

# Balancing Priorities: How Sustainability and Social Context Influence Sequential Consumer Choices

**Felix Reimers**  
Kiel University  
**Stefan Hoffmann**  
Kiel University

Cite as:

Reimers Felix, Hoffmann Stefan (2025), Balancing Priorities: How Sustainability and Social Context Influence Sequential Consumer Choices. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (126051)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



# **Balancing Priorities: How Sustainability and Social Context Influence Sequential Consumer Choices**

## **Abstract:**

This study explores the dynamics of sequential decision making in sustainable consumer behavior, examining how initial purchases, individual traits, and social contexts influence subsequent decisions. Using a 2x2 experimental design, shopping cart (sustainable vs. unsustainable) and social presence (present vs. absent) were manipulated to assess the effects on subsequent decisions in a grocery shopping environment. Results show that high environmental consciousness triggered balancing effects, where prior unsustainable purchases increased subsequent eco-friendly choices, while low environmental consciousness supported highlighting effects, reinforcing initial behaviors. Additionally, conspicuous consumers displayed highlighting in public but balancing effects in private settings. Contrary to expectations, prosocial intentions were unaffected. In conclusion, findings highlight the complex interplay of personal and contextual factors in sustainable decision making.

***Keywords:*** *Balancing, consumer behavior, sustainability*

***Track:*** *Retailing & Omni-Channel Management*