

Acceptability of unsustainable consumption

Benedikt Schnurr

TUM School of Management, Technical University of Munich

Georgios Halkias

Copenhagen Business School

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Abstract

People are increasingly encouraged to adopt more sustainable behaviors. But what determines whether people perceive unsustainable consumption choices made by others as (un)acceptable? We demonstrate that people judge the same unsustainable consumption choice as more acceptable when that choice is made by a lower- versus higher-income individual, even when a comparable sustainable consumption option does not impose any additional monetary costs. The evidence suggests that this effect is attributed to people's belief that environmental concerns are more of a luxury problem for lower- (vs. higher-) income individuals, accounting for differences in interpersonal judgments of immorality and environmental knowledge as alternative processes. Finally, we find that this effect has important behavioral downstream consequences as people are less likely to support policy interventions promoting sustainable consumption when these interventions target lower- (vs. higher-) income individuals.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Public Policy*

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics