Why Good People Do Bad Things? The Effect of Ethical Ideology, Guilt Proneness, and Self-Control on Consumer Ethics

Abstract

Purpose - Various studies showed that unethical behaviours committed by consumers occur more frequently than may be expected. People have stolen from a shop at some time in their life and remained silent, people walk out of a grocery store have stolen something from the store and employees have stolen from their workplace. Why seemingly good people do bad things and vice versa? What factors contribute to this discrepancy? Hence, the purpose of the present study is threefold. First, we examine the impact of ethical ideology on self-control and guilt proneness. Second, we examine the roles of self-control and guilt proneness in consumer ethical decision making. Finally, we explore the mediating effects of self-control and guilt proneness on the relationship between consumer ideology and ethical decision making.

Design/ methodology/ approach - We collected a non-probability sample using a cross-sectional online survey of adult consumers across Australia wide. The sampling frame was from a pre-recruited online panel company Permissioncorp. Consumers were introduced to the study in relation to their beliefs in general consumer ethics behaviors. The response rate for the survey invite was 17.9%, with a final sample size of 311 consumers out of 3246 that were invited to participate based on the these screening criteria (i.e. their country of birth (Australia only), gender, age group, and state in which they reside to ensure representation across these groups).

Findings - The results showed that idealism was a positive determinant of guilt proneness and self-control, whereas relativistic individuals were less prone to guilt and less able to control their behaviour. In addition, there was a significant negative correlation between self-control and unethical consumer behaviour. Finally, both self-control and guilt proneness had an indirect mediating effect on the relationship between ethical ideology and consumer behaviour.

Originality - This is one of the first studies to explore the interactions between ethical ideology, self-control, guilt proneness, and consumer ethics.

Keywords Consumer ethics, Ethical ideology, Guilt proneness, Self-control, Australia
Introduction

Why good people do bad things? The results of various studies show that unethical behaviours committed by consumers occur more frequently than may be expected. For example, 4 in 10 people have stolen from a shop at some time in their life and remained silent (Kallis and Vanier, 1985), 1 in 11 people who walk out of a grocery store have stolen something from the store (Faw, 2012); people purchase goods with the intention of using them for a short, specified amount of time before returning them for a refund (Longo, 1995), customers cheat to capitalize on service guarantees (Wirtz, 1998), and employees have stolen from their workplace (Hefter, 1986; Moorthy et al. 2015; Sulsky et al. 2016). On the other hand, individuals may also unexpectedly perform good deeds. For example, a recent news story reported that a homeless man returned a backpack he had found containing almost US$42,000 in cash and traveller’s cheques (CNN, 2013). Why seemingly good people do bad things and vice versa? What factors contribute to this discrepancy? To date, most studies have focused more on the role of ethical ideologies and less on the role of moral affective characteristics (Guilt proneness and self-control). The Hunt-Vitell theory (1986; 1993) suggests that individual’s ethical ideologies (i.e. idealism and relativism) are key factors to explain ethical discrepancies between individuals. The importance of this study is to investigate what factor contributes to this discrepancy. In this paper, we argue that ethical ideologies (i.e. idealism and relativism) precede guilt proneness and self-control since ethical ideologies represent internalised moral beliefs that motivate one’s restraint and proneness to guilt. Along the same line of reasoning, Vitell et al. (2009) reported that religion that represent moral systems is an antecedent to self-control. In addition, consumers’ ethical judgement largely determined a consumer intention to engage in ethically questionable practices (Carrington et al., 2016; Flurry and Swimberghe, 2016; Kenhove, Vermeir and Verniers, 2001; Vitell, Singhapakdi and Thomas, 2001; Singhapakdi and Vitell, 1990). Since
guilt is typically viewed as involving concern for moral standards or harm done to others (Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006), it is likely that individuals will not anticipate guilt if they did not perceive a particular action as unethical or immoral. The study focuses on guilt-proneness and self-control for two reasons. Firstly, previous traditional theories of guilt have suggested that guilt is a solitary intrapsychic phenomenon (Baumeister, Stillwell and Heatherton, 1995). However, Tangney (1992) found that guilt was heavily related to relationship between people. Guilt motivates people to behave in ways that maintain and benefit their relationships. As a results, it linked to anxieties, depression which often a response to perceived threat to interpersonal relationship (Baumeister and Tice, 1990; Baumeister, Stillwell and Heatherton, 1994; Chatzidakis, 2015; Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006). Secondly, self-control also concern with interpersonal relationships. Poor self-control leads to aggression and antisocial behaviour, which are relevant to consumer ethics (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Tangney et al., 2004). Self-control has been found to contribute to a broad range of positive outcome in life (Tangney et al., 2004) and have been found to refrain people from acting upon morally questionable behaviour tendencies (Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006; Vitell et al., 2008). Both, guilt-proneness and self-control have been tested separately but not collectively to identify their strength of their impact on consumer ethics behaviours.

Thus, the purpose of the present study is threefold. First, we examine the impact of ethical ideology on self-control and guilt proneness. Second, we examine the roles of self-control and guilt proneness in consumer ethical decision making. Finally, we explore the mediating effects of self-control and guilt proneness on the relationship between consumer ideology and ethical decision making. This is one of the first studies to explore the interactions between ethical ideology, self-control, guilt proneness, and consumer ethics.

**Literature Review**
Consumer ethics explore the extent to which consumer belief that certain behaviours are “wrong” or “not wrong” i.e. unethical or ethical (Muncy and Vitell, 1992). Muncy and Vitell (1992) defined consumer ethics as “the moral principles and standards that guide behaviour of individuals or groups as they obtain, use and dispose of goods and services” (p. 298). They designed the most widely used construct for ethical consumer behaviour, the Consumer Ethics Scale (CES). Vitell and Muncy (1992) developed the scale through a review of literature and discussion with people who have worked in the area. The study initially found 27 statements which cover the breadth of such ethical situations and represent the domain of ethical judgement faced by consumers (Vitell and Muncy, 1992). The scale includes four dimensions, or types of unethical behaviour: (a) actively benefitting from illegal activities, (b) passively benefitting from illegal activities, (c) benefitting from questionable (but legal) activities, and (d) so-called ‘no harm/no foul’ behaviour. Recently, Vitell and Muncy (2005) updated the scale by adding new items grouped into three new distinct behaviour categories: (e) downloading or buying counterfeit goods, (f) doing good deeds, and (g) recycling and environmental awareness. Most consumers reported it was more ethical to benefit from a passive activity than from an active/illegal activity. In addition, consumers noted that benefiting from a passive activity was more ethical than benefiting from questionable but legal activities. Moreover, the perception of no harm/no foul involvement was generally acceptable and considered more ethical than the other three beliefs (Vitell and Paolillo, 2003).

According to marketing ethics theory, an individual will apply ethical guidelines based on the different moral ideologies when making decision involving ethical problem (Carrington et al., 2016; Donoho et al., 2001; Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Singhapakdi et al., 1999). Since then, various studies relating to the concept of consumer ethics have been published in the last twenty years (Caruana et al. 2016Pekerti and Arli, 2016; Chatzidakis...
These studies have explored several key areas: (1) the impact of cultures or countries on consumer ethics. Muncy and Vitell’s (1992) constructs have been used to explore consumer ethics in various countries, including Austria (Rawwas, 1996), Belgium (Kenhove, Vermeir and Verniers, 2001), Egypt (Al-Khatib, Dobie and Vitell (1995), European countries (i.e., Germany, Scotland, Italy, and Portugal) (Polonsky et al., 2001); Hong Kong (Bateman, Fraedrich and Iyer 2002), Indonesia (Arli and Tjiptono 2014), Japan (Erffmeyer, Keillor and Thorne, 1999), Lebanon (Rawwas, 2001), Malaysia (Singhapakdi et al., 999), Northern Ireland (Rawwas and Singhapakdi, 1998), Singapore (Hoon et al., 2001), United Kingdom (Mitchell and Chan, 2002) and the United States (Muncy and Vitell, 1992, Rawwas and Singhapakdi, 1998). These studies showed mixed results. For example: little differences between consumers in Northern vs Southern Europe (Polonsky et al., 2001). In contrast, other study found US consumers were more ethical than Egyptian consumers (Al-Khatib et al., 2002). However, in general, (1) these studies found that most consumers believed it was more ethical to passively benefit, rather than actively benefit, from an illegal activity that passively benefitting from an illegal activity was less ethical than benefiting from deceptive but legal, activities. No harm/ no foul behaviour was generally considered acceptable and more ethical than the other three situations (Vitell and Paolillo, 2003). (2) The impact of demographic on consumer ethics. The findings show that elderly consumers were more ethical than the younger ones (Gentina et al., 2016; Fritzsche, 1988; Muncy and Vitell, 1992; Rawwas, Strutton and Johnson, 1996). (3) The impact of religion on consumer ethics. Studies show intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity was a significant determinant of consumer ethics. The “extrinsically motivated person uses his religion whereas the intrinsically motivated lives his religion (Allport and Ross, 1967). Consumers with high intrinsic religiosity tend to be more ethical while consumers with high extrinsic religiosity will are less ethical in their intention.
(Vitell et al., 2009; Arli and Tjiptono, 2014), and (4) the impact of moral ideologies on consumer ethics. Studies have concluded that idealism is associated with greater ethicality and relativism is associated with lower ethicality (Kenhove, Vermeir and Verniers, 2001; Al-Khatib, Dobie and Vitell, 1995; Rawwas, Vassilikopoulo et al., 2011; Vitell and Al-Khatib, 1994).

Despite extensive studies conducted on consumer ethics, little is known about the underlying dynamics of moral affective characteristics on consumers’ distinct ethical decision processes (Dahl, Honea and Manchanda, 2003; Lu et al., 2015). Prior studies showed the potential impact of anticipated guilt and self-control when considering (un)ethical behaviour as people appear to avoid a variety of behaviours (Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006; Baumeister, Heatherton and Tice, 1994). Furthermore, previous studies were mainly focusing on ethical ideologies (i.e. idealism and relativism). Thus, this study fills the gap in existing research on consumer ethics by examining both the interrelationships and mediating impact of ethical ideologies (i.e. idealism and relativism) and moral affective characteristics (i.e. guilt and self-control) on distinctive consumer ethics behaviours. Based on this research, several implications and suggestions for future research are discussed. In the next section, several hypotheses were developed to predict the impact of ethical ideology on self-control and guilt proneness, the effect of self-control and guilt proneness on consumer ethical decision making, and the mediating effects of self-control and guilt proneness on the relationship between ethical ideology and different consumer ethics behaviours.
Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

This section will discuss the conceptual framework and hypothesis of this study (see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 About Here

Ethical Ideology: Idealism and Relativism

Forsyth (1980) suggested two evaluative dimensions of ethical ideology that have since been widely applied: idealism and relativism. Idealism refers to the degree to which an individual believes that the right decision can be made in an ethically questionable situation (Forsyth 1980). Idealistic individuals believe “desirable consequences can, with the right action, always be obtained” (Forsyth, 1980), whereas relativistic individuals “reject the possibility of formulating or relying on universal moral rules when drawing conclusions about moral questions” (p. 175). Idealism and relativism are important factors in explaining ethical discrepancies among individuals (Smith and Quelch, 1993). This is consistent with a deontological paradigm, which is based upon the motivations for behavior of an individual, rather than a teleological paradigm, which focuses on the consequences of particular actions or behaviours (Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Murphy and Laczniak, 1981). A deontological evaluation process centers on the inherent rightness versus wrongness of the behaviour, irrespective of its consequences while a teleological evaluation process centers on the consequences of the parties in the decision situation (Hunt and Vitell, 1986). Forsyth (1980) suggests that both teleology and deontology are non-relativistic as they advance universal moral principle. Idealism and deontology are positively related to ethical decision making while relativism and teleology are negatively related (Michalos and Poff, 2012).

Many empirical studies have used Forsyth’s (1980; 1992) ethical ideologies to explore and compare the ethical beliefs of consumers within a country or culture, including Austria (Rawwas, Strutton and Johnson, 1996), Egypt (Al-Khatib, Dobie and Vitell, 1995),
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Japan (Erffmeyer, Keillor and Thorner, 1999), Belgium (Kenhove, Vermeir and Verniers, 2001), Romania (Al-Khatib, Robertson and Lascu, 2004), and the US (Vitell, Lumpkin and Rawwas, 1991). In general, these studies show that an individual’s perception of ethically questionable actions is affected by their ethical ideology: Idealism correlates with a higher level of ethicality, while relativism correlates with a lower level of ethicality (Rawwas, Vitell and Al-Khatib, 1994; Lu and Lu, 2010).

Idealistic individuals believe there is a morally correct alternative that will not harm others, and they focus on the rightness and wrongness of their actions (Swaidan, Vitell and Rawwas, 2003). Highly idealistic individuals adhere to moral absolutes when making ethical decisions, thus increasing their self-control and guilt proneness. On the other hand, relativistic individuals consider the situation rather than the ethical principles being violated (Forsyth 1992). The Hunt-Vitell theory (1986), Hunt and Vitell (1993) suggests that individual’s ethical ideologies (i.e. idealism and relativism) are key factors that explain ethical discrepancies between individuals. It can be argued that, antecedent by ethical ideology, consumers’ ethical judgement largely determined a consumer intention to engage in ethically questionable practices (Vitell et al., 2001; Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006). However, it should be noted that a relative emphasis on outcome over principles does not necessary translated into a relative lack of ethical standards (Ferrel et al., 1989; Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Vitell and Paolillo, 2003). Relativistic ideology believes there are no absolute moral rules other than the relativistic one (Vitell and Paolillo, 2003). A decision is right only if it produces for all people a balance of positive outcomes than do other available alternatives thus may override individuals’ emotion and feeling (Vitell and Paolillo, 2003).

Moreover, moral systems such as religion are an antecedent to self-control (Vitell et al. 2009). Guilt is an aroused form of emotional distress based on the possibility that one maybe in the wrong (Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006). Typically viewed as involving concern
for moral standards or harm done to others (Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006; Tangney and
Dearing, 2002), individuals are unlikely to anticipate guilt if they did not evaluate a particular
action as unethical or immoral. Thus, an individual’s ethical ideology will precede their guilt
pronestness and self-control. This form of contemplation is likely to negatively affect self-
control and guilt proneness. Accordingly, we posited the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Idealism is a positive determinant of (a) self-control and (b) guilt proneness.

**H2:** Relativism is a negative determinant of (a) self-control and (b) guilt proneness.

**Self-Control**

Self-control has been described as “the ability to override or change one’s inner responses, as
well as to interrupt undesired behavioural tendencies (such as impulses) and refrain from
acting on them” (Tangney, Baumeister and Boone, 2004). Self-control promotes the long-
term best interests of an individual and helps constrain competing urges, behaviours, or
desires (Baumeister 1999; Mischel 1974; Vitell et al., 2008; Muraven, 2000; Baumeister and
Exline, 1999). Thus, it is an essential component of morally ethical behaviour (Geyer and
Baumeister, 2005).

Various studies demonstrate that self-control acts as a moral muscle to refrain
individuals from behaving in an unethical or undesirable manner (Geyer and Baumeister,
2005). Self-control represents a personal capacity that supports individuals in regulating their
behaviour and is central to most cases of vice and sin (Baumeister and Exline, 1999). High
levels of self-control lead to academic honesty (Bolin, 2004); are tied to positive moral
identities such as friendliness, kindness, and helpfulness (Tangney, Baumeister and Boone,
2004); help one to resist short-term temptation (e.g. when trying to lose weight) (Mischel,
1974; Lowenstein, 2006; Myrseth and Fishbach, 2009); prevent lying about problem-solving
performance (Gino et al., 2011), reduce aggressive and deviant work-related behaviours
(Bordia, Restubog and Tang, 2008; Douglas and Martinko, 2001; Marcus and Schuler, 2004, Sarchione et al. 1998) and curb software piracy (Higgins, 2004; Marcum et al., 2011). To conclude, self-control is crucial for virtuous behaviour (Geyer and Baumeister, 2005).

Baumester and Exline (1999) suggested that self-control acts as a moral muscle to help individuals refrain from behaving in an undesirable or unethical manner. According to this view, individuals with high degree self-control are more likely to act morally. Self-control has been shown to contribute to a broad range of positive outcomes in life (Tangney, Baumeister and Boone, 2004). As previously discussed, individuals with high self-control exhibit higher ethical values such as honesty and less aggressive compared to individuals with lower self-control. In a similar manner, self-control will reduce individuals’ tendency to perform unethical behaviours. Vitell and Muncy (2005) group CES into two broad categories, ‘unethical behavior’ (e.g. actively benefiting from illegal activities, passively benefiting from illegal activities, actively benefiting from questionable, but legal activities, and no harm/no foul behaviours and downloading or buying counterfeit goods) and ‘ethical behaviour’ (e.g. Doing good deeds and recycling), thus self-control will significantly influence people agreement with various ethical and unethical behaviours. We posited the following hypotheses:

**H3:** Self-control is a negative determinant of unethical consumer behaviours, namely (a) actively benefiting from illegal activities, (b) passively benefiting from illegal activities, (c) actively benefiting from questionable (but legal) activities, (d) no harm/no foul behaviours, and (e) downloading or buying counterfeit goods.

**H4:** Self-control is a positive determinant of ethical consumer behaviours, namely (f) doing good deeds, and (g) recycling.

**Guilt Proneness**

Guilt proneness is a restraining factor in ethically questionable consumer situations (Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006). Nonetheless, it has received minimal attention in consumer
research (Dahl, Honea and Manchanda, 2003). Guilt proneness represents “a personality trait indicative of a predisposition to experience negative feelings about personal wrongdoing, even when the wrongdoing is private” (Cohen et al., 2011). Guilt proneness is not the same as feeling guilty. Guilt is defined as “an individual’s unpleasant emotional state associated with possible objections to one’s own action, inactions, circumstances, or intentions” (Baumeister, 1994). It represents an aroused form of emotional distress distinct from fear and anger and is based on the belief that one may be wrong or that others may have such perceptions. Guilt proneness, on the other hand, can be characterized by the tendency to anticipate negative emotions with regard to committing wrongdoings, as opposed to feeling guilty in a particular moment (Cohen et al., 2011).

Studies suggest that guilt is an important emotion in ethical decision making (Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006). For example, guilt-related emotions correlate positively with impulse purchases and overspending (Dahl, Honea and Manchanda, 2003; Rook, 1987) and arise in both usage situations (e.g. using products that are harmful to one’s health, such as cigarettes) and disposition situations (e.g. not recycling a product) (Dahl, Honea and Manchanda, 2003). Guilt-related emotions have been identified as moral emotions that take into consideration the interests and welfare of others or society (Eisenberg, 2000, Skoe, Eisenberg and Cumberland, 2002).

Guilt-prone individuals tend to take responsibility for their wrongdoings or illegal actions (Cohen et al., 2011; Tangney et al., 2011). A study on inmates found that guilt proneness was negatively related to a risk assessment measure for predicting violent behaviours (Tangney et al., 2011). Other studies have shown that individuals who score highly on guilt proneness make fewer unethical business decisions (Cohen et al., 2011) and engage in fewer counterproductive work behaviours (e.g., stealing office supplies, being late for work (Cohen, Panter and Turan, 2013). Tibbetts (2003) found that guilt proneness was
negatively related to criminal activities such as the use of marijuana and other drugs. As a moral emotion, guilt proneness drives individuals to think and act ethically (Cohen et al., 2011; Tangney et al., 2011).

Cohen et al. (2013) suggest that the anticipation of guilty feelings about private misdeeds indicates that individuals internalized moral values. Individuals who are likely to anticipate feeling guilty when they engage in an unethical behaviour will allow their behaviour to be directed by these anticipatory affective experiences (Steenhaut and Kenhove, 2006). Anticipation of guilt interrupts and controls individuals, signalling whether a particular action is unacceptable or unethical. Individuals with high guilt proneness will consider the interest and welfare of others and are less likely to behave unethically. Therefore, guilt proneness may negatively predict unethical behaviour (Cohen et al., 2011).

Accordingly, we posited the following hypotheses:

**H5:** Guilt proneness is a negative determinant of unethical consumer behaviours, namely (a) actively benefiting from illegal activities, (b) passively benefiting from illegal activities, (c) actively benefiting from questionable (but legal) activities, (d) no harm/no foul behaviours, and (e) downloading or buying counterfeit goods.

**H6:** Guilt proneness is a positive determinant of ethical consumer behaviours, namely (f) doing good deeds, and (g) recycling.

**Mediating Variables**

Up to this point, we argued that ethical ideology, specifically relativism and idealism; drive the self-regulatory variables of self-control and guilt proneness. In turn, self-control and guilt proneness impact consumer ethical decision making. This model identifies self-control and guilt proneness as important mechanisms that underlie the relationship between ethical ideology and consumer behaviour.

Ethical ideology is linked to deviant behaviour (Chan, 2011; Henle, 2005). Self-control, as a form of self-regulation, helps individuals overcome impulses and prevent inappropriate behaviour (Baumeister, 2000). Given that moral standards provide distinct
targets toward which individuals may direct their self-control (Geyer and Baumeister, 2005), it is likely that individuals with high moral standards use self-control with varying psychological strength in order to act according to their moral ideas of idealism and relativism. Previously, we argued the divergence of ethical standards between idealistic and relativistic individuals. Consistently, we propose that idealistic individuals would decrease unethical or increase ethical behaviours via increased self-control and relativistic individuals would increase unethical or decrease ethical behaviours via decreased self-control given this discrepancy. Accordingly, we posited the following hypotheses:

**H7:** Self-control partially mediates the relationship between idealism and unethical/ethical behaviours, namely (a) actively benefiting from illegal activities, (b) passively benefiting from illegal activities, (c) actively benefiting from questionable (but legal) activities, (d) no harm/no foul behaviours, (e) downloading or buying counterfeit goods, (f) doing good deeds, and (g) recycling.

**H8:** Self-control partially mediates the relationship between relativism and unethical/ethical behaviours, namely (a) actively benefiting from illegal activities, (b) passively benefiting from illegal activities, (c) actively benefiting from questionable (but legal) activities, (d) no harm/no foul behaviours, (e) downloading or buying counterfeit goods, (f) doing good deeds, and (g) recycling.

Guilt is a private experience related to one’s conscience (Tangney and Tracy, 2012). As discussed previously, guilt serves a moral function in motivating reparative actions and deterring illegal behaviours (Tangney, Stuewig and Mashek, 2007). Steenhaut and Kenhove (2006) found a mediating effect of anticipated guilt on the relationship between ethical beliefs and ethical intentions. Therefore, guilt proneness is likely to act as a mediating self-regulatory factor in the relationship between ethical ideology and ethical consumer behaviours. Given the focus on absolute morals, we expect idealistic individuals to decrease unethical or increase ethical behaviours via increased guilt proneness. In contrast, relativistic individuals should increase unethical or decrease ethical behaviours via decreased guilt proneness. Accordingly, we posited the following hypotheses:
**H0:** Guilt proneness partially mediates the relationship between idealism and ethical/unethical behaviours, namely (a) actively benefiting from illegal activities, (b) passively benefiting from illegal activities, (c) actively benefiting from questionable (but legal) activities, (d) no harm/no foul behaviours, (e) downloading or buying counterfeit goods, (f) doing good deeds, and (g) recycling.

**H10:** Guilt proneness partially mediates the relationship between relativism and unethical/ethical behaviours, namely (a) actively benefiting from illegal activities, (b) passively benefiting from illegal activities, (c) actively benefiting from questionable (but legal) activities, (d) no harm/no foul behaviours, (e) downloading or buying counterfeit goods, (f) doing good deeds, and (g) recycling.

These 10 hypotheses are represented by the conceptual framework diagram shown in Figure 1.

**Methods**

**Data collection**

To test the 10 hypotheses presented above, we collected a non-probability sample using a cross-sectional online survey of adult consumers across Australia wide. The sampling frame was from a pre-recruited online panel company Permissioncorp. The company is accredited by relevant industry bodies including ESOMAR, AMSRO, QSOAP and ISO for data quality, and consist of 767, 498 members recruited to reflect the Australian population. In this study, respondents were screened on the basis of their country of birth (Australia only), gender, age group, and state in which they reside to ensure representation across these groups. The stringent screening process determines the overall composition of the final sample and should overcome some disadvantages associated with self-selection bias. Consumers were introduced to the study in relation to their beliefs in general consumer ethics behaviors. Participants were introduced broadly to the survey through the introduction of the survey to “understanding how and why consumers like themselves act ethically or unethically.”
The response rate for the survey invite was 17.9%, with a final sample size of 311 consumers out of 3246 that were invited to participate based on the above screening criteria. The sample consisted of an almost equal number of females and males (155 and 158, respectively), with ages ranging from 17 to 67 years (mean = 40 years). With respect to education, 42.2% of respondents had a college education and 41.2% had a university or postgraduate education. In terms of annual income, 23.3% earned less than $20,000, 46.1% earned between $21,000 and $60,000, and 30.6% earned more than $60,000.

Measures

All items were anchored on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Consumer ethical beliefs were measured using 28 items from Muncy and Vitell’s (2005) Consumer Ethics Scale. Two examples are: *Observing someone shoplifting and ignoring it* and *Using a coupon you did not buy for merchandise*. Following established studies on consumer ethics, the items were anchored by 1 = *strongly believe this is wrong* and 5 = *strongly believe this is not wrong*.

The two dimensions of ethical ideology were measured using items from Forsyth (1980), with 10 and 9 items for relativism and idealism, respectively. Items such as *There are no ethical principles that are so important that they should be a part of any code of ethics* and *A person should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree* represent relativism and idealism, respectively.

Personal self-control was measured using five items from the impulsivity subscale of the Brief Self-Control Scale by Maloney et al. (2012). Examples are: *Pleasure and fun sometimes keep me from getting work done* and *I often act without thinking through all the alternatives*. These items were anchored by 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*.

Guilt proneness was measured using eight adapted items from the guilt subscales of the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale developed by Cohen et al. (2011). Examples are: *You
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secretly commit a crime. What is the likelihood that you will feel remorse about breaking the law? and You lie to people and they never find out about it. What is the likelihood that you will feel terrible about it? These items were anchored by 1 = very unlikely and 5 = very likely.

Data Analysis

Since the study was aimed at exploring the relationship between latent variables, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is considered the most appropriate. SEM allows researcher to compare the model to empirical data. Kaplan (2000, p. 1) proposes, that “structural equation modeling can perhaps best be defined as a class of methodologies that seeks to represent hypotheses about the means, variances and covariances of observed data in terms of a smaller number of ‘structural’ parameters defined by a hypothesized underlying model”. Prior to analysing the data, an item-to-total correlation test was performed to test for inconsistencies among the various items. Items that scored below .40 were deleted. The process of determining which items to drop was also guided by theoretical considerations.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS AMOS Version 20 software (Anderson, 1988). First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using maximum likelihood of estimation to assess the psychometric properties of each measurement model. Items were estimated to load on a factor specified a priori and on factors to correlate. Each item was scaled on the latent variable by setting factor loading to 1.00. Measurement models were then respecified based on factor loadings as well as standardised residuals, modification indices, and item reliability.

Next, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the structural model by determining the estimated path coefficients ($\beta$) and associated $t$-values, which provided evidence for the structural parameters. $T$-values that exceeded 1.96 for path estimates were statistically significant. Results were assessed for goodness of fit using the following
absolute fit indices: Chi-squared, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean residual (SRMR), goodness of fit index (GFI), and comparative fit index (CFI).

Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for each key variable to test for internal consistency reliability. Values below the threshold of .60 indicate unsatisfactory internal consistency (Malhotra and Birks 2007). Tests for convergent and discriminant validity and composite reliability were also undertaken. Convergent validity was assessed by determining whether factor loadings were greater than .50 and statistically significant (p ≤ .05). To assess discriminant validity among the constructs, the average variance extracted (AVE) values for each construct were compared to the squared correlation estimates of paired measured constructs in the model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Composite reliability values (CR) were calculated and compared to a threshold benchmark of .60 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Finally, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were also calculated.

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach’s alpha, AVE, and CR were determined for all variables that passed the initial reliability test using item-to-total correlations. In total, 11 key variables were evaluated at the start of the analysis process. They are the two ethical ideology antecedents, idealism and relativism, the two self-regulatory variables, self-control and guilt-proneness, and the seven dimensions of consumer ethics: (a) actively benefitting from an illegal activity (ACTIVE), (b) passively benefitting from an illegal activity (PASSIVE), (c) benefitting from questionable (but legal) activities (QUEST), (d) no harm/no foul behaviours (NOHARM), (e) downloading or buying counterfeit goods (DL), (f) doing good deeds (GOOD), and (g) recycling (REC).

To test for mediation effects, two separate bias-corrected bootstrap analyses with both mediators (self-control and guilt proneness) were conducted using a series of multiple regression analyses (Preacher, 2008; Zhao, 2010; Preacher, 2004). Prior to (direct effects) and
after (total effects) determining mediation effects, the relationship between the independent and dependent variable were established to infer mediation and the extent of mediation. A bootstrap test resamples the data to estimate standard errors and to derive a confidence interval with the bootstrapped sampling distribution. The bias-corrected confidence interval is useful as it considers non-normal distribution of mediation effects and produces more accurate Type 1 error rates (Cheung and Lau, 2008). A mediating effect is considered significant if the 95% confidence intervals do not bracket zero. This test establishes whether statistically significant results exist for mediation by self-control and guilt proneness of the relationship between the two ethical ideologies, idealism and relativism, and each of the seven consumer ethics dimensions.

**Results**

Based on item-to-total correlations, several items were removed due to poor reliability. Several tests for validity and reliability were performed. Convergent validity was established, as the factor loadings for all items were greater than .50 and were significant ($p \leq .05$), indicating that the measures significantly related to the underlying dimensions. The descriptivestatistics and correlations for key variables are shown in Table 1. Evidence for discriminant validity was provided by the fact that, except for the construct of consumer ethics, ACTIVE, all AVEs exceeded the squared correlations. All CR values exceeded the threshold of .60, providing support for the reliability of the scales. Similarly, values for Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .63 to .90, exceeding the cutoff of .60 for satisfactory internal reliability. The 10 proposed hypotheses described above were tested using SEM. As shown in Table 2, standardised path estimates were significant for all aspects of H1 (positive relationship), H2 (negative relationship), H3 (negative relationship), and H6 (positive relationship). For H5, path estimates were significant for only some unethical consumer
behaviours (QUEST and NOHARM), but indicated a negative relationship rather than the positive relationship as hypothesized.

*Insert Table 2 About Here*

The structural results also showed that the ethical ideology variables, idealism and relativism, explained significantly the variance in self-control ($R^2 = 24\%$) and guilt proneness ($R^2 = 45\%$). Idealism and relativism also explained significantly the variance in consumer ethics variables ACTIVE ($R^2 = 56\%$), PASSIVE ($R^2 = 78\%$), QUEST ($R^2 = 74\%$), NOHARM ($R^2 = 55\%$), DOING GOOD ($R^2 = 17\%$), and REC ($R^2 = 11\%$). The estimated structural model was of acceptable fit to the data based on Chi-Square ($\chi^2 = 936.5$, df = 448, $p < .01$), RMSEA (.06), GFI (.84), CFI (.90), and SRMR (.07), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 provides results of the direct effects, total effects, and bootstrap analyses for mediation effects by self-control and guilt proneness on the relationship between variables for ethical ideology and consumer behaviour. The results for the direct effects between relativism and three mediators QUEST ($b = .02$, CI: [-.10 – .13], $p > .05$), GOOD ($b = -.10$, CI: [-.22 – .02], $p > .05$), and REC ($b = -.09$, CI: [-.20 – .02], $p > .05$) were not statistically significant from zero.

Based on 1000 bootstrapped samples, there were statistically significant indirect relationships between the consumer behaviour variables ACTIVE (Idealism: $b = -.03$, CI: [-.06 – -.01]; Relativism: $b = .02$, CI: [.01–.05]), PASSIVE (Idealism: $b = -.05$, CI: [-.11 – -.01]; Relativism: $b = .05$, CI: [.02 – .09]), QUEST (Idealism: $b = -.05$, CI: [-.10 – -.01]), and NOHARM (Idealism: $b = -.06$, CI: [-.14 – -.02]; Relativism: $b = .06$, CI: [.02 –.11]) and ethical ideology variables, idealism (negative relationship) and relativism (positive relationship), through the mediating variable, self-control. Thus, there is partial support for H7 and H8.

*Insert Table 3 About Here*
The results also showed statistically significant indirect relationships between idealism and the unethical behaviours ACTIVE \((b = -0.05, CI: [-0.09 \text{ to } -0.01])\) and PASSIVE (negative relationship) \((b = -0.09, CI: [-0.16 \text{ to } -0.02])\) and between idealism and the ethical behaviours REC \((b = 0.13, CI: [0.05 \text{ to } 0.23])\) and GOOD \((b = 0.12, CI: [0.05 \text{ to } 0.21])\) (positive relationship) through the mediating variable, guilt proneness, providing partial support for H9. The total effect for the relationships between idealism and the unethical behaviours QUEST \((b = -0.06, CI: [-0.15 \text{ to } -0.03])\) and NOHARM \((b = -0.04, CI: [-0.13 \text{ to } -0.06])\) were not statistically significant from zero, when controlling for the interactions, hence indicating full mediation for these paths.

In summary, the results demonstrate that self-control is a mediating factor in the relationship between both idealism and relativism and the unethical consumer behaviours, ACTIVE, PASSIVE, QUEST, and NO HARM. In contrast, guilt proneness was a mediating factor only for idealism, but applied to the relationship between idealism and both unethical consumer behaviours (ACTIVE and PASSIVE) and ethical consumer behaviours (GOOD and REC).

**Discussion**

**Idealism and Relativism**

Many studies have analysed the impact of ethical ideology (idealism and relativism) on consumer ethics (Hunt and Vitell, 1986; Hunt and Vitell, 1993). This study extends Hunt and Vitell’s model by including self-control and guilt proneness as an integral part of the consumer ethical decision making process. This research contributes to current research to show ethical ideology influences these moral affective characteristics. In addition to being correlated with a higher level of ethicality (e.g., Rawwas, Vitell and Al-Khatib, 1994), our results show that idealism is a positive determinant of guilt proneness and self-control.
This result is consistent with the observation that idealistic individuals adhere to moral absolutes and exhibit concern about the welfare of others when making decisions (Forsyth 1980). Some ethical dilemmas will engage emotional processing to a greater extent than other and these differences in emotional engagement affect consumers’ judgements. This serves to explain why such individuals may be more prone to guilt and better able to control their behaviour compared to less idealistic individuals. Thus, merely focusing on ethical ideologies (e.g., Al-Khatib, Dobie and Vitell, 1995; Rawwas, Strutton and Johnson, 1996) to determine people’s attitude is insufficient.

In contrast, our results indicate that relativistic individuals are less prone to guilt and less able to control their behaviour. Relativistic individuals base their judgement on the particular situation, and their actions thus tend to be configural (Forsyth, Boyle Jr and McDaniel, 2008). Consequently, they may attempt to justify an unethical decision, which may repress or neutralize their guilt. Moreover, since relativistic individuals believe that ethicality may vary from one situation to another, they may feel little need to control or restrict their behaviour in any given situation. The results highlight the role of reason in emotional anticipation which plays an important role in ethical decision making.

Self-Control, Guilt Proneness, and Consumer Ethics

Results of this study contribute to existing research to show unique relationships exist between ethical ideologies, moral affective characteristics, and distinctive forms of consumer ethics. Nonetheless, some variables in this study are influenced by sociocultural contexts, which have implications with respect to the external validity of the findings. For instance, studies show environmental concern may not be a norm in certain cultures due to a lack of resource conscientiousness or low environmental knowledge (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Wesley, Schultz and Zelezny, 1999), thus the dimension of recycling in the Consumer Ethics
Scale may be less applicable. In addition, Western cultures (as examined in this study) that are more open and less rule bound are more affected by guilt than Eastern cultures (Anolli and Pascucci, 2005), and this can weaken the mediating effect of guilt proneness. Such cultural differences render a need to be cautious when generalizing results to other contexts. Future studies should test the model in countries with notable sociocultural values to compare variations in the strength and magnitude of effects. Moreover, this study used cross-sectional and a nonprobability sample collected from an online survey panel. A cross-sectional research design does not consider the temporal sequence of variables tested in this study. Guilt proneness and self-control may change over time which influences an individual stance on morality.

In our model, self-control significantly explained all unethical consumer behaviours, namely: actively benefitting from illegal activities, passively benefitting from illegal activities, benefitting from questionable (but legal) activities, and no harm/no foul behaviours. This is consistent with previous findings that individuals with strong self-control are more likely to act ethically (Vitell, Bing, Davison, Ammeter, Garner and Novicevic, 2009). Self-control is not only an antecedent of moral identity (e.g., Vitell et al. 2008, Baumeister and Vohs, 2007, Schmeichel and Vohs, 2009), but also an antecedent of consumer ethical decision making. Interestingly, in our study self-control did not significantly explain ethical consumer behaviour, namely recycling and doing good deeds. Previous studies have shown that individuals with high self-control exhibit fewer impulse control problems, such as binge drinking and over-eating (Tangney, Baumeister and Boone, 2004). Our results suggest that, while consumers with high self-control are less likely to behave unethically, self-control may not be related to ethical behaviour. Using the analogy of an automobile, self-control acts as a brake to stop consumers from behaving unethically, but not as an accelerator to encourage behaviours that benefits others or society.
In our model, guilt proneness did not significantly explain certain unethical behaviours, namely actively or passively benefitting from illegal activities. More surprisingly, it had a direct positive relationship to other unethical behaviours, namely benefitting from questionable (but legal) activities and no harm/no foul behaviours. This finding suggests that individuals who are more prone to guilt are more likely to perceive these latter behaviours as being acceptable. Typically, studies found the anticipation of guilt inhibits antisocial behaviours since individuals’ experience of guilt guide them in making moral decisions (Cohen et al., 2013; Olthof, 2012). However, these studies seem to dominantly focus on unethical behaviours more severe in nature and consequential. For example, Cohen et al. (2013) examined the association between guilt proneness with counterproductive work behaviours such as incivility, absenteeism or theft. Olthof (2012) investigated instances of bullying and aggressive behaviours. Possibly, the nature of benefitting from questionable (but legal) activities and no harm/no foul behaviours represent behaviours perceived as acceptable or milder in severity. Therefore, the acceptance of lower severity behaviours may prompt guilt prone individuals to assuage or neutralize anticipated guilt and normalise such behaviours as a response to their internal pressure (Ingram and Hinduja, 2008; Topalli, 2006).

Finally, we found that, unlike self-control, guilt proneness was a positive determinant of recycling and doing good deeds, suggesting that guilt proneness evokes people to act positively toward others. This finding corresponds with existing studies that highlight guilt represent an empathic and perspective-taking response and predicts the occurrence of prosocial behaviours (Tangney, 1991; Wolf et al., 2010). Our results show that guilt proneness may not necessarily deter consumers when faced with certain unethical situations, but it may encourage them to perform acts that benefit others and the environment. To
conclude, we suggest that when people do bad things, these consumers tend not to be lacking in guilt proneness, but in self-control.

Mediating Effects
Finally, results of this study contribute to understanding dissimilar dynamics of moral affective characteristics on consumer ethics. We showed that self-control mediates the relationship between both ethical ideologies (idealism and relativism) and unethical consumer behaviours (actively benefitting from illegal activities; passively benefitting from illegal activities; benefitting from questionable, but legal, activities; and no harm/no foul behaviours). These results suggest that self-control is an important internal attribute that allows both idealistic and relativistic individuals to regulate their behaviour. This finding corresponds to the idea of self-control as a virtue that reflects one’s strength of character. A failure of self-control has been associated with many sins and vices (Baumeister, 2000).

On the other hand, we found that guilt proneness mediated only the relationship between idealism and consumer behaviour. However, the latter included both unethical consumer behaviours (actively benefitting from illegal activities and passively benefitting from illegal activities) and ethical consumer behaviours (doing good deeds and recycling). These results suggest that guilt proneness is an important mechanism that encourages idealistic individuals to act in moral ways. Since idealistic consumers believe in following universal moral principles to the letter (Forsyth, 1980), these consumers may be prone to guilt in situations where strict laws or guidelines govern the appropriateness of behaviours. Likewise, idealistic consumers may adhere to moral absolutes of caring through socially responsible actions (Kolodinsky, 2010). While guilt proneness acts as a regulatory mechanism that helps idealistic consumers maintain a duty of care, in contrast, relativistic
consumers are not affected by the same mechanism. Possibly, relativistic consumers tend to be more detached from their emotions and from personal responsibility (Tangney, 1990).

**Implications**

The results of this study demonstrate that ethical ideology is a significant determinant of self-control and guilt proneness. This finding has significant implications for managers and policy makers. The study offers some macromarketing implications. There are stereotypes that suggest poor people are more likely to behave unethical. In recent decades, studies have found that due to changes in the macro-environment there might also be changes in people’s behavior, in particular in terms of consumer behaviors (Shavitt et al., 2006; Singhapakdi et al., 1995; Strauss and Howe, 1997). Thus, when people are migrating to new environment, their behavior may be influenced by their moral philosophies and self-control which eventually affect their behavior. Hence, the myths of poor people are less ethical can be removed.

Furthermore, there are some micromarketing implications for managers. Consumers who are idealistic tend to make ethical decisions guided by their ethical ideology. Thus, managers who clearly understand the ethical ideology of their consumer segments may be more effective at identifying which consumers are likely to engage in certain behaviours. More specifically, to reduce costs in managing unethical consumer behaviours, companies could selectively encourage patronage from consumers who hold idealistic and relativistic ethical positions by upholding values that appeal specifically to these consumers. Further exploration of differences between groups indicated that college educated and older individuals held higher idealistic moral positions. Given the high percentage of individuals with high idealistic positions, there is potential for marketers to communicate with specifically with college or older consumers’ who are likely to hold these moral positions on
issues that may be of significance to them. For example, consumers who are idealistic are more likely to support a company that adheres to a similar ethical position. Accordingly, a company may choose to demonstrate high moral standards and conduct on key issues such as employment or trade. Our findings have important implications for how to promote ethical consumer behaviour. Our finding that guilt proneness had no effect on some unethical consumer behaviours, and a positive effect on others, suggests that companies would be better off promoting and encouraging self-control (e.g., delayed gratification) rather than attempting to impose guilt as a means of curbing unethical consumer behaviours.

The results of this study underscore the importance of self-control and guilt proneness as key mediators of behaviour and draw attention to the need for managers and public policy makers to help consumers develop and stretch these moral muscles. Baumeister and Exline (1999) noted that individuals fail to self-regulate when moral standards are unclear, in situations of low self-awareness, or when they perceive an inability to conform to behavioural standards. Hence, there is the potential to develop character education programs or explicit communication messages that develop strengths in these areas so as to increase self-control. Consumers prone to experiencing guilt tend to alter their behaviour in order to avoid experiencing an unpleasant emotion (Baumeister, 1994). The interpersonal enhancing function of guilt may enable companies to strengthen their relational bonds with consumers, increasing the sense of interpersonal obligation and reducing acts of self-interest. For example, companies could develop relationship marketing programs to engage with their consumers and discourage transgressions. Moreover, workshops and training to strengthen individuals’ capacity for self-control (e.g. meditation) should be administered through school, workplaces. Self-control represents individuals’ capacity to resist temptation (Baumeister, 2002). Finally, intervention methods through smartphone, online calendar, and radio
announcements may be used to improve individuals’ self-control especially in situations requiring an ethical decision making.

**Limitations and Future Research**

While this research provided interesting insights, there are a few limitations that warrant attention in future studies. Second, measuring ethical or non-ethical behaviour is also difficult because of individuals’ tendencies to conceal information (Dalton and Ortegren, 2011; Randall and Fernandes, 1991; O'Fallon and Butterfield, 2005). Respondents may attempt to fake good or exaggerate by under or over-reporting such behaviors (Randall and Fernandes, 1991). Despite these limitation, self-reported survey data is commonly acceptable in examining ethical behaviours (Fisk et al., 2010) and precautions were taken to design the survey in terms of theoretical plausibility of causal relationships and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore, while the use of a volunteer panel may introduce response bias, studies suggest this data collection method does not present significant differences as compared to traditional survey methods such as telephone or mail (Göritz, 2004; Dennis, 2001). Efforts were undertaken to overcome sample bias limitations through the use of quota sampling. However, caution must be exercised when generalising about the effects across countries. Future research could include a longitudinal research design to investigate how these variables evolve over time or experimental design to claim causality.

Third, this study examined the effects of only four exogenous variables on consumer behaviour (idealism, relativism, self-control, and guilt proneness). Additional studies using other theoretically interesting mediating variables, such as personal life purpose, moral judgement, or normlessness, may provide a deeper understanding of processes that govern the relationship between broad ethical ideologies and specific unethical consumer behaviours. Researchers can then compare the effectiveness of distinct mediating dynamics on
behaviours. This knowledge is highly relevant for managers and public policy practitioners, identifying critical points of intervention for distinct behaviours.

Finally, our study unexpectedly found that guilt proneness was positively correlated with certain unethical behaviours. We posited that this may have to do with the role of interpersonal relationships in feelings of guilt. Other studies have indicated that interpersonal concerns are keys to experiencing guilt (Dahl, Honea and Manchanda, 2003; Tangney, 1991). Future studies should examine and compare the impact of interpersonal versus non-interpersonal relationships on consumer guilt.

Overall, this research contributed to the limited information on this topic by examining mediating variables that shape the relationship between ethical ideology and consumer ethical decision making and behaviour. It paves the way for future studies to improve our understanding of other moral muscles that may apply to consumers in various settings.
Appendix

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Note: ACTIVE = actively benefitting from illegal activities, PASSIVE = passively benefitting from illegal activities, QUEST = benefitting from questionable (but legal) behaviour, NOHARM = no harm/no foul behaviour, DOWNLOAD = downloading or buying counterfeit goods, RECYCLING = recycling and environmental, GOOD = doing good deeds.
### Table 1. Descriptive statistics and Correlations for Key Variables

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**

1. **ACTIVE** = actively benefitting from an illegal activity, **PASSIVE** = passively benefitting from an illegal activity, **QUEST** = benefitting from questionable (but legal) activities, **NOHARM** = no harm/no foul behaviours, **GOOD** = doing good deeds, **REC** = recycling and environmental awareness.
2. The **boldfaced** diagonal elements represent the correlation square of the constructs. The off diagonal elements represent the correlations of the constructs.
3. p<.05*; p<.01**

Why Good People Do Bad Things
### Table 2. Results for Structural Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Structural Parameters</th>
<th>Standardized Path Estimates ($\beta$)</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| $H_1$: Idealism is a positive determinant of (a) self-control and (b) guilt proneness. | (a) .42**  
(b) .65** | 5.173  
7.072 | Yes  
Yes | |
| $H_2$: Relativism is a negative determinant of (a) self-control (b) guilt proneness. | (a) -.27**  
(b) -.23** | -4.078  
-3.448 | Yes  
Yes | |
| $H_3$: Self-control is a negative determinant of unethical consumer behaviours, namely (a) actively benefitting from illegal activities, (b) passively benefitting from illegal activities, (c) benefitting from questionable (but legal) activities, and (d) no harm/no foul behaviours. | (a) -.72**  
(b) -.90**  
(c) -.90**  
(d) -.78** | -7.427  
-8.826  
-9.239  
-8.713 | Yes  
Yes  
Yes  
Yes | |
| $H_4$: Self-control is a positive determinant of ethical consumer behaviours, namely: (f) recycling and (g) doing good. | (f) .03  
(g) -.09 | .460  
-1.411 | No  
No | |
| $H_5$: Guilt proneness is a negative determinant of unethical consumer behaviours, namely (a) actively benefitting from illegal activities, (b) passively benefitting from illegal activities, (c) benefitting from questionable (but legal) activities, and (d) no harm/no foul behaviours. | (a) -.07  
(b) -.03  
(c) .21*  
(d) .21* | -.942  
.469  
2.732  
2.759 | No  
No  
No  
No | |
| $H_6$: Guilt proneness is a positive determinant of ethical consumer behaviours, namely: (f) doing good and (g) recycling. | (a) .32*  
(b) .43** | 3.159  
4.921 | Yes  
Yes | |
| $H_7$: Self-control partially mediates the relationship between idealism and unethical consumer behaviours, namely (a) actively benefitting from illegal activities, (b) passively benefitting from illegal activities, (c) benefitting from questionable (but legal) activities, and (d) no harm/no foul behaviours. | | See Table 3 | Partia Support | |
| $H_8$: Self-control partially mediates the relationship between relativism and ethical consumer behaviours, namely: (f) doing good and (g) recycling. | | See Table 3 | Partial Support | |
| $H_9$: Guilt proneness partially mediates the relationship between idealism and consumer ethic behaviours namely: (a) actively benefiting; (b) passively benefiting; (c) questionable behaviour; (d) no harm; (f) doing good, and (g) recycling. | | See Table 3 | Partial Support | |
| $H_{10}$: Guilt proneness partially mediates the relationship between relativism and consumer ethic behaviours namely: (a) actively benefiting; (b) passively benefiting; (c) questionable behaviour; (d) no harm; (f) recycling, and (g) doing good. | | See Table 3 | Partial Support | |

Final Model Fit: Chi-Square $\chi^2=936.5$, df= 448 p<.01; RMSEA=.06; GFI=.84; CFI=.90; SRMR=.07; p<.05*; p<.01**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Via Guilt Proneness</th>
<th>Via Self-Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism → Consumer Ethics A</td>
<td>-0.05*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Effect</td>
<td>-0.15*</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
<td>-0.08*</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism → Consumer Ethics B</td>
<td>-0.09*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Effect</td>
<td>-0.15*</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
<td>-0.14*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism → Consumer Ethics C</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Effect</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism → Consumer Ethics D</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Effect</td>
<td>-0.18*</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism → Consumer Ethics E</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Effect</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idealism → Consumer Ethics F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Effect</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
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<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism → Consumer Ethics A</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Effect</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism → Consumer Ethics B</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
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<td>Direct Effect</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
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<td>Total Effect</td>
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<td>Relativism → Consumer Ethics C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Total Effect</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **Boldfaced** elements represent significant bootstrapped individual indirect effect because 0 does not occur within the lower and upper limit of the 95% confidence interval in line with the direct effects.
References


-- END OF MANUSCRIPT --