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Moderating Factors on the Impact of B Corporation Certification on Purchase Intention, Willingness to Pay a Price Premium and Consumer Trust

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Abstract – This study determines the impact of B Corp certification on consumers' attitudes, consumers' purchasing intention, and consumers' willingness to pay price premium and investigates the moderating effect of demographics and psychographics on these relationships. A convenient sample of 133 Americans participated. Respondents were exposed to pictures of a product with and without the B Corp logo and meaning. Repeated measures on a single sample research method is applied. Findings indicate a significant overall effect of the certification with description on purchase intentions, willingness to pay a price premium and trust. Additionally, there is a significant moderating effect of consumer demographics on the relationship between certification and consumers' purchase intentions, willingness to pay a price premium, and consumer trust. Results also suggest demographics moderate the impact of certification on purchase intention and consumer trust to a greater degree than on consumer willingness to pay price premium.

Keywords - sustainability certification, B corp, sustainability consumer behaviors, segmentation

Introduction

As consumers become more aware of the social and environmental issues facing our world, they are increasingly interested in purchasing products and services from companies seeking to provide a positive environmental and/or social impact. A 2015 Nielsen study revealed sales of sustainable products and services grew more than four percent globally, while products and services from companies without a commitment to sustainability only grew by about one percent (www.nielsen.com).

Current research indicates consumers are increasingly buying these products and are also willing to pay a premium for sustainable products and services. In 2014, Nielsen found fifty-five percent of global consumers were willing to pay more for products and services if they knew the company engaged in sustainable business practices. Nielsen expanded this study in 2015 and found 66 percent of global consumers are willing to pay more for these sustainable products and services (www.nielsen.com). It is clear there is a growing market for sustainability, but who comprises this potential market? While the research presented here validates previous research demonstrating the positive impact of a sustainability certification on consumer feelings and behavioral intentions (i.e., trust, willingness to pay a price premium, and purchase intentions); it goes a step further by identifying moderating demographic and psychographic factors on these relationships. In particular, our research question is which/how do consumer demographic characteristics moderate the relationship between B Corp certification and purchase intention, willingness to pay price premium, and customer trust? These findings will assist sustainability marketers in efforts to identify these market segments in the population.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a means through which companies give back to their communities. CSR activities can help connect conscientious consumers with like-minded companies by raising consumer awareness of a company's positive impact on society. Sustainability certification is a subset of CSR. Companies seeking a particular certification go through an extensive verification process monitored by a third-party organization to obtain it, and in return, gain the rights to use a special label on their products.

There are many popular sustainability certifications available that certify multiple products, services, and industries, such as Green Plus, ENERGY STAR, WaterSense, Green Seal, Certified Organic, and Fair Trade Certified. Even more certifications are designed for single product lines, service sector, or industry. The B Corp certification is used in this study. The B Corp certification is a comprehensive, third-party, sustainable business certification offered by B Lab, a global, nonprofit organization headquartered in Southeastern Pennsylvania (www.bcorporation.net). The organization and its certification requirements were established in 2006, but did not certify its first organization until 2007, with the King Arthur Flour family becoming the first company to utilize the B Corp insignia on its packaging. This certification is less known than many of the popular certifications mentioned above.

The B Corp Agreement is a certification of two years requiring companies to recertify and continually meet the performance requirements. The certification has an annual fee structure based on a tiered system of company financial strength. This enables global and domestic partnerships from sole proprietors to over 250+ employees. To obtain a B Corp certification, companies must complete and score 80 or higher on a 200-plus-question assessment of their business practices in the governance, worker, community, environment, and social impact areas. Once a score of 80 is achieved, companies complete a thorough review of their assessment with a member of the B Lab team, sign a term sheet, meet a legal requirement depending on the company's location of incorporation, and assess the annual fee.

In 2008, B Corp had 125 sustainable companies, compared to 1,800 sustainable companies globally in 2017. Some B Corp companies include Method, Seventh Generation, Patagonia, and Ben and Jerry's. There are no restrictions regarding the types of companies that can be certified. B Lab certifies manufacturing companies, retail stores, consumer products, law firms, and marketing firms.

When certified, companies gain access to numerous resources, including the rights to use the 'Certified B Corp' logo on marketing materials and packaging. Each company makes different uses of the logos and information provided to them by B Lab. For example, Method does not use the logo on its products but does include a section on its website, devoted to explaining its certification and the B Corp movement. Badger, on the other hand, uses the logo frequently, designing retail displays that further explain the B Corp movement to customers in stores carrying the company's products. B Lab touts several benefits but it is unknown if the certification impacts consumer behavior.

Literature review and hypotheses development

Sustainability certifications and consumer behaviors

Research on the potential benefits of third-party sustainability certification is limited and the findings are conflicting. For example, recent studies show consumer purchase intention and willingness to pay a price premium are higher for sustainably certified products than for products without any certification (de Andrade Silva et al., 2017; Harris, 2007; Sparks et al., 2013; Terlaak and King, 2006; Vecchio and Annunziata, 2015). This is especially the case in younger consumers who are moving into prime spending years. Other researchers have concluded that while sustainable product attitudes are favorable, purchase intentions and actual purchases do not follow (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006).

Consumer trust in sustainability certifications is less researched. Earlier research found consumers perceived "greenwashing" from most claims and therefore do not trust these types of claims (Kangun et al., 1991). Credibility in the claim has been found to have a significant effect on consumer trust; however, consumers seem skeptical of the credibility of sustainability claims as a whole (Crane, 2000; Hulme, 2010; Marin-Burgos et al., 2015). For instance, previous research suggests Chinese consumers have low levels of trust in organic certification (Yin et al., 2016). Other researchers conclude certification trust can be increased, but only in the case of low-involvement product categories (Atkinson and Rosenthal, 2014).

Research suggests that extensive communication of sustainable practices will lead to enhanced identification with a sustainable brand, favorable attitudes, increased trust, and purchase intentions. Thus, a certification label alone may not be enough (Maignan and Ferrell, 2004). Consumers may not necessarily trust certification labels on products (Marin-Burgos et al., 2015) and may need additional explanation on the standards for various labels as they are very different. Some companies may strive to obtain more rigorous certifications, while others choose the most cost effective option purely for the perceived marketing benefits (Raynolds et al., 2007; Vertinsky and Zhou, 2000). Trust in certification overlaps with trust in company and more research is needed to determine the best practices for marketing certifications to consumers. Therefore, the procedure for this research includes presenting respondents with a description of the B Corp certification, and not just the logo. Although past research illustrates some inconsistencies regarding certifications' impact on willingness to pay a price premium, purchase intention, and trust, findings generally indicate a positive impact when combined with communication. Thus, we present the following:

H1: B Corp certification will have a positive impact on purchase intention, willingness to pay price premium, and consumer trust in the company.

Demographic Variables and Sustainability Behaviors

While many consumers have favorable attitudes toward sustainable products and practices, there is limited evidence these attitudes result in consistent consumer behaviors (D'Souza et al., 2007; Royne et al., 2016). This gap between attitudes, intentions, and actual behavior has been long discussed in the literature (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006). Marketing communication efforts along demographic and psychographic lines is necessary to close the gap. Knowing consumers is essential to successful sustainability marketing communications efforts as there is growth in the importance of environmentalism and increased competition for the sustainable consumer (do Paco et al., 2009). Effective communication strategies begin with effective segmentation of the market. Rylander and Allen (2001) have examined both demographic and psychographic factors affecting consumer attitudes toward environmental issues. Wang (2014) states the need for integrated understanding of how both demographic and psychographic factors affect sustainable purchase intention. This research examines several moderating variables in order to develop a sustainable consumer profile. Specifically, the variables are generational cohort, gender, ethnicity, education, environmental concern, and political leaning.

There is a long stream of research investigating age and sustainable/environmental behaviors, however the findings are inconsistent. Some studies suggest no correlation at all (Anderson and Hansen, 2004; Kinnear et al., 1974; Loureiro et al., 2002; Meyer and Liebe, 2010), others suggest a negative relationship (Anderson et al., 1974; Chan, 1996; Van Liere and Dunlap, 1981; Zimmer et al., 1994), while others suggest the relationship is positive in nature (Roberts, 1996; Royne et al., 2016; Samdahl and Robertson, 1989; Straughn and Roberts, 1999). Further, because the Millennial Generation (i.e., those born between the mid-1980s through early 2000s) continues to attract marketing attention due to its size and market opportunity (McKayn, 2010), a generational analysis of sustainable attitudes and intentions is necessary. This generation is said to differ from previous generations in many ways and therefore research has begun to examine this generation and their attitudes toward sustainability and sustainable products (Lu et al., 2013). Some findings suggest the millennial generation is more concerned about a sustainable environment than other generations (Coddington, 1993; Tulgan and Martin, 2001) and has higher impact on influencing others' sustainable behaviors (Lee, 2011). Thus it is expected that:

H2: Generation type will moderate the impact of the B Corp certification on purchase intention, willingness to pay price premium, and customer trust. In particular the impact will be higher for Millennials than for the rest of the generations.

Results regarding the impact of gender on sustainable consumer behaviors are also inconclusive, however there is strong evidence for greater female engagement. Women have greater concern for environmental issues, and engage in sustainable behaviors more than men (Anderson and Hansen, 2004; Furlow and Knott, 2009; Laroche et al., 2001; Loureiro et al., 2002; Mainieri et al., 1997; Pomarici and Vecchio, 2014; Straughan and Roberts, 1999). Therefore we expect:

H3: The impact of the B Corp certification on purchase intention, willingness to pay price premium, and customer trust will be higher for female than male consumers.

Research on the impact of ethnicity and sustainable consumer behaviors is relatively scant. There is evidence Hispanics and African Americans have lower levels of sustainable engagement than other ethnic groups (Royne et al., 2016). Since much is unknown about ethnicity and sustainable attitudes and intentions, we posit:

H4: The impact of the B Corp certification on purchase intention, willingness to pay price premium, and customer trust will be higher for white respondents than nonwhite consumers.

Most of the previous literature suggests a positive relationship between levels of education and sustainability attitudes (Anderson et al., 1974; Roberts, 1996; Van Liere and Dunlap, 1981; and Zimmer et al., 1994) and behaviors (Chan, 1996; do Paco et al., 2009; Roberts, 1996; and Straughan and Roberts, 1999). Only one study found nonsignificant differences among educational levels and sustainable behaviors, (Laroche et al., 2001), Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: Education level will positively moderate the impact of the B Corp certification on purchase intention, willingness to pay price premium, and consumer trust.

Environmental concern means ‘perceiving environmental problems as serious, supporting efforts by government to protect environmental quality’ and ‘engaging in behaviors aimed at improving environmental quality’ (Liere and Dunlap, 1980: p. 188). Previous research illustrates environmental concern is related to specific sustainable consumer behaviors. Specifically, consumer concern for waste was found to be related to recycling behaviors (Royne et al., 2016). These behaviors were further impacted by demographics (e.g., gender) (Royne et al., 2016). Thus, we hypothesize:

H6: *The level of environmental concern will positively moderate the impact of the B Corp certification on purchase intention, willingness to pay price premium, and consumer trust.*

In the US, conservatives tend to favor business and economic growth over the environment, whereas liberals usually support environmental protection (McCright and Dunlap, 2010). Liberal consumers are more inclined to read environmental literature, recycle at home, join environmental groups, and participation in outdoor activities (Johnson et al., 2004). Also they are more likely to invest in energy efficient initiatives (Gromet et al., 2013). Additionally, consumers who are more liberal tend to buy organic food regularly (Bellows et al., 2008). Thus, we posit:

H7: *The impact of the B Corp certification on purchase intention, willingness to pay price premium, and consumer trust will be higher for consumers who are moderate or somewhat liberal than for consumers who are conservative.*

Research method

To test the hypotheses of this study, a survey was developed in Google Forms. The survey was distributed over a two week period to a group of respondents using social media and personal contacts of the researchers. All respondents were from the Pennsylvania area of the United States as the B-corp certification was developed in the area. Convenience snowball sampling was used (Kotler et al. 2002). Data was collected in the spring of 2016. The survey encouraged respondents to imagine themselves shopping in the freezer section of a grocery store. They were then presented with the following two conditions: (i) an image of a Ben and Jerry’s pint of Cake Batter ice cream and (ii) the same image of the Ben and Jerry’s pint with a B Corporation Certification logo and an explanation of what the logo means.

The first condition, the plain image of the Ben and Jerry’s pint, was designed as a control.

The second condition was designed to measure the effectiveness of a certification logo in changing consumer purchase intention, willingness to pay a price premium, and trust in the brand.

After respondents were exposed to the conditions, they were prompted to answer a series of questions designed to measure their intent to purchase the product, their willingness to pay a price premium, and trust in the brand (all scaled items can be found in Appendix A). Respondents answered these ten questions each time they were exposed to one of the two conditions.

Purchase intention was measured using four questions slightly adapted from a purchase intention scale used by Schreier et al. (2012). The first two questions were five-point Likert scale questions asking respondents to rate the degree to which they agree that (i) they would seriously consider purchasing products from the company and (ii) actively search for the company when shopping. The remaining two questions were five-point semantic differential scale questions asking respondents to (i) indicate their likeliness and (ii) probability of purchasing products from the company.

Willingness to pay a price premium was measured using three questions slightly adapted from a scale by Folse et al. (2012). The questions used were five-point Likert scale questions that asked respondents to rate the degree to which they agree that (i) the price of the product would have to go up before they would switch to another brand of ice cream, (ii) they are willing to pay a higher price for this brand of ice cream than other brands of ice cream, and (iii) they are willing to pay 10% more for this brand of ice cream than other brands.

Consumer trust was measured using three five-point Likert scale questions slightly adapted from a trust scale by White et al. (2012). The questions asked respondents their level of agreement with statements regarding whether (i) they can depend, (ii) rely, and (iii) are confident the company is truthful about its products.

Once respondents were exposed to the two conditions and answered the questions for each condition, they answered simple demographics questions as well as two scaled questions indicating their political leanings and the extent to which they were concerned about the environment.

Results

Participants

Data from 133 participants was collected to examine the relationship between demographic factors of the individuals, their political leanings and environmental concern on purchase intention, price premium and consumer trust. Respondents consisted of 90.2% female and 9.8 % male. Most the respondents (59.1%) were 30 years old or younger, while 42.4% of the respondents were students and 38.6% were employed full time. In terms of education level, the entire sample obtained at least a high student degree, with 39.1% of respondents having completed some college, and 25% - Bachelor's Degree. The responses to the scaled questions at the end of the demographics section indicated, on average, respondents were concerned about the environment (mean score: 4.10), and had moderate to somewhat liberal political leanings (mean score: 3.43). Table 1 provides a sample description in terms of the demographics and Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics of the scales.

Table 1. Demographics of the sample

Gender	Percentage
Male	9.8%
Female	90.2%
Level of Education	
High School Diploma or Equivalent	11.3%
Some College, No Degree	39.1%
Trade/Technical/Vocational Training	0.8%
Associate Degree	9.8%
Bachelor's Degree	25.6%
Master's Degree or Higher	13.5%
Race	
White	95.5%
Black or African American	1.5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2.3%
Other	0.8%
Age	
18 to 20 years old	22.7%
21 to 30 years old	36.4%
31 to 40 years old	8.3%
41 to 50 years old	9.1%
51 to 60 years old	18.9%
61 to 70 years old	3.8%
71 years old or older	0.8%

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation and Cronbach-alpha

Scale	Number of items	Mean	St. dev.	Cronbach alpha
Purchase Intention A	2	3.579	1.171	0.71
Price Premium A	3	2.842	1.283	0.89
Consumer Trust A	3	3.837	0.902	0.94
Purchase Intention B	2	3.827	1.002	0.82
Price Premium B	3	3.303	1.163	0.89
Consumer Trust B	3	4.155	0.852	0.96

Test of Hypotheses

Table 3 summarizes the results from hypotheses testing. The dependent variables in this study are all categorical/ordinal in nature. As the hypotheses relate to the change in customer responses before and after B Corp certification exposure, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was used to test the significance in the mean differences. This test was used because we had two repeated measures of the same sample. In addition, Wilcoxon Signed Rank test works well with small sample size (Ruther, 2009), which was our case when we were comparing some of the demographic factors.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test results for the change in purchase intention (PI), price premium (PP) and consumer trust (CT) for the two conditions ("A" = without the certification and "B" = with the certification)

Factor	N	PI(B) – PI(A)	PP(B) – PP(A)	CT(B) – CT(A)
All respondents	133	3.767***	6.559***	4.683***
Generation				
Generation Z	30	1.652	2.951**	1.698
Generation Y	59	2.964**	4.123***	3.820***
Generation X	12	1.186	1.628	1.316
Baby Boomers	30	3.372**	3.729***	1.971*
Gender				
Male	13	0.966	2.213*	1.786
Female	120	3.605***	6.194***	4.362***
Race				
White	127	3.585***	6.320***	4.635***
Other	6	1.300	1.841	1.000
Level of Education				
High School Diploma or Equivalent	15	1.186	2.547*	0.897
Some College, No Degree	52	1.385	3.965***	3.133**
Associate Degree	13	2.887**	3.051**	1.342
Bachelor or Higher Degree	52	2.958**	3.720***	3.346**
Environmental Concern				
Neutral	28	1.732	3.314**	1.817
Concerned	64	2.748**	4.477***	3.299**
Very concerned	41	1.867	3.631***	2.783**
Political Leaning				
Very conservative	3	1.414	1.000	1.342
Somewhat conservative	23	0.462	1.707	1.342
Moderate	41	2.018*	4.249***	2.613**
Somewhat liberal	46	3.289**	3.993***	2.647**
Very liberal	20	0.998	2.775**	2.373*

The mean scores increased for the B Corp condition where the logo along with an explanation is provided, indicating sustainability certification has a higher impact on consumers' purchase intention ($z = 3.767, p < 0.001$), willingness to pay a price premium ($z = 6.559, p < 0.001$), and consumer trust in the company ($z = 4.683, p < 0.001$). Thus our Hypothesis 1 is supported.

The positive impact of B Corp certification on purchase intention is significant for Baby Boomers ($z = 3.286, p < 0.001$) and Generation Y ($z = 2.964, p < 0.001$) and not significant for Generation X ($z = 1.186, p > 0.05$) and Generation Z ($z = 1.652, p > 0.05$). The positive impact of B Corp certification on price premium is significant for Baby Boomers ($z = 3.286, p < 0.001$), Generation Y ($z = 4.123, p < 0.000$), and Generation Z ($z = 2.951, p < 0.001$) and not significant for Generation X ($z = 1.628, p > 0.05$). The positive impact of B Corp certification on consumer trust is significant for Baby Boomers ($z = 1.971, p < 0.01$) and Generation Y ($z = 3.820, p < 0.000$) and not significant for Generation X ($z = 1.316, p > 0.05$) and Generation Z ($z = 1.698, p > 0.05$). Thus our Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 stated the effect of certification will be higher for female than for male consumers. The results show gender does moderate the certification impact, specifically for purchase intention ($z = 3.605, p < 0.001$ for females versus $z = 0.966, p > 0.05$ for males) and consumer trust ($z = 4.362, p < 0.001$ for females versus $z = 1.786, p > 0.05$ for males). We did not find evidence that gender moderates the impact of certification on price premium. Thus our Hypothesis 3 is partially supported.

Hypothesis 4 stated the effect of certification will be higher for white than for non-white consumers. The results show race does moderate the certification impact, specifically for purchase intention ($z = 3.585, p < 0.000$ for white consumers versus $z = 1.300, p > 0.05$ for non-white consumers), price premium ($z = 6.320, p < 0.000$ for white consumers versus $z = 1.841, p > 0.05$ for non-white consumers) and consumer trust ($z = 4.635, p < 0.000$ for white consumers versus $z = 1.000, p > 0.05$ for non-white consumers). Thus our Hypothesis 4 is supported.

The positive impact of B Corp certification on purchase intention is significant for consumers with an associate degree ($z = 2.887, p < 0.001$) and bachelor, masters or higher degree ($z = 2.958, p < 0.001$) and is not significant for consumers with some college or a high school diploma. The positive impact of B Corp certification on price premium is significant for all levels of educations. The positive impact of B Corp certification on consumer trust is significant for customers with some college ($z = 3.133, p < 0.001$) and bachelor, masters or higher degrees ($z = 3.346, p < 0.001$) and is not significant for customers with high school diploma. Thus our Hypothesis 5 is partially supported.

The positive impact of B Corp certification on purchase intention is significant for customers who are concerned about environment ($z = 2.748, p < 0.000$) and not significant for customers who are neutral or very concerned about environment. The positive impact of B Corp certification on price premium is significant for all levels of environmental concern. The positive impact of B Corp certification on consumer trust is significant for customers who are concerned ($z = 3.299, p < 0.001$) or very concerned ($z = 2.783, p < 0.001$) about environment and not significant for customers who are neutral. Thus our Hypothesis 6 is partially supported.

The positive impact of B Corp certification on purchase intention is significant for customers who are moderate ($z = 2.018, p < 0.05$) and somewhat liberal ($z = 3.289, p < 0.001$) and not significant for customers who are very and somewhat conservative, as well as for customers who are very liberal. The positive impact of B Corp certification on price premium is significant for customers who are moderate ($z = 4.249, p < 0.000$), somewhat liberal ($z = 3.993, p < 0.000$) and very liberal ($z = 2.775, p < 0.001$) and not significant for customers who are very and somewhat conservative. The positive impact of B Corp certification on consumer trust is significant for customers who are moderate ($z = 2.613, p < 0.001$), somewhat liberal ($z = 2.647, p < 0.001$) and very liberal ($z = 2.373, p < 0.05$) and not significant for customers who are very and somewhat conservative. Thus our Hypothesis 7 is partially supported.

Discussion

Our results indicate B Corp certification with an accompanying explanation does have a positive impact on consumers' purchasing intentions, willingness to pay a price premium, and consumer trust in general, however, this impact is different for different demographic, education, and political groups. The results suggest the group reporting the highest impact of B Corp certification are white females, Millennials (age 22-40) or Baby Boomers (age 53-71), with college or higher degree, who are concerned or very concerned about the environment, with moderate or liberal political leaning. On the contrary, the group that is least affected by the B Corp certification are non-white males, Generation X (age 41-52), with high school diploma only, who are neutral towards environment, and have conservative political leaning.

Although some of our hypotheses have been already tested in the prior literature, this is the first study, to the best of our knowledge, which creates a profile of the "sustainable consumer". In addition, we find some differences from prior research. For example, our results indicate not only the Millennials as suggested by Coddington (1993) and Tulgan and Martin (2001), but also the Baby Boomers generation value B Corp certification, specifically regarding purchase intention and consumer trust. However, with willingness to pay a price premium, we observe the impact of B Corp certification for all generations, except for Generation X. Similarly, the results for purchase intention and consumer trust are higher for females than for males, however, they are significant for both groups regarding price premium. Price premium is also significant for all levels of environmental concern, as opposed to purchase intention and consumer trust. These results suggest the demographic characteristics moderate the impact of certification on purchase intention and on consumer trust to a greater degree than the impact of certification on consumer willingness to pay price premium. This is an important observation, as it means a company needs not only to gain certification to have competitive advantage, but it has to keep the price competitive. In other words, price becomes an order qualifier, and the certification –an order winner in the sustainable market competition.

Contribution, Limitations and Future Research

The main finding of this study is that providing consumers with more information about a company's sustainability certification, such as what the label means or how the certification was obtained, can increase the consumer purchase intention, willingness to pay a price premium, and overall consumer trust in the company. For companies with these certifications, these results mean in order to maximize the financial benefits of having the certification, they cannot simply place a label on their products or website and expect consumers to understand what it means. They must elaborate on the certification. However, companies can choose to do this in a way that best matches their current branding strategy. For example, one company may include a section about the certification on the side of its product box, while another may create an in-store retail display about the certification.

Another finding of this study is consumer trust in the company directly affects consumers' purchase intention and willingness to pay a price premium for the company's products. This supports the idea that, by providing consumers with more information about the sustainability certification, companies can establish trust among consumers and reap the financial benefits of the increased purchase intention and willingness to pay a price premium.

One of the primary limitations of this study is it only provided one conditions for marketing sustainability certification (i.e., packaging). There are many ways in which companies can communicate information about their certification to consumers who are not captured in this study. In addition, while the results indicated there may be a point where the amount of information is too much and therefore becomes ineffective, future research with more conditions is necessary to determine that point. This research could help companies further determine how to best advertise their certification to achieve the maximum financial benefit. There were only six non-white and only 13 male respondents. Thus results for race and gender should be treated with caution. Another limitation is the convenience snowball sampling used in social media. However, in the last years this has become a common approach of data collection in marketing literature (Casler et al., 2013).

Another limitation of this study is only one product was used to gauge consumer purchase intention, willingness to pay a price premium, and consumer trust. The choice of product may impact the scores compared to an image of a body wash or cleaning product, because people, generally, have favorable attitudes toward ice cream. A future study should examine responses to the same scaled questions and conditions using a wider variety of products.

A final limitation of this study is it only examined B Corp certification. Future research needs to examine the impact of different certification labels to determine if there are differences in responses based on the label presented to respondents.

Conclusion

This research contributes to the consumer research domain by investigating the impact of B-corp certification on consumer behavior. The proliferation of sustainable certifications in food industry makes it difficult for consumers and companies to identify the value of the logo on the package. Findings of our research suggest consumers do value B-corp certification and are more willing to pay a higher price, however, more research is needed to confirm they are actually paying higher price.

Another contribution of our research is the effort to identify the demographics factors that moderate the relationship between sustainable certification and consumer attitudes. Even though some of the demographic characteristics have been already investigated in prior literature, we create a profile of the sustainable consumer. This has a significant practical contribution as well, as it will help companies better align their certification efforts with the targeted market segment. For example, if a specific product is marketed towards a younger white female population, then the B-corp certification will impact consumer behaviors and companies should invest in the certification. However, if the product is targeted towards nonwhite older male population, the certification has no impact. So, knowing the customers and their values are critical factors in the decision to invest in sustainable certifications.

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Appendix A. Scaled Items

Purchase Intention

1. I would seriously consider purchasing products from this company. 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree, 5 - strongly agree
2. I would actively search for this company. 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree, 5 - strongly agree
3. To me, purchasing a product from this company is: 1 - very unlikely, 2 - unlikely, 3 - neutral, 4 - likely, 5 - very likely
4. To me, purchasing a product from this company is: 1 - very improbable, 2 - improbable, 3 - neutral, 4 - probable, 5 - very probable

Willingness to Pay a Price Premium

1. The price of this brand would have to go up quite a bit before I would switch to another brand of ice cream. 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree, 5 - strongly agree
2. I am willing to pay a higher price for this brand of ice cream than for other brands of ice cream. 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree, 5 - strongly agree
3. I am willing to pay 10% more for this brand over other brands of ice cream. 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree, 5 - strongly agree

Consumer Trust

1. I can depend on this company to be truthful about the products they offer. 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree, 5 - strongly agree
2. I can trust on this company to be truthful about the products they offer. 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree, 5 - strongly agree
3. I am confident that this company is honest about the products they offer. 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neutral, 4 - agree, 5 - strongly agree

Environmental concern

1. How concerned are you about the environment? 1 - very unconcerned, 2 - unconcerned, 3 - neutral, 4 - concerned, 5 - very concerned

Political Leaning

1. What is your political leaning? 1 - very conservative, 2 - somewhat conservative, 3 - moderate, 4 - somewhat liberal, 5 - very liberal

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