

## Social responsibility in purchase and consumption: a study of the Portuguese consumer behavior

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### **Abstract**

In the last decades, academic literature has been putting a notorious emphasis on the concepts of socially responsible consumer. However, literature also shows the existence of differences in the behavioural attitudes of consumers, due to the influence of the socio-cultural context and of social interactions. In the case of Portugal, there is no thorough study that analyzes the propensity of individuals for socially responsible consumption. Thus, this paper aims to examine the determinants of Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD), building on the work of Weeb, Mohr and Harris (2008), by analyzing the socio-demographic consumer profile.

Exploratory interviews were used and collected data were subject to qualitative analysis. Additionally, a convenience sample of 1027 Portuguese adults answered to an online questionnaire. The results show that the socially conscious behaviour appears to be well established among the consumers. Also, individuals with certain demographic characteristics differ in their levels of social consciousness in purchase and consumption.

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## Keywords

**Consumer Behaviour, Social Responsibility, Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal.**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, academic literature has been putting a notorious emphasis on the concepts of socially responsible consumer: the one that grounds acquisition and use of products in a desire to minimize adverse effects and to maximize positive effects for society in the long term. It highlights the emergence of a new type of consumer who is totally aware of his or her purchase, has different values and ensures carefully the effects of his or her actions on the market (Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Antil, 1984; Antil & Bennett, 1979; Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968; Brooker, 1976; Webster, 1975). The decision of socially responsible consumer integrates environmental and ethical concerns, but also specific aspects such as corporate social responsibility, socio-economic and cultural context, and other information not limited to products and services (Gurviez, Kreziak, & Sirieix, 2003; Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001; Webb, Mohr, & Harris, 2008).

The concept of socially responsible consumer has its origin in the green consumer and is often associated with it (Anderson, Henion, & Cox, 1974). Later it expanded to the concept of ethical consumer, the one that takes into account moral factors in his or her purchasing decisions, and also includes the environmental concerns (Strong, 1996). Thus, according to Shaw and Shiu (2002), ethical consumer is a broader and more complex concept than green consumer. The social issues underlying consumer behaviour have led to the emergence of the socially responsible consumer concept.

In fact, consumers from various nationalities are demonstrating more concern about the natural environment, and more social and ethical behavioural intentions concerning purchase decisions. However, literature also acknowledges the existence of differences in the behavioural attitudes of consumers, due to the influence of the surrounding socio-cultural context and of social interactions (Özçağlar-Toulouse, Béji-Bécheur, Fosse-Gomez, Herbert, & Zouaghi, 2009). The studies that evaluate the receptivity and importance given by consumers to the social responsibilities of companies have different results depending on the nationality of the consumers (Ismail & Panni, 2008; Maignan, 2001; Ramasamy & Yeung, 2009). In the case of Portugal, there is no thorough study that analyzes the propensity of individuals for socially responsible consumption. Furthermore, for companies that want to use corporate social responsibility (hereinafter CSR) for strategic purposes, it is mandatory to understand the nature of the differences in the importance given by consumers to environment, ethical and philanthropic issues. This requires a deep knowledge of the characteristics of the consumer.

Thus, and in order to provide relevant theoretical and practical contributions to consumer behaviour, this research has two main objectives: (1) to characterize the degree of social consciousness of the Portuguese consumer (2) to characterize the Portuguese consumer profile using socio-demographic characteristics. Exploratory interviews were used and collected data were subject to qualitative analysis. Additionally, a convenience sample of 1027 Portuguese adults answered to an online questionnaire. Collected data were analyzed using quantitative statistical techniques.

After this introduction, the paper follows with a literature review on the concepts of socially responsible consumer and describes the potential variables predictors of the socially responsible consumer behaviour, leading to the research hypotheses. The following section focuses on the methodological aspects of the study, including the context of the research and techniques for collecting and processing data. The fourth section is devoted to presenting the main results obtained. The paper ends with a discussion of the results, and the main conclusions and limitations of the study.



## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

The concept of socially conscious or responsible consumption is consolidated with the studies of Berkowitz and Lutterman (1968); Webster (1975) and Brooker (1976). According to Webster (1975, p. 188), "the socially conscious consumer can be defined as a consumer who takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or who attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change". Antil (1984) states that the socially conscious consumer is the one that adopts behaviours and purchasing decisions associated with environmental problems and shows interest not only in meeting individual needs, but is concerned about the possible effects for the society. In the same line of thought, Mohr et al. (2001, p. 47) argue that the socially responsible consumer is identified as "a person who bases its acquisition, use and disposal of products on the desire to minimize or eliminate the harmful effects and maximize the positive long-term benefits to society". More recently, Newholm and Shaw (2007) report that the socially responsible consumer is concerned with different elements, and exemplify: the origin of the product, the human rights, the manufacture, the labour relations, the experimental use of animals, among others.

The socially responsible consumer is conscious that by accepting, versus rejecting, certain products or companies, he or she is contributing to the preservation of the environment, to sustainability and to improve the quality of life of society in general, both now and in the future. Auger *et al.* (2003) estimate the relative value perceived by consumers facing the social characteristics of the products. Auger *et al.* (2008) have shown that the social characteristics of the products could affect the likelihood of purchasing these products and identified distinct customer segments with ethical orientation. Klein (2004b) highlights that when information on the quality of the new product is not very clear, consumers try to assess the quality of the product based on the information on the social components. Mohr et al. (2001) conclude that the consumer's relationship with the companies is mediated by initiatives that these companies promote to avoid the negative externalities of products or services and for their efforts to maximize the social benefits in the short, medium and long term. Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill (2006) show that CSR strategies well designed and with good choices regarding social issues can result in significant changes in consumer behaviour. In the same line of thought, other researchers point out that CSR positively influences the consumer behaviour, including purchase intention and also purchase (Auger et al., 2008; Klein & Dawar, 2004a; Maignan, 2001; Mohr & Webb, 2005).

In the last decade, it is considered that the socially responsible consumption is not only determined by the social and environmental responsibility, but it is also crucial to understand the economic and social context of the consumer. The information that consumers have, and their real possibilities to acquire socially responsible products and services, largely determine their purchase and consumption decisions. Lee (2008) and Lee & Shin (2010) have been proposing studies of socially responsible consumption confined at the geographical context.

Francois-Lecompte and Roberts (2006) built a specific measurement scale for France, and identified a French thought more on the community side, in comparison with the individualistic consumption of the Americans. Based on the scales of Francois-Lecompte & Roberts (2006) and Webb et al. (2008), Yan and She (2011) developed an instrument contextualized in China and again the results of socially responsible consumption in China differ from the United States and France. Herrera and Díaz (2008) determined, in the Spanish context, the CSR has a central role in the reputation of organizations and therefore has an effect on consumer behaviour. In Brazil, consumers are willing to pay higher prices for products and services of companies with social responsibility (Carvalho, Sen, Mota, & de Lima, 2010). Inversely, Mexican consumers prefer not to be informed about CSR practices and continue to make their purchasing decisions based on price (Arredondo Trapero, Maldonado De Lozada, & Garza García, 2010).

Basil and Weber (2006) show that individuals motivated by a concern for appearance, as well as individuals motivated by their values, shopped by supporting the philanthropic corporate responsibility, but the first group did not see CSR as a normative requirement, unlike the second group of individuals. Lee (2008) states that social influence is the most important factor of socially responsible behaviour in adolescents in Hong



Kong. The study by Lee & Shin (2010) in Republic of Korea found out that corporate social contribution (economic development, consumer protection, social welfare, donations, and education), and and corporate local community contribution (culture activities, local community development and local community involvement) affect consumers' purchase intention while corporate environmental contribution have no effects on consumers' purchase intention.

Hence, socially responsible consumption should be studied as a collective phenomenon, associated with the construction of identity in a culture and in a particular context.

The consumer behaviour literature has been defining culture as a set of socially acquired behaviour patterns transmitted symbolically through language, rituals, beliefs and value systems (Deeter-Schmelz & Sojka, 2004; Sojka & Tansuhaj, 1995). While Schwartz (1992) focuses on values at the individual level and the role of the individual within society, Hofstede (1980, 1983, 1985, 2001) focuses on values at the aggregate or national level. Hofstede (2001) states that national culture provides a society's characteristic profile with respect to norms, values, and institutions, and affords an understanding of how societies manage exchanges. Regardless of the literature perspective, values have been widely viewed as reflecting the characteristics of the particular culture from which individuals emanate. According to Solomon (2011), in the society at large there are groups, denominated subcultures, whose members share beliefs and common experiences that set them apart from others and can be based on similarities in age, race, ethnic background or strong identity with something.

Several authors have dedicated their studies to identifying and characterizing the socially conscious consumer. The profile of this consumer can be characterized by personality, attitudes and socio-economic characteristics, despite the weak relationships found by Webster (1975). Thirty years later, in France, the results of Lecompte and Valette-Florence (2006) showed that age, gender and socio-economic status played an important role in identifying the demographic profile of the socially responsible consumer. In the Portuguese context, the results of the green consumer market segmentation by Paço and Raposo (2010) show that geographic variables are not significant to explain the green consumer, while some demographic variables are. The segment "green activists" was composed mostly of women, aged between 25 and 34 and between 45 and 54; individuals with higher education levels; working in more qualified jobs and earning higher incomes. Also in the Portuguese context, Akehurst, Afonso, and Martins Gonçalves (2012) conclude that socio-demographic variables are not relevant in explaining the ecologically conscious consumer behaviour. However, these results come from a convenience sample of 186 respondents, 51.1% of which below 30 years old and 59.1% undergraduates.

Thus, given the results of the various studies concerning the socio-demographic profile of the socially responsible consumer and the conclusions of the national studies regarding the green profile consumer, in the current study the following research hypotheses are proposed:

- H1:** Women are more socially conscious regarding purchase and consumption than men.
- H2:** Age is positively related to social consciousness of individuals in purchase and consumption.
- H3:** The education level is positively related to social consciousness of individuals in purchase and consumption.
- H4:** Individuals with various occupation levels differ in their levels of social consciousness in purchase and consumption.
- H5:** There are differences in social consciousness of individuals in purchase and consumption by marital status.
- H6:** Family income is positively related to social consciousness of individuals in purchase and consumption.
- H7:** Individuals in families with children are more socially conscious in their purchase and consumption than individuals in families without children.



### 3. METHODOLOGY

In order to address the seven research hypotheses postulated in this study, it was decided to develop a qualitative and a quantitative research.

The qualitative research was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, an initial survey was developed based upon existing measures developed in English by Webb et al. (2008) - the Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD), a multidimensional scale with 30 items - and was translated into Portuguese by two independent translators in accordance with the acceptable standards (Sperber, Devellis, & Boehlecke, 1994). Also, English speakers examined pre-translated and post-translated instruments. The results suggested only minor linguistic changes, which were incorporated into the version of the instrument. The second stage consisted in refining the Portuguese version of the survey instrument. A focus-group involving seven researchers of different scientific areas was used to refine the proposed survey packet. Iterative pre-testing with this group indicated the need to adapt some items of the scales to the Portuguese social context. Specifically, items had to be reworked and adjusted to materials commonly recycled in Portugal and for which there recycling infrastructures available. The third stage involved personal interviews with business professionals which examined the instrument. The changes suggested, such as summarizing some contents of the questionnaire to make it easier to read and to optimize the response rate, were incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

Our final instrument of SRPD resulted in 25 items grouped into three dimensions: CSR consideration by consumer (13-items); Consumer Recycling Behaviour (5-items); Environment Impact Purchase and Use criteria (7-items). All items were measured in a Likert-format, using a five-point rating scale anchored by "Never" and "Always", ranging from 1 to 5 respectively. Seven socio-demographic variables were also included in the study: gender; age; education level; occupation, marital status, family income and household composition.

The questionnaire was edited using the LimeSurvey software and was made available to a convenience sample using a snow ball technique. The target population of this research is confined to individuals living in Portugal, aged over 17 years old. The data were collected through a survey available online between 3 and 23 of February 2015. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques in SPSS 22.0.

### 4. RESULTS

Following the methodology previously defined, a total of 1027 valid answers were obtained and is considered for analysis.

Respondents are aged from 18 to 78 years old, with a median of 39 years. The majority of the respondents were: females (61.3%); between 35 and 44 years old (32.8%); graduated (39.3%); workers for others (63.5%); married/consensual union (57.4%); living in the central region of the mainland (46.2%) and in an urban zone (77.9%). The number of household with children under 18 years was 472 (46.0%) and the family income was equally shared by intermediate levels of income. Additional details concerning the sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Sample characteristics**

	n	%		n	%
<b>Total sample</b>			<b>Marital status</b>		
Size	1027	-	Married/consensual union	589	57,4
<b>Gender</b>			Single	350	34,1
Female	630	61,3	Divorced/separated	80	7,8
Male	397	38,7	Widower	8	0,8
<b>Age (years)</b>			<b>Household composition</b>		
18–24	166	16,2	Only adults	555	54,0
25–34	203	19,8	With children <18 years	472	46,0
35–44	337	32,8	<b>Family income</b>		
45–54	215	20,9	Do not know/no answer	95	9,3
55–64	81	7,9	1–500 euros	29	2,8
More than 64	25	2,4	501–1,000 euros	178	17,3
<b>Education level</b>			1,001–1,500 euros	195	19,0
Compulsory education	248	24,1	1,501–2,000 euros	179	17,4
Bachelor Degree	41	4,0	2,001–3,000 euros	196	19,1
Graduation	404	39,3	3,001–4,000 euros	103	10,0
Masters Degree	235	22,9	More than 4,000 euros	52	5,1
Doctorate	99	9,6	<b>Region of country</b>		
<b>Occupation</b>			Northern of mainland	244	23,8
Self-employed	93	9,1	Center of mainland	474	46,2
Worker for others	652	63,5	South of mainland	183	17,8
Unemployed	55	5,4	Autonomous regions	126	12,3
Housewifely	8	0,8	<b>Place of residence</b>		
Student	180	17,5	Rural	227	22,1
Retired	39	3,8	Urban	800	77,9

Analyzing the distribution of the responses to the SRPD items we found that the practices of socially conscious behaviour are very present among the respondents.

As regards to “CSR consideration by consumer”, the results highlight four items that show to be always presents (=5) in the daily life of respondents: avoid buying products made using child labour (56.6%); avoid buying from companies that discriminate women (49.6%); avoid buying from companies that discriminate minorities (33.4%); and also, effort to buying products and services from companies that pay at all of their employees a living wage (30.7%). With respect to “Consumer recycling behaviour”, all the five items have more than 43.8% of the respondents to recycle always (mode equal to 5). Finally, concerning to “Environment impact purchase and use criteria”, the three items highlighting with 5 points in a Likert scale are: avoid buying products that are made from endangered animals (57.7%); avoid buying from companies





that harm endangered plants or animals (38.9%); and, limit the use of energy such as electricity or natural gas to reduce the impact on the environment (31.4%).

Inversely, the practices included in SRPD items that show to be never presents (=1) in the daily life of respondents are: recycle medicines (11.2%); walk, ride a bike, car pool, or use public transportation to help reduce air pollution (8.3%).

It is important to note that in all 25 items, the practices of socially conscious behaviour never adopted have much lower values than the practices of socially conscious behaviour always adopted by the respondents. Additional details concerning the distribution of the responses to the items of SRPD are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 - Distribution of the responses (in %) to the items of Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (1= Never; 5 = Always)**

Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (N= 1027)	1	2	3	4	5
<b>CSR considerations by consumer</b>					
I try to buy from companies that help the needy	5,3	10,5	32,1	34,2	17,9
I try to buy from companies that hire people with disabilities	6,0	12,1	32,7	31,2	18,0
I avoid buying products or services from companies that discriminate against minorities	4,9	8,3	22,2	31,3	33,4
When given a chance to switch to a retailer that supports local schools, I take it	4,0	6,8	24,3	37,1	27,8
I try to buy from companies that make donations to medical research	6,2	11,8	31,4	29,7	20,9
I make an effort to buy from companies that sponsor food drives	4,9	7,8	24,5	36,6	26,2
When given a chance to switch to a brand that gives back to the community, I take it	3,2	4,8	19,8	42,2	30,0
I avoid buying products made using child labor	5,4	4,5	12,8	20,8	56,5
When given a chance, I switch to brands where a portion of the price is donated to charity	3,6	6,6	24,4	35,8	29,6
I avoid buying products or services from companies that discriminate against women	3,8	6,3	15,7	24,6	49,6
When I am shopping, I try to buy from companies that are working to improve conditions for employees in their factories	2,8	4,5	20,5	39,9	32,3
I try to buy from companies that support victims of natural disasters	4,7	9,0	24,9	33,1	28,3
I make an effort to buy products and services from companies that pay at all of their employees a living wage	3,7	5,8	25,5	34,3	30,7
<b>Consumer recycling behaviour</b>					
I recycle cardboard/paper/magazines/journals	5,4	5,2	10,7	21,1	57,6
I recycle plastic/aluminum	6,3	5,5	11,9	19,3	57,0
I recycle glass	5,4	5,3	8,8	18,3	62,2
I recycle batteries	6,7	5,8	11,9	17,3	58,3
I recycle medicines	11,2	9,2	16,4	19,4	43,8
<b>Environment impact purchase and use criteria</b>					
I avoid buying from companies that harm endangered plants or animals	3,8	5,8	22,1	29,4	38,9
Whenever possible, I walk, ride a bike, car pool, or use public transportation to help reduce air pollution	8,3	18,5	28,6	22,4	22,2
I avoid using products that pollute the air	2,1	7,8	25,7	36,9	27,5
I avoid buying products that pollute the water	2,1	5,9	22,9	39,5	29,6
I make an effort to avoid products or services that cause environmental damage	1,8	5,5	23,4	40,4	28,9
I avoid buying products that are made from endangered animals	2,4	4,0	12,3	23,6	57,7
I limit my use of energy such as electricity or natural gas to reduce my impact on the environment	2,5	5,3	23,4	37,4	31,4



For characterization of the sample in relation to socially conscious of respondents, we derived summated scales of the responses obtained in the Likert scale for each set of items associated with "CSR consideration by consumer" (13 items); "Consumer recycling behaviour" (5 items); "Environment impact purchase and use criteria" (7 items). Similar reasoning was followed with all 25 items of SRPD. According to the obtained range of values of these sums, we divided the respondents into four groups and classified them in "very low", "low", "high", and "very high" socially conscious behaviour. Table 3 shows the results.

**Table 3 – Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal characteristics**

	CSR consideration			Recycling behaviour			Environmental behaviour			SRPD		
	sum	N	%	sum	N	%	sum	N	%	sum	N	%
Very low	[13;26]	42	4,1	[5;10]	67	6,5	[7;14]	21	2,0	[25;50]	17	1,7
Low	[27;39]	158	15,4	[11;15]	101	9,8	[15;21]	156	15,2	[51;75]	96	9,3
High	[40;52]	430	41,9	[16;20]	255	24,8	[22;28]	433	42,2	[76;100]	458	44,6
Very high	[53;65]	397	38,7	[21;25]	604	58,8	[29;35]	417	40,6	[101;125]	456	44,4
Total		1027	100,0		1027	100,0		1027	100,0		1027	100,0

Only 1.7% of the respondents received up to 50 points (very low) in all of the items SRPD, 9.3% have a low behaviour and the remaining 89.0% have a high and very high behaviour with respectively 44.6% and 44.4%. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the socially conscious behaviour appears to be well established among the respondents. Analyzing each of the three dimensions separately, we found that the highest results between the practices established come from recycling behaviour: 58.8% of the respondents are in the group of very high socially conscious behaviour. This is in line with a mode of 5 (= Always) previously observed in all items of recycling behaviour. The environmental behaviour dimension also shows a very good result: 40.6% of respondents have a very high socially conscious behaviour and 42.2% have a high one. Finally, on CSR consideration by consumer, 38.7 % have a very high socially conscious behaviour and 41.9% have a high one.

In order to verify whether there are statistically significant differences for each of the three dimensions under study, as well as for the overall SRPD scale, according to each of the socio-demographic characteristics, we performed nonparametric statistical tests. In the case of variables with two categories, Gender (female; male) and Household composition (family with children; family without children) the Mann-Whitney Test to the equality of distributions in two independent groups was used. For the remaining variables, the Kruskal Wallis Test to the equality of distributions in three or more independent groups was used. Tables 4 and 5 show, respectively, the results of the statistical tests performed. A 5% significance level was adopted.

**Table 4 – Mann-Whitney Tests to the equality of the distribution of CSR consideration; recycling behaviour and environmental behaviour by gender and by household composition (with or without children)**

N =1027		CSR consideration	Recycling behaviour	Environmental behaviour	SRPD
<b>Gender</b>	Mann-Whitney U	116071,500	106989,500	112625,500	112376,000
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,052	,000	,007	,006
<b>Household composition</b>	Mann-Whitney U	123526,000	119498,500	129698,000	124046,500
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,115	,013	,786	,143

**Table 5 – Kruskal Wallis Tests to the equality of the distribution of CSR consideration; recycling behaviour and environmental behaviour by age group; marital status; education level; occupation and family income**

N =1027		CSR consideration	Recycling behaviour	Environmental behaviour	SRPD
<b>Age group</b>	Chi-Square	72,843	113,977	39,442	107,818
	df	5	5	5	5
	Asymp. Sig.	,000	,000	,000	,000
<b>Marital status</b>	Chi-Square	26,609	65,772	5,537	37,288
	df	3	3	3	3
	Asymp. Sig.	,000	,000	,136	,000
<b>Education level</b>	Chi-Square	7,578	24,848	14,950	15,039
	df	5	5	5	5
	Asymp. Sig.	,181	,000	,011	,010
<b>Occupation</b>	Chi-Square	59,138	77,306	19,506	75,734
	df	5	5	5	5
	Asymp. Sig.	,000	,000	,002	,000
<b>Family income</b>	Chi-Square	19,360	28,173	4,178	20,309
	df	7	7	7	7
	Asymp. Sig.	,007	,000	,759	,005

Analyzing the results of the tests, we found statistically significant differences in SRPD according to the following socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents: gender, age, marital status, education level, occupation, and family income. The existence of children under 18 years old in the household does not reflect statistically significant differences in consumer behaviour. However, when considering each of the three dimensions of SRPD separately, we found statistically significant differences in the recycling behaviour for families with children and families without children.

Regarding the variable gender, additional analysis of the results leads to the conclusion that females have higher values of SRPD than males. Thus, hypothesis **H1** is not rejected. Concerning the variable age, further analysis of the results shows that the SRPD values increase with the age group, but the last age group (over 64 years) has lower values than those obtained for the 55-64 age group. Hence, hypothesis **H2** is partially rejected. Regarding the level of education, it was found that having the highest degree does not necessarily imply more social consciousness. For example respondents with the masters level have lower mean ranks of SRPD than graduate respondents, which contradicts our hypothesis **H3**. On the other hand, the hypothesis



**H4** is not rejected, because there are statistically significant differences in social consciousness in purchase and consumption in individuals with different occupation levels. Students are those with lower mean ranks of SRPD. The hypothesis **H5** is not rejected, because there are statistically significant differences between individuals with different marital statuses concerning social consciousness in purchase and consumption. Singles are those with the lowest mean rank values in SRPD. Concerning family income, results show that the mean ranks of SRPD increase with family income, except for two income groups. Thus, the hypothesis **H6** is partially rejected. Finally, **H7** is rejected since no significant differences in SRPD were found for families with and without children. Table 6 summarizes the results of the hypotheses that were tested.

**Table 6 –Results of the hypotheses tests conducted to validate the seven proposed research hypotheses**

Hypotheses	Statistical tests	Result
<b>H1:</b> Women are more socially conscious in their purchase and consumption than men.	Mann-Whitney U Test	Not reject
<b>H2:</b> Age is positively related to social consciousness of individuals in purchase and consumption.	Kruskal Wallis Test	Partially rejected
<b>H3:</b> The level of education is positively related to social consciousness of individuals in purchase and consumption.	Kruskal Wallis Test	Partially rejected
<b>H4:</b> Individuals with various occupation levels differ in their levels of social consciousness in purchase and consumption.	Kruskal Wallis Test	Not reject
<b>H5:</b> There are differences in social consciousness of individuals in purchase and consumption by marital status.	Kruskal Wallis Test	Not reject
<b>H6:</b> Family income is positively related to social consciousness of individuals in purchase and consumption.	Kruskal Wallis Test	Partially rejected
<b>H7:</b> Individuals of family with children are more socially conscious in their purchase and consumption than individuals of family without children.	Mann-Whitney U Test	Reject

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Prior research in the field of marketing suggests that social responsibility activities by companies in certain CSR domains (e.g., environmental protection, local community involvement) may have a direct effect on reputation of companies and on consumers' purchase intentions. Thus, managers seek more efficient and effective ways to be socially responsible according to the judgement of consumers.

This study provided empirical evidence of the socially conscious consumer profile in Portuguese context. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the socially conscious behaviour appears to be well established among the respondents. It was noted that consumers have a very high recycling behaviour and are prepared to base their buying decisions on purchasing and consumption products that do not harm the environment, and also, they also avoid socially irresponsible companies. As regards to "CSR consideration by consumer", the results highlight four items: avoid buying from companies that discriminate minorities, avoid buying from companies that discriminate women, avoid buying products made using child labour, and also, an effort to buying from companies that pay at all employees a living wage. With respect to "Consumer recycling behaviour", in a Likert scale from 1 (=Never) to 5 (=Always), the value 5 occurs most frequently in all the five items. Finally, concerning to "Environment impact purchase and use criteria", the three behavioural practices more socially conscious are: avoid buying products that are made from endangered animals, avoid buying from companies that harm endangered plants or animals; and, limit the use of energy such as electricity or natural gas to reduce the impact on the environment.



The analysis of the results leads to the conclusions that there are differences in SRPD according to the following socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents: gender, age, marital status, education level, occupation, and family income. Moreover, the results show that females have higher values of SRPD than males, and the SRPD values increase with the age group except for the age group over 64 years. Students and singles are those with lower mean ranks of SRPD respectively on occupation level and marital status. On the other hand, the existence of children aged under 18 years old in the household does not reflect statistically significant differences in the consumer behaviour.

In order to make a correct segmentation of the market and to meet CSR requirements of different consumers, the managers and marketers need to know the propensity of individuals for socially responsible consumption; additionally, they need to have a detailed characterization of the several social consciousness profiles of consumers.

## **6. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In this study there are some limitations to take into account. The results of this study apply only to the sample, and are not possible to generalize to the population due to the sampling method adopted.

Several topics for future research development would be possible. It would be interesting to bring about a more detailed characterization of the socially conscious profile by including psychographics variables already identified in the literature (e.g., Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Ability, and Collectivism). Furthermore, it would be advantageous to use another type of statistics techniques (e.g. structural equation models) to carry out a rigorous and robust study of the several constructs.



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