

## **Measuring Responsible Consumption Behavior for Spanish Consumers**

### **ABSTRACT**

The Hispanic population reached 650 million in 2014 and it's expected to grow up to 815 million in 2050 (Population Reference Bureau, 2014). Spanish is the language with more speakers only surpassed by Chinese and followed by English (Simons & Fennig, 2017). It is important that we as global marketers understand their consumption and disposal behavior. Companies around the world need more suitable scales to assess Hispanic responsible consumption patterns in order to create better social and environmental campaigns. This research propose a new scale developed for Spanish spoken consumers. We conducted interviews in Mexico and some other Spanish spoken countries. Our new scale is well understood in diverse Latin American countries and measures in a more accurate way how sustainable is the consumption of Hispanics. For reliability of the instrument, we tested internal and external validity of the new scale.

**Keywords:** Responsible consumer behavior, Sustainable consumption, Hispanic market, Hispanic measures.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In a world full of economic crisis, environmental problems and society movements there is no doubt that many individuals are expecting that private companies get involved to solve these unfortunate situations (Smith, 2008). According to the Global CSR study (Cone Communications & Ebiquity, 2015) many consumers care about corporate responsibility and this interest influence their purchase and consumption behaviors. Furthermore, there is a growing concern among consumers for the environment, the ethical impact of their purchases and the consequences of their everyday actions in the community. There have been multiple efforts to develop a scale that accurately measures the intention of consumers for behaving responsibly (Boulstridge and Carrigan, 2000; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Carrington, Neville and Whitwell, 2010; Chao and Lam, 2011; Dawkins, 2004; Devinney, Auger, Eckhardt and Birtchnell, 2006; Ertz, 2016; Taufique, Siwar, Talib, and Chamhuri, 2014; Valor, 2008). However all of these scale proposals are intended for the English speaking market. The need for a scale for Hispanic and Spanish spoken consumers is evident since there are more than 650 million inhabitants in more than 20 countries where Spanish is the native language (Population Reference Bureau, 2014).

A Spanish scale becomes important, since it has been demonstrated that sustainable consumption pattern is impacted considerably by geography and demographics (WBCSDS, 2011). Consumption behavior varies across cultures and cannot be captured with the existing English scales for sustainable consumption. The Global Socially-responsible consumer report conducted by Nielsen (2012) found important regional differences with consumers in Latin-American, with the rest of the world.

The main objective of this paper is to create a scale that best measures and profiles socially responsible consumer behavior and attitudes of Spanish spoken consumers. We started from the most frequently used English scales in the world to construct one more suitable for the Hispanic socio-cultural context (Harkness, Villar and Edwards, 2010).

In this paper we first reviewed existent measures of consumer responsible behavior. We explain the methodology to create our proposed scale and provide with statistical measures to prove its internal and external validity. A general discussion is the final part of the paper to provide analysis on the perceptions of the proposed scale and the adjustments needed to make it more suitable for the Hispanic consumers, as well as the limitations we found while conducting the research.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### ***The consumer responsible behavior and its measures***

Consumers today express concerns about their consumption impact on the community and the environment. Consumers are asking themselves about what and how they buy, use, and discard products (Kotler, 2011). Reality shows consumers wanting to make better choices for themselves, their families and the world in general due to a perceived moral responsibility to take part in solving current problems (Gilg, Barr and Ford, 2005).

Responsible consumers take into consideration their public consequences for the society (Webster, 1975), and the environment (Antil, 1984) of their private consumption. Antil (1984) developed one of the first scales (i.e. the Socially Responsible Consumption Behavior scale or SRCB) on this topic. The SRCB has been widely used by many other researchers to get a better comprehension of responsible consumers. Mohr, Webb and Harris (2001) defined a socially responsible consumer as the person who base his acquisition, usage and disposition of products on the desire to eliminate or at least minimize any harmful effect while maximizing the long-run impact on society. Based on their definition they develop the Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD) scale (Webb, Mohr and Harris (2007) in line with the holistic perspective of the mindful consumer defined by Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas (2011).

For this study, we used Webb, Mohr and Harris' scale as a starting point because it acknowledges the full cycle of the consumer behavior, which is the purchase, usage and disposal of products while expressing concern about the protection of both social and ecological resources. Our proposed scale also consider the consumer attitude and literacy about corporate social responsibility by including questions regarding the way they seek for information about socially responsible companies, products and brands.

Several previous scales focus explicitly in the narrower environmental domain and try to measure the ecological behavior (Barnes & Montgomery, 1995; Kaiser, 1998; Haws, Winterich, & Naylor, 2010; Cleveland, Kalamas, and Laroche, 2012; Lee, Jan, and Yang, 2013), lowering consumption level (Leonard-Barton, 1981; Cowles & Crosby, 1986; Roubanis, 2008), or the welfare of the community (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Haws, 2011; Quazi, Amran, and Nejati, 2016). The SRPD scale eliminates the heavy weight that existing scales give to the environmental dimension to include the societal dimension. That is the second reason why we chose this scale. Additionally, the SRPD is influencing theory and practice thru its four dimensions in responsible consumers' behavior: 1) Purchases based on firms' CSR performance; 2) Consumer recycling habitus; 3) Tradeoffs between traditional and responsible purchasing criteria; and 4) Avoidance and reduction in consuming products that have a negative environmental and social impact. Pieters (1991) arguments that research on sustainable consumption should address the full consumption cycle of products, that is, initial choice, usage, life extension and disposal.

## **METHODOLOGY**

First, surveys with the original SRPD scale were administered to 23 adults in the North of Mexico to assess how Spanish spoken consumers perceive the scale. How well understood were each one of the items. The purpose was to identify those actions that were not adequate to the Spanish market and cultural context. Then the English original scale was translated by a professional translator who also has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Marketing. The Spanish version of the scale was back translated to English by a second professional translator who had no access to the original scale to assure that the scale suffer no distortion in the translation process (Harkness, Villar and Edwards, 2010). Small divergences were evaluated by the authors and two other pair judges to reach the final version to be tested in the pilot study.

For the pilot study, twenty three questionnaires were administered by internet using Qualtrix in Mexico and other Latin American Countries. Results showed some wording issues and some terms were defined in a way that made more sense to Hispanic consumers (e.g., food drives > *campañas de comida* > *campañas de donación de alimentos*). We eliminated items that were not present in the Hispanics consumers' behavior and included some other concerning behaviors and attitudes that were not present in the original SRPD scale or any other English scale mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, new items were added to assess consumer attitude and literacy about corporate social responsibility, derived from frequent comments of consumers who claim that they were not aware of the sustainable actions of the companies nor their motivations. We included several questions regarding the way they seek for information about socially responsible companies, products and brands.

The new questionnaire was send to adult consumers in Mexico, five Latin American countries and Spain. A total of 351 questionnaires were received, of those only 260 questionnaires were fully answered and used for validating the instrument. 10 % of the questionnaires came from Central America and Spain and the rest from Mexico.

Given that Social Responsible Consumption is a complex construct evaluation of the scale was conducted following the paradigm for multi-item scale construction proposed by Peterson (2000) using a theoretical background of the construct to be measured. Reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's alpha in order to evaluate the internal consistency, i.e. the homogeneity of items within the scale (DeVellis, 2012). The steps followed to evaluate the scale are presented in the next section of the paper.

## RESULTS

Although the back translation process confirmed that the scale did not lose any meaning during the adaptation of the scale for Hispanics and because of the new added items, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed using AMOS for validity purposes. The objective was to confirm the content and meaning of the variables. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) identified the items that performed better (DeVellis, 2012). Considering results obtained from the validation process a reliable and statistically valid scale for Hispanic consumers was developed. Final model is in Appendix 1.

### Internal construct validity

Using the scree test and oblique rotation, 4 factors were identified as with the original scale. The Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant at the < ,001 level and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure (KMO) of sampling adequacy was high at .851 (Hair et al., 1995; DeVellis, 2012). Both tests indicate that factor analysis was appropriate for use with this data set. All items

in the scale were subjected to an EFA resulting in a very good fitting model. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was ,096 falling within the acceptable range from ,05 to ,10.

**Table 1. Hispanic SRPD scale validity measures**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>Explained Variance</b>
<b>Individual responsibility (RESP)</b>	<b>,898</b>	<b>0,882</b>	<b>23,72 %</b>
<b>Recycling behavior (REC)</b>	<b>,849</b>	<b>0,582</b>	<b>8,59 %</b>
<b>Traditional purchase criteria (TRAD)</b>	<b>,843</b>	<b>0,697</b>	<b>7,00 %</b>
<b>Ecological behavior (ECOL)</b>	<b>,844</b>	<b>1,8038</b>	<b>5,66 %</b>

Table 1 shows the four factors confirmed by factor analysis which explained 45% of the variance. The four new factors are the same found by Webb et al (2207).

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, construct reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). All four factors met or exceeded accepted standards for Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally, 1979; Hair et al., 1995). The AVE provides an assessment of the amount of variance captured by the measurement of the construct relative to random measurement error. An AVE of ,50 or higher indicates high internal consistency.

We added some items reflecting the consumers' involvement with CSR activities and only three of them remained in the final model: 1) I look for information about environmental impact, 2) I read labels to find out if the product' company have environmental campaigns, and 3) When I go to the supermarket I Take with me my reusable bag.

#### **External Construct Validity**

The RMSEA obtained for the model was ,096; GFI = ,758; AGFI = ,715; and  $X^2 = 1160,917$ . AVEAs and construct validity test (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) supported the unidimensionality and internal consistency of each factor. These results indicate that the scale is reliable and valid.

## **DISCUSSION**

Faced with the new challenge from socially or environmentally concerned consumers, the business world is adopting the societal dimensions of marketing in an active manner (Laroche, Toffoli, Kim and Muller, 1996). The problem faced is that all scales developed for these purposes are in English. Our new Spanish scale represents a better tool for measuring responsible behavior in Hispanic countries. Our research provide evidence of the differences among Hispanic versus

American and European consumers. Most of the studies we assessed in our literature review were carried on United States, Europe or Canada, so results from those studies on socially conscious consumption behavior are prone to a cultural bias. As Ahmed, DeCamprieux and Hope (1981) posit, there is evidence that knowledge of environmental issues, attitudes toward the environment, and environmentally-friendly behavior varies across cultures. Therefore scales that intend to measure responsible behaviors must take into account cultural traits and include psychological variables, such as consumers' environmental concern, perceived consumer effectiveness and environmental knowledge (Albayrak, Caber, Moutinho and Herstein, 2011).

We found that some items of the original scale do not quite fit Hispanic consumers. This may be based in the cognitive and behavioral obstacles Hispanic consumers face when trying to behave in a socially responsible consumer way (Valor, 2008). Consumers can buy responsible if they have enough information about corporate impact on social and environmental welfare. However, even at the initial stages of our research, consumers reported having difficulties in finding this information (Valor, 2008). Even if consumers are motivated to buy responsibly, they do not have access and certainly do not make an additional effort to review companies or brand responsible background. Furthermore, consumers must have the skills and resources to act responsible (Montgomery and Stone, 2009). Assuming that consumers have overcome cognitive obstacles, they may not be able to buy responsible or to recycle if they cannot find good companies to do so (Valor, 2008) or recycling centers and collection programs near their homes (Jackson, Olsen, Granzin and Burns, 1993). As Montgomery and Stone (2009) state poorer countries lack the government based resources to implement the sort of environmental standards enjoyed by most Americans, which could explain the differences found when measuring social responsible behavior in Hispanic countries.

### **LIMITATIONS**

While invitations to answer the questionnaire were sent via email to individuals in different Hispanic countries, most of the participants in our study were Mexicans, therefore we do not have enough data to test differences among participants of different countries.

At the first stage of our research, we used the scale as it was originally designed by the authors, and did not measure if participants have the knowledge, skills and tools required to become socially responsible consumers. From some comments we learned that participants lack the knowledge about some specific actions, for example, it is difficult to know if a company hires child labor or not, therefore the answers provided in many cases were based in intentions and not in real actions (Chao and Lam, 2011).

### **CONCLUSIONS**

While some useful findings have resulted from research on socially conscious consumer behavior, a holistic view is needed to understand the complex topic of consumer behavior. To make it even more complex, it seems that country-specific market structures, cultural traits and other path dependencies might matter for individual consumption decisions; future analysis might include a cross-cultural review to assess such differences and shed light in how social responsible behavior varies across cultures.

The original scale selected although used by several researchers in prior works, needs more than a language adaptation to be successfully used with Hispanic consumers who have a different understanding of the items and who, due to contextual factors lack the knowledge and information to answer accurately the original survey. Five items of the original scale were

removed due to such limitations, but the findings provide ground to engage into a second stage to assess how contextual factors moderate social responsible behaviors. Even though our results are slightly different from the ones obtained by Webb, Mohr and Harris (2007), we believe the research exercise has been useful in adding insight into what means to be a socially responsible consumer in Mexico and other Hispanic countries. Our adapted version proved to measure responsible consumer behavior among Hispanics as well as the original did with English spoken consumers.

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## Appendix 1. Final model

