

The role of attitudes towards socially responsible organizations on consumer behavior

A. P. Duarte, & C. Mouro

Centro de Investigação e Intervenção Social, CIS/ISCTE-IUL, Lisboa, Portugal

Introduction

Nowadays organizations are under increasing pressure to behave in responsible manner. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) implies that organizations should be concerned with integrating social and environmental considerations in their business operations and interactions with stakeholders.

In the European context, the multitude of socially responsible practices has been organized in two dimensions, which can emphasise either internal affairs (e.g. work-family conflicts) or external providing (e.g. support for social causes).

There is still limited evidence that individuals are indeed willing to give their support to socially responsible organizations through their socially responsible consumer behaviour (SRCB). The current study provides knowledge on this issue in a non Anglo-Saxon, European country, namely Portugal, aiming at increasing responsiveness to specific situational challenges.

This study intends to extend prior research by analysing the relationship between perceived importance of CSR and socially responsible organizations.

Method

A convenience sample of 210 individuals was surveyed through a self-reported questionnaire. Respondents were aged between 18 and 72 years ($M=35$; $SD=11$); 60.5% were female. At the time of the study, 96.2% were employed.

Eight items regarding socially responsible practices were presented, four related to internal CSR (e.g. “have a fair pay police”)

and four related to external CSR (e.g. “give support to social causes”). Response scale: 1- Not important, 5- Very important.

Five items measured readiness to support socially responsible organizations as consumers (e.g. “I would pay more to buy products/services from a socially responsible company”). Response scale: 1- Totally disagree, 5- Totally agree.

All variables reveal good reliability levels.

Results

Perceived importance of CSR and readiness to engage in SRCB are positively and significantly associated. Results revealed that only the importance attributed to external CSR dimension ($\beta=.42$, $p=.000$) significantly helps to predict participants' engagement in SRCB. The importance placed to internal CSR had no significant effect over SRCB ($\beta=.03$, n.s.). The model explains 19% of SRCB unique variance.

Discussion

The findings suggest that participants value corporate engagement in both internal and external CSR, despite placing a higher importance to internal ones.

However, in their purchase behaviours they seem to be influenced only by the importance they attribute to external social responsible practices. Since CSR initiatives, particularly external initiatives are valued and considered by individuals in their purchasing behaviours, organizations should engage in this type of practices, as well as increase consumers awareness of their CSR portfolio through a effective corporate communication process.