

DOCTORAL THESIS

A social dilemma perspective on socially responsible consumption

Lee, Lai Yung Ada

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ABSTRACT

Recent research on corporate social responsibility has focused on the corporate level, whereas limited research has been conducted at the individual level most commonly referred to as socially responsible consumption. Recycling is a kind of socially responsible consumer behaviour because it benefits the society as a whole in the long term but involves a personal cost and does not benefit the individual consumer directly. Previous studies on recycling have used theories such as the theory of interpersonal behaviour, means-end chain theory, theory of planned behaviour or norm activation model. However, these theories have only explained part of recycling behaviour and are inadequate because they have not explained it from a social dilemma perspective. A social dilemma is a situation in which there is conflict between an individual's self-interest and the collective interest of the group. Will consumers pursue their own interests or will they act for the good of the entire society? This study takes an innovative approach to explain recycling behaviour through the lens of social dilemma theory. It uses a mixed methods approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative elements in the research design. A phenomenological approach is used to gain a deeper understanding of the recycling experiences of individuals, and survey data is used for quantitative analyses. In the qualitative study, 142 significant statements and eight themes were identified from 20 in-depth interviews. In the quantitative study, data were collected from 332 respondents. Based on the data analysis, the central relationships in the model are supported. There is a positive relationship between the expectation that others will participate in recycling and the likelihood of personal participation in recycling, and there is also a positive relationship between the likelihood of personal participation and recycling behaviour. Of the four moderators considered, only social value orientation is significant. In the latter part of this thesis, the theoretical and methodological contributions and practical implications of the study are discussed.

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