

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN: WHY CONSUMER BEHAVIORS DON'T MATCH THEIR ATTITUDES

Colin B. Gabler, University of Alabama, United States
Timothy D. Butler, University of Alabama, United States

Environmental concern has been growing in the social consciousness over the past several decades, driving firms to offer more and more green products. But while consumers claim to care about how their daily habits impact the environment, that desire has not translated into sales. This presents a frustrating paradox for managers as a society seemingly bent on making a change has yet to follow through in practice.

By conducting depth interviews with 16 undergraduate students, the authors investigate why so many consumers call themselves environmentally conscious, but so few live in a way that is good for the planet. Two main themes emerge. First, while green may be ingrained into our culture, consumers do not feel enough pressure or influence from society to act on their positive attitudes. We call this lack of environmental societal norms. Secondly, consumers feel as if they can make little difference in the big picture. With the problem so overwhelming, they do not believe one person can make an impact. We call this low environmental locus of control. The findings could help policy-makers and managers create strategies that move consumers from attitudes to action.

References Available upon request.