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Developing a Composite Index of Environmental Consciousness: Evidence from Survey and Google Trends Data

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Environmental consciousness is a complex construct that involves multiple dimensions related to pro-environmental attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Academic literature has attempted, over the last 20 years, to conceptualize and operationalize environmental consciousness, thus leading to a wide variety of measures. However, the available measures are country-specific and with a predominant U.S. focus, based on convenience samples and fairly limited in terms of interpretability and external validity. To overcome the above limitations the present study develops an index of environmental consciousness at both micro (consumer) and macro (country) level, by considering the four main dimensions of environmental consciousness: the affective, cognitive, active and dispositional dimensions. By means of the analysis of more than 27 000 “Eurobarometer 92.4” responses from consumers belonging to the 28 EU member states in 2019, the present paper develops a comprehensive measure of consumer environmental consciousness that captures heterogeneity across European countries. To assess the robustness of the index, the link between environmental consciousness and life satisfaction is also examined. The new survey-based composite index is further compared to a big-data-based index based on Google Trends data on environmental-related search categories. Results shed light on differences in environmental consciousness across European countries. The link between environmental consciousness and life satisfaction is also supported, confirming previous research in this area. Finally, the index appears to be strongly correlated with actual consumer search patterns on Google. Results provide implications for companies and policy makers on how environmental consciousness can be measured and assessed.

Keywords

Environmental consciousness composite index; survey-based data; Google Trends

Classification

Both methodology and application

Primary author: Prof. D’ATTOMA, Ida (Department of Statistical Sciences, University of Bologna)

Co-author: Prof. IEVA, Marco (Department of Economics and Management, University of Parma)

Presenter: Prof. D’ATTOMA, Ida (Department of Statistical Sciences, University of Bologna)

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