Towards Ethical Consumerism:

Bridging the Gap between the Obstacles and Drivers of

Ethical Consumerism

by

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Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of Master of Philosophy in the

Faculty of Human Sciences at Stellenbosch University

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December 2018

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Being an ethical consumer means making informed purchasing decisions. Ethical consumers buy products that are ethically produced and that are not harmful to the environment or to society. They value all stakeholders within the manufacturing process by using their consumption power to support ethical production throughout the product cycle. Through their consumption choices and by voicing their concerns, ethical consumers play an important role in shaping the ways in which companies direct their business. This interdependent relationship or co-responsibility between businesses and ethical consumers impacts positively on the sustainability of both the environment and society. Moreover, businesses need to convince their customers that they truly care about the impact of their operations on their consumers, society and the environment, and that they are not only interested in making a profit.

The main problem statement that this thesis addresses is that the majority of consumers are not currently committed to ethical consumption practices. In order to understand why there is such a weak uptake of ethical consumerism, the thesis investigates the different obstacles and drivers that may influence consumers as they make their consumption choices. After identifying and examining each of the obstacles to and drivers of ethical consumerism, possible change levers and change agents are proposed in an attempt to bridge the current gap that prevents consumers from committing to ethical consumerism.

Keywords: Ethical consumerism, Consumer ethics, Obstacles to ethical consumerism, Drivers of ethical consumerism, Levers of change, Change agents.

OPSOMMING

Om 'n etiese verbruiker te wees, beteken om ingeligte aankoopbesluite te neem. Etiese verbruikers koop produkte wat eties geproduseer word en wat nie skadelik vir die omgewing en die samelewing is nie. Etiese verbruikers ag alle belanghebbendes tydens die vervaardigingsproses as belangrik en gebruik hulle koopmag om etiese produksie tydens 'n produk se lewensiklus te ondersteun. Deur middel van verbruikskeuses en die verwoording van hul besware, vervul etiese verbruikers 'n belangrike rol in die vorming van die wyse waarop maatskappye hul besighede rig. Hierdie interafhanklike verhouding of medeverantwoordelikheid tussen ondernemings en etiese verbruikers bring 'n positiewe uitwerking op die volhoubaarheid van beide die omgewing en die samelewing teweeg. Daarbenewens moet besighede hul kliënte oortuig dat hulle werklik omgee oor die impak van hul bedrywighede op hul verbruikers, die samelewing en die omgewing, en dat hulle nie slegs winsbehep is nie.

Die hoof probleemstelling waaroor hierdie tesis handel, is die feit dat die meerderheid verbruikers nie huidiglik verbind is tot etiese verbruikspraktyke nie. Ten doel om te begryp waarom daar 'n swak verbintenis tot etiese verbruikerswese bestaan, ondersoek die tesis die verskillende hindernisse en kragte wat verbruikers kan beïnvloed tydens hul verbruikskeuses. Nadat die struikelblokke en kragte van etiese verbruikerswese geïdentifiseer en ondersoek is, word moontlike hefbome van verandering asook veranderingsagente voorgestel in 'n poging om die huidige gaping wat verbruikers ervaar, te oorbrug en sodoende hulself tot etiese verbruikerswese te verbind.

Sleutelwoorde: Etiese verbruikerswese, Verbruikersetiek, Hindernisse tot etiese verbruikerswese, Kragte van etiese verbruikerswese, Hefbome van verandering, Veranderingsagente.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the following people for their contribution and support in the preparation and writing of this thesis:

• Thank you to my Creator for providing me with the opportunity to write this thesis.

• To Dr Minka Woermann, for introducing me to the field of Business Ethics, for sharing my excitement about this topic, for her inexhaustible patience and professional guidance throughout the process.

• To my husband Fanie, for his never-ending love, patience and encouragement.

• To my children Jana and Roux, for introducing me to Philosophy, and for their motivation and their support throughout this field of study.

• To my dear parents for their continuous love and support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AWI – Animal Welfare Institute

CES – Consumer Ethics Scale

CnSR – Consumer Social Responsibility

CRSC – Consumer Responsibility for Sustainable Consumption

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

EI – Emotional Intelligence

GHG – Greenhouse gas Emissions

IGD – Institute of Grocery Distribution

ISO – International Organisation for Standardisation

PCE – Perceived Consumer Effectiveness

SEL – Social and Emotional Learning

SRI – Sustainable and Responsible Investment

UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUALISING ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer choices impact on a variety of stakeholders, and affect societies, businesses as well as the environment. In essence, every purchasing decision can be an ethical choice. Through purchasing, consumers confirm whether they care for, or support, certain issues in order to prevent harm to the environment or society. Ethical consumers prefer to express their values through their purchasing behaviour and show concern for the rights of workers, the practice of fair trade, animal welfare and the sustainability of the environment (Carrington, Michalj; Neville and Whitwell, 2010). In this literature study, the possible obstacles and drivers that consumers face with regard to their ethical purchasing decision-making processes will be examined. That will enable us to account for the uptake of ethical consumerism as a field of interest within applied ethics.

Within the field of applied ethics, and specifically business ethics, significant focus has been placed on the ethical and social responsibility of corporations as stakeholders of society and the environment. However, it is important to examine the uptake of ethical consumerism as consumers are responsible for their contributions as co-stakeholders within this field of business ethics (Carrington *et al.* 2010:139). Before this will be elaborated upon on a theoretical level, a brief practical example will be discussed to frame this investigation.

Consumers globally enjoy coffee on a daily basis. This brewed drink is prepared from the roasted beans of the Coffea plant's berries, native to countries like Madagascar, Mauritius, Ethiopia and Sudan amongst others. Several stakeholders are affected in the production and manufacturing process of coffee and such stakeholders include coffee farmers, the farmworkers, the related societies, and also, the natural resources within this environment. Before and during the consumption of coffee, the concern to the consumer is the enjoyment of this beverage. Consumers do not necessarily consider all stakeholders within this industry when they enjoy a cup of coffee. For example, are consumers aware of the amount of non-recyclable coffee pods or the number of paper cups and spoons that go to waste during the consumption process? Are consumers troubled by the carbon footprint when heating water for coffee or are they concerned about the enormous water usage during this process? Also, do consumers consider the conditions of employment of the coffee farmworkers or the price that coffee farmers receive for this hard-earned product? To further complicate the matter, some consumers prefer black coffee or espresso while some prefer variations

of the beverage such as Café Latté or Cappuccino. When only focusing on the carbon footprint of this widely preferred beverage, black coffee produces 21 grams of carbon dioxide per cup where each Latte produces 340 grams of carbon dioxide per cup. It is therefore evident that a few tablespoons of milk per cup of coffee or coffee alternative, represents on average 65 % of the carbon footprint of this beverage (McColl, 2016). Furthermore, when considering that coffee shops globally produce on average 300 to 700 cups of coffee per day, it seems reasonable to conclude that significant carbon footprint will affect climate change globally. At the same time, coffee (with or without milk) is not the only product selected by consumers on an everyday basis. Every purchasing choice, whether it pertains to the production, marketing or retailing of food, clothes, shoes or any other product, impacts on a variety of stakeholders.

Carrington *et al.* note that consumer activist groups and environmental awareness campaigns by the media contribute to an increased awareness concerning the impact of the modern consumer culture on the environment and society, giving rise to this new type of consumer - the ethical consumer. Unavoidably, this focus on and growth of an ethical purchasing culture has caught the attention of companies who want to "meet the needs of their stakeholders" (Carrington *et al.*, 2010:140). Products like fair trade tea, fair trade chocolate and "green" beer amongst others, are often the focus of marketing strategies as companies try to promote these sustainable products to consumers.

Carrington *et al.* (2010) confirms that consumers (especially in industrialised countries) have become more aware of, and also better informed about, the origin of products, production methods, as well as policies and practices within the companies that they support. In other words, consumers have developed a consciousness about this subject although there still seems to be a lack of an in-depth understanding of ethical consumerism. Although research indicates that customers are increasingly becoming aware of ethical consumption and the benefits thereof, their ethical intentions do not seem to translate into consistent and concrete ethical purchasing behaviour when it comes to the point at the cash register (Carrington *et al.*, 2010:139). In other words, there seems to be a barrier between the intentions of the consumer and their actual purchasing behaviour. This gap is referred to by researchers such as Auger, Burke, Devinney and Louviere (2003) and Carrington *et al.* (2010) as the intention-behaviour gap and can be viewed as one of the causal factors of the weak uptake of ethical consumerism.

Another challenge most consumers presently face is the access to, and availability of, a vast number of products as a result of technological and market-related developments. The fact that consumers can easily meet their consumption needs, results in unnecessary but also excessive consumption patterns. Unfortunately, a knowledge deficit from the side of the consumer regarding these intense

consumption patterns creates negative and harmful consequences for the environment, also for future generations thereby negatively impacting on "responsible consumption behaviour" (Carrington, Michalj; Neville and Whitwell, 2010:140).

Although Bray *et al.* (2011) are of the opinion that consumers need to accept responsibility for educating themselves with regards to ethical consumption, research has confirmed that there is still a deficiency in knowledge from consumers (Bray, Johns and Kilburn, 2011:602). The fact that consumers are aware of some issues is simply not enough. In order to purchase ethically on a constant basis, they need to have a profound familiarity and understanding of ethical consumerism and the impact of consumer decisions on themselves, society and the environment. Thus, it can be deduced that while consumers have access to a variety of sources of information regarding ethical consumption issues, they are reluctant and even passive to engage with such information often because they are overwhelmed by the amount of information (Burke, Eckert and Davis, 2014:2241). The above-mentioned two factors namely the intention-behaviour gap, as well as the knowledge deficit of consumers, seem to be two important factors that contribute towards a weak uptake of ethical consumerism.

Besides already existing educational programmes within corporations and institutions, it is also of importance that consumers acknowledge their role in educating themselves with regards to ethical consumerism. This study will suggest that the main reason for the weak uptake of ethical consumerism is related to the interaction between the intentions and behaviours of consumers. One therefore needs to investigate the possible obstacles to and drivers of ethical consumerism in order to understand the influence thereof on the intentions and behaviours of consumers. By exploring the obstacles (i.e. stumbling blocks or barriers) to, and drivers (i.e. positive forces or influences) of ethical consumer decision-making, a better understanding of the moral agent, i.e. the ethical consumer and the forces at play, can be developed. The following figure suggests the interaction between consumers' intentions in relation to their behaviour. The consumption behaviour of consumers without moral intentions, do not translate into ethical purchasing. Conversely, consumers with moral intentions may become ethical consumers given that they are not influenced by the factors contributing to the intention-behaviour gap.

| Amoral Behaviour | | Ethical Behaviour | |
| **Deliberately OR Survival** | | | |
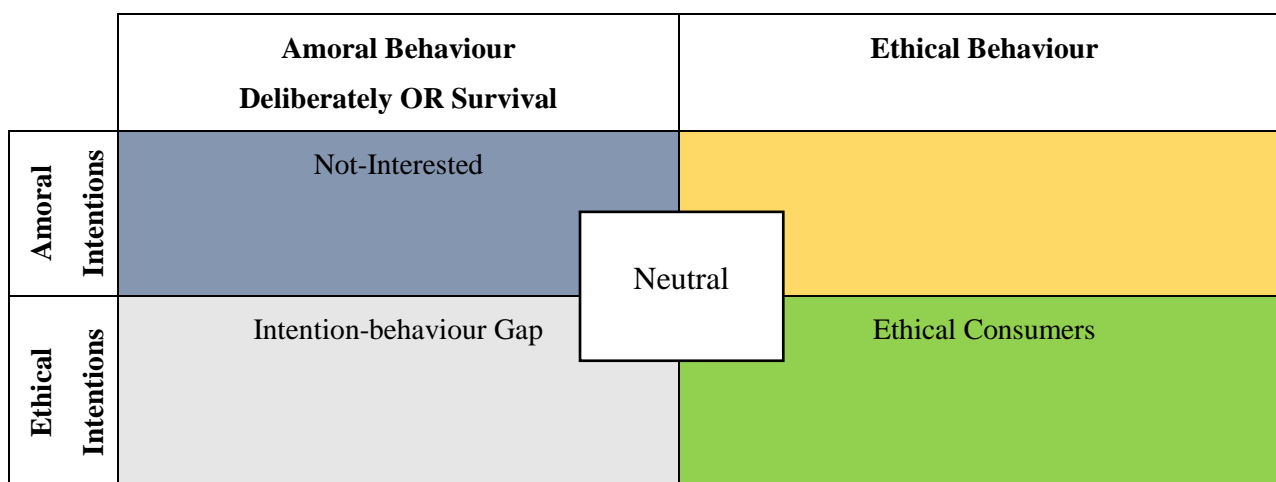
Figure 1.1: The interaction between consumers' intentions and their behaviour.

However, before this hypothesis can be unpacked fully, it is important to comprehend the concept of ethical consumerism. This will be achieved by tracing its historical development, as well as investigating the various ways in which ethical consumerism can be defined. Thereafter, it is important to explore what consumer responsibility with regards to the ethical consumer entails, as well as to examine the influence of ethical consumerism on the environment.

1.1 THE ORIGIN OF ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

In the mid-19th century, cooperatives (centred on principles of unity warranting a better-quality standard of living) and consumer movements in the rural farming communities of Northern America and Europe were alerted by information disseminated by trade unions regarding the unethical practices of authoritative landowners to increase their own profits. According to Grisewood (2005) in A Guide for Trade Unions[1], these practices included the exploitation of raw materials and land, as well as the utilisation of cheap labour. The cooperatives were committed to preventing such exploitative practices and concentrated on improving the standard of living for the workers. This was achieved by providing equal opportunities in education and by promoting gender equality in the workplace. A general focus on protecting the rights of the workers, as well as protecting the right of the environment, became essential. With the advance of more competitive and innovative economies, the cooperative movement unfortunately faded, although a renewed interest in the movement was sparked in the late twentieth century due to renewed ethical and environmental awareness amongst consumers (Grisewood, 2005:7).

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[1] All references to Grisewood refer to joint participation of several authors contributing to the document titled "A Guide for Trade Unions". Currently, 44 unions are affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

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Industrialised countries experienced a different consumer drive in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with a focus on good value for money. The quality of products and services had to correspond to the amount that consumers would be willing to pay. Movements such as the Consumer's League in New York (1891) and the Consumer's Association in Great Britain (1898) were formed and provided consumers with authoritative information e.g. regulations regarding advertising and requirements for labelling. The focus on value for money conversely impacted quite significantly on the retail sector in the sense that their legal framework had to be strengthened. This framework required the retail sector to reconsider regulations concerning advertising and labelling requirements of consumer goods such as cosmetics, food and drugs (Grisewood, 2005:8).

As a result of retailers strengthening their legal frameworks, consumers became aware of the fact that they do not only consume products that are produced, but they also consume the processes involved to produce these products. Consumer goods (once thought of as objects without a history), were redefined to include the ethical (and unethical) decisions made during the production process. Therefore, the act of consumption became a political choice, like voting, so that democratic values are implemented in the market (Kirchhoff, 2016). This awareness contributed to consumer movements conducting specialised research by testing products according to a series of criteria, e.g. effectiveness, durability, price and safety in order to ensure that customers receive value for money. However, towards the end of the 20th century, the consumer movements were less concerned with cooperative action and political tension and provided more authoritative information to consumers. As a result, there was a focus on issues such as consumer rights and concurrent legal processes which caused consumer movements to disregard a range of ethical challenges (Grisewood, 2005:8). Firstly, consumers received a multiplicity of information influenced by the fast pace at which technology changed; secondly, retailers competed for consumer interest by offering promotions on certain items and by producing their own brand lines at a cheaper price; thirdly, long-term issues regarding the environment and society were not addressed by this type of consumerism and poorer communities were consequently disregarded, thereby encouraging the middle-class to aspire to higher standards of living (Grisewood, 2005:9). One should, however, not underestimate the impact of this type of consumer activism due to the influence that it had on companies and governments worldwide to comply with legal standards and also reassess communication and marketing strategies.

Grisewood notes that from 1960 onwards, this consumer movement contributed to the intensification of activism against multinational corporations' conduct and practices. This activism stemmed from an increased reaction from consumers with regards to companies that exercise power over them and thereby affect the lives of millions of people. This activism initiated a parallel focus

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on Corporate Social Responsibility (hereafter referred to as CSR) of small and large companies and was steered by the lawyer Ralph Nader who published a book *Unsafe at Any Speed* in 1965, in which the negligent conduct of the car manufacturing business was exposed (Grisewood, 2005:9). Nader criticised the industry for misleading their customers in advertising campaigns and he established a "Centre for Study of Responsive Law and Corporate Responsibility" which expanded not only in the USA but also globally. Similar organisations emerged, aimed at influencing governments to safeguard the rights and welfare of their citizens with regards to suitable industry standards of conduct.

Between 1980 and 1990, attention was focused on international supply chains with reference to international labour standards informing consumers of violations with regards to the production of specific goods. This form of activism progressed and resulted in campaigns against companies such as Nike and Adidas, where exploitative practices with regards to supply chains became evident. As a result, companies globally became aware of the fact that accountable and ethical business practices are important to consumers. Previous arguments stating that multinational companies in developing countries cannot be held responsible for exploitive labour practices were no longer considered valid (Grisewood, 2005:10). The impact of this form of consumer activism obligated (especially private sector) companies to be accountable for the labour standards in their supply chains and eventually became noticeable globally in the working conditions and environments of employees and their families.

In the 1980s, an alternative form of consumer activism known as "green-consumerism" emerged, which was founded as a result of the influence of consumption on the environment with regards to future generations and sustainability. Again, consumer decisions were influenced by the rapid progress in information technology and the role that the media continued to play. Consumers around the world became increasingly more conscious about the origins, policies and practices of goods and services that they purchase on an everyday basis. Awareness was continuously created through the media to educate consumers on the impact of their purchasing decisions on the environment. As a result, consumers became more attentive and careful about the effect of their purchasing choices on the environment thereby accepting added responsibility for protecting the environment for future generations (Grisewood, 2005:11).

Green consumerism became more established since the 1980s and the influence thereof extended to products known today as ''green products'. The main message of green consumerism is that consumers should be well informed when they make decisions about the consumption of products and that they should also be more radical and decrease their consumption in general so as to provide

for future generations. Green consumerism therefore aims to lower the impact of consumerism on the environment by advocating purchasing of locally produced products or products made from recycled materials (Chen, X; De la Rosa, J; Peterson, M; Zhong, Y; Lu, 2016:140). As a result of green consumerism, ethical consumerism emerged in the early 1990s; a form of social activism where consumers globally accept responsibility for their purchasing decisions (Grisewood, 2005:11). Ethical consumerism reiterated the basic principles of the first cooperatives by focusing on the principles of non-exploitive behaviour, valuing human rights, environmentalism and fair trade.

Responses to the demands of ethical consumerism became evident as globally, a number of businesses have instituted changes to the demands of ethical consumerism. Two examples of such are Marks and Spencer (a British retailer) and Woolworths (South African chain store modelled on Marks and Spencer) where products within a wide range of ethically compliant processes are available. Marks and Spencer inform their clients about their on-going commitment to ethical practices despite challenges by noting on their website:

> In January 2007, we launched Plan A to address the key environmental, social and ethical challenges facing Marks and Spencer. After ten years and two further updates, Plan A continues to lead the sustainable business agenda (Marks and Spencer, 2017).

According to Woolworths, the company is committed to responsible sourcing, responsible energy and water usage and to the sustainability for all directly sourced products. They commit to "care for the environment", and their "people and communities" by stating the following on their website:

> While you may be familiar with some of our environmental and conservation projects, for us in a South African and African context, sustainability isn't just about being 'green'. It's about sharing expertise, helping local enterprises to grow, and contributing to a prosperous, secure future for our country (Woolworths, 2017b).

It is evident that the essential principles of ethical consumerism have remained consistent even though they have taken different forms over the past 100 years (Grisewood, 2005:12). Safeguarding humans, animals and the environment is a challenge that consumers have to accept, but are they able to? As we have a better understanding of the historical trajectory of the ethical consumer, the next section will explore similarities and variations of the definitions thereof.

1.2 TOWARDS DEFINING ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

In order for more consumers to engage in ethical consumerism, it is of importance that there is a consensus on what the concept entails and how it should be defined. While a variety of definitions

of ethical consumerism have been suggested, the main concept of ethical consumerism suggests that consumers take responsibility for their purchasing decisions, thereby contributing positively to environmental and social issues. Hence, by taking responsibility for their purchasing decisions, it is anticipated that consumers will support companies that comply with ethical practices due to the belief that their support for these firms would motivate firms to operate and trade in an ethical manner. Consumers and corporations are thus co-responsible for committing to ethical practices, thereby impacting positively on society, as well as on the environment.

In order to shed light on ethical consumerism as such, it is appropriate to compare some already existing definitions. The following definitions of the "ethical consumer" remain consistent in the sense that consumption patterns and consumption behaviour create consequences for society and the environment. Elkington and Hailes (1988 in Wheale and Hinton, 2007) refer to the ethical consumer as:

> A person who avoids products likely to endanger health, cause damage to the environment, consume a disproportionate amount of energy and waste, use materials derived from threatened species or environments, involve the unnecessary use of or cruelty to animals, or adversely affect other countries (Wheale and Hinton, 2007:303).

Tallontire (2001 in Wheale and Hinton, 2007) defines the term by focusing on the three main components of ethical consumerism i.e. "human rights, animal welfare and the environment", while Vitell *et al.* (2001) highlight the fact that the "ethical consumer is guided more by his/her principles than by consequences" (Wheale and Hinton, 2007:303).

In their article: "What to Buy? On the complexity of Being a Critical Consumer", Gjerris *et al.* extend the term ethical consumerism to "critical consumerism" as well as to "political consumerism" (Gjerris, Gamborg and Saxe, 2016:81). They furthermore differentiate between the terms "citizen" and "consumer", two important terms that should be outlined clearly. According to Gjerris *et al.*, consumerism entails a focus on materialism and extrinsic values, i.e. consumers purchase goods and services that they want within the boundaries of what they can afford. Citizenship, on the other hand, consists of broader intrinsic values, i.e. the obligations and responsibilities in conjunction with definite rights (Gjerris *et al.* 2016:82). The two mentioned terms do not, however, function exclusively but within a multifaceted relationship. In other words, consumers purchase goods and services according to their wants and needs, but in the broader sense consumers are also citizens and should act according to their duties and responsibilities within the global society.

In addition, Aydin and Kazancoglu (2017:36) note that consumers have the responsibility to control their consumption behaviour by complying with a voluntary but simplistic lifestyle. This lifestyle involves focusing more on consumption that contributes to personal development and growth thereby reducing their wants-based consumption and impact on the environment. Aydin and Kazancoglu (2017) define ethical consumerism as "environmental consumerism" and note that two specific factors, namely a "simplicity lifestyle" and "consumption values", affect the decisions of the ethical consumer. Consumers who reject materialistic and excessive consumption lifestyles, in other words, consumers who follow a "simplicity lifestyle", can be classified as ethical consumers. The researchers describe "consumption values" as the consumer's evaluation of the impact that a certain service or utility has on society or the environment (Aydin and Kazancoglu, 2017:35).

Even though the above definitions speak to the notion of ethical consumerism which this study will investigate, a provisional working definition which can be utilised as a point of departure is needed. Consequently, for the purposes of this study, ethical consumerism will be defined as the notion that consumers ought to consider ethical principles when making purchasing decisions regarding the use of goods or services in order to prevent harm, but simultaneously promote environmental and social sustainability. These ethical principles will consider societal, animal and environmental well-being; as well as fair trade issues, development, corporate social responsibility, labour practices, policies and globalisation. When applying these principles to making purchasing decisions, risks such as food scarceness, environmental degradation and questionable marketing and consumption practices should be mitigated. To summarise, ethical consumerism will include the practice of consumer responsibility in order to guide the consumer in making ethical decisions.

As we now have a better understanding of ethical consumerism, it is important to further understand how ethical consumerism can have an impact on consumer responsibility, and simultaneously how consumer responsibility can contribute to ethical consumerism. In other words, consumers that actively practise their consumer responsibilities will contribute to the enhancement of ethical consumerism at large, but at the same time, it is ethical consumerism which makes possible the practices of consumer responsibility. Besides this reciprocal relationship between ethical consumerism and consumer responsibility, Grisewood is of the opinion that consumer responsibility entails consumers that are not only aware of, but also concerned about, the effects that their purchasing behaviour will have on themselves, as well as on the environments in which they function (Grisewood, 2005:2).

In order to better conceptualise consumer responsibility, research by Vitell (2015) identifies two types of consumer responsibilities. The first type of responsibility is called consumer ethics and

involves the moral codes and criteria that guide the behaviours of individuals as they acquire, use, and dispose of goods and services. The second type of responsibility consumers have is towards society and involves preventing harm and acting proactively for the benefit of society. The latter kind of responsibility is known as Consumer Social Responsibility (CnSR) (Vitell, 2015:768). By exploring these responsibilities, it will also become clear how ethical consumerism is not merely a descriptive or theoretical concept, but one that includes consumer ethics and CnSR which encourages active participation in favour of a real change. In light of this, both of these types of consumer responsibilities will next be discussed.

1.2.1 CONSUMER ETHICS

According to Vitell (2015), studies related to ethics and the consumer, have grown exponentially since the year 2000. Studies examining consumer behaviour with regards to ethical issues and social responsibility have been conducted in all parts of the world. Vitell (2003:33) notes that much research has been piloted in the field of ethics with a focus on ethics in the marketplace because of the relationship between the buyer and the seller or "buyer/seller dyad". However, less research has been conducted on the buyer's side of this dyad, i.e. the side of the consumer, even though the consumer is a major contributor and participant in the business process.

In order to conceptualise the term consumer ethics, Vitell and Muncy (1992 in Vitell, 2003) integrate two other definitions, i.e. a definition of consumer behaviour and a definition of business ethics:

> Consumer behaviours are acts, processes, and social relationships exhibited by individuals, groups, and organizations in the obtainment, use of, and consequent experience with products, services and other resources (Bagozzi and Zaltman, 1975 in Vitell, 2003).

> Business ethics is moral principles and standards that guide behaviour in the world of business (Ferrell and Fraedrich, 1989 in Vitell and Muncy, 1992).

> Consumer ethics is "the moral principles and standards that guide behaviours of individuals as they obtain, use and dispose of goods and services" (Vitell and Muncy, 1992:297).

Consumer ethics is, therefore, the consumer's view of ethics whereby the consumer embraces theories that differentiate between right and wrong behaviour as he/she acquires, uses, and disposes of goods and services.

According to Vitell (2003), there are three theoretical models that can be applied to test ethical issues in the decision-making process of the consumer. These are the models of Ferrell and Gresham (1985), Hunt and Vitell (1986, 1993), and Trevino (1986). However, the Hunt-Vitell

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model can be applied directly to individual consumer behaviour and is therefore seen as the most suitable model to test research questions relating to consumer ethics. This is accomplished by eradicating the constructs of professional, organisational and industry environments which make the Hunt–Vitell model the most appropriate theoretical model for testing research questions involving consumer ethics (Vitell, 2003:34). In this model, the decision maker or, in this case, the consumer is tested on the basis of an ethical problem at hand, as well as on the consumer's perception of alternatives in order to resolve the problem. When the consumer experiences an ethical dilemma, he/she chooses a solution to resolve this ethical problem. Alternatives are considered by means of using two main evaluations in order to find the best solution. Firstly, a deontological evaluation concentrates on the perceived duty of the consumer in order to achieve explicit "actions or behaviours," and secondly, a teleological evaluation focuses on the "consequences of those behaviours" as relevant to the goal to be achieved.

Vitell (2003:34) also proposes that consumers use both deontological as well as teleological evaluations in making ethical judgements. When making deontological evaluations, consumers will be challenged to evaluate the fundamental rightness or wrongness of several alternatives or behaviours. These evaluations furthermore imply that the alternatives are measured against deontological norms (including situation-specific beliefs as well as general beliefs) which are representative of the personal values of the consumer (Vitell, 2003:34).

Vitell (2003) continues by stating that the main concern when consumers make teleological evaluations would be to consider whether the goal of their decision will result in more "good than bad". Should greater good than bad result from their decision, the decision would be considered as an ethical choice. The teleological evaluation comprises of four key concepts namely, (1) the apparent consequences of every alternative for different stakeholder groups; (2) the likelihood that the consequence will take place for every group of stakeholders; (3) each consequence and the desirability or lack thereof, and (4) the significance of every stakeholder group (Hunt and Vitell, 1986:9 in Vitell, 2003). The outcome of the research concerning the teleological evaluation states that the beliefs of consumers will play a key role when they consider the amount of good versus bad that is produced by every alternative. If the consequences are perceived to be good for most stakeholders, the decisions will be viewed as ethical in nature (Vitell, 2003:40).

By using both deontological as well as teleological evaluations, Vitell makes it clear that ethical theory can be an essential driver towards ethical consumerism. One shortcoming of this analysis remains that many consumers are unaware of the various theoretical possibilities that can guide their decision-making processes. Furthermore, ethical judgements show a correlation to

demographic factors (i.e. gender, age and the level of education), psychographic notions (i.e. guilt proneness) and also techniques of neutralisation (Vitell, 2003:45).

1.2.2 CONSUMER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Apart from ethical considerations, it is important to understand the relation between consumer social responsibility (CnSR) and corporate social responsibility (CSR). This section will therefore investigate what these two responsibilities respectively entail, as well as how they form part of a reciprocal relationship.

Vitell describes CnSR as the responsibility that consumers need to accept in order to make decisions that will benefit all stakeholders (Vitell, 2015:768). Additional concepts of CnSR include the reactions of consumers towards CSR; consumers' awareness of CSR, as well as a focus thereon; and the understanding of the power that consumers have over CSR (Nielsen, 2015:22). In essence, consumer social responsibility is the "moral gaze" that consumers have of corporations and can also be seen as a key driver of CSR. CnSR is thus the "consumer side of Corporate Social Responsibility" (Caruana and Chatzidakis, 2014:577).

Nielsen (2013) in Burke *et al.* (2014), state that more than 50 % of consumers in 58 countries globally indicated that they would pay more for products which are manufactured by companies complying with CSR (Burke *et al.* 2014:2238). Examining the support of consumers for CSR in South Africa, consumers show their willingness to support causes that could make a difference. An example is the support of customers through the Woolworths and the MySchoolMyVillageMyPlanet initiative. Although Woolworths encourages consumers to support a good cause by spending more at their stores, five hundred million rands worth of contributions have been made since the launch of the MySchoolMyVillageMyPlanet initiative in 1997 up until 2017 (Woolworths, 2017a). Customers receive a blue My School card that is swiped with every purchase in the store thereby supporting this cause for the community:

> As our main partner (MySchoolMyVillageMyPlanet), Woolworths donates more than R1.5 million every month on behalf of customers to schools and charitable organisations (Woolworths, 2017a).

Another example signifying the importance of the relationship between CSR and CnSR can be seen in a study steered by Castaldo *et al.* (2009) in Vitell (2015), titled "The missing link between corporate social responsibility and consumer trust: The case of fair trade products". This study shows a link between CSR and CnSR as long as the company selling the products is, firstly,

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compliant with social and ethical requirements, and secondly, if the company has disclosed its commitment to protecting consumer interests and consumer rights (Vitell, 2015:770). Consumers therefore show trust in companies that value socially responsible products and consumer interests.

Caruna and Crane propose that consumer votes (i.e. market choices that consumers exercise) are represented by the preferences that consumers have with regard to specific products or services that are eventually purchased. It can hence be said that consumer responsibility is a vehicle for the achievement of consumers' "political goals" and would include behaviours such as boycotts or collective action to withdraw from the marketplace (Caruana and Crane, 2008:1497). An example of this concerns the boycotts against the purchasing of apartheid goods from South Africa between 1959 and 1994. The anti-apartheid movement persuaded consumers not to buy South African products for a period of 35 years (Jenkinson, 1959). These votes/choices can be defined as CnSR and specifically give emphasis to interests in causes such as sustainability of the environment, ethical trade and fair trade, free-range products, and animal rights (Vitell, 2015:767).

Research conducted by Belk (2005) in Vitell (2015) comprising eight[2] countries in which CnSR and consumer ethics were combined in parts, indicates the lack of concern from consumers for unethical and forged goods, poor workforce relations and damage to the environment. The study indicates that consumers did not show concern for the abuse of animals, copyright infringement or bad working conditions, but they were interested in receiving good value for money. Consumers justified their self-centredness by referring to the unethical conduct of multinational firms, thereby confirming that unethical behaviour on the part of consumers will most likely be influenced by perceived unethical behaviour on the part of a business (Vitell, 2015:770).

Vitell states that CSR will be most effective when there is corresponding CnSR. Consumers therefore need to be convinced of their important role and responsibility in this effort (Vitell, 2015:773). As illustrated by Figure 1.2 below, consumers value CSR initiatives from companies as a purchase criterion when they reflect on buying products from such a company. In this way, it can be argued that the combination of consumer ethics and CnSR in response to CSR will increase ethical consumerism at large. Thus, the social responsibilities of corporations in influencing their consumers seem to be a motivating factor affecting consumers' ethical consumption, and will be explored next.

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[2] Eight countries comprising Australia, China, Germany, India, Spain, Turkey, Sweden, and the United States.
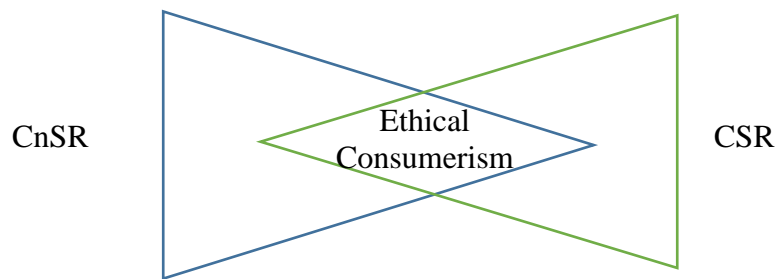
Figure 1.2: The interconnection between ethical consumerism, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and consumer social responsibility (CnSR).

1.3 THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CORPORATIONS IN INFLUENCING ETHICAL CONSUMERS

Businesses have a responsibility regarding the consequences of their business decisions and actions and consumers are increasingly influenced by CSR and company compliance to ethical behaviour (Košútová, 2014:34). CSR is based on ethical principles such as commitment, transparency, impartiality and cooperation with all stakeholders. The following definitions will explain the term CSR better:

Howard R Bowen (1953) defines CSR in his book "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman" as the commitment of organisations to make decisions, promote strategies, and take actions consistent with the goals and values of society (Košútová, 2014:36).

Holme and Watts (2000) cited by Košútová (2014) propose the following definition:

> CSR commits the organization to behave ethically, increase economic growth and contribute to the quality of life for employees of both local communities and society as a whole (Košútová, 2014:37).

Companies that commit to CSR practices often make use of cause-related marketing campaigns in order to inform their consumers of such practices. A company is supported by customers when they trust the company with regards to the commitment to CSR. Cause-related marketing is where a nominated cause receives specific support from a business dependent upon the customers buying from that business. Thus, if the brand being sold relates to the specific cause, consumers are expected to look favourably on this venture (Vitell, 2015:770). Cooperative efforts from a profit-driven enterprise, as well as from a non-profit enterprise, are therefore combined in marketing

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strategies in order to create mutual benefit. The following example of Pampers and UNICEF will illustrate the concept of cause-related marketing:

> P and G Pampers and UNICEF joined forces in 2006 to fight maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT), a disease virtually unknown in the industrialized world, but a 'silent killer' causing mothers and new-born babies in the developing world a most painful death. Through a cause-related marketing campaign under the banner of '1 Pack = 1 Vaccine', Pampers has raised significant funds to help eliminate this disease and raise its public profile, particularly in developed countries (UNICEF, 2012).

When considering cause-related marketing strategies, Quazi *et al.* confirm the buying power that consumers have over manufacturers (Quazi, Amran and Nejati, 2016:49). The Director of the UK's Ashridge Centre for Business and Society, Andrew Wilson, notes that "shopping is more important than voting" (Wilson, 2013). Consumers express their moral choices by spending money on certain products which may contribute positively towards society or the environment. Furthermore, the emergence of global consumerism will advance the empowerment of consumers internationally to influence global markets. Consequently, from this power that consumers have over manufacturers, derives responsibility i.e. consumer social responsibility. More importantly, the collaboration between consumers and CSR marketing campaigns would be favourable to both parties if this balance could be maintained (Quazi, Amran and Nejati, 2016:54).

In order to better understand the responsibilities of corporations with regards to their influence on consumers, research by Caroll (1991) will be explored. Caroll divides organisational responsibilities into four sub-responsibilities namely legal, ethical, economic and humanitarian responsibilities.

Firstly, with regards to business legal responsibilities, activities of the company should comply with legislation. Caroll (as cited by Nielsen 2015:23) points out that the law is humanity's "codification of right and wrong" and that rules should be obeyed. In their research, Caruana and Crane (2008:1496) emphasise the role that corporations perform in the construction of consumer responsibility. Corporations are urged to take responsibility by making responsible consumers their target and informing them about the socially responsible credentials of their products, using lawful advertising and labelling practices as a medium for doing so (Caruana and Crane, 2008:1497).

Secondly, ethical responsibilities are defined by Caroll as the duty to do what is fair, just and right (Nielsen, 2015:23). This includes activities regarding restructuring, product quality, the impact on the environment and also economic activities. The principle that should be followed with regards to ethical responsibilities is defined by Košútová (2014:37) as "do not hurt others". As an example referring to ethical trade, companies have tried to accept responsibility by developing and adapting

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to ethical business practice codes in order to address the issues surrounding unethical trade and also to retain their clients. Also, policies regarding ethical sourcing in their supply chain have been adopted by some companies (Grisewood, 2005:19). Unfortunately, due to a lack of standardisation of these codes, it is difficult to implement and monitor such codes and to punish companies where violations have occurred (Grisewood, 2005:20).

Economic responsibilities thirdly imply that the business entity should meet the needs of profitability in order to ensure sustainability. Luchs, Phipps and Hill (2015:1457) elaborate by noting that companies, and specifically marketing managers, should also be responsible for producing environmentally sustainable goods and that their consumers' needs should be kept in mind without compromising the practical features of such products. According to Luchs, it would be favourable if marketing managers can communicate consequences to their consumers of buying specific products. They should, for instance, express responsibility in terms of the maximum utility corresponding with the use of environmentally-friendly products (Luchs *et al.,* 2015:1457). Caroll states that the economic responsibility is the foundation upon which all the other responsibilities rest and that profitability should be valued in combination with the other responsibilities (Nielsen, 2015:23).

Caroll also includes humanitarian responsibilities in his framework and accentuates the importance of corporations to become good corporate citizens. Corporations should be responsible with regards to resources that are of importance to the community and should contribute to improving the quality of life in general (Nielsen, 2015:23). The environmental impact that is experienced due to the increased consumer demand and purchasing power of consumers globally should be investigated and reconsidered continuously. The negative effect that consumers and corporations have on the environment should be restricted in order to preserve resources for forthcoming generations.

The above-mentioned responsibilities, namely legal, ethical, economic and humanitarian responsibilities, affect the environment and sustainability thereof directly. As the environment is a dependent stakeholder of both business and the consumer, one should examine the effects of business and consumerism on the environment.

1.4 SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The aforementioned discussions constitute an attempt to understand the concept of ethical consumerism and consumer responsibilities, which include consumer ethics and the relationship between CnSR and CSR. The primary aim of ethical consumerism remains to create an ethical and sustainable relationship between corporations, consumers and the environment. In fact, any attempt

to make sense of ethical consumerism without taking into consideration the impact of consumerism on the environment would not be very ethical at all. For this reason, the following factors such as climate change, economic consumption, environmental consumption and sustainable energy will be elaborated upon.

Society faces rapid fluctuations in the global climate. Wysocki (2012) in Swim, Clayton and Howard (2011) argues that humans need to reflect on the fact that the environment does have a vital standing, thereby recognising the importance of being more responsible in their daily practices. Consumers are primarily responsible for producing climate changes due to two factors, i.e. population growth and consumption practices (Swim, Clayton and Howard, 2011:251). Referring to population growth, the term indicates factors such as population size, reproduction patterns of different societies and cultures, and also the density and distribution of populations globally (Swim *et al.* 2011:256). Research indicates that consumer behaviour such as reproductive behaviour, as well as cultural views of societies, have a direct impact on the environment. Reproductive behaviour includes the rights or responsibilities of consumers regarding the use of contraceptives, whether an unborn child should have a right to life, and whether the elderly should have a right to die (Swim, Clayton and Howard, 2011:261). These decisions could contribute to population growth which would further burden the environment thereby contributing to more economic consumption.

Consumption practices involve two main streams of consumption, namely a) economic consumption, i.e. a driver of energy usage, and b) environmental consumption. Both economic and environmental consumption involve the consumption behaviours of organisations, as well as consumption patterns of individuals. Examples of economic consumption include transportation systems, the cooling and heating of houses and buildings, and the use of appliances. The effects of economic consumption as a result of the growing population are becoming increasingly evident. The impact of individuals' activities on the environment can be measured by their carbon footprint. The amount of fossil fuels consumers burn by making use of electricity, transportation and heating, leads to greenhouse gas emissions. According to Grisewood (2005:40), a carbon footprint consists of the sum of two parts namely the primary and secondary footprints. The primary footprint includes the burning of fossil fuels due to transportation systems and domestic energy consumption; in other words, consumption that is directly controlled by consumers. The secondary footprint consists of indirect emissions due to products used by consumers and the lifecycles of these products. It is evident that consumers and their consumption behaviour have a direct impact on the amount of emissions that are produced (Grisewood, 2005:40). Solomon *et al.* (2009) confirm the impact of "human-induced climate change" and stress the fact that carbon dioxide and the effects

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thereof are irreversible for thousands of years even after emissions are terminated (Solomon *et al.*, 2008:1704).

Environmental consumption includes farming practices, pollution, waste/littering, as well as the use of natural resources, i.e. water and food. The sustainability of the environment is a critical factor to be taken into account and can be enforced by complying with a range of preventative practices. Farming with free-range produce, as well as organic foods, is governed by stringent certification systems in order to ensure that specific standards are met. Examples of practices with regards to organic farming include not using antibiotics or growth hormones in the case where livestock is involved. The production of organic foods excludes the use of herbicides, pesticides and insecticides. Genetically modified products are also not permitted (Grisewood, 2005:28). In the European Union, organic farming is regulated by a number of principles. These include utilising natural systems, encouraging natural cycles (i.e. animals, plants, microorganisms), preserving landscape features (e.g. threatened species), considering the welfare of animals, preventing pollution, and also taking into consideration whether farming systems can impact on other ecological and social systems (Grisewood, 2005:29).

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported in 2008 that the use of organic agriculture has the potential to ensure food security, specifically in Africa. Out of 24 African countries, 114 projects were assessed and the outcome indicated that organic practices contributed to yields that were doubled as a result. The resistance to drought, as well as the fertility of the soil, also improved with the use of organic farming practices.

Sustainable resources are other factors to be reckoned with especially because of the rapid economic growth globally. Grisewood (2005:41) warns that a depletion of natural resources is becoming a concern internationally and that it mainly results from economic development. Since the most valuable resource to humans and animals is water, it is unfortunate that the quality of water has, over the past 30 years, reduced considerably due to several forms of pollution including point source pollution (i.e. oil spills), surface water pollution, microbiological pollution, dumped chemicals and human waste. The incidence of droughts is also more prevalent and thus calls for extreme measures to conserve water. The agricultural sector, industries, homeowners and consumers should all make an effort to preserve this life-giving resource (Grisewood, 2005:44).

The considerations mentioned above only confirm the fact that ethical consumers, as well as responsible businesses, should be co-responsible for the sustainability of the environment because of their direct influence and dependency on the environment.

1.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 introduced ethical consumerism by describing three stakeholders of consumption i.e. consumers, corporations and the environment. In the first section of this chapter, the consumer as a stakeholder of ethical consumerism was investigated. The origin and development of ethical consumerism as a consumer movement was examined by focusing on the practices and influences that have impacted on this type of consumer activism. The importance of consumer ethics was thereafter examined as the consumer's view of what he/she perceives as right and wrong influences the way in which goods and services are acquired, used, and disposed of. As consumers are co-responsible for the impact of their consumption behaviour on the society, as well as on the environment, the importance of Consumer Social Responsibility was discussed thereafter.

The second section of Chapter 1 focused on corporations as stakeholders of ethical consumerism. Corporations need to comply with social responsibility practices as ethical commitments will contribute to the quality of life for employees of both local communities and society as a whole, and at the same time, contribute towards economic growth. The third stakeholder of ethical consumerism, the environment, was examined in the last section as both the first stakeholder (i.e. the consumer), as well as the second stakeholder (i.e. corporations), are dependent on the sustainability of the environment. As both economic and environmental consumption impact on the environment, the importance of preserving the environment and its resources should be stressed.

Consumption practices have a devastating and wide-reaching impact globally. Chapter 2 will therefore focus on the possible obstacles to ethical consumerism, while Chapter 3 will explore the possible drivers thereof. As this study aims to investigate ethical consumerism as a powerful intervention to minimise harm to all stakeholders, Chapter 4 will propose recommendations for influencing the intentions of consumers towards consuming ethically in future. Consumers and corporations should make decisions actively in order to shop for a global cause.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALISING THE OBSTACLES TO ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

While consumers are constantly in need of products and services, some consumers make decisions mainly because they have a desire to own or use certain products or services (Wheale and Hinton, 2007:303). Conversely, other consumers have to consider whether they can indeed afford specific products or services. Whether purchasing physically in a shop, or perhaps online, consumers are engaging with decisions on a daily basis. However, the question remains whether consumers reflect on products and services that they consider buying as every purchase made, impacts on the sustainability of the economy, society, and the environment. As was previously alluded to in Chapter 1, it seems to be the case that although ethical awareness amongst consumers is in fact on the increase, the growth in the ethical market is still very small. With a better understanding of the concept of ethical consumerism, the next step is to investigate the factors that inhibit ethical purchasing.

Cowe and Williams (2001) in Wheale and Hinton (2007), explore consumers' ethical purchasing intentions and the fact that their purchasing behaviour does not always translate into ethically responsible sales. Their research examines consumers globally by means of using a questionnaire distributed through the Ethical Consumer Magazine in 2005. Thirty percent of the readership was selected and the questionnaires were placed in 2000 of a total of 6000 magazines. The magazines containing the questionnaires were randomly distributed to avoid bias due to demographic or geographic placement (Wheale and Hinton, 2007:306). The research indicates that consumers can be divided into five different sections according to specific consumer outcomes (Wheale and Hinton, 2007:303). These five different sections will be discussed briefly as the complexity of the consumer and ethical consumer market needs to be understood in order to take into account the spectrum of the various obstacles which prohibit them from making ethical purchasing decisions. Figure 2.1 demonstrates the five groups of consumers with their related ethical purchasing intentions as identified by Wheale and Hinton (2007).
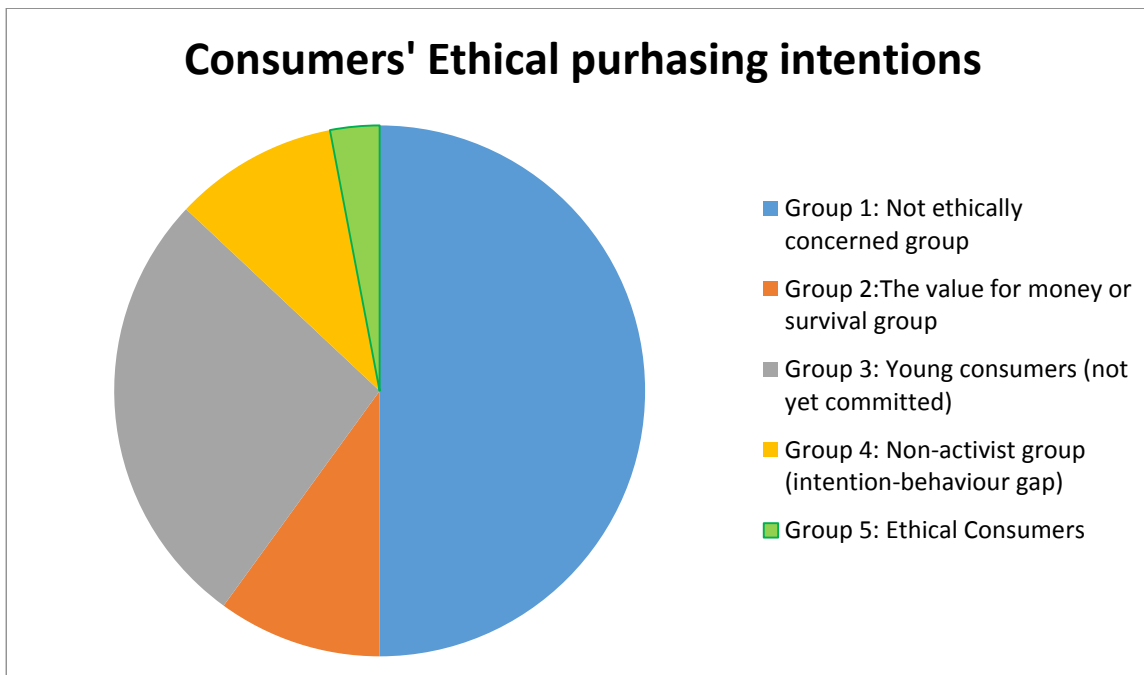
Figure 2.1: Consumers' ethical purchasing intentions according to Wheale and Hinton (2007:303).

It seems to be the case that the first and largest group of consumers (group 1) in Wheale and Hinton's (2007) study, representing half of the size of the population completing the questionnaire, are not concerned about ethicality in the marketplace. They are not influenced by marketing or any related awareness campaigns and prefer to stay independent with regards to their purchasing behaviour. Satisfying their needs remains their main objective. This group may, therefore, consist of consumers who deliberately show amoral intentions because they have the knowledge but refuse to commit to ethical purchasing (refer to Figure 2.1, group 1).

The second group identified by Wheale and Hinton (2017:303), comprises one-fifth of the population and is more concerned about receiving monetary value than receiving ethical value for their money. Price is the only factor that is considered and these consumers make their decisions accordingly. It should also be kept in mind that the possibility might exist that this group consists of consumers who do not necessarily have a choice to purchase ethically as they may fall into a low-income group or have limited access to ethical choices. Individuals in this group may thus have the intention to buy ethically but do not have the financial or physical resources to support their choices (refer to Figure 2.1, group 2 - survival).

The third group of consumers includes younger consumers who have not yet established consumption behaviour patterns and are therefore difficult to allocate to a specific category. These

consumers are suspected of being influenced by various factors and will only be able to make better-informed decisions with more experience and in time (refer to Figure 2.1, group 3).

Group 4 has indicated through the questionnaire that they are eager to acquire more information on ethical issues. This group's behaviour is referred to by Webb and Mohr (1998) in Wheale and Hinton (2007) as the so-called "halo effect", which is best described by the gap between the attitude of the consumer and the behaviour of the consumer. This gap, referred to as the intention-behaviour gap, can be viewed as one of the biggest challenges to being an ethical consumer (refer to Figure 2.1, group 4).

Cowe and Williams in Wheale and Hinton (2007) conclude by referring to the last kind of consumer, i.e. the ethical consumer (refer to Figure 2.1, group 5). Ethical consumers may commit to ethical practices due to several considerations including amongst others, in-group identification which involves self-definition and self-investment (Leach *et al.*, 2008:144), or virtue signalling that can be described as the way in which many people say or write things to indicate that they are virtuous (Bartholomew, 2015). However, many ethical consumers are interested in and concerned with stakeholders such as society, corporations, as well as the environment. Ethical consumers, or put differently, ethical activists, will walk the extra mile to pursue their ethical beliefs and virtues. These consumers are not interested in brand names or lower prices. Instead, they value products that are not genetically modified, choose to support fair trade labels, avoid products involving child labour or animal factoring practices, and commit to recycling initiatives. Ethical consumers are guided and influenced by information and are alert to unethical marketing strategies (Wheale and Hinton, 2007:304).

In a study by Cowe and Williams (2000) in Gruber and Schlegelmilch (2014:30), it is confirmed that only 3% of consumers globally do in fact purchase ethically (referred to as the fifth group of consumers in Figure 2.1). Furthermore, the researchers argue that the 30 % of consumers (as seen in the above-mentioned fourth group) indicated that they would pursue ethical purchasing but that their willingness does not necessarily translate into ethical sales. Cowe and Williams (2000) refer to this discrepancy as the "30:3 syndrome".

Building on Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2 illustrates the relationship between consumers' intentions and their related ethical behaviour concerning their purchasing decisions.

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	Amoral Behaviour	Ethical Behaviour
Amoral Intentions	**GROUP 1** **(satisfying the needs deliberately)** **GROUP 2** **(value for money)**	
Ethical Intentions	**GROUP 2** **(survival)** **GROUP 4** **(consumers who subscribe to the Intention-behaviour gap)**	**GROUP 5** **Ethical Consumers (3%)**

GROUP 3

(young consumers, not yet committed)

Figure 2.2: The relation between consumers' intentions and consumer behaviour with regard to ethical purchasing.

Burke *et al.* (2014:2242) motivate the heterogeneity[3] of consumers (as seen in group 1 to group 5) in relation to their individual reasoning and note the impact of heterogeneity on different attitudes to consumption. They refer to this heterogeneity as "consumer segmentation" and describe this term as the significant dissimilarities which consumers show with regard to their ethical beliefs. Examples of this includes

Carrigan and Moraes (2015) elaborate on the existence of consumer segmentation or heterogeneity and identify possible reasons for why consumers are motivated to take up ethical consumption practices. Their investigation identifies three inherent pressures that consumers experience when they make purchasing decisions. Firstly, consumers are viewed as egocentric, amoral and rationally-economically motivated beings who are only interested in one thing namely satisfying their own needs (previously referred to as group 1 and group 2). Secondly, consumers have to regulate their

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[3] Aggregate best-worst scores given for reasons for and against ethical consumerism were calculated. For example, reasons stated by individuals for why they would purchase ethically were as follows: a) I can help to make a difference; b) I am informed and able to distinguish c) I can become an opinion leader; d) I may be granted a higher status.

Reasons stated for why individuals would not purchase ethically: a) Products are too expensive; b) I am suffering from ethical overload; c) I don't really give this much thought.

own consumption while at the same time, take co-responsibility for a viable and well environment. Consumers are therefore concerned about their own needs but should be concerned and responsible for the sustainability of the environment (previously referred to as group 3). Thirdly, consumers (previously referred to as group 4) are accused of hypocrisy because of their inconsistent and unreliable consumption intentions and behaviour impacting on several stakeholders (Carrigan and Moraes, 2015:7).

The question remains why most consumers are dismissive with regards to certain important ethical issues and others are not. In order to further understand how the spectrum of consumers and their respective behaviours relate to their non-commitment towards ethical consumption practices, this chapter will now investigate the obstacles to ethical consumerism.

2. OBSTACLES TO ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

The next section will explore five possible obstacles to ethical consumerism, namely consumer prejudice, choice complexity and consumer confusion, neutralisation techniques, the intention-behaviour gap, and lastly consumer inertia.

2.1. CONSUMER PREJUDICE

Prejudice can be described as an unfavourable view or opinion formed about something or someone without sufficient knowledge, reason, or thought. Bray *et al.* (2011) refer to consumer prejudice as one of the possible causes of the weak uptake of ethical consumerism. Their research indicates two kinds of prejudice, namely scepticism and cynicism that have been proven to contribute towards consumers' inability to commit to ethical purchasing. Scepticism is associated with doubt about the truth of an issue and individuals often require more information in order to be convinced to change their opinion accordingly (Bray, Johns and Kilburn, 2011:604). Cynicism, on the other hand, is associated with a lack of trust with regards to the motives of others. Trust can only be restored with sufficient evidence and a solid record of truthful motives of the individuals or the companies that instigated the cynicism in the first place (Bray, Johns and Kilburn, 2011:603).

Bray *et al.* (2011) particularise marketing tactics as a reason for consumer prejudice and state that consumers experience scepticism and cynicism due to their disbelief in some tactics. An example of such is the tactic known as euphemistic labelling, used to disguise or mask the real meaning of a word in order to promote the sale thereof. Companies will, for example, include in their marketing campaigns their concern for practices that will decrease harm to society, animals, as well as to the environment. To explain this, the example of the word "free-range" as a marketing tactic, will briefly be elaborated on. The concept "free-range" is used to illustrate the fact that animals are not

confined in an enclosure for twenty-four hours of a day. Animals are therefore believed to experience outdoor ranging for a few hours daily. According to Farmer (2012) the word "free-range" does not set any requirements for the duration, amount, or quality of outdoor access that animals will be exposed to. As a result of the absence of such requirements, the word "free-range" is therefore distrusted by some consumers as they believe that the marketing intentions of companies are used as a tool to attract the interest of consumers rather than supporting an honest cause. Some products marketed as "free-range" or "cage-free", actually should have been marketed as "barn raised" or "cage raised" (Farmer Angus, 2012). Consumers are consequently unconvinced about their own contribution towards such ethical causes as they distrust the intentions of the marketing strategies of some companies (Burke, Eckert and Davis, 2014:2242). This issue will be returned to in section 2.3.1.

According to Shaw and Shiu (2003), another factor contributing to consumer prejudice is the fact that consumers are doubtful about premiums to be paid when ethical products are purchased (Shaw *et al.*, 2005:195). An example is evident when consumers have a choice between ordinary roast coffee products and fair trade coffee products. Some consumers would prefer to purchase fair trade coffee as they believe that the premiums paid for these products will, in fact, enhance the lives of workers in developing countries. Conversely, other consumers are the of opinion that companies do not allocate these premiums to the advertised cause and believe that the premiums to be paid will never reach the beneficiaries of these intended ethical causes (Burke, Eckert and Davis, 2014:2242).

Skarmeas and Leonidou (2013) investigate consumer scepticism and cynicism with regards to CSR practices of companies. In the face of numerous reported occurrences of misconduct, consumer prejudice towards the authenticity of CSR practices is unavoidable. Consumer scepticism and cynicism is obvious in cases where companies value shareholder-driven or egoistic motives. In cases where attributions of companies are determined by values and ethical standards, consumer uncertainty about CSR practices seems to be inhibited. Although consumers therefore accept the strategic motives of companies to engage in CSR initiatives, they are mostly motivated by the value-driven elements thereof. Care should thus be taken by policy-makers when CSR programmes are adopted as research proves that scepticism and cynicism about CSR practices will affect retailer equity negatively. Unfavourable "word of mouth" communication about CSR practices may add to consumer prejudice and eventually erode the consumer base, thereby negatively influencing the impact of socially responsible practices altogether (Skarmeas and Leonidou, 2013:1836).

From the previous research, it is thus evident that consumer prejudice, specifically scepticism and cynicism, are in fact valid obstacles to ethical consumerism. The importance of truth and trust

should not be underestimated in business operations as it could positively contribute to restricting consumers' prejudices.

2.2 CHOICE COMPLEXITY AND CONSUMER CONFUSION

Consumers tend to make choices based on three different aspects, namely 1) information regarding the products or services, 2) capital or economic means of the consumer, and 3) available markets from which to select their choices. Carrigan and Moraes (2015:11) state that while consumers mostly seek abundance in choice when making consumer decisions, too many options (i.e. the number of alternatives and the number of qualities that differentiate products and services) could lead to choice complexity and confusion.

Carrigan and Moraes (2015), note that factors such as an overload of information and difficulty in interpreting the information correctly, will contribute towards the complexity of consumer choices. As a result, the complexity of consumer choices may contribute to consumer confusion. According to their study, Carrigan and Moraes note that consumers experience confusion when they are confronted with choices regarding brand similarity, ambiguous or misleading information, and lastly, excessive information or an information overload (Carrigan and Moraes, 2015:13). Researchers like Carbone, Gaito and Senni (2009) and Irwin (2015), point to consumers' passivity in engaging with information (Irwin, 2015). It will now be investigated in more detail how misleading information, an overload of information, as well as passivity with regard to engaging with information, contribute towards choice complexity and consumer confusion.

2.2.1 MISLEADING INFORMATION

Consumers are constantly confronted with a variety of information on products and services that are aimed to assist them in making purchasing decisions. Information is mainly communicated through co-workers, friends and family, magazine articles with product reviews, social media and product labels. Regulations on food labelling and advertising require that the following information should be communicated to consumers: an accurate product name; all ingredients, which should be listed in descending order with regards to mass; possible allergens; the country of origin; a use by or best before date; a batch identification number; nutritional information; the details of the manufacturer; and the net contents in metric units (Steenkamp, 2017).

The Foodstuffs Act and the Regulations pertaining to labelling (referred to as R146) mandate that accurate information should appear on food labels, thereby reducing ambiguity in wording and addressing misleading claims. Consumers being diabetic, intolerant or allergic to certain ingredients may suffer severe health problems when inaccurate information is stated on labels. Currently, these

regulations (R146) are under revision (R429) and available in a draft format to improve this information further for the consumer (Department:Health, 2014).

Despite these regulatory requirements, one should be cognisant of the risk that labels might be used to mislead or deceive consumers in order to increase sales. Many companies are guilty of using misleading information through marketing practices, such as, for example, using messages, images, slogans and package information that are not a reflection of the truth. Images of, for example, happy hens or grass-fed cows do not always give a true reflection of the lifecycle of these animals and consumers are often misled by such information (Onegreenplanet.org, 2014). Furthermore, product claims such as "green" or "all natural" or "raised without antibiotics" are, in some cases, far from reality.

While the aim of marketing is to convince consumers to purchase certain products or services, Steenkamp (2017) note that some companies use marketing strategies in order to mislead their customers by either stating half-truths or even blatant untruths about certain products in order to encourage sales. However, while ingredients or information listed on products should in fact convince consumers to engage in buying, some consumers are conscious of the fact that they are being misled through such information. To highlight this, the following example of misleading product information can serve as proof thereof. Vegetable oils are extracted from various seeds such as, amongst others, canola, rapeseed and sunflower seeds. A blatant untruth can be seen on food labels that refer to vegetable oils and their related energy values. Although all types of vegetable oil possess the same energy value in kilojoules or calories, some companies market their oils as "lite", thereby suggesting that it contains a lower energy value than other vegetable oils on the market (Steenkamp, 2017).

To elaborate further, information referring to the contentious flavour enhancer, monosodium glutamate (known as MSG), linked to several health concerns including amongst others, liver toxicity and high blood pressure, is another example of misleading information. Some health foods contain an ingredient named "Hydrolysed Vegetable Protein" which comprises high amounts of MSG but does not require listing the specific word "MSG" on the label. Consumers will consequently be misled with regards to their consumption of MSG in such a product as the ingredient seems healthy due to the wording "vegetable protein" (Douillard, 2013).

Misleading information was also the source of the scandal that occurred in the United Kingdom where beef meat products contained horse meat without stating such information on the product labels. In some cases, horse meat was used as a 100% substitute for beef. Consumers were thus

deceived about the ingredients of the products that they purchased, due to untrue marketing practices (BBC News, 2013). In an article titled "80 % of 'Sustainable' Meat Labels are Misleading?!" published by onegreenplanet.org, it is stated that consumers are very often the prey of companies that abuse the food labelling system. After a three year investigation by the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), which included twenty-five companies, only five companies could support their sustainable meat labels with adequate documentation. The companies under investigation used labels with information such as "sustainably farmed" and "humanely raised and handled" without substantiating their claims. In reality, some governments even verified fake certifications made by a number of companies by accepting only their word that the information on the product labels was in fact true, rather than by verifying the associated farming practices (Onegreenplanet.org, 2014). Conversely, the five companies that could in fact support their claims with regards to the validity of their product ingredients, opted for certification by a third party which gave credibility to the claims they made on their labels (Onegreenplanet.org, 2014).

The examples as reflected above might therefore apply to consumers who have intentions of purchasing ethically, whether for the reason of their own health or for the purpose of ensuring environmental sustainability. However, it remains difficult for consumers to distinguish whether they are being misled or not and this, as previously argued, can contribute to their reluctance to support ethical practices.

2.2.2 INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Hartlieb and Jones (2009 in Antonetti *et al.*, 2014) indicate that improved labelling may contribute to ethical consumerism. However, the amount of information as well as the way in which information is communicated seems to have an impact on consumer decisions. Research shows that some consumers prefer not to be guided by information available on products due to too much information provided (i.e. product labels, website information and information on packaging). Carrigan and Moraes (2015:16) state that consumers tend to be less interested in considering products where labels include too much information and therefore require higher cognitive involvement. Burke *et al.* (2014) elaborate by saying that some consumers feel bombarded and overwhelmed by too much information on labels, thus contributing to a disinterest in information (Burke *et al.*,2014:2241, 2242). Consumers furthermore indicated that they rather prefer less information, communicated in a clear and comprehensible manner. This enables them to access product information without having special skills or levels of education in order to process and consider information relevant to their needs (Carrigan and Moraes, 2015:16). It is thus clear that an

overload of information plays a key role in the decision-making processes of consumers and that it can be seen as an obstacle to ethical consumerism.

2.2.3 PASSIVITY IN ENGAGING WITH INFORMATION

Consumers gain access to information through several platforms including regulatory authorities, social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), the internet (online product platforms), the media (television, radio, magazines, newspapers) and also public information made available by the government. Although access to this enormous amount of information regarding the origin and manufacturing of products and services are available on the market, some consumers remain passive in accessing such information when it comes to ethical purchasing decisions. Carrigan and Moraes also point out that some consumers find it difficult to actively process and engage with information as it might not be relevant to their personal motivation for purchasing products (Carrigan and Moraes, 2015:16).

Irwin (2015) proposes that consumers that support ethical issues do not necessarily inform themselves adequately with regards to the ethical issues (for example child labour) that they value. As an example, consider the Nike scandal where the basketball player Michael Jordon was paid twenty million US dollars per year to endorse the brand. At the same time and within the same period, the company's Indonesian factory workers earned half of that amount in wages. Although the anti-Nike information triggered frustration and anger amongst consumers, the incident did not seem to have a significant effect on their consumption behaviour. It appears that the impact of information does not in all cases have the ability to alter the behaviour of consumers, as some consumers remains passive in engaging and reacting to such information (Brenton and Hacken, 2006:4).

Carbone *et al.* (2009) highlight another example wherein the concept of Social Farming in Italy is explored. This concept involves the development of environmental rehabilitation, integrative work processes and social inclusion. Although consumers with an ethical appetite show interest in such farming practices, the lack of active engagement with the information[4] regarding these farming activities remains a constraint to ethical consumerism (Carbone *et al.*, 2009:346).

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[4] It is also important to note that all consumers might not have access to the platforms of information as mentioned above. The availability of information to consumers in rural areas can be seen as a constraint to making informed purchasing decisions. Furthermore, it is important to note that low-income consumers are less likely to access ethical information as research indicates a correlation between low-income consumers and related lower levels of education. It can therefore be said that an element of social exclusivity is attached to low-income earners as they could possibly

Although the afore-mentioned research proves that some consumers are passive with regards to accessing information, Bray *et al.* (2011) state that consumers who do change their consumption behaviour react best to information that concerns companies that are subjected to bad press exposure. Their research suggests that negative ethical publicity through prominent communication channels impacts more on ethical purchasing behaviour of consumers. In other words, consumers seem to react better to information focusing on unethical practices than to information that focuses on ethical practices. It appears that without bad press exposure, a lack of information and knowledge will therefore continue to limit ethical consumption (Bray *et al.*, 2011:602).

From the above, it is clear that consumers may find information complex and confusing due to different reasons. It is important to refer to Figure 2.2 as all three of the above constraints namely misleading information, an overload of information as well as consumers' passivity in engaging with information can influence consumer groups 1, 2, 3 and 4. It can therefore be said that the way in which information is communicated to consumers plays an important role in their ethical purchasing intentions and decisions. Going forward, I shall discuss how neutralisation techniques can be seen as another obstacle to ethical consumerism.

2.3 NEUTRALISATION TECHNIQUES

Bandura (1999 in Chowdhury and Fernando, 2014) refers to moral disengagement as a form of neutralisation and describes it as the process whereby individuals occasionally disengage or separate themselves from their moral responsibilities. In other words, individuals violate their own moral standards by justifying their unethical behaviour as right and/or ethical. When engaging in unethical behaviour, individuals sometimes explain their behaviour using a number of neutralisation techniques (Chowdhury and Fernando, 2014:678).

Bandura continues by identifying eight different cognitive mechanisms through which moral disengagement can operate:

> Moral justification, euphemistic labelling, advantageous comparison, diffusion of responsibility, displacement of responsibility, distortion of consequences, dehumanization, and attribution of blame (Bandura, 1999).

These cognitive mechanisms could be applied separately or together with a neutralisation technique in order to justify behaviour.

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have less access to information or the interpretation of such information due to their geographic location and level of education (Carrigan and Moraes, 2015:16).

In their article titled "How Techniques of Neutralization Legitimize Norm- and Attitude Inconsistent Consumer Behaviour", Gruber and Schlegelmilch (2014:29) explore the cognitive processes of consumers when it pertains to ethical purchasing choices. The study focuses extensively on the contradiction between the positive attitudes of consumers towards socially and environmentally responsible practices, and the reasons why these attitudes do not translate into ethical purchasing behaviour. In their research, they focus specifically on the technique of neutralisation that consumers use when making ethical decisions. Gruber *et al.* refers to Fenichel (1945) and Freud (1936) in their study on ego psychology where neutralisation as a defence mechanism is investigated. Five techniques of neutralisation are identified and will be discussed shortly. Each of them can shield feelings of noncompliant consumer behaviour or blame.

The first technique of neutralization is called "Denial of Responsibility". It reflects consumers' opinions that external factors are responsible for circumstances and that they do not have control to influence such circumstances. They are therefore in denial of their responsibilities. To shed light on this technique, one can refer to the following example. Although global warming is a concern for some consumers, the opposite can be seen where certain individuals are of the opinion that the contributions that they make towards environmental sustainability will not have an effect on the sustainability of the environment or society at all (Gruber and Schlegelmilch, 2014). They are therefore denying their responsibility to contribute towards an ethical cause.

The second technique, "Appeal to Higher Loyalties", is a technique used by consumers to legitimise their behaviour by stating that they will sacrifice the norms of society in order to benefit their own beliefs (or the beliefs of a smaller group). In other words, by violating certain social norms, consumers claim that they are adhering to higher principles in order to justify their behaviour. As an example, one can consider a small group of individuals that prefer to litter in public because they will argue that work (removing litter) is being created for other individuals (Gruber and Schlegelmilch, 2014).

Elaborating on the above, another example is evident in the research done by Eckhardt, Belk and Devinney (2010) wherein consumers were interviewed about the price that they are willing to pay for ethical products. The issue at hand referred to factory workers making athletic shoes.

> Most Australians are concerned about price, not the labour issues. Morals stop at the pocketbook. People might say something, but if they were to make them [athletic shoes] in Australia at twice the price, people would buy the foreign cheaper brand. These blokes [factory workers in Southeast Asia] are lucky to have a job. If they weren't making them there these people would not have work. You would not want to upset the labour conditions

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in these countries [by paying them more]. The advantages to these people outweigh the costs (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:430, 431).

The above example suggests that some consumers interviewed were of the opinion that factories operating under "sweatshop conditions", i.e. conditions including unfair wages, child labour, unreasonable hours and a lack of benefits for workers, could hold economic benefits for the country in which they operate as these "countries need opportunities". The research indicates that some Australian consumers are more concerned about the price of products than they are about labour issues in factories. Thus, if they are able to purchase a product at a good price, no matter what the circumstances are under which these products were manufactured, they would be content, thereby legitimising their own behaviour (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:430).

"Condemning of the Condemners" is the third technique used by individuals to deflect their own misconduct by condemning other individuals. Thus by shifting the blame, they are neutralising their own behaviour. As an example, one can refer to consumers who do not save water and then blame the government or municipality because more precautions were not taken in order to do so. When a society partakes in such conversations, they deflect their own responsibility in contributing towards a more ethical environment (Gruber and Schlegelmilch, 2014:32).

Fourthly, "Denial of Injury", is an argument used to excuse one's own wrongdoing because other individuals or stakeholders were not injured in the event. Because of the fact that there is no real victim, there is no real harm. To illustrate this example, consider cases where individuals are caught selling illegal copies of music, i.e. online misbehaviour. It is argued that no one was injured as a result of this action even though the composer of the music will suffer a loss of income (Gruber and Schlegelmilch, 2014:32).

This technique can also be seen in the following case where consumers justify their behaviour by weighing the benefits of their own actions to the perceived harm to be caused to other individuals.

> Aren't we exploiting ourselves when we use cheap labour from migrants? If I have a cleaner to clean my place, I wouldn't get a Spanish cleaner because I have to pay her 12 Euros an hour, I get a Romanian one and I pay her 6 Euros an hour. It's the same thing (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:430).

The fifth technique, "Denial of Victim", is a technique applied when individuals argue that an injury is not an accident, but rather a form of punishment (Gruber and Schlegelmilch, 2014). One can say that the victim deserves the consequence. Once again, the example of preserving the environment can be used to describe this technique. The example of drought in certain parts of the

world could be seen by consumers as nature punishing them instead of accepting responsibility to save water.

Apart from the five neutralisation techniques by Gruber and Schlegelmilch (2014) as discussed above, Echardt *et al.* (2010) in their research titled "Why don't consumers consume ethically?" investigate the nature of the justifications and excuses that consumers use when they evade ethical purchasing. The research of Gruber and Schlegelmilch as well as research by Echardt *et al.*, interconnect on certain neutralisation strategies identified.

Echardt *et al.* (2010) conducted their research in eight countries and used in-depth interviews to collect data. Discussions focused on the rationalisations of the interviewees for the absence of ethical consumption patterns and three strategies of justification were identified. The first justification was identified as economic rationalisation which is best described as consumers wanting value for money. Secondly, institutional dependency was identified as a justification strategy entailing that institutions such as the government should accept responsibility to regulate products that are sold. The last justification strategy was identified as developmental realism. This can be described as a rationalisation process of unethical behaviours that should exist in order for economic development to take place on a macro level (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:426). These three strategies of justification will forthwith be discussed in more detail.

2.3.1 ECONOMIC RATIONALISATION

When buying certain products or services, consumers weigh certain benefits and disadvantages in order to make the best choice. Economic rationalisation involves the consideration of the benefits of any product or service in relation to the cost thereof. With economic rationalisation, the consumer uses rational arguments in order to justify the fact that his/her choice is influenced mostly by the price of the product.

To illustrate, Eckhardt *et al.* (2010) investigate consumers' attitudes towards testing products on animals. An Australian consumer who is not concerned about testing products on animals supported the egoistic view when he was interviewed about this practice and justifies his behaviour by noting that he will purchase the product if the benefits thereof to him personally outweighed the costs. He furthermore admits that he would not pay more than 10 % extra for a product that is certified as biodegradable (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:430).

According to reports issued by the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD), consumers' expenses can be viewed as one of the top barriers to ethical shopping (Burke *et al.*, 2014:2238). In other words, due to their monthly expenses, consumers want to buy as much as possible for as little as

possible. MacGillivray (2000 in Badje *et al.* 2013) confirms that consumers' willingness to pay for ethical products does not translate into actual ethical purchasing behaviour as ethical initiatives are mostly more expensive and therefore have a relatively small market share (Bajde *et al.*, 2013:363). Their research indicates that consumers are more concerned about the financial value of products as opposed to the ethical value of products (e.g. recyclability, sustainability, fair trade) especially when it concerns food and merchandises that are frequently purchased. This was measured against consumers' characteristics, preferences and willingness to purchase goods based on ethical credentials (Bajde*, Pelsmacker, Driesen and Rayp, 2013:366). Bray *et al.* (2011) elaborate in their article titled "An Exploratory Study into the Factors Impeding Ethical Consumption" that individuals experience "post-purchase dissonance" or put differently, internal conflict, after an ethical product is purchased at a higher cost as opposed to buying an unethical product at a lower cost (Bray *et al.*, 2011:601). Some consumers are thus unwilling to compromise quality and price as they view some ethical alternatives as substandard.

Vitell (2015:771) confirms that in the case where the cost of a "responsible" or ethical product is too high, consumers might rather consider buying a more affordable product as it will be considered a more valued ethical decision to save money than to buy a product from a company that is committed to ethical practices. It can hence be established that despite the fact that many consumers are able to recognise the value of ethical products, very often their only concern is buying a good product at an affordable price rather than an ethically responsible product at a higher price. Consumers show transparency about the fact that price is a key inhibitor when considering ethical products as they do not necessarily value a product as "responsible" or "ethical" because of the higher price (Gleim *et al.*, 2013:57)**.**

When referring to price, the perception of quality also comes into play. Consumers mostly want to purchase the best possible quality at the best possible price. The perception of quality within the framework of ethical consumerism takes two distinct forms. According to Bray *et al.* (2011), consumers have different perceptions when it comes to certain manufacturing practices. Some consumers equate quality with the purchase of ethical or sustainable products. However, some consumers equate quality with receiving good value for money. As we are currently investigating the perception of economic rationalisation as an obstacle to ethical consumerism, the focus of equating quality with money should be discussed briefly. To illustrate this, I shall refer to three product examples namely fair trade coffee, free-range products, and luxury products.

With regards to "fair trade" coffee, certain consumers perceive products branded as "fair trade" to be of an inferior quality to other brands of coffee. Retailers of fair trade products are in this market for three main reasons (Obermiller *et al.*, 2009:160). Firstly, retailers in the market of fair trade coffee, e.g. "Starbucks" and "Peet's Coffee" in the United States, and "Cafedirect" and "Grumpy Mule" in the United Kingdom (Cadwell, 2017), sell fair trade coffee because of their concern for small coffee producers. With fair trade products being more expensive than other products, farmers, especially in developing countries, normally receive premiums that are associated with control mechanisms in order to sustain themselves in the long run (Burke *et al.*, 2014:2241). Secondly, for some retailers, it is crucial to meet the demands of consumers preferring to purchase socially responsible products as the availability of such products ensures customer support. Thirdly, retailers sell fair trade coffee due to their belief that the taste profile is of a higher standard.

Non-fair trade coffees such as Nescafé, Maxwell House and Lavazza, state that they are concerned about the sustainability of their products as well as ethical working conditions for their workers, although all certification processes of these companies are rejected. Therefore, these coffees may contain moulds, pesticides and chemicals and on another level, the working conditions of their staff might also be substandard (CaffeineInformerStaff, 2017).

But, for fair trade coffee to compete in the market, both the price and taste profile should be comparable to that of non-fair trade coffees. Some consumers perceive the taste and quality of fair trade coffee as inferior to non-fair trade coffees and are therefore not willing to pay more for such a product. The limit on the sales of fair trade coffee is thus caused by the weak consumer demand for the coffee and not in essence by the production capacity thereof (Obermiller *et al.*, 2009:160). The reason for this seems to be that fair trade coffee is often sold to consumers at a higher price because it is a "socially responsible product". Unfortunately, the only concern to most of the consumers is buying a quality product at an affordable price.

With regards to the consumption of free-range products, some consumers perceive free-range chicken or eggs as a high-quality product, especially the taste thereof. Consumers who prefer free-range products are thus driven towards ethical consumption by their perceived taste and not necessarily by the environmental or health benefits of the products. Thus, the quality in terms of the taste of the product is viewed as more important than the ethicality of the product. In the case of luxury products such as soap, the literature indicates that consumers prefer product satisfaction and convenience of products above ethical aspects (Burke *et al.*, 2014:2241). Consumers are therefore not as concerned about the effects that these luxury products have on the environment, but rather that they purchase a quality product at an affordable price.

From the above, it is clear that some consumers do not want to purchase ethically when they have to face a loss in quality at an affordable price. Bray *et al.* (2011:602) state that the perceived quality of goods plays a key role in the decision-making process of consumers and that quality and price, more than ethicality, influences consumers in their decision-making (Bray *et al.*, 2011:602). It can thus be argued that consumers most often make use of the technique of economic rationalisation in order to justify their purchasing choices, thereby ignoring the ethical consequences altogether.

2.3.2 INSTITUTIONAL DEPENDENCY

A second justification strategy used by consumers with inconsistent ethical beliefs is referred to as institutional dependency (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:431). Consumers deflect their own responsibility by trusting institutions or the government to make ethical choices on their behalf. This strategy closely relates to the work by Gruber and Schlegelmilch, (2014) i.e. "Denial of Responsibility", as discussed earlier in this chapter. Echardt *et al.* argue that laws and regulations should be debated by politicians who should agree on consumerist ethical policies. Consumers, who require the institution to be ethically responsible, put their trust in the government for sanctioning sales of such products, thereby absolving themselves of ethical responsibility.

Eckhardt *et al.* (2010) interview respondents in eight countries in order to collect data on their views of consumption issues, as well as consumer behaviour. The discussions focus on rationalisations with regards to the lack of patterns in ethical consumption. On one occasion, a Swedish consumer was interviewed and asked about his views on a biodegradable soap. The consumer replied "Now we're part of Europe so it's Europe's responsibility" indicating that some social democracies like Sweden and Germany rely on legal codes of governments to justify their consumer attitudes towards ethical choices. Advertisers and institutions (non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or the government) are regarded by the interviewees as "key institutions", thereby expecting that they should accept responsibility for communicating ethical standards mandated by the government to consumers. A German consumer notes in the interview that packaging in Germany containing a duck sign indicates that such products can be considered as "green" or ethical. The opinion was that other countries should follow by indicating clear codes on products in order to inform consumers about the ethicality of the products to be considered. Furthermore the view was that consumers do not need to take responsibility to investigate whether products are ethical or not, as the government and advertisers should accept the responsibility of this role (Eckhardt *et al.*,2010:431).

Institutional dependency can, therefore, be viewed as an obstacle to ethical consumerism as consumers hold institutions responsible for addressing ethical matters that influence them. Even if

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consumers view a certain practice as unethical, they do not feel that it is their responsibility to address the issue. Consumers are of the opinion that their role is insignificant in this regard and that institutions (NGO's or government), as well as the code of law, should be responsible for addressing these matters (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:431).

2.3.3 DEVELOPMENTAL REALISM

Developmental Realism suggests that consumers justify the unethicality of corporations' behaviours on the basis of the necessity thereof for the development of the economy. Through their research, Eckhardt *et al.* (2010) show that consumers view breaching their personal sense of morality as the price that they have to pay in order for economic growth to take place. Unethical practices such as the mistreatment of workers, animal factoring and the production of counterfeit goods are viewed by some consumers as developmental phases in the economy and "the way the world works during a particular stage of development" (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:432).

Their research further indicates that consumers, especially in developing economies such as Turkey and India, were of the opinion that poverty prevents them from caring about ethical practices. Thus, in order to survive financially, these consumers are not concerned about ethical practices, but rather view unethical practices as a reality in their economic situation. To further highlight this, respondents from China did not show any concern for the ethicality in labour practices (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:432). Practices such as the oppression of workers by requiring them to work longer hours for fewer wages or making use of child labour were not viewed as unethical. Instead, the respondents consider the labour situation as "normal for the local area". Some consumers in developing countries are of the opinion that the level of living should be compared with the salaries and affordability of products and services in that particular country rather than the ethicality of labour conditions altogether.

When asked about the Nike Factory labour conditions, i.e. the exploitation of workers, a Chinese woman noted the following:

> Most people know how Nike shoes are made. It's very normal. Some say it's a good thing. You will be laid-off if you aren't oppressed by others. The boss gives money to you. The boss earns money, and then you have money. No one is hurt. Everyone has won (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:432).

An Indian participant admits that there are only a limited number of work opportunities available in their country, and therefore workers are satisfied with any work that they can get. Individuals are not concerned about ethics when they are not able to buy the bare necessities. At the same time, the

opinion is that manufacturers also benefit from exploiting workers due to the fact that the low wages that they are paying earns them access to higher profits. There is thus a perceived win-win situation in developing countries; individuals are employed under unethical conditions and, at the same time, corporations make use of cheap labour thereby providing at least a sustainable income to their workers. Unfortunately, neither the workers nor the consumers exposed to poverty have any choices about ethical practices. The only thing that they are concerned about is the survival of their families (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:433).

It can therefore be said that consumers rationalise their ethical behaviour by viewing it through the lens of their knowledge of the labour conditions in their country, their political education, and their current economic situation. Eckhardt *et al.* (2010:434) refer to ethical consumption practices in the developing countries as the "relativism of the more versus the less affluent world" or put in a different way, ethics can be considered as a luxury.

To conclude, the three rationalisation strategies namely Economic Rationalisation, Institutional Dependency, and Developmental Realism are used by consumers to justify the lack of their ethical concerns for their respective consumption behaviour. Consumers will not necessarily be influenced by more information or moral appeals. Although the research indicates that the justification strategies vary across all eight countries (see footnote 1 on page 13 for the list of countries), it is still evident that the respondents are not motivated to comply with ethical consumption practices and that consumers find a way to conveniently justify their unethical choices (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2010:434).

Neutralisation techniques are thus proven to form a successful rationalisation mechanism as it displays the connection between consumers' attitudes and their behaviour. This technique can hence be viewed as an impeding factor towards ethical consumerism.

2.4 THE INTENTION-BEHAVIOUR GAP

Why do ethically-minded consumers still "vote" for or commit to purchasing unethical products and services? Although mainstream consumers are not necessarily concerned about their impact on society, animals, and the environment (refer to Figure 2.2, group 1, 2 and 3), consumers in group 4 do have the intention to engage in ethical purchasing decisions. The only problem remains that their intentions do not seem to translate into ethical purchasing. This gap between the intentions of consumers and their actual purchasing decisions, is referred to as the so-called "intention-behaviour gap" or the "word-deed gap" (Carrington *et al.*l, 2010:139).

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Although in the past, research focused on the formation of consumers' cognitive intentions, other researchers like Carrigan and Attalla (2001 in Carrington *et al.*, 2014) state that "social desirability bias" plays a significant role in research findings in that respondents answer questions in a favourable manner. Good behaviour can thus be over-reported, thereby contributing to this perceived gap between the intentions of consumers and their actual behaviour (Carrington *et al*., 2014:2760). In their study titled "Lost in Translation: Exploring the ethical consumer-behaviour gap", Carrington *et al.* (2014) identify four aspects affecting the behaviour of consumers within this gap. These include 1) the prioritisation of ethical concerns; 2) the formation of habits or plans; 3) the willingness to sacrifice and commit; and 4) modes of shopping behaviour (Carrington *et al*., 2014:2762). To shed further light on this "intention-behaviour gap", the four factors affecting the behaviour of consumers who form part of this gap, will be discussed briefly.

2.4.1 THE PRIORITISATION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY ETHICAL CONCERNS

Carrington *et al.* (2014), state that most consumers find it difficult to include ethical purchasing concerns into their daily lives. In order to include such concerns, consumers need to inform themselves about ethical purchasing matters and also prioritise objectives so as to form new behaviours within their consumption framework. Consumers tend to prioritise their concerns into primary ethical issues and secondary ethical issues. Primary ethical issues mostly concern matters that are close to the individual's own ethical values, i.e. values that are viewed as a high priority by the consumer. One individual might focus on the disposal of waste, while another individual prioritises greenhouse emissions. In chapter 3, I shall further elaborate on the concept of values. These high priority values "guide" the consumer's decision-making. The consumer exhibits certain consumption habits and commitments which are pre-meditated and eventually result in ethical consumption. Secondary ethical issues, on the other hand, are often not integrated into purchasing behaviour and compete with issues such as convenience and cost. Although consumers manage to include primary concerns in their daily purchasing decisions, secondary ethical concerns often do not seem to reach the shopping basket and are situated "further down" on a scale of importance. While consumers have their own preferences towards their primary and secondary important ethical concerns, this study argues that the secondary ethical concerns are the main reason for the intention-behaviour gap (Carrington *et al.*, 2014:2763).

2.4.2 CONSUMERS' HABITS AND PLANS

While some consumers plan ahead before they embark on a shopping trip, other consumers do not. Shopping plans include informal written or remembered shopping lists in order to make the shopping process easier. However, in the absence of shopping lists or a shopping plan, consumers might compromise ethical purchasing intentions and decisions by making impulsive decisions leading to trade-offs. On the other hand, when consumers want to break their existing shopping habits, they need to reconstruct their behavioural patterns and processes which is a difficult and challenging process to attempt (Carrington *et al.*, 2014:2763). The research of Carrington *et al.* (2014) correlates strongly with the findings of consumer inertia by Yanamandram and White (2004 in Bray et al., 2011) or consumer a-motivation as previously discussed.

2.4.3 SACRIFICE AND COMMITMENT

In certain situations, it becomes difficult for consumers to adapt to ethical shopping because they are not willing to commit to ethical choices. In some cases, the market does not provide accessible options especially with regards to their primary ethical concerns. This might lead to a sense of discontent, which in turn would lead to reluctance to commit to and develop ethical shopping plans. Carrington *et al.* (2014:2764) refer to an example of a consumer purchasing an iPhone, but after using the device and reading more about the manufacturing process, the consumer regrets his/her decision. Thus, in some cases, perceived ethical choices may lead to disappointment which affects the consumer's ethical choices in future. Consumers are therefore not always willing to commit to or sacrifice their preferred products for an ethical alternative, especially when convenience, quality and a higher cost are at stake (Carrington *et al.*, 2014:2763).

2.4.4 MODES OF SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR

Carrington *et al.* (2014)state that not prioritising primary or secondary ethical concerns will influence ethical purchasing practices negatively as a consumer's purchasing plans will fall back into previous habits of unethical shopping. Simultaneously, the researchers are of the opinion that a willingness to commit to ethical matters, or to sacrifice unethical ones, can manifest in three shopping approaches. The first approach, i.e. rapid or pre-meditated shopping behaviour, involves a process of shopping without any internal or external conflict. This mode of shopping normally involves ethical shopping due to the fact that conflicting priorities already have been resolved. The second approach involves decision-making primarily at the point of purchase. The consumer experiences frustration due to a lack of specific shopping plans which also results in a time-consuming process. Decision-making can only occur after the consumer reads product labels and

evaluates ethical and non-ethical concerns at the shelf. This feeds into discussions on the complexity of information, which may inhibit consumers from engaging with all the relevant information in order to be able to make appropriate decisions. Unfortunately, the consumer's ethical intentions are often lost in this process. Spontaneous and impulsive shopping is the third approach that consumers can take. Spontaneous shopping is unplanned and often influenced by the environment wherein consumers find themselves. Shopping through this approach can result in ethical or unethical purchasing behaviour (Carrington *et al.*, 2014:2764).

The four factors as described above (i.e. the prioritisation of primary and secondary ethical concerns; consumer habits and plans; sacrifice and commitment; and modes of shopping behaviour) are interrelated and, at the same time, facilitate the transformation of intentions into ethical or unethical consumption behaviour. However, in the case where ethical intentions do not translate into ethical consumption practices, the following obstacles are identified: compromised personal values of consumers; the impact of unethical consumption habits; a lack of planning which includes ethical considerations before actual shopping occurs; a reluctance to sacrifice or make commitments with regards to ethical shopping; the absence of ethical information or even a lack of effort to conduct searches for ethical information; and lastly, an environment that promotes impulsive purchases compromising ethical considerations (Carrington, Neville and Whitwell, 2014:2765).

From the above, it can be said that the factors influencing consumers within the intention-behaviour gap (i.e. consumers in group 4, Figure 2.2 page 23) are also closely related to some of the other obstacles identified earlier in this chapter in Figure 2.2 on page 23 (i.e. group 1-3). It is therefore important to note that consumers' ethical concerns are indeed closely related to their intentions to purchase ethically, as well as to the amount of knowledge that they accessed in order to make informed purchasing decisions.

2.5 CONSUMER INERTIA

For consumers to leave their trusted brands and regular product choices in order to try something new is not an easy process. Some consumers prefer a consistent pattern of purchasing the identical brands almost every time they shop. They make purchasing decisions out of habit simply because it requires less effort and time. The consumer sometimes lacks the motivation to reflect on alternatives and purchasing becomes a non-reflective process (Yanamandram and White, 2004:3).

It is therefore evident that some consumers often refuse to change their consumption habits and do not have the ability to "move" themselves from choosing one brand over another. "I am a Heinz person" or "I have got to have my Weetabix in the morning" are examples of preferences that

consumers have developed over years (Bray *et al.*, 2011:603), even though they may be aware that their choices do not reflect ethical behaviour. Although price and quality can also be reckoned as obstacles to ethical consumerism (as will be discussed later), purchasing inertia is shown to be a stronger barrier to ethical consumption. Some consumers have developed locked-in behaviours with regards to their specific choices and, as a result, they find it difficult to alter their choices.

In an article written by Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter, she identifies seven reasons for consumer inertia. Firstly, consumers do not want to lose control over their purchasing behaviours as the loss of control adds to consumer fear. Secondly, consumers experience too much uncertainty about the alternatives to their preferred products, and are consequently not willing to attempt research in this regard. Thirdly, consumers find radical changes confusing and distracting, and therefore they prefer to stick to their original choice with which they feel comfortable. In the fourth place, consumers find it hard to admit that previous choices were not optimal and that they therefore need to make changes. The fifth reason is that these changes require hard work in the sense that consumers need to put in an effort to test and adjust to changes. In the sixth instance, fear of the effects of changes on consumers contributes to inertia. Lastly, consumers are biased as they are of the opinion that other products are "just as bad anyway" and that it is difficult to find a perfect product of any kind (Kanter, n.d.). It is therefore easier for some consumers to deliberately disregard information as they experience challenges in order to process such information.

Carrigan and Moraes (2015) add two more causes that might contribute towards consumer inertia. Firstly, the availability of alternative ethical options especially in rural areas, and secondly, the impact that choice complexity and consumer confusion might have. These factors will be discussed in more detail in section 2.3. Bray *et al.* (2011) add a further obstacle to this list namely a "lack of motivation" by consumers to engage in the ethical purchasing process. This phenomenon is described as "a-motivation" which suggests that individuals experience an absence of motivation to engage in ethical buying as they are convinced that their actions will not contribute towards a positive outcome. In their article titled "An Exploratory Study into the Factors Impeding Ethical Consumption", Bray *et al.* elaborate on this concept of "a-motivation" by confirming the contradiction that exists between consumers' rhetoric and their actions. Their research suggests that although some consumers are willing "to do their bit" with regards to ethical consumption, they could also substantiate why they should not engage in ethical consumption. This is reminiscent of Forte's work on locus of control (Forte 2004 in Bray *et al.,* 2011) where vegetarians were convinced that their consumption patterns would make a difference (motivation), while non-

vegetarians argued that their actions with regards to consumption patterns would not have an impact at all (a-motivation) (Bray *et al.*, 2011:602).

These studies provide support for Jacobson and Dulsrud's argument regarding the complexities that consumers experience when attempting to commit to ethical consumerism. Their article titled "Will consumers save the world?" points to the constant conflict between consumer habits, consumer inertia and moral considerations that inform purchasing decisions (Jacobsen and Dulsrud, 2007:478). Although limited research is currently available in the field of consumer inertia, it seems that it is an obstacle to be reckoned with in the field of ethical consumerism.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In Chapter 2 we have explored several obstacles to ethical consumerism. Firstly, it was established that consumers' doubt in the marketing tactics and premiums to be paid for an ethical cause, leads to scepticism and cynicism. Furthermore, consumers are prejudiced by companies that do not honour their respective CSR commitments, thereby confirming their scepticism regarding ethical products and services. Secondly, consumers are overwhelmed by the amount of choices and information about products in the marketplace. This contributes to the inability of consumers to commit to ethical alternatives as the excessive amount of information acts as a barrier to altering their shopping behaviour. Consumers are thirdly using several neutralisation techniques in order to justify their own unethical behaviour, thereby transferring the responsibility to other stakeholders within the framework of ethical consumerism. Fourthly, the fact that some consumers have the intention to purchase ethically but do not, also known as the intention-behaviour gap, is a well-researched obstacle to ethical consumerism. Lastly, some consumers prefer to continue their purchasing practices according to their existing habits, trusted brands and regular product choices. Consumer inertia therefore prevents consumers from exploring better alternatives that may contribute towards an ethical cause, as doing so is perceived as a complex and time-consuming process.

It is important to note that these obstacles should be constantly reviewed as consumers, corporations, as well as the environment, will be exposed to the impact of consumerism in future. Nixon, in his book review titled "Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor", focuses our attention on harm created by environmental destruction and persistent resource extraction (Nixon, 2012:488). He defines slow violence as follows:

> Slow violence is a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all (Nixon, 2012:480).

Nixon's view of slow violence is not only limited to environmental degradation, but also to social issues such as labour conditions and the consequences for poverty and inequality. Unfortunately, it seems that Nixon is correct in saying that slow violence will only become real when consumers are faced with dilemmas that affect them directly. As this chapter has focused on a wide spectrum of obstacles to ethical consumerism, it can be said that the identified obstacles are complex in nature and that they cannot be dealt with in a simplistic manner. However, it is important to try to combat these obstacles in order to cultivate a change in consumers' behaviour towards more ethical and sustainable solutions. For this reason, Chapter 3 will investigate the drivers of ethical consumerism in the hope of identifying the leverage points to establish an ethical culture amongst consumers.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUALISING THE DRIVERS OF ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

In Chapter 2, the obstacles that prevent a large percentage of consumers from engaging in ethical purchasing were explored. We referred to the study by Wheale and Hinton (2007) and investigated the impediments that could possibly influence consumers in groups 1-4 of Figure 2.2, i.e. consumers who are not yet committed to ethical purchasing. Although research indicates that only 3% of consumers do in fact prefer to engage in ethical purchasing practices (Carrington *et al.*, 2010:139), Chapter 3 will investigate the possible drivers that could positively influence more consumers to purchase ethically.

Ethical consumers (as referred to in Figure 2.2, group 5) are aware of the impact and consequences of their purchasing decisions. When, for example, deciding to purchase low-priced clothes, they realise that they might contribute to practices involving worker exploitation. Factory farmed animals on the other hand, may deliver meat at a reduced price, but the quality of life of these animals might be severely compromised. They are not only committed to preventing harm with regards to consumption, but simultaneously they want to ensure fairness and sustainability with regards to production and consumption practices. Ethical consumers therefore become habitual consumers who act from a virtue perspective in that right actions become second nature. It can furthermore be argued that the "votes" that consumers cast at the purchasing point would in fact be in support of, or in opposition to, certain right or wrong practices and the consequences thereof. With this in mind, this chapter seeks to determine which factors are at play when a consumer decides to opt for, and what they regard as, ethical consumerism. For the purpose of this study, five factors will be discussed as drivers of ethical consumerism, namely socio-ethical behaviours, psychographic variables, affective factors, CSR and the impact of information. Each of these possible drivers of ethical consumerism will be briefly defined before turning to the discussion of each of these factors.

Although it should be noted that socio-ethical behaviours can be context specific, the focus in this thesis will fall on this behaviour as a driver of ethical consumerism. Socio-ethical behaviours can be viewed as a social group's ethical compass and can aid in supplying valued information about the profile of the buyer. These behaviours are influenced by demographic factors such as gender and age, the role that family is likely to play, as well as the possible influence of education on consumers. In the section on education, the focus will fall on certain stages of education including

school education, higher education, the influence of education on consumers and their culture, and also the role of education on certain lifestyle changes such as vegetarianism and veganism.

Psychographic variables shed light on the reasons for consumers' purchasing behaviour and are influenced by several factors, which include values, norms and social identity, and emotional intelligence (Chowdhury, 2017:528).

Affective factors include the role of a person's moods, feelings, and attitudes towards making ethical decisions. The emotions of guilt and empathy are examples of affective factors which have been researched in detail and which were proven to be strong contributing factors to ethical decision-making.

Corporate Social Responsibility is the commitment of companies to accept responsibility for their actions. These responsibilities, as previously referred to in Chapter 1, seem to act as a powerful driver of ethical consumerism as consumers are motivated by the example that companies set.

The impact of information refers to the different platforms via which ethical consumer information is communicated to the public. These platforms involve the internet, media, and marketing initiatives. Other sources of product information are communicated in mediums such as product labels, packaging, word-of mouth, and brochures.

It is important to note that although the above-mentioned factors will be investigated as drivers to ethical consumerism, it should be mentioned that an absence of the drivers can possibly cause an opposite effect, i.e. the absent drivers can be seen as obstacles or have a neutral result towards the influence on ethical consumerism. But, for the purpose of this study, the presence of these factors will be discussed as drivers of ethical consumerism.

3. DRIVERS OF ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

3.1. SOCIO-ETHICAL BEHAVIOURS

In their article titled "Exploring Relationships between Ethical Consumption, Lifestyle Choices, and Social Responsibility", Morgan *et al.* (2016:200) note the growing interest amongst consumers in social consciousness when making purchasing decisions. In their study, Morgan *et al.* collected data on the demographic and lifestyle factors that influence consumers in order to investigate whether these factors play a role in the socio-ethical behaviours of consumers. Factors such as gender and age, the role of the family, and the influence of education on consumers will be briefly elaborated upon.

3.1.1 GENDER AND AGE

According to Morgan *et al.* (2016), evidence collected on gender and age of American consumers is consistent with previous studies by Vanhonacker *et al.* (2007). Five main ethical concerns are investigated, namely the attitudes of individuals towards animal welfare, the protection of the environment, food safety, worker exploitation, and ethical advertising . Although gender and age are fixed factors that were investigated, research across different studies proves consistencies concerning the outcome of these factors.

When investigating the influence of gender as a driver of ethical consumerism in relation to the five ethical concerns as mentioned above, research has shown that women demonstrate a greater ethical consciousness for issues such as animal welfare, environmental protection, and food safety, as they prioritise these aspects during processes of assessment and purchasing. In this regard, it might also be useful to take into consideration that household chores, including grocery shopping, may very often still be a gendered activity - this despite the fact that more women have entered the workforce. Morgan *et al.*'s study further reveals that issues relating to fair labour practices show that neither women nor men demonstrate a high concern for the well-being of workers, which may imply that they either are not concerned about the issue or that they perhaps lack knowledge in this regard. However, matters such as corporate ethics, philanthropy, and truthful advertising are valued by both men and women as key factors in the decision-making process and can, therefore, contribute towards ethical purchasing practices (Morgan *et al.*, 2016:202).

When investigating the impact of age within the framework of ethical consumerism, Huang *et al.* (2012) examine the different categories of ethical inquiries across age groups in China and refer to the fact that the younger generation in China are viewed as more socially conscious than the older generations. The younger generation in their study is also more inclined towards activism and passionate about convincing their peers about harmful practices (Huang *et al.*, 2012:328).

Investigating the relation between age and consumer behaviour amongst Americans, Morgan *et al.* (2016) refer to the ethical attitudes of 1201 American consumers between the ages of twenty-four and sixty-five years of age. Their study demonstrates that ethical responses decrease as the age of respondents increases. Younger consumers thus exhibit a higher consciousness with regards to ethical practices than older consumers and younger respondents are also more inclined to convince other individuals to become more aware of ethical practices (Morgan, Croney and Widmar, 2016:203). Research indicates that there is a relation between ethical awareness and age. As the possibility of age as a driver of ethical consumerism strongly relates to research conducted within the framework of education, this driver will be further elaborated upon in the section 3.1.3.

3.1.2 THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

In this section, the role that family and family members play in contributing towards ethical consumerism will be explored. It is important to note that information in this section can be cross-referenced to the information in other sections on gender, age, income and education, as these concepts are inter-connected and also applicable to different individuals within the framework of families.

Members of families occupy different roles and fulfil certain functions which are evident in recurrent patterns of behaviour. From an early age, individuals are confronted with choices regarding consumption. Carey *et al.* (2008:353) state that although ethical decision-making within families has been rigorously researched, the areas of "family consumer decision-making" and "ethical consumerism" are still under-researched. Within the domain of "family consumer decision-making", two central theories are relevant. Blood and Wolfe (1960 in Carey *et al.*, 2008) propose the resource theory which focuses on resources such as income, social status, and the level of education of each one of the parents or partners within a family. This theory suggests that the partner with the stronger resources will have more influence in the decision-making process. French and Raven (1959 in Carey *et al.,* 2008) propose the social power theory where factors such as education and social class within the parental relationship form the basis of the social power within that family. Once again, the theory suggests that the stronger the power of an individual within the family, the more influence the person will have over the decision-making process. These two theories address the decision-making processes within families and are further sub-divided into the communal point of view and the familial approach. The communal view includes pressures from society, as well as the art of balancing work and life. The familial approach includes factors such as the structure of the family, the impact of marriage or single parent families, as well as the level of influence that children could exercise on the process of decision-making. In the following section, the focus will fall on the familial approach in order to investigate how the structure of a family unit can influence the decision-making process of consumers (Carey *et al.*, 2008:553).

Since 1970, family structures have changed immensely and structures such as blended families, reconstituted families, step-families, co-habiting families and also same-gender marriage families have emerged. The above-mentioned family structures, together with the upswing in smaller size families and the fact that women tend to have children at a later stage in their lives, prove to have an impact on the consumer decision-making processes (Carey *et al.*, 2008:554). In their article titled "The impact of ethical concerns on family consumer decision-making", Carey *et al.* (2008) investigate the roles of husbands and wives within a family structure. The study indicates that

husbands have a tendency to state that they have more authority within their relationships than they essentially have and that wives conversely tend to under-report their power in relationships due to reasons such as gender inequalities and expectations with regards to their specific cultures. Although their research states differences in the perceptions of husbands and wives about their authority within the family, Carey *et al.* (2008) confirm that wives/mothers effectively instigate the pursuit of an ethical lifestyle within their families, and that husbands/fathers are in fact found to be less ethically-minded than the mothers. The study furthermore suggests that wives construct their identity for their role as mothers by making use of tools such as their moral values, actions, and consumer decisions (Carey *et al.*, 2008:557). These findings also correspond closely to the research discussed in the previous section on gender, where the important influences of women with regards to ethical consumption decisions was discussed.

Carey *et al.* (2008:559) argue that within a family structure, some parents are informed about the concept of ethical consumption when they are to become first-time parents. This is also referred to as the "inheritance factor" as ethical consumption issues often become important to parents as a result of the birth of their children. One can therefore gather that in some cases, parents might become more inclined towards ethical consumerism when they see the world through the eyes of their young child. The field of "parental consumer decision-making" could benefit from research in future, as parents set an example to their children on how to become ethical consumers and global citizens (Carey *et al.*, 2008:559). Carey *et al.* also explore ethical consumers' decision-making processes within family structures consisting of children under the age of three years. Since 1960, "pester power", i.e. the ability and influence that children exert over their parents in pressurising them to buy certain products that they want, is a force to be reckoned with. It is further established that children under the age of three subject their parents to pester tactics. Cook (2003 in Carey *et al.* 2008) traces this behaviour back to the 1930s where the child was given centre stage at home as a new "middle-class morality" emerged in the Western World. Even though parents are aware of their children's role in making consumer decisions, the extent of this role is underestimated. Cook (2004 in Carey *et al.* 2008) notes that supermarkets and retailers coax children by strategically placing targeted products either at the point of sale or at a specific height (Carey *et al.*, 2008:559).

Fortunately, parents are able to influence their children into being responsible consumers by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge as they engage in making ethical purchasing decisions. Communication amongst family members is shown to influence ethical decision-making to a large extent, thereby proving to be an important tool in the process of generating awareness (Carey *et al.*, 2008:557). Parents indicate that they make use of "trade-off tactics" as they rationalise their own decisions, and try to discipline their children's non-ethical

demands (Carey *et al.*, 2008:558). Trade-off tactics entail parents engaging with their children when making consumption choices. Here ethical products are weighed in terms of (less ethical) alternatives. As an example, a parent would motivate a child to rather choose a glass water bottle over a plastic one when confronted with alternatives in making a choice. Families furthermore indicate that their use of communication patterns vary from strict to lenient. These patterns of communication are reflective of the elementary learning and disciplinary methods that parents carry out on their children, and that echoes their style of parenting. The amount of influence that a parent can exercise over a child with regards to their decision-making within a respective family environment, will depend on where the parent is positioned on the scale of communication (Carey *et al.*, 2008:555)

Another factor which influences family decision-making is the financial position of the family. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, low-income families often do not have the liberty of choosing ethical products, as their geographic area or the access to ethical information might be seen as a constraint in this process (Carrigan and Moraes, 2015:16). Furthermore, low-income consumers often need to consider the best value for money in order for them to survive financially. However, within wealthier families, a factor that influences family ethical decision-making is the connection to materialism. Huang *et al.* (2012) note that families with a higher income tend to be materialistic, and therefore more focussed on their own needs instead of being focussed on the impact of their consumption habits on society and the environment. This is consistent with the research of Vitell *et al.* (2007 in Huang *et al.* 2012:328), wherein it is established that the importance of money within families is linked to questionable consumer behaviours.

Consumer decision-making within families is thus a complex process and is influenced by several factors. Parents that value ethical consumerism, and therefore an ethical lifestyle, are presented with added pressures as they need to balance their ethical obligations with the influences (e.g. peer pressure, societal pressure or fashion trends) emanating from inside, as well as outside, the family unit (Carey *et al.*, 2008:555).

3.1.3 THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION

Education is a lifelong process and individuals are receptive thereto from birth throughout the different stages of their lifecycles. Individuals are furthermore exposed to different forms of education by different stakeholders, i.e. from birth to primary school, from primary to high school education, during higher education and lastly during adulthood. It involves the process of engaging with information in order to facilitate learning, skills, beliefs, knowledge and habits. Education can therefore be viewed as a powerful and on-going process of exposure of individuals to different

methods and forms of information (Kohlberg and Hersh, 2014:53). Before discussing education as a driving force of ethical consumerism, it is important to refer to Kohlberg and Hersh's theory on moral development and the application of this theory to the practice of schooling as a moral initiative. According to them, moral education does not only occur within families or within broader society, but involves the schooling system as an important institution contributing to the moral development of individuals. As initially stated by Piaget in "The Moral Judgement of a Child" (1932), moral development represents transformation in the structure of thought of an individual (Kohlberg and Hersh, 2014:54). According to Kohlberg and Hersh, moral development or reasoning develops over time and involves six stages. These stages furthermore consist of three levels namely the pre-conventional level, the conventional level, and the post conventional level.

The first level, namely the pre-conventional level, defines the stage where morality is externally controlled. Authority figures impose rules that are conformed to, in order to avoid punishment. The pre-conventional level consists of two stages. The first stage, namely the "punishment/obedience orientation", represents children who want to obey rules in order to avoid punishment; whereas the second stage, the "instrumental purpose orientation", represents behaviour which is focused on receiving rewards. Elements of fairness, sharing and reciprocity develop in this stage (Kohlberg and Hersh, 2014:54). The second level, the conventional level, signifies that social rules and the conformity thereto are valued as important. In this level, the emphasis shifts from an egocentric perspective towards a social perspective where rules set by parents, peers, as well as government are valued for maintaining social order. The conventional level also consists of two stages. Stage three, the "good boy/nice girl orientation", represents the individual's striving for approval by others. This stage involves behaviour judged by intention (to be a good person in the eyes of others). Stage four, namely the "law and order orientation", represents individuals who value laws, rules, and authority for determining and maintaining social order. These rules and laws regulate human behaviour (Kohlberg and Hersh, 2014: 55). Level three, the post conventional level, suggests that values and principles define morality in individuals. Two stages are described within this level. Stage five, the "social contract orientation", suggests that human behaviour is determined by individual rights. This stage suggests that rules and laws are tools that can be used by individuals to improve individual purposes and include utilitarian nuances. The last stage, stage six, is identified by the researchers as the ultimate stage of functioning. This stage, titled "universal ethical principle orientation", denotes that individuals' actions are determined by their own ethical beliefs. These beliefs are guided by the categorical imperative of Kant (1785), which states that one can only act as one would like all other individuals to act towards all other people. At this level,

individuals consider the consequences of their actions on all stakeholders (Kohlberg and Hersh, 2014: 55).

Kohlberg and Hersh (2014:57) note that schools at present are currently more focused on authority than on ideas of justice. Education therefore incorporates stage one (punishment morality) and stage four (law and order). They suggest that stages two and three should rather be focused on within the education system. This is because principles, rather than power, would positively contribute in assisting learners to discover how they think, rather than telling them what to think. It is clear from this theory that the education system poses many opportunities for moral development of individuals and can contribute to ethical behavioural patterns.

Section 3.1.2 elaborated on the role of parents in influencing their babies after birth. This section, in turn, focuses on education as a driving force towards ethical consumerism within the frameworks of 1) school education amongst tweens; 2) higher education; 3) education and culture; and 4) the role of education through lifestyle influences.

A study by El-Bassiouny, Taher and Abou-Aish, (2011) focuses on the influence of ethics education amongst tweens in schools and the eventual impact thereof on the behaviour of consumers. The researchers explore the relevance and effects of character or ethics education in the patterns of tween consumers, i.e. consumers between the ages of ten and fourteen. The study explores the intense growth in the Egyptian tween consumer market before 2011 (El-Bassiouny *et al.*, 2011:159). Results of the study specify that scholars who receive training in character or ethical education presented with higher levels of humanitarianism which had a noticeable counter effect on emergent childhood consumerism. Results by Devine *et al.* indicate that character or ethical education contributes towards the spirituality as well as the morality of scholars, which further encourages ethical consumerism. Character or ethical education can therefore be said to spur on ''conscientious consumerism'' (Devine, T; Seuk, J.H; Wilson, 2001). Consumers are committed to making careful and informed decisions and eventually also demand social responsibility from corporations before supporting them. This, in turn, adds pressure to the notion of societal marketing, where companies have to respond to their consumers' ethical needs by giving attention to specific marketing strategies reflective of ethically compliant practices. Moreover, companies are pressured by tween consumers to be increasingly aware of the effects of their activities on society. El-Bassiouny *et al.* (2011) are of the opinion that the implementation of character or ethical education can be an effective driver to influence consumers of all ages through opinion leadership. An opinion

leader is an eminent individual or business that has the capability to inspire public beliefs on the matter for which the individual is acknowledged. As a result of the research by El-Bassiouny, Taher and Abou-Aish (2011:165), the Egyptian government is motivated to inculcate character or ethics education in its schooling curriculum, as well as through their policies in order to improve the education of moral citizens and eventually contribute to the developmental needs of their country. Ghoshal (2005 in El-Bassiouny *et al.,* 2011:165) contributes by stating that apart from the school curriculum, business ethics education is an important consideration in young individuals' higher education curriculum, as it can have a strong and sustainable effect in preventing corporate scandals (Ghoshal, 2005).

With regards to higher education, in an online survey comprising 1201 American consumers, 57% of the individuals who participated in the survey had received a college degree and 28% had earned a Bachelor's degree. Consumers with either a college or a bachelor's degree, i.e. an educational background, were shown to be more committed to ethical consumption practices than non-educated consumers (Morgan, Croney and Widmar, 2016:203).

Within the context of culture, it is believed that education can contribute towards individuals' commitment to ethical consumption practices. Lu, Huang and Chang, (2014), state that East Asian countries are inspired by Confucian ethics while Western countries are influenced by Western values. While the emphasis of Confucian Dynamism is placed on values such as "hierarchical relationships, social harmony, and the observance of tradition" which correlate positively with consumer ethics, Western values focus on issues such as individualism, progress and freedom, which correlate negatively with consumer ethics. Although values will be explored in the next section under psychographic variables, it is important to note the influence thereof on the education of individuals (Hofstede 1993 in Lu *et al.*, 2014:34). Citizens in East Asian countries who value Confucian teachings stay within societal norms to evade feelings of dishonour caused by disobedience to native teachings, civilisations, and traditions. Therefore, individuals who value Confucian teachings are morally and ethically guided in their relationships and responsibilities. While the focus of the East Asian teachings is on social interests, the focus of Western values is on personal gain (Lu *et al.*, 2014:34). In a sample of 521 individuals that were interviewed and asked about their attitudes towards ethical practices, the results proved that educated consumers, within the framework of Confucian Dynamism, value ethical practices as more important than consumers who assess Western values as important (Lu *et al.*, 2014:48).

As discussed previously, education takes place in different phases of the lifecycle. However, during these phases (from birth throughout the different stages to adulthood), certain lifestyle practices can

contribute to the awareness of ethical practices. One such lifestyle practice is the practice of vegetarianism, which dates back to 7th century BCE (Olivelle, 1998). The fundamental reasons for individuals to follow a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle are actively to prevent harm and to increase environmental sustainability. McDonald (2000), in her article titled "Once You Know Something, You Can't Not Know It; An Empirical Look at Becoming Vegan", investigates the process of individuals in deciding to make major lifestyle changes. A possible explanation for making such lifestyle changes was explored through the transformation theory of Mezirow in the late 1900s. This theory involves ten steps that are followed by an individual when such a transformation is planned, and is explained as follows:

> The ten steps, which Mezirow says can occur in any order, include a disorienting dilemma, self-examination, and critical assessment of assumptions. They also include recognizing that discontent and transformative experiences are shared, exploring new options, planning a course of action, acquiring new skills and knowledge, trying new roles, renegotiating relationships and building new ones, and reintegrating the new perspective into one's life. A central triad, upon which the ten steps depend, includes critical reflection, democratic dialogue, and reflective action (McDonald, 2000:2).

Individuals considering a lifestyle change such as becoming vegan or vegetarian, normally experience an ethical dilemma before they attempt the road to change. Before individuals decide to adopt such a lifestyle, they firstly show an openness and orientation to learn more about the matter. Some individuals additionally need openness towards repressed information, i.e. information that previously resulted from mental conclusions in an unconscious manner. In other words, certain individuals might show an apparent lack of interest with regards to the issue of vegetarianism or veganism, but the seeds planted through initial openness to more knowledge could contribute to an eventual change in orientation at a later stage (McDonald, 2000:19). McDonald investigates methods used by individuals who indicated a willingness to gain more knowledge on lifestyle adjustments such as vegetarianism and veganism. Sources such as cookbooks, newsletters, books, brochures and magazines are used by individuals to collect more information on the topic. However, pivotal to collecting the information is the perception or the guarantee that the information is, in fact, truthful and accurate (McDonald, 2000:20).

Vegetarians and vegans are furthermore influenced by two types of learning that play a central, but also an interdependent role on their journey to becoming more ethically conscious. "Communicative learning" focuses on the communication of concepts such as cruelty to animals or animal factoring. Individuals are therefore confronted to act, repress or deal with the moral

implications of such practices (McDonald, 2000:20). "Instrumental learning" entails the skills to equip individuals for preparing and committing to this lifestyle and include teaching them to read the labels of ingredients, accessing information on how to cook vegetarian food, and also learning how to order vegetarian or vegan food in a restaurant (McDonald, 2000:21). As soon as individuals inform themselves properly through communicative as well as instrumental learning, they make the final decision whether they want to commit to this type of lifestyle. Morgan *et al.* (2016) confirm the high levels of obligation that vegetarians and vegans experience towards accepting responsibility for being ethical consumers. Both vegetarians and vegans commit to dietary responsibilities, the support for ethical advertising, as well as for the welfare of animals. Vegetarians, as well as vegans, also indicate a strong response to recycling practices which points toward their responsibility towards the conservation of the environment (Morgan *et al.* 2016:207). Vegetarians and vegans furthermore indicate that education does play a key role in creating awareness about ethical as well as unethical practices, and that it can be viewed as a key driver to contribute towards ethical consumerism.

As we have now investigated the influence of education on consumers, the notion remains that educated consumers seem more knowledgeable about, and committed to the importance of safeguarding the sustainability of society and the environment by accepting ethical responsibility in their everyday decisions. It can therefore be said that the socio-ethical behaviours as discussed in this section, can be viewed as contributing behaviours to the profile of the ethical consumer. Going forward, we will further explore the psychographic factors or the reasons that motivate individuals to commit to ethical consumption practices.

3.2 PSYCHOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Whereas socio-ethical dimensions are crucial constructs affecting the ethical attitudes and behaviours of individuals, psychographic factors are of equal importance as they emphasise the reasons behind the decisions of the ethical consumer. Forthwith the impact of values and emotional intelligence will be discussed as possible drivers of ethical consumerism.

3.2.1 THE IMPACT OF VALUES

Cherry and Caldwell (2013:117) investigate ethical decision-making by referring to two decision-making approaches, namely the rational approach and the intuitive approach. These approaches seem to act interdependently in the decision-making process, especially with reference to the process of problem-solving. In their research, Cherry and Caldwell focus specifically on the role of the intuitive decision-making approach which includes intuitive responses, emotions, and values.

Although intuitive and rational processes are proven to be interdependent, intuitive processes seem to precede cognitive decision-making processes and are therefore very important as an initial step in the decision-making process. In their study, Cherry and Caldwell investigate the extent to which personal values and emotions can contribute towards ethical decision-making. This, in turn, will determine whether some values have the ability to influence the ethically-driven consumer to support certain products and services complying with ethical standards (Cherry and Caldwell, 2013:117).

In order to elaborate on their research, Cherry and Caldwell also refer to the empirical analysis of Muncy and Vitell (1992) wherein the "Consumer Ethics Scale" (CES) is established. This scale consists of four dimensions measuring the opinions and beliefs of consumers regarding actions that are mostly perceived as questionable[5]. A fifth dimension was later added and focuses on positive actions (doing good/recycling) that consumers support (Vitell, 2015:769). For the purpose of this study, only the fifth dimension (i.e. doing good/recycling) will be discussed with regard to how this dimension might contribute to ethical decision-making.

"Doing good/recycling" includes positive consumer behaviour such as recycling materials or correcting a miscalculated bill that would have been in the consumer's favour (Vitell, 2015:769). Shaw *et al.* (2005) confirm the importance of this value and indicate that ethical consumers value economically, socially and environmentally responsible purchasing decisions. This is also the reason for consumers to engage in recycling practices as they value "protecting the environment" as important (Shaw *et al.*, 2005:196). To clarify the value of doing good further, Roper and Parker (2013) in their article titled "Doing well by doing good"; note the fact that fast food packaging is the type of litter that is currently escalating in extremely high quantities. Moreover, their research indicates that consumers' attitudes towards certain product brands are negatively affected by the

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[5] The first dimension involves "Actively benefitting from illegal activities" and measures whether consumers will consciously engage in questionable actions. An example of such is to drink a can of soda while still in the store, without paying for it. Such a decision would obviously demonstrate a very low scale of values toward ethical decision-making. "Passively benefitting" is the second dimension and involves the consumer benefitting from an action due to a mistake that was made by another individual such as receiving undeserved change without correcting the person who offered the change. The third dimension, "Actively benefitting from questionable (but perceived to be legal) acts", involves a conscious action of lying when a person is, for example, negotiating the price of a new product like a car. Consumers believe that this action is not illegal, even though it is a conscious act of error, and in essence, a lie. On another, and perhaps more common level, the "no harm / no foul", and fourth dimension entails consumers who are copying or downloading software without purchasing the original brand. They believe that by not causing tangible harm to someone, this behaviour is acceptable (Vitell, 2015:769).

presence of litter. Their research states that some of the fast food companies that collected litter close to their own businesses eventually experienced a positive relationship between the repurchasing intentions of their consumers and the absence of litter (Roper and Parker, 2013:2266).

After Cherry and Caldwell (2013) investigated the CES created by Muncy and Vitell (1992), they continued their research by exploring whether there could be a link between personal values and ethical principles. Their research combined the CES as well as the "Value Model" as constructed by Haidt (2001 in Cherry and Caldwell, 2013:119). Haidt (2001:108) proposes a framework consisting of "five psychological systems" otherwise known as "values pools" that provide the source of moral reasoning. Haidt and Graham (2007 in Cherry and Caldwell, 2013) state that consumers' moral principles are additionally influenced by social and cultural responses (as discussed in the previous section of social-ethical behaviour), and that these responses will affect their reactions towards ethical practices (Cherry and Caldwell, 2013:120). The five psychological systems developed by Haidt (2001), will be discussed next.

In the first foundation, Haidt explores individuals' sensitivity to caring for or protecting others, thereby approving initiatives to prevent suffering or harm. The second foundation explores the idea of fairness where this pool of fairness values is presented as a set of instinctual concerns about equity, justice and rights. Thirdly, cohesion or "in-group" stresses the significance of belonging to a certain group or community where individuals are able to trust each other. Individuals betraying their group will be condemned and distrusted by the other individuals of that group, while individuals who make sacrifices for their group, in other words, individuals who are loyal to their group, will be valued. Hierarchy, order and discipline are emphasised in the fourth value dimension as positive values, while subversion or benefitting from an unethical act indicates the negative element of this value. The last foundation is called "purity" which highlights concepts such as decency and cleanliness with opposing values such as wrongdoing, degradation and disgust (Cherry and Caldwell, 2013:119, 120).

From the research, Cherry and Caldwell note that the "Consumer Ethics Scale" as well as the "Value Model" indicates a strong relationship between the attitudes of consumers and their purchasing decisions. It is argued by both models that these processes, i.e. consumers' attitudes and their purchasing decisions, occur instinctively (i.e. through emotions and values) and that they precede rational thought thereby indicating a positive link when it concerns ethical decision-making within a consumer framework (Cherry and Caldwell, 2013:117).

The reason for choosing the above-mentioned models is because both focus on people's sensitivities and reactions towards specific values. In applying these models, it will further be explored how

consumers' decisions of either approving ethical behaviour or disapproving unethical actions are driven by their intuitive values (Cherry and Caldwell, 2013:128). Next, the values of fairness, care, cohesion and purity will be discussed as these intuitive values seem to contribute to consumers' ethical decision-making.

3.2.1.1 The impact of Fairness

The principle of fairness highlights individuals' sensitivity to other individuals who seem to take more out of a system than they can contribute or than they deserve. Cherry and Caldwell (2013:120) indicate that values in the fairness pool are relevant to several ethical issues including intuitive concerns regarding rights, justice, equity and equality. Likewise, the CES confirms that the "Do Good" items in the scale focus on the positive exchange between businesses and consumers regarding issues of fairness (Cherry and Caldwell, 2013:121). Vitell (2015:770) indicates that consumers are likely to support practices that are committed to the interests and rights of individuals, as well as practices that comply with social and ethical requirements. Both models thereby confirm that consumers value fairness as an ethical principle in their decisions.

3.2.1.2 The impact of Care

Haidt's values model (i.e. the value of "care or harm") as well as Muncy and Vitell's CES (the "Do Good" items) indicate that consumers show sensitivity towards care as a value. This value relates to employees' welfare and social issues such as racism, child labour, and environmental exploitation (Cherry and Caldwell, 2013:121). To confirm the above, research by Shrum, McCarty and Lowrey (1995) indicate that ethical consumers are constantly seeking information on products and services in order to make informed purchasing decisions. The main reason for this behaviour is a concern for the health and well-being of humans, animals, and the environment. Pryce (2002:140) highlights care as a value when it concerns the behaviour of consumers with regards to matters such as product liability, product recalls, and ingredient scares. These questionable practices influence consumer purchasing behaviour negatively as they are concerned about safety and protection in the broad sense. Consumers' power to influence purchasing behaviour has been proven in several boycotts where social issues within high profile brand names such as Ford, Shell, and Nike were targeted. Real damage is caused to these companies' brand and financial performance when the value of care within their corporate practices is compromised (Pryce, 2002:140).

Cherry and Caldwell (2013:119, 126) furthermore emphasise consumers' profound concern when distress or cruelty is caused to others and that this concern plays a major role in consumers' decisions to support companies that regard ethical practices as important. This can be illustrated

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through the example of factory farming as demonstrated by Swensen (2016), where ethical issues arise as manufacturers have to keep up with mass production. The genes of animals are manipulated and hormones, antibiotics, and other chemicals are pumped into the animals in order to keep up with production targets. Unfortunately, ethical farming practices cannot compete with the profit margins of the factory farming industry (Swensen, 2016). The increased availability of information regarding the aforementioned issues on social media contributes towards consumer awareness and perceptions of this value within the business environment, thereby progressively pressuring businesses to show the value of care in their day to day practices (Pryce, 2002:140).

According to Burke *et al.* (2014), ethical consumers would consider reducing their consumption of meat as a result of their concerns for animal cruelty. Furthermore, ethical consumers demand organic food due to their concern for their health and the protection of the environment. Free-range farming practices are valued by ethical consumers as it is believed that these practices contribute to a better life for the animals and the sustainability of the environment (Burke, Eckert and Davis, 2014:223). From the above, it can be said that the value of care plays a key role in the decision-making process of ethical consumers and that this value can be seen as an important driver for ethical consumerism.

3.2.1.3 The impact of Cohesion

Cohesion can be described as unity, togetherness or a sense of belonging to a certain group. When considering the values pools, (i.e. loyalty and or betrayal), Cherry and Caldwell are of the opinion that some values will be relevant to individuals while other values will be more relevant to groups (Cherry and Caldwell 2013:121). To elaborate, Morgan *et al.* (2016:2014) investigate ethical commitments with the focus on the assessment of the following factors for respondent-specific dynamics of consumers belonging to certain categories of society such as education, gender, family member influence, and religion. Values such as cohesion and loyalty can be considered as factors that do in fact influence consumers' purchasing behaviour within certain groups of society (Morgan *et al.*, 2016:214).

Although religion can also be seen as a driver of ethical consumerism within the framework of socio-ethical behaviours, it will be discussed here within the context of the values of cohesion and loyalty. Religion closely relates to these values as individuals, as part of a collective, adhere to the beliefs and values of certain groups. Goldberg (2006 in Vitell *et al.*, 2016) defines spirituality as a "search for universal truth" whereas religion is defined as "formal beliefs and group practices as related to existential issues". Religion is thus closely related to a specific culture, while spirituality can be viewed as a universal concept and is not necessarily related to the membership of a group.

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Religion often influences the behaviour of individuals with regards to their judgements, moral standards, attitudes, actions, and beliefs. In turn, individuals' moral beliefs play a role in influencing their moral identity (i.e. the degree to which they perceive themselves to be a moral person, or to have a moral character). Research confirms that an individual's religion, together with their moral identity, affect consumer decision-making (Vitell *et al.*, 2016:147). Religion can manifest both intrinsically (i.e. more spiritually), as well as extrinsically (i.e. motivations of deontological or duty-based-nature). The concepts are likewise linked to judgements of an ethical nature because individuals with strong moral beliefs are likely to act in a more ethically responsible way, and vice versa (Vitell, 2015:769).

Vitell *et al.* (2005 in Huang *et al.* 2012) confirm the link between intrinsic religiosity and ethical beliefs of consumers by noting that consumers who are spiritually or religiously orientated, are likely to view questionable activities (such as removing the pollution device from a car in order to get better mileage) as wrong. In the article titled "The Impacts of Ethical Ideology, Materialism, and Selected Demographics on Consumer Ethics: An Empirical Study in China", Huang *et al.* advise that religious beliefs should be respected by governments as they can contribute towards change in consumer ethics, thereby reducing unethical behaviour in societies and business environments. Huang elaborates by referring to the Cultural Revolution in China from 1966 to 1976 which led to China welcoming several kinds of reforms. The reform contributed towards many Chinese people turning into atheists, which left China with only 27% religious Chinese consumers. The study confirms that Chinese individuals younger than 26 years of age are more likely to make ethical decisions which are directly linked to the fact that these individuals were not influenced by the Cultural Revolution (Huang *et al.*, 2012:328). Thus, in addition to the influence of religion on ethical behaviour, policy makers, as well as marketers, might take note of the fact that religion can be viewed as an important driver of ethical consumerism (Huang *et al.*, 2012:328). As also alluded to in the previous section of socio-ethical behaviours, it can be concluded that the principle of cohesion positively relates to the ethical decision-making process of consumers.

3.2.1.4 The impact of purity

The impact of the value of purity (cleanliness and decency) is positively related to the condemnation of unethical activities or the validation of ethical activities. These values relate strongly to the previously discussed dimensions of actively or passively benefitting from activities perceived as unethical (Cherry and Caldwell, 2013:122)**.** To elaborate further, ethical consumers are of the opinion that they have a valuable role to play by making decisions that will have a positive impact on society, animals and the environment, even though it might be on a small scale. Relating

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to this, Vermeir and Verbeke (2006 in Antonetti and Maklan, 2014) explore the concept of PCE i.e. the "perceived consumer effectiveness", which is defined as the perception of consumers concerning the extent to which they believe that their personal efforts can contribute to solving problems of a social as well as an environmental nature (Antonetti and Maklan, 2014:118). Ethical consumers confirm their contribution and the impact thereof when committing to this value. Kinnear *et al.* (1974 in Burke *et al.,* 2014), highlight the fact that ethical consumers are keenly aware of their impact on the environment because of their concern for conservation. Berger and Corbin (1992 in Burke *et al.*, 2014) note that perceived consumer effectiveness can positively impact on ethical behaviour. Hoffman and Hutter (2012 in Burke *et al.,* 2014), agree by highlighting that ethical consumers believe that every small purchase made, will eventually contribute towards the bigger case for ethical consumerism. Burke *et al.* (2014) state that ethical consumers engage in buying ethical products due to their belief that they contribute towards practices that will benefit the environment, humans, and animals. This trend manifests in businesses as consumers reward companies by "buycotting" (supporting) products from companies that comply with CSR and ethical practices. Conversely, consumers are strategic when they boycott companies with regards to practices that they perceive as questionable or disgusting (Burke *et al.*, 2014:2240). From this, it is evident that ethical consumers' personal values, specifically the values affecting their sense of purity, affect their commitment to accepting responsibility for ethical consumption practices. These values thus play an important role in consumers' intuitive decision-making processes in order to contribute towards the cause of being ethical consumers (Morgan *et al.*, 2016:200).

3.2.2 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

According to Vitell (2015:768), human behaviour, which is extended to facets of consumer behaviour, is influenced by emotions. Krishnakumar and Rymph (2012:324) describe emotions as powerful psychological activities which are directed at something or someone. These mental activities are developed over time and normally consist of a degree of valence (i.e. attractiveness or averseness), as well as intensity which can be either of an active or passive nature. Paul Ekman identifies six main emotions which include feelings of anger, happiness, surprise, disgust, sadness and fear (Ekman, Levenson and Friesen, Wallace, 1983:1208). Emotional intelligence can be viewed as the capability or reaction of one individual to recognise their individual and other individuals' emotions. The role that emotional intelligence plays in consumer ethical decision-making will hence be investigated as it is anticipated to affect ethical consumption practices

(Chowdhury, 2017:528). Salovey and Mayer (1989 in Chowdhury, 2017:529) define the term emotional intelligence as follows:

> The subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.

Additional to the definition of emotional intelligence, Davies *et al.* (1998 in Chowdhury, 2017) identify four dimensions thereof. The first dimension of emotional intelligence is the review and assertion of emotions in oneself, secondly the review and assertion of emotions in others, thirdly modulation of emotions in oneself, and lastly the use of emotions in order to enable one's performance (Chowdhury, 2017:529).

Haidt (2003 in Chowdhury, 2017) elaborates on this concept in the Handbook of Affective Sciences by focusing on the three components of emotional intelligence, namely the ability to experience, recognise, and control emotions. These components are perceived to be precursors to an individual's ethical beliefs. Haidt is of the opinion that emotional intelligence in consumers will therefore inspire consumer ethics and eventually encourage ethical consumerism (Chowdhury, 2017:528). Chowdhury continues by stating that the most important dimension of emotional intelligence is the ability to review and assert emotions in oneself (or according to Haidt as mentioned above, to experience one's own emotions). Research indicates that consumers who are emotionally intelligent, show a positive correlation to ethical actions and a negative correlation to unethical behaviour, whereas the second dimension, namely the review and assertion of emotions in others, relates positively to ethical pro-social actions (Chowdhury, 2017:529). Emotional intelligence is also a requirement for ethicality, whereas emotional literacy depends on moral development and character building through educational and socialisation practices. Emotional literacy can be seen as the first step towards emotional intelligence and the ability to recognise, understand and appropriately express our emotions. Chowdhury is of the opinion that personal moral beliefs facilitate the influence of emotional intelligence in consumer ethics. Furthermore, it is stated that consumers utilise cognitive, as well as affective, mechanisms when making ethical decisions (Chowdhury, 2017:542).

Segon and Booth (2014) in Chowdhury (2017) differ from this view. According to their article titled "Uncomfortable Ethical Decisions: The Role of Negative Emotions and Emotional Intelligence in Ethical Decision-Making", individuals who make unethical decisions prefer to avoid painful emotions rather than to face them. It can therefore be postulated that individuals who are

emotionally intelligent but avoid emotions that cause pain, can in fact engage in unethical decision-making. It has nevertheless been shown that individuals who deal with all their different emotions will engage in ethical decision-making as their behaviour is mediated by emotional intelligence (Krishnakumar and Rymph, 2012:336). We can therefore conclude that emotional intelligence can be viewed as an important driver of ethical consumerism as long as consumers are willing to face up to their negative emotions.

As we have now discussed the psychographic factors that influence ethical consumerism, we will forthwith discuss the affective factors. Two affective factors will be discussed namely the roles that empathy and guilt play in influencing ethical decision-making.

3.3 AFFECTIVE FACTORS

Apart from socio-ethical behaviours and psychographic factors, affective factors also seem to influence consumer behaviour. Research indicates that individuals' emotions play an important role in their decision-making process and that their purchasing behaviour is directly affected thereby (Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2006:270). Emotions are described as powerful psychological activities directed at something or someone. Within the framework of ethical consumerism, Steenhaut and Van Kenhove argue that the interactions between consumers' behaviour and their emotions can be distinguished by using two approaches. The dimensional approach views emotions as broad principal dimensions which can be plotted on a broad spectrum, from positive to negative emotions, or from emotions consisting of "good"-ness to emotions concerning "bad"-ness. On the other hand, the discrete emotional approach focuses on distinctive emotions such as happiness, sadness, empathy, or guilt amongst others. Discrete emotions seem to offer a better explanation for the ethical decisions in which consumers engage (Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2006:280).

In addition to the above approaches, Chowdhury explores the term moral emotions. This can be described as emotions linked to the wellbeing of a person or a society and can be sub-divided into two categories (Tangney *et al.* 2007) cited in Chowdhury, (2017:529). The first category includes "self-conscious moral emotions", described as emotions of the self, such as embarrassment, shame, pride and guilt. Self-conscious moral emotions originate from self-reflection and occur when individuals want to avoid experiences such as embarrassment, which can be seen as a negative self-conscious emotion. The second category comprises "other-focused moral emotions" and is defined as emotions that originate from the observation of others. Compassion and empathy are examples of other-focused emotions and relate closely to matters such as eco-friendly or pro-environmental activities. Chowdhury confirms that emotional responses are fundamental in defining moral beliefs

and moral actions (Chowdhury, 2017:529). This section will firstly focus on the self-conscious moral emotion of guilt, and secondly on the other-focused emotion of empathy as both these emotions indicate a strong relation to ethical consumerism.

3.3.1 THE ROLE OF THE EMOTION OF GUILT

Steenhaut and Van Kenhove (2006:269) point to the fact that both positive and negative emotions can guide ethical behaviour as these emotions can give prominence to the consequences and violations of norms. The emotion of "anticipated guilt" is examined in their study with specific reference to the relationship of this emotion to an individual's ethical intentions, as well as to his or her ethical beliefs (Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2006:270). In their study, they refer to Baumeister *et al.* (1994:245) defining guilt as follows:

> …an individual's unpleasant emotional state associated with possible objections to one's own actions, inaction, circumstances, or intentions. It is an aroused form of emotional distress that is distinct from fear and anger and based on the possibility that one may be in the wrong (Baumeister, R; Stillwell, M; Heatherton, 1994).

Several researchers have found a link between the emotion of guilt and the behaviour of the consumer. Lascu (1991 in Okada, 2005) indicates that the emotion of guilt can occur in different stages of the consumption process, i.e. when products are purchased (e.g. during impulse buying), during the usage of products (e.g. products harmful to an individual), or even during disposal of products or the resultant waste. Dahl *et al.* (2003 in Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2006:270) elaborate by stating that guilt levels increase drastically during the disposal of products especially when consumers do not discard food, packaging, or electronic waste by means of an ethically compliant process of recycling. Antonetti and Maklan (2014) furthermore note that consumers experience post-consumption guilt when they are directly responsible for negative outcomes after consumption practices took place. Examples include consumers feeling guilty because of their direct activities contributing to issues such as poor working conditions for workers or their impact on pollution. It is further postulated that the negative emotion of guilt might transform consumers' purchasing patterns in future as the emotion might initiate ethical and responsible behaviour (Luchs *et al*., 2015:1459).

Although guilt is mainly considered as a "self-conscious" moral emotion, Tangney and Dearing (2002 in Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2006:270) point to the fact that guilt as a moral value can in some cases be viewed as an "other-focused" moral emotion, as it relates to the welfare of others or the welfare of society. This implies that guilt can be experienced by consumers when they consider

engaging in unethical activities that will cause harm to others or to society, or put differently when negative relational consequences are expected. Consumers will thus be motivated by anticipating the emotion of guilt when interpersonal consequences are evaluated and the decision to "do the right thing" deserves preference.

In order for companies to advise consumers about their responsible consumer practices, the role of consumers' emotions, with specific reference to the emotion of anticipated guilt, should not be underestimated. Marketing strategies can therefore affect consumers' perception of their responsibilities when the role of emotions in consumer behaviour is understood. As an example, the support for environmentally responsible products could be increased through the use of marketing campaigns that focus on this specific emotion (Luchs *et al.*, 2015:1459). Steenhaut and Van Kenhove and Kenhove further argue that the emotion of guilt can be used as a powerful tool within communication strategies. They note that guilt is effective when information with regards to the protection of intellectual property should be communicated. In the case of the exploitation of intellectual property, the emphasis of the communication strategy should fall on the interpersonal harm caused as a result of an infringement of copyright. The eventual harm caused to the original artist might introduce anticipated guilt and contribute towards preventing such behaviour in future (Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2006:279). Anticipated guilt might therefore act as a mechanism of control or a so-called partial intermediary in the prevention of actions that are of an unethical nature (Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2006:270). In other words, one's ethical beliefs can have a positive effect on one's ethical intentions through the emotion of anticipated guilt, especially when a consumer is faced with a situation that is ethically questionable (Vitel 2003 in Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2006:278). Apart from consumers' intentions, Luchs *et al.* (2015:1458) investigate the link between the emotion of guilt and consumer responsibility in their study titled "Exploring Consumer Responsibility for Sustainable Consumption". They point out that guilt as an emotion directs ethical decision-making and affects responsible consumer behaviour. It seems that consumers feel guilty when their consumption activities lead to consequences that are negative in principle, and that guilt might in fact increase responsibility amongst consumers.

Another factor that seems to influence the emotion of guilt in consumers is the perception of happiness or pleasure during the consumption process. As was stated in Chapter 2, neutralisation techniques are often used by some consumers to excuse unethical consumption practices and can therefore also aid in reducing feelings of guilt due to the rationalisation of consumption behaviour (Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2006:280). Although some consumers are frequently motivated by the experience of enjoyment, especially when it comes to their consumption behaviour, some consumers experience the emotion of guilt when they associate their enjoyment with hedonic

consumption. Evidently, more pleasure will be experienced when consumers can justify their positive experience within the framework of consumption. However, when consumers cannot justify the experience of pleasure, the emotion of guilt will become more apparent (Okada, 2005:43).

Arli *et al.* investigate guilt together with shame, and specifically focus on these two emotions in relation to certain consumer cultures (Arli, Leo and Tjiptono, 2016:3). They note that guilt applies to the individual's specific behaviour or their private sense (i.e. "I did a bad thing"), while shame emphasises the global self and comes to the fore when personal shortcomings are made public (i.e. "I am a bad person").

In Arli *et al.*'s study, consumers in Indonesia and Australia took part in research on the emotions of guilt and shame (Arli, Leo and Tjiptono, 2016:2). The study indicates that Australians' anticipation of shame encouraged them to "do good" to others and the conclusion was drawn that economic development, together with a more extensive acceptance of responsibility to society, encourages consumers to engage in ethical practices such as recycling and the responsible disposal of goods. In contrast, Indonesian consumers responded more favourably to the emotion of guilt in correcting their unethical behaviour. The conclusion drawn was that people from developing countries view unethical behaviours in terms of personal transgressions and that the emotion of anticipated guilt was more evident in ensuring ethical consumption behaviour (Arli *et al.*, 2016:11).

From the research, it is indicated that the potential impact of the emotion of guilt (and in some cases the emotion of shame), is a valid driver of ethical consumerism and that marketers and business strategists can successfully make use of these emotions in order to influence consumers to accept responsibility for their consumption behaviour (Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2006:278).

3.3.2 THE ROLE OF EMPATHY

Chowdhury and Fernando (2014:679) note that the emotion of empathy can be viewed as a person's ability to detect the feelings or cognitive thoughts of other persons. Apart from detecting other individuals' feelings or thoughts, the emotion of empathy also seems to enable an individual to respond accordingly. Empathy is thus an "other-focused moral emotion" and consists of components such as affection and cognition.

According to Cohen (2010 in Chowdhury and Fernando, 2014), the emotion of empathy within the framework of business ethics contributes to more ethical, and fewer unethical practices, due to the emphasis on the consequences to the "other". Batson and Ahmad (2009 in Chowdhury and Fernando, 2014), note that selflessness, collaboration and pro-social behaviour, are the effects of empathy in moral psychology literature.

Chun (2016) examines the reasons why consumers prefer to support a certain brand when shopping. She investigates whether there is a correlation between the ethical character of customers and their perception of the ethical character of a company, also known as "virtue character congruence". Virtues can be defined as traits that are relevant to the behaviours of individuals or businesses and include behaviour that shows high moral standards. The author worked on developing a scale (Chun 2016) to measure organisational virtues and states the following with regard to an organisation's ethical character:

> An organization's ethical character can be represented by six dimensions of virtue: integrity, empathy, courage, warmth, zeal, and conscientiousness (Chun, 2016:531).

In her research, Chun focuses on The Body Shop, a cosmetic brand established by Anita Roddick in 1976 in the United Kingdom. This cosmetic brand was created on the basis of an ethical philosophy and claims to focus on the abovementioned six virtues in order to emphasise its commitment to consumers and to differentiate itself from other competitors (Chun, 2016:534). Chun uses three measurements in order to establish virtue character congruence. Firstly, she measures virtue congruence by assessing the six dimensions of the ethical character scale. Secondly, consumer-brand-identification is measured and statements such as "I feel an affinity with The Body Shop" and "I am pleased to be associated with The Body Shop" were tested. Thirdly, citizenship is evaluated in order to measure whether consumers perceive the Body Shop as a business that plays a role in society beyond the concept of purely making profits (Chun, 2016:536). The findings state that consumers' self-image and their image of The Body Shop are congruent with regards to the virtue of empathy. This indicates that there is an emotional attachment between the customers and The Body Shop as the value of empathy (supportive, sympathetic, concerned and reassuring) is shared by both (Chun, 2016:541).

These research findings thus affirm that empathy is a valid driver of ethical consumerism, in that there is a positive link between this emotion and ethical decision-making in consumers (Chowdhury and Fernando, 2014:679).

3.4 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Would customers by default support companies that act responsibly in their respective business practices, and would such companies, in turn, motivate consumers to commit to ethical consumption practices? While Milton Friedman argues that: "the business of business is business" (Friedman, 1970), Grayson and Hodges summarise a counter-position in the following statement: "Today the business of business is everybody's business" (Grayson and Hodges, 2008). This statement supports the assumption that consumers can be an important check and balances system for CSR, and vice versa.

CSR, which is also referred to as the conscience of a business (Wood, 1991) in Vitell *et al.*, (2016), focuses on proactive initiatives that corporations should take into consideration in order to offer benefits to society, while simultaneously minimising harmful practices on both societal and environmental levels. Matten and Moon (2008) note that by implication, a corporation that acts in accordance with their CSR policy, measures its operational compliance with legal, international, and ethical norms (Matten and Moon, 2008:3). Furthermore, firms have the discretion, as well as the choice, to implement CSR policies that go beyond compliance and the instrumental interests of the corporation in order to participate in social good.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Carroll (1991) in Matten and Moon, (2008:3) differentiates between four main responsibilities of CSR, namely "economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities". Pryce (2002) notes that with regards to ethical responsibilities, CSR has moved to centre-stage globally and is an issue not to be ignored by any business, regardless of size, ownership structure, or the sector in which it operates. In addition to the aforesaid, Pryce identifies five factors that can be viewed as drivers of CSR in businesses. These include procurement changes, government pressure and legislation, employees' changing expectations, the rise of socially responsible investments and lastly, customer pressure (Pryce, 2002:140). While this confirms that consumer pressure can be considered as a driver of CSR, we are currently exploring the validity of CSR as a driver of ethical consumerism. In other words, for companies to influence consumer purchasing behaviour in a profitable way, it is imperative for them to act with ethical responsibility. The opposite should however also be true as it can be said that consumers accepting responsibility for their ethical purchasing decisions will - through these decisions - be able to influence companies with regards to their CSR practices, as well as the products and services that are on offer. Vitell (2015:767) proposes an alignment of "corporate interests" (i.e. profits) and "consumer interests" (i.e. self and public interests) in order to increase the benefits for both business and for society. Hence, in order

to eventually achieve optimal sustainability for businesses, society and the environment, the approach should be a shared responsibility and a commitment from the consumer, as well as from the corporation (Luchs *et al.*, 2015:1463).

When consumers make ethical consumption decisions, they rely upon the company's credibility with regards to product labels, brand names, and also CSR commitments. Pryce (2002:140) notes that CSR is valued amongst ethical consumers as it denotes businesses that prioritise their ethical, as well as social obligations beyond their financial and legal responsibilities. Local communities, as well as global communities, might therefore be positively impacted by a company's CSR initiatives. Palihawadana, Oghazi and Liu (2016) elaborate by stating that CSR has developed as an inescapable priority for leaders of businesses globally as consumers' purchasing intentions are much influenced by their evaluations of companies and their compliance to CSR. However, it seems that consumers globally view CSR initiatives in diverse ways, as research shows that the adoption of CSR in developing countries lags behind those of developed countries. This might be as a result of the fact that economic responsibilities are valued higher than other CSR responsibilities, i.e. legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities in developing countries due to these countries' dependence on economic sustainability (Palihawadana *et al.*, 2016:4966,4967).

In the Millennium Poll survey conducted by Environics International Ltd., consumers were asked to describe how they formed impressions of the companies they considered supporting. One in two persons mentioned that factors relating to a company's responsibilities, i.e. business ethics, environmental impacts, and commitments to society, mostly influenced their impressions of companies (Business Leaders Forum, 2003). Findings from the Millennium Poll further indicated that 25 000 consumers in 23 countries reported that brand or price of products was of less importance to them as they valued the corporations' CSR commitments of higher importance when they make ethical purchasing decisions (Pryce, 2002:140). Consumer pressure is therefore an important factor for businesses to consider especially when it pertains to their CSR practices. This pressure is experienced repeatedly in the examples of consumer anger when companies engage in irresponsible or unethical behaviour. In the past, consumers have applied pressure by boycotting high-profile companies such as Ford, Nike and Shell with regards to issues ranging from racism and child labour to issues affecting the environment. Not only did these boycotts cause real damage to the implicated companies as they directly influenced their financial performance, but they acted as proof of the commitment of consumers to refrain from supporting unethical practices. It can therefore be said that CSR does play a vital role in consumers' commitment to supporting such businesses. Pryce confirms that in cases where questionable behaviour becomes evident, consumer

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pressure is driven by a rapid surge of information regarding the behaviour of companies, for example accessing information on the Internet. Companies are therefore constantly forced to reveal their activities and CSR commitments, as consumers are motivated by the ethical compliance and performance of companies (Pryce, 2002:140).

In the case of Nike, questionable practices (in this case, moral failure) regarding child labour issues became apparent in the 1990s, resulting in public anger. Nike was faced with consumer boycotts and as a result, the company suffered immense reputational and financial damage. The CEO of Nike, Phil Knight, promised change in 1998 and, subsequently, Nike acknowledged their issues and stated a commitment towards transparency and change. In 2005, the company published their first CSR report and has since made several changes for the better. The fact that Nike is constantly facing their problems and responding to their challenges, contributes towards the sustainability of the brand (Newell, 2015). British Airways, on the other hand, conducted a preventative survey to investigate the ethical policies of their own suppliers in order to guarantee the customers of their commitment to ethical practices.

> Corporate Responsibility is a key part of our company's business plan. Despite the current economic uncertainties, at British Airways we have fully protected the level of resources to maintain our commitment to One Destination, our Corporate Responsibility programme. British Airways has led the airline industry in setting ambitious and challenging targets, including a carbon efficiency target, an absolute emissions reduction target, noise reduction targets, targets to improve our level of recycling and fundraising targets for Flying Start (British Airways, 2011:5).

It is evident that consumers have the ability to drive changes in companies that relate to ethical and responsible behaviour, as in the case of British Airways. Moreover, it is evident that responsible companies can count on the support of ethical consumers.

Companies globally have recognised the important role of CSR engagement in order to influence their customers and to enhance a positive corporate reputation. In turn, CSR practices motivate consumers to support ethical practices of companies thereby creating co-responsibility between companies and their consumers to commit to ethical consumerism. Although we have derived from previous research in Chapter 2 that some consumers show a lack of interest in CSR commitments from companies due to a lack of knowledge and awareness on their side, research confirms that consumers' ethical awareness and purchasing behaviour can be influenced by effective communication and truthful marketing campaigns (Nielsen, 2015:36). In the next section, the focus will fall on the impact of well-communicated information as a driver of ethical consumerism.

3.5 THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION

Consumers engage in discussions about products and services and whether they should be supported or rather avoided (Hellopeter, 2018). These discussions have a reciprocal influence amongst consumers and can act as a living reference or "word-of-mouth" affirmation with regards to the quality, price, and other features of such products and services. Ethical issues such as the sustainability of the environment, practices which involve child labour or suspect working conditions, animal abuse and factory farming, fair trade principles and organic farming, are becoming crucial considerations for consumers as their choices act as votes for or against such practices.

Sekerka, Mccabe and Bagozzi (2014:10) state that while in the past consumers primarily received information via telephones, emails and face-to-face talks, the internet has since become a worldwide platform for "word-of-mouth" testimonials. Virtual environments, as well as tools available online, have impacted on the information currently accessible and available to consumers. Social media is becoming a powerful force in guiding judgements amongst consumers collectively. Through numerous interactions and conversations, a single message has the ability to reach millions of customers at once. Social-media produces an ever-present platform of influence amongst consumers of different ages, backgrounds, races, gender, cultures, social status, and levels of education. Sekerta *et al.* (2014) state that consumers are in fact willing to take moral action more seriously (even more seriously than their own beliefs) when they are influenced by their peers on social media. Personal conversations and the exchange of informal product information can inspire consumer choices and decisions within this frame of peer groups. Customer reviews and online conversations can therefore enhance the education process through creating awareness that can influence purchasing decisions. It is further believed that online networks can substitute locality as a "new online community", which offers a continuous context to the ethical consumer (Sekerka *et al.*, 2014:10)

Cho and Kasser (2011) explore the role of the media in the behaviour of the "pro-environmental consumer" and discover that the content of media news influences the social consciousness of consumers positively. In their research, they focus on the forms of television programmes and related pro-environmental responses of viewers. Specialists in Communication Studies examined the relationship between five different forms of television programming and the pro-environmental concerns of the viewers. Types of programmes include programmes on public affairs, situation comedies, documentaries on nature, and progressive as well as traditional dramas. When factual (true incidents), fictional (imaginative creations) and actual-based (true incidents in current news)

television programmes were evaluated, a positive indicator of pro-environmental behaviour was demonstrated in the case where consumers viewed actual-based programmes (Cho and Kasser, 2011:10). The use of news media indicates a positive influence on the environmental attitudes, as well as on the behaviours of consumers. Not only does news media inform consumers about environmental issues, but it provides insight into ethical matters which would not have been addressed otherwise. Consequently, the use of news media has shown a positive relation to ethical consumerism, as well as to pro-environmental behaviour. Individuals, who were attentive to news media, indicated a strong concern for ethical matters within their consumption choices. As a result, news media can be seen as a strong force to encourage social, as well as environmental, awareness and consciousness of consumers. The media can therefore be considered as a driver of ethical consumerism as it motivates ethical behaviour amongst consumers (Cho and Kasser, 2011:17).

Apart from sources on the internet and media, consumers also access information from several other sources including product labels, brochures, and marketing initiatives. Auger *et al.* (2003) demonstrate the positive impact of information on consumers' ethical purchase intentions and state that salience is a key factor in the process of consumer decision-making. Consumers react to, and are convinced by, information received in an effective, adequate and constant fashion. Consumers are sometimes ignorant with regards to information on the products that they consider buying. However, when consumers receive appropriate ethical information which is presented in an effective and adequate way, they are more likely to alter their behaviour in order to favour their ethical convictions (Auger *et al.* 2003:299).

The Body Shop is an example of a company that effectively communicates and addresses their consumers' needs through their commitment to attend to the functional, as well as ethical features of their products. To validate this, the following example may shed more light on this statement. The Body Shop communicates the following information to their customers online, as well as on product labels:

Aloe Soothing Rescue Cream

- Formulated for sensitive skin
- Pure Community Trade aloe from Campeche, Mexico
- No added fragrance, colour or alcohol
- Formulated without preservatives
- Soothe and calm sensitive skin with the power of Aloe Vera.

One can gather from the above that the company is committed to community trade and refrains from ingredients that could possibly cause harm. Furthermore, The Body Shop commits to enrich the planet by furthermore sharing the following information on their website:

> The world is our source of beauty, but it's facing devastation. We actively help enrich the biodiversity where we grow our ingredients. We act and campaign to enrich and support threatened areas of outstanding natural value to the planet.

> BY 2020 WE COMMIT TO

> - Build bio-bridges, protecting and regenerating 75 million square meters of habitat helping communities to live more sustainably
>
> - Reduce the environmental footprint of our stores every time we refurbish or redesign them
>
> - Develop and deliver three new sustainable packaging innovations
>
> - Ensure that 70% of our total product packaging does not contain fossil fuels
>
> - Power 100% of our stores with renewable or carbon balanced energy
>
> - Reduce by 10% the energy use of all our stores (TheBodyShop, 2018)

Consumers that are committed to support the Body Shop are therefore capable of making informed decisions by accessing information on the product labels, as well as on the company's website, thereby committing their purchasing votes towards ethical practices.

Elaborating on the access to information, Maniatis (2016) investigates consumers' perceptions about products known for their "green appearance" and "green reliability", and the influence of these perceptions on consumers' ethical purchasing decisions. The conclusion drawn is that consumers examine products by assessing labels with regards to certification processes, the types of ingredients used, the type of packaging used, the product information on the packaging and also the economic and environmental benefits. Consumers make product choices based on the knowledge that they gain of the product on the basis of their analysis of four domains. These domains are "environmental consciousness", "green appearance consciousness", "reliability consciousness", and "economic consciousness". Maniatis notes the importance of marketing campaigns that include the above-mentioned four domains of knowledge analysis, but also adds that the appearance of the product plays a key role. The details about product ingredients, the environment, as well as societal benefits of the product, the recyclability of the product, as well as logos representing green certifications, are additional factors that influence consumers during the process of decision-making (Maniatis, 2016:226). Both education awareness and the access to well communicated information

are important drivers in convincing consumers to accept ethical responsibility for their consumption choices and practices.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Carrier *et al.* (2012) note that an ethical consumer shows a preference towards products or services that are viewed as socially and environmentally beneficial. This preference to use and consume ethically, is initiated through several influences. Although the goals and values of ethical consumers vary, individuals or groups make consumption decisions according to their unique contexts, experiences and commitments. This can, for example, include support for an improved life for farmers in Central Africa; or actively participating in practices that can reduce global warming, or the protection of fish supplies in the Atlantic North. With every purchasing decision, ethical consumers cast their "votes" through their shopping decisions as they consider the consequences of their actions (Carrier and Luetchford, 2012:3).

In Chapter 3, we have reflected on five possible drivers of ethical consumerism. Firstly, the focus fell on the socio-ethical behaviours that influence ethical consumers' decisions. The role of gender and age, family and the influence of education were discussed. Secondly, psychographic factors were examined, and included the influence of certain values on consumer behaviour, as well as the role that emotional intelligence plays in making ethical consumption decisions. Thirdly, affective factors such as the role of anticipated guilt and the emotion of empathy were discussed, which both indicated a positive relation to ethical consumption practices. Fourthly, CSR was shown to be a valid driver of ethical consumerism as companies and consumers seem to cross-influence each other in accepting co-responsibility for consumption practices. Lastly, consumers value accurate and truthful information about products as this contributes to their awareness and knowledge about important ethical issues and the consequent impact of their purchasing behaviour on society and the environment.

As the drivers of ethical consumerism have been discussed, we now turn to practical options and suggestions for motivating ethical consumers to maintain their commitment, and for influencing non-ethical consumers to become aware of the importance of committing to ethical consumerism.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

After investigating the concept of Ethical Consumerism and what it entails in Chapter 1, we explored several obstacles thereto in Chapter 2, as well as a variety of drivers in Chapter 3. Figure 4.1 offers a summary of both the identified obstacles to and drivers of ethical consumerism.

INFLUENCE IS CONTEXT SPECIFIC Socio-Ethical Behaviours - Gender and age - Role of family - Influence of Education		
OBSTACLES TO ETHICAL CONSUMERISM		**DRIVERS OF ETHICAL CONSUMERISM**
Consumer Prejudice - Economic Rationalisation - Perception of Quality		Psychographic Factors - Values - Emotional Intelligence
Consumer Inertia		
The Intention-Behaviour Gap - Prioritisation of concerns - Consumer habits and plans - Sacrifice and commitment - Modes of shopping behaviour	**LEVERS OF CHANGE**	Affective Factors - Guilt - Empathy
Neutralisation Techniques - Economic rationalisation - Institutional Dependency - Developmental Realism		Corporate Social Responsibility
Choice Complexity and Consumer Confusion - The Complexity of information - Information overload - Passivity in engaging with information		The Impact of Information Online / Media (actual-based)/Marketing initiatives / Knowledge gain through analysis - Environmental consciousness - Green appearance consciousness (product ingredients, societal benefits, packaging, recyclability, logos representing certification) - Reliability consciousness - Economic consciousness

Figure 4.1: Summary of the obstacles to and the drivers of ethical consumerism.

Figure 4.2 suggests levers to affect change within the framework of ethical consumption behaviour. Consumers currently positioned in groups one to four, need to change their consumption intentions

and behaviour drastically in order to mitigate social, as well as environmental risks, and to ensure sustainability in the future. These changes can only be achieved through the effective use of relevant levers of change that will be able to combat some of the obstacles to ethical consumerism.
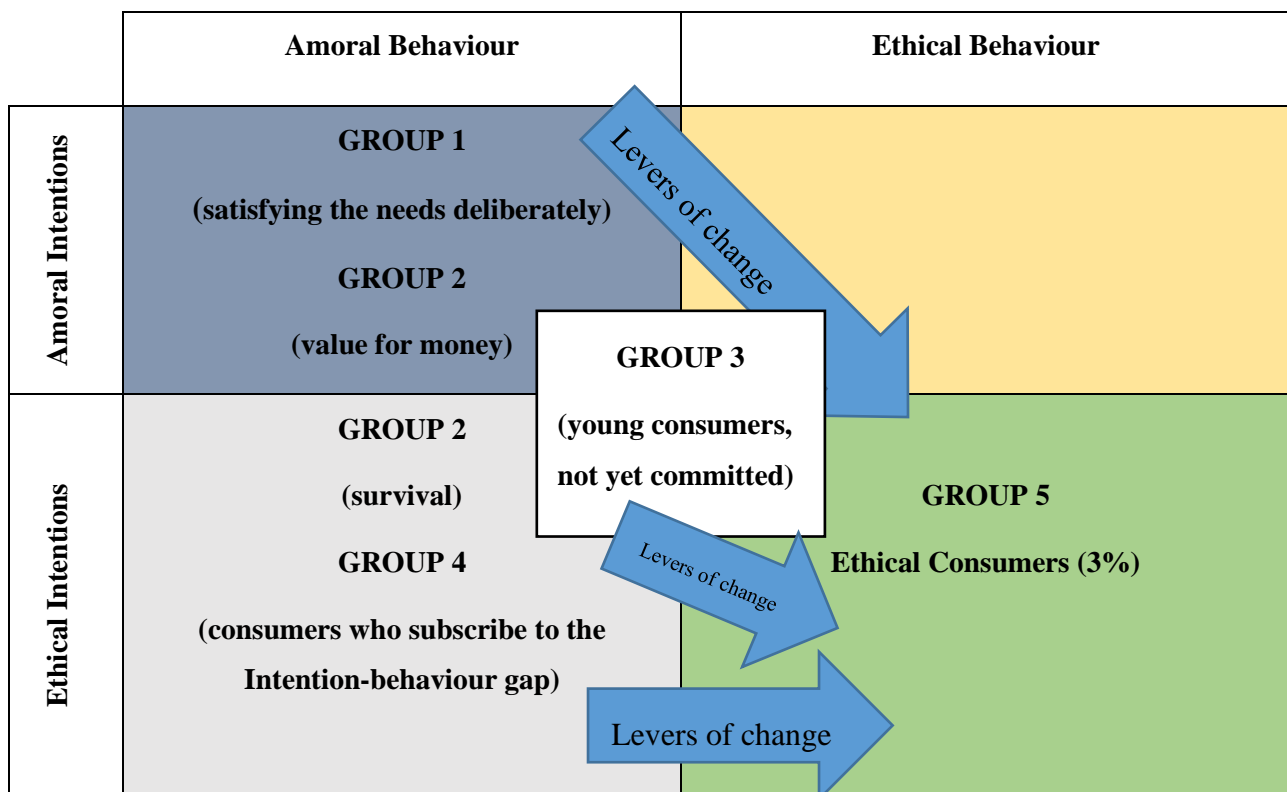

Figure 4.2: The relation between consumers' purchasing intentions and consumer behaviour and the levers of change that may affect change in ethical consumption behaviour.

As was discussed in Chapter 2 and summarised in Figure 4.1, the obstacles to ethical consumerism namely consumer prejudice, consumer inertia, the intention-behaviour gap, neutralisation techniques, and choice complexity and consumer confusion, may, independently or in combination, contribute to low ethical intentions as well as amoral behaviour amongst consumers. Figure 4.2 urges us to ask two questions. Firstly, what may heighten consumers' ethical intentions and secondly, what will positively influence consumers' amoral behaviour? These two matters will be discussed briefly.

Carrigan and Moraes (2015) remind us in Chapter 2 that there are three inherent pressures experienced by consumers when making purchasing decisions. These pressures are identified as egocentricity (self-centredness), amoral and rational-economic motivations, as well as hypocrisy (referring to group 4), that impact on inconsistent and unreliable consumption intentions and behaviour (Carrigan and Moraes, 2015:7). Consumers currently belonging to group 1 indicate amoral intentions resulting in amoral behaviour. Possible reasons for their behaviour may include self-centredness, a lack of knowledge resulting in amoral and rational-economic motivations,

limited ethical sensitivity, inadequate ethics education, and limited ethical information. Group 2 reflects amoral intentions resulting in amoral behaviour, but unlike group 1, this group requires value for money as a possible result of amoral rational-economical motivations, or in other words, "more goods for less money". A lack of information and knowledge may contribute to this group's view that ethical products are sub-standard quality products. Limited ethical sensitivity or inadequate ethics education could possibly affect this group's intentions resulting in amoral behaviour.

Although some consumers in group 2 may have intentions to comply with ethical consumerism, their intentions do not translate into ethical behaviour due to limited financial or physical means. They may therefore have enough knowledge and ethical sensitivity, but their physical means remains a constraint in complying with ethical consumption behaviour.

Group 3, currently neutral in their intentions and behaviours, are still undeveloped with regards to influences. Ethics education, ethical information as well as product knowledge could be valid levers of change for this group. However, the obstacles that were previously identified could continue playing a role in influencing these consumers to remain neutral. The levers of change may thus hopefully impact this group effectively as they currently show a neutral attitude.

As referred to in Chapter 2, the obstacles that contribute to the behaviour of consumers in group 4, also known as the intention-behaviour gap, include prioritisation of concerns, consumer habits and plans, sacrifice and commitment, and modes of shopping behaviour. According to Carrigan and Moraes (2015), hypocrisy could also be a reason for why the intentions of consumers in group 4 do not translate into ethical behaviour. Limited information or a lack of product knowledge may also contribute towards the inability of group 4 to translate their intentions into ethical consumption behaviour. Although it is important to focus on drivers of change that may influence the obstacles of ethical consumerism, it remains just as important to remind ourselves of the drivers that positively influence consumers in group 5 (i.e. ethical consumers). From Chapter 3, we learned that ethical consumers are motivated by drivers such as psychographic and affective factors, CSR, and the impact of information and knowledge gained through analysis of ethical matters. These drivers may thus possibly influence consumers from other groups should they be adequately and effectively subjected thereto.

The abovementioned pressures preventing consumers of groups one to four from engaging in ethical consumerism are summarised in Figure 4.3, which exhibits these pressures and suggests effective levers of change.
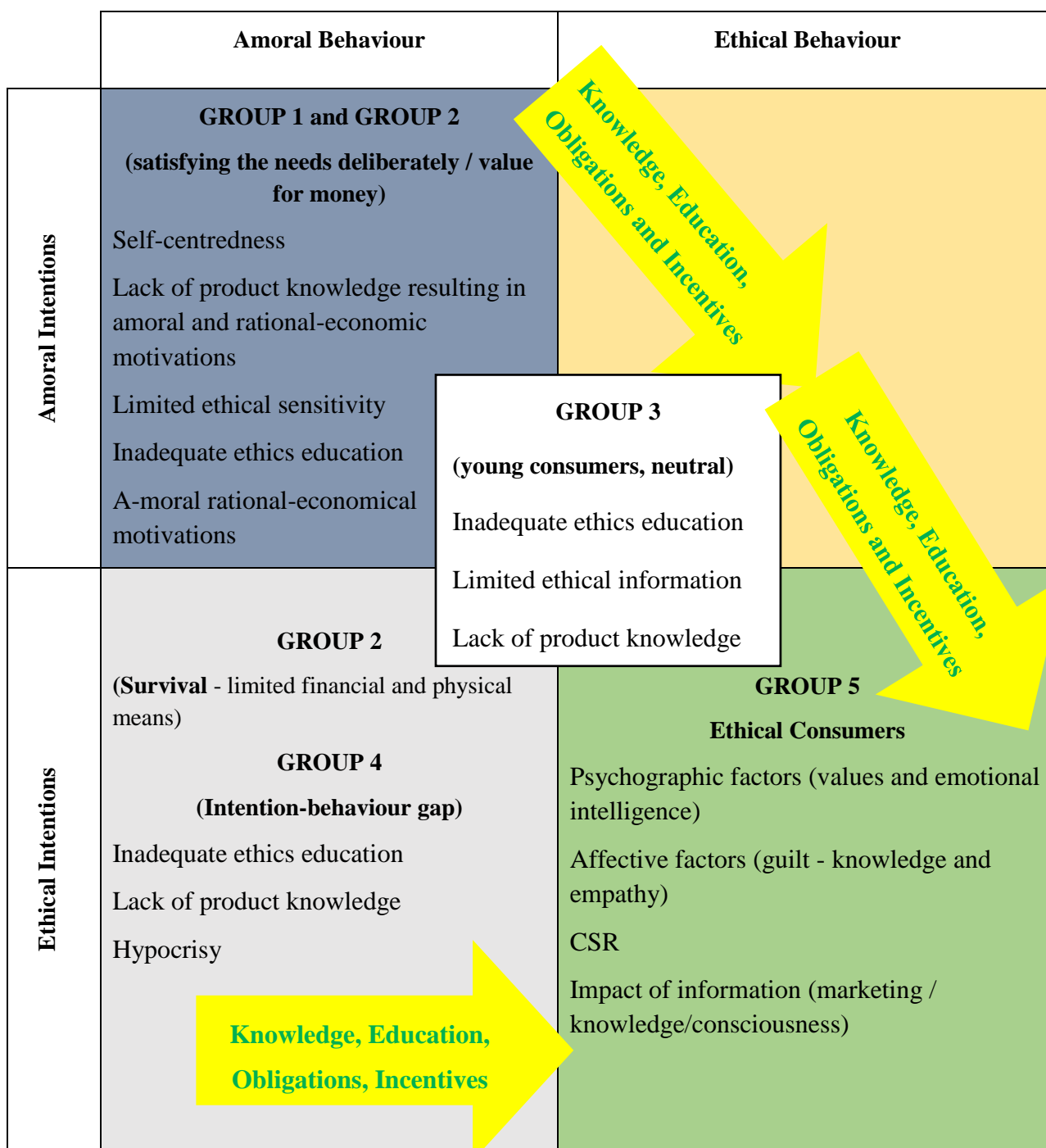
	Amoral Behaviour	Ethical Behaviour
Amoral Intentions	**GROUP 1 and GROUP 2** **(satisfying the needs deliberately / value for money)** Self-centredness Lack of product knowledge resulting in amoral and rational-economic motivations Limited ethical sensitivity Inadequate ethics education A-moral rational-economical motivations	*Knowledge, Education, Obligations and Incentives*
Ethical Intentions	**GROUP 2** **(Survival** - limited financial and physical means) **GROUP 4** **(Intention-behaviour gap)** Inadequate ethics education Lack of product knowledge Hypocrisy **Knowledge, Education, Obligations, Incentives**	**GROUP 5** **Ethical Consumers** Psychographic factors (values and emotional intelligence) Affective factors (guilt - knowledge and empathy) CSR Impact of information (marketing / knowledge/consciousness)

GROUP 3

(young consumers, neutral)

Inadequate ethics education

Limited ethical information

Lack of product knowledge

Figure 4.3: Possible reasons for consumers' intentions not translating into ethical behaviours, and the recommended levers of change.

4.1 STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Figure 4.3 illustrates the pressures affecting consumers' intentions and behaviour. It furthermore suggests four levers of change i.e. knowledge, education, obligations and incentives, that may address these pressures. In order to understand which levers of change may affect consumer intentions, and which levers may affect consumer behaviour, the next section will briefly focus on each of these two terms.

4.1.1 CONSUMER INTENTIONS

Figure 4.3 suggests that knowledge could act as a possible lever of change for human intentions. Two definitions of the term intentions will be briefly referred to. According to Sobotka (2016) human intentions are guided by knowledge. She defines the following as necessary for intention:

> Before intention, there must be knowledge. Still before knowledge, there must be learning. And it is learning which helps us have the capacity for both right understanding and right thought (Sobotka, 2016).

Smith (2017) notes that human intentions guide individuals' rationalised actions. Accordingly, rationalisation involves the process to explain reasons for our behaviour. Therefore, the reasons for our behaviour will influence our intentions. Smith defines intentions as follows:

> Intentions are the psychological states that produce and guide action. In particular, on the most common view, intentions are the efficient causes of intended actions, are what rationalize actions, are what promote both the sort of intra-agential, cross-temporal coherence that allows people to take complicated actions over time, and facilitate the sort of trans-agential coherence that allows people to act in concert with one another.

In order for agents to account for reasons behind their actions, knowledge is essential. For the purpose of this thesis, I would like to differentiate between the terms information, knowledge, and education, as it will highlight why information on its own will not be effective enough to influence consumers' ethical intentions. One of the obstacles identified in Chapter 2, namely choice complexity and consumer confusion, has shown that information (without embedded knowledge and adequate education), seems ineffective (Carrigan and Moraes, 2015).

Preston *et al.* (2012) differentiates between information and knowledge by stating the following:

> Information is said to be facts provided or learned about someone or something. Information is factual and it can even be trivial. Information can also be false or information can lack connectedness. Information involves no defined connection between ideas.

> Knowledge is the factor that connects fragments of information together. This creates a mental map and understanding of a topic. Knowledge forms meaning from bits of information (Preston, Ryan and Cody, 2012).

Although information exists without knowledge, knowledge is non-existent without information. The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Hetherington, 2018) defines knowledge as follows:

    a)   Knowledge as acquaintance

b) Knowledge -That

c) Knowledge – Wh-

d) Knowing – How

Hetherington describes four kinds of knowledge at the hand of Gilbert Ryle (1971). Firstly, knowledge involves acquaintances by means of direct interaction. There is a difference between knowing someone or something, and knowing a fact about someone or something. Knowledge is therefore not only gathered through experiences, but also by learning facts about experiences. Secondly, "knowledge – that" refers to a kind of knowledge that involves the truth. For example knowledge that kangaroos hop or that the earth is round. Thirdly, "knowledge – wh" refers to phrases such as knowing "whether"; knowing "who"; knowing "why"; and knowing "what". By asking these questions, one's reasoning about certain issues will be influenced. Fourthly, "knowing - how" indicates the action of knowing how to do certain things, thus a type of practical knowledge (Hetherington, 2018).

Education is defined as the process of inviting information, truth, wisdom and respect (Smith, 2015). It can be described as the process of gaining specific subject contents and experiencing life lessons in order to contribute to knowledge.

As the term knowledge connects fragments of information, this term (knowledge) will be used for the purpose of this thesis. Education and knowledge are thus proposed as two levers of change (Figure 4.4), as they can affect our intentions.

Figure 4.4: Information and education, as well as information and knowledge as levers of change, affecting ethical intentions

4.1.2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

From the previous section, knowledge and education were identified as levers of change that may affect consumer intentions. The next step will involve addressing the levers of change that will affect consumer behaviour. In their article titled "How laws affect behaviour", Galbiati and Vertova (2014) state that incentives play a positive role in shaping an individual's behaviour. The researchers refer to two aspects working interdependently, namely obligations and incentives. The obligation part consists of formal rules that may impact the behaviour of individuals, while the incentive part refers to the consequences for upholding or violating the implored behaviour.

Incentives are therefore effected as possible punishments, or rewards, depending on whether the contributions fall below the minimum, or above the expected behaviour (Galbiati and Vertova, 2014:49). Their research furthermore confirms that individuals comply with rules in the presence of even weak incentives. It can therefore be said that obligations and incentives in combination will positively affect cooperation in behaviour and may mitigate self-interest or egocentric behaviour (Galbiati and Vertova, 2014:56). Whereas regulations are defined as principles or rules made and maintained in order to manage systems, organisations or activities; obligations are defined as conditions of being morally or legally bound to something. These directives are made in order to control the way things are done or the way in which people should behave (Smith, 2015). In this context, the term obligations and regulations (Figure 4.5) will be used interchangeably i.e. as a prescription promoting a certain desired end. Galbiati and Vertova (2014) argue that the combination of obligations and incentives positively contribute towards desired ethical behaviour.

Figure 4.5: Obligations and incentives as levers of change affecting ethical behaviour.

As the four levers of change namely knowledge, education, obligations and incentives are suggested to address the intentions as well as the behaviour of consumers, it is important to mention that these levers may often work collectively. As an example, education, regulations and knowledge powerfully impact on one another. Alternatively, knowledge and incentives may similarly cross-influence one another. With this in mind, Figure 4.4 may assist in identifying the stakeholders that may act as change agents in effecting the levers of change in order to address the pressures that consumers experience.

4.2 STAKEHOLDERS OF ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

During the consumption processes, different stakeholders influence consumers' buying patterns. Figure 4.6 summarises four different stakeholders of ethical consumerism namely the primary social stakeholders, the secondary social stakeholders, the primary non-social stakeholders and lastly the secondary non-social stakeholders.

PRIMARY SOCIAL STAKEHOLDERS	SECONDARY SOCIAL STAKEHOLDERS
- Government - Consumers - Manufacturers, Suppliers, Retailers and Marketers - Internet and Media - Society	- Educational Institutions - Regulators and Certifying Institutions - Social Pressure Groups - Civic Institutions - Trade Bodies
PRIMARY NONSOCIAL STAKEHOLDERS	SECONDARY NONSOCIAL STAKEHOLDERS
- Natural Environment - Future Generations - Nonhuman Species	- Environmental Interest Groups - Animal Welfare Organisations

Figure 4.6: Stakeholders of ethical consumerism influencing consumers' buying patterns.

Consumers make use of products and services on a continuous basis. According to the website[6] titled, "Principles of Marketing explained Marketing-Insider", consumers purchase four types of products, namely: 1) "convenience products", which include frequently bought products such as fast food, coffee, laundry detergents and magazines; 2) "shopping products" that are less frequently purchased and include goods such as furniture, clothing, and used cars; 3) "speciality products" with unique characteristics such as professional equipment; designer clothes and specific cars, and lastly, 4) "unsought products", which are products that consumers do not often think about and only purchase when they are in need of them for example life insurance, funeral services or medicine (Claessens, 2017). Throughout the consumption processes, stakeholders influence consumers' buying patterns. The following examples serve to illustrate the role of stakeholders in influencing consumers:

- Government, together with regulators and certifying institutions, affect codes of practices and markets by enforcing manufacturing and consumption obligations through policy.
- Consumers influence other consumers by word-of-mouth communication.
- Manufacturers, suppliers and retailers may influence consumers through marketing initiatives, the use of specific packaging, and information provided on labels. They may further be effective change agents in developing and implementing incentives in order to motivate consumers to change their consumption habits.

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[6] https://marketing-insider.eu/4-types-of-consumer-products/

- Focusing on information and education as levers of change, stakeholders such as the internet and media, and educational institutions can act as effective change agents.
- Social pressure groups have the ability to persuade consumers through information and knowledge provided on communication platforms.

The following section demonstrates how these changes can employ the identified levers of change in order to influence ethical consumerism positively.

4.3 LEVERS OF CHANGE

4.3.1 EDUCATION

Education as a platform to inform consumers about ethical practices from a young age cannot be underestimated. As Carey *et al.* confirmed in Chapter 3, "parental consumer decision-making" is an important field of interest within ethical decision-making. Parents have the opportunity, as role models, to educate and influence their children in becoming ethical consumers and citizens of the global world (Carey *et al.*, 2008:559). Furthermore, education is not only the responsibility of parents, but also the collective responsibility of stakeholders within the education system, including students, teachers, principals, and the government.

Kohlberg and Hersh (2014) argue that moral development occurs at different levels and stages of teaching (see Chapter 3). With this in mind, it is clear that the education system is a forceful platform for the moral development of individuals. Kohlberg and Hersh note that priority should be given to the moral development involving stages two and three where principles, rather than power, constitute the focus.

El-Bassiouny *et al.* (2011) demonstrate in Chapter 3 that ethics education for tween students is positively correlated with ethical consumerism. This lever may prove a powerful resource in addressing the intentions of young consumers, who have not yet formed their consumer intentions or behaviour (Figure 4.2, group 3). Currently, the role of the education system in advocating consumer ethics is undervalued. Platforms such as the internet, media and television could be included in educational systems as mediums of communication on ethical consumer practices. Ethical consumerism should be incorporated within all levels of the school curriculum, and could even be introduced and reinforced from a pre-school level through to college or university education. As an example, the primary school curriculum could focus on recycling practices thereby using recycled materials to support their broader curriculum. Organic farming, information on child

labour and fair trade can similarly be included in higher levels of the education system. Learners who are taught about ethical consumerism could possibly, in turn, influence their parents, thereby addressing a broader part of society.

Furthermore, within the education system, the influence of emotional intelligence, which has been shown to develop attributes like self-awareness, responsible decision-making, social-awareness and self-management, should receive priority. Emotional intelligence encourages positive beliefs regarding "doing-good" actions, which strongly relate to ethical consumer behaviour (Chowdhury, 2017:123). In their article titled "Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions", Taylor *et al.* (2017) confirm that school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes show short-term as well as long-term benefits across diverse age groups as well as geographic contexts. According to their research, these emotional learning programmes would prepare students from various backgrounds to successfully develop an ethical sensitivity towards social and environmental issues. These programmes will enable learners and students to become emotionally intelligent citizens who value ethicality within the field of consumerism (Taylor *et al.*, 2017). Collaborative action from stakeholders within the education environment is needed in order to address consumer behaviour and the impact thereof on the sustainability of the social and natural environment.

4.3.2 INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

By making ethical consumption decisions, consumers actively demonstrate their "consumer power" as they control the impact of their consumer decisions in order to benefit society and protect the environment (Shaw *et al.*, 2005:197). Maniatis (2016) reminds us that consumers make consumption decisions based on their analysis of four main domains, namely environmental consciousness, reliability consciousness, economic consciousness, and green appearance consciousness (including product ingredients, the societal benefits to humans and animals, the type of packaging and its recyclability, and the certification processes included on the label).

Based on the fact that knowledge influences one's intentions, information and education can effectively contribute in empowering consumers in deconstructing their habitual consumption patterns and forming new and more ethical behaviours and routines. This might motivate consumers to alter their purchasing behaviour from supporting conventional markets to the support of unconventional markets comprised of ethical consumption alternatives. In order for consumers to become more knowledgeable, a multi-dimensional approach involving several dimensions of communication and a variety of platforms (where focused information can be transferred) should be

used. This approach will eventually enable sustainable ethical consumption behaviour (Carrington, *et al.*, 2014:2764).

As was discussed under the obstacles of ethical consumerism, consumers view information as complex and overwhelming, which sometimes results in passivity. To overcome these challenges, information needs to be clear, relevant, and trustworthy in order to create a mental map and understanding of a topic. Within the retail environment, research by Carter (2009) suggests that consumers might be persuaded to change their purchasing behaviour if marketers engage consumers in all the steps of the decision-making process. These steps involve a need for information, which will in turn affect the consumer's perceived responsibility, thereby triggering a change in purchasing behaviour (Carter, 2009:474). As referred to in Chapter 2, the complexity of information remains a constraint to consumers.

I will briefly refer to two different scenarios in order to demonstrate the passivity of consumers with regard to engaging with information, and the urgent need for platforms of communication. The first scenario was discussed in Chapter 1, where the impact of the consumption of coffee (and milk) on climate change was highlighted. Claessens (2017) classifies coffee (with or without reference to the fast food industry) as a convenience product – a product often purchased by consumers without the necessary consideration with regards to the negative effects thereof on the environment and society. In other words, consumers purchase coffee (or alternatives thereof) for their enjoyment, as well as for the benefits experienced by the consumption of the product. As a result, coffee is often marketed as a product full of flavour and aroma that satisfies the needs of its consumers as indicated below.

Image 4.1: Coffee (Snell, 2017)

However, not all types of coffee products are manufactured in compliance with ethical standards. Should true marketing or ethical marketing use images as indicated below, especially when coffee is manufactured under questionable conditions, consumers might think twice before purchasing such a product.

Image 4.2: Sorting coffee by hand - back-breaking work in the poverty cycle (Sustaingreen, 2018).
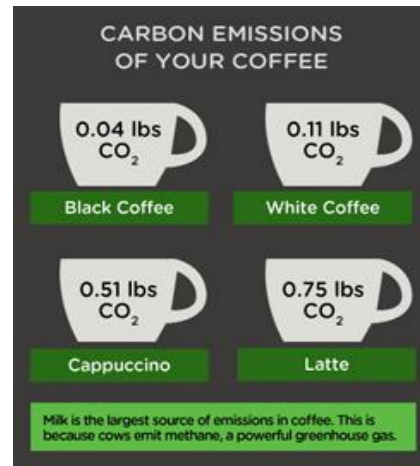

Image 4.3: Carbon emissions of your coffee (O'Neill, 2007).

The second scenario to be discussed, pertains to the category of "Unsought products", i.e. products that consumers do not think about often and only purchase when they are in need of them (Claessens, 2017). A woman experiences menopausal symptoms and visits her gynaecologist. The medical professional prescribes the drug Premarin, a hormone replacement therapy drug containing "conjucated estrogens", in order to treat the patient's symptoms of menopause, preventing certain forms of cancer, and inhibiting osteoporosis (Envisionsolutionsnow, 2018). When visiting the website of the company Pfizer, which produces the specific drug, the patient is pleasantly surprised by the company's commitments to their vision, which states "Living our full potential in striving for a healthier Southern Africa" as well as their values, including "Integrity", "Innovation", "Respect for people" (PfizerSouthAfrica, 2017). The patient's medical aid approves the product and the patient obtains the product from her local pharmacy. The product that she purchases resembles the following image:

Image 4.4: Premarin - Hormone Replacement Therapy (PfizerSouthAfrica, 2017).

However, after a year of using the product and enjoying the benefits thereof, the patient is coincidently informed, that the product that she is using is made from a questionable source, namely the urine of horses. When she acquires information and adequate knowledge about the product by reading on the internet and following discussions on social media, she realises that the product

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holds ethical concerns. Firstly, the product's name Premarin, is contracted from "**PRE**gnant **MAR**es' Ur**IN**e". Secondly, the circumstances under which the horses are kept in order to source their urine, is appalling and shocking (Allin, 2018). Throughout their entire pregnancies (11 months), the mares are confined to stalls so small that they cannot physically turn around. After the birth of their foals, the mares are once again impregnated and this cycle can be repeated for up to 12 years. The horses wear "rubber urine-collection sacks" on a continuous basis in order for the urine to be collected, which causes chafing and sores on the animals. Furthermore, the horses have restricted access to water in order for them to produce concentrated urine.

After the patient becomes knowledgeable about the practices in the manufacturing of the product, she constructs a different image of the product that she is using.

Image 4.5: Premarin – Hormone Replacement Therapy (Allin, 2018).

From the two examples discussed above, i.e. the lifecycle of coffee and the lifecycle of the example of hormone replacement therapy, it becomes evident that several stakeholders play a role in informing and educating consumers and thereby, in combatting consumer passivity. In the abovementioned cases, information was initially inefficiently communicated and did not alert consumers to the consequences and impact of the products used. It becomes clear that consumers are often not well educated, informed or aware about the products and the related impact of these products. The co-responsibility of consumers, as well as other stakeholders (manufacturers, suppliers, marketers, government) in contributing towards the dissemination of truthful information, is imperative for building a sound body of consumer knowledge.

The global community should also appoint an organisation responsible for ethical consumerism in all countries. This organisation would manage and govern ethical consumerism in each country thereby ensuring standardised global ethical product standards. An example of such an organisation currently fulfilling this role is the Ethical Consumer. This organisation was founded in 1989 and is presently based in Manchester in the United Kingdom. The Ethical Consumer publishes current and relevant ethical, social and environmental news in its magazines and offers an online guide with

relevant consumer information. The mission of the organisation is "to make global businesses more sustainable through consumer pressure" (EthicalConsumer, 2018). An organisation such as the Ethical Consumer includes information such as product reports, company profiles, ethical shopping, boycotts, and consumer campaigns on their online platform. This information is accessible to all the stakeholders of consumption including consumers, manufacturers, suppliers, marketers, the media and internet, government, regulators, as well as certifiers. When a global organisation such as the Ethical Consumer is institutionalised and operative, it could become a "one stop shop" organisation where consumers can access relevant and truthful consumer information, thereby contributing to consumption practices and the related impact thereof on society and the environment. Again, the interplay between the levers of change namely information, knowledge, and regulation come to light in this example.

Open membership to such an organisation holds many benefits to consumers as it may contribute to empowering both consumers and businesses with one aim in mind - ensuring sustainability. An organisation as referred to above, may address some of the identified obstacles to ethical consumerism namely "choice complexity and consumer confusion", as well as neutralisation techniques as it will communicate ethical information to consumers clearly and truthfully. Furthermore, consumers would be able to judge, through the knowledge gained on this platform, what the consequences of their consumption practices may hold.

Although information and knowledge are readily available, one should keep in mind that individuals approach and react differently to information. Individuals gain knowledge through different learning styles including visual, auditory, verbal, physical, logical, social and solitary styles (Learningstyles, 2018). It is therefore important that the platforms communicating information to consumers will make use of different learning styles in order to successfully influence diverse consumers. These platforms will be discussed briefly.

The internet, media and television have the ability to provide relevant and current information to consumers as frequently as they access these platforms. Furthermore, information can be accessed not only by the use of computers, laptops and tablets, but also through mobile phones. This might provide solutions for consumers in rural areas as access to network coverage becomes more available. Information will continuously become more accessible through the use of applications on electronic devices. For the purpose of ethical consumerism, an application could be developed by an organisation advocating for this important cause, i.e. the Ethical Consumer, where consumers can instantly access consumer information on a mobile application. Mobile phones are thus an accessible global platform for consumers in gaining awareness and knowledge about ethical

consumerism. When referring to the television as possible medium of communication, the role of actual-based television programmes can possibly impact consumers globally as research has proven the effectiveness thereof (Cho and Kasser, 2011:10). A dedicated consumer channel could be institutionalised to inform consumers on ethical consumerism. The important role of films and marketing initiatives in communicating ethical practices should also not be underestimated (Smaill, 2015). The platforms as discussed above may therefore address consumers with visual, auditory and verbal learning styles.

Within a retail environment, well-trained and educated employees are a crucial source of information to customers. It is essential that retailers ensure that employees know the benefits of ethical products, and that they are motivated to communicate this information to customers. Also, ethical products should be promoted regularly within businesses as this will improve the awareness of these producers. Samples or promotional products may enhance the perceptions of some consumers about ethically compliant products. Demonstrations in-store, together with attractive displays may further overcome barriers that some consumers face regarding ethical products. It remains important that ethical products should meet the expectations of quality and value for money as consumers prioritise these attributes when making purchasing decisions.

Retailers should also target consumers that are not easily drawn to ethical products in their marketing campaigns. As we have previously mentioned, men are less interested than women in purchasing ethical products. Therefore, retailers can offer environmentally friendly products in categories such as sporting goods or electronics, where men often have more interest (Gleim *et al.*, 2013:58). Recycling practices should be institutionalised and rewarded in several areas of the retail environment in order to motivate consumers to change their behaviour into a zero-waste attitude. Furthermore, the point of sale could be an effective way in marketing ethical practices as consumers often have to waste time while in a queue.

Mounted tablet computers could be used as an effective source of information within the retail environment. Unfortunately, some constraints (e.g. limited ethical alternatives, or expensive ethical options) might not make this platform effective in South Africa at present, but it may be considered for future reference. Placed at strategic stations within stores or businesses, consumers can, by scanning products on these devices, instantly access information on the ethical lifecycle and standards of products that they consider purchasing. This platform can furthermore suggest alternatives to mainstream products which might encourage ethically supported products. These information stations can provide detailed information (text or auditory) that communicates ethical product information to all consumers (Gleim *et al.*, 2013:58). Information can also include updates

on boycotts thereby informing and influencing consumers when making purchasing decisions (Cho and Kasser, 2011:5, 6). Products supporting human rights violations, environmental destruction, unfair trade practices and animal testing can be communicated effectively thereby preventing consumers from supporting unethical practices. On the other hand, information on buycotts i.e. products complying with ethical practices, may encourage consumers to choose ethical alternatives over unethical ones (Cho and Kasser, 2011:5, 6). This platform may therefore contribute in offering instant information to consumers addressing prejudices and unjustified behaviours. In this way, consumers could eventually allow themselves to plan their shopping excursions better while forming new consumption habits. These platforms may therefore address consumers with a variety of learning styles and may be effective in communicating effective information and knowledge.

One of the drivers of ethical consumerism, namely the role of guilt, should be highlighted within the retail environment. Steenhaut and Van Kenhove (2006) refer to the positive impact of guilt on consumers when advertisements aim to make consumers feel guilty about the consequences of their decisions. Anticipated guilt can therefore act as a motivation to prevent unethical behaviour. Not only could it address ethical purchasing decisions within the context of online information platforms and advertisements, but also by using point of sale displays which focus on possible negative consequences of unethical consumption choices. The emotion of guilt becomes specifically effective in cases where the value of harm to others and the environment is emphasised. Although anticipated guilt in marketing can be effective in convincing consumers to choose ethical alternatives, it remains important that regulators and certifiers confirm the ethical lifecycles of products. False information about companies being targeted negatively may lead to possible legal action which will once again confuse consumers.

4.3.3 REGULATORY OBLIGATIONS

Section 2.3 focused on consumer confusion as a result of the information communicated on product labels and the related uncertainty with regards to the validity of the claims made. Some labels provide too little information, whereas others provide too much. Although there are currently more than 400 eco-labels[7] on the market that serve to enhance credibility, targeted and regulated ethical marketing information can assist businesses in gaining a competitive advantage in the market. Some labels focus on only one ethical attribute, but can mislead consumers into thinking that the products are ethical in general. Other labels include the ethical processes of the entire lifecycle of a product,

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[7] A voluntary method of environmental performance certification and labelling that identifies products or services proven to be environmentally preferable.

and are called multi-attribute labels. Although multi-attribute labels represent the environmental impact of the entire lifecycle of a product; the product and the manufacturing processes involved should be reviewed annually in order to ensure repeated certification. Currently, ISO, the International Organisation for Standardisation, is involved in environmental product declarations. As consumers are often prejudiced about information, it is important that organisations involved in regulating and certifying products are indeed credible. As referred to earlier in this chapter, international ethical standards should be developed and improved in order to ensure a transparent certification process (Ottman, 2011).

Image 4.6: Examples of Eco-labels (Ottman, 2011).

In order to establish an internationally recognised ethical standard, governments globally, with the help of specialists in the field of ethical consumerism, should adopt international standards of ethical compliance in the field of consumption. This will involve manufacturers, suppliers, and retailers following regulations and standardised processes throughout the entire life-cycle of products in order to access the market for ethically compliant products. Simultaneously, ethically compliant products need to be regulated and certified internationally, according to standardised measures. This will require regulators, certifiers and auditors to be educated and trained in international standards to ensure that ethically compliant products are recognised in the market.

After products are certified according to their specific ethical standards, they have to be graded accordingly. Thus, a product complying with, for example, three ethical standards (e.g. fair trade, organically grown, no child labour), will score higher points than a product complying with only one ethical standard (e.g. fair trade). The scores that products are graded by should be easily understood by consumers and should be recognised and acknowledged internationally. To illustrate further, the international consumer platform titled Behind the Brands, scores companies on seven ethical practices. These practices include land, water, women (rights, opportunities, and equal pay), climate, farmers, workers, and transparency. The scores that companies achieve internationally play a role in influencing consumers to support or avoid these products. Furthermore, this platform engages with the companies in assisting them to improve their company score card (BehindTheBrands, 2018). A recommendation to further support this platform, may involve that once products are scored, ethically compliant products should receive a green label stating the

ethical standards to which the specific product complies, whereas a product causing harm to society or the environment should have a red label stating the harmful effects. Apart from including existing, compulsory information on product labels, these scores could offer an easier and less complex way for consumers to view the ethicality of products. A platform such as Behind the Brands demonstrates the interplay between knowledge and regulation and heightens a consumer's sense of obligation.

4.3.4 INCENTIVES

Although information may be easily accessed by consumers, it still remains a challenge to motivate consumers to become more knowledgeable. One should therefore address the gap between consumers and their ability to access, engage with, and become conscious about ethical information. Consumers need to be encouraged and influenced to support ethically compliant products and to erode competitive barriers of mainstream options (Burke *et al.*; 2014:2241). In order to mobilise more consumers to become ethical, the quality of information should be improved and consumers need to be motivated to become ethically more conscious. A possible way of attending to both the quality of information as well as consumer motivation would be to develop an incentive scheme such as a consumer rewards card, or a Shop Ethical Rewards Card.

Image 4.7: Shop Ethical Rewards Card (EthicalConsumer, 2018).

Although such a card is not yet available on the market, the suggestion is that consumers using this rewards card will automatically become members of an organisation such as the Ethical Consumer, thereby giving them access to the most recent information and developments in the field of ethical consumerism. Consumers will furthermore receive incentives for purchasing ethically compliant products such as green building supplies, green transportation, renewal energy options and even green investment products.

Similarly, manufacturers, suppliers, and retailers offering ethical products to the market should also be incentivised when consumers support their products. These rewards can be subsidised incentives from governments as the value of ethical consumption practices should rather be rewarded upfront

instead of punishing harmful costly consequences later on. This will enable consumers, as well as businesses, to accumulate an "ethical score" on their reward cards. These rewards could apply when businesses make use of ethical manufacturing practices, ethical marketing strategies, CSR and recycling initiatives. The aim would therefore be to include all stakeholders to gain an ethical score on their rewards cards when ethical products are purchased.

To illustrate the concept, one could refer to ShopZero that recently opened its doors in Cape Town (Janneke, 2017). ShopZero aims to campaign for a waste-free and plastic-free product lifestyle which involves no packaging (e.g. by using reusable containers to purchase products such as olive oil). The shop's main aim is to reduce waste within the lifecycle of all their products. ShopZero would be a good example where consumers, as well as the retailer and its suppliers, would be able to score ethical points when their products are supported. This shop with the products on offer, is an example of a shop that should be listed on the internet platform of an organisation such as the Ethical Consumer, where consumers could access information and become more informed about a business' compliance with ethical consumerism.

Together with the retail environment, government and the local municipalities can play an enormous role in the enforcement of recycling practices. They can strongly advocate the five R's of recycling (i.e. refuse; reduce; reuse; repurpose, and rot) in order to force consumers to comply with recycling practices (Johnson, 2017). The government and retailers could also offer rewards when consumers comply with recycling practices, such as using their own bags when shopping. Durable recycling containers for plastic, glass, paper, aluminium, e-waste, and non-recyclable products should be provided within the retail and business environments, within neighbourhoods, at educational institutions, and at public venues such as parks and picnic spots. Consumers choosing to recycle should be able to weigh their recyclables thereby gaining ethical rewards when swiping their rewards cards. Recycling could possibly address unemployment as unemployed individuals could recycle all kinds of pollution in order to gain rewards points on their consumer cards, enabling them to purchase a decent meal and to feel valued in the society. Tax should be increased drastically on products that are made from plastic in order to demotivate consumers to purchase such products. Products sold in containers such as glass should earn high ethical rewards as the harmful impact thereof is much less when compared to plastic. Within the field of recyclable packaging, continuous research would assist in replacing current non-recyclable products with better alternatives, thereby again highlighting the role of educational institutions in supporting ethical consumerism.

The scores earned by supporting ethical products and swiping the Shop Ethical rewards card can be allocated to a variety of causes. Ethical consumers should be able to use these rewards to earn discounts on other ethically compliant products purchased, or consumers could contribute their rewards towards an ethical cause such as a societal, environmental or animal charity cause. On the other hand, manufacturers, suppliers and retailers earning ethical rewards could allocate their rewards to corporate socially responsible practices, e.g. supporting consumer campaigns within the education system. This might encourage a co-responsible approach between businesses and consumers as companies can influence consumer awareness and purchasing behaviour by alerting consumers to their CSR commitments (Nielsen, 2015:36).

In conclusion, the suggestions made in chapter 4 aim to emphasise the importance of giving consideration to ethical consumerism, as it continues to move to centre stage in academic and policy debates. As Wheale and Hinton (2007:303) remind us in Chapter 1, our significant social and environmental challenges are directly related to human consumption activities. Consumers should be forced to take immediate action regarding certain consumption practices such as the disproportionate use of energy and waste resulting in irreversible climate change, worker exploitation and unnecessary cruelty caused to animals. The current and future devastating impact of consumerism should be urgently and globally addressed. It is the shared responsibility of all stakeholders of consumerism to become knowledgeable and accountable for their actions on society and the environment. It is furthermore a shared responsibility to continue searching for solutions to preserve our environment and its resources. Ethical consumerism should not only aim to achieve sustainability, but should aim to ensure a flourishing environment for future generations.

4.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

As suggested by this research, there are at least seven directions in which this research could be expanded in future. Firstly, consideration of effective strategies for intensifying the urgency of consumer ethical behaviour awaits urgent research. In order to attract ethical consumers, marketing researchers could play an important role in refocusing their investigation from the "ethical consumption gap" to the "marketing construction of the gap". The second direction is related to a credible ethical consumer online platform where consumers can access information about ethical practices, manufacturers, suppliers, retailers. The third course for further research involves investigating an international system where regulators, auditors and certifiers will evaluate ethical products according to international standards. Fourthly, research on the scoring of ethical products requires attention, as does incentivising consumers to shop ethically. In the fifth instance, a curriculum within the education system involving ethics and specifically ethical consumerism

should be investigated in order for current and future generations to learn to preserve the environment and ensure sustainability. The sixth area of development would be to institutionalise ethical or truthful marketing and advertisements in the movie and television industry, specifically in the form of actual-based consumer short-films and advertisements. Lastly, research on eco-materials, packaging and labelling needs continuous research, and the role of governments in regulating and taxing harmful materials should receive urgent attention.

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