

What sustainability attributes drive consumer behaviour?

A systematic review of the research on sustainable consumption

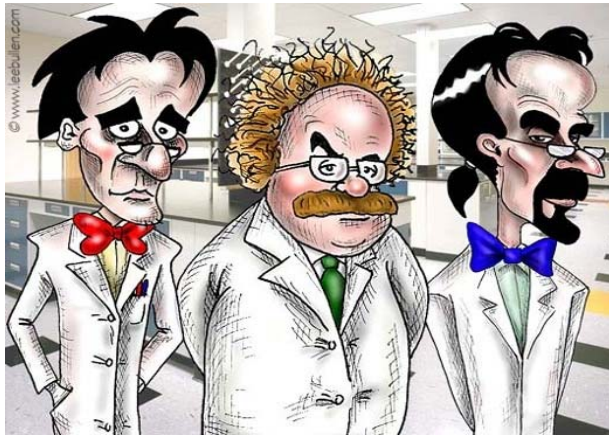
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www.SustainabilityResearch.org

Based on the research of:

Drs. June Cotte and Remi Trudel, Ivey Business School



The RNBS bridges the gap between industry and academia



Academics produce valid, reliable and objective research

Practitioners need relevant and actionable knowledge

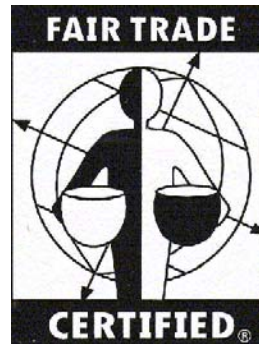


Key conclusions from the body of research

- Do not compromise product functionality
- Fear punishment, but don't expect a reward
- Drivers: efficacy, context, etc... attributes?
- No more surveys



Will consumers purchase based on social attributes?



44% of Germans are LOHAS consumers (Ipsos 2009)

84% of French are willing to pay 10% premium (Globescan 2007)

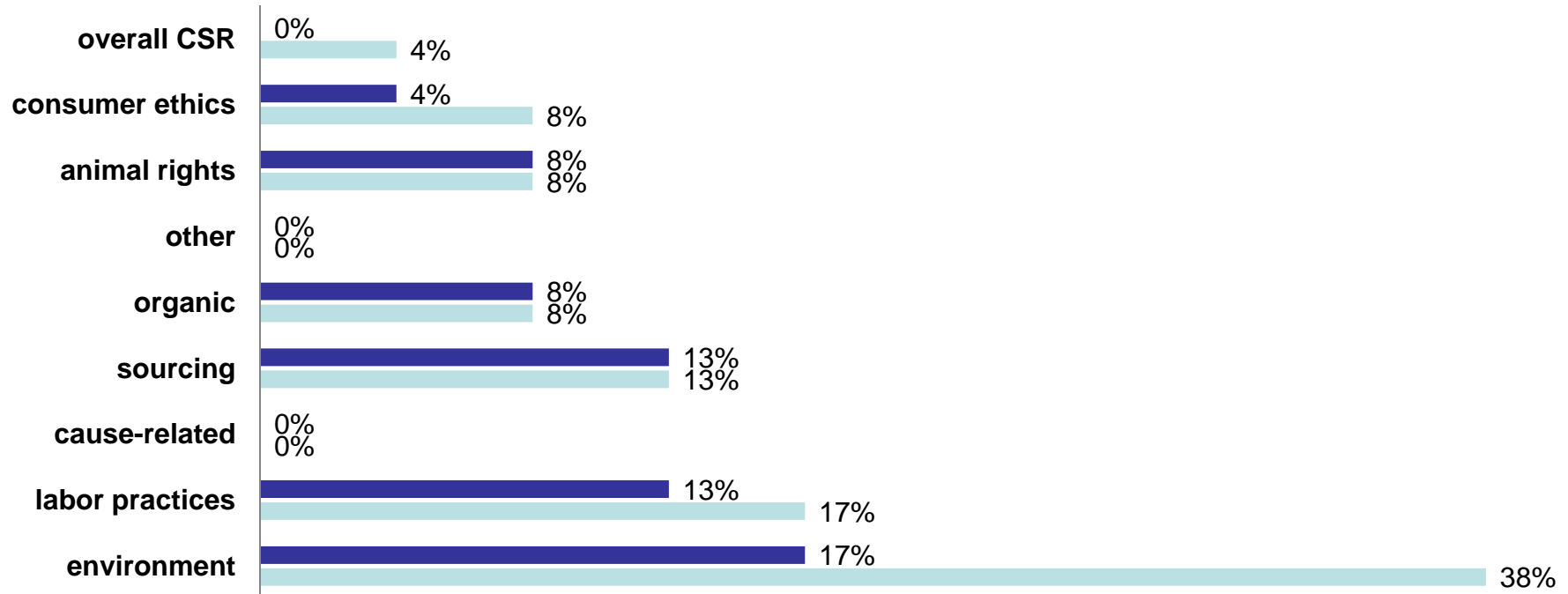
... but little evidence on behaviours!



Attributes: Environment appears to be a driver

Consumer Acceptance CSR Dimensions: Behavior-Based Studies

- Percentage of studies showing willingness to pay premium
- Percentage of studies showing willingness to change behavior



Trade-offs: It appears that consumers will not trade off product functionality

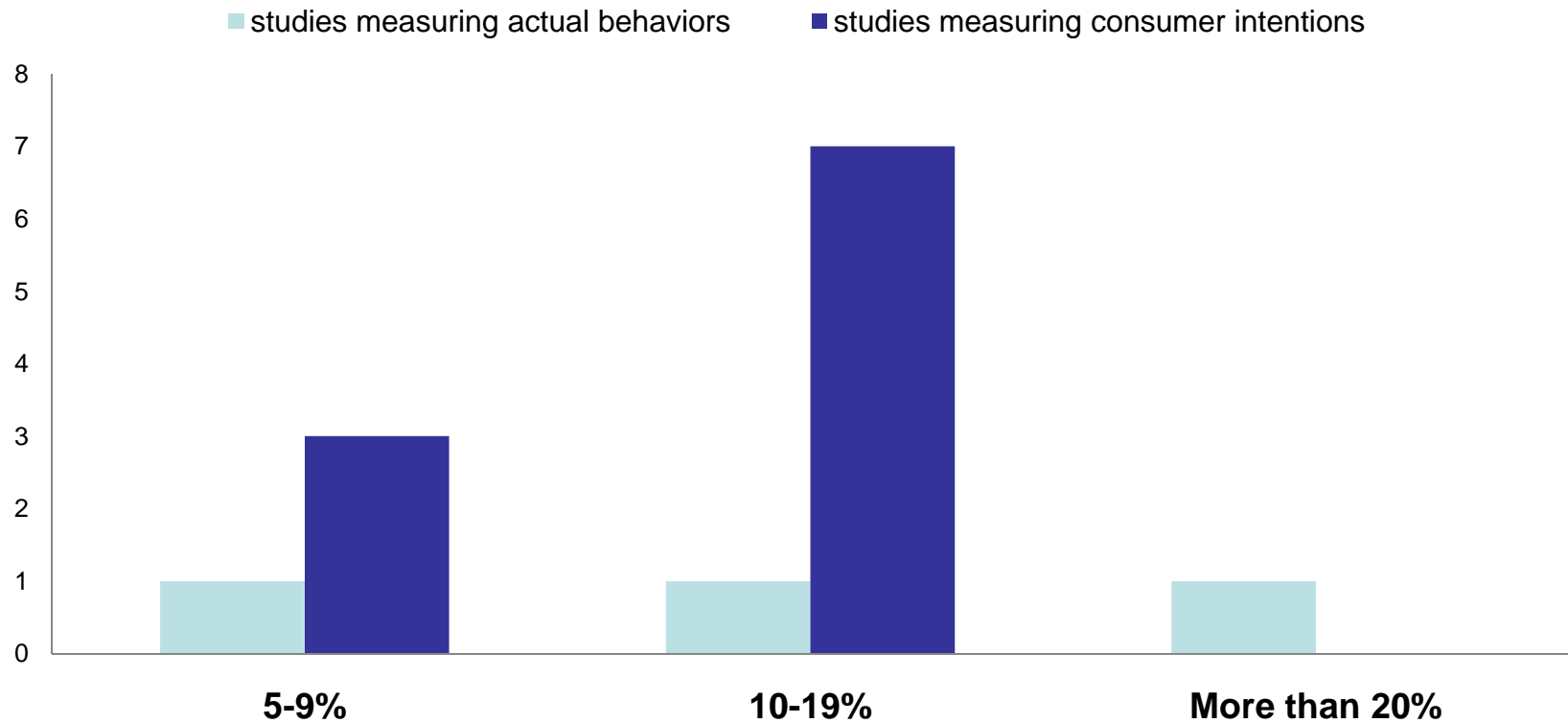
“[Some consumers] are willing to pay a premium for social attributes but will not sacrifice product functionality.”

(Auger *et al.* 2006; consistent with Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004)



Reward: Few studies find consumers pay premiums

Studies Showing Willingness to Pay as Percentage Increase

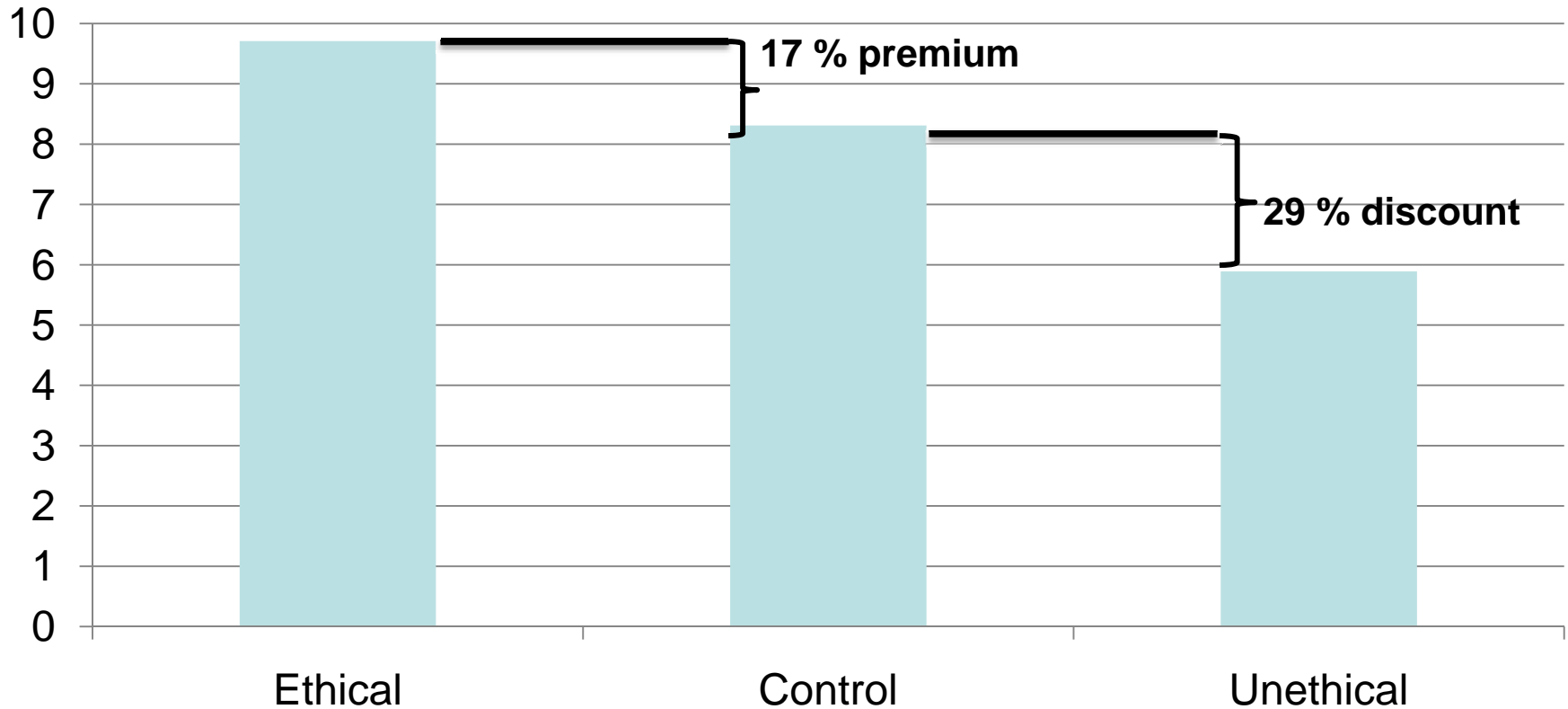


Note: based on a small set of the total studies that included specific increases (13/91).



Punishment: There may be a greater discount for 'unsustainability'

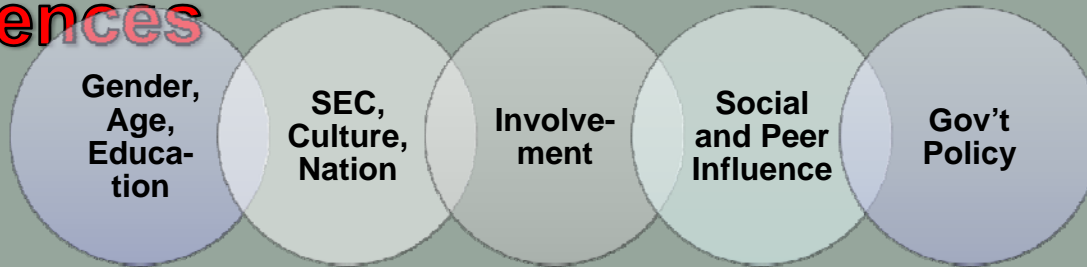
Willingness to Pay



Source: Trudel and Cotte, 2009, SMR



Influences



Firm CSR Actions

Consumer Attitudes towards CSR Actions

Consumer Behavioral Intentions

Willingness to Change Behavior

Willingness to Pay a Premium

Willingness to Punish

Impediments:

- Contradictory firm actions
- Prior negative consumer knowledge or attitude re: firm

Enhancements:

- Consumer knowledge of action
- Consumer understanding
- Prior positive consumer attitude re: firm
- Company / issue fit

Impediments:

- Negative consumer attributions (why? greenwashing)
- Effect on perceived quality
- Negative perceptions of consumer efficacy
- Consumer sacrifice

Enhancements:

- Positive perceptions of consumer efficacy
- Acceptance of firm and consumer responsibility

Impediments:

- Competitive actions
- Confusion at POP
- Habit
- Misleading packaging
- Required trade-offs

Enhancements:

- Clear benefit
- Prior small commitment
- Consistency/fit with brand
- Salience of issue
- Simplified claims/labels
- In-store education

Enhancements and Impediments

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The screenshot shows the website's layout. At the top left, a dark header contains the text "RESEARCH NETWORK for BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY". Below this is a vertical navigation menu with expandable items: PEOPLE, KNOWLEDGE, OPPORTUNITIES, DIALOGUE, NEWS & EVENTS, and ABOUT THE NETWORK. To the right of the menu is a large banner image depicting a group of professionals in a meeting, with a wind turbine visible in the background. Below the banner is a search bar and a "GO" button. The main content area is titled "LATEST NEWS" and contains several news items with hyperlinks, such as "Free interdisciplinary student conference at Carleton University" and "Network Executive Director wins 'business school Oscar'". At the bottom, a dark footer contains a horizontal navigation menu with links for People, Knowledge, Opportunities, Dialogue, News & Events, and About the Network, along with "Contact" and "Home" links. Below the footer, a small copyright notice reads: "All information on this site is protected by Copyright © 1999-2007, Research Network for Business Sustainability".

Database of sustainable consumption research
coming this fall...

