Article

Shopping for Society? Consumers' Value Conflicts in Socially Responsible Consumption Affected by Retail Regulation

Jin-Myong Lee [1], Hyo-Jung Kim [2,*] and Jong-Youn Rha [2]

[1]   Department of Consumers' Life Information, Chungnam National University, 99 Daehak-ro, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon 34134, Korea; jmlee@cnu.ac.kr

[2]   Department of Consumer Science, Seoul National University, 1 Gwanak-ro, Gwanak-gu, Seoul 08826, Korea; jrha@snu.ac.kr

*   Correspondence: hyojungkim@snu.ac.kr; Tel.: +82-42-821-6847

Abstract: Consumers have a dual role as economic actors who purchase products and as citizens comprising society. Thus, consumers may experience conflict between pursuing personal values (i.e., low price and high quality) and social values (i.e., equity and common good). In addition, these choices can be affected by governmental regulation of retail markets. This study aimed to identify consumer perspectives toward socially responsible consumption (SRC) in the choice of grocery store format and to investigate actual store choice behavior across consumer groups with those different perspectives while considering the role of retail regulation. For this purpose, we conducted a Q methodological study in which 30 South Korean consumers rank-ordered 40 statements regarding SRC. After performing Q factor analysis using PQ-Method software, we classified four distinctive consumer groups: "ethical conformist", "market liberalist", "ambivalent bystander", and "internally conflicted". After investigating similarities and differences between these consumer groups, we found major criteria for understanding consumer perspectives to SRC such as the priority of values pursued, the experience of a value-action gap, and internal conflicts in the decision-making process.

Keywords: socially responsible consumption; value conflict; retail regulation; Q methodology; South Korea

---

1. Introduction

Socially responsible consumption (SRC) is a discrete, important, and emerging topic [1]. In many empirical studies, consumers have been reported to consider ethical and social aspects in their consumption choices [2–4]. Consumers often use their purchasing power to actively influence markets and society toward more ethical and positive social impacts, such as through boycotts or ethical consumption choices [5,6]. These studies suggest that the role of consumer can be extended from self-interested buyers to citizens comprising society.

Although the importance of consumers' social responsibility is increasingly being emphasized, there are still many difficulties preventing consumers from practicing SRC [7,8]. One is the conflict of incompatible values in consumer choice [9]. Since consumers have a dual role as economic actors who purchase products and as citizens comprising society, they may experience conflicts in values between the personal (i.e., pursuing low price and high quality) and the social (i.e., pursuing equity and common good) [10]. Conflicts between different values can be an obstacle to expanding SRC because they increase the complexity and difficulty of the decision-making process and threaten the stability of behavior [11].

Consumers' different perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors toward SRC must be investigated and analyzed before implementing relevant government policies or socially responsible corporate

marketing strategies. Several studies have dealt with consumer conflicts in SRC, but research exploring the different types of consumers responding to situations of value conflict is very limited. This study aimed to identify consumers' subjective perspectives to SRC in the choice of grocery store format and to investigate actual store choice behavior across consumer groups with those different perspectives. For this purpose, we used Q methodology, a way of revealing patterns and connections by identifying individuals with the same perspectives, categorizing different opinions, and uncovering insights into the construction of major social groupings [12,13]. By analyzing the characteristics and differences of consumer perspectives, we contribute to the understanding of consumer reaction to SRC and to develop retail policies targeted to each group to encourage the practice of SRC. As a specific research topic, we selected the South Korean government's regulation of large retailers, which was implemented to protect local markets and enhance the welfare of society.

This study differs significantly from existing studies in two aspects. First, prior studies on consumer reaction to SRC focused on identifying variables that affect attitudes and behaviors regarding SRC [14–16] or exploring the diversity of SRC motivations [17]. Some studies suggested that the complexity of consumer motivation for SRC should be considered [18], but studies investigating the intersubjectivity of consumers are very limited. This study examined the different perspectives of consumers to SRC and identified the main criteria for constructing consumers' perception framework through the lens of value conflict.

Second, most previous studies on SRC assume a situation in which consumers' freedom of choice is guaranteed. In many cases, however, SRC is affected and/or constrained by government policies, not just market principles; the impact of government regulation on the market is particularly significant in the retail industry. Consumer perceptions of market mechanisms and government roles can make a difference in consumer reactions to SRC [19]. Therefore, this study characterized the consumer perspectives to SRC as promoted by South Korean government regulation in the context of everyday grocery consumption.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Value Conflicts in Socially Responsible Consumption

Markets are composed of various stakeholders and multiple interests. In order for markets to develop in a sustainable direction, the expansion of market diversity and creation of sound economic ecosystems that reflect the needs of various stakeholders are very important. It is also necessary for multiple stakeholders to recognize the importance of sustainable development and behave responsibly, such that the role of individual consumers is being increasingly emphasized [20,21].

Webster [22] defined a socially responsible consumer as "a consumer who takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or who attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change". As the networking and solidarity of consumers is strengthened by the development of the Internet and various media, the power of consumers in the market is gradually increasing [23]. Consumers are learning that they can influence markets and society through everyday consumption and are holding themselves more accountable for the consequences of their consumption behavior [24,25].

Caruana and Chatzidakis [17] proposed a framework for SRC that divided the levels of consumers' social responsibility into micro, meso, macro, and super macro levels according to agents and motivations. In their framework, SRC at the micro level is largely practiced by consumers according to their motivation to maximize their personal utility or altruistic concerns. On the other hand, at the macro level, SRC is promoted institutionally by the government for social welfare and to manage relationships between stakeholders in the market. As such, SRC is a comprehensive concept that can be implemented in multi-level contexts by interrelated agents such as consumers, families, governments, and NGOs, and its significance is increasing for the sustainability of society as a whole [17].

In practicing SRC, however, consumers may experience a value conflict due to ideological tension as they are both buyers who consume private resources and citizens playing a larger role in society [26]. Carrington et al. [27,28] explained that consumers in ethical consumption pursue social values based on their inner ethics but suffer conflict due to another desire, selfishness, which causes inconsistency in the decision-making process. Shaw and Shiu [29] explained that consumers pursue ethical consumption both for their own satisfaction and for others, and thus they can experience psychological conflict when those interests collide. In addition, it has been shown that consumers experience conflicts of personal and social values in the context of sustainable food consumption [30], sustainable fashion consumption [31], and ethical consumption considering animal welfare [11,32].

In the context of SRC, value conflicts are generally regarded as negative. Many empirical studies have reported that value conflicts cause consumers to fall into a dilemma [33,34], suffer difficulties in decision-making [8], and experience reductions in satisfaction [35]. The value conflict is considered to be a factor that induces the gap between value and action by hindering the persistence and consistency of consumption choice [11,28,36,37]. On the other hand, Schacter et al. [38] suggested that the value conflict has a positive effect in that it can stimulate consumers to think more actively and make better alternative choices through the conflict adjustment process [39]. The effects of consumers' value conflicts on SRC have been presented in several studies, but little is known about consumer perspectives on the value conflict situation.

2.2. Growth of Large Retailers and Government Regulation

Retail is closely related to consumers' daily lives and therefore has a direct impact on the welfare of individual consumers and society. Retail has traditionally been a community-based enterprise mainly involving small-scale and/or self-employed businesses; thus, co-existence with local communities is strongly required [40]. However, large and centralized retailers around the world are increasingly dominating the market with economies of scale, eroding the market for existing small retailers such as traditional markets and "mom-and-pop" stores. Haltiwanger et al. [41] analyzed US data from 1975 until 2005 and reported that the entry of large retailers into a market reduced self-employment by 35%. The growth trend of large-scale retailing is deepening the problem of economic bipolarization and threatening the co-existence of local economies.

As the adverse impact of large retailers' growth on local markets has increased, regulatory policies for large retailers have been adopted in many OECD countries [42]. In general, those who support regulation of large retailers emphasize that the principle of co-existence and co-prosperity must be applied for the balanced development of society. Also, regulating market oligopolization is necessary to ensure non-discriminatory access by retailers upstream and downstream and to protect the survival of small-scale and/or self-employed businesses [43]. In contrast, those who oppose the regulation of large retailers pointed out that it limits consumers' freedom of choice and that it could lead to rising prices by hindering competition [44,45]. As such, there are clearly both positive and negative impacts of large retailers on markets and society; arguments for and against regulation of large retailers are quite valid.

In the case of South Korea, the number of hypermarkets (combinations of grocery and department stores) rapidly increased from 171 in the year 2000 to 515 in the year 2016. In particular, market concentration by major retail companies has intensified remarkably. The nation's top three retail giants (E-Mart, Homeplus, and Lotte-Mart) account for 78% of total stores and 87% of total retail sales [46]. Since 2010, the big three retailers have turned their eyes toward super-supermarkets (SSMs; supermarkets smaller than hypermarkets operated by major companies) and expanded their commercial spheres from suburbs to downtowns and from big cities to smaller cities. This has aroused social controversy as the entry of SSMs tends to cause the closure of many small local stores. According to the Korean Chain Store Association [46], for every SSM that opens, an average of 22 small stores have disappeared between 2000 and 2011.

To address these problems, central and local governments have elevated the level of regulation against large retailers' penetration of local markets. For example, laws newly revised in 2013 force large retailers to close for two Sundays per month and to limit late-hour business operations. Moreover, the government designated "Traditional Commercial Activity Protection Zones" within 500 m of traditional markets and regulated the opening of large retailers.

The regulation of large retailers directly influences consumers because they have to endure the resulting inconvenience and are forced to change their consumption behaviors. As previous studies noted [9,18,47], consumers may be conflicted about regulating large retailers because on the one hand this limits their access to lower priced and/or high quality goods, while on the other hand it enhances society by aiding the viability of small stores that might be unable to compete otherwise [48]. Because a considerable gap exists between market paradigms surrounding the debate on regulation of large retailers (e.g., equity versus efficiency, liberalism versus communitarianism), consumers' perceptions and attitudes to such regulation could be diverse.

3. Methodology

Q methodology is an integrated research approach that synthesizes the advantages of quantitative and qualitative methods to clarify a subject's perspective about a phenomenon, interest, or concern [12]. It is an increasingly popular method for eliciting individual perspectives systematically and analyzing the overlap and differences between them using correlation analysis [49,50]. Q methodology can uncover perspectives or positions in a debate without imposing predefined categories; thus it is often used to structure so-called wicked problems, i.e., problems that are characterized by much uncertainty [51]. Thus, Q-methodology is a useful method to determine and convert subjective human perceptions into an objective outcome [49].

The first step in the process is conducting an extensive literature review. From a collection of statements, called "the concourse", a Q-set is selected that still represents the full diversity of viewpoints, claims, and ideas but is a manageable number of statements for a participant to sort. The Q-set is then administered to participants who rank-order the statements in a forced quasi-normal distribution from least agreement to most agreement; this process is called the Q-sort. The data collected from the Q-sort is then analyzed using by-person factor analysis in a statistical program. The five steps of Q-methodology as implemented in this study are shown in Figure 1.
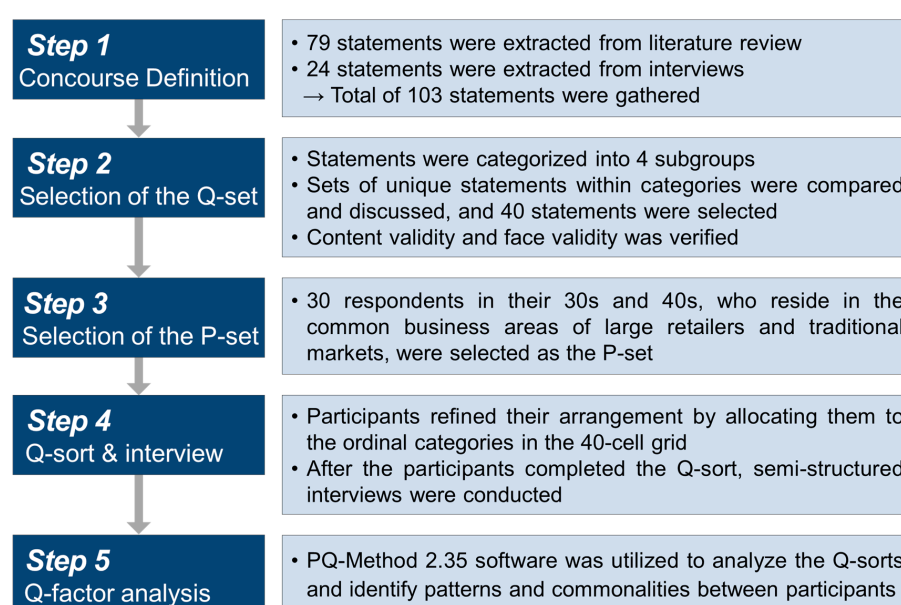
Step 1 Concourse Definition	• 79 statements were extracted from literature review • 24 statements were extracted from interviews → Total of 103 statements were gathered
Step 2 Selection of the Q-set	• Statements were categorized into 4 subgroups • Sets of unique statements within categories were compared and discussed, and 40 statements were selected • Content validity and face validity was verified
Step 3 Selection of the P-set	• 30 respondents in their 30s and 40s, who reside in the common business areas of large retailers and traditional markets, were selected as the P-set
Step 4 Q-sort & interview	• Participants refined their arrangement by allocating them to the ordinal categories in the 40-cell grid • After the participants completed the Q-sort, semi-structured interviews were conducted
Step 5 Q-factor analysis	• PQ-Method 2.35 software was utilized to analyze the Q-sorts and identify patterns and commonalities between participants

Figure 1. The Q methodology process used in this study.

3.1. Concourse Development

The concourse should be both diverse and comprehensive in order to capture the complete range of perspectives that different groups of stakeholders might have [12]. We conducted both a literature review and personal interviews in order to reflect the wide range of participants' opinions and thoughts on SRC as promoted by large retailer regulations. First, we extracted 79 statements from various sources including academic research, business reports, newspaper articles, position papers, expert columns, and web documents. Second, we selected 24 statements from semi-structured interviews with four individual consumers who were deeply interested in this issue. Through this process, a total of 103 statements were gathered.

3.2. Setting Up the Q-Set

In general, a smaller number of statements (between 30 and 64) is deemed to be an appropriate amount that respondents can cope with [49]. After excluding duplicated or similar statements, we categorized the remaining 87 statements into the following subgroups: positive and negative attitude, personal and social value orientation, conflict experience, and involvement. We then identified unique statements within these categories and compared and discussed the six categorizations and sets of unique statements and continued this process iteratively until 40 statements remained. Finally, we conducted a content validity test with three consumer experts along with another validity test with two general consumers.

3.3. Selection of the P-Set

The P-set consists of respondents who actually participated in the Q-sorting. Typical Q methodology studies range from 20 to 45 respondents, a sample size that is expected to reflect the broadest possible range of knowledge, interests, and values; in short, perspectives [52]. In this study, we selected 30 South Koreans, in their 30s and 40s, who resided in the common business areas of hypermarkets, SSMs, traditional markets, and "mom-and-pop" stores as the P-set through purposive sampling.

3.4. Q-Sort

A pack of 40 cards (each containing an individual statement), the Q-sort grid, and an instruction sheet were given to respondents. Each respondent read every individual statement and then sorted these into three preliminary piles: "agree", "disagree" and "neutral or unsure" [12]. From these initial sorts, the participant refined their arrangement by allocating them to the ordinal categories in the 40-cell grid according to the extent to which each reflected his/her own experience (see Figure 2). After the P-set completed the Q-sort they filled out demographic information and underwent a semi-structured interview to ensure the accuracy and understanding of their participation. The Q-sorts were conducted in September 2015 and typically lasted 30–50 min per respondent.
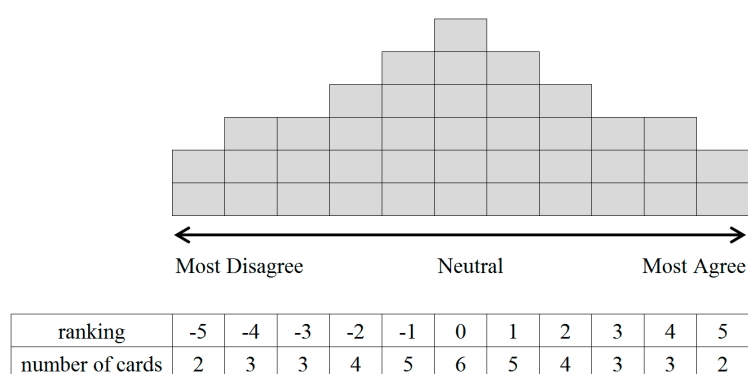

ranking	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
number of cards	2	3	3	4	5	6	5	4	3	3	2

Figure 2. Q-sort distribution.

3.5. Q Factor Analysis

We conducted the statistical analysis using PQ-Method 2.35 software [53]. First, the software calculated a correlation matrix of all 30 sorts representing the level of similarity of the perceptions of individual respondents. A principle component analysis and varimax rotation was then executed to rearrange the data by identifying and ordering components and ranking them according to the amount of variance that they explained within the original data. Q methodology inverts factor analysis by grouping participants' Q-sorts, thereby indicating underlying shared perspectives [12].

4. Results

Following the iteration process, we selected a 4-factor solution as the best representation; this solution cumulatively explained 60% of the total variance within the data. The eigen-values for each of these four factors were 8.084, 6.001, 2.101, and 1.913, respectively. Table 1 shows which respondents define and thus share a perspective. Nine respondents were highly loaded on factor 1, 11 on factor 2, four on factor 3, and five on factor 4, meaning that people can be classified into four different groups based on their perspective on the regulation of large retailers. One respondent loaded on two different factors (known as a "confounder"); as is standard practice in Q-studies, this sort was excluded from the construction of the factors' viewpoints [52].

Table 1. Results of Q-factor analysis.

	ID	Factor Loading				Gender	Age	Income (Million Won)
		1	2	3	4			
Group 1 (*n* = 9)	13	0.8007X [1]	−0.1244	0.1937	−0.0053	F	31	350
	27	0.7703X	−0.2225	0.1134	0.0162	F	35	370
	14	0.7352X	−0.4380	0.2125	−0.1607	F	33	450
	30	0.7046X	0.0972	−0.2904	0.2579	M	35	180
	25	0.6932X	−0.1099	0.0336	−0.0978	M	38	200
	19	0.6888X	−0.5670	−0.0366	−0.0052	M	41	420
	5	0.6823X	−0.2189	0.2207	0.0116	M	39	700
	9	0.6324X	−0.3180	0.3981	−0.1929	F	31	350
	16	0.5361X	0.1867	0.1423	0.3691	F	34	350
Group 2 (*n* = 11)	7	−0.1042	0.7467X	0.1760	0.0874	M	36	500
	22	−0.1129	0.7395X	0.2745	0.0214	M	40	650
	17	0.1830	0.7324X	−0.0272	0.2546	F	33	250
	23	−0.4572	0.6959X	−0.0126	0.2114	M	33	300
	3	−0.0322	0.6941X	0.0071	0.0912	M	37	450
	24	−0.5470	0.6623X	0.0958	0.0356	M	37	400
	21	−0.3993	0.6331X	−0.0797	0.0255	M	37	700
	12	0.1203	0.5881X	0.2451	0.0390	F	31	280
	20	0.3599	0.5740X	−0.0579	0.3387	F	34	430
	10	−0.0316	0.5530X	−0.1122	0.1239	F	34	300
	15	0.1829	0.4120X	0.2252	0.0152	F	33	500
Group 3 (*n* = 4)	11	0.2154	−0.0301	0.7989X	0.2503	F	32	600
	29	0.1242	0.4047	0.7457X	0.1406	F	30	150
	18	0.3496	0.0436	0.6821X	0.1954	F	34	200
	6	0.4660	−0.0101	0.6506X	0.0645	M	35	300
Group 4 (*n* = 5)	8	−0.0642	−0.1203	0.3182	0.7730X	M	43	450
	28	0.0075	0.3884	0.0447	0.6609X	F	33	300
	26	0.3137	0.2289	−0.1505	0.6573X	M	37	450
	2	−0.2112	0.1512	0.1604	0.6492X	F	36	300
	1	−0.0046	0.0974	0.1523	0.5677X	M	39	220
Confounded (*n* = 1)	4	−0.1597	0.4512	0.4739	0.3542	M	40	450
Eigen values		8.084	6.001	2.101	1.913			
Explained variance		20%	20%	10%	10%			

[1] X = significant sort.

Factor sort values for each statement are listed in Table 2, which represents the Z score values that have been translated back to their original scale; this gives a snapshot of the voice of each group [54].

Table 2. Complete list of statements and factor sort values.

No.	Q Statements	Factor Scores			
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**
1	I am positive about the regulation of large retailers because it protects small stores and local markets.	5	−2	1	−4
2	I am positive about the regulation of large retailers because it guarantees workers' right to rest.	3	0	0	−5
3	I am negative about the regulation of large retailers because it encroaches upon consumers' right of choice.	−3	3	−3	0
4	I am negative about the regulation of large retailers because it makes consumers' lives more inconvenient.	−2	4	−1	0
5	Consumers should understand the social value of co-existence and shared growth pursued by regulation of large retailers.	2	−2	0	−3
6	Consumers should consider the sustainable development of society in everyday consumption.	1	−1	−2	0
7	The choice of retail stores is entirely free for individual consumers.	1	5	5	5
8	Maximizing utility in a given budget is the ultimate goal of consumption.	1	2	4	3
9	In fact, I don't care much for the regulation of large retailers.	−2	−1	3	3
10	Since the implementation of large retailer regulations, I feel uncomfortable shopping in large retailers.	0	−4	−4	−1
11	Although I generally agree with the need to regulate large retailers, I don't want to shop in traditional markets or "mom-and-pop" stores.	−1	0	−5	−1
12	I am positive about the regulation of large retailers because it prevents the tyrannies of large corporations.	5	−4	3	0
13	I am positive about the regulation of large retailers because it prevents wastes of energy.	0	−4	1	0
14	I am negative about the regulation of large retailers because it results in price increases.	−3	1	−2	−1
15	I am negative about the regulation of large retailers because it reduces local employment.	0	1	−1	−2
16	As members of the local community, consumers should accept some inconvenience from the regulation of large retailers.	2	0	−1	−2
17	On the days of the mandatory closures of large retailers, it is desirable to shop in traditional markets or "mom-and-pop" stores.	3	−3	1	2
18	In a capitalist society, it is inevitable that a decline in traditional markets and "mom-and-pop" stores results from competition in the market.	−2	2	0	−2
19	Even if the regulation of large retailers is actually effective, it is unfair for consumers to make sacrifices for this.	−2	4	4	5
20	Although I generally agree with the need to regulate large retailers, I can't stand any inconvenience caused by such regulation.	0	2	5	4
21	When purchasing a few items, I feel conflicts regarding whether I shop in a large retailer or a small local store.	0	−3	−4	4
22	I am positive about the regulation of large retailers because a fair competition between large retailers and small local stores is virtually impossible.	4	−1	1	0
23	The regulation of large retailers is a necessary policy for a better society.	4	−1	2	1
24	I am negative about the regulation of large retailers because it goes against market trends.	−5	3	0	−4
25	I am negative about the regulation of large retailers because it is excessive government market intervention.	−3	4	0	−3
26	The regulation of large retailers does not have any influences on me.	−1	−5	2	1
27	The regulation of large retailers is meaningful for consumers to practice their social responsibilities.	2	−2	2	0
28	Even if the growth of large retailers has a negative impact on society, it is reasonable to shop in large retailers if prices or services are better than small local stores.	1	5	4	4
29	Even if I am willing to shop in small local stores instead of large retailers, it is difficult to put it into practice.	0	0	−3	3
30	I oppose the regulation of large retailers, but I'm reluctant to say that to other people.	−4	−1	−5	2
31	Regulatory policies for large retailers will be beneficial to consumers in the long run.	4	−2	0	−2
32	The regulation of large retailers is a good policy.	3	−3	1	−4
33	The regulation of large retailers will become an obstacle to strengthening competitiveness of small local stores.	−4	1	−2	2

Table 2. *Cont.*

No.	Q Statements	Factor Scores			
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**
34	Even if constrained by law, large retailers will continue to penetrate local markets.	−4	2	−2	−1
35	Beyond pursuing personal satisfaction, consumers have a responsibility to consider the impact of their consumption behavior on society.	2	1	−1	2
36	If large retailers offer products and services desired by consumers, they should be commended rather than regulated.	−1	3	2	1
37	Since the implementation of large retailer regulations, I find it more difficult to choose a retail store.	−1	0	−4	−1
38	The regulation of large retailers should be strengthened further.	1	−5	−1	−5
39	The regulation of large retailers should be completely abolished.	−5	0	−3	−3
40	I don't want to associate the survival of small store owners with my consumption life.	−1	1	3	1

4.1. Factor Description

4.1.1. Group 1: Ethical Conformist—"We Should All Live Together"

Nine participants (Group 1) recognized the positive impact of large retailer regulations on society and voluntarily accepted them; thus they were classified as "ethical conformist". They agreed that regulation protects local markets and small store owners (statement 1), and prevents the tyranny of large corporations (12). They also evaluated this regulatory policy as being beneficial to consumers in the long run (31) and strongly opposed the abolition of large retailer regulation (39). Further, they argued that government regulation is inevitable because fair competition between large retailers and small local stores is virtually impossible (22). The ethical conformists perceived inconveniences due to regulation to be relatively low compared to other groups and believed that seeking equity among members of society is a trend of modern capitalism. Some relevant quotes (translated and lightly edited) from the interviews reflecting these perspectives include:

"It's only two days a month! Anyone who wants to shop in a large store can go for the remaining 28 days. There is actually not much inconvenience." (ID #13)

"I think regulation of large retailers is in line with current trends. The past was an achievement-oriented era, but now the value of relationships, harmony, and co-prosperity is much more important. So, I think it is desirable for capitalism to actively intervene and to promote the balanced development of society." (ID #19)

"In the long run, if traditional markets are encouraged, they will be a good place to host local festivals or to introduce local culture." (ID #30)

In summary, the ethical conformists pursued social values on the basis of communitarian ideology and therefore viewed the practice of SRC most positively, even though this was enforced by regulation.

4.1.2. Group 2: Market Liberalist—"Let the Wallet Work for Itself"

Eleven participants (Group 2) regarded free competition and maximization of efficiency as basic principles of capitalist market. Thus, they were classified as "market liberalist". They argued that the regulation of large retailers reduces the convenience and the welfare of consumers by the invasion of consumers' right to choose (3, 7), and they responded more sensitively to personal inconvenience than to the negative impact of large retailers on society (28). They also showed a negative attitude toward governmental intervention in the market (25). In interviews, the market liberalists believed that the retail industry could evolve through free competition and that consumers could benefit and be satisfied in this process. They also felt that it was unfair for the government to impose sanctions on other

stakeholders to protect certain stakeholders in society and responded negatively to the immediate infringement of freedom of choice due to large retailer regulations.

> "It is a pity that the powerless are lagging behind. However, I think that small stores should try their best to provide better products and services to survive the competition." (ID #3)

> "Does it make sense that the government prevents me from shopping at the time and place I want in a liberal state? I am upset when a hypermarket is closed because of regulations, particularly on the weekend." (ID #21)

> "I think it is not a good idea to restrict the shopping behavior of general consumers to protect a certain group. This compulsive approach will reduce the benefits for consumers." (ID #20)

In summary, the market liberalists pursued personal values on the basis of individualistic ideologies and denied the need for SRC, including large retailer regulation.

4.1.3. Group 3: Ambivalent Bystander—"It's a Good Policy in Principle, But Not for Me"

Four participants (Group 3) agreed with the social responsibilities of consumers and the need to regulate large retailers, but their responses were generally contradictory and less concerned. Thus, they were classified as "ambivalent bystander." Their overall attitude toward SRC was positive, as they agreed that regulation of large retailers prevents the tyrannies of large corporations (12) and opposed the abolition of such regulation (39). At the same time, however, they hated to suffer any inconvenience due to regulation (20) and they did not want to take the survival of small store owners into consideration when making purchase decisions (40). They paid little attention to the government's intention to promote SRC and were least affected by such regulation (26). The ambivalent bystanders emphasized responsibility as a social citizen when evaluating policy, but pursued efficiency and convenience as purchasers in actual shopping behavior. Discrepancies in their beliefs and behaviors and low involvement in this topic were revealed in the interviews:

> "I understand the necessity of regulating large retailers and agree that it is an inevitable policy. But I don't think this is an important issue for which to change my shopping habits." (ID #6)

> "I am in favor of this regulation. The state has an obligation to protect the underprivileged. Even so, if a large retailer is cheap and convenient to use, I will just continue to use them." (ID #29)

In summary, the ambivalent bystanders pursued both personal values and social values ambivalently, but they evaluated it only from a third-party perspective.

4.1.4. Group 4: Internally Conflicted—"Seems Like I'm Doing Something Wrong..."

Lastly, 5 participants (Group 4) experienced conflict between the sense of moral obligation to practice SRC and the inconvenience of reality due to regulation. Thus, they were classified as "internally conflicted." When making simple purchases they experienced conflict about whether to shop in a large retailer or a small local store (21). Although they opposed the regulation of large retailers, they were reluctant to say that to others (30). They intended to shop in small local stores but were reluctant to do so in practice (29). In the interviews, one participant in this group philosophically opposed the regulation of large retailers but practiced compliance with government policy because of his governmental position. Another participant felt guilty for gaining benefits through the use of large retailers and described himself as selfish.

"Of course, I don't want anyone to restrict my shopping behavior. But I cannot say that I oppose the government policy, which was implemented for good purposes, especially in my position as a public official." (ID #2)

"To be honest, I oppose this policy because it makes me conflicted with regard to everyday grocery purchases. I feel bad when I shop at a hypermarket because I seem to be a selfish person" (ID #28)

In summary, the internally conflicted experienced conflict between personal and social values because they regarded SRC as a kind of duty.

4.2. Similarities and Differences Between Perspectives

We calculated the correlation between factor scores using the PQ-Method software for an in-depth understanding of the relevance of the four different consumer perspectives. Table 3 shows the correlation matrix of the four factors.

Table 3. Correlations between factor scores for consumer perspectives.

	Factor 1	**Factor 2**	**Factor 3**	**Factor 4**
Factor 1	1			
Factor 2	−0.374	1		
Factor 3	0.401	0.193	1	
Factor 4	0.006	0.352	0.366	1

The correlations show that factor 1 (ethical conformist) and factor 3 (ambivalent bystander) are most alike (r = 0.401). Both groups positively assessed large retailer regulations (27, 23, 32), and considered using small local stores as desirable consumer behavior (17). However, ethical conformists put social values above personal values and accepted the inconveniences that can be caused by regulations, while ambivalent bystanders did not agree to sacrifice themselves for social values (19, 20). While ethical conformists had a consistent attitude regarding SRC, ambivalent bystanders had a value-action gap in the decision-making process.

Factor 3 (ambivalent bystander) was also correlated with factor 4 (internally conflicted) (r = 0.366). The two groups were less interested in SRC or regulatory issues than the other two groups, and opposed the abolition of regulations (20, 39). While the ambivalent bystander had a positive attitude toward SRC that was forced by regulation, the internally conflicted had a negative attitude (1, 2, 32). The ambivalent bystanders experienced the least conflict among the four groups, while the internally conflicted experienced the biggest conflict (21, 29, 30). This suggests that one criterion distinguishing the two groups is whether they experience internal confusion or difficulty in situations where different values conflict.

Also, factor 2 (market liberalist) and factor 4 (internally conflicted) shared a similar viewpoint (r = 0.352). Both groups opposed arguments that consumers should consider social sustainability in their consumption life (5, 6). While market liberalists felt that regulation of large retailers unfairly controls the market and that it is inevitable that small stores will be harmed by competition, the internally conflicted opposed these comments (18, 24, 25). These results show that consumers who are preferentially pursuing their own benefits and convenience in consumption can be classified into different subgroups depending on whether they consider social responsibility as a citizen.

4.3. Store Choice Behavior Across Different Consumer Groups

To investigate the relationship between consumers' perspectives on economic SRC and actual behavior, we considered shopping in retail store formats for the period of a month. Table 4 shows the store choice behavior across the four previously-defined consumer groups as defined by the

frequency of purchases and the average purchase amount. The ethical conformist, who pursues relatively strong social values, actually shopped a lot in traditional markets and "mom-and-pop" stores. On the other hand, the market liberalist, who pursues relatively strong personal values, was a multi-faceted consumer who shopped at a variety of store formats including hypermarkets, SSMs, franchise convenience stores operated by large corporations, and e-commerce. The ambivalent bystander frequently purchased at convenience stores and "mom-and-pop" stores. The internally conflicted shopped at hypermarkets intensively and had the lowest purchase amount among all groups.

Table 4. Store choice behaviors across different consumer groups.

Operated by	Store Format	Group 1: Ethical Conformist		Group 2: Market Liberalist		Group 3: Ambivalent Bystander		Group 4: Internally Conflicted	
		pf [1]	pa [2]	pf	pa	pf	pa	pf	pa
large corporations	hypermarket	2.3	18.9	4.1	43.7	2.0	17.0	4.8	46.1
	SSM	1.4	3.4	4.5	10.4	0.8	1.5	3.4	4.1
	convenience store	4.0	3.2	16.8	9.5	12.0	5.7	9.0	3.6
self-employed	traditional market	5.4	21.0	0.8	0.6	4.5	13.5	0.0	0.0
	"mom-and-pop" store	9.6	23.9	3.2	3.0	12.0	30.0	7.0	5.6
others	online and mobile	2.8	13.1	6.3	23.0	4.0	15.0	2.4	4.8
	Total		83.4		90.1		82.7		64.2

[1] pf = purchase frequency per month, [2] pa = purchase amount per month (in million won).

5. Discussion and Implications

The current success and future direction of regulatory policies intended to promote SRC eventually depends on consumers' adaptability. Therefore, understanding consumers' perception of market ideology and attitudes toward such regulation is very important [55]. In this study, we tried to shed light on consumers' perspectives toward SRC forced by government regulation and discover the reasons behind those perspectives.

The statistical results of Q methodology indicate that consumers can be categorized into four groups according to their perspective regarding SRC: ethical conformist (Group 1), market liberalist (Group 2), ambivalent bystander (Group 3), and internally conflicted (Group 4). The ethical conformists pursued social values in consumption based on collectivist ideology and actually used small local stores even when forced by regulation. The market liberalists pursued personal values based on individualistic ideology and did not acknowledge consumers' social responsibility. They shopped at a variety of retail formats including online shopping and mobile shopping to maximize personal benefits. The ambivalent bystanders pursued both personal and social values, but there was a discrepancy between their stated values and actual behavior. The internally conflicted appeared to waver without a clear position due to the clash of personal and social values in SRC. As they shopped at hypermarkets intensively, it is predictable that conflicts tended to arise between moral obligation and actual behavior.

Our results in this study contribute to the ongoing academic discussion of this topic. Qu et al. [13] presented consumer groups that recognize sustainable consumption as sustainable consumers, potential sustainable consumers, and unsustainable consumers. This study revealed that consumer perspective on SRC as forced by government regulation (rather than adopted by free choice) is quite complicated and diverse. In addition, three of the groups in our study, excluding market liberalists, perceived the dual role of consumers and citizens, confirming that South Korean consumers' attitudes toward social responsibility are largely based on a collectivist culture [23,26]. As a result of comparing the overlap and differences between consumer perspectives, we found major criteria for understanding consumer perspectives to SRC, such as priority of value pursued, the experience of the value-action gap,

and internal conflicts in the decision-making process. These results can be useful for understanding consumers' value frames regarding social responsibility.

Our findings show that consumers can experience internal conflict if the social values promoted by retail regulation conflict with consumers' personal values. In particular, the internally conflicted experienced confusion and difficulty in choosing a retail store under the current regulations. If social responsibility that contradicts personal values is enforced continuously, the values of individuals can be underestimated, and their satisfaction and welfare can be reduced. With the ongoing development of Internet and communications technology and globalization, consumers can experience more diverse and complex consumption values and new conflicts of values related to this may develop. Therefore, we should continuously examine what types of value conflicts are being experienced by consumers and search for solutions to relieve and solve these conflicts.

Our findings have practical implications for policymakers and retailers aiming at sound market development. First, our findings suggest that consumers' perspectives on SRC need to be more precisely predicted when designing policies. The direct goal of recent regulatory moves by the South Korean government was to increase the sales of traditional markets and "mom-and-pop" stores. In this study, however, many consumers agreed with the intentions of large retailer regulation but showed a negative attitude toward its effectiveness. In recent surveys, sales at large retailers have decreased due to regulations, but sales at small local stores have not changed. Rather, the e-commerce and m-commerce market grew rapidly due to the balloon effect [56]. Emphasizing "goodness" alone cannot change consumers. Without micro-level behavioral changes, the effect of regulatory efforts cannot be sustainable or stable. Thus, when establishing retail policies, it is necessary to communicate with consumers regarding the significances of the policies and create consensus and to evaluate considerations regarding the actual interests of consumers as a major stakeholder in the market.

Second, several obstacles have been revealed that hinder the expansion of SRC. Even if consumers recognize that SRC is worthwhile, it is difficult for them to practice it in everyday consumption [21]. For example, the ambivalent bystanders believed that the economic sustainability of society is important, but these values did not affect their actual behavior. The market liberalists regarded free competition as the fundamental principle of capitalism and considered the intervention of the government itself to be inappropriate. Such passive attitudes, low interest, and extreme views of market principles may hamper the expansion of SRC practices. Thus, policymakers and business practitioners should prioritize efforts to address these obstacles.

Third, Miller et al. [57] suggested that SRC can be actively practiced when it is supported by individuals' self-efficacy. Furthermore, social support can have positive effect on increasing SRC by enhancing the confidence of consumers [21]. This implies that voluntary SRC practices of consumers can be more effective in enhancing economic sustainability than regulatory forcing. This argument is supported by the consumer groups in this study that pursued social values but opposed regulation. Therefore, government and businesses should create a market environment in which both personal values and social values are achieved through SRC by providing educational programs to support SRC and continuously publicizing the positive effects of SRC to consumers.

Fourth, all four groups agreed that the choice of retail stores should be entirely free to consumers. This suggests that even if SRC is required, the basic right of consumers should be considered.

Also noteworthy is that enhancing economic sustainability through co-existence and cooperation is an important principle of modern capitalism globally [58]. Therefore, large retailers should remember that excessive penetration into local markets forces consumers into value dilemmas and threatens the soundness of the market. As individuals have dual roles as consumers and citizens, large retailers need to consider the welfare of consumers and small local store owners who are vulnerable to competition as responsible social members. We hope that this study helps raise more awareness of this issue.

In the long term, this study can serve as a starting point for understanding consumers' value frameworks on government regulation, which acknowledges the necessity of achieving welfare of society. Several limitations of this study as an initial exploratory approach should also be considered.

First, although Q-methodology is a powerful tool for describing and understanding the subjective viewpoints of diverse consumers, the number of participants can be too small for broad generalizations and so the statistical reliability of results can be uncertain. In future studies, larger surveys covering a broader cross section of the population using a more quantitative approach would be useful for assessing and generalizing these findings. Second, the current study only focused on the economic and political (social) spheres of sustainability, so further research should consider environmental factors as well in order to achieve a more comprehensive view of sustainability. Third, it would also be interesting to analyze and compare differences in demographic and psychological characteristics between consumer groups, such as consumer satisfaction. In particular, a deeper and more qualitative approach to cross-loaded people could be a meaningful research direction. Fourth, such analyses should be extended temporally to observe changes in consumer attitudes and behavior with regard to SRC and related regulations.

Author Contributions: Jin-Myong Lee designed, collected, and analyzed the data; Hyo-Jung Kim conducted the interpretations of results; Jong-Youn Rha provided expertise in discussing the design proposals and conclusions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Luchs, M.G.; Miller, R.A. *Consumer Responsibility for Sustainable Consumption. Handbook of Research on Sustainable Consumption*; Edward Elgar Publishing: Northampton, MA, USA, 2015; pp. 254–266. ISBN 978 1-783-126-3.
2. Devinney, T.M.; Auger, P.; Eckhardt, G.; Birtchnell, T. *The Other CSR: Consumer Social Responsibility*; Leeds University Business School Working Paper; 2006; Volume 15, pp. 1–12. Available online: http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.901863 (accessed on 2 June 2017).
3. Pigors, M.; Rockenbach, B. Consumer social responsibility. *Manag. Sci.* **2016**, *62*, 3123–3137. [CrossRef]
4. Scourfield, P. Are there reasons to be worried about the 'caretelization' of residential care? *Crit. Soc. Policy* **2007**, *27*, 155–180. [CrossRef]
5. Brinkmann, J. Looking at consumer behavior in a moral perspective. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2004**, *51*, 129–141. [CrossRef]
6. Lu, D.; Liu, Y.; Zhang, H.; Lai, I.K. The ethical judgment and moral reaction to the product-harm crisis: Theoretical model and empirical research. *Sustainability* **2016**, *8*, 626. [CrossRef]
7. Bray, J.; Johns, N.; Kilburn, D. An exploratory study into the factors impeding ethical consumption. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2011**, *98*, 597–608. [CrossRef]
8. Carrigan, M.; Attalla, A. The myth of the ethical consumer–do ethics matter in purchase behaviour? *J. Consum. Mark.* **2001**, *18*, 560–578. [CrossRef]
9. Bingen, J.; Sage, J.; Sirieix, L. Consumer coping strategies: A study of consumers committed to eating local. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* **2011**, *35*, 410–419. [CrossRef]
10. Tienhaara, A.; Ahtiainen, H.; Pouta, E. Consumer and citizen roles and motives in the valuation of agricultural genetic resources in Finland. *Ecol. Econ.* **2015**, *114*, 1–10. [CrossRef]
11. Schröder, M.J.; McEachern, M.G. Consumer value conflicts surrounding ethical food purchase decisions: A focus on animal welfare. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* **2004**, *28*, 168–177. [CrossRef]
12. Brown, S.R. Q methodology and qualitative research. *Qual. Health Res.* **1996**, *6*, 561–567. [CrossRef]
13. Qu, W.G.; Yang, Z. The effect of uncertainty avoidance and social trust on supply chain collaboration. *J. Bus. Res.* **2015**, *68*, 911–918. [CrossRef]
14. Kang, J.; Liu, C.; Kim, S.H. Environmentally sustainable textile and apparel consumption: the role of consumer knowledge, perceived consumer effectiveness and perceived personal relevance. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* **2013**, *37*, 442–452. [CrossRef]
15. Kozar, J.M.; Hiller Connell, K.Y. Socially and environmentally responsible apparel consumption: Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. *Soc. Respon. J.* **2013**, *9*, 315–324. [CrossRef]

16.　Tully, S.M.; Winer, R.S. The role of the beneficiary in willingness to pay for socially responsible products: A meta-analysis. *J. Retail.* **2014**, *90*, 255–274. [CrossRef]

17.　Caruana, R.; Chatzidakis, A. Consumer social responsibility (CnSR): Toward a multi-level, multi-agent conceptualization of the "other CSR". *J. Bus. Ethics* **2014**, *121*, 577–592. [CrossRef]

18.　Moisander, J. Motivational complexity of green consumerism. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* **2007**, *31*, 404–409. [CrossRef]

19.　Atkinson, L. Locating the "politics" in political consumption: A conceptual map of four types of political consumer identities. *Int. J. Commun.* **2015**, *9*, 2047–2066.

20.　Hult, G.T.M. Market-focused sustainability: Market orientation plus! *J. Acad. Mark. Sci.* **2011**, *39*, 1–6. [CrossRef]

21.　Schlaile, M.P.; Klein, K.; Böck, W. From bounded morality to consumer social responsibility: A transdisciplinary approach to socially responsible consumption and its obstacles. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2016**, 1–28. [CrossRef]

22.　Webster, F.E. Determining the characteristics of the socially conscious consumer. *J. Consum. Res.* **1975**, *2*, 188–196. [CrossRef]

23.　Wesley, S.C.; Lee, M.Y.; Kim, E.Y. The role of perceived consumer effectiveness and motivational attitude on socially responsible purchasing behavior in South Korea. *J. Glob. Mark.* **2012**, *25*, 29–44. [CrossRef]

24.　Hoffmann, S.; Hutter, K. Carrotmob as a new form of ethical consumption. The nature of the concept and avenues for future research. *J. Consum. Policy* **2012**, *35*, 215–236. [CrossRef]

25.　Rezabakhsh, B.; Bornemann, D.; Hansen, U.; Schrader, U. Consumer power: A comparison of the old economy and the Internet economy. *J. Consum. Policy* **2006**, *29*, 3–36. [CrossRef]

26.　Johnston, J. The citizen-consumer hybrid: Ideological tensions and the case of Whole Foods Market. *Theory Soc.* **2008**, *37*, 229–270. [CrossRef]

27.　Carrington, M.J.; Neville, B.A.; Whitwell, G.J. Why ethical consumers don't walk their talk: Towards a framework for understanding the gap between the ethical purchase intentions and actual buying behaviour of ethically minded consumers. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2010**, *97*, 139–158. [CrossRef]

28.　Carrington, M.J.; Neville, B.A.; Whitwell, G.J. Lost in translation: Exploring the ethical consumer intention–behavior gap. *J. Bus. Res.* **2014**, *67*, 2759–2767. [CrossRef]

29.　Shaw, D.; Shiu, E. Ethics in consumer choice: A multivariate modelling approach. *Eur. J. Mark.* **2003**, *37*, 1485–1498. [CrossRef]

30.　Vermeir, I.; Verbeke, W. Sustainable food consumption: Exploring the consumer "attitude–behavioral intention" gap. *J. Agric. Environ. Ethics* **2006**, *19*, 169–194. [CrossRef]

31.　Lundblad, L.; Davies, I.A. The values and motivations behind sustainable fashion consumption. *J. Consum. Behav.* **2016**, *15*, 149–162. [CrossRef]

32.　De Bakker, E.; Dagevos, H. Reducing meat consumption in today's consumer society: Questioning the citizen-consumer gap. *J. Agric. Environ. Ethics* **2012**, *25*, 877–894. [CrossRef]

33.　Marks, L.J.; Mayo, M.A. An empirical test of a model of consumer ethical delimmas. *Adv. Consum. Res.* **1991**, *18*, 720–728.

34.　Culiberg, B.; Bajde, D. Do you need a receipt? Exploring consumer participation in consumption tax evasion as an ethical dilemma. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2014**, *124*, 271–282. [CrossRef]

35.　Gregory-Smith, D.; Smith, A.; Winklhofer, H. Emotions and dissonance in 'ethical' consumption choices. *J. Mark. Manag.* **2013**, *29*, 1201–1223. [CrossRef]

36.　Grimmer, L.; Miles, M.P.; Grimmer, M. The performance advantage of business planning for small and social retail enterprises in an economically disadvantaged region. *Eur. J. Int. Manag.* **2016**, *10*, 403–421. [CrossRef]

37.　Shaw, D.; McMaster, R.; Newholm, T. Care and commitment in ethical consumption: An exploration of the 'attitude–behaviour gap'. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2016**, *136*, 251–265. [CrossRef]

38.　Schachter, D.R.; Schwartz, D. The value of capstone projects to participating client agencies. *J. Public Aff. Educ.* **2009**, *15*, 445–461.

39.　Amason, A.C.; Schweiger, D.M. Resolving the paradox of conflict, strategic decision making, and organizational performance. *Int. J. Confl. Manag.* **1994**, *5*, 239–253. [CrossRef]

40.　Hu, Y.C.; Wang, C.C.F. Collectivism, corporate social responsibility, and resource advantages in retailing. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2009**, *86*, 1–13. [CrossRef]

41.　Haltiwanger, J.; Jarmin, R.; Krizan, C.J. Mom-and-pop meet big-box: Complements or substitutes? *J. Urban Econ.* **2010**, *67*, 116–134. [CrossRef]

42. Koske, I.; Wanner, I.; Bitetti, R.; Barbiero, O. The 2013 update of the OECD's database on product market regulation. *OECD Econ. Dep. Work. Pap.* **2015**, *1200*, 1–75. [CrossRef]

43. OECD. *Report on Regulatory Reform, Volume II, Thematic Studies*; OECD: Paris, France, 1997.

44. Boylaud, O.; Nicoletti, G. Regulatory reform in retail distribution. *OECD Econ. Stud.* **2001**, *2001*, 253–274. [CrossRef]

45. Kim, W.; Hallsworth, A.G. Tesco in Korea: Regulation and retail change. *Tijdschr. Econ. Soc. Geogr.* **2016**, *107*, 207–281. [CrossRef]

46. Korean Chainstores Association. *The Yearbook of Retail Industry*; Korean Chainstores Associations Press: Seoul, Korea, 2016.

47. Burroughs, J.E.; Rindfleisch, A. Materialism and well-being: A conflicting values perspective. *J. Consum. Res.* **2002**, *29*, 348–370. [CrossRef]

48. Whitman, J.Q. Consumerism versus producerism: A study in comparative law. *Yale Law J.* **2007**, *117*, 340–406. [CrossRef]

49. Hermans, F.; Kok, K.; Beers, P.J.; Veldkamp, T. Assessing Sustainability Perspectives in Rural Innovation Projects Using Q Methodology. *Sociol. Rural.* **2012**, *52*, 70–91. [CrossRef]

50. Kraak, V.I.; Swinburn, B.; Lawrence, M.; Harrison, P. AQ methodology study of stakeholders' views about accountability for promoting healthy food environments in England through the Responsibility Deal Food Network. *Food Policy* **2014**, *49*, 207–218. [CrossRef]

51. Nijnik, M.; Nijnik, A.; Bergsma, E.; Matthews, R. Heterogeneity of experts' opinion regarding opportunities and challenges of tackling deforestation in the tropics: A Q methodology application. *Mitig. Adapt. Strateg. Glob. Chang.* **2014**, *19*, 621–640. [CrossRef]

52. Cuppen, E.; Breukers, S.; Hisschemöller, M.; Bergsma, E. Q methodology to select participants for a stakeholder dialogue on energy options from biomass in the Netherlands. *Ecol. Econ.* **2010**, *69*, 579–591. [CrossRef]

53. Schmolck, P. PQMethod (Version 2.35). Computer Software, 2002. Available online: http://schmolck. userweb.mwn.de/qmethod (accessed on 15 August 2015).

54. Donner, J.C. Using Q-sorts in participatory processes: An introduction to the methodology. *Soc. Dev. Pap.* **2001**, *36*, 24–49.

55. Levy, A.S.; Fein, S.B.; Schucker, R.E. Performance characteristics of seven nutrition label formats. *J. Public Policy Mark.* **1996**, *15*, 1–15.

56. Chun, S.A. Good Intentions, Questionable results: A critical analysis of the shutdown of large retailers in South Korea. *Aust. J. Asian Law* **2015**, *16*, 1–20. Available online: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2627509 (accessed on 20 March 2016).

57. Miller, M.J.; Sendrowitz, K.; Connacher, C.; Blanco, S.; de La Pena, C.M.; Bernardi, S.; Morere, L. College students' social justice interest and commitment: A social-cognitive perspective. *J. Couns. Psychol.* **2009**, *56*, 495–507. [CrossRef]

58. Porter, M.E.; Kramer, M.R. The big idea: Creating shared value. *Harv. Bus. Rev.* **2016**, *89*, 1–12.