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University of Kent  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Kent Business School  
MA Management (Research)

# **The relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption**

Master thesis by  
**Bradley Cronk (bc376)**  
Graduation Subject: Marketing and Social Responsibility

Supervisors: Dr Adolf Acquaye, Professor Alex Mohr  
Academic Years: 2014/2015 and 2015/16

**Word count: 39,336**

# MA Management (Research) Thesis

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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSUMPTION

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### **Abstract**

#### ***Problem definition and research questions***

The determinants of ethical consumption behaviour are largely unknown. This research explores the effectiveness of political ideology as a predictor of ethical consumption. Increasing the understanding of ethical consumption will create opportunities for organisations to supply consumer segments with products that address the ethical consumption issues that are most important to them. The issues that form overall ethical consumption include: (1) animal rights in product testing; (2) use of animal byproducts; (3) product biodegradability; (4) products made from recyclables; (5) product safety information provided; (6) human rights; (7) packaging recyclability; (8) product disposability; (9) payment of minimum wages; (10) unions allowed; (11) minimum living conditions met; (12) sexual orientation rights; (13) safe working conditions guaranteed; (14) use of child labour in production; (15) genetically modified (GM) material usage; and (16) gender, religious and racial rights (Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007).

Knowledge of the determinants of ethical consumption would have implications for how different product categories, for example, 'environmentally friendly' or 'Fairtrade' are positioned in the market and how consumers are targeted in marketing communications campaigns. This research can help practicing marketers to understand which ethical features are important to which consumers. With an understanding that consumers' political ideology impacts how they prioritise ethical consumption issues, marketers can politically charge their messages, and segment and target consumers based on their ideological perspective. The research therefore reinforces the widely-accepted marketing maxim that values are more effective than demographics in profiling consumers and segmenting markets (Doran 2009). In fact,

the effectiveness of values as a segmentation criterion has a profound impact on the practical implications for this research. Furthermore, Cotte & Trudel's (2009) systematic review of the literature suggests that personality variables, including political orientations, can explain ethical consumption attitudes better than demographic factors. Previous research has only ever studied political ideology in a limited way with a simple measure of liberalism (Roberts 1996). This research goes further by using more comprehensive measures of the Left/Right distinction in politics and addressing the various ethical consumption issues as well as overall ethical consumption.

Using political ideology to understand ethical consumption is novel since political ideology is usually understood for its influence on the government and the public sector through democratic means. However, this research aims to explain how political ideology affects consumer responses to business behaviour in the private sector as well. In this regard, we understand consumption choices to represent market politics, and acknowledge that ethical consumption treats the marketplace as a quasi-democracy. This view of ethical consumption as purchase voting is well documented in the literature and adds pertinence to the use of political ideology as the predictor variable for this research.

### ***Hypothesis and approach to the research***

This paper hypothesises that (1) there is a relationship between ethical consumption and political ideology, such that individuals with a more Leftist political ideology will display stronger intentions to engage in ethical consumption and those with a more Rightist political ideology will display weaker intentions to engage in ethical consumption. Critically, an individual's intentions to engage in ethical consumption will decline from Left to Right on the spectrum of political ideology (RH-1). However, (2) both the strength and the direction of this relationship will vary across the different ethical consumption issues (this hypothesis is elaborated on in Appendix 1 to cover animal, environmental and human/social welfare issues (RH-2)). For instance, political ideology may have no predictive power for certain ethical consumption issues, while other dimensions may correlate closely with an increasingly Rightist ideology. The rationales for these hypotheses are that the consumer's values in consumption will differ in line with their political ideology. A relationship has been found between an individual's personal values and ethical consumption (Doran 2009), but evidence for the relationship with political values is yet to be established.

Political ideology is hypothesised to be a predictor of ethical consumption behaviour because it provides the lens for promoting beliefs and attitudes on social and economic issues (Feldman, Johnston 2014). The issues addressed within ethical consumption (e.g. the environment, animal welfare, human rights and sustainability) are often more

closely associated with the political Left than with the political Right. The Left-wing is proven to support social equality and social justice, and oppose the social hierarchy generally accepted on the Right-wing. With strong ties to labour unions we can predict that workers' rights are a concern of those with a Left-wing orientation. Products that support workers' rights, such as Fairtrade items are therefore predicted to be important to Leftist consumers. Similarly, the Left-wing has been heavily associated with movements such as civil rights and the environmental movement. It is therefore feasible to suggest that products which support human rights (e.g. Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) endorsed products) and the environment (products endorsed by Rainforest Alliance and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)) will appeal more to Leftists. There are particularly strong links between Leftism and support for environmental issues in Britain and around the world where a number of political parties representing the 'green-left' have emerged. In Britain these are the Green Party of England and Wales and the Scottish Greens. However, there are also ethical consumption issues that are hypothesised to correlate more closely with Rightist political beliefs. See Appendix 1 for more detail on the hypothesised strength and direction of the relationship between animal welfare (RH-2.1), human/social welfare (RH-2.2), environmental welfare (RH-2.3), and other ethical consumption issues (RH-2.4), and political ideology.

## ***Methods***

Following three rounds of survey pretesting, data was collected in March 2016 on a general population sample, from a Qualtrics panel of UK consumers aged 18 and above. 220 UK consumers were surveyed, using established scales for measuring both ethical consumption and political ideology. Data was collected on two scales of ethical consumption, two scales of political ideology and a group of control variables identified through a review of the existing literature (age, education, gender, marital status, income, country of birth and religiosity). Data analysis was then conducted through the statistical program SPSS. The results include descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis, and multivariate regression.

## ***Results and conclusions***

A significant relationship was found between political ideology and ethical consumption in both cases where a traditional Left/Right measure was used. In fact, Left/Right political ideology was found to predict around 4 or 5% of the variance in ethical consumption intentions. However, no significant relationship was found between an individual's level of Libertarianism or Authoritarianism and ethical consumption. Critically, ethical consumption intentions reduce with a more Right wing political ideology. A correlation was found between ethical consumption (measured through the Socially Responsible Purchasing and Disposal (SRDP) scale) and Rightist political ideology. A -0.214 correlation was found with a 0.001 significance level when

measured using the British Social Attitudes (BSA) Left/Right scale on political ideology, and -0.224 with a significance of 0.002 when measured with the Buckle (2013) Left/Right policy preferences scale. However, the relationship was obscured by the confounding/moderating variables. The regression analysis controlled for all known confounding variables identified within the literature. When these items were held constant, the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption increased in magnitude. These coefficients increased from -0.214 (BSA) and -0.224 (Buckle 2013), to -0.261 and -0.240 respectively. However, it is important to acknowledge that the relationship found between these variables was still weak in nature. These negative relationships proved that ethical consumption intentions decrease from Left to Right on the spectrum of political ideology.

From the findings, this article underscores political ideology as a partial predictor of ethical consumption, and maps how important or unimportant the different ethical consumption issues are to consumers. The results explain how the importance of specific ethical consumption issues will decline or increase from Left to Right on the spectrum of political ideology.

The results show that recycling intentions (4.54/5) were generally higher than intentions to avoid environmental impact in consumption (3.50/5). Similarly, consumers had stronger intentions to avoid environmental impact in consumption than to purchase based on firms' CSR performance (3.13/5). The analysis provided later in this report shows that recycling intentions, intentions to avoid environmental impact and intentions to purchase based on firms' CSR performance all decline from Left to Right on the spectrum of political ideology.

Human rights, child labour, safe working conditions, minimum living conditions for workers and paying minimum wages were the five most important ethical consumption issues identified in this study. At the other end of the scale, the right to unionise, product disposability, the use of GM material and product biodegradability were the four least important ethical consumption issues overall.

Political ideology has a significant correlation (positive or negative) with 9 of the 16 ethical consumption issues covered in this survey. When controlling for confounding factors, and using the BSA scale of political ideology, the only variables with a significant correlation were. A stepwise multiple regression was used to only include statistically significant predictor variables. Seven of the ethical consumption issues had a significant relationship when potential confounding factors were controlled for. Four issues had a negative relationship (animal byproducts used, right to unionise, human rights and gender, religious and racial rights) and three had a positive relationship (product safety information provided, avoiding the use of GM in products and product

disposability) with a more Rightist ideology. Overall ethical consumption intentions reduced with a move from Left to Right on the spectrum of political ideology.

Religiosity was found to be the best predictor of ethical consumption intentions in this model. The stepwise models (each with 3 variables) explained 12.6% and 12.9% of the variability in ethical consumption intentions. In both cases, none of the demographic variables had a statistically significant relationship with any individual ethical consumption issues, reinforcing the idea that political ideology can be a better predictor of ethical consumption than simple demographics.

***Key Words***

Corporate Social Responsibility, Ethical Consumption, Political Ideology, Consumer Behaviour

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### ***The Author***

Bradley Cronk is a part-time MA Management (Research) student at the University of Kent's Kent Business School (KBS). Prior to embarking on the postgraduate research programme at KBS, Bradley had studied BSc (Hons) Business and Management at the University of East Anglia where he graduated with 1<sup>st</sup> class honours. Bradley is also a practicing marketing professional with experience across the Financial Services, Higher Education and Market Research sectors. He holds the CIM's Professional Diploma in Marketing and Associate Membership of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (ACIM).

### ***Thesis Overview***

With the inclusion of a narrative and a systematic literature review, this thesis is structured in accordance with the IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) approach to scientific writing. The report therefore provides a thorough introduction to the research area as well as detailed descriptions of the methods and results uncovered in the study. Specifically, the survey design and administration are covered in depth before I provide a discussion of the implications of the research.

# Section 1: Introduction

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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSUMPTION

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## **Introduction**

### ***Social context behind the research problem***

The role of business in society has been discussed by the most prominent management gurus, for example, Michael Porter and Peter Drucker and business leaders such as Bill Gates and Dominic Barton (Crane, Matten & Spence 2014). There is emerging thought in the areas of 'enlightened self-interest' and 'creating shared value', as new approaches to the way we manage our organisations. This world view appears to be spreading in western democracies and is promoted by consumers through the phenomenon of ethical consumption (Crane, Matten & Spence 2014).

A socially responsible approach to managing organisations has also gained momentum as a political issue, for example the new 'Benefit Corporation' legislation introduced in 20 US states advocates a B Corp's purpose to be the creation of a significant positive impression on both society and the environment (Haigh et al. 2015, Rawhouser, Cummings & Crane 2015). It has been proven that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be politically motivated (Scherer, Palazzo 2011, Detomasi 2008, Rawhouser, Cummings & Crane 2015). In the US the Benefit Corporations are more likely to be legislated for in states run by the Democratic Party (Left of centre, progressive and liberal) as opposed to those run by the Republican Party (Right of centre, traditional and conservative) (Rawhouser, Cummings & Crane 2015). These organisations are subject to private-sector tax laws; however, they differ in that their social commitments are highlighted in their corporate and legal documents. These organisations, a hybrid between a charity and a business, tend to resonate more with those of the political Left because they shift societal expectations toward greater social responsibility (Rawhouser, Cummings & Crane 2015).

Formal CSR is predominately a private sector phenomenon in theory and practice; however, there is demand on public sector goods and services to be responsibly produced as well. As such, governments and countries can be exposed to boycotts and buycotts just as companies can; the simultaneous buycott (pro-Israel) and boycott (pro-Palestine) Israel campaigns are very prominent manifestations of this. Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in the third sector are also involved, often encouraging business and public sector institutions to uphold CSR and address various ethical consumption issues by holding them accountable. For this reason, I argue that understanding the link between ethical consumption and political ideology not only has important implications for managerial practice, but can also inform policy making.

### ***Relevance of the research topic***

The study of ethical consumption has become essential as a result of rising debates around both social and environmental issues (Newholm, Shaw 2007). An investigation of political ideology within the realm of ethical consumption is necessary because political values can be major drivers in ethical consumption behaviour. Critically, ethical consumption may be politically motivated (Lewis, Potter 2011).

*'What perhaps sets the study of ethical consumption apart from the other marketing interests in the consumer area is its overt socio-political nature [...] the boycott is the archetypal semi-organised consumer action'*

(Newholm, Shaw 2007): pp.260

Ethical consumption is an important form of consumer pressure exerted on business. Business and the private sector are now widely recognised as the dominant force in global society and in both developed and developing countries around the world. Due to this widespread influence of business, a consumer's economic vote can be at least as important as their vote in political elections. Economic votes are more frequent and private consumption forms a larger part of the overall economy than public consumption. Consumers in this respect have the power to use their purchasing behaviour to reward or punish companies, much in the same way they reward and punish political parties with their votes. The power to give or refrain from giving 'purchase votes', boycotts and buycotts of products or companies, is an important phenomenon that can empower consumers to 'shop for a better world' (Carrigan, Szmigin & Wright 2004).

The use of purchase votes and proactive support for a business in purchasing behaviour are two types of ethical consumption behaviour expressing demand for socially responsible business practice. Consumer boycotts are another manifestation of ethical consumption. Boycotts are becoming increasingly widespread because they have been found to be a highly effective form of consumer action; boycotts induce a significant stock market reaction and therefore represent an effective vehicle for consumers to express their values and opinions in the marketplace (The Economist 1990). Still, ethical consumption is not entirely democratic since purchase votes are not equally available and many ethical products, for example, free range and organic products command a significant price premium (Littler 2011). This is where the quasi-democratic nature of ethical consumption differs from the one person, one vote system used in political elections.

### ***Understanding ethical consumption***

Ethical consumption requires knowledge of where products are sourced from and how they are produced (Coles, Crang 2011). In Britain and elsewhere the phenomenon has risen in popularity alongside an increasing degree of disillusionment with the respective political systems. Global markets are ethical systems alongside the political system where shopping for ethical products is sometimes seen as more effective than a vote in a political election (Shaw, Newholm & Dickinson 2006). Consumers that do not have confidence in their political system may be more likely to exercise their political will through the purchase of ethical products. Shaw, Newholm & Dickinson (2006) suggest that to the degree that political democracy is perceived to be failing to engage the public, marketers must consider the shifts in demand to purchase votes within their marketing strategies.

Ethical consumption has existed for centuries but has grown significantly in the past 20 to 25 years (Carrigan, Szmigin & Wright 2004). It would be logical to suggest that this revolution in purchase behaviour is related directly with an enhanced provision of CSR. I argue that along with the interests of the various other stakeholder groups, ethical consumption may be an aspect of the demand side of the CSR agenda, as well as a natural result of its existence. Consumers that value socially responsible behaviours and product features can increase the demand for CSR through ethical consumption. However, it is important to acknowledge that customers are not the only stakeholder group influencing a firm's provision of CSR.

It is important at this stage to highlight the differences between green consumerism and ethical consumerism. Critically, ethical consumerism and ethical consumption covers a variety of both social and sustainability issues, while green consumerism focuses distinctly on the effects of consumption on the natural environment. While these distinctions are useful for the purpose of this research, these consumer behaviours may be performed by the same individuals in the marketplace. Similarly, ethical consumption is not anti-consumerism, it more closely resembles mainstream consumerism but in an adjusted form. It is therefore criticised by both the proponents of modern consumer culture and the anti-consumer movements (Littler 2011). Modern consumer culture can be dismissive of ethical consumption, arguing that it does not have the ability to produce real change and is only pursued by individuals hoping to enhance their own image and perception of self. Conversely, anti-consumer movements argue that ethical consumption does not go far enough, particularly in addressing environmental issues where a reduction in overall consumption would be more effective (Littler 2011).

It is crucial to understand that CSR and ethical consumption behaviours are subjective activities open to individual interpretation. Many consumption behaviours are ethical



in one way but entirely unethical in another (Lewis, Potter 2011). An illustrative example of this could be the purchase of Fairtrade coffee in Starbucks while Starbucks are avoiding their full tax obligations. It is a widely held view from the proponents of CSR that covert tax avoidance practices behind the scenes of overt CSR action is the height of hypocrisy. However, unfortunately there are many examples of pro-CSR companies avoiding tax (Sikka 2013).

Ethical consumption is intrinsically linked with the intersecting concepts of sustainable consumption, critical consumption, political consumption, green consumption, socially responsible consumption, conscious consumption and social consumption (Pecoraro, Uusitalo 2014). These concepts largely refer to the same phenomenon, each emphasizing a different aspect of ethical consumption. The underlying premise for these concepts is that consumers can help address social and/or environmental issues through their purchasing behaviour. As the phenomenon of ethical consumption has grown, it has become important to understand consumers' purchase decisions, and explore potential predictors of these various forms of ethical consumption behaviour. To date, past behaviour relating to social causes, such as being involved with NGOs like Amnesty International have been the most effective predictors of ethical consumption (Belk, Devinney & Eckhardt 2005). Demographics, on the other hand, have been proven to be poor determinants of ethical consumption behaviour (Newholm, Shaw 2007, Roberts 1996). In fact, age, gender and income explain only 8% of the variations in socially responsible consumer behaviour (Roberts 1996). This research therefore attempts to explore the unexplained 92% and discover determinants of ethical consumption behaviour by testing whether political ideology is a significant predictor of overall ethical consumption and various ethical consumption issues.

To date there has only been one systematic review of ethical consumption. Cotte & Trudel's (2009) systematic review of the body of knowledge on socially conscious consumerism funded by the Network for Business Sustainability covers 30 years of research on consumers' propensity to reward firms for their CSR activity. The review presented in this thesis will build on this while incorporating the literature from the past 7 or 8 years following Cotte & Trudel's (2009) review and focusing specifically on the determinants of ethical consumption.

Cotte & Trudel's (2009) systematic review provides conflicting evidence for the role of demographic variables in enhancing socially conscious consumption attitudes. The research is unclear on the predicting value of various demographics; many papers show no relationship while others show positive or negative relationships between ethical consumption and age, gender, income, education and occupation:

*“The evidence from this review shows conflicting results for the role of demographics in forming positive socially conscious consumer attitudes. Some research shows that social consciousness increases directly with socio-economic status (Anderson, Cunningham 1972, Bourgeois, Barnes 1979), and with income (Huang, Kan & FU 1999, Webster Jr 1975); a recent study claimed green shoppers are typically older, higher than average income, and are better educated (Deloitte Consulting LLP 2008). Demographic results are conflicting though, with several studies showing less socially conscious attitudes with higher education and higher income (BBMG, 2008), and more social consciousness with younger consumers”*

(Cotte, Trudel 2009): pp.33

### ***The importance of ethics in everyday consumption***

While there is extant evidence of the existence of ethical consumption and ethics in everyday consumption, there is also reason to argue that ethics are still relatively unimportant in consumer purchase decisions. Modern consumers in the UK are increasingly overloaded with marketing stimulus in a noisy and cluttered media environment. When coupled with increasingly time constrained lifestyles, the amount of time and degree of effort consumers are willing to expend on ‘information search’ and ‘an evaluation of alternatives’ has declined. As a result, ethical consumption remains a niche product offering despite the ever present suggestions that it will inevitably become the norm demanded by mainstream consumers. The evidence from early in the twenty first century suggests that ethical products rarely exceed 3% of market share (Cowe, Williams 2000). Evidently, there are factors which are more important than consumer ethics effecting everyday purchase decisions. Many consumers prioritised the traditional features of price, value, convenience and quality in evaluating purchase decisions (Mohr, Webb & Harris 2001).

### ***Rationale behind the study***

Various interpretations of ethical consumption exist, not all self-identified ethical consumers prioritise the same issues, and these diverse approaches to ethical consumption are manifestations of different value systems (Pecoraro, Uusitalo 2014). Similarly, political ideology varies between individuals. This research intends to identify any potential relationship between these two variables while controlling for potential confounding factors. It is accepted in the literature and in practice that there are various approaches and perspectives on ethical consumption (Pecoraro, Uusitalo 2014). This research investigates whether these varying approaches and support for different ethical consumption issues can be predicted by consumers’ political ideology.

Freestone's (2008) research on understanding the ethically aware consumer identified Liberal Democrat affiliated survey respondents as more environmentally conscious than the respondents affiliated with the UK's two main parties; Labour and Conservative. Furthermore, it was also found that survey respondents affiliated with the centrist Liberal Democrat party were more concerned with oppressive governmental regimes, animal testing and factory farming than their Labour counterparts on their political Left and their Conservative counterparts to their Right (Freestone 2008). The same study found that while Conservative and Labour affiliated respondents had a similar outlook on the environment; a Labour affiliation was more closely related to concern for the issues of third world exploitation and workers' rights (Freestone 2008).

One reason why political ideology has been adopted for the purposes of this study as opposed to party affiliation is that the major political parties in the UK tend to display inconsistencies in their stance on salient ethical issues. Freestone's (2008) analysis of UK party manifestos identified that parties were changing their priorities on ethical issues such as the environment.

Exploring the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption is pertinent since both ethical consumption and political ideology are characterised by both social and economic features (Feldman, Johnston 2014). This research has been motivated by the premise that because political ideology determines an individual's beliefs on social and economic issues, it follows that their ideology could influence their attitudes toward the social and economic issues addressed by ethical consumption.

## **Problem Statement**

We are currently unable to explain or predict ethical consumption behaviour. And, current research has provided only limited explanation and contradictory results.

### ***Importance of the research area***

This research project has been developed against a background of the increasing importance of sustainability and social responsibility. It is widely accepted that businesses are, and should be, held accountable for their environmental and social performance by key stakeholder groups such as consumers, media, civic organisations and government (Acquaye, Yamoah & Feng 2015). As a response to this, CSR has emerged as a strategic process which organisations use to actively engage their stakeholders (Porter, Kramer 2011). Bolton and Mattila (2015) report that of the main stakeholder groups, consumers have been identified as the most critical driver of CSR. Applying the fundamental economic concept of supply and demand to CSR and ethical consumption, this informs us that consumption (demand) is the mechanism through which an organisation's approach to social responsibility (supply) is determined. Understanding the major influences and factors that drive consumers towards CSR related activities has become an important contemporary research issue (Boccia, Sarno 2013, Singh 2015), and an unresolved challenge in practice (Fliess et al. 2007, Nielsen 2014).

Addressing the demand-side for socially responsible business, through ethical consumption attitudes and behaviour, provides a strong business case for CSR. Production of socially responsible products and services can be justified when and where demand exists on the consumption side. Consumption and production of socially responsible products represent a demand and supply relationship. The foundation of the business case to supply the market with socially responsible business practice/sustainable business activity/corporate citizenship/creating shared value (many of these terms are used interchangeably) behaviours is a demand from the market for such an approach. These conditions allow companies to produce products that address ethical consumption issues and allow consumers to consume products with ethical features.

For the purpose of this report I define CSR as it relates to consumers in the broadest sense, across private, public and the third sector, not solely corporations, and across social, environmental and economic issues (not solely 'social' responsibilities). This definition is useful from an ethical consumption perspective as public and third sector institutions also produce a large proportion of goods and services for consumption as well as having their roles subject to ethical scrutiny across social, environmental and economic issues.

### ***Focus and core concepts***

The primacy of consumers in driving CSR (Bolton, Mattila 2015), has led to the acknowledgement of the specific phenomenon of ethical consumerism as an essential driver of CSR in practice (Sharma, Kiran 2013, Crifo, Forget 2015). This is because consumers that value socially and environmentally responsible business practice and product features can increase the demand for CSR through ethical consumption. Despite the understanding of the link between CSR and ethical consumption, the determinants of ethical consumption by itself are largely unknown. This research project therefore seeks to provide some needed research insight to help address this knowledge gap around the determinants of ethical consumption behaviours.

Previous attempts to address this knowledge gap, including Dowd and Burke (2013), Hassan et al. (2014) and Eleni et al. (2015) who have all reported on the use of consumer behaviour models as a conceptual framework to investigate consumer purchase behaviour. These studies followed earlier works by *inter alia*: (Muncy, Vitell 1992, Shaw, Shiu & Clarke 2000, Vermeir, Verbeke 2004). However, research findings on consumer motivations to buy ethical products have been characterised by disagreements and intellectual tensions (McEachern, McClean 2002, Doran 2009, Yamoah et al. 2014).

An extant review of the literature suggests that attempts to identify determinants of ethical consumption have typically investigated variables such as past behaviour relating to social causes (Belk, Devinney & Eckhardt 2005) and the influences of demographic factors such as age, gender, income and employment status. However, these variables have been identified as insufficient predictors since they do not significantly explain ethical consumption (Dickson 2001). For instance, De Pelsmacker et al. (2005) re-emphasised that demographics alone are not sufficient in defining and identifying ethical consumers after Roberts (1996) had earlier reported that it can only explain 8% of the variations in socially responsible consumer behaviour. The need for contemporary research that would adequately address these knowledge gaps and identify significant predictor variables for ethical consumption as a way for organisations to better understand their major CSR stakeholders has therefore become urgent.

### ***Understanding the existing research***

Little is known as to what motivates UK consumers to buy products with ethical features. Research is therefore required to help marketers understand what ethical features and ethical consumption issues are important to which consumer segments.

As inherently socio-political phenomena, it is intuitive to suggest that ethical consumption may be predicted by an individual's political ideology. This research project therefore seeks to undertake a robust test to provide a scientific basis to the anecdotal suggestion that political ideology has a role in consumer purchase behaviour (Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti 2005), and in validating the extent of the influence. Ethical consumption can be assessed within the context of political phenomenon as a result of its relationship with the problemisation of consumption and the various contemporary debates around human rights, climate change and social justice etc. (Barnett et al. 2010).

*'the emergence of ethical consumption should be understood as a means through which various actors seek to 'do' politics in and through distinctly ethical registers'*

(Barnett et al. 2010): pp.2

None of the existing research into the social determinants of political ideology has identified variables that are correlated with political ideology, but not with ethical consumption. There is research, for example, indicating that age, education, gender, income and religiosity are correlated with political ideology to some degree. However, none of these will be appropriate as instrumental variables since these variables have also been shown to have some relationship with ethical consumption. Other research uses personality traits (Big Five Personality Dimensions) as an independent predictor of the social and economic beliefs that define an individual's political ideology. Results suggested that those with liberal beliefs are more open-minded and that those with conservative beliefs will generally lead more orderly lives. However, statistically significant relationships have also been found for between personality and ethical consumer attitudes as well, so personality traits would also be inappropriate as an instrumental variable for this research (Gerber et al. 2010, Mondak 2010).

### ***The approach taken in this study***

The study seeks to explain the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption while controlling for age, social class (socioeconomic status (the weighted average of occupation, education and income (Anderson, Cunningham 1972)), income, education, religiosity and employment sector. These control variables will account for any possibility that the relationship found between political ideology and ethical consumption is determined by another underlying factor. However, this research does not include any instrumental variable to account for the possibility of endogeneity. Both the independent variable and the dependant variable in this research are complex social phenomenon and therefore intrinsically linked with a multitude of other social factors.

## Research Objectives

The aims of this project are to investigate the relationship between overall ethical consumption and political ideology, as well as the relationship between political ideology and the various ethical consumption issues that form the wider construct.

The overarching aim of this research is to undertake a study on the formulation of a theoretical proposition that political ideology has a role as a predictor of ethical consumption intentions and behaviours. The aims are to investigate the relationship between overall political ideology and ethical consumption as well as the relationship between political ideology and the various ethical consumption issues that form the wider construct.

The specific aims of this research project are:

- **Research Objective 1 (RO-1):** To understand how well political ideology can predict an individual's ethical consumption attitudes and intentions.

Given the absence of an adequate predictor for ethical consumption, this objective seeks to understand the role of political ideology as a predictor variable is necessary to provide marketers with an understanding of the degree to which ethical consumption can be politically motivated.

- **Research Objective 2 (RO-2):** To identify how the various ethical consumption issues are associated with political ideology, the predictive power of political ideology, and whether different ethical attributes are more, or less, important to individuals with different ideologies.

This is an essential aim for establishing the specific areas of consumption that can be predicted by political beliefs. The more granular evidence provided by meeting this research aim will give a deeper understanding of the ethical consumption phenomenon, but will also make the results more actionable for marketers within their specific industries.

- **Research Objective 3 (RO-3):** To understand the factors associated with ethical consumption attitudes and intentions.

This objective necessitates a more holistic view of the potential predictors of ethical consumption and provides the study with the degree of objectivity and the diversity of independent variables required for segmentation studies.

### ***Theoretical contribution***

This study will contribute to the consumer behaviour and business ethics literature on ethical consumption by providing a useful predictor of ethical consumption and/or helping to further our understanding of the determinants of ethical consumption.

This thesis also attempts to build on existing consumer behaviour and ethical decision making theory to provide a model for understanding ethical consumption. Consumer behaviour models have been recommended as conceptual frameworks for investigating consumer purchase behaviour in ethical products. Such consumer behaviour models make use of behavioural control factors. However, research suggests that the literature on consumer motivations to buy ethical products has been blighted with disagreements (Yamoah et al. 2014, Vermeir, Verbeke 2006, McEachern, McClean 2002). In particular, despite anecdotal evidence suggesting that political ideology has a role in consumer purchase behaviour (Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti 2005), the issue has received limited systematic research attention until now (Bray, Johns & Kilburn 2011, Strong 1996).

### ***Management and policy implications***

Identifying consumers that are sympathetic towards ethical issues is important from a practitioner's perspective. The understanding produced within this research provides actionable insights into ethical consumers for decisions in:

1. Segmentation, targeting and positioning (STP) and
2. Marketing communications messages

For example, marketers could target consumers geographically by inferring political ideology from the outcome of elections in constituencies across the UK (political ideology has been identified as a strong predictor of voting behaviour). Marketing communications messages could then be politically charged to align the brand personalities of political parties with consumers' political values. The evidence could also allow organisations to address the ethical consumption issues with a broad base of political support or the issues of the highest importance to UK consumers. Critically, it is the role of individual marketers to utilise these findings in a way that supports or informs their own marketing strategy.

The implications of this research also stretch to policy makers. Insights gleaned from this study will not only inform political parties on the importance of various ethical issues to consumers with a political ideology that matches their own. But the research will also indicate how parties can appeal to consumers across the political spectrum and ultimately allow them to tailor political campaigns around that.



Policy makers should also understand ethical consumption for its economic value, £47.2bn in the most recent Ethical Consumerism Report 2012, and relevance for the public sector. Ethical consumption issues are important to state owned enterprises because there is demand for public sector goods and services to be responsibly produced as well. As such, public sector organisations are faced with responsibilities to address ethical consumption issues in the same way, or to a greater degree, than a private sector company is expected to.

## **Research Questions**

Which socially responsible business practices do consumers value? Who cares about where products come from and how they are produced? Is there higher demand for ethical products amongst certain groups of people? Specifically, does an individual's political belief system (political ideology) impact their attitude toward ethical consumption and can we map which ethical consumption issues are most important to individuals with different political beliefs?

Research questions have been developed from the specified research objectives. This study addresses the following research questions:

- **Research Question 1 (RQ-1):** Is there a relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption attitudes and intentions?
- **Research Question 2 (RQ-2):** Do consumers with a Leftist political ideology have stronger intentions to engage in ethical consumption than those with a Rightist political ideology?
- **Research Question 3 (RQ-3):** Do the various ethical consumption issues differ in their importance to individuals occupying different points on the ideological spectrum (which issues are the most important and which are the least important)?

In summary, this study looks to investigate (1) whether there is a relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption, (2) the strength and direction of that relationship, and (3) how the relationship changes when ethical consumption is broken down into the various ethical consumption issues. It is from these questions that research hypotheses and methods have been developed. Critically, these questions are investigated using empirical data collected through an online questionnaire with a sample of 220 consumers.

### ***Development of the research questions***

These research questions were developed from the research objectives defined earlier in this thesis. The study looks to answer a focused group of three questions, each derived directly from the overarching objectives of the research. The literature base from which these questions have emerged is a combination of the business ethics, CSR and consumer behaviour literatures. The questions emerged as an outcome of an extensive narrative review of the consumer behaviour and business ethics literature.

A systematic review of the determinants of ethical consumption was conducted subsequent to the original narrative review. From this structured review of the

literature, political ideology was identified as a potential determinant of ethical consumption. Upon the identification of political beliefs as a predictor variable, it was necessary to further explain the relationship between the two variables by breaking down the concept of ethical consumption into its various ethical consumption issues. Ultimately this led to the research question on which ethical consumption issues are most important to which set of political beliefs. Political ideology was itself broken down as a concept and its constituent parts of Leftism and Rightist beliefs, which have been considered in the formation of these research questions and the research hypothesis that follows.

Together the three questions explore the various facets of both ethical consumption and political ideology. As such, answering these questions could provide rich insights into the nuances that exist in any relationship identified between these two variables.

## **Section 2: Literature Review**

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### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSUMPTION**

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Graduation Subject: Marketing and Social Responsibility

Supervisors: Dr Adolf Acquaye and Professor Alex Mohr

Academic Years: 2014/2015 and 2015/16

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## Narrative Literature Review

### *Ethical consumption*

#### Defining ethical consumption

The subjective nature of ethical consumption means there is currently no consensual agreement on an appropriate definition for the concept. However, Cowe and Williams (2000): pp.4, provide a useful definition of ethical consumers as “*people who are influenced by environmental or ethical considerations when choosing products and services*”. The authors suggest that the term ethical consumption is used “*to cover matters of conscience such as animal welfare and Fairtrade, social aspects such as labour standards, as well as more self-interested health concerns*” (Cowe, Williams 2000): pp.4. This is just one of the many definitions of the ethical consumer and ethical consumption issues can vary between definitions. For the purpose of this paper, Auger, Devinney & Louvier’s (2007) list of ethical consumption issues have been adopted ((1) animal rights in product testing; (2) use of animal byproducts; (3) product biodegradability; (4) products made from recyclables; (5) product safety information provided; (6) human rights; (7) packaging recyclability; (8) product disposability; (9) payment of minimum wages; (10) unions allowed; (11) minimum living conditions met; (12) sexual orientation rights; (13) safe working conditions guaranteed; (14) use of child labour in production; (15) genetically modified (GM) material usage; and (16) gender, religious and racial rights). However, to further understand the concept and its wide variety of uses it is important to acknowledge the variety of definitions that exist.

**Table 1 – Definitions of ethical consumption**

Source	Term	Definition
(Cowe, Williams 2000): pp.4	Ethical	<i>“Concerned with matters of conscience such as animal welfare and Fairtrade, social aspects such as labour standards, as well as more self-interested health concerns behind the growth of organic food sales”</i>
(Shaw, Clarke 1999): pp.109	Ethical consumer	<i>“In addition to being concerned about environmental issues, are distinguished by their concern for deep seated problems, such as those of the Third World”</i>
(Harrison, Newholm & Shaw 2005): pp.4	Ethical consumer	<i>“Care whether a corporation promoted employees from minority ethnicities, plan their consumption to avoid harm to other animals, worry about ‘product air miles’ and probably a plethora of other concerns”</i>

(Harper, Makatouni 2002): pp.289	Ethical consumer	<i>“Buy products which are not harmful to the environment and society. This can be as simple as buying free-range eggs or as complex as boycotting goods produced by child labour”</i>
(Shaw, Clarke 1998): pp.163	Ethical consumption	<i>“The degree to which consumers prioritize their own ethical concerns when making product choices”</i>
(Ethical Consumer 2015b)	Ethical purchasing	<i>“Buying things that are made ethically by companies that act ethically”</i>

Adapted from: (Freestone 2008)

### **Ethical consumption issues**

There have been various attempts to identify the specific consumption issues that form the wider concept of ethical consumption. One popular list of categories is that from the UK-based Ethical Consumer Research Association:

- **Environment:** environmental reporting, nuclear power, climate change, pollution and toxics, and habitats and resources
- **People:** human rights, workers’ rights, supply chain policy, and irresponsible marketing
- **Animals:** animal testing, factory farming, and other animal rights
- **Politics:** political activity, boycotting call, genetic engineering, anti-social finance, and company ethos
- **Product sustainability:** organic, Fairtrade, positive environmental features, and other sustainability

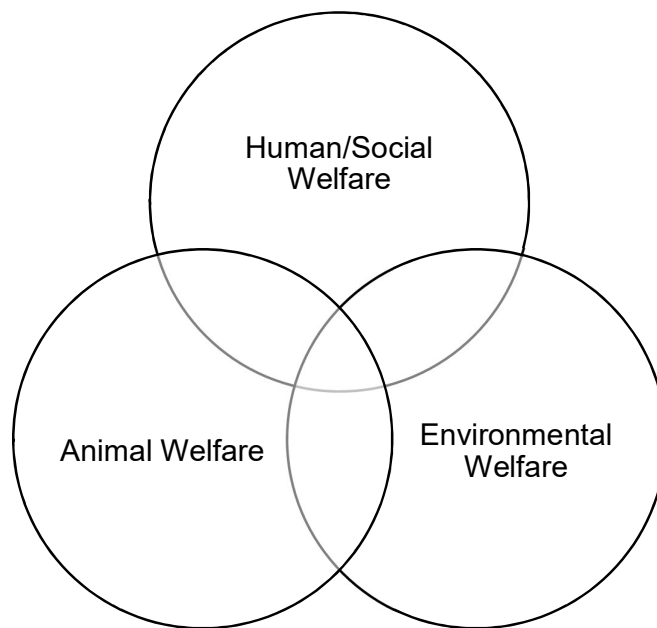
(Ethical Consumer 2015b)

Starr (2009) provides a similar attempt to understand the ethical consumption landscape. The research lists the primary issues in ethical consumption as: environmental sustainability; biodiversity, nature, endangered species; genetically modified crops and animals; free trade in tropical commodities; abusive labour practices; animal welfare; local economy; repressive regimes; consumerist lifestyles (Starr 2009). The central finding in Starr’s (2009) study was that if all else remains equal, people have a higher propensity to consume ethically when the people around them do and social norms can influence consumers to make more ethical consumption choices. This insight indicates that it is important to factor in social desirability bias when measuring ethical consumption.

As previously suggested, there is little consensual agreement on which issues come together to form the wider phenomenon of ethical consumption. One of the most comprehensive studies of ethical consumption issues examined a total of 16 individual social and ethical issues (Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007). Together these issues provide a comprehensive picture of the issues being addressed when discussing the broader phenomenon of ethical consumption. Conversely, rather than attempting to list individual issues, Low & Davenport (2007) have attempted to distil the myriad of consumption issues into a triple bottom line of ethical consuming which can categorise the many consumption issues that exist (see *Figure 1*).

**Figure 1 – The triple bottom line of ethical consuming**

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Adapted from: (Low, Davenport 2007)

Auger et al.'s (2007) list of issues on ethical consuming will be used in our survey to investigate research hypotheses for each of the categories of ethical consumption in Low & Davenport's (2007) triple bottom line of ethical consuming. Critically, this approach conveniently covers a broad range of issues while also providing a concise and practical framework for investigating through survey research.

Research has shown that consumers can be selectively ethical in that they are motivated to engage in ethical consumption on certain ethical issues but not on others. For this reason, it is important to understand ethical consumption by investigating its constituent elements. Long & Murray's (2013) study reported five ethical consumption issues, as highlighted by participants of their focus groups. Long & Murray (2013)

applied these five issues in their survey studying the correlates of ethical consumption. The factors identified in their focus groups were environmental, social, political, importance of origin and global scales component factors.

### **Understanding the individual ethical consumption issues**

This section provides a more in depth explanation of the ethical consumption issues outlined by the Ethical Consumer Research Association (2015b). The issues highlighted here mirror those identified by other research in the area.

**Environment:** The environment is one of the broadest and most prominent areas of ethical consumption theory and practice. In response to stakeholder demands for environmentally friendly products and organisations, many businesses have adopted environmental reporting as a method of measuring and managing their environmental performance as well as communicating their efforts to consumers and other stakeholders (Ethical Consumer 2015b). Environmental concerns for consumers include pollution and contribution to climate change as well as the exploitation of natural resources and destruction of natural habitats. Companies with poor performance or a bad reputation in these categories can become the recipients of negative consumer action through boycotts or related activities (Ethical Consumer 2015b). However, more commonly when evidence is brought to light in the press, these companies or products can receive decreased consumer demand as a result of the everyday ethical consumer in the mainstream market. An example of this can be found in the consumer response to the BP oil spill and the drastic fall in demand experienced by the company.

**Animals:** Alongside the environment, animal rights do tend to mobilise activists from the more extreme end of the ethical consumption spectrum. However, there are also a variety of mainstream responses to ethical concerns around the rights of animals. Vegetarian and vegan diets and lifestyles are some of the most popular responses to consciousness of animal rights, but these ethical concerns can also stretch to other related industries such as entertainment, research and clothing where the use or exploitation of animals can influence consumer purchasing decisions. In these markets the demand for alternative products and services has driven the rise in meat free alternatives to various animal products, faux fur, synthetic leather, non-dairy milk and yogurt etc. For other consumers, animal friendly may mean simply buying free-range or boycotting brands with a particularly poor record for the way they treat animals; many such examples exist within the cosmetics industry. Lush is an example of a cosmetics manufacturer and retailer addressing various animal related ethical consumption issues. The retailer produces all their products to be 100% vegetarian and they actively fight against animal testing in the industry.



**People:** Consumption issues in this area typically cover human rights or worker's rights. Consumer action is often seen as a response to poor working conditions, low wages, inappropriate marketing or relationships with unethical supply chain partners (Ethical Consumer 2015b). Purchasing from co-operatives as opposed to shareholder owned organisations is one area of ethical consumption that has spread into a wide variety of product categories. Addressing this consumption issue can help to ensure that workers are getting a fair deal; many products with the Fairtrade logo will also be produced by co-operatives. This is a great example of the personal nature of consumption ethics. Many consumers will not see an ethical decision when shopping with private companies over cooperatives, but there is a subset of consumers that approach this as an ethical consumption decision.

Fairtrade aims to guarantee a fair deal for workers and focuses predominantly on the agricultural sector in developing nations (Ethical Consumer 2015b). Some of the key product categories included under the Fairtrade banner are coffee, bananas, cotton, wine, sugar, chocolate and tea. Fairtrade has become a mainstream consumption phenomenon and has been a large part in the growth of ethical consumption as a whole. On the other hand, Nestlé, the multinational food and beverage manufacturer have become one of the most famously boycotted consumer brands as a result of their aggressive marketing of a baby milk formula in developing countries. It is widely accepted that the formula was marketed inappropriately and may have been an indirect cause of death for many inadequately breast fed children in these nations (Ethical Consumer 2015b). There are many such examples of inappropriate marketing which can be misleading, harmful or offensive to consumers and knowledge of these transgressions can influence consumer purchasing behaviour.

**Politics:** Tax avoidance is probably the most salient issue under this category of consumption issue. Many organisations, particularly large multinationals have received negative criticism and consumer response as a result of their accounting practices. An equally important sub section of this consumption category is political lobbying. Organisations that wield a high level of influence in the political sphere through party donations and lobbying may not always have the best interests of the general population in mind. When this is the case, and political activity is seen to be to the detriment of the wider population, boycotts may take place and the companies involved may be negatively evaluated in consumer purchasing decisions. However, there is an issue of information asymmetries, and such acts are often unknown to consumers.

**Product sustainability:** Companies committed to sustainability can create positive brand associations for themselves and enhance consumer based brand knowledge. There are a large volume of consumers committed to particular sub-cultures of ethical

consumption under the wider banner of sustainability. For example, many vegetarian and vegan consumers are committed to their consumption habits as a more sustainable lifestyle for the planet, for agriculture and for their own health. Equally, there are consumers committed to buying organic or Fairtrade goods as a consumption vote for sustainability. There are also many environmentally aware consumers that look for energy efficiency and low carbon alternative when making purchase decisions.

### **Ethical consumption practices**

In addition to the various categories of ethical issues that exist, it is also possible to categorise ethical consumer practices. Harrison, Newholm & Shaw (2005) identified boycotts, positive buying (buycotts), product screening and anti-consumerism/sustainable consumerism as the typology of ethical consumption behaviours. According to Harrison, Newholm & Shaw (2005), these consumption behaviours are driven by a variety of factors:

- Globalisation of markets and the weakening of national governments
- The rise of the transnational corporations and brands
- The rise of campaigning and pressure groups
- The social and environmental effects of technological advance
- A shift of power towards consumers
- The effectiveness of market campaigning
- The growth of the wider corporate responsibility movement

### **Drivers of ethical consumption**

Evidence suggests that the drivers of ethical consumption and ethical criteria impact consumers differently when applied to different product categories (Carrigan, Attalla 2001). For example, consumers are more likely to make ethical choices when purchasing food products than when purchasing clothing. Carrigan & Attalla's (2001) matrix on ethical awareness and ethical purchase intentions can categorise consumers and help understand the ethical choices made by consumers.

**Table 2 – Consumer attitudes to ethical purchasing**

		Ethical awareness	
		High	Low
Ethical purchase intentions	High	<i>Caring and ethical</i>	<i>Confused and uncertain</i>
	Low	<i>Cynical and disinterested</i>	<i>Oblivious</i>

(Carrigan, Attalla 2001)

This matrix is a useful tool for understanding types of ethical consumers. However, there are a variety of other factors that may be used to categories ethical consumers, and yet no comprehensive framework exists. Ethical consumption remains an under-examined aspect of consumer behaviour despite its recent rise to prominence. In fact, Smith (2008): pp.5, provides evidence that “*up to 90% of consumers consider corporate responsibility in their purchase and consumption behaviours*”. Cowe & Williams (2000) also found that over a third of UK consumers would describe themselves as ‘ethical purchasers’. However, research is still required to identify the profile, psychographic and behavioural factors influencing ethical consumption levels.

**Factors determining ethical consumption**

Ethical consumption attitudes and intentions can be predicted by emotional and social components (Oh, Yoon 2014). Oh & Yoon’s (2014) survey results showed self-identity, ethical obligation and altruism to be positively related with an individual’s attitudes toward ethical consumption. Antil’s (1984) paper provides a profile of the ethical consumer, however, none of the ten demographic variables measured were found to have a significant relationship with socially responsible consumption. In fact, Antil’s (1984) most significant finding was that a consumer’s awareness of social issues and their belief that they can contribute to the solution are strongly related with socially responsible consumption attitudes. Such ethical awareness and intention to consume ethically are captured by Carrigan & Attalla’s (2001) in their matrix of consumer attitudes to ethical purchasing. Fullerton, Kerch & Dodge (1996) identified that younger, more educated and higher income consumers appear to be more influenced by ethical concerns when making their purchasing decisions. There is also evidence to suggest that there are differences in the consumption behaviours of men and women, and that women are generally more socially concerned than men when making consumption decisions (Roberts 1993).

The previous attempts to profile ethical consumers have produced inconsistent results. Roberts (1995) provides an overview of demographic research into socially responsible consumption, finding that six of the 17 studies investigating age as a predictor variable found age to be negatively correlated with ethical consumption. Equally, 8 studies found no significant relationship at all and another 3 found a positive correlation between age and ethical consumption, meaning they found more inclination toward ethical consumption among older consumers. A summary of Roberts' (1995) review on profiling socially responsible consumption can be found below in Table 3. This table displays the total counts in which a positive relationship was found between the predictor variable and ethical consumption, as well as the total counts for negative relationships, no significant relationship and how often the predictors were not investigated in the studies at all.

**Table 3 – Profiling levels of socially responsible consumer behaviour**

	<b>Positive relationship with ethical consumption</b>	<b>Negative relationship with ethical consumption</b>	<b>Not significant results</b>	<b>Not investigated</b>
<b>Age</b>	3	6	8	5
<b>Social-Economic Status</b>	9	0	4	9
<b>Place of Residence</b>	4	1	1	16
<b>Sex (Female)</b>	6	2	10	4
<b>Education</b>	10	1	7	3
<b>Income</b>	10	1	7	4
<b>Occupation</b>	7	0	8	7

Adapted from: (Roberts 1995)

From Roberts' (1995) review of the literature, social-economic status, education and income seem to most consistently show a positive correlation with ethical consumption. Overall, the profile of an ethical consumer is a younger, female from a higher social-economic background, with higher income, a prestigious occupation and a higher level of education.

According to Antil's (1984) profile of the socially responsible consumer, those consumers willing to make an effort when purchasing a product are more likely to consume responsibly. Similarly, consumers with knowledge and concern for social and environmental issues are more likely to consume ethically. In fact, Antil (1984) summarises socially responsible consumers as:

*“A group that transcends demographic and socioeconomic segments. They are more likely to live in urban areas and tend to be involved in community activities, but are not any more socially active than the average consumer. They are more liberal but not to the extent that they could be termed radical.”*

(Antil 1984): pp.7

Demographics cannot fully explain a consumer’s propensity to consume ethically. Other individual differences have therefore been investigated in the literature to better understand ethical consumers and better predict ethical consumption behaviour (Roberts 1995). Again Roberts’ (1995) review of the literature can be summarised to profile ethical consumers as those that are Libertarian with concern for, and knowledge of, environmental issues as well as perceiving themselves to have an ability to effect social issues with their consumption. Table 4 below provides a more detailed overview of the literature review conducted in Roberts’ (1995) paper. Like Table 3, this table also displays the total counts in which a positive relationship was found between the predictor variable and ethical consumption, as well as the total counts for negative relationships, no significant relationship and how often the predictors were not investigated in the studies at all.

**Table 4 – Individual differences and socially responsible consumer behaviour**

	<b>Positive relationship with ethical consumption</b>	<b>Negative relationship with ethical consumption</b>	<b>Not significant results</b>	<b>Not investigated</b>
<b>Perceived Consumer Effectiveness</b> (ability to affect issues with their consumption)	6	0	0	9
<b>Dogmatism</b>	1	1	0	13
<b>Power of Big Business</b>	2	0	0	13
<b>Libertarianism</b>	7	1	0	7
<b>Self-Actualisation</b>	1	0	1	13
<b>Environmental Concern</b>	4	0	0	11
<b>Environmental Knowledge</b>	2	0	1	12
<b>Alienation</b> (feeling of isolation from one’s community)	1	4	0	10

Adapted from: (Roberts 1995)

Equally we understand that there are factors impeding ethical consumption, notably the price of the product, the consumption experiences of the buyer, the ethical obligations of the consumer, information on the positive or negative ethical acts associated with the product or producer, product quality, inertia in changing purchasing behaviour, cynicism toward the motives of CSR and the guilt associate with unethical consumption choices (Bray, Johns & Kilburn 2011). These factors include key hurdles to ethical consumption, such as individuals not recognising the morality in consumption decisions, an individual's locus of control (internal or external), the consumer's knowledge of an ethical issue and cynicism around the motivations behind ethically made products.

### **A history of ethical consumption**

Unloading political baggage onto products is something that stretches a long way back in our consumer culture (Hilton 2003). However, broadly speaking, ethical consumerism has only become a recognisable phenomenon in the past four decades (Hilton 2003). There is a strong history of ethical consumption amongst groups that have been marginalised in society. One such example of this would be US housewives' boycotts against supermarket labour exploitation (Littler 2011). This boycott was direct consumer action against supermarkets known to be involved in the exploitation of migrant farm workers in their supply chains. Similarly, working-class communities have traditionally been heavily involved in support of labour rights and co-operative organisations (Littler 2011). However, green and environmental issues were the drivers that started ethical consumerism as a social movement, and human rights and animal rights issues became more important for consumers more recently (Hilton 2003).

### **The rise of ethical consumption**

It was predicted that as a 'luxury', ethical consumption would decline as household spending reduced and government austerity commenced in 2008. However, in the years from 2008 the value of ethical markets has increased from £32.2bn (2008) to £80.3bn (2014); according to a recent report from the Ethical Consumer Research Association (ECRA). Ethical consumerism has become increasingly mainstream and more widespread through organic, green, Fairtrade and free range products. Fairtrade and free range eggs are some of the most obvious and widespread examples of ethical consumption. The plethora of CSR activities and ethical consumption issues that exist necessitates 'ethical consumption' as a catch-all term for a variety of socially and politically motivated consumption behaviour and preferences.

The ethical consumer market is a continually evolving segment in both size and profile; thus, it is an important area for many marketers to consider. CSR activities can create

what Keller (2001) calls favourable 'brand responses' and from consumers there are more examples of companies and products that have become consumers' preferred brand as a result of their CSR activities. CSR allows companies to differentiate themselves, particularly from low price, low value products as consumers are often willing to pay a premium; assuming they value the ethical dimensions being offered (Dillard, Murray 2013). Educating customers can be essential for upholding the CSR agenda. If customers recognise and value the ethical consumption characteristics then theoretically they would pay a premium for those products or services. In fact, knowledge of ethical issues is one of the most useful predictors/drivers of ethical consumption (Antil 1984).

Ceteris paribus, customers prefer responsible to irresponsible business (Smith 2008, Roberts 1995, Green, Pelozo 2011, Freestone, McGoldrick 2008). Green and Pelozo (2011) identify (1) emotional value, (2) social value and (3) functional value as the three forms of consumer value rendered by an organisation's CSR activities. Their assertion is that CSR will influence an individual's purchasing behaviour if an organisation's CSR activity is able to create such value (Green, Pelozo 2011). However, the attitude behaviour gap indicates that other elements of a value proposition are more important. An attitude-behaviour gap exists around the world within ethical consumption. One survey of a cross-section of the US population found that:

*"While 51 per cent of respondents said they would be likely to pay more for a product or service if it were associated with a cause they care about, only 20 per cent said they had actually bought a product or service in the past 12 months because it was associated with a cause."*

(Simon 1995): pp.23

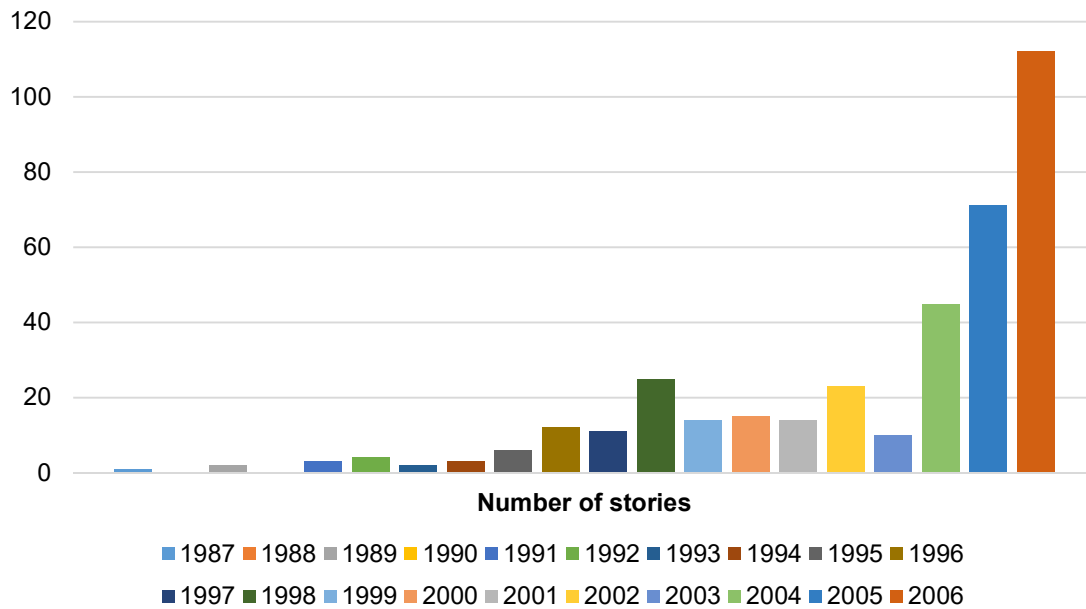
In the UK, Cowe and Williams (2000) identified that while only between 1-3% of purchases were ethical in nature, approximately 30% of consumers were highly motivated to purchase Fairtrade products.

In fact, the overall market share for ethical products is estimated to be less than 2% (Belk, Devinney & Eckhardt 2005). To a large extent, this is because consumers do not want to be inconvenienced by ethical consumption. Mohr, Webb & Harris (2001) suggest that price, quality and convenience are the most vital decision making factors for consumers. They attribute that attitude-behaviour gap in ethical consumption to the fact that *"survey data typically suffers from a social desirability response bias"* (Mohr, Webb & Harris 2001): pp.50. This is a plausible explanation and is considered in more depth within the research design and interpretation of results presented in this thesis.

### The increasing media interest in ethical consumption

In correlation with the increased academic and real world consumption activity that ethical consumption has received, the volume of stories in national newspapers (UK) has also increased in the years between 1987 and 2006.

Figure 2 – Increasing news coverage for ethical consumption



(Barnett et al. 2010):104

### Consumption attitudes, intentions and behaviours

There is a substantial volume of research documenting that most consumers are unwilling to adjust their consumption behaviours to address their stated environmental concerns or attitudes towards sustainable consumption. The most consistent finding within ethical consumption literature is that a gap exists between what people say they will do and what they actually do, the so-called attitude-behaviour gap (Caruana, Carrington & Chatzidakis 2015). Cowe & Williams (2000) identified a ‘30:3 phenomenon’, where 30% of consumers have ethical consumption intentions, yet just 3% of market share is ethical consumption. An explanation for the gap is a distinct over-reliance on self-reported attitude surveys when attitudes do not directly predict purchase intentions or consumption behaviours. Another explanation is the possibility that respondents conceal their underline attitudes by providing desirable survey responses in order to hide their socially undesirable beliefs. However, this explanation would appear less likely. Bray, Johns & Kilburn’s (2011) focus groups and subsequent analysis of qualitative data identified seven ‘impeding factors’ that characterise the



attitude-behaviour gap; (1) price sensitivity, (2) personal experience, (3) ethical obligation, (4) lack of information, (5) quality, (6) inertia and (7) cynicism.

The attitude-behaviour gap is not the primary focus of this research; however, it is a vastly important phenomenon for the interpretation of research findings in this paper. To this effect, the survey data collected will address purchasing attitudes and intentions, and political attitudes but will not cover purchasing or voting behaviour (Barnea, Schwartz 1998, Palfrey, Poole 1987).

Cotte & Trudel's (2009) systematic review of socially responsible consumption found that studies of ethical consumption can measure attitudes, intentions or behaviours. A gap has been identified between attitudes and intentions as well as the gap that exists between intentions and behaviours. Three quarters of ethical consumption research is concerned with attitudes and intentions without addressing consumption behaviours directly. Together these observations about the ethical consumption literature suggest a need for more research into ethical consumption behaviours in the future. Cotte & Trudel's (2009) review also found that 90% of ethical consumption studies were conducted on North American and European consumers. This again has implications for future research since Auger, Devinney & Louviere (2007) identified that attitudes toward both social and ethical matters differ across countries. However, we must accept that the ethical consumption market is generally more developed in North American and European countries and academic researchers in the field are generally based within institutions in these countries.

### **Ethical consumption from the firm's perspective**

Growing ethical consumption is both an opportunity and a threat from the firm's perspective. CSR can have a significant influence on the brands that consumers choose to purchase, and organisations with a progressive approach to CSR are poised to capitalise on increasing demand for products and firms displaying CSR features. Ethical consumption can also be a threat for organisations that are at risk of the negative forms of consumer action associated with ethical consumption. In this regard, we can view ethical consumption as both a push and a pull driver for organisations to become more socially responsible. Organisations with poor social performance will be pushed to enhance their CSR practice to avoid or limit negative consumer action, such as boycotts. Organisations will also be pulled by the market to respond to increasing demand for ethical organisations with an enhanced and progressive approach to dealing with environmental, social and sustainability issues.

Ethical consumption may be viewed as a soft form of market regulation on company behaviours. 'Good companies' are rewarded for producing products that deal with ethical consumption issues, while 'bad companies' that neglect the responsibilities that

consumers expect them to address are punished. Rewarding good behaviour is likely to come in the form of positive word of mouth, positive evaluations of products and an increased likelihood to pay price premiums for the ethical brand. Punishment on the other hand is likely to come from negative PR and media coverage as well as organised boycotts and a general reduction in demand from consumers.

### **Recognising and targeting ethical consumers**

Many marketing professionals are finding themselves responsible for identifying and targeting ethical consumers, or at least appealing to consumers more broadly with products positioned as socially responsible. As discussed earlier, targeting ethical consumers is a challenging task since, to date, both profile and psychographic characteristics have been found to have limited predictive power on ethical consumption issues. Further to this, the UK Data Protection act has strict rules around the use of sensitive personal data such as political opinions, and marketers may find that they are unable to target consumers based on their political ideology.

For the purposes of this thesis, ethical consumption has been understood to encapsulate many of the terms that may have previously been judged as synonymous with ethical consumption. Terms such as socially responsible consumption and the green consumer can be understood as subsets under the banner of ethical consumption. For identifying and targeting segments of the ethical consumption market, these distinctions can become quite valuable.

In attempts to identify the socially conscious, green or general ethical consumers, marketers could segment their audience based on their sensitivity to the issue at hand. However, it is not easy to identify consumers that are sensitive to ethical issues. Since marketers still tend to segment and target their audience based on demographics, it is important to acknowledge that this method of segmentation is particularly ineffective in the ethical consumption market. The literature discussed earlier highlighted that personality and attitude measures can be more effective predictors of ethical consumption than the extant demographic variables that have been researched. The issue, however, is that identifying segments of a wider population based on their attitudes can be significantly more challenging for marketers. One area with promise for marketers is digital advertising where messages can be tailored to an audience based on their browsing behaviour and the profile that has been built up on them through online cookies. Critically, pay per click advertising can be tailored to ethical consumers based on the various search terms that they may use and digital advertising space can be purchased on web pages that are relevant to the interests of ethical consumers but this approach may not work in every product category.

The changing nature of marketing and the emergence of what is being described as an inbound/content approach to marketing is something that may become increasingly effective for targeting ethical consumers. Content marketing through blogs, social media and third party channels can encourage consumers to engage with a brand, typically online, without the traditional one-way, push style communications that were more popular in the past. This paradigm shift in marketing towards two-way, interactive marketing communications is one potential opportunity for modern marketers hoping to promote their products and brands to an ethical consumer audience. A good example of a brand pursuing this approach in their marketing is the fruit smoothies brand Innocent. Innocent smoothies publish content to, and interact with over half a million Facebook users and over 30,000 twitter users on a daily basis. The brand prides itself on sustainability and doing good as well as tasting good. Their “tastes good does good” message is front and centre in their marketing and on their products.

Organisations also have the capacity to target consumers with advertising, email, direct mail and any channel they see fit once they have the relevant customer data to do so. Prospective customers could be targeted by organisations working with large data gathering organisations such as Facebook, Google, and Experian etc. If online behaviour can be identified as an accurate predictor of ethical consumption, then the data gathered on customers online could make targeting the ethical consumer audience much more possible. However, to date there isn't relevant research within the academic literature exploring this possibility. Yet we may assume that organisations are already using this data as well as their own research and analytics to target consumers in the ethical consumption market, since this is commonplace across many industries in modern marketing.

### **Ethical consumption in the UK**

The UK is one of the most developed markets for ethical consumption. UK consumers have the high incomes, high status jobs, a high level of education and access to information on ethical consumption issues that support consumers in making socially responsible purchasing decisions. The Ethical Consumer magazine based in Manchester has positioned itself as the heart of the ethical consumer movement in the UK since 1989. The ethos of the Ethical Consumer is centred on making ethics easy (Ethical Consumer 2015b). The magazine provides online tools and resources as well as a bi-monthly magazine for consumers looking to make ethical decisions in their everyday consumption.

The Ethical Consumer Market Report provides a barometer of UK spending since 1999. The 2015 report highlighted that the value of ethical sales rose by 8% from 2014 during a period with inflation only just above 0.5% (Ethical Consumer 2015b). The report divides the ethical consumption market into seven main areas:

- **Ethical Food & Drink:** Organic, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Free range eggs
- **Green Home:** energy efficient appliances, boilers and light bulbs
- **Eco-Travel Transport:** cars and bicycles
- **Ethical Personal Products:** buying for re-use and ethical clothing and cosmetics
- **Community:** local shopping, charity shops and charity donations
- **Ethical Money:** ethical banking, investments and share issues
- **Boycotts**

(Ethical Consumer 2015a)

Figure 3 provides an overview of the ethical consumption market in the UK over the past 15 years. In 2014 the combined value of ethical spending and ethical money rose to £80billion up from £13 billion in 1999.

**Figure 3 – Value of the Ethical Market 1999 - 2014**



1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
£13.046bn	£15.477bn	£13.577bn	£15.900bn	21.998bn	£25.841bn	£26.125bn	£32.238bn
2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
£36.333bn	£36.220bn	£42.819bn	£46.157bn	£67.755bn	£75.211bn	£78.197bn	£80.257bn

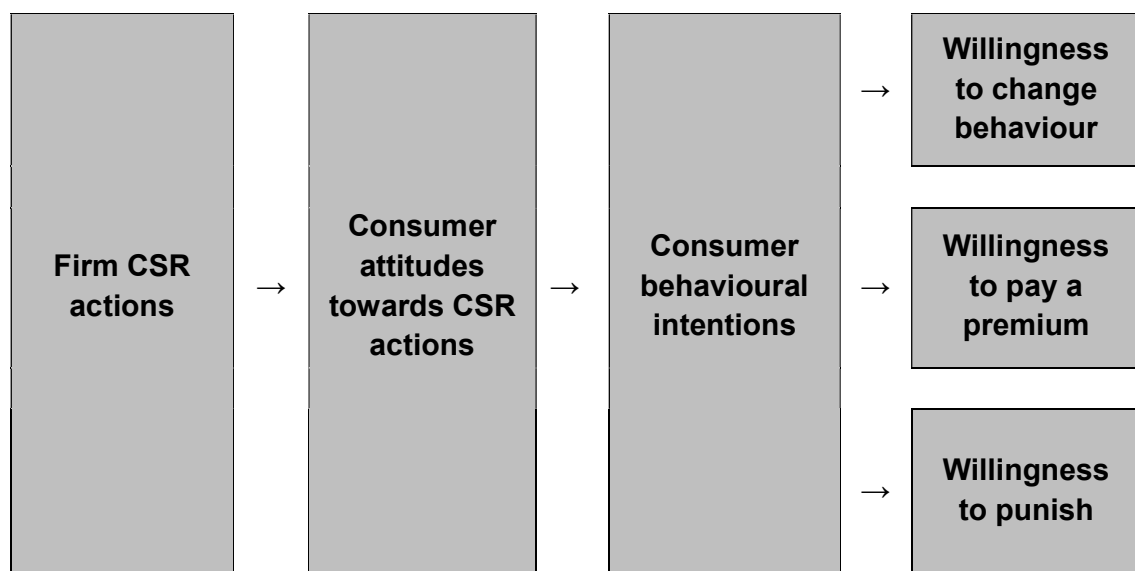
(Ethical Consumer 2015a)

The Co-operative also produced an Ethical Consumer Market Report up until 2012 (Co-operative 2012). The latest report found that over half of the eggs sold in the UK are cage free, and more than half of the consumers surveyed stated that they have avoided products as a result of a company’s negative moral reputation (Co-operative 2012). Since 2000, UK consumers have also increased their propensity to recycle, support local shops, seek information on a company’s reputation and buy primarily for ethical reasons (Co-operative 2012).

## The relationship between ethical consumption and CSR

We can understand the process in its purest form quite succinctly as ethical purchasing behaviours being the result of ethical purchasing intentions, which are the result of ethical purchasing attitudes, which in turn stem from the organisations approach to CSR. Cotte & Trudel's (2009) model of socially conscious consumerism developed from their systematic review of the literature describes the relationship between CSR and ethical consumption behaviour in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4 – A model of socially conscious consumerism**



Adapted from: (Cotte, Trudel 2009)

**Influences:** gender, age, education, socio-economic class, culture, nation, involvement, social and peer influence and government policy.

### CSR and related concepts

Exploring the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption is of interest because the argument over whether CSR should be pursued by private sector organisations is not easily mapped by the Left/Right political divisions. Furthermore, mirroring ethical consumption the two key characteristics defining an ideology are social and economic (Jost, Federico & Napier 2009). CSR is supported by individuals with a Left-wing affiliation and individuals with a Right-wing affiliation. Similarly, both sides of the political spectrum have their critics of CSR. Milton Friedman is one of many famous examples of a neoliberal ideologue in opposition of CSR, he suggested:

*'There is one and only one social responsibility of business [...] to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.'*

(Friedman 1970): pp.133

Conversely, Philip Kotler promotes CSR, citing its economic rationale and benefits on sales, market share, branding, corporate image, employees and investors (Kotler, Lee 2005). More recently a socially responsible approach has been promoted by management gurus Michael Porter and Peter Drucker and business leaders such as Bill Gates and Dominic Barton (Crane, Matten & Spence 2014). In some capacity, neoliberals and Marxists tend to agree that firms cannot be socially responsible; in this regard as CSR is a more politically centrist phenomenon. Some Leftists will argue that business cannot be the best regulator of themselves and some Right-wingers will argue that business should not regulate itself.

Ethical consumption does find natural support from the Left but many dismiss it as window-dressing. Popular author Naomi Klein suggests that voluntary approaches to CSR cannot be relied upon and that piecemeal offering of social value by the private sector is a symptom of a systemic problem, solvable by investments in the public sector (Klein 2014). This opinion also criticises ethical consumption as a superficial solution to people's fears which allows the underlying causes to perpetuate further (Littler 2011).

## **Ethical Investing**

Ethical or Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) is an approach to financial investment concerned with producing social and ethical good as well as financial returns (Ethical Consumer 2015b). In parallel with ethical consumption, SRI is becoming increasingly high profile phenomenon and a method of guiding change towards more socially responsible business (O'Rourke 2003). While ethical consumption is the method by which consumers can reward or punish company behaviour, SRI is an investor/owner's equivalent. Ethical consumption and SRI can produce similar pressures on organisations to manage themselves in an ethical and socially responsible manner. However, the two activities are used by different stakeholder groups. Company owners can adopt SRI to reward companies' CSR and address various ethical issues whereas consumers can use ethical consumption.

Ethical Investment is an umbrella term covering sustainable, social and environmental investment (O'Rourke 2003). Many ethical mutual funds have been launched in the

past 10 years as products for investors that want their money to work for good (O'Rourke 2003).

The Vanguard Group manage two of the largest and most popular SRI funds. Their funds are designed to exclude any securities that do not adhere to the ten principles of socially responsible investing established in the UN Global Compact (United Nations 2016). An external screening agency is also used to exclude companies that neglect factors such as: human rights, labour, environment, corruption and weapons (The Vanguard Group 2015). The issues addressed by ethical investing clearly overlap with ethical consumption issues. In fact, Ethical Consumer (2015b) evaluates investment funds with the same scorecard of ethical issues that they use to evaluate any other product category. Critically, ethical investing has the same general goal as ethical consumption but provides another method for obtaining that goal.

The UK's Ethical Consumer Market Report 2015 values ethical investment at £13.4 billion, up from £3.7 billion in 2000 (Ethical Consumer 2015a). According to the Ethical Consumer magazine, ethical investing is one of four areas that make up the ethical money market. The market for ethical money and ethical financial products includes ethical investment, ethical banking, credit unions and ethical share issues (Ethical Consumer 2015a).

### **Existing theories of ethical consumption**

A General Theory of Marketing Ethics introduced by Hunt & Vitell (1986) explains the ethical behaviour of marketing practitioners and has since been adopted in numerous empirical studies of ethical consumers. It has been accepted as the most prevalent model for explaining ethical consumption. The model was not originally developed to understand ethical consumption, and with the academic and real world growth of ethical consumption there a need for the development of a definitive model of ethical consumption. The Hunt & Vitell (1986) model relies on factors such as industry context and organisational environment which are largely irrelevant in a consumer context. A new model is necessary and it should address the previous ethical consumption literature by factoring in a variety of control variables as well as political ideology as an important predictor.

Shaw & Shiu (2002) first introduced a theory for the purchasing decisions made by ethical consumers. In defining their model the researchers added both ethical obligations and self-identity to the existing psychological theory of planned behaviour (Shaw, Shiu 2002). Ultimately (1) ethical obligations, (2) attitudes, (3) self-identity, (4) subjective norms and (5) perceived behavioural control were the 5 variables identified as predictors of ethical consumption intentions (Shaw, Shiu 2002). These variables were shown to have weak or moderate correlations with ethical consumption

intentions. This model was developed based on a sample of self-identified consumers; subscribers to the Ethical Consumer magazine. It remains necessary to develop a model of ethical consumption for the wider consumer market. Furthermore, it is necessary to develop a model that is useful for practicing marketing professionals as well as conceptually rigorous.

Few ethical consumption studies address the consumer decision making process. Beckmann's (2007) article is an example of research that does use buyer decision making theory to summarise ethical consumption. Beckmann (2007) applies the main findings of a literature review concerning consumers and CSR to build a comprehensive picture of ethical consumption; specifically, how a company's CSR influences the consumer decision making process:

- **Need recognition:** Most consumers proclaim an interest in CSR issues; however, consumers have varying degrees of knowledge on companies' CSR. It is broadly understood by consumers that a large number of private sector organisations engage in activities that could constitute CSR. But, many consumers are cynical about CSR initiatives and their underlying motives (Beckmann 2007).
- **Information search:** Consumers generally espouse more favourable attitude towards companies engaged proactively in CSR (Beckmann 2007). Attitudes are influenced by both non-commercial (e.g. word of mouth and social media) and commercial (e.g. advertising and mainstream media) sources of information.
- **Evaluation of alternatives:** Intuitively, CSR increases positive attitudes held towards a brand and its products (Beckmann 2007).
- **Purchase (attitudes and behaviours):** The connection between attitudes and purchase behaviour is weak. Price and quality are still the more important features influencing purchase decisions. In addition, Consumers' negative reaction to unethical behaviour is often more pronounced and direct than their reaction to proactive, responsible behaviour (Beckmann 2007).
- **Post-purchase experiences:** Many consumers see a trade-off between CSR features on the one hand and price, value, convenience and quality on the other (Mohr, Webb & Harris 2001); e.g. they are happier to accept a higher price and/or lower quality in return for an ethical product (Beckmann 2007).

When discussing existing models of ethical consumption it is also important to recognise the work of Bray, Johns & Kilburn (2011) and Cotte & Trudel (2009). In fact, their models explain ethical consumption in the context of its determinants better than any of the other models from the literature; see Appendix 5 for these models. The



Bray, Johns & Kilburn (2011) model includes exogenous variables influencing ethical consumption (e.g. gender, affluence, education level and age), but builds on this to include variables that explain the well documented gap between attitudes and behaviours; the variables identified to impede ethical consumption include price sensitivity, the consumer's personal experience, ethical obligation, a lack of information, product quality, inertia and cynicism toward ethical products and brands (Bray, Johns & Kilburn 2011). It was not necessary to include these variables in this study because this survey investigated attitudes and intentions and not behaviours. On the other hand, the Cotte & Trudel (2009) model was built upon an extensive review of the literature. Their model, like the Bray, Johns & Kilburn (2011) model also focuses on the gaps between attitudes and intentions, and intentions and behaviours.

## ***Political Ideology***

### **Defining political ideology**

*“An ideology is a system of collectively held normative and reputedly factual ideas, beliefs and attitudes advocating a particular pattern of social relationships and arrangements, and/or aimed at justifying a particular pattern of conduct which its proponents seek to promote, realise, pursue or maintain”* (Hamilton 1987): pp.38. Ideology has philosophical and operational levels. Philosophical ideology deals with the big picture while operational ideology deals with specific issues. Ideologies emerge from a combination of top-down socialisation and bottom-up psychological predispositions (Jost, Federico & Napier 2009).

There are definitions of political ideology, many include that it is a political belief system and a generally action-orientated collection of political ideas (Heywood 2012). An ideology according to Heywood (2012) has three main features: a critique of existing order, a vision of future society and a theory of political change. This definition of the features of political ideology applies universally to liberals, conservatives, socialists, fascists, ecologists and religious fundamentalists.

The Left/Right division in politics has been understood to be the best method for classifying political attitudes for more than 200 years. The principle differences between a Leftist and a Rightist ideology are: (1) openness vs resistance to change and (2) acceptance vs rejection of inequality (Thorisdottir et al. 2007, Jost, Federico & Napier 2009). Traditionally the political Left is pro-change and anti-inequality whereas the Right is generally more pro-status quo and more accepting of inequality as an inevitable bi-product of progress. Hence, ideologies will make assertions about human nature, historical events, present realities and future possibilities (Thorisdottir et al. 2007).

### **The role of ideology**

According to Heywood (2012), as well as providing the lens through which the world can be understood, political ideologies influence political life in the following ways:

- They structure political understanding and so set goals and inspire activism
- They shape the nature of political systems
- They act as a form of social cement

### **Measuring political ideology**

There are various approaches to measuring political ideology. This research adopts the traditional Left/Right distinction, a Libertarian/Authoritarian scale and a scale measuring policy preferences to create a multidimensional model of political ideology.

The advantage of using a combination of the Left/Right and Libertarian/Authoritarian scales means it can accurately measure the ideology of an electorate regardless of levels of involvement in politics, and how well-formed their self-identified political ideologies are (Evans, Heath & Lalljee 1996).

*“Single item measures of core political beliefs suffer from a variety of limitations when compared with multiple-indicator scales. Single questions are unable to address the complexity of multi-faceted topics, whereas multiple-item scales enable the assessment of attitude consistency across a range of social and political issues, so that the common thread provided by the value position they tap can be detected.”*

(Evans, Heath & Lalljee 1996): pp.94

### **Dimensions of ideology**

It is important to cover economic and social dimensions to accurately understand ideology (Jost, Federico & Napier 2009). Approaches include: liking or disliking a range of political slogans on a scale of conservatism and liberalism (Fishkin, Keniston & McKinnon 1973), levels of agreement with questions on individualism or egalitarianism (Michaud, Carlisle & Smith 2009), and levels of agreement with statements about freedom, justice, individuality and progress of the market (Buckle 2013). Longo & Baker (2014) use a 7 point scale anchored by ‘strongly agree and strongly disagree’ to understand political ideology. Congruently, Buckle (2013) provides a series of statements which adhere to Left or Right wing political leanings. Responses to these survey questions were measured on a Likert scale of agreeableness. As a result of the various measurement scales available, it was necessary to make a decision on which would be the most appropriate for this research. The decision was made to adopt the British Election Study (BES) and the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey scales measuring the Left/Right orientation and the Libertarian/Authoritarian orientation (Curtice, Bryson 2003), and a scale from Buckle (2013) measuring Left/Right policy preferences. Justification for the use of these scales is presented within the methods section of this report.

### **Factors correlating with political ideology**

Demographics including: age, education, gender, income and religiosity have each been shown to correlate with political ideology (Feldman, Johnston 2014). However, the relationship is weak in all cases. Income correlates with economic conservatism to the largest degree while religiosity correlates with social conservatism to the largest degree (Feldman, Johnston 2014). The most robust social predictor of political ideology explored in the existing research are personality traits such as openness to experience and conscientiousness (Carney et al. 2008, Gerber et al. 2010, Mondak 2010, Thorisdottir et al. 2007). Evidence suggests that differences exist between Left

and Right, and that the differences may be rooted in personality characteristics. However, factors such as agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism are not consistent predictors of political orientation. In fact, out of the Big Five Personality Dimensions only 'Openness to New Experiences' and 'Conscientiousness' were found to predict political orientations.

*"As a general rule, liberals are more open-minded in their pursuit of creativity, novelty, and diversity, whereas conservatives lead lives that are more orderly, conventional, and better organized."*

(Carney et al. 2008): pp.836

These research findings are intuitive since openness vs resistance to change is one of the two primary distinctions between a Leftist and a Rightist ideology. Greber et al.'s (2010) research reinforces these findings, concluding that 'Openness' is most significantly correlated with liberal attitudes toward both social and economic policy dimensions of political ideology. Ultimately, their research shows that the Big Five personality traits are at least as effective as education or income when predicting an individual's political ideology.

### **Ideological perspectives**

Liberalism is increasingly associated with freedom and choice and has implied openness and open-mindedness (Heywood 2012). Heywood (2012) describes a commitment to the individual as a central theme in liberal beliefs which means individuals are free to choose and satisfy their interests while being rewarded for their talents and willingness to work. Classic liberalism looks to minimise the role of the state while modern liberalism accepts the role of the state in helping individuals to make decisions that are in their own interest.

The word 'conservative' is readily associated with a resistance to change and a lifestyle that is cautious and conventional. Heywood (2012) defines political conservatism as a desire to conserve tradition and the organic structure of society. While traditional conservatives defend established values and institutions, the new Right-wing believe in a strong but minimal state, and combines economic Libertarianism with social Authoritarianism (Heywood 2012). Conservatives tend to believe that society is naturally hierarchical and strongly believe in property rights.

The route word for socialism means to share and this ideology has traditionally been defined by its opposition to capitalism (Heywood 2012). Socialists believe in a more humane and equal vision for human society. Heywood (2012) describes equality as the defining principle of socialism and socialists believe that this provides the basis for a stable and cohesive society. There are various forms of socialism, Marxism

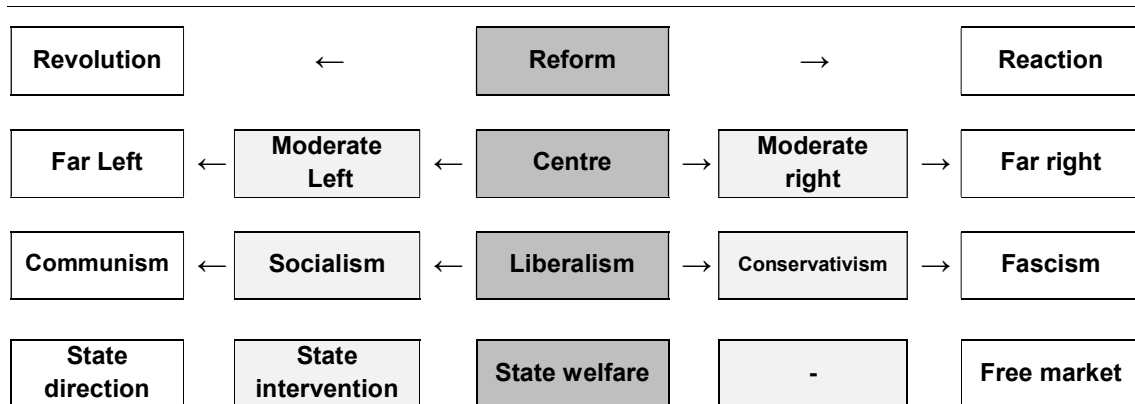
promotes revolution to a classless society whereas democratic socialism embraces gradual reform to humanise the capitalist system (Heywood 2012).

Nationalism is a belief that the nation is central to political organisation and that humans are naturally divided into nations. There are various forms of cultural and ethnic nationalism, and these have been used to defend traditional institutions, protect cultures, establish a social order and promote war, conquest and imperialism (Heywood 2012).

Ecologism is the form of political ideology most concerned with the environment. This ideology has become increasingly popular since the 1960s by the growing green movements (Heywood 2012). This ideology rejects the human centric thinking of the traditional ideologies and embraces interconnectedness with nature and the environment (Heywood 2012). The different perspective that this ideology brings has brought about new ideas on economics, morality and social organisation (Heywood 2012). A shallow form of ecologism is environmentalism which adopts ecologist beliefs for human benefit. Deep ecologists on the other hand reject the notion that humans are any more special or important than other species (Heywood 2012).

These various ideologies can be understood in the simplest sense by how they relate to the traditional Left/Right distinction in political ideology.

**Figure 5 – Spectrum of political ideologies**



Adapted from: (Leach 2015): pp.11, 12 and 13

### Political ideology in the UK

Most political ideologies transcend nations; however, even the most international ideologies including socialism and liberalism espouse distinct differences in different national political systems (Leach 2015). British conservatism is itself distinct and has flourished in a time when similar political beliefs have declined internationally (Leach

2015). In fact, Leach (2015) describes conservatism as the dominant political philosophy in the UK throughout the twentieth century.

It is also important to acknowledge that ideology in the UK differs among the constituent countries and regions. It is generally accepted that Northern Ireland is politically quite different from the rest of the UK but the rise of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in the 2015 UK General Election and being close to a vote for independence in the Scottish independence referendum highlighted more differences in political beliefs between the nations.

In general British conservatism, liberalism and socialism all dismiss ideology and abstract reasoning in favour of a more pragmatic approach (Leach 2015). However, it is also important to recognise that pragmatism is often viewed as a weakness in British politics and it invites criticism about an absence of long-term vision (Leach 2015). Debates over political ideas and values led to the emergence of the 'New Right' and 'New Labour' ideologies. These new approaches embraced old ideologies and pragmatism simultaneously to emphasise whatever works in achieving their overall vision for society (Leach 2015).

Revolutionary political parties on either side of the spectrum do not usually find broad based support in the UK. It is generally accepted that UK voters have a narrow decision to make between voting for a centre-Right or a centre-Left political party (Leach 2015). In fact, political parties within the UK have often been found to compete for the centre ground in British politics as a way of gaining more support from voters. A greater range of political thinking has become more prominent recently with the dramatic rise of the United Kingdom Independence Party and an emergence of other parties outside of the political mainstream including the Green Party and nationalists in both Scotland and Wales (Leach 2015).

## ***Consumer Behaviour***

### **Defining consumer behaviour**

For marketing to effectively price, communicate and distribute products that satisfy the needs, wants and desires of the customer, it is important to understand consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour refers to a study of the way individuals and groups acquire, use and dispose of goods and services. This includes the psychological, social, cultural and other buyer characteristics influencing the consumer decision process as well as organisations' marketing activities and other environmental stimuli.

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) relates to a study of consumption behaviour from a social and culture perspective. Critically, CCT looks to understand consumption in the wider context of the environment within which consumption occurs (Schiffman, Hansen & Kanuk 2008). The other primary school of thought in consumer behaviour is Buyer Decision-Making Theory (BDT). The buyer decision making process is a rational and conceptually sequential theory. Dewey (1910) first introduced the five-stage decision making process for understanding consumer behaviour. The model has since been developed upon at each stage: need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, choice and outcome.

### **Factors that influence purchase behaviour**

Traditionally the factors that influence consumer behaviour have been categorised into four distinct areas:

- Cultural factors
- Social factors
- Personal factors
- Psychological factors

On a macro level, cultural factors impacting consumption can refer to the national cultures measured by the power distance index, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance index, masculinity vs. femininity, long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation and indulgence vs. restraint specified in Hofstede's (1983) cultural dimensions theory. On the more micro level of sub-cultures, culture can also refer to the visible artefacts, the espoused beliefs and values of the members of that culture and the basic underlying assumptions that are taken for granted within that cultural context (Schein 2010). It is expected that both national cultures and subcultures could impact ethical consumption, however, current research has generally only focused on culture at the national level (Pecoraro, Uusitalo 2014, Belk, Devinney & Eckhardt 2005, Bucic, Harris & Arli 2012).

Social factors refer to membership of social groups according to age, occupation, hobbies or any other groups that may influence the lifestyle, mind-set or attitudes of the consumer. The family is generally understood to be the most influential group shaping the attitudes and opinions of the consumer. From an ethical consumption perspective we know that consumers are more likely to consume ethically when others around them do too (Starr 2009).

Personal factors refer to the profile and behavioural variables influencing consumer behaviour. Profile factors can include: age, gender, income, occupation, socio-economic status and marital status amongst other things. There are a variety of ways in which demographics and other personal factors influence an individual's consumption choices. For example, an individual is likely to have very different consumption behaviours, habits and hobbies at age 20 and age 60. As discussed in detail earlier, the research into the relationship between factors like this and ethical consumption behaviours has been contradictory in parts and can only explain a small portion of a consumer's propensity to consume ethically (Anderson, Cunningham 1972, Webster Jr 1975, Roberts 1993, Roberts 1996, Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007).

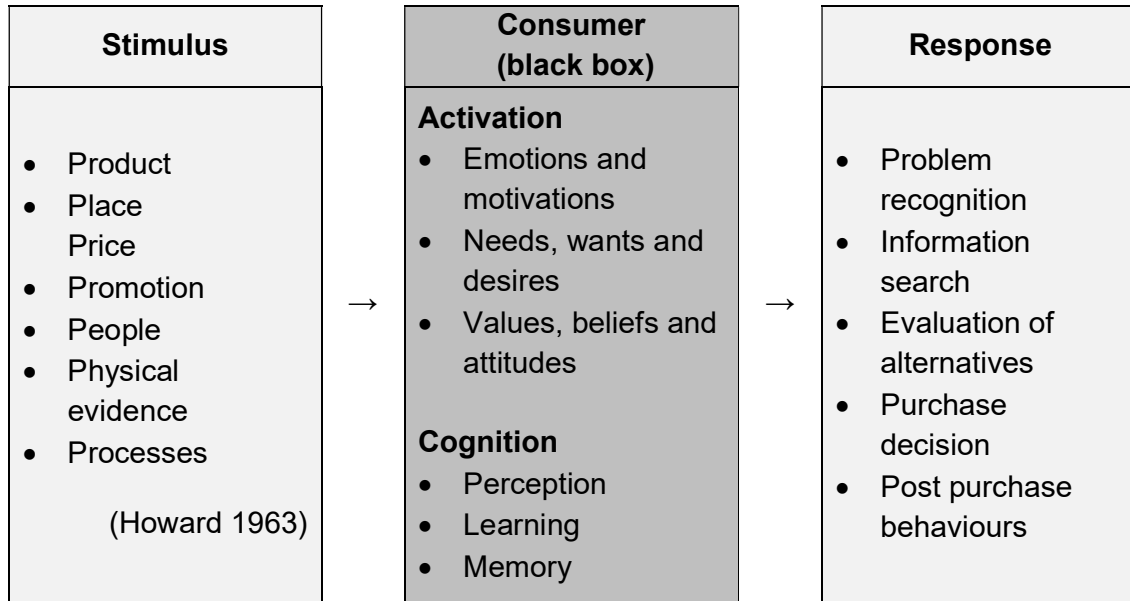
### **Buyer Decision Making Theory**

Psychological factors include: the consumer's values, beliefs, attitudes, emotions and motivations as well as their perception and learning in the specific area of consumption. For the ethical consumer this can relate to the underlying values, beliefs and attitudes that bring them to be concerned about specific ethical consumption issues. Learning and perception would refer to how the consumer understands the individual consumption issues and how they frame the importance of that issue in the context of their consumption.



**Figure 6 – Buyer Decision Making Theory**

This is the rational, psychological and economic perspective of consumer behaviour.



Adapted from: (Howard, Sheth 1969, Vakratsas, Ambler 1999)

It is possible to assert that the well understood attitude-behaviour gap evident in ethical consumption is caused by issues arising at the evaluation of alternatives stage in this BDT process. CCT would be useful as a lens for studying self identified ethical consumers, but this research will adopt a BDT approach as it looks to implement quantitative survey methods and investigate UK consumers in general.

**Consumer Culture Theory**

Consumption can be understood as an act of self-identification and self-expression. In the case of ethical consumption this can include consumption as a status symbol; hence the ‘bourgeois bohemian’ critique of ethical consumption as a function of class division (Littler 2011). This defaming nickname has arisen for the middle classes in western countries who can afford ethical products such as: Fairtrade coffee, organic food and hybrid cars. These forms of ethical consumption are criticised as inaccessible to those of a lower socio-economic background. In this regard, income, social class and education can be seen as mediating factors in the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption. As a result, these factors are often controlled for in ethical consumption studies and are controlled for in the survey presented within this thesis.

CCT is most readily applied in interpretive research including ethnography and phenomenology. This is the subjective, interpretivist, social and cultural perspective of consumer behaviour. Under this theory, consumption is seen as a self-creation/identity project where consumption empowers consumers to build and order their lives. Individual acts of consumption can be interpreted as acts of self-completion. An example would be the consumption of Rainforest Alliance tea as a means of bridging the divide between an individual's actual self and ideal self as an ethical consumer that supports sustainable agriculture.

As well as the internal influences from self-concept and self-esteem, consumer culture theory accepts the influences of external sources such as: reference groups, significant others, ideas and material objects. Ethical consumers may be understood as a specific subculture of consumption whereas individual ethical consumption issues may be upheld and valued by a niche consumer tribe. This view sees consumers categorise certain consumption as sacred and other forms of consumption as profane (Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry Jr 1989). For example, vegans see the consumption of meat, eggs and dairy as a profane form of consumption which contradicts their ideals. Consumer tribes have established norms and rituals dictating right and wrong and ultimately guiding the consumption behaviour of constituent members.

Consumers vary in their degree and extent of involvement across the various product categories. Involvement in this sense refers to the intrinsic self-relevance of the consumption phenomenon. Self-identified ethical consumers are highly involved in the consumption phenomenon and can therefore be described as predispositionally involved in ethical consumption. On the other end of the spectrum, situational involvement is a low level of involvement with the consumption phenomenon (Schiffman, Hansen & Kanuk 2008). The mainstream consumer market with a propensity for ethical consumption is situationally involved with ethical consumption. For example, situationally involved consumers might select a Fairtrade option while shopping in a generic supermarket chain whereas a predispositionally involved consumer might make the decision to only ever consume products with ethical attributes and only (Schiffman, Hansen & Kanuk 2008).

### **Ethical branding**

According to Levitt (1960) competition is based on what customer's value on top of factory output, instead of competing primarily on what the company produces. This view is exemplified in the service dominant logic perspective (Vargo, Lusch 2004). Customers buy ethical products for the end value they render. Including the intangible benefits that are realised within the consumption experience and are apparent at the augmented product level. Critically for marketers and how organisations allocate their budgets:

*“When asked about the most important purchase factors, if price and quality were equal, respondents did rank ‘socially responsible business practices’ above advertising (31 per cent versus 27 per cent)”*

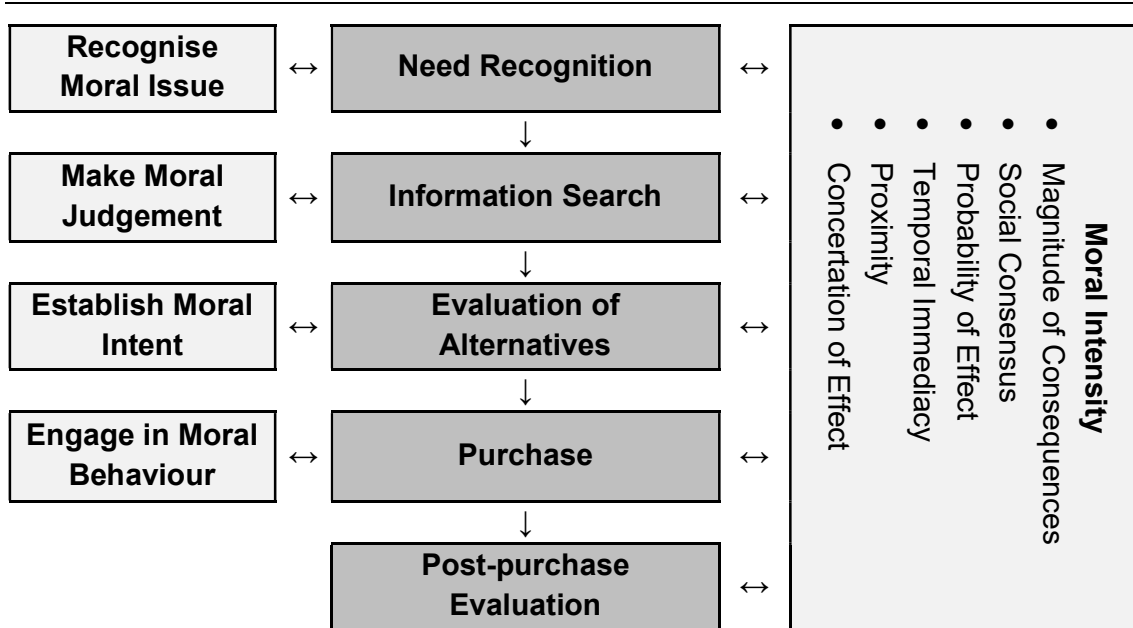
(Simon 1995): pp.23

Marketing campaigns are often designed as attempts to create desirable consumer brand knowledge. This can be achieved through rational or emotional messages in marketing campaigns e.g. using classical conditioning to gain new associations via sponsorship activities (Keller 2001). Ethical criteria are often adopted as points-of-difference in brand positioning; this is one of the most widespread critiques of CSR activity. Critics often cynically dismiss CSR agendas as public relations ploys as opposed to true altruism or attempt to create social value. With 55% of companies citing reputation and brand as a driver of CSR reporting, it was ranked as one of the three most important drivers along with both ethics (69%) and economic considerations (68%) (KPMG 2008).

### **Understanding consumer behaviour in the context of ethical decision making**

While currently a dominant model for explaining ethical consumption, Hunt & Vitell's (1986) model does not include seminal models of ethical decision making. Jones's (1991) framework on moral intensity and Rest's (1986) model for ethical decision making can be combined with Dewey's (1910) buyer decision making process model, to produce a model for understanding ethical consumption. Ethical Consumption can be understood through a combination of Rest's (1986) ethical decision making model and Jones's (1991) theory of moral intensity; moral intensity impacts each stage ethical decision making. However, it is important to consider the wider purchasing decision rather than simply the ethical dimension of consumption. Buyer Decision Making Theory accounts for the other important factors in consumer decision making; quality, price, convenience etc.

**Figure 7 – Ethical Buyer Decision Making**



Adapted from: (Rest 1986, Jones 1991, Dewey 1910, Beckmann 2007)

Jones’s (1991) theory of moral intensity was conceived to explain the factors influencing decision-makers where issues of right and wrong must be addressed. Jones (1991) proposed that decisions would be framed by the following six variables: (1) magnitude of consequences, (2) degree of social consensus, (3) probability of effect, (4) temporal immediacy, (5) proximity and (6) concentration of effect. Future research could investigate whether moral intensity can be applied to ethical consumption decisions just as these variables influence decisions of moral content for organisational decision makers. Such a study could be used to evaluate the model above.

## **Systematic Literature Review**

This systematic review of literature evaluated a large volume of research investigating the determinants of ethical consumption. A review was required to appraise current research and provide a comprehensive understanding of the control variables required in the primary data collection phase of this research project. The review has been necessary to limit the systematic bias of a narrative review by including all relevant literature. It has been acknowledged, however, that this thesis may be limited by publication bias since only interesting and novel results published in the top academic journals have been used in this review. A decision has been made balancing what is ideal and what is practical as a research methodology.

### ***A review of the determinants of ethical consumption***

According to Auger et al. (2003) ethical consumption studies fall into two categories: (1) those studies that identify and measure the strength of consumption preferences and (2) studies that analyse the factors influencing the adoption of ethical products. The later of the two categories is the focus of this review. This systematic review has been an effective method for summarising a substantial amount of literature. The review provided a strong source of research evidence in the ethical consumption field. Here are the methods adopted for this review:

#### **1. Planning**

- a. Only peer reviewed journal articles investigating the determinants of ethical consumption have been included.

#### **2. Search**

- a. The search utilised Google Scholar and the University of Kent Library search electronic databases to include all major publishers (e.g. Elsevier, SAGE Journals, JSTOR, and Emerald Journals etc.)
- b. The search terms used were: ethical consumption, ethical consumers, socially responsible consumer(ism), conscious consumer(ism), green consumption, recycling behaviour, consumer ethics, environmental consumer(ism), social(ly) conscious consumer(ism), Fairtrade

#### **3. Appraisal**

- a. Journals have been included from the screening of titles and abstracts from the 2015 Chartered Association of Business Schools' Academic Journal Guide in the areas of: (1) General management, ethics and social responsibility, and (2) Marketing
- b. Did the study investigate determinant(s) of ethical consumption?

**Table 5 – Systematic review of the determinants of ethical consumption**

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Anderson, Cunningham 1972)	Journal of Marketing	4	Socially conscious consumers	Self-administered questionnaire posted to respondents	Random sample of 1,200 Texas households, with 412 respondents returning completed questionnaires	Demographic and socio-psychological variables.	<p>(1) Socio-psychological variables more effectively predicted socially responsible consumption.</p> <p>(2) Occupation, socioeconomic status and age (younger) were consistently correlated with higher levels of socially conscious consumption.</p> <p>(3) Socio-psychological variables; dogmatism, conservatism, status consciousness and cosmopolitanism all have a strong relationship with socially conscious consumption.</p>

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Webster Jr 1975)	Journal of Consumer Research	4	Socially conscious consumers	Postal survey	Questionnaires were sent to 432 residents in one small New England community in America; 231 responded and the analysis was based on 227 of the responses after omissions	Personality, attitude and socioeconomic variables	<p>(1) Personality and attitude measures were better predictors of socially conscious consumption than socioeconomic and demographic variables.</p> <p>(2) Socially conscious consumers can be distinguished by personality, attitude, and socioeconomic variables. However, these relationships tend to be weak.</p> <p>(3) Socially conscious consumers are more likely to be females and also more likely to have a higher level of income.</p>

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The relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Belch 1979)	The conserver society (American Marketing Association)	N/A	Socially and ecologically concerned consumers	Lifestyle research	125 American consumers from San Diego, California	Environment and the physical health of the individual	<p>(1) Socially and environmentally concerned consumers are more likely to be financially and emotionally secure</p> <p>(2) They participate in outdoor and philanthropic activities.</p> <p>(3) Socially and ecologically concerned consumers are also more likely to be rational buyers.</p>



Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Antil 1984)	Journal of Macromarketing	2	Socially responsible consumers	Consumer mail panel	American study of 500 males and 500 females; selected from over 65, 000 households. The sample was balanced according to census data and 690 usable questionnaires were returned from a mail survey.	Demographic factors, perceived consumer effectiveness, conservatism, effort, environmental concern, knowledge of issues and psychographics	(1) None of the ten demographic factors measured had a significant relationship with socially responsible consumption.  (2) Socially responsible consumers are generally disenchanted and critical of both business and government.
(Vitell, Lumpkin & Rawwas 1991)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Consumer ethics	Postal questionnaire	Questionnaires were sent to 1600 residents over the age of 60 in the south-east of America; 394 were usable	Age	(1) Elderly consumers, are generally diverse in their ethical beliefs and typically more ethical than younger consumers.  (2) Elder women were more ethical than their male counterparts.

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Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Ruegger, King 1992)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Perceptions of ethical conduct	Anonymous survey	A sample of 2,196 students	Age and gender	<p>(1) Gender and age are significant factors determining ethical conduct.</p> <p>(2) Female respondents and older respondents were shown to be more ethical.</p> <p>(3) Students with more experience tend to be more ethical than those with limited work experience.</p>
(Muncy, Vitell 1992)	Journal of Business Research	3	Consumer ethics	Questionnaire mailing	1,900 heads of households in America with a total of 569 usable responses	Sex, age, income, education, occupation	<p>(1) Ethical concerns are highest among older consumers with lower levels of both income and education.</p> <p>(2) Low income consumers were found to be more unethical in their beliefs.</p>

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Borkowski, Ugras 1992)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Ethical attitudes	Direct response questionnaires after reading a case study and watching a video of an ethical dilemma.	130 undergraduate and MBA students at a private university in America	Sex, age, degree course, exposure to ethics courses and employment status	<p>(1) Ethical positions change with the individual's age.</p> <p>(2) Younger respondents may be more morally idealistic.</p> <p>(3) Undergraduates are more focused on the ethics of justice than MBA students. MBA students are generally more utilitarian dealing with ethical dilemmas.</p>
(Rallapalli et al. 1994)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Ethical beliefs	Self-administered questionnaire	A survey completed by 295 American undergraduate business students	Personality traits	<p>(1) Individuals with less ethical beliefs are those with high needs for autonomy, innovation, and aggression, as well as individuals with a high propensity for risk taking.</p> <p>(2) Individuals with more ethical beliefs are those with a higher need for social desirability, and individuals with a strong problem solving coping style.</p>

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The relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Roberts 1995)	Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice	2	Socially responsible consumer behaviour	Mail questionnaire	A national random cluster sample of 1,503 American consumers (adult), with 605 usable survey responses	Demographic factors and attitudinal scores	<p>(1) Socially responsible consumers are more likely to own their own home, to have attended university, to be married and to be supporters of a Left of centre political party (US democrats) than the average consumer.</p> <p>(2) Socially responsible consumers can be segmented according to their degree of ecologically conscious and socially conscious consumer behaviours.</p>

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Roberts 1996)	Business Horizons	2	Socially responsible consumer behaviour	Mail questionnaire	A national random cluster sample of 1,503 American consumers (adult), with 605 usable survey responses	Demographic factors (age, sex, education, occupation, and income)	<p>(1) Age, sex and income explain only 8% of the variation in socially responsible consumer behaviour.</p> <p>(2) Females were found to be more ethical than males.</p> <p>(3) A relationship was found between higher income and socially conscious behaviour, however, this relationship was weak.</p> <p>(4) The study did not find a relationship between occupation and socially conscious consumer behaviour.</p>
(Fullerton, Kerch & Dodge 1996)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Consumer ethics	Scenarios	A representative sample of 1,298 American consumers with a total of 362 responses	Demographic factors (age, sex, education, income)	<p>(1) Ethical transgressions are generally more accepted by more educated, younger and higher income consumers.</p> <p>(2) Lower income groups had more purist beliefs and higher income consumers were more unethical in their beliefs.</p>

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The relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Lee, Holden 1999)	Journal of Psychology and Marketing	3	Environmentally Conscious Behaviour	Survey (participation provided students with extra credit on their course)	Survey of 78 American undergraduate business students	Beliefs, feelings and self-perception	(1) Distress and empathy enhance the propensity for consumer behaviour that addresses environmental welfare.  (2) Perceived consumer effectiveness predicted pro-environmental behaviours in cases of high involvement. However, it could not predict low involvement consumption decisions with any statistical significance.

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Vitell, Paolillo 2003)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Consumer ethics	Mailed questionnaire	A sample of 3000 American consumers was used to represent the national population. 353 usable questionnaires were returned.	Relativism, Idealism, Consumer alienation and Religiosity	<p>(1) Older consumers were shown to be more ethical.</p> <p>(2) No significant relationship was found with religion and consumer ethics; religiosity is only related to consumer ethics indirectly.</p> <p>(3) Higher income individuals were found to be less ethical; any relationship between income and consumer ethics must be an indirect relationship.</p> <p>(4) Idealism was positively linked and relativism was negatively linked to all four dimensions of consumer ethics.</p>

**Kent Business School, University of Kent**

The relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Swaidan, Vitell & Rawwas 2003)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Ethical beliefs	Survey	A sample of 315 African American consumers (professionals)	Idealism, relativism, age, gender, education, marital status.	<p>(1) Consumers that are older, more educated, and married are more likely to reject illegal activities than their younger, less educated, and unmarried counterparts.</p> <p>(2) The rejection of unethical behaviour is more likely to come from more educated consumers.</p>
(Belk, Devinney & Eckhardt 2005)	Consumption Markets and Culture	2	Consumer ethics	Interviews	Qualitative methods (interviews) and video ethnography involving 20 consumers from 8 different countries.	Culture (affluent and poor nations in Europe, North America and Australasia)	<p>(1) Results suggest a general lack of concern for ethical consumption issues across cultures.</p> <p>(2) Involvement with NGOs is the most effective predictor of ethical consumption.</p> <p>(3) Culture had little impact on ethical consumption</p> <p>(4) Ethical behaviour from business has little impact on consumer behaviour.</p>



Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Doran 2009)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Fairtrade Consumption	Online survey	<p>Five organisations partook and 809 surveys were returned.</p> <p>The survey results from 329 consumers (208 females and 121 males) were usable.</p>	Personal values and demographic factors	<p>(1) Personal values are a predictor of Fairtrade consumption.</p> <p>(2) Demographics are inadequate when attempting to profile Fairtrade consumers.</p>

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Paek, Nelson 2009)	Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising	N/A	Socially responsible consumer behaviour	Postal survey	Postal survey with a final sample size of 1,068 respondents (American national survey data).	Demographics, personality traits, beliefs in advertising ethics and attitudes toward business, advertising and brand values.	<p>(1) Consumer characteristics (sex, ages, race, education, income, liberalism, altruism, opinion leadership, attitudes towards brand values, big business and beliefs in advertising ethics) relate to boycotting and buycotting as two types of ethical consumption behaviour.</p> <p>(2) The strongest relationship was a positive correlation between altruism and boycotting and buycotting behaviour.</p> <p>(3) Education was the only variable positively associated with both buycotting and boycotting behaviours.</p>

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Starr 2009)	Journal of Socio-Economics	2	Ethical consumption	Questions on ethical buying asked in the 2004 General Social Survey	A representative sample of the American population has been used (1500 adults).	Income, age, education, gender, social values, social norms and lifestyle conventionality	<p>(1) Buying ethically is positively associated with education, income, being female, and strength of political interests.</p> <p>(2) Consumers are more likely to consume ethically when others around them do too.</p> <p>(3) Evidence suggested that ethical consumption was politically neutral. Neither Democrats nor Republicans were significantly more likely to have bought ethically.</p>
(Swimberghe, Sharma & Flurry 2011)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Ethical judgements	Online survey	A representative sample of 531 adult American consumers.	Religion (religious commitment and Christian conservatism)	<p>(1) Firms could benefit from considering their customer's religion.</p> <p>(2) The study highlighted that consumers do consider the actions of organisations and make moral judgements about their behaviour.</p>

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Deng 2012)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Consumer responses to the ethical behaviours of organisations	Interviews	167 consumers in areas around Wuhan city, China.	Ethical responses	<p>(1) The consumer's ethical consciousness, ethical cognitive effort, perception of ethical justice, motivation judgment, institutional rationality, and corporate social responsibility–corporate ability belief, all factored in to whether they responded positively, negatively or neutrally to an organisation's CSR.</p> <p>(2) The potential negative and positive responses to CSR are resistance, questioning, indifference, praise, and support.</p>

Author(s) and year	Journal	ABS Journal Ranking	Construct	Methods	Sample	Variables	Results
(Shang, Pelozo 2015)	Journal of Business Ethics	3	Ethical consumption	Controlled experiment (Ethical Consumption Choice: Ethical vs. Non-ethical vs. Control)	<p>Study 1: 266 undergraduate students</p> <p>Study 2: 217 undergraduate students</p> <p>Study 3: 175 undergraduate students</p> <p>Study 4: 228 undergraduate students</p>	Gender role orientation	<p>(1) Participants viewed male and female customers who did not purchase the Fairtrade coffee as significantly more masculine than their counterparts in the control condition, and those in the control condition viewed the customers as more masculine than the customer who purchased the Fairtrade coffee.</p> <p>(2) Consumers are perceived to be less masculine (more feminine) if and when they consume ethical products.</p> <p>(3) Socially responsible consumer behaviour is not expected as a masculine behaviour.</p>

## ***Results and conclusions***

There is only a limited understanding of what motivates UK consumers to buy products with ethical features. We are currently unable to explain or predict ethical consumption behaviour. And, current research has provided only limited explanation and contradictory results. This systematic review has identified that much of the existing research into the determinants of ethical consumption has been focused on demographic and profile predictor variables. Thus, there is a significant gap in the literature, and a lot of opportunity to investigate psychographic and behavioural predictors. Research is also required to help marketers understand what ethical features and ethical consumption issues are important to which consumer segments.

The most consistent finding from this systematic review is that the findings in the literature are inconsistent. There are many contradictory findings in the academic and non-academic research. However, we are able to make some general conclusions from the literature. Overall, the profile of an ethical consumer is a younger, female from a higher social-economic background, with higher income, a prestigious occupation and a higher level of education. Age, income, education, religiosity and employment sector were all found to have a relatively consistent predictive relationship with ethical consumption. These variables have been identified within the review and will be taken forward for the theory development and hypothesis testing undertaken for this research project. Other predictor variables such as personal values, perceived consumer effectiveness and culture will not be employed in this research study as controlled variables since evidence on their predictive power is less well established and/or contradictory.

## **Modelling the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption attitudes**

Political ideology will guide an individual's attitudes on a whole host of social and economic policy issues. Budge, Robertson & Hearl (1987) provide a list of 54 categories covering all policy areas. This is a rather comprehensive list of policy areas, and political ideology will go some way toward deterring an individual's beliefs and attitudes towards each of these policy issues. Example categories include military, human rights, regulation of capitalism, law and order, labour groups, underprivileged minority groups, environmental protection, social justice and welfare (Budge, Robertson & Hearl 1987). Looking at these areas there is some obvious overlap and interplay with ethical consumption issues.

The following model (see *Figure 8*) explains the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption to be explained through the results of this study and the multivariate regression analysis conducted. The various mediating, moderating and confounding factors identified in this study have been identified and included within this theory. However, it is worth highlighting that political ideology can only influence an individual's ethical consumption intentions or behaviours through their attitudes toward ethical consumption. It is for this reason that the model focusses on attitudes rather than addressing behaviours directly.

Political ideology and ethical consumption attitudes are complex and interrelated concepts, so a simple relationship theory like this could never capture the nuanced interaction between the various factors. It is possible that ethical consumption attitudes and political attitudes are determined by a third factor, however this has not been identified in the current literature and it is unknown whether such a factor exists. To inform this study, *Figure 8* explains the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption attitudes as comprehensively as possible without making potentially spurious assumptions.

**Figure 8: Political Ideology and Ethical Consumption attitudes**

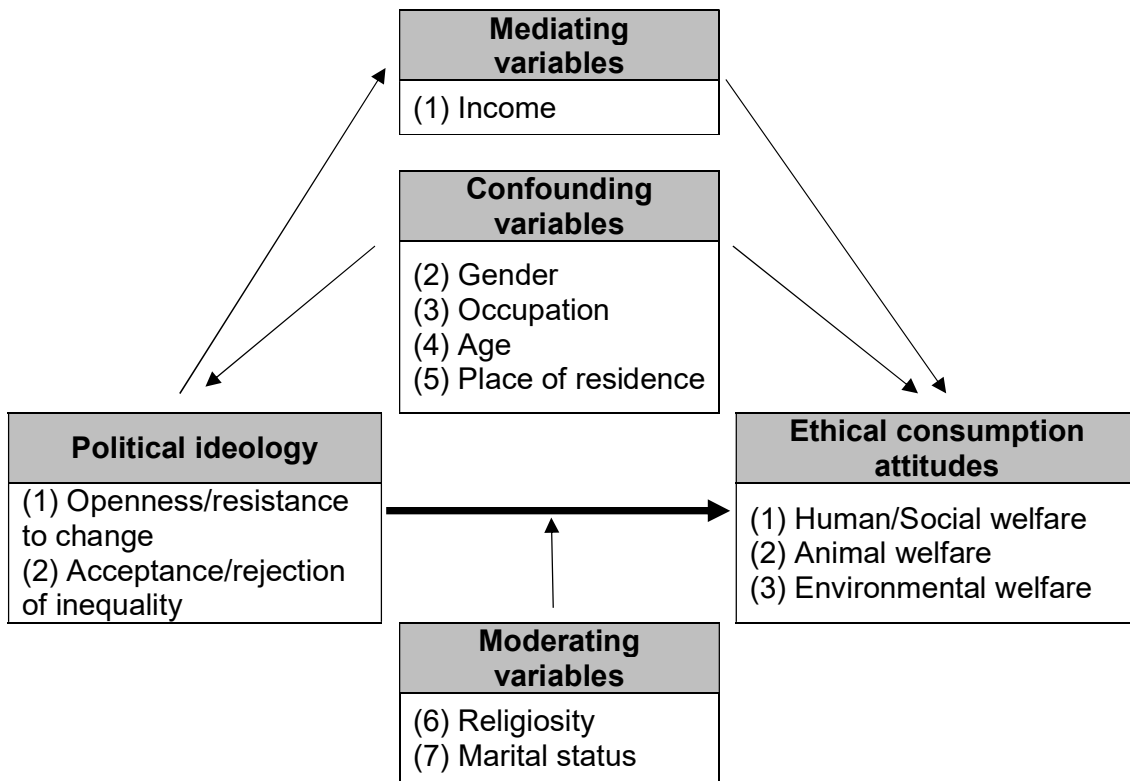


Figure 8 has been developed for this study to understand the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption, and incorporates the variables that were found to relate to political ideology and ethical consumption in this literature review. The variables highlighted in this model are all taken from the extant narrative and systematic literature review presented in this thesis. The model has been developed with mediating, moderating and confounding variables identified in previous research, and empirically established as constructs for understanding either political ideology, ethical consumption, or both. This is an imperfect model since the concepts are all interrelated and their complexity means there are an innumerate volume other potential variables that interact with the items in this model. However, this model does capture all of the variables included in this study and provides an illustration of how these variables are expected to relate to one another. Critically, the model illustrates how the variables included as control variables that have been found to correlate with ethical consumption also correlate with political ideology (Feldman, Johnston 2014).

***Explanatory theory***

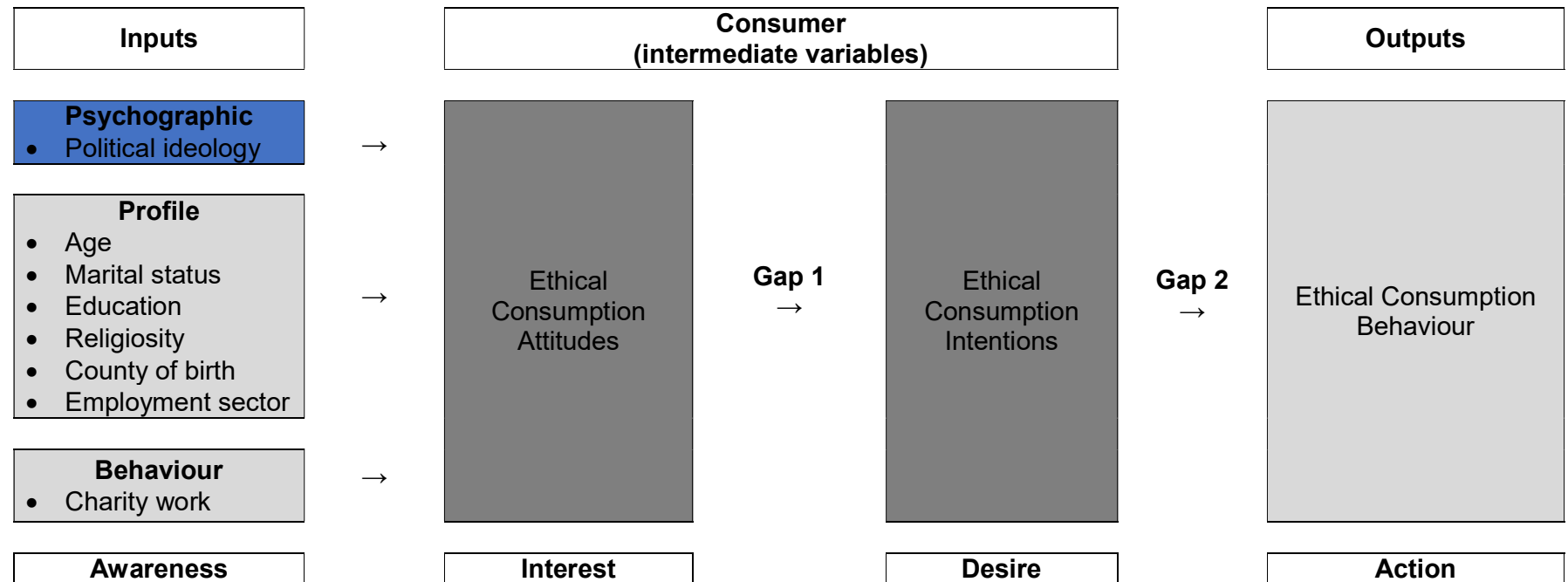
The theory of why consumers buy ethically that this study attempts to test is an input, transformation output model based predominantly on the black box model of the consumer and the extant ethical consumption literature reviewed in this thesis (Howard, Sheth 1969, Vakratsas, Ambler 1999, Cotte, Trudel 2009). Ethical



consumption has three main dimensions (1) attitudes, (2) intentions and (3) behaviours (Cotte, Trudel 2009), this is captured in the model where attitudes and intentions are internal to the consumer and ethical consumption behaviours are understood as the output from those attitudes and intentions.

Psychographic, profile and behavioural factors are all influences on a consumer's attitudes and intentions (Wedel, Kamakura 2012). Political ideology is just one of many variables/inputs that influence consumers' ethical consumption intentions. Indeed, much of the existing research has focused on profile factors that impact ethical consumption attitudes. However, this model leaves significant room for further psychographic and behavioural variables to be added; pending the results of empirical research into these areas. This model also highlights the documented gaps between attitudes and intentions and between intentions and behaviours. Significantly, income and perceived consumer effectiveness are understood to help explain these gaps. The price premium of many ethical products means that those with intentions to consume ethically may not be able to do so due to their means and income. And, those with ethical attitudes may not develop intentions to consume ethically if they have a low perception of their ability to address the underlying social or environmental issue through their purchasing behaviours.

Figure 9 – A model of Ethical Consumption



- **Field:** Ethical consumption
- **Literature review:** Identified control factors
- **Problem:** We are currently unable to explain or predict ethical consumption behaviour. And, current research has provided only limited explanation and contradictory results.
- **Gap 1:** (1) Perceived consumer effectiveness (locus of control), (2) Lack of information
- **Gap 2:** (1) Income, (2) Price sensitivity, (3) Inertia in purchasing behaviour, (4) Quality, (5) Cynicism

Adapted from: (Howard, Sheth 1969, Vakratsas, Ambler 1999, Cotte, Trudel 2009, Bray, Johns & Kilburn 2011)

The variables highlighted in this model are all taken from the extant narrative and systematic literature review presented in this thesis. This model illustrates how perceived consumer effectiveness, cynicism around ethical claims, inertia in changing purchasing behaviour, income and price sensitivity, perception of quality and convenience can all inhibit a consumer from engaging in ethical consumption behaviours (Bray, Johns & Kilburn 2011). However, perhaps the most important thing that this model displays is that political ideology is one of many variables that determine an individual's ethical consumption attitudes. It is also important to recognise that behaviours are the result of intentions and intentions are the result of attitudes, and therefore a predictor variable such as political ideology cannot influence purchasing behaviour directly. Rather, these variables influence behaviours by first influencing attitudes and intentions.

This model is innovative in the sense that political ideology has been introduced as a predictor. Ultimately, this model adds political ideology to the variables already proven to predict ethical consumption. These variables were identified as the most vital predictors from an extensive narrative and systematic review of ethical consumption literature. The model explains a gap in our current theories of ethical consumption. Cotte & Trudel's (2009) theory, upon which this model has built, was more descriptive in nature and contrasts with this explanatory model of ethical consumption. This study will investigate the relationship between the inputs outlined in this theory and UK consumers. Of course, particular effort will be made in this study to test the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption. This will establish whether political ideology is a useful predictor of ethical consumption, and identify if it should now be included in further research and theory development in the field going forward.

## **Section 3: Theory and Hypothesis**

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### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSUMPTION**

**Bradley Cronk (bc376)**

Graduation Subject: Marketing and Social Responsibility

Supervisors: Dr Adolf Acquaye and Professor Alex Mohr

Academic Years: 2014/2015 and 2015/16

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## Research Hypotheses

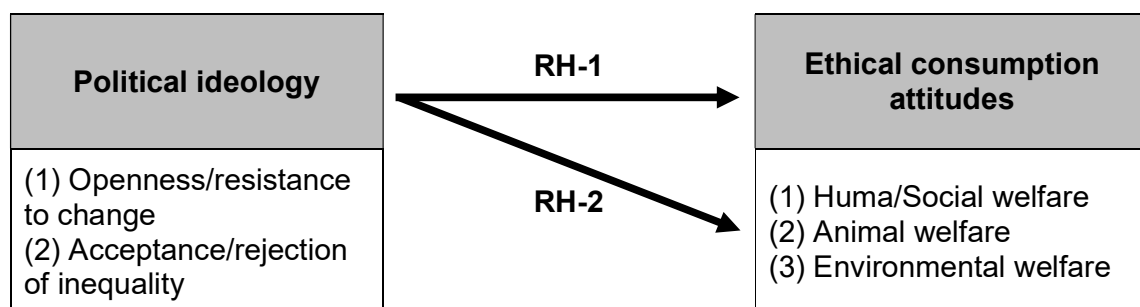
The majority of the ethical consumption issues investigated within this study are hypothesised to be more important to consumers further to the Left of the Left/Right ideological spectrum. Similarly since the majority of ethical consumption issues are hypothesised to be most important to Leftist consumers, there is a hypothesis that overall ethical consumption intentions will increase with a more Leftist ideology and decrease with a more Rightist ideology.

Political ideology is expected to affect ethical consumption intentions through the attitudes toward ethical consumption that overlap and interconnect with the attitudes that form an individual's ideology. Political beliefs affect economic and social beliefs (Feldman, Johnston 2014), both of which are intrinsically relevant to ethical consumption. With Leftism generally denouncing social and economic inequality and denouncing discrimination (Jost, Federico & Napier 2009, Thorisdottir et al. 2007, Curtice, Bryson 2003), it follows that Left-wing consumers will have greater ethical consumption intentions. This is primarily a function of their attitudes toward the social, environmental and animal welfare issues addressed through various ethical consumption practices.

### *Hypothesis testing*

The hypothesis to be tested is that political ideology, when measured through a scale of agreeableness relevant to some political, Left or Right, statements, will have a relationship with ethical consumption. It is theorised that the more extreme/far Left or Right the higher the inclination for certain elements of ethical consumption. Figure 10 illustrates the two hypotheses tested in this study. The first hypothesis illustrated is the relationship between political ideology and overall ethical consumption, and the second is the relationship between political ideology and the individual ethical consumption issues. The primary mechanisms for these relationships are explained as openness vs resistance to change and the acceptance vs rejection of inequality.

**Figure 10: Political Ideology and Ethical Consumption attitudes**



### ***Development of the research hypothesis for overall ethical consumption***

The concept of political ideology, like any belief system, is intrinsically linked with the attitudes, values, and subsequently, the behaviours of individuals (Caprara et al. 2006, Gerber et al. 2010). Conservative beliefs include (1) advocating tradition and resisting social change and (2) accepting some degree of inequality as necessary. Similarly, accepting (1) an advocacy for social change and (2) rejecting inequality are central to a Leftist ideology (Jost, Federico & Napier 2009, Thorisdottir et al. 2007, Curtice, Bryson 2003).

Political ideology is hypothesised to be a predictor of ethical consumption intentions because ideology can provide a lens for promoting beliefs and attitudes on social and economic issues (Evans, Heath & Lalljee 1996, Hamilton 1987, Feldman, Johnston 2014). The issues addressed within ethical consumption, for example, environment, animal welfare, human rights and sustainability are often more closely associated with the political Left than with the political Right (Neumayer 2003, Furnham, McManus & Scott 2003, Moghaddam, Vuksanovic 1990). The Left-wing is proven to support social equality and social justice, and oppose the social hierarchy generally accepted within the Right-wing (Jost, Federico & Napier 2009). With strong ties to labour unions in the UK, we can predict that workers' rights are a concern of those with a Left-wing orientation (Leach 2015). Products that support workers' rights, such as Fairtrade items are therefore likely to appeal to Leftist consumers. Similarly, the Left-wing has been heavily associated with movements such as civil rights and the environmental movement (Moghaddam, Vuksanovic 1990, Neumayer 2003). It is therefore feasible to suggest that products which support human rights (e.g. those endorsed by the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)) and the environment (e.g. those endorsed by the Rainforest Alliance and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)) will appeal more to Leftists. Furthermore, we see particularly strong links between Leftism and support on environmental issues in Britain and around the world where a number of political parties representing the 'green-left' have emerged (in Britain these are the Green Party of England and Wales and the Scottish Greens) (Leach 2015). However, there are also ethical consumption issues that are hypothesised to be more important to consumers with Rightist political beliefs. See Appendix 1 for details on the hypothesised strength and direction of the relationship between the various ethical consumption issues and political ideology.

It is useful in the context of this study to understand ethical consumption as a self-identification project. Consumer behaviour researchers have found that individuals create and communicate their self-identities with the products and brands they consume (Schiffman, Hansen & Kanuk 2008, Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry Jr 1989). Political belief systems can also be intrinsically related to an individual's self-concept; and this further justifies the hypothesised relationship expected to exist between

political ideology and ethical consumption; both can be linked with an individual's self-concept.

### **How openness or resistance to change influence ethical attitudes and intentions**

A Left-wing ideology is associated with openness to change whereas Right-wing ideology is more associated with resistance to change (Jost, Federico & Napier 2009, Thorisdottir et al. 2007). Ethical consumption constitutes a change, an adaptation to traditional consumption behaviours. Critically, ethical consumption is how consumers shop for a better world (Carrigan, Szmigin & Wright 2004). Since a Right-wing ideology is one that generally accepts the status quo and accepts things as they are (Feldman, Johnston 2014, Heywood 2012), it follows that consumers with a Right-wing ideology will not be as likely to change their consumption behaviour and engage in ethical consumption to promote change on issues such as the way we treat the environment and our workforce.

Roberts' (1995) review of the literature highlighted that Libertarianism had a positive relationship with ethical consumption in 7 of the 8 studies that investigated the relationship. This suggests that those consumers with more Libertarian views will have a higher propensity to engage in ethical consumption behaviours; e.g. making ethical purchases and lifestyle choices. This is critical since, despite measuring a very different dimension of political ideology, Libertarianism is also open rather than resistant to change (Evans, Heath & Lalljee 1996, Evans, Heath 1995). This openness to change is one factor that a Libertarian and a traditional Left-wing ideology have in common.

Ethical consumption and the casting of purchase votes is a market response to support companies or causes (Shaw, Clarke 1999). It is an adaptation to a free market economy. A Rightist ideology includes acceptance of free markets, while progressive, Leftist, politics looks to reform capitalism; most notably with the adoption of socialist or communist principles (Heywood 2012, Curtice, Bryson 2003, Barnea, Schwartz 1998). Principles around community, equality, worker's rights, pacifism and fairness are central a Left-wing ideology but are also major goals for the ethical consumption movement. A Left-wing ideologue desires change to improve community, equality, worker's rights and fairness, and many of these issues can be addressed through various forms of ethical consumption behaviour (Curtice, Bryson 2003, Barnea, Schwartz 1998). Fairtrade for example promotes fairness, workers' rights and equality by getting farmers around the world a better deal and improved working conditions.

If we accept that a capitalist marketplace is satisfying Right-wing desires to maintain the status quo, then it follows that support for a change in the marketplace through ethical consumption will come more readily from the pro-change and progressive wing

of politics; the political Left. Similarly, Rightists are going to be less likely to adopt ethical consumption, because they are generally more resistant to change and accepting of things the way they are (Thorisdottir et al. 2007, Jost, Federico & Napier 2009).

### **How the acceptance or rejection of inequality influence ethical attitudes and intentions**

Attitudes around the acceptance or rejection of inequality are intrinsically linked with the attitudes consumers will hold around human and social welfare ethical consumption issues. Inequality in this context refers to the differences in the social and economic wellbeing of individuals within a population. We know that those on the political Right will have a higher degree of general acceptance for inequality which informs us that they are less concerned about disparities in areas such as income and wealth distribution. Ethical consumption, through initiatives such as Fairtrade, support for co-operatives and a promotion of worker's rights is often an attempt to address issues of inequality. In fact, supporting workers is a central goal of political Leftism, whereas a Right-wing ideology advocates a support of employers and capitalists as part of the promotion of economic freedom and economic progress (Leach 2015).

The promotion of economic freedom and economic progress is not something that falls under ethical consumption as we generally describe it. This does not mean that these are unethical goals, it simply highlights that ethical consumption movement shares goals with political Leftism rather than a Right-wing political ideology. Many Rightist ideals are supported through traditional consumption, while the Left has some strong criticisms of consumer society (McIntyre 1992). A Right-wing ideology, or the archetypal neo-liberal belief system, is very pro-business (Kohli 2010). Business creates jobs for workers and profits for its owners or shareholders. Consumers are supporting business and helping them employ workers and make profits for their owners each time they make a purchase. In this sense, most forms of consumption can be seen as ethical and mutually beneficial for the consumer, the organisation, the worker and the owner; consumption will also support economic growth, higher tax revenues and reduced unemployment.

Ethical consumption, as we understand it however is an alternative form of consumption that attempts to support causes beyond those of economic freedom and economic progress. Profits, providing employment and abiding by the law are not enough for the ethical consumer if there are ethical transgressions in the way the organisation behaves. Critically, the more Rightist capitalist ideal is being supported by conventional consumption. However, the alternative, ethical consumption, is emerging to support other ideals around human and social welfare, animal rights and



the environment (Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007, Webb, Mohr & Harris 2008, Harrison, Newholm & Shaw 2005).

Ethical consumption is clearly cynical of business as opposed to being pro-business. Of course ethical consumption is pro ethical business, but much of ethical consumption involves avoiding products and organisations that are behaving unethically toward their people, animals or the planet (Cowe, Williams 2000, Harrison, Newholm & Shaw 2005, Shaw, Clarke 1999, Ethical Consumer 2015b). As a result, ethical consumption does not seem to fit naturally with the pro-business ethos associated with Right-wing ideology. In fact, the goal of ethical consumption is to regulate business in many ways. Through the reward and punishment of good and bad business behaviour the ethical consumer seeks to promote ethical behaviour and punish unethical behaviour; or at least not reinforce ethical transgressions through their purchases (Carrigan, Szmigin & Wright 2004). This market pressure from consumers that make ethical considerations in their purchasing decisions is an attempt to regulate business in pursuit of social and environmental goals.

The regulation of business and industry is valued by those on the political Left and ethical consumption allows consumers to do this in the marketplace as an addition to their expression of political will through democratic elections. A right-wing ideologue on the other hand has a goal of pursuing de-regulation and generally believes that positive outcomes will come from the pursuit of self-interest by individuals and business. Right-wingers may therefore be decidedly against using purchase votes to coerce business into change, forcing a business to change the way it operates in this way could be viewed restricting their freedom; particularly considering these organisations are probably not breaking any laws.

The FairTax initiative is another area of ethical consumption, this is a project to encourage corporations to pay their fair share of tax and encourage consumers to support those organisations that are certified for paying their fair share (Murphy 2014).

*“Inspired by the Fairtrade Mark, the Fair Tax Mark is a new standard to promote companies pursuing ethical tax policies and reward good behaviour among taxpayers.”*

(Murphy 2014): p.35

This is one manifestation of the Leftist nature of many ethical consumption initiatives. A tax and spend ethos to fiscal policy forms an important part of Left-wing ideology and Leftists desire to redistribute wealth (Franchino, Zucchini 2015). Right-wing consumers are less likely to feel as passionate about an initiative to effectively increase the amount of tax being paid. A Right-wing ideology is based on a low tax and low spend fiscal policy (Franchino, Zucchini 2015).

Based on this discussion, I have formulated the first research hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 1 (RH-1):** There is a relationship between ethical consumption and political ideology, such that an individual with a more Leftist political ideology will display stronger intentions to engage in ethical consumption and those with a more Rightist political ideology will display weaker intentions to engage in ethical consumption. Critically, an individual's intentions to engage in ethical consumption will decline from left to Right on the spectrum of political ideology.

### ***Development of hypothesis for individual consumption issues***

This section provides a detailed description and justification of the strength and direction for the hypothesised relationship between political ideology and the various ethical consumption issues identified by Auger, Devinney & Louviere (2007) and addressed in this research. Low & Davenport's (2007) triple bottom line of ethical consuming is used here to categorise the individual hypotheses into (1) animal welfare issues (RH-2.1), (2) human/social welfare issues (RH-2.2), (3) environmental welfare issues (RH-2.3) and (4) other ethical consumption issues (RH-2.4). Each of these categories set out in Low & Davenport's (2007) model is measured, and tested, using multiple variables from Auger, Devinney & Louviere (2007).

#### **Animal welfare issues**

It is hypothesised that these issues will be more important to the more Left-wing consumer: (1) Animal rights, (2) Animal byproducts used. Animal rights is not traditionally an issue covered by a political belief system. The promotion of equality on the political Left is generally only applied to equality for all humans and not across animal species. However, authors Furnham, McManus & Scott (2003) identified in their research that consumers with a more Left-wing than Right-wing ideology are more strongly against animal experimentation. Dhont & Hodson (2014) made a similar finding as a result of the social dominance orientation and authoritarianism associated with the Right-wing ideologies:

*“Two survey studies conducted in heterogeneous community samples (Study 1, N = 260; Study 2, N = 489) demonstrated that right-wing ideologies predict greater acceptance of animal exploitation and more meat consumption through two explaining mechanisms: (a) perceived threat from non-exploitive ideologies to the dominant carnist ideology (for both SDO and RWA) and (b) belief in human superiority over animals (for SDO).”*

(Dhont, Hodson 2014): pp.2

The results found by Dhont & Hodon (2014) indicate that issues of equality do extend to animals, and while those with an omnivorous diet accept a degree of inequality, vegetarians and vegans tend to reject this inequality much more. These themes are echoed in research into the ethical treatment of animals (Daniel 2014), and organisations that promote such treatment. Organisations such as the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the Vegan Society and the Vegetarian Society promoting animal rights often emphasise similarities between humans and animals and use metaphors to anthropomorphise the animal. Similarities are drawn between the egg and dairy industries and slavery. The same is true of various forms of entertainment (e.g. circus elephants and lions). These themes coincide with the views about equality that are central to a Left-wing belief system.

There are strong similarities between the way that these organisations argue for the rights of animals and the way that human rights are promoted. Critically, the themes of fairness and empathy are abounding and as discussed previously, these are values of an egalitarian and therefore a more Left-wing consumer.

### **Environmental welfare issues**

It is hypothesised that these issues will be more important to the more Left-wing consumer: (3) Product biodegradability, (4) Products made from recyclables, (7) Packaging recyclability, (8) Product disposability. There are particularly strong links between Leftism and support for environmental issues (Neumayer 2003, Neumayer 2004).

*“Left-wing parties and individuals are also more pro-environmental than their Right-wing counterparts”*

(Neumayer 2004): pp.1

We know that Left-wing ideologues have a progressive ideal that the world can be improved (Jost, Federico & Napier 2009). Being open to change in the sources of energy that we use (a change from fossil fuels to renewables), and an interest in collective good are both factors that will increase the importance of environmental issues to consumers with Leftist ideals.

Supporting environmental causes may necessitate personal sacrifices (Burke 1993). A collectivist outlook and considering the needs of future generations as equal to that of your own generation will enhance environmentally conscious consumption behaviours. There is a substantial correlation between liberalism and welfare-state liberalism and environmental concern (Buttel, Flinn 1978). It follows that this environmental concern could transfer directly to these consumption issues.

### **Human/social welfare issues**

It is hypothesised that these issues will be more important to the more Left-wing consumer: (6) Human rights, (9) Paying minimum wages, (11) Minimum living conditions met, (10) Unions allowed, (16) Gender, religious, racial rights. Human rights are centred on freedom and equality. However, Rightist generally accept inequalities and this can contravene many human rights issues that look to support those that are disadvantaged. Supporting those that are disadvantaged is a central component of political Leftism.

A Right-wing political ideology has been found to correlate negatively (between -0.42 and -0.66 for six correlations from two studies) with support for human rights in a western and third-world context (Moghaddam, Vuksanovic 1990, McFarland, Mathews 2005). This result was found to be a function of Right-wing authoritarianism. Political Leftism on the other hand values egalitarianism, fairness, empathy and a reduction of social and economic inequalities. These values are all very complimentary to the support of human rights. Moghaddam & Vuksanovic (1990) also explain that Right-wing Authoritarianism generally oppose human rights because of their opposition to individual liberties.

The politics of the minimum wage is similar to the politics of other social welfare issues. Critically, there is more support on the political Left, but there is still support for these policies among more Left oriented members and supporters of Right-wing political parties (Waltman 2000). Promoting income equality is a large part of the egalitarian mind-set of many on the political Left. These issues will be important to those consumers that have strong views about helping the disadvantage and promoting a fairer and more equal society. These issues may also appeal to Rightist that believe that these issues are important to avoid welfarism. However, these are areas that are primarily focused on reducing inequality, supporting workers and empathising with those that are vulnerable or less well off. On balance these issues align more closely with a more Leftist political ideology. In fact, the original National Minimum Wage Act 1998 was introduced by the Left-of-centre Labour party in the UK.

The centre Left Labour Party in the UK has strong links with workers' rights and labour unions (Leach 2015). The right to unionise is a much-politicised issue in the UK, principally because of the role of unions in upholding workers' rights. Those on the Right of UK politics will typically support employers over unions and there is a prevailing belief that unions interfere with the market forces for supply and demand of labour, and lead to inefficiencies in business and the economy. For these reasons, it is hypothesised that the more politically Left leaning a consumer is in our survey the more important they will value the right to unionise as a workforce.

Left-wing ideology is often associated with social liberalism and equality for all people through the principle of egalitarianism. The issues of gender, religious and racial rights have all found support on the political Left. Conversely, the far Right in UK politics has strongly opposed the spread of alternative religions. For example, the British National Party, a prominent far Right party in the UK, states that “*Our Christian heritage is the bedrock of our culture and identity. The BNP will protect [the UK] from creeping Islamisation and far-Left political correctness*” (British National Party 2015). This is one of the issues at the forefront of their 2015 manifesto. The other 4 of their top 5 policy issues in the 2015 manifesto focus on banning halal meat, banning hijabs and burqas, and stopping immigration (British National Party 2015). Given these policy priorities and those of similar Right-wing parties, the issues of gender, religious and racial rights are hypothesised to be less important to Rightists and more important to the more Left-wing consumer.

The all for one and one for all philosophy of Leftist values attempts to foster an inclusive and tolerant society, whereas some Rightists believe in a more exclusive society and nationalism which often involves opinions about the superiority of one’s own nation (Feldman, Johnston 2014, Hamilton 1987). Right-wing Authoritarianism is significantly related to prejudice against a variety of social groups, including Arabs, gay people, feminists and atheists (Duckitt, Sibley 2007). It follows that Rightist will therefore find the wider issues of gender, religious and racial Rights, as less important to them.

It is hypothesised that these issues will display no directional relationship: (12) Sexual rights, and (14) Child labour not used are not traditionally issues covered by a political belief system. However, again the principles of egalitarianism and communalism associated with the political Left would make this issue one more likely to appeal to those on the political Left than the political Right. The use of child labour is a mainstream ethical issue that is predicted to transcend political beliefs. There are conservative and liberal values that make this issue important to all ideologies across the Left/Right political spectrum. Furthermore, it is hypothesised that these issues will be more important to the more Right-wing consumer: (13) Safe working conditions. The political Right generally value safety and security more than those on the political Left. However, Leftists will typically value workers’ rights highly and this could moderate the relationship. Regardless, the conservative ideals of Rightist consumers will make the issue of safe working conditions an important one to those on the political Right.

### **Other ethical consumption issues**

It is hypothesised that these issues will be more important to the more Right-wing consumer: (5) Product safety information provided, (15) Genetically modified material

used. Compliance, conservatism and following rules form part of a Rightist ideology (Franchino, Zucchini 2015). It could be reasonably assumed that these attitudes influence a consumer's preference for product safety information. However, empirical evidence for this relationship is yet to be obtained. In this case a consumer with a preference for Rightist views would find the provision of product safety information as more important than a Left-wing ideologue would.

A Rightist ideology is linked with acceptance of the status quo, conservatism and resistance to change (Franchino, Zucchini 2015). GM may be too scientifically progressive for the traditional values of a typical Rightist consumer. According to Costa-Font & Mossialos (2015) consumers with more Right-wing and conservative views perceived the risk of GM to be higher.

Based on this discussion, I have formulated the second research hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 2 (RH-2):** Both the strength and the direction of this relationship will vary across the different ethical consumption issues.
  - **RH-2.1:** Animal welfare issues will generally be more important to consumers with a more Leftist political ideology
  - **RH-2.2:** Human/social welfare issues will generally be more important to consumers with a more Leftist political ideology
  - **RH-2.3:** Environmental welfare issues will generally be more important to consumers with a more Leftist political ideology
  - **RH-2.4:** Other ethical consumption issues that don't fit into one of the three categories of ethical consumption (animal welfare, human/social welfare and environmental welfare), will generally be more important to consumers with a more Rightist political ideology

## **Section 4: Research Methods**

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### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSUMPTION

**Bradley Cronk (bc376)**

Graduation Subject: Marketing and Social Responsibility

Supervisors: Dr Adolf Acquaye and Professor Alex Mohr

Academic Years: 2014/2015 and 2015/16

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## **Methods**

An explanatory research method was used to probe extant literature and gain an in-depth understanding of the existing knowledge and gaps in the research area. Following this, a research survey was designed to collect empirical data from UK consumers. The data was subject to quantitative analysis using a statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis phase aimed to deduce the relationship between predictor variables and ethical consumption.

The study controls for age, income, employment sector, education, religiosity and employment sector to account for any possibility that the relationship found between political ideology and ethical consumption is jointly determined by another underlying factor. However, it is accepted that controlling for the temporal influences upon ethical consumption is a practical impossibility. There could be some omitted variable bias (e.g. personality traits or perceived consumer effectiveness could be confounding factors). A comprehensive literature review was adopted to avoid this. However, only the factors already understood to help predict ethical consumption behaviour were included in the survey. This leaves a possibility that factors not already studied that have a strong predictive ability were inadvertently omitted from the research. As with any piece of research, a decision has been made balancing what is ideal and what is practical as a research methodology.

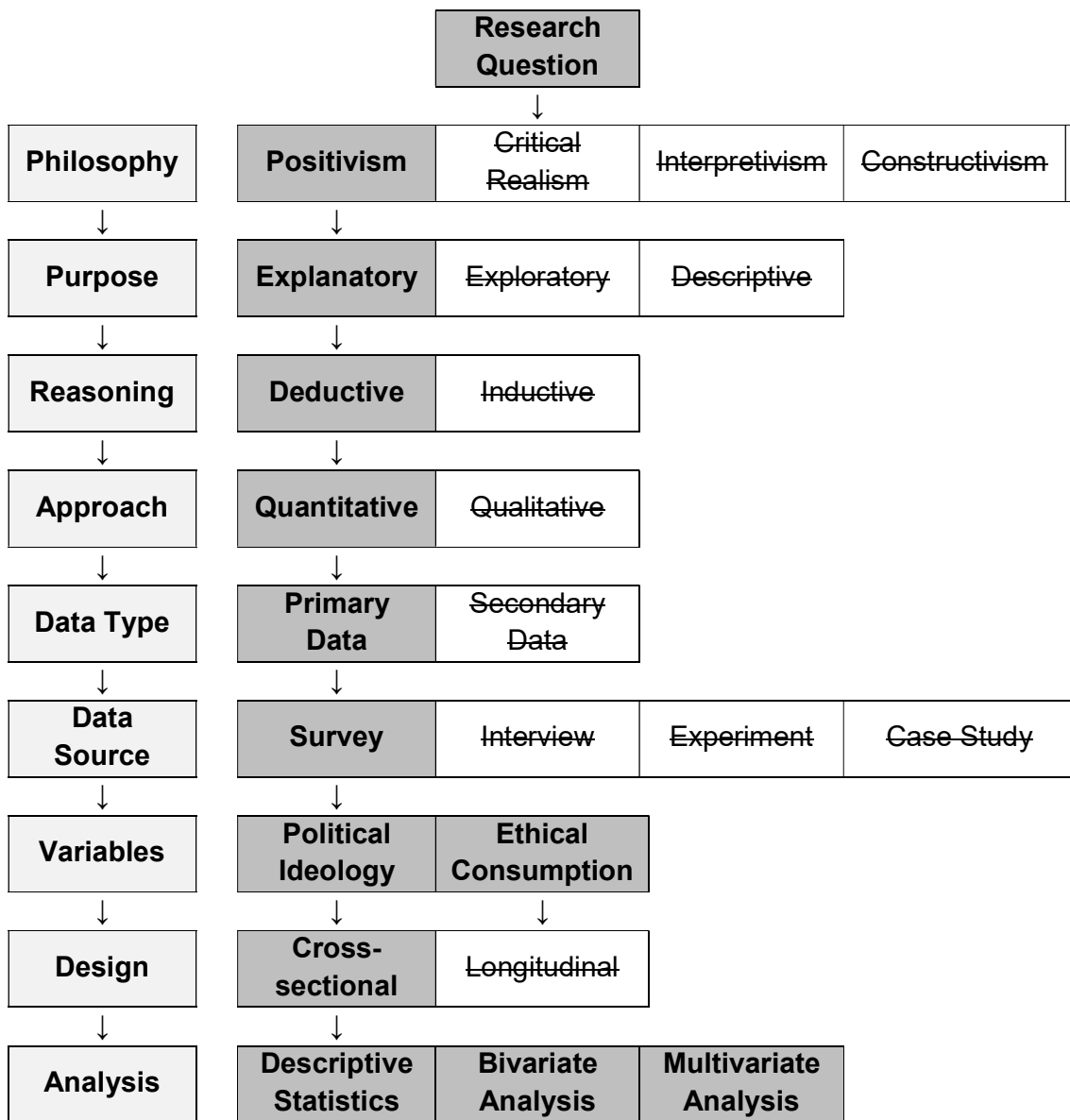


## **Research Philosophy**

This section discusses the basic beliefs guiding the approach to knowledge development within this thesis and explains the quantitative and positivist philosophical approach underpinning the research. As a positivist piece of research there has been no relationship between the researcher and respondents. It is intended that the study presented will be objective and utilise a scientific method of enquiry.

An epistemology is what we know to be true and what constitutes acceptable knowledge, while ontology refers to our view of reality and the assumptions we make about the way things work. This research adopts a realist ontology where the social reality of ethical consumption and political ideology are considered independently and not as projections of consciousness and cognition. The epistemological view adopted is one of the pragmatist, the criteria by which the knowledge created will be judged are its practical consequences and real world effects. Please refer to Figure 11 for a more detailed account of the research philosophy underpinning this thesis.

Figure 11 – Research Philosophy



**Researcher axiology**

It is also relevant to explain my own views as the researcher. In relation to axiology and in the interest of transparency and addressing researcher bias, readers may be interested in my own position on ethical consumption and political ideology. I am generally pro ethical consumption in its various forms. Like many UK consumers I practice ethical consumption in some circumstances while I ignore it in others. The ethical consumption issue that I engage in most committedly is in the area of animal rights and animal friendly products. I would identify myself as a vegetarian but an imperfect vegan; I avoid animal products for my food, clothes and entertainment. I find

my commitment to veganism interrupted in both food and clothing consumption (leather belts and shoes) due to the convenience and availability of non-vegan products and the inconvenience of finding vegan alternatives. In fact, this is a growing area of ethical consumption, for example, many consumers are boycotting real fur and animal tested products (Roberts 1996).

*“a vegetarian diet seems to be the most common way to meet the demands of ethical consumerism in everyday life. [...] A vegetarian diet fits in with various kinds of ethical ideas about animal rights and the environment.”*

(Pecoraro, Uusitalo 2014): pp.58

In relation to political ideology I identify myself as slightly Left-of-centre with a high degree of openness to change and general agreement with egalitarianism. However, while my views are socially liberal (I believe in protecting minorities and supporting those disadvantaged in society), I also identify with many ideas from the political Right, including free trade, economic freedom and self-reliance. I have completed the ‘relationship between political ideology and ethical consumer’ survey which provides a more intimate picture of my own axiology (see *Appendix 2*). These results are presented in the interest of transparency, with the aim of giving the reader an overview of my personal axiology and relationship with the research topic.

### **Research ethics**

Survey respondents were informed that the results of the survey would be published in a master’s thesis and academic literature in order to contribute to the academic and public understanding of ethical consumption. The survey brief also stipulated that participation in the survey would be strictly voluntary and respondents could refuse or cease participation at any time. All answers have been treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act and in order to ensure that all information remained confidential, respondents were asked not to include their name or personal information anywhere in their survey responses.

The survey was created on the Qualtrics website host for surveys. The research data includeS recorded information/outputs from Qualtrics. The data collection took place in March 2016. Participants were recruited from a random probability sample of UK consumers with quotas on age and gender to fit UK census statistics. Data was processed on Qualtrics and analysed using SPSS. The data has now been stored in a research data repository and backed-up on a secure server at the University of Kent.

Research data was managed to high standards throughout the research data lifecycle; this involved avoiding any loss of data and complying with the policies of the University and journal publishers. Any data that I collected was organised, stored securely. The data will be archived in a digital repository for 5 years now that the project has finished.

## Research Methods

Quantitative survey data will be collected for statistical analysis to test the hypotheses presented earlier in this thesis. Critically, this will be a deductive process measuring the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption attitudes and intentions. The research is guided by 5 principles outlined by Worchester and Dawkins (2005) in their article on surveying ethical attitudes:

1. **Representative sample** – 220 UK consumers
2. **Consistency of questioning** – uniform survey administration method
3. **Impartial questioning** – online survey respondents
4. **Anonymity of respondents** – confidentiality in storage and use of data
5. **Rigorous analysis** – descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis and multivariate regression

(Worchester, Dawkins 2005)

The research uses multiple pre-existing scales to explain the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption. Ethical consumption is measured using the Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD) scale (Webb, Mohr & Harris 2008), and a Best/Worst Scale measure of ethical consumption developed by (Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007). Political ideology is measured based on the traditional Left/Right dimensions and the Libertarian/Authoritarian orientation.

Table 6 below provides a description and overview of the design and administration of this research project.

**Table 6 – Research design overview**

<b>Research sponsor</b>	University of Kent
<b>Collector</b>	Bradley Cronk, MA Management (Research) student
<b>Purpose</b>	Identify whether political ideology is an effective predictor of ethical consumption, ultimately informing marketing decision making and CSR practice.
<b>Goals</b>	(1) Test a hypothesis that Leftists are more likely to engage in ethical consumption.  (2) Test a hypothesis that different ethical consumption issues will be more or less important to consumers with different political ideologies.
<b>Target population</b>	UK consumers (64,000,000)

<b>Sampling frame</b>	Online, the anonymity inherent in this mode of survey administration was essential for overcoming the social desirability response bias, which is often acknowledged but unaddressed in ethical consumption research. Face-to-face and telephone interviews would be inappropriate since they are likely to lead to a social desirability bias in respondents.
<b>Survey design</b>	The survey was created on the Qualtrics website host for surveys ( <a href="http://www.qualtrics.co.uk">www.qualtrics.co.uk</a> ).
<b>Sample design</b>	Random probability sampling with quotas for age and gender
<b>Sample size</b>	220 consumers
<b>Encouraging survey responses</b>	There will be no incentive for completing this survey. Cobanoglu & Cobanoglu (2003) have proven this to be the cheapest method of online survey administration and even found having no incentive to gain a response rate (23.9%) higher than certain prize draw incentives.
<b>Questionnaire</b>	<a href="http://kbs.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_80KkPunHNjomhx3">http://kbs.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_80KkPunHNjomhx3</a>

### ***Justification of research methods***

Primary data was necessary to fill a gap in the literature while secondary research provided the theoretical frameworks to inform primary data collection. The narrative and systematic literature reviews provided a platform for primary data collection by defining appropriate models and confounding variables to guide the research project.

A quantitative and deductive approach to the research was taken to produce a generalizable theory from a representative sample of UK consumers. The generalisability of the research is important when considering the managerial and policy implications of the study. This approach allowed for the elimination of confounding influence through the use of control variables and provided quantifiable results that could be analysed objectively. The methodology was also selected as a decision between what is ideal and what is practical given the budget and research expertise of the primary researcher.

The cross-sectional survey mode of data collection was utilised to compare the sub-groups of our sample at a particular snapshot in time. Again, this approach to the research was necessary for practical reasons since a longitudinal study would require more time and budget than was available for this study. Furthermore, the survey approach was deemed appropriate due to its cost effectiveness and ease of administration when objectively studying large populations and dealing with large samples.

## **Research Design**

This general population study uses established measurements for both political ideology and ethical consumption, utilising two existing scales. The research looks at implicit ethical consumption through an attitudinal and intention based measures for both the dependent and independent variables of ethical consumption applied to a sample of UK consumers; it does not simply focus on those self-identified as ethical consumers (Lewis, Potter 2011). Much of the existing research on ethical consumption is focused on the self-identified ethical consumer. The sample for this research will be a cross section of the wider UK population. The research will utilise surveys as a source of primary data collection, based on a random probability sample of 220 consumers with quotas for age and gender. The UK consumer population will be represented through a probability sampling method; the random probability sample will give each member of the population more than a nonzero chance of being selected (Groves et al. 2009).

This research is a general population study of UK consumers. The sample will be appropriate according to Ferber (1977) since the items on the measurement scale are relevant to respondents who answer them; consumer behaviour and political ideology are both relevant to the sample. Observing the advice of Czaja & Blair (2005), the survey design began with an analysis of questions used in both the ethical consumption (Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007, Roberts 1995, Freestone, McGoldrick 2008, Webb, Mohr & Harris 2008) and the political ideology literatures (Evans, Heath & Lalljee 1996, Michaud, Carlisle & Smith 2009, Evans, Heath 1995, Buckle 2013). It was then necessary to analyse each scale to identify which would be the most effective in answering the research questions presented in this paper.

### ***Defining an appropriate approach to the research***

The complex social phenomena of ethical consumption and political ideology are operationalised into two separate measurement scales within the survey. Both variables are scale variables, not simple Left/Right or yes-no dichotomies. The decision was made to use established scales and survey questions for measuring both political ideology and ethical consumption. Political ideology will be measured based on the traditional Left/Right dimensions and the Libertarian/Authoritarian orientation using the relevant scales from the British Election Study (BES) and the British Social Attitudes (BSA). The research also uses the Buckle (2013) policy preference scale. Ethical consumption will be measured using the empirically tested, Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD) scale (Webb, Mohr & Harris 2008), and a Best/Worst Scale measure of ethical consumption developed by Auger, Devinney & Louviere (2007).

A significant evaluation of current ethical consumption literature was conducted to identify the necessary control variables for this study. For example Auger et al.'s (2007) study incorporates socio-demographic criteria, gender, age, income and education as the relevant control variables. Freestone and McGoldrich (2008) stratified their sample according to age and gender as well as geographic region (UK). And Swimberghe et al. (2011) used only age, gender and income as their control variables. Bray, Johns & Kilburn (2011) collected a more extensive list of exogenous variables for their research: moral maturity, gender, affluence, educational level, beliefs, confidence, age, locus of control. However, due to the complexity of the phenomenon, it is accepted that controlling for all the temporal influences upon ethical awareness, concern and action is a practical impossibility. As a result, only those variables empirically shown to correlate with ethical consumption were included within this research study.

Having thoroughly explored the literature on the determinants/predictors of ethical consumption/socially responsible consumption, my study will control for age, social class, income, education, religiosity and employment sector. These control variables will account for any possibility that the relationship found between political ideology and ethical consumption is determined by another underlying factor. For example, it was necessary to control for income because higher income has a significant positive correlation with Rightist voting and higher levels of education have a significantly negative correlation with Rightist voting (Van der Waal, Achterberg & Houtman 2007).

### **Sample**

The sample size for the survey was determined using a formula developed by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) to provide a representative sample for research activities within a given population:

$$s = \frac{X^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2 (N-1) + X^2 P(1 - P^2)}$$

- **s** = required sample size.
- **X<sup>2</sup>** = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841).
- **N** = the population size.
- **P** = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size).
- **d** = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05).

(Krejcie, Morgan 1970)

The sample size required to be representative of the ethical consumption attitudes of UK consumers (64,000,000) would have been 384 at a 0.05 confidence interval and 96 at a 0.10 confidence interval. The sample for the survey was limited to 220 at £2.73 per response given the £600 budget available (providing a 0.066 confidence interval for the UK population studied for this research).

- **Population Size:** 64,000,000 (total number of UK consumers)
- **Margin of Error:** 6.6%
- **Sample size:** 220

To avoid the risk of the sample being demographically unrepresentative, and given the relatively small sample size, a panel used and the sample was split by age and gender to align the sample with UK Census statistics. Responses that fell below the minimum time for survey completion were removed by Qualtrics.

## ***Measures***

### **Ethical consumption**

Various scales exist for measuring ethical consumption (Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007, Roberts 1995, Freestone, McGoldrick 2008, Webb, Mohr & Harris 2008). The most widely used and empirically tested scale in the field is the Muncy & Vitell (1992) Consumer Ethics Scale. However, this scale refers to the ethical or unethical behaviour of consumers when dealing with producers rather than how consumers' attitudes and behaviours are impacted by the social responsibility of organisations. For example, Muncy & Vitell (1992) cover whether consumers believe that a series of statements are wrong or right in the areas of 'Proactively Benefiting at the Expense of the Seller' or 'Returning damaged merchandise when the damage is your own fault'.

The Muncy & Vitell (1992) Consumer Ethics Scale was deemed inappropriate for understanding whether political ideology impacts perceptions of ethical product features and the various ethical consumption issues. More appropriate scales for this research include:

- The Best/Worst scale constructed by Auger, Devinney & Louviere (2007)
- The Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD) scale (Webb, Mohr & Harris 2008)
- Freestone and McGoldrick's (2008) framework 1-7 scale for 22 motive statements.
- Roberts' (1995) Socially Responsible Consumer Behaviour (SRCB) scale

The Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD) scale and Auger, Devinney & Louviere's (2007) model have been chosen as the best suited to answering the



research questions presented for this study (Webb, Mohr & Harris 2008). The SRPD scale was selected because it has been constructed to understand purchasing behaviour based on firms' CSR performance and support the development of theory and marketing strategy. Furthermore, the SRPD has adapted and built upon prior scales (Ellen 1994, Roberts 1995). Then a pool of 147 items (statements) were reduced to 72 through content-validity judging. More items were subsequently removed following a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), reducing the total number of items to 26 (Webb, Mohr & Harris 2008). Reducing the scale to 26 items was important because scale length can be a potential cause of common method bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The SRDP scale was chosen because it deals with intentions rather than behaviours (Webb, Mohr & Harris 2008). Measuring intentions rather than attitudes allows us to measure something closer to actual behaviour and reduces the gap that could exist between our measurements and actual behaviour.

This research did not adopt the seven-point Decisional Balance Scale (DBS) from Freestone and McGoldrich (2008). The Freestone and McGoldrich (2008) DBS measure was not selected to measure ethical consumption because it would not allow the research to delve into the various issues within ethical consumption.

The SRDP scale measures three dimensions of socially responsible consumption, namely (1) the influence of firms' CSR performance on consumers' purchase behaviours, (2) consumers' recycling behaviours and (3) consumers' avoidance and usage reduction of products that harm the environment (Webb, Mohr & Harris 2008). Past measures of ethical consumption have not used confirmatory factor analysis; they largely ignored CSR and prioritised environmental issues over social issues to a disproportionately large degree. These factors further influence the decision to use the Webb, Mohr & Harris (2008) scale.

**Table 7 – Ethical consumption scale (SRPD)**

<b>Factor 1 – CSR performance (CSRP)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I try to buy from companies that help the needy.</li><li>• I try to buy from companies that hire people with disabilities.</li><li>• I avoid buying products or services from companies that discriminate against minorities. When given a chance to switch to a retailer that supports local schools, I take it.</li><li>• I try to buy from companies that make donations to medical research.</li><li>• I make an effort to buy from companies that sponsor food drives.</li><li>• When given a chance to switch to a brand that gives back to the community, I take it.</li><li>• I avoid buying products made using child labour.</li><li>• When given a chance, I switch to brands where a portion of the price is donated to charity.</li><li>• I avoid buying products or services from companies that discriminate against women.</li><li>• When I am shopping, I try to buy from companies that are working to improve conditions for employees in their factories.</li><li>• I try to buy from companies that support victims of natural disasters.</li><li>• I make an effort to buy products and services from companies that pay all of their employees a living wage.</li></ul>
<b>Factor 2 – Consumer recycling behaviour (RECYCLE)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I recycle cardboard.</li><li>• I recycle plastic containers.</li><li>• I recycle magazines.</li><li>• I recycle aluminium cans.</li><li>• I recycle steel/tin cans.</li><li>• I recycle paper.</li></ul>
<b>Factor 3 – Environmental impact purchase and use criteria (ENVIRON)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I avoid buying from companies that harm endangered plants or animals.</li><li>• Whenever possible, I walk, ride a bike, car pool, or use public transportation to help reduce air pollution.</li><li>• I avoid using products that pollute the air.</li><li>• I avoid buying products that pollute the water.</li><li>• I make an effort to avoid products or services that cause environmental damage.</li><li>• I avoid buying products that are made from endangered animals.</li><li>• I limit my use of energy such as electricity or natural gas to reduce my impact on the environment.</li></ul>

This measure refines and updates previous scales, and reflects current social and environmental concerns more closely than its predecessors (Ellen 1994, Roberts 1995). Overall it provides an inclusive scale for measuring ethical consumption at various stages of the Buyer Decision-making Process.

The Low & Davenport (2007) framework can provide an overview of ethical consumption and can incorporate the more extensive lists. For example Auger, Devinney & Louviere's (2007) list of 16 issues:

- **Human/Social Welfare** – e.g. product safety information provided, human rights, payment of minimum wages, unions allowed, minimum living conditions met, sexual orientation rights, safe working conditions guaranteed, use of child labour in production, gender, religious and racial rights
- **Environmental Welfare** – e.g. product biodegradability, products made from recyclables, packaging recyclability, product disposability, genetically modified (GM) material usage
- **Animal Welfare** – e.g. animal rights in product testing, use of animal byproducts

Adapted from: (Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007)

It would be unfeasible to directly address every individual ethical consumption issue in this study because there are too many potential issues to include. It was therefore necessary to use these broad areas to capture issues across ethical consumption. Auger, Devinney & Louviere's (2007) scale is the most comprehensive scale for overcoming this issue and directly addressing a large number of individual ethical consumption issues. The purpose of including the Best/Worst scale was to overcome the issues associated with using ratings scales, to validate the results of the SRDP scale and to include 16 pertinent ethical consumption issues extracted from the extant literature in ethical consumption and CSR (Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007).

**Table 8 – Ethical Consumption Best/Worst Scale**

<b>Social and ethical issues</b>
In this section, we will present you with sixteen social and ethical issues. These will be organized in groups of four over the next two pages (a total of twenty groups or questions). For each group, select the one issue among the four that is least important to you and the one issue that is most important to you. Please make sure that you select only one least important and one most important for each group of four issues. We have included a description of the issues below; please keep them in mind throughout the rest of this section.

- **Animal rights**—describes the general treatment of animals for commercial purposes such as the use of animals for product testing, the displacement or killing of animals for natural resource exploitation (e.g., logging), or the cruel use of animals for entertainment.
- **Animal byproducts used**—Indicates that the product is made using animal byproducts such as animal fat or lard.
- **Product biodegradability**—indicates that the materials used to make a product can be broken down naturally and hence are safer for the environment.
- **Products made from recyclables**—indicates that some or all of the materials used to make a product were obtained from recycled sources.
- **Product safety information provided**—means that information about the safe use of a product and/or potential dangers from using a product is/are included with the product.
- **Human rights**—describes the basic rights of all people as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights such as the right to food, clothing, housing, education, etc.
- **Packaging recyclability**—indicates that part or all packaging materials can be recycled for future use (e.g., product packages, food containers, shipping boxes, etc.).
- **Product disposability**—indicates that a product can be disposed of without causing undue damage to the environment.
- **Paying minimum wages**—signifies that companies adhere to the minimum wage standards of the country(ies) in which they are operating.
- **Unions allowed**—indicates that unionization is legal within a country and that companies producing in that country do not attempt to prevent or curtail the unionization of their workers.
- **Minimum living conditions met**—means that companies supply their employees with basic and acceptable living accommodations when required.
- **Sexual rights**—indicates that discrimination against individuals based on their sexual orientation is not allowed.
- **Safe working conditions**—signifies that companies follow a set of procedures to create a safe working environment for their workers.
- **Child labour not used**—means that companies do not use workers under the minimum working age in the country(ies) in which they are operating.
- **Genetically modified material used**—indicates that the use of genetically modified (GM) materials is allowed within a country and that companies use GM materials in their products.
- **Gender, religious, racial rights**—indicates that discrimination based on gender, religion, or race is not allowed.

<b>Example</b>		
In this example, sexual rights are least important and human rights are most important. Please notice that only <b>one issue</b> was selected in <b>each column</b> ( <b>Least Important</b> and <b>Most Important</b> ).		
Which issue matters <b>LEAST</b> to you? ( <u>tick ONLY ONE box for each question</u> )		Which issue matters <b>MOST</b> to you? ( <u>tick ONLY ONE box for each question</u> )
<input type="checkbox"/>	Animal rights	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sexual rights	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Human rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender, religious, racial rights	<input type="checkbox"/>

Adapted from: (Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007)

The Best/Worst measure of ethical consumption is a scale with 16 ethical consumption issues measured using 20 questions. Each question asks respondents to select the 'most important' and 'least important' issue. Each of the 16 issues appears 5 times in this measure. This was used to create a number between -5 and +5 for each issue to define how important or unimportant an issue is to the consumer. Respondents selected which issue mattered most and which issue mattered least out of the four issues listed in each question.

### **Political ideology**

The British Election Study (BES) and the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey have converged in their scales measuring the Left/Right orientation and the Libertarian/Authoritarian orientation (Curtice, Bryson 2003). This robust political ideology measurement scale is used here to cover the two areas of political values in British society:

- principles of socialism versus laissez faire (Left/Right dimension) and
- Libertarianism versus Authoritarianism

(Evans, Heath 1995)

This scale from the BES and BSA reliably and concisely measures ideology without adding dramatically to questionnaire length (Evans, Heath & Lalljee 1996). The BES and BSA scale also provided a foundation for the European Social Survey (ESS) scale measuring political ideology.

One survey question that this research does not adopt from the ESS is the self-identification measure of political ideology (see Table 9). This is because we measure ideology regardless of an individual's self-perception and involvement in politics.

**Table 9 – Self reported political Ideology scale**

In political matters people talk of 'the Left' and 'the Right'. Please indicate which number best describes your own views.

Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 00 means the Left and 10 means the Right?											
Left										Right	Don't know
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	88

(Evans, Heath & Lalljee 1996)

**Table 10 – Political Ideology Scale (BES & BSA)**

Left/Right scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off. [Redistrb]</li> <li>• Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers. [BigBusnN]</li> <li>• Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth. [Wealth][7]</li> <li>• There is one law for the rich and one for the poor. [RichLaw]</li> <li>• Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance. [Indust4]</li> </ul>
Libertarian/Authoritarian scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values. [TradVals]</li> <li>• People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences. [StifSent]</li> <li>• For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence. [DeathApp]</li> <li>• Schools should teach children to obey authority. [Obey]</li> <li>• The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong. [WrongLaw]</li> <li>• Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards. [Censor]</li> </ul>

Respondent will be invited to 'Agree strongly', 'Agree', 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Disagree' or 'Disagree strongly' with the statements on these scales. This Likert scale

with these statements has been found to be more stable and strongly associated with social characteristics than other measures of political ideology (Evans, Heath 1995). The scale was adopted for this study precisely because of its strength in measuring ideology.

The questionnaire will also include questions from Buckle (2013); these questions are used to provide a measure of a respondent's position on the Left–Right spectrum. This scale measures both the social and the economic dimensions of political ideology. The Buckle (2013) scale has been adopted to confirm or refute the results gathered from the BSA/BES scales by measuring political policy preferences.

**Table 11 – Political ideology Left/Right scale**

<b>Policy preferences</b>
1. The overall level of taxation in the UK is too high.
2. Britain is too unequal; this should be rectified even if it were to hurt the economy.
3. When the economy is in recession, the government should increase spending as a stimulus mechanism, even if this raises debt.
4. When the economy is coming out of recession, the government should cut spending, even if this means hardship for some.
5. Reducing the deficit should be the number one priority for the current government.
6. Far more resources should be spent protecting the environment and making sure we live in an environmentally sustainable way.
7. In today's world of equal rights, feminist concerns are increasingly irrelevant.
8. Immigration into the UK is too high and needs to be reduced.
9. In general, the government is too big; we should aim for a smaller state sector and a larger private one.
10. All peoples should rule themselves; they should not be subject to rule by a foreign power—either directly or through foreign backed dictators.
11. Large corporations are dangerous because they have far too much power and influence.

Buckle's (2013) Left/Right policy preferences scale has 11 individual items/questions, six of which point to a Rightist ideology and five of which point to a Leftist ideology. This scale was measured with the options: 'Completely disagree', 'Disagree', 'Neutral', 'Agree', 'Completely agree' and 'Don't know'. Respondents are given a net political ideology score by subtracting their scores on the Left-wing policy issues from the scores they got from their responses to Right-wing policies.

## **Data collection**

A cross section of quantitative data was collected in March 2016 through digital/internet surveys. This method allowed for wide geographic coverage of the UK. To manage the quantity and quality of survey responses, the duration of the questionnaire was limited to around 15 minutes (Czaja, Blair 2005). Responses that fell below the minimum time for survey completion were removed by Qualtrics. The survey was administered online to maximise response rates and reduce selection bias (Groves et al. 2009). All survey responses that fell below a minimum response time for the survey were automatically void and were not included in the analysis.

These steps were taken to avoid any bias in the responses we received. The introductions to sections of the survey were made deliberately vague to avoid the chance that respondents may have their own implicit theories about the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption. Avoiding the implicit theory cause for common method bias was also addressed through the ambiguous naming/title of the survey (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

### ***Survey administration***

The research used the Qualtrics website host for surveys ([www.qualtrics.co.uk](http://www.qualtrics.co.uk)), this was used to collect the research data and organise the results before beginning the data analysis. It was therefore necessary to purchase an audience of a representative sample of UK consumers from these professional survey providers (Qualtrics) who completed the already designed and tested research survey for the project. The data was collected over one week in March 2016, while the survey itself was developed throughout late 2015 and early 2016 with multiple rounds of pretesting and a rigorous process for selecting between the existing scales measuring political ideology and ethical consumption.

A key process in the research design and implementation was the collection of primary data from a representative sample of the target population of UK consumers. An online sampling method was adopted for this research study in order to ensure anonymity which is essential in order to overcome the social desirability response bias, which is often acknowledged but unaddressed in ethical consumption research. This form of common method bias refers to a tendency of respondents to provide answers which they understand to be socially acceptable rather than a reflection of their true attitudes (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Completing the survey online rather than face-to-face or over the phone helps to further anonymise the respondent and avoid any social element in the data collection process.



## Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted through the statistical program SPSS. The results include descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis and multivariate regression. The statistical analysis assumes a null hypothesis; that no relationship exists between an individual's political ideology and ethical consumption attitudes and intentions. The alternative hypotheses are two-tailed, assuming that the relationship between political ideology could indicate that ethical consumption intentions increase or decrease the more Right-wing the political ideology, and this research intends to uncover whether it increases or decreases. As one extension of this, there is another null hypothesis to be disproved. The second null hypothesis is that political ideology will not predict a consumer's attitudes toward individual ethical consumption issues; the issues will not correlate with political ideology in any way.

This research report empirically tests the theory that ethical consumption decreases the more Right-wing the consumer's political ideology. The theory will be tested through an analysis of primary data from 220 UK consumers. The prediction from this theory is a directional alternative hypothesis that if individuals are identified to have more Right-wing political ideology, then they will have weaker intentions to engage in ethical consumption practices. An audience of a representative sample of UK consumers was purchased to test this hypothesis empirically. The theory is that the socially conservative ideals that lead to a general 'resistance to change' (Thorisdottir et al. 2007, Jost, Federico & Napier 2009), will translate in to a resistance to change from traditional consumption behaviours to more ethical consumption.

Factors that may confound the primary relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption are controlled for, these include: age, gender, education, marital status, country of birth, income, employment sector and religiosity.

The relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption presented within this report utilises 220 original respondents; this N value does not include the cases that were removed because they did not meet the minimum duration of time required to complete the survey. Sampling error was limited through the quota sampling scheme adopted and established scales were used in the measurement of the variables to reduce response bias from any misunderstanding of the questions. A pilot study was conducted to help select the measurement scales for both ethical consumption and political ideology. Some of the previous scales tested on respondents included factors that were less easy to understand and respondents were finding difficulty in selecting the appropriate response for themselves. In fact, this is the reason why Freestone & McGoldrick's (2008) scale could not be used.

Census data was used to construct a representative sample of the UK population. Quota controls were applied to the sample. Simple random sampling was not possible because the Qualtrics sampling frame and the panel without quotas would produce an unrepresentative sample. Self-completion surveys were used and low completion rates were not an issue because Qualtrics could collect responses from their large databases until our sampling criteria were met. The average duration of survey responses was 10 minutes and 27 seconds. Responses completed in too short a time frame were removed, since it was agreed that no valid response could be completed in such a timeframe.

### ***Recoding***

Procedures were undertaken to cleanse and recode the data where necessary. This included validating the Qualtrics data output, comparing the data with UK Census data and acknowledging any differences between my sample and the UK population. It was also necessary to compute new variables from the large volume of factors/questions for both measures of political ideology and ethical consumption.

A new variable was computed for the Webb, Mohr & Harris (2008) SRPD scale from the CSR, RECYCLE and ENVIRON factors. The new variable was computed from the 26 individual factors and ultimately produced a SRPD score based on the mean score of responses across the 26 items; by taking a mean score, this included cases where respondents selected the 'Don't know' option, giving a mean only for those questions that were answered.

The Best/Worst Scale analysis ranks the order of importance for the 16 ethical consumption issues (Auger, Devinney & Louviere 2007). For Auger, Devinney & Louviere's (2007) scale, a new variable was computed for each of the 16 ethical consumption issues by subtracting the number of times an issue was selected as 'least important' from the amount of times it was selected as 'most important' by individual survey respondents. This created a number between -5 and 5 which defines how important or unimportant an issue is to the consumer. This figure between -5 and 5 was used to rank the importance of ethical consumption issues.

Another variable was computed for the Left/Right BSA and Libertarian/Authoritarian BSA scales by following BSA guidelines. The scores for each question were added and then divided by the number of items in the scale, giving indices ranging from 1 (Leftmost, most Libertarian) to 5 (Rightmost, most Authoritarian). The Left/Right scale was used throughout the analysis and formed part of the analysis central to this research project.

Policy preferences were assessed on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being 'Completely disagree', 3 'Neutral' and 5 'Completely agree'. Respondents were asked about their

preferences on a part of the survey separate to the other measure of political ideology. These preferences were considered individually, and agreement with some questions indicated Right-wing views and agreement with other questions indicated Left-wing views.

The Buckle (2013) policy preference scale was then computed from the 11 items by following a procedure outlined by Buckle (2013):230), offsetting the Left and Right-wing preferences:

- Score for Right-wing policy preference – Score for Left-wing policy preferences = Overall Score (for political ideology)

### ***Descriptive statistics***

In this section of the results the data is summarised to make it more understandable. Measures of centre and measures of spread are used to this effect. Numerical and graphical summaries of the data are provided in this section of the results. The section looks to make statistical inferences about UK consumers in general. Like many systematic statistical analyses, this study starts with descriptive statistics followed by bivariate and multivariate analysis.

Ordinal scales are used to measure the dependant and independent variables. In a systematic and scientific way, the data was analysed for various variables investigated. Descriptive statistics were produced for the independent control variables, the independent predictor variables and then the dependent variables. It was then possible to compare the descriptive statistics for the numerous control variables with UK Census data to ensure the respondents were an accurate and representative sample of UK consumers.

The various factors forming the two measures of ethical consumption and the two measures of political ideology were used to compute new variables. The new variables were then analysed to report descriptive data on those constructs measured.

### ***Bivariate analysis***

All analysis was conducted on a two-tailed basis to test statistical significance of relationships in either direction. This includes running correlation tests between political ideology and ethical consumption; specifically, the analysis covers measurement of Pearson's R squared. Linear regression models were also conducted between both measures of political ideology and both measures of ethical consumption. The results of these bivariate models are presented in tables and scatter plots within the results section of this thesis.

### ***Multivariate analysis***

The regression models produced within this section of the analysis include both enter and stepwise methods of regression. Confounding variables are controlled for in these models by holding them constant in the multiple regressions. Accounting for those confounding variables helps explain the pure effect of political ideology on ethical consumption. These models have been produced for both measures of ethical consumption, this allowed the results to be compared and verified against one another. The stepwise model was used to identify the predictor variables within the model that statistically have a significant relationship with ethical consumption. The regression analysis also includes the creation of an age variable centred on the mean (45.08 years old). This new variable provides a meaningful intercept for interpreting the effect of age on ethical consumption.

## **Section 5: Results**

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### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSUMPTION**

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Academic Years: 2014/2015 and 2015/16

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## **Results**

The results presented within this section are based on a survey with 220 valid responses and a quota sampling method based on UK Census data. To reinforce the validity of this research, two measures were used for both the independent and dependent variables. The results can be generalised upward from our sample to the wider population. The results are intended to be generalizable to UK consumers in general. Results in this section include the output of the SPSS analysis; this includes everything from measures of spread and measures of central tendency to a multivariate stepwise regression.

### ***Data and variables***

#### **Dependent variables**

The Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD) scale of ethical consumption developed by Webb, Mohr & Harris (2008) has three factors: (1) purchasing based on firms' corporate social responsibility (CSR) performance, (2) recycling, and (3) avoidance and use reduction of products based on their environmental impact. Together these three factors comprise a total of 26 individual items/statements. The following response options were provided for each statement: 'Never true', 'Rarely true', 'Sometimes true', 'Often true', 'Always true' and 'Don't know'. This scale was one of two used to measure consumers' intentions to engage in ethical consumption.

A Best/Worst measure of ethical consumption was also employed within the research. Developed by Auger, Devinney & Louviere (2007), this scale covers 16 ethical consumption issues measured using 20 questions. Here respondents were able to then select which issue mattered most and which issue mattered least out of the four issues listed in each question. Each question asks respondents to select the 'Most important' and 'Least important' ethical consumption issue. Each of the 16 issues appears 5 times in this measure. The data was then analysed through a count analysis method to produce a number between -5 and +5 for each issue, ultimately defining how important or unimportant an issue is to the consumer. Each issue starts with a score of zero, and each time the issue is selected as 'Most important' 1 is added to the overall score and each time issues are selected as 'Least important' 1 is subtracted from the overall score.

## Independent control variables

My literature review identified a number of variables required as control variables for analysing the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption. To better understand these descriptive statistics, it was possible to compare the survey data with UK Census data, and ensure that the sample was largely representative of UK consumers.

### Age

Age was measured on a sliding scale between 18 and 100. A quota was used to create a sample of adult consumers representative of the UK population. The youngest survey respondent was 18 years old and the oldest respondent was 78. The mean value for the age of respondents was 45.08 years old with a standard deviation of 15.41 years. The sample mirrors the UK Census data for adults since this age quota was applied to the sample (Office for National Statistics 2011).

### Marital status

Respondents' marital status was captured from six options that were provided for the question 'What is your marital status?' (1) 'Single', (2) 'Divorced / separated', (3) 'In a relationship (non-cohabiting)', (5) 'Widowed, Married / living with partner' or (6) 'Other'.

Figure 12 – Marital status variable



26% of the respondents were single, 11% were in a non-cohabiting relationship, 52% were married or living with a partner, 7% were divorced or separated and 3% were widowed. The UK Census data for marital status were not too dissimilar; 34% single, 46% were married, 11.6 were separated or divorced and around 7% were widowed (Office for National Statistics 2011).

### **Education**

The education variable was also measured from six options presented to the respondent. The options provided for the question 'What is the highest level of formal education you have obtained?' were: (1) 'Pre-secondary education', (2) 'Higher education (attained or studying towards)', (3) 'Secondary education (GCSE or equivalent)', (4) 'Postgraduate education (attained or studying towards)', (5) 'Further education (A levels or equivalent)' or (6) 'Don't know'. In the data collected for this variable, those with no qualifications seem to be underrepresented when compared with ONS data on the labour market (Office for National Statistics 2013).

**Table 12 – Education variable**

<b>What is the highest level of formal education you have obtained?</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Pre-secondary education	2	0.9
Secondary education (GCSE or equivalent)	64	29.1
Further education (A levels or equivalent)	53	24.1
Further education (A level s or equivalent)	54	24.5
Postgraduate education (attained or studying towards)	47	21.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Whilst the consumers in the sample were more highly educated than the general population according to the Office for National Statistics' data from 2013, the difference was very small (Office for National Statistics 2013). The 2013 ONS data showed that 21% of the population have A-levels or equivalent and 38% of the population are graduates (Office for National Statistics 2013). Our sample showed very similar results with 24.1% of the sample having A-levels or equivalent, although, 45.9% of the sample were graduates (undergraduates and postgraduates).

### **Income**

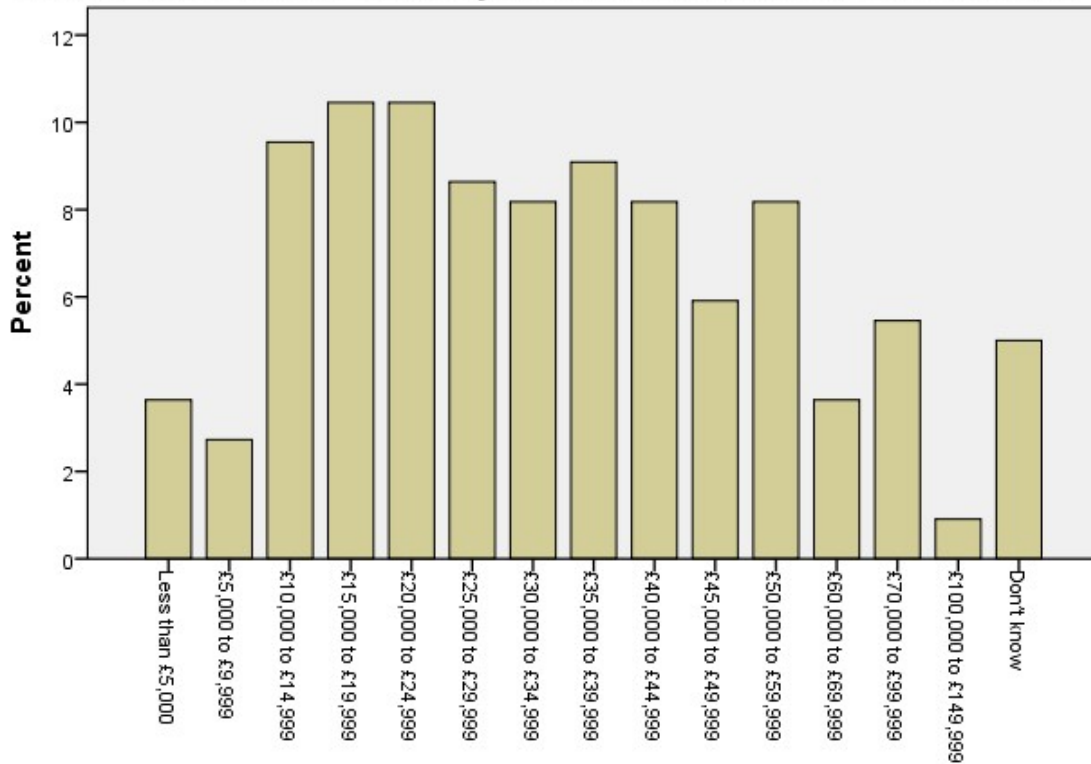
Income was measured on a 12 item scale. Respondents were presented with the question 'What is the total annual income of your household from all sources before tax?'. Options for their response ranged from 'Less than £5,000' to 'More than £150,000' and a 'Don't know' option. The data has a median in the 7<sup>th</sup> decile which is between £30,000 and £34,999 and the mean score for income was 7.44 which also



falls into the £30,000 and £34,999 income decile/bracket; mirroring the total household income of £33,155 highlighted in the ONS data (Office for National Statistics 2015).

**Figure 13 – Income variable**

**What is the total annual income of your household from all sources before tax?**

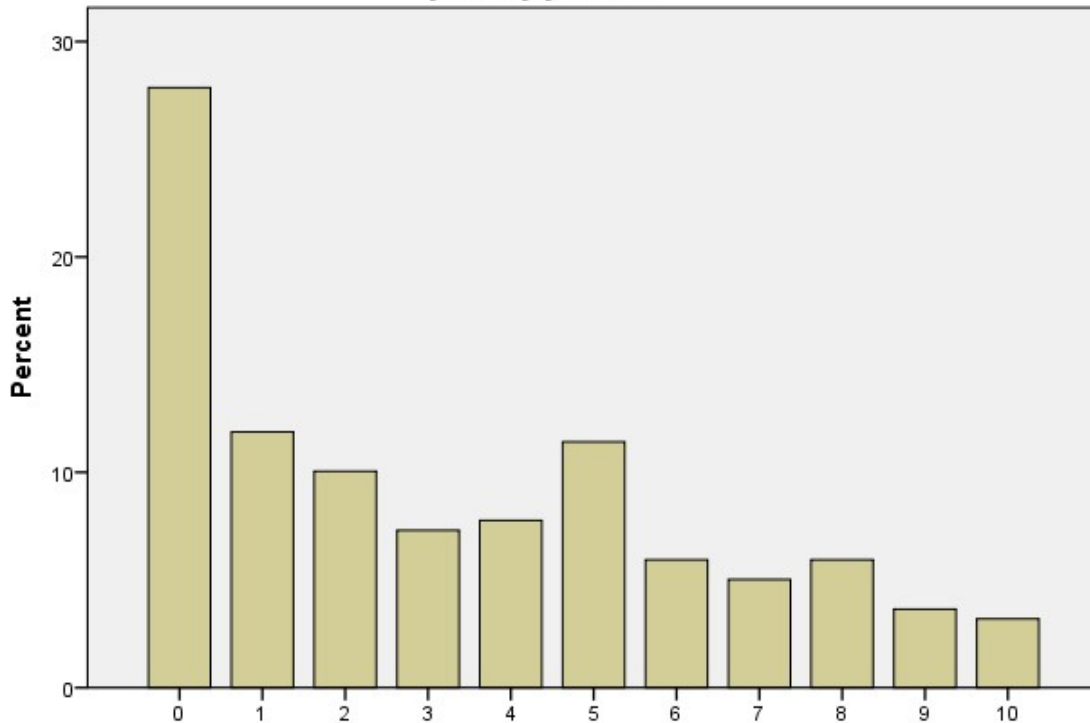


### Religiosity

Religiosity was measured on a scale from 0 to 10, for the question ‘Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?’. On the scale provided, 0 meant ‘Not at all religious’ and 10 meant ‘Very religious’. 25.13% of the UK population stated that they had no religion in the 2011 Census (Office for National Statistics 2011). Similarly, 27.7% of respondents to our survey indicated that they were not at all religious. Beyond this similarity it was not possible to compare the observed religiosity with national statistics because it is not a variable studied in government Census and population studies.

Figure 14 – Religiosity variable

Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?



### Country of birth

Country of birth was measured with a question asking 'Where were you born?', and a follow-up was included to ask 'If you were not born in the United Kingdom, when did you most recently arrive to live here (do not count short visits away from the UK)?'. The 2011 census data indicates that 86.6% of the population were born in the United Kingdom (Office for National Statistics 2011). Similarly, 89.5% of our sample were born in the UK.

### Independent predictor variables

The British Social Attitude (BSA) survey scale scores the Leftmost and most Libertarian position as 1, and the Rightmost and most Authoritarian position as 5. The middle option of 'Neither agree nor disagree' is scored as 3. To compute the overall variable, the scores to all questions in this scale of political ideology are added together and then divided by the number of items in the scale to provide an average. Ultimately, this produces a score from 1 (Leftmost, most Libertarian) to 5 (Rightmost, most Authoritarian). This scale measured two factors (1) Left vs Right wing; and (2) Libertarian vs Authoritarian. This involved asking respondents to answer a total of 11 individual items/questions for this section of the survey.

The Buckle (2013) Left/Right policy preferences scale has 11 individual items/questions, six of which point to a Rightist ideology and five of which point to a Leftist ideology. The overall construct for this variable was produced by subtracting the average score for the Leftist items from the average score for the Rightist items. The Buckle (2013) scale gives a positive score to those who generally approve of the Right-wing political policies more than Left-wing ones. Conversely, those who gave higher values to the Left-wing statements end up with a negative score, and centrists end up with one around zero.

## ***Descriptive statistics***

### **Ethical consumption**

In this section we present the results for the ethical consumption intentions of our sample; see Appendix 3 for data tables. On a scale from 1-5 where 1 is 'Never true' and 5 is 'Always true', the mean score for responses on the CSR construct within the SRDP scale (see *Table 13*) was 3.10; between 'Sometimes true' and 'Often true'. This mean score was lower than the mean score for responses to the RECYCLE and ENVIRON questions within the survey. Evidently, purchasing intentions based on CSR performance were strong, but not as strong as intentions to engage in recycling and environmentalist behaviours.

The ethical consumption issue within the CSR performance construct which proved most important to the consumers was child labour with a mean value of 3.66. Avoiding child labour was 0.4 higher than the next lower mean values for discrimination against minorities and discrimination against women. This contrasts with donating to medical research which was found to be the least important to consumers and had a mean value of 2.90. However, the next lowest mean value was only 0.02 higher than donating to medical research; this issue was the support for food drives.

The ethical consumption issue which proved most important to consumers under the ENVIRON construct was the protection of endangered animals; this had a mean value of 3.97, compared with reducing air pollution which had a mean value of 3.34. However, recycling intentions were significantly higher than any environmental or CSR performance issues (see *Figure 13*). The ENVIRON and RECYCLE constructs within the SRDP scale had mean values of 3.50 (between 'Sometimes true' and 'Often true') and 4.54 (between 'Often true' and 'Always true'). Further research may be able to produce useful insight by investigating why consumers have higher intentions to address some issues (e.g. recycling) through their consumption behaviours, and have lower intentions of addressing other issues.

Table 13 ranks consumers' intentions to address each of the 26 ethical consumption issues measured through Webb, Mohr & Harris's (2008) scale, according to the mean score they achieved between 1 and 5; where consumers are asked about their intentions to address the consumption issue, 1 is 'Never true' and 5 is 'Always true'.

**Table 13: SDRP Scale – ethical consumption issues**

		Mean score (between 1 and 5)
<b>1</b>	RECYCLE – Aluminium cans	<b>4.59</b>
<b>2</b>	RECYCLE – Paper	<b>4.55</b>
<b>3</b>	RECYCLE – Cardboard	<b>4.54</b>
<b>4</b>	RECYCLE– Plastic containers	<b>4.54</b>
<b>5</b>	RECYCLE – Steel/tin cans	<b>4.52</b>
<b>6</b>	RECYCLE – Magazines	<b>4.51</b>
<b>7</b>	ENVIRON – Endangered animals	<b>3.97</b>
<b>8</b>	CSRP – Child labour	<b>3.66</b>
<b>9</b>	ENVIRON – Use of energy	<b>3.65</b>
<b>10</b>	ENVIRON – Environmental damage	<b>3.47</b>
<b>11</b>	ENVIRON – Water pollution	<b>3.40</b>
<b>12</b>	ENVIRON – Air pollution	<b>3.36</b>
<b>13</b>	ENVIRON – Endangered plants and animals	<b>3.34</b>
<b>14</b>	ENVIRON – Avoid air pollution in transport	<b>3.34</b>
<b>15</b>	CSRP – Living wage	<b>3.30</b>
<b>16</b>	CSRP – Discrimination against minorities	<b>3.26</b>
<b>17</b>	CSRP – Discrimination against women	<b>3.26</b>
<b>18</b>	CSRP – Working conditions	<b>3.20</b>
<b>19</b>	CSRP – Giving back to the community	<b>3.09</b>
<b>20</b>	CSRP – Price includes donation to charity	<b>3.08</b>
<b>21</b>	CSRP – Support victims of natural disasters	<b>3.05</b>
<b>22</b>	CSRP – Help the needy	<b>3.03</b>
<b>23</b>	CSRP – Hiring disabled people	<b>3.00</b>
<b>24</b>	CSRP – Local schools	<b>2.96</b>
<b>25</b>	CSRP – Food banks	<b>2.92</b>
<b>26</b>	CSRP – Medical research	<b>2.90</b>

From Table 13 there is a clear hierarchy in the importance of ethical consumption issues to the consumers. Consumer’s self-reported intentions to address these issues are prioritised in the following order:

1. Recycling issues
2. Environmental issues
3. CSR issues

Individual ethical consumption issues were analysed further through the Auger, Devinney & Louviere’s (2007) Best/Worst scale of ethical consumption. This scale was

used to rank 16 ethical consumption issues across social welfare, environmental welfare and animal welfare issues. These results rank the importance of individual ethical consumption issues based on the mean score (across our sample of UK consumers) for the net importance of each issue.

**Table 14: Ethical consumption issues ranked according to importance**

		<b>Net importance score (between -5 and +5)</b>
<b>1</b>	Human rights	<b>+2.41</b>
<b>2</b>	Child labour not used	<b>+2.34</b>
<b>3</b>	Safe working conditions	<b>+1.41</b>
<b>4</b>	Minimum living conditions met	<b>+1.11</b>
<b>5</b>	Paying minimum wages	<b>+0.97</b>
<b>6</b>	Animal byproducts used	<b>+0.88</b>
<b>7</b>	Animal rights	<b>+0.72</b>
<b>8</b>	Sexual rights	<b>+0.19</b>
<b>9</b>	Gender, religious, racial rights	<b>+0.19</b>
<b>10</b>	Products made from recyclables	<b>-0.84</b>
<b>11</b>	Packaging recyclability	<b>-0.90</b>
<b>12</b>	Product safety information provided	<b>-0.92</b>
<b>13</b>	Product biodegradability	<b>-1.03</b>
<b>14</b>	Genetically modified material used	<b>-1.24</b>
<b>15</b>	Product disposability	<b>-1.35</b>
<b>16</b>	Unions allowed	<b>-1.89</b>

Table 14 shows that human rights, child labour, safe working conditions, minimum living conditions for workers and paying minimum wages were the five most important ethical consumption issues. Evidently, there is clearly a stronger preference for human and worker related rights than any other ethical consumption issues. The right to unionise, product disposability, the use of GM material and product biodegradability were the four least important ethical consumption issues. There is a general indication that product related issues are less important. Given the issues deemed most important, we might expect that the right to unionise would also be important. However, this does not appear to be the case; this is potentially related to the strongly political nature of this issue and will be discussed further at later stages of the analysis.

### **Political ideology**

The next set of results is focused on consumers' political ideology. The results show that the mean score for the political ideology constructs within the BSA scale were: 2.23 (Left/Right) and 2.46 (Libertarian/Authoritarian). Under both scales consumers generally 'Agree' with the various statements. By leaning towards the agree option on

these scales, it tells us that the sample were more Leftist and more Libertarian than Rightist and Authoritarian; see Appendix 3 for data tables.

An individual's score on the Buckle (2013) scale is determined by subtracting an individual's average score for Left-wing policies from the average score for Right-wing policies. Left-wing consumers will receive a negative score, centrists will receive a score around zero and positive scores indicate Right-wing policy preferences. The equation for identifying these scores is as follows:

- Right Wing - Left wing = Overall score for political ideology
- Questions (1+4+5+7+8+9) - Questions (2+3+6+10+11) = Overall score for political ideology

The average score for Rightist ideology factors was 3.41 and for Leftist ideology factors the mean score was 3.59. Overall, this survey of UK consumers found that consumers are centrists on average; but marginally more Leftist than Rightist. Specifically, the mean score for overall ideology was -0.18 on a scale between -5 and 5, where -5 is completely Left-wing and 5 is completely Right-wing; see Appendix 3 for data tables.

### ***Bivariate analysis***

A two-tailed bivariate analysis was conducted to understand the strength of association between the dependant and independent variables and whether this association was statistically significant. The  $R^2$  value found in linear regression explains that the independent variable only partially explains the outcome variable. The correlation allows us to see the connection between the actual dimensions of these two measurable variables. This correlation looks for a linear relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption; however, the data has explained that the relationship is not exactly linear.

There is a statistically significant relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption in both cases where the traditional Left/Right distinction is used to measure political ideology. However, no significant relationship was found between an individual's level of Libertarianism or Authoritarianism and ethical consumption. No alarming collinearity statistics were identified in the results. This is important since multicollinearity could have had a large impact on the coefficients produced in the bivariate analysis. Establishing that no collinearity existed reduced the likelihood of receiving erratic results in the regression analysis.

### **Pearson's correlation**

A correlation was found between ethical consumption (measured using the Webb, Mohr & Harris (2008) SDRP scale) and political ideology such that ethical consumption reduced with a more Rightist ideology. There was a -0.214 correlation with a 0.001 significance level when political ideology was measured using the BSA Left/Right

scale, and a -0.224 correlation with a significance of 0.002 when ideology was measured with the Buckle (2013) policy preferences scale. Both measures of political ideology attribute a lower score to Leftist ideology and a higher score to Rightist ideology. These correlations therefore suggest that ethical consumption reduces as consumers' political ideology moves further to the Right on the ideological spectrum. Table 15 presents the results of the correlation analysis. Further to this, it was established that the two political ideology scales correlate strongly (0.544) with one another which reinforces the validity of these measures and explains the similarity of the correlation results.

**Table 15: Correlation analysis**

	Political ideology (BSA)	Political ideology (Buckle 2013)
Ethical Consumption (SDRP scale)	-0.214	-0.224
N	220	195
Significance (2-tailed)	0.001	0.002

Ethical consumption intentions reduce with a more Right-wing political ideology. However, since the correlations fall between 0.20 and 0.39 we can define both -0.214 and -0.224 as weak correlations. The results of these correlations are very similar across the two measures of ethical consumption, reinforcing the result indicating that ethical consumption intentions are higher among Left-wing consumers and those intentions reduce with consumers further to the Right on the Left/Right scale of political ideology.

***Bivariate regression***

This regression investigates how a move to the Right on the Left/Right spectrum of political ideology will impact ethical consumption. This linear regression explains how political ideology influences ethical consumption at different stages on the Left/Right continuum. It is important to recognise at this stage that the analysis does not control for potential confounding factors. The results of the model explain the nature and direction of the relationship between our dependant and independent variables. However, we are unable to infer causality from this analysis and the results do not explain the pure effect of political ideology on ethical consumption. The effect identified simply underscores the existence and nature of the association between the two variables. A latter section of the analysis is devoted to establishing whether the relationship is causal in nature.

The BSA scale produced an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.046 suggesting that around 4.6% of the variability in ethical consumption intentions can be attributed to political ideology alone. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> reduced the predictive value of political ideology to 4.1%. An R value near 1 indicates a strong positive relationship and an R value near -1 indicates a strong

negative relationship. An R value near zero indicated no correlation and suggests that there is no linear relationship between the two variables. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.041 indicates that political ideology goes some way to explaining the variability in ethical consumption. However, a much more comprehensive model is required to predict and explain ethical consumption more thoroughly.

A perfect Leftist ideology produced a constant value of 3.960 out of 5 for ethical consumption. This 3.960 figure for perfectly Left-wing ideologues reduced by 0.183 with each step to the Right on the 5-point scale for political ideology. The total effect of political ideology on the 3.960 constant for ethical consumption is five times 0.183. The total effect is therefore 0.915, so ethical consumption intentions reduce from 3.960 for the Leftmost consumers to 3.045 for those with the most Rightist of ideologies. This tells us that ethical consumption intentions reduce from a case where statements on ethical consumption behaviours go from being ‘Often true’ for those on the far Left, down to only ‘Sometimes true’ for far Right consumers.

**Table 16: Bivariate analysis using the BSA scale of political ideology**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard error of the estimate
0.214	0.046	0.041	0.70915

	B	Standard error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Significance
<b>Constant</b>	3.960	0.135	-	0.000
<b>Political ideology (BSA)</b>	-0.183	0.057	-0.214	0.001

In an attempt to further validate the results of the first bivariate regression, a second regression was undertaken using the Buckle (2013) scale of policy preferences. The Buckle (2013) scale produced an R squared of 0.050 and an adjusted R squared of 0.045 which largely reinforces the findings that political ideology explains around 4-5% of the variation in ethical consumption intentions. The standardised beta shows a negative relationship of -0.224 which is slightly stronger than the relationship found with the BSA scale. Again, suggesting that ethical consumption intentions reduce with a move from the political Left to the political Right. In addition, all tests for heteroscedasticity came back negative, and this further reinforced the validity of these results produced in this section of the analysis.



**Table 17: Bivariate analysis using the Buckle (2013) scale of political ideology**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard error of the estimate
0.224	0.050	0.045	0.70334

	B	Standard error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Significance
<b>Constant</b>	<b>3.528</b> (lower)	0.052	-	0.000
<b>Political ideology (BSA)</b>	<b>-0.191</b> (larger)	0.060	<b>-0.224</b> (larger)	0.002

At a 95% confidence interval the upper bound and lower bound of the correlation coefficient both suggested that the relationship between a political ideology (measured where a low score indicates Left-wing beliefs and a high score indicates Right-wing beliefs) and ethical consumption is a negative one. This means that there should be little doubt that ethical consumption intentions reduce with a more Right-wing ideology. The standardised beta coefficient was -0.224 which was found to be statistically significant. Again, with this model, the results indicate that far Left respondents would on average respond 'Often true' to statements of their ethical consumption intentions and far Right would respond 'Sometimes true'. This is a full point reduction of ethical consumption intentions on a five-point scale.

### Analysis of individual ethical consumption issues

From the results it has been identified that out of the 16 ethical consumption issues, 9 had a significant correlation (positive/Right-wing or negative/Left-wing) with political ideology; this indicates that political ideology is a useful variable to include in models attempting to predict ethical consumption attitudes on 9 of the 16 issues investigated. Those issues with a positive relationship, indicating that they were more important to Right-wingers were (1) product safety information provided, (2) product disposability, (3) safe working conditions and (4) use of GM materials. Conversely, those with a negative relationship, indicating that the issue was more important to consumers with a left-wing ideology, were (1) animal rights, (2) human rights, (3) unions allowed, (4) sexual rights and (5) gender, religious and racial rights. A full account of these correlations can be found in Table 18 which identifies the strength and direction of the relationship between the two measures of political ideology and the various ethical consumption issues.

**Table 18: Correlations with individual ethical consumption issues**

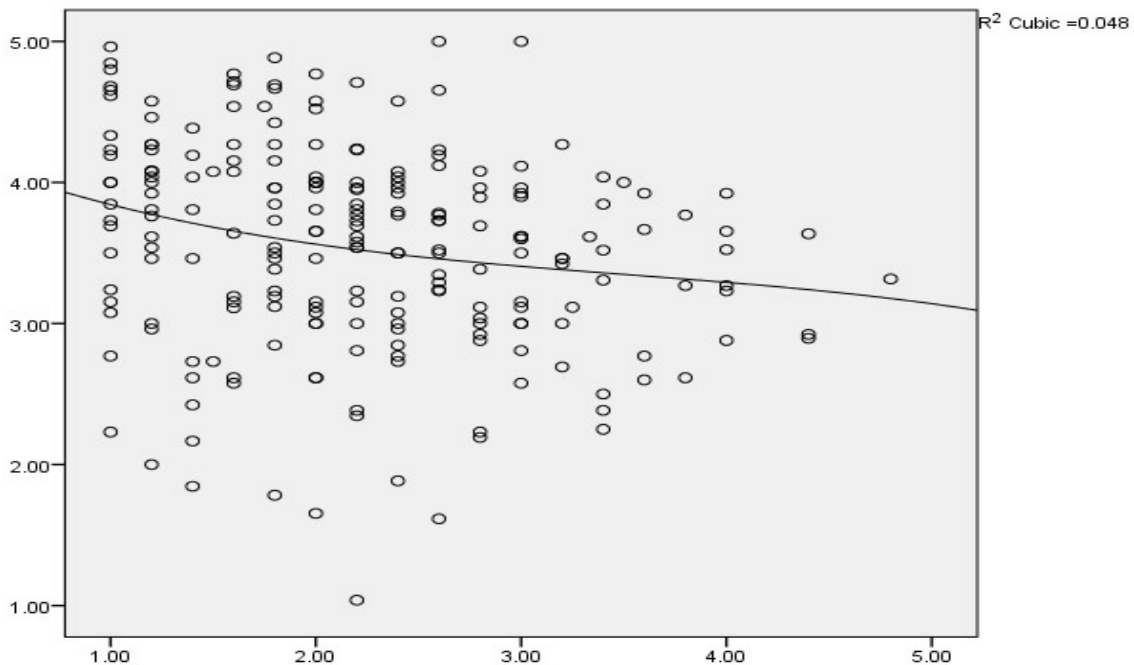
	Buckle (2013) policy preferences	BSA Left/Right scale
<b>Animal rights</b>	-	-0.145
<b>Animal byproducts used</b>	-	-
<b>Product biodegradability</b>	-	-
<b>Products made from recyclables</b>	-	-
<b>Product safety information provided</b>	0.288	0.143
<b>Human rights</b>	-0.224	-
<b>Packaging recyclability</b>	-	-
<b>Product disposability</b>	0.157	-
<b>Paying minimum wages</b>	-	-
<b>Unions allowed</b>	-0.289	-0.189
<b>Minimum living conditions met</b>	-	-
<b>Sexual rights</b>	-0.144	-
<b>Safe working conditions</b>	-	0.135
<b>Child labour not used</b>	-	-
<b>Genetically modified material used</b>	0.197	-
<b>Gender, religious, racial rights</b>	-0.191	-

This table lists all of the instances where political ideology was significantly correlated with an ethical consumption issue. The right to unionise as a workforce was the issue found to correlate most strongly with political ideology; this relationship indicates that the issue of labour unions is more important to Left-wing consumers. On the other hand, the provision of safety information was the issue that correlated the most strongly with an increasingly Right-wing political ideology. Critically, on these two issues, the two measures of political ideology illustrated the same relationship. However, it is significant to recognise that the two measures of political ideology identified different relationships between ideology and ethical consumption issues.

### Scatter plots and data modelling

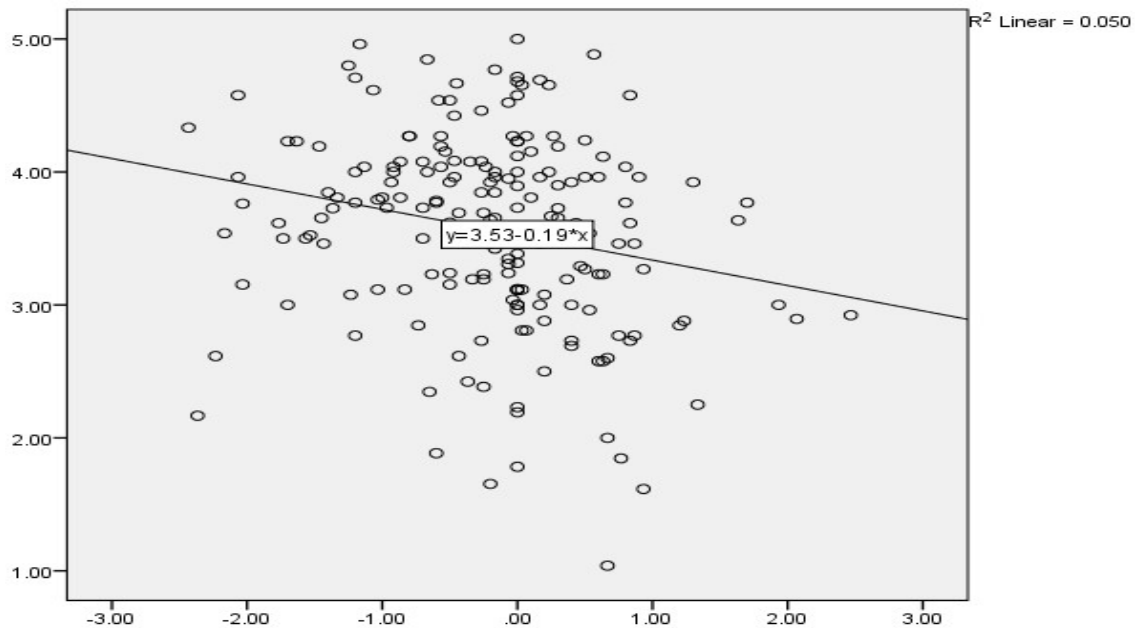
There is a relationship between the Left/Right scales and ethical consumption. The trend in Figure 15 and 16 displays higher ethical consumption from Leftists which reduces with an increasingly Right-wing ideology. However, the relationship is not linear. With both political ideology scales, a cubic model best fit the data with an R squared of 0.048 for the BSA scale of political ideology and 0.085 for the Buckle (2013) scale. The equivalent linear models produced R squared values of 0.046 (BSA) and 0.050 (Buckle 2013).

**Figure 15: Cubic bivariate model using the BSA scale of political ideology**



We know from our earlier correlation statistics that there is a weak negative relationship, i.e. ethical consumption reduces as we move towards a more Rightist ideology. This relationship is modelled in both Figure 15 and Figure 16. These models graphically represent the correlation between political ideology and ethical consumption. The two models present the relationship using the two different measures of political ideology. Evidently, the data modelled in this way shows how the two measures of political ideology display similar relationships with ethical consumption intentions. Ethical consumption in the context of these scatter plots is measured on an overall basis using the Webb, Mohr & Harris (2008) SDRP scale.

**Figure 16: Linear bivariate model using the Buckle (2013) scale of political ideology**



In this model we are attempting to explain the Y axis of ethical consumption with political ideology running from Left to Right on the X axis. The correlation coefficients of -0.214 and -0.224 mentioned earlier explains the strength of the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption. With this regression, it is possible to estimate a value for ethical consumption given a known political ideology.

A weak linear relationship was found between these two scale variables. The level of ethical consumption intentions reduces with a shift to the Right in political ideology. The correlation coefficient for the linear model is measured on a scale between 0 (no relationship) and 1 (perfectly correlated). Our linear coefficient was approximately -0.214/-0.224; the relationship identified is therefore weak (<0.3 is weak, 0.3-0.5 is moderate, and 0.5 is strong). The  $R^2$  value of 0.041/0.045 means that the model did not fit the data well, and the cubic model as seen in Figure 16 shows a better fit with the data ( $R^2=0.48$ ). This non-linear relationship must be understood to avoid a systematic misinterpretation of regression results at various points across the Left/Right scale.

Evidently this bivariate correlation has indicated that the relationship between the two variables of interest is not random; the correlation is statistically significant. The observed relationship is weak (-0.214/-0.224), however, this is to be expected when dealing with complex social phenomena. As with almost all social science phenomena, we are not expecting a perfectly linear relationship, and nor was it expected that political ideology could fully explain the variability in ethical consumption. This bivariate analysis has established a correlation; however, association is not causation, therefore

it becomes important to test the relationship further while controlling for potential confounding factors. Investigating the prospect of a causal relationship is the role of the multivariate analysis.

### ***Multivariate analysis***

In social research we usually assume that the phenomenon of interest is affected by more than one factor. This multivariate analysis seeks to understand whether political ideology effects ethical consumption, as well as being associated with ethical consumption; as discovered in earlier bivariate analysis. A multivariate regression model will be used at this stage of the analysis to address issues of multicollinearity, moderation and omitted confound variables. This model will control for the relevant confounding factors.

This section of the results investigates whether the effect found in the bivariate analysis was down to chance and random variation or whether there is some real effect. In multiple regression, control variables are added as other potential explanations of ethical consumption behaviour. In the social sciences there is almost always more than one explanatory variable. The regression model allows us to understand the individual effect of the various predictor variables. This study has controlled for various confounding variables. The various variables moderating the relationship the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption are age, marital status, education, income, employment sector, religiosity and country of birth.

Attempting to prove causation is difficult in these circumstances. Given the infeasibility of a randomised control study for the social phenomenon of interest, further regression should attempt to rule out alternative explanations. Regression analysis is the most commonly used statistical tool in the social sciences. The regression equation presented in this section of the results explains the relationship between our two variables. The model summarises the data and allows us to make predictions about an individual's consumption based on their political ideology.

### ***Regression models***

$R^2$  describes how well the model explains the data. The  $R^2$  is a measure of how close the data fits the model, and adjusted  $R^2$  can be used to understand multivariate analysis. Adjusted  $R^2$  adjusts for the number of predictor variables in a model. This can be used to compare multiple linear regression models. Multiple linear regressions will allow us to investigate the relationship between ethical consumption and several independent variables at the same time. This has been used in our case for an explanatory analysis of the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption.

The multivariate model including the Buckle (2013) policy preference variable has an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.232 which means the model explains 23% of variation in ethical consumption intentions. The results underscore the pure effect of political ideology on ethical consumption when confounding factors that may impact ethical consumption are held constant; age, marital status, education, income, religiosity, country of birth. This analysis suggests that the effect of political ideology increases when other factors are controlled. This result is evident from the enhanced standardised beta coefficient. The coefficients have increased from -0.214 (for the BSA scale) and -0.224 (for the Buckle (2013) scale), to -0.261 and -0.240 respectively. Despite the growth in standardised beta, it is important to recognise that the relationships uncovered should still be classified as weak in magnitude; <0.3 is weak.

**Multivariate regression with the BSA scale of political ideology**

Using statistical procedures that give a 5% chance of making a type 1 error, it is important to test whether the association is statistically significant or whether it could have been observed by chance. The size of the effect is -0.261 but the sample size has impacted the statistical significance of the results. When investigating whether the observation is due to chance alone or too large to be explained purely by chance we can refer to the Table for statistical significance which is 0.000.

**Table 19: Multivariate regression with the BSA scale of political ideology**

<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Standard error of the estimate</b>
0.446	0.199	0.163	0.66527

	<b>Standardised Beta Coefficients</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>Political ideology</b>	-0.261	0.000
<b>Gender</b>	0.146	0.030
<b>Marital status</b>	0.018	0.813
<b>Country of birth</b>	0.156	0.017
<b>Education</b>	0.105	0.141
<b>Employment sector</b>	-0.096	0.149
<b>Income</b>	-0.009	0.891
<b>Religiosity</b>	0.228	0.001
<b>Age</b>	0.56	0.272

These regression coefficients could have been positive or negative, and refer to the slope and constant of the model. Forward selection was used to build this model. The model was developed by adding variables to the model to establish a model that could

best explain the data. Political ideology and religiosity have been found to be the most effective predictors of ethical consumption.

### **Multivariate regression with the Buckle (2013) scale of political ideology**

The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.232 produced by the model is an illustration that the model explains approximately 23% of ethical consumption behaviour. The standardised coefficient gives detail on the magnitude of impact each predictor variable has on the outcome variable. Results highlighted that an individual's religiosity and political ideology have the greatest impact on their ethical consumption. The standardised B coefficient was 0.274 for religiosity, contrasting with -0.240 for an individual's political ideology. To summarise the model, moving to the Right on the Left/Right scale will lead to lower ethical consumption intentions; and being less religious also reduced ethical consumption intentions. The more religious a consumer is on a scale from 0-10, the higher their intentions to engage in ethical consumption will be. All other effects found were very small and/or not statistically significant; largely reinforcing the results of Roberts' (1995) study. Furthermore, the results have also explained that there were no issues with multicollinearity in the model; VIF values are below the threshold of either 3 or 5 in all instances.

**Table 20: Multivariate regression with the Buckle (2013) scale of political ideology**

<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Standard error of the estimate</b>
0.517	0.268	0.232	0.63207

	<b>Standardised Beta Coefficients</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>Political ideology</b>	-0.240	0.000
<b>Gender</b>	0.103	0.130
<b>Marital status</b>	0.146	0.050
<b>Country of birth</b>	0.167	0.010
<b>Education</b>	0.87	0.216
<b>Employment sector</b>	-0.162	0.015
<b>Income</b>	-0.001	0.983
<b>Religiosity</b>	0.274	0.000
<b>Age</b>	0.56	0.448

**Stepwise regression analysis**

A negative relationship indicates that ethical consumption intentions/attitudes reduce as we move from Left to Right on the spectrum of political ideology. Conversely, a positive relationship indicates that the more Right-wing consumers saw the ethical consumption issue as important.

The stepwise model also indicates a relationship that supports RH-1 that an individual’s intentions to engage in ethical consumption will decline from Left to Right on the spectrum of political ideology. The standardised beta coefficient is -0.219 for the relationship between the BSA Left/Right scale of political ideology and ethical consumption as measured by the Webb, Mohr & Harris (2008) SDRP scale. The coefficient is -0.244 for the relationship between the Buckle (2013) Left/Right policy preference scale and ethical consumption. In both cases, religiosity and political ideology were identified as statistically significant predictor variables with religiosity being the best predictor and political ideology the second best predictor. Table 21 gives a full overview of the regression results for both measures of political ideology and both scales of ethical consumption; Webb, Mohr & Harris’ (2008) SDRP scale of overall ethical consumption intentions and Auger, Devinney & Louviere’s (2007) Best/Worst scale of individual ethical consumption issues.

**Table 21: Stepwise regression for overall ethical consumption and individual issues**

	<b>Left/Right BSA scale</b>	<b>Statistically significant predictor variables</b>	<b>Left/Right policy preferences scale (Buckle 2013)</b>	<b>Statistically significant predictor variables</b>
<b>Overall ethical consumption (SRDP)</b>	-0.219	(1) Religiosity, (2) Political Ideology, (3) Gender (This model explains 12.6% of the variability)	-0.244	(1) Religiosity, (2) Political Ideology, (3) Marital status (This model explains 12.9% of the variability)
<b>Human rights (Best/Worst scale)</b>			-0.224	(1) Political Ideology
<b>Animal byproducts used (Best/Worst scale)</b>	-0.145	(1) Political Ideology		
<b>Gender, religious, racial rights (Best/Worst scale)</b>			-0.197	(1) Religiosity, (2) Political Ideology



<b>Product safety information provided (Best/Worst scale)</b>	0.143	(1) Religiosity, (2) Political Ideology	0.282	(1) Political Ideology, (2) Religiosity
<b>Genetically modified material used (Best/Worst scale)</b>			0.206	(1) Political Ideology, (2) Age
<b>Product disposability (Best/Worst scale)</b>			0.149	(1) Gender, (2) Political Ideology
<b>Unions allowed (Best/Worst scale)</b>	-0.192	(1) Political Ideology, (2) Marital status	-0.289	(1) Political Ideology

Stepwise multiple regression was used to only include statistically significant predictor variables. 7 of the ethical consumption issues had a significant relationship when we control for potential confounding factors. 4 issues had a negative relationship and 3 had a positive relationship with a more rightist ideology. So 4 issues appealed to more Left-wing consumers and 3 issues appealed to more Right-wing consumers. And, overall ethical consumption intentions reduced with a move from Left to Right on the spectrum of political ideology. Religiosity was found to be the best predictor of ethical consumption intentions in this model. The stepwise models (each with 3 variables) explained 12.6% and 12.9% of the variability in ethical consumption intentions.

Under the stepwise model, political ideology was found to be the only independent variable in the model to predict the importance of human rights and animal byproducts with statistical significance. Similar to the measure of overall ethical consumption as measured by the Webb, Mohr & Harris (2008) SDRP scale, political ideology and religiosity have been found to be the best predictors of the importance of individual ethical consumption issues. Gender, age and marital status were the only other predictor variables found to have any statistically significant relationship with Auger, Devinney & Louviere's (2007) 16 ethical consumption issues.

This regression analysis controlled for all known confounding variables identified in the literature. When held constant the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption increased in magnitude. The relationship was obscured by the confounding/moderating variables. Neutralising the relevant confounding factors in a multivariate regression improves the validity of the claim that there is a causal relationship.

## **Section 6: Discussion**

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### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSUMPTION**

**Bradley Cronk (bc376)**

Graduation Subject: Marketing and Social Responsibility

Supervisors: Dr Adolf Acquaye and Professor Alex Mohr

Academic Years: 2014/2015 and 2015/16

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## Discussion

This study is timely due to the current rise in ethical consumption caused by a climate for public scrutiny of business behaviour. Ethical consumption is an area growing in research literature, in practice and in our media. As well as the popularity of the topic, this research project was motivated more specifically by the current lack of effective predictors for ethical consumption, and the absence of an adequate profile of the ethical consumer.

Political ideology covers both economic and social attitudes (Jost, Federico & Napier 2009). Similarly, ethical consumption covers the social dimension of consumer behaviour, which is otherwise a broadly economic concept involving the purchase, use and disposal of products. Since these two concepts are so interrelated, it's logical to expect that the variables will be correlated in some way. Using both the Buckle (2013) and BSA Left/Right scales of political ideology, this study has identified that ethical consumption intentions reduced as consumers' political ideology moves further to the Right on the ideological spectrum. While this highlights the nature of the relationship and supports RH-1, it was also possible to highlight how the strength and direction of the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption varied across the numerous ethical consumption issues (RH-2).

### ***Research findings***

Apart from age and gender, where a quota was used to ensure the sample was representative, the control variables measured in this study were all found to fit well with UK national statistics and census data. Thus, we can accept these research findings as a representative picture of the UK population.

The study identified that there is a clear hierarchy in the perceived importance of ethical consumption issues from the consumer perspective. This study has uncovered that consumer's self-reported intentions to address these issues can be prioritised in the following order:

1. Recycling issues
2. Environmental issues
3. CSR issues

The results have also identified that ethical consumption from the consumer's perspective can be more strongly related to their behaviours when disposing of the product, as opposed to their purchasing behaviour. This is significant considering the disproportionately large amount of attention the purchasing stage of the buyer decision making process receives in consumer research and the media. To date, the domain of ethical consumption has been focused on ethical purchasing attitudes, intentions and behaviours. Our results, however, would suggest that there is significant interest

in ethical disposal. This is a phenomenon that warrants further investigation. In practice this could signal that there is a market for organisations that will support consumers in disposing their products in a way that is more environmentally friendly and ethical. In fact, certain organisations, particularly in the technology and automotive sectors, have been able to tap into this demand with schemes to support ethical and environmentally friendly product disposal.

Within the issues measured through the SRDP scale, human rights, workers' rights and the rights of various underserved groups were the most important. This theme was broadly reinforced when issues from the Best/Worst scale were ranked according to their net importance. Critically, human rights and worker related rights were the most important issues for our sample. The only issue that detracts from this clear hierarchy was the right to unionise. However, as discussed earlier, the right to unionise is a highly-politicised issue in the UK and the relatively low importance of this issue can be explained by its unimportance to more rightist consumers. Organisations hoping to elicit purchases from ethical consumers should therefore begin their CSR efforts by improving human lives in their workforce and supply chain.

This study tested multiple hypothesis. It was possible to reject of null hypothesis in testing RH-1, that ethical consumption intentions would not be any higher among consumers that are more aligned with the Left-wing policies and a more Left-wing ideology. In fact, a relationship was found between the two variables, and political ideology along with a consumer's religiosity were found to be better predictors of ethical consumption intentions than any of the other independent control variables adopted for this study; this is significant because the independent control variables selected for this study were adopted as the only variables in the current literature proven to help profile ethical consumers. Despite our evidence that political ideology does constitute some of the variability in ethical consumption intentions, it is important to recognise that political ideology only goes a small way toward predicting overall ethical consumption intentions. And, the relationship between the two variables, although statistically significant, has proven to be weak; this has been proven true when adopting two different measures of Left/Right political preferences. Critically, in testing RH-1 we have identified one of the best individual predictors of ethical consumption behaviour and a useful addition to any new models attempting to profile the ethical consumer.

By testing RH-1 this study has highlighted that, using two established measures of political ideology, consumers' intentions to engage in ethical consumption reduce the more Right-wing the individual's political belief system is. The effect is such that the average Left-wing consumer would indicate that statements around their ethical purchasing habits were 'Often true', while the average Right-wing consumer indicated that the statements were only 'Sometimes true' for them. Throughout this thesis we have discussed why the more Left-wing consumers are likely to engage in ethical consumption than their Right-wing counterparts; the mechanisms discussed around

the social and economic differences in ideology have included arguments around the Left-wing's egalitarian values.

Closely followed by political ideology, the most significant predictor of overall ethical consumption and the best predictor for many of the ethical consumption issues was religiosity. This result reinforces the finding of Swimberghe et al. (2011), that firms should consider the religious commitment of its customers. It's likely that the more religious individual will have higher moral intentions as a result of their faith, and will therefore display the more ethical attitudes and behaviours that we observed in this study. Critically, many religions, including Christianity which is dominant in this UK context, have moral teachings that could be colouring ethical consumption intentions. However, it is significant to highlight that some previous research in consumer ethics identified no significant relationship between religion and consumer ethics; religiosity is only related to consumer ethics indirectly (Vitell, Paolillo 2003).

Past research into the effectiveness of political attitudes in predicting ethical consumption has found mixed results. For example, evidence from Starr (2009) suggested that ethical consumption was politically neutral. Neither Democrats nor Republicans were significantly more likely to have bought ethically. Conversely, Roberts (1996) and Paek & Nelson (2009) found that liberalism was positively correlated with socially responsible consumption. Using a more robust measure of political ideology, this study has established that there is, in fact, a significant relationship between the two variables.

RH-2 was tested to enhance our understanding of the nuanced relationship between our independent and dependant variable. This was achieved by investigating the strength and direction of the relationship between political ideology and various ethical consumption issues. As hypothesised, this study has produced results that suggest that some, but not all, of the ethical consumption issues can be predicted by an individual's political ideology. In fact, only 7 of the 16 issues investigated displayed a significant relationship with ethical consumption when potential confounding factors were controlled for; a larger sample may have helped uncover more statistically significant relationships. The strength and direction of the relationship varied across the ethical consumption issues, some issues appeal more to Left-wing consumers and some appeal more to Right-wing consumers. The strength of the relationship varied, but considering the complexity of the concepts all relationships identified were relatively weak. However, in summation, human/social, animal and environmental welfare issues were all found to generally be more important to Left-wing consumers.

RH-2 is important from a practical perspective because it outlines which issues appeal most or least to which consumer. This is critical since most organisations will not be hoping to target ethical consumers in general, but will want to better understand which consumers find the ethical features of their product appealing. However, as with overall ethical consumption, it should be acknowledged that political ideology only

goes part of the way toward predicting which consumers find which ethical consumption issues important. Political ideology should be used in conjunction with other predictors when attempting to profile consumers concerned about a particular ethical consumption issue.

The results highlighted that not all ethical consumption issues can be predicted by political ideology. While it may be the case that some more statistically significant relationships may have been found with a larger research sample, we can assert that political ideology had the strongest predictive effect on overall ethical consumption, and the predictive power was generally lower for the individual ethical consumption issues. The fact that individual issues are not related to political ideology as much as the relationship between political ideology and overall ethical consumption does have profound implications for practicing marketers. Critically, political ideology may not be an effective tool for segmentation, targeting, positioning or designing marcomms for products that address only a narrow ethical consumption issue. For example, the results of this study suggest that political ideology may not be a useful predictor of intentions to avoid the consumption of animal byproducts. Other issues that displayed no significant relationship include: product biodegradability, products made from recyclables, packaging recyclability, minimum living conditions met and child labour not used.

The results of this study provide us with a better understanding of the profile of an ethical consumer and through this study we have introduced one of the most powerful predictors of ethical consumption identified in the literature so far. However, it is necessary for future research to test the predictive capacity of new variables if we are to gain a more comprehensive profile of the ethical consumer. There is scope for the introduction of new psychographic, profile and behavioural variables. However, much of the existing research has focused on profile factors (e.g. demographics), and researchers may find that introducing psychographic and behavioural variables produces models that better predict the variability in ethical consumption. Critically, this study has identified that a psychographic variable, political ideology, has explained more of the variation in ethical consumption than any one profile factor. This is significant since previous research has identified that demographics are inadequate when attempting to profile ethical consumers, particularly Fairtrade consumers (Doran 2009). And, more research is required to investigate how effective behavioural factors are in predicting ethical consumption. Particularly considering that involvement with NGOs can be an effective predictor variable (Belk, Devinney & Eckhardt 2005).

From the perspective of the consumer, these results could help explain why individuals purchase and consume products in the way that they do. Introspectively, these insights could help the individual understand how their political beliefs impact other areas of their life. Specifically, the results can help consumers understand their own attitudes and behaviours, in the same way that researchers and practitioners might.

From this research we have been able to make some generalisations about UK consumers as a whole. The results of this study suggest that ethical consumers are generally: more Left-wing (political ideology), more religious (religiosity), younger (age), female (gender), higher income (income), highly educated (education), and work in a more prestigious occupation (occupation). These insights provide a useful profile of ethical consumers, however much of the variability in ethical consumption is unaccounted for in this profile of ethical consumers. And more research, into psychographic and behavioural predictor variables, is recommended to help establish a more comprehensive profile/persona of an ethical consumer in the future.

### ***Limitations and Future Research***

#### **Survey research**

The survey method does not allow for immersive understanding of ethical consumption, only an outside view as opposed to an insider perspective. It could therefore be criticised as focusing on areas chosen by the researcher rather than exploring the consumers' attitudes without predefined restrictions. These are limitations associated with survey research in general and although there is scope for qualitative studies in the field of ethical consumption, such additional research studies are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Further to this, the measurement process for broad and intangible concepts such as political ideology and ethical consumption may have created a spurious sense of precision (Bryman, 2012). Critically, Bryman (2012) provides examples of how key terms and scales can be misinterpreted in surveys. Nevertheless, the ambiguous and social nature of these concepts justifies the relatively weak relationship between the variables discussed within the analysis. Complex social phenomena are hard to measure and it makes absolute sense that political ideology does not predict ethical consumption comprehensively. Ethical consumption is a complex and nuanced set of attitudes and behaviours, and ultimately predicting this complexity will require a robust model with many predictive variables. Simply put, the persona of an ethical consumer is expected to be complex and multidimensional. It is for this reason that further research into predictors of ethical consumption is recommended.

The overreliance on quantitative surveys in ethical consumption research has left everyday shopping behaviour relatively unexplored (Caruana, Carrington & Chatzidakis 2015). There is an opportunity to employ further rigor in the investigation of the predictors of ethical consumption. In fact, some future studies could adopt a qualitative approach to investigation, and study actual behaviour as well as attitudes and intentions; experimental methods of investigation could prove equally valuable. This is critical given the gap between attitudes and intentions, the gap between

intentions and behaviours, and the inability of surveys to measure actual consumer behaviour.

There are two types of error related to the acceptance or rejection of a hypothesis. Rejecting a hypothesis which is true (type 1) or not rejecting a hypothesis which is false (type 2). A false positive would reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption when it is true and a false negative would fail to reject the null hypothesis when it is false. A larger sample size could have been used to reduce the likelihood of a type one or a type two error. However, as with any piece of research, a decision has been made balancing what is ideal and what is practical as a research methodology. The sample size required to be representative of the ethical consumption attitudes of UK consumers (64,000,000) would have been 384 at a 0.05 confidence interval (Krejcie, Morgan 1970). However, this study utilised a more modest sample of 220 UK consumers, providing a 0.0661 confidence interval while still producing some robust and significant results. Ideally a larger sample size would have been used; we may have found some more statistically significant relationships with a larger sample.

### **Issues with causality**

The regression analysis controls for all known confounding variables identified in the literature. When potential confounding factors were held constant, the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption increased in magnitude. The relationship was obscured by the moderating variables. Neutralising the relevant confounding factors in a multivariate regression improves the validity of the claim that there is a causal relationship. Political ideology and ethical consumption attitudes are complicated and intertwined, often overlapping and making it difficult to establish a natural order. In this case it is impossible to establish complete causality.

Controlling for the temporal influences upon ethical consumption is a practical impossibility. Attempting to prove causation is difficult in these circumstances. Given the infeasibility of a randomised control study for the social phenomenon of interest, further regression should attempt to rule out alternative explanations. It is accepted however, that political ideology may find correlation but rarely will it find causation for ethical consumption. We cannot infer causation from the models presented in this paper. Political ideology is not endogenous; there are a number of unmeasured causes. Equally, ethical consumption and political ideology may be caused by another underlying factor. Future research should look to build on the model and further test political ideology's causal influence by controlling for yet more predictor variables in an expanded multiple regression model.



### **Social desirability response bias**

Consumers are more likely to produce a socially desirable answer on a questionnaire than throughout a prolonged, depth interview (Belk, Devinney & Eckhardt 2005). The overreliance on quantitative surveys in ethical consumption research has left everyday shopping behaviour relatively unexplored (Caruana, Carrington & Chatzidakis 2015); it is necessary for future research to diverge from this common method and avoid the inherent bias (Mohr, Webb & Harris 2001).

As well as socially desirable response bias, self-reported survey responses can lead to a consistency motif where respondents attempt to appear consistent and rational in their responses (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Together these effects may have obfuscated the true relationship between ethical consumption and political ideology. Critically, these are factors that may have distorted the measurement of both political ideology and ethical consumption.

### **Problems with endogeneity**

This research was not able to comprehensively address issues of endogeneity. There was no appropriate instrumental variable for this research. None of the existing research into the social determinants of political ideology has identified variables that are correlated with political ideology, but not with ethical consumption. Further to these limitations, there could be some omitted variable bias (e.g. personality traits or perceived consumer effectiveness could be confounding factors). A comprehensive literature review was adopted to avoid this. However, only the factors already understood to help predict ethical consumption behaviour were included in the survey. This leaves a possibility that factors not already studied that have a strong predictive ability were inadvertently omitted from the research.

## **Section 7: Contribution**

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### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSUMPTION**

**Bradley Cronk (bc376)**

Graduation Subject: Marketing and Social Responsibility

Supervisors: Dr Adolf Acquaye and Professor Alex Mohr

Academic Years: 2014/2015 and 2015/16

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### ***Addressing the research problem***

This project was undertaken because researchers have been unable to adequately explain or predict ethical consumption behaviour. Current research into the determinants of ethical consumption has provided only limited explanation and contradictory results. The results of this study show that political ideology goes part of the way toward explaining the variation in ethical consumption intentions, and highlights political ideology as one of the most effective variables for predicting ethical consumption. The study also illustrates how ethical consumption intentions reduce from the Left to the Right on the spectrum of political ideology. Future researchers now have a useful psychographic variable to include in their models profiling ethical consumers. And, marketing practitioners have an important factor to consider when promoting ethical products or brands.

This research project set out to achieve and largely addressed multiple objectives:

- **Research Objective 1 (RO-1):** To understand how well political ideology can predict an individual's ethical consumption attitudes and intentions.

This study has established political ideology as one of the best-known predictors of ethical consumption. The data indicate that political ideology explains around 4-5% of the variation in ethical consumption intentions.

- **Research Objective 2 (RO-2):** To identify how the various ethical consumption issues are associated with political ideology, the predictive power of political ideology, and whether different ethical attributes are more, or less, important to individuals with different ideologies.

The results indicate that 7 of the 16 ethical consumption issues had a significant relationship with the measures of political ideology when potential confounding factors were controlled for.

- **Research Objective 3 (RO-3):** To understand the factors associated with ethical consumption attitudes and intentions.

The study establishes a profile for an ethical consumer as a more leftist, more religious, younger, female from a higher social-economic background, with higher income, a prestigious occupation and a higher level of education.

The theory developed in this thesis introduces political ideology as the first psychographic predictor of ethical consumption attitudes. The theory highlights that political ideology is one of numerous variables to be used when profiling ethical consumers and the empirical results reinforce ideology as one of the most effective predictor variables identified so far. Visually presented in Figure 9 (*page 80*), the

theory shows that an individual's political ideology will influence their ethical consumption attitudes, and that ethical consumption intentions follow those attitudes, and ethical consumption behaviours follow intentions. The proposed theory acknowledges the gaps between attitudes, intentions and behaviours, and highlights where political ideology fits in predicting ethical consumption.

### ***Hypothesis testing***

We can reject the null hypothesis that an individual's political ideology will not influence their ethical consumption. The analysis suggests that to some degree, individuals identified to have a Left-wing political belief system will be more likely to engage in ethical consumption. However, the results indicate that the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption was only weakly and negatively correlated at -0.214 (BSA scale) and -0.224 (Buckle (2013) scale). This indicated that ethical consumption reduced the further to the right the consumer is on the political spectrum. The magnitude of the effect of political ideology on ethical consumption was not overestimated in the bivariate analysis. In fact, controlling confounding variables in the multivariate model led to an increase in the effect of political ideology on ethical consumption (-0.261 for the BSA scale and -0.240 for the Buckle (2013) scale).

In support of RH-1, overall ethical consumption intentions reduced with a move from Left to Right on the spectrum of political ideology. A significant relationship was found between the SRDP measure of ethical consumption and both the Buckle (2013) policy preference scale and BSA scale for measuring the Left/Right dimension of political ideology. The relationship was found to be weak, but it strengthened when confounding variables were controlled for in a multivariate regression. Specifically, the coefficients increased from -0.214 (BSA scale) and -0.224 (Buckle (2013) scale) policy preference scale), to -0.261 and -0.240 respectively. This indicates that the effect of political ideology on ethical consumption is moderated by some other independent factors such as age, gender and income. This further highlights how ethical consumption intentions were reduced among the more Right-wing consumers, and reported ethical consumption intentions were higher among Left-wing consumers.

Breaking down ethical consumption into the various ethical consumption issues to test RH-2, it was discovered that the strength and direction of the relationship between political ideology differed from issue to issue. 7 of the 16 ethical consumption issues had a significant relationship with the measures of political ideology when potential confounding factors were controlled for. 4 issues had a negative relationship, indicating that consumers with a Leftist ideology deemed the issue more important, and 3 had a positive relationship, indicating that these issues are more important to individuals with a more Rightist ideology. Human rights, the use of animal byproducts, the right to unionise as a workforce and gender, religious and racial rights were all

found to be more important to consumers with a Leftist political belief system. The provision of product safety information, the use of genetically modified materials and product disposability were all found to be more important to consumers with a Rightist ideology. These results are largely congruent with the outcomes hypothesised in RH-2.1, RH-2.2, RH-2.3 and RH-2.4 (see *Appendix 1*) The exception however is that product disposability was hypothesised to be an issue that would be more important for Leftists, because there is a substantial correlation between liberalism and environmental concern (Buttel, Flinn 1978). This did not prove to be the case and the actual relationship went in the opposite direction. However, it is significant to highlight that product disposability was one of the least important ethical consumption issues overall, and the relationship between political ideology and this factor was only found to be true under one of the two scales measuring political ideology; the Buckle (2013) scale. This apparent relationship could be caused by Right-wing consumers' preference for order and Left-wing consumer's valuing the other environmental issues measured in the Best/Worst scale; without further research it is not possible to explain this relationship with any degree of certainty.

Critically, an individual's political ideology does impact their attitude toward ethical consumption, and we can map which ethical consumption issues are most important to consumers with different political beliefs. While the Left/Right scales of political ideology (multiple scales were used for each construct to confirm the validity of results) were much better predictors of overall ethical consumption intentions than the Libertarian/Authoritarian scale, the Libertarian/Authoritarian scale did have a significant relationship with 4 of the 16 ethical consumption issues. Specifically, those with a more Libertarian ideology tended to rank human rights and the right to unionise with high importance. And, those consumers with a more Authoritarian ideology ranked the provision of product safety information and avoiding the use of GM materials as issues with high importance. These results could be equally important for the segmentation, targeting and communications strategy of marketing executives. However, these results were not gathered as part of the primary thesis of this research project and report.

### ***Understanding ethical consumption***

When looking at consumers overall, there is a stronger preference for human and worker related rights than any other ethical consumption issues. The right to unionise, product disposability, the use of GM material and product biodegradability were the four least important ethical consumption issues. For marketers looking to appeal to a broad base of UK consumers with ethical products, human rights, child labour, safe working conditions, minimum living conditions for workers and paying minimum wages are the five most important ethical consumption issues. When looking at the most important issues as measured by the Webb, Mohr & Harris (2008) SRDP scale,

recycling issues were clearly the most important, and environmental issues were more important than CSR performance issues. There is a clear hierarchy in the importance of ethical consumption issues; (1) recycling issues, (2) environmental issues and (3) CSR issues. These results indicate that consumers' intentions to recycle and to address environmental issues are higher than their intentions to reward or punish firms through their purchasing behaviour. Marketers hoping to appeal to ethical consumers should therefore ensure that they address consumers' recycling and environmental concerns before looking to address wider CSR issues.

These results raise some key considerations for marketing practice and help further illuminate the causes of ethical consumption. However, with 77% of the variability in ethical consumption still largely unexplained, both theory and practice of marketing to ethical consumers and ethical consumer behaviour has significant scope to be improved. Further improvements to the understanding of ethical consumers and the way ethical products are marketed has potential to help address social, environmental and economic issues. Organisations using the insights of ethical consumption research are poised to capture the increasing demand for ethical products and brands, and are also engines themselves for stimulating ethical demand and creating shared value for themselves, their shareholders and the ethical consumers. But, more broadly, helping stimulate demand for ethical consumption helps to justify and reinforce the business case for CSR.

### ***Significance and contribution***

Political ideology has been confirmed as a weak but significant predictor of ethical consumption and various ethical issues; 9 out of 16 to be specific (7 out of 16 when we control for confounding factors). Marketers now know which ethical product features are most important, those around human and worker rights. Political ideology can be used as part of segmentation, media planning and/or messaging to consumers based on the relationships found between political ideology and ethical consumption issues. Religiosity was a good predictor of overall ethical consumption and various individual ethical consumption issues. Overall, organisations can now better understand the profile of an ethical consumer and use this in creating customer personas. These customer personas can now vary according to ethical features being marketed, or be presented to represent the wider market of ethical consumers.

### ***Management and policy implications***

This research has provided deeper understanding of ethical consumption and the factors that predict it. Ultimately, the practical insights will support marketers in:

- Segmenting the market according to political ideology
- Targeting relevant consumers (based on political beliefs)

- Positioning products and brands to appeal to the identified target market
- Designing effective marketing communications for the target market

With effective segmentation, targeting and positioning (STP) and marketing communications in the ethical consumer market, organisations can align their fiduciary duties with the creation of social value. This study identifies which consumers are most likely to engage in ethical consumption, namely a Leftist, religious, younger, female consumers from a higher social-economic background, with higher income, a prestigious occupation and a higher level of education. Further to this, ethical issues have been ranked in order of importance and mapped against political ideology.

Our survey results have identified the most important ethical consumption issues. These results can be interpreted by marketers to identify which issues to address with their products and services. Specifically, it was identified that a clear hierarchy exists between the various ethical consumer behaviours. Recycling intentions were highest (scoring an average of between 4.51 and 4.59 out of 5), environmental issues were the second most important set of issues (scoring between 3.34 and 3.97 out of 5), and CSR performance issues are where consumers had the lowest intentions to engage in ethical consumption behaviours (scoring between 2.90 and 3.66 out of 5). These results explain that average ethical consumption intentions range between 'Sometimes true' and 'Always true' depending on the particular issue (1= 'Never true', 2= 'Rarely true', 3= 'Sometimes true', 4='Often true', 5='Always true' and 6= 'Don't know').

On a policy level, it was identified that Leftists found human rights, the right to unionise, sexual rights and gender, religious and racial rights as the most important ethical issues. It follows that political organisations on the political Left could emphasise these issues in their policies and manifestos to appeal to a Leftist voter base. Similarly, political parties hoping to appeal to consumers on the political Right, could form policy on the use of GM materials or another of the ethical issues identified as important to Rightist consumers in our research.

## **Segmentation**

A market segment is a collection of buyers with homogeneous needs. Traditional market segmentation has been centred on demographic variables. However, marketers are finding it increasingly effective to use psychographic and behavioural factors as well as profile factors when segmenting their target audiences. Regardless of the factors used for segmentation, marketers should ensure their segments are effective, actionable, profitable, measurable and reachable. Ensuring segmentation meets these criteria can bolster the effectiveness of market segmentation. Using

political ideology in segmentation criteria would be an example of psychographic segmentation.

The results of this study suggest that it is possible to segment the ethical consumer market based on political ideology. Marketers of 'ethical' products should use political ideology alongside a range of factors (e.g. age, education and gender) proven to have a relationship with the particular ethical consumption issues that their goods or services intend to address. Effective marketing of ethical products will support the continued growth of ethical consumption and allow consumers to continue addressing social and environmental causes through their purchase decisions.

This research has developed insights for a new approach to segmentation of the ethical consumer market. However, marketers will have to overcome the convenience of segmentation based on demographics. A large market does exist for goods and services with ethical dimensions. However, marketers should recognise that not all consumers expressing social concern will engage in ethical consumption; there is a clear gap between attitudes and behaviours. Quality, value, convenience and price are still the most important features influencing buyer decision making (Mohr, Webb & Harris 2001). Marketers will find practical challenges to the use of political ideology in segmentation. Clearly political ideology is not a characteristic where data is readily available for marketers to use. Further to that, politics is a protected characteristic and therefore political ideology data may be difficult to acquire. Regardless, it is the role of the individual marketers to identify how to use these insights to segment the market.

## **Targeting**

Now that marketers understand the nature of the relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption, the insights can be used to inform the selection of targeting strategy. However, again it is important to mention that the sensitive nature of political opinions means that marketers will be severely restricted in the way they can use data on the political opinions of consumers. In fact, the use of such data is subject to strict rules under the Data Protection Act.

The targeting approaches appropriate in the ethical consumer market segment are a concentrated or a differentiated approach. A concentrated approach is that used by organisations targeting the niche, hard-core, ethical consumer segment. This is a niche market that requires a high degree of concentration on CSR performance. In fact, CSR performance should be central to strategy if an organisation is hoping to target the hard-core, self-identified ethical consumers. An example of an organisation pursuing this approach to targeting would be the ethical Triodos Bank or the Vegetarian Shoes company.



Circumstances where a differentiated approach would be appropriate can be found in the wider consumer market. Mainstream consumers also value ethical product features and certain ethical consumption issues; as established in this study. Organisations can use those ethical points-of-difference to differentiate their brand in the minds of consumers. An example of a differentiated approach to targeting ethical consumers in the mainstream consumer market can be found in Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream. Ben and Jerry's differentiate themselves with core values and a social mission for a fair economy, social justice and the environment (Ben & Jerry's 2016). Ben and Jerry's involvement with initiatives such as Fairtrade and climate justice have established them as the accepted ethical alternative in the ice cream and frozen yogurt markets. Organisations should consider which approach is correct for them based on their own objectives and the nature of their product or service.

### **Positioning**

Market positioning is a psychological construct held within the minds of a customer. An organisation's positioning strategy should be clear, credible, consistent and competitive. Trout & Ries (1982) suggest that further to meeting this 4Cs criteria, segmentation strategies come in three forms: Reinforce current positioning, deposition and reposition your competitors or occupying a new and currently unoccupied position. Positioning an organisation or individual products to appeal to ethical consumers will often require the creation of favourable associations. The challenge will be to create points-of-difference since ethical products, like many other product categories, will often communicate similar messages in similar ways.

Emphasising ethical attributes can be a Unique Selling Point (USP) for a brand and a powerful differentiating tool. Like most forms of differentiation, this can allow organisations to decommoitize their market and begin to command price premiums. An example of this can be found with cosmetics products where organisations such as Lush have been able to command real price premiums as a result of their ethical differentiation. However, it is down to the organisations to decide on a positioning strategy appropriate for them and their market and product category.

### ***Originality and theoretical contribution***

Most companies do not have an understanding of their customer's ethical beliefs (Crane, Matten & Spence 2014). In the ethical consumption literature, there is only a limited understanding of the determinants of ethical consumption intentions. Research into what predicts ethical consumption was therefore required. It is pressing now more than ever for a comprehensive persona and profile of ethical consumerS to be developed, and this study builds on previous work to go some way towards achieving that.

It is well understood that ethical consumption is on the rise (Co-operative 2012) but the motivations behind this behaviour are relatively unproven. This study provides a predictor variable for various forms of ethical consumption. Political ideology was identified as one of the two most important, statistically significant predictors of ethical consumption. Critically, political ideology along with the consumer's religiosity was more effective at predicting ethical consumption than any of the other predictor variables in the literature at present. Political ideology was found to be a better predictor of ethical consumption than a consumer's age, marital status, education, income, place of birth, occupation and gender. Previous research by Roberts (1996) explained 8% of the variability in ethical consumption, using additional variables such as religiosity and introducing political ideology allowed us to now develop a model explaining a full 23% of the variability. The research still has some way to go, but this is a significant step in the right direction.

Consumers with a Left-wing political orientation have higher intentions to engage in ethical consumption. This relationship exists because many of the issues addressed by ethical consumption coincide closely with Left-wing values. Ethical consumption issues fall into three main categories (1) Human/Social welfare, (2) Animal welfare and (3) Environmental welfare (Low, Davenport 2007). For each of these categories there is evidence to suggest that the progressive and egalitarian principles of the Left-wing lead Left-wingers to value these issues more highly than Right-wing individuals. Critically, political ideology and ethical consumption attitudes are the product of an individual's values, attitudes and beliefs. The values, attitudes and beliefs held by an individual will inform their political orientation and their attitudes toward various ethical consumption issues. As a result, political ideology and ethical consumption attitudes are intrinsically linked.

The results of this study highlight that UK consumers do typically have the intention to consume ethically. This result supports much of the prevailing theme within the research, which is that on average consumers do generally report attitudes and intentions to consume ethically. However, in the real world of purchasing decisions there are a number of factors impeding ethical consumption (Bray, Johns & Kilburn 2011); the most notable of the factors causing this gap between intentions and behaviours are price sensitivity, perception of quality and shopper convenience (Mohr, Webb & Harris 2001). As a result, this study of ethical consumption attitudes and intentions is unlikely to translate directly into ethical consumption behaviours. Critically, the higher intentions to consume ethically among Left-wing consumers is likely to be moderated somewhat in consumption behaviour. Nevertheless, those consumers with higher intentions to consume ethically will on aggregate engage in more ethical consumption than those consumers with lower ethical consumption intentions.

This study also found that intentions vary across different areas of consumer behaviour. At the disposal stage, recycling in particular, ethical consumption intentions were higher than they were at the purchase stage. Intentions to recycle were the highest among our sample of UK consumers when compared with other ethical consumption behaviours, this was followed by intentions to make consumption decisions that reduce or avoid degradation to the environment. Ethical intentions were lower in general when it came to making purchasing decisions based on the CSR performance of a company.

### **Future research**

This research attempts to understand ethical consumption on a macro level and provide a generalised theory to be applied for specific ethical consumption issues. Further research could look at individual product categories and test whether the theory presented in this thesis holds true. The theory developed in this paper should be applied to various product categories and tested experimentally. However, a more pressing area of research would be in identifying more determinants of ethical consumption to help construct a more complete profile of the ethical consumer.

Key areas that have emerged for future research include:

- Identifying more predictors of ethical consumption to help build a more comprehensive ethical customer persona; the best model presented in this thesis could only predict 23% of variation in ethical consumption intentions.
- Investigating whether or not public demand for ethical products outstrips what companies supply in the market.
- Investigating the gap between consumer attitudes in ethical consumption and actual behaviour in the form of purchase votes (boycotts and buycotts).
- Exploring the factors that most strongly influence purchasing behaviour and evaluating the importance of ethical attributes when considering the bigger picture.
- There is scope for further research investigating why consumers rank issues such as child labour as more important than other ethical consumption issues.
- Explaining whether political ideology can predict ethical/socially responsible investment (SRI) (the purchase of stocks and bond with ethical motives).

Having identified that there is a relationship between political ideology and ethical consumption; we can refer to the extant consumer behaviour literature on how lifestyles, attitudes and values (LAVs) influence purchasing behaviour. Critically, consumption behaviours can be influenced by personal values (Carman 1978, Homer, Kahle 1988, Shim, Eastlick 1998). Future research into the determinants of ethical consumption may benefit from looking at these areas for an effective predictor variable.

## Conclusions

Reporting on the findings of an empirical study of 220 UK consumers, this report underscores political ideology as a determining factor in ethical consumption and maps how individual ethical consumption issues vary in their degree of importance to consumers as per the consumers' position on a Left/Right scale of political ideology.

Price, quality, value and convenience are still the most vital decision making factors for consumers. It is well established that on an aggregate level, quality and price drive purchasing behaviour more than ethical dimensions of the good/service (Carrigan, Szmigin & Wright 2004, Smith 2008, Mohr, Webb & Harris 2001). However, a revolution appears to be taking place within wealthy capitalist societies, ethical consumption is entering the mainstream (Lewis, Potter 2011). This study highlights that political ideology can be a useful predictor of ethical consumption. And, underscores political ideology as an important factor for researchers and practitioners trying to profile the ethical consumer. Indeed, political ideology and religiosity were found to be the most powerful predictors of overall ethical consumption and intentions and attitudes toward various ethical consumption issues.

This research and much of the literature on ethical consumption has identified that large segments of socially responsible consumers do exist (Roberts 1995, Roberts 1996, Buckle 2013, Beckmann 2007, Freestone, McGoldrick 2008, Michaud, Carlisle & Smith 2009). However, many consumers complain that it is hard to be good. For example, Adams & Raisborough's (2010) research found numerous accounts expressing the sentiment that purchases can be compromises between ethics and price. This is one manifestation of the well-recognised gap between consumers' ethical consumption intentions and behaviours. This research has identified that the average consumer's ethical consumption intentions range between 'sometimes true' and 'often true' depending on the issue; ethical consumption issues vary in importance. Critically, the average UK consumer indicated that they engage in each of the ethical consumption behaviours listed in our survey either 'sometimes' or 'often'.

This study has described the association between political ideology and ethical consumption in the UK context. The multivariate model was then able to explain ethical consumption more comprehensively. However, 77% of the variation in ethical consumption intentions is still unaccounted for. Only 23% of the variability in ethical consumption can be explained by the predictor variables used for this study; the independent control variables used in this study were those identified in the literature from the work of previous researchers. Political ideology must therefore be understood alongside an individual's demographics and religiosity, as one of many predictors required to profile the ethical consumer. It is therefore recognised that further research is still required. Areas with the most promise for future research include the predictive power of personality traits, perceived consumer effectiveness and other lifestyle characteristics.

## **Section 8: References**

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### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSUMPTION**

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## **Section 9: Appendices**

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### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSUMPTION**

**Bradley Cronk (bc376)**

Graduation Subject: Marketing and Social Responsibility

Supervisors: Dr Adolf Acquaye and Professor Alex Mohr

Academic Years: 2014/2015 and 2015/16

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## List of appendices

### Appendix 1 – Hypothesis development

	<b>Ethical consumption issue</b>	<b>Direction of relationship</b>
Animal welfare issues	<b>(1) Animal rights</b> <b>(2) Animal byproducts used</b>	These issues will be more important to the more Left-wing consumer
Environmental welfare issues	<b>(3) Product biodegradability</b> <b>(4) Products made from recyclables</b> <b>(7) Packaging recyclability</b> <b>(8) Product disposability</b>	These issues will be more important to the more Left-wing consumer
Other ethical consumption issues	<b>(5) Product safety information provided</b>	This issue will be more important to the more Right-wing consumer
Human/social welfare issues	<b>(6) Human rights</b>	This issue will be more important to the more Left-wing consumer
Human/social welfare issues	<b>(9) Paying minimum wages</b> <b>(11) Minimum living conditions met</b>	These issues will be more important to the more Left-wing consumer
Human/social welfare issues	<b>(10) Unions allowed</b>	This issue will be more important to the more Left-wing consumer
Human/social welfare issues	<b>(12) Sexual rights</b>	This issue will display no directional relationship
Safe working conditions	<b>(13) Safe working conditions</b>	This issue will be more important to the more Right-wing consumer
Human/social welfare issues	<b>(14) Child labour not used</b>	This issue will display no directional relationship
Other ethical consumption issues	<b>(15) Genetically modified material used</b>	This issue will be more important to the more Right-wing consumer
Human/social welfare issues	<b>(16) Gender, religious, racial rights</b>	This issue will be more important to the more Left-wing consumer

**Appendix 2a – Political ideology survey responses**

<b>Political ideology</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Personal</b>	<b>Sample average</b>
<b>Political ideology policy preferences (Buckle 2013)</b>	Position on the Left – right spectrum (Rightists have positive scores, centrists have scores around 0 and Leftists have negative scores)	-2	-0.18
<b>Political ideology BSA Scale</b>	Left wing measures	4.08	3.41
	Right wing measures	3.12	3.59

This figure provides a summary of my personal results to the survey questions on political ideology from Buckle (2013) and the British Social Attitude survey. These results are presented in the interest of transparency, with the aim of giving the reader an overview of my personal axiology and relationship with the research topic.

**Appendix 2b – Ethical consumption survey responses**

<b>Ethical consumption</b>			
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Personal</b>	<b>Sample average</b>
<b>SDRP Scale (Webb, Mohr &amp; Harris 2008)</b>	CSRP	3.77 (Often true)	3.13 (Sometimes true)
	ENVIRON	3.71 (Often true)	4.54 (Always true)
	RECYCLE	4.17 (Often true)	3.50 (Often true)
<b>Best/Worst scale (Auger, Devinney &amp; Louviere 2007)</b>	Animal rights in product testing	+3	+0.72
	Use of animal byproducts	+4	+0.88
	Product biodegradability	0	-1.03
	Products made from recyclables	-2	-0.84
	Product safety information provided	-4	-0.92
	Human rights	+5	+2.41
	Packaging recyclability	-2	-0.90
	Product disposability	0	-1.35
	Payment of minimum wages	+1	+0.97
	Unions allowed	-3	-1.89
	Minimum living conditions met	0	+1.11
	Sexual orientation rights	-2	+0.19
	Safe working conditions guaranteed	+1	+1.41
	Use of child labour in production	+3	+2.34
	Genetically modified (GM) material usage	-5	-1.24
Gender, religious and racial rights	+2	+0.19	

This figure provides a summary of my personal results to the survey questions on Webb, Mohr & Harris (2008) SDRP scale of ethical consumption and Auger, Devinney & Louviere (2007) Best/Worst scale of ethical consumption issues. These results are presented in the interest of transparency, with the aim of giving the reader an overview of my personal axiology and relationship with the research topic.

**Appendix 3a: Summary of SRPD scale survey results (CSRP)**

		Never true	Rarely true	Sometimes true	Often true	Always true	N	Mean
<b>1</b>	I try to buy from companies that help the needy.	11	44	98	52	10	215	<b>3.03</b>
<b>2</b>	I try to buy from companies that hire people with disabilities.	13	44	94	41	15	207	<b>3.00</b>
<b>3</b>	I avoid buying products or services from companies that discriminate against minorities.	13	41	58	59	30	201	<b>3.26</b>
<b>4</b>	When given a chance to switch to a retailer that supports local schools, I take it.	24	44	76	43	20	207	<b>2.96</b>
<b>5</b>	I try to buy from companies that make donations to medical research.	21	56	67	38	20	202	<b>2.90</b>
<b>6</b>	I make an effort to buy from companies that sponsor food drives (charitable donations of food for food banks).	19	52	81	42	16	210	<b>2.92</b>
<b>7</b>	When given a chance to switch to a brand that gives back to the community, I take it.	18	41	77	55	20	211	<b>3.09</b>
<b>8</b>	I avoid buying products made using child labour.	10	21	55	64	56	206	<b>3.66</b>
<b>9</b>	When given a chance, I switch to brands where a portion of the price is donated to charity.	15	40	89	48	19	211	<b>3.08</b>
<b>10</b>	I avoid buying products or services from companies that discriminate against women.	16	41	53	45	39	194	<b>3.26</b>
<b>11</b>	When I am shopping, I try to buy from companies that are working to improve conditions for employees in their factories.	11	38	77	55	23	204	<b>3.20</b>
<b>12</b>	I try to buy from companies that support victims of natural disasters.	16	46	73	48	20	203	<b>3.05</b>
<b>13</b>	I make an effort to buy products and services from companies that pay all of their employees a living wage.	13	36	71	47	38	205	<b>3.30</b>
<b>Average</b>								<b>3.10</b>

**Appendix 3b: Summary of SRPD scale survey results (ENVIRON)**

		Never true	Rarely true	Sometimes true	Often true	Always true	N	Mean
1	I avoid buying from companies that harm endangered plants or animals.	13	32	47	52	35	179	3.36
2	Whenever possible, I walk, ride a bike, car pool, or use public transportation to help reduce air pollution.	14	41	46	53	41	195	3.34
3	I avoid using products that pollute the air.	11	28	67	54	30	190	3.34
4	I avoid buying products that pollute the water.	12	24	63	52	35	186	3.40
5	I make an effort to avoid products or services that cause environmental damage.	9	26	57	59	37	188	3.47
6	I avoid buying products that are made from endangered animals.	11	18	29	41	93	192	3.97
7	I limit my use of energy such as electricity or natural gas to reduce my impact on the environment.	11	18	51	62	52	194	3.65
<b>Average</b>								<b>3.50</b>

**Appendix 3c: Summary of SRPD scale survey results (RECYCLE)**

		Never true	Rarely true	Sometimes true	Often true	Always true	N	Mean
1	I recycle plastic containers	2	5	17	33	139	196	4.54
2	I recycle magazines	6	3	20	23	144	196	4.51
3	I recycle aluminium cans	3	2	15	32	143	195	4.59
4	I recycle steel/tin cans	4	5	16	30	139	194	4.52
5	I recycle paper	6	4	14	25	147	196	4.55
6	I recycle cardboard	4	6	16	24	146	196	4.54
<b>Average</b>								<b>4.54</b>

These data tables provide mean scores of our samples responses for the various ethical consumption intentions. The tables clearly illustrate the average score for each of the three ethical consumption constructs( CSR, ENVIRON and RECYCLE).

**Appendix 4a: Summary of BSA scale survey results**

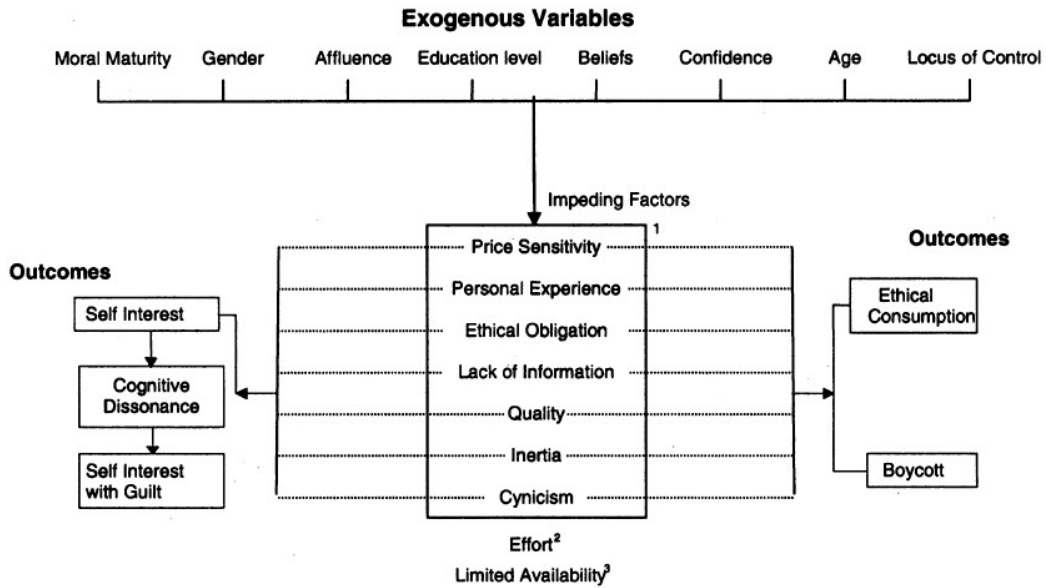
		Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	N	Mean
<b>1</b>	Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off.	56	78	39	31	14	218	<b>2.40</b>
<b>2</b>	Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers.	62	84	48	18	4	216	<b>2.16</b>
<b>3</b>	Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth.	66	87	44	17	4	218	<b>2.11</b>
<b>4</b>	There is one law for the rich and one for the poor.	85	66	38	20	10	219	<b>2.11</b>
<b>5</b>	Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance.	42	95	44	27	8	216	<b>2.37</b>
<b>6</b>	Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values.	44	83	62	20	9	218	<b>2.39</b>
<b>7</b>	People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences.	76	76	54	10	3	219	<b>2.03</b>
<b>8</b>	For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence.	71	41	35	31	37	215	<b>2.64</b>
<b>9</b>	Schools should teach children to obey authority.	61	91	51	11	4	218	<b>2.11</b>
<b>10</b>	The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong.	15	75	66	46	11	213	<b>2.83</b>
<b>11</b>	Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards.	24	79	59	29	24	215	<b>2.77</b>



**Appendix 4b: Summary of Buckle (2013) Left/Right policy preference survey results**

		Completely disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely agree	N	Mean
<b>1</b>	The overall level of taxation in the UK is too high.	6	29	47	65	45	192	<b>3.59</b>
<b>2</b>	Britain is too unequal; this should be rectified even if it were to hurt the economy.	8	27	58	57	40	190	<b>3.49</b>
<b>3</b>	When the economy is in recession, the government should increase spending as a stimulus mechanism, even if this raises debt.	9	34	52	52	25	172	<b>3.29</b>
<b>4</b>	When the economy is coming out of recession, the government should cut spending, even if this means hardship for some.	15	39	56	57	11	178	<b>3.06</b>
<b>5</b>	Reducing the deficit should be the number one priority for the current government.	6	36	48	65	25	180	<b>3.37</b>
<b>6</b>	Far more resources should be spent protecting the environment and making sure we live in an environmentally sustainable way.	3	11	54	82	39	189	<b>3.76</b>
<b>7</b>	In today's world of equal rights, feminist concerns are increasingly irrelevant.	15	48	58	43	26	190	<b>3.09</b>
<b>8</b>	Immigration into the UK is too high and needs to be reduced.	7	18	41	48	77	191	<b>3.89</b>
<b>9</b>	In general, the government is too big; we should aim for a smaller state sector and a larger private one.	6	26	57	51	38	178	<b>3.50</b>
<b>10</b>	All peoples should rule themselves; they should not be subject to rule by a foreign power—either directly or through foreign backed dictators.	8	21	57	52	48	186	<b>3.60</b>
<b>11</b>	Large corporations are dangerous because they have far too much power and influence.	1	17	50	64	59	191	<b>3.85</b>

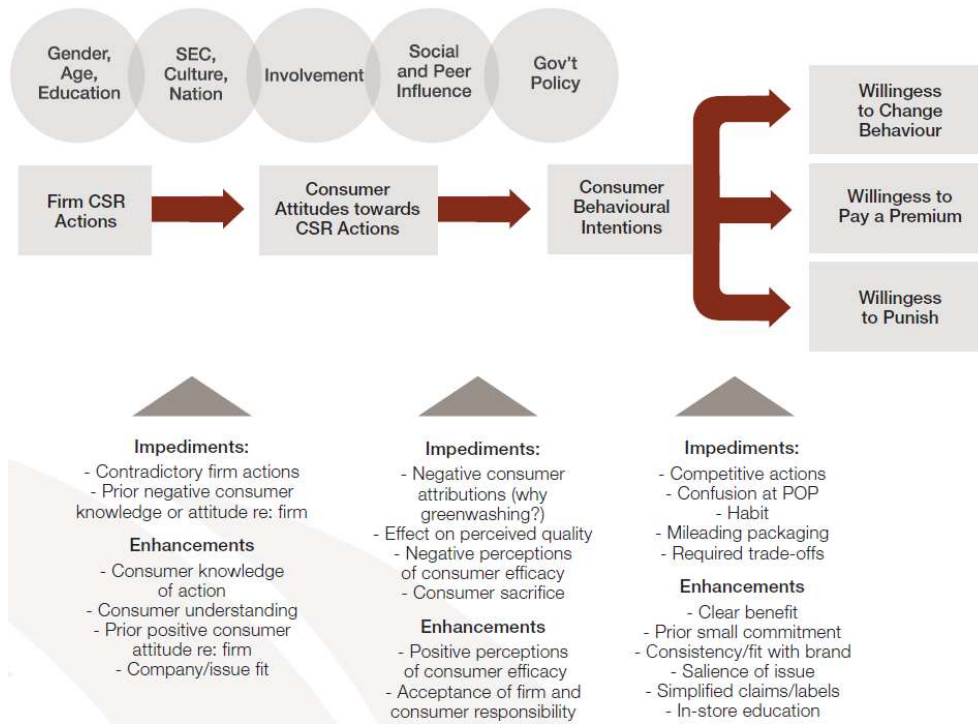
Appendix 5a – Model of factors impeding ethical consumption



- 1 Factors identified in the present study
- 2 Identified by Carrigan and Attalla (2001) but not found in the present study
- 3 Identified by Nicholls and Lee (2006) but not found in the present study

(Bray, Johns & Kilburn 2011)

Appendix 5b – A model of socially conscious consumerism



(Cotte, Trudel 2009)