

Looking for info? Understanding ethical consumer information management using a diary approach

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Abstract-

Purpose

Although the role of information has been previously studied in the ethical consumer literature, practices related to information searches and interpretation have not been fully examined in relation to ethical consumption. The purpose of this paper is to explore the search and use of information by ethically oriented consumers in order to understand the problems involved in this process, and how ethical consumers address them by adopting a number of practices.

Design/methodology/approach

Using a qualitative approach and diaries, the paper explores how consumers carry out their informational search and interpretation over an 11-week period.

Findings

First, insights are provided about the specifics of information search and the contexts, timing and use of information. Second, the information management practices used by participants to navigate the problems they encounter are identified. These practices are discussed in relation to the maximizing vs optimizing approach adopted by the participants.

Practical implications

New technologies, such as mobile applications and geo-localization, could overcome some of the problems inherent to information searches identified in this study. The use of social networks may also prove particularly interesting for companies and NGOs that target ethically oriented consumers.

Originality/value

Information search and the use and interpretation of information are part of the

efforts undertaken by ethical consumers, but they have not been the focus of past research. This study provides empirical evidence on consumer practices employed to circumvent the problems found in a context of information asymmetries, and the gradual development of consumer skills in relation to ethical information searches and management. It shows how information search and management shapes the practice of ethical consumption.

Index Terms- Quality; Qualitative methods; Knowledge; Information management; Information; Impact; Green; Experiences; Ethical consumption; Diaries; Decision-making; Consumption; Complexity; Choice; Behavior; Barriers

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