Understanding Hispanic Environmental Attitudes and Recycling Behaviors

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Understanding attitudes and behaviors of different cultural groups is important in a multicultural society like the US. Environmental issues have attracted the attention of researchers in the social sciences and marketing, and researchers have studied recycling issues in an effort at understanding how to impact recycling behavior. We tested (1) how past recycling behavior was impacted by concern for the environment, length of past recycling behaviors, and the inconvenience of recycling; (2) how perception of recycling effort was impacted by concern for the environment, importance of recycling, and inconvenience of recycling; and (3) how recycling behavior was impacted, length of past recycling, recycling effort, and non-availability of recycling bags. A majority of the hypotheses tested was supported; however, the importance of recycling was not a principal driver of recycling behavior. Concern for the environment was a partial driver of such efforts. The key drivers of recycling were convenience, effort, past experience, and availability of bags. This may suggest that the mechanical aspects of recycling are stronger than inherent values. Managerial and public policy implications are highlighted, along with limitations of the research that are presented in the conclusion section of the paper.

Keywords: Hispanic community, Recycling behaviors, Environmental attitudes

INTRODUCTION

Understanding attitudes and behaviors of different cultural groups is important in a multicultural society like the US. According to the US Census, in 2010, there were 50.5 million Hispanics in the United States, comprising 16 percent of the total population. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population grew by 43 percent -- rising from 35.3 million in 2000, when this group made up 13 percent of the total population. US society faces the challenges associated with receiving newcomers who represent a plurality of ethnic, linguistic, and racial groups (Glazer, 1997). An element of this plurality is the concern that different ethnic groups who migrate to this country may come from cultures in which certain pro-environment behaviors are not as common as they are in the US, especially since environmentalism has become an important part of American culture, and performing certain pro-environmental behaviors is a form of cultural praxis or ritual form of participation in civic life (McCarthy, 1996). This study attempts to understand the antecedents of Hispanic recycling behavior and to suggest strategic initiatives to influence recycling attitudes and behaviors among Hispanics. Environmental issues have attracted the attention of researchers in the social sciences and marketing (Berger, 1997; Shrum et al., 1994). Marketers have researched recycling issues in an effort at understanding how to increase consumer recycling behaviors (Biswas et al., 2000), and to understand consumer motivations underlying the purchase of environmentally friendly products and services (Bagozzi & Dabholkar, 1994). Interestingly, most of the research has been on Anglo consumers, with the result that our understanding of recycling attitudes and behaviors among other major ethnic groups like Hispanics is limited.

Understanding Recycling Behavior, Attitudes and Beliefs

One of the most widely used approaches to understanding pro-environmental behaviors has been to examine the attitude-behavior relationship. Psychological constructs such as attitude and beliefs are important and often researched because they