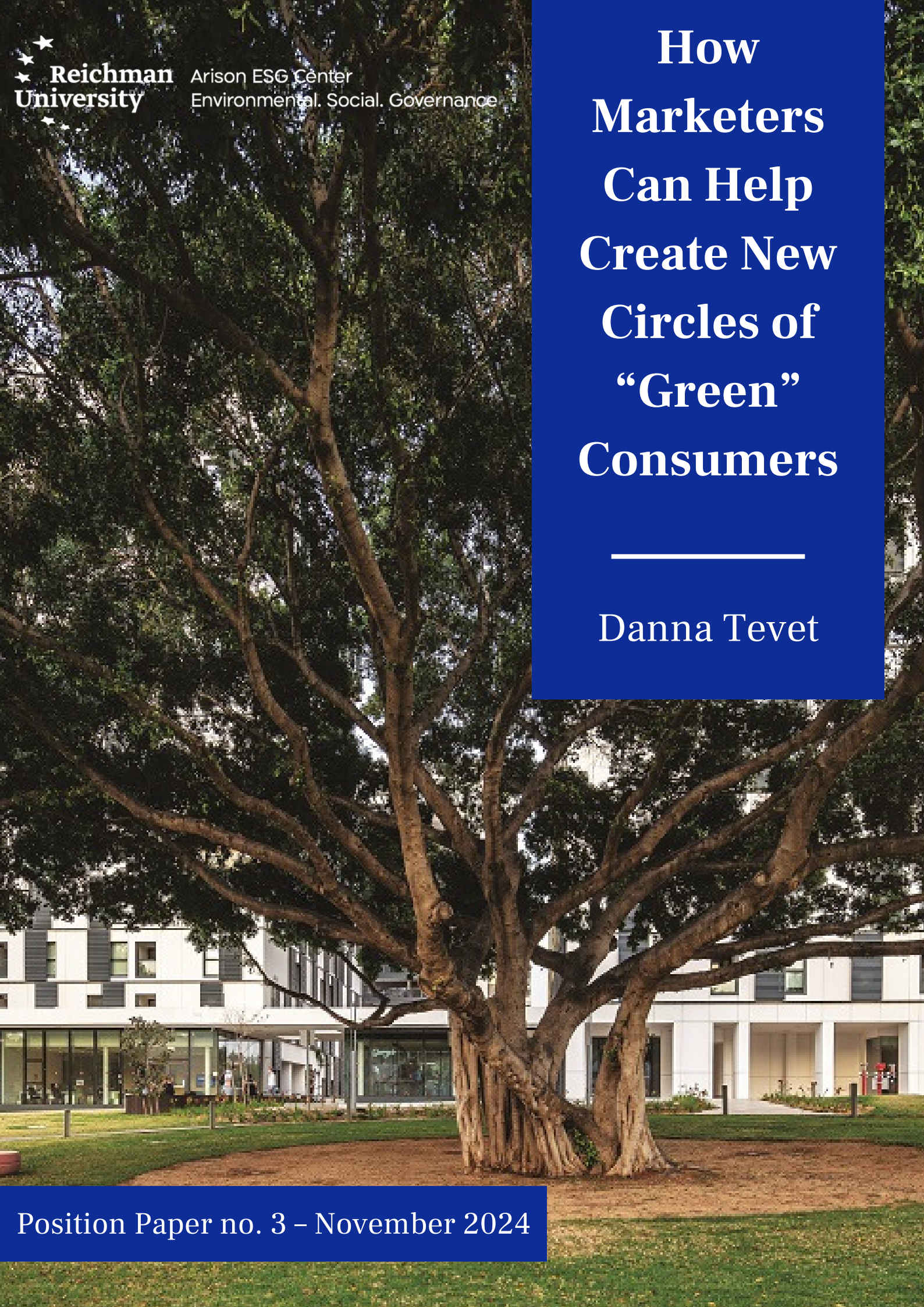




How Marketers Can Help Create New Circles of “Green” Consumers

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Abstract

Consumers must transition to sustainable consumption to reduce carbon emissions. Although many consumers claim they are willing to consume in an environmentally friendly manner, a significant gap remains between consumer attitudes and actual behavior. While legislation and enforcement represent one approach to increasing green consumption behavior, research in the field shows that enforcing and mandating green product consumption is often ineffective, as it generates consumer resistance and fails to create motivation for future green consumption. In contrast, other studies indicate the existence of a "spillover effect," where consumption of products with green characteristics can "spill over" into additional green product consumption in the future.

This position paper reviews the theoretical background and key research in sustainable consumption, presenting research findings that demonstrate that a necessary threshold condition for the spillover effect is maintaining the consumer's sense of free choice in selecting green products. The research also demonstrates the extension of the spillover effect from future consumption to word-of-mouth recommendations about green products to others.

The model presented in this paper suggests that when consumers use or consume green products, they experience better consumption experiences that lead them to perceive themselves as having a more "green" identity, which increases their likelihood to influence others to consume these products through word-of-mouth recommendations. However, the spillover to recommendations about green products occurs only when consumers choose these products of their own free will, not when they feel forced or compelled to use them. The paper further argues that marketers have significant potential to expand the circles of green consumers. It also offers practical recommendations for marketers, aimed at creating processes that will motivate consumers to voluntarily choose green products and spread word-of-mouth recommendations about these products to others.

Introduction: The Importance of Transitioning to Green Consumption and the Gap Between Attitudes and Behavior

As consumption becomes an increasing threat to our environment, researchers are seeking additional means to encourage environmentally friendly consumption behaviors.¹ Data indicate that approximately two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere, directly or indirectly, originate from household consumption. While technological solutions that may reduce or capture atmospheric carbon emissions are important, changing consumption habits and reducing energy use represent the most reliable and highest-potential approach to reducing atmospheric emissions (Ivanova et al., 2020).

One of the major challenges in transitioning to sustainable consumption is bridging the gap between consumer attitudes and actual behavior. While a significant proportion of consumers express willingness to transition to green consumption (using products and services that reduce the use of natural resources, toxic materials, and waste emissions throughout the product's shelf life, Roy, 2020), there remains a gap between consumers' positive attitudes and their actual behavior. This gap has been the basis for numerous studies conducted in recent decades and continues to be a subject of contemporary research in consumer behavior. The literature describes several main reasons for the gap between pro-environmental attitudes and non-green consumption behavior. *First*, there are perceptions that the quality and effectiveness of green products are inferior compared to non-green products (for example, hygiene and cleaning products are perceived as less effective if they are environmentally friendly, Lin & Chang, 2012). *Second*, some consumers are unwilling to pay a higher price for green products, if they are more expensive, even if they believe they should consume them. Third, consumers find it difficult to understand how behavioral change at the personal level will actually impact the environment (ElHaffar, Durif & Dubé, 2020). *Finally*, consumers do not always know how to identify which products are truly green, especially when the available information is complex or technical (Gleim et al., 2013).

In this context, issues of distrust in marketers and manufacturers sometimes arise regarding whether the products they offer are genuinely green (rather than representing

greenwashing; Groening, Sarkis & Zhu, 2018). For example, one study found that when a product's green attribute is perceived as central (rather than peripheral), consumers perceive the product as greener because they believe the marketer is genuinely interested in protecting the environment. This perception leads to more positive evaluations and interest in the product (Perez et al., 2020).

Comparing the Effects of Enforcing Green Product Consumption versus Consumption from Internal Motivation

One approach to addressing the gap between attitudes and environmentally friendly behavior is to ensure increased use of green products and prevent environmentally harmful behavior through a policy of external interventions on consumers. Interventions can be positive (incentives, rewards, financial rebates) or negative (fines, penalties, taxes) (Bolderdijk, Lehman & Geller, 2012). Research indicates that negative interventions, such as enforcement or taxation, may generate public antagonism as they are perceived as threatening or limiting choice autonomy and forcing people to change their behavior.

Mandating green consumption without allowing freedom of choice may reduce internal motivation to engage in other pro-environmental behavior (Nyborg, Howarth & Brekke, 2006). Coercion generates aversion; strict regulations trigger psychological reactance (Brehm et al., 1966), causing people to seek ways to restore their lost autonomy (Attari et al., 2009). Psychological reactance may also lead to opposite attitudes and behaviors toward the source of threat, namely, reducing willingness to purchase and decreasing product satisfaction (Clee & Wicklund, 1980). The ban on cleaning products containing phosphates in Miami, Florida, led to negative attitudes toward the law and prompted people to smuggle cleaning products from neighboring states (Mazis, Settle & Leslie, 1973). However, certain studies have shown that when consumers understand the benefits they will receive from regulations or taxation, their acceptance increases. Additionally, framing a tax more positively ("climate contribution," for example, rather than "carbon tax") may improve its public acceptance (Baranzini & Carattini, 2017).

Regarding positive interventions, such as providing economic incentives for green consumption, mixed findings

¹ It is important to note that some green organizations oppose current consumption levels due to concerns about broader environmental impacts. This paper does not focus on reducing consumption but rather on converting it to green consumption to maintain sustainability while preserving modern living standards and positively impacting economic and social processes.

emerge. Financial incentives were found to increase the adoption rate of electric vehicles (Searchful et al., 2014). It was also found that combining positive incentives ("carrot") with negative incentives ("stick") is necessary to effectively maintain green consumption (Yang et al., 2023). However, although such incentives have the potential to change behavior, it usually does not result in long-term change because the behavioral change stems from external rather than internal motivation (one that causes enjoyment, satisfaction, or self-fulfillment). In fact, external incentives may undermine internal motivation for pro-environmental behavior by shifting focus from the internal satisfaction involved in this activity to the external reward, consequently weakening the motivation to act in an environmentally friendly manner (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 1999). In other words, internal motivation is an important foundation for maintaining environmentally friendly behaviors over time, as these behaviors stem from consumers' belief that they are contributing to environmental protection, leading to a sense of satisfaction and understanding that they are acting in accordance with their personal values.

In summary, consumers generally prefer greater choice autonomy and respond more positively to offers they perceive as providing them with independent and voluntary choice options, as opposed to offers dictated by external forces (Botti, Iyengar & McGill, 2023; Chernev, Böckenholt & Goodman, 2015). This holds true even when the sense of choice is merely perceptual—meaning they may not have actually made a choice, but as long as they feel the action was not forced upon them (Wertenbroch et al., 2020).

Most consumer products currently available in the market are not environmentally friendly due to polluting production processes, extensive use of natural resources, non-biodegradable packaging, and environmentally harmful transportation and distribution processes. This means that consumers have broad access to these products, which are often also cheaper and more accessible. Therefore, it is crucial to encourage consumers to choose environmentally friendly products from the wide range of products available to them. The demand for green products will help expand this market and increase the options available to consumers.

Green Product Consumption May Lead to Repeated Consumption

While gaps exist between pro-environmental attitudes and actual consumption of environmentally friendly products, research has identified various factors that may encourage

green consumption, including product characteristics (price, quality, availability, packaging, manufacturing materials, product labeling, etc.; Barbu et al., 2022), consumers' personal traits, available knowledge, values and beliefs (such as altruism, belief in social justice, etc.; Leonidou, Leonidou & Kvasova, 2020; Nguyen, Lobo & Greenland, 2017; Reimers, Magnuson & Chao, 2016), political orientation, social factors (such as sustainability-related social norms; Kim & Seock, 2019), and contextual factors (such as consumption circumstances or presence of others during consumption; Testa et al., 2021).

One of the interesting findings in this context is the *spillover effect*: research shows that in certain cases, green consumption behavior can self-motivate and self-reinforce, meaning the very use of a specific green product may increase the user's tendency to consume green products subsequently (Lauren et al., 2019). For example, a series of experiments showed that using a product with a green attribute, compared to one with a regular attribute, leads to greater enjoyment of the green-attributed product, greater willingness to pay for it, and even to pay more for it. The explanation is that when consumers use green products, they often feel a sense of pride and self-satisfaction in knowing they are contributing positively to the environment. This sense of doing good and social responsibility leads to a warm glow feeling. In turn, these feelings enhance the overall enjoyment of the product consumption experience and increase the likelihood that consumers will purchase the product again. A person might enjoy listening to music more, for instance, when using headphones made from recycled materials, because they feel good about their conscious choice to use an environmentally friendly product (Tezer & Bodur, 2020).

Another explanation for self-reinforcing behavior is based on Bem's self-perception theory (Bem, 1972), which suggests that we learn about ourselves the same way we learn about others – by observing the implications of our behaviors. Therefore, engaging in pro-environmental behaviors may lead people to perceive themselves as "green," and consequently develop a greater moral commitment to continue acting in an environmentally friendly manner.

However, past green behavior will not always lead to future green behavior. This is because sometimes green behavior stems from motives other than environmental concern, such as saving money or attempting to gain status/social visibility. Another reason is that in certain cases, people who have performed one pro-environmental behavior feel justified in

following it with another behavior that is not pro-environmental (Lacasse, 2016).

In conclusion, research in consumer perceptions of sustainable products offers various theoretical perspectives and identifies numerous factors influencing consumer choices. However, it is important to emphasize that few studies provide a multi-dimensional perspective examining economic, social, and environmental effects simultaneously. Moreover, most studies focus on single product categories. Since different products have different functions and characteristics, they affect how consumers perceive, purchase, and use them differently (Camilleri et al., 2023). Therefore, existing literature may sometimes be perceived as presenting contradictory or ambiguous results.

Green Product Consumption Leads to Word-of-Mouth Recommendations to Others

As mentioned, research indicates a spillover effect where past green behavior can predict future green behavior, especially when this behavior aligns with the consumer's self-perception as "green" (i.e., having a "green self-identity"; Van der Werff, Steg & Keizer, 2014). The current research focuses on an additional aspect of the spillover effect, examining how green product consumption not only drives additional consumption but also extends influence through recommendations of green products to others. This process, where consumption leads to recommendation, may expand the customer base for environmentally friendly products.

Consumer reviews and recommendations have become essential tools in purchase decision-making, influencing both purchase intentions and actual buying behavior (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Zhu & Zhang, 2010). Consumers appear to trust recommendations given to them by other consumers and tend to perceive these recommendations as sincere and reliable (Racherla, Mandviwalla & Connolly, 2012).

Considering the enormous impact of consumer reviews and recommendations on other consumers' behavior, it is clear that encouraging people to post more positive reviews about green products will help promote green consumption. Indeed, research has begun to specifically examine consumer motivations and behavior regarding recommendations for green products. One such study showed, for example, that people who report adhering to environmental values are more likely to recommend green products to others, compared to people who do not claim this (Allen & Spialek, 2018).

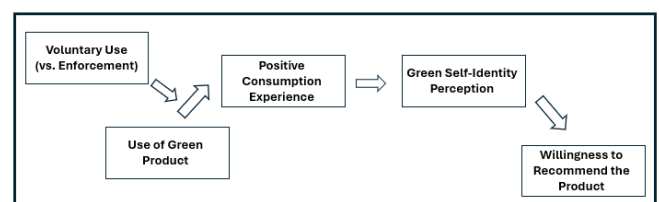
A recent study regarding hotel guest satisfaction directly showed that incorporating sustainability-related features in the hotel, such as water conservation, waste minimization, recycling, and energy conservation, increased guests' satisfaction with their stay, which increased their likelihood of spreading positive recommendations about the hotel (Hameed, Hussain & Khan, 2022). Another study examined guest reviews regarding sustainability-related features in hotels. The researchers found that although only 6.8% of guests explicitly mentioned sustainability-related features in their reviews, they tended to characterize these features positively. Additionally, readers exposed to these reviews tended to perceive environmentally friendly features mentioned in the reviews as more helpful and beneficial, compared to reviews that did not mention such features (Brazyté, Weber & Schaffner, 2017).

The Current Research

Compared to existing literature, the current research adds two important components not yet validated in the literature. *First*, although previous studies found that using green products leads to a positive consumption experience, the current research demonstrates that such an experience will occur only when consumers choose or perceive their choice as voluntary (as opposed to when they are forced to use it). *Second*, the current research broadens the scope regarding the spillover effect, demonstrating that spillover is not limited to future consumption of green products but also extends to recommending these products to others (thereby expanding the green consumer base).

The theoretical model is presented in FIGURE 1 and describes the relationships between the central variables in this research. As shown in the figure, using a green product leads to a positive consumption experience which strengthens the consumer's green self-identity perception. This perception in turn increases willingness to recommend the product to others.

FIGURE 1: THE THEORETICAL MODEL



Research Hypotheses Derived from the Model:

1. Using products with green attributes (compared to regular attributes) will enhance the product's consumption experience.
2. Using products with green attributes will improve the product's consumption experience, as long as users believe they voluntarily chose to use the product.
3. A positive consumption experience will strengthen users' green self-identity perception.
4. Users' green self-identity will affect their likelihood to recommend the product to others.

Current Research Findings²

Study 1 – Using a Green Product Leads to Perceived "Green" Self-Identity, Leading to Positive Consumption Experience and Willingness to Recommend the Product.

Method

The study included 304 participants who completed an online questionnaire after reading one of three scenarios to which they were randomly assigned. The only difference between the scenarios was the description of the product type used. All participants read a scenario where they were in a foreign city and entered a laundromat to wash their clothes. At this stage, each participant was randomly assigned, according to experimental conditions, a description of the cleaning detergent (laundry detergent) provided by the laundromat and used by them. Participants in the "green" product condition were told that the detergent they used was environmentally friendly, and its container was recyclable. In the "harmful" product condition, participants were told that the detergent they used was polluting (environmentally harmful), and the bottle was non-recyclable. In the "neutral" product condition, participants were told it was a regular detergent found in supermarkets, with no mention of harmful or environmentally friendly characteristics.

Subsequently, participants read a mixed description, both positive and negative, of their experience at the laundromat (for example: "You load your clothes into one of the machines and sit on an available sofa, waiting for the machine to finish. The sofa is very comfortable and you sink into it. You take a book out of your bag and start reading it, but the background music

in the laundromat is too loud and distracts you from the book. After some time, your laundry is ready").

Finally, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they would recommend the laundromat to friends and evaluate their experience at the laundromat. Additionally, participants were asked two questions about their green self-identity perception, namely how much they see themselves as someone who cares about the environment and who is willing to take proactive steps to protect the environment.

Results³

1. Likelihood to Recommend the Laundromat

Participants who received the green product in the scenario were more willing to recommend the laundromat compared to those who received the harmful product. No significant difference was found in willingness to recommend between those who received the neutral and polluting conditions (see FIGURE 2A).

2. Consumption Experience Evaluation

Participants who received the green product in the scenario rated their laundromat experience more positively than those who received the polluting or neutral product. No significant difference was found in experience evaluation between the neutral and harmful conditions (see FIGURE 2B).

3. Green Self-Identity Perception

Participants who received the green product in the scenario rated themselves as having a greener identity than those who received the polluting or neutral product. No significant difference was found in green identity perception between the neutral and polluting conditions (see FIGURE 2C).

4. Overall Effects

A serial mediation analysis using Bootstrapping Process method (Model 6, with 5,000 resamples; Hayes, 2013), showed that experimental conditions (product characteristics) fully mediated the effect on willingness to recommend the product through green self-identity perceptions and consumption experience (product characteristics > positive consumption experience > green self-identity perception > recommendation likelihood; $b = -.02$, $SE = .01$, 95% CI: $[-.0485, -.0069]$). In other words, the mere use of a green product improved participants' consumer experience and green identity

² For the complete research, see Stockheim, Tevet & Fenig, 2024.

³ All data presented in the results of studies 1 and 2 are statistically significant at least at the 5% significance level.

perception, which increased their willingness to recommend the laundromat.

Summary

The findings of this experiment show that using a green product (versus a polluting or neutral product) not only improves the consumption experience but also strengthens consumers' green identity and increases their willingness to recommend the product to others. The findings validate hypotheses 1, 3, and 4.

FIGURE 2A: THE EFFECT OF PRODUCT TYPE ON WILLINGNESS TO RECOMMEND THE LAUNDROMAT

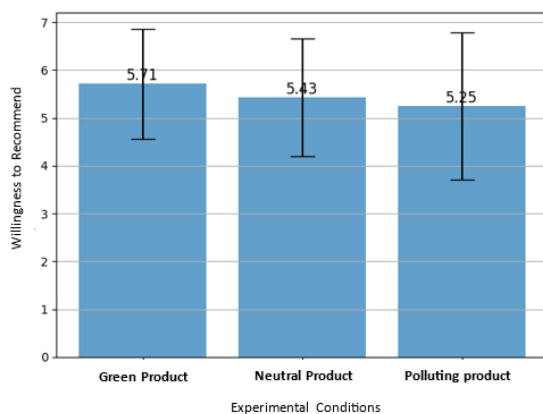


FIGURE 2B: THE EFFECT OF PRODUCT TYPE ON PERCEPTION OF CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCE

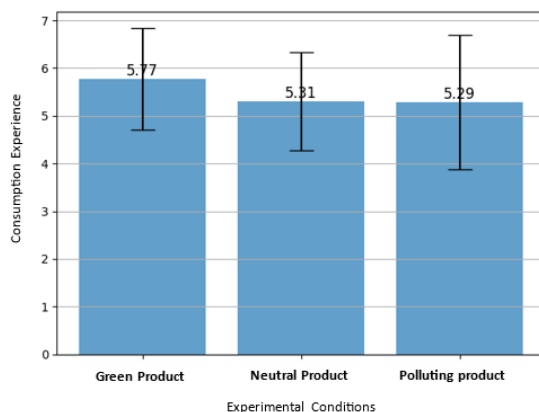
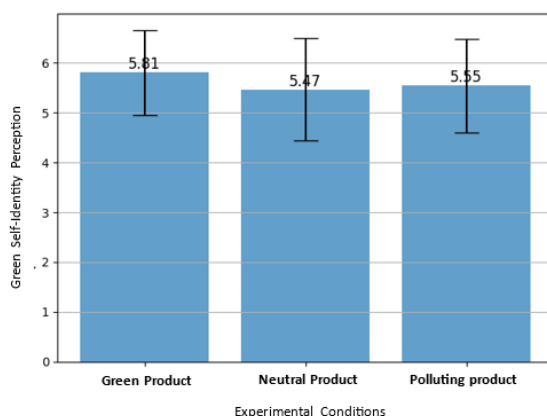


FIGURE 2C: THE EFFECT OF PRODUCT TYPE ON PERCEPTION OF GREEN SELF-IDENTITY



Study 2 – Choosing (as Opposed to Being Required) to Use a Green Product Leads to Perceived "Green" Self-Identity, Leading to Positive Consumption Experience and Likelihood to Recommend the Product.

Method

This study included 196 participants who completed an online questionnaire after reading a scenario similar to that presented in Study 1, except that in this experiment, participants were presented only with an environmentally friendly product. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: (1) the participant chooses to use a green product – the "choice" condition; or (2) the participant is required to use a green product – the "enforced" condition. Similar to the first experiment, participants were asked to imagine buying cleaning detergent at a laundromat in a foreign city. In the "choice" condition, they were told they chose to buy an environmentally friendly detergent; in the "necessity" condition, they were told they were required to buy an environmentally friendly detergent due to municipal environmental regulations. Subsequently, they rated their experience at the laundromat and their likelihood to recommend the laundromat to others, as well as their green self-identity perception, namely how much they see themselves as someone who cares about the environment and who is willing to take proactive steps to protect the environment.

Results

1. Likelihood to Recommend the Laundromat

Participants in the choice condition showed greater willingness to recommend the laundromat compared to those in the enforced condition (see FIGURE 3A).

2. Consumption Experience Evaluation

Participants in the choice condition evaluated their consumption experience at the laundromat more positively than those in the enforced condition (see FIGURE 3B).

3. Green Self-Identity Perception

Participants in the choice condition rated themselves as having a greener identity than those in the enforced condition (see FIGURE 3C).

4. Overall Effects

A serial mediation analysis using Bootstrapping Process method (Model 6, with 5,000 resamples), showed that the effect of free choice in deciding to use the product (versus mandatory use) on willingness to recommend was fully mediated through consumption experience and green self-identity perception (choice to use > consumption experience > green self-identity perception > recommendation likelihood; $b = -.091$, $SE = .037$, 95% CI: $[-.1719, -.0269]$). In other words, the findings again show that choosing to use the product led to a more positive consumer experience, which influenced a stronger green self-identity perception, which in turn increased participants' likelihood to recommend the laundromat. However, the findings demonstrate that this effect does not occur when consumers feel they are being forced to use the product and lack autonomy in the decision to consume them, thereby also validating hypothesis 2.

Summary

The research results show that choice autonomy to consume a green product improves the consumption experience and increases consumers' likelihood to recommend the product. This positive influence is mediated by the consumption experience and consumers' green self-identity perceptions. This research reinforces previous findings by highlighting the importance of consumer autonomy in decision-making as a key factor in enhancing their consumption experience and green identity

FIGURE 3A: THE EFFECT OF CHOICE VERSUS MANDATORY USE ON WILLINGNESS TO RECOMMEND THE LAUNDROMAT

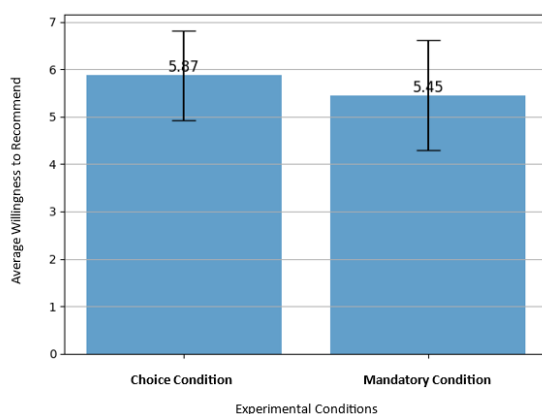


FIGURE 3B: THE EFFECT OF CHOICE VERSUS MANDATORY USE ON PERCEPTION OF CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCE

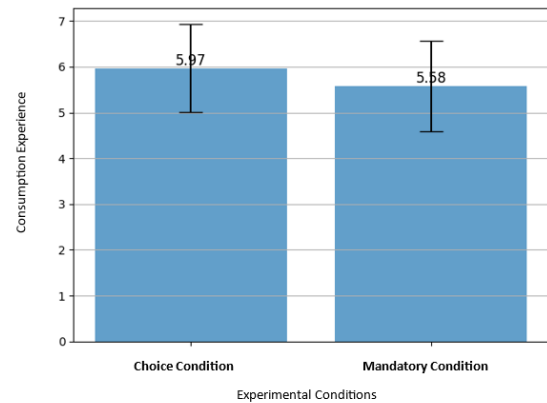
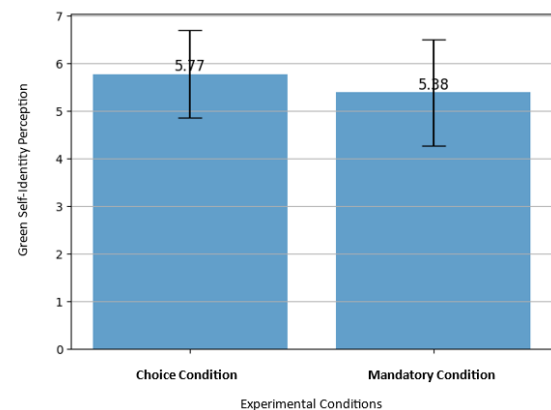


FIGURE 3C: THE EFFECT OF CHOICE VERSUS MANDATORY USE ON PERCEPTION OF GREEN SELF-IDENTITY



Discussion

The findings presented here demonstrate that consumers who use a product or service with green attributes (as opposed to environmentally harmful or neutral attributes) report a more positive consumption experience, which in turn increases their likelihood to recommend the product or service. Until now, previous research had demonstrated the spillover effect only regarding future green consumption. This research contributes to existing literature by demonstrating that the spillover effects of using green products can extend beyond private consumption and influence consumers to recommend green products to others.

While consumer-generated recommendations and reviews play a crucial role in consumption decisions, willingness to recommend has received little research attention as a behavioral outcome influenced by green consumption. The research findings reveal how green consumption can create a moral circle, where consumers using green products recommend such products to others. The findings also shed new light on the relationships between green product usage,

green self-identity, and the likelihood to recommend a green product. Previous research has shown that green self-identity plays an important role in encouraging engagement in future green behaviors (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010).

Finally, the findings indicate that enforcing green product usage may undermine consumers' perception of autonomy, thereby weakening the spillover effect (Wertenbroch et al., 2020). The important theoretical contribution of these findings lies in understanding how consumer sense of autonomy is a central component in the success of this process. Beyond their important theoretical contribution in expanding knowledge of the spillover effect, these findings have practical implications for policymakers who use tools such as regulation and taxation to promote green consumption. Previous research has also found that such policies may have negative side effects, leading to increased environmentally harmful consumption in areas not covered by regulation (Nyborg, Howarth & Brekke, 2006).

In conclusion, although many studies in consumer behavior, including the current research, are based on experiments and simulated scenarios rather than extensive empirical information and data, these are controlled conditions that allow deep understanding of the psychological mechanisms behind the behaviors being studied. Moreover, the repetition of similar findings across various different studies contributes to the strength of the conclusions and reinforces confidence in their validity.

Managerial Implications - Recommendations for Marketers

Consumers want to be greener, but research shows they expect businesses to guide them and "lead the way" (Bonini & Oppenheim, 2008). For businesses, being greener is beneficial. Those that adapt and align themselves with sustainability requirements can increase their chances of long-term success, enjoy strategic advantages, improve their reputation, and enhance their brand value.

The findings presented here underscore the crucial role of marketers in educating consumers about green consumption and expanding the reach of green consumerism. Marketers can influence purchasing motivation and initiate the first stage of the spillover effect, which begins with personal use. Additionally, marketers can engage in the final stage of the spillover effect by encouraging consumers to recommend green products through word-of-mouth, thereby expanding the green consumer base.

Below are several recommendations for marketing activities to encourage purchase and use, and to increase word-of-mouth recommendations and diffusion, based on the literature reviewed here, current research findings, and practical examples from successful marketing activities worldwide.

1. Improving Awareness and Encouraging Green Behavior (Purchase/Use)

As mