

Corporate Social Irresponsibility and Consumers’ Psychological Conflicts

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This work is dedicated to my family.

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1. Introduction

The introduction chapter of this quasi-cumulative dissertation gives a short overview about the three papers included in this work. It is important to note that the papers follow a logical order which will be briefly described at this point, in the chapter transitions as well as in the general discussion of the dissertation.

The three papers together follow the overarching research question how corporate social irresponsibility (CSI) and consumers' psychological conflicts are connected. First, Paper 1 describes a literature analysis, building the basis for Paper 2 and Paper 3, specifically, to understand the terminology and theoretical properties surrounding CSI as well as corporate social responsibility (CSR). The most important (abstract) ethics-related terms (e.g., CSR, green consumption, sustainability) used in the marketing ethics literature are therefore examined. The question which terms are used to which extent in influential marketing journals and how they relate to each other constitutes the basic research question of Paper 1 ('Contemporary Usage of Marketing Ethics Terminology: A Concept Analysis'). Second, Paper 2 ('Fooling Yourself: The Role of Internal Defense Mechanisms in Unsustainable Consumption Behavior') then exploratory addresses the role of consumers' inner conflicts in the field of unsustainable consumption behavior – and in case of their indirect support of CSI behavior – by means of 20 in-depth interviews. Third, Paper 3 ('Cling Together, Swing Together? Corporate Social Irresponsibility: Do Consumers Feel Accountable for It?') experimentally investigates the specific causal relationships of particular consumer conflicts on the basis of their perceived degree of moral responsibility.

Contemporary Usage of Marketing Ethics Terminology: A Concept Analysis (Paper 1)

Conceptual and empirical articles in the field of marketing ethics deal with terms such as CSR, CSI, sustainability, or business ethics. As we could not find an overarching framework about the different relevant terms, the authors conceptually explored the most important terms as well as their frequency of use (in different outlets) and its interrelations. 868 journal articles using 105 different ethics-related terms were analyzed in order to build a conceptual framework of marketing ethics terms, facilitating the following research approaches of Paper 2 and Paper 3. As will be stated later, three relevant dimensions constitute the pillars of the developed conceptual framework, that is, abstraction (macro, meso, micro), appeal (moral, pragmatic), and subject (environmental, social). Further analyses of Paper 1 deal with specific term usage frequencies across time and between different marketing outlets. Major definitions of relevant ethics-related concepts are stated in the theoretical part of this paper. In the research at hand, *marketing ethics* is – among others – used as an umbrella term for the more practice-oriented expressions *CSR*, *corporate social performance (CSP)*, *CSI* as well as for *sustainability*.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR is hotly debated in business ethics (e.g., McWilliams and Siegel 2001). However, there is neither a clear and strict CSR definition (e.g., Maignan and Ferrell 2004) nor a determined way of measuring the construct (e.g., Turker, 2009). So far, the definition of Archie B. Carroll (1979, 1991) still holds a big impact when it comes to operationalization. According to this definition, the basis of socially responsible behavior lies in economic responsibilities, that is, the company is obligated to make profit to ensure its own prospective existence (Carroll 1979). The next level describes companies' duty to obey the law, which is called legal responsibilities. At level three there are ethical responsibilities (e.g., fairness), which are not binding by law but more or less expected by society. Finally,

philanthropic responsibilities such as voluntary acts like charitable donations stand on top of Carroll's classification.

Corporate Social Performance (CSP)

Corporate social performance (CSP) specifies corporate behavior which relates to CSR aspects (Igalens and Gond 2005). In their well-known meta-analysis about the link of CSP with corporate financial performance (CFP), Orlitzky, Schmidt, and Rynes (2003) found a positive CSP-CFP-relation of $\rho = .36$ ($N = 388$), which relates to a medium effect size (Cohen 1992). Following the argumentation of Wang, Choi, and Li (2008), the CSP-CFP relationship is not linear but described by an inverse U-shape. More recently, Servaes and Tamayo (2013) found out that CSR activities and firm value are positively related for specific conditions only (i.e., in case of high customer awareness).

Corporate Social Irresponsibility (CSI)

With regard to CSR, an essential problem is that positive and negative CSP are not on the same continuum (Wood 2010). Wagner, Bicen, and Hall (2008) argue that negative information (compared to positive information) is more intensively communicated in the media. In addition to that, consumers remember negative information longer than positive information. Finally, there is more talk about companies 'doing bad things'. CSI seems to constitute an important factor for consumers' decision making and a negative link between bad CSP and CFP has been found (Wood 2010). For instance, consumers negatively interpret CSI information while positive CSR information is only relevant for all those who are interested in the CSR theme (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). Case studies such as *BP* (Friedman and Weiser Friedman 2010) also show the negative economic impact of CSI (i.e., *BP* lost much money because of its negatively judged behavior).

Sustainability

Mastering the challenges of sustainability will be the key factor of a firm's future success (Sheth, Sethia, and Srinivas 2011). In general, the term is defined in many different ways (e.g., Hoffman and Bazerman 2005). Business researchers describe sustainability through the 'triple bottom line' (Elkington 1998), consisting of economic, social, and environmental goals (e.g., Dyllick and Hockerts 2002). First, economic sustainability describes the company's ability to create long-term value in order to ensure its future profitability (Chabowski, Mena, and Gonzalez-Padron 2011). Second, social sustainability aims for taking into account societal issues such as equal rights or tolerance (e.g., Goodland and Daly 1996). Third, environmental sustainability constitutes the "maintenance-of-natural-capital" (Goodland and Daly 1996, p. 1007). This facet contains resource management (Chabowski et al. 2011) as well as a sense of caring for our nature (Kilbourne 2006).

Fooling Yourself: The Role of Internal Defense Mechanisms in Unsustainable Consumption Behavior' (Paper 2)

Based on the literature analysis conducted in Paper 1, the second research question is based on the theoretical concept of the attitude-behavior gap. In particular, consumers on the one hand (increasingly) claim pro-environmental attitudes while on the other hand buying non-green products or services (Olson 2013). The authors propose that this 'contradiction' should lead to inner consumer conflicts. Therefore, Paper 2 uses an explorative research approach (i.e., in-depth interviews) to detect these inner conflicts and to investigate how consumers deal with them in order to avoid a negative emotional condition.

Unsustainable consumption behavior – which can be defined as a resource-intensive way of individual consumption – is suspected to contrast with consumers' resource-saving ideals. Therefore, consumers with both a high sustainability orientation and unsustainable consumption patterns should perceive or feel intrapsychic conflicts. In-depth interviews led to a novel classification with regard to consumer

sustainability (i.e., the aspects consumers subsume under the sustainability label). Interviews revealed that long-term sustainability-related motives (e.g., low energy use) stay in contrast with short-term motives (e.g., individual comfort), resulting in inner conflicts of varying degree. Notably, consumption behavior is only changed in case of very intense conflicts. On the contrary, consumers make use of several psychological defense mechanisms in order to deal with their psychological conflicts, leaving them the possibility to consume unsustainably. Last but not least, Paper 2 revealed first evidence for the presence and significance of consumers' moral responsibility for socially irresponsible firm behavior, which is examined in Paper 3.

Cling Together, Swing Together? Corporate Social Irresponsibility: Do Consumers Feel Accountable for It? (Paper 3)

As stated above, Paper 2 detected that (some) consumers show inner psychic conflicts because of their unsustainable consumption behavior. Results also indicate that consumer might perceive individual (moral) responsibility for unsustainable company actions (see also transition between Paper 2 and Paper 3). Paper 3 therefore explores consumers' moral responsibility for companies' socially irresponsible behavior.

To the best of our knowledge, consumers' self-perceptions in third-party-scenarios, that is, in cases of companies doing harm to a third party (e.g., employees), have not been investigated in depth so far. A common moral responsibility factor, consisting of responsibility and guilt, is investigated. Causal relationships are tested by means of three independent experimental studies, in the first place manipulating formal customer affiliation (customer vs. non-customer) as well as psychological customer affiliation (high brand glorification vs. low brand glorification). Study 1 (describing a company acting socially irresponsible to its employees) shows that high-glorifying consumers perceive higher moral responsibility compared to low-glorifying consumers only in case of low customer affiliation. Study 2 (again describing a company acting socially irresponsible to its

employees) demonstrates the important role of victim proximity with regard to individual moral responsibility for irresponsible company actions. This relationship is mediated by consumers' perceived empathic concern. Study 3 reveals that the relationship between victim poverty and moral responsibility is mediated through victim controllability and empathic concern. Finally, the three studies deal with the mediating role of moral responsibility for purchase intention, negative word-of-mouth as well as consumers' willingness to donate for the victims (i.e., the employees).

The following dissertation is structured as follows: Papers 1 and 2 are connected through a short transition, first of all consisting of two conducted pre-studies of Paper 2. The transition between Paper 2 and Paper 3 mainly consists of additional theoretical parts about *moral responsibility* as well as *social identity theory*. Finally, a general discussion deals with some additional important aspects.

2. Contemporary Usage of Marketing Ethics Terminology:

A Concept Analysis*

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Abstract

Marketing scholars build on terms such as corporate social responsibility, sustainability, or business ethics when conducting conceptual as well as empirical research efforts. However, it seems difficult to find incorporating reflections about relevant terms, its frequency of use in different outlets, and its conceptual interrelations. Such a uniting perspective would support a less ambiguous deployment of contemporary marketing ethics terminology and thus advance theory development. Therefore, we conducted a contemporary concept analysis of marketing ethics terminology. In so doing, we built upon a comprehensive dataset, consisting of 868 journal articles and using 105 different marketing ethics terms. A conceptual framework of marketing ethics is proposed, synthesizing terms alongside three dimensions in terms of abstraction (macro, meso, micro), appeal (moral, pragmatic), and subject (environmental, social). The paper also analyzes how often specific terms are used in premier marketing outlets across time and reflects on resulting implications for future research efforts.

Terms such as *corporate social responsibility* (CSR), *sustainability*, *prosocial behavior*, *ethical consumption*, and many other ethics-related terms are used by marketing researchers in order to express relevant social and environmental issues. However, the exact meaning of a single term as well as the terms' incidences and interrelationships often seem unclear. Such problematic term use can lead to misunderstandings, resulting in theoretical misconceptualizations as well as questionable practical implications. This is particularly true if the authors do not provide a working definition for the respective term. Academia has generally acknowledged that it is essential to use the right term for the specific context in order to avoid such misunderstandings. Researchers should therefore get away from a 'one-term-fits-all'-approach (van Marrewijk 2003) but rather work on a common language for the different marketing ethics facets (Pelozo and Shang 2011). To take a step toward an integrating framework, our research proposes a general typology of marketing ethics terminology. We will use the

labels ‘ethics-related terminology’ and ‘marketing ethics terminology’ as an umbrella for all below-discussed terms, consisting of terms such as CSR, cause-related marketing (CRM), or business ethics.

Next, we explore how the usage of the most common marketing ethics terms has evolved over time. On the one hand, many researchers emphasize the elevated meaning of business ethics, CSR, and sustainability for both academia as well as corporate practice (e.g., Kotler 2011). On the other hand, it seems relevant to examine if leading marketing journals also follow this important megatrend.

Furthermore, important marketing journals should differ in their role for marketing ethics research. This issue appears to be relevant for business researchers who have to focus on a specific target journal. We also analyze the question which papers could be labeled as key papers in the field of marketing ethics. Key papers’ role for academic research cannot be overestimated as they have a guiding function in stimulating and influencing future research. Thus, the identification of these specific journal articles could help marketing ethics researchers in developing new research questions by building on existing literature.

Finally, we explore how often the most relevant terms are used in between an article. This statistic shows the strength a specific term has in the articles it is used, varying from being just a popular keyword to being essential for the paper. High strength rates also indicate the degree the papers could be classified as marketing ethics articles.

By analyzing all full published articles of eleven important marketing journals from 2000 to 2012, our research contributes to the field by presenting a general typology of marketing ethics terminology. In particular, 105 most common ethics-related terms are arranged in a structuring framework which includes three dimensions. First, the level of abstraction (macro, meso, micro) shows if a term is mainly connected with an individual (e.g., consumer), a finite and well-defined group of individuals (e.g., company), or general principles referring to broader entities (e.g., the whole society). Second, a term can through its wording include an implicit connotation of a moral appeal (e.g., *ethical behavior*) or a rather non-moral pragmatic one (e.g., *sustainability*). Third, many terms can, depending on

content, refer to an environmental and a social subject. Finally, most ethics-related terms can be clustered into five term fields, that is, *charity*, *environmental*, *ethics*, *social/CSR*, and *sustainability*. We also detect that both the number of papers using ethics-related terminology and the number of selected marketing ethics terms in total have clearly increased from 2000 to 2012. Interestingly, there is no linear growth of terminology but high periodic variations between increasing and decreasing time periods. One further result of our analyses is that *JAMS* (*Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*), *JMM* (*Journal of Macromarketing*), and *JPPM* (*Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*) play a leading role concerning the amount of marketing ethics terminology.

The remainder of this article starts with a theoretical background section, followed by a description of the methodological approach of the research at hand. Subsequently, a derived framework of marketing ethics terminology is presented. Next, further results deal with the evolvement of ethics-related terminology, commonalities and differences between journals, key papers of marketing ethics as well as the article-oriented strength of the most important terms. The paper also discusses its contribution, limitations as well as future research opportunities.

Theoretical Background

When reading literature dealing with sustainability, ethics, or CSR, it becomes clear that there are many disagreements and inconsistencies concerning the use of ethics-related terminology (Dahlsrud 2008). Amongst the used terms are *sustainable consumption* (Dolan 2002), *green consumption* (Gupta and Ogden 2009), *ethical consumption* (Strong 1997), *sustainability* (Elkington 1998), *CSR* (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001), *corporate citizenship* (Maignan and Ferrell 2001), *corporate social responsiveness* (Carroll 1979), or *cause-related marketing* (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). Recent research tries to list and define the complete range of CSR terms (Visser et al. 2010) which at the same time shows a high need to structure the most relevant ones. However, there are still growing numbers of different terms (Rossouw 2012) which adds confusion to the field (De Bakker, Groenewegen, and

Den Hond 2005). This leads Peloza and Shang (2011) to argue for an increased consistency in business ethics research. Therefore, some theoretical background with regard to our umbrella term (i.e., *marketing ethics*) and the most essential and general terms seems necessary.

Marketing Ethics

Marketing ethics can be defined as a systematic way to explore the application of moral standards to marketing decisions, behaviors as well as institutions (Laczniak and Murphy 1993) by means of evaluation of fairness or perceived injustice by others (Ferrell and Ferrell 2008). This also means that marketing managers should follow these standards in order to act in a right and fair way (Laczniak and Murphy 2006). As Thomas et al. (2002) note, marketing ethics involves morals norms with regard to exchange relations and other marketing-related issues, for example fair and just treatment of customers. The term *ethical marketing* “refers to practices that emphasize transparent, trustworthy, and responsible personal and/or organizational marketing policies and actions that exhibit integrity as well as fairness to consumers and other stakeholders” (Murphy, Laczniak, and Prothero 2012, p. 4). However, when it comes to *business ethics*, costs and benefits for a person and for the whole society have to be weighed against each other (Cornelissen et al. 2007).

More generally spoken, ethics of marketing involves some kind of moral standards (Shapiro 2012) which can go beyond the law (Murphy et al. 2012). However, more pragmatic issues such as resource-driven firm policies are not independent from marketing ethics. There is a logical connection between ethics and sustainability, because the conservation of our environment (which is the basis for the future of mankind) is also related to moral issues. For instance, the decision to use renewable energy in order to help the environment is also connected with moral norms.

Indeed, the notion of marketing ethics can be traced back to basic philosophical ethics theories such as utilitarianism (Murphy et al. 2012). Sophisticated theories about marketing ethics have been developed. One basic approach describes ethical behavior as an indirect result of different environments (cultural, industrial, organizational, professional) and personal characteristics, mediated

(among others) by positive and negative consequences and its respective probabilities (Hunt and Vitell 2006). Ferrell and Gresham (1985) developed a contingency framework how marketers come to ethical or unethical decisions. They postulated several propositions, for example that unethical behavior depends on the ratio between “contacts with unethical patterns to contacts with ethical patterns” (p. 93).

In line with researchers such as Nill and Schibrowsky (2007) as well as Schlegelmilch and Öberseder (2010) marketing ethics is adopted as a broader umbrella term in the present study: Both papers use the label *marketing ethics articles* to investigate different issues such as green marketing and social responsibility. Accordingly, we define as follows:

‘Marketing ethics terminology (or ethics-related terminology in marketing) denotes terms which can (context-sensitive) be linked with someone (individual, company, politics, society) doing something good (or precisely not) for a broader entity (the environment, society).’

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The term CSR stands amongst the most prominent ones in marketing ethics. Furthermore, this term is of highest academic interest for marketing researchers. Therefore, the following sections deal particularly with the specificities of the CSR term. The CSR concept has been discussed already decades ago (Bowen 1953; Carroll 1979) and indeed, Carroll’s CSR conceptualization remains to be the most influential definition so far. He describes CSR as a pyramid consisting of economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities which a company should follow (Carroll 1979, 1991). Other definitions picture a societal marketing concept which improves the welfare of consumers as well as the society (Kotler 1997) and involves damage prevention (Mohr et al. 2001). Furthermore, CSR as a strategic device has been divided into ‘quiet’ and ‘loud’ (Ligeti and Oravec 2009) or ‘implicit’ and ‘explicit’ CSR (Matten and Moon 2008). A good CSR strategy has been shown to lead to positive consumer reactions such as positive word-of-mouth (Lacey, Kennett-Hensel, and Manolis 2015).

These effects of CSR actions on consumer responses are mediated by moral emotions and individual differences (Xie, Bagozzi, and Grønhaug 2015). Meta-analyses have been likewise conducted to examine the firm profitability of CSR strategies (Orlitzky et al. 2003; Walsh, Weber, and Margolis 2003).

Several other authors have also contributed to a more advanced understanding of CSR (Vaaland, Heide, and Grønhaug 2008) and its respective activities (Peloza and Shang 2011). Nevertheless, Dahlsrud (2008) notes that there is still much confusion in the field of CSR definitions, for example with regard to the inclusion of other ethics-related terms such as corporate philanthropy (Szócs et al. 2016).

When having a look at CSR definitions in leading marketing journals, it comes to the fore that there is only a small amount of widely established definitions which are used again and again. Most authors refer to these original sources and only some researchers state more than one CSR definition (Hult 2011; Maignan and Ferrell 2004; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). In general, definitions can be divided into four streams: straightforward or objective definitions (type one), obligatory or educational definitions (type two), more balanced or pragmatic definitions (type three), and illustrating or specific ones (type four). The definitions stem from various different outlets. However, it seems difficult to find contemporary definitions from *Journal of Consumer Research (JCR)*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology (JCP)*, and *Journal of Retailing (JR)*.

Definitions of type one appear to be quite generic and are contentwise closely connected to the wording ‘corporate social responsibility’. The best example is the simple statement that CSR describes the degree of a firm’s social responsibility (Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen 2007). These straightforward definitions (see also Hult 2011; Peloza and Shang 2011) can on the one hand be criticized as being too vague. On the other hand, these definitions could be regarded as the only overarching CSR explanations (i.e., they explain what CSR means by its original wording).

Next, definitions of type two share an educational element by including a moral appeal with regard to a company's obligation to behave responsibly towards the society (e.g., Mohr and Sarin 2009). This type is also represented by older definitions by Bowen (1953), Brown and Dacin (1997) as well as Drucker (1946, 1954). The definition by Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz (2009) is one of the rare ones mentioning negative CSR (e.g., air pollution, bribery, child labor practices), which is undoubtedly of high relevance for different stakeholders.

Third, definitions of type three take a more balanced perspective by integrating economic corporate goals into the CSR definition. For instance, CSR should not only improve societal welfare but also organizational interests (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). Focusing on economic interests only, Friedman (1970) sees a company's social responsibility solely in an obligation to increase its own profits.

Finally, type four definitions are more specific in illustrating what a firm stands for or does within the broad field of CSR issues. These issues might relate to CRM (Luo and Bhattacharya 2009), donations (Krishna and Rajan 2009), or the support of employees, the community, and the environment (Paul et al. 2009). More specific definitions bear the potential to explain what aspects or issues belong to CSR. Nevertheless and as opposed to generic definitions, they might also exclude other important CSR aspects.

No specific CSR scale is dominating academic research (Turker 2009), which makes the question how to measure CSR a hot-debated topic. As Orlitzky et al. (2003) note, different ways of CSR measurement do also distort their found relationship between corporate social performance (CSP) and corporate financial performance. Some authors give an overview about the measurement of CSP (Igalens and Gond 2005) or marketing ethics scales (Vitell and Ho 1997). On the contrary, we could not find a contemporary overview of CSR measurement in leading marketing journals.

Above stated CSR definitions give insights into the meaning of CSR and they can also serve as a basis to develop respective items for measuring CSR as a construct. However, although CSR compounds (e.g., CSR activities, CSR beliefs) are sometimes measured, in most cases the CSR term is not

measured at all as it is rather operationalized, manipulated, or integrated into theoretical argumentations. Furthermore, there is research building on objective indices to measure CSR (Torres et al. 2012). Apart from this, we identified some papers which explicitly use one or more items to measure CSR. Amongst these are also papers which measure CSR without discussing CSR definitions in depth. The scales can be arranged on a continuum ranging from very general CSR to concrete actions of corporate giving. In particular, some papers are more or less straightforward in measuring if a company is socially responsible (Gürhan-Canli and Batra 2004; Klein and Dawar 2004). Other papers integrate concrete corporate causes in their scales, for example by introducing the question if a company supports good causes (Berens, van Riel, and van Bruggen 2005), and others (which claim to measure CSR) have an exclusive focus on corporate giving (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Braig 2004; Paul et al. 2009). With regard to the latter ones, it becomes clear that the CSR term is also used as a synonym for corporate giving or CSP.

Sustainability

Sustainability basically refers to the general principle to only use resources to a degree which enables future generations to live with at least the same amount of resources (United Nations 1987). The common core of sustainability definitions is that “a sustainable system is one which survives or persists” (Costanza and Patten 1995, p. 193). From a business point of view, sustainability goes down to the so-called ‘triple bottom line’ (Elkington 1998), which is said to consist of economic, social, and environmental aspects (Sheth et al. 2011): First, economic sustainability includes securing a firm’s own future or ensuring quality and durability of goods. Second, social sustainability can refer to human rights, law abidance as well as health and security of customers and employees. Third, environmental sustainability encompasses issues such as pollution, recycling, or the use of natural resources (e.g., wood, oil, water). Sheth et al. (2011) recently emphasized a lack of sustainability research focusing on consumers. Therefore, they developed the concept of mindful consumption, which consists of caring for nature, community, and oneself. First research also indicates that a sort of

individual sustainability (consisting of one's own economic, mental, and physical health) might exist (Stich and Wagner 2012).

Sustainability can be understood in different ways: While Luchs et al. (2010) use the term as an equivalent to ethicality, other research focuses on the distinction of sustainability from terms such as responsible marketing (Varey 2010) or marketing ethics (Shapiro 2006). According to Holliday, Schmidheiny and Watts (2002), sustainability should lead to eco-efficiency, CSR, or transparency and Farrell and Hart (1998) stress that sustainability should enhance social welfare whilst preserving the environment.

The general term *the environment* (in its connotation to nature or climate) or its compounds (e.g., *environmental friendliness*, *natural environment*) are of highest relevance and therefore an important part of many marketing ethics (e.g., Nill and Schibrowsky 2007) or CSR articles (e.g., Brown and Dacin 1997). However, the term itself leaves no room for deeper discussions how it should be defined. This is why we standardly understand the environment as an equivalent to nature (Torelli, Monga, and Kaikati 2012). Notably, the environment normally is not defined at all.

Further Relevant Terms

Ethics (like *marketing ethics*) is an umbrella term itself which can refer to different fields (e.g., human behavior, marketing, moral philosophy) or different subtypes of ethics (e.g., research ethics, utilitarian ethics, virtue ethics, work ethics). In addition to that it often lacks a clear definition. Therefore, we can only understand the ethics term by analyzing the respective context. For our purposes, we combine the definitions by Aurier and N'Goala (2010) as well as Shapiro (2012), who describe ethics as a moral consideration or marketing standard. It is important to note that ethics constitutes the basic facet of our umbrella term *marketing ethics*.

The term *charity* refers to the general principle to help someone or something in need (or at least the intention to do so). However, in marketing research the term *charity* often stands for *charity foundation* or *charity organization* (e.g., Krishna 2011). Both definitions are easy to understand and useful for our purposes.

Social welfare characterizes a maximization of “the sum of utilities for all members in a society” (Ding 2007, p. 4). It includes both efficiency and equity considerations (Kannan and Telang 2005). Social welfare integrates criteria from consumers, producers, and society but also intends to lessen environmental damage (Levi and Nault 2004).

State of Research

The need to systematize knowledge on business ethics has been realized by various researchers. Whilst De Bakker et al. (2005) have a look on historical developments in ethics-related terminology, other authors focus on giving an overview of the marketing ethics literature (Nill and Schibrowsky 2007; Schlegelmilch and Öberseder 2010). Furthermore, ethics research has been explored from an interdisciplinary perspective (Bernardi et al. 2008). Notably, there has been a special issue on sustainability in *JAMS* in 2011, contributing to the discipline by analyzing green marketing strategies (Cronin et al. 2011) and the structure of sustainability research (Chabowski et al. 2011) as well as by comparing sustainability with CSR (Hult 2011).

Existing classifications focus on specific issues such as CSR activities (Peloza and Shang 2011), CSR stakeholders (Fairbrass and Zueva-Owens 2012), or sustainability dimensions (Closs, Speier, and Meacham 2011). We could not find a comprising framework of the most common ethics-related terminology in marketing, which we attempt to create through the extraction and analysis of contemporary ethics-related terminology in important marketing journals. This new typology could

contribute to a better understanding of the most important terms. Notably, our framework can help to select the adequate term in a specific research context.

Several researchers have analyzed general trends concerning the amount of ethics-related research in marketing. De Bakker et al. (2005) detected for example a rising number of publications about CSR and CSP between 1969 and 2002. However, this analysis lacks more contemporary research and is not limited to leading marketing journals, which results in the fact that specialized journals (i.e., *Business & Society*, *Journal of Business Ethics*) comprise the largest amount of publications. This is in line with findings by Nill and Schibrowsky (2007) who find a large increase in the number of marketing ethics publications between 1981 and 2005 only for specialized journals. Finally, the analysis by Schlegelmilch and Öberseder (2010) shows increasing numbers of marketing ethics articles but only on a decade level. Altogether, marketing ethics research shows that academic knowledge in this area is growing fast.

Previous authors have divided the literature into ethics-related papers and non-ethics-related papers, which led to the fact that their analyses did only deal with full ethics-related papers (De Bakker et al. 2005; Nill and Schibrowsky 2007; Schlegelmilch and Öberseder 2010; Vaaland et al. 2008). In other words, marketing papers using ethics-related terminology but focusing basically on another topic have been excluded from previous analyses. Therefore, we explore which terms are most common in marketing ethics in general rather than only in specific marketing ethics articles and how their use has evolved over the last years. The research at hand also gives researchers an overview about the relevance of marketing ethics terminology in important marketing journals. Usage frequencies of ethics terminology in general as well as incidence rates of specific terms are compared for eleven outlets. To the best of our knowledge, differences and commonalities between journals with regard to ethics-related terms have not been explored so far.

Determining a paper's influence by number of citations is well-established in the marketing community (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003; Kunz and Hogueve 2011). However, citation numbers are

biased through certain factors such as journal quality or publication date (older articles are cited more than newer ones). As opposed to this, our research analyzes the number of used ethics-related terms, indicating how mainstream a paper's terminology is compared to the whole field. This approach is innovative insofar as it constitutes an alternative way of influence measurement. Notably, our research contributes to marketing ethics research by building on the idea of a nomological network (Cronbach and Meehl 1955): A nomological network illustrates concepts and its interrelations. Although our derived framework has no direct linkages between constructs, relationships can be seen in the model, that is, a term's position is not independent from other terms' positions. As Cronbach and Meehl (1955) note, nomological networks help researchers to ensure a concept's (*here*: marketing ethics) construct validity.

In particular, key papers are articles which use the most common terms, that is, they build on existing research terminology. This approach helps to come to a more complete picture of a specific issue. On the contrary, papers developing new unestablished terms, basically denoting already existing ones, are more or less operating 'in vacuo' by ignoring existing academic research. Therefore, these articles can barely be seen as key papers for the business ethics field.

A final analysis deals with the quantity a specific term is used in between an article. A term (*not*: the meaning of a term) appears to be more essential for a paper if it is used several times. In particular, some terms are used as keywords (i.e., *their meaning* is important for the paper) but not a second time within the same paper (i.e., *the term itself* is not important). For instance, green marketing (Agrawal et al. 2012) or social responsibility (Dobson and Gerstner 2010) are only used as keywords. We could not find any existing research analyzing the strength of specific ethics-related terms, indicating which terms serve as well-used umbrella terms only and which terms are basically essential for a paper.

Methodological Approach

As there are quite a lot of published papers in numerous marketing journals, we had to narrow down the number of potentially relevant papers. Therefore, we decided to include all full conceptual or empirical research papers (we excluded editorials, executive summaries, etc.) published between 2000 and 2012 in the following leading marketing journals:

International Journal of Research in Marketing (IJRM)

Journal of Consumer Psychology (JCP)

Journal of Consumer Research (JCR)

Journal of Marketing (JM)

Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)

Journal of Retailing (JR)

Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS)

Management Science (MNS)

Marketing Science (MKS)

In addition to that we included two journals both from the general marketing discipline and at the same time probably very relevant for the issue at hand:

Journal of Macromarketing (JMM)

Journal of Public Policy & Marketing (JPPM)

Specialist journals focusing primarily on ethics-related topics (e.g., *Journal of Business Ethics*) were not included as our research explicitly focuses on marketing journals publishing articles with different

themes. The outlet *Management Science* was also included as it contains a section of marketing articles (Bernardi et al. 2008; Chabowski et al. 2011), *Harvard Business Review* left out because of its high practical orientation. In general, the journal selection is similar to the selections by other authors (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003; Kunz and Hogreve 2011). Additionally, the heuristic to choose these specific outlets stems from personal talks to several marketing researchers. The time period (i.e., 2000 to 2012) was mainly chosen because it provides us with enough papers to come to valid conclusions with regard to the use of marketing ethics terminology and at the same time focusing on more contemporary research. Among the used databases were *EBSCO*, *INFORMS*, *JSTOR*, *ScienceDirect*, and *Springer*.

Furthermore, we had to limit the number of relevant search terms as there is an almost innumerable amount of terms which can be linked with CSR, ethics, or sustainability in a broader sense. In general, we included terms relating to consumers, companies, or broader principles (e.g., CSR, *ethical consumption*, *sustainability*). However, we decided to exclude (concrete) product- and store-related terms (e.g., *ethical product*, *green product*, *socially responsible store*), very generic terms (e.g., *fairness*, *legitimacy*, *moral*, *social justice*) but also terms naming very specific issues (e.g., *animal welfare*, *child labor*, *bribery*) as well as some appearances of relevant terms used in a different or very unclear context (e.g., *ethics*, *prosocial behavior*). Notably, our analysis is not about issues (i.e., specific ethics-related issues such as fair advertising, local production, or employee rights) but about (abstract) general marketing ethics terms. For an overview about different marketing ethics issues, the article by Pelozo and Shang (2011) is highly recommended. Finally, we excluded sustainability issues in the sense of ‘making good business in the long-term’ (e.g., economic sustainability, *sustainable competitive advantage*) because these terms are not directly linked with doing something good for a broader entity, that is, the environment or parts of our society (Chabowski et al. 2011). For a more detailed insight into the decision to include or exclude certain terms the authors can be contacted.

The full search instruction was:

"cause mark*" OR "cause-related marketing" OR "cause related marketing" OR "charit*" OR "citizenship" OR "corporate societal marketing" OR "csr" OR "ecolog*" OR "environment*" OR "ethic*" OR "green" OR "mindful" OR "organic produc*" OR "philanthrop*" OR "social behav*" OR "social cons*" OR "social mark*" OR "social perf*" OR "social resp*" OR "sustainab*"

In addition to that, a second search was performed for the terms *social cause*, *socially responsible behavior*, and *social welfare*. Terms had to be verbatim to be included, although singular and plural were treated as equivalents. 3803 published papers were downloaded and examined in detail. A raw data set was created. In a next step, this data set was reduced to only terms which have been used in at least 10 different papers. This final data set consists of 868 papers using 3270 terms (please note that each term is counted only one time per paper but one paper can make use of several different terms).

The authors used the final dataset to conduct a contemporary concept analysis. Concept analyses are not very common in marketing outlets, but have often been used in medical research (e.g., Maben and Macleod Clark 1995). However, there is not only one single way to conduct a concept analysis. So-called *formal concept analyses* are used in order to build a hierarchy of a specific concept (by means of mathematical vectors) including connections between different attributes of the concept (Cimiano, Hotho, and Staab 2005). On the contrary, concept analyses in health care and nursery are rather focusing on wording instead of mathematical connections.

Several concepts have been analyzed by concept analyses, for example *collaboration* (Hennemann, Lee, and Cohen 1995), *fatigue* (Ream and Richardson 1996), *health promotion* (Maben and Macleod Clark 1995), *quality of life* (Meeberg 1993), or *resilience* (Olsson et al. 2003). There are also different ways to conduct concept analyses in this field: Some authors focus on a concept's attributes, antecedents, and relations, while other researchers concentrate on definitions. Comparisons of and

differentiations from related concepts can also be taken into account (Meeberg 1993; Ream and Richardson 1996).

As a consequence, concept analysis is a quite flexible methodology which allows for deeper comprehension of a specific concept. On the one hand, this methodology is especially helpful to understand very broad, generic, or mainly colloquially used concepts or terms which are unclear to many receptors. On the other hand, concept analyses always depend on the amount of existing literature which makes them rather inappropriate for very unknown and unexplored concepts. All types of concept analyses have in common that they try to consider elements belonging to a specific higher-order concept in one way or the other. While Olsson et al. (2003) try to figure out the core *elements* of a specific concept and Meeberg (1993) illustrates a concept's essential *attributes*, we decided to focus on the core *terms* of a concept (i.e., *marketing ethics*). These terms can then be connected with specific attributes (partly reflected in our three extracted dimensions). One could also say that a concept analysis is similar to bibliometric analyses (De Bakker et al. 2005) and literature reviews (Nill and Schibrowsky 2007), however aiming for a systematic comprehension of the terms expressing a certain concept (i.e., marketing ethics terminology).

Results

Structuring Marketing Ethics Terminology

In total, the final sample consists of 105 different terms (i.e., terms used in at least 10 different papers). But before these terms can be arranged in an illustrating framework, a rationale for structuring these terms has to be detected. Therefore, key definitions of the relevant terms have been analyzed. Overall, the majority of terms can be structured in terms of five special term fields: *charity*, *environmental*, *social/CSR*, *ethics*, and *sustainability*. Table 1 shows a complete list as well as the information how often a certain term is used and to which field it belongs.

Charity: The charity field consists out of eight different terms making it to 367 data points. Charity terminology is only defined in rare cases in published papers because its meaning is quite common and can best be explained by the use of a brief example (e.g., ‘company XY donates money for the Red Cross’). In general, charities collect money for a cause (Popkowski Leszczyc and Rothkopf 2010) and “provide numerous vital services, ranging from health care to housing to disaster relief” (White and Peloza 2009, p. 109). Therefore, they can refer to various different contents, complicating their integration into a specific business ethics context. They can rather be seen as an open middle category between different dimensions.

Environmental: The environmental field includes 1096 data points based on the deployment of 41 different terms. Notably, the integration of *JMM* and *JPPM* led to the integration of many additional environmental terms (i.e., terms reached the minimum use number of ten), which makes the environmental field to the largest term field. The variety of common terms is distinctively pronounced, emphasizing the rising significance of environmental issues in the marketing literature. The environment can be seen as a pillar of sustainability (Huang and Rust 2011), encompassing issues such as recycling or the avoidance of pollution (Luchs et al. 2010). *Environmental impacts* are for instance global warming (Nelson 2004) or the amount of pollution (Banerjee, Iyer, and Kashyap 2003) and *environmental concerns* relate to how important someone considers “the protection of the natural environment” (van Doorn and Verhoef 2011, p. 170). The term *green* represents something natural or environmental and hence belongs as well to the environmental field. *Green marketing* refers to “products that are less harmful to the environment” (Sheth 2011, p. 175), whilst *green consumers* “choose to purchase environmentally friendly products when given the opportunity” (Cronin et al. 2011, p. 169). Finally, *ecology* terminology is also part of the environmental field.

Table 1

INCLUDED TERMS (USED IN MORE THAN 10 DIFFERENT PAPERS)

Term	N	Term	N	Term	N	Term	N
The Environment ^b	229	Ethical Concern ^c	41	Environmental Responsibility ^b	29	Environmental Pollution ^b	19
Charity ^a	177	Ethical Behavior ^c	41	Social Marketer ^d	29	Corporate Philanthropy ^d	19
Ethics ^c	142	Charitable Giving ^a	40	Sustainable Consumption ^e	29	Ethical Norm ^c	19
Social Responsibility ^d	138	Environmentalism ^b	37	Environmental Sustainability ^b	28	Environmental Quality ^b	18
Corporate Social Responsibility/CSR ^d	129	Unethical Behavior ^c	37	CSR Initiative ^d	28	Environmental Friendliness ^b	18
Social Welfare ^d	110	Ethical Standard ^c	37	Environmental Degradation ^b	27	Green Consumer ^b	18
Sustainability ^e	110	Business Ethics ^c	36	CSR Activity ^d	26	Corporate Responsibility ^f	18
Social Marketing ^d	75	Sustainable Development ^e	35	Charitable Cause ^a	26	Ethical Dilemma ^c	18
Environmental Impact ^b	68	Charitable Organization ^a	35	Ethical Decision Making ^c	26	Socially Responsible Behavior ^d	17
Environmental Concern ^b	55	Prosocial Behavior ^d	35	Ethical Principle ^c	25	Social Marketing Campaign ^d	17
Marketing Ethics ^c	49	Environmentalism ^b	34	Environmental Policy ^b	25	Environmental Group ^b	17
Cause-Related Marketing/CRM ^f	48	Environmental Protection ^b	33	Corporate Citizenship ^f	25	Social Movement ^d	17
Social Cause ^d	48	Ecology ^b	33	Charitable Contribution ^a	23	Ethical Implication ^c	17
Natural Environment ^b	45	Philanthropy ^d	31	Environmental Performance ^b	22	Ethical Problem ^c	17
Charitable Donation ^a	45	Ethical Value ^c	30	Environmental Damage ^b	21	Ethicality ^c	17
Environmental Problem ^b	43	Green Marketing ^b	30	Ethical Consideration ^c	21	Sustainable Marketing ^e	16

Ethical Responsibility^c (16), Ethical Conduct^c (16), Environmental Consequence^b (16), Proenvironmental Behavior^b (16), Sustainability Initiative^e (15), Environmental Value^b (14), Environmental Regulation^b (14), Unethical Practice^c (14), CSR Program^d (14), Environmentally Conscious Consumer^b (14), Social Concern^d (14), Greenwashing^b (13), Ecological Concern^b (13), Ethical Marketing^c (13), Environmental Standard^b (13), Ethical Practice^c (13), Environmental Marketing^b (13), Environmental Goal^b (12), Environmental Practice^b (12), Ethical Decision^c (12), Social Consciousness^d (12), Environmental Consciousness^b (12), Environmental Movement^b (11), Ecological Sustainability^b (11), Ethical Judgment^c (11), Social Performance^d (11), Environmentally Responsible Behavior^b (11), CSR Strategy^d (11), Environmental Cause^b (11), Cause Marketing/CM^f (11), Environmental Organization^b (11), Social Initiative^d (11), Charity Organization^a (11), Corporate Social Performance/CSP^d (10), Charitable Behavior^a (10), CRM Campaign^f (10), Green Consumption^b (10), Environmental Challenge^b (10), Social Program^d (10), CSR Association^d (10), Greening^b (10)

^a'Charity' field

^b'Environmental' field

^c'Ethics' field

^d'Social' field/CSR

^e'Sustainability' field

^fOthers

Notes: Numbers (N) and numbers in brackets show in how many different papers a term is used. Terms are sorted according to these numbers.

Social/CSR: The social field comprises 23 terms and 822 data points. It is therefore the second largest field with regard to the number of data points. Especially, *CSR*, *social responsibility*, and *social*

welfare are often used. CSR and social responsibility are often defined as a corporate obligation to have a positive impact on the society (Wagner et al. 2009). Social welfare stems from a more macroeconomic perspective and, whilst often not defined at all, describes the maximization of “the sum of utilities for all members in a society” (Ding 2007, p. 4).

Ethics: The ethics field includes 668 data points from 23 different terms. Interestingly, *ethical consumption* did not make it into the final sample as this term is rarely used in leading marketing journals. On the contrary, *ethics* and *(un-)ethical behavior* are amongst the most common terms. Ethics is a very generic term which can be seen as a moral consideration (Aurier and N'Goala 2010). Similarly, *business ethics* serves as an umbrella for sustainability, corporate citizenship, and inter-individual ethics (Rossouw 2011). Ethical and unethical behavior refer to the degree an act is perceived as right, fair, or just (Hunt and Vitell 1986; Thomas et al. 2002).

Sustainability: Five different terms constituting 205 data points characterize the sustainability field, which makes it by far the smallest of the five term fields. This seems quite surprising because sustainability can be seen as a higher-order principle where CSR and other terms rest on (Hult 2011). We speculate that the sustainability term might sometimes be too generic and also difficult to grasp which makes other terms more suitable for a specific research question. Indeed, *sustainability* appears to be amongst the vaguest terms as it can mean almost everything. Therefore, a majority of researchers refer to the classical definition that sustainability means “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations 1987, p. 1).

After analyzing relevant ethics-related terminology, a comprehensive framework showing the selected terms will be introduced. First of all, our framework consists of three dimensions: *subject* (environmental, social), *abstraction* (macro, meso, micro), and *appeal* (moral, pragmatic). It is important to note that some terms can appear twice in this model (i.e., as a social term and as an environmental term). In other words, non-environmental/-social terminology (i.e., ethics field, charity field, and sustainability field terminology as well as *CRM* and *corporate citizenship*) appears top and

down exactly at the same position. On the contrary, environmental and social field terminology is only used once in the model.

The present conceptualization corresponds with Chabowski et al. (2011) who point out basic social and environmental ethical properties. Furthermore, sustainability research on the triple bottom line uses the environment and the society as fundamental constituents (Elkington 1998).

The second dimension is framed as abstraction, consisting of micro, meso, and macro levels of conceptualization. Several researchers use this trichotomy to systematize a wide range of different concepts (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Layton 2008) and it is also connected with ethics (Brinkmann 2002; Preuss 1999). Enderle (1997) gives a reasonable description of the three levels: First, the micro level refers to individuals such as consumers, employees, or employers. Second, economic organizations are located on the meso level as their conduct “cannot be described solely by the actions of its individual members” (p. 175). Third, the macro level includes broad and holistic economic conditions, policies, and relations. Other authors have also coined terms relating to micro (individual), meso (local, organizational), and macro (cosmopolitan, global, societal) levels (Hearn et al. 2008; Seitanidi and Lindgreen 2010; Victor and Cullen 1988). Also being in line with Rossouw (2011), ethics and sustainability belong to the macro level and corporate (social) responsibility as well as corporate citizenship to the meso level.

Appeal constitutes the third important dimension of our framework, containing a moral and a pragmatic pole. Related dichotomies exist in the extant literature such as distinctions in terms of moral versus legal (Humphreys 2010), normative versus positive (Nill and Schibrowsky 2007), ethical versus normative (Rossouw 2012) as well as ethical versus pragmatic (Wartick and Cochran 1985) opposing principles.

Moral and pragmatic appeals can be connected with subject and abstraction. Every term was therefore allocated to a specific combination of the three framework dimensions. Three different coders (i.e., marketing researchers) independently rated each of the 105 terms according to these dimensions. Their ratings are first of all based on the definitions given in the selected papers. However, in case of

vagueness or ambiguity, definitions stated in other papers or internet sources could be considered as well. As can be seen in Figure 1, ratings for abstraction ranged from 0 to 2.5 and ratings for appeal from -2 to 2 (0.5 intervals). Coders also rated if a term is usually used environmental and/or social. In case of disagreement about a term's positioning, raters jointly came to a mutual agreement.

Terms such as *behavior* can not only refer to an individual but also to an entire group. However, the most common meaning of a word with regard to the extracted definitions decided about the term's position in the framework. The framework is also incomplete with regard to the whole range of marketing ethics terms. Nevertheless, the stated figure can be used as a holistic and flexible structure for the integration of additional ethics-related terms. Altogether, this framework could help academic researchers in the selection of the most appropriate marketing ethics terminology.

Figure 1

STRUCTURING MARKETING ETHICS TERMINOLOGY

A: Environmental

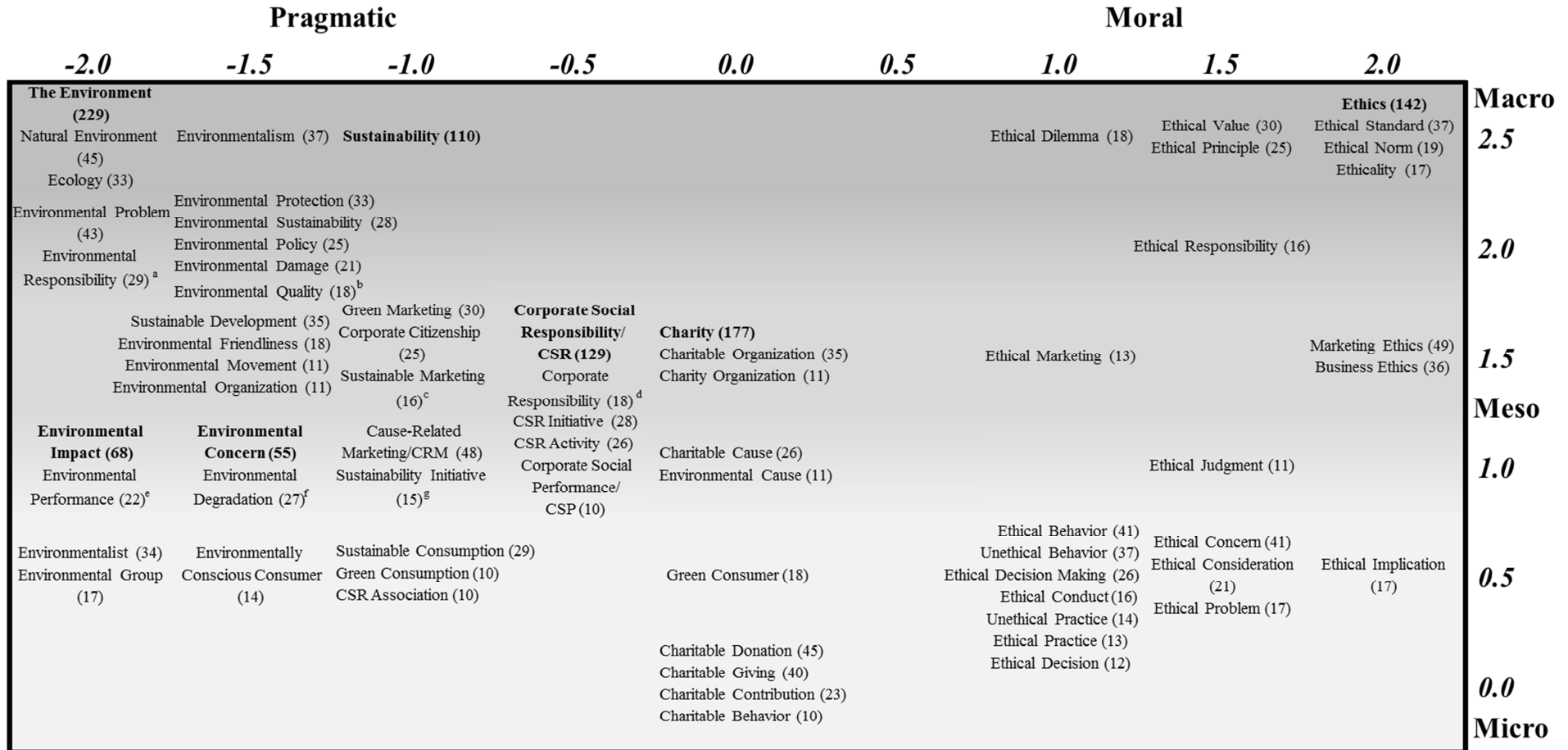


Figure 1

STRUCTURING MARKETING ETHICS TERMINOLOGY (*continued*)

B: Social

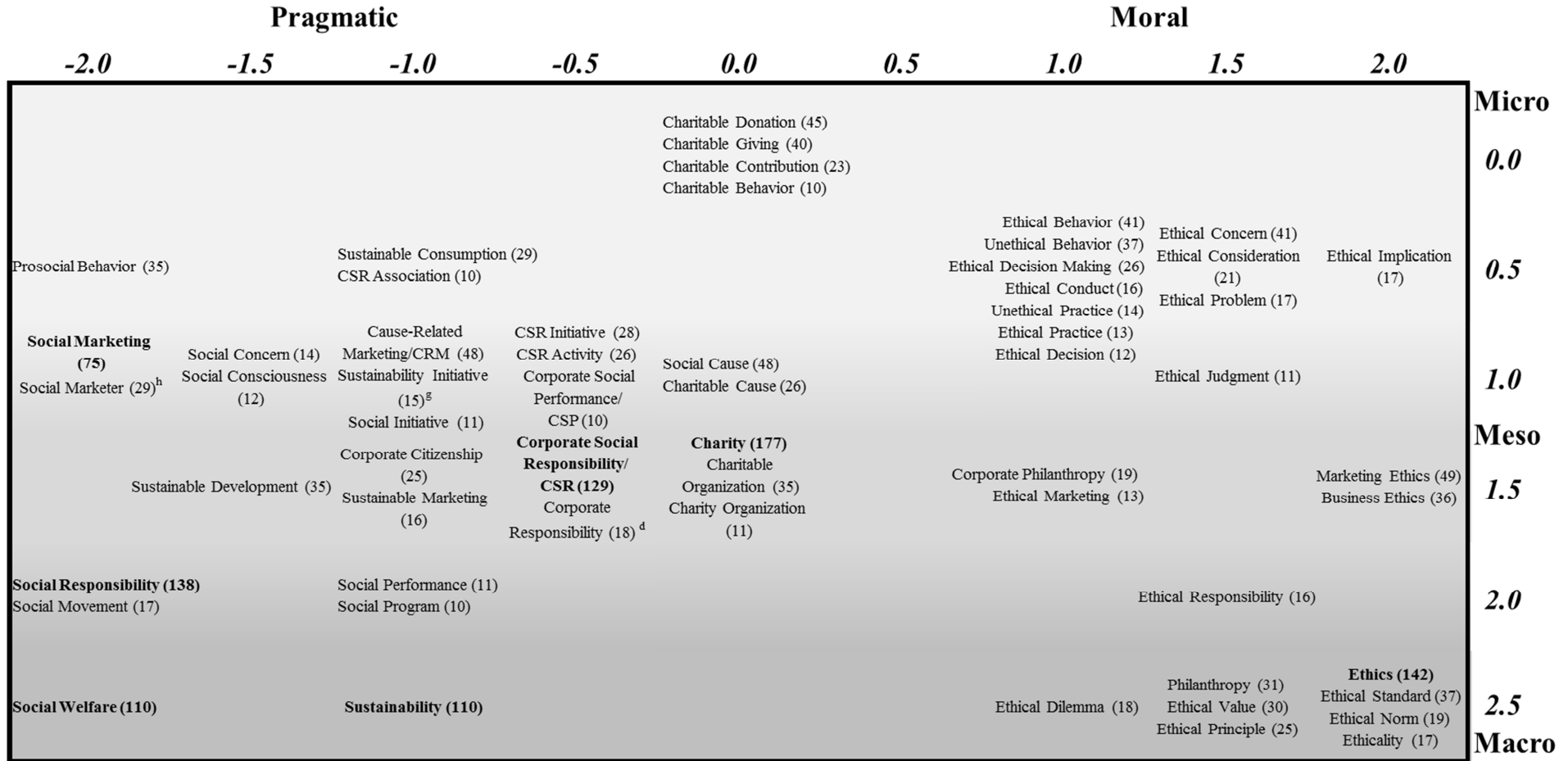


Figure 1

STRUCTURING MARKETING ETHICS TERMINOLOGY (*continued*)

C: Exponents/Further Relevant Terms & Notes

^a *Environmental Goal (12), Environmental Challenge (10)*

^b *Environmental Regulation (14), Environmental Value (14), Environmental Standard (13), Ecological Sustainability (11)*

^c *Environmental Marketing (13), Greenwashing (13), Greening (10)*

^d *CSR Program (14), CSR Strategy (11)*

^e *Environmental Pollution (19), Environmental Consequence (16), Proenvironmental Behavior (16), Environmental Practice (12), Environmentally Responsible Behavior (11)*

^f *Ecological Concern (13), Environmental Consciousness (12)*

^g *Cause Marketing/CM (11), CRM Campaign (10)*

^h *Social Marketing Campaign (17), Socially Responsible Behavior (17)*

Notes: CSR = corporate social responsibility. CRM = cause-related marketing. Numbers in brackets show in how many different papers a term is used. Terms are sorted according to these numbers. Terms with appearance rates >50 are printed in bold.

Evolution of Marketing Ethics Terminology

First of all, the number of papers (in important marketing journals) using ethics-related terminology has increased. The effect becomes smaller but does hold when we control for the number of published articles per year. This control seems important as there is a general rise in the numbers of published papers per year. Additionally, the number of selected ethics-related terms has also increased. This effect might stand for a general increase of marketing ethics terminology but could also be interpreted as an increasing use of the most common marketing ethics terms. However, our analyses could rule out the latter explanation. A control for number of published papers revealed the same main effect for number of ethics-related terms. Figure 2 shows general trends in the usage of marketing ethics terminology. These effects also hold if *JMM* and *JPPM* papers are excluded from the sample.

Figure 2A illustrates the development for the number of selected papers. Three phases can be identified: a stagnation phase from 2000 to 2002 (negligible total increase and small periodic variation), a small boom between 2003 and 2007 (small total increase), and a big boom beginning in 2007 (high total increase and high periodic variation). A control for number of overall annual publications (Figure 2B) leads the small boom to disappear, that is, a longer stagnation phase occurs between 2000 and 2007 (negligible total increase and small periodic variation). We find no substantial change with regard to the big boom phase beginning in 2007.

Figure 2C depicts the progress for the number of selected ethics-related terms. Again, three phases emerge: a stagnation phase from 2000 till 2003 (no total increase and small periodic variation), followed by a small boom beginning in 2003 (small total increase and high periodic variation) and a big boom beginning in 2007 (high total increase and high periodic variation). A control for number of annual publications (Figure 2D) again leads to only two remaining phases, that is, a stagnation phase until 2007 (negligible total increase but high periodic variation) and a big boom beginning in 2007 (high total increase and high periodic variation).

It has to be noted that 2011 numbers of selected papers and terms are biased through the aforementioned special issue on sustainability. However, this does not change the overall trends which

we identified. We like to emphasize three additional findings: First, selected papers and terms show similar patterns insofar as three phases (stagnation, small and big boom) turn into two (stagnation, big boom) when controlling for number of overall annual publications. Second, no linear increases but rather high periodic variations could be detected. Finally, marketing ethics seems currently situated in a big boom phase where it is also unclear what will come next. However, we speculate that the relevance of marketing ethics will continue to rise as will be discussed later.

Marketing Ethics across Journals

First, Figure 3 shows the degree (or percentage) of relevant papers (Figures 3A, 3B) and terms (Figures 3C, 3D) out of a certain outlet. Second, Table 2 lists the most common terms of every journal. Third, Figure 4 indicates how often the most relevant terms were used by journal. Finally, Figure 5 shows how often terms out of a certain term field were used by journal. In the following, key results will be extracted from Figures 3, 4, and 5 as well as from Table 2. Differences between outlets will be analyzed journal by journal.

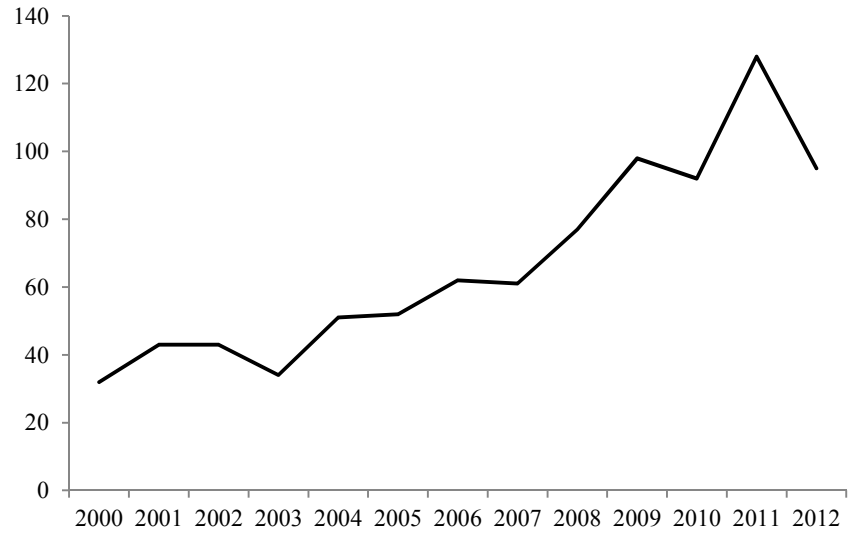
International Journal of Research in Marketing (IJRM): The percentage of selected *IJRM* papers and terms is slightly below average, with a small total increase and high periodic variations over time. The most common terms are CSR, the environment, and charity, whilst sustainability is sparsely used. Compared to other outlets, the number for CSR appears to be quite high. Low term field numbers can be identified for charity, ethics, and sustainability.

Journal of Consumer Psychology (JCP): The percentage of selected *JCP* papers is distinctively pronounced (17.72%). Over time, there is a small increase comprising high periodic variations. However, the percentage of selected terms is not comparably high with also no substantial increase over time. On the one hand, charity and charitable donation are very common in general and CRM compared to other outlets. On the other hand, CSR and social welfare are not used this often and sustainability not at all. A comparable high term field number arises for charity and a low one for sustainability.

Figure 2

GENERAL TRENDS OVER TIME

A: Number of Selected Papers



B: Number of Selected Papers/Number of Published Papers

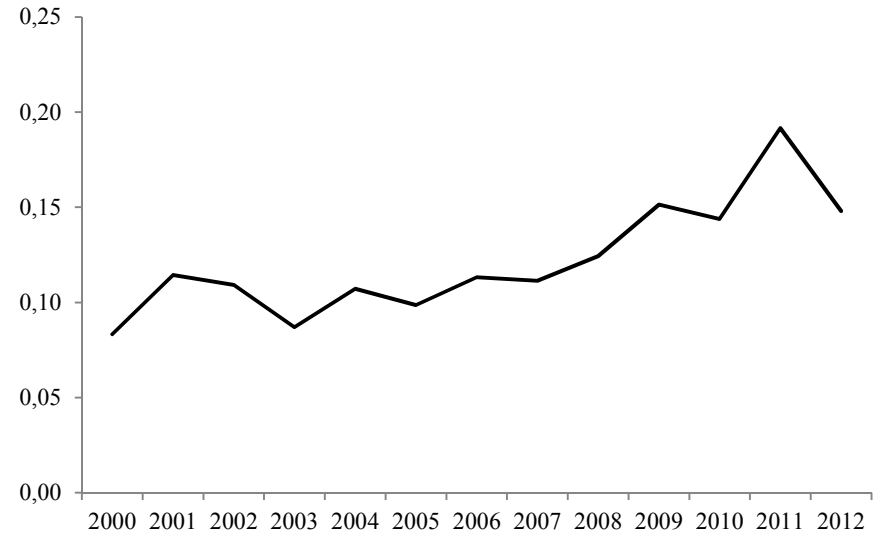


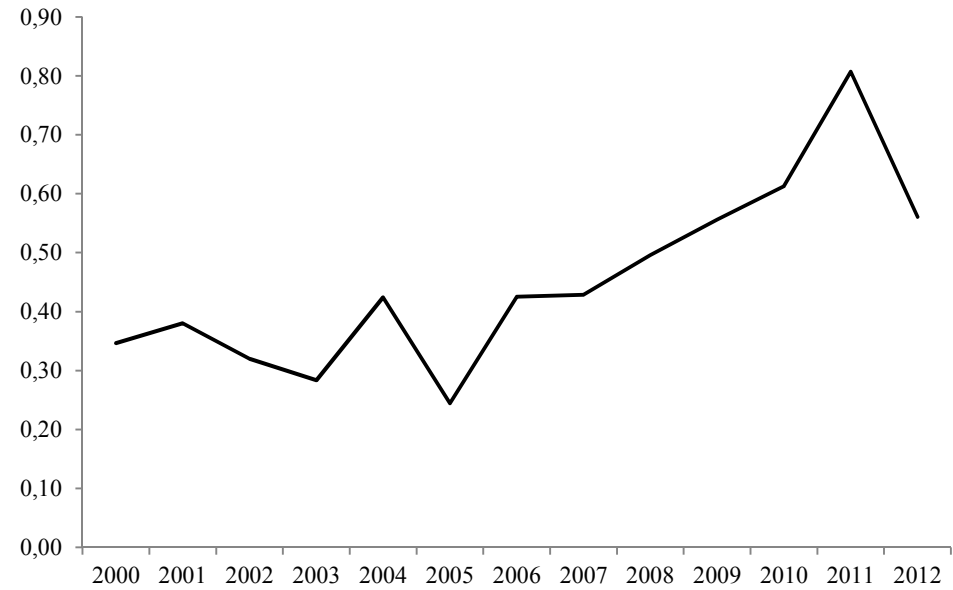
Figure 2

GENERAL TRENDS OVER TIME (*continued*)

C: Number of Selected Terms



D: Number of Selected Terms/Number of Published Papers

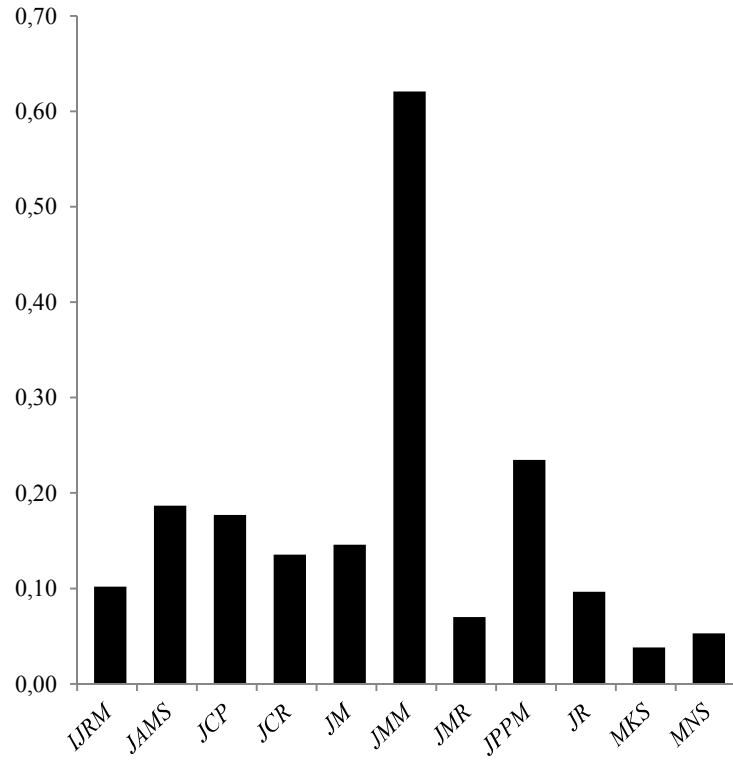


Notes: Year 2011 is 'biased' through a special issue about sustainability.

Figure 3

GENERAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JOURNALS

A: Number of SP/Number of PP per outlet (Σ)



B: Number of SP/Number of PP per outlet

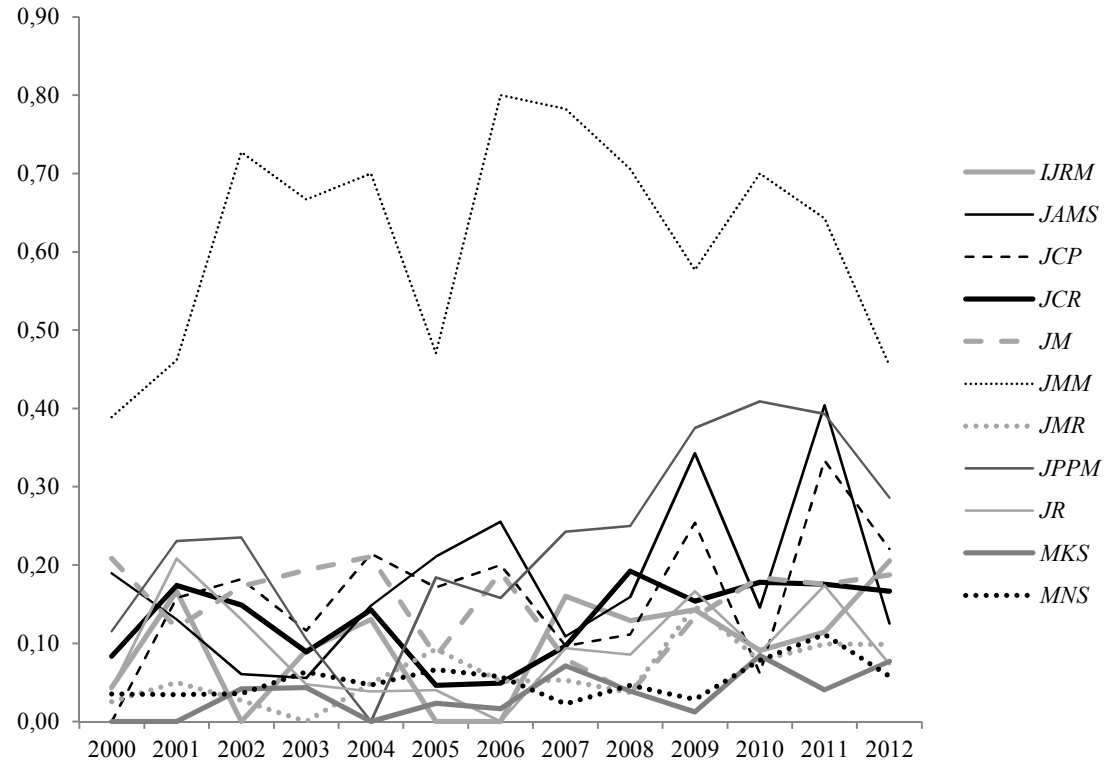
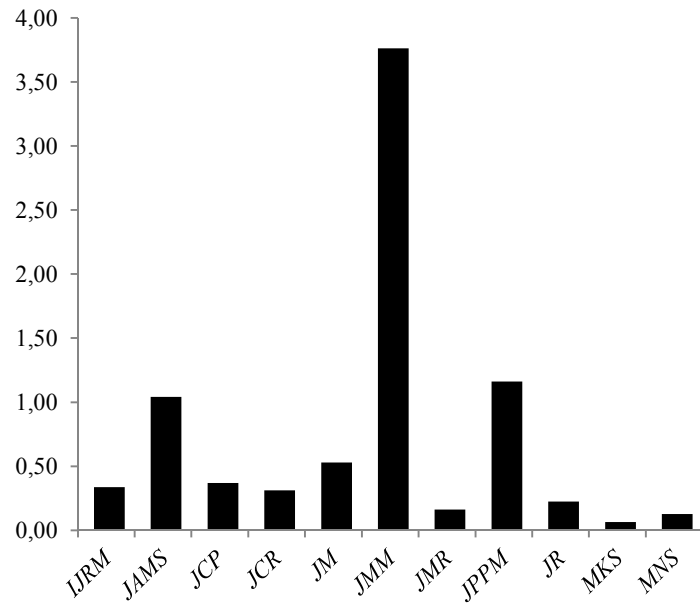


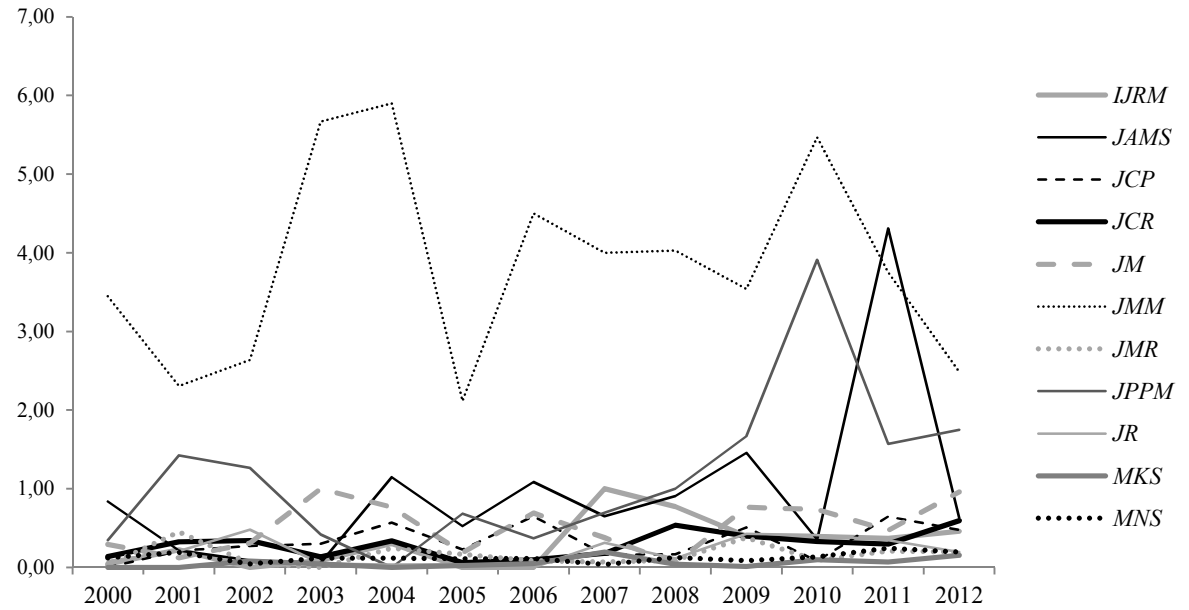
Figure 3

GENERAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JOURNALS (continued)

C: Number of ST/Number of PP per outlet (Σ)



D: Number of ST/Number of PP per outlet



Notes: SP = selected papers, PP = published papers, ST = selected papers. Used journal abbreviations are *IJRM* (International Journal of Research in Marketing), *JAMS* (Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science), *JCP* (Journal of Consumer Psychology), *JCR* (Journal of Consumer Research), *JM* (Journal of Marketing), *JMM* (Journal of Macromarketing), *JMR* (Journal of Marketing Research), *JPPM* (Journal of Public Policy & Marketing), *JR* (Journal of Retailing), *MKS* (Marketing Science), and *MNS* (Management Science). Year 2011 is 'biased' through a special issue about sustainability.

Table 2

OFTEN USED TERMS BY JOURNAL

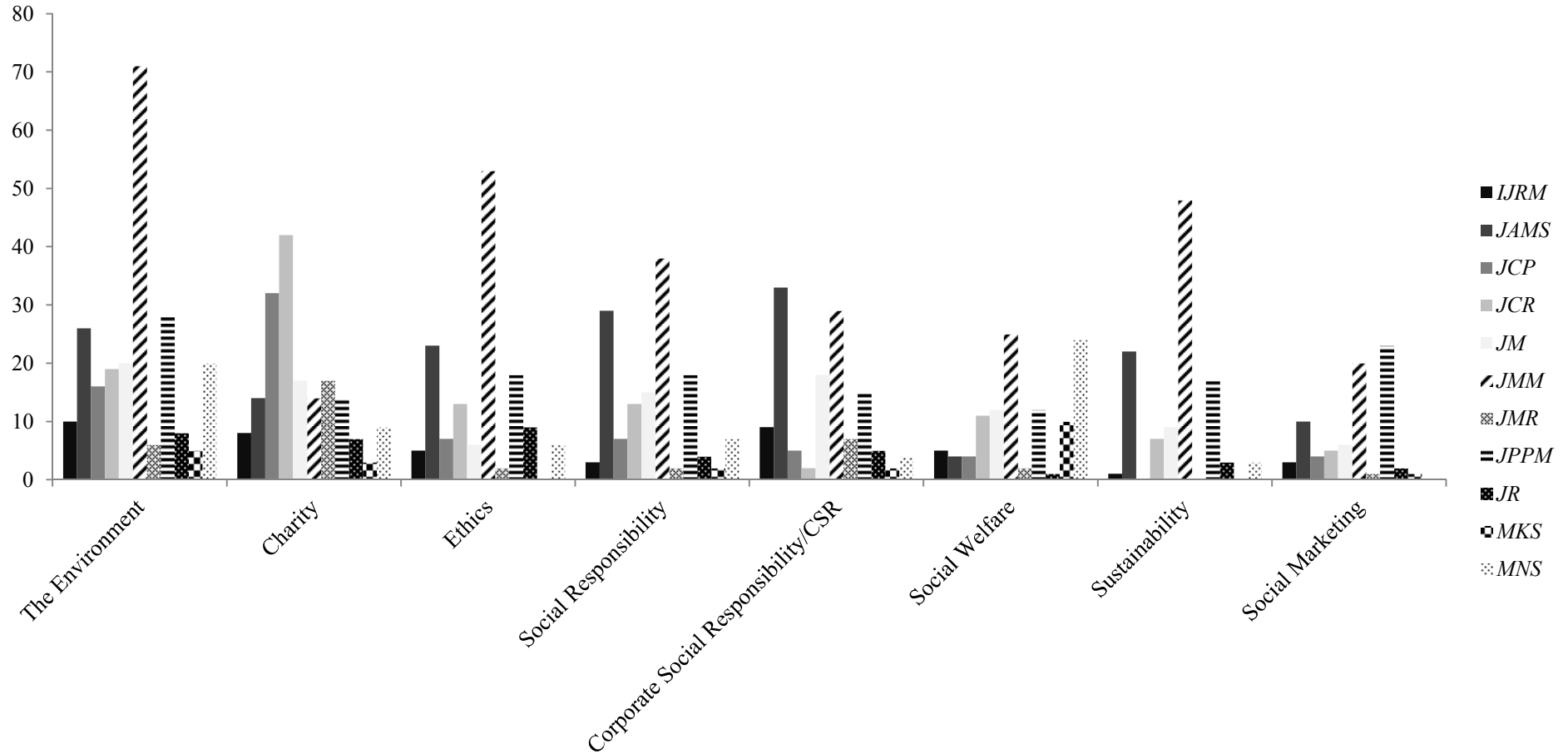
Journal	Terms	Journal	Terms
<i>International Journal of Research in Marketing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environment 10 • Corporate Social Responsibility/CSR 9 • Charity 8 • Ethics 5 • Social Cause 5 • Social Welfare 5 	<i>Journal of Public Policy & Marketing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environment 28 • Social Marketing 23 • Ethics 18 • Social Responsibility 18 • Sustainability 17 • Corporate Social Responsibility/CSR 15 • Charity 14 • Social Welfare 12
<i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity 32 • The Environment 16 • Charitable Donation 10 • Social Responsibility 7 • Ethics 7 	<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics 9 • The Environment 8 • Charity 7 • Corporate Social Responsibility/CSR 5
<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity 42 • The Environment 19 • Social Responsibility 13 • Ethics 13 • Charitable Donation 11 • Social Welfare 11 • Prosocial Behavior 10 	<i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science^a</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Social Responsibility/CSR 33 • Social Responsibility 29 • The Environment 26 • Ethics 23 • Sustainability 22 • Charity 14 • Ethical Behavior 14 • Cause-Related Marketing/CRM 13
<i>Journal of Macromarketing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environment 71 • Ethics 53 • Sustainability 48 • Social Responsibility 38 • Corporate Social Responsibility/CSR 29 • Marketing Ethics 29 • Social Welfare 25 • Environmental Impact 24 	<i>Management Science</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Welfare 24 • The Environment 20 • Environmental Impact 15 • Charity 9 • Social Responsibility 7
<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environment 20 • Corporate Social Responsibility/CSR 18 • Charity 17 • Social Responsibility 15 • Social Welfare 12 	<i>Marketing Science</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Welfare 10 • The Environment 5 • Charity 3
<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity 17 • Corporate Social Responsibility/CSR 7 • Charitable Giving 7 		

^aJournal includes a special issue about sustainability.

Notes: Numbers show how many times a term is used.

Figure 4

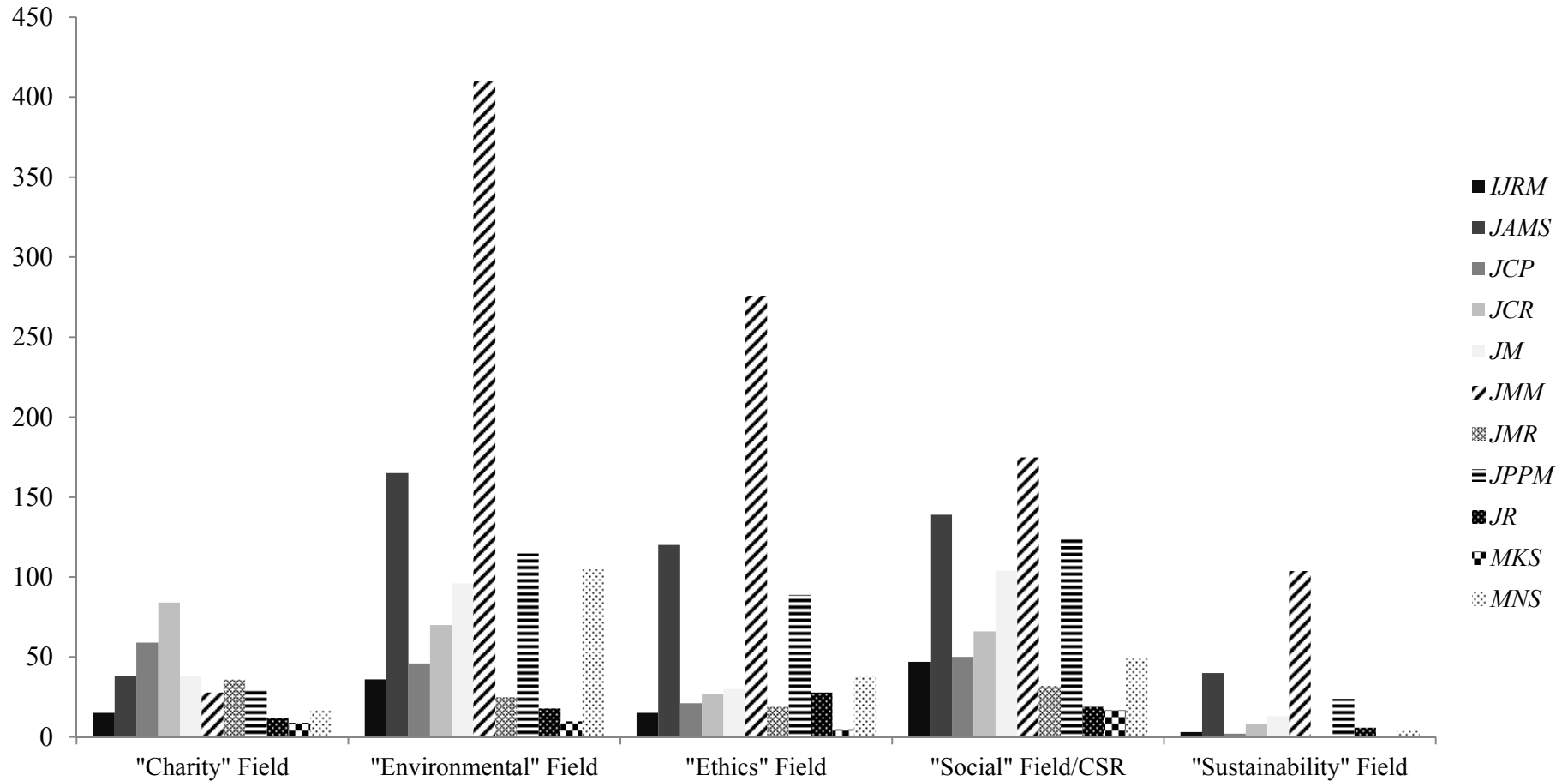
SPECIFIC TERM-USE BY JOURNAL



Notes: CSR = corporate social responsibility. Used journal abbreviations are *IJRM* (*International Journal of Research in Marketing*), *JAMS* (*Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*), *JCP* (*Journal of Consumer Psychology*), *JCR* (*Journal of Consumer Research*), *JM* (*Journal of Marketing*), *JMM* (*Journal of Macromarketing*), *JMR* (*Journal of Marketing Research*), *JPPM* (*Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*), *JR* (*Journal of Retailing*), *MKS* (*Marketing Science*), and *MNS* (*Management Science*).

Figure 5

SPECIFIC TERM FIELD USE BY JOURNAL



Notes: CSR = corporate social responsibility. Used journal abbreviations are *IJRM* (*International Journal of Research in Marketing*), *JAMS* (*Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*), *JCP* (*Journal of Consumer Psychology*), *JCR* (*Journal of Consumer Research*), *JM* (*Journal of Marketing*), *JMM* (*Journal of Macromarketing*), *JMR* (*Journal of Marketing Research*), *JPPM* (*Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*), *JR* (*Journal of Retailing*), *MKS* (*Marketing Science*), and *MNS* (*Management Science*).

Journal of Consumer Research (JCR): In general, marketing ethics terminology is quite common in this journal although numbers for specific terms differ significantly. There is no substantial trend over time despite some fundamental variations (for number of selected papers and terms). *JCR* appears to be the leading journal for the terms charity and charitable donation as well as for terminology from the charity field. Furthermore, this journal makes comparably much use of the terms social responsibility, social welfare, ethics, and sustainability. Whilst quite common in other outlets, CSR and CRM are not frequently used in *JCR*. Finally, *JCR* comprises several articles building on consumer culture theory (CCT). It appears that CCT research differs from other articles in type of language and often lacks a constant use of specific terms. Therefore, it is difficult to identify concrete constructs in this research field.

Journal of Macromarketing (JMM): Numbers of selected papers and terms are by far highest for *JMM*. There appears to be no further increase across time which might reflect a certain degree of saturation (as a result of the existing high importance of marketing ethics terminology). Especially the terms the environment, ethics, and sustainability are often used. *JMM* is also the leading outlet for the terms ethics, social responsibility, social welfare, and sustainability. On the contrary, charity is only used at an average rate. Finally, *JMM* reaches highest numbers for all term fields except the charity field.

Journal of Marketing (JM): Numbers for selected papers and terms appear to be quite high, although there is only high periodic variation but no substantial increase over time. *JM* often uses the CSR term as well as social responsibility in general and also in comparison to other outlets. Apart from the ethics term, most common ethics-related marketing terms show high frequencies of use in this journal (e.g., CSR, social cause, social responsibility, social welfare, sustainability, the environment). The majority of terms stems from the environmental and from the social field. Indeed, *JM* seems to be a journal with a very large variety of different terms. Despite *JM*'s high importance for marketing ethics, the CSR abbreviation is not absolutely established in its meaning as it is also used in the sense of *customer service representatives* (Jasmand, Blazevic, and de Ruyter 2012). Furthermore, sometimes terms are not used as different terms but as equivalents (e.g., ethicality and sustainability; Luchs et al. 2010).

Journal of Marketing Research (JMR): Although Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) published a very famous and often cited CSR-paper in *JMR*, marketing ethics terminology tends to be not very prevalent in this outlet. Numbers of selected papers and terms are quite low, although there seems to be a small increase over time with regard to selected papers. Most ethics-related terms are used sparsely (the environment, social responsibility, ethics) or not at all (sustainability). Environmental and sustainability field are especially underrepresented in *JMR*. Notably, charity appears to be the only term which is used comparably often.

Journal of Public Policy & Marketing (JPPM): This journal ranks second with regard to numbers of selected papers and terms. A significant increase can be seen in both selections, however periodic variations are high. The environment as well as social marketing are amongst the most used terms. Use numbers for the most important ethics-related terms are above average. *JPPM* holds the top position for the term social marketing, while the charity term is only averagely used. The outlet reaches the third position (after *JMM* and *JAMS*) for all term fields except the charity field.

Journal of Retailing (JR): Numbers of selected papers and terms can be interpreted as slightly below average with no substantial increase but high periodic variations for papers. Similarly to *JMR*, most common ethics-related marketing terms are not very prevalent, that is, only ethics appears comparably often in *JR*. Indeed, *JR* is at the bottom of all outlets concerning the use of social welfare, charitable action, and social cause. Finally, numbers for specific fields are quite low, above all for the fields charity, environmental, and social.

Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS): *JAMS* shows to have a leading position in marketing ethics. First, 18.68% of all papers made it into the final sample. Second, the ratio between selected terms and published papers is 1.04 (average across all outlets: 0.74; average across outlets without *JMM* and *JPPM*: 0.35). Finally, despite high periodic variations, numbers of selected papers and terms have risen to a noteworthy high level, although 2011 results are partly biased through the special issue on sustainability. In particular, *JAMS* is ranked highly in the use of the terms CSR (first), CRM (first), social responsibility (second), ethics (second), sustainability (second), and the environment (third). Interestingly, this is opposed to only average use of the terms charity, charitable

donation, and social welfare. On a field level, *JAMS* is ranked second after *JMM* in all fields except for the charity field.

Marketing Science (MKS): Ethics-related terminology does not play an important role in *MKS*. Notably, *MKS* is ranked last with regard to number of selected papers (substantial increase over time) and terms (no significant increase). Only the macroeconomic term social welfare is used at a substantial rate. The journal holds also the last position in all five marketing ethics fields. Interestingly, the CSR abbreviation stands for *customer-specific return* (Palmatier, Gopalakrishna, and Houston 2006) and the term *environment* is frequently used in a generic ‘non-green’ sense.

Management Science (MNS): Relatively (i.e., in relation to the total number of published papers in this journal) and apart from *MKS*, *MNS* seems to be the least important outlet for marketing ethics terminology. Numbers for selected papers (small increase over time) and terms (no significant increase) are well below average. Many terms such as CSR, charitable donation, and CRM are comparably uncommon in *MNS*. On the contrary, the outlet is ranked second for the use of social welfare and environmental impact (after *JMM*) and average with regard to the environment. The journal performs above average for the fields ethics and environmental. Curiously, researchers publishing in *MNS* use the abbreviation CSR for various different expressions: *cross-sectional regression* (Jagannathan et al. 2012), *customer sales representative* (Iravani, Kolfal, and Van Oyen 2007), *customer service representative* (Keskinocak, Ravi, and Tayur 2001), and *customer support representative* (Xue, Hitt, and Chen 2011).

In the following, some general issues about differences between journals will be outlined. To begin with, it is no big surprise that *JMM* and *JPPM* reach very high use numbers for ethics-related terminology. Therefore, our results confirm these outlets’ important role for the marketing ethics field. *JAMS* also holds a leading position in the use of marketing ethics terminology. This is in line with Nill and Schibrowsky (2007) who find this outlet ranked highest (out of the eleven journals at hand) in terms of number of marketing ethics articles. Furthermore, our result supports *JAMS*’ high *marketing*

ethics impact factor with regard to number of citations, calculated by Schlegelmilch and Öberseder (2010).

Second, in comparison to the number of published articles, *MKS* and *MNS* make relatively rare use of marketing ethics terminology. This supports Nill and Schibrowsky (2007), who rank these outlets at the bottom of the leading marketing journals (concerning the number of marketing ethics articles). However, the macroeconomic term social welfare is comparably common in *MKS* and *MNS*, which is then usually illustrated or measured via theoretical formulas.

Third, *JCR* and *JCP* show a clear focus on charity terminology whilst more strategic terminology such as CSR is not very common. This might trace back to the more individualistic consumer perspective which distinguishes these outlets from other outlets which tend to be rather corporate-driven, that is, employ a more macroeconomic perspective.

Ultimately, some term specific characteristics are stated against the backdrop of different journals. To begin with, the environment is comparably often used across journals. Charity appears to have a high relative proportion for most journals, but interestingly this number is averagely low for *JAMS* (which is across all terms one of the leading journals for marketing ethics terminology). CSR is the most common term in *JAMS* and number second in *JM*, *IJRM*, and *JMR*. As mentioned above, social welfare is number one in *MNS* and *MKS*. Notably, *JAMS* (together with *JMM* and *JPPM*) shows an important role regarding the use of the sustainability term. This term is rarely used in other journals and not at all in *JCP*, *JMR*, and *MKS*. As a side note, the abbreviation CRM also describes the issue *customer relationship management* (Holm, Kumar, and Rohde 2012). In addition to that, some authors use the abbreviation CM for the term cause-related marketing (Krishna and Rajan 2009).

Key Papers for Marketing Ethics Terminology

Every specific journal article makes use of a certain number of different ethics-related terms. In particular, an average number of 3.77 terms are used per selected paper (ranging from 1 to 33 out of 105 selected ethics-related terms). Table 3 shows the papers (column one) with the highest numbers of

used terms (column two). The third column is important insofar as it controls for the amount of different terms used in the specific year the respective paper was published. That is to say, the listed paper makes use of a certain percentage of different terms 'common' for a specific year. The higher the percentage, the more important is the paper for the respective year. The fourth column controls for the journal the paper was published. In other words, a paper's relative influence decreases for outlets using a high amount of different ethics terms and vice versa. For instance, papers published in *JMR* and *MNS* (compared to *JAMS* papers) can gain higher relative influence with lower absolute term numbers. The reason is that *JAMS* makes use of more different terms than *JMR* and *MNS*. The fifth column combines columns three and four and determines a paper's relative influence by controlling for publication year and outlet. The information if a certain percentage is rather high, average, or low can only be extracted when this number is compared with other numbers in the same column. The notes of Table 3 contain a more detailed explanation how the stated numbers can be interpreted.

