Towards a Measure of Individual Consumer Morality

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To what extent are 'ethical consumers' different from other consumers regarding their decision-making in situations that have moral implications? Are they any different at all? Despite the fact that ethical consumption is receiving increased recognition from researchers, there are currently no satisfactory answers to these questions. Existing individual morality measures fail to account for the large spectrum of morality approaches and have been mostly developed for application in an organisational context. Accordingly, the concept of a new measure is proposed that takes a wide variety of morality approaches into account and is specifically developed for use in the context of consumption.

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ABSTRACT

To what extent are ‘ethical consumers’ different from other consumers regarding their decision-making in situations that have moral implications? Are they any different at all? Despite the fact that ethical consumption is receiving increased recognition from researchers, there are currently no satisfactory answers to these questions. Existing individual morality measures fail to account for the large spectrum of morality approaches and have been mostly developed for application in an organisational context. Accordingly, the concept of a new measure is proposed that takes a wide variety of morality approaches into account and is specifically developed for use in the context of consumption.

BACKGROUND

Consumers’ attitudes towards corporations have severely deteriorated since the early 1980s, as demonstrated by more than a halving of the number of UK respondents between 1980-1998 who agree with the statement that large companies help improve consumers’ lives (Howard and Nelson 2000). This dramatic deterioration in trust is probably due in no small way to the publicity surrounding notorious incidents such as the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska and Shell’s 1995 attempt to sink the oil platform Brent Spar in the North Sea, to name only two. The decline in public trust in corporations is seen as one of the main drivers of what is now called the ‘ethical market’ (e.g., Cowe and Williams 2001). Research findings suggest that consumers show a growing awareness of and an increasing interest in what can be summarised under ‘ethical consumption’, a phenomenon usually associated with people’s consumption-related concerns regarding issues such as environment sustainability, animal welfare, fair trade, labour standards, but also personal health (e.g., Tallontire, Rentsendorj, and Blowfield 2001).

Numerous indicators support the assumption that the ethical consumption movement is still gaining momentum, potentially resulting in what Tallontire et al. (2001) call negative and positive purchase behaviours. On the ‘negative behaviour’ side, for example, according to Mintel’s 1990 special report, 50% of UK respondents would not buy animal-tested products (in Tallontire et al. 2001); almost ten years later, as many as 85% of UK respondents indicated that animal testing of cosmetics safety (e.g., skin care products, makeup) is never justified (MORI 1999). The resulting avoidance or boycotting of certain products or entire companies can cause significant negative consequences, even for big corporations. A case example here is Monsanto, which reacted arrogantly and insensitively to public concerns about the use of GM technology in soy bean production in Europe. Superfluous corporate dismissal of concerns about bio-diversity and human health resulted in a considerable public impetus to NGO-initiated anti-GM campaigns (e.g., Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth), which lead a number of food manufacturers and retailers in Britain to turn against GM technology altogether (Cowe and Williams 2001). On the ‘positive behaviour’ side, consumers may actively seek products and companies which they perceive as ethical. In 2000, 51% of UK respondents had chosen products/services based on a company’s responsible reputation at least once over the last 12 months, with one-third of them having done so at least four times. Fifty-two percent had recommended a company based on its responsible reputation at least once, over one-quarter of them had done so at least four times (Hines and Ames 2000). Examples of organisations that have profited significantly from their ethical image are The Body Shop, having over 2000 stores in 50 countries and achieving a 25% operating profit growth in 2004, and TransFair in the USA, with average annual Fair Trade coffee growth rates of 75% between the launch of the label in 1998 and the year 2003. Accordingly, the phenomenon of ethical consumption can be seen to have a significant (positive or negative) impact on the performance of corporations.

An alternative perspective from which ethical, or environmentally and socially conscious, consumption can be approached, is that of sustainability. It has been argued that a sustainable future can only be achieved when behavioural changes of consumers are given equal attention as that given to producers (e.g., Haake and Jolivet 2001; Michaelis 2000). There are two notable aspects to this. Firstly, it has been reasoned that consumers need to change regarding what and how they consume (e.g., Haake and Jolivet 2001). This includes behavioural modifications such as purchasing Fair Trade products, buying household appliances of higher energy efficiency, and using public transportation instead of private cars. Secondly, there is another, by far less popular, element of sustainable consumption, called ‘sufficiency’ (e.g., Linz 2002). Given the current size and growth of the world population combined with the limited resources on the planet, in order to enable every person on earth (particularly in the southern hemisphere) to reach at least minimum living standards, it has been argued that individuals in developed countries have to decrease consumption levels all together (e.g., Linz 2002; Sachs 2002; Scherhorn 2002). Consequently, for individuals from places such as Europe and North America, this would not only mean consuming differently but consuming certain products/services in a lesser volume or even not at all. Such patterns of reduced consumption behaviour are already evident among groups that have been called ‘voluntary simplifiers’ and ‘frugal consumers’ (e.g., Craig-Lees and Hill 2002; Lastovicka et al. 1999; Shaw and Newholm 2002).

As a result, the phenomenon of ethical or moral consumption (the terms ‘ethical’ and ‘moral’ are used synonymously in this paper) is of great interest from at least two angles, namely from the perspective of corporations and from the sustainability side. All the more surprising then is the fact that, so far, the morality of consumers has received so little attention in the marketing field (e.g., Folkes and Kamins 1999). Looking at the moral decision-making of the individual in particular, most research has focused on modelling the decision-making of the seller side (Al-Khatib, Vitell, and Rawwas 1997; Muncy and Vitell 1992). Accordingly, it is not surprising that most existing individual morality models and measures have been developed for studying moral decision-making from an organisational perspective. Very little is known about the morality-related decision-making of consumers. Do the so-called ‘ethical consumers’ use different moral norms, rules, and principles as compared to their mainstream counterparts? Are they perhaps more deontological in nature? Do they possibly show consideration for a larger range of people affected by their actions? Or do they perhaps have a higher degree of internalisation of their morality beliefs? So far, there are no answers to these questions and existing individual morality measures are not designed in a way that helps to address...
this deficiency. Bearing this in mind, the concept of a new individual consumer morality measure is developed in this paper.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify some key definitions. In this paper, ‘individual consumer morality’ denotes those morality approaches that individuals apply when making consumption-related decisions in cases of conflicts between the benefit of the decision-maker and the benefit of other affected stakeholders in all stages of the marketing circle. The term ‘morality approaches’, also called normative theories or ethical theories synonymously by other authors (e.g., Frankena and Granrose 1974), denotes those norms, rules and principles that were proposed by normative authorities (e.g., moral philosophers and the Church) to provide individuals with decision-making guidelines in case they encounter benefit conflicts as mentioned above. Examples of morality approaches are ‘classical utilitarianism’, commanding that one should always act in a way that maximises the balance of pleasure over pain for everyone affected by one’s action (e.g., Gensler 1998), and Kant’s exceptionless rules approach, advising only actions consistent with the maxim which one would at the same time wish to become a universal law (Kant 1994). Benefit conflicts, that is conflicts of interest, arise typically from an inverse nature of gains for the different stakeholders; more benefit for the decision-maker frequently results in less benefit for other stakeholders and vice versa. For example, the purchase of an animal-tested cosmetics product leads to benefit gains for the purchaser, the manufacturer and the distributor (among other stakeholders). At the same time, however, the suffering of animals, environmental degradation from waste (for example, from chemicals in the manufacturing process, the product packaging, and the product itself), and social costs (for example, from supporting the controversial ideal of beauty) are on the downside of effects. Any decision that affects parties other than the decision-maker him- or herself has a moral element. Consequently, almost all consumption decisions have a moral dimension, giving further emphasis to the importance of the subject matter.

Having outlined the relevance of the individual consumer morality concept and provided some necessary definitions, the next step will be to review and critique three existing individual morality scales. In the subsequent section, the concept of a new individual consumer morality measure which addresses various criticisms will be introduced. Given the diverse and complex nature of the field of moral philosophy, an attempt will be made there to deal with moral decision-making approaches in a very systematic way. Thus, the new scale will be presented by introducing its main dimensions, illustrated with examples of morality approaches. Finally, the methodology for the technical scale development will be outlined.

**REVIEW OF EXISTING INDIVIDUAL MORALITY MEASURES**

A major criticism that existing moral decision-making scales have to accept is the fact that they insufficiently account for the rich variety of morality approaches proposed by normative authorities in the past (e.g., Hansen 1992; Skipper and Hyman 1993). The three instruments which have achieved particular popularity in past marketing research are Forsyth’s (1980) idealism/relativism scale, Reidenbach and Robin’s Multidimensional Ethics Scale (e.g., 1988; 1990), and Muncy and Vitell’s (e.g., 1992) Consumer Ethics Scale. These have been used by a multitude of authors to understand morality-related decision-making; accordingly, a closer examination of the three scales is indicated. However, the review will be mostly limited to the question of how the scales account for morality approaches. For a more detailed overview of issues see Grix, Lawson, and Todd (2004).

The idealism/relativism scale (IRS) is based on the assumption that morality approaches can be parsimoniously discriminated by using two constructs, namely ‘relativism’, the extent to which individuals hold universal moral codes, and ‘idealism’, the view that desirable consequences can always be obtained or that they may be accompanied by undesirable ones (Forsyth 1980; Schlenker and Forsyth 1977). Accordingly, the two constructs are used to span a two-by-two matrix (high/low relativism, high/low idealism), where the four resulting fields are proposed to represent major moral-philosophical approaches.

As the IRS claims to be a measure of morality approaches, the face validity of the scale must be questioned. After all, the two IRS dimensions do not correspond to any of the philosophical ethics theories or any key constructs associated with them. The association of a number of ethics schools with idealism and relativism that was apparently clear to Forsyth (1980) cannot be accepted without reservation. In addition, some of the major morality approaches (e.g., utilitarianism) as well as more secondary ones (e.g., prima facie duties) have not been linked to the IRS by its creator at all. All together, it seems doubtful that a field as rich as moral philosophy can be covered even to a somewhat adequate degree by only two constructs. Consequently, Forsyth’s instrument has to be criticised as being not comprehensive (see also Barnett et al. 1998).

The Multidimensional Ethics Scale (MES) has been described as an effort to take the plurality of normative ethics approaches in moral philosophy into account. Reidenbach and Robin’s (1988) initial scale development attempt was based on 33 items from the five approaches of justice, relativism, egoism, utilitarianism, and deontology. The final result was a three-factor solution based on the dimensions of ‘moral equity’, ‘relativism’, and ‘social contract’ (measured by eight items all together). The instrument is based on a number of vignettes describing scenarios that contain morally questionable decisions or activities. Vignettes have been widely used in other research on ethical decision-making as well (e.g., Fritzsche and Becker 1984; Hyman 1996).

It is questionable whether Reidenbach and Robin’s choice of constructs was appropriate. As a-priori scale dimensions, the authors chose a number of normative morality approaches (such as deontology and utilitarianism) and attempted to represent them in one single factor each. Every approach is, however, so diverse and full of different ideas (and therefore constructs) in itself that it seems impossible to force it into just one single factor. As such, it is perhaps not surprising that the authors were unsuccessful in rebuilding the chosen a-priori factors or, in some cases, unsuccessful in finding them in their empirical data at all. Due to its resulting non-correspondence with any ‘pure’ philosophical morality approaches, the face validity of the MES has been questioned in several cases (Cohen, Pant, and Sharp 1993; Hansen 1992; Hyman 1996; Skipper and Hyman 1993). The lack of deontological and teleological dimensions in the final MES seems critical as well. These two streams have been called the two rival views of ethics which have greatly influenced world affairs in the 20th century (Brady 1990) and are represented in major moral decision-making models (e.g., Hunt and Vitell 1986, 1993). Their absence becomes even more implausible as Cohen, Pant, and Sharp (1993) found evidence for the existence of an utilitarian dimension in their MES re-development effort and Hansen (1992) reported a factor that represented deontological judgment. The MES has also been criticised for lacking other essential components. Among others, Skipper and Hyman (1993) note that a religion component is missing, while Hansen (1992) comments on the lack of the ethical egoism approach. The final critical issue that is to be raised here refers to Reidenbach and Robin’s choice of the vignettes. Apart from stating that the three scenarios used for the scale development were chosen on the basis of the “variety of ethical problems they presented and because of the variability of individual reactions to
The Consumer Ethics Scale (CES) differs from the former two in that it is not based on morality approaches at all but on dimensions of (usually immoral) behaviours. However, as it is the only consumer morality scale that has achieved some popularity, it is briefly discussed in this review (the IRS and the MES were developed to measure the morality of individuals in organisations). It is designed to measure the beliefs of consumers with respect to a number of questionable practices (e.g., pirating movies, keeping excessive change). These items load on the factors ‘proactively benefiting at the expense of the seller’, ‘passively benefiting’, ‘deceptive practices’, and ‘no harm/no foul’.

