WHAT ECONOMIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE AFRICAN CONSUMER? THE CASE OF COTE D’IVOIRE

QUELLE RESPONSABILITE ECONOMIQUE POUR LE CONSOMMATEUR AFRICAIN ? CAS DE LA COTE D’IVOIRE

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SUMMARY

The goal of this research is to treat Ivorian consumer responsibility by focusing on its economic aspect. This economic sensitivity is more perceptible when the consumer must make a choice between the local product and the foreign product. Two studies have been conducted concerning the French consumer ((Folcher and N’Goala, 2014) and Moroccan consumer (Elmanssouri and Baakil, 2017). Our other a quantitative study was conducted among a sample of 107 Ivorian consumers to verify the veracity of the components of this multidimensional theoretical construct based on five mechanisms, we have tested whether the Ivorian consumer is also: (1) aware of the consequences of these acts of purchase on the economy of his country (2) claim some responsibility, (3) manifest an intention in their arbitration between foreign and local products, (4) feel part of a collective movement of support for the economy of the country, (5) seek a personal and collective interest through support to the economy of their country.

KEY WORDS: Consumer Responsibility Economic, Ivorian consumer, local product, foreign product.

RÉSUMÉ

L’objectif de cette recherche est de traiter la responsabilité du consommateur Ivoirien en se focalisant sur son aspect économique. Cette sensibilité économique est plus perçue lorsque le consommateur doit faire un choix entre le produit local et le produit étrangers vendu dans le pays. Deux études ont été effectué dans le contexte français ((Folcher et N’Goala, 2014) et marocain (Elmanssouri et Baakil, 2017). Une étude quantitative a été menée auprès d’un échantillon de 107 consommateurs ivoirien pour vérifier la vérité des composantes de ce construit théorique multidimensionnel fondé sur cinq mécanismes. Ainsi, nous avons testé si le consommateur ivoirien est aussi : (1) conscient des conséquences de ces actes d’achat sur l’économie de son pays (2) s’attribuent une part de responsabilité, (3) manifestent une intention dans leur arbitrage entre les produits étrangers et locaux, (4) se sentent partie prenante dans un mouvement collectif de soutien à l’économie du pays, (5) recherchent un intérêt personnel et collectif au travers du soutien à l’économie de leur pays.

MOTS CLES : Aspect économique de la responsabilité du consommateur, consommateur ivoirien, produit local, produits étrangers
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INTRODUCTION

Today, consumers are becoming more concerned about many issues such as: environmental protection, the preservation of their health, the well-being of the community, the reality of advertising messages, the societal actions of companies... In addition, consumers are using new channels of communication to learn about these many issues and share their opinions with other consumers.

In this context, companies are required to introduce responsible, social and environmental concerns into their marketing practices. New types of marketing have emerged: social marketing, responsible marketing, ethical marketing, ecological marketing, green marketing...

In addition, in implementing responsible practices, companies must identify the parties interested in its actions, always involve them in this societal process and communicate with them.

Faced with these responsible business practices, consumers conduct responsible behaviors that are reflected in their intentions and acts of purchase. In addition, consumers sometimes become aware of their potential impact on their country's economic performance in terms of growth, employment, public deficits (social security), trade balance, etc. They will even have to make a choice between domestic and foreign products in their purchases.

The purpose of this study is to address consumer responsibility, focusing on its economic side. An investigation will be conducted on the economic responsibility of the African consumer towards the product manufactured locally compared to that designed abroad but sold on the domestic market. The aim is to get closer to the behavior of this consumer and to detect his sensitivity to economic responsibility.

This led us to analyze in the first part, the transition from consumer social responsibility to Consumer Economic Responsibility (REC).

In a second part, we have explained the various mechanisms of Consumer Economic Responsibility that we have selected as variables to study. In the third and final part, we analyzed the results of the empirical field study to verify the validity of these variables initially selected in relation to the degree of economic responsibility of the African consumer.
1- Conceptual framework of the study:

1.1. Emergence and development of responsible marketing:

Responsible marketing, sometimes called sustainable or ethical, can be defined as the reconciliation between marketing and corporate social responsibility CSR. It has emerged in response to the new expectations of stakeholders and with the aim of respecting the environment, people and the planet.

The first definition that approached responsible marketing is that advanced by the American Marketing Association (AMA) in 2004: “Marketing is a function of the organization and a set of processes that aim to create, communicate and deliver value to customers and manage relationships with them to serve the organization and its stakeholders”.

Responsible marketing aims to offer green, fair and socially responsible products. The aim is to satisfy more and more demanding and better-informed stakeholders.

There are three main forms of responsibilities linked to the marketing function: economic responsibility (best offer guaranteeing sustainable profit), social or partnership responsibility (mutually satisfactory exchange with its stakeholders) and finally social responsibility (concertation between the goals of the company and those of the society).

These three types of responsibilities were consolidated in the P.R.I model of Patrick BARTHEL (2013).

Patrick BARTHEL developed the P.R.I model that is linked to the responsible marketing, comprising three key ecosystems of an organization: Product ecosystem, Relational ecosystem and Institutional ecosystem.

The product ecosystem, mainly focused on the profitability of the company’s product portfolio, is an appropriate tool to help the marketing manager better assume his economic responsibility. It supports to better integrate the principles of Sustainable Development into the attributes of the company’s offer system presented to the market.

The Relational ecosystem, mainly centred on Customer / Stakeholder relations, must establish a climate of trust favourable for any exchange and cooperation with these parties and must take in consideration their respective interests.
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Finally, The institutional and societal ecosystem, is focused on the promotion of the production or distribution activity of the company, the quality of relations with all the Stakeholders likely to contribute to the improvement of the commercial offer, and finally on the quality of institutional communication for the benefit of the company’s image and its products. The goal is to better meet their requirements and expectations.

Along with the emergence of responsible marketing, the concepts of responsible consumption and responsible consumer have emerged.

1.2. The responsible consumption and the responsible consumer:

The responsible consumption and the Moroccan consumer were both defined differently in the literature. Several aspects are taken into account: the perception of corporate social responsibility (Sen et Bhattacharya, 2001 in Swaen, 2002 ; Webb et Mohr, 1998 ; etc), the preoccupation for natural resources (Hénion, 1976 ; Antil, 1984) or the environmental concern in general (Anderson et Cunningham, 1972 ; Kinnear, Taylor et Ahmed, 1974).

Binninger.A.S, Robert.I (2008) specify that responsible consumption mobilizes different theoretical foundations which are ethical consumption, ecological or green consumption and socially responsible consumption.

Ecological or green consumption is linked to the identification of the determining characteristics of the individual concerned about the protection of the environment. Two lines of research have evolved jointly: the first one is focused on the link between concern for the environment and ecological behaviour; while the second, a more extremist one, is focused on the advent of a "Conservation Society".

T.C. Kinnear, J.-R. Taylor et Ahmed (1974) both emphasize the role of individual personal consumption in the deterioration of the environment. They define the ecological consumer as an individual who must "adopt a purchasing behavior consistent with the conservation of ecosystems". This trend has allowed the development of research on the conceptualization of green marketing (W.E. Kilbourne 2004).

The second way of thinking referring to the conversationalist approach, proposes the advent of a conservation society, where one could maintain, even improve, his standard of living, while consuming less or differently (K. Valaskis et al 1979). In the same context, G. Fisk (1973) recommends a limitation of the individual consumption, called "responsible consumption", considering ecological requirements.
Socially responsible consumption is mentioned in Webster’s studies in the middle of the 70’s. Indeed, according to F. Webster (1975), the socially responsible consumer is "a person who takes into account the public consequences of his private consumption, and who tries to use his purchasing power to induce changes in society". The studies that have followed one another are segmented between researchers who present a broad vision of socially responsible consumption taking into account several dimensions (F.Webster 1975, J. Roberts 1995, A. François-Lecompte 2003) and others who reduce this notion to purchasing depending on the degree of social responsibility of the company (L. Mohr, D. Webb et K. Harris 2001, M. Carrigan et A. Attala 2001, S. Sen et C.B. Bhattacharyya 2001, T. Brown et P. Dacin 1997).

From his point of view, J. Roberts (1995) approaches socially responsible consumption according to two dimensions: the environmental dimension and the societal dimension. He defines socially responsible consumers as "those who buy goods or services which they perceive as having a positive (or less bad) impact on their environment, and who use their purchasing power to express their social concerns".

In addition, studies on responsible consumption evoke the concept of Responsible Consumption Behaviour, which has been treated by many researchers who approached it differently without treating it in depth. Some of them limited their studies to particular aspects of consumption such as: environmental protection, ethnocentric behaviour ... (Shimp et Sharma, 1987; Stone et al, 1995; Lecompte et Florence, 2006). Others have tried to define it based on descriptive or exploratory analysis (Binninger, 2006; Toulouse, 2007).

Responsible Consumption Behavior was defined by Toulouse (2007), as being “a set of voluntary acts located in the sphere of consumption, and adopted following an awareness of the consequences deemed negative of consumption on the outside world of the individual, these consequences raising neither the functionality of purchases nor immediate personal interest ”. This definition highlights two dimensions for qualifying consumer behaviour as thoughtful behaviour, the repercussions of which are well recognized: voluntary action by consumers, and awareness of the negative consequences for the outside world. New concepts have thus emerged: thoughtful consumption, conscious consumption, committed consumption, ethical consumption, etc.

The concept of Responsible Consumption Behaviour can include two dimensions: Responsible Purchasing Behaviour and Responsible Consumption Behaviour. These two emerging notions have been analyzed in only few works (Maignan et Al, 2002; Carter, 2004; Worthington et al, 2008).
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Several researchers have tried to define the socially responsible consumer by generally emphasizing environmental and societal concerns. Mohr et al (2001), have distinguished in their contribution on consumption: the concept of purchase and use. They defined the socially responsible consumer as "a person who bases his acquisition, use and possession of products on the desire to minimize or eliminate adverse effects as well as the desire to maximize the long-term beneficial impact on society".

Moreover, Lecompte (2005) presents purchasing as a "positive form of Socially Responsible Consumption". He took the case of purchases of ecological and social labeled products and purchases of sharing products. For their part, to measure the concept of Socially Responsible Consumption, Lecompte and Florence (2006), evoked in addition to responsible purchasing behavior, a facet of responsible use of a product at home.

Socially responsible consumption behavior also refers to the study of Ecologically Responsible behavior and Ethnocentric behavior.

Studies of ecologically responsible behaviour have been based on the triple cognitive, affective and behavioural component of the classical attitude model(Dunlap et Van Liere, 1978; Balderjahn, 1988 ; Dembkowsky et Hammer-Lloyd, 1994). Maloney and Ward (1973) thus defined ecological concerns as "the set of specific knowledge and emotions, the level of predisposition and extent of behaviour to respond to environmental and pollution problems".

On the other hand, ethnocentric behavior means that consumers, known as ethnocentric, consider the purchase of imported products to be incorrect and may have a negative economic impact and a loss of employment (shimp et sharma, 1987). It is a responsible behavior when the consumer, through his act of purchase, contributes to the well-being of his nation, to the promotion of household products and to the creation of employment for other individuals.

This ethnocentric behavior refers to the Economic Responsibility of the Consumer, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

1.3. From social responsibility to the economic responsibility of consumers:

By referring to the work of François Lecompte (2005), we can identify five dimensions to measure responsible consumption practices:

- Company behaviour: refuse to buy from companies whose behaviour is considered non-responsible.
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- The purchase of sharing products: buying products for which "part of the price will go to a good cause.
- The desire to help small businesses: do not buy everything from big enterprises and support small businesses.
- Taking in consideration the geographical origin of products: the desire to favour, at a certain level, products from consumer’s geographical community.
- And finally, reducing the volume of consumption: the consumer avoids “consuming too much” and tries as much as possible to do things himself.

According to the 2014 GreenFlexEthicityen survey, the individual has evolved from being a "consumer actor" to a "consumer author" who chooses the "Do It Yourself" rather than buy. The motivations go beyond economic reasons alone, to expand into the search for authenticity and the desire to find healthier, more ecological and sustainable products. Several types of “sustainable” consumers have been determined according to the degree of commitment and concern about sustainable development issues. They are: proactive, green-builders, optimistic good behaviour, laggards, jaded of sustainability, and indifferent.

Responsible consumers must reconsider their relationship with themselves, nature and society (VéroniqueGallais, (2010)). It is also a question of exploding the status of consumer and decompartmentalizing its different roles (consumer, user, worker, taxpayer, voter ...) in order to act from a more global view.

The consumer must be considered as one of the major actors in the implementation of a more harmonious economic development, ecologically respectful of natural resources, and socially equitable. First as a citizen, he is directly concerned by the regulatory and incentive approaches implemented by local authorities. He is also aware of all climatic and economic events and phenomena, thanks to the generalization and development of information and communication networks.

The behaviour of responsible consumers has also evolved from a strict focus on only less consumption and environment friendly to integrate also the economic dimension by being interested also in the economic growth.

Hence the emergence of the concept of Economic Consumer Responsibility ECR. This concept, which has its origins in works on the consumer social responsibility CSR, remains lowly studied since researchers were much more interested in both environmental and social aspects.
However, consumers are more and more aware about the impact of their acts of consumption not only on their health or on the financial health of companies or on the ecological health of the planet but also and above all on the economic health of their country (locally, regionally and nationally). The consumer, therefore, became a “consumer actor” by having a purchasing and consumption approach that is interested in the positive or negative effects that his purchasing decisions can have. He can no longer be passive or indifferent in his act of consumption but rather he is called to be responsible.

The economically responsible consumption is not homogeneous because it depends on the profile of the consumer who practices it, his concerns and his state of mind. The heart of this responsibility comes above all from his awareness of the economic impact that his act of purchase or consumption can have on the local, regional or even national level.

Folcher, (2015) defines the economic responsibility of the consumer as:

"The obligation felt and perceived by consumers to respond to the economic consequences (employment, growth, business liquidation, etc.) of their purchases of products, especially when they are manufactured outside their home territory". This definition evokes the effect of the country of origin of manufactured products to better understand the motivations and psychological variables that can intervene in the purchase of household products.

According to the foundational work of Schooler in 1965, Steenkamp and Van Trijp (1996), Agrawal and Kamakura (1999), the country of origin has a significant effect on the evaluation of products by consumers, they tend to use this notion as an extrinsic indicator to form judgments on product quality. These authors pointed out that the original effect varies depending on the product category, the level of involvement and familiarity and the expertise of consumers.

Subsequently, researches on the country of origin of the product mainly focused on the congruence between the country of origin and the perceived quality or intentions and purchasing attitudes (Bonnal, 2011; Usunier, 2002), or the impact of patriotism and cultural stereotypes on the evaluation of product attributes (Sharma et al, 1995; Han, 1988; Balabanis et al, 2001).

The country of origin is also conceived as a brand (Kapferer, 2011) or as an attribute of the product among others, which can produce cognitive (quality), emotional (pleasure, symbols) or normative effects (obligation to buy local) on consumer preferences.
The works of (Folcher and N’Goala, 2014) identify five facets of Consumer Social Responsibility, which will be used in our empirical study later:

- **Awareness of the consequences of acts of purchase:**

  It focuses on consumers’ awareness of the consequences that their preferences and their purchases can have on the country's economic health.

  Our study is interested in the intensity of the causal link perceived by the consumer between his consumption of foreign products and the consequences on the economy of his country.

- **The collective attribution of a part of responsibility to each actor in the system:**

  The second dimension is concerned with causal attribution which is the process by which individuals assess and judge their behaviour but also others and the environment in which they evolve in by inferring behaviours and events. According to the theory of social psychology (Heider, 1958), the attribution can be: Either an internal attribution where, the consumer will take all or part of the responsibility for the economic health of his country. Or an external attribution where, the consumer blames the companies or the government.

- **Collective involvement in the support of the country's economy:**

  This third dimension focuses on committed consumption which is not the subject of a precise definition, not more than any of the political consumerism, sustainable consumption, fair consumption, citizen consumption. It is only associated with the idea that consumers can pursue a political commitment by refusing certain products (boycott), by favoring other products or services from specific companies to reward them for their ethical, responsible or civic behavior (buycott) (Friedman, 1996), or by modifying certain consumption-related practices (sorting waste, etc.).

- **The intentionality of acts of purchasing foreign products:**

  The intentionality of purchasing acts means that when the individual judges himself to be able to assume the consequences of his acts, he needs to recognize whether he has acted voluntarily. In the economic responsibility, consumers explain that they do not purposely buy foreign products because today they no longer know what is foreign or domestic when there are locally assembled products.
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- The research for a personal and collective interest in the purchase of local and domestic products:

This fifth and last dimension is concerned with the fact that the consumer who sought above all to balance his budget (Volle, 2007; Antonides et al, 2011) must also help to raise the bar of the National economy. His personal interest must consider the collective interest of the country. This raises the question of finding a ground for reconciliation between the purchase of a domestic product that would allow the economic aspect of the territory to be developed and its personal interest such as the preservation of its job, its income or ensuring the future of its family.

2- Empirical study on the economic responsibility of the Ivorian consumer

2.1 Methodology:

Our study aims to identify the different facets of the economic responsibility of the Ivorian consumer. To do this, we sent an online questionnaire of a sample of 107 consumers, a sample consisting mainly of male students.

As mentioned above, the scale of measurement of the economic responsibility of the borrowed consumer, has been validated by Folcher and N’GOALA (2014) for the French consumer. It has been tested and adapted to the Ivorian consumer. At this multidimensional scale, economic responsibility implies that consumers are:

1. Aware of the consequences of their purchasing actions on their country’s economy,

2. take some responsibility,

3. show intent in their compromises between products (foreign to the inside),

4. feel part of a collective movement to support the economy,

5. seek a personal and collective interest in the country’s economy.

In the first phase, we tested this scale of measurement with 12 people in the sample and two academic experts from the consumer social responsibility (CSR) field. Therefore, we have substituted the item “If I am interested in the economic health of our country, it is above all so that my country retains its status” instead (If I take an interest in the economic health of our country, it is above all so that the country retains its status as a “rich” country.
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Another item has been changed from “If I am interested in the economic health of our country, it is above all so that our country maintains its industrial and economic dynamism” by “If I am interested in the economic health of our country, it is above all so that our country maintains its economic dynamism” which is more appropriate to the economic context of the country concerned.

The KMO index (0.688) and a Bartlett test (meaning 0.001) indicate that the data are factorable and allow us to accept the results of this factor analysis.

In a second phase, we removed items with a representation quality of less than 0.5 from the scale, considering the quality of the items and their importance. Then we observed the matrix of the components after rotation. Thus, we eliminated the collective allocation “the economic health of my country is the responsibility of consumers” in the first place. Then we eliminated the intentionality of purchases “we are not very well informed about the origin of the products we buy”. In addition, we have gradually eliminated two items that are correlated with several axes at once: it is collective involvement “If I am interested in the economic health of our country, it is above all to keep it as an emerging country and the causal awareness “not to buy local products has a great effect on the economy of the country”. Finally, we eliminated the government’s allocation of “economic health is the responsibility of the government,” and “if companies relocate it’s primarily because of the government.”

2.2. Results:

Factor analysis, and after the purification of the measuring instruments, allowed the extraction of 5 components, thus rendering more than 65.93% of the variance of the initial components (rule of own values greater than 1, rotation of oblimin in five iterations):

1. The allocation of the consumer to the dimension of the personal and collective interest of supporting the country’s economy.

2. Distribution of responsibility to the company and business leaders

3. the quest for self-interest and collective interest.

4. To assign the share of responsibility to the consumer built up on the basis of the intention to buy domestic products.

5. Awareness of causality in the purchase of foreign products combined with collective participation
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This measurement instrument was tested as part of an exploratory approach (analysis of key components) to judge both the converging validity and reliability of the buildings. This is essentially a single data collection with this instrument, the psychometric qualities are quite satisfactory for most items whose factor contribution is greater than 0.70. Nevertheless, taking into account the qualitative aspect, we kept items whose contribution ranges from 0.5 to 0.6. The weakest is the collective involvement item “only collective actions are effective in encouraging locally produced products” (0.501). The item of intentionality of purchases “We do not always look at the origin of the products purchased” (0.571). The item of causation awareness of the act of purchase “buying foreign products has a great effect on the economy of your country” (0.539).

Moreover, the reliability coefficients (Cronbach alpha) are greater than 0.72, except for axis 5 causation consciousness assembled to collective involvement that is less than 0.4. Of course, on the one hand, these dimensions should thus be reinforced in view of a confirmatory factor analysis that will be carried out from data obtained from a more representative sample of the Moroccan population. On the other hand, we must take into account that there is a relationship between the number of items and the value of the alpha: a small number of items (two or three) gives a generally lower alpha of (0.6) than a measure of four statements (0.7). It is from this perspective that we have eliminated this last dimension, the awareness of causality of purchasing acts combined with collective involvement of the consumer.

In conclusion, our study showed that our respondents:

1. Are aware that their personal and collective interest would support the country’s economy. For them, the consumer has a role to play in the development of their country and that the purchase of local products would emanate from a certain collective involvement. They also believe that the dynamism of their economies will have an impact on the present and future of future generations (M-5.07).

2. Give the consumer a fairly substantial responsibility through their intentionality of purchases on the health of their economy. They feel that they are not sufficiently informed about the origin of the products (M-4, 343).

3. Assign responsibility for the economic health of their country only to businesses and business leaders. They completely obscure the role of other entities such as the government (M-3,059).
4. They identify a link between staff (current income) and the future of the collective in maintaining good economic health (M-3,831)

In short, our respondents believe that each consumer has an individual and collective role to play in the economic development of his country; Nevertheless, they, like Moroccans, believe that their responsibility is minor for the economic health of the country, since the purchase of foreign products does not stem from an intention. As a result, they ask for more information about the origin of the products purchased.
CONCLUSION

In general, the African market sees the emergence of fairly diverse consumer profiles. These consumption profiles multiply according to the consumer’s character, taste, income and level of awareness of their economic responsibility. Our study focuses on the Ivorian consumer who has an important role in the economic health of his country. They perceive a personal and collective interest in supporting Côte d’Ivoire’s economy and protecting current and future generations. However, this consumer faces problems in the consumption of local products namely, poor quality, prices and even sometimes trust in local businesses. That said, despite these deficiencies, the notion of economic responsibility is rather preliminary among Ivorians as is the case for consumers in emerging African countries such as Morocco.

It is in this sense that our research work is a test of the existing scale of measurement on consumer economic responsibility in the Ivorian context. On a theoretical level, we have tried to identify the inherent mechanisms of REC in the Ivorian consumer. From a strategic and managerial point of view, the objective will be to eventually have levers and incentives applicable in the Ivorian context, both at the institutional level (state awareness campaigns, the region...) and at the organisational level (brand strategy made in,...).

Methodologically, this research is a first step towards the operationalization of the economic responsibility of the African consumer and the development of each of its facets. The study can be conducted on a larger sample, including a comparison between several nationalities.
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