

REVIEW



Do consumers care about morality? A review and framework for understanding morality's marketplace influence

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Abstract

There are many ways consumers' morality has been shown to impact their marketplace behavior. We present a theoretical framework for how to conceive of and study marketplace morality in an attempt to unify these disparate findings. First, we describe two common conceptualizations of marketplace morality: (a) the attribute-level approach (where a product attribute fits within a category that is normatively considered moral) and (b) the person-level approach (where consumers differ in the extent to which they dispositionally value morality). We then introduce a third conceptualization: (c) the attitude-level approach (where consumers differ in the extent to which they see their relevant attitude as based in their morality). Through this approach, we demonstrate morality's predictive utility for consumers' marketplace behaviors and help explain why other research could have found mixed evidence for its influence. Moreover, we use this approach to illuminate four contexts in which consumers' morality is more likely to influence marketplace attitudes and thereby impact their behavior: when the consumer's attitude is emotional, value-relevant, identity-relevant, and/or conceived in a negative valence. We conclude with a discussion of some of the unique challenges to attitude moralization in the marketplace as well as implications for managers promoting morally positioned purchases.

KEYWORDS

attitudes and persuasion, ethics and morality

1 | INTRODUCTION

One of the most impactful ways for consumers to support their moral and ethical ideals is through their purchase behaviors (Moraes et al., 2011). Yet public polls and academic research reveal mixed evidence regarding the extent to which consumers' morality guides their marketplace decisions. In some cases, consumers seem to definitively purchase, spread word of mouth, and remain loyal to firms that are in accord with their own moral standards. In other cases, consumers' morality appears to have a more muted influence, only minimally affecting which products they purchase or use. Finally, there are also examples when consumers seem to neglect their moral beliefs entirely, making choices that appear to contradict their moral values.

This inconsistency of findings is surprising, because in other domains of consumers' lives such as in their social affiliation choices (Skitka et al., 2005) and their political decision-making (Skitka & Bauman, 2008), consumers' morals exert a strong and reliable influence over their behaviors. So, what are the circumstances in which morality is more or less likely to affect consumption choices? And how can marketing managers leverage this information in their own product or brand positioning?

The present review is centered on consumer morality (a.k.a., consumer ethicality). Although some work has defined morality as including a sense of *objective* correctness and universality of one's beliefs (Skitka et al., 2021; e.g., everyone believes that incest is immoral), at its core, most researchers agree that consumer morality refers to the

standards or beliefs that comprise what consumers *subjectively* perceive as “right” or “wrong” (Campbell & Winterich, 2018; Skitka et al., 2021). That is, individuals can disagree widely on what constitutes “right versus wrong,” in any given domain, but this subjectivity is inherent to morality’s definition (Skitka et al., 2021)—and part of the reason, we contend, for why consumer research has demonstrated mixed findings for its influence. In this review, we first identify research that displays the range of morality’s influence—some work showing that morality strongly impacts marketplace behavior, other work showing a moderate impact, and still other work showing little to no influence. We then introduce a framework for understanding the different approaches to studying consumer morality, showing how researchers’ disparate approaches to it have the potential to explain the previous inconsistencies in the literature. Finally, we show how the approach advocated in this review can be used to inform researchers and managers about when consumers’ morality is most likely to guide their consumption behaviors.

2 | CONSUMER MORALITY: HOW IMPACTFUL IS IT?

The notion that consumers’ morality will influence them to purchase from, be loyal to, and spread positive word of mouth about ethical companies (while doing the opposite for unethical ones) is supported by a variety of public opinion and financial metrics. For example, in 2019, consumers spent a total of 300 billion dollars on ethical products (Schwarz, 2019). In one recent poll, 46% of consumers expressed the intention to purchase from socially conscious brands (Conscious Consumer Spending Index, 2020), and in another survey about fashion trends, over 60% of consumers reported greater concern about the company’s labor and environmental practices than its products’ pricing and/or availability (Granskog et al., 2020). Consumers have also exhibited an inclination to punish companies that perpetuate unethical practices. Over one third of consumers have participated in at least one marketplace boycott (Holmes, 2005).

As noted earlier, however, there is also evidence that suggests relatively little influence of consumers’ morality. For example, one poll found that consumers reported caring more about a product’s price and quality than its ethicality (Morgan Stanley, 2016). Such findings are underscored by examples of high-profile ethical scandals that did not influence consumer behavior. For example, Volkswagen’s deception about their auto emissions tests (Boudette, 2017), the FIFA World Cup executives’ flagrant bribery and money laundering (Feinstein, 2015), and United Airlines’ decision to have a passenger dragged from a plane (Zumbach, 2018), all resulted in no long-term financial consequences for these organizations. Thus, these metrics and case studies suggest that the influence of consumers’ morality on their marketplace behaviors might, at times, be minimal.

Turning to peer-reviewed consumer research, evidence points to a similar range of morality’s influence. In support of morality’s impact, some research finds that participants report a greater willingness to pay for products that possess ethical benefits (Creyer, 1997;

Elfenbein & McManus, 2010; Laroche et al., 2001; Zhou et al., 2016). For example, consumers are willing to pay a premium for products that are labeled as organic, fair trade, and/or have recyclable packaging (Mai, 2014). Such effects also arise more broadly for brands with ethical reputations. For example, consumers are more loyal to brands that operate ethically (Singh et al., 2012). They are more likely to refrain from negative word of mouth against these firms after service failures (Vo et al., 2019), and they are more likely to evaluate their products favorably, even when the product’s ethicality is unrelated to performance (Chernev & Blair, 2015).

To complement morality’s positive marketplace influence, despite the anecdotes mentioned earlier, there is research showing that consumers sometimes “punish” companies who commit moral transgressions. For example, when a firm engages in unethical practices, consumers report a lower willingness to purchase their products (Miller & Sturdivant, 1977) and a greater willingness to spread negative word of mouth about them (Krishna & Kim, 2020). Similarly, ethical transgressions can lead consumers to boycott a firm’s products or services (Balabanis, 2013; Lim & Shim, 2019), protest the firm (Grappi et al., 2013), or even be willing to steal from the firm (Rotman et al., 2018). Notably, these punishing behaviors seem especially likely when consumers expect the company to be ethical (e.g., when a non-profit firm commits an ethical transgression; Hornsey et al., 2020).

However, in contrast to the aforementioned work, research has also found the opposite—that sometimes consumers care very little or not at all about a product’s or brand’s ethical attributes (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; for a review, see Devinney et al., 2010). For example, some studies showed that consumers who reported liking fair trade products (De Pelsmacker et al., 2005) or sustainability in fashion (McNeill & Moore, 2015; Young et al., 2009) were no more willing to purchase products with such attributes compared with consumers without this affinity (see also Mohr et al., 2001; Öberseder et al., 2011). Other work has found that consumers’ moral concerns vary in the extent to which they impact consumption (Chowdhury & Fernando, 2014; Gill, 2020). These examples suggest that although consumers often *express* caring about a product’s ethicality, those sentiments do not always translate into actual purchasing behaviors (Auger & Devinney, 2007; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; McGregor, 2006). Indeed, much research has tried to understand why consumers’ self-reported favorability toward ethical attributes so often fail to predict actual consumer behavior—labeled the “ethical intention-behavior gap” (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Carrington et al., 2010; Eckhardt et al., 2010; Hassan et al., 2016).

Beyond neglecting ethical information, consumers sometimes willfully ignore it (Ehrich & Irwin, 2005). For example, consumers sometimes ignore (or even endorse) the use of sweatshop labor the more they like a product (Paharia et al., 2013). Moreover, consumers are inclined to derogate other consumers who make ethical purchases when they themselves did not (Zane et al., 2016), and will even evaluate ethical products (e.g., environmentally-friendly products) as less effective than standard ones (Luchs et al., 2010). In sum, these findings show that although consumers might report positive attitudes

regarding moral marketplace behaviors, these moral considerations can have limited influence on choices.

In sum, it is unclear whether or to what extent consumers' morality influences their consumption behaviors—a stark contrast to the research on morality in other domains, where research largely shows a consistent and reliable behavioral influence (Skitka et al., 2021). So why might morality in the marketplace be different? Researchers have proposed several moderators to reconcile the disparate effects of morality's marketplace influence. For example, when consumers lack the control to consume ethically (e.g., because they cannot afford the ethical choice or because there is a dearth of ethical options in a choice set), they will not make the ethical purchase (Barbarossa & Pastore, 2015; Carrington et al., 2010; Carrington et al., 2016). Likewise, constraints from the environment or social context, such as local norms, can reduce ethical purchases if peers or admired others seem to neglect morality in their purchases (Carrington et al., 2016; Szmigin et al., 2009). Other research has suggested that consumers often engage in unethical consumption due to habitually making those consumption choices, despite the best of intentions (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). Although these extenuating factors are helpful in understanding the ethical intention-behavior gap, they are not specific to moral considerations but rather apply to behavior more globally (e.g., people's non-moral purchase behavior will also be influenced by the cost of goods and the social context). Moreover, these factors fail to consider how different approaches to studying morality could also contribute to the inconsistency of findings. Thus, to provide a more theoretical account for when morality is likely to be more or less influential in driving consumer behavior, we first turn to *how* morality has been studied in consumer behavior research.

3 | STUDYING THE IMPACT OF MARKETPLACE MORALITY

Across the literature on consumer morality, we contend that researchers have taken three overarching but distinct approaches and, furthermore, that the lack of a unified framework has contributed to the aforementioned mixed findings. First, we discuss the two approaches most common in consumer research: an *attribute-level* approach and a *person-level* approach to studying morality. For both, we outline the insights these have provided while also highlighting issues endemic to these treatments. Subsequently, we introduce a third way to conceptualize morality, an *attitude-level* approach, which we posit is an underutilized perspective that could help to resolve the conflicting findings in this literature. Moreover, we later show how this approach can be used to uniquely predict factors that moderate (i.e., increase or decrease) morality's marketplace influence. Importantly, though, previously identified moderators, such as perceived behavioral control, norms, goals, and habits (Ajzen & Kruglanski, 2019), could each further interact with any of these three approaches, and thus, the framework we advance is meant to complement, rather than supplant, past work in this area.

Throughout this review, we examine morality's influence on a variety of consumer behaviors. These include both behaviors beneficial to a firm, like increased purchasing or positive word of mouth, as well as behaviors harmful to a firm, such as boycotting or spreading negative word of mouth. Research from other domains has found that morality influences a variety of diverse behaviors (e.g., willingness to vote as well as engage in violence; Skitka et al., 2021). Thus, although consideration of how morality might differentially impact various types of behaviors is worthy of research, we focus on how a researcher's approach to studying morality—either at the attribute-, person-, or attitude-level—has plausibly contributed to the field's conflicting findings and can help explain when morality's influence on consumer behavior (broadly construed) is enhanced versus diminished. We next describe these three approaches (summarized in Table 1).

3.1 | The attribute-level approach

When studying morality, consumer researchers have often examined its impact at the attribute-level, where an attribute of the product, service, or brand fits within a category that is normatively considered moral (e.g., comparing reactions to a “green” vs. a “non-green” product where “green” is assumed to be a moral attribute; Peloza

TABLE 1 Definitions and examples of each of the three approaches to marketplace morality: attribute-level, person-level, and attitude-level

Approach to morality	Definition	Example
Attribute-level	Morality is based on whether the product possesses attributes that are normatively seen as moral.	A consumer purchases fair-trade coffee, which is deemed moral consumption because pre-testing has found that fair trade is generally seen as a moral attribute.
Person-level	Morality is based on whether the consumer tends to generally value ethicality.	A consumer purchases fair-trade coffee because a high value is placed on ethicality by the consumer and fair trade is seen as a moral attribute.
Attitude-level	Morality is based on whether the consumer sees the attitude toward the product or brand as stemming from moral considerations.	A consumer purchases fair-trade coffee because that person's positive attitude toward fair-trade coffee is perceived to be based on a sense of morality.

et al., 2013). Often, whether an attribute constitutes a “normatively moral category” is determined through pre-testing or the authors’ own intuitions. Common examples of such attributes include environmental sustainability (Bartels & Onwezen, 2014; Peloza et al., 2013), fair trade labor practices (De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Peloza et al., 2013; White et al., 2012), absence of animal cruelty (Cornish et al., 2020; Feinberg et al., 2019), product usage inclusivity (Patrick & Hollenbeck, 2021), organic farming (Juhl et al., 2017; Zander & Hamm, 2010), and local manufacturing (Sneddon et al., 2014), to name a few. Attributes such as these have likely come to be perceived as normatively moral attributes through cultural norms (Lafferty, 1996; Varul, 2009) or their perceived connection to reducing a social harm (Schein & Gray, 2018). Regardless, through this attribute-level approach, certain products or brands that highlight these attributes are considered a priori ethical. Thus, when a consumer purchases (or does not purchase) a product with one of these normatively moral attributes, it is concluded that morality influenced (or did not influence) the behavior.

Under this treatment of morality, research has found mixed evidence for morality’s impact. That is, whereas some work taking this attribute-level approach shows that consumers are more willing to pay for products that possess these ethical attributes (vs. products devoid of these qualities; McGoldrick & Freestone, 2008; Zander & Hamm, 2010), other work has found greater variance in the impact of ethical attributes on behavior (Mai, 2014)—and conflicting results have emerged even for the same attribute. For example, whereas some research shows that consumers are more willing to pay for products labeled fair-trade (Loureiro & Lotade, 2005; Yang et al., 2012), other work has found only a weak or non-existent impact of it on willingness to pay (Basu & Hicks, 2008; Rashid & Byun, 2018). Likewise, although some work has found positive effects of eco-friendly attributes on consumption behavior (Carley & Yahng, 2018; N. Lee et al., 2012; Namkung & Jang, 2017), other work has found this labelling has only a weak effect on consumption (Amendah & Park, 2008; Grunert et al., 2014).

Although studying morality at the attribute-level can be useful for developing a general understanding of how products with normatively ethical attributes impact consumption, this perspective has an integral drawback. An attribute-level approach to studying morality assumes that all (or nearly all) consumers within a sample perceive the attribute to be morally relevant to some degree. However, not all consumers necessarily share this view. Relatedly, even if consumers normatively value an attribute (e.g., all participants within a sample like fair trade), they might not value it for moral reasons. For example, although one consumer might value fair trade because of the attribute’s moral significance, another consumer might value it because fair trade signals a higher quality product. The failure to find an effect of morality when studied at the attribute-level could therefore be explained by the variance in consumer samples: Participants in a given study might not even value the attribute let alone perceive that attribute to be morally relevant.

3.2 | The person-level approach

To address drawbacks of the attribute-level approach, some researchers have proposed studying morality’s influence at the person-level. Here, researchers treat morality as an individual difference in the extent to which a given person dispositionally values specific ethical attributes or ethicality itself more broadly. For example, rather than assuming that all consumers value the attribute of environmental sustainability, researchers have assessed the extent to which individual consumers value it and find that those who value this attribute more are more likely to purchase products or brands that feature it (Haws et al., 2014). This type of finding is in accord with expectancy-value models of attitudes and behavior, which hold that the extent to which people find particular attributes (e.g., sustainability) to be desirable, the more favorable their attitudes and behavior will be toward products possessing that attribute (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). More commonly, however, morality studied under a person-level approach examines variation in how much consumers value morality itself. For example, researchers have studied how variations in consumers’ *moral identity* (i.e., the degree to which consumers incorporate various moral traits into their self-concept; Aquino & Reed, 2002), *moral reflectiveness* (i.e., the extent to which people reflect their morals in their everyday behavior; Afsar & Umrani, 2020; Reynolds, 2008; Verma & Chandra, 2018), and *moral potency* (i.e., individuals’ strength of moral character; Hannah & Avolio, 2010; Mortimer et al., 2020) predict consumers’ engagement with products or brands that emphasize normatively moral attributes. In general, the more consumers broadly value morality, the more they are likely to consume products with attributes presumed to reflect morality (e.g., Andorfer & Liebe, 2013; Van Quaquebeke et al., 2019). Thus, the person-centered approach shares an assumption with the attribute approach that some features of products are normatively moral.

Most importantly, studying morality at the person-level recognizes that certain consumers place more or less value on ethicality and therefore that a product’s presumed ethical attributes will only influence those who value ethicality. Yet, even under this approach, researchers find mixed evidence for morality’s influence. Although some research finds that consumers high in moral identity report greater purchase intentions (Andorfer & Liebe, 2013; Van Quaquebeke et al., 2019) and positive word of mouth (Xie et al., 2015) for morally positioned products, other work has found no such associations (Bauer & Menrad, 2020).

As with the attribute-level approach, a few issues emerge from the person-level approach, too. First, past work has shown that a moral identity must be salient in order to exert its influence (Reed, 2004). Thus, if one’s moral identity is not activated in a given purchasing context, that identity would have limited influence on consumption choices. For example, if a consumer high in moral identity is choosing between a jacket made of sustainable fabric or one made of standard fabric, and moral identity is not activated, it is unlikely to exert influence. Moreover, if a different identity (e.g., one’s identity as a mother) is salient at the point of purchase, one might select the

option that best aligns with that identity. Thus, in testing morality's influence at the person-level, researchers must first assume that the participant's moral identity is salient to consumers at the time of choice.

Another drawback of this perspective is that it presupposes that those who value morality will be more likely to moralize all of their consumer choices. In other words, these individuals are presumed to have equal interest and favorability toward all morally positioned products and attributes. Yet, even among individuals who place a high emphasis on morality, there likely will be differences in what attributes are seen as most relevant to their morality. For example, whereas an orthodox Jew with a high moral identity could see pork as morally bad, a gentile with a high moral identity could see it as a neutral object without moral implication. Likewise, a woman with a high moral identity might see a company that pays its female employees less than its male employees as morally bad but not perceive eco-friendly attributes as morally relevant (Schlager et al., 2021). This is because people do not necessarily agree on which attributes are morally relevant, an issue shared by both the attribute and person-level approaches—but one which is addressed in a third, less common approach in marketing that we describe next.

3.3 | The attitude-level approach

Although the aforementioned approaches to studying morality's influence have yielded useful insights, we propose that a third approach, an *attitude-level* conceptualization, addresses many of the challenges outlined earlier. Under this approach, researchers examine attitude moralization—the extent to which consumers' overall attitudes toward a specific product, category, or brand is perceived to derive from their moral concerns or beliefs (Skitka et al., 2021). Because each consumers' moral concerns are subjective and variable from person-to-person, so too is attitude moralization. This attitude-level approach takes into consideration both the consumer's attitude toward an attribute, product or brand (i.e., the consumer's general positivity or negativity toward it; Eagly & Chaiken, 2007; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981) in combination with differences in the extent to which they perceive that attitude to be based on their core moral values and beliefs. For example, one consumer might perceive a positive attitude toward fair trade coffee to be based in moral concerns, whereas a different consumer could perceive an equally positive attitude to be based on a non-moral source (e.g., inferences about the product's quality). According to this framework, in order to test whether “morality matters in the marketplace,” researchers must know the degree to which any given consumer's attitude (be it positive or negative) toward a particular attribute, product, brand, etc. is perceived to stem from moral concerns.

When morality is construed in this manner, there is ample and consistent evidence for the effect of it on behavioral outcomes. For starters, work in the psychological and political domains has found that perceiving a moral basis to one's attitude is a property that contributes to an attitude's *strength* (Petty & Krosnick, 1995; see

Luttrell & Sawicki, 2020; Philipp-Muller, Wallace, Sawicki, et al., 2020; Xu & Petty, in press). Strong attitudes are those that are “durable and impactful” (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). For example, individuals whose attitudes are perceived to have a moral basis, are more likely to vote in political elections for an attitude-consistent candidate (Ryan, 2014), be repulsed by those who disagree with their morally-based position (Philipp-Muller, Wallace, & Wegener, 2020; Skitka et al., 2005), interpersonally advocate on behalf of their attitude (Philipp-Muller, Wallace, Sawicki, et al., 2020), and even tolerate vigilante violence against those who behave in attitude-inconsistent ways (Skitka & Houston, 2001). In this manner, attitudes that are strengthened because they are perceived to be based in morality are quite similar to attitudes that are strengthened for other reasons (e.g., they are held with great confidence; Tormala & Rucker, 2018).

In contrast to the attribute- and person-level approaches, the attitude-level approach recognizes that consumers might moralize their attitudes toward some attributes or products but not others, and even if they value a specific “normatively moral” attribute, they might not value it for moral reasons. In other words, whereas the attribute-level and person-level approaches define morality in a top-down manner, the attitude-level approach acknowledges individual differences in whether various attributes or products are considered moral. To illustrate this point more clearly, we turn to research by Luttrell et al. (2021) that exemplifies this approach. In this work, consumers reported their attitudes toward various product categories (e.g., organic food, electric cars, and made-in-America clothing) as well as the degree to which their positivity toward these product categories was based on their core moral convictions. This research highlighted that many consumers had positive attitudes toward these product categories; however, there was variation in the extent to which that positivity was perceived to be based on morality. Moreover, even consumers who tended to report greater moralization across product categories did not necessarily moralize every domain. Instead, the consistent finding from this research was that the more consumers moralized their positive attitudes toward a specific product category, the more likely they were to purchase products from that category. Furthermore, when morality was assessed using this attitude-level approach, its impact maintained across a 2-month timespan, across different samples, across a variety of topics, and even for products that had low consumer reviews. Morality's influence also trumped other consumer perceptions normally shown to account for purchasing decisions, such as consumers' overall positivity toward the product category, their attitudinal confidence, and the participants' predilection to behave in socially desirable ways.

In the marketing literature, this attitude-level approach has been studied under a variety of different terms. Past research has used individual differences in *moral norms* (i.e., personal beliefs about whether a particular behavior is morally right or wrong; Dean et al., 2008; Parker et al., 1995), *moral intensity* (i.e., the extent to which an individual perceives there to be a moral imperative in a given situation; Jones, 1991; Zou & Chan, 2019), and *ethical obligation* (i.e., the perceived moral or ethical obligation to perform a particular behavior; Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Kurland, 1995), among others. However, at their

most basic level, each of these methods assesses the extent to which morality is perceived to underscore the consumer's relevant attitude, compelling them to act in accordance with that attitude. Thus, these terms can therefore be categorized under a singular, theoretical umbrella. In doing so, it allows researchers to (a) understand which consumer attitudes are moralized and (b) reconcile previous, contradictory findings in the literature.

3.3.1 | Identifying what becomes moralized

An attitude-level approach recognizes that virtually any attitude can be moralized to varying degrees. That is, although many individuals do moralize normatively moral issues like torture (Aramovich et al., 2012) or recycling (Luttrell et al., 2019), they might not moralize attributes that would be assumed ethical by a variety of other people, such as fair-trade labor and environmental issues (Luttrell et al., 2021; see also, Gilbert, 2006). Other less "normatively moral" products (e.g., one's refrigerator) can also become moralized (Jarudi et al., 2008). For example, even the rational reliance on logic and evidence is seen by some as a matter of morality (Ståhl et al., 2016). Because there is such variance in which attitudes are deemed morally relevant by different consumers, researchers and marketers cannot reliably presume which attitudes a consumer is likely to have moralized. Without determining whether a consumer has moralized their attitudes toward a relevant product, one cannot know whether to attribute their purchasing behaviors to the moral positioning of the product or to other factors.

3.3.2 | Addressing contradictory findings

Under the attitude-level framework, we can begin to address some of the mixed findings in the literature. For example, when past work taking an attribute-level approach found that consumers do not have increased purchase intentions for fair-trade (Basu & Hicks, 2008; Rashid & Byun, 2018) or eco-friendly products (Amendah & Park, 2008; Grunert et al., 2014; Mai, 2014), it is possible that the samples studied did not have morally-based attitudes for those topics. Similar thinking can be applied to understanding person-level inconsistencies. If a sample high in moral identity does not exhibit high valuation of a product or brand that is normatively perceived as ethical, it does not necessarily mean that morality is not influential. Instead, as noted earlier, it might simply mean that these consumers do not moralize that specific attribute.

In addition to helping to identify false negatives in the literature, the attitude-level approach can help researchers identify instances where consumers' morality might have unintentionally contributed to behavioral outcomes. Because consumers can moralize virtually any product or attribute, the promotion of a product's specific attribute might inadvertently take advantage of some consumers' attitude moralization. For example, a bookstore that promotes a specialization in rational, logic-based books might be moralized by a subset of

consumers who have moralized rationality (Ståhl et al., 2016). Thus, an attitude-level approach not only provides potential insight into past findings but also helps to broaden the scope of what constitutes a moral attribute in future studies. As we document next, when morality is examined in this light, research finds that it exerts a consistent effect on consumer behavior.

4 | ATTITUDE MORALIZATION IN THE MARKETPLACE

By taking an attitude-level approach to the study of morality, we can conduct a more precise examination of morality's influence in the marketplace. First, we describe how this attitude-level approach reveals a consistent effect of morality on consumption relevant to moralized attributes, products, and brands. Second, we discuss the types of consumer attitudes that often elicit moralization.

4.1 | Moralization of specific products or brands

When consumers possess positive moralized attitudes toward specific products or brands, they are more likely to make relevant purchases than if they had similarly positive attitudes not based in morality. Likewise, when they possess negative moralized attitudes, they are more likely to abstain from those purchases than if they had equally negative attitudes not based in morality. For instance, when consumers have moralized their attitudes toward specific foods or beverages (e.g., organic wine), they are more likely to purchase them (Arvola et al., 2008; Koklic et al., 2019; Thøgersen, 2002)—notably, an effect that extends above and beyond any effects of the attitude's degree of positivity (Dowd & Burke, 2013). This pattern persists even beyond other typical predictors of behavioral intentions, such as perceived control (Dean et al., 2008), and have been found for a variety of different products, such as environmentally-friendly clothing (Kim & Seock, 2019). This is true even for products that are not normatively considered moral. For example, those with higher levels of moral obligation regarding skimmed milk report higher intentions to purchase skimmed milk for their families (Raats et al., 1995). Conversely, negative, moralized attitudes toward specific products predict greater purchasing abstinence as well. For example, a perceived moral obligation to reduce clothing purchases predicts lowered frequency of such purchases (Joanes, 2019). Likewise, consumers who moralize their negative attitudes toward pirated software show reduced intentions to use such programs (Chen et al., 2009).

In addition to products, moralized attitudes regarding specific brands have also been shown to impact consumer behavior. For example, when consumers' positive attitudes toward retail brands' acts of corporate social responsibility (CSR) are moralized, they report greater intentions to purchase from that retailer (Diddi & Niehm, 2017). For negative moralized attitudes, the converse is true: Consumers whose moral attitudes conflict with a brand's values or associations avoid purchasing from (Lee et al., 2009) and are more

likely to boycott that brand (Barakat & Moussa, 2017). For example, consumers who moralize their negative attitude toward an organization's use of offshore factories report greater boycott intentions toward the organization (Hoffmann, 2013).

4.2 | Moralization of product or brand attributes

Rather than moralizing product- or brand-specific attitudes, other research has shown how consumers can moralize their attitudes toward broader attributes, which then influence consumption behaviors for a variety of products or brands for which that attribute applies. For example, consumers who moralize their positive attitudes toward the attribute of "animal welfare" exhibit an increased likelihood to purchase ethically raised meat (Bennett et al., 2002; McEachern et al., 2007). Likewise, consumers who moralize their positive attitudes toward the environment are more likely to engage in a variety of eco-friendly purchasing behaviors (Culiberg, 2014; Thøgersen, 1996; Thøgersen, 1999). These consumers are more likely to purchase clothing that is made with organic or recyclable materials (Hwang et al., 2015). Moralized attitudes can even influence less conventional forms of consumption. For example, consumers who moralize their attitude toward "collaborative consumption" (i.e., purchasing idle resources from peer networks) are more likely to participate in sharing-economy behaviors (e.g., purchasing second-hand clothes; Roos & Hahn, 2019).

In sum, across both attitudes toward specific products/brands and broader attributes, an attitude-level approach to the study of morality reveals convergent evidence for its influence on both positive (e.g., purchase intentions) and negative (e.g., boycotting) consumption behaviors. However, even if morality matters in this way, there is still the question of *when* consumers will moralize their marketplace attitudes. That is, although the prior evidence points to the reliable impact of consumers' morality once the relevant attitude has been moralized, the question remains as to when consumers are more likely to base their consumer attitudes on morality (vs. other factors, like practicality) in the first place.

4.3 | Moderators of marketplace moralization

Better understanding of which types of attitudes are moralized and which consumer segments are more likely to moralize which attitudes can help brand managers more appropriately position their products or company. As we review next, prior research suggests that there are certain kinds of attitudes that consumers are more likely to moralize: (a) *emotional attitudes*, (b) *value-relevant attitudes*, (c) *personal identity-relevant attitudes*, and (d) *negatively valenced attitudes*. Importantly, these elements do not guarantee moralization. However, these properties make attitudes with these features more prone to moralization (with some research even suggesting that combinations can lead to an even greater likelihood; e.g., an attitude that is both emotional and value-relevant; Xie et al., 2019). Although these four categories share

some conceptual overlap (e.g., values and identity are related; Belgrave et al., 1994), we review them as distinct elements that can contribute singular or additive value in predicting attitude moralization.

4.3.1 | Emotional attitudes

Decades of research have shown that attitudes can be based largely on one's emotional or cognitive reactions to a stimulus (cf., Crites et al., 1994), and research finds that consumers' emotions play a key role in whether people moralize an attitude or not (Haidt, 2001; Horberg et al., 2011; Skitka et al., 2021; Skitka & Wisneski, 2011). For example, Wisneski and Skitka (2017) found that when participants were shown attitude-relevant disgusting images, they were more likely to moralize their corresponding attitudes. Emotions are connected to morality because moralization is often an affective process (Haidt, 2001), and some have even argued that emotions always accompany moralized attitudes (Skitka et al., 2021). Thus, the more consumers associate emotionality with their relevant attitude, the more likely they are to moralize that attitude (Brandt et al., 2015).

Although the influence of an attitude's emotionality on consumers' moralization has been observed, it is qualified by two elements: the emotion's valence (discussed in a later section) and the specific emotion that is aroused. First, although some work has found that attitudes associated with positive emotions (e.g., gratitude and pride) are often more likely to be moralized (Goenka & van Osselaer, 2019; Grappi et al., 2013), a great deal of research has demonstrated the influence of negative emotions on moralization, especially anger (Brandt et al., 2015; Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Rojzman et al., 2014) and disgust (Landy & Goodwin, 2015; Schnall et al., 2015).

Previous research has shown that anger and disgust are distinct emotions that can impart independent effects on attitudes in general (Briñol et al., 2018) and robust effects on attitude moralization in particular (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011; Molho et al., 2017; Rozin et al., 1999). For example, the more anger consumers reported at a company's poor treatment of its employees, the more these consumers moralized their attitudes, which led to greater intentions to boycott the firm (Lim & Shim, 2019). In the domain of food consumption, the more vegetarians felt disgust toward killing animals, the more they moralized their negative attitudes toward animal farming, which led to a greater likelihood of boycotting animal products (Rozin et al., 1997; for a similar example with cigarettes, see Rozin & Singh, 1999). The moralizing effect of anger and disgust have also been shown to enhance consumers' negative word of mouth (Cronin et al., 2012; Grappi et al., 2013; Xie & Bagozzi, 2019), retaliation against store employees (Loureiro et al., 2018), and devaluation of the product being sold (Amar et al., 2018; Skarlicki et al., 2013). As mentioned, although there is less evidence documenting the moralizing effect of positive emotions, when observed, it has an inverse influence on positive consumption behaviors (e.g., increased donations; Goenka & van Osselaer, 2019). Future research would benefit from

understanding why anger and disgust in particular are associated with attitude moralization as well as a greater understanding of the types of positive emotions most likely to elicit moralization. Another direction for future research is to tease apart the effects of emotions and morality in enhancing behavior. That is, some research suggests that emotionally based attitudes (regardless of morality) are more likely to be acted upon than cognitively based attitudes (Rocklage et al., in press) and this might partially account for the impact of attitude moralization on behavior.

4.3.2 | Value-relevant attitudes

Another element of attitudes that affects moralization is the degree to which the specific attitude is connected to a consumer's values. Values (e.g., benevolence) are important guiding principles in one's life that orient one's thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Schwartz, 1997, 2012). Consumers develop their values through a variety of sources, such as their culture (Vauclair & Fischer, 2011) and families (Kasser et al., 1995). Notably, although values and morals share some overlapping qualities (e.g., both transcend individual contexts; Skitka et al., 2005), they are distinct constructs (Philipp-Muller, Wallace, Sawicki, et al., 2020). For example, people can hold "achievement" as a value; however, they might or might not moralize it (e.g., they see achievement as important and positive but do not connect it to their moral convictions; Schwartz, 2007). Despite these distinctions between morals and values, some researchers have suggested that in order to moralize an attitude one must first connect that attitude to an already established higher order value (Rozin et al., 1997). For example, consumers would be most likely to moralize their positive attitude toward home alarm systems if they connected that attitude to a personal value like "security."

In the literature, there are several examples of consumers' values predicting which attitudes they moralize, which in turn predicts their consumption. For example, although consumers generally hold positive attitudes toward companies' acts of social responsibility, individuals who endorse self-transcendent values (e.g., benevolence and universalism) moralized those positive attitudes to a greater extent, increasing their likelihood of purchasing from those companies (Golob et al., 2019). Likewise, among consumers who held positive attitudes toward eco-friendly products, those who held "environmentalism" as a value were more likely to moralize those positive attitudes and subsequently report greater purchase likelihood for eco-friendly products (Awuni & Du, 2016; Lin & Huang, 2012). Thus, knowing the values of consumers can provide useful insight into whether they are likely to moralize a specific attitude in that domain.

From research in this area, one division between consumer segments found to reliably predict their values (and thus which attitudes they are likely to moralize) is political orientation. Consumers' liberal to conservative political stances have received much attention in values research due to the consistent types of values they typically entail (Feldman, 2003). For example, liberals are more likely to moralize values related to preventing harm or promoting fairness, whereas

conservatives are more likely to moralize values related to sanctity, respecting authority, and in-group loyalty (Feinberg & Willer, 2013). Thus, in knowing these distinctions, one can better predict which attitudes liberal and conservative consumers are likely to moralize (Clifford, 2019; Ryan, 2017). For example, although there are both liberals and conservatives who favor vegan diets, liberals (vs. conservatives) are more likely to base their positive veganism attitudes in their morals (e.g., preventing harm) compared with other, non-moral qualities, like cost.

Knowing consumers' political values (and therefore the types of topics they have likely moralized) can provide greater persuasive leverage, too, as evidenced from the moral matching literature. That is, when persuasive messages position an attitude object as relevant to moral concerns typically endorsed by members of their political orientation, they are more likely to engage in attitude-consistent behavior (Bloemraad et al., 2016; Feinberg & Willer, 2015). For example, when a message positively describes the act of recycling as relevant to "maintaining purity" (a conservative-endorsed moral), conservatives are far more likely to recycle than when a similar message connects recycling to "preventing harm" (a liberal-endorsed moral; Feinberg & Willer, 2013). Beyond political orientation, future research would benefit from identifying other segments that tend to signal clusters of specific values in order to better predict which attitudes consumers are most likely to moralize.

4.3.3 | Identity-relevant attitudes

Consumer identities serve as another means by which attitudes can become more readily moralized. These identities can vary widely, such as those that stem from personal qualities (e.g., one's conscientiousness) to social groups (e.g., favorite sports teams), to blends of the two (e.g., one's race and/or gender; Oyserman, 2009). In this section, we focus specifically on consumer's social identities, which represent their sense of "who they are" based on the group(s) to which they subjectively feel they belong (Hornsey, 2008; Tajfel, 1978). As with the prior moderators of moralization, regardless of whether an identity is linked to a positive or negative attitude, identity-relevant attitudes are more likely to be moralized (Morris & Liu, 2015; Strohming & Nichols, 2014). For example, Zunick et al. (2017) found a strong, positive correlation ($r = .67, p < .001$; Study 3) between the extent to which consumers' identity was linked to their positive attitude and the extent to which that attitude was moralized.

Because one's sense of morality can be deeply connected to one's sense of self and identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002), linking an attitude to one's sense of self makes the attitude more prone to moralization. Although consumers' attitudes are commonly connected to their sense of self (e.g., their attitude toward athletic gear reflects their identity; Belk, 1988; Park et al., 2010), marketing research has focused predominantly on how consumers' demographic identities (e.g., gender, ethnicity and religiosity) can promote attitude moralization. For example, women (vs. men) were less likely to purchase from a company with a high gender pay gap, because women's identification with their

gender led to a greater moralization of their negative attitude toward gender pay discrepancies (Schlager et al., 2021). Other research in this vein has examined consumers' nationality and religion as identities that can increase moralization. For example, consumers with Chinese (vs. American) identities were more likely to moralize their negative attitudes toward unethical labor practices against Chinese workers, which predicted reduced purchase intentions (Shen & Dickson, 2001; see also Hoffmann, 2013). As another example, among Muslim individuals, the more they identified with their religion, the more they moralized their positive attitude toward Halal meat (i.e., meat prepared according to religious scripture), which increased consumption (Ahmed et al., 2014; Ali et al., 2017).

Future research should consider how other identities, beyond those associated with consumers' demographics, could be leveraged to help moralize attitudes to influence behavior. For example, whether certain product domains are considered more versus less of an extension of the self might impact moralization and subsequent consumption.

4.3.4 | Negatively valenced attitudes

Across the moderators for moralization that we have discussed (emotions, values, and identities), we treated the valence of the underlying attitude as relatively interchangeable (i.e., linking either positive or negative attitudes to one's values could increase those attitudes' moralization). However, there is reason to believe that negative attitudes are more commonly moralized than positive ones. Notably, it is well-established that a negativity bias exists in human psychology, where people often tend to give greater psychological weight to negative (vs. positive) features or outcomes (Baumeister et al., 2001; Haberstroh et al., 2017; Ito et al., 1998). Yet research suggests that the magnitude of this negativity bias differs as a function of the type of evaluation being made such that it is greater for morally relevant information (Fleischmann et al., in press; Rozin et al., 1989; Skowronski & Carlston, 1987). Morality is typically conceived in regard to preventing the violation of important values (Irwin & Baron, 2001; Tetlock et al., 2000), rather than promoting actions consistent with these values. For example, when describing brands that engage in normatively determined ethical practices, consumers freely report greater prevention-based (vs. promotion-based) thoughts about the brand (Bullard & Manchanda, 2013; see also Bush et al., 2021). Accordingly, this match between negativity (vs. positivity) and morality leads consumers to be more likely to moralize their negative attitudes.

The negativity bias in attitude moralization is evinced across a number of different domains. For example, in forming negative consumer attitudes (i.e., through option exclusion sets), consumers rely on ethical attribute information. However, in forming positive consumer attitudes (i.e., through option inclusion sets), these ethical attributes are more likely to be ignored (Irwin & Naylor, 2009). Similarly, in choosing products across different brands, consumers' negative attitudes toward brands' unethical behavior exert a stronger

effect on their ultimate choice than consumers' positive attitudes toward brands' ethical behaviors (Schamp et al., 2019). Similarly, consumers' negative attitudes toward a company's unethical behavior impact willingness to pay for relevant products more than their positive attitudes toward the company's ethical behavior do (Folkes & Kamins, 1999; Lingnau et al., 2019; Moosmayer, 2012). In fact, whereas a firm's single unethical behavior can moralize a consumer's negative attitude toward the company, ethical behaviors do not moralize positive attitudes to the same extent (Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011; Lichtenstein et al., 2007). Relatedly, whereas the unethical behavior by one firm can lead consumers to generate and moralize negative attitudes toward separate but related firms, a company's ethical behaviors do not induce the same generalization processes (Miller & Sturdivant, 1977; Rozin et al., 1989).

Future research would benefit from further delineating the types of negative attributes, emotions, and thoughts that are more or less likely to be moralized by different types of consumers, with an emphasis on how such moralization impacts consumption. In addition, given that any consumer preference (e.g., choosing Coke over Pepsi) can be framed positively (I like Coke) or negatively (I dislike Pepsi; Bizer & Petty, 2005; Catapano & Tormala, 2021), future research might examine whether changing the mere framing of one's preference could affect attitude moralization.

5 | CHALLENGES TO ATTITUDE MORALIZATION IN THE MARKETPLACE

Taken together, when attitudes are emotional, value-relevant, based in identity, and negatively valenced, they are more commonly moralized and, therefore, more likely to have an impact. Still, there may be instances where consumers will be unlikely to moralize their attitudes, even if they possess those qualities. That is, under an attitude-level approach, the impact of morality is most likely when consumers (a) perceive that their attitude toward a topic is based in morality and (b) are compelled by that morality in their decision-making. There is reason to believe that consumers might be less likely to moralize their marketplace attitudes in general compared with other attitudes they possess outside the consumption domain.

For most aspects of people's social lives, they operate within a "moral economy" (Cheal, 1988; Giesler, 2006), where they engage in social transactions with others that tend to follow generally accepted moral practices and norms. This moral economy, however, often stands at odds with the "market economy" that people enter as consumers (Campbell & Winterich, 2018; Grayson, 2014; Weinberger & Wallendorf, 2012). Specifically, in market economies, consumers expect organizations to profit from their purchases, and in return, consumers expect to gain some benefit from their purchases (Aggarwal, 2004; McGraw et al., 2012). A similar parallel can be drawn from the literature that distinguishes between "communal" and "exchange" inter-personal relationships (Clark & Mills, 1993). In communal relationships, individuals help one another out of a genuine concern for the others' welfare, but in exchange relationships, they

expect strict reciprocity for any act of service. Notably, when individuals are simply striving to have their personal goals met within the relationship (as in exchange relationships), morality seems to exhibit a reduced influence on one's behaviors (e.g., people are less likely to strive to care for and prevent harm to one's relationship partner; Crocker & Canevello, 2012). Analogously, when both companies and consumers are encouraged to maximize their personal goals within this relationship, morality's influence might be subdued.

A primary function of morality is to regulate (or suppress) motivations to attain a self-interested outcome that otherwise diminishes the common or greater good (Baron, 1999; Haidt, 2001; Kish-Gephart et al., 2014). Thus, in the marketplace, where attaining self-interest is normative, people might be less likely to moralize their attitudes than in non-consumption domains, because purchasing ethical products often incurs costs to one's self-interests. Normatively ethical (e.g., eco-friendly) products can be more expensive (Bissinger, 2019; Ivanova, 2019; Stecklow & White, 2004) and less common than alternatives. Thus, in order for consumers to maximize their self-interest (e.g., find the cheapest product that fits their needs), they might engage in a number of cognitive processes to minimize moralization of their attitudes. For example, when consumers can justify sacrificing their morality for the sake of self-interest (i.e., purchasing a more useful product at the expense of an ethical one), they tend to do so (Luchs & Kumar, 2017). Moreover, consumers willfully forget the ethical attributes of products to lessen the emotional difficulty associated with ethical dilemmas (Reczek et al., 2018).

In addition to the processes consumers might engage in to trivialize the moralization of their attitudes, one factor that can impact whether attitude moralization influences consumption is the specificity of the attitude that gets moralized. Research from social psychology demonstrates that attitudes measured at a broad level (e.g., one's attitude toward environmentalism) do not necessarily predict highly specific behaviors (e.g., composting; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). When considering this relationship in the marketplace, there might be a similar effect with attitude moralization. For example, even if consumers have moralized their positive attitudes toward diversity, they might be less inclined to extend that moralization to their more specific attitudes toward marketplace behaviors such as shopping at minority-owned businesses. As tentative evidence for this, when a product is associated with a particular charitable cause, consumers' positive attitudes toward that product do not necessarily generalize toward the brand (Khan & Pond, 2020). Thus, even if consumers' attitudes regarding relevant topics (e.g., fair trade) are, in fact, moralized, consumers might deem this moralization irrelevant for the more specific attitudes behind their behaviors, thereby reducing the influence of that broader attitude's moralization (Croizet & Fiske, 2000; Snyder & Kendzierski, 1982).

As another consideration for why attitude moralization might be less likely in the marketplace, we turn to prior research that we discussed on the ethical-intention behavior gap. In that work, research has suggested that ethical consumption (vs. other types) potentially imposes external restraints on attitude-consistent behaviors (Carrington et al., 2010, 2016). For example, a

consumer who has a deeply moralized positive attitude toward the environment might not be able to afford solar panels, whereas, in contrast, they could vote for politicians who support environmental initiatives. Thus, the marketplace confers constraints on behavior that can be absent in other domains. As it is not just one's attitude that drives action but also perceptions of control (Ajzen, 1991; Sheppard et al., 1988), ethical products might undermine control through their financial or product option limitations (Barbarossa & Pastore, 2015; Carrington et al., 2010, 2016). Thus, impediments to perceived behavioral control (in addition to norms and habits) specific to the marketplace might further moderate the effects of attitude moralization on consumption. That is, even among those who moralize a product, if they think that purchasing it is beyond their control (or not normative or habitual), they might still abstain.

6 | MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Across the prior sections, we provided evidence for the theoretical advantages of studying morality's marketplace influence at the attitude- (vs. attribute- or person-) level, revealing morality's strong and reliable influence as well as the factors that can affect whether consumers moralize their attitudes in the first place. In this final section, we illustrate how this insight can be used by marketing managers to better influence marketplace behavior.

First, this review emphasizes that morality *does* matter in the marketplace. Thus, if managers can bring consumers' moral concerns to bear on their relevant, marketplace attitudes, it is a reliable way to influence their relevant behaviors. As noted earlier, one effective method for doing this is to frame the content of one's marketing communications to match the moral basis of their targets' attitudes (Teeny et al., 2021). For example, Luttrell et al. (2019) found that using messages that emphasized the moral (vs. practical) advantages of a behavior was a persuasive strategy for those who had moralized their respective attitude (see also Bailey et al., 2018; Feinberg & Willer, 2013; Luttrell & Petty, 2020). As discussed, however, which products, brands, or attributes consumers moralize can vary greatly, and moral messaging only tends to be effective for those who have already moralized their attitudes.

In light of these remarks, it is important to emphasize that although managers might assume certain attributes are moralized by their consumer segment, this review reveals that this might not be the case. For example, two consumers could report positive attitudes toward made-in-America clothing; however, one might base this positivity in practical concerns (e.g., perceived product quality), whereas the other might base it in moral ones (e.g., they think it is "right" to purchase products made by their ingroup members). Conversely, attitudes assumed to be non-moral might in fact be moralized. For example, attributes such as whether the product or service promotes rationality (Stähl et al., 2016) or whether it supports issues like net neutrality on the Internet (Turilli et al., 2012) can also be moralized. In a similar vein, different consumers can moralize the same topic for

different reasons. For example, moral messaging for a recycling drive will be more effective if the act is framed as an attempt to protect the sanctity of nature (vs. the unfair treatment of nature) if targeting conservatives (vs. liberals; Feinberg & Willer, 2013). Thus, it becomes important for managers to identify which attitudes their consumers have (or have not) moralized in order to position one's brand or products in a way that matches consumers' basis for their attitudes.

To help with identifying whether an attribute, product, or brand has been moralized, managers can use a single-item question in consumer surveys to ask the degree to which an attitude toward a relevant topic is "a reflection of your core moral beliefs and convictions" (Luttrell et al., 2021; Skitka et al., 2021). However, even without soliciting this more specific data, this review outlines four common qualities likely to be associated with moralized attitudes: emotionality, value-relevance, identity-relevance, and negative valence. Thus, if a firm offers a product that is connected to one of these qualities, morally positioning these offerings could increase consumers' relevant behaviors if consumers view those products favorably.

As another approach, however, managers might also consider trying to *induce* consumers to moralize their attitudes. Past work has found that individuals can be led to moralize their attitudes, even if those attitudes did not originally have a moral basis (Luttrell et al., 2016; see also Wisneski & Skitka, 2017). Although such efforts are more difficult than simply activating one's already moralized attitude, inducing moralization should make consumers more likely to act in attitude-consistent ways (Luttrell et al., 2021). Previous research would recommend connecting participants' sense of morality to the respective attitude through the moderators outlined in this review. For example, if a company were trying to moralize consumer attitudes toward a new fair-trade product, it might be more advantageous to frame the fair-trade attribute as "stopping corrupt labor practices" instead of "promoting fair labor practices," as negative attitudes are more likely to be moralized than positive ones. Of course, because attitude moralization generally increases attitude-consistent behavior, consumers who moralize negative attitudes could be detrimental to a brand. Thus, managers would want to ensure that they are only inducing moralization when their consumers view their products or brand favorably. Because research has yet to study induced moralization in the field, future interventions testing this process would be beneficial to both theory and practice.

Finally, even when accounting for these considerations, moral positioning of a product might still be problematic if the brand behind it is perceived as immoral (Lenz et al., 2017; Wagner et al., 2020). When consumers suspect there are ulterior motives to a firm's engagement in ethical positioning, it can backfire, reducing favorability and positive consumption behaviors among the target consumers (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015; Vanhamme & Grobbsen, 2009). For example, if a firm's launch of an ethical product is perceived as a means to absolve an ethical scandal, this strategy can backfire—even if the new ethical product matches consumers' moralized attitudes. In short, utilizing consumer moralization is best done when done morally.

7 | CODA

Although the prior literature's conclusions on the behavioral impact of consumers' morality was somewhat conflicted, this review describes how prior approaches to studying morality might have produced such tensions. Conceptualizing consumer morality at the attribute- or person-level either assumes that an attribute is considered moral by everyone or a consumer who moralizes many issues will moralize this specific issue, too. Consequently, we demonstrated the advantages of taking an attitude-level approach to studying morality, which reveals a consistent effect of morality on consumer behavior (e.g., purchasing and word of mouth) when it is conceived in this manner. We then identified several features of attitudes that could make them more likely to be moralized (i.e., high emotionality, value-relevance, a connection to one's identity, and negative valence). In sum, this review offers both theoretical and practical insight on the influence and antecedents of consumers' moralized attitudes, providing a more nuanced answer to the question of whether and to what degree consumers care about morality in the marketplace.

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How to cite this article: Philipp-Muller, A., Teeny, J. D., & Petty, R. E. (2022). Do consumers care about morality? A review and framework for understanding morality's marketplace influence. *Consumer Psychology Review*, 5(1), 107–124. <https://doi.org/10.1002/arcp.1072>