Given that the CES’ purpose is not the detection of the individual application of morality approaches but of immoral behaviour, the scale is not based on any ethical theories. This is not so much a criticism of the scale itself but an illustration of the fact that there is currently no instrument for measuring morality approaches applied by individuals facing consumption situations that have a morality dimension.

In summary, existing individual morality measures have received significant criticism regarding their potential to provide details on an individual’s application of morality approaches to an appropriate extent. In the following, this criticism will be addressed and the concept of a new individual consumer morality measure will be introduced.

CONCEPTUALISING A NEW INDIVIDUAL CONSUMER MORALITY MEASURE

As stated at the beginning, it is intended to treat moral decision-making approaches very systematically in this research. This will be done by characterising all of the morality approaches along the same dimensions. These common dimensions will then serve as the basis for the development of the new morality measure. To account for morality approaches in an adequate manner, six dimensions are suggested, namely i) basic reasoning logic, ii) decision-making principle, iii) situational flexibility, iv) consideration scope, v) source of morality beliefs, and vi) roots of morality beliefs.

These six dimensions have been chosen because it is believed that they provide the major common characteristics along which all, or at least most, of the major morality approaches can be simultaneously characterised. While it would certainly be possible to describe each morality approach based on further, very approach-specific features as well, these are not included because at the same time they would not be applicable to other approaches. Their inclusion would result in an unmanageable number of concepts in the new morality measure and would detract from the desired systematic approach to morality. Even though this means that the approaches will not be represented in every single detail in the final measure, given their multi-faceted nature, there appears to be no better systematic way of building a morality scale (see also criticism of the Multidimensional Ethics Scale above). In the following discussion, the six dimensions and their components (scale constructs) will be characterised and discussed. In addition, examples will be given to illustrate how the major morality approaches are represented by these constructs in the new measure.

i) Basic Reasoning Logic. This dimension relates to what Singer calls the “great divide within ethics” (1994, 243), that is the controversy over whether the moral quality of an act should be evaluated based on the properties of the consequences it causes or based on certain properties of the act itself (i.e., whether it follows a rule or principle). Approaches based on the former are usually summarised under ‘teleology’ or ‘consequentialism’. Its advocates take the view that every act that has a morality dimension should be evaluated exclusively based on the net goodness/badness resulting from it (e.g., Gensler 1998); when having a number of alternative activity options, one should always choose that activity which produces the greatest amount of net-benefit (or the least amount of net-harm). In contrast, approaches based on the latter often trade under ‘deontology’ and ‘non-consequentialism’. Deontologists propose that, in order to be moral, the act itself has to fulfil certain criteria (other than leading to consequences of a particular quality). Thus, only activities which are in accordance with certain norms or principles or with ones duty should be chosen (e.g., Höffe 2002; Preston 2001). Accordingly, the basic reasoning logic dimension contains the two constructs ‘deontology’ (goodness of ends makes moral) and ‘teleology’ (acts meeting certain criteria makes means moral). Examples of individual morality approaches that fall into the former category are utilitarianism (proposing that such an act is moral which leads to the greatest good for the greatest number) and ethical egoism (proposing that such an act should be pursued which leads to the greatest good for the decision-maker). On the contrary, Kant’s exceptionless rules approach (proposing that an act must always be in accordance with universal principles), represents a very influential deontological version or morality (Preston 2001).

ii) Decision-Making Principle. In this dimension, the optimisation rule and the optimisation criterion underlying each morality approach are dealt with. For example, while utilitarianism is associated with the construct ‘maximise happiness’ (maximisation being the rule and happiness being the criterion), situation ethics is concerned with ‘maximise agape’ (love of the neighbour in a Christian sense). The ethics of care approach promotes ‘maximum care’ for others while Kant’s exceptionless rules approach commands to ‘meet universal principles’. Discourse ethics requires that, in order to be moral, a norm must find “approval from all concerned parties as participants of a practical discourse” (Habermas 2001, 103). Accordingly, this approach promotes finding ‘maximum consent’ among the affected parties (Höffe 2002). Thus, the decision-making principle dimension refers to the most specific and (more or less) hands-on ‘algorithm’ provided by an approach to guide individuals in their decision about what is moral and what is not and, therefore, what to do and what to avoid.

iii) Situational Flexibility. This dimension pertains to the nature of each approach to morality with regard to how much it accounts for specific characteristics of the decision-making situation. This feature is closely linked to a morality approach’s characteristics in the decision-making principle dimension discussed above. Among others, constructs in the situational flexibility dimension include ‘strict principles’, best applicable to Kant’s exceptionless rules approach. According to Kant, universal principles have to be followed at all times; thus, an act that has been identified as immoral once is immoral in every case (following, e.g., Taylor 1975). A false promise, for example, is never permissible regardless of the situational circumstances and no matter how inappropriate this rule may seem in some situations (O’Neill 1993). As a result, this approach has no situational flexibility at all. Utilitarianism, on the other hand, requires individuals to make an entirely new maximum happiness calculation in every morally
significant situation that occurs. Thus, every time a morality decision is to be made, all situational specifics can be (and, in fact, have to be) taken into account again, resulting in a ‘full situational appraisal’. The prima facie duties approach stands between the two as it promotes that individuals should follow those principles that fit the specific situation (Ross 1930), resulting in the construct ‘applicable principles’.

iv) Consideration Scope. The consideration scope of an approach relates to the extent to which the interests of others are taken into account when making morality decisions. On the one hand, the scope can be limited to the extreme, leaving only room for the interests of the ‘decision-maker’ him- or herself. This is where one would expect to find an approach such as ethical egoism. However, there have also been arguments that Kant’s exceptionless rules approach primarily accounts for preserving the virtue of the decision-maker (by preventing him/her from engaging in wrong activities) rather than for an individual’s concerns for others (e.g., Davis 1997). For example, while the rule that one must never lie helps an individual to stay virtuous, in certain situations it may lead to catastrophic consequences for other individuals for whom a lie would have saved considerable grief. On the other hand, the consideration scope of an approach can be very large, requiring that a decision-maker takes into account ‘all human individuals affected’ by an activity (e.g., utilitarianism and discourse ethics). Resulting in an even broader scope, individuals may also choose not only to be concerned about the interests of humans but also about the interests of other subjects as well. This may result in a consideration of ‘all sentient organisms affected’ or even ‘all nature affected’, including organic (e.g., plants) and non-organic components (e.g., the sea and the mountains) of the natural environment (for a continuum of environmental entities see also Meyers 2002).

A different approach is taken by prima facie duties, which requires an individual to particularly care for the concerns of those people to whom the decision-maker has ‘special relations’. Accordingly, prima facie duties require the decision-maker to rate higher the interests of people to whom he/she, for example, has made a promise or to whom he/she has a debt (e.g., due to reciprocity) than the interests of those to whom he/she is not tied in such a way (Ross 1930).

v) Foundation of Morality Beliefs. The fifth dimension refers to the fundamental base from which an individual draws his/her morality beliefs. In this work, these sources can be, for example, of ‘religious’ or ‘secular’ nature. In the first case, religious proponents of deontology would be assumed to believe that they have to follow certain rules because it pleases God. Similarly, situation ethics followers maximise agape for the reason that it is God’s commandment (Fletcher 1966). In contrast, a secular individual believes that all morality decisions should, e.g., be logically consistent (e.g., Kantian ethics) or be in accordance with the law of nature (e.g., Locke 1994; Singer 1994).

vi) Roots of Morality Beliefs. The sixth and final dimension refers to the question of whether individuals decide and act upon principles and convictions because they hold them themselves or because they believe that others expect them to comply with such principles and convictions. Individuals of the former kind would be internally driven, the latter externally driven (see also Grix et al. 2004). Kant himself, for example, realised that only because individuals act in a certain obligatory way does not necessarily mean that they act out of duty (i.e., because they believe themselves that they have a duty to act this way). Instead, they may just as well act in accordance with duty (despite inwardly preferring to act differently), for example, when they feel that they are not safe from discovery (O’Neill 1993). This feature has not been formally associated with any specific morality approaches by normative authorities. On the contrary, it is easily conceivable that any morality approach could be rooted internally in or externally to the individual. The dimension has been included in the new concept because it is felt that it may provide an important characteristic to explain individual differences in individual moral decision-making.

As a summary, table 1 provides an overview of the measure dimensions and examples of the major constructs. In addition, examples of morality approaches are provided.

In contrast to existing individual morality scales which take only very limited ranges of morality constructs and approaches into account, table 1 illustrates how the proposed new measure is designed to cover a wide spectrum of these. While the scale incorporates the regularly considered utilitarianism and exceptionless rules, it also includes much less accounted for approaches such as ethics of care, situation ethics, prima facie duties, discourse ethics, and varieties of utilitarianism with extended consideration scopes. Accordingly, the new scale contributes to examining a wide variety of normative approaches that individuals may potentially use for their moral decision-making. In particular, for the first time a measure will facilitate the quantitative study of these approaches in the area of consumption-related decision-making.

Regarding the current state of the project, the review of the relevant literature for the theory-based concept development has been finished, the preliminary result being the measure concept as illustrated in the preceding paragraphs. A preliminary list of scale items has been generated (not included in this paper). The next step, the technical scale development including qualitative and quantitative empirical research, will be initiated in November 2004.

SCALE DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

Following the theory-based conceptualisation, the further development of the measure will proceed in two distinct steps, a qualitative and a quantitative empirical research stage. Purpose of the first stage is to qualitatively explore which approaches individuals use when making consumption decisions that have moral implications (i.e., involve a conflict between the interests of the decision-maker and the interests of other stakeholders). The research population for this stage is a group of New Zealand farmer families who have chosen to live jointly in an eco-village community, following a philosophy of living an environmentally and socially conscious life. Accordingly, they engage in activities such as cultivating their lands based on organic principles, harvesting power from wind and sun, building houses from recycled natural materials, and treating grey water self-sufficiently. It is assumed that the members of the community made their lifestyle changes, at least partly, on the basis of moral considerations. An example would be conflicts of interest resulting from consumption-inflicted damage of the environment, which threatens natural integrity, including the welfare of animals and humans. Hence, the community members’ likelihood of having experience with moral decision-making (leading to an improved ability to perceive moral implications of consumption decisions in general) is assumed to be more substantial as compared to that of the average (New Zealand) consumer. Scholars have argued that moral norms are only likely to be activated if the individual perceives that the decision has a moral dimension (e.g., Schwartz 1968). Accordingly, the community members are believed to be an appropriate sample for the exploration of decision-making approaches applied by individuals in interest conflict cases. At the end of November 2004, a researcher
will join the community for a period of two weeks. He will fully integrate into the community and participate in the daily eco-village life. Even though community members will be aware of the research, this approach will allow to pursue relevant information leads naturally when they occur in discussions and to gain additional impressions from participant observation. More formal interview sessions will be conducted to investigate the moral decision-making of community members in greater detail. Morality approaches identified in the explorative research will be used for verification of and/or integration into the new individual consumer morality measure. In addition, research insights will be used to complement the existing list of scale items and refine the questionnaire for the consumer morality survey. The research opportunity will also be used to collect material for the development of appropriate vignettes (see criticism of the Multidimensional Ethics Scale regarding this matter further above). In this research, vignettes will be constructed by describing social situations which incorporate those factors that are assumed to be most important to the respondents’ decision-making processes (Alexander and Becker 1987). Accordingly, in order to improve chances for the data-based identification of all those morality constructs that were described in the last section, the vignettes will be composed in such a way that all constructs can be potentially applied based on at least one vignette by respondents. For example, in order for the construct ‘maximise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Construct examples*</th>
<th>Morality approach examples*</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Reasoning logic</td>
<td>Evaluation of an act based on its consequences or the properties of the act itself</td>
<td>Teleology</td>
<td>Utilitarianism, Ethical egoism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deontology</td>
<td>Exceptionless rules, Christian religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-Making Principle</td>
<td>Optimisation rule and criterion (algorithm) provided by the morality approach</td>
<td>Maximise happiness</td>
<td>Utilitarianism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximise agape</td>
<td>Situation ethics, Christian religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximise consent</td>
<td>Discourse ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximise care</td>
<td>Ethics of care</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet universal principles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Situational flexibility</td>
<td>Degree to which behaviour can be adapted to situational specifics</td>
<td>Strict principles</td>
<td>Exceptionless rules</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Applicable principles</td>
<td>Prima facie duties</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Full situational appraisal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consideration Scope</td>
<td>Degree to which the interests of parties affected by an activity are taken into account</td>
<td>Decision-maker</td>
<td>Ethical egoism, Exceptionless rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special relations</td>
<td>Prima facie duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All human individuals affected</td>
<td>Utilitarianism, Discourse ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All sentient organisms affected</td>
<td>Extended utilitarianism I</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All nature affected</td>
<td>Extended utilitarianism II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation of morality beliefs</td>
<td>Fundamental base from which an individual draws its morality beliefs</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Situation ethics, Christian religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Exceptionless rules, Discourse ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roots of morality beliefs</td>
<td>Distinction between beliefs that are internally rooted or externally imposed</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Any</td>
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* Due to space restrictions, examples cover only a fraction of constructs and morality approaches in the final concept.
care’ to emerge from the survey data, there must be at least one vignette to which the ethics of care approach can be applied.

Based on the refined questionnaire, quantitative research will commence in the first quarter 2005. Data collection is scheduled for February 2005 and will involve a nationally representative consumer sample as well as an additional purposive sample of environmentally and socially conscious (and therefore potentially more morality-experienced) consumers. The two different samples will be employed to allow testing for differences in the individual morality scale structure emerging from the survey data. Data analysis will involve a determination of the underlying factor structure by exploratory factor analysis with a substantiation of these results undertaken by confirming relationship patterns through structural equation modelling (e.g., DeVellis 2003).

SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK
As stated in the beginning of this paper, so far there are no satisfactory answers to the question regarding if and how so-called ‘ethical consumers’ are any different from other consumer groups regarding their decision-making in situations that have moral implications. Existing individual morality measures insufficiently account for the large spectrum of morality approaches and have been mostly developed for application in an organisational context. Accordingly, the authors propose a new concept for an individual consumer morality scale that takes a wide variety of morality approaches into account and is specifically developed for use in a consumption context.

Findings from the explorative research will be available shortly after finishing the qualitative stage of the study at the end of 2004. First ‘hard’ results from the quantitative research can be expected at the beginning of the second quarter 2005. These results will, for the first time, allow answers to the question, which of the wide variety of morality approaches (and which particular elements of these) individuals apply when facing consumption situations that have moral implications. In addition, the research will provide indications as to how individuals combine these morality approaches.

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