

Greenwash versus green action – An evaluation of consumer commitment to pro-environmental behaviour

Caitlin Ferreira

University of Cape Town

Jeandri Robertson

University of Cape Town

Georgina Wood

Red & Yellow Creative School of Business

Debbie Ellis

University of KwaZulu-Natal

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Abstract

Increased media attention on environmental issues has sparked global interest in pro-environmental behaviour and the role that consumption patterns play in environmental degradation. This paper examines the differential between greenwashing and green action of consumers, through 12 semi-structured interviews with upper-income South African consumers. The results established that first, pro-environmental behaviour is oftentimes incompatible with convenience. Second, acting in a pro-environmental manner is seen as a luxury of wealthy consumers, as eco-friendly alternatives are prohibitively expensive. Third, consumers place blame on others for environmental degradation and fourth, cognitive dissonance appears rife between consumers' knowledge of and engagement in pro-environmental behaviours. This research has implications for government agencies, manufacturers of green products and marketing practitioners.

Keywords: *Sustainability; Pro-environmental Behaviour; Consumer Knowledge*

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics