

The Eye of the Beholder: Using Neural Networks to Uncover Who Stereotypes Mainstream Green Consumers

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Abstract

In the context of climate change, pro-environmental behaviors are often socially evaluated through stereotype lenses. While prior research focuses on the stigma associated with green activism, this study investigates whether this negativity spills over to mainstream green consumers. We shift the focus to the perceiver, analyzing if demographic identity traits and exposure to environmental information sources shape these judgments using a representative Spanish sample (N=1,397). We integrate linear regression with interpretable Neural Networks to capture non-linear patterns. Results refute the spillover hypothesis since mainstream green individuals remain socially validated. However, nuances exist: individuals who are exposed to digital media and are middle-income are the most favorable observers, while digital engagement mitigates age-related negative stereotype attributions. Mass-market green campaigns should prioritize digital channels and middle-class framing to avoid social stigma.

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics