



Consumption Ethics: A Review and Analysis of Future Directions for Interdisciplinary Research

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Abstract

The terminology employed to explore consumption ethics, the counterpart to business ethics, is increasingly varied not least because consumption has become a central discourse and area of investigation across disciplines (e.g. Graeber, 2011). Rather than assuming interchangeability, we argue that these differences signify divergent understandings and contextual nuances and should, therefore, inform future writing and understanding in this area. Accordingly, this article advances consumer ethics scholarship through a systematic review of the current literature that identifies key areas of convergence and contradiction. We then present the articles in this Journal of Business Ethics Symposium and analyse how these articles fit within the interdisciplinary themes. Subsequently, we develop a transdisciplinary theoretical framework that encapsulates the complexity and contextual nature of consumption ethics. We conclude by outlining how genuinely transdisciplinary research into the intersection of ethics with consumption may develop.

Keywords Interdisciplinary · Consumption ethics · Ethical consumption · Green consumption · Review

Introduction

We are witnessing the continued growth of consumption ethics (Olson 2013; Newholm et al. 2015), alongside a significant shift in the breadth and scope of consumers' ethical concerns since the 1990s (Harrison et al. 2005). Far from a homogeneous collective, however, what is 'ethical' encapsulates different expressions, concerns and issues across

individuals, groups and socio-spatial contexts (Carrington et al. 2015; Chatzidakis et al. 2012). These issues are often complex and consider both the environmental and societal impacts of consumption.

Interest in consumption ethics is not limited to those seeking to practise it and businesses seeking to appeal to or avoid the gaze of the ethical consumer. The multi-faceted ethical consumer is increasingly attracting academic interest across disciplinary fields, as well as drawing the attention of activist organisations, government bodies, journalists, media, celebrities, primary industry, manufacturing sectors, and retailers. Differing academic disciplinary lenses, however, tend to be contained in separate streams of research literature that are developing in parallel and in relative isolation, as the current review demonstrates. Developing separate bodies of knowledge within bounded disciplinary silos has resulted in a multiplicity of terminology and varied tacit meanings of consumption ethics. We contend that this plurality and isolation of labels and meanings is working to further strengthen the barriers between disciplines. Indeed, the absence of a common language to enable communication across the disciplines and to develop common and meaningful understandings of consumption ethics hampers the very efforts of these scholars to develop a more equitable and sustainable world. Thus, the purpose of this Journal of Business Ethics

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Thematic Symposium is to advance consumer ethics scholarship and practice through showcasing interdisciplinary approaches and theoretical frameworks that encapsulate the complexity and contextual nature of consumption ethics.

In this introductory paper, we first systematically interrogate and review perspectives, terminology and language employed to explore consumer ethics across disciplines by asking: what is ethics in consumption; who is the ethical consumer; and what do ethical consumers do? We achieve this through a review of work within the core disciplines of business, management and accounting, arts and humanities, economics, econometrics and finance, psychology and social sciences, examining the sub-disciplines within these core schools of thought (see “[Methodology](#)”). Second, employing content and thematic analysis, we critically examine the multiplicity of language and meanings used to portray consumption ethics identifying key areas of convergence and contradiction. Third, we introduce the four thematic symposium papers, illustrating how they support the interdisciplinary understanding of consumption ethics advanced. Fourth, to enrich our contribution, we develop an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that encapsulates the complexity and contextual nature of consumption ethics. In doing so, we advance a common platform of meanings and language, to facilitate an improved contextualisation of interdisciplinary research in our field. Finally, we highlight the issues and implications arising from our review and symposium papers for future interdisciplinary research.

Methodology

We conducted a systematic review of the following disciplines: philosophy, religious studies, history, social science, geography, political science, gender studies, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, economics, econometrics, finance, psychology, management, marketing and business. We took a three-step approach to obtain a comprehensive overview of the consumer ethics articles published across and within each of these business-related and humanities disciplines (Schlegelmilch and Öberseder 2010), and to rigorously analyse this body of literature. First, we identified the journals to be included in our review. Second, we selected appropriate search terms to mine these journals for relevant journal articles. Third, we systematically analysed the selected journal articles.

Sampling Strategy

First, the top ten journals for each discipline and sub-discipline were identified based on the Scopus SCImago journal ranking system. This journal ranking indicator draws upon the Scopus database—currently the largest scientific

database that also best represents global literature coverage, and provides a meaningful journal ranking within disciplines, based upon up-weighting within-discipline citations as an indication of subject area expertise (Guerrero-Bole and Moya-Aneón 2012). The top ten journals were separately identified for each discipline to ensure equitable disciplinary representation and to minimise disciplinary bias due to disparities in citation rates and conventions between research fields (Guerrero-Bole and Moya-Aneón 2012), such as, some disciplines citing more heavily than others. We additionally identified the *Journal of Business Ethics* given the dominance of this journal to the consumer ethics literature within business disciplines. This resulted in the identification of 26 journals from across 12 academic disciplines to form the basis of the review. Second, each journal’s database was systematically researched using a consistent list of search terms, which included: consum* ethics; ethical consum*; green consum*; pro-environmental consum*; consumer citizen*; anti-consum*; responsible consum*; conscious consum*; political consum*; pro-social consum*; radical consum*; sustainable consum*; consumer resistance; consumer activism; consumer social responsibility. This list of search terms was commonly employed across all the journals sourced for the review and was systematically expanded across all of the journals to capture new and emerging terminologies and meanings. No date restriction was applied. A minimum of 100 citations as at June 2019 was applied to the *Journal of Business Ethics* articles to ensure that the review included contributions that have been influential. This resulted in 155 relevant articles found in social science, geography, political science, gender studies, philosophy, religious studies, history, business and management, marketing, economics, econometrics, finance and psychology.

Analysis Approach

Third, the review moved into the analysis phase by systematically employing content and thematic (e.g. Braun and Clarke 2006) analysis techniques to identify, categorise, analyse, synthesise, and contrast the multiplicity of consumption ethics terminology, meanings and assumptions. The initial phase of analysis focused on three key lines of inquiry: what is ethics in consumption; who is the ethical consumer; and, what do ethical consumers do? To ensure the validity of our review and analysis, we employed methods to improve intercoder and intracoder reliability, such as, the use of multiple researchers to code and classify the text, and the use of a consistent coding frame (Neuendorf 2002). Subsequently, we produced a series of tables that included key themes and language from each of the identified articles across the main identified lines of inquiry. Both independently and jointly we developed higher-order emerging themes that summarised the prevalence of each disciplinary

understanding. The final stage included going back to the original articles of each discipline to ensure the prevalence and validity of our main insights and observations. We also triangulated these against key books published on consumption ethics or closely related areas (see Table 1).

An Interdisciplinary Understanding of the Ethical Consumer

“Consumer ethics”, “consumer citizenship”, “anti-consumption”, “responsible”, “conscious”, “ethical”, “political”, “pro-social”, “radical”, “green” and “sustainable” consumption are terms that are often used in an interchangeable fashion and yet they vary in terms of popularity and definitional clarity across and within disciplines. Within geography, for instance, the term ethical consumption is used more commonly than the broader term consumer ethics (see Barnett et al. 2010). Likewise, green consumerism has typically been narrowly viewed as a sub-type of ethical consumption that encompasses pro-environmental motivations only (e.g. Connolly and Shaw 2006), although for social psychologists (e.g. de Groot and Thøgersen 2013) green consumerism incorporates both social and environmental concerns. Adding to the multiplicity of disciplinary lexicons, ethical consumption can be conceived as either directly impacting entities in the immediate supply chain, such as, rural farmers through consumption of fairly traded commodities; or,

indirectly creating positive outcomes for entities outside of the immediate commodity chain, such as, the beneficiaries of cause-related marketing (Hawkins 2011; Olson et al. 2016).

