

## Fumbling the Greek Ethical Consumers' Profile

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### ABSTRACT

This research presents an exploratory attempt to examine the three different, although assumed inter-related, types of ethical consumption, namely positive (ethical buying choices), negative (boycotting) and discursive (digital activities against “unethical” business practices) in the Greek market. The results indicated that ethical consumers are a minority, as they represent just the 19.33% of the sample. Greeks were found to be rarely engaged in actual ethical preferences, such as buying organics and fair trade products. They occasionally adopt some behaviours, like choosing traditional products or energy saving bulbs. They get engaged rather often in recycle/repair/reuse of already used products probably driven by financial or, other than ethical, criteria. Greek consumers have rather occasionally taken part in a boycott during the last few years. They are quite unfamiliar with digital activities against “unethical” business practices.

Better educated consumers are more likely to get engaged in all ethical consumption types. Women are more likely to prefer ethical buying choices and take part in boycotting campaigns, while middle aged consumers are those, who are more likely to enhance ethical buying and discursive activities too. People, who still feel powerful towards politics and politicians, are more likely to get engaged in ethical buying and discursive activities while consumers, who share post-materialistic self-expression, pro-social values are more likely, to some extent, to make ethically influenced purchasing choices.

### KEYWORDS

Ethical Consumption, Boycotting, Political Consumerism, Greece

### Fumbling the Greek Ethical Consumers' Profile

Ethical consumption is a relatively new topic within the marketing academic literature. Although its roots might be found back in the seventies, it has not gained the place it deserves in the marketing community yet (Newholm and Shaw 2007). The severe economic crisis, by which many countries suffer for several years, might be considered as one of the reasons for the observed neglect. However, it does exist a small but dynamic academic stream addressing the challenge to understand ethical consumption better (Papaoikonomou *et al.* 2011). Cowe and Williams (2000, p. 2) had claimed in the beginning of the new millennium that “*shoppers are highly aware of ethical issues and many are ready to put their money where their morals are*”. De Ferran and Grunert (2007) had also postulated that moral values would have been a significant driving force of the buying and/or not-buying behaviours among consumers of the western societies.

Ethical consumption is understood as the type of consumption that aims at the overall social welfare, not just at the satisfaction of individual needs and wants (Crane 2001; Tallontire *et al.* 2001). Tallontire *et al.* (2001) suggested that ethical consumption consists of three different types, namely the positive ethical consumption (ethical buying, e.g. ecological and fair-trade products buying), the negative ethical consumption (boycotting) and the consumer action, which was later renamed by Micheletti *et al.* (2005) to discursive ethical consumption (mainly digital activism).

From a marketing view point, the first type, namely ethical buying, is obviously the most interesting one. A certain part of this type, the ecologically related consumer

behaviour, has gained most of the researchers' attention so far (see among others: Shrum *et al.* 1995; Schlegelmilch *et al.* 1996; Roberts 1996; Thøgersen and Ölander 2002 and 2003; Cleveland *et al.* 2005; Peattie and Crane 2006; Fraj and Martinez 2006a; Carrus *et al.* 2008; Tilikidou 2013). The negative ethical consumption (boycotting) has been investigated in a number of studies (Garret 1987; Sen *et al.* 2001; Kozinets 2002; John and Klein 2003; Klein *et al.* 2004; Shaw *et al.* 2007; Farah and Newman 2010; Chapa 2014; Farah 2014) while the discursive type of ethical consumption has been the most neglected type so far (Kozinets and Handlman 2004; Micheletti and Stole 2008).

Previous research results indicated that most of the papers presented the examination of one, separate variable of the whole concept of ethical behaviour (e.g. boycotting), while in the literature, there are more papers that followed a qualitative than a quantitative methodological approach (see: Shaw and Clarke 1999; Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Nicholls 2002; Carrigan *et al.* 2004; Kozinets and Handleman 2004; Shaw *et al.* 2005; Shaw *et al.* 2006; Shaw 2007; Rode *et al.* 2008; Bray *et al.* 2011; Papaoikonomou, *et al.* 2011; Brunk 2012).

Of course, demographics have attracted most of the research effort, as potential determinants of ethical behaviours, while there has been very scant psychographic research in the area. Attitudes have been mostly utilized for the examination of the ecological behaviours and provided evidence that are able to influence some of the consumer choices (Roberts 1996; Follows and Jobber 2000; Fotopoulos and Krystallis 2002; Nordlund and

Garvill 2002; Tanner and Cast 2003; Lee 2008; Carrus *et al.* 2008; Long and Murrey 2013; Pagiaslis and Krystallis-Krontalis 2014).

In Greece, research has been mostly directed towards one of the positive ethical consumption aspects, namely the Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behaviour (Tilikidou 2001 and 2013; Tilikidou and Delistavrou 2005, 2008 and 2014) or merely one aspect of it, such as organics (Fotopoulos and Krystallis 2002). Research with reference to the fair-trade products has been very limited (Delistavrou and Tilikidou 2009). In addition, exploratory research was attempted with regards to the consumers' intentions to adopt some selected aspects of ethical consumption (Delistavrou and Tilikidou 2012). Scant, as it has been and fragmentary in nature, previous research has been inconclusive with regards to the ethical consumption conceptualization and measurement. Therefore, it may be argued that there is much left to be more deeply understood with regards to the overall concept of ethical consumerism, its adoption, types and antecedents in regards to the Greek society.

The aim of this study is two-fold: firstly, building upon previous qualitative outcomes to put under exploratory quantitative investigation all the three types of ethical consumption simultaneously and reveal some of the demographic and psychographic antecedents of this kind of behaviour; secondly, to attempt a market segmentation of the Greek market on the basis of ethical consumers choices.

This attempt is expected to add to our previous knowledge regarding ethical consumption, as there has been scant relevant research in the geographical area under investigation. The theoretical contribution of this study is hopefully derived by the

theoretical framework, which integrates the three types of the overall concept of ethical consumption and suggests their simultaneous investigation. This is a rather new approach as the so far research designs have usually focused on one ethical behaviour in a fragmentary context. In this study, an effort is made to explore whether there are any connectors between and among the distinct ethical behaviours. Another part of the expected contribution to the knowledge is the measurement effort with the utilization of reliable and valid constructs, originally developed for the population under examination.

Moreover, a part of the practical contribution of this study is expected to come from the segmentation effort for the first time in the Greek market and on the basis of the overall ethical consumption types. In addition, fumbling the potential antecedents of ethical consumption in Greece in comparison to consistencies or differences to previous research findings, in other countries, may hopefully provide useful implications to several recipients, such as business interested in ethical strategies and/or avoidance of boycotts; consumers' associations and public policy makers are expected to gain information by the results of this study.

### **Literature Review**

With reference to the antecedents of the first, positive type of ethical consumption, namely ethical buying, attitudes have been examined in a number of studies so far (Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Papaoikonomou *et al.* 2011). However, it is a rule that there is a word/deed inconsistency in consumer research, especially when the investigation concerns

the socially desirable behaviours (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000; Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Chatzidakis *et al.* 2007; Papaoikonomou *et al.* 2011). Nevertheless, assuming that the attitudes-behaviour gap is never going to disappear, the ethical consumers' profile demands thorough demographical and psychographical analyses, if it is to serve as a basis for effective business strategies.

With regards to demographics, previous research results in other countries indicated that the ecologically conscious consumers (e.g., Roberts 1996; Diamantopoulos *et al.* 2003; Gilg *et al.* 2005), as well as the ethical consumers (Neilson 2010; Koos 2012; Carfagna *et al.* 2014; Copeland 2014) have been over time of a relatively high educational status. As to gender, women were found to get engaged more frequently in ethical purchasing (Neilson 2010; Koos 2012; Carfagna *et al.* 2014) and boycotting (Klein *et al.* 2004; Koos 2012; Carfagna *et al.* 2014). Age indicated mixed results. Copeland (2014) and Koos (2012) found that younger consumers enhance ethical buying, while Carr *et al.* (2012) found that older consumers are those who enhance ethical buying. Younger consumers have been also found to enhance participation in boycotting (Gardberg and Newburry 2009; Koos 2012). Cowe and Williams (2000) argued that middle-aged consumers, who earn high incomes, are more ethical consumers than their counterparts. Consumers holding better income than their counterparts were found to get more frequently engaged in ethical buying (Neilson 2010; Koos 2012; Carfagna *et al.* 2014; Copeland 2014).

In Greece, it has been found rather often that ecologically conscious consumers are better educated and hold relatively better incomes than their counterparts (Tilikidou and Delistavrou 2005 and 2006; Tilikidou 2007 and 2013). A positive influence of education was also found in an exploratory study concerning some aspects of ethical consumption (Delistavrou and Tilikidou 2012). More frequent ethical purchasers have also been found to be women and middle-aged consumers (Delistavrou and Tilikidou 2012). Younger consumers have been found to hold stronger intentions to take part in both boycotting and digital activism (Delistavrou and Tilikidou 2012).

With regards to psychographics, green consumers have been gradually found to be opinion leaders and careful shoppers (Shrum *et al.* 1995), innovative (Bhate 2001; Bhate and Lawler 1997), extroverted and guided by self-fulfilment values (Fraj and Martinez 2006b).

A small number of researchers adopted Inglehart's (1977 and 1979) ideas about materialism/post-materialism. It is to be noted that Inglehart in 2008 claimed that the so-called developed countries were already experiencing intergenerational value changes from materialist to post-materialist values, due to the high rates of economic growth that kept occurring during those years. Scheepers and Nelissen (1989) examined the concept of post-materialism introduced by Inglehart (1977 and 1979) and found a strong association with environmental consciousness as such. Stolle *et al.* (2005) hypothesized that the shift toward post-materialist values would motivate political consumerism and found that political consumerism is strongly related to post-materialism. Pepper *et al.* (2009) found that Inglehart's (WorldValues Survey 2006), Socio-political Post-Materialism was a better

correlate of their dependent variable, namely the Socially Conscious Purchasing, than Richins' (2004) Personal Materialism was. Positive relationships have also been indicated between Post-materialism and boycotting (Copeland 2014).

In Greece, Tilikidou and Delistavrou (Tilikidou and Delistavrou 2004, 2006, 2014; Tilikidou 2013) have indicated that ecologically conscious consumers are anti-materialists and interested in politics while the same authors have once found that ethical consumers hold higher level of universalism than their counterparts do (Delistavrou and Tilikidou 2012).

Eventually, the review of the so far wisdom on the subject, limited as it is, demonstrates that there is a long way in front of the future researchers, if we are to reveal as many as possible influences and insights that formulate the ethical consumers and their behaviours in the market place.

### **Theoretical Basis and Research Objectives**

In this study, all various ethically related behaviours were assumed to be theoretically integrated under the broad concept of Ethical Consumption (EC). EC was assumed to consist of three distinct, though inter-related types, namely Positive Ethical Consumption (PEC), Negative Ethical Consumption (NEC) and Discursive Ethical Consumption (DEC). It was judged that there was a need to overcome the somehow fragmentary so far investigation and put simultaneously the three types of ethical consumption under quantitative, empirical investigation.



Moreover, previous theoretical suggestions (see among others: Ebreo and Vining 2001; de Ferran and Grunert 2007) were followed and EC was assumed to be influenced by demographics and specifically selected individual differences. As previous research has many times indicated (Rokeach 1973; De Pelsmacker *et al.* 2005; Davidov *et al.* 2008; Tilikidou 2013) the socially sensitive behaviours were found to be influenced by socially oriented personality variables and values. In this sense, it was hypothesized that variables regarding political empowerment and materialist/post-materialist values should and could play a role in the formulation of ethical patterns in the market.

Therefore, it was decided to adopt Paulhus' (1983) suggestions about locus of control over politics and politicians in order to understand the consumers' perceptions about their own ability to affect and control the national and global socio-political evolutions (Robinson *et al.* 1991, p. 428). Socio-political control differs from personal locus of control. It is argued that personal goals are sometimes opposite to those of the general society of the political system, i.e. boycotting a product to reduce its price (Paulhus 1983). Socio-political control refers to the perceived capability of the individuals to affect the social and political macro-systems (Robinson *et al.* 1991, p. 419).

Moreover, Inglehart's (1977) suggestions to examine materialism/post-materialism were adopted. Inglehart (1990) understands materialism as a focus on "lower order" needs for material comfort and physical safety over "higher order" needs for self-expression, affiliation, aesthetic satisfaction and quality of life (Inglehart 1990, pp. 66–68). Post-materialism is the converse of materialism. Socio-political materialists view economic

growth, low crime rates and strong national defence as important social priorities, whereas post-materialists place greater emphasis on freedom of speech, giving people more of a say in government decisions, and enhancing the natural environment. Inglehart (1977 and 1990) and Inglehart and Welzel (2005) have documented, over recent decades, a large-scale shift in western society from materialist to post-materialist values. According to Inglehart's theory, materialist and post-materialist values are mutually exclusive. However, various other researchers have empirically demonstrated that materialism/post-materialism may in fact be multidimensional, and that it is possible to endorse both types of values simultaneously (e.g. Bean and Papadakis 1994; Braithwaite *et al.* 1996).

In an effort to verify this theoretical framework, the following research objectives were set:

- To explore the degree up to which Greek consumers are engaged in each one of positive, negative and discursive ethical consumption behaviours
- To investigate the potential influence of demographics on each one of the above behavioural variables
- To explore the potential impact of Socio-political Control as well as the impact of Materialism/Post-materialism constructs on each one of the above behavioural variables
- To explore any potential segmentation schemes among Greek consumers on the basis of their engagement in the overall concept of ethical consumption

## **Methodology**

### *Sampling*

A survey was conducted in the urban area of Thessaloniki. The population of the survey was defined to be the total number of households in the selected geographical area, which comes to 308,834 households (N) according to the 2011 national census. The Hellenic Statistical Authority (H.S.A.) calculation of the sample size (n) is based on the formula of  $n \geq 1.42/1000$  (H.S.A., 2014, p. 12). In an effort to obtain a better representativeness level, the sample size was calculated on the formula of  $2/1000 \times 308,834$ , i.e.  $n=618$ . In practice, 620 households were targeted. The instrument was a structured questionnaire and respondents were approached through personal interviews. The sampling method was a combination of the two-stage area sampling and the systematic method (Tull and Hawkins 1993, p. 544; Zikmund 1991, p. 471). An urban Thessaloniki map served as the sampling frame.

In the first stage of the area sampling, 100 blocks were selected with the employment of a random numbers table. The surrounding streets of each block were marked on the map. Those blocks were pre-measured and they were found to include 4,813 households. So, the sampling selection should be based on an interval of 7 households ( $4,813/620=7.76$ ). In the second stage, the systematic method was employed. This method requires drawing of a random number. Number 4 was drawn, so interviewers were instructed to contact every 7 apartments beginning from the 4<sup>th</sup> (4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> etc.). A marketing academic researcher acted as the field manager. The interviews were taken by trained senior marketing students in teams of 2. The procedure provided 570 questionnaires

(response rate 92%); 6 questionnaires were removed due to excessive missing values in more than 10 variables. The final n resulted in 564 usable questionnaires.

### *Variables Measurement*

Positive Ethical Consumption (PEC) is a multi-item variable of 19 items. The respondents were asked how often they have adopted each one of the behaviours during the last few years. The behaviours included choices of organics, recycled paper products, local and traditional products, also recycling of packaging, reuse and repair of durables etc.

Negative Ethical Consumption (NEC) is a multi-item variable of 9 items. The respondents were asked how often, during the last few years, they have avoided buying S/M products of brands, which had been accused about “unethical” practices, such as environmental damage, child labour, cruelty towards workers or animals etc.

Discursive Ethical Consumption (DEC) is a multi-item variable of 7 items. The respondents were asked how often, during the last few years, they have taken part into a set of activities such as petition gathering, sharing sms-emails-posts, writing in a blogs etc., aiming to make public “unethical” business practices.

PEC, NEC and DEC were originally developed for the population under examination. All these three behavioural variables were measured on 7-point frequency scales where: 1=Never, 2=Very Rarely, 3=Rarely, 4=Occasionally, 5=Often, 6=Very Often and 7=Constantly.

For the locus of control examination, the Socio-political Control Scale of Spheres of Control (Paulhus 1983) was used. The scale is comprised of 10 items. The Materialism/Post-

materialism measures have been adopted from Inglehart (1977). Each one contains 6 items. All the three personality variables were measured on 7-point Likert scales from 1= Strongly Disagree to 7= Strongly Agree.

## Results

### *Univariate Analysis*

Chi-square did not indicate any statistically significant differences between each one of the demographical characteristics of the sample and the relevant population parameter. The sample consisted of 50.5% women and 49.5% men. The 23% of the sample were between 45 and 54 years of age, the 22.3% between 35 and 44 and the 21.8% between 25 and 34 years of age. With regards to the respondents' level of education the 62.1% of them were secondary school graduates, the 30.3% hold a university degree and the 3.7% hold a post-graduate degree. The 31.4% earn 15,000 to 30,000 euros and the 41.3% of the sample earn 5,000 to 15,000 euros annually. With regard to the respondents' occupation the 27.5% were private employees and the 21.6% were professionals.

The Positive Ethical Consumption scale (PEC) provided a Cronbach's alpha of 0.900, which indicates exemplary reliability. PEC is measured on a range of 19-133 and provided a Mean of 66.56 (St.D.=21.36); this indicates that consumers rather rarely get engaged in ethical buying choices in overall. However, the item Means (see Appendix, Table 1) indicate that consumers are used to buy energy efficient bulbs very often while they get engaged rather often in recycle/repair/reuse, in this order. They rather occasionally buy local

traditional products and free range eggs and poultry while they rather rarely buy organics and fair trade products.

The Negative Ethical Consumption (NEC) resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.974, which indicates exemplary reliability. As NEC is measured on a range of 9-63 and provided a Mean of 33.26 (St.D.=17.78) it indicates that consumers have been rather occasionally engaged in a boycotting. No worth mentioning differences in the items' Means are observed as all of them were found between 3.5 and 4.0.

The Discursive Ethical Consumption (DEC) resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.900, which indicates exemplary reliability; it takes theoretical values from 7 to 49 and providing a Mean of 17.93 (St.D.=9.40), it indicates that consumers very rarely take part in digital actions with relevance to participation in petitions or protest events etc.

The Socio-political Control Scale (SCS) indicated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.675, which was judged to be acceptable to a certain extent; it takes theoretical values from 10 to 70, it provided a Mean of 39.81 (St.D.=8.74), which is exactly an average score.

The Materialism scale (M) indicated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.915; it takes theoretical values from 6 to 42 and with a Mean of 31.07 (St.D.=8.78) indicated a rather strong agreement to materialist values among Greeks. The Post-materialism scale (PM) indicated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.944; it takes theoretical values from 6 to 42 and with a Mean of 31.01 (St.D.=9.31) it also indicated a rather strong agreement to post-materialist values too.

### *Bivariate Analysis*

One-way ANOVAs were applied to explore the Mean differences in each one of the behavioural variables across the categories of each one of the demographical characteristics. Gender provided statistically significant relationships at  $p < 0.05$  with PEC and at  $p < 0.10$  with NEC (women). Age provided statistically significant relationships at  $p < 0.05$  with PEC and at  $p < 0.05$  with DEC (both in the 45-54 years old category). Education provided statistically significant relationships at  $p < 0.001$  with PEC and DEC and at  $p < 0.10$  with NEC (all in the post-graduates' category).

Pearson's parametric correlations indicated statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ , positive, however weak relationships between PEC and PM ( $r = 0.148$ ) and SCS ( $r = 0.140$ ); also, statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ , positive and weak relationships were found between DEC and SCS ( $r = 0.233$ ). Worth mentioning in terms of strength, statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ , positive and moderate relationships were found between the pairs of the behavioural variables, namely PEC and NEC ( $r = 0.407$ ), PEC and DEC ( $r = 0.510$ ) and NEC and DEC ( $r = 0.472$ ).

### *K-Means Cluster Analysis*

In an effort to approach a segmentation scheme of the overall concept of ethical consumption as it was deemed in the theoretical framework, the K-Means Cluster Analysis was employed. This technique classifies cases into relatively homogeneous groups, indicating distinct for each group degree of involvement in the behaviour under

examination (Malhotra 1999, p. 610). K-means is very useful to estimate the number and the size of potential market segments. In this application all items of PEC, NEC and DEC were entered in the analysis. The most interpretable solution indicated 3 clusters. The first one joined 109 cases (19.33%) of those consumers, who obtained the larger cluster centres in all items than their counterparts in the other two clusters. The second one joined 187 cases (33.16%) of those consumers, who obtained average scores and the third one gathered the relevant majority, 268 cases (47.52%), of those consumers who indicated the lower of all participation in ethical consumption behaviours.

Taking a closer look at the values of the cluster centres, we can gain some interesting findings. Consumers grouped in the first cluster frequently engage in boycotting and rather occasionally in ethical buying and discursive activism. Consumers grouped in the second cluster seem to engage frequently in boycotting but rarely in the other two types of ethical consumption. Finally, respondents grouped in the third cluster hardly make any ethical consumption choice at all. The three clusters were named **Ethical Consumers**, **Hesitant Consumers** and **Indifferent Consumers** respectively.

### **Discussion and Limitations**

It is to be acknowledged that ethical consumption is still in its infancy in Greece, while no indication was obtained with regards to its potentials for fast growth in the future. It is to be firstly mentioned that almost half of the sample has hardly adopted any ethical behaviours, positive, negative or discursive, during the last few years. On the other hand,



those consumers, who were gathered in the first cluster (named Ethical Consumers), declared that they are used to enhance some behavioural patterns that should be further discussed. As a matter of fact, these behaviours seem to be essentially driven by other motives than ethics. For example, these consumers declared that they almost always buy energy efficient bulbs; however, there are hardly any more bulbs of the old type in the market. Moreover, the results indicated that Greeks are engaged more in the famous 3Rs (recycle/repair/reuse) than they are in other behaviours of the Positive Ethical Consumption (PEC) scale. These findings are in line with those of Tilikidou and Delistavrou (2006 and 2008) with regards to the non-purchasing ecological activities. It might be argued though that these behaviours seem to be driven rather by financial or conservative than ethical motives. The same comment could also stand for the preferences towards traditional products and free-range eggs, findings that are consistent with those by Delistavrou and Tilikidou (2012) with regards to ethical buying. On the other hand, organics, which are usually more expensive than their conventional alternatives, are rather occasionally preferred, even by Ethical Consumers, which is also in line with the relevant findings by Delistavrou and Tilikidou (2012) as well as consistent with the secondary data about the growth of the organics' market in Greece. In Greece, the total value of the organics was growing until 2010 (ICAP 2012) while in 2013 the total value of organic sales dropped by 12.5% from 2012 (ICAP 2014). The decrease is most probably attributed to the economic crisis. On the contrary, in Europe the organics' market witnessed a large growth over the last ten years. The growth rate from 2013 to 2014 reached the 7.4% (FiBL 2016, p. 213-215).

Western European countries like Sweden, Norway and France had double-digit growth rates (45%, 25% and 10% respectively). Germany had a growth rate of 4.8% and the U.K., where retail sales had been decreasing for four consecutive years, they started to grow again in 2013 by 4% (FiBL 2016, p. 200).

With relevance to the negative ethical consumption (NEC), it is to be mentioned that when Greeks had been asked in previous studies (e.g. Delistavrou and Tilikidou 2012) if they were going to take part into a future boycotting campaign, they provided very high scores of intentions. These scores were higher when the boycotting call concerned a firm that had been accused about products containing GMOs or about child labour. In this study, consumers were asked if they had actually taken part into any boycotting campaign during the last years. In overall, it was found that they had not. Actually, not for none cause. The European Social Survey (E.S.S.) of 2010 had indeed indicated that 93.7% of Greeks had not boycotted a product for ethical, political or environmental reasons. As Koos (2012) commented about the E.S.S. results of 2002/2003, boycott participation in Western Europe is higher, e.g. in Sweden, Switzerland (both 35%), France and Great Britain (both 28%), than in Southern and Eastern Europe.

It is also to be pointed out that Greeks seem to be very unfamiliar with ethical discursive activities, in overall. All they actually do is to discuss with their close people the possibility of participating in any given boycotting campaign. It is rather probable that there are situational reasons explaining this picture. It has to be noted that internet access of households in Greece came up to 66% in 2014, which is lower than the average of the EU27

(81%) and even lower than that of other western Europe countries such as the Netherlands (96%), the UK (90%) and Germany (89%) (Eurostat 2015). This might be an explanation of the low scores in the items of “spread of messages” (D03) or “visiting and writing in internet blogs” (D04) against an “unethical” product or a company.

With relevance to demographics, in this study it was found that *women* have been more engaged in choices of ethical products than men have. These findings are similar to those by Neilson 2010, Koos 2012 and Carfagna *et al.* 2014. Women also have taken part in boycotts more often than men have. These findings are similar to those by Klein *et al.* (2004), Koos 2012 and Carfagna *et al.* 2014. With regards to *age*, the results of this study about both positive and discursive types are also in line with those by Cowe and Williams (2000), who found that middle aged consumers enhance all types of ethical consumption. With reference to ethical buying the results of this study are in contrast to those by Copeland (2014) and Koos (2012), who found that younger consumers enhance ethical buying while Carr *et al.* (2012) found that older consumers are those, who enhance ethical buying. With reference to discursive activities the findings of this study are in contrast to previous results in the same geographical area, which had indicated young consumers to be more active in digital actions against “unethical” business practices (Delistavrou and Tilikidou 2012). In this study, age did not provide any evidence of impact on consumers’ participation in boycotting campaigns. On the contrary, previous research results have indicated that younger consumers enhance boycotting both in other countries (Gardberg and Newbury 2009; Koos 2012) and in Greece (Delistavrou and Tilikidou, 2012). With

regards to *income* the results of this study did not provide any influence on any type of Ethical Consumption, while previous research results have indicated that consumers holding better income than their counterparts were found to get more frequently engaged in ethical buying (Neilson 2010; Koos 2012; Carfagna *et al.* 2014; Copeland 2014) and in boycotting (Gardberg and Newburry 2009; Copeland 2014; Carfagna *et al.* 2014). In fact, the only certainly common demographic discriminating factor is the respondents' level of *education*, which was found to affect positively all the three types of ethical consumption. This result is in line with previous research results both of other countries (Neilson 2010; Koos 2012; Carfagna *et al.* 2014; Copeland 2014) and of Greece (Delistavrou and Tilikidou 2012).

With reference to psychographics, the results of this study indicated that all the three types of Ethical Consumption did not provide any evidence of relationships with Inglehart's (1977) Materialism. As for Inglehart's (1977) Post-materialism, merely the first type of ethical consumption, namely ethical buying, indicated a weak relationship with it. This finding is in line with those by Cowe and Williams (2000) and by Pepper *et al.* (2009). Boycotting and discursive behaviours were found unrelated to Post-materialism. These results are in contrast to previous research results by Copeland (2014) about boycotting and by Stolle *et al.* (2005) about discursive activities.

It is to be noted that both Inglehart's (1977) measures, Materialism and Post-materialism indicated the same, rather high, overall Means in the whole sample of Greek consumers, while no significant differences are observed in either the Means of the items or between clusters. It seems that Inglehart's theory, that materialist and post-materialist

values are mutually exclusive, is not verified by the results of this study. Inglehart's claim - that his prediction in 1971 about intergenerational value changes had actually occurred in 2008 and also that West European publics will continue to show significant movement toward self-expression values as younger cohorts replace older ones in the adult population- does not seem to be the case in Greece, which is suffering from a severe economic crisis from 2010 and onwards. Considerable parts of the Greek population have to face serious issues of unemployment and poverty these days. These problems, most possibly, prevent a shift towards self-expression, pro-social values etc.

Even, in the case of locus of control towards politics, it is to be mentioned that Paulhus' (1983) Socio-political Control Scale provided evidence of very weak correlation with positive ethical buying and weak correlation with discursive activities. In contrast, this scale had provided (in previous studies in the same geographical area in the past) evidence of considerable moderate correlations either with ecological purchasing (e.g. Tilikidou and Delistavrou 2005) or with non-purchasing ecological activities (e.g. Tilikidou and Delistavrou 2006 and 2008). It has been also reported in other countries that political variables do impact on consumers' engagement in boycotting (Neilson 2010; Koos 2012; Copeland 2014). The results of this study might be interpreted as some kind of citizens' abhorrence towards policy and politicians due to the expanding inefficiency of political parties and Governments in the years of the economic crisis.

Of course, there are many limitations in this study as it has been an initial, exploratory effort to fumble ethical consumption as a three-types concept and reveal some

of the antecedents of this kind of behaviour. An inherent limitation of this study is that the findings - as in any study on a socially desirable topic, should be questioned about overestimation. In further research efforts, there is a need to include a sufficient measure to eliminate the social desirability effect of the findings. Another limitation of this study is that the probability sample was taken just from the Thessaloniki urban area and not from all over Greece. Therefore, generalization of the results is somehow limited.

### **Conclusions**

In this study, an effort was made to build upon previous qualitative findings and proceed to a quantitative exploration of the overall concept of ethical consumption in Greece, a topic that has been considerably neglected so far by the marketing academic community. The theoretical framework of this study that suggested the concurrent examination of the three types of ethical consumption in relation to selected demographic and psychographic variables was verified, to a satisfactory extent, given the exploratory nature of the study. The fact that the three types were found rather strongly interrelated verifies the assumption that ethical consumption should be faced as an integrated concept. The choice to utilize multi-item behavioural measures and the choice to examine socially oriented psychographic variables as potential antecedents of ethical behaviours provided fruitful, new knowledge with regards to the insights of the overall concept of ethical consumption and its three types.

With reference to the positive ethical consumption, it was found that consumers are rarely engaged in actually ethical preferences like organics and fair trade products, they occasionally make ethical choices like traditional products or energy saving bulbs, while they get engaged rather often in recycle/repair/reuse of already used products probably driven by financial or, other than ethical, criteria. With reference to the negative ethical consumption it was found that Greek consumers have rather occasionally taken part in a boycott during the last few years. As to the discursive ethical consumption, it was indicated that Greeks are quite unfamiliar with digital activities against unethical business practices.

As expected, some of the antecedents of ethical consumption in Greece were revealed by the analyses of the results of this study. It was found that better educated consumers are more likely to get engaged in all the ethical consumption types. Women are more likely to prefer ethical buying choices and take part in boycotting campaigns, while middle aged consumers are those, who are more likely to enhance ethical buying and discursive activities, too. As to psychographics, people who can overcome their disappointment and can still hold a sense of political control are those, who are more likely, even to a limited grade, to get engaged in ethical buying and discursive activities. In addition, consumers, who share post-materialistic self-expression, pro-social values are more likely to make ethically influenced purchasing choices, at least to a wider extent than their counterparts.

It seems that Greeks differ from citizens of other countries in terms of age and income: Greek ethical buyers were found in this study to be middle aged and annual income

do not discriminate them while in other countries ethical purchasers were found to be either younger (Copeland 2014; Koos 2012) or older citizens (Carr *et al.* 2012) holding higher incomes (Neilson 2010; Koos 2012; Carfagna *et al.* 2014; Copeland 2014). In terms of psychographics, engagement in boycotting in Greece is not affected by socio-political control and post-materialism while in other countries boycotting is positively influenced by political variables (Neilson 2010; Koos 2012; Copeland 2014) and post-materialism (Copeland 2014). Post-materialism does not impact upon the Greek consumers' engagement in discursive activism while it positively influences Swedish consumers' participation in discursive activities (Stolle *et al.* 2005).

Last, but not least, it has to be noted that in fact Greeks are not frequently engaged in none of the ethical consumption types while the segmentation effort indicated that ethical consumers represent a minority as they count for less than 20% of the sample. These evidences indicate that the ethical consumption should be faced as a niche market in the Greek society. Therefore, there is plenty in front of future research in order to understand better the ethical consumption types and their motivational basis.

### **Further Research Suggestions**

Further clarification is required with regards to the definition and contents of the whole ethical consumption as a concept. The insights of each ethical consumption type in people's everyday life need to be better understood. Qualitative research methods should be employed to fulfil the above direction. Qualitative tools (in depth interviews, focus



groups etc.) maybe be also found useful during the early stages of the development of reliable and valid measures, adequate for a future large-scale quantitative survey in order to obtain better measurement accuracy.

Future research should also face decisions that concern the adoption and/or adaptation of a consumer behaviour model adequate for the examination of ethical consumption in Greece.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study provide fruitful insights to enterprises that aim to design and implement an ethical strategy. The ethical purchasing behaviours that are mostly adopted by Greek consumers incorporate financial and traditional aspects. For many consumers, the price premium of the ethical products (e.g. organics) is a significant hurdle that limits the penetration of such products (Fotopoulos and Krystallis 2002). Therefore, ethical business strategies should minimize the consumers' financial objections, i.e. price more reasonably their products. Government should consider lowering the prices of ethical products through changing the tax system, for instance, by introducing tax measures that favour ethical products or penalize "unethical" products. It might be considered that in Ireland the 2002 regulation of a tax of 0.17€ per plastic bag, called "plastax", led to a 90% reduction in the use of plastic bags (OECD 2008). In accordance, specifically designed awareness-raising campaigns regarding, for example, the connections between the price

premium and the ethical attributes of a product appear to be necessary to be implemented by both business and Government.

The results of this study indicated that clearly not each and every consumer is ready to be convinced by the ethical message. Ethical strategies in Greece should primarily target middle-aged, highly educated women, who hold strong post-materialistic values and feel strong enough to affect their political and social environment. The relevant advertising campaigns should be designed accordingly.

The findings that regard the consumers' engagement in boycotting should concern all enterprises in their effort to avoid the threat of getting an "unethical" reputation. Well educated Greek women, seem ready and willing to punish "unethical" business and/or products. Therefore, they might be considered the target group for a boycotting campaign that a consumerism or citizenship association might decide to call.

Consumers' engagement in discursive activism was found to be at a very low level of adoption. Ethical consumerism organizations have to work very hard in order to raise consumers' awareness and participation in such activities. They can attract new members or advocates and raise participation in their planned activities by targeting middle-aged people, who hold strong beliefs about their own capability to affect the social and political system.

Additionally, the strong relationships found among the three types of ethical consumption indicate that ethical buyers can also be boycotters and discursive activists. Thus, business, ethical consumerism organizations and public policy strategies could target

to consumers engaged in all the three types of ethical consumerism. For example, advertisements of ethical products might be placed nearby any discursive ethical event. Ethical activism recruitment and/or boycotting calls could take place close to organics' specialty stores. Of course, the discursive activists may be a target audience for boycotting campaigns.

In overall, it is to be conceded that as long as the current financial crisis is torturing the largest portion of the Greek people, ethical consumption is hardly going to become a story of great success. Nevertheless, the Greek academic community had better not neglect any more this subject, as the relevant evolutions in some other European countries indicate considerable potentials. Papaoikonomou *et al.* (2012) took into consideration some relevant suggestions (e.g. Mohr *et al.* 2001; Carrington *et al.* 2010; Bray *et al.* 2011) and claimed that *"in recent years, the western world has observed the growing popularity and gradual consolidation of the ethical consumer, a group of individuals that, broadly defined, express their concerns about the ethical behaviour of companies (in terms of their respect for the environment, their employees, their community, etc.) by means of their consumer behaviour"*. Therefore, research towards exploring, revealing and understanding better the ethical consumption segment in the Greek market should be expanded by all means.

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**Appendix: Table 1: Item descriptives of all behavioural variables**

		Whole sample		Cluster centres		
		Mean	Std. Dev.	1 109 cases	2 187 cases	3 268 cases
<b>Positive Ethical Consumption</b>						
P01	Buy organic wine	2.63	1.718	4.394	2.310	2.134
P02	Buy organic fruit and vegetable	3.19	1.836	4.706	2.941	2.754
P03	Buy organic honey	3.47	2.042	5.303	3.182	2.922
P04	Buy organic pasta	2.56	1.697	4.220	2.203	2.142
P05	Buy organic olive oil	3.47	2.055	5.018	3.171	3.052
P06	Buy organic milk	2.65	1.843	4.294	1.995	2.440
P07	Buy organic legumes	2.90	1.928	4.771	2.503	2.425
P08	Buy free range eggs and poultry	4.18	1.945	5.321	4.235	3.683
P09	Buy ecological detergents	2.94	1.850	4.817	2.679	2.358
P10	Buy recycled paper products	3.19	1.874	4.734	3.000	2.701
P11	Buy ecological toiletry	2.93	1.937	4.908	2.428	2.466
P12	Buy local traditional products	4.45	1.700	5.532	4.508	3.963
P13	Buy Fair Trade products (e.g. coffee, sugar, drinks, etc.)	2.65	1.902	4.275	2.524	2.082
P14	Use fabric bags for shopping	3.24	1.970	5.018	3.342	2.444
P15	Buy products and services that have been produced or/and delivered by companies adopting Corporate Social Responsibility (charity, sponsorship to societal tasks, hygiene and safety programmes, volunteerism and environmental protection programmes)	3.13	1.767	4.789	3.176	2.425
P16	Buy energy efficient bulbs	5.32	1.738	6.128	5.620	4.776
P17	Recycle the recyclable packaging	5.07	1.883	6.101	5.358	4.440
P18	Reuse a product or its packaging waste instead of throwing it to the rubbish (food cups, bags, wrapping paper etc.)	4.14	2.016	5.083	4.572	3.463
P19	Repair or maintain used products instead of replacing them with new (clothes, furniture, electrical equipment, linen etc.)	4.44	2.000	5.312	4.695	3.907
<b>Negative Ethical Consumption</b>						
N1	Seriously damage the environment	3.72	1.961	5.578	4.818	2.205
N2	Be involved in financial scandals	3.63	2.052	5.431	5.037	1.925
N3	Be involved in safety and hygiene scandals	3.90	2.182	5.633	5.428	2.134
N4	Use child labour	3.62	2.236	5.550	5.246	1.705
N5	Be involved in extremely cruel behaviour towards animals	3.61	2.232	5.477	5.257	1.709
N6	Be involved in extremely cruel behaviour towards workers	3.84	2.237	5.651	5.551	1.907
N7	Financially support governments which are involved in wars	3.58	2.220	5.422	5.251	1.664
N8	Support interests hostile to our country	3.79	2.174	5.248	5.289	2.146
N9	Make profit in an extremely promiscuous way	3.56	2.209	5.486	5.160	1.668
<b>Discursive Ethical Consumption</b>						
D1	Discussions with my friends and acquaintances and efforts to motivate their participation in products' boycotting	3.27	1.730	4.890	3.198	2.660
D2	Participation in petition gathering	2.61	1.677	4.459	2.444	1.981
D3	Spread of messages through internet or cell phones	2.54	1.700	4.440	2.374	1.888
D4	Visiting and writing in internet blogs	2.57	1.682	4.147	2.465	1.993
D5	Participation in protest events	2.48	1.673	4.073	2.246	2.004
D6	Establishing and organizing protest groups	1.90	1.432	3.330	1.717	1.437
D7	Participation in the No Shopping Day	2.56	1.966	4.606	2.417	1.821

