

Sustainable Consumption Behavior: The Influence of Reference Groups on the Impact of Social Norms

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Abstract

Sustainable consumption and the application of social norms have gained great attention to marketing research within the last years. However, influential determinants regarding the impact of those norms are still partly lacking. Thus, the present study investigates the influence of reference groups and social norms on consumers' intention to buy a sustainable product. Therefore, a 2 (socially proximal vs. socially distant reference group members) x 2 (descriptive vs. injunctive norm) between-subject online experiment was conducted. The resulting interaction effect signposts, that the social proximity of the reference group moderates the positive influence of social norms on consumers' buying intention. Socially proximal reference group members wield greater influence on intending to buy a sustainable product by using a descriptive norm, whereas the influential impact of socially distant reference persons is higher in combination with injunctive norms. To conclude, managerial implications as well as suggestions concerning prospective research are demonstrated.

Keywords: *sustainable marketing; social norms; pro-environmental behavior*

Track: Consumer Behaviour