A Factor-Analytical Approach on Identities in Environmentally Significant Behavior

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Abstract : There are many ways in which environmentally significant behavior can be explained. Dominant psychological theories, namely, the theory of planned behavior, the norm-activation theory, its extension, the value-belief-norm theory, and the theory of habit do not explain large parts of environmentally significant behaviors. A new and rapidly growing approach is to focus on how consumer's identities predict environmentally significant behavior. Identity may be relevant because consumers have many identities that are assumed to guide their behavior. Therefore, we assume that many identities will guide environmentally significant behavior. Many identities can be relevant for environmentally significant behavior. In reviewing the literature, over 200 identities have been studied making it difficult to establish the key identities for explaining environmentally significant behavior. Therefore, this paper first aims to establish the key identities previously used for explaining environmentally significant behavior. Second, the aim is to test which key identities explain environmentally significant behavior. To address the aims, an online survey study (n = 578) is conducted. First, the exploratory factor analysis reveals 15 identity factors. The identity factors are namely, environmentally concerned identity, anti-environmental self-identity, environmental place identity, connectedness with nature identity, green space visitor identity, active ethical identity, carbon off-setter identity, thoughtful self-identity, close community identity, anti-carbon off-setter identity, environmental group member identity, national identity, identification with developed countries, cyclist identity, and thoughtful organisation identity. Furthermore, to help researchers understand and operationalize the identities, the article provides theoretical definitions for each of the identities, in line with identity theory, social identity theory, and place identity theory. Second, the hierarchical regression shows only 10 factors significantly uniquely explain the variance in environmentally significant behavior. In order of predictive power the identities are namely, environmentally concerned identity, anti-environmental self-identity, thoughtful self-identity, environmental group member identity, anti-carbon off-setter identity, carbon off-setter identity, connectedness with nature identity, national identity, and green space visitor identity. The identities explain over 60% of the variance in environmentally significant behavior, a large effect size. Based on this finding, the article reveals a new, theoretical framework showing the key identities explaining environmentally significant behavior, to help improve and align the field.

Keywords : environmentally significant behavior, factor analysis, place identity, social identity
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