Such differences in nuance and the usage of terminologies and meanings are not surprising given the distinct historic and discursive influences—and often isolated literature streams—within each discipline. Rather, they are telling of the broader social–historical–economic–political–cultural context in which the contemporary “ethical consumer” has emerged. The commonalities and contrasts, therefore, provide a starting point from which to reveal, synthesise and naturalise what ethics in consumption is, who is the ethical consumer and what do ethical consumers do within and across our distinct disciplines and domains.

We analysed the articles in our review along the above three lines of inquiry as these questions reveal commonalities and contrasts within and between disciplines. We synthesise these interdisciplinary themes and assumptions in Fig. 1. We now present these themes and varying approaches in detail.

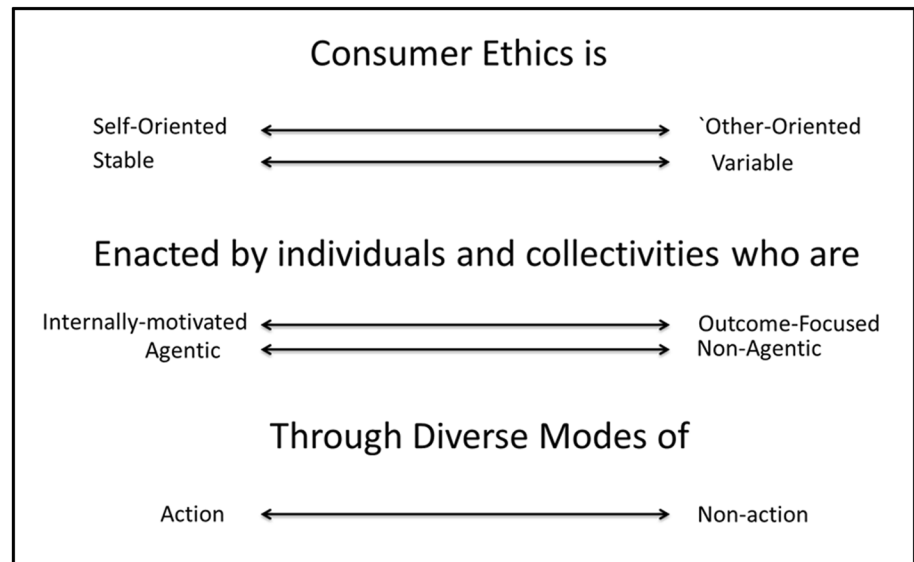
What is Ethics in Consumption?

Our review reveals two key elements of divergence and commonality between the articles when we explore what constitutes ethics in consumption. We denote these elements as: (1) *the beneficiaries of ethical consumption*; and (2) *ethics stability*. It is interesting to note that these key elements

Table 1 Key books on consumption ethics

Authors	Book title	Main discipline
Carrier and Luetchford (2012)	<i>Ethical consumption: Social Value and Economic Practice</i>	Anthropology
Crocker and Linden (1998)	<i>Ethics of Consumption: The Good Life, Ethics and Global Stewardship</i>	Various disciplines
Devinney et al. (2010)	<i>The Myth of the Ethical Consumer</i>	Marketing and consumer studies
Harrison et al. (2005)	<i>The Ethical Consumer</i>	Marketing and consumer studies
Shaw et al. (2016)	<i>Ethics and Morality in Consumption: Interdisciplinary Perspectives</i>	Various disciplines
Humphery (2009)	<i>Excess: Anti-consumerism in the West</i>	History
Lewis and Potter (2011)	<i>Ethical Consumption: A Critical Introduction</i>	Media and cultural studies
Littler (2008)	<i>Radical Consumption: Shopping for Change in Contemporary Culture</i>	Cultural studies
de Neve et al. (2008)	<i>Hidden Hands in the Market Ethnographies: Ethnographies of Fair Trade, Ethical Consumption and Corporate Social Responsibility</i>	Anthropology
Micheletti (2003)	<i>Political Virtue and Shopping: Individuals, Consumerism and Collective Action</i>	Politics
Newig et al. (2008)	<i>Governance for sustainable development: Coping with ambivalence, uncertainty and distributed power</i>	Governance and sustainability
Sandlin and McLaren (2010)	<i>Critical Pedagogies of Consumption: Living and Learning in the Shadow of the “Shopocalypse”</i>	Education
Schwartz (2010)	<i>Consuming Choices: Ethics in a Global Consumer Age</i>	Philosophy
Barnett et al. (2010)	<i>Globalising responsibility: The political rationalities of ethical consumption</i>	Geography
Soper and Trentmann (2008)	<i>Citizenship and Consumption</i>	History and philosophy

Fig. 1 Consumer ethics: key interdisciplinary themes and assumptions



and the associated orientations (other-self, stable variable) are generally assumed and unstated in the articles reviewed, suggesting that researchers often bring these orientations to their research unconsciously, and/or it is not a disciplinary practice to overtly state these positions. Table 2 orients the approach taken and the underlying assumptions of relevant studies in our review to the nature of ethics in consumption.

The Beneficiaries of Ethical Consumption: Self or Other Focused

A common thread that emerged across disciplines and journals was the beneficiary of consumption—to whom the ethical considerations in consumption were directed. This common orientation was *other-oriented*—in contrast to self-benefit oriented products and consumption (e.g. Pelozo et al. 2013; White and Simpson 2013; Barnett et al. 2005). Thus, typically, ethical consumption choices are assumed to be self-transcendent: focused on the benefit of others rather than oneself, where ‘others’ may be human, non-human, singular and/or collective (Freestone and McGoldrick 2008; Klein et al. 2004; White et al. 2012; Xie et al. 2015). For example, business scholars Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014, p. 525) suggest that ethical consumption extends to practices that “contribute to the good of the community in which [the consumer] lives.” Political scientists Bolsen et al. (2014) focus on the actions of consumer-citizens to suggest that pro-social behaviours are those that positively contribute to public goods.

Consumer researcher Henry (2010) similarly suggests that the notions of the citizen and the consumer are intertwined when considering the exercising of moral logics in consumption choices; where consumer responsibilities are linked to ideals of good citizenship, in contrast to

self-interested individualistic ways of being and consuming. The beneficiaries of good consumer citizenship are beyond the self: other consumers, society and the planet (e.g. Kronrod et al. 2012). Further, Klein et al. (2004, p. 93) suggest that beyond ethical consumers acting “against selfish interests for the good of others”, the boycotting behaviours of ethical consumers are often accompanied by a self ‘sacrifice’. Thus, the benefit to others can come at a cost to self—a cost inherent to consuming ethically. This cost or sacrifice is often framed in terms of a ‘trade-off’ between consuming ethically and the cost of doing so—where these costs may come in the form of price, performance, status, identity enhancement, and so on (Olson 2013).

There were exceptions, however, to this common other-orientation. In particular, these exceptions emerged in the economics and geography disciplinary streams. First, a divergent meaning of ‘sustainable consumption’ was found within some of the economics literature reviewed, for instance, Fleurbaey (2009) and van der Ploeg (2011). In these studies, the term ‘sustainability’ refers to “sustainable levels of consumption” (van der Ploeg 2011, p. 402) where consistent levels of consumption are maintained across future generations—to maintain a consistent standard of living and lifestyle. This economic perspective affords little consideration of the externalities of these sustained levels of consumption on individuals or the environment and society at large. Further, in some instances, what counts as ethical consumption additionally or dominantly includes benefits to self (e.g. Auger and Devinney 2007; Devezer et al. 2014; White and Simpson 2013), illustrating a *self-orientation*.

This self-orientation emerged as a common theme in a cluster of geography studies that take a critical perspective to their appraisal of ethical consumption. For example, Carrier (2010) critically contends that ethical consumption

Table 2 Beneficiaries and stability of ethical consumption

	Beneficiaries of ethical consumption			Ethics Stability	
	Self-oriented	Other-oriented		Stable	Variable
Business, management and accounting					
Marketing and consumer research					
<i>International Journal of Research in Marketing</i>	van der Wal et al. (2016)	Strizhakova and Coulter (2013)		Strizhakova and Coulter (2013) van der Wal et al. (2016)	
<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Devezer et al. (2014)	Klein et al. (2004) Kronrod et al. (2012) Kotler (2011) Pelozo et al. (2013) Gershoff and Frels (2015) Olsen et al. (2014) Lin and Chang (2012) Kähr et al. (2016) White et al. (2012) White and Simpson (2013)		Kähr et al. (2016) Klein et al. (2004) Kotler (2011) Pelozo et al. (2013)	Devezer et al. (2014) Gershoff and Frels (2015) Lin and Chang (2012) Olsen et al. (2014) White et al. (2012) White and Simpson (2013)
<i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	Huang and Rust (2011)	Lacey et al. (2015) Olson (2013) Sheth et al. (2011) Xie et al. (2015)		Lacey et al. (2015) Marinova and Singh (2014) Olson (2013) Uslay et al. (2009)	Huang and Rust (2011) Sheth et al. (2011)
<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	Ehrich and Irwin (2005)	Irwin and Naylor (2009) Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) White et al. (2011)		Ehrich and Irwin (2005)	Irwin and Naylor (2009) Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) White et al. (2011)
<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Luedicke et al. (2010) Chernev and Blair (2015)	Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) Giesler and Veresiu (2014) Henry (2010) Kidwell et al. (2013) Kozinets and Handelman (2004) Newman et al. (2014) Olson et al. (2016) Varman and Belk (2009) Zhao and Belk (2008) Bregman et al. (2015)		Chernev and Blair (2015) Varman and Belk (2009)	Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) Henry (2010) Kidwell et al. (2013) Kozinets and Handelman (2004) Newman et al. (2014) Zhao and Belk (2008)
<i>Journal of Operations Management</i>		Tate et al. (2010)			Bregman et al. (2015)
<i>Journal of Supply Chain Management</i>					
<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Michaelson (2010)	Smith et al. (2010) Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014) Enderle (2000) Schuler and Christmann (2011) Smith et al. (2010)		Michaelson (2010)	Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014)

Table 2 (continued)

	Beneficiaries of ethical consumption		Ethics Stability	
	Self-oriented	Other-oriented	Stable	Variable
Management and organisation studies				
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Auger and Devinney (2007) Castaldo et al. (2009) D'Astous and Legendre (2009) Rawwas (1996)	Auger et al. (2003) Auger et al. (2007) Bray et al. (2011) Carrington et al. (2010) Chatzidakis, Hibbert and Smith (2007) De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) Doran (2009) Freestone and McGoldrick (2008) Öberseder et al. (2011) Rawwas (1996) Vitell (2003)	D'Astous and Legendre (2009) Doran (2009) Freestone and McGoldrick (2008)	Auger et al. (2003) Auger and Devinney (2007) Auger et al. (2007) Bray et al. (2011) Carrington et al. (2010) Castaldo et al. (2009) Chatzidakis, Hibbert and Smith (2007) De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) Öberseder et al. (2011) Rawwas (1996) Vitell (2003)
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	Dowell and Muthulingam (2017)	Barnett (2007) den Hond and de Bakker (2007) McWilliams and Siegel (2001) Murray and Montanari (1986) Lange and Washburn (2012) Shrivastava (1995) Starkey and Crane (2003) King and Soule (2007) Weber, Heinze and DeSoucey (2008)	King and Soule (2007)	
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>				
Social sciences, arts and humanities				
Political science and international relations				
<i>American Journal of Political Science</i>	Baker (2005)	Bolsen et al. (2014) Dancey and Goren (2010)	Bolsen et al. (2014)	Dancey and Goren (2010)
<i>International Studies Quarterly</i>		Steger and Wilson (2012) Minton et al. (2016)	Steger and Wilson (2012) Minton et al. (2016)	
<i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i>				
Gender studies				
<i>Gender, Place & Culture</i>		Hawkins (2011)	Hawkins (2011)	
Philosophy		Williamson (2008)	Williamson (2008)	
<i>The Leadership Quarterly</i>				
Geography, planning and development				

Table 2 (continued)

	Beneficiaries of ethical consumption		Ethics Stability	
	Self-oriented	Other-oriented	Stable	Variable
<i>Antipode</i>	Brockington and Duffy (2010) Carrier (2010) Wilson and Curnow (2013)	Alkon and McCullen (2011) Amin and Thrift (2005) Barnett (2007) Busa and Garder (2015) Moragues-Faus (2016) Rosol (2012) Zitcer (2015)	Amin and Thrift (2005) Carrier (2010) Brockington and Duffy (2010) Zitcer (2015) Rosol (2012)	Alkon and McCullen (2011) Barnett (2007) Wilson and Curnow (2013) Busa and Garder (2015) Moragues-Faus (2016) Raco (2005)
<i>Economic Geography</i>		Hamilton (2013)	Hamilton (2013)	
<i>Global Environmental Change</i>	Laestadius et al. (2014)	Spaargaren and Mol (2008) Spaargaren (2011)	Ridoutt and Pfister (2010) Spaargaren (2011) Laestadius et al. (2014)	Spaargaren and Mol (2008)
<i>Progress in Human Geography</i>	Dowling (2010) Mansvelt (2008)	Popke (2006) Reid et al. (2009)	Dowling (2010)	Mansvelt (2008) Popke (2006) Reid et al. (2009)
Economics, Econometrics and Finance				
Economics and Finance				
<i>Journal of Economic Literature</i>	Brown (2000) Fleurbay (2009) Guthrie (2006) van der Ploeg (2011)	Kitzmueller and Shimshack (2012)		
<i>Journal of Political Economy</i>				
<i>The European Journal of History of Economic</i>	Edwards (2014)	Kotchen (2006)	Kotchen (2006)	Edwards (2014)

represents a “conjunction of capitalism and conservation” where market-mediated activities/transactions are problematically viewed as effective mechanisms to bring about social equity and environmental protection. Thus, ethical consumers unwittingly reinforce the capitalist market logic and in effect contradict their ethical concerns when attempting to consume ethically. From this perspective, the consequences of ethical consumption work to reinforce the self-serving nature of the market, rather than providing benefits for others.

Ethics Stability

The studies in our review took divergent perspectives on the stability and consistency of individuals’ ethics in consumption across domains. While some studies contend that ethics are *variable* and *contingent*, evolving and changing as consumers move through the domains of their life; other studies suggest that an individual’s ethics in consumption are relatively *stable* and *consistent* across domains. For instance, management theorists Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014) and geographers Barnett et al. (2005, p. 23) contend that ethics in consumption are fluid and evolving—the “working up of moral selves”. Political scientist Baker (2005) takes this argument further to suggest that belief systems of individuals as citizens can differ from the belief systems of the same individuals when they are making decisions as consumers. From this perspective, the systems of morality (or amorality) are deemed to differ inside and outside of the market (Carrington et al. 2016). In contrast, however, political scientists Bolsen et al. (2014) find that an individual’s internal pro-social preferences are relatively stable across domains, while consumer researchers Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) note that the political ideologies of individuals are shaped by societal fields and are, thus, malleable, contextual and contingent on the domain in which they are being exercised. Indeed, the marketing and consumer research literature reviewed generally views consumer ethics—or at least the expression of such ethical positions—as variable across contexts and scenarios. This is not surprising given the focus in marketing on the manipulation and transformation of consumers and their behaviours, and the assumptions of marketing’s effectiveness in driving this variability.

Whether stable or variable, however, academics across disciplines suggest that individuals derive their ethics in consumption logics and belief systems from multiple ethical contexts and resources (e.g. Enderle 2000; Baker 2005; Karababa and Ger 2011). Along these lines, Enderle (2000) contends that ethical resources are complex and contingent as they originate from “many different kinds of ethics.”

Who is the Ethical Consumer?

The demographic and psychographic profiling of the ‘ethical consumer’ has been a key theme in disciplines such as psychology and marketing at least since the 1960s (e.g. Anderson and Cunningham 1972; Webster 1975; Roberts 1996; Straughan and Roberts 1999). Other disciplines have focused on their own set of questions, ranging from the ethical consumer’s religiosity (Minton et al. 2016; Wenell 2014) to his/her class in a socio-historic setting (Newholm et al. 2015). We find in our interdisciplinary review, however, that research is moving away from profiling and creating typologies of concerned consumers. Rather, the field is moving towards framing the ethical consumer around questions of *responsibility* and *agency* that look *beyond the individual actor* (i.e. *collectivities*). Table 3 illustrates these differing positions by the studies in our review.

Responsibility

When considering the sense of responsibility underlying individuals’ ethics in consumption, the studies within our review generally take one of two clear orientations to this responsibility that we denote as *internal-* and *outcome focused* (Barnett et al. 2005; Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma 2014). In studies favouring the internal responsibility orientation, consumption choices ‘reflect a person’s conscience’ (Irwin and Naylor 2009; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Zitcer 2015). In marketing, we observe studies that align with this orientation often assume that the consumer has a deontological orientation/motive (e.g. Irwin and Naylor 2009), to consider their duties and responsibilities towards others in their consumption choices. Also in marketing, Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) argue that consumers take actions that are congruent with their personal beliefs. In some studies, such as those reviewed in political science, this internalised orientation equates to ethical citizenship in consumption. From philosophy, Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014) frame this in terms of virtue ethics, viewing consumer responsibility not in terms of sets of isolated practices but as an ongoing project. Similarly, in finance Glac (2012) also takes a more holistic perspective to regard consumer ethics in terms of individuals and investors who should follow life principles.

In contrast, in studies giving primacy to responsibility as *outcome focused*, the consumer’s key motivation concerns the consequences of their individual choices. We find this perspective dominant in business-related disciplines. In marketing, for example, responsibility was most dominantly viewed in terms of consumers expressing their moral agendas through marketplace behaviour (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004; Castaldo et al. 2009; Lin and Chang 2012; Olsen et al. 2014). This orientation is often concerned with

Table 3 Responsibility, agency and collectivity in ethical consumption

	Locus of responsibility		Consumer agency	
	Internally motivated	Outcome focused	Agentic	Non-agentic
Business, management and accounting				
Marketing and consumer research				
<i>International Journal of Research in Marketing</i>	Strizhakova and Coulter (2013) van der Wal et al. (2016)		Strizhakova and Coulter (2013) van der Wal et al. (2016)	
<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Peloza et al. (2013) Devezer et al. (2014)	Devezer et al. (2014) Gershoff and Frels (2015) Olsen et al. (2014) Kähr et al. (2016) Klein et al. (2004) Lin and Chang (2012) White and Simpson (2013) Kronrod et al. (2012) Kotler (2011) Talukdar and Lindsey (2013) White et al. (2012)	Devezer et al. (2014) Peloza et al. (2013) Kähr et al. (2016) Klein et al. (2004) White et al. (2012) White and Simpson (2013)	Gershoff and Frels (2015) Olsen et al. (2014) Kotler (2011) Lin and Chang (2012) Talukdar and Lindsey (2013)
<i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	Xie et al. (2015) Lacey et al. (2015)	Huang and Rust (2011) Olson (2013) Uslay et al. (2009) Sheth et al. (2011)	Huang and Rust (2011) Uslay et al. (2009) Lacey et al. (2015) Sheth et al. (2011) Xie et al. (2015)	Olson (2013)
<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	Ehrich and Irwin (2005) Irwin and Naylor (2009) Sen and Bhattacharya (2001)	White et al. (2011)	Ehrich and Irwin (2005) Irwin and Naylor (2009) Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) White et al. (2011)	
<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) Chernev and Blair (2015) Henry (2010) Laran et al. (2011) Karababa and Ger (2011) Kidwell et al. (2013) Varman and Belk (2009) Luedicke et al. (2010) Olson et al. (2016)	Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) Howlett et al. (2009) Kozinets and Handelman (2004) Newman et al. (2014) Zhao and Belk (2008) Giesler and Veresiu (2014)	Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) Chernev and Blair (2015) Henry (2010) Kozinets and Handelman (2004) Laran et al. (2011) Luedicke et al. (2010) Karababa and Ger (2011) Varman and Belk (2009)	Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) Giesler (2010) Giesler and Veresiu (2014) Howlett et al. (2009) Kidwell et al. (2013) Newman et al. (2014) Olson et al. (2016) Zhao and Belk (2008)
<i>Journal of Political Economy</i>		Kotchen (2006) Edwards (2014)		Kotchen (2006) Edwards (2014)
<i>The European Journal of History of Economic</i>				
Management and organisation studies				
<i>Journal of Operations Management</i>	Bregman et al. (2015)	Bregman et al. (2015)	Bregman et al. (2015)	

Table 3 (continued)

	Locus of responsibility		Consumer agency	
	Internally motivated	Outcome focused	Agentic	Non-agentic
<i>Journal of Supply Chain Management</i>		Tate et al. (2010)		Tate et al. (2010)
<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Enderle (2000) Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Luesma (2014) Michaelson (2010)	Schuler and Christmann (2011) Smith et al. (2010)		Enderle (2000) Michaelson (2010) Schuler and Christmann (2011) Smith et al. (2010)
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Auger and Devinney (2007) Carrington et al. (2010) Doran (2009) Freestone and McGoldrick (2008) Vitell (2003)	Auger, Burke, Devinney, and Louviere (2003) D'Astous and Legendre (2009) Bray et al. (2011) Castaldo et al. (2009) Chatzidakis, Hibbert and Smith (2007) De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) Öberseder et al. (2011) Vitell (2003)	D'Astous and Legendre (2009) Carrington et al. (2010) Castaldo et al. (2009) De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) Doran (2009) Freestone and McGoldrick (2008) Öberseder et al. (2011)	Auger and Devinney (2007) Auger, Burke, Devinney, and Louviere (2003) Auger et al. (2007) Bray et al. (2011) Chatzidakis, Hibbert and Smith (2007) Vitell (2003)
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>		Aguilera et al. (2007) Dowell and Muthulingam (2017) den Hond and de Bakker (2007) Shrivastava (1995)	Barnett (2007) McWilliams (2001) Shrivastava (1995)	Aguilera et al. (2007) den Hond and de Bakker (2007) Basu and Palazzo (2008)
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	King and Soule (2007) Sine and Lee (2009) Weber et al. (2008)		Weber et al. (2008)	
Social sciences, arts and humanities				
Political science and international relations				
<i>American Journal of Political Science</i>	Baker (2005) Bolsen et al. (2014)	Carpenter and Ting (2007) Dancey and Goren (2010)	Baker (2005) Bolsen et al. (2014) Dancey and Goren (2010)	
<i>International Studies Quarterly</i>		Steger and Wilson (2012)		Steger and Wilson (2012)
<i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i>	Minton et al. (2016)			Minton et al. (2016)
Gender studies				
<i>Gender, Place & Culture</i>		Hawkins (2011)		Hawkins (2011)
Philosophy				
<i>The Leadership Quarterly</i>		Williamson (2008)	Williamson (2008)	
Geography, planning and development				

Table 3 (continued)

	Locus of responsibility		Consumer agency	
	Internally motivated	Outcome focused	Agentic	Non-agentic
<i>Antipode</i>	Carrier (2010) Rosol (2012) Wilson and Curnow (2013) Zitcer (2015) Amin and Thrift (2005)	Barnett (2007) Brockington and Duffy (2010) Alkon and McCullen (2011) Busa and Garder (2015) Moragues-Faus (2016)	Olivers (2004) Barnett (2007) Alkon and McCullen (2011) Busa and Garder (2015) Moragues-Faus (2016)	Brockington and Duffy (2010) Carrier (2010) Rosol (2012) Yates (2011) Wilson and Curnow (2013) Zitcer (2015)
<i>Economic Geography</i>	Hamilton (2013)		Hamilton (2013)	
<i>Global Environmental Change</i>	Spaargaren (2011) Laestadius et al. (2014)	Ridoutt and Pfister (2010) Spaargaren and Mol (2008)	Spaargaren and Mol (2008)	Laestadius et al. (2014) Ridoutt and Pfister (2010) Spaargaren (2011)
<i>Progress in Human Geography</i>	Dowling (2010) Mansvelt (2008) Popke (2006)	Reid et al. (2009)	Mansvelt (2008) Popke (2006) Reid et al. (2009)	Dowling (2010)
Economics, econometrics and finance				
Economics and finance				
<i>Journal of Economic Literature</i>		Brown (2000) Fleurbay (2009) Kitzmueller and Shimshack (2012) Nordhaus (2007)		Brown (2000) Guthrie (2006) Fleurbay (2009) Kitzmueller and Shimshack (2012) van der Ploeg (2011)
<i>Journal of Political Economy</i>		Kotchen (2006) Edwards (2014)		Kotchen (2006) Edwards (2014)
<i>The European Journal of History of Economic</i>				
<i>The Journal of Finance</i>		Boczar (1978)		Boczar (1978)

minimising or inflicting no harm upon others through consumption. In terms of the former, Gershoff and Frels (2015, p. 97) equate the ethical consumption choices of those concerned with environmental issues with choices that “cause less pollution, use fewer natural resources, and are less harmful to the environment overall.” To scholars such as Gershoff and Frels (2015), motives of ethical consumption are underpinned by the consequences of consumption, rather than by an internal sense of moral duty.

Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014) represent an exception to the delineated positions between consumer ethics and ethical consumption generally taken in the literature. They suggest that “ethical consumption...extends to all types of practices as long as they are integrated into the individual’s search for a morally good life *and* contribute to the good of the community in which she lives” (525) [emphasis added]. Such a view is shared by Soper (2007) who, in philosophy, uses the term “alternative hedonism” to reflect benefits for both self and community. Additionally, in psychology, Williamson (2008) favours the view that the ‘good life’ comes from pursuing selected morally appropriate pleasures with the best possible outcomes for all.

Interestingly, our review suggests the favouring of specific orientations to the locus of responsibility by a number of journals. Specifically, we note a weighting towards outcome-focused assumptions of responsibility in the *Journal of Marketing*. In contrast, however, the *Journal of Consumer Research* has a marked interest in internally motivated consumer ethics, and the papers reviewed from *Administrative Science Quarterly* were exclusively underpinned by assumptions of internally motivated consumption ethics. These journal orientations illustrate how specific positions on consumption ethics can become institutionalised within literature streams and journal-based conversations.

Agency

As noted above, responsibility can and often is exercised through the marketplace. Consumer demand is deemed important (Schuler and Christmann 2011) and consumers with agency exercise their responsibility through consumption choices (Henry 2010) to reward those they deem to be morally responsible (Chernev and Blair 2015). This can often occur and be understood in terms of ‘consumer activism’ (Boczar 1978; Kozinets and Handelman 2004) and ‘consumer resistance’ (Case 1955). Furthermore, consumers’ purchase decisions have the capacity to affect organisational buying decisions for future product ranges (Tate et al. 2010).

Across disciplines, however, questions of consumer agency are framed differently placing serious doubt on the extent to which consumers freely and rationally decide both what constitutes ethically superior choices and how to

enact them. For instance, several studies from within marketing, place the site of moral judgement firmly with the *external* producer (e.g. Gershoff and Frels 2015; Lin and Chang 2012). In these studies, producers get to decide what is ethical and sustainable, and which ethical attributes they are going to use to augment their market offer and increase consumer demand (e.g. Kotchen 2006). For example, Newman et al. (2014) empower the producer with determining the “socially beneficial product enhancements” to be associated with their products and brands. These ethical options are derived externally to the consumer—what is ‘ethical’ is determined by the producer and the market, and the consumer is tasked with recognising the ethical augmentation and benefits, and to respond by adjusting their purchasing habits accordingly.

Non-market *external* institutions such as government regulators and religious structures are also present in research that both indirectly and directly questions the agency of the ethical consumer. This is particularly prevalent in political studies and corporate social responsibility (CSR) research. For instance, Schuler and Christmann (2011) determine ethics to relate to the guidelines and regulations set out in market-based initiatives, such as fair trade, and ethical products are those that comply with these regulations. This non-market external influence is also extended to activist groups who work to shift production and consumption practices (Wilson and Curnow 2013). Further, the social norms present in the domains that an individual interacts with have also arisen in research as sources of moral logic (e.g. Giesler and Veresiu 2014). Finally, it is argued that both corporations and the state are shifting responsibilities for ethics to the end consumer. Rosol (2012, p. 240), for example, suggests that ethical consumption can be “understood as part of a distinct political rationality which aims at passing on state responsibilities to civil society”. Similarly, Giesler and Veresiu (2014) contend that institutional actors work to construct the ethical consumer subject by dictating the moral norms and controlling the choices available to the consumer, then responsabilising the consumer with the moral capacity and agency to act ethically within the social and market constraints placed on them.

In contrast, some studies place the locus and outcome of moral judgement with the individual consumer in the form of self-derived *internal* moral guides, value and belief systems and moral identity projects (e.g. Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Irwin and Naylor 2009; Luedicke et al. 2010; Pelozo et al. 2013). For example, Irwin and Naylor (2009, p. 235) suggest that what is deemed ethical by an individual when making consumption choices reflects the individual’s “protected or sacred values, which are values that people state they are unwilling (or at least reluctant) to trade-off”. These values are “self-standards” (Pelozo et al. 2013) possessed by consumers who are moral agents with moral autonomy to

make their own moral judgements about firms and the ethical attributes of their market offerings based on their own moral guides and the perceived self-interest of firms and ethicality of products (Chernev and Blair 2015).

Notwithstanding, the majority of studies across disciplines view consumer action as—in one way or another—limited (e.g. Etzioni 1958; Soper 2007), being both constrained and enabled by institutions and social structures (Giesler and Veresiu 2014) and the availability of relevant information (Schuler and Cording 2006). Accordingly, the extent to which the Westernised conception of ethical consumption is limited to the daily spheres and financial reach of the agentic ‘affluent’ has been one of the questions that has been most broadly pondered and critically examined. Disciplinary agreement existed around the notion that ethical consumption is open to affluent consumers who can pay price premiums for ethics (Olson et al. 2016; Soper 2007; Strizhakova and Coulter 2013; McWilliams and Siegel 2001). This can serve to fetishise ethical consumption (Brockington and Duffy 2010; Carrier 2010; Hawkins 2011) through conspicuous acts of ethical consumption (Kitzmueller and Shimshack 2012; van der Wal et al. 2016). Such consumers can be open to manipulation (Edwards 2014) which questions the extent to which the social change necessary for an equitable consumption ethics can be achieved within the context of constrained market choices (Amin and Thrift 2005; Brockington and Duffy 2010; Moragues-Faus 2016; Rosol 2012).

Phrasing the question somewhat differently, some geographers have pondered “where” is the ethical consumer, juxtaposing “Within North” and “North–South” to “Within South” and “South–South” relationships (Gregson and Ferdous 2015). Soper (2007) argues that the geographic/proximal separation between production and consumption further delineates ethical consumption to the domain of the affluent, Northern, consumer. Thus, critical theorists argue that modern neoliberal adaptations position ethical consumption as a lifestyle choice of wealthy white social classes in the global north (Alkon and McCullen 2011). Buying-in to the marketing rhetoric and social kudos that comes from shopping ethically, these consumers have little understanding or care for the minimal contribution that they may be making to social and ecological change, or the significant contribution that they may be making to corporate profits (González and Waley 2013; Hawkins 2011; Moragues-Faus 2016). It is also argued that proximal distance plays a role in selective choices by corporations and consumers to identify the beneficiaries of ethical consumption choices. For example, Brockington and Duffy (2010) argue that while we might look to mitigate consumption-related problems—social and ecological—in distant exotic locations, such problems closer to home remain hidden and unsupported.

Despite these constraints, for some, consumer market choices do have the potential to serve as supplements to other forms of political action (Barnett et al. 2005; Hawkins 2011) and themselves serve as “influential minorities” (Hamilton 2013) with agentic potential. This is explored by Barnett et al. (2010) who distinguish between the ethical consumer as an actual and as a rhetorical figure, the latter being part of a discourse mobilised by a variety of actors for purposes other than directly stimulating everyday consumer demand for ethical products.

Beyond the Individual: Collectivities

For some researchers across disciplines, the agency of ethical consumers is realised through collective action (den Hond and de Bakker 2007), an ‘ethical shopping movement’ (Aguilera et al. 2007) or social movements of consumers (Bartley and Child 2011; Glac 2012; King and Soule 2007). Such movements can effect change through pressuring stakeholder groups and in generating media coverage (Wilson and Curnow 2013).

It is noted that consumers acting as concerned citizens are stakeholders alongside other groups, including corporations and governments (Shrivastava 1995). Thus, moving beyond the role of individual consumers, Bolsen et al. (2014) highlight the importance of a focus on the production of public goods, while Moore (2008) focuses on managers as a means to moderate consumption from within organisations. Similarly, supply chain management studies show that ethical consumption can go beyond consumer actions, as organisations’ purchasing decisions can also impact upon society and the environment (e.g. Tate et al. 2010). Organisational buyers can behave ethically by fostering sustainability among suppliers and, in turn, consumers can influence companies to behave more ethically by demanding certain attributes in products that can avert the consequential loss of consumer support (Busse 2016; Deegan and Shelly 2014). From a contrasting social sciences perspective, Potoski and Prakash (2005) view companies as being engaged in ethical consumption when they voluntarily comply with externally set standards, investing significant resources in these programmes and re-structuring their operations and cultures accordingly. In return for this ethical conduct, complying firms enjoy a range of benefits and rewards, including, regulatory relief/freedom, goodwill, visibility of their ‘good’ environmental citizenship with external audiences and reputational benefits that deliver positive brand equity.

What Do Ethical Consumers Do?

The acts of ethical consumers involve modes of engagement with the market. We organise these acts of engagement with and/or withdrawal from the market into two approaches or

orientations: (1) taking action through ethical forms of consumption and/or a citizenship; and (2) abstention, or anti-consumption, to not consume or reduce aggregate levels of consumption. We now examine these distinct modes of *action* and *abstention* evident in the interdisciplinary literature, which are illustrated by discipline in Table 4.

Exercising Consumption Ethics Through Action

Ethical consumption practices live up to the consumer's own ethical self-standards (Peloza et al. 2013). We found two modes of active practice in the interdisciplinary literature: (1) active engagement with the market through ethical consumption choices; and (2) political action at individual and collective levels. In this first ethical consumption scenario, consumers are still consuming—just in ways that align with their personal ethics. Thus, ethical consumption focuses on buying and consuming our way to a better, more equitable world. These acts of ethical consumption are viewed as virtuous consumption practices (Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma 2014) focused on internal 'goods' (i.e. virtues) rather than 'external' (commoditised) goods (Moore 2008). These consumption acts of ethical consumers are often presented as relatively mundane elements of daily life that have ethical significance (Popke 2006) on a quotidian and broader level—such as consumers activating their conservation intentions through recycling behaviours (White et al. 2011); actively choosing fair trade, sweatshop-free and animal cruelty-free products (De Pelsmacker and Janssens 2007; Schuler and Christmann 2011); conserving energy by switching off lights (Reid et al. 2009); and shopping at farmers' markets (Alkon and McCullen 2011). Unsurprisingly, the marketing and consumer research articles reviewed generally took this orientation towards consumers' enactment of ethics in marketplaces.

Despite assumptions of virtuosity, however, this active mode of ethical consumption is not above interdisciplinary criticism. For example, anthropologists like Graeber (2011) and Miller (2012), view "ethical consumer" practices as products of the specific separations of economic with social realms within the context in which academic work on consumer ethics takes place. To these scholars, the logics and practices of consumer ethics are the product of particular conjunctures in academic and lay worlds alike. A further critical and interdisciplinary perspective on the nature of ethical consumption emerging from our literature analysis, argues that acts of 'ethical consumption' equate to an uneasy conflation of capitalism and conservation. For example, Carrier (2010, p. 674) argues that flawed assumptions that market transactions—labelled ethical or otherwise—are a panacea for all ills, are at the core of neoliberal versions of ethical consumption, and that these assumptions work to "fetishise commodities, market transactions and, indeed,

people themselves". This argument is aligned with the view that all consumption decisions are inherently ethically charged in nature (Hawkins 2011). There are no amoral or ethics-free consumption domains, rather, all consumption practices have ethical dimensions (Popke 2006).

Beyond consumption acts, consumption ethics is also viewed as a field for activist/political practice (e.g. Bolsen et al. 2014). For example, Kähr et al. (2016) present a view of 'pro-social consumers' who act upon ethical motives by engaging in 'consumer brand sabotage', indicating an approach of resistance towards unethical market practices. Similarly, Xie et al. (2015) understand complaining directly to companies, negative word of mouth and boycotting behaviour on an individual level, as politicised tactics of ethical citizen consumers. This second mode of active practice is underpinned by the assumption that consumers effectively possess the power to act as voters in their consumption decisions, to influence the level of social responsibility of the organisations with which they interact. For example, den Hond and de Bakker (2007) refer to "political consumerism" and how activist groups challenge business directly, rather than via established channels of public policy. In turn, activists can influence the extent to which political consumerism is exerted, by educating consumers about the ways in which their actions can effect change within corporations.

While the majority of journal articles reviewed take the view of consumers exercising their ethics through action (see Table 3), there were other approaches. In particular, some studies investigated consumers' politically motivated practices of anti-consumption, and the business and marketing disciplines link the behaviour of corporations to the boycott and boycott responses of consumers. We now detail these divergent approaches.

Exercising Ethics by Not Consuming: Anti-consumption

Drawing on criticisms of ethical consumption as an illusionary practice driven by growth-oriented business models, and disillusionment at the notion that the solution to the negative consequences of over-consumption and inequitable consumption is more consumption (just relatively more ethical), a second mode of consuming ethically is explored in the literature—anti-consumption or reduced consumption (e.g. Amin and Thrift 2005; Soper 2007; Moore 2008; Sheth et al. 2011). For example, Sheth et al. (2011) suggest that engaging in more 'ethical' forms of consumption does not address the dire economic and social consequences of over-consumption. Consumption reduction and regulation is needed, rather than simply the adoption of different forms of consumption (Moore 2008). Similarly, Soper (2007) suggests that the ills of growth-oriented capitalism cannot be fixed through more consumption. Thus, in contrast to ethical consumption, anti-consumption is about not consuming at

Table 4 Modes of ethical consumption engagement

Modes of ethical consumption engagement		Abstention
Action		
Business, management and accounting Marketing and consumer research		
<i>International Journal of Research in Marketing</i>	Strizhakova and Coulter (2013) van der Wal et al. (2016)	
<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Devezer et al. (2014) Gershoff and Frels (2015) Kotler (2011) Kronrod et al. (2012) Lin and Chang (2012) Olsen et al. (2014) Pelozo et al. (2013) White et al. (2012) White and Simpson (2013)	Kähr et al. (2016) Klein et al. (2004) Kravets and Sandikci (2014) Taluqdar and Lindsey (2013)
<i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	Abela and Murphy (2008) Lacey et al. (2015) Marinova and Singh (2014) Olson (2013) Uslay et al. (2009)	Huang and Rust (2011) Sheth et al. (2011) Xie et al. (2015)
<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Enderle (2000) Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma (2014) Schuler and Christmann (2011)	Moore (2008) Michaelson (2010) Smith et al. (2010)
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Auger and Devinney (2007) Bray et al. (2011) Carrington et al. (2010) Castaldo et al. (2009) D'Astous and Legendre (2009) De Pelsmacker and Janssens (2007) Doran (2009) Öberseder et al. (2011) Rawwas (1996) Singh et al. (2009) Vitell (2003) White et al. (2011)	Doran (2009) Freestone and McGoldrick (2008)
<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>		Ehrich and Irwin (2005) Irwin and Naylor (2009) Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) Singh et al. (2005)

Table 4 (continued)

Modes of ethical consumption engagement	
Action	Abstention
<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Varman and Belk (2009) Williams and Steffel (2014)
	Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) Chernev and Blair (2015) Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) Giesler and Veresiu (2014) Henry (2010) Holt (2002) Howlett et al. (2009) Laran et al. (2011) Karababa and Ger (2011) Kidwell et al. (2013) Kozinets and Handelman (2004) Luedicke et al. (2010) Newman et al. (2014) Olson et al. (2016) Kotchen (2006)
<i>Journal of Political Economy</i>	Edwards (2014)
<i>The European Journal of History of Economic</i>	Bregman et al. (2015)
<i>Journal of Operations Management</i>	Busse (2016)
<i>Journal of Supply Chain Management</i>	Aguilera et al. (2007) Shrivastava (1995)
Management and Organisation Studies	King and Soule (2007)
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	
Political Science & International Relations	
<i>American Journal of Political Science</i>	
	Baker (2005) Bolsen et al. (2014) Carpenter and Ting (2007) Dancey and Goren (201) Naoi and Krauss (2009) Potoski and Prakash (2005) Wood (2009) Steger and Wilson (2012) Miller and Stanczak (2009) Minton et al. (2016)
<i>International Studies Quarterly</i>	
<i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i>	

Table 4 (continued)

	Modes of ethical consumption engagement	
	Action	Abstinence
Gender Studies <i>Gender, Place & Culture</i>	Hawkins (2011)	
Philosophy <i>The Leadership Quarterly</i>	Williamson (2008)	
Social sciences, arts and humanities Geography, Planning & Development <i>Antipode</i>	Alkon and McCullen (2011) Barnett (2007) Busa and Garder (2015) Carrier (2010) Moragues-Faus (2016) Olivers (2004) Raco (2005) Rosol (2012) Wilson and Curnow (2013) Ziteer (2015)	Amin and Thrift (2005) Brockington and Duffy (2010) Yates (2011)
<i>Economic Geography</i> <i>Global Environmental Change</i>	Hamilton (2013) Spaargaren (2011)	Laestadius et al. (2014) Ridoutt and Pfister (2010) Spaargaren and Mol (2008) Mansvelt (2008)
<i>Progress in Human Geography</i>	Popke (2006) Dowling (2010) Reid et al. (2009)	
Economics, econometrics and finance Economics and Finance <i>Journal of Economic Literature</i>	Brown (2000) Kitzmueller and Shirmshack (2012) Barnes et al. (2016) Glac (2012)	
<i>The Journal of Finance</i>		

all—or at least with frugality—thereby reducing aggregate consumption irrespective of whether that consumption is tagged as ethical or not (Amin and Thrift 2005). Further, we note two levels of non- or anti-consumption in the literatures: individualised anti-consumption (e.g. consumer boycotts); and, collective anti-consumption (e.g. being part of the voluntary simplicity movement).

Collective Action: Boycotts and Buycotts

When individual acts of ethical consumption are considered within the broader contexts of consumer collectives and movements, these consumer movements can either disrupt business directly by boycotting their products, or, indirectly by raising their voice and affecting company reputation. In comparing the impact of direct and indirect ethical consumer activism on business, King and Soule (2007) found the reputational damage inflicted by negative media coverage to be more damaging than consumer boycotts by protest movements. From a broader perspective, Smith, Palazzo and Bhattacharya (2010) identified that consumers collectively target corporations' brand image via anti-corporate and anti-brand boycotting and activism, as well as ensuring that they reward positive CSR activities in corporations—an example of buycotting. Furthermore, McWilliams and Siegel (2001) found that consumers in general, could be said to provide demand for CSR by their interpretation of signals from organisations (such as labelling) that enable them to 'reward' companies for investing in CSR activities, even though this may result in paying a higher price.

Indeed, Aguilera et al. (2007) view the political role of consumers as citizens to pressurise companies to engage in CSR. Such action can lead to a wider influence when companies' competitors consequently also feel pressured to engage in responsible business practices to be perceived as socially responsible enterprises within a market sector (Barnett 2007). Indeed, it is suggested that through collective social movements activist groups can go so far as to challenge the foundations of the capitalist system (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). This position and the assumption that consumers can make a difference at a macro-level is contentious. For example, Moragues-Faus (2016) suggests that while boycotts and buycotts do make an impact upon consumption decisions of the collective, there is often little social change as a consequence.

In this first phase of our review study we interrogate the literature across multiple disciplines to develop an interdisciplinary understanding of what is ethical consumption, who is the ethical consumer, and what do ethical consumers do. We now further build on these findings by, firstly, introducing our four thematic symposium papers and, secondly, illustrating how our interdisciplinary framings are reflected in these papers.

Thematic Symposium Papers

In our first paper, Sandikci brings the extraordinary into everyday consumption through an examination of how religion is implicated in the consumption of nail polish. Drawing on recent debates in anthropology and sociology she builds on a moral economy framework to conceptualise social reproduction and resistance in consumption. In doing so, through an archival and netnographic study, she finds so-called halal nail polish both problematic and acceptable as interactions between microsocial and macrosocial vantage points shape and inform views of 'proper' action. In moving beyond the tendency to focus on individual *or* social/structural perspectives, these perspectives are brought together through the exploration of multiple vantage points which develop a more holistic and connected disciplinary view.

In our second paper, Hietanen and Sihvonon bring a novel philosophical perspective to consumer ethics that builds on Levinasian ideas. This is corroborated through an ethnographic study of Restaurant Day—a consumer driven food festival. In this study, we find an emergent ethicality grounded in personal responsibility, where a desire to act generously to strangers takes precedence over conventional norms and rules, thus, revealing personal responsibilities and a sense of justice. Restaurant Day provides a vantage point from which to observe possible Levinasian ethical relations that create opportunities for alternative modes of living.

The third paper by Tiia-Lotta Pekkanen builds on an eclectic interdisciplinary framework—comprising ideas and concepts from institutional theory and practice theory—to provide a more sophisticated account of the embeddedness of sustainable consumption. By embeddedness, Pekkanen refers not only to the social, historical, cultural, economic, political and technological context of everyday consumption activity, but also to its ever-shifting nature due to a variety of micro- and macro-level changes. An institutional ethnography of the everyday consumption practices of eighteen informants helps the author corroborate four layers that address the hierarchy of cultural context and agency, taking also into account institution formality and time needed to effect change. For instance, Pekkanen's model shows how and why sustainable practices that are embedded in the wider institutional structures of society are more likely to be achieved and maintained, as opposed to micro-level practices that are down to choice editing. As such, Pekkanen's study also provides a revisited response to long-standing debates in social sciences around the impasse of consumer agency versus structure (see, e.g. Giesler and Veresiu 2014 vs. Sen and Bhattacharya 2001), reframing it as a question around the multi-layered relationship between conscious choice and socio-cultural embeddedness.

Whereas Pekkanen's study addresses (un)intentional and habitual sustainable routines and practices, the fourth paper by Zollo focuses on the role of unconscious emotions by integrating insights from socio-cognitive psychology and microsociology. Specifically, Zollo focuses on the concept of "moral intuition" defined as "the sudden appearance in consciousness of a moral judgment, including an affective valence (good–bad, like–dislike), without any conscious awareness of having gone through steps of searching, weighing evidence, or inferring a conclusion" (Haidt 2001, p. 818). This is extended via a more socially oriented approach that builds on symbolic interactionism. Subsequently, the author develops a holistic, integrated and interdisciplinary model that has both an "intuitionist" and a "social and moral emotions" component, along with five insightful propositions that demand future research.

Returning to our interdisciplinary definition of consumer ethics, we can see a range of views and dimensions reflected in these papers. For instance, Sandikci's focus on halal nail polish can be viewed as consumer ethics that is self-orientated and motivated by the desire to wear a nail polish that is in keeping with Islamic law. Thus, action is internally motivated by personal religious beliefs and personal interest. Consumers here, however, are non-agentic. We see individuals struggle with tensions between the moral acceptability of the product and powerful institutional structures, resulting in a consumer ethics that is both variable and evolving. In contrast, Hietanen and Sihvonnen reveal a consumer ethic that is other-orientated as participants in Restaurant Day seek to engage in protest while also focusing on the needs of others. These consumers are agentic in their actions and are both internally motivated by a sense of personal responsibility that is outcome focused on the positive experience of others. This represents consumer ethics around ethical relations that are evolving and open to change. Pekkanen's paper reflects a consumer ethics that are (primarily) self-oriented, yet are also viewed as embedded in a variety of institutional structures that are in themselves variable as opposed to stable. Further, consumer ethics are enacted by individuals through both agentic and less agentic forms of action (and inaction), as the formality and rigidity of institutional structures plays out differently across contexts. Interestingly, by integrating insights from psychology and microsociology, Zollo views consumer ethics as both self- and other-oriented. However, relative to Pekkanen's paper, ethics is viewed as more stable, and enacted by individuals who are (primarily) internally motivated and agentic (despite being potentially driven by unconscious emotions).

In the above papers, we observe the successful integration and synthesis of theoretical frameworks and insights derived from differing disciplinary perspectives. The small

number of papers in this symposium, however, points to the challenges of interdisciplinary research, resulting in limitations in terms of interdisciplinary scope. Indeed, we received no papers combining theories and concepts from three or more disciplines. A wider range of interdisciplinary offerings would serve to advance more multi-faceted disciplinary insights from, for example, macro to micro, consumption to production and across individuals, collectivities and social structure. Ultimately, it would attend to the development of understandings that *transcend* specific disciplinary interactions to advance new and holistic approaches. Accordingly, we now draw conclusions and outline directions for future research.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

The development of separate disciplinary literatures exploring ethical consumption in isolated parallel streams has resulted in the flourishing of multiple lexicons and varied tacit meanings. In this paper, we rigorously engage with, combine and decipher these disciplinary silos to draw out common and contrasting meanings, assumptions and threads. Through a systematic review of the literature we identify key themes that cut across disciplines and which help us to identify areas of convergence and divergence. Accordingly, we propose an interdisciplinary account of *consumer ethics* as self- versus other-oriented, stable versus variable that is *enacted by individuals and collectivities* who are internally motivated versus outcome focused, agentic vs non-agentic, and *through diverse modes* of action and abstention. Thus, contributing a first attempt to provide a common understanding of the intersection of ethics and consumption that acknowledges the contributions from distinct disciplinary traditions.

Despite the distinct contributions of our four interdisciplinary papers, we observe that there is further scope in identifying areas of convergence and divergence across disciplines and outlining more holistic frameworks for interdisciplinary understanding(s). Our paper proposes some practical solutions to the inherent challenges in moralising and politicising everyday consumption. In this sense, our overall agenda can be more appropriately described as *transdisciplinary*, in that it aims to "overcome the disconnection between knowledge production, on the one hand, and the demand for knowledge to contribute to the solution of societal problems, on the other hand" (Hirsch Hadorn et al. 2008, p. vii) through transcending disciplinary paradigms, encouraging participatory research, searching for unity of knowledge across disciplines and focusing on life-world problems (Hirsch Hadorn et al.

2008). Our delineation of common themes across disciplines enables researchers to identify the foci and relative strengths of each discipline, assess omissions in current understandings and the complementarity of adjacent disciplines.

For instance, issues pertaining to the identity of the ‘ethical consumer’ have been extensively investigated within psychology and marketing but often from a micro-individual perspective (e.g. Irwin and Naylor 2009; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Peloza et al. 2013; Luedicke et al. 2010). Consequently, they do not sufficiently explain the socio-economic and cultural milieu within which identifications emerge in the first place; a topic that has long troubled disciplines that insist on the more socially constructed nature of identities (see Zollo this issue), including anthropology, political and sociological studies. Within political science, for instance, a long-standing tradition has focused on identity politics and their intersection with questions of social and environmental justice (see, e.g. Fraser 2013). Likewise, within our review the variety of approaches taken towards questions of identity is particularly prevalent in current attempts to profile the ‘ethical consumer’, starting with socio-demographic characteristics and moving on to address interrelated questions of *responsibility* and *agency*. More holistic, transdisciplinary understandings could integrate these profiles.

In our review, a parallel area of research seems to be more explicitly concerned with how ethical consumption is legitimated and normalised. For instance, legal and religious studies, as distinct disciplines, shed light onto how ethical consumption is “regulated” both strategically and tactically by formal laws as well as religious norms, customs and rituals (Wenell 2009; Sandikci this issue). The importance of social and ‘felt’ norms is highlighted in various anthropological treatments, and also in marketing and psychology studies where ‘ethical norms’ form part of consumers’ ethical decision making (e.g. Shaw and Shiu 2003). As discussed above, various disciplines consider how moral logics are ultimately structurally constructed, institutionalised and regulated by powerful industry and government actors (e.g. Giesler and Veresiu 2014; Pekkanen this issue; Schuler and Christmann 2011). Regulation, however, also has a broader meaning, one that emphasises the (re)production of particular patterns of moral and symbolic behaviour as inherently natural or more precisely, ideological. For instance, in marketing Carrington et al. (2016) consider ethical consumption as integral to the ideological construction of a greener and more socially just capitalist society, exactly at the point where such possibility proves to be even more elusive. Regulation is also about how more particular struggles over meanings are negotiated by top-down actors (e.g. legal institutions) and bottom-up/grassroots ones (e.g. adbusters.org; fashionrevolution.org) as we observe in Hietanen (this issue). Within management,

for instance, Caruana and Chatzidakis (2014), discuss how the construction of “ethical consumption” is the outcome of discourses and actions by a variety of actors operating at different levels. Ultimately then, we see further opportunities for cross-fertilisation in the regulatory and legitimacy fronts.

Finally, another key theme that is ripe for future inter- and transdisciplinary research is processes of *production*. Economics, with its inherent focus on the “ethical externalities” of production and/or studies into consumer demand for ethical products, emerges as a key explanatory discipline; although, as mentioned above, some of the economics literature does not focus on ‘ethical externalities’ but on maintaining current production levels for the benefit of future generations (Fleurbaey 2009; van der Ploeg 2011). Production, however, is also decidedly cultural in so far as one can speak of different cultures of production (e.g. U.S. vs. Japan), and more broadly acknowledge that various economic processes and practices—from conducting market research to designing a product—are cultural phenomena (e.g. du Gay et al. 1997).

Within our review we find that production is represented as a key ethical locus where moral decisions and judgments are made. Particularly within the marketing discipline there is increasing recognition that it is producers that ultimately determine what is ‘ethical’ for consumers (see, e.g. Lin and Chang 2012; Olsen et al. 2014; Newman et al. 2014). Inter-related points are made by sociologists, political scientists and human geographers that study, for instance, the life of objects, ethical or otherwise, and in doing so expose the various cultural and socio-economic contradictions (e.g. Cook 2004) in the life span and supply chain of any commodity. Here, what emerges as ‘ethical’ is ultimately viewed as the product of particular cultural realms. There is also a contrasting insistence—following Harvey (1990) and others—that any commodity is underpinned by politics and ethics of labour and production that are specific to capitalist structures. More transdisciplinary understandings could integrate the economic and socio-cultural forces that sustain current supply chains (ethical or otherwise), and in doing so, bring previously separated accounts of production and consumption together.

Altogether, we make a first attempt to systematically interrogate and synthesise perspectives, terminology and the language employed across the various disciplines that have focused on one or more facet of consumption ethics. We hope it will prove to be a significant stepping-stone to a more holistic and transdisciplinary stream of consumption ethics research.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest Michal Carrington declares no conflict of interest. Andreas Chatzidakis declares no conflict of interest. Helen Goworek declares no conflict of interest. Deirdre Shaw is a section co-editor in the *Journal of Business Ethics*.

Ethical Approval This manuscript does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

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