

MORAL HYPOCRISY IN THE MARKETPLACE – BALANCING SELF-INTEREST & GREATER GOOD DECISIONS

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Cite as:

Soliman Meikel (2024), MORAL HYPOCRISY IN THE MARKETPLACE –
BALANCING SELF-INTEREST & GREATER GOOD DECISIONS. *Proceedings of
the European Marketing Academy*, 53rd, (118883)

Paper from the 53rd Annual EMAC Conference, Bucharest, Romania, May 28-31, 2024



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Abstract

Even though consumers regularly claim that they want to make decisions that benefit society (i.e., greater good decisions), oftentimes they fall short on this premise and make decisions that benefit themselves instead (i.e., self-interest decisions). Extant research investigated how these self-interest decisions impact consumers own future (im-)moral behaviors and judgements – exposing moral hypocrisy within consumers. Similarly interesting but overlooked by research is to what extent moral hypocrisy exists between consumers. To tackle this, two experiments were conducted. Across both studies, evidence suggest a robust moral hypocrisy effect. The present research finds that consumers hold others to higher moral standards than themselves. Consumers morally judged themselves with greater lenience and attributed a higher moral character to themselves compared to other consumers. In line, consumers reported experiencing more self-conscious (e.g., embarrassment) and other-condemning (e.g., contempt) moral emotions when making self-interest choices compared to ascribing these emotions to others – further suggesting a moral hypocrisy effect.

Subject Areas: *Cognition, Consumer Behaviour, Decision-Making*

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics