung, der Koalition zum Verbot des Einsatzes von Formaldehyd nicht beizutreten, angesichts der moralischen Verpflichtung von Nike/Patagonia, Produkte herzustellen, die Mensch und Umwelt weder schädigen noch verletzen, alarmierend und unverantwortlich. Lancy fährt mit den Worten fort: "Es reicht nicht nur nach Qualität in unseren Produkten zu suchen. Wir müssen dafür sorgen die Qualität in unser aller Leben zu sichern!"



*Appendix 4: Robustness Checks of the Results of the ANOVAs in Study 2a and Study 2b (dependent variable: consumers' disappointment)*

	Study 2a					Study 2b				
	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
<i>Corrected model</i>	53	38.72	22.61	***	.43	5	74.49	44.33	***	.60
<i>Constant</i>	1	160.01	93.46	***	.39	1	71.86	42.77	***	.23
CSiR (Lying)	1	129.12	75.39	***	.34	1	324.58	193.17	***	.57
Self-brand-match (SBM)	1	1.09	0.63	n.s.	.00	1	0.29	0.18	n.s.	.00
<i>Interaction</i>										
Lying × SBM	1	18.09	10.57	***	.07	1	11.48	6.84	**	.05
<i>Controls</i>										
Age	1	0.23	0.13	n.s.	.00	1	0.54	0.32	n.s.	.00
Gender	1	26.85	15.68	***	.10	1	0.79	0.47	n.s.	.00
<i>Error</i>	149					146				
R <sup>2</sup>	.43					.60				
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adjusted</sub>	.41					.59				

*Notes: Two-way ANOVA; dependent variable = consumers' disappointment. n.s.:  $p > .10$ ; †:  $p \leq .10$ ; \*:  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*:  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*:  $p \leq .001$ ; Gender: male = 0, female = 1.*

## **5. The Influence of Extrinsic Product Attributes on Consumers' Food Decisions: Review and Network Analysis of the Marketing Literature**

**Authors:** Nils Christian Hoffmann, Claudia Symmank, Robert Mai, Harald Rohm, Marijn Stok, Stefan Hoffmann

### **Abstract:**

The paper synthesizes the existing research on the influence of key product characteristics on the consumers' food decision-making. By applying network analysis on a sample of 233 empirical studies from the last three decades, the paper demonstrates how marketing-specific variables are embedded in a network of other predictors. The paper also analyses network structure and density using well established measures. The results show that there is still a lack of research concerning the interplay between marketing-relevant extrinsic product attributes (e.g. price, brand, labelling, country of origin) and intrinsic food attributes, policy-related factors, as well as aspects of the proximal and distal environment. The paper identifies gaps in the marketing literature and derives research propositions. Additionally, implications for marketing practice are developed.

### **Keywords:**

Consumers' decision-making, network analysis, consumer behaviour, extrinsic attributes, food marketing

### **Citation:**

Hoffmann, N. C., Symmank, C., Mai, R., Stok, F. M., Rohm, H., & Hoffmann, S. (2020). The influence of extrinsic product attributes on consumers' food decisions: review and network analysis of the marketing literature. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(9-10), 888-915.

## 5.1. Introduction

The food market of today seems to be saturated across nearly all relevant food groups. This leads to an increased competition among food producers, which fosters the need to develop new products and to improve and fine-tune existing ones (Combris, Bazoche, Giraud-Héraud, & Issanchou, 2009). Intense competition is associated with high rates of new product development failures as 40-50% of new food products disappear from the market within their first year (Costa & Jongen, 2006). For such a highly competitive market environment, understanding consumers and their preferences is a critical success factor. To avoid costly failures or to position foods more effectively, the food industry and marketers are keen to understand the mechanisms that guide food decision-making and to identify the factors that shape consumption choices.

Food choice—the selection of a specific food among two or more alternatives at a given time or in a specific context (Mela, 2001; Stok et al. 2018)—is a core topic of marketing and consumer behaviour, in particular. Over the past decades, a large number of studies addressed food decision-making, including analyses on how consumers draw conclusions about food characteristics (e.g. Raghunathan, Naylor, & Hoyer, 2006), how they choose between different options (e.g. Carroll & Vallen, 2014), what motivational factors drive their purchase intentions (e.g. Mai & Hoffmann, 2015), and how technology can support food choice (Flaherty et al. 2019). In recent years, interest in food-related research has increased heavily. Much of this research is empirical and primarily aims at isolating and analysing specific effects or phenomena that have direct or indirect business implications. In consideration of the growing number of food-related marketing studies, scholars are faced with the challenge of keeping track of the different facets of food decisions that are being examined.

With the intent to meet this challenge, the main objective of the present paper is to outline and synthesize the efforts of marketing researchers in a highly fragmented scientific area by shifting the perspective from analysing isolated drivers and partial explanations to developing a more complete picture about the interplay between product characteristics in consumers' food decision-making. To do so, we pursue three sub-objectives: Firstly, we categorize food consumption-related marketing research and identify central predictors that shape food decision-making of adults with a special emphasis on extrinsic product characteristics. We focus on four overarching aspects that are highly relevant in the marketing literature: brand (Baumann & Hamin, 2014; Boyland & Christiansen, 2015; Kelly et al., 2016), price (Bagchi & Block, 2011; Hauser, Nussbeck, & Jonas, 2013; Michels et al, 2008), labelling (Gomez, Werle, & Corneille, 2015; Howlett et al., 2009; Kozup, Creyer, & Burton, 2003; Zwick, 2013), and

country of origin (Berg & Preston, 2017; Krešić, Herceg, & Lelas, 2010; Luomala, 2007). Secondly, using network analysis (Hennig et al. 2012), we show how these factors are embedded in a broader network of different predictors, including intrinsic attributes (especially taste), policy-related influences, as well as aspects of the proximal and distal environment. With the help of the network analysis, we are able to shed light on this highly complex field and show which predictors of food decision-making have been jointly researched, and maybe even more importantly, which predictors have not been considered jointly in research on food decision-making yet. Knowledge about the inclusion of different drivers is important to overcome monocausal and conceptually limited explanations in food marketing. Therefore, as a third major contribution the analysis helps to identify gaps in the literature of this seemingly well-explored field of research. We detail which classes of factors should be analysed jointly in future research.

## **5.2. Conceptual Background**

### **5.2.1. The Need for an Integrative Approach in Food Research**

In the marketing literature, food decision-making has been conceptualized in terms of food purchase intention (Mai & Hoffmann, 2015), food purchase decision (Tirelli & Martínez-Ruiz, 2014), or food choice (Hansen, Mukherjee, & Thomsen, 2011; Peters-Teixeira & Badrie, 2005). Research from an isolated marketing standpoint, however, may face the danger of neglecting relevant factors and boundary conditions that shape consumers' food decision-making. For this reason, marketing academics need to bear in mind that food consumption is in the focus of many related disciplines, including nutritional science (Harnack et al., 2008; Vyth et al., 2010), psychology (Toepel, Ohla, Hudry, le Coutre, & Murray, 2014; Wagner, Howland, & Mann, 2014), food technology (Annett, Muralidharan, Boxall, Cash, & Wismer, 2008; Jaeger et al., 2011; Jaros, Thamke, Raddatz, & Rohm, 2009), and economics (Barreiro-Hurle, Gracia, & De-Magistris, 2010; Luomala, 2007; Mai, Symmank, & Seeberg-Elverfeldt, 2016). By reviewing nearly 2,000 published studies from various scientific disciplines, Symmank et al. (2017) revealed that the vast majority of research on food decision-making has been conducted in the fields of nutritional science, medicine, and health science.

Although the literature widely agrees with the notion that a complex interplay among different factors jointly determine food consumption, interdisciplinary approaches are still scarce (Grunert et al., 2016; Jacobsen et al., 2014) and the field is dominated by isolated approaches focused on one or few relevant characteristics. Our critique of the current literature does not primarily focus on critical aspects of individual studies. Our critique is focused on the structural

aspect of how different classes of predictors are integrated and jointly researched in order to overcome monocausal and discipline-specific explanations. To overcome this issue, we explore how the predictors that are specific to marketing research are connected to the variables that are primarily explored in other fields.

### **5.2.2. Predictors of Food Decision-Making**

To integrate and synthesize the insights from different fields, several framework models of food decision-making have been suggested (Furst, Connors, Bisogni, Sobal, & Falk, 1996; Köster, 2009; Van der Merwe, Kempen, Breedts, & De Beer, 2010), of which the DONE (Determinants Of Nutrition and Eating behaviour) framework ([www.uni-konstanz.de/DONE](http://www.uni-konstanz.de/DONE); Stok et al., 2017) is by far the most comprehensive. The present research adopts this framework to categorize marketing-related predictors of food decision-making.

The DONE framework is a multi-level framework which was developed in an extensive Delphi-like process by integrating input from more than 150 international researchers. Delphi methods in general have their weaknesses (for a good overview of the possibilities, limitations and validity of the Delphi method see Boukdedid et al. 2011). Critics may argue that even a very comprehensive and multi-disciplinary framework such as the DONE framework may fall short in acknowledging the true complexity and nature of interactions between determinants. However, its unique multi-layer approach and the scope of the framework offer an excellent basis for further research and an ideal starting point for our network analysis. While most of the other present frameworks in the current literature “show the signature of the respective discipline” (Stok et al. 2017, p. 24), the DONE framework is able to synthesize the correlates and determinants of nutrition and eating in a much broader scope. The present paper applies the comprehensive DONE framework and narrows its scope to capture and analyse marketing-related predictors of food decision marketing.

The DONE framework presents a hierarchical, multi-level structure of predictors with four categories on the main level that are split into eleven so-called stem-categories: individual factors (biological, demographic, psychological, situational), interpersonal factors (social, cultural), environmental factors (product, micro, meso/macro), and a policy component (industry, government). The stem-categories are further split into 51 categories at the third level, the so-called leaf-categories, 39 of which are used in the present analysis as they apply to food choices of adults (Symmank et al., 2017). The first central issue addressed in this paper is to identify which predictors of food decision-making are mainly covered by the marketing literature.

### 5.2.3. Extrinsic Product Cues

From a marketing perspective, extrinsic product attributes (e.g. brand, price, labelling, country of origin) are important levers to increase food attractiveness and to stimulate purchases without modifying the physical properties of the product itself (Akdeniz, Calantone, & Voorhees, 2013). Intrinsic attributes, such as ingredients or nutritional composition, refer to product properties that cannot be changed without modifying the product itself (Akdeniz et al., 2013; Szocs & Biswas, 2015).

Some studies have already explored extrinsic product characteristics in the context with other predictors specified in the DONE framework, such as psychological factors (e.g. quality awareness: Bornkessel, Bröring, Omta, & van Trijp, 2014; Botonaki, Polymeros, Tsakiridou, & Mattas, 2006) or socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. age, gender: Ares & Gámbaro, 2007; Driskell, Meckna, & Scales, 2006). However, no study has applied a network approach to analyse co-occurrences of extrinsic product attributes and other predictors of food decision-making. Extrinsic product attributes are specifically relevant for marketing practitioners, as they might be utilized and adjusted to meet consumers' demands without changing the product itself (Olsen & Jacoby, 1972). In the original DONE framework, extrinsic product attributes constitute one of 51 predictors of food decision-making. All those predictors are shown to be relevant in consumers' food decision-making and offer unique insights into the complexity of how consumers make food choices. However, extrinsic product attributes are of outstanding importance for marketing practitioners and need to be investigated further and in more detail. Past research has identified several extrinsic attributes that influence consumers' purchase behaviour and highlighted their importance for practitioners and their fundamental role in forming consumer judgments and buying behaviours. For example, Pechman and Ratneshwar (1992) found that high-priced orange juices are inferred to be of higher quality, indicating that the extrinsic product attribute price influences or even overwrites sensory experiences. Similarly, judgments of quality are shown to be dependent on characteristics implied through branding and/or labelling (Bredahl, 2003; Lans et al., 2001, Richardson et al., 1994). Likewise, the country of origin strongly guides consumer judgments, for example, improving food product perceptions if consumers' perceptions of the respective country are favourable (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). By investigating the joint effects of country of origin and price, Veale and Quester (2008) show that even if all sensory information is made available to the consumer (through sensory experience), extrinsic product cues still exert a significant and strong influence on consumers' preference formation. In sum, these studies underscore the importance of extrinsic product attributes on consumer preferences and indicate that in some cases they even

overcome sensory perceptions. However, these findings have not been aggregated so far and marketing research still lacks a sense of the bigger picture on the interplay of extrinsic product attributes with other attributes. For this reason, we analyse these relevant extrinsic product attributes and investigate how they are embedded in a broader network of marketing-specific predictors of food decision-making to obtain a better overview of the literature; the second central issue of this article.

### **5.3. Study Design**

#### **5.3.1. Search Process**

The search process builds on and extends the procedure and data developed by Symmank et al. (2017) who performed an extensive interdisciplinary review on the literature that addresses the food decision-making of adults. They developed an initial set of more than 10,000 articles from ten electronic databases. To identify these articles, the authors conducted a comprehensive literature search in ten different electronic databases (Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Cinahl, EconLit, PsycArticles and PsycInfo of EBSCO, Embase, PubMed, Web of Science, and Cochrane). Multiple keyword combinations were used to account for variations in terminology across the papers. Additionally, the authors excluded studies that deal with animals or infants. After data cleansing, the remaining 1,820 papers were assigned to the following disciplines: nutritional science, medicine/health science, food technology, behavioural science, biology, psychology, social psychology, sociology, business research/economics, and marketing/consumer research (for more details, please refer to Symmank et al., 2017). Table 1 shows the keyword combination that Symmank et al. (2017) used in their review.

*Table 1: Keyword combination used in Symmank et al. (2017)*

Aim of the keyword	Execution <sup>a</sup>
Relevant dependent variables	“food purchase intention*” OR food purchase behavior“ OR food purchase decision*” OR food buying intention*“ OR food buying behavior” OR food buying decision*“ OR food decision-making” OR food acceptance*“ OR food preference*” OR food choice*”
Methodological keywords	AND (data OR regression OR empiric* OR variance OR evidence OR sampl* OR statistic* OR analysis OR signific* OR hypothes*)
Exclusion of animal studies	AND NOT (animal*) AND
Exclusion of young age groups	AND NOT (child* OR infant*)

*Notes: \* Wildcard indicator, <sup>a</sup> Keyword combination is for all databases except PubMed. Search terms were adapted to respective database syntax to achieve valid results. For PubMed we used a specific combination of Mesh Terms: (food preferences/statistics and numerical data) AND humans. Source: Symmank et al. (2017)*



For our research, we focus on literature in marketing/consumer research and business research/economics. We advanced the database of Symmank (2017) by including more recent articles that met the search criteria. Given the focus of our research, the literature search is focused on papers from journals that specifically address issues from a marketing/consumer standpoint as well as business administration and economics. To be included in our final dataset, every publication needed to address at least one of the predictors of the DONE framework as a main dependent or independent variable, had to be published in a journal from marketing/consumer research or business research/economics and had to apply a quantitative approach. Using this procedure, 233 studies published between 1985 and 2019 were classified as belonging to the specific research areas and used for the current network analysis. These articles were published in 103 different journals. Please see Table 2 for a list of the journals with more than 4 publications. The journals are not limited to the core areas of marketing (e.g. *Journal of Marketing*, Tsiros & Heilman, 2005), but also focus on general business (e.g. *Journal of Business Research*, Harker, Sharma, Harker, & Reinhard, 2010), consumer behaviour (e.g. *Journal of Consumer Research*, McFerran, Dahl, Fitzsimons, & Morales, 2010), psychology (e.g. *Psychological Studies*, Hervé, Obin, & Ferrand, 2014), food (e.g. *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, Tsakiridou, Mattas, & Mpletsa, 2009), or agribusiness (e.g. *Journal of International Food and Agribusiness Marketing*, Onozaka, Melbye, & Hansen, 2014). The journal with the highest number of respective publications was the *International Journal of Consumer Studies* (n = 32), followed by the *Journal of Consumer Research* (n = 12), and the *Journal of International Food and Agribusiness Marketing* (n = 9). In 11 additional journals, the number of publications was larger than 4 (e.g. *Psychology and Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, *Journal of Consumer Studies and Home Economics*). These publications jointly account for 45.5% of all journal publications, whereas 46 journals had only one entry.

*Table 2: Journals and their cumulative share of the articles analysed in this study*

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Journal</b>	<b>Number of Articles</b>	<b>Cumulative Share</b>
1	International Journal of Consumer Studies	32	13.7%
2	Journal of Consumer Research	12	18.9%
3	Journal of Foodservice Business Research	8	22.3%
4	Journal of International Food and Agribusiness Marketing	8	25.8%
5	Journal of Food Products Marketing	6	28.3%
6	Psychology and Marketing	6	30.9%
7	Journal of Applied Psychology	5	33.1%
8	Journal of Food Products Marketing	5	35.2%
9	Agribusiness	4	36.9%
10	Agricultural Economics-Zemedelska Ekonomika	4	38.6%
11	American Journal of Agricultural Economics	4	40.3%
12	Journal of Business Research	4	42.1%
13	Journal of Consumer Affairs	4	43.8%
14	Journal of Consumer Studies and Home Economics	4	45.5%

*Notes: The table shows each journal that had published at least four of the articles included in our network analysis.*

### 5.3.2. Coding of Predictors

The predictors that were covered by the respective publications were coded using a procedure that followed the structure of the DONE framework (Symmank et al., 2017). First, two researchers independently analysed the titles, abstracts and (if necessary) the full texts of the publications and identified which categories of the DONE framework were analysed in the 233 articles. Out of the total 51 leaf categories of the DONE framework, 39 categories were suitable for our research as the rest of them explored food choices among infants or elderly people. Because of the profound practical and scientific relevance of extrinsic product attributes and to further enrich the framework, we complemented the deductive nature of the DONE framework by scanning the literature carefully for cues of extrinsic product attributes (such as brand, price, labelling, country of origin, etc.). We included all the variables that were analysed in those studies that explicitly affect consumers' behaviour towards certain products without modifying the physical properties of the product itself. For being able to spotlight the category of extrinsic product attributes and their fundamental importance for marketing research, we refined the categories of the DONE framework and coded each article that examined extrinsic product attributes in greater detail. With this inductive approach, we replaced the original leaf-category 'extrinsic product attributes' with eight separate extrinsic product attribute categories. In sum, we analysed 46 categories. The extrinsic product attributes included in the analyses were: country of origin, food labelling, nutritional information, price, product brand, product convenience, product packaging, and reputation. Employing this coding schema, two coders independently categorized the publications.

This procedure led to a 2-mode  $233 \times 46$  rectangular matrix with the studies as the rows and the attributes as the columns. A 1 in a cell indicates that the predictor was used in the study. The analysis of the 233 publications resulted in a total of 379 attribute codings ( $M = 1.63$  codings per publication;  $SD = 1.19$ ).

### 5.3.3. Method

We applied network analysis to explore the scope and interrelations of food-related marketing research. This type of analysis has been used extensively to investigate social networks (Hennig et al., 2012). Network analysis helps to analyse how these items are embedded in a network of relevant items (Hennig et al., 2012). Within a network analysis, each predictor is represented by a node whose size indicates its relative frequency of occurrence. The (graphical) network that is the result of the analysis illustrates which predictors are closely related as these predictors are displayed spatially close. Consequently, network analysis unravels which predictors of food

choice have been jointly researched thus far. In this research, the analysis was performed using UCINET Software (version 6.625; Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002) and NetDraw (Borgatti, 2002). To apply network analysis, we transformed the  $233 \times 46$  rectangular matrix that we used to code the articles by matrix multiplication and created a  $46 \times 46$  valued square predictor matrix. The diagonal indicates the total number of times the predictor variable was used in any study and the off diagonals indicate the number of times each predictor pair was jointly researched.

## 5.4. Findings

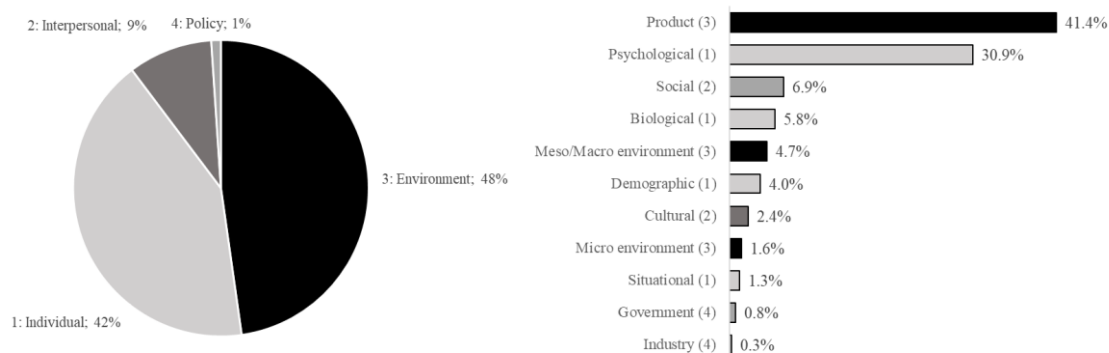
### 5.4.1. Overview of the Main Predictors of Food Decision-Making

The analysis of food-related marketing research indicates a rapid and exponential growth in studies on food decision-making. While between 1985 and 1989, two studies were identified, a steady increase in the number of publications is noticeable over the last few decades; more than 120 papers that fall in the scope of our research were published between 2010 and 2019. This trend can be expected to continue in the coming years, as recent meta studies on a variety of food-related research topics indicate (e.g. food labelling (Shangguan et al., 2018), emotions in food (Evers et al., 2018), nudging healthy food (Cadario & Chandon, 2019), and others).

The majority of the 233 publications explore predictors of food decision-making that belong to the main categories of environmental factors (47.8%) and individual factors (42.0%). Empirical studies dealing with interpersonal relations represent 9.2%, whereas policy-related studies are scarce in the marketing literature (1.1%). Figure 1 highlights that *product* is the most widely studied stem-category within the DONE main levels (41.4%), followed by *psychological factors* (e.g. food beliefs or personality) at 30.9%.

Based on Symmank et al. (2017), the eleven stem-category predictors of the DONE framework were further differentiated into 39 leaf-categories. Brain function, oral function, food-related physiology, anthropometrics, sensory perception, physical health, and sleep characteristics belong to the stem-category *biological*. The stem-category *demographic* is split into biological demographics, cultural characteristics, and personal socio-economic status. Personality, mood and emotions, self-regulation, health cognitions, food knowledge, skills and abilities, food beliefs, food habits, eating regulation, weight control cognitions and behaviours, and intervention are the third level predictors within the stem-category *psychological*, and *situational* predictors are differentiated into hunger, related health behaviours, situational and time constraints.

Figure 1: Stem-categories of food choice considered in the marketing literature



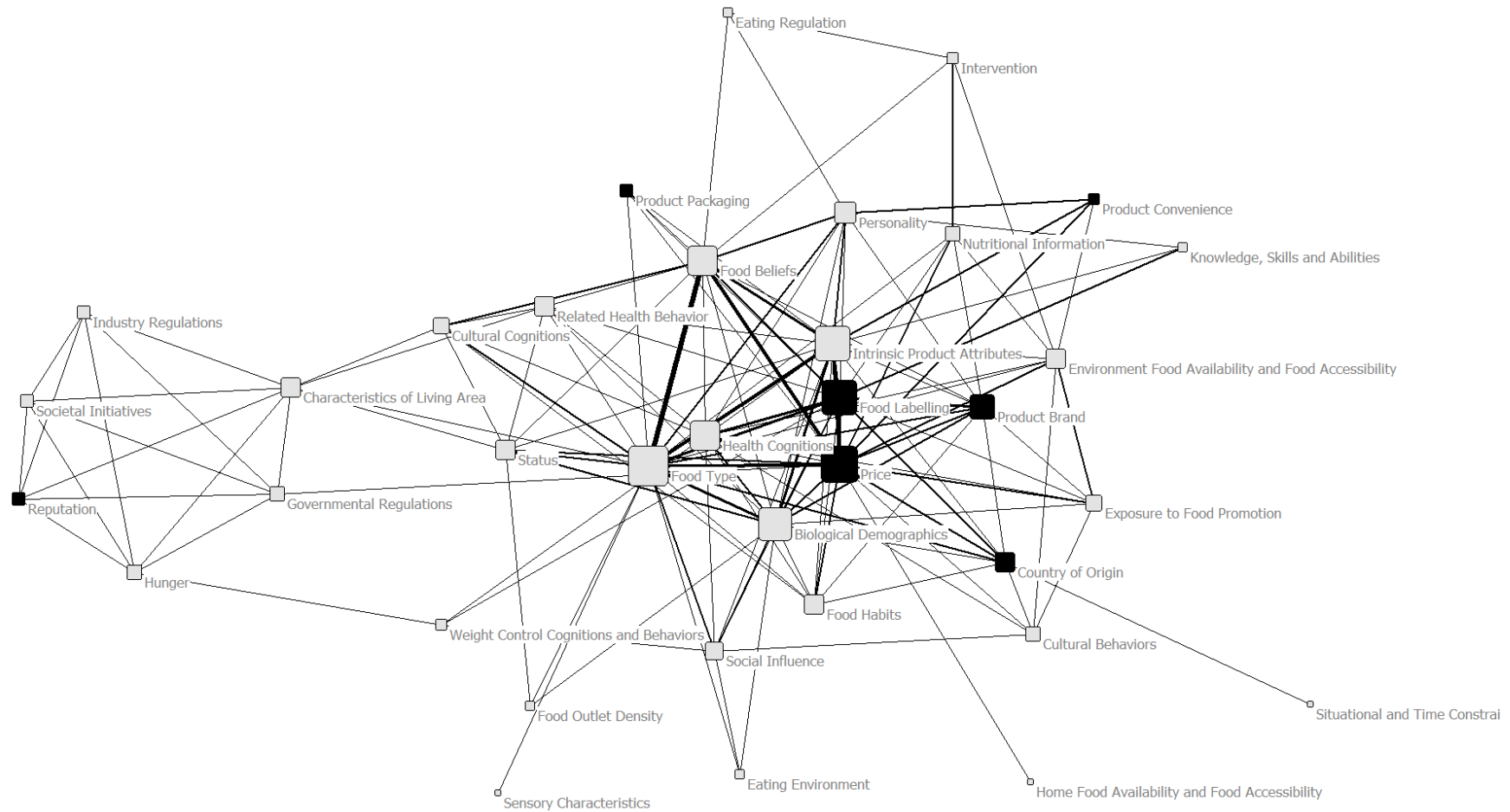
Notes:  $n = 379$  entries; left: the pie chart shows the cumulative shares (in %) of the four main levels. Left: numbers in parenthesis indicate how the eleven stem-categories are assigned to the four main levels (share in %): (1) individual, (2) interpersonal, (3) environment, (4) policy.

The leaf-categories *social* and *cultural* include social influences and cultural cognitions and behaviours, respectively. Intrinsic product attributes, extrinsic product attributes, and food type belong to the stem-category *product*. *Micro* is split into portion size, home food availability and accessibility, and eating environment, and *meso/macro* into characteristics of living area, environment food availability and accessibility, food outlet density, exposure to food promotion, and societal initiatives. The leaf-category *industry* includes industry regulations, and *government* is differentiated into governmental regulations and campaigns.

Regarding the first sub-objective (categorizing food consumption-related marketing research and identifying central predictors of food decision-making), network analysis reveals one major component. Components are defined as “sub-graphs that are connected within but disconnected between sub-graphs” (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005, p.185). The major component that was revealed by our analysis consists of 36 connected predictors and 10 isolates (i.e., predictors without any tie to any other predictor) that were not covered in prior marketing research (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). The full network including the 36 predictors is visualised in Figure 2, showing that extrinsic product attributes such as labelling, brand, price, and country of origin were among the most essential predictors. Using geodesic distances as the scaling technique in UCINET, this is visualised by their central position in the network and by node size. These categories have strong co-occurrences with many other predictors, including food type (Jervis, Lopetcharat, & Drake, 2012; Kim & Boyd, 2006), food beliefs (Honkanen, Verplanken, & Olsen, 2006), and demographics (Mittal, Prashar, & Mittal, 2011). For example, Mittal et al. (2011) analysed the impact of consumer characteristics, including demographics (e.g. age, gender), on food and grocery shopping attitudes. This combination of research interests takes a central position in Figure 2. Other studies evaluated more remote connections. Honkanen et al. (2006) investigated the role of ethical motives in consumer choice of organic

foods in Norway, while Kim & Boyd (2006) focused on Japanese consumers' readiness to accept genetically modified food. Also, Jervis et al. (2012) identified factors that influence the choice of latte-style coffee beverages.

Figure 2: Network of predictors examined in the marketing literature



Notes: Each predictor is represented by a node whose size indicates its relative frequency of occurrence in the dataset, while line thickness illustrates which predictors are strongly interrelated, which is underlined by their physical proximity (layout by distances only using geodesic distances; default scaling in UCINET). The black nodes indicate extrinsic product attributes.

## 5.4.2. Spotlight on Four Key Extrinsic Product Attributes

### Research Relevance of Extrinsic Product Attributes

As the second contribution of this paper, we investigate how the main extrinsic product attributes are embedded in a broader network of different predictors using network analysis. To this end, we calculated k-cores, eigenvector centrality and degree centrality, which are shown in Table 3 for all predictors used in the network analysis. The four most widely considered extrinsic product attributes in marketing research are food labelling (e.g. Pennings, Striano, & Oliverio, 2013), brand (e.g. Wyma et al., 2012), price (e.g. Huyghe & Van Kerckhove, 2013), and country of origin (e.g. Shin & Hancer, 2016) as indicated by their largest k-cores of  $k = 7$ . Hanneman and Riddle (2005, p. 182) define the k-core as “a maximal group of actors, all of whom are connected to some number (k) of other members of the group”. The indicator is widely applied in network analysis to identify strongly connected nodes of a network. Specifically, a k-core of 7 indicates that this attribute forms a sub-network with other attributes that are themselves connected to 7 attributes. This indicates a strongly embedded node within the network and gives hints about which predictors are most strongly connected within the whole network and which predictors often analysed in the marketing literature. For further analysis, we dichotomized the data so that the matrix captures only the absence (0) or presence (1) of a tie, but not how often predictors were examined together. We then estimated the degree of centrality of the nodes of the network. The degree of centrality indicates the number of a predictor's connections (i.e., the number of co-occurrences of a specific attribute with other attributes). The results suggest that labelling (17 ties), price (18), brand (11), and country of origin (9) have the most ties and exceed the average degree (6.17) of the entire network. Furthermore, we estimated eigenvector centrality for which higher scores imply greater actor centrality in the network (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). Eigenvector centrality not only takes into account the number of node connections (i.e., its degree) but also the centrality of the nodes that are connected to it (Hansen, Shneiderman, and Smith, 2010). This indicator constitutes a powerful measure to identify strongly connected and influential nodes. The whole network displays rather high variability in centralities ( $M = 0.106$ ,  $SD = 0.103$ ) and the results, again, show that labelling (0.304), price (0.297), brand (0.234), and country of origin (0.186) are the most central and influential extrinsic product attributes and among the most central attributes in general.



*Table 3: Network measures of all the predictors used in the main analysis*

Predictor	Main Level	K-Core	Degree	Eigenvector Centrality
<i>Extrinsic Product Attributes</i>				
Price	Environment	7	18	0.297
Food Labelling	Environment	7	17	0.304
Product Brand	Environment	7	11	0.234
Country of Origin	Environment	7	9	0.186
Nutritional Information	Environment	5	6	0.120
Product Packaging	Environment	5	5	0.132
Reputation	Environment	5	5	0.015
Product Convenience	Environment	4	4	0.084
<i>Other Predictors of the DONE Framework</i>				
Food Type	Environment	7	20	0.318
Intrinsic Product Attributes	Environment	7	17	0.311
Biological Demographics	Individual	7	16	0.298
Food Beliefs	Individual	7	14	0.260
Health Cognitions	Individual	7	14	0.249
Personality	Individual	7	10	0.193
Food Habits	Individual	7	9	0.207
Related Health Behaviour	Individual	6	9	0.189
Personal Socio-economic Status	Individual	6	9	0.174
Environment Food Availability and Accessibility	Environment	6	9	0.149
Social Influence	Interpersonal	6	8	0.152
Exposure to Food Promotion	Environment	6	7	0.145
Cultural Cognitions	Interpersonal	6	7	0.131
Cultural Behaviours	Interpersonal	6	6	0.105
Characteristics of Living	Environment	5	9	0.081
Governmental Regulations	Policy	5	6	0.039
Hunger	Individual	5	6	0.021
Industry Regulations	Policy	5	5	0.015
Societal Initiatives	Environment	5	5	0.015
Weight Control Cognitions	Individual	4	4	0.064
Intervention	Individual	3	4	0.051
Knowledge, Skills and Ability	Individual	3	3	0.072
Food Outlet Density	Environment	3	3	0.070
Eating Environment	Environment	3	3	0.068
Eating Regulation	Individual	3	3	0.045
Home Food Availability and Accessibility	Environment	1	1	0.026
Sensory Characteristics	Individual	1	1	0.028
Situational and Time Constraints	Individual	1	1	0.016

*Notes: Predictors with a k-core = 0 are not shown. A k-core is a maximal group of actors, all of whom are connected to some number (k) of other members of the group: a higher k-core indicates strength; the degree indicates the number of connections the node has to other nodes; Eigenvector centrality indicates the centrality of each attribute within the network and higher numbers indicate higher centrality.*

## Interplay of Extrinsic Product Attributes

Taken all together, our network analysis implies strong co-occurrences of product labelling, price, brand, and country of origin (e.g. Ding, Veeman, & Adamowicz, 2012). Plausibly, price is closely related to brand as branded products often have higher prices, and willingness to pay largely depends on the brand. Ares, Giménez and Deliza (2010), for example, showed that brand and price are key aspects driving the choice of functional yogurt. Similarly, the link between food labelling and price stems from the frequently observed fact that products on which information is touted in a special way (e.g. health claims) are more expensive than conventional products. Barreiro-Hurle et al. (2010) conducted a choice experiment to identify the effects of health and nutrition labels of more and less healthy foods on willingness to pay (Haws, Reczek, & Sample, 2016). Additionally, the networks for brand and price closely overlap, whereas the labelling-network includes distinct aspects, such as knowledge, skills and abilities, or weight control. To gain a better understanding of these co-occurrences with other predictors, partial ego networks were created that spotlight the co-occurrences for the four extrinsic attributes. Ego networks highlight specific nodes (called egos) and show their directly connected nodes and the relationships among these other nodes (Wasserman & Faust 1994). Ego networks are used to understand variations in the connections of different nodes within a network and their unique surroundings (Hanneman & Riddle, 2015). We use ego networks to highlight differences in the connections of the four main extrinsic product attributes and show how their direct relationships to other predictors may differ between each other.

Table 4 shows the network measures for all the ego networks, including their sizes, number of ties, number of pairs and their density.

*Table 4: Network measures of the ego networks*

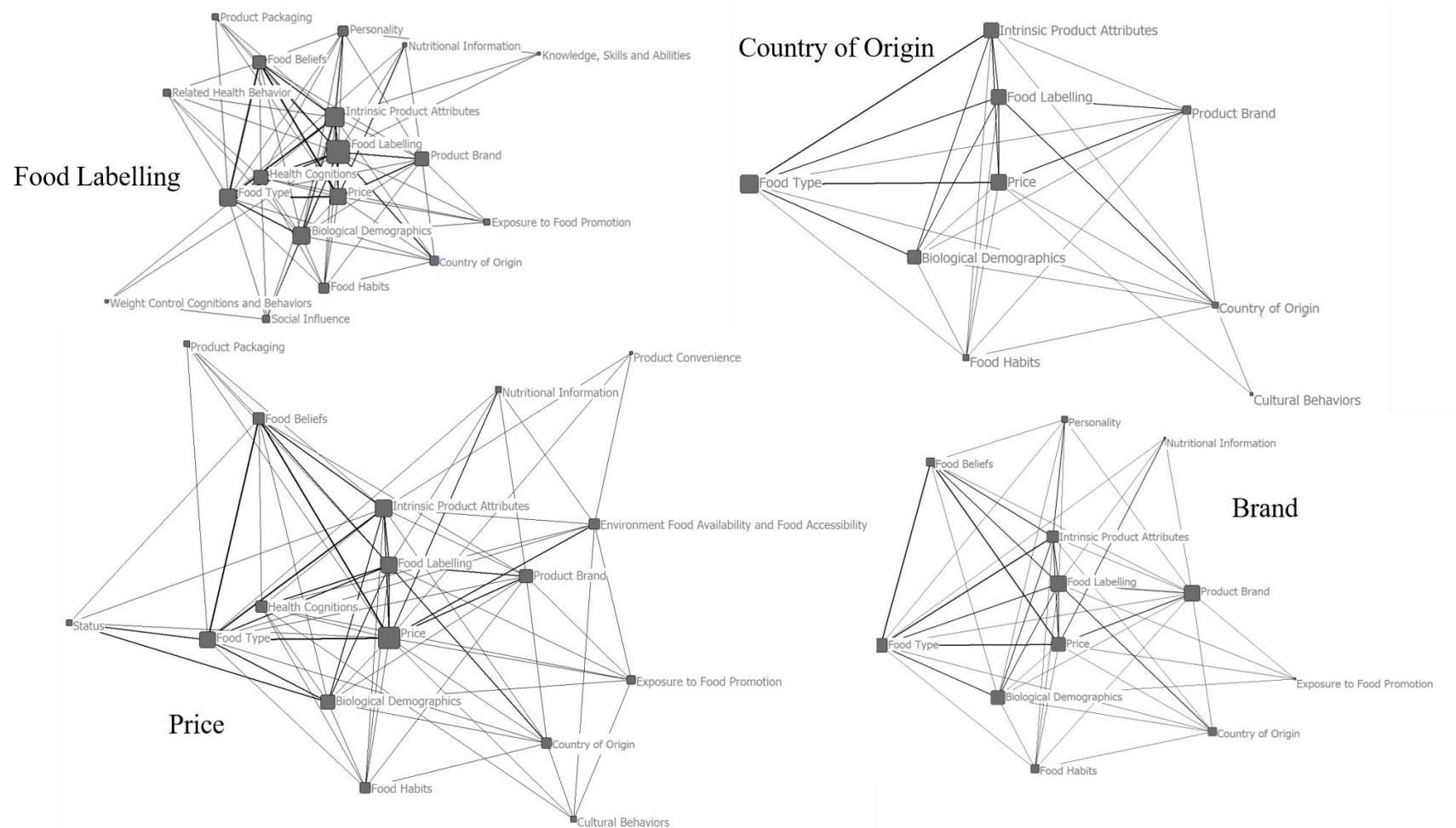
<b>Ego Network of Predictor</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Ties</b>	<b>Pairs</b>	<b>Density in %</b>
Price	18	57	306	18.6
Food Labelling	17	61	272	22.4
Product Brand	11	37	110	33.6
Country of Origin	9	22	72	30.6

*Notes: The size indicates the number of nodes that are directly connected to the specific product attribute, indicating the size of the ego network. Ties refer to the number of connections among all the nodes in the ego network. Pairs indicate the number of possible ties in each ego network. The density of the ego network indicates what percentage of all possible ties in each ego network are actually present (Hanneman & Riddle, 2015).*

## **Food Labelling**

The ego network of food labelling in Figure 3 demonstrates that this attribute is often examined in a context with product type and intrinsic attributes (e.g. Al-Shamsi, Rahman, Abdullah, & Claereboudt, 2013; Hirogaki, 2012). This is not surprising because food labels typically provide a verbal and/or visual representation of intrinsic product properties (e.g. nutritional composition). For example, Hirogaki (2012) has shown that health claim messages increase consumer willingness to purchase functional foods. For sweets, Al-Shamsi et al. (2013) found that colour and sweetness are the most important intrinsic product attributes for selecting typical Arabian sweets. There are also associations to health cognitions, knowledge, and food beliefs which tend to operate at a cognitive level. Food labelling invokes cognitive efforts to process and interpret the label. For example, Howlett, Burton and Kozup (2008) showed that providing information on trans-fat in a nutrition facts panel affects purchase intention. Likewise, Nayga (1999) and Droms (2006) revealed that the healthfulness of food choices is based on nutritional information. From a dual systems processing account (Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Kahneman, 2003; Smith & DeCoster, 2000), it is therefore plausible to assume that the influence of food labelling on food decision-making is strongly intertwined with the influence of other cognitions, such as nutritional knowledge and health cognitions.

Figure 3: Ego network food labelling, brand, price, and country of origin



Notes: To increase readability, nodes with a degree of  $d=1$  have been erased from the ego networks.

## **Brand**

Research on brand, an important factor in food decision-making, has strong associations with various other categories of predictors (Figure 3). Brand sensitivity is known from marketing theory to be strongly defined by both (cultural) background and personal food-related experiences (d'Astous & Gargouri, 2001; Workman & Lee, 2013). In line with this, connections were found between brand and the country of origin (e.g. Krešić, Herceg, Lelas, & Jambrak, 2010), personality (e.g. Deshpande, Basil, & Basil, 2009), food habits (e.g. Krešić et al., 2010), and exposure to food promotion (e.g. Mathios, 1996).

## **Price**

The ego network of price—one of the most important variables for food marketers—reveals strong linkages to food type (e.g. Balcombe, Bitzios, Fraser, & Haddock-Fraser, 2014) and intrinsic attributes (e.g. Al-Shamsi et al. 2013) (Figure 3). This might be explained by the fact that price closely depends on the nutritional composition of the food (i.e., the product ingredients). The prominent ties between price and food beliefs may stem from the fact that previous research explored price sensitivity of consumers towards certain foods (e.g. Hauser et al., 2013). When individuals hold positive beliefs about certain functional foods or healthy features, they are willing to spend more money on those foods and vice versa. For example, Lacanilao, Cash, & Adamowicz (2011) examined how consumers react to taxes on high-fat snacks.

## **Country of Origin**

Research on the country of origin has strong connections to other extrinsic product attributes. In this regard, Figure 3 shows a relatively small but dense ego network of country of origin and indicates that most of the studies investigated product origin together with price and food labelling. For example, Luomala (2007) explored whether the origin of food influences consumers' decisions and showed that the effect of activating the domestic origin on product choice differs between the cognitive and affective meanings that are associated with foreign foods. Berg and Preston (2017) show that consumers' willingness to substitute non-local food for local food is highly contingent on the price of the non-local food. However, this willingness is also dependent on consumer characteristics, which likewise affect consumers' willingness to pay for local food. While our analysis shows some co-occurrences of the country of origin and extrinsic product attributes, less is known about the co-occurrences of the origin of the product and sensory or intrinsic attributes, such as product taste (Krešić, Herceg, and Lelas, 2010).

## **5.5. Major Research Gaps in Marketing Research on Food Decision-Making**

The third sub-objective is to identify research gaps in the marketing literature that investigates food decision-making based on extrinsic food characteristics. Apart from the identified hot spots, the analysis reveals that a large number of issues have not been addressed so far. This is underscored by the relatively low density of the dichotomized network (13.7%). Hence, only 13.7% of the possible ties were actually present in the network. Some of these ties potentially have strong theoretical and practical implications. Furthermore, some scarcely studied phenomena and their interrelations also need to be researched in future studies.

### **5.5.1. Relation of Consumer Studies to Marketing Management**

The ego networks in Figure 3 reveal that most of the predictors of the DONE framework are not directly connected to the most relevant marketing aspects, such as extrinsic product attributes, meaning that these predictors have not yet been considered in a joint study. For researchers interested in healthy food decisions, it is important to recognize that the price is one of the most central and important criteria of food choice. However, there are almost no co-occurrences with health aspects, such as health cognitions, weight control, or related health behaviours. In addition, we find that food brands are intensively researched, but there is apparently no research-related connection to environmental factors, including eating environments, food outlet density, characteristics of living area, home and environment food availability, and food accessibility. Regarding the food environment, for example, Wilcox, Vallen, Block and Fitzsimons (2009) showed that the presence of other products influences consumer perception of more or less healthy foods. The same is true for food labelling. Given that there are socio-demographic differences in responses to food brands, it is highly recommended to connect these variables in future research to investigate their effects on food choice. Based on the findings of this network analysis, it is highly desirable to obtain information on those food choice predictors.

*Research direction 1: Food decision-making is a complex process of human behaviour. While several predictors of food choice were analysed in isolated approaches, many influencing factors are not yet covered in marketing-related studies. We therefore believe that further research that meets the requirements of complex real-life choice behaviour is necessary. Researchers should dare to take putatively unimportant factors into account as these might appear to be effective in at least some of the consumers.*

### 5.5.2. Interdisciplinary Research

Despite a growing number of publications on food choice, interdisciplinary research is still scarce (Grunert et al., 2016; Jacobsen et al., 2014). Depending on the research domain, food decision-making has been conceptualized differently: For example, in the marketing literature, food decision-making is “measured” as purchase intention (Baker, McCabe, Swithers, Payne, & Kranz, 2015; Mai & Hoffmann, 2015; Nasir & Karakaya, 2014; Roseman, Kim, & Zhang, 2013), purchase decision (Papies, Potjes, Keesman, Schwinghammer, & van Koningsbruggen, 2014; Tirelli & Martínez-Ruiz, 2014), or food choice (Carroll & Vallen, 2014; Peters-Teixeira & Badrie, 2005). Psychological research has a stronger focus on eating behaviour (de Castro, 2000; Schüz, Schüz, & Ferguson, 2015; Sproesser, Schupp, & Renner, 2013), and in the food technology literature, food acceptance (García-Segovia, Harrington, & Seo, 2015; Hoppert et al., 2013) or food preference (Alm, Olsen, & Honkanen, 2015; Jaros et al., 2009; Miyagi & Ogaki, 2014) are more common terms.

Food decision-making as dependent variable is just as manifold as the influencing factors and their origin in different disciplines. For example, extrinsic food attributes are originally analysed as a part of the marketing mix in consumer research, where informational cues play the major role in food choice. By contrast, intrinsic food attributes originate from food sensory research where the influences of nutritional composition or manufacturing processes on sensory properties (appearance, taste, smell, texture) are investigated (Steptoe, Pollard, & Wardle, 1995). Further, as Symmank et al. (2017) point out, many studies from behavioural science address the influence of “moods and emotions” on consumers' food decision-making. However, there is still a lack of research that combines managerial topics from marketing science (such as extrinsic product attributes) with insights from other disciplines that focus on affective processes (Aikman, Crites, & Farbrigar, 2006). For these reasons, the complexity of food decision-making and its large number of influencing factors from different domains can only be reflected by studies with a broad interdisciplinary focus (Gardner et al. 2014; Winterich & Haws, 2011).

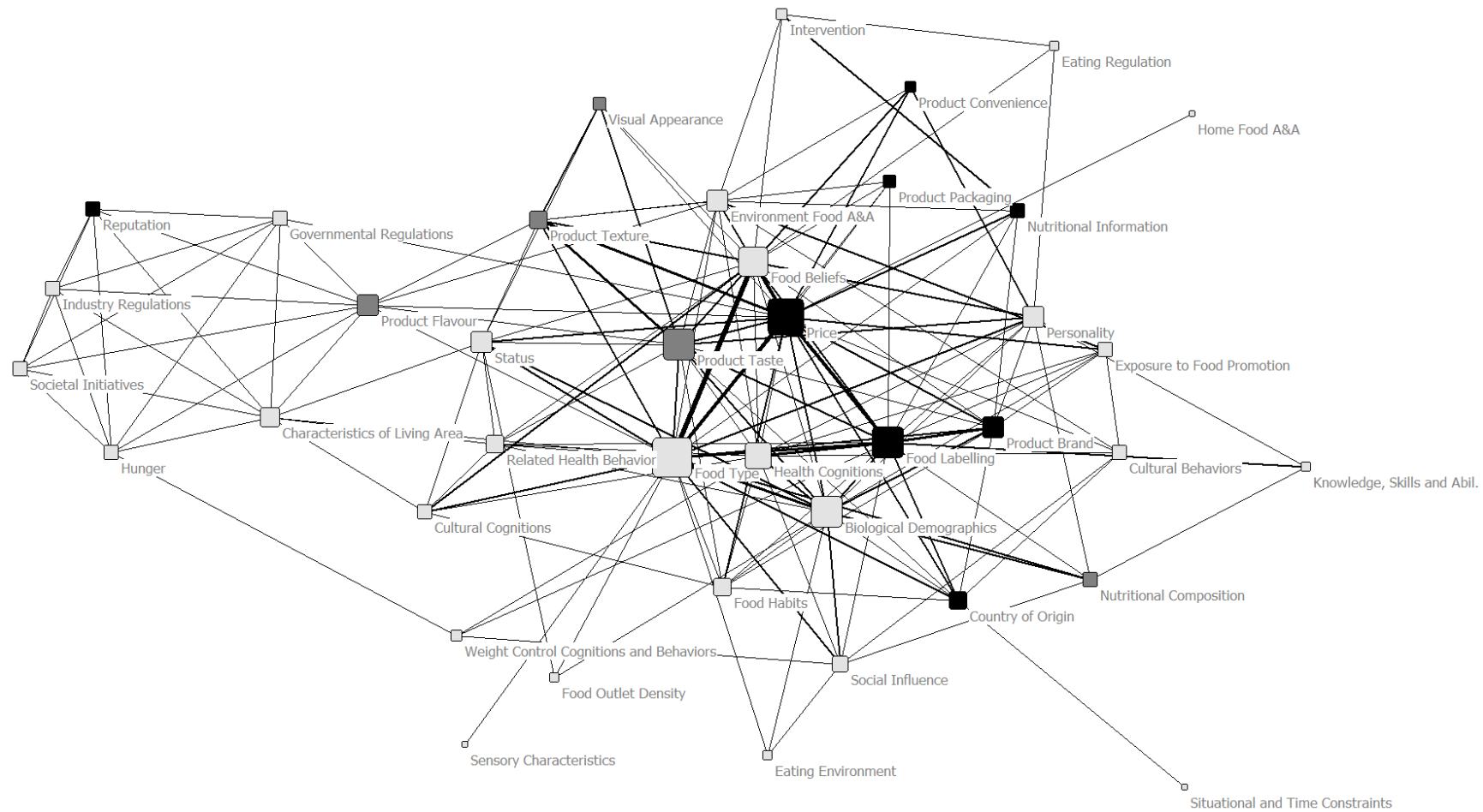
*Research direction 2: Consumer research in general, and research on extrinsic product attributes in particular, should be more attentive in including factors of neighbouring domains (e.g. psychology). Doing so might provide the possibility to obtain a more balanced view of affective and cognitive processes that lead to food choices.*

### **5.5.3. Interplay of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Product Attributes**

To date, only a few marketing studies take into account that extrinsic product attributes influence the perception of intrinsic food attributes such as taste or smell (e.g. Irmak, Vallen, & Robinson, 2011; Mai et al., 2016; Wansink & Park, 2002). Intrinsic attributes perceived during consumption of a product contribute to the consumers' decision to buy or not to buy again (Mai et al., 2016). To delve deeper into the interplay between extrinsic and intrinsic product attributes, we conducted an additional network analysis and inductively disintegrated the category intrinsic product category into five single categories (product taste, visual appearance, product texture, product flavour, and nutritional composition); we recoded the relevant articles accordingly.



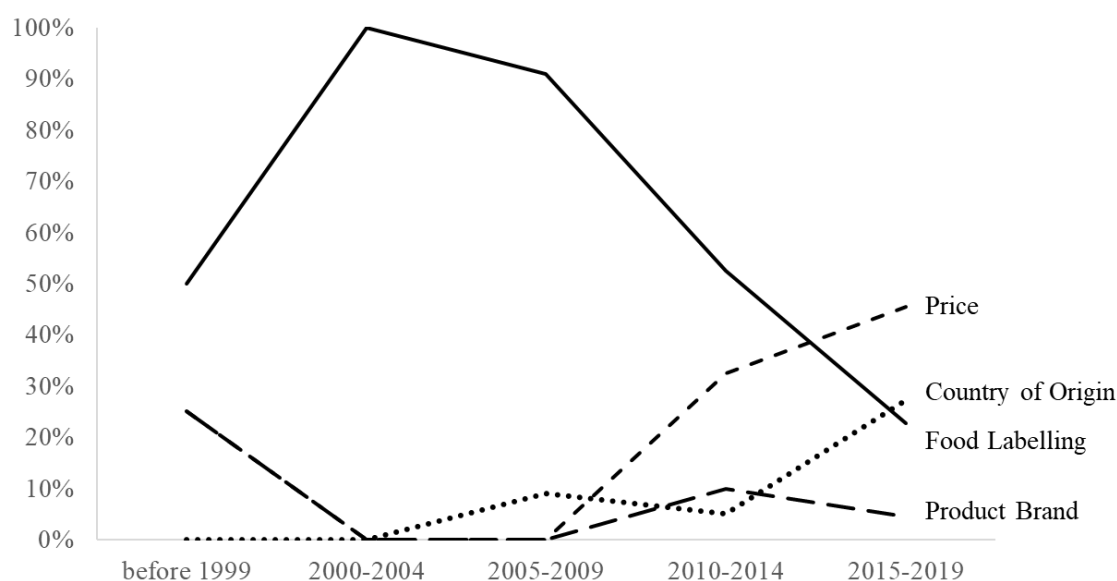
Figure 4: Network of predictors examined in the marketing literature with disintegrated intrinsic attributes



Notes: Each predictor is represented by a node whose size indicates its relative frequency of occurrence in the dataset, while line thickness illustrates which predictors are strongly interrelated, which is underlined by their physical proximity. The black (dark grey) nodes indicate extrinsic (intrinsic) product attributes. Home Food A&A = Home Food Availability and Accessibility, Environment A&A = Environment Food Availability and Accessibility.

As Figure 4 reveals, the taste of a product is often jointly analysed with the price of the product, but also with intrinsic attributes, such as product texture. However, other extrinsic attributes, such as product brand, are yet to be analysed together with intrinsic attributes in marketing research. Specifically, Figure 5 illustrates that the share of publications addressing the impact of the country of origin appears to have increased recently. Still, research is scarce that combines country-of-origin-effects with other attributes, such as the taste of the product, its visual appearance or other sensory evaluations.

*Figure 5: Share of extrinsic product attributes (price, country of origin, food labelling, product brand) among new publications over time*



*Notes: The graphs represent the share of new publications that analyse the specific extrinsic product attributes within a five-year time span.*

Further, our study also shows that intrinsic and extrinsic attributes are tested with regard to the food type. Put differently, they are often not generally tested, but just on a food-type specific level. It would be very interesting to pursue research that tries to delve deeper into the interactions between extrinsic and intrinsic product attributes for different types of food. Further research may define the relevant subcategories of the food types. Relatedly, our analysis indicates that the interplay between extrinsic and intrinsic product attributes requires continuous updating because of the development of new products and changes in consumer needs. This is of particular importance regarding changes in research habits, for example sampling methods. As it is a convenient way to generate large samples, many researchers rely on MTurk or similar panels. As, in most cases, this research is done online which has substantial implications for the aspects that are being studied. Even more importantly, this research practice bears the danger of overemphasizing the first purchase situation and overestimating the impact of extrinsic cues which are solely perceived by the visual sense. The intrinsic product attributes that are

additionally detected by the gustatory or olfactory senses are difficult to examine in online settings, however. Thus, researchers studying food decision-making should not abandon laboratory or field designs for the sake of larger samples and more convenient sampling methods.

*Research direction 3: Food scientists working on intrinsic attributes and marketing scholars who focus on extrinsic attributes should expand their cooperation. Pre-purchase situations (buying vs. not buying decision for the first time) and the post-purchase situations (buying vs. not buying decision after having consumed the product) should be taken into account. Food product marketing will only be effective if consumers are convinced twice—in the supermarket and at home.*

#### **5.5.4. Rational Decisions vs. Decisions Based on Heuristics**

From an economics standpoint, decisions of well-informed consumers are the result of consumer preferences, which in turn depend on subjective utilities of anticipated outcomes weighed by their probabilities (Shafir & LeBoeuf, 2002). However, research from behavioural economics suggests that in real life, consumers do not consciously consider their preferences thoroughly before making a decision and that they have, or use, only a fraction of the available information (Gunasti & Ross, 2009). Their choices are therefore often based on heuristics that allow satisfactory decisions with minimum effort (Deval, Mantel, Kardes, & Posavac, 2013; Kardes, Posavac, & Cronley, 2004; Roering, Boush, & Shipp, 1986; Scheibehenne, Miesler, & Todd, 2007). As consumers are faced with a variety of foods to choose from, they need to apply rules of thumb, intuitive heuristics, or naïve lay theories to reduce complexity and to draw efficient decisions (Deng & Srinivasan, 2013; Irmak et al., 2011; Wansink & Park, 2002) and are therefore highly prone to behavioural nudges (Guthrie, Mancino, & Lin, 2015; Lehner, Mont, & Heiskanen, 2016; Thaler & Sunstein, 2009). Recent studies (Karnal, Machiels, Orth, & Mai, 2016; Yarar et al., 2019) demonstrate that consumers form their judgments on the basis of heuristic conclusions taking extrinsic product attributes into account. These mental shortcuts apply especially if consumers lack knowledge about intrinsic sensory properties (i.e., when they buy a food for the first time knowing nothing about the product's sensory properties, Arvola, Lähteenmäki, & Tuorila, 1999; Hoegg & Alba, 2007). From dual-system theory in psychological research (Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Kahneman, 2003; Smith & DeCoster, 2000), we also know the two processing approaches in consumer behaviour (White, Lin, Dahl, & Ritchie, 2015). Some consumers may respond to food in a relatively automatic manner

simplifying their inferences about the product, whereas other consumers tend to engage in and enjoy cognitively effortful information processing (Mai et al. 2019; Hoffmann et al. 2019).

*Research direction 4: Food decision-making is driven by processes that occur at different levels: Humans make their decisions on the basis of rationally pondering about available input for their decision-making and/or they are affected by processes that operate outside their awareness. It is not only the effortful route that influences food choice; it might actually be relevant to study also factors known to be associated with more automatic decision-making (e.g. impulsiveness, self-control, need for cognition, habits) in conjunction with, for example, food labelling variables.*

### **5.5.5. Food Choices between Different Consumer Segments**

Consumer segmentation is often used to develop retail marketing strategies that address consumers with specific preferences and needs. For example, Nayga (1999) investigated effects of socioeconomic and demographic variables and attitudes regarding nutrition and health on consumer choice of healthier food products. He revealed that certain groups (e.g. individuals who are less aware about the linkage between diet and disease or individuals who less frequently use nutrition panels and labels) are less likely to choose a healthier alternative. As a very simple segmentation of food decision-making styles, Mai and Hoffmann (2012) differentiate between taste lovers and nutrition fact seekers which can be distinguished by their health consciousness and self-efficacy. As another example, Al-Shamsi et al. (2013) identified five types of consumers based on their preferred intensity of the sensory attributes of sweets. The findings of Kim and Boyd (2006) suggest that food safety, quality labelling information, and attitudes towards grocery food products are the most important factors for Japanese consumers to buy genetically modified food. Chalupová, Prokop and Rojík (2016) explored the preferences of consumers from Vysočina Region in the Czech Republic for regional food. They show that consumers generally prefer their local food but that this preference differs hugely across regions. These findings highlight the importance of targeting consumers adequately and regionally, because their preference for regional (or foreign) food products varies greatly, even within countries. Marketers need to be aware of those national and cross-national heterogeneities and adjust their practices and promotion campaigns accordingly. These examples show that segmenting consumers based on a variety of attributes may be beneficial for marketers. However, consumer segmentation is not only useful within, but also between countries due to globalized markets and different cultural backgrounds. The food industry has

to gauge cross-cultural variance of food choices. Labrecque, Doyon, Bellavance and Kolodinsky (2006), for example, detected cross-cultural differences for French Canada, the United States, and France in terms of knowledge, credibility of information, and food attitudes that influence acceptance of functional foods.

*Research direction 5: Retailers and marketing experts should be keen to keep their strategies and activities in perfect tune with the consumer needs. Campaigns should focus on specific consumer segments, which may either be similar across different countries (e.g. acceptance of functional food) or differ between or even within a country (e.g. consumers of traditional or regional food). Extrinsic product attributes are of considerable importance and need to be given more attention. Hence, the country of origin of a product should be elaborated, specifically in joint studies with consumers' food habits (as country images may vary, and food habits are strongly culture-dependent) and sensory attributes. Each segment therefore requires different marketing approaches.*

### **5.5.6. Interplay Between Food Choices and Physical Activity**

The network analysis reveals that health cognitions, weight control, and related health behaviours are important predictors of food decision-making. However, some scholars consider human well-being not only from the perspective of dietary intake, but also from the perspective of physical activity, and in the best case a combination of both (Cawley, 2004; Eisend & Möller, 2006; Michie, Abraham, Whittington, McAteer, & Gupta, 2009). A challenge in the investigation of health behaviour is that healthy (e.g. doing sports) and unhealthy (e.g. consuming a lot of alcohol) behaviours may take place consecutively or simultaneously. Individuals also tend to counterbalance food intake through physical activity and vice versa (Albarracin, Wang, & Leeper, 2009; Werle, Wansink, & Payne, 2014). For example, an observational field study by Werle et al. (2014) revealed that physical activity triggers the search for reward (consuming more hedonic snacks) when individuals perceive it as exercise (instead of fun). Similarly, the choice of a food among alternatives might be affected systematically by consumer's prior decisions (Khan & Dhar, 2006). In psychological and marketing research, the pattern that prior behaviour can influence subsequent (unmoral) behaviour is known as the licensing effect (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010; Miller & Effron, 2010). Goal fulfilment theory (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998; Fishbach & Dhar, 2005) even goes one step further by arguing that merely having the opportunity to behave in line with a goal can lead to goal fulfilment and license consumers

to behave in line with alternative goals. Wilcox et al. (2009), for example, showed that the mere presence of a healthy snack among three indulgent snacks increased the likelihood of choosing the most indulgent snack.

*Research direction 6: Although it has been documented that individuals tend to compensate previous efforts with hedonic choices, there has been limited evidence on how to prevent this compensation. Future studies should specifically focus on the relationship between physical activity and food choice as these are two key recommendations to prevent widespread diseases. Furthermore, when dealing with food decision-making in the context of health behaviour, future studies may also consider how prior food choices or the level of physical activity affect subsequent food choices.*

## **5.6. Conclusion**

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to review systematically the predictors of food decision-making that were explored in empirical studies in the marketing literature between 1985 and 2019. The emphasis on extrinsic product attributes has revealed that brand, price, food labelling, and country of origin are well researched, also in conjunction with other specific categories of predictors. The observed relationships fit well with marketing theory. However, it also becomes apparent that the predictors that are not directly linked to these aspects in theory are barely considered by marketing researchers. Given that a large number of diverse factors shape consumer food decision-making in a highly complex fashion, it is also necessary to consider the potential boundary conditions and moderating and mediating effects. Our results generate several opportunities for future research and we provide six specific directions for future research. We call for more marketing research to include factors that have been discussed primarily in other fields so far, including food technology, medicine, psychology, political science, etc. Marketing researchers should be open to cross-disciplinary research to detect the influences on consumer food choices and to conduct research outside paradigmatic thinking. With respect to food companies, policy makers, or consumer policies, this study enhances the general understanding of the predictors that guide consumer food decision-making, but more importantly the interplay between them.

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## **6. Politische Lenkungsmechanismen und deren psychologische Grenzen. Der Einfluss staatlicher Besteuerung und freiwilliger Abgaben auf den Konsum (un-)ethischer Produkte**

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### **Abstract:**

Verbraucherpolitische Maßnahmen, die den Konsum von bestimmten Gütern beeinflussen sollen und so zu einem langfristig veränderten Konsumverhalten führen können, sind weit verbreitet und haben sich größtenteils als adäquates und hilfreiches Mittel herausgestellt, um die negativen Konsequenzen des Konsums zu minimieren. Sogenannte Sündensteuern auf bestimmte Produkte oder Produktgruppen zu erheben, beispielsweise auf Fleisch, Zigaretten oder Kraftstoff, ist von Ökonomen seit langem als probates Mittel angesehen worden, um in das Marktgeschehen regulierend einzugreifen. Neuste Erkenntnisse aus der Konsumpsychologie legen jedoch nahe, dass diese Annahme nicht immer zutrifft. Aufbauend auf der Theorie der moralischen Lizenzierung untersucht der Artikel Barrieren und Grenzen staatlicher Lenkungsmechanismen aus einer konsumpsychologischen Sichtweise und zeigt, unter welchen Umständen die Besteuerung von bestimmten Gütern oder die Einführung von Nudges zu entgegengesetzten und nicht-intendierten Effekten führen kann.

### **Keywords:**

Consumer Policy, Consumption Taxes, Consumer Psychology, Nudging

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## **6.1. Steuern als staatlicher Lenkungsmechanismus für ein nachhaltigeres Konsumverhalten**

Die Möglichkeit Steuern auf bestimmte Produkte zu erheben, um so den Absatz von diesen Produkten zu verringern, ist ein klassisches politisches Lenkungsinstrument und wird seit vielen Jahrzehnten von Regierungen auf der ganzen Welt angewendet. Die Notwendigkeit der Erhebung einer zusätzlichen Steuer auf bestimmte Produkte wird mit den allgemein als negativ eingestuften Folgen des Konsums dieser Produkte begründet. Diese vermeidbaren negativen Folgen können sehr vielfältig sein und sind oft spezifisch auf den Konsum bestimmter Produkte zurückzuführen, unterscheiden sich aber deutlich in ihrem Abstraktionsgrad und in der direkten Zurechenbarkeit des Konsums auf die Folgen des Konsums. So kann mit der Einführung einer zusätzlichen Steuer auf Zigaretten das Ziel verfolgt werden, die Gesundheit der Bevölkerung zu schützen. Die Einführung einer Steuer hat stets eine Erhöhung des Endpreises des besteuerten Gutes zur Folge, was dann, dem klassischen ökonomischen Prinzip von Angebot und Nachfrage folgend, zu einer Verringerung der Nachfrage führt und langfristig zu einem ebenso verringerten Angebot.

Gleichzeitig kann die erhobene Steuer und die damit einhergehenden erhöhten staatlichen Einnahmen aber auch dazu verwendet werden, Raucher-Präventionskampagnen zu finanzieren, die den negativen Preiseffekt einer Steuer weiter verstärken könnten. So können sowohl kurzfristige, marktbasierende Preiseffekte durch die Steuer erzielt werden und gleichzeitig die Möglichkeit einer langfristigen Informations- und Aufklärungskampagne geschaffen werden. In der ökonomischen Literatur wird in diesem Zusammenhang von der mehrfachen Dividende einer Steuer (Pereira et al. 2016) gesprochen, die dazu führt, dass der Staat aus verschiedenen Gründen eine Einführung einer solchen, oft auch als „Sündensteuer“ (Rheume 2015) bezeichneten, staatlichen Abgabe legitimieren kann. Die mehrfache Dividende bildet sich aus einer kurzfristig erhöhten Steigerung der staatlichen Einnahmen, einer langfristigen Verbesserung der Gesundheit der Bevölkerung und einer erfolgreichen Steuerungswirksamkeit politischer Maßnahmen. Schon Adam Smith ging davon aus, dass die negativen Externalitäten von Gütern wie Tabak, Rum und Zucker gut durch eine gezielte Besteuerung minimiert werden könnten (Rheume, 2015). Der Begriff der negativen Externalitäten ist in der Ökonomie und in anderen Wissenschaften ein etablierter Begriff zur Bezeichnung von nicht-intendierten und indirekten Effekten des Konsums und der Produktion von Gütern und ist in der Grundbedeutung nicht normativ zu verwenden. Adam Smith sprach auch nicht explizit von dem moralischen oder ethischen Aspekt einer Sündensteuer, sondern ausschließlich von einer Steuer als mögliches Instrument zur Verringerung dieser negativer Externalitäten im ökonomisierten

Sinne. Die aktuelle Debatte um Sündensteuern geht allerdings weit darüber hinaus und untersucht auch, inwiefern der Staat durch Steuern eine Funktion als normative und wertgebende Instanz einnehmen kann und als paternalistische Instanz den Konsumierenden klare Regeln und Grenzen setzen sollte und wie genau diese Grenzen und die damit einhergehende Beschränkung der Entscheidungsfreiheit des Individuums auszusehen haben (Thaler/Sunstein 2003).

In der Literatur zu Sündensteuern wird allerdings eine äußerst kontroverse Debatte darüber geführt, wie die exakte Ausgestaltung einer solchen Steuer tatsächlich aussehen sollte. Von der allgemeinen Kritik an politischer Einflussnahme am Wirtschaftsgeschehen über Steuern, bis hin zu einer Forderung nach flächendeckender Besteuerung von als sündhaft angesehen Gütern, gibt es für jegliche Strömung Argumente, die die legislative und praktische Ausgestaltung einer solchen Steuer untermauern, anzweifeln oder schlicht und systematisch ablehnen. Auch die ethische Bewertung von Sündensteuern ist Gegenstand aktueller Diskussionen. So wird im Zuge dieser Diskurse häufig darauf hingewiesen, dass eine Verteuerung bestimmter Produkte insbesondere Käuferschichten mit geringem Einkommen trifft und diese Sündensteuer somit die Einkommensungleichheit in der Gesellschaft verstärkt. Für den interessierten Lesenden sei Perkins (2014) empfohlen, die in ihrem Aufsatz eine kompetente und umfassende Analyse zu diesen ethischen Bedenken anbietet und die Argumente aller Seiten eingehend beleuchtet.

Festzuhalten ist allerdings, dass, unabhängig von politischer Ideologie und wissenschaftlicher Strömung, gewisse Sündensteuern auf der ganzen Welt erhoben werden und zu einem integralen Bestandteil der Steuergesetzgebung der jeweiligen Länder gehören. Maciag (20015) schätzt, dass allein die staatlichen Einnahmen durch Steuern auf Glücksspiel, Alkohol und Tabakwaren in den USA knapp 4% der gesamten staatlichen Steuernahmen ausmachen.

Eine offene Frage, die in verschiedenen Bereichen der Wissenschaft noch nicht ausreichend diskutiert wurde, ist die Wirkung solcher Steuern auf die Wahrnehmung und auf die psychologischen Reaktionen von Konsumierenden. Der folgende Aufsatz versucht anhand aktueller empirischer Befunde aus den Gebieten der Verhaltensökonomik, der Psychologie und der Konsumforschung Licht in das sprichwörtliche Dunkel zu bringen und untersucht, wie staatliche Maßnahmen von Konsumierenden aufgefasst werden und vor allem, was für nicht-intendierte Effekte von einer extern auferlegten Abgabe ausgehen können, welche psychologischen Mechanismen für diese Effekte verantwortlich sind und wie aus Sicht der Verbraucherforschung dagegen angegangen werden kann.

So ergeben sich nicht nur aus staatlicher Sicht gravierende individuelle Unterschiede in der Akzeptanz und Wirksamkeit von Steuern. Konsumierende reagieren äußerst unterschiedlich auf staatliche Steuerungsmechanismen und sehen eine staatlich auferlegte zusätzliche Abgabe durchaus als unterschiedlich legitimierbar an, sodass es hoch relevant erscheint, aus einer wissenschaftlich fundierten Perspektive diese Reaktionen zu untersuchen, in der politischen Ausgestaltung der Steuergesetzgebung zu antizipieren und so die Effektivität staatlicher Maßnahmen zu optimieren.

In der jüngsten Literatur zur Konsumpsychologie wird in den letzten Jahren verstärkt auf den sogenannten liberalen Paternalismus als Gegenstück zu verpflichtenden staatlichen Initiativen (wie etwa Steuern) hingewiesen. Im Sinne des liberalen Paternalismus kann ein Staat auch durch ein sanftes „Nudging“ (Sunstein/Thaler 2003) Einfluss auf die Konsumententscheidungen von Individuen nehmen, ohne die Entscheidungsfreiheit der Konsumierenden zu beschränken. Im Zuge dieses Beitrages wird daher auch auf den liberalen Paternalismus eingegangen, um zu verdeutlichen, welche politischen Instrumente einem Staat zur Verfügung stehen, um das Konsumverhalten der Bürgerinnen und Bürger nachhaltiger zu gestalten. Wichtig ist dabei, dass diejenigen, die diese staatlichen Maßnahmen erarbeiten und umsetzen wollen, verstehen, wie Konsumierende diese Maßnahmen wahrnehmen und verarbeiten.

Um dies zu erörtern, wird, nach einer kurzen Diskussion des liberalen Paternalismus im folgenden Verlauf des Beitrages erst ein grober Überblick über mögliche psychologische Mechanismen und Theorien gegeben, die den möglichen absatzsenkenden Effekt einer Steuer oder weicherer staatlicher Steuerungsmechanismen mindern können. Dabei wird insbesondere auf die Theorie der moralischen Lizenzierung (Merritt et al. 2010) eingegangen und untersucht, welche Folgen das Zahlen einer Steuer auf das Verhalten von Konsumierenden haben kann. Die Theorie der moralischen Lizenzierung nimmt an, dass Individuen moralisch gebotene Handlungen als eine Art Lizenz auffassen können, die es ihnen erlaubt, andere moralisch nicht gebotene Handlungen auszuführen ohne dabei ein schlechtes Gewissen zu verspüren. Diese sozialpsychologische Theorie, die in den letzten Jahren hohe Aufmerksamkeit erhalten hat (für einen Überblick inklusive einer umfangreichen Meta-Analyse, siehe Blanken et al. 2015), sollte in die Diskussion einer möglichst effizienten Ausgestaltung konsumbezogener Steuern einbezogen werden.

Darüber hinaus wird exemplarisch dargelegt, welche Einflussfaktoren bei der Bewertung der Wirksamkeit einer Steuer auf bestimmte sündhafte Produkte eine Rolle spielen können. Dazu

werden Einblicke in ausgewählte empirische Studien gewährt und in den Kontext des Beitrages eingeordnet.

Ziel dieses Beitrages ist es, verbraucherpolitische Maßnahmen hinsichtlich ihrer Effektivität auf die Reduzierung nicht-nachhaltiger Produkte zu untersuchen und dabei evidenzbasiert zu begründen, unter welchen Voraussetzungen die Reduktion des Konsums bestimmter Produkte besonders vielversprechend erscheint. Insbesondere soll dieser Beitrag darauf aufmerksam machen, wie das Zusammenspiel von Eigenverantwortung der Konsumierenden (ConSR) und patriarchaler Wirtschaftspolitik besonders erfolgswirksam im Sinne eines nachhaltigeren Konsumverhaltens gestaltet werden kann.

## **6.2. Die Lenkung von Konsumierenden mit Hilfe des liberalen Paternalismus**

Das menschliche Verhalten ist ein außerordentlich komplexer Vorgang und seit langem Hauptgegenstand der wissenschaftlichen Forschung verschiedenster Disziplinen (Lehner et al. 2016). Die effiziente Gestaltung von politischen Instrumenten, die verschiedene Bereiche des Konsumverhaltens steuern sollen, benötigt daher ein tiefgehendes Verständnis des menschlichen Entscheidungsverhaltens und der zu

Grunde liegenden psychologischen Mechanismen. Lehner et al. (2016) beschreiben ganz folgerichtig, dass die Ausgestaltung politischer Maßnahmen in der Vergangenheit häufig unzureichend auf verhaltenswissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse eingegangen ist und keine Rücksicht auf das vielschichtige menschliche Entscheidungsverhalten genommen wurde. Shafir (2013) bescheinigt der Politik daher auch einen, wenn überhaupt, eher unsystematischen Einsatz der Verhaltenswissenschaft in der Politik, die hauptsächlich auf der neoklassischen Ökonomie und der darin fest verwurzelten Annahme einer rationalen Entscheidungsfindung eines Homo Oeconomicus basieren (Thaler 2000). Die Verhaltenswissenschaften können hier einen großen Beitrag leisten, diese Annahmen kritisch zu beleuchten und durch aktuelle experimentelle Forschungen darauf aufmerksam machen, dass die Antizipation der ökonomisch irrationalen Natur des Menschen stärker in die Verbraucherpolitik integriert wird. In diesem Sinne wurde in den letzten Jahren vermehrt über das sogenannte Nudging (auf Deutsch etwa mit „schubsen“ zu übersetzen) als verbraucherpolitisches Instrument zur Einflussnahme auf das Konsumverhalten diskutiert. Während Nudging meist eher unbewusst und automatisch funktioniert (Thaler/Sunstein 2008), beruhen, wie eingangs erwähnt, die meisten politischen Instrumente zur Änderung des Verbraucherverhaltens hin zu nachhaltigeren Verhaltensweisen, auf der Fähigkeit der Verbraucher, neue Informationen zu verarbeiten und rationale Entscheidungen zu treffen (Lehner et al. 2016).

Ein Nudge oder Nudging bezieht sich auf jeden Aspekt des Entscheidungsumfelds, auch Choice-Architektur genannt, „der das Verhalten der Menschen auf vorhersehbare Weise verändert, ohne dass irgendwelche Optionen verboten oder ihre wirtschaftlichen Anreize wesentlich verändert werden“ (Thaler/Sunstein 2008: 8). Nudging basiert auf dem von Sunstein und Thaler (2003) definierten liberalen (oder libertären) Paternalismus und wird als Verbesserung oder Erweiterung des staatlichen Paternalismus angesehen, der oft als bevormundend und freiheitseinschränkend angesehen wird (Schnellenbach 2011). Nudges sollen demnach die Freiheit der Individuen, insbesondere ihre Entscheidungsfreiheit, erhalten und diese Entscheidungen gleichzeitig in eine gewisse Richtung lenken, ohne dabei die Eigenverantwortlichkeit der Individuen in ihren Entscheidungen zu mindern. Die Erhaltung der individuellen Verantwortung und der Möglichkeit, diese Verantwortung eigenständig wahrzunehmen und in Verhalten übertragen zu können, aber nicht zu müssen, steht beim Nudging im Vordergrund und unterscheidet diese Strategie der Verbraucherpolitik stark von anderen Maßnahmen, wie bspw. der Einführung einer verpflichtenden Steuer.

Jüngste Studien zeigen, dass Nudging ein sehr hilfreiches Instrument sein kann, um Verbrauchern zu helfen, umweltfreundlichere Konsumententscheidungen zu treffen (Lehner et al. 2016). Da sich die Menschen oft nicht über die Auswirkungen ihrer Entscheidungen auf die Umwelt im Klaren sind, arbeiten Nudges meist an der Veränderung nicht-deliberativer Aspekte der Handlungen von Einzelpersonen (House of Lords 2011). Zu den Nudging-Instrumenten gehört zum Beispiel die Variation von Standard- und Voreinstellungen bei verschiedensten Entscheidungssituationen. Das prominenteste Beispiel von Nudging in Form von Standard- oder Voreinstellungen ist die international heterogene Ausgestaltung der gesetzlichen Regeln zur Organspende (Whyte et al. 2012). Während in einigen Ländern, unter anderem Deutschland, eine sogenannte Opt-in-Strategie verfolgt wird, in der nur diejenigen Personen Organspender sind, die ausdrücklich und aktiv einer Registrierung als Organspender zustimmen, verfolgen andere Länder eine Opt-out-Strategie, bei der jede Person erst einmal als Organspender registriert wird und dann ausdrücklich und aktiv dieser Regelung widersprechen muss. Wie Davidai und Kollegen (2012) zeigen, spielt die Wahl der sogenannten Default-Option sowohl im Experimentallabor als auch in der realen Welt eine erhebliche Rolle und führt dazu, dass in fast allen Ländern, die eine Opt-out-Strategie anwenden, die Rate an Organspendern signifikant höher ist, als bei den Ländern, die eine Opt-in-Strategie verwenden. Davidai und Kollegen resümieren passend: „In considering the enormous differences in organ donation rates between opt-in and opt-out countries, the surprise one experiences does not arise from the fact that different default policies are associated with different percentages of potential donors. The

surprise is that the effect is so large” (Davidai et al. 2012: 15203). Diese Ergebnisse lassen schließen, dass die Möglichkeiten der staatlichen Steuerung mit Hilfe von Nudging-Strategien außerordentlich effektiv genutzt werden kann – und dies weit über einen statistisch signifikanten Unterschied hinaus zu einer tatsächlich enormen praktischen und gesellschaftlichen Relevanz.

Nudging kann und wird aber nicht nur in Fragen der Organspende außerordentlich effektiv genutzt. So zeigen Lehner und Kollegen (2016) auf, dass deutliche Verhaltensänderungen unter anderem durch die Arbeit mit Warnungen verschiedener Art, die Änderung von Layouts und Merkmalen verschiedener Umgebungen, die Erinnerung an die eigene Wahl oder die Aktivierung von sozialen Normen hervorgerufen werden können. Der potenzielle Anwendungsbereich von Nudges ist dabei denkbar vielschichtig. Griesoph et al. (2019) konnten bspw. nachweisen, dass verschiedenfarbige Labels an den Ausgaben von Universitäts-Mensen, die den CO<sub>2</sub>-Fußabdruck des entsprechenden Gerichtes anzeigen, die Häufigkeit der Wahl eines umweltfreundlicheren Gerichtes steigern. Es zeigt sich, dass Nudging in einer Vielzahl von Situationen und Kontexten eingesetzt werden kann, um das Verhalten von Konsumierenden in eine bestimmte Richtung zu lenken, ohne die tatsächliche Entscheidungsfreiheit einzudämmen. Insgesamt ist festzuhalten, dass Nudging in vielen Fällen erfolgversprechend eingesetzt werden kann und sich von den meist genutzten politischen Instrumenten deutlich unterscheidet. So werden kooperative Politikinstrumente wie Gesetze, Verbote, Sanktionen oder wirtschaftliche und fiskalische Maßnahmen, z.B. Steuern oder Subventionen, nach Sunstein (2014) nicht als Nudges angesehen, da sie eben genau nicht die Entscheidungsfreiheit des Individuums gewährleisten können. Ebenso zu dokumentieren ist die Frage nach der ethischen Bewertung von Nudges (Schubert 2017), die in der wissenschaftlichen Gemeinschaft durchaus scharf und kontrovers diskutiert wird. Von Bedenken nach einer verringerten Autonomie des „geschubsten“ Individuums bis hin zur Furcht vor einem psychologisch trainierten und intransparent agierenden Staates, der seine Bürger und Bürgerinnen scheinbar wohlwollend, aber dann doch der eigenen Ideologie folgend, beeinflusst, führen Kritiker zum Teil fundamentale Punkte auf, die durchaus auch gegen eine Nutzung von Nudges insgesamt und insbesondere gegen eine Nutzung von Nudges durch eine staatliche Instanz sprechen.

Gewiss wird in diesem Beitrag nicht auf die tatsächliche Komplexität der aktuellen Forschung zu Nudging eingegangen, sodass relevante Einflussfaktoren, spezifische Kontexte und andere Erkenntnisse außer Acht gelassen werden. Den interessierten Lesenden sei daher insbesondere Lehner et al. (2016), Sunstein (2014) sowie Thaler und Sunstein (2008) empfohlen.

### **6.3. Psychologische Wahrnehmungsprobleme individueller Moralentscheidungen**

Sowohl die Einführung einer sogenannten Sündensteuer auf bestimmte Produkte sowie die Möglichkeit durch Nudging das Verhalten von Konsumierenden zu einem nachhaltigeren zu transformieren, wurde in der Vergangenheit wissenschaftlich untersucht und unter bestimmten Umständen für erfolgsversprechend erachtet. Dabei ist der Erfolg einiger politischer Steuerungsinstrumente keineswegs eindeutig. Die meisten Wissenschaftler und Wissenschaftlerinnen sind sich bspw. einig, dass der Zigarettenkonsum auch durch eine stetige Erhöhung der Steuerlast in den letzten Jahren in vielen Teilen der Welt erheblich reduziert werden konnte (Ross et al. 2017). Auch das Nudging wird in vielen Teilen der Welt erfolgreich eingesetzt und erweist sich auch außerhalb universitärer Experimentallabore als potentes Mittel zur Steuerung des Konsumverhaltens. Auch hier zeigt sich, dass bestimmte Instrumente lediglich in bestimmten Gebieten anwendbar zu sein scheinen und die Effektivität solcher Maßnahmen in Abhängigkeit des Anwendungsgebietes und vor allem der individuellen Charakteristika der Konsumierenden steht. Bislang wenig Beachtung wurde darüber hinaus möglichen individuellen psychologischen Mechanismen geschenkt. Diese könnten einen Beitrag zum Verständnis liefern, bei welchen Anwendungsgebieten und unter Berücksichtigung welcher individuellen Charakteristika die besprochenen Lenkungsmechanismen wirken. Darüber hinaus könnten sie erklären, welche psychologischen Grundlagen verstanden werden sollten, um abschätzen zu können, warum manche gut geplanten Maßnahmen nicht die gewünschte Wirkung zeigen. Im Folgenden wird daher die Theorie der moralischen Lizenzierung als Beispiel eines psychologischen Wahrnehmungsproblems im Gebiet der Konsumhandlungen ausführlich besprochen. Anschließend erfolgt ein Einblick in aktuelle psychologische Literatur, die Effekte untersucht, die auf individueller Ebene die Effektivität von staatlichen Maßnahmen zur Lenkung des Konsumverhaltens unterwandern können.

#### **6.3.1. Das Konzept der moralischen Lizenzierung: Wie auf gute Taten schlechte Taten folgen können**

Die Frage wie Menschen Moralentscheidungen treffen und wie sie mit moralischen Unsicherheiten und Ungewissheiten umgehen, beschäftigt Forschende verschiedenster Disziplinen schon seit jeher. In neuester Zeit wurde ein Phänomen beobachtet und mehrfach empirisch nachgewiesen, das vielen prominenten und anerkannten Theorien über Moralentscheidungen widerspricht: Moralische Lizenzierung (Merrit et al. 2010). Moralische Lizenzierung beschreibt das Phänomen, dass Menschen im Anschluss an eine moralische



Handlung dazu neigen, weniger moralisches Verhalten zu zeigen (Blanken et al. 2015). Das vergangene moralische Verhalten erhöht die Wahrscheinlichkeit für die entsprechende Person, in anschließenden Handlungen weniger moralisch zu handeln, ohne sich dabei als unmoralisch zu empfinden oder als eine solche Person wahrgenommen zu werden. Die Forschung zu moralischer Lizensierung entspringt der ursprünglich rein ökonomisch geführten Debatte zu Rebound-Effekten (Santarius/Soland 2018), die in den letzten Jahren allerdings zunehmend durch interdisziplinäre Perspektiven bereichert wurde (Reimers et al. 2020).

Gemäß der Theorie der moralischen Lizensierung scheinen Personen durch eine moralische Handlung, eine Lizenz für zukünftiges Fehlverhalten zu erwerben, die das weitere Verhalten der Personen beeinflusst. Diese Lizenz befreit die Personen und lässt sie sich bei Verhaltensweisen wohler fühlen, die normalerweise als sozial wenig akzeptiert oder moralisch fragwürdig gelten (Miller/Effron 2010). Die tatsächliche Durchführung oder allein schon die Erinnerung an prosoziales Verhalten (als Überbegriff für moralisch „korrekte“ Handlungen), dient scheinbar als eine im Voraus stattfindende Rechtfertigung für späteres Fehlverhalten, die einen davor schützt, sich ob der Verletzung moralischer Regeln schlecht zu fühlen (Shalvi et al. 2015). In der Mehrzahl der bislang durchgeführten Studien, leitete meist eine Erinnerung an eigenes vergangenes moralisches Verhalten, das sogenannte „Priming“ die darauffolgende moralisch oder ethisch fragwürdige Handlung ein.

Die Theorie der moralischen Lizensierung scheint weit verbreiteten und anerkannten psychologischen Verhaltenstheorien zu widersprechen, in denen die moralischen Entscheidungen der Menschen keineswegs konsistent und rational getroffen werden, sondern vielmehr einem wesentlich komplexeren und bisher nicht beachteten Schema folgen. Ältere Theorien, wie die „Self-perception theory“ von Bem (1972), beschreiben bspw. die Moralentscheidungen von Menschen als eine Konsequenz aus bei sich selbst beobachteten Verhaltensweisen. So folgt auf moralisches Verhalten auch moralisch korrektes Verhalten. Menschen sehen sich in Bezug auf ihre vergangenen Handlungen als eine moralisch handelnde Person und versuchen dieses Bild durch konsistente Moralentscheidungen aufrecht zu erhalten. Weitere äußerst prominente Theorien, wie bspw. die Theorie der kognitiven Dissonanz (Festinger 1957) oder auch der „sunk cost effect“ (Arkes/Blumer 1985), heben den Wunsch nach konsistentem Verhalten als wichtigsten Einflussfaktor auf das menschliche Verhalten hervor. Andere sozialpsychologische Theorien betonen das Streben des Menschen nach moralischem Handeln, das auch von der Umwelt als solches wahrgenommen wird. Menschen empfinden es als erstrebenswert moralisch zu handeln und wollen als ein moralisch handelndes Wesen wahrgenommen werden. Konsistente Moralentscheidungen, so die Theorie, führen

dazu, dass diese Wahrnehmung aufrechterhalten werden kann. Besonders im Anschluss an eine bereits geschehene moralische oder ethische Handlung, erscheint konsistentes Entscheidungsverhalten in anschließenden Situationen als der wahrscheinlichste Ausgang (Blanken et al. 2015).

In den letzten Jahren wurden zahlreiche Studien veröffentlicht, die diesen Theorien widersprechen und die die Existenz moralischer Lizenzierung in den verschiedensten Bereichen, wie bspw. bei der Vergabe von Arbeitsstellen (Monin/Miller 2001), der Spendenbereitschaft an gemeinnützige Organisationen (Sachdeva et al. 2009) oder bei unehrlichem Verhalten (Mazar/Zhong 2010), nachweisen konnten. Dabei wurde stets eine signifikante Steigerung des unmoralischen Verhaltens derjenigen Probanden beobachtet, die sich in der Vergangenheit an eine moralische Handlung oder eine moralische Tat erinnern haben. So zeigten bspw. Probanden in einer Studie von Jordan et al. (2011) eine geringere Spendenbereitschaft als eine entsprechende Kontrollgruppe, wenn diese sich vorher an eine Situation erinnern haben, in der sie anderen Personen geholfen, und damit moralisches Verhalten gezeigt haben.

Moralische Lizenzierung tritt keineswegs nur in sogenannten „within-domain“-Designs auf. Ein „within-domain“-Design bezeichnet in diesem Zusammenhang ein Forschungsdesign bzw. eine Studie, in denen der Stimulus und die abhängige Variable einer einheitlichen Kategorie zuzuordnen sind. Die bisher erwähnten Studien untersuchen stets den Einfluss einer moralischen Aktivität in der Vergangenheit (Stimulus bzw. unabhängige Variable) auf das Moralverhalten der Probanden in einer anschließenden Entscheidungssituation (abhängige Variable). In einer Vielzahl weiterer Studien wird allerdings herausgestellt, dass vergangenes moralisches Verhalten auch in anderen Bereichen moralische Lizenzierung bewirken kann. Khan und Dhar (2006) konnten in ihrer Studie zeigen, dass Probanden, die sich vorstellten freiwillig ehrenamtliche Tätigkeiten für ihre Gemeinde auszuüben, im Anschluss hedonistische Produkte (die Motive wie die Lust nach Luxus, Spaß und Befriedigung bedienen) im Vergleich zu utilitaristischen Produkten (die ihren Hauptnutzen in der Erfüllung von Notwendigkeiten und der reinen Funktionalität haben) bevorzugten. Auch Mazar und Zhong (2010) bestätigten die Existenz von moralischer Lizenzierung in den sogenannten *cross-domain-Designs* und zeigten, dass Probanden, die in einem virtuellen Supermarkt für nachhaltige und ökologische Produkte einkauften, im Anschluss daran im Rahmen eines Ultimatum-Spiels weniger Geld an andere Personen abgaben und mehr Geld stahlen, als Probanden die konventionelle Produkte kauften. Die Effekte des vergangenen moralischen Verhaltens zeigen sich also nicht nur bei

Situationen, die der vorangegangenen Situation stark ähneln, sondern auch in gänzlich anderen Entscheidungssituationen, die alle allerdings ein prosoziales Element beinhalten.

Die genauen Wirkungsmechanismen von moralischer Lizenzierung sind bis heute Mittelpunkt der Diskussion. Miller und Effron (2010) heben besonders die Differenzierung zwischen *Moral Credits* und *Moral Credentials* hervor, um zwei mögliche Wirkungspfade der moralischen Lizenzierung zu beschreiben.

*Moral Credits* können als moralisches Guthaben oder als moralische Währung (Sachdeva et al. 2009) übersetzt werden. Dieses Guthaben kann durch vergangene moralische Handlungen aufgebaut und dann in anschließenden Entscheidungen wieder abgebaut oder ausgegeben werden. So wird durch das Guthaben, das durch positive, moralische Handlungen erworben wird, ein späteres Überschreiten von moralischen Regeln finanziert und lizenziert. Die Person, die im Anschluss an eine moralische Handlung weniger moralisches Handeln zeigt, kann sich folgerichtig denken: „Ich habe etwas Gutes und Richtiges getan, also darf ich nun etwas Schlechtes machen“. Die unmoralische Handlung wird als solche zwar wahrgenommen, aber als vertretbar erachtet (Blanken et al. 2015). *Moral Credentials* hingegen, frei übersetzt als *moralische Referenzen*, wirken auf eine andere Art und Weise. Das vergangene moralische Verhalten verändert hierbei den Standpunkt, von dem aus die Person ihr späteres Moralverhalten bewertet. Vergangenes tolerantes Verhalten, bspw. durch die Anerkennung der Gleichberechtigung zwischen Mann und Frau (Monin/Miller 2001), beweist einem selbst, dass man eine Person frei von Vorurteilen ist. Diskriminierendes Verhalten im Anschluss daran wirkt weniger mit Vorurteilen belastet, da die Entscheidung durch eine vermeintlich tolerante Person ausgeführt wurde. Die moralisch fragwürdige Entscheidung wird in diesem Fall als weniger schlecht bewertet.

Die Ausführungen zur Theorie der moralischen Lizenzierung lassen es nun zu, die Übertragbarkeit dieser Theorie auf die Wirksamkeit mancher staatlichen Maßnahmen zur Verringerung des Konsums von bestimmten Produkten oder Produktkategorien zu überprüfen. Welche Rolle eine moralische Lizenzierung tatsächlich im Konsumverhalten spielt und wie individuell vorgenommene Lizenzierungsprozesse mit institutionalisierten Steuerungsmechanismen interagieren, werde ich im Folgenden diskutieren. Die moralische Lizenzierung ist allerdings nicht der einzige Mechanismus, der die Wirksamkeit mancher Lenkungsmechanismen in Frage stellen könnte. Daher wird im Folgenden ein Einblick in aktuelle empirische Arbeiten gegeben, die sowohl die Theorie der moralischen Lizenzierung als Erklärungsansatz für nicht-intendierte Effekte von staatlichen Lenkungsmechanismen

anführen als auch weitere Effekte beschreiben wird, die bei der Ausgestaltung politischer Maßnahmen beachtet werden sollten.

### **6.3.2. Aktuelle empirische Befunde zur Verbindung von Steuern, liberalem Paternalismus und Konsumpsychologie**

In der aktuellen Konsumforschung werden unterschiedliche Ansätze diskutiert, die die Effektivität von verschiedenen staatlichen Lenkungsinstrumenten untersuchen. Angesichts des voranschreitenden Klimawandels und der zögerlichen politischen Reaktionen darauf, hat sich in den letzten Jahren und Jahrzehnten eine Forschungsrichtung entwickelt, die sich mit den Themen der ökologischen Nachhaltigkeit, des klimafreundlichen Konsums und den zu Grunde liegenden psychologischen Mechanismen im Bereich der Konsumforschung auseinandersetzt.

Die Dynamik des Klimawandels und die Brisanz der globalen Erwärmung und ihrer Folgen für das zukünftige gesellschaftliche Zusammenleben, hat zu einem regelrechten Boom wissenschaftlicher Publikationen aus verschiedensten Fachgebieten geführt. Auch in der Konsumforschung ist dieser Trend eindeutig auszumachen. Dabei wird größtenteils akzeptiert, dass es zur Lösung des Klimawandels und aller damit einhergehender Probleme keine einfachen Lösungen gibt. Jede Maßnahme, wie auch Steuern und Instrumente des liberalen Paternalismus, bergen Risiken, sind stark kontext-abhängig und in ihrer Wirksamkeit höchst individuell. Darüber hinaus sind demokratische Staaten immer auf die Mitarbeit der Bevölkerung angewiesen, wodurch die Verantwortung der Transformierung des Konsumverhaltens keineswegs alleinig auf den Schultern des Staates liegt. Konsumierende können ebenso Einfluss auf die Ausgestaltung der Politik nehmen und übernehmen damit auch durch die Akzeptanz ihrer politischen Rolle als gestaltende und eigenverantwortliche Bürger und Bürgerinnen (Schmidt 2016), individuelle Verantwortung (ConSR).

Aufgrund der Komplexität und der Risiken einzelner Maßnahmen, erscheint es umso notwendiger die jeweiligen Schwächen und Stärken der verschiedenen Ansätze systematisch zu analysieren und zu verstehen. Dies ist bislang in der Literatur noch nicht ausreichend geschehen und so versteht sich dieser Beitrag auch als Aufruf, empirische Forschung zur Effektivität verschiedenster Maßnahmen weiter zu intensivieren und Kombinationen von Maßnahmen und Lenkungsmechanismen zu entwickeln, die die individuellen psychologischen Prozesse berücksichtigen und Konsumierenden ein nachhaltigeres Handeln ermöglicht.

## **Moralischer Ablasshandel durch Steuern und staatliche Abgaben**

In Anbetracht der Theorie der moralischen Lizenzierung muss man sich die Frage stellen, ob die zusätzliche Steuer auf ein Produkt, dessen Konsum als unethisch angesehen wird, tatsächlich eine absatzmindernde Wirkung erzielt. Wie eingangs erwähnt, zeigen einige Studien, dass nach der Einführung einer Steuer die Nachfrage nach diesem Gut langfristig durchaus gesunken ist. Bei anderen Produkten ist es allerdings fragwürdig, ob eine Steuer (oder alternative Methoden staatlicher Einflussnahme) ähnliche Effekte hervorrufen können.

In der aktuellen politischen und gesellschaftlichen Debatte wird häufig von der Möglichkeit der Einführung einer Fleischsteuer gesprochen. Diese Diskussion findet Platz in der medialen Berichterstattung und tangiert ein hochrelevantes Thema. Die negativen ökologischen Auswirkungen des Fleischkonsums sind offensichtlich (Carlsson-Kanyama/González, 2009; McMichael et al. 2007; Stehfest et al. 2009). Eine Verringerung des Fleischkonsums kann die Emissionen von Treibhausgasen deutlich verringern und somit dazu beitragen, die schädlichen Auswirkungen des Klimawandels zu begrenzen (Hedenus et al. 2014; Steinfeld et al. 2006). Obwohl mittlerweile viele Kampagnen von verschiedensten Initiativen und Umweltschutzverbänden die Konsumierenden über die negativen Umwelt-Folgen des Fleischkonsums informieren, ist die Nachfrage nach Fleisch in den letzten zehn Jahren nicht gesunken. Immer noch sind sich viele Konsumierende den potenziellen Auswirkungen ihres Fleischkonsums auf den Klimawandel nicht bewusst oder leugnen diese sogar (Pohjolainen et al. 2016; Truelove/Parks 2012). Das Potenzial einer langfristigen und nachhaltigen Umstellung des Fleischkonsums von Konsumierenden ist indes enorm. So könnte die Umstellung der Ernährung hin zu einer veganen Ernährungsform, die Emissionen von Treibhausgasen des gesamten Lebensmittelbereiches um bis zu 50% senken (Poore/Nemecek 2018). Vorerst würde es allerdings sicherlich reichen, den sehr hohen Fleischkonsum in den meisten westlichen und industrialisierten Ländern zu verringern, ohne direkt ganze Produktgruppen auszuschließen.

Jüngste Forschungen in der Verbraucherethik und Verbraucherpsychologie zeigen, dass sich die Verbraucher zwar für bestimmte negative ökologische Probleme verantwortlich fühlen, aber regelmäßig daran scheitern, ihre angeblichen Werte und Einstellungen in Handlungen umzusetzen (Schlaile et al. 2018). Selbst wenn sich die Verbraucher über die möglichen negativen Auswirkungen ihrer Konsumententscheidungen im Klaren sind, sehen sie sich einer Vielzahl von internen und externen Barrieren gegenüber, die sie daran hindern, ihr Verhalten entsprechend zu ändern (Govind et al. 2019). Es ist offensichtlich, dass Forschung und Politik eine Vielzahl von Problemen angehen müssen, um ein Bewusstsein für nachhaltige

Ernährungsgewohnheiten zu schaffen, eine Rolle in den Einstellungsbildungsprozessen der Konsumierenden zu spielen und ihnen zu helfen, diese Einstellungen in tatsächliches Verhalten umzusetzen.

Vor diesem Hintergrund untersuchen Hoffmann et al. (2018), ob eine Steuer auf Fleischprodukte tatsächlich einen absatzmindernden Effekt mit sich bringen würde, oder, aufgrund der einsetzenden moralischen Lizenzierung, ein moralischer Ablasshandel stattfindet, der die intendierte regulierende Wirkung einer Steuer zu einem gewissen Teil negieren würde. Ziel dieser Untersuchung war es, zu überprüfen, ob die Zahlung einer zusätzlichen Abgabe Konsumierende dazu motiviert, eine Lizenz innerhalb einer Entscheidungssituation zu entwickeln, die dann dazu genutzt wird, mit dem unethischen Konsummuster fortzufahren.

Hauptteil des Experiments ist eine Auswahlentscheidung, vor die die Probanden und Probandinnen gestellt wurden, in der sie die Wahl zwischen einem fleischhaltigen Gericht und einem vegetarischen Gericht hatten. Das fleischhaltige Gericht wurde dabei unter anderem mit einer Umweltsteuer in Höhe von 25% belegt. Hervorzuheben ist hier, dass die Autoren ebenfalls untersuchten, ob eine andere Form der Abgabe ähnliche Effekte mit sich bringt wie eine Steuer. In ihrem Experiment führten sie daher eine zusätzliche freiwillige Abgabe ein, deren Höhe die Probanden und Probandinnen frei bestimmen konnten. Das so gezahlte Geld sollte dann durch eine vertrauensvolle Nichtregierungsorganisation verwendet werden, um die negativen ökologischen Folgen des Fleischkonsums zu kompensieren. Um die Effekte auf die Auswahlentscheidungen vergleichen zu können, wurde darüber hinaus eine Kontrollgruppe erstellt, in der die Auswahlentscheidung ohne zusätzliche Abgabe dargestellt wurde. Die Probanden und Probandinnen wurden per Zufall einer der drei Gruppen zugeordnet (eine Kontrollgruppe, eine Gruppe, bei der die fleischhaltige Alternative mit einer Steuer belegt wurde und eine Gruppe, bei der zusätzlich zur Wahl der fleischhaltigen Alternative gespendet werden konnte). Zu Beginn der Studie wurde allen Teilnehmenden ein Zeitungsartikel vorgestellt, der über die negativen Umweltfolgen des Fleischkonsums aufklärt, und darüber hinaus wurde abgefragt, wie schuldig sich die Teilnehmenden nach der Lektüre dieses Artikels fühlten („Inwieweit fühlen Sie sich durch diesen Artikel schuldig?“, Allard/White 2015). Die Autoren interessierte insbesondere, wie sich die moralische Verpflichtung der Konsumierenden vor und nach der Auswahlentscheidung veränderte. Sie stellten die Frage, ob Konsumierende sich durch das Zahlen einer Steuer (oder durch das freiwillige Zahlen einer Spende) moralisch entlasten, und dadurch implizit die absatzreduzierenden Effekte einer Abgabe negieren könnten.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Konsumierende, die nach dem Lesen des Zeitungsartikels ein geringes Schuldgefühl empfanden, sich also durch die Beschreibung der negativen Umweltfolgen des Fleischkonsums emotional nicht betroffen fühlten, sich durch eine extern auferlegte Steuer weiter entlasten konnten, während Konsumierende, die ein hohes Schuldgefühl aufwiesen, sich ausschließlich durch das Zahlen einer freiwilligen Abgabe entlasten konnten. Die Ergebnisse weisen insgesamt darauf hin, dass Konsumierende sich unter Umständen durchaus durch eine zusätzliche finanzielle Abgabe von ihrem Schuldgefühl freikaufen können. Der absatzmindernde Effekt einer zusätzlichen Abgabe konnte in der Untersuchung nicht bestätigt werden. In einer zweiten Studie (Hoffmann et al. 2020) zeigten die Autoren, dass die Wirksamkeit einer freiwilligen Abgabe oder einer Steuer auch von dem Umweltbewusstsein der Konsumierenden abhängt und dass der Prozess, der zu einer Verhaltensänderung im Sinne einer niedrigeren Nachfrage der fleischhaltigen Option führt, von emotionalen Reaktionen der Individuen gesteuert wird. Die Autoren konnten herausstellen, dass Konsumierende ein gewisses Bedauern bei unethischen Konsumententscheidungen empfinden und dieses Bedauern in Abhängigkeit ihres Umweltbewusstseins dann die Auswahlentscheidung determiniert. Insgesamt zeigt sich anhand dieser Studien, dass der psychologische Prozess einer zusätzlichen finanziellen Abgabe auf verschiedene Konsumprodukte noch nicht ausreichend verstanden ist und in Zukunft breiter erforscht werden muss. Dabei muss auch zur Kenntnis genommen werden, dass die Wirksamkeit verschiedener staatlicher Instrumente zwischen unterschiedlichen Produktkategorien zum Teil erheblich variieren kann.

### **Weitere aktuelle Befunde zur Konsumpsychologie von Steuern und Abgabe**

Auch andere Studien haben sich bislang mit dem psychologischen Effekt bestimmter freiwilliger Abgaben als eine Form des Nudgings beschäftigt. So konnten zum Beispiel Tiefenbeck et al. (2013) in ihrer Studie darlegen, dass Verbraucher, die an einer Wassersparkkampagne teilnahmen, ihren Stromverbrauch tatsächlich erhöhten. Dabei handelt es sich um sogenannte indirekte Rebound-Effekte (Reimers et al. 2020). Sie sind eine Form der moralischen Lizenzierung und zeigen, dass auch freiwillige Kampagnen zur Reduzierung eines Gutes durchaus nicht-intendierte Effekte haben können. Die Studienlage zu diesen nicht-intendierten Effekten ist allerdings alles andere als eindeutig und eine Differenzierung von individuellen Einflussfaktoren (Moderatoren) ist bislang nicht erfolgt. So gibt es bislang nur vereinzelte Studien, die sich mit spezifischeren psychologischen Fragestellungen der Wirksamkeit einer Steuer und alternativen Abgaben beschäftigen. Schmacker und Smed (2019) untersuchen die Effekte der Einführung einer Sündensteuer auf zuckerhaltige Getränke und

zeigen, dass bei Konsumenten mit niedriger Selbstkontrolle eine solche Steuer das Konsumverhalten nicht signifikant verändert. Einen anderen Moderator auf die Wirksamkeit einer Steuer identifizieren Aspara et al. (2017), indem sie den Einfluss der individuellen Intelligenz von Konsumierenden auf die Wirksamkeit von Umweltsteuern untersuchen und herausfinden, dass sich intelligentere Konsumierende durch eine Steuer eher nachhaltiger verhalten, als Konsumierende mit einer niedrigeren individuellen Intelligenz. Bei dieser Untersuchung tritt also kein moralischer Lizenzierungseffekt auf, sondern eine Verstärkung des nachhaltigen Effekts einer Steuer. Wie eingangs erwähnt, zeigt sich die Studienlage uneindeutig. Diese Beobachtung ist aus politischer Sicht erst einmal ernüchternd, da sie die Schwierigkeit der effektiven Ausgestaltung politischer Maßnahmen zur Verbesserung des Nachhaltigkeitsverhaltens von Konsumierenden nur noch erhöht. Aus wissenschaftlicher Sicht ergeben sich daraus jedoch viele zukünftige Forschungsrichtungen und offene Forschungsfragen, die bearbeitet werden können.

#### **6.4. Diskussion und Grundsteinlegung für zukünftige empirische Forschung**

Steuern oder andere Lenkungsinstrumente einzuführen, stellen für einen Staat gangbare Möglichkeiten dar, Konsumverhalten zu beeinflussen und ConSR zu fördern. Klassischen ökonomischen Annahmen folgend, werden Steuern häufig als Vehikel genutzt, um durch eine so erwirkte Preiserhöhung die Nachfrage nach bestimmten, nach allgemeiner Auffassung als unethisch oder wenig nachhaltig angesehenen Gütern zu verringern. Diese sogenannten *Sündensteuern* haben sich in den letzten Dekaden bei Produkten, wie bspw. Alkohol und Zigaretten als durchaus erfolgreich erwiesen. Bei anderen Produkten scheint es aber weniger eindeutige Befunde zu geben, so dass nicht davon ausgegangen werden kann, dass eine Steuer auf unethische Produkte per se als effektiv oder wirksam angesehen werden kann. Eine Steuer ist natürlich nicht die einzige Möglichkeit eines Staates auf die Konsumententscheidungen von Individuen einzuwirken. Durch verschiedene Nudging-Maßnahmen kann der Staat indirekter, weniger autoritär und damit schlussendlich weniger freiheitsbeschränkend auftreten und die Konsumententscheidungen von Individuen dennoch sanft beeinflussen. Auch hier ist allerdings immer noch nicht geklärt, wie effektiv Nudging tatsächlich genutzt werden kann, für welche Produktkategorien und vor allem auch für welche Gruppen von Konsumierenden diese Maßnahmen besonders erfolgsversprechend sein könnten. Die ethischen Probleme solcher Maßnahmen tragen, neben den zum Teil ambivalenten Forschungsergebnissen und unklaren Datenlagen, dazu bei, dass in der Praxis noch relativ wenig von diesen Maßnahmen Gebrauch gemacht wird.



Die Wissenschaft kann hier allerdings durchaus einen erheblichen Beitrag leisten und durch tieferegehende Analysen beleuchten, wie staatliche Maßnahmen möglichst schonend und gleichzeitig möglichst effektiv umgesetzt werden können. Dabei sind allerdings noch viele Fragen zu klären. Insbesondere die Höhe und der Abstraktionsgrad einer Steuer sind aus konsumpsychologischer Sicht außerordentlich relevante Einflussfaktoren, die in der aktuellen Forschung noch nicht ausreichend untersucht wurden. Es bleibt bislang bei grundlegenden psychologischen Studien zu diesen Themen, die das Konsumverhalten nicht direkt mit einbeziehen. So zeigten Gneezy et al. (2012), dass kostspielige ethische Handlungen Konsumierende eher dazu bringen, sich in Zukunft ethisch konsistent zu verhalten, während relativ kostenniedrige Handlungen (also bspw. eine sehr geringe Steuer) eher dazu führen, dass Lizenzierungseffekte auftreten. Angewendet auf eine Sündensteuer würde dies implizieren, dass zu geringe Steuern vielleicht eher nicht-intendierte Effekte mit sich brächten, während relativ hohe Steuern über den absatzmindernden Effekt hinaus zu ethischerem Verhalten von Konsumierenden führen könnte.

Der Abstraktionsgrad der Steuer ist der zweite äußerst relevante Faktor, der bislang in der Wissenschaft vernachlässigt und noch nicht ausreichend untersucht wurde. Wird eine Steuer abstrakt als Umweltsteuer bezeichnet, kann es sein, dass die Konsumierenden die Folgen ihres Konsums nicht mehr mit der spezifischen Kaufhandlung in Verbindung setzen, da die mentale Distanz zu groß erscheint. Gleichermaßen kann es passieren, dass, je abstrakter eine Maßnahme bezeichnet wird, die Konsumierenden immer stärker das Gefühl haben, dass ein einzelnes Individuum nichts an dem zu übermächtig erscheinenden Problem ausrichten kann. Diesem Problem des mangelnden Vertrauens in die Wirksamkeit des eigenen Handelns (Schmidt 2016), könnte allerdings entgegenwirkt werden, wenn der Zweck der Abgabe so spezifiziert wird, dass auch die individuellen Konsumierenden ihren Einfluss bzw. ihren Beitrag zur Lösung des anzugehenden Problems erkennen. Hier könnte es auch helfen, die gesamtgesellschaftlichen, aber abstrakten Vorteile eines nachhaltigen oder ethischen Konsumverhaltens mit den daraus resultierenden egoistischen oder individuellen und spezifischen Vorteilen zu verknüpfen.

Schlussendlich zeigt sich, dass es noch sehr viel Raum für zukünftige Forschung gibt. Die Ansätze, die bislang auf staatlicher Ebene verfolgt werden, können nur teilweise dazu beitragen, das Konsumverhalten nachhaltiger zu gestalten. Es fehlt insbesondere an verbundenen Elementen, die konsumpsychologische Erkenntnisse mit einbeziehen und die einzelnen Maßnahmen, wie bspw. die Einführung einer Steuer oder die Durchführung von Nudging-Maßnahmen miteinander verweben – eine „one-size-fits-all“-Maßnahme kann es nicht geben.

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## **7. Der Defining-Issues-Test (DIT) in der wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Konsumforschung. Die empirische Analyse von Konsumdilemmata**

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### **Abstract:**

Der auf der kognitiven Entwicklungstheorie moralischen Urteilens von *Lawrence Kohlberg* basierende Defining Issues Test (DIT), ist eine Methode, mit der sich Aussagen über die moralische Urteilsfähigkeit von Individuen treffen lassen. Der vorliegende Beitrag beschreibt den Hintergrund und den Aufbau des DIT und eröffnet das mögliche Potential einer Übertragung der bislang hauptsächlich in der Psychologie und den Bildungswissenschaften eingesetzte Methode in die Wirtschaftswissenschaft.

### **Keywords:**

Defining-Issues-Test, Konsumdilemmata, Kohlberg, Nachhaltigkeit, empirische Analyse

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## 7.1. Einordnung der Stufentheorie der Moralentwicklung in die Wirtschaftswissenschaften

Die Identifikation und Analyse von Determinanten der moralischen Urteilsfähigkeit des Menschen ist ein grundlegender Forschungsgegenstand in der Philosophie, der Psychologie und einer Vielzahl angrenzender Fachrichtungen. Dabei geht es stets um die Frage, wie Menschen ihre Moralurteile bilden, welche Faktoren hierbei eine Rolle spielen und wie sich diese Faktoren unterscheiden.

Ein prominenter und wegweisender Vertreter dieses Forschungsgebietes war der amerikanische Psychologe *Lawrence Kohlberg*. Mit seiner Theorie der **Moralentwicklung** aus dem Jahr 1964 war er Wegbereiter vieler bekannter Forschenden, die die Theorie empirisch überprüften und sie weiterentwickelten (vgl. *Rest et al.*, 1997). Bis heute genießt die Theorie ein hohes Ansehen und ist in praktisch jedem Psychologie-Lehrbuch zu finden. Im Bereich der Wirtschaftswissenschaften kommt sie allerdings eher selten zur Anwendung, was unter anderem an dem noch immer zaghaften Umgang mit interdisziplinären Forschungsmethoden liegt. Insbesondere zwischen den Bereichen der Psychologie und der Philosophie könnten Forschende und Studierende der Wirtschaftswissenschaften hier Impulse und Anregungen gewinnen, welche wir mit der Integration der Theorie der Moralentwicklung in den Bereich der Wirtschaftswissenschaften anregen möchten.

Zu diesem Zweck werden zuerst die Grundlagen der Theorie beschrieben, ehe der sogenannte **Defining-Issues-Test**, kurz DIT (vgl. *Rest et al.*, 1974; 1999) eingeführt und erläutert wird. Dieser Test gibt Forschenden die Möglichkeit, aufbauend auf dem *Kohlberg'schen* Modell der Moralentwicklung, empirisch fundierte Aussagen bezüglich der Moralurteile von Individuen zu treffen und diese über verschiedene Anwendungsbereiche hinweg zu vergleichen. Ferner wird sein Nutzen, die tatsächliche Anwendung sowie allgemeine Richtlinien im Umgang mit dem DIT erläutert, um die in Wirtschaftshandlungen ubiquitären **Entscheidungsdilemmata** empirisch analysieren zu können und so neue Erkenntnisse für zukünftige Forschung zu gewinnen.

## 7.2. Die Theorie der kognitiven Moralentwicklung von *Lawrence Kohlberg* und der Defining-Issues-Test (DIT)

Im Verlauf ihres Lebens entwickeln Menschen die Fähigkeit, moralische Urteile zu fällen, stetig weiter. *Lawrence Kohlberg* hat sich über seine gesamte Karriere hinweg mit der Frage beschäftigt, wie dieser Entwicklungsprozess verläuft und wie Menschen ihre Fähigkeit, kognitiv komplexe Moralurteile zu fällen, entwickeln (vgl. *van den Enden et al.*, 2019). Seine

Antwort auf diese Frage bildet sein Stufenmodell der Moralentwicklung, dessen Aufbau und Analyse nachfolgend erörtert werden soll.

### 7.2.1. Das Stufenmodell von Lawrence Kohlberg

Um die moralische Urteilsfähigkeit von Individuen zu differenzieren, hat *Kohlberg* die Theorie der kognitiven Moralentwicklung entwickelt, die die Urteilsfähigkeit von Individuen anhand eines Stufenmodells klassifiziert. Das Stufenmodell wurde aus einer Reihe von Interview-Studien abgeleitet, den sogenannten Moral-Judgment-Interviews (MJI), in denen *Kohlberg* die Probanden mit moralischen Dilemmata konfrontierte und sie anschließend über ihre moralischen Bewertungen der Situationen ausfragte (vgl. *Kohlberg*, 1958, 1969).

Das bekannteste Dilemma aus *Kohlbergs* Versuchsreihen ist das sog. **Heinz-Dilemma**, das folgend dargestellt wird, um den Aufbau der untersuchten Dilemmata zu verdeutlichen. Es wird schnell klar, dass diese Dilemmata stets verschiedene moralische Urteilmöglichkeiten gegeneinander aufspielen können und es keine eindeutig richtigen oder falschen Auflösungen der Geschichte geben kann.

„In einem fernen Land lag eine Frau, die an einer besonderen Krebsart erkrankt war, im Sterben. Es gab eine Medizin, von der die Ärzte glaubten, sie könne die Frau retten. Es handelte sich um eine besondere Form von Radium, die ein Apotheker in der gleichen Stadt erst kürzlich entdeckt hatte. Die Herstellung war teuer, doch der Apotheker verlangte zehnmal mehr dafür, als ihn die Produktion gekostet hatte. Er hatte 200 Dollar für das Radium bezahlt und verlangte 2000 Dollar für eine kleine Dosis des Medikaments. *Heinz*, der Ehemann der kranken Frau, suchte alle seine Bekannten auf, um sich das Geld auszuleihen, und er bemühte sich auch um Unterstützung durch die Behörden. Doch er bekam nur 1000 Dollar zusammen, also die Hälfte des verlangten Preises. Er erzählte dem Apotheker, dass seine Frau im Sterben lag, und bat, ihm die Medizin billiger zu verkaufen bzw. ihn den Rest später bezahlen zu lassen. Doch der Apotheker sagte: „Nein, ich habe das Mittel entdeckt, und ich will damit viel Geld verdienen.“ *Heinz* hatte nun alle legalen Möglichkeiten erschöpft; er ist ganz verzweifelt und überlegt, ob er in die Apotheke einbrechen und das Medikament für seine Frau stehlen soll“ (vgl. *Kohlberg*, 1995, S.496).

In den zusammengetragenen Antworten dieser sogenannten Moral-Judgement-Interviews (MJI) erkannte *Kohlberg*, dass die Probanden ihre moralischen Urteile auf unterschiedlich komplexe **normative Logiken** fußten. Aus dieser Erkenntnis entwickelte er sein Modell (vgl. *Kohlberg*, 1958, 1969). Dem Modell liegt die Annahme zugrunde, dass Menschen sechs Stufen des moralischen Urteilens durchlaufen (vgl. Tab. 1) und dabei allmählich von niedrigeren zu



komplexeren Formen des moralischen Denkens übergehen (vgl. *Thoma/Dong, 2014*). Diese Stufen folgen einer eindeutig bestimmbar Reihenfolge und können nicht übersprungen werden. *Kohlbergs* Forschungsergebnisse legen nahe, dass nur die wenigsten Menschen die komplexeste Stufe moralischer Urteilsfähigkeit erreichen können.

Die sechs Stufen der Moralentwicklung lassen sich weiterhin in drei übergeordnete Normebenen unterteilen. Auf der **prä-konventionellen Ebene** (Stufe 1 und Stufe 2) spielen Argumente eine Rolle, die ausschließlich persönliche Interessen in den Vordergrund rücken. Auf der **konventionellen Ebene** (Stufe 3 und Stufe 4) stehen Argumente, die sich an einfachen Gruppennormen und übergeordneten Autoritätsprinzipien orientieren und auf der **post-konventionellen Ebene** (Stufe 5 und Stufe 6) befinden sich Argumente, die sich auf universalisierbare moralische Prinzipien berufen.

*Tabelle 1: Stufen der moralischen Entwicklung*

Stufe	MJI	DIT	Einstellung	Ethische Kategorie
6	Post-konventionell		Es herrschen universelle Prinzipien vor, welche die Anspruchsrechte aller Menschen berücksichtigen. „Handle so, dass deine Handlungen und die Auswirkungen deiner Handlungen von allen Menschen gewünscht werden können und dass jeder potenziell gleich handeln könnte.“	Deontologie
5			Subjekte orientieren sich an Normen, die für die gesamte Gesellschaft den größten Nutzen bringen. „Handle nach einem sozialen Konsens, der für alle involvierten Parteien wünschenswert ist“	Kontraktualismus
4	Konventionell	Konventionen beibehaltend	Abstrakte normative Strukturen werden anerkannt. Subjekte erkennen Gesetze und staatliche Autoritäten als wichtig an. „Erfülle deine Pflicht“	Konformismus
3		Persönliches Interesse	Subjekte wollen die Erwartungen ihrer unmittelbaren Peer-Gruppen erfüllen und als ‚gut‘ anerkannt werden. „Mach das, was am besten für die Gruppe ist“	Binnenmoral
2	Prä-konventionell		Subjekte erkennen andere als Träger eigener Ziele und nutzen dieses Wissen für ihren eigenen Vorteil. „Wenn es sich gut anfühlt, tu es!“	Strategisches Selbstinteresse
1				Subjekte können nur ihre unmittelbaren Bedürfnisse wahrnehmen. Handlungen werden durch Belohnung und Sanktionen motiviert. „Solange es keine Bestrafung gibt, ist es vollkommen in Ordnung“

Quellen: Kohlberg, 1969 (S. 347ff.); Thoma, 2006 (S. 68ff.)

### 7.2.2. Auswertungen der Moraldilemmata nach Kohlberg

Im Anschluss an die Lektüre der Dilemmata bat *Kohlberg* die Probanden die Geschichten zu reflektieren und anzugeben, aus welchen Gründen die Protagonisten der Geschichte sich wie verhalten sollten. Diese Analyseart ermöglichte es *Kohlberg* und seinen Kollegen die Beweggründe der moralischen Urteilsfindung der Probanden zu erfassen, ohne selbst ein normatives („richtige“ oder „falsche“ Antworten) Urteil über die Probanden zu fällen.

Am offenen Ende jeder Kurzgeschichte wurden die Befragten gebeten, zu erklären, wie und warum der Protagonist bzw. die Protagonistin der Geschichten entsprechend handeln sollte. So wurde beispielsweise in dem eingangs vorgestellten *Heinz*-Dilemma gefragt, ob und warum *Heinz* das Medikament stehlen sollte. Auf Grundlage der von den Befragten vorgeschlagenen **Handlungsnormen** unterschied *Kohlberg* die sechs Stufen des moralischen Denkens (vgl. Tab. 1) wonach sich nun die Aussagen der Probanden in die Kategorien einteilen lassen. Schnell ist ersichtlich wie sich die Moralurteile zwischen den Stufen unterscheiden. Bilden auf der sechsten Stufe universalisierbare Prinzipien die Basis für die gefälltten Moralurteile, wird im Gegenzug auf der ersten Stufe aus reinem individuellem Egoismus argumentiert. Entsprechend könnte eine Argumentation auf einer post-konventionellen Ebene (Stufe 5 und 6) beispielsweise lauten: „*Heinz* sollte die Medikation nicht stehlen, da er unmöglich wollen kann, dass Diebstahl zur Erreichung individueller Ziele zu einer allgemein anerkannten Norm wird. Der Apotheker verhält sich allerdings nicht korrekt und sollte sich an sozialen Fürsorgepflichten orientieren müssen“. Studienteilnehmende, die auf der ersten Stufe des Modells einzuordnen sind, würden eher argumentieren, dass es schon in Ordnung sei, die Medikation zu stehlen, solange *Heinz* sich dabei nicht erwischen ließe. Anhand des *Heinz*-Dilemmas wird deutlich, welchen Charakter die in *Kohlbergs* Studien angeführten Kurzgeschichten haben. Die Dilemmata zwingen die Probanden, moralische Werte abzuwägen und Kompromisse einzugehen. Es gibt keine eindeutigen (widerspruchsfreien) Lösungen.

Die MJI wurden von *Kohlberg* und seinen Kollegen stets handschriftlich durchgeführt und unterlagen, wie für Interviews üblich, den subjektiven Werturteilen der Interviewenden und der auswertenden Personen. Die Weiterentwicklung der MJI in den Defining Issues Test (DIT) im Laufe der 1970er Jahre vereinfachte die bis dato komplexe Anwendung, Durchführung und Auswertung der Interviews (vgl. *Rest et al.*, 1974) und ermöglichte das Treffen quantifizierbarer Aussagen über die Moralurteile der Probanden.

Statt frei formulierter Antworten, erfassen Forschende mit Hilfe des DIT Aussagen im Multiple-Choice-Verfahren und können so eindeutige Zahlenwerte generieren. Nach jeder

Kurzgeschichte werden im DIT eindeutige Handlungsentscheidungen abgefragt, ehe es zur nächsten Befragungsphase übergeht. Diese Handlungsentscheidungen reflektieren die Geschichten und fordern die Probanden zu einer eindeutigen Handlung auf. Im oben erwähnten *Heinz*-Dilemma lautet diese Frage beispielsweise: „Soll *Heinz* die Medikamente stehlen?“. Die Antwortmöglichkeiten sind dann: „Ja, er sollte es tun“, „ich kann mich nicht entscheiden“ und „Nein, er sollte es nicht tun“. Mit Hilfe dieser Angaben können im weiteren Verlauf der Auswertungen noch einige Indizes (insbesondere der später besprochene U-Score) gebildet werden. Nach dieser Frage geht es im DIT mit der **Rating-Phase** weiter.

Während im *Kohlberg*'schen Original die Probanden am Ende der Kurzgeschichten mit Interviewfragen nach ihrer moralischen Urteilsfähigkeit und der zu Grunde liegenden Argumentation zu fragen, zeigte man die Probanden bis zu zwölf verschiedene Aussagen, die sich auf die Stufen des Modells beziehen. Diese Aussagen mussten dann nach ihrer Relevanz für den Protagonisten bewertet werden. Die Rating-Phase wird durch eine dritte Phase, der **Ranking-Phase**, ergänzt. In dieser Phase mussten die Probanden die vier wichtigsten der insgesamt zwölf Aussagen auswählen und hinsichtlich ihrer Relevanz für die Bewertung der Situation sortieren. Aus diesen Informationen kann man nun den sogenannten P-Score errechnen, der die moralische Urteilsfähigkeit der Probanden approximiert und der in Kapitel 3 ausführlicher besprochen wird. Mit der Zeit wurde der DIT immer weiter verfeinert und inhaltlich angepasst sowie eine Reihe weiterer Indizes entwickelt, die die Aussagekraft des DIT weiter erhöhen und auf die im folgenden Kapitel näher eingegangen wird.

### **7.3. Empirische Analysen des DIT im digitalen Zeitalter**

#### **7.3.1. Überblick**

In der ersten Version des DIT wurde noch ausschließlich der sogenannte **P-Score** verwendet, mit dem die moralische Entwicklungsstufe einzelner Probanden angegeben und verglichen werden kann. In der weiteren Entwicklung des DIT wurde dann der neuere und aussagekräftigere **N2-Score** (vgl. *Rest et al., 1997*) eingeführt, der für die Ermittlung des persönlichen moralischen Entwicklungswertes auf eine größere Datenvielfalt zurückgreifen kann. Aktuellere Studien weisen auf weitere Indizes hin, wobei sich insbesondere der **U-Score** (vgl. *Thoma et al., 1991*), der die moralische Entwicklung mit den Entscheidungsempfehlungen der Probanden in Relation setzt, als besonders relevant erwiesen hat. Auf diese drei prominentesten Indizes und deren Berechnungsgrundlage wird im Folgenden genauer eingegangen. Während die meisten der vorhandenen Studien offline durchgeführt wurden, zeigt sich in jüngster Vergangenheit ein neuer Trend zur Online-Erhebung des DIT. Auch hier zeigt

sich, dass die zur Verfügung stehenden Indizes durchaus auch in einem Online-Setting valide und reliable Ergebnisse erzielen (vgl. Xu et al., 2007).

### 7.3.2. P- und N2-Scores zur Erfassung der moralischen Urteilsfähigkeit

Der P-Score repräsentiert den Anteil der Punkte, die sich auf post-konventionelle Aussagen beziehen. Je höher dieser Score ausfällt, desto stärker bewerten die Probanden post-konventionelle Aussagen als relevant und desto höher befinden sie sich in dem von Kohlberg definierten Stufenmodell. Während häufig sechs Dilemmata hintereinander abgefragt werden, kommt es durchaus auch vor, dass diese Anzahl variiert wird. Es hat sich allerdings gezeigt, dass mindestens fünf Kurzgeschichten in Folge die Ergebnisse der Analysen zufriedenstellend und valide abbilden können (vgl. Rest et al., 1999). Nach jeder Kurzgeschichte [k] haben die Probanden die Möglichkeit die vier relevantesten Aussagen anzugeben. Für die relevanteste Aussage erhält der Proband bzw. die Probandin vier Punkte, für die zweitrelevanteste Aussage drei Punkte usw. Es werden nur die Rankingpunkte berücksichtigt, die post-konventionelle Aussagen bewerten [p] (Aussagen der fünften und sechsten Stufe des zugrunde liegenden Stufenmodell). Wenn ein Proband bzw. eine Probandin ein Ranking [α] für eine bestimmte Story [k] nicht angibt, wird die Punktzahl für diesen Fall auf der Basis der maximal zu erhaltenen, abzüglich der ausgelassenen Punkte neu berechnet.

$$P - Score = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^n p_k}{(n*10) - \alpha} \quad (1)$$

*Formel 1: Der P-Score*

Obwohl der P-Score den **Standardwert** für die normative Urteilsfähigkeit darstellt, berücksichtigt er außer der postkonventionellen Rangfolge keine anderen Daten. Daher wurde zur Verbesserung der Methode zusätzlich der N2-Score eingeführt (vgl. Rest et al., 1997), der den P-Score ohne Anpassung der ausgelassenen Rankings in eine Relation zur Rating-Phase setzt (vgl. Rest et al., 1997). Der erste Teil des N2-Scores besteht aus einem nicht an fehlende Rankings angepassten P-Score. Der zweite Teil ist die Differenz zwischen den durchschnittlichen Bewertungen (R) im postkonventionellen Bereich (Stufe 5–6) und dem prä-konventionellen persönlichen Interesse (Stufe 2–3). Dieses Rating wird standardisiert, indem es durch die Standardabweichung geteilt wird. Der zweite Teil des N2-Scores wird um den Wert drei gewichtet, da eine empirische Standardabweichung von 1/3 zum P\*-Score besteht. Damit sind der N2- und der P-Score miteinander vergleichbar (vgl. Rest et al., 1997).

$$N2 - Score = \sum_{k=1}^K \frac{p(k)}{10 * K} + \left( \frac{\text{mean}(\sum_{k=1}^K R_k(\text{Stufe } 5 + \text{Stufe } 6)) - \text{mean}(\sum_{k=1}^K R_k(\text{Stufe } 2 + \text{Stufe } 3))}{SD(R_k(\text{Stufe } 1 + \text{Stufe } 2 + \text{Stufe } 3 + \text{Stufe } 4 + \text{Stufe } 5 + \text{Stufe } 6))} \right) * 3 \quad (2)$$

*Formel 2: Der N2-Score*

In vielen Experimenten werden sowohl der P-Score als auch der N2-Score verwendet. Ersterer, um ihn besser mit anderen P-Scores in der Literatur vergleichen zu können, und letzterer, um das Verständnis der Teilnehmer für komplexe moralische Aussagen in den verschiedenen Anwendungsbereichen der Dilemmata zu überprüfen.

**7.3.3. U-Scores zur Ermittlung der Übereinstimmung von Verständnis und Antwortverhalten**

Neben dem P-Score und dem N2-Score ist der U-Score ein weiterer wichtiger und häufig berechneter Standard. Der U-Score zeigt, ob Probanden die normativen Argumente in der Rating-Phase für ihre Entscheidungsfindung nutzen. Solange ein Proband nicht die Option „ich kann mich nicht entscheiden“ in der ersten Entscheidungsphase nach dem Lesen der Story gewählt hat, prüft der U-Score, ob die Entscheidung für oder gegen die Handlung des Protagonisten bzw. der Protagonistin der Story mit dem Rating der 12 normativen Argumente übereinstimmt (vgl. *Thoma et al.*, 1991).

$$U - Score = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^K \sum_{i=1}^{12} T_{ik}(3-R_{ik})E_{ik}}{\sum_{k=1}^K \sum_{i=1}^{12} (2|E_{ik}|)} \text{ mit } E_{ik} = \frac{(MP_{ik}-MC_{ik})}{S_{ik}} \quad (3)$$

*Formel 3: Der U-Score*

$T_{ik}$  ist eine dichotome Variable und wird verwendet, um einen positiven Zähler für Antworten beizubehalten, die mit der gewählten Aktionswahl übereinstimmen.  $R$  ist die Bewertung eines Argumentes  $[i]$  in Story  $[k]$ , und  $E$  ist die effektive Größe der Differenz zwischen der gemittelten Bewertung eines Arguments  $[i]$  in Story  $[k]$  für alle Probanden, die für die Handlung in der Story stimmen, und den Bewertungen der Teilnehmenden, die sich gegen die Handlung entscheiden. Somit standardisiert  $E$  die durchschnittlichen Ratings in Bezug auf alle Teilnehmenden. Dementsprechend ist  $MP_{ik}$  die durchschnittliche Bewertung des Arguments  $[i]$  in Story  $[k]$  für alle Probanden, die sich für die Option „Der Protagonist oder die Protagonistin sollte es tun“ entscheiden, und  $MC_{ik}$  ist die Bewertung desselben Items, die für die Teilnehmenden berechnet wird, die sich für die Option „Der Protagonist oder die Protagonistin sollte es nicht tun“ entscheiden.  $S_{ik}$  ist die Standardabweichung aller getroffenen Entscheidungen. Der U-Score deutet also auf die Übereinstimmung der Probanden zwischen ihrer hypothetischen Handlungswahl und ihrem Verständnis der Argumente hin. Ein niedriger U-Score weist darauf hin, dass die Probanden **intuitiv** eine andere Handlungsentscheidung wählen, als sie **argumentativ** vertreten.

Zusammengenommen bieten die verschiedenen Indizes die Möglichkeit die Antworten der Probandinnen und Probanden auf die zum Teil hoch komplexen moralischen Dilemmata empirisch valide zu überprüfen.

#### **7.4. Chancen der Verwendung des DIT in der wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Forschung**

Einige konventionelle Instrumente der empirischen wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Konsumforschung eignen sich häufig nicht, die authentischen normativen Urteile von Individuen zu erfassen. So sind sowohl Survey-Studien als auch experimentelle Untersuchungen von dem Problem der sozialen Erwünschtheit sowie der Attitude-Behavior-Gap betroffen. Sobald Menschen in Umfragen mit moralisch sensiblen Themen konfrontiert werden, neigen sie dazu, Überzeugungen zu äußern, von denen sie annehmen, diese entsprächen einer gesellschaftlich erwünschten und allgemein geteilten **Norm** (vgl. *Chung/Monroe*, 2003). Dieser psychologische Effekt der **sozialen Erwünschtheit** konnte für alle Umfragedesigns mit moralisch sensiblen Themen sowohl kontextunabhängig als auch im Konsumkontext nachgewiesen werden (z.B. *Auger/Devinney*, 2007). Durch die indirekte Befragungsmethode des DITs kann dieses Problem größtenteils überwunden werden, da die befragten Personen nie direkt nach ihren individuellen Einstellungen gefragt werden, sondern diese aus den gegebenen Ratings- und Rankings abgeleitet werden und die befragten Personen darüber hinaus stellvertretend für die Protagonisten der Kurzgeschichten antworten.

Auch das Phänomen der **Attitude-Behavior-Gap**, welches die empirische Ermittlung normativer Konsumenteneinstellungen in aller Regel mit sich zieht (vgl. *Heidbrink et al.*, 2011; *Heidbrink/Müller*, 2017), könnte durch die Anwendung des DITs eingedämmt werden. So zeigen *Carrington et al.* (2012), dass zwar bis zu 90% der Konsumierenden ethische Gesichtspunkte beim Kauf von Konsumprodukten als wichtig anerkennen, doch nur 3% der Konsumierenden tatsächlich ethisch produzierte Produkte kaufen. Der DIT kann durch den Einsatz von Entscheidungsdilemmata bewusste oder unbewusste Falschaussagen von Probanden minimieren und die häufig festgestellte Diskrepanz zwischen geäußerten Einstellungen (Attitude) und tatsächlichen Verhaltensmustern (Behavior) teilweise auflösen. Die Dilemmata zwingen die Probanden, moralische Werte abzuwägen und Kompromisse einzugehen. Es gibt keine eindeutigen (widerspruchsfreien) Lösungen und keine eindeutigen moralischen Gründe für eine der Geschichten, die sonst zu einer allgemeinen Zustimmung führen würden, ohne dass die Probanden tatsächlich hinter den geäußerten Argumenten stehen. Insgesamt ist es denkbar, dass der DIT in vielen Bereichen der Konsumforschung genutzt

werden kann, um die individuelle Fähigkeit, Entscheidungsdilemmata im Konsumkontext aufzulösen, zu untersuchen und so Einblicke in die offenbaren Argumentationsmuster und **kognitiven Prozesse** der Moralbildung zu gewinnen. Der Konsumkontext bietet sich im Besonderen an, da viele Konsumhandlungen mit moralischen Konflikten einher gehen, die eben genau die beiden Probleme der sozialen Erwünschtheit und der Attitude-Behavior-Gap mit sich bringen.

Verschiedene Spielarten des DIT wurden in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten in unterschiedlichsten Disziplinen verwendet, jedoch ist der Großteil der Studien im Bereich der Bildungsforschung angesiedelt und beschäftigt sich weniger mit praktischen und alltäglichen Anwendungen des *Kohlberg*'schen Modells der Moralentwicklung (vgl. *Corcoran/O'Flaherty*, 2016). Diese Lücke in der Literatur lässt sich unter anderem damit begründen, dass in manchen Disziplinen der Wirtschaftswissenschaften noch immer eine gewisse Zögerlichkeit vorherrscht, interdisziplinäre Arbeit, insbesondere mit der Philosophie und der Psychologie, zu forcieren. So wird zwar beispielsweise im Bereich der Wirtschaftsethik schon seit Jahrzehnten durchaus erfolgreich gezeigt, dass die Integration der Erkenntnisse der verschiedenen Forschungsdisziplinen außerordentlich fruchtbar ist (vgl. *Bienengräber*, 2010), doch gerade im Bereich des Konsumverhaltens sind normative Erklärungsansätze noch selten (vgl. *Karimova et al.*, 2020). Diese Lücke in der Literatur könnte mit Hilfe des DIT und seiner Anwendung in der Konsumforschung zumindest teilweise geschlossen werden. Unser heutiges Konsumverhalten ist durch eine unüberschaubare Vielzahl von Einzelentscheidungen geprägt, die durch die zunehmende Relevanz von Klima- und Umweltschutz stetig komplexer wird. Daraus ergeben sich alltägliche **Konsumententscheidungen**, die sehr stark an moralische Dilemmata erinnern, da Konsumierende stets Entscheidungen treffen, die unterschiedliche Bereiche ihrer Persönlichkeit betreffen und häufig in Abwägungsentscheidungen münden (vgl. *Schlaile et al.*, 2018).

Dies lässt sich am Beispiel der **Sharing Economy** veranschaulichen: Konsumierende können hier dem Argument folgen, dass Sharing womöglich einen finanziellen Vorteil bringen kann, weil es mitunter günstiger ist, ein Auto bei Bedarf zu leihen als es zu besitzen. Ebenso können sie die individuelle Bequemlichkeit als das wichtigste Argument erkennen oder aber dem abstrakten Wunsch nach einer Welt, in der alle Individuen für Umwelt- und Naturschutz eintreten und die negativen Auswirkungen ihres Konsums minimieren wollen. Egoistische, prä-konventionelle Argumentationen widersprechen post-konventionellen und führen so zu einem schwer lösbaren Konsumdilemma. Erst die rationale und mitunter argumentative Auflösung dieser Dilemmata zeigt in der Analyse dann die moralische Urteilsfähigkeit der

Konsumierenden. Mit Hilfe der Anwendung des DIT im Konsumbereich kann genau das erreicht werden.

### 7.5. Abschließende Betrachtungen

Der DIT hat für die wirtschaftswissenschaftliche Forschung großes Potenzial. Wurde der Test bislang eher in der moralischen und bildungspsychologischen Grundlagenforschung eingesetzt, können Forschende in den Wirtschaftswissenschaften von dem nachhaltigen und umfangreichen Wissensschatz, der sich in über 1000 Studien hinweg entwickelt hat, stark profitieren. Sicherlich ist der DIT nicht gänzlich frei von Mängeln und muss auch in kommenden Anwendungen stets hinterfragt werden. Eine Erweiterung der Perspektive der Konsumforschung mit Hilfe **interdisziplinärer Ansätze** ist nichtsdestotrotz zu begrüßen, da so wertvolle Erkenntnisse für die wirtschaftswissenschaftliche Forschung gewonnen werden könnten.

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### **Erklärung zum selbständigen Verfassen der Arbeit**

Ich erkläre hiermit, dass ich meine Doktorarbeit „Essays on (Un-)Ethical Consumption and the Ethics of Consumption in a Global Marketplace“ selbstständig und ohne fremde Hilfe angefertigt habe und dass ich als Koautor maßgeblich zu den weiteren Fachartikeln beigetragen habe. Alle von anderen Autoren wörtlich übernommenen Stellen, wie auch die sich an die Gedanken anderer Autoren eng anlehnenden Ausführungen der aufgeführten Beiträge wurden besonders gekennzeichnet und die Quellen nach den mir angegebenen Richtlinien zitiert.

Kiel, 18.12.2020

Nils Christian Hoffmann