To begin with, we like to highlight some general findings. First, many of the papers were published in 2011. Second, eight out of the top 18 papers were published in *JMM* and six in *JAMS*. While it is no big surprise that many key papers stem from *JMM*, data again shows *JAMS*' outstanding role for marketing ethics. Third, several key papers were printed in the aforementioned special issue about sustainability. Finally, three specific papers have to be highlighted: Crane (2000), Pelozo and Shang (2011) as well as Sen and Bhattacharya (2001). The first one has the highest absolute position by using 33 different terms but also shows top values with regard to year and outlet. However, other papers (e.g., Chen 2001) overcome its combined percentage per journal and year. The paper by Pelozo and Shang (2011) is the best positioned paper published not in *JMM*, although its relative term use per journal and year is not very high. This might be a result of the high number of ethics-related *JAMS* publications in 2011. The paper by Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) displays a very high relative position with regard to percentage per journal as well as per journal and year. This article was published in *JMR*. As *JMR* is a journal usually not focusing on business ethics, this article appears to be even more special. Indeed, the paper by Sen and Bhattacharya is one of the most cited CSR articles ever.

As mentioned before, the article by Pelozo and Shang (2011) is (apart from four articles published in *JMM*) on top of the ranking for absolute numbers, which is not surprising as this paper deals with a wide range of different CSR activities. Two further generic articles (also published in *JAMS*) about the relationship between sustainability and consumption (Huang and Rust 2011) and the structure of sustainability research (Chabowski et al. 2011) rank second and third. In comparison to the respective year, the article by Crane (2000) about the role of morality for marketing to the natural environment shows the highest influence rate, followed by Laczniak and Murphy (2006) and Banerjee et al. (2003). The articles by Crane (2000), Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) as well as Laczniak and Kennedy (2011) are very influential with respect to the specific journal. Lastly, Chen's article about green product development (2001) is fairly influential when having controlled for journal and year. This paper was published in *Management Science* which in turn does not show a high affinity towards marketing ethics terminology. Again, Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) make it under the 'top three', completed by Maignan and Ferrell (2004) with their paper about CSR and marketing.

Table 3

KEY INFLUENTIAL PAPERS

Paper (journal)	Number of different terms used	Percentage per year	Percentage per journal	Percentage per journal and year
Crane 2000 (<i>JMM</i>)	33	47.14%	32.35%	82.50%
Laczniak and Kennedy 2011 (<i>JMM</i>)	31	31.63%	30.39%	55.36%
Laczniak and Murphy 2006 (<i>JMM</i>)	30	39.47%	29.41%	63.83%
Prothero, McDonagh, and Dobscha 2010 (<i>JMM</i>)	27	29.03%	26.47%	40.30%
Peloza and Shang 2011 (<i>JAMS</i>) ^a	27	27.55%	27.27%	35.06%
Huang and Rust 2011 (<i>JAMS</i>) ^a	23	23.47%	23.23%	29.87%
Chabowski et al. 2011 (<i>JAMS</i>) ^a	23	23.47%	23.23%	29.87%
Maignan and Ferrell 2004 (<i>JAMS</i>)	23	31.08%	23.23%	88.46%
Martin and Johnson 2010 (<i>JPPM</i>)	22	23.66%	22.68%	44.90%
Varey 2010 (<i>JMM</i>)	22	23.66%	21.57%	32.84%
Prothero and Fitchett 2000 (<i>JMM</i>)	21	30.00%	20.59%	52.50%
Nill and Schibrowsky 2007 (<i>JMM</i>)	21	26.92%	20.59%	42.86%
Grein and Gould 2007 (<i>JMM</i>)	21	26.92%	20.59%	42.86%
Dobscha and Ozanne 2001 (<i>JPPM</i>)	20	28.99%	20.62%	66.67%
Banerjee et al. 2003 (<i>JM</i>)	20	34.48%	23.81%	71.43%
Sheth et al. 2011 (<i>JAMS</i>) ^a	20	20.41%	20.20%	25.97%
Cronin et al. 2011 (<i>JAMS</i>) ^a	20	20.41%	20.20%	25.97%
Chen 2001 (<i>MNS</i>)	19	27.54%	28.79%	90.48%
...
Sen and Bhattacharya 2001 (<i>JMR</i>)	16	23.19%	30.77%	88.89%

^aPaper was published in a special issue about sustainability.

Notes: Used journal abbreviations are *JAMS* (*Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*), *JM* (*Journal of Marketing*), *JMM* (*Journal of Macromarketing*), *JMR* (*Journal of Marketing Research*), *JPPM* (*Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*), and *MNS* (*Management Science*). The table is sorted according to the 'number of different terms used'. This number shows the general influence of a specific paper with regard to marketing ethics terminology. The third column ('percentage per year') measures the relative influence a paper has (concerning marketing ethics terminology) for the specific year it was published. It is calculated by dividing 'number of different terms used' through the number of different terms used by all papers in this year. The fourth column ('percentage per journal') measures the relative influence a paper has for the specific journal it was published. It is calculated by dividing 'number of different terms used' through the number of different terms used by all papers in this outlet. The last column ('percentage per journal and year') measures the relative influence a paper has for the specific outlet and year the paper was published. It is calculated by dividing 'number of different terms used' through the number of different terms used by all papers published in this outlet and in this year at the same time.

Example: Peloza and Shang (2011) use 27 different terms. In the year of this publication (i.e., 2011), 98 different terms are used across all papers in eleven outlets. Therefore, the paper makes use of 27.55% (= 27/98) terms common for 2011. All articles published in *JAMS* use 99 different terms. Therefore, the paper makes use of 27.27% (=27/99) terms common for *JAMS*. All articles published in *JAMS* in 2011 use 77 different terms. Therefore, the paper makes use of 35.06% (=27/77) terms common for *JAMS* in 2011.

Strength Rates of Specific Terms

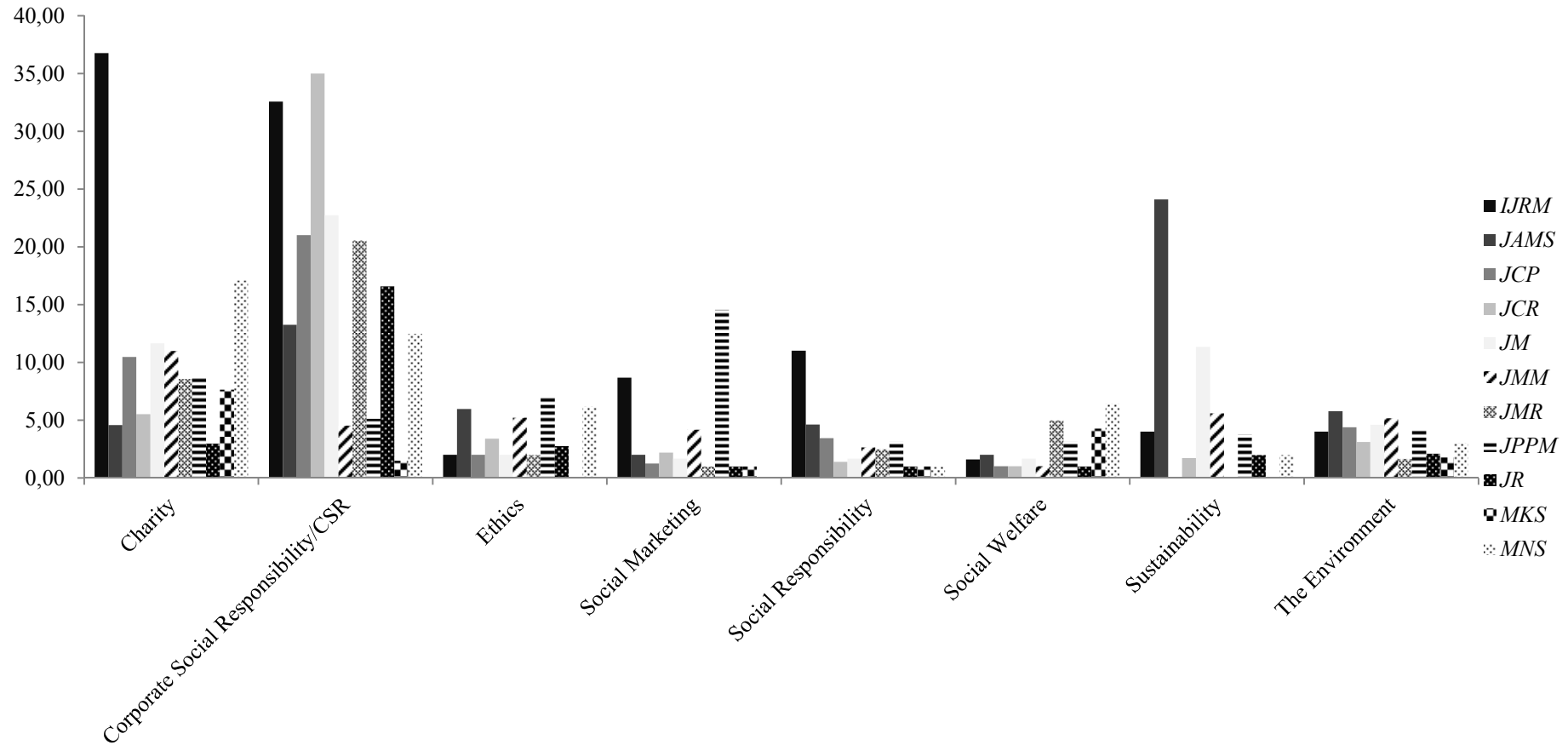
If a term is used in a specific article, it appears on average 3.89 times in this paper (i.e., its specific strength is 3.89). The higher the strength rate, the more important is the use of this term for the article at hand. However, there are huge differences between different terms and outlets. Figure 6 gives an overview about the use rates of the most relevant marketing ethics terms.

To begin with, the CSR term shows very high strength rates all across different outlets (13.98). Only the rates for cause marketing (35.09), CSP (24.80), and CSR activity (14.77) appear to be higher. High values are also reached for environmental standard (12.92) and CSR association (10.30). On the contrary, average rates for other important terms such as social marketing (6.60), ethics (4.83), the environment (4.34), or social welfare (2.95) are comparably low. Lowest strength rates can be found for environmental movement (1.18), corporate philanthropy (1.16), and environmental challenge (1.10).

Next, strength rates can be calculated term-wise for specific outlets. In particular, very high strength rates are reached for charity in *IJRM* (36.75), CSR in *IJRM* (32.56) and *JCR* (35.00) as well as for sustainability in *JAMS* (24.09). The highest rates can be found for cause marketing in *MNS* (274.00) and *JCP* (42.00), CSP in *JM* (113.00), CSR activity in *JCP* (63.00), environmental standard in *MNS* (38.75) as well as for prosocial behavior in *MNS* (36.50).

Figure 6

STRENGTH MEASUREMENT OF THE MOST COMMON TERMS



Notes: CSR = corporate social responsibility. Used journal abbreviations are IJRM (International Journal of Research in Marketing), JAMS (Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science), JCP (Journal of Consumer Psychology), JCR (Journal of Consumer Research), JM (Journal of Marketing), JMM (Journal of Macromarketing), JMR (Journal of Marketing Research), JPPM (Journal of Public Policy & Marketing), JR (Journal of Retailing), MKS (Marketing Science), and MNS (Management Science).

Finally, there are several examples for papers using a specific term as a keyword only. Among these articles are Agrawal et al. (2012; green marketing), Barone, Norman, and Miyazaki (2007; charitable contribution), Chabowski et al. (2011; corporate responsibility), Dobson and Gerstner (2010; social responsibility), Huang and Rust (2011; environmental policy), İşlegen and Reichelstein (2011; the environment), Scholder Ellen, Webb, and Mohr (2006; cause marketing/CM) as well as Shang, Reed, and Croson (2008; philanthropy, charitable giving). These findings are interesting insofar as authors or editors acknowledge the terms' essential *meaning* for the respective paper. However, this is not reflected by term use in the paper. This leads to the assumption that the term's meaning can be very important for the article although the specific term seems to be not important at all, but rather provides readers with a helpful device to contentwise classify the paper at hand.

Overall Discussion

The authors contribute to the field of business ethics in several ways. First and to the best of our knowledge, there is not much research dealing with an analysis of contemporary marketing ethics terminology in leading marketing journals. This appears to be important as business ethics has been shown to be an integral part for marketing in theory and practice alike. Ethics terminology is analyzed both on an overall and on a term-by-term level. Second, a general framework listing and structuring various ethics-related terms constitutes a helpful device for academic researchers. Third, trends and journal specific differences lead to a deepened comprehension with regard to the relevance of different terms such as charitable contribution, CSR, or sustainability. Forth, specific papers could be identified to be very influential concerning the use of marketing ethics terminology.

The authors propose a three-dimensional framework in order to improve structuring ethics-related terminology used in contemporary marketing research (Figure 1). Although this perspective emphasizes environmental and societal aspects, individual stakeholders (consumers, employees, etc.) are also part of the framework. Furthermore, it offers a flexible structure concerning the integration of

additional terms and relevant subdimensions. Despite a wide range of included ethics-related marketing terms, several aspects had to be left out (e.g., economic issues of corporate responsibility and sustainability). This also depends on the working definition for the marketing ethics term which we have developed in our paper. It is important to note that other working definitions would have led to the selection or non-selection of different terms which would have changed specific aspects (but not the general nature) of the framework, too.

Interestingly, marketing ethics terminology has gained much importance from 2000 to 2012 in several of the selected leading marketing journals. However, there appear to be surprisingly high periodic variations for most outlets. These can be interpreted as an indirect reaction by journal editors, academia in general, or by a journal's specific research community: On the one hand, high numbers of marketing ethics terminology might stand for a certain degree of saturation (concerning marketing ethics) in a specific journal, thereby resulting in a temporary decrease of term use for the near future. On the other hand, low numbers indicate a short-time lack of marketing ethics which leads the community to draw on more ethics-related terms in the following year. In other words, the overall increase in the usage of marketing ethics terminology is influenced by short-term academic reactions with respect to the journal's latest 'needs' for marketing ethics.

Use of marketing ethics terms differs significantly between journals. Beyond a very influential special issue about sustainability, our research reveals a leading role of *JAMS* in the business ethics field. This is also in line with Wilkie and Moore (2012), who note that many ethics and CSR articles have been published in *JAMS* already since 1990. Therefore, the authors suggest that *JAMS* should expand this role to become even more attractive as publication outlet for business ethics researchers. Whilst *MKS* and *MNS* show a tendency toward macroeconomic business ethics terminology, *JAMS* and *JM* (and with reservations also *IJRM*, *JMR*, and *JR*) appear to be more 'mainstream'. *JCP* and *JCR* can be connected with a rather microeconomic (i.e., individual) ethics-related terminology. Notably, it is no surprise that *JMM* and (to a lower degree) *JPPM* constitute important outlets for marketing ethics terminology.

Several important papers have been identified. The often cited *JMR*-paper by Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) appears to be of high relevance for the business ethics field, although it is not published in *JAMS* or *JMM* but in a rather ‘exotic’ journal concerning ethics-related terminology. In general, we speculate the number of different used terms (instead of number of citations) to be an alternative and innovative way in determining a journal’s or paper’s relative influence on the field.

Limitations

Undoubtedly, our research underlies several limitations. To begin with, the coding process seems quite subjective as other coders might have selected different searching machines, databases, outlets, papers, and ethics-related terms. However, we argue that there are no systematic biases towards or against one of the selected terms, papers, or journals, that is, subjective components should by no means change our central results. Another limitation goes back to the well-known principle ‘garbage in, garbage out’, which means that the used search instruction already reduces the range of potential terms for the final sample. However, due to practical reasons (i.e., it is almost impossible to consider all ethics-related terms), we had to restrict the number of search words. Please note that this procedure is not only restrictive because it also allows for more focus with regard to specific analyses.

When having a look at our framework (Figure 1), it becomes clear that the absolute numbers of the selected terms might slightly differ from the numbers other coders might have detected. This is due to the fact that there is a bunch of terms which are relevant in one context but not in another one (e.g., ethics, prosocial behavior, sustainability, the environment). In addition to that, the transitions between relevant and non-relevant contexts are fluent and sometimes the context is even unclear. Ethics-related terms used in less than ten papers were also excluded from the overall sample. Nevertheless, we can again rule out any systematic bias with regard to our key results. A final aspect mentioned before is the fact that economic aspects (e.g., economic sustainability) are not part of the framework and therefore also missing in further in-depth analyses.

The authors' analyses do only comprise the years 2000 to 2012, that is, they offer only a contemporary perspective on the use of marketing ethics terminology. This problem can be solved by combining the research at hand with established business ethics papers dealing with earlier (and also future) periods of time. Furthermore, other journals apart from the eleven selected ones are not considered in the analyses. It is also important to note that a journal's focus on business ethics can be influenced by the strategic orientation of the editors in charge. Next, determining a journal's or paper's influence via citation analyses would have led to different results. Finally, the special issue about sustainability is influencing results for 2011 publications as well as for the role of *JAMS* in comparison to other outlets.

Future Research

Sustainability is an "emerging megatrend" (Lubin and Esty 2010, p. 44) and probably the most relevant marketing issue of our times (Kotler 2011; Sheth 2011). As opposed to this, notions of the sustainability term are (except in *JMM* and *JPPM*) still quite rare in leading marketing journals and many of them appear in a *JAMS* special issue from 2011. This shows that much more research in the area of sustainability is needed also concerning the explicit use of sustainability terminology.

Another issue, also acknowledged by leading marketing researchers and journal editors, is a severe lack of conceptual papers. Without doubt more conceptual business ethics papers in leading marketing journals would be helpful for academia. In addition to that, empirical business ethics papers should draw on clear and distinguishing definitions in order to increase construct validities. The difference between a term's meaning and how it is actually used could be thought-provoking for academic researchers.

The limited time frame (2000 to 2012) already offers a broad perspective on the evolvement of business ethics terminology. Nevertheless, more drastic periodic developments could be detected when analyzing a longer time frame. Another aspect points toward the fact that leading marketing journals only constitute one part of the academic marketing literature. Therefore, comparisons of overall term use or specific terms between leading, mainstream, and business ethics specific journals

might be of high interest. A direct comparison could also rest on the question in which aspects term-based influence measurement is inferior or superior as opposed to 'classical' citation analysis.

3. Transition between Paper 1 and Paper 2

Analyzing the most common marketing ethics terms and its interrelationships provides the foundation for more specific research questions in the field of unsustainable consumption and corporate social irresponsibility (CSI). As stated before, the literature analysis conducted in Paper 1 constitutes an integral part for the understanding of concepts such as sustainability and CSI. Furthermore, the analysis has been conducted following the nomological network idea and also in respect to the marketing ethics research community.

Apart from this, Paper 1 has an additional guiding function with regard to term selection. In particular, the developed framework also facilitates to choose the most adequate terminology for the following study. First, as Paper 2 focuses on individual consumers, a term from the micro field had to be chosen (*abstraction*). Second, a term comprising both environmental and social issues had to be selected (*subject*). Third, a focus should lie on natural resources, that is, a pragmatic term should be picked (*appeal*). Finally, a negative connotation had to be included in order to ‘provoke’ inner conflicts. These four aspects combined led to the decision to use the term *unsustainable consumption*.

The second paper deals with three main questions:

1. *What does sustainability mean from a consumers’ perspective (consumer sustainability)?*
2. *What kind of inner conflicts do consumers have when consuming unsustainably?*
3. *Which sort of strategies do consumers use in order to deal with their inner conflicts?*

Given the explorative nature of this research, the authors decided to conduct in-depth interviews. These interviews consisted of open questions but followed a specific guideline.

Pre-Studies of Paper 2

Before the study could be conducted, two pretests were conducted in order to detect products bearing high potential for inner conflicts (when using or buying).

In order to do so, the software *Unipark* (www.unipark.com) was used to design two online surveys (participants were randomly assigned to one of them). The first survey raised the question ‘How sustainable is product XY?’. A sample of 46 doctoral students answered this question for 146 different products (groceries/stimulants, clothing, accommodation/household, transport, sanitation/cosmetics, office, electronics, recreation) on a 7-point Likert scale. The pretest revealed that some participants had problems to understand the term *sustainability*, also emphasizing the relevance to define consumer sustainability. However, most participants interpreted the expression under the perspective of the amount of resources needed to make the product.

Participants of the second survey answered the question ‘How necessary for daily living is product XY?’. A sample size of 58 doctoral students judged the same 146 products on another 7-point Likert scale. In case of having or buying a specific product: The lower the perceived sustainability as well as the perceived necessity, the higher should be the potential for inner conflicts (along the lines of: ‘*It’s neither necessary nor do I really need it...however, I want/buy it.*’). Therefore, an index was calculated product by product to identify the products which are (theoretically) most powerful to lead to an inner conflict. The index was calculated by the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{‘How sustainable is product XY?’} + \text{‘How necessary for daily living is product XY?’}}{2}$$

According to the results, the 10 following products showed the highest and lowest conflict potential (*sustainability-necessity index*):

<i>Permanent wave</i>	1.83	<i>Kitchenware</i>	5.30
<i>Caviar</i>	1.98	<i>Locker</i>	5.33
<i>Yacht</i>	2.00	<i>Bicycle</i>	5.35
<i>Airplane</i>	2.10	<i>Potatoes</i>	5.48
<i>Helicopter</i>	2.18	<i>Bread</i>	5.58
<i>Steam cleaner</i>	2.21	<i>Chair</i>	5.58
<i>Steamer</i>	2.21	<i>Shower</i>	5.61
<i>Digital picture frame</i>	2.22	<i>Table</i>	5.63
<i>Luxury car</i>	2.23	<i>Bed</i>	5.83
<i>Second car</i>	2.28	<i>Drinking Water</i>	6.33

High index values point toward the direction that a product is sustainable and/or necessary for daily living (e.g., drinking water), low values indicate the opposite (e.g., caviar), that is, a product is unsustainable and/or not necessary for daily living (i.e., bears a high potential for a psychological conflict). To sum up, these pretests as well as personal talks and several internet sources delivered some starting points which products (or services) could be connected with inner consumer conflicts. The interviewer also could directly address ‘sensitive’ issues such as a second car, frequent flying, or other unsustainable (resource-intensive) non-mandatory products or services in order to figure out if an inner conflict exists. The following chapter (Paper 2) describes theoretical background, interview methodology, and results with regard to the aforementioned three questions.

4. Fooling Yourself: The Role of Internal Defense Mechanisms in Unsustainable Consumption Behavior*

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Abstract

Unsustainable consumption offers a fertile ground for the rise of intrapsychic conflicts. A series of 20 in-depth interviews was conducted to investigate people's inner conflicts in the field of sustainability and how consumers deal with them. After the development of a sustainability classification from a consumer's point of view, we led consumers to talk about their inner conflicts in the sustainability context. In particular, these conflicts emerge when long-term sustainability-related motives contrast with short-term motives. Results show that especially sustainability-oriented consumers show intrapsychic conflicts of varying degree when consuming unsustainably. Notably, consumers use a wide range of psychological defense mechanisms to continue unsustainable consumption behavior. Only in case of intense conflicts, actual behavior is modified. In general, this research proposes a theoretical framework of how consumers deal with their inner conflicts.

Introduction

The majority of consumers claim sustainability to be of high subjective importance. For instance, people state that it is essential to reduce waste and to be economical with natural resources like water, oil, or the tropical rain forest. Nevertheless, at the same time, many consumers also engage in unsustainable consumption behavior, for example taking the car instead of public transport or purchasing products based on a very resource-intensive production process. Therefore, the question arises why even sustainability-oriented consumers show unsustainable consumption behavior. Under the umbrella of the so-called attitude-behavior gap (Carrigan, Moraes, and Leek 2011) this question has been and still is controversially discussed in the area of consumer research (Eckhardt, Belk, and Devinney 2010). However, we speculate that there are also intrapsychic consumer conflicts involved. To the best of the authors' knowledge, the underlying psychological mechanisms of whether and how consumers solve the resulting inner conflicts have not yet been examined. Therefore, this approach

tries to make a first step towards an understanding of how consumers solve their inner conflicts in the field of sustainability.

Due to the complex and explorative nature of the present research question, the authors decided to follow a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews (Bengtsson and Ostberg 2006). In-depth interviews are combined with pre-existing theoretical knowledge to propose a new theoretical framework, trying to explain how inner conflicts emerge and how different conflict types are resolved by consumers. This paper is structured as follows: First, a brief theoretical background about the concept of sustainability as well as about psychological defense mechanisms is provided. Second, method and findings of the conducted in-depth interviews are described. Finally, implications, limitations, and future research directions are discussed.

Theoretical Background

Sustainability

Sustainability is an “emerging megatrend” (Lubin and Esty 2010, p. 44) which is also considered to be the essential and most important challenge for modern marketing (Kotler 2011; Sheth 2011). The common core of sustainability definitions is that a sustainable system is a “system [...] which survives or persists” (Costanza and Patten 1995, p. 193). However, there are many different definitions of sustainability. Sustainability can, for example, be described as the use of resources in a way which enables future generations to live with the same or larger amount of resources (United Nations 1987). Recent conceptual research proposes not only ecological and social aspects but also the importance of personal well-being in the context of consumer sustainability (Sheth et al. 2011). Nevertheless, there is not much research about the consumer’s understanding of the sustainability term and which facets it consists of. Therefore, this aspect will need to be explored first, thereby creating the basis for further investigation of inner conflicts in the field of unsustainable consumption.

But why do even sustainability-oriented consumers behave unsustainably? Recent studies investigate this issue by focusing on the gap between consumer attitudes and actual behavior (Bray, Johns, and Kilburn 2011). In doing so, current research systematizes the reasons consumers provide to justify unsustainable consumption (Banbury, Stinerock, and Subrahmanyam 2012; Eckhardt et al. 2010; Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, and Gruber 2011). One of these reasons is said to lie in local infrastructure (Banbury et al. 2012). Specifically, consumers who live in rural areas claim bad local infrastructure, in particular limited public transport opportunities, to account for an impossibility to live and consume sustainably. Consumers also state their own institutional dependency (Eckhardt et al. 2010), that is, they emphasize the responsibility of institutions such as the government to regulate which products are allowed to be sold or not. Furthermore, high prices of sustainable products are said to be a major reason for not buying them (Öberseder et al. 2011). To sum it up, there is a high need to know which reasons consumers point out regarding their unsustainable consumption behavior. However, it seems equally important to gain knowledge about the underlying psychological mechanisms of whether and how consumers solve their suspected inner conflicts when consuming unsustainably. Therefore, this paper focuses on the investigation of consumers' intrapsychic conflict resolution strategies.

Defense Mechanisms

The psychoanalytic concept of unconscious or semiconscious defense mechanisms is commonly used in everyday language. In particular, specific defense mechanisms like denial, suppression, repression, or projection are well-known terms for many people. These mechanisms enable individuals to encounter their inner conflicts (Freud 1936/1946). Although there are also voices who emphasize that some defense processes can be conscious to a certain degree (Erdelyi 2001), defense mechanisms are for the most part considered to be rather semiconscious or unconscious (Cramer 1998). However, it is important to note that individuals can use and elaborate on defense mechanisms without being conscious as to *why* they use them (Bond 1995).

In contrast to psychoanalysts, non-clinical researchers focused more on conscious processes like coping strategies so far (Cramer 2000), nevertheless, today there is a handful of empirical research

outside the clinical context (Baumeister, Dale, and Sommer 1998). Defense mechanisms are also an emerging theme in marketing, but do not seem to have been investigated much (Homburg and Fürst 2007). Following this, our research takes a first step to empirically investigate defense mechanisms in consumer research. Building on in-depth interviews, this research develops a framework, revealing different types of inner conflicts and corresponding mechanisms employed for conflict resolution in the context of unsustainable consumption.

Method

We conducted 20 in-depth interviews with German consumers in an open and unstructured way. Participants were chosen according to demographic criteria, thereby varying according to age, gender, occupation as well as levels of education (Table 4). To get a picture of *average* German consumers, very ecologically-minded individuals were not part of the sample. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The data analysis was executed by two researchers using the standard procedure of coding and clustering the codes into higher-order categories (Creswell 2009). Comments from interviews were double-back translated. A general framework was built combining the qualitative data with theoretical background knowledge (Workman, Homburg, and Gruner 1998).

Findings

In a first step, it seems important to get a better understanding of consumer sustainability to identify areas of potential inner conflicts. Therefore, we asked participants to reflect on sustainability from a consumer's point of view. Building on Sheth et al. (2011), we also asked them about their self-understanding of personal sustainability. Altogether, results reveal ecological (economic conservation, environmental preservation), social (family protection, occupational justice, social justice), and also

individual facets of sustainability (physical health, mental health, economic health). Most notably, our data contribute to a first classification of consumers' sustainability objectives and issues (Table 5).

Afterwards, we directed consumers to talk about their inner conflicts in the sustainability context. Our research leads to a theoretical framework (Figure 7). The results suggest that conflicts, varying in terms of strength, emerge from the simultaneous presence of opposing consumption motives. Depending on the degree of conscious awareness, there is a tendency to use specific defense mechanisms to resolve conflicts for the sake of continuing unsustainable consumption behavior, or, if conflict resolution was not successful, change actual behavior. In the following, the nature of this framework will be elaborated in more detail.

Table 4

PROFILES OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS AND INTERVIEW FACTS

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Type of interview	Interview duration
Benjamin	53	Administration secretary	Phone	50 minutes
Bert	30	Fundraiser	Video	106 minutes
Charlene	27	Teacher (academic high school)	Phone	46 minutes
Clarissa	43	Electrician	Phone	60 minutes
Denice	27	Unemployed	Phone	81 minutes
George	82	Retiree	Phone	120 minutes
Jack	50	Marketing assistant	Phone	87 minutes
Jessica	34	Occupational health and safety practitioner	Video	68 minutes
Jonathan	44	Kitchen worker	Face-to-face	60 minutes
Kristie	38	Administrative assistant	Face-to-face	49 minutes
Maria	77	Housewife	Phone	85 minutes
Martin	27	Plasterer	Phone	52 minutes
Monica	48	General practitioner & housewife	Phone	54 minutes
Peter	25	Research assistant (marketing)	Face-to-face	146 minutes
Rebecca	58	Child care worker	Phone	75 minutes
Sadie	20	Hairdresser	Face-to-face	50 minutes
Thomas	27	Research assistant (sociology)	Phone	87 minutes
Todd	29	Glassblower	Phone	54 minutes
Tony	48	Sales manager	Phone	66 minutes
Ursula	58	Teacher (junior high school)	Phone	122 minutes

Table 5

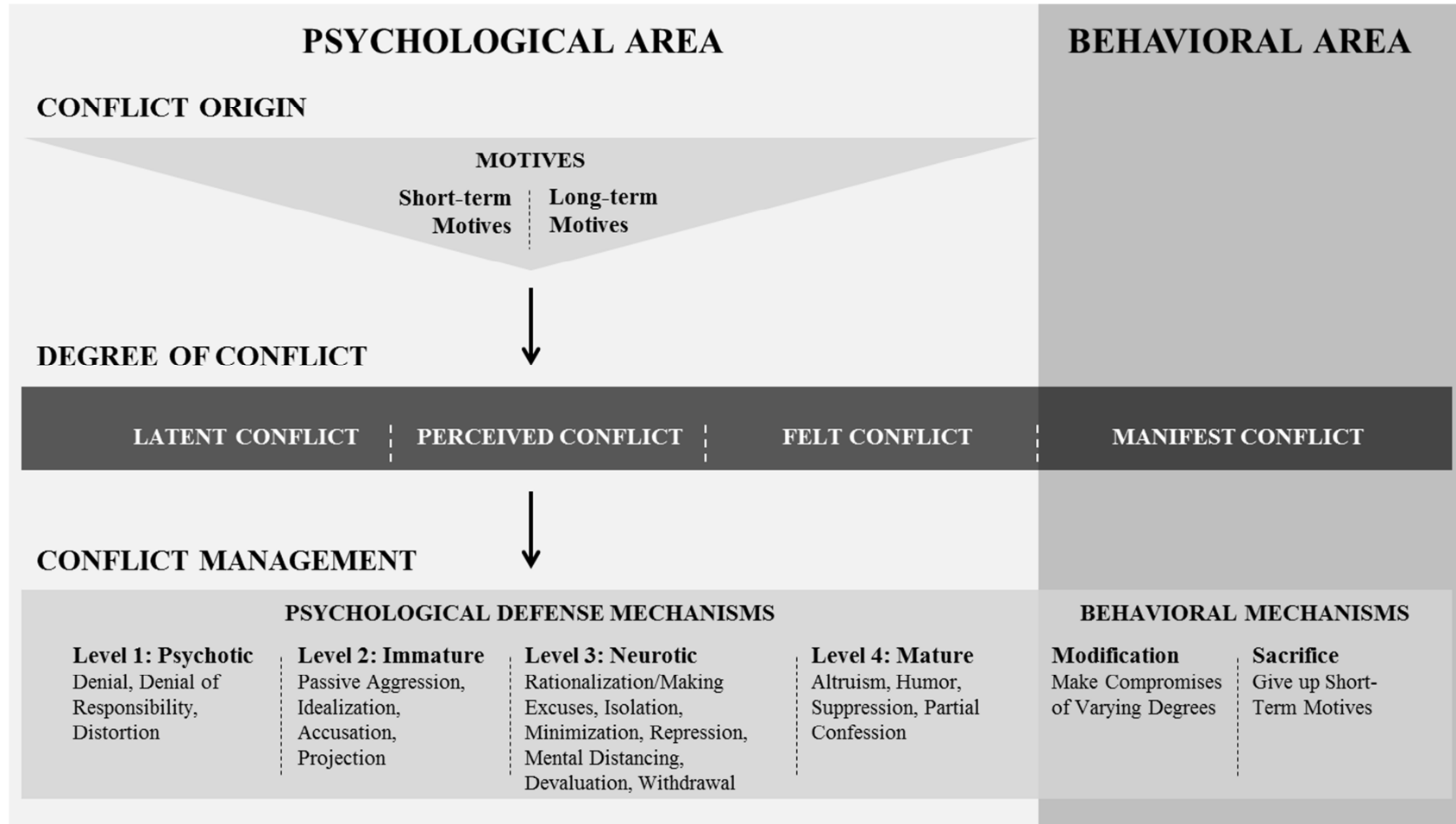
CONSUMERS' SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES AND ISSUES:

EXAMPLES FROM INTERVIEWS

Sustainability dimension	Sustainability objective	Most important issues
Ecological sustainability	Economic conservation	Resources, energy, consumption rate, waste, recycling, packaging, transport, organic food
	Environmental preservation	Climate, animals, pollution, damaging, mutilation
Individual sustainability	Economic health	Saving, debt, retirement provisions
	Mental health	Work-life balance, stress, recreation, spirituality
	Physical health	Balanced diet, exercise, sports, alcohol & cigarettes
Social sustainability	Family protection	Responsibility toward family, education, children's children
	Occupational justice	Labor conditions, exploitation, minimum wage, child labor
	Social justice	Fairness, poverty, social engagement, peace

Figure 7

FRAMEWORK FOR INNER CONFLICTS:
EMERGENCE, TYPES, AND MANAGEMENT



Intrapsychic Conflicts

We draw on common motive, need, and goal classifications (Reiss 2004) as well as consumer research about people's conflicts (Bahl and Milne 2010; Lee and Shrum 2012; Ratneshwar, Pechmann, and Shocker 1996). Motives can be divided into short-term and long-term motives (Schweitzer 2005), whereby sustainability refers by definition to the long-term perspective (Costanza and Patten 1995). Basically, we find that conflicts emerge in situations where long-term sustainability-related motives contrast with short-term motives.

Depending on salience and severity of specific motives clusters, the type of inner conflict can vary. For classification purposes, we used the terms latent conflict (people are not aware of a conflict at all), perceived conflict (people recognize a conflict without having bad feelings about it), felt conflict (people recognize a conflict while having bad feelings about it), and manifest conflict (people recognize a strong conflict which has immediately to be resolved), which have been labeled in organizational conflict research (Pondy 1967, 1989; Maltz and Kohli 2001), introducing these labels to intrapsychic conflicts. Our study provides initial evidence of these different consumer conflicts (Table 6). It is important to note that conflict types can overlap, for example containing both cognitive and emotional conflict aspects at the same time (Luce 1998).

An example for perceived conflict comes from Jessica. Her long-term motive idealism (in the form of human orientation) is opposed to the short-term motive well-being (in the form of enjoyment). In contrast, Bert has to deal with a more severe conflict (felt conflict), where his short-term motives financial security, personal well-being (in the form of comfort), and acceptance by others (in the form of self-expression) contrast with idealism.

'Even though one rather should not eat chocolate, because I believe that cultivating chocolate heavily relies on child labor, but, unfortunately, I always melt at the sight of chocolate myself.'
(Jessica, 34)

'Sometimes, when I'm conscious of [using unsustainable products] and I think that's mostly the case for clothes, then indeed, I have a bit of a bad conscience. This is crap, yes, I should really do better, but I don't. Because it's too demanding for me, because it's too expensive, because I would look stupid in such clothes.' (Bert, 30)

Table 6

CONSUMERS' INNER CONFLICTS: CITATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS

Type of conflict	Working definition	Excerpt from interviews
Latent conflict	People do not recognize a conflict at all, despite the presence of conflicting motives.	[Talking about her reasons for consuming sustainably] . . . sometimes I have a critical look at the whole economic development. Well, at school we have learned 'economy only works if there is a steady growth'. And well, I think, in terms of pure logic, this isn't possible without destroying the environment, too. And for me personally, this is actually important, that I do not mindlessly consume and that means I am maybe to a certain degree unproductive with regard to economic interests. Well, actually sustainability is of higher importance. . . . I do not feel bad [<i>emphasized</i>], no [talking about consuming or using unsustainable products, for example owning two cars which are both used every day]. . . . No [asked if having sometimes a bad conscience]. (Monica, 48)
Perceived conflict	People recognize a conflict which they can describe without having bad feelings about it.	Even though one rather should not eat chocolate, because I believe that cultivating chocolate heavily relies on child labor, but, unfortunately, I always melt at the sight of chocolate myself. (Jessica, 34)
Felt conflict	People recognize a conflict which they can describe while having bad feelings about it.	Sometimes, when I'm conscious of [using unsustainable products] and I think that's mostly the case for clothes, then indeed, I have a bit of a bad conscience. This is crap, yes, I should really do better, but I don't. Because it's too demanding for me, because it's too expensive, because I would look stupid in such clothes. (Bert, 30)
Manifest conflict	People recognize a strong conflict which has to be resolved immediately.	I had ordered something for my kids, shipping order. And when I had the products [T-Shirts] later in my hands, I had a look at the label, then there was written 'made in Bangladesh'. There I wrapped them up and sent them back. . . . there I've thought 'no'. I've sent them back. This was a thing I somehow couldn't do, because I thought that there is child labor behind it, one-hundred percent. (Kristie, 38)

These two examples illustrate different degrees of inner conflicts in the field of unsustainable consumption behavior. Especially when conflicts become more severe, people show a bad conscience and tend to feel guilty. Therefore, it seems obvious that people heavily rely on certain strategies to deal with their inner conflicts.

Defense Mechanisms

Furthermore, we investigated consumers' semiconscious or unconscious processes. There is much research about conscious processes (Levav, Kivetz, and Cho 2010; Ratneshwar, Mick, and Huffman 2000) and recently, consumer researchers have started to show interest in the examination of unconscious processes (Chartrand et al. 2008; Laran and Janiszewski 2009). In particular, unconscious internal defense mechanisms can help people, at least in the short term, to solve their inner conflicts (Freud 1936/1946). We find that people use a wide range of defense mechanisms to face their inner conflicts for the sake of continuing unsustainable consumption behavior. Vaillant (1977, 1992) proposes a hierarchical classification of defense mechanisms into psychotic (mainly altering reality), immature (mainly altering distress), neurotic (mainly mastering acute distress), and mature (mainly mastering general distress). In our research, we identify established mechanisms by prior researchers as well as new ones which we allocate to the aforementioned hierarchical classification. Table 7 outlines definitions and examples of all the defense mechanisms employed by the participants.

Although every defense mechanism serves the common goal to solve inner conflicts, the extracted mechanisms vary in nature and frequency of use. In our study, among the most used defense mechanisms are denial of responsibility, rationalization, and suppression. In the following examples, Todd uses denial of responsibility in order to avoid negative feelings, Ursula excuses or rationalizes her behavior by time pressure, and George admits that he is actively suppressing his negative feelings.

'And well, sometimes I even think if I take care or not, in my opinion in the end the whole caboodle will go down the drain anyway, such being the case [pauses]. Now, this is my personal opinion.'
(Todd, 29)

'To be honest, I do have these noble goals, in some areas I reach them and I act more consciously. On the other hand, I would have to inform myself a lot about every single product that I buy [emphasized]. And I would have to question every single product, erm, and this might also be a self-serving declaration, I do not like to completely reject this, this might be a self-serving declaration when I claim 'I don't have the time for this'. It's too bad when you have to say 'I don't have the time for this', maybe this does also mean 'I don't want to take the time'.' (Ursula, 58)

Well, I can say that in this case I'll suppress this. . . . I'm not aware of this bad conscience all the time, well, then I block it out. . . . Once the bad conscience has disappeared, the feeling has disappeared, too. Then I'm not thinking about it, I don't think about it all the time. Then the problem has disappeared for the moment. (George, 82)

Besides several new subcategories, our findings provide initial evidence of the mechanisms accusation, mental distancing, and partial confession. First, accusation encompasses a direct allegation of somebody. This is in contrast to projection, which depends on comparisons with other people (Baumeister et al. 1998). Second, mental distancing characterizes the dissociation from others without devaluing them, whilst the latter one is defined as the attribution of exaggerated negative characteristics to others (Kernberg 1967, 1987). Third, partial confession describes the confession of minor own weaknesses in order to mask more severe weaknesses or to preempt arguments against oneself. As shown below, Jonathan accuses others to be responsible for his own wrongdoing, whilst Sadie uses projection to whitewash her behavior by comparison with others. Bert relies on mental distancing and Thomas uses devaluation to strengthen his own position. Finally, Monica is confessing one of her minor weaknesses in order to distract from her total consumption level which can be

suspected to be very high (her family owns two cars which are both used every day, lives in a huge mansion, and goes on vacation at least four times a year).

'Then of course I am thinking 'why did you do this again [dumping a cigarette end]?!'. But sometimes this happens, then I just dump it. Because [loud] there is no container where you can put this cork top when you are on your way, there is none! Where have you seen a cigarette container here in V. [city name] where you can put the end, never [pauses]?! There the population has to intervene more, but that's not the case. Or the city government, it doesn't do anything either.' (Jonathan, 44)

'Okay, people always tell me 'you are way too posh'. I would spend so much money on clothes, everything, but when I see others compared to me, what a shoe cabinet or wardrobe they have, compared to them I am really modest [pauses]. This is nuts, when I have a look at my friends [slightly bewildered].' (Sadie, 20)

'When it comes to clothes it is really difficult to get true healthy clothes. And then I would really walk around completely in eco-style, which is something that I don't like to do.' (Bert, 30)

'But at the same time, I sometimes realize that I'm not as consequent as I should be, and that I find myself sometimes provoking other people, who are very sustainable, a little . . . also that I sometimes realize that I take the opposite standpoint, and that I satirize so to say excessive sustainable thinking in a cynical way.' (Thomas, 27)

Table 7

DEFENSE MECHANISMS FOR DEALING WITH INNER CONFLICTS:
CITATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS

Defense mechanism (Level of defense mechanism)	Short definition	Excerpt from interviews
Denial (Psychotic)	Refusal to admit certain aspects of reality (Bovey and Hede 2001)	. . . the long-term effects, I'm sure that is something no one could imagine 20 or 30 years before, that we would have these problems with emissions and that actually the global warming would be coming. If global warming actually exists. There you have also, erm, reports saying the opposite. . . . And because of this uncertainty about the actual existence, it is absolutely no buying criterion for me so far. <i>(Peter, 25)</i>
Denial of responsibility* (Psychotic)	Refusal to admit own responsibility for sth. (Bierhoff, Klein, and Kramp 1991)	And well, sometimes I even think if I take care or not, in my opinion in the end the whole caboodle will go down the drain anyway, such being the case [<i>pauses</i>]. Now, this is my personal opinion. <i>(Todd, 29)</i>
Distortion (Psychotic)	Reshaping of reality to meet inner needs (Vaillant 1992)	Yeah, well, but I would really not define coffee as semiluxury food but as a necessity. <i>(Thomas, 27)</i>
Accusation** (Immature)	Direct allegation that someone is guilty of sth.	Then of course I am thinking 'why did you do this again [dumping a cigarette end]?!'. But sometimes this happens, then I just dump it. Because [<i>loud</i>] there is no container where you can put this cork top when you are on your way, there is none! Where have you seen a cigarette container here in V. [city name] where you can put the end, never [<i>pauses</i>]. There the population has to intervene more, but that's not the case. Or the city government, it doesn't do anything either. <i>(Jonathan, 44)</i>
Projection (Immature)	Refusal to accept own weaknesses by comparison with others' weaknesses (Baumeister et al. 1998)	When it comes to electricity, there I also try to be economical. This is a product where I really try to behave appropriately. For example when I go out of the house, I take care that not all the lamps are turned on everywhere and that the TV is off, yeah, that I don't have electrical devices on standby. Here, I try to behave in a certain way, in order to assure this. Well, there are families in which I have friends who don't pay attention to this. . . . everyone has his own TV and his own computer, these things run around the clock, and everyone has his own car. <i>(Todd, 29)</i>

*New mechanism subcategory/categorization.

**Newly discovered mechanism (including own working definition).

Table 7 (continued)

Defense mechanism (Level of defense mechanism)	Short definition	Excerpt from interviews
Idealization (Immature) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General* • Comparative* 	Attribution of exaggerated positive characteristics to the self or to others (Kernberg 1987; Pauchant and Mitroff 1988)	Well, if everyone would do this, just to say, somewhat living like me, myself, my husband, just to say, then we would live in an almost ideal world, here, right?! (Rebecca, 58)
Passive aggression (Immature)	Indirect or passive aggression towards others (Vaillant 1992)	I don't have a bad conscience [<i>tricksy</i>]. I have not killed anyone, I treat the environment well, I treat my fellow men well. Why should I have a bad conscience [<i>without understanding/aggressive</i>], eh?! If I can give something, I give it to someone who has less than me, so why do I have to have a bad conscience [<i>emotional/aggressive</i>]?! (Rebecca, 58)
Repression (Neurotic)	Unconscious decision to exclude unpleasant thoughts or feelings (Vaillant 1977)	Well shit, actually this is shit. But well, that's just the way it is. (Bert, 30)
Rationalization/making excuses (Neurotic) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity* • History/education* • Opportunity* • Material pressure* • Mental pressure* • Temporal pressure* 	Justification of impulses, motives, or behaviors in order to make them plausible and tolerable (Brown and Starkey 2000)	. . . one knows that a big part of the coffee is simply made under conditions of exploitation in the southern hemisphere, in South America. And after all, there is then also, so to say, the presence of the normative consciousness, that practically fair trade coffee, if any, would be the good solution, but I have also to admit that I normally reach for the normal coffee due to the limited budget. (Thomas, 27)
Isolation (Neurotic)	Creation of a psychological distance between unpleasant issues and oneself (Homburg and Fürst 2007)	Erm, well, with cigarettes this is clearly an addiction. Here I'm totally fair and square, you can label this as addiction. . . . This is something, I would say, this is just an independent small issue, this addictive behavior. (Ursula, 58)
Minimization (Neurotic)	Trivialization of the wrongdoing (Hoyk and Hersey 2008)	Also, I sometimes think 'oh my God, another cancer stick'. This might be true. And I also think 'if I am smoking more and more now, I will die someday, I will die earlier'. . . . But I think 'as long as I can reduce it' [<i>pauses</i>]. For example, I can resist smoking a cigarette for 4 to 5 hours, I don't have to smoke then [<i>emphasized</i>]. (Jonathan, 44)

*New mechanism subcategory/categorization.

**Newly discovered mechanism (including own working definition).

Table 7 (continued)

Defense mechanism (Level of defense mechanism)	Short definition	Excerpt from interviews
Mental distancing** (Neurotic)	Dissociate oneself from others' opinions, attitudes, or behaviors	I don't wanna be like that [extremely ecological], I cannot be like that, and maybe there's also no need for it. (Thomas, 27)
Devaluation (Neurotic) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cynical* • Skeptical* 	Attribution of exaggerated negative characteristics to the self or to others (Kernberg 1967, 1987)	But at the same time, I sometimes realize that I'm not as consequent as I should be, and that I find myself sometimes provoking other people, who are very sustainable, a little . . . also that I sometimes realize that I take the opposite standpoint, and that I satirize so to say excessive sustainable thinking in a cynical way. (Thomas, 27)
Withdrawal (Neurotic)	Avoidance of threatening situations (Constantinides and Beck 2010)	Or take for example <i>Takko Fashion</i> [discount clothing store]: There, I don't go in that store as a matter of principle and for the purpose of not being tempted. (Charlene, 27)
Altruism (Mature)	Instinctively helping others in a constructive way (Vaillant 1992)	I don't know which country this was about, the one with the civil war problem, well there we have also donated something. . . . We are lucky to live in a country without suffering from hunger and now I have donated money for that. (Clarissa, 43)
Humor (Mature)	Outright expression of thoughts and feelings without discomfort (Vaillant 1992)	While eating, I don't think 'oh, this animal happily bounced around and has been slaughtered for me' [<i>travesties her words</i>]. (Maria, 77)
Suppression (Mature) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General* • Temporal* 	Semiconscious or conscious decision to delay paying attention to sth. (Vaillant 1977)	But, so to say, then after all with the ulterior motive 'there are so many starting points where one should live sustainably', in a way, that it is always [<i>pauses</i>] difficult to say where to start and to condemn everything. Well, there I really caught myself how I totally suppressed this. (Thomas, 27)
Partial confession** (Mature)	To confess own weaknesses in order to mask more severe weaknesses or to preempt arguments against oneself	Well, this is maybe impulse buying, which you do rather without thinking. That something in the shop is attracting you, let it be a T-shirt, there I don't have a look if it's 'made in Taiwan' or somewhere else. This can definitely happen, that in a certain moment I do not take care of sustainability. (Monica, 48)

*New mechanism subcategory/categorization.

**Newly discovered mechanism (including own working definition).

'Well, this is maybe impulse buying, which you do rather without thinking. That something in the shop is attracting you, let it be a T-shirt, there I don't have a look if it's 'made in Taiwan' or somewhere else. This can definitely happen, that in a certain moment I do not take care of sustainability.' (Monica, 48)

In general, we find that more severe conflicts tend to be resolved by more advanced mechanisms. For example, participants with felt conflicts rely on mature rather than on psychotic defense mechanisms, while the latter suggest the existence of latent conflicts. Only when inner conflicts cannot be sufficiently resolved, people change actual consumption behavior. According to Ekins (1994), people use modification and/or sacrifice to feel like living a sustainable life. Indeed, participants report making minor compromises in order to resolve their manifest conflicts. As a consequence, they report having reduced their negative feelings or even produced positive ones.

'I had ordered something for my kids, shipping order. And when I had the products [T-Shirts] later in my hands, I had a look at the label, then there was written 'made in Bangladesh'. There I wrapped them up and sent them back. . . . there I've thought 'no'. I've sent them back. This was a thing I somehow couldn't do, because I thought that there is child labor behind it, one-hundred percent.' (Kristie, 38)

Kristie's example shows that she needed to change her actual behavior in order to overcome the underlying manifest conflict. To sum it up, participants sometimes tend to make compromises on behalf of sustainability issues, nonetheless in many cases psychological defense mechanisms prevent them from changing unsustainable consumption pattern.

Discussion

This research tried to address the important question of why even sustainability-oriented consumers show unsustainable consumption behavior. We undertook a first step to develop a theoretical framework describing consumers' underlying psychological mechanisms. Notably, the concept of semiconscious defense mechanisms was introduced as one possible explanation of the aforementioned phenomenon. In-depth interviews revealed that there is a wide range of different defense mechanisms which people use to continue unsustainable consumption behavior.

In addition to the specific results above, defense mechanisms show some general aspects which should be discussed. To begin with, defense mechanisms are often said to be rather unconscious (Cramer 1998). Indeed, there is a continuum between unconscious and semiconscious defenses. In particular, first level (psychotic) mechanisms like denial or distortion are mainly unconscious, that is, people use them to resist their bad conscience without being aware of using them. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult for researchers to detect psychotic defenses. Nevertheless, our research is indicative of some of these first level mechanisms. Second level (immature) mechanisms such as accusation or projection tend to be rather unconscious at the moment of their use, but under certain circumstances people might become aware of their utilization when reflecting about their own past behavior (Bond 1995). Mechanisms on the third level (neurotic) like rationalization or devaluation contain more semiconscious processes compared to immature mechanisms. Especially rationalization is a mechanism which participants use in different subtypes (complexity, history/education, opportunity, material pressure, mental pressure, temporal pressure). It is important to note that most of these rationalizations take the short-term, not sustainability-related, motive (personal comfort, enjoyment, acceptance by others, etc.) as a default. In other words, participants are not willing to make any compromises at the cost of their short-term motives. This is why they start searching for arguments that justify their negligence of sustainability-related motives. Finally, fourth level (mature) mechanisms are used in a more semiconscious way (Vaillant 1992). For instance, general and temporal suppression constitute a promising way for consumers to overcome inner conflicts.

Furthermore, psychological defense mechanisms stem from psychoanalytic therapy and have often been connected with mentally ill individuals. However, mature defenses are common for healthy individuals to solve psychological conflicts (Vaillant 1992), as is supported by the conducted in-depth interviews. Moreover, neurotic defenses are well-established when healthy individuals have to master acute distress. Again, this seems obvious when having a look at the wide range of rationalizations used by our interview partners when being confronted with potential intrapsychic conflicts. Whilst clinicians consider immature (age 3 to 15) and psychotic defenses (age before 5) to be typical for children and adults in psychotherapy (Vaillant 1992), other researchers claim most defense mechanisms to have normal as well as pathological manifestations (Baumeister et al. 1998). Therefore, it is no surprise that people continue to use primitive defense mechanisms which they have learnt during childhood and adolescence. Our interviews indicate that individuals rather unconsciously rely on those mechanisms which have been successful for them in the past. Interestingly, results point in the direction that higher (vs. lower) levels of education are connected with more advanced defense mechanisms (neurotic, mature) and vice versa, therefore, individuals' intellectual age might play a role in this context.

Last but not least, there is some debate about the efficiency of specific defense mechanisms, building on the differentiation between adaptive and maladaptive defenses (Segal, Coolidge, and Mizuno 2007). Whilst adaptive mechanisms such as humor and suppression are said to help individuals solving their inner conflicts, maladaptive mechanisms like projection and withdrawal should even worsen the situation in the midterm. Even though we also found evidence that higher level defenses seem to be more helpful for individuals to reduce negative feelings in general, there is also a strong subjective preference for the use of specific mechanisms. We speculate that this originates from the individual's successful use of these mechanisms in the past.

Limitations and Future Research

For the purpose of classifying participants' degree of inner conflict, we draw on Pondy's systematization into latent, perceived, felt, and manifest conflicts (Pondy 1967, 1989). It hardly needs

mentioning that in reality there is no clear-cut differentiation including four separated conflict types, but rather a continuum of inner conflicts according to strength. Nevertheless, we regard the terms 'latent', 'perceived', 'felt', and 'manifest' to be appropriate reflections of conflict strength. In particular, 'latent' as an indicator that the individual is not yet aware of the conflict at all, 'perceived' as the unemotional recognition of the conflict, 'felt' as the emotionally laden conflict perception, and 'manifest' as a very strong and apparent conflict, seem to be helpful criteria to classify inner conflicts.

In this research, several previously identified defense mechanisms as well as three new mechanisms (accusation, mental distancing, partial confession) could be identified. However, there are several additional defense mechanisms (Vaillant 1992), for example anticipation, somatization, sublimation, acting out, hypochondriasis, or displacement, which have been found inside the clinical context but were not supported in the conducted in-depth interviews. The possible reasons for this are threefold. First, there are some defenses like sublimation which are very difficult to detect via in-depth interviews. Maybe projective techniques might be an additional method to address this shortcoming. Second, the framework of unsustainable consumption behavior might lead to certain preferences concerning the selection of specific defense mechanisms whilst other defenses might not be very appropriate in this context. Third, the reason might also lie in the specific sample.

Finally, the detailed results concerning the evolution of inner conflicts and its respective conflict resolution strategies cannot be generalized to every human in every country in the same way. Not only do individuals have an inconsistent understanding what sustainability means, they also show huge differences concerning the subjective importance of particular sustainability aspects. Especially preferences, personality characteristics, and cultural aspects might play a role. For instance, there might be individual differences in altruism, materialism, or long-term orientation. These factors might shape the intensity of an intrapsychic conflict or the frequency of use of certain psychological defense mechanisms. However, they should by no means change the general theoretical framework which has been developed in this research approach.

Our theoretical contribution may be a starting point for further research to explore the nature and effectiveness of several conflict reduction strategies. Especially, additional knowledge about different degrees of intrapsychic conflicts and the corresponding internal defense mechanisms would help to further understand why consumers can continue to consume unsustainably although at the same time realizing the importance of living a sustainable life. As a matter of fact, defense mechanisms vary in nature. Therefore, building on experimental designs, it might be difficult to investigate the complete range of defense mechanisms in a single study. We suggest that future experimental research should concentrate on the examination of discrete defense mechanisms. Most interestingly, the effectiveness of a specific defense mechanism (denial of responsibility, rationalization, accusation, partial confession, or suppression) could be tested.

Finally, social desirability is an issue of high relevance (Dalton and Ortegren 2011; Mick 1996), thereby being especially dangerous for biasing results in research dealing with issues of unsustainable consumption. Consequently, we strongly advise to control for this bias when further investigating psychological defense mechanisms in the field of sustainability.

5. Transition between Paper 2 and Paper 3

The conducted interviews reveal initial evidence that consumers might perceive individual responsibility for unsustainable company actions. In other words, although people do not directly (but indirectly) harm the environment or other people, an inner moral conflict could be detected:

'We are actually living at the expense of the developing countries, that is, for example, that some poor worker is sitting in an Apple factory in China and becomes in fact lastingly etched or inhales some toxic dust the whole time, so that I can use my computer . . . and buy it as cheap as possible. This would be another example for social non-sustainability . . . Sometimes, when I'm conscious of [using unsustainable products] and I think that's mostly the case for clothes, then indeed, I have a bit of a bad conscience. This is crap, yes, I should really do better, but I don't. Because it's too demanding for me, because it's too expensive, because I would look stupid in such clothes.' (Bert, 30)

'I had ordered something for my kids, shipping order. And when I had the products [T-Shirts] later in my hands, I had a look at the label, then there was written 'made in Bangladesh'. There I wrapped them up and sent them back. . . . there I've thought 'no'. I've sent them back. This was a thing I somehow couldn't do, because I thought that there is child labor behind it, one-hundred percent.' (Kristie, 38)

These examples point to the relevance of consumers' moral responsibility when supporting unsustainable companies through their own attitudes, emotions, and behavior. Therefore, this concept will be shortly described below. Before doing so, social identity theory is suggested as an explaining mechanism.

Social Identity Theory

The Basic Idea of Social Identity Theory (SIT)

The underlying rationale of social identity theory is the assumption that every human has a distinct self-concept, that is, the sum of beliefs a person has about himself (e.g., Brehm, Kassin, and Fein 2005). Building on the idea of a self-concept, researchers have started to define the self as an instance which consists of both personal identity aspects and social identity aspects. Specifically, social identification describes the “perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate” (Ashforth and Mael 1989, p. 21). Following this notion, an individual’s social identity is per definition relational and comparative: relative to individuals in other categories as well as a matter of degree of identification (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Furthermore, it is impossible to speak of *the* social identity of an individual, because one’s social identity appears to be context-dependent, thereby allowing for multiple social identities to coexist as one belongs to multiple groups simultaneously (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Which social identity is self-descriptive in a given situation is determined by the salience of situational cues (Ashforth and Mael 1989).

Turner (1985) extended social identity theory by developing *self-categorization theory (SCT)*, which specifies how social categorization leads to prototype-based depersonalization of self and others and represents the cognitive basis of group behavior. Following Hogg and Terry (2000, p. 123):

“Social categorization of self and others into ingroup and outgroup accentuates the perceived similarity of the target to the relevant ingroup or outgroup prototype (cognitive representation of features that describe and prescribe attributes of the group). Targets are no longer represented as unique individuals but, rather, as embodiments of the relevant prototype – a process of depersonalization. Social categorization of self – self-categorization – cognitively assimilates self to the ingroup prototype and, thus, depersonalizes self-conception. This transformation of self is

the process underlying group phenomena, because it brings self-perception and behavior in line with the contextually relevant ingroup prototype.”

Self-categorization specifies the conditions under which different social identities become salient – a matter of category accessibility and category fit – and how the cognitive process of self-categorization unfolds: 1) *Social categorization* – refers to the notion that people organize social information by categorizing individuals into groups; 2) *Social comparison* – the process by which social categorization is invested with meaning; and 3) *Social identification* – the process by which information about social groups is related to the self (Ellemers, De Gilder, and Haslam 2004).

SIT in Marketing Research

Social identity theory has not only been investigated to a high degree in organizational research, but has also given rise to numerous articles in leading marketing journals. First of all, marketing papers can be divided into research dealing with consumers (e.g., White and Dahl 2007), employees (e.g., Hughes and Ahearne 2010), or both (e.g., Press and Arnould 2011). Furthermore, marketing researchers use social identity theory to explore several forms of people’s identification with a certain unit, for example the whole organization (e.g., Bhattacharya, Rao, and Glynn 1995), a team within an organization (e.g., Wieseke et al. 2012), or a brand (e.g., Lam et al. 2010). Antecedent variables of identification can be logically clustered into characteristics of the organization, the product, and the market as well as refer to activities and affiliations. Finally, well-established outcome variables from the marketing literature such as satisfaction, willingness-to-pay, and word-of-mouth are connected with social identity theory.

Moral Responsibility

*“The **act of buying is a vote** for an economic and social model, for a particular way of producing goods. We are concerned with the quality of goods and the satisfactions we derive from them, but we cannot ignore the conditions under which products are made – the environmental impact and working conditions. **We are linked to them** and therefore have a **responsibility** for them.”*

Anwar Fazal, president of the International Organization of Consumer Unions

The citation above exemplary shows that there is a substantial amount of anecdotal evidence pointing in the direction of consumer responsibility for irresponsible or unsustainable company actions (i.e., support of the company through purchase decisions; see also Shaw 2007: *consumption as a vote through boycotting or buycotting*). As stated before, this notion is also supported by results of our in-depth interviews (Stich and Wagner 2012) indicating that consumers may experience individual responsibility and guilt for socially irresponsible company actions.

Again, Paper 1 serves our purpose to understand which concept fits best for the research question at hand, that is, the exploration of consumers’ moral responsibility in case of socially irresponsible firm behavior. First, Paper 3 focuses initially on corporate behavior (which then leads to consumers’ psychological reactions), therefore, a term from the meso field seemed most adequate (*abstraction*). Second, the term should be connectable with environmental as well as social issues (*subject*). Third, a common term with no strong moral appeal neither a too pragmatic one had to be selected (*appeal*). Last but not least and similar to Paper 2, a negative connotation should be given in order to evoke moral responsibility. Therefore, the term *corporate social irresponsibility (CSI)* was used for Paper 3.

6. Cling Together, Swing Together? Corporate Social

Irresponsibility: Do Consumers Feel Accountable for It?*

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Abstract

This research deals with an understudied aspect in consumer research, that is, consumers' self-perceptions in case of companies doing harm to a third party (i.e., employees). In particular, self-perceptions include the notions of responsibility and guilt, which together constitute one common factor (moral responsibility). Moreover, we look at formal (customer vs. non-customer) and psychological (high vs. low brand glorification) customer affiliation in third-party scenarios. Study 1 shows that high brand glorification increases consumers' degree of moral responsibility for low but not for high customer affiliation. Study 2 reveals that victim proximity appears to influence consumers' perceived responsibility for irresponsible company actions through empathic concern. Finally, study 3 shows victim poverty to affect moral responsibility through victim controllability and empathic concern. The research also examines the mediating role of moral responsibility with regard to purchase intention, negative word-of-mouth as well as consumers' willingness to donate for the victims.

Introduction

Consumers have a high degree of power in today's economy. In addition to that, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is of growing importance for consumers and also for companies themselves. In particular, there are consumers who expect companies to act in a socially responsible way (Webb, Mohr, and Harris 2008) and blame them for unsustainable actions and products (Wagner et al. 2009). Consequences can be negative word-of-mouth, a negative corporate image, or reduced purchase intention (Einwiller et al. 2006; Luo and Bhattacharya 2006; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). The worst-case scenario from a company's point of view would lie in a product or company boycott which can severely harm the firm's profitability in the end (King and Soule 2007): Companies such as *BP* (oil well blowout), *Wal-Mart* (bribery), *McDonald's* (unhealthy food), or *Nike* (child labor practices) are

systematically boycotted by organized networks of consumers which meet at several virtual platforms (e.g., www.ethicalconsumer.org; www.organicconsumers.org; www.triplepundit.com).

Apart from the high practical relevance, CSR continues to grow as an important stream of research (Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012; Torelli et al. 2012). Two forms of CSR can be distinguished, that is (positive) corporate social responsibility (CSR) and (negative) corporate social irresponsibility (CSI). Past research suggests that negative CSR information leads to more pronounced consumer reactions than positive CSR information. In other words, there appears to be a disproportional destructive impact of CSI perceptions compared to CSR (Handelman and Arnold 1999; Mohr and Webb 2005; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). Consequently, an emerging stream of research concentrates on the mechanisms and dynamics that may explain the destructive effects of perceived CSI (Lange and Washburn 2012; Putrevu et al. 2012; Sweetin et al. 2013).

Third-party scenarios describe situations of consumers ‘observing’ others doing harm to a third party (e.g., other consumers, employees, the environment; Nelissen and Zeelenberg 2009). However, consumers could support the violating company in various ways through their own purchase decisions or recommendations and we speculate that they might therefore – to a certain degree – feel responsible and guilty for corporate actions. The theoretical basis for this assumption stems from social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986) and more specific literature dealing with customer-company-identification (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen 2005). For instance, the “perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate” (Ashforth and Mael 1989, p. 21) can shape consumers’ reactions such as company loyalty or company promotion (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). Nevertheless, it seems difficult to find research on the debate how consumers feel on behalf of others’ wrongdoings. In order to do so, we focus on consumers’ self-perceptions concerning moral responsibility (encompassing notions of responsibility and guilt).

We speculate that consumers might perceive individual moral responsibility for irresponsible company actions. Notably, the degree of moral responsibility should depend on a consumers’ formal (customer vs. non-customer) and psychological (high vs. low brand glorification) affiliation with a company as well as on the perceived proximity and poverty of the respective victim. Moral responsibility should

affect CSI outcomes (i.e., perceived CSI, negative word-of-mouth, purchase intention, and willingness to donate for the victims). Empathic concern and the degree victims have control over their situation (victim controllability) should also constitute psychological mechanisms influencing moral responsibility as well as the aforementioned CSI outcomes.

In particular, our results show a significant terminative interaction between customer affiliation and brand glorification, that is, high brand glorification only increases consumers' moral responsibility perceptions for low (vs. high) customer affiliation (Study 1). Further analyses discover that the influence of victim proximity on moral responsibility is mediated through empathic concern (Study 2). Study 3 reveals victim poverty to shape moral responsibility through victim controllability and empathic concern. The three studies also explore the mediating function of moral responsibility for CSI outcomes.

This paper is structured as follows: First, we give a brief overview of the theoretical background and introduce our conceptual model. Afterwards, we present the methodology and results for three lab experiments examining the role of moral responsibility, based on several main hypotheses. We conclude with an overall discussion of our implications, also including limitations and future research directions.

Theoretical Background and Conceptual Model

Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Social Irresponsibility

As mentioned before, there has been a growing stream of research dealing with corporate social responsibility (CSR). In addition to that, researchers have started to show an increasing interest in the negative aspect of CSR, that is, corporate social irresponsibility (CSI). A recent example is the paper by Kang, Germann, and Grewal (2015), where the authors explore the relationships between CSR, CSI, and firm performance by suggesting a structural panel vector autoregression specification. More specifically, Sweetin et al. (2013) have found experimental evidence for consumers' willingness to

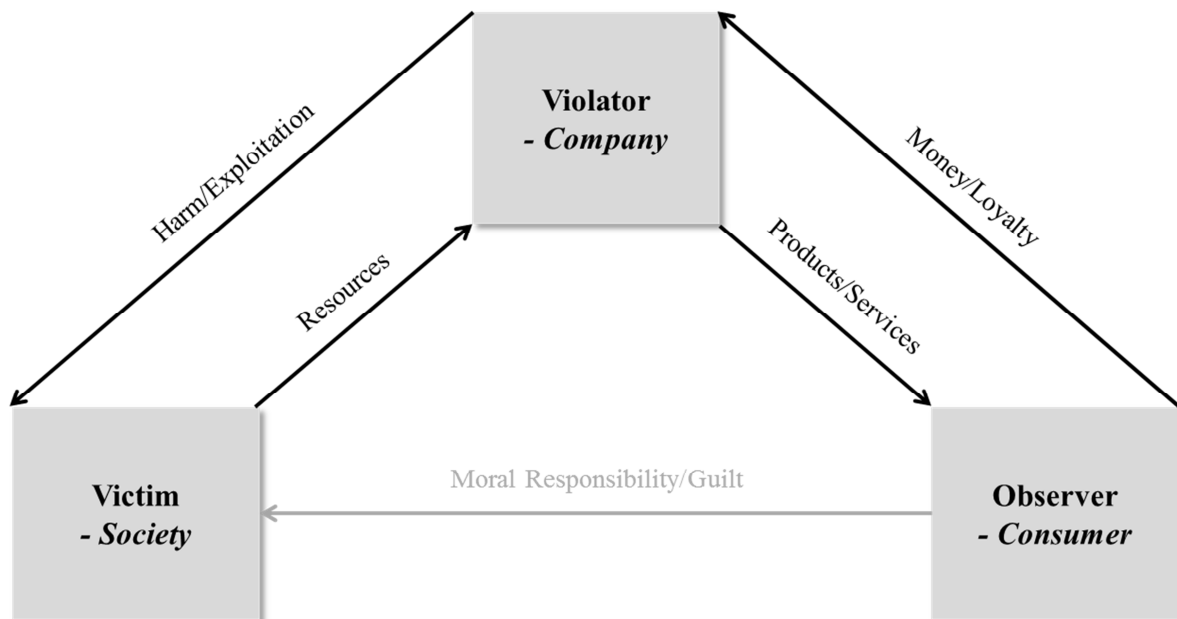
punish companies for their socially irresponsible behavior. Notably, CSI is more fatal than CSR: Ethical behavior is not rewarded (if companies are expected to act ethically), however, unethical behavior is punished (Creyer and Ross 1996). Furthermore, management journals as well deal with CSI issues: Lange and Washburn (2012) developed a theoretical model where they claim several propositions in the area of CSI attributions (e.g., higher perceived corporate culpability leads to higher CSI attributions). There is also an increasing number of articles dealing with product-harm crises which can be seen as one important manifestation of CSI (e.g., Chen, Ganesan, and Liu 2009; Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Helsen 2008; Cleeren, van Heerde, and Dekimpe 2013). Finally, a special issue on CSR, CSI, and corruption was presented in *Journal of Business Research* (Putrevu et al. 2012). Despite a long list of relevant research in the field of CSR and CSI, there are still open questions with regard to specific aspects, that is, the relationship between CSI and moral responsibility as well as CSI outcomes such as purchase intention or negative word-of-mouth.

Moral Responsibility

It is important to note that there are different forms of responsibility, that is, causal responsibility and moral responsibility (e.g., McGraw 1987, p. 248). While causal responsibility is the extent to which an agent is the cause of some outcome, moral responsibility defines the extent to which an agent deserves the blame for the outcome. The two forms have also been explored in third-party scenarios (Zimmermann et al. 2011): Causal responsibility emphasizes who caused the wrongdoing in the past (i.e., the ingroup) and moral responsibility focuses on the current consequences of the wrongdoing (it is therefore a sociomoral norm to respond to the consequences of the ingroup's transgressions and the current needs of the victim). Moral responsibility should also play a role in case of identification with a brand community (Ewing, Wagstaff, and Powell 2013). Once again, as identification is not limited to the ingroup (Tanis and Postmes 2005), moral responsibility for an outgroup's transgression appears to be possible as well. As a side note, moral responsibility can refer to an individual or to a whole group (Waytz and Young 2012). Figure 8 illustrates how consumers, company, and victim can – in general – relate to each other.

Figure 8

RELATION BETWEEN CONSUMER, COMPANY, AND VICTIM



Guilt is an emotion which appears to be closely connected to moral responsibility. However, different forms of guilt exist. On the one hand, individual guilt means that someone feels badly about having not met another's needs or having harmed the other's welfare in some way (Clark, Fitness, and Brisette 2003). On the other hand, there are two well-known forms of non-individual guilt: collective guilt and group-based guilt. Collective guilt means feeling badly when the ingroup is associated with inequitable treatment of outgroups (Powell, Branscombe, and Schmitt 2005). Group-based guilt means feeling badly because of harmful or immoral actions or inactions of fellow group members; this form of guilt does not depend on personal responsibility for the wrongdoing but arises from the association between individual and violator group (Branscombe, Doosje, and McGarty 2002; Zimmermann et al. 2011). The difference between personal guilt and group-based guilt has also been demonstrated in laboratory experiments as has been the positive connection between identification and collective guilt (Doosje et al. 1998).

The relationship between responsibility and guilt is controversially discussed. First, responsibility could lead to guilt (Clark et al. 2003). Second, responsibility can lead to guilt which then leads to

third-party punishment (Nelissen and Zeelenberg 2009). Third, guilt can also lead to responsibility (Berndsen and Manstead 2007). Finally, causal responsibility has been found to lead to group-based guilt which then leads to moral responsibility which itself leads to third-party reactions (Zimmermann et al. 2011). However, these different relationships highly depend on the respective working definitions with regard to different forms of responsibility and guilt.

Notably, we hold the opinion that guilt items can be integrated into the moral responsibility construct. This in line with the Schwartz' Responsibility Scale which includes several guilt items (e.g., Hoyk and Hersey, p. 23). Furthermore, other authors treat group-based guilt and moral responsibility conceptually and through their measurement as equivalents (Roccas, Klar, and Liviatan 2006). A similar procedure can be seen when different emotions are combined in a single factor for empirical research purposes (e.g., contempt, anger, disgust; Grappi, Romani, and Bagozzi 2013).

To the best of our knowledge, moral responsibility (including notions of guilt) from an observer's (i.e., third party's) perspective has not been deeply explored in marketing so far. For reasons of clarification, we developed the following working definition for the moral responsibility concept, which we will use in the course of the following article:

'Moral responsibility describes perceived own accountability and felt own blame for corporate actions which lead to harm to a victim.'

Conceptual Model

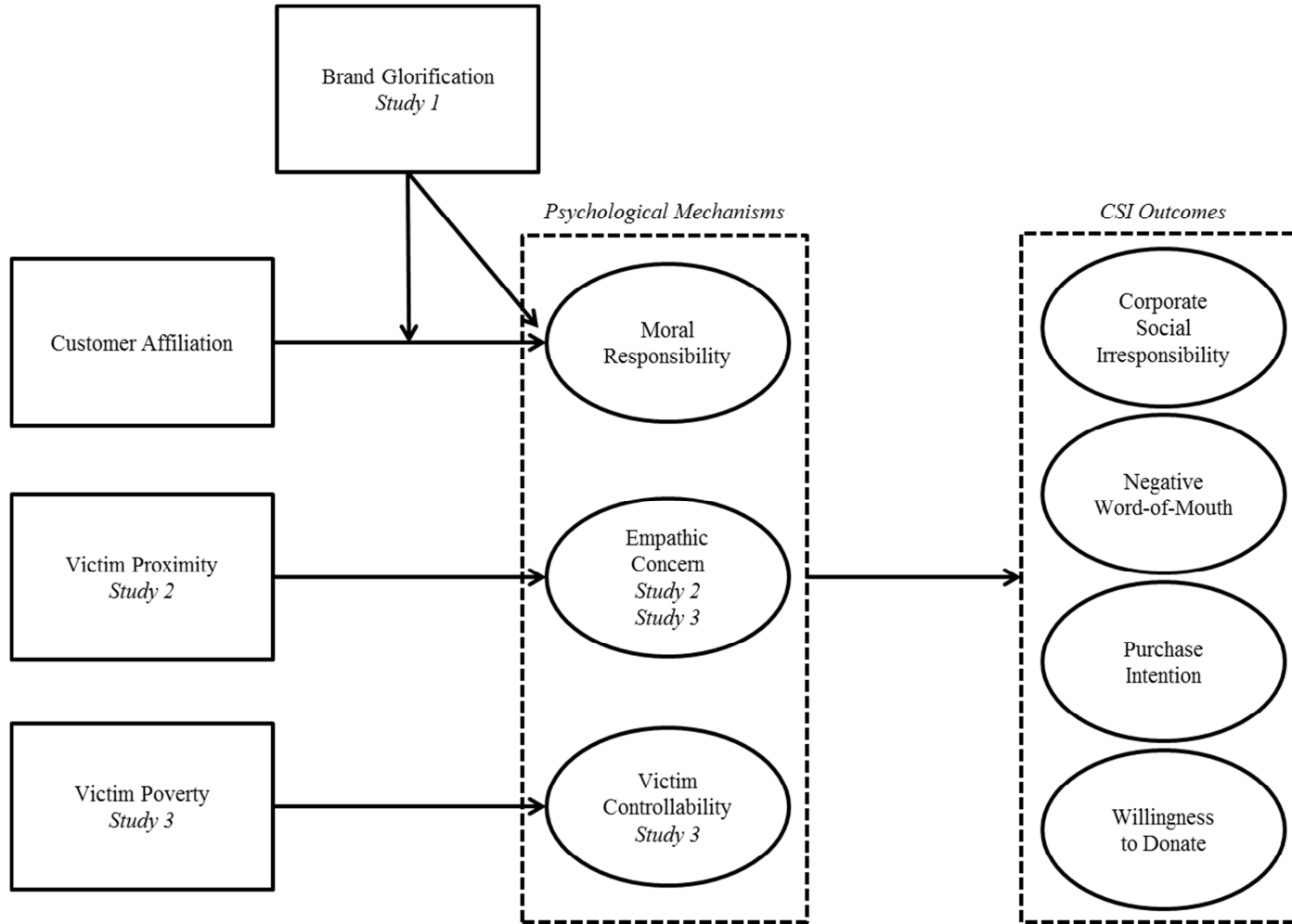
Based on a profound analysis of the literature, an overall conceptual model was built (Figure 9). As can be seen, there should be substantial differences concerning the degree of perceived own moral responsibility (in case of companies doing harm to a victim) depending on formal (customer vs. noncustomer; see also Sela, Wheeler, and Sarial-Abi 2012) and attitudinal (glorification of the brand or the company) affiliation (experimentally manipulated factors). Next, victim properties should also influence moral responsibility, that is, perceived proximity and poverty of the victim (experimentally

manipulated factors) as well as the victim's possibilities to control its own situation (mediating psychological mechanism). Another mediating psychological mechanism is suspected to be the extent of individual empathic concern for the respective victims.

Last but not least, moral responsibility should in the end influence important CSI outcomes, specifically the degree of perceived CSI, the intention to spread negative word-of-mouth about the violating company, purchase intention (i.e., the intention to buy from the violating company), and consumers' willingness to donate for the affected victims. Depicted variables will shortly be explained below and some respective working definitions will be expressed.

Figure 9

OVERALL CONCEPTUAL MODEL



Notes: CSI = corporate social irresponsibility. Boxes = manipulated variables. Ovals = measured variables.

Study 1

In a first step, important antecedents and consequences of moral responsibility should be explored. This seems important as there is not much research about consumers' psychological processing of CSI information so far. Notably, we assume that the specific degree of identification with the irresponsibly acting firm should shape consumers' degree of own perceived moral responsibility. Although not acting irresponsibly themselves, consumers may (through their purchase decisions, that is, support of the company), be considered to be partially responsible for corporate actions. On the analogy of Dick's and Basu's famous differentiation between behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (1994), social identification with a group (i.e., the perception of belongingness to a social group) can be built through formal affiliation (being a customer) or through attitudinal affiliation (being a fan). In other words, customers or fans should feel connected to the violating company through social identification.

In general, social identity rests on intergroup social comparisons that seek to confirm or to establish ingroup-favoring evaluative distinctiveness between ingroup and outgroup, motivated by an underlying need for self-esteem (Turner 1975). This means that social identity theory postulates ingroup favoritism instead of objective evaluations in case of typical ingroup-outgroup situations (Tajfel and Turner 1986). However, individuals can be less tolerant of ingroup (vs. outgroup) members who transgress social norms or standards, which is called a 'black sheep effect' (e.g., Marques, Yzerbyt, and Leyens 1988) and which might be relevant for academic marketing as well. In particular, the black sheep effect postulates that positively valued ingroup members will be perceived more favorably than positive outgroup members, but negatively valued ingroup member can receive greater disapproval than will negatively valued outgroup members (Kerr et al. 1995):

“The black sheep effect is a sophisticated form of the well-known ingroup favoritism bias, earlier highlighted by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Indeed, because deviant behavior emanating from an ingroup member threatens the social identity of other members of the group,

members are more inclined to react toward the perpetrator of an incivility and eventually to exclude him from the group. In this way, they succeed in restoring the altered ingroup image and maintaining a positive social identity.” (Nugier et al. 2009, p. 1127)

If there is no realistic chance for a group change (e.g., in case of country citizenship), ingroup favoritism has been found to prevent the occurrence of a black sheep effect (e.g., Leidner et al. 2010). On the contrary, in case of ‘shapeable’ groups, psychological research has detected that violating ingroup (vs. outgroup) members can evoke higher own moral responsibility (Zimmermann et al. 2011). Customer affiliation is defined according to Sela et al. (2012) as a customer’s affiliation with a company or a brand. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₁: Customers show a higher degree of moral responsibility compared to non-customers (in case of the respective company acting socially irresponsible).

Between-countries-research has explored different facets of identification. Whilst the term *identification* has often been equated with *attachment* (i.e., the subjective identification of one’s self with the essence and common fate of a group), researchers have found a distinct and to a high degree uninvestigated form of social identification, that is, *national glorification* (Leidner et al. 2010, p. 1116; Roccas et al. 2006). National glorification refers to the belief that one’s group is superior to outgroups on a variety of dimensions. It has been found to have different relations to outcome variables compared to national attachment (e.g., Roccas et al. 2006). This is why glorification might also play an important role for identification with a specific company or brand. The aforementioned variable attitudinal affiliation (or colloquial: being a fan) is therefore expressed by the derivated concept of *brand glorification*.

In addition to that, it is important to note that people can also identify with a specific outgroup (e.g., an admired soccer team or a luxury brand which oneself cannot afford because of money or availability

restrictions), that is, identification is *not* limited to ingroups but can also appear between individuals and positive evaluated outgroups (e.g., Hogg and Turner 1985; Tanis and Postmes 2005). For example, Marques, Robalo and Rocha (1992) have found out that likeability can be more important than formal affiliation with regard to specific evaluations. As brand glorification constitutes a specific form of social identification and perceived superiority can also lead to social identification with a group, we postulate the following hypothesis:

H₂: High glorifiers show a higher degree of moral responsibility compared to low glorifiers (in case of the respective company acting socially irresponsible).

There is also initial evidence for the mediating role of moral responsibility for ultimate dependent variables such as purchase intention. While Thompson and Sinha (2008) state that moral responsibility leads to community-oriented actions (e.g., sharing information about products offered by the brand), more general evidence stems from van der Linden (2011) who gives theoretical explanations for feelings of moral responsibility leading to the formation of prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior can implicate negative company evaluations, lower company support as well as compensation for the victim.

In particular, higher moral responsibility or moral norms can lead to higher donations for the victims (van der Linden 2011; Zimmermann et al. 2011). Similar effects have been stated for helping behavior (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) and the goal to compensate (Leach, Iyer, and Pedersen 2006). Furthermore, negative word-of-mouth should be lower if company actions are perceived as more just (Blodgett, Granbois, and Walters 1993), that is, feelings of moral responsibility should be lower. Finally, as a feeling of moral responsibility activates moral norms and moral norms are a main driver for purchase intention (Guido et al. 2010), higher justice perceptions of company actions should also lead to higher repatronage intentions (Blodgett et al. 1993). Again, brand glorification and customer

affiliation should lead to the same effects as they both increase consumers' identification with a company:

H₃: Moral responsibility mediates the relationship between customer affiliation and perceived corporate social irresponsibility (a), negative word-of-mouth (b), purchase intention (c), and willingness to donate (d).

H₄: Moral responsibility mediates the relationship between brand glorification and perceived corporate social irresponsibility (a), negative word-of-mouth (b), purchase intention (c), and willingness to donate (d).

The authors assume that the effects of customer affiliation and brand glorification on moral responsibility are not additive. According to the principle of multiattribute diminishing sensitivity, additional identification features (in case of high social identification) should not lead to higher moral responsibility perceptions:

“An alternative that is superior to a competitor, based on one or more dimensions, is expected to gain less from the addition of another (positive) feature...”

(Nowlis and Simonson 1996, p. 37)

When conducting an analysis of variance, this effect manifests in a terminative interaction:

“A terminative interaction is one in which two or more variables are clearly effective in modifying behavior, but when combined their effect is not increased over what either alone would do.”

(Neale and Liebert 1986, p. 165)

To make it easy, perceived loyalty can stem from behavioral *OR* attitudinal loyalty (Dick and Basu 1994) and moral responsibility is built through formal (customer affiliation) *OR* attitudinal (brand glorification) social identification:

H₅: Moral responsibility is influenced by a terminative interaction effect of customer affiliation and brand glorification. Both factors increase moral responsibility, however, their combined effect is not stronger than the effect of only one of these factors.

Research Design

Procedure and Participants: In order to examine the hypothesized causal relationships, a 2 × 2 online experiment was developed (manipulated factors: high customer affiliation vs. low customer affiliation; high brand glorification vs. low brand glorification), where participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Online experimentation has been recently described as an adequate methodology to investigate CSR communication effects on consumers (Vanhamme et al. 2015). The experiment was conducted via *Amazon Mechanical Turk*, which is a common procedure in experimental marketing research (e.g., Roggeveen et al. 2015). Participants received \$ 1.00 for a complete response which took them between 195 to 964 seconds. An instructional manipulation check was applied in order to exclude 15 participants not following the instructions (Oppenheimer, Meyvis,

and Davidenko 2009, p. 868). The final sample consisted of 205 participants (living in the U.S.) with different sociodemographic characteristics (average age: 35.63 years; 52.2% male, 47.3% female, one invalid answer; highest educational achievement: higher than high school degree in case of 68.30%). All participants received information about a fictive retail company selling electronic goods named Power-Mart (Wagner et al. 2009):

'Power-Mart is one of the largest retailers of consumer electronics in the U.S. The chain operates stores all across the nation, offering an attractive selection of electronic goods such as home entertainment systems, personal computers, and digital cameras. Because Power-Mart sells its goods at very competitive prices in an attractive store environment, their stores tend to be quite popular with most people.'

In a next step, subjects were primed according to the two factors at interest by a description of their personal judgment of Power-Mart and their personal (shopping) history with the company:

'However, your own opinion of Power-Mart is even much more positive than usual. You believe that Power-Mart is flat out the very best electronic goods retailer in the market. In your view, it is way superior to its competitors.' (high brand glorification)

'However, your own opinion of Power-Mart is somewhat less enthusiastic. Your opinion of Power-Mart is pretty neutral. You believe Power-Mart is about just as good or bad as most other retail stores selling electronic goods.' (low brand glorification)

'As part of your regular shopping habits, you are a frequent customer of Power-Mart. You tend to visit the Power-Mart store in your local area regularly and have purchased several items there in the past. You are also a member of Power-Mart's customer loyalty program because you shop there regularly.' (high customer affiliation)

'Actually, there happens to be no Power-Mart store in your local area that you would be able to visit. Thus, you have never shopped at Power-Mart. You are not a customer of Power-Mart and you are not enrolled in their customer loyalty program.' (low customer affiliation)

Finally, a hypothetical newspaper report describing Power-Mart's socially irresponsible behavior was presented (e.g., Vanhamme et al. 2015):

'Poor Employee Health Care Coverage by Power-Mart:

Retailer Power-Mart does not provide medical insurance coverage to the large majority of its employees in local stores all across the U.S. Most low-wage employees working at the retailer are forced to pay for medical expenses entirely out of their own pockets or must rely on state subsidized programs.'

Participants then answered several items measuring moral responsibility, corporate social irresponsibility, negative word-of-mouth, purchase intention, and willingness to donate. All variables were measured by more than one item on seven-point scales (1 = 'I disagree completely'; 7 = 'I agree completely'). The respective items were adopted from the literature. Table 17 shows the used items, its respective reliabilities, and the original sources. Last but not least, respondents answered several manipulation and realism check items as well as sociodemographic questions.

Manipulation and Realism Checks: Our customer affiliation prime was tested with two items ('I was a regular Power-Mart customer'; 'I was enrolled in Power-Mart's loyalty program') on a seven-point scale (1 = 'absolutely false'; 7 = 'absolutely true') ($\alpha = .96$). A *t*-test between two independent samples (conducted via *SPSS 16*) revealed a successful manipulation: $M_{\text{high affiliation}} = 6.73$, $M_{\text{low affiliation}} = 1.30$; $t(203) = 45.29$, $p < .001$. Accordingly on the same seven-point scale, the brand glorification prime was tested with two items ('I considered Power-Mart to be a superior company'; 'I believed that Power-Mart is better than other retailers') ($\alpha = .99$). The manipulation was also successful: $M_{\text{high glorification}} =$

6.83, $M_{\text{low glorification}} = 1.80$; $t(203) = 36.23$, $p < .001$. Two items were also used in order to investigate how realistic the used experimental design was evaluated by the participants (Darley and Lim 1993): ‘I could imagine an actual company doing the things described in the situation earlier’ and ‘I believe that the described situation could happen in real life’ ($\alpha = .86$; measured on the same seven-point scale as the manipulation check items). Results ($M_{\text{realism}} = 6.64$, $SD_{\text{realism}} = .59$) indicate that the scenarios are “highly realistic” (Homburg, Klarmann, and Staritz 2012, p. 121).

Validity Assessment: The software *Mplus 5.1* was used in order to examine the measurement properties for the used scales (moral responsibility, corporate social irresponsibility, negative word-of-mouth, purchase intention, and willingness to donate). The confirmatory factor analysis shows a good overall model fit: $\chi^2(109) = 236.93$; $\chi^2/df = 2.17$; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .08; comparative fit index [CFI] = .97; Tucker-Lewis Index [TLI] = .96; standardized root mean square residual [SRMR] = .05. All standardized factor loadings are statistically significant at $p < .001$ (indication for convergent validity) and estimates are positive (.64 to .98). Construct reliabilities (.84 to .98) and average variances extracted scores (.51 to .94) display evidence for internal consistency. Discriminant validity is (apart from the squared correlation between negative word-of-mouth and purchase intention) supported through examining the criterion by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Descriptives and correlations (calculated with *SPSS 16*) of Study 1 are shown in Table 8.

Table 8
DESCRIPTIVES AND CORRELATIONS (STUDY 1)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	CA	BG	MR	CSI	NW	PI
Customer affiliation (CA)								
Brand glorification (BG)								
Moral responsibility (MR)	2.47	1.38	.18**	.14*				
Corporate social irresponsibility (CSI)	5.12	1.66	-.04	-.10	.31**			
Negative word-of-mouth (NW)	3.84	1.80	-.10	-.27**	.42**	.70**		
Purchase intention (PI)	3.97	1.83	.18**	.27**	-.23**	-.63**	-.74**	
Willingness to donate (WD)	2.60	1.69	.04	.06	.37**	.13	.20**	-.17*

Notes: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. CA and BG are manipulated variables.

Results

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted via *SPSS 16* (independent variables: customer affiliation and brand glorification; dependent variable: moral responsibility). The results reveal a significant main effect of customer affiliation: $F(1, 201) = 5.76, p < .05$ ($M_{\text{high affiliation}} = 6.73$; $M_{\text{low affiliation}} = 1.30$). Therefore, as customers show a higher degree of moral responsibility compared to non-customers (in case of the respective company acting socially irresponsible), H_1 could be supported.

The same analysis also shows a significant main effect of brand glorification: $F(1, 201) = 4.10, p < .05$ ($M_{\text{high glorification}} = 6.83, M_{\text{low glorification}} = 1.80$). Therefore, as high glorifiers show a higher degree of moral responsibility compared to low glorifiers (in case of the respective company acting socially irresponsible), H_2 could be supported.

According to the conducted ANOVA, a terminative interaction effect of customer affiliation and brand glorification on moral responsibility could be found: $F(1,201) = 6.46, p < .05$ ($M_{\text{high affiliation} + \text{high glorification}} = 2.67$; $M_{\text{high affiliation} + \text{low glorification}} = 2.77$; $M_{\text{low affiliation} + \text{high glorification}} = 2.70$; $M_{\text{low affiliation} + \text{low glorification}} = 1.84$). As can also be seen in Figure 10, customer affiliation and brand glorification both increase moral responsibility, however, their combined effect is not stronger than the effect of only one of these factors. Therefore, H_3 could be supported.

Mplus 5.1 was used in order to calculate the overall fit indices of the hypothesized structural equation model. Results show that the underlying model is a satisfactory representation of the observed data: $\chi^2(157) = 348.16$; $\chi^2/df = 2.22$; RMSEA = .08; CFI = .95; TLI = .94; SRMR = .09). Path coefficients of the structural equation analysis are depicted in Table 9.

Figure 10

INTERACTION OF CUSTOMER AFFILIATION
AND BRAND GLORIFICATION (STUDY 1)



Table 9

STRUCTURAL EQUATION ANALYSIS: PATH COEFFICIENTS (STUDY 1)

<i>Effects on Moral Responsibility</i>				
Structural Path		Estimate	t-value	R²
Customer affiliation (CA) →	Moral responsibility	.82**	3.91	.09
Brand glorification (BG) →	Moral responsibility	.74**	3.28	
CA x BG →	Moral responsibility	-.79*	-2.37	
<i>Effects on CSI Outcomes</i>				
Moral responsibility →	Corporate social irresponsibility	.44**	4.76	.11
Moral responsibility →	Negative word-of-mouth	.56**	6.01	.19
Moral responsibility →	Purchase intention	-.35**	-3.27	.05
Moral responsibility →	Willingness to donate	.59**	5.31	.17

Notes: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Unstandardized coefficients. CSI = Corporate social irresponsibility.

The mediation analysis was conducted via *Mplus 5.1*. In doing so, a bootstrap analysis with 10,000 resamples was run. The MODEL INDIRECT command allowed for the computation of all postulated indirect effects. A possible interaction between customer affiliation and brand glorification was integrated into the model. Table 10 summarizes the unstandardized coefficients. As can be seen, all indirect effects show substantial significance ($b > \text{S.E.}$). This means that moral responsibility mediates the relationship between customer affiliation and perceived corporate social irresponsibility (a), negative word-of-mouth (b), purchase intention (c), and willingness to donate (d). Therefore, H_3 was fully supported.

Table 10
MEDIATION ANALYSIS (STUDY 1)

Independent Variable	Mediator	Dependent Variable	Indirect Effect		
			<i>b</i>	S.E.	CI (95%)
Customer affiliation (CA) →	Moral responsibility	CSI	.36*	.12	.17 to .65
		Negative word-of-mouth	.46*	.14	.22 to .78
		Purchase intention	-.29*	.12	-.59 to -.09
		Willingness to donate	.48*	.14	.25 to .81
Brand glorification (BG) →	Moral responsibility	CSI	.32*	.13	.12 to .65
		Negative word-of-mouth	.41*	.14	.18 to .75
		Purchase intention	-.26*	.13	-.57 to -.07
		Willingness to donate	.43*	.16	.17 to .80
CA x BG →	Moral responsibility	CSI	-.35*	.19	-.81 to -.05
		Negative word-of-mouth	-.45*	.23	-.96 to -.07
		Purchase intention	.28*	.18	.02 to .74
		Willingness to donate	-.47*	.21	-.94 to -.09

Notes: * $p < .05$. Unstandardized coefficients. CSI = Corporate social irresponsibility. S.E. = Standard Error. CI = Confidence Interval. Bootstrap analysis is based on 10,000 resamples.

The same mediation analysis also reveals the mediating role of moral responsibility for the relationship between brand glorification and perceived corporate social irresponsibility (a), negative

word-of-mouth (b), purchase intention (c), and willingness to donate (d). Again, all indirect effects show substantial significance ($b > \text{S.E.}$). Therefore, H_4 was fully supported. Notably, the influence of the interaction effect (between customer affiliation and brand glorification) on the four abovementioned dependent variables was also significantly mediated by moral responsibility.

Study 2

Study 1 revealed the high importance of social identification triggers (i.e., customer affiliation, brand glorification) for moral responsibility as well as the latter role for ultimate dependent variables (CSI perception, negative word-of-mouth, purchase intention, willingness to donate for the victims). Research about third-party scenarios (e.g., Nelissen and Zeelenberg 2009) illustrates that victim characteristics have to be considered as well in matters of social identification. So far, the role of the victims (i.e., the employees) themselves has not been explored in depth. However, the literature indicates that perceived emotional and formal closeness to the victim changes the observer's assessment of a specific situation. For example, observers' demand to punish the violator depends on the victim's belonging to the ingroup vs. the outgroup (Bernhard, Fischbacher, and Fehr 2006). In particular, demand for punishing the violator is highest if the victim belongs to the ingroup; if the victim belongs to the outgroup, demand for punishing is higher when the violator belongs to the outgroup (Bernhard et al. 2006). According to Lange and Washburn (2012), high identification with the victim leads observers to care more and perceive less complicity of the victims in case of low identification with the violator. Moral intensity also varies with the social, cultural, physiological and physical proximity of the victim (Jones and Ryan 1997). While emotional proximity to the victim has clearly been disclosed as a moderating factor for observers' relative punishment preference (van Prooijen 2010), the above stated research also suggests that the pure geographical proximity (without considering socioeconomic or sociocultural aspects) of the respective victim should shape observers' assessments of the CSI scenario.

Considering further analyses of the literature and theoretical reflections, *victim proximity* should not only play a role for individual moral responsibility and its ultimate dependent variables, but in a first step have a significant influence on people's empathic concern with regard to the victims (i.e., the employees). There has been a bunch of research considering empathic concern, subsuming other-oriented feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others, as an important psychological mechanism for individual attitudes and behavior (Davis 1980, p. 11; Davis 1983; Leliveld, van Dijk, and van Beest 2012; Niezink et al. 2012). In order to examine the role of geographical proximity of the victims for perceived empathic concern, socioeconomic or sociocultural aspects should not differ between the developed scenarios. Therefore, the victims should only differ with regard to their geographic proximity. Again, social identity theory generally postulates ingroup favoritism (Tajfel and Turner 1986), therefore ingroup victims (i.e., employees from the same country) should evoke higher feelings of empathic concern than outgroup victims (i.e., employees from another likewise developed country). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₆: Consumers show a higher degree of felt empathic concern for geographically proximal (vs. distant) victims.

In accordance with Study 1, moral responsibility should influence ultimate dependent variables (perceived corporate social irresponsibility, negative word-of-mouth, purchase intention, and willingness to donate). However, empathic concern has been proposed to positively influence moral integrity (e.g., Batson, Thompson, and Chen 2002). Therefore, we assume that empathic concern serves as an important predictor for individual moral responsibility, leading to the following hypothesis:

H₇: Consumers' empathic concern mediates the relationship between victim proximity and moral responsibility (a), perceived corporate social irresponsibility (b), negative word-of-mouth (c), purchase intention (d), and willingness to donate (e).

Research Design

Procedure and Participants: Corresponding to Study 1, a 2 × 2 online experiment was developed, manipulating customer affiliation (high vs. low) and victim proximity (high vs. low). Participants were drawn via *Amazon Mechanical Turk* and randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Complete responders (participation time: 194 to 801 seconds) received \$ 1.00 for their work. Again, an instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer et al. 2009, p. 868) was designed, leading to the exclusion of 4 inattentive participants. The final sample consisted of 238 participants (living in the U.S.) with different sociodemographic characteristics (average age: 35.16 years; 50.4% male, 49.6% female; highest educational achievement: higher than high school degree in case of 65.50%). First, participants received the general background information about Power-Mart (Wagner et al. 2009; see Study 1). Second, the customer affiliation prime from Study 1 was used (high vs. low customer affiliation). Third, victim proximity was manipulated by a newspaper report about Power-Mart's poor treatment of employees in the U.S. vs. in England (United Kingdom) which are two countries with similar socioeconomic and sociocultural standards:

'Poor Health Care Coverage of Power-Mart's American Employees: Retailer Power-Mart does not provide medical insurance coverage to the large majority of its employees in local distribution centers all across the U.S. Most low-wage employees working for the retailer in the U.S. are forced to pay for medical expenses entirely out of their own pockets or must rely on state subsidized programs.' (high victim proximity)

'Poor Health Care Coverage of Power-Mart's Employees in England: Retailer Power-Mart does not provide medical insurance coverage to the large majority of its employees in

international distribution centers in England, United Kingdom. Most low-wage employees working for the retailer in England are forced to pay for medical expenses entirely out of their own pockets or must rely on state subsidized programs.’ (low victim proximity)

Participants then answered the same items from Study 1. In addition to that, empathic concern was measured (‘Imagining the employees, I feel...’) as well as attitude toward the employees’ country (‘In general, my feelings toward [country] as a nation are...’) which was included as a control variable. Table 17 shows the used items, its respective reliabilities, and the original sources. According to Study 1, respondents answered several manipulation and realism check items as well as sociodemographic questions.

Manipulation and Realism Checks: Our customer affiliation prime was tested with the same items as in Study 1 ($\alpha = .98$). A *t*-test between two independent samples (conducted via *SPSS 16*) revealed a successful manipulation: $M_{\text{high affiliation}} = 6.71$, $M_{\text{low affiliation}} = 1.08$; $t(236) = 64.67$, $p < .001$). The victim proximity manipulation was assessed via two seven-point scale items (1 = ‘absolutely false’; 7 = ‘absolutely true’): ‘Power-Mart’s poor health care treatment occurred very close to where I live’; ‘Power-Mart provided poor health care to employees with a high proximity to my local area’ ($\alpha = .97$). Again, the manipulation was successful: $M_{\text{high proximity}} = 3.32$, $M_{\text{low proximity}} = 1.54$; $t(236) = 7.09$, $p < .001$). Results of the two realism check items (see Study 1) indicate a high degree of realism ($\alpha = .93$; $M_{\text{realism}} = 6.55$, $SD_{\text{realism}} = .87$).

Validity Assessment: Akin to Study 1, measurement properties for the used scales (attitude toward country, moral responsibility, empathic concern, corporate social irresponsibility, negative word-of-mouth, purchase intention, and willingness to donate) were examined with the *Mplus* software (version 5.1). The confirmatory factor analysis shows a satisfactory overall model fit: $\chi^2(303) = 617.02$; $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.04$; RMSEA = .07; CFI = .95; TLI = .94; SRMR = .05. All standardized factor loadings are statistically significant at $p < .001$ (indication for convergent validity) and estimates are positive (.56 to .99). Construct reliabilities (.89 to .98) and average variances extracted scores (.63 to

.94) display evidence for internal consistency. Discriminant validity according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker 1981) is fully supported. Descriptives and correlations (calculated with *SPSS 16*) of Study 2 are shown in Table 11.

Table 11

DESCRIPTIVES AND CORRELATIONS (STUDY 2)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	CA	VP	AC	MR	EC	CSI	NW	PI
Customer affiliation (CA)										
Victim proximity (VP)										
Attitude toward country (AC)	5.48	1.39	.02	-.38**						
Moral responsibility (MR)	2.24	1.34	.51**	.00	-.02					
Empathic concern (EC)	4.88	1.41	.05	.15*	.15*	.26**				
Corporate social irresponsibility (CSI)	5.38	1.54	-.09	.17**	-.10	.23**	.48**			
Negative word-of-mouth (NW)	4.10	1.92	-.12	.11	-.11	.26**	.44**	.73**		
Purchase intention (PI)	3.75	1.81	.20**	-.14*	.18**	-.10	-.33**	-.63**	-.75**	
Willingness to donate (WD)	2.71	1.68	.04	.13*	-.08	.37**	.33**	.36**	.34**	-.27**

Notes: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. CA and VP are manipulated variables.

Results

With regard to H_6 , a t -test between two independent samples (conducted via *SPSS 16*) revealed a significant mean difference between high and low victim proximity conditions with regard to felt empathic concern: $M_{\text{low proximity}} = 4.68$, $M_{\text{high proximity}} = 5.10$; $t(236) = -2.29$, $p < .05$. In other words, consumers perceived more empathic concern for U.S. employees (proximal victims) than for English employees (distant victims), thus, H_6 could be supported.

Overall fit indices of the hypothesized structural equation model were calculated with *Mplus 5.1*. All in all, results show that the underlying model is a satisfactory representation of the observed data: $\chi^2(358) = 750.21$; $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.10$; RMSEA = .07; CFI = .94; TLI = .94; SRMR = .08). Path coefficients of the structural equation analysis are depicted in Table 12. Two path coefficients between moral responsibility and ultimate dependent variables miss significance, which emphasizes the importance to analyze the expected mediating role of the empathic concern variable.

The mediation analysis was also conducted via *Mplus 5.1*. In accordance to Study 1, a bootstrap analysis with 10,000 resamples was run and all postulated indirect effects were computed. Table 13 displays the unstandardized coefficients. As can be seen for victim proximity, all total indirect effects show substantial significance ($b > \text{S.E.}$). This means that consumers' empathic concern mediates the relationship between victim proximity and moral responsibility (a), perceived corporate social irresponsibility (b), negative word-of-mouth (c), purchase intention (d), and willingness to donate (e). Therefore, H_7 was fully supported.

Table 12

STRUCTURAL EQUATION ANALYSIS: PATH COEFFICIENTS (STUDY 2)

<i>Effects on Moral Responsibility/Empathic Concern</i>					
Structural Path			Estimate	t-value	R²
Customer affiliation	→	Moral responsibility	1.14**	8.94	.31
Empathic concern	→	Moral responsibility	.19**	3.46	
Victim proximity	→	Empathic concern	.59**	4.14	.08
Attitude toward country	→	Empathic concern	.23**	3.61	
<i>Effects on CSI Outcomes</i>					
Moral responsibility	→	Corporate social irresponsibility	.05	.74	.23
Empathic concern	→	Corporate social irresponsibility	.61**	6.94	
Moral responsibility	→	Negative word-of-mouth	.21*	2.59	.21
Empathic concern	→	Negative word-of-mouth	.59**	7.00	
Moral responsibility	→	Purchase intention	-.03	-.40	.10
Empathic concern	→	Purchase intention	-.48**	-4.50	
Moral responsibility	→	Willingness to donate	.45**	4.46	.21
Empathic concern	→	Willingness to donate	.41**	4.95	

Notes: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Unstandardized coefficients. CSI = corporate social irresponsibility.

Table 13

MEDIATION ANALYSIS (STUDY 2)

Independent Variable	Mediator(s)	Dependent Variable	Specific Indirect Effect			Total Indirect Effect		
			<i>b</i>	S.E.	CI (95%)	<i>b</i>	S.E.	CI (95%)
Customer affiliation	→ Moral responsibility	CSI				.06	.09	-.12 to .23
	→ Moral responsibility	Negative WOM				.24*	.10	.04 to .44
	→ Moral responsibility	Purchase intention				-.04	.10	-.23 to .18
	→ Moral responsibility	Willingness to donate				.51*	.13	.27 to .77
Victim proximity	→ Empathic Concern	Moral responsibility				.11*	.05	.04 to .23
	→ Empathic Concern	CSI	.36*	.12	.16 to .62			
	→ Empathic Concern → Moral responsibility	CSI	.01	.01	-.01 to .03	.37*	.12	.16 to .63
	→ Empathic Concern	Negative WOM	.35*	.12	.15 to .62			
	→ Empathic Concern → Moral responsibility	Negative WOM	.02*	.01	.01 to .07	.37*	.13	.16 to .65
	→ Empathic Concern	Purchase intention	-.29*	.10	-.53 to -.13			
	→ Empathic Concern → Moral responsibility	Purchase intention	-.00	.01	-.03 to .02	-.29*	.10	-.53 to -.13
	→ Empathic Concern	Willingness to donate	.25*	.09	.10 to .46			
→ Empathic Concern → Moral responsibility	Willingness to donate	.05*	.02	.02 to .12	.30*	.10	.13 to .52	

Notes: * $p < .05$. Unstandardized coefficients. CSI = Corporate social irresponsibility. WOM = word-of-mouth. S.E. = Standard Error. CI = Confidence Interval. Bootstrap analysis is based on 10,000 resamples.

Study 3

Study 2 has shown that higher (geographic) victim proximity leads to higher felt empathic concern, in turn mediating moral responsibility and CSI outcomes. However, there is first evidence that also socioeconomic victim characteristics can shape consumers' assessments. To begin with, Jones and Ryan (1997) generally state that moral intensity also depends on the *social* proximity of the victim. Using the example of China, media in Western countries as well as “politicians complain about bad working conditions in China and other low-wage sites” (Palat 2004, p. 3622). The need for improving Chinese labor conditions has also been stated by several Western institutions (e.g., U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2011), condemning the (on average) low living standard. With regard to our experimental CSI scenarios, consumers should attribute employees in non-Western countries (such as China) a certain degree of poverty (i.e., *victim poverty*).

In addition to that, workers in China are thought to be quite helpless with regard to fundamentally change their situation, for example, there has been a centralized job assignment instead of free contractual choice in the past (Fei and Reynolds 1987). Although this has changed to some extent, there is still more freedom of job choice and less inequality in developed countries compared to China (Okushima and Uchimura 2005). On the contrary, American workers are said to be architects of their own fortune to a much higher degree, which is symbolized by the typical American symbols of ‘the self-made man’, the metaphor ‘from dishwasher to millionaire’ and ‘the American Dream’. In other words, they could easily change their employer. However, if others are perceived as *helpless* or *hopeless*, a form of passive identification appears (Florian, Mikulincer, and Hirschberger 2000). Furthermore, a positive correlation between guilt and hopelessness has been found (de Rivera, Gerstmann, and Maisels 1994). Helplessness seems important in observers' evaluations as willingness to donate goes down if victims can be blamed for their plight (Zagefka et al. 2011) and perceived victim deservingness can influence purchase intentions and willingness to assist the victims (White, MacDonnell, and Ellard 2012). Finally, Goss et al. (2011) found out that a company is evaluated more positively if the victim gets the blame.

We use the term *victim controllability* which we define as the degree victims have control over their own situation, that is, victims with a high controllability are *not* helpless and can rather be blamed for their own situation. Workers in Western countries (vs. in non-Western countries) should therefore by tendency have a higher victim controllability. Thus, a negative relationship between victim poverty and observers' (i.e., consumers') perception of victim controllability is assumed:

H₈: Consumers associate lower feelings of victim controllability with high (vs. low) poverty victims (in case of the respective company acting socially irresponsible).

In line with the stated authors (de Rivera et al. 1994; Goss et al. 2011; White et al. 2012), victim controllability should serve as another important mediator in third-party CSI scenarios:

H₉: Consumers' perception of victim controllability mediates the relationship between victim poverty and empathic concern (a), moral responsibility (b), perceived corporate social irresponsibility (c), negative word-of-mouth (d), purchase intention (e), and willingness to donate (f).

Research Design

Procedure and Participants: Corresponding to Studies 1 and 2, a 2 × 2 online experiment was developed, manipulating customer affiliation (high vs. low) and victim poverty (high vs. low). Again, participants were drawn via *Amazon Mechanical Turk* and randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Complete responders (participation time: 197 to 1691 seconds) received \$ 1.00 for their work. A new instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer et al. 2009, p. 868) led to the exclusion of 5 inattentive participants. The final sample consisted of 265 participants (living in the U.S.) with different sociodemographic characteristics (average age: 35.09 years; 52.8% male, 47.2% female;

highest educational achievement: higher than high school degree in case of 68.60%). The established Power-Mart company was introduced (e.g., Vanhamme et al. 2015; see Study 1). Afterwards, the customer affiliation prime from Studies 1 and 2 was presented (high vs. low customer affiliation). Finally, victim poverty was manipulated by a newspaper report about Power-Mart's poor treatment of employees in England (United Kingdom) vs. Bangladesh (two countries with different socioeconomic standards):

'Poor Health Care Coverage of Power-Mart's Third-World Employees:

Retailer Power-Mart does not provide medical insurance coverage to the large majority of its employees in international distribution centers in the third-world country of Bangladesh. Most low-wage employees working for the retailer in Bangladesh are forced to pay for medical expenses entirely out of their own pockets or must rely on state subsidized programs.'

(high victim poverty)

'Poor Health Care Coverage of Power-Mart's Employees in England:

Retailer Power-Mart does not provide medical insurance coverage to the large majority of its employees in international distribution centers in England, United Kingdom. Most low-wage employees working for the retailer in England are forced to pay for medical expenses entirely out of their own pockets or must rely on state subsidized programs.'

(low victim poverty)

We decided to rely on Bangladesh, a non-Western country with high poverty rates, because of China being a non-democratic country and having also an ambitious middle class as well as high economic growth rates, that is, some confounding factors might be included in a China scenario. England was chosen in order to rule out effects of (geographic) victim proximity as Bangladesh and England are comparably far away from the U.S.

Participants then answered the same items from Study 2. Additional items measuring victim controllability (e.g., ‘Employees probably had other attractive job opportunities.’) on a seven-point scale (1 = ‘absolutely false’; 7 = ‘absolutely true’) were included. Again, Table 17 shows the used items, its respective reliabilities, and the original sources. According to Studies 1 and 2, respondents answered several manipulation and realism check items as well as sociodemographic questions.

Manipulation and Realism Checks: Our customer affiliation prime was tested with the same items as in Studies 1 and 2 ($\alpha = 1.00$). Again, a *t*-test between two independent samples (conducted via *SPSS 16*) revealed a successful manipulation: ($M_{\text{high affiliation}} = 6.90$, $M_{\text{low affiliation}} = 1.05$; $t(263) = 159.16$, $p < .001$). The victim poverty manipulation was assessed via three seven-point scale items (1 = ‘absolutely false’; 7 = ‘absolutely true’), adapted from Wang et al. (2012): ‘Employees’ working conditions occurred in an affluent country’; ‘Employees’ working conditions occurred in an economically well-developed country’; ‘Employees’ working conditions occurred in a country with a high standard of living’ ($\alpha = .97$). Item responses were reverse coded and supported a successful manipulation: $M_{\text{high poverty}} = 6.17$, $M_{\text{low poverty}} = 1.37$; $t(263) = 42.65$, $p < .001$. Finally, results of the two realism check items (see Study 1) indicate a high degree of realism ($\alpha = .78$; $M_{\text{realism}} = 6.65$, $SD_{\text{realism}} = .54$).

Validity Assessment: Again, measurement properties for the used scales (attitude toward country, moral responsibility, empathic concern, victim controllability, corporate social irresponsibility, negative word-of-mouth, purchase intention, and willingness to donate) were examined with the software *Mplus 5.1*. The confirmatory factor analysis shows a satisfactory overall model fit: $\chi^2(376) = 702.85$; $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.87$; RMSEA = .06; CFI = .96; TLI = .95; SRMR = .07. All standardized factor loadings are statistically significant at $p < .001$ (indicating convergent validity) and estimates are positive, ranging from .51 to .99. Furthermore, construct reliabilities (.90 to .98) and average variances extracted scores (.64 to .95) display evidence for internal consistency. Considering the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker 1981), discriminant validity is fully supported. Table 14 shows descriptives and correlations (calculated with *SPSS 16*) of Study 3.

Table 14

DESCRIPTIVES AND CORRELATIONS (STUDY 3)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	CA	VPO	AC	MR	EC	VC	CSI	NW	PI
Customer affiliation (CA)											
Victim poverty (VPO)											
Attitude toward country (AC)	4.98	1.47	-.01	-.66**							
Moral responsibility (MR)	2.17	1.28	.43**	.13*	-.08						
Empathic concern (EC)	4.82	1.45	-.05	.08	.12	.31**					
Victim controllability (VC)	2.37	1.33	.02	-.23**	.18**	-.19**	-.28**				
Corporate social irresponsibility (CSI)	5.23	1.58	-.11	.07	.02	.26**	.58**	-.36**			
Negative word-of-mouth (NW)	3.99	1.87	-.17**	.06	.01	.33**	.54**	-.27**	.70**		
Purchase intention (PI)	3.70	1.84	.24**	-.12*	.05	-.26**	-.46**	.34**	-.62**	-.76**	
Willingness to donate (WD)	2.72	1.70	.02	.20**	-.09	.36**	.39**	-.27**	.38**	.38**	-.34**

Notes: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. CA and VPO are manipulated variables.

Results

A *t*-test between two independent samples (conducted via *SPSS 16*) was conducted in order to examine H_8 . The analysis revealed a significant mean difference between high and low victim poverty conditions with regard to perceived victim controllability: $M_{\text{high poverty}} = 2.06$, $M_{\text{low poverty}} = 2.67$; $t(263) = -3.87$, $p < .001$. That is, consumers associate lower feelings of victim controllability with high poverty victims (i.e., employees in Bangladesh) compared to low poverty ones (i.e., employees in England), thus, H_8 could be supported.

Table 15

STRUCTURAL EQUATION ANALYSIS: PATH COEFFICIENTS (STUDY 3)

<i>Effects on Moral Responsibility/Empathic Concern/Victim Controllability</i>					
Structural Path			Estimate	<i>t</i>-value	R²
Customer affiliation	→	Moral responsibility	1.13**	10.32	.30
Empathic concern	→	Moral responsibility	.24**	5.06	
Victim controllability	→	Empathic concern	-.28**	-5.45	.13
Attitude toward country	→	Empathic concern	.16**	3.97	
Victim poverty	→	Victim controllability	-.66**	-6.49	.06
<i>Effects on CSI Outcomes</i>					
Moral responsibility	→	Corporate social irresponsibility	.07	1.21	.39
Empathic concern	→	Corporate social irresponsibility	.61**	9.34	
Victim controllability	→	Corporate social irresponsibility	-.24**	-4.59	
Moral responsibility	→	Negative word-of-mouth	.17**	2.63	.31
Empathic concern	→	Negative word-of-mouth	.61**	9.51	
Victim controllability	→	Negative word-of-mouth	-.14*	-2.50	
Moral responsibility	→	Purchase intention	-.14*	-2.05	.27
Empathic concern	→	Purchase intention	-.53**	-6.64	
Victim controllability	→	Purchase intention	.31**	4.72	
Moral responsibility	→	Willingness to donate	.23**	3.01	.21
Empathic concern	→	Willingness to donate	.39**	5.79	
Victim controllability	→	Willingness to donate	-.21**	-3.64	

Notes: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Unstandardized coefficients. CSI = corporate social irresponsibility.

As in Studies 1 and 2, overall fit indices of the hypothesized structural equation model were calculated with *Mplus 5.1*. Results reveal the underlying model as a barely satisfactory representation of the observed data: $\chi^2(442) = 1148.29$; $\chi^2/df = 2.60$; RMSEA = .08; CFI = .92; TLI = .91; SRMR = .10). Path coefficients of the structural equation analysis are depicted in Table 15. One path coefficient between moral responsibility and perceived CSI misses significance. All other paths show substantial magnitudes.

In order to examine our mediating hypothesis (H_9), *Mplus* (version 5.1) was used to perform a bootstrap analysis with 10,000 resamples, leading to a computation of all postulated indirect effects. Table 16 displays the unstandardized coefficients. With regard to victim poverty, all total indirect effects show substantial significance ($b > S.E.$). This means that consumers' perception of victim controllability mediates the relationship between victim poverty and empathic concern (a), moral responsibility (b), perceived corporate social irresponsibility (c), negative word-of-mouth (d), purchase intention (e), and willingness to donate (f). Therefore, H_9 was fully supported.

Table 16

MEDIATION ANALYSIS (STUDY 3)

Independent Variable	Mediator(s)	Dependent Variable	Specific Indirect Effect			Total Indirect Effect		
			<i>b</i>	S.E.	CI (95%)	<i>b</i>	S.E.	CI (95%)
Customer affiliation	→ Moral responsibility	CSI	.08	.09		.08	.09	-.11 to .24
	→ Moral responsibility	Negative WOM	.20*	.10		.20*	.10	.00 to .37
	→ Moral responsibility	Purchase intention	-.15*	.09		-.15*	.09	-.33 to .03
	→ Moral responsibility	Willingness to donate	.26*	.11		.26*	.11	.06 to .49
Victim poverty	→ Victim controllability	Empathic concern	.19*	.07		.19*	.07	.35 to .08
	→ Victim controllability → Empathic concern	Moral responsibility	.05*	.02		.05*	.02	.10 to .02
	→ Victim controllability	CSI	.16*	.06	.31 to .06			
	→ Victim controllability → Empathic concern	CSI	.11*	.04	.22 to .05			
	→ Victim controllability → Empathic concern							
	→ Victim controllability → Empathic concern → Moral responsibility	CSI	.00	.00	.01 to -.00	.28*	.09	.49 to .13
	→ Victim controllability	Negative WOM	.09*	.05	.22 to .01			
	→ Victim controllability → Empathic concern	Negative WOM	.12*	.04	.22 to .05			
	→ Victim controllability → Empathic concern → Moral responsibility	Negative WOM	.01*	.01	.02 to .00	.21*	.08	.40 to .09
	→ Victim controllability	Purchase intention	-.21*	.08	-.08 to -.40			
	→ Victim controllability → Empathic concern	Purchase intention	-.10*	.04	-.04 to -.20			
	→ Victim controllability → Empathic concern → Moral responsibility	Purchase intention	-.01*	.01	-.00 to -.02	-.31*	.11	-.14 to -.56
	→ Victim controllability	Willingness to donate	.14*	.06	.29 to .04			
	→ Victim controllability → Empathic concern	Willingness to donate	.07*	.03	.16 to .03			
→ Victim controllability → Empathic concern → Moral responsibility	Willingness to donate	.01*	.01	.03 to .00	.22*	.08	.41 to .10	

Notes: * $p < .05$. Unstandardized coefficients. CSI = Corporate social irresponsibility. WOM = word-of-mouth. S.E. = Standard Error. CI = Confidence Interval. Bootstrap analysis is based on 10,000 resamples.

Table 17

ITEMS

Variable	Items	Reliability	Original Source
Moral responsibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I feel responsible for the consequences of [firm]'s behavior. 2. To some extent, I am accountable for the consequences of [firm]'s actions. 3. I feel that I enabled [firm] in what they did. 4. I feel guilty for the bad outcomes caused by [firm]. 5. I feel remorse on behalf of [firm]'s behavior. 	.83 (Study 1) .88 (Study 2) .88 (Study 3)	Zimmermann et al. (2011)
Empathic concern	<p><i>Imagining the employees, I feel:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. compassionate. 2. sympathetic. 3. moved. 4. softhearted. 5. tender. 6. warm. 	.95 (Study 2) .95 (Study 3)	Niezink et al. (2012)
Victim controllability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. [Firm]'s employees had control over their situation. 2. [Firm]'s employees had power over their situation. 3. [Firm]'s employees were able to regulate their situation. 	.92 (Study 3)	McAuley, Duncan, and Russell (1992)
Corporate social irresponsibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. [Firm] is a socially irresponsible company. 2. [Firm] is not concerned with the well-being of society. 3. [Firm] has low ethical standards. 	.93 (Study 1) .94 (Study 2) .91 (Study 3)	Wagner et al. (2009)
Negative word-of-mouth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I would say bad things about [firm] to others. 2. I would encourage my friends and family to stay away from [firm]. 3. I would recommend others to avoid shopping at [firm]. 	.96 (Study 1) .96 (Study 2) .96 (Study 3)	Voorhees, Brady, and Horowitz (2006); Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996)
Purchase intention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I would be willing to shop at [firm]. 2. I would consider purchasing [firm]'s products if I could. 3. I would be willing to visit [firm] stores. 	.98 (Study 1) .98 (Study 2) .97 (Study 3)	Bower and Landreth (2001); Grewal et al. (2003)
Willingness to donate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I would be willing to give donations to benefit the employees' health needs. 2. I would consider to give money for the cause of supporting the employees' personal health care. 3. I would donate to a fund that helps covering the health care expenses of the employees. 	.98 (Study 1) .98 (Study 2) .98 (Study 3)	Zagefka et al. (2011)
Attitude toward country	<p><i>In general, my feelings toward [country] as a nation are:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. unfavorable/favorable. 2. bad/good. 3. unpleasant/pleasant. 4. negative/positive. 	.96 (Study 2) .97 (Study 3)	Homer (1995)

Notes: Items were measured on seven-point-scales. Reliability is measured by *Cronbach's Alpha*.

Overall Discussion

The article at hand deals with a so far underresearched concept, that is, consumers' perceived moral responsibility in third-party scenarios where companies behave socially irresponsible to victims (i.e., their employees). Study 1 builds on the famous social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), describing that consumers can develop social identification not only through formal customership (i.e., customer affiliation) but also through attitudinal affiliation (i.e., brand glorification). The concept of brand glorification was derived from original research on *national glorification* (Leidner et al. 2010, p. 1116). We state the opinion that this additional identification trigger can contribute to the marketing discipline, building on consumers' identification with companies or brands. Furthermore, the 'black sheep effect' (Marques et al. 1988) might broaden marketers' understanding of social identification consequences as it emphasizes that ingroup favoritism can be substituted by higher punishment tendencies for norm-incongruent acting ingroup members (compared to outgroup ones). Most importantly and to the best of our knowledge, the psychological mechanism of moral responsibility has not been explored in depth so far by marketing researchers. Therefore, Study 1 shows which factors shape consumers' degree of perceived moral responsibility for socially irresponsible company behavior. In particular, not only formal customers of a company reveal higher responsibility rates but also high glorifying consumers tend to feel more own moral responsibility for CSI behavior. Moral responsibility in turn increases CSI perceptions and negative word-of-mouth intentions as well as decreases the intention to buy products from the affected firm. Willingness to make a donation for the respective victims is increased. These relationships indicate the practical relevance of consumers' moral responsibility for actual consumer behavior. In other words, companies should try to avoid negative moral responsibility perceptions especially with regard to their formal customers as well as their attitudinal ones (i.e., high glorifiers). This effect mainly affects companies with big and loyal customer bases and also companies having a very positive reputation in public. Last but not least, a terminative interaction effect (Neale and Liebert 1986, p. 165) between customer affiliation and brand glorification shows that one of the factors alone is sufficient for a full moral responsibility effect; so

both types of companies (firms with big and loyal customer bases; firms with many admirers and a positive public reputation) are equally affected.

Study 2 concentrates on a deeper exploration of moral responsibility in CSI scenarios. Basic research has proved that victim characteristics can play an essential role in observers' assessments of the situation (e.g., Bernhard et al. 2006). Thus, we examined the aspect of geographical victim proximity, manipulated through employees working in a proximal vs. a distal country. Furthermore, another psychological mechanism for CSI outcome variables (e.g., purchase intention) comes to fore, that is, empathic concern for the respective victims (e.g., Davis 1983). The assumption that empathic concern mediates the relationship between geographical proximity and moral responsibility was supported, explaining *why* consumers tend to feel morally responsible in third-party scenarios. In particular, proximal victims lead consumers to feel higher empathic concern compared to distal victims. Two socioeconomically and socioculturally similar countries (U.S. vs. England) were chosen in order to rule out effects of perceived victim poverty and victim controllability (see Study 3). Empathic concern also mediates (again through moral responsibility) the relationship between victim proximity and perceived CSI, negative word-of-mouth, purchase intention, and willingness to donate for the victims. This means that higher empathic concern increases perceived moral responsibility as well as CSI perceptions, negative word-of-mouth and willingness to donate for the victims. On the contrary, purchase intention decreases when consumers feel higher empathic concern for the victims. In practice, firms harming their local employees (i.e., employees working in the same country they sell their products) should especially pay attention how their CSR and CSI actions are perceived by potential consumers in order to avoid (in the end) lower sales figures.

The third study (Study 3) focuses on another potentially relevant victim characteristic with regard to moral responsibility, that is, the perceived poverty of the victims. Scenarios with English vs. Bangladeshi workers were chosen, thereby ruling out geographical victim proximity differences (as study participants lived in the U.S.). According to fundamental rights of self-determination, victim poverty of English workers should be associated with higher rates of self-control (i.e., high victim controllability). In contrast, poverty among Bangladeshi should be connected with helplessness, that

is, lower self-control (i.e., low victim controllability). Results confirm that consumers associate lower feelings of victim controllability with high (vs. low) poverty victims in case of companies acting socially irresponsible toward the victims. Moreover, victim controllability serves as a mediating factor for empathic concern, moral responsibility, perceived corporate social irresponsibility, negative word-of-mouth, purchase intention, and willingness to donate. Specifically, victim poverty can (through the mediation of victim controllability, empathic concern, and moral responsibility) lead to higher CSI perceptions, negative word-of-mouth, and willingness to donate for the victims as well as lower purchase intentions. Again, practical implications point in the direction that companies should consider how consumers perceive their employees' working conditions. Especially workers in the Third World (e.g., Bangladeshi) should be provided with fair working conditions in order to avoid negative CSI outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research Areas

As data were collected via laboratory experiments, internal validity is high, however, external validity seems partly restricted because of artificiality (fictitious company: Power-Mart). Additionally, variables such as *purchase intention* can only be approximations of expected real behavior. In order to confirm laboratory effects, a future research direction could therefore point in the direction of a field study. In a first step, participants' relation and identification with an existing brand (e.g., *Pepsi Cola*) could be measured. Second, an authentic CSI report about this brand (vs. a competing brand such as *Coca-Cola*) could be presented. Third, subjects would have to select an incentive for study participation, choosing between a product of the respective brand (vs. a competing brand). This 'decision' could then serve as a proxy measurement for actual purchase behavior which would go along with higher external validity. Nevertheless, coming back to our used CSI scenarios, it has to be noted that realism checks revealed that scenarios have been highly realistic, indicating that results would also hold in a real-life setting. Aside from that, the authors state the opinion that real-life-settings or field data alone (including confounding factors) cannot ensure the high internal validity of the conducted laboratory experiments.

The three conducted experiments cannot cover all potentially relevant factors in third-party CSI scenarios. Therefore, the research at hand only serves as a first step in discovering the role of consumers' moral responsibility for socially irresponsible corporate actions. We suspect that *corporate credibility* should play an important role (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006) as might several consumer traits. First of all, *justice sensitivity* could be relevant, describing a concern for justice for oneself or for others (e.g., Lotz et al. 2011; Schmitt et al. 2005). Further consumer characteristics include *materialism* (putting a high emphasis on material objects; Rindfleisch and Burroughs 2004), *idealism* ("desire to improve society"; Reiss 2004, p. 187), *egocentrism* (putting oneself in the center of reality assessment; Stagner 1977), existing *expertise* (about a branch, company, brand, or product), and *need for uniqueness* ("an individual pursuit of differentness relative to others that is achieved through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's personal and social identity"; Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001, p. 50). In addition to that, group characteristics such as *feedback* (e.g., Bearden and Etzel 1982), *role models* (e.g., Gibson 2004), or *diffusion of responsibility* (Bandura 1999; Hinrichs et al. 2012) could be considered for future study development.

Finally, different CSI contexts apart from the used scenario could be used for future experimental studies on moral responsibility. These could be connected with bad labor conditions, air pollution, or harmful products. Future research could also control for social desirability effects (Dalton and Ortegren 2011; Mick 1996) as these might play a role in the area of corporate social irresponsibility.

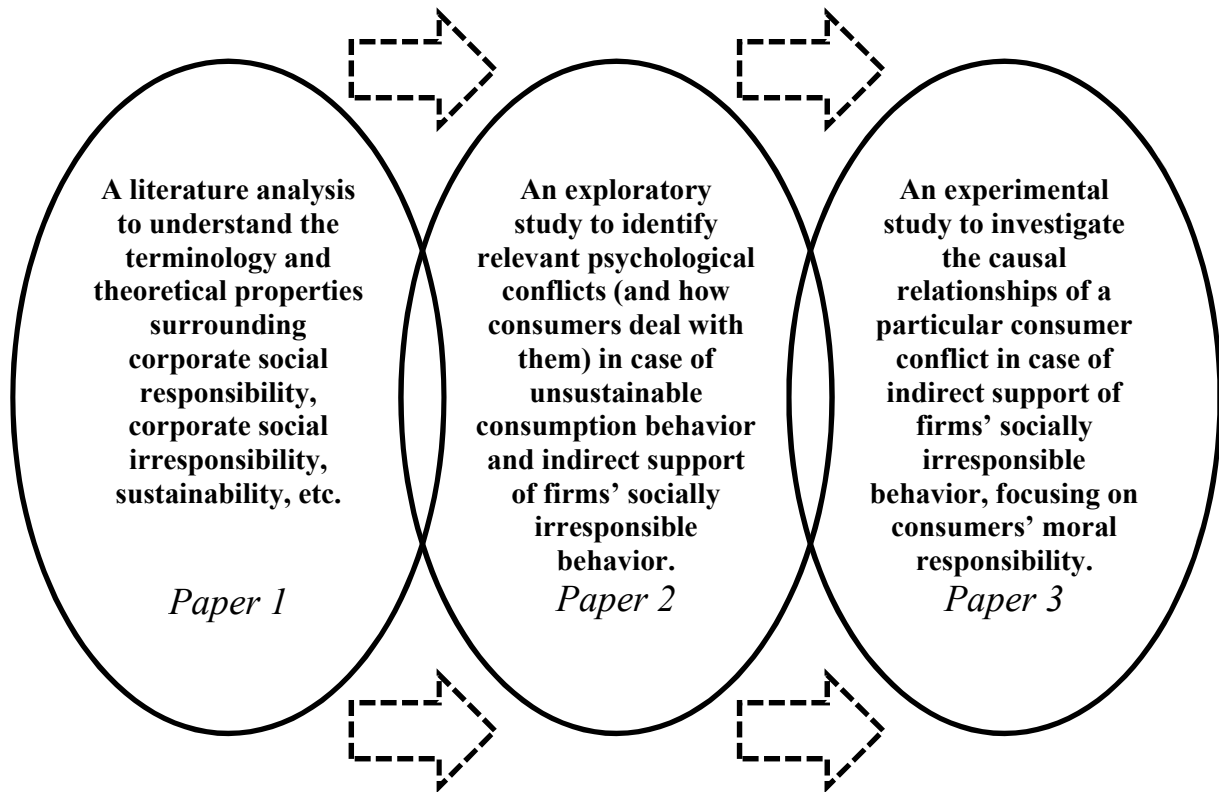
7. General Discussion

The three described papers deal with different aspects in the area of marketing ethics and (corporate) social irresponsibility. However, the dissertation title ('Corporate Social Irresponsibility and Consumers' Psychological Conflicts') appropriately states the common theme for the research at hand. Paper 1 emphasizes that knowledge about marketing ethics terms and its interrelations can help to avoid conceptual and operational misunderstandings. The literature analysis (conducted by using the umbrella term 'marketing ethics') serves the purpose to understand the terminology and theoretical properties surrounding CSI, sustainability, and other relevant concepts. This analysis as well as the developed framework could also help us in order to avoid conceptual misunderstandings and to choose the most adequate terminology with regard to Papers 2 and 3.

Paper 2 shows that consumers tend to use several psychological defense mechanisms in order to keep and justify their (unsustainable) consumption patterns. Paper 3 experimentally analyzes consumers' perceived moral responsibility when supporting socially irresponsible companies. These experiments enable the authors to account for causal relationships in the area of consumers' psychological conflicts through a high degree of internal validity, whilst the conducted in-depth interviews generally stress external validity. To sum up, Papers 2 and 3 enabled us to find strong support for consumers' inner conflicts as well as for their perceived moral responsibility in the field of unsustainable consumption (also with respect to consumers' indirect support of companies' socially irresponsible behavior in third-party scenarios). Figure 11 below depicts what has been done in the three papers.

Figure 11

OVERVIEW ABOUT PAPERS 1, 2, AND 3



At this point, no further summary of the three dissertation papers should be given as this has been done in the introduction chapter. On the contrary, additional aspects will be described. First, the metaphor of the *wisdom of the crowd* deals with the following question: ‘Who are the most relevant players in marketing ethics research?’. Second, some essential areas for future research in marketing ethics are described.

The Wisdom of the Crowd

A fundamental question in academia revolves around the question who ‘defines the agenda’ in marketing ethics research. On the one hand, the meaning and contents of specific concepts such as marketing ethics, CSR, or sustainability are defined by a minority of experts (i.e., persons with an

extremely high expertise in the specific research field or in research at large), usually done within conceptual research. On the other hand, the majority of researchers use specific concepts for the exploration of concrete research questions (or they just use an ethics-related term in an article which itself deals with a completely different subject), usually done within an empirical research project. The first group (i.e., experts and/or conceptual researchers) focuses on the *meaning* of a term, the second one (i.e., non-experts and/or empirical researchers) uses specific terms as *means to an end* and thus indirectly contributes to the question how a term is actually used. But which group is right and which is wrong? And which credo should academic researchers follow? To discuss this essential question, the metaphor of the ‘wisdom of the crowd’ will be used.

The world-famous internet encyclopedia *Wikipedia* is first of all characterized through the fact that every person can write or edit entries in order to improve quality and validity of the website content. Therefore, *Wikipedia* is an excellent example how the wisdom of the crowd (instead of the wisdom of some few experts) contributes to a valuable source of knowledge (Niederer and van Dijck 2010).

Wikipedia operates with a complex hierarchy of permission levels (i.e., the degree users can edit online content) for its users. In particular, different levels of expertise are used to classify the users (Niederer and van Dijck 2010). As a consequence, marketing ethics researchers could be categorized into more than two groups: first, conceptual experts of marketing ethics (e.g., Archie B. Carroll) or important economic thinkers (e.g., Peter Drucker); second, researchers familiar with the marketing ethics literature (which have also published in this field) and well-known general marketing researchers; third, researchers which are comparably new to the field of marketing ethics. These three categories could be further divided into numerous subgroups.

Moreover, the high quality of *Wikipedia* does not only stem from human writers, but is also substantially driven by bots (i.e., automated software or scripts). These bots automatically edit website content in order to improve *Wikipedia*’s quality and validity (Niederer and van Dijck 2010). A similar control system is also existent in marketing research: Academics exchange their knowledge at conferences and other research forums. They discuss controversial definitions, arguments, or research projects. Therefore, questionable research content has a rough ride getting published in leading

journals. In addition to that, new concepts, terms, or definitions are usually especially questioned in order to constitute a first wisdom of the crowd regarding this new research content (e.g., the huge debate stimulated by Carroll's article from 1979). Immature ideas are further developed by the crowd (if they bear the potential to advance academic research) or rejected by counterarguments and disregard (e.g., through non-citation).

The idea of crowd wisdom has led to the release of several research articles. Notably, Davis-Stober et al. (2014) discuss *when* and *to which extent* a crowd can be wise. They find that only a highly skilled expert makes more valid judgments than an average crowd judgment. On the contrary, members of this crowd should be diverse and they have to state independent judgments. Therefore, marketing ethics research from different academic backgrounds should be used in order to actually profit from the wisdom of the crowd. Difficulties are created through the fact that people dislike crowd averages in general, although prefer average group judgments if there is a comprehensible selection of judges (Mannes, Soll, and Larrick 2014). Marketing ethics researchers should thus not only (randomly) collect definitions for a specific term. Moreover, it would make sense to also consider factors such as journal quality, journal focus, or author reputation during terminology analysis.

The principle of the wisdom of the crowd has also been applied in marketing research in the field of user-generated content: Consumer opinions (vs. expert opinions) have been found to lead to more valid conclusions with regard to purchase decisions (Tirunillai and Tellis 2012). Furthermore, Lüttgens et al. (2014) discuss that crowdsourcing can be a promising strategy for corporate innovation.

In general, Surowiecki (2005) strikes a blow for the wisdom of the crowd with respect to the value of collective knowledge, opinions, and decisions for economies, societies, or nations. This becomes clear when having a look at political systems, that is, the principle of democracy rests upon a collective decision making process, too. Crowd wisdom is reflected in people's voting behavior as well as in decision making processes of political parties. If nations would rely on a single expert alone, the political system would be despotism. Although there is the statistical chance that a single person comes to more valid judgments than a whole group, odds for that are far below the superiority of statistical judgments (Grove and Meehl 1996). The power of statistical judgments is also supported by

literature dealing with the regression toward the mean phenomenon (e.g., Nesselroade, Stigler, and Baltes 1980). However, not every political decision is made by the biggest possible group: Otherwise, there would be regular referendums on various topics in all nations across the world. Politics therefore reflects the wisdom of the crowd but also its natural limits. Members of political parties should reflect a knowledgeable sample of the whole population, which again supports the importance of how a crowd is assembled (Mannes et al. 2014) and in particular how marketing ethics researchers should collect definitions for a specific term.

In the end, researchers face the decision between following some experts vs. following the crowd. As academic research is a system based on expert knowledge, it seems unlikely that a radical wisdom of the crowd would serve academic purposes. However, it is important to note that numerous researchers already created some sort of crowd wisdom by using ethics-related terms without adhering to conceptual definitions by experts. We suggest marketing ethics researchers to strike a balance between experts' opinions (i.e., how experts define a term's meaning) and the wisdom of the crowd (i.e., how a term is actually used). The first approach is important in the light of the nomological network idea. The second one creates room for future controversial debates which are an essential part for advancing marketing ethics research. Concerning our developed framework in Paper 1 (see Figure 1), we primarily built on the question how a term is used (vs. how experts define a term's meaning) by researchers publishing in important marketing journals, that is, we extracted a specific sample out the whole crowd of marketing ethics articles.

Areas for Future Research

Revising the marketing ethics literature led to the extraction of several practice-related dilemmas. Notably, these dilemmas come along with areas for future research. By contributing to these areas, journals such as *JAMS* or *JMM* could expand on their leading roles in the field of marketing ethics.

Growth vs. Sustainability

At least since the *Club of Rome*'s release of their book *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972), contradictions between a steady economic growth and a sustainable economic future have come to the fore. Although realizing the importance of sustainability (e.g., Lubin and Esty 2010), only a few voices have ever doubted the importance of economic growth. On the contrary, authors try to arrange the two concepts through writing about *sustainable growth* (e.g., Holliday 2001), *sustainability through growth* (e.g., Magretta 1997), or *sustainable consumption* (e.g., Dolan 2002). These ideas can be problematic insofar as they neglect that economic growth is mainly driven by rising consumption levels, Western consumption levels being unsustainable at the same time (Sheth et al. 2011). This contradiction, the need to grow or to develop further while at the same time acting sustainably, probably constitutes the most severe dilemma for societies and corporations but also for individuals. Academic research has started to show interest in solving the sustainable growth dilemma (e.g., Daly 1990; Sheth et al. 2011), however much more research is needed in this area.

Freedom vs. Security

Data protection and online privacy have become important issues in marketing ethics (e.g., Milne, Rohm, and Bahl 2004). Beyond these issues there exists the more general dilemma between individual freedom and collective security. In particular, companies face the decision with whom they (intentionally) share the collected data: intelligence agencies, local authorities, other companies, advertising agencies, etc. Collective security can, beyond doubt, be maximized through data transfer to specific institutions such as intelligence agencies. However, consumers can barely control or understand who gets their data and what receiving actors use the new information for (i.e., there is only limited transparency). For instance, insurances might receive personal data about an individual's drinking, smoking, or eating behavior, resulting in an (unfavorable) adaptation of the personal insurance tariff. Moreover, individual freedom with regard to data protection is especially endangered in the age of social media (Fuchs et al. 2013). The dilemma between individual freedom versus

collective security is already a hot debated topic in European societies. We speculate that future marketing ethics research can make a crucial contribution to this debate.

Materialism vs. Idealism

Most societies share a focus on the accumulation of material goods by means of consumption. However, this accumulation ignores that perceived material wealth is based on a relative evaluation how big our wealth is compared to the wealth of our direct neighbors. In particular, the value of something decreases when everyone owns it. Several research deals with the negative aspects of consumption (Csikszentmihalyi 2000) or rising overconsumption (Sheth et al. 2011). On the one hand, more material wealth does not always lead to happiness, while a more idealistic and altruistic worldview might help people to be happier (Post 2005). This worldview can also correspond to lifestyles of reduced consumption such as voluntary simplification (e.g., Craig-Lees and Hill 2002). On the other hand, consumption is absolutely essential for social welfare and economic growth. Therefore, more research about an optimal level of materialistic (vs. idealistic) orientation, maybe building on the mindful consumption concept (Sheth et al. 2011), is highly needed.

Efficiency vs. Amount

This dilemma goes back to a paradox detected in the 19th century by William Stanley Jevons (1865). Jevons found out that efficiency gains through technological progress are compensated through an increased overall consumption of the respective resource. A more efficient use of our available natural resources therefore would not be sustainable at all because the total amount of used natural resources would still increase. For instance, cars become more and more fuel-efficient but actually waste more fuel (in total) than the preceding models. Reasons for this might be that the new model is heavier or uses more electronics. Once again, striving for growth and further development can (despite higher technological efficiency) lead to a higher resource use. On a global scale, efficiency gains are also compensated by a rising world population which also has rising needs. However, it is still unclear if

efficiency gains always cause higher production and consumption (Alcott 2005). The solution of this dilemma is crucial for our global environment. Therefore, we hold the opinion that marketing ethics research could explore under which circumstances efficiency helps and when consumers, companies, or nations tend to compensate these gains through higher total consumption.

Efficiency vs. Effectiveness

A further stage of resource efficiency is eco-effectiveness. Eco-effectiveness builds on the idea of material life cycles, that is, resources should be reused again and again without any wastage (e.g., Braungart, McDonough, and Bollinger 2007). This means that effectiveness (as compared to efficiency) considers that the amount of natural resources is finite. The idea of eco-effectiveness manifests itself in the cradle-to-cradle principle, which is extensively discussed by McDonough and Braungart (2010). Can cradle-to-cradle be a realistic alternative in order to save natural resources? Which countries, industries, or products have the abilities and capacities to focus on effectiveness (instead of efficiency)? And how does this dilemma relate to individual consumption decisions? Although these questions are not new to marketing ethics, there is still research needed concerning this matter.

Emergency Aid vs. Developmental Aid

This dilemma revolves around the question which type of help *really* helps a victim. Several researchers have contrasted short-term and long-term effects of geopolitical or emergency aid and developmental aid (Headey 2008). Please note that this dilemma is very complex insofar as both types of aid can have positive and negative effects, being ethical or unethical depending on the temporal point of view. A more concrete modification deals with the question under which conditions consumers decide to donate to victims (which costs money) versus to actively help them (e.g., through capacity building), which costs time and effort (Wheeler 2009). Further exploration of moderating factors with regard to this dilemma would constitute a promising avenue for marketing ethics.

Think Local, Act Global vs. Think Global, Act Local

A very practice-driven dilemma originates from the corporate strategy field. Where and under which conditions should a company focus on global strategies but locally-oriented implementation? And when should corporations rather develop local strategies in order to globally implement them? An interesting article was published by Park and Vanhonacker (2007) who claim that multinational corporations have to think local in order to be successful in the Chinese market. However, this credo does not hold for other markets. The dilemma can be easily transferred to ethics-related issues such as environmental pollution or social welfare optimization. In a globalized world, governments, companies, and individuals (through their values, standards, and behaviors) have to find a balance between local and global thinking as well as acting when dealing with (global) social and environmental issues. For instance, a local approach to solve an environmental problem (e.g., building solar power stations) might help some further countries as well, being counterproductive for other countries at the same time. The dilemma of local and global thinking respective acting could stimulate future marketing ethics research.

Blaming Oneself vs. Blaming the Others

People often blame others for their own unsustainable consumption behaviors. Specifically, they use slogans such as ‘this flight would also go without me’, ‘this animal is already dead’, or ‘politics or companies have to take action against child labor’. These and other slogans enable consumers to avoid self-blame by blaming other consumers, companies, or politics at large. This reflects a general human tendency to use coping strategies or psychological defense mechanisms (e.g., Cramer 1998) and helps people to feel better (see also Paper 2). Fundamental research has also been done in the field of blame, guilt, and personal responsibility (e.g., Gilbert and Miles 2000). Therefore, concrete ethics-related questions could be examined in the light of this dilemma.

8. References

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9. Affirmation – Statutory Declaration

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Affirmation – Statutory Declaration
According to § 10 part 1 no. 6 of the Doctoral Program Regulations (dated 5th March 2008 as amended on the 8th September 2009)

I hereby declare, that the

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submitted to Wissenschaftliche Hochschule für Unternehmensführung (WHU) – Otto-Beisheim-Hochschule – was produced independently and without the aid of sources other than those which have been indicated. All ideas and thoughts coming both directly and indirectly from outside sources have been noted as such.

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The following persons helped me gratuitous/non-gratuitous in the indicated way in selecting and evaluating the used materials:

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Further persons have not been involved in the preparation of the presented dissertation as regards contents or in substance. In particular, I have not drawn on the non-gratuitous help of placement or advisory services (doctoral counsels/PhD advisors or other persons). Nobody has received direct or indirect monetary benefits for services that are in connection with the contents of the presented dissertation.

The dissertation does not contain texts or (parts of) chapters that are subject of current or completed dissertation projects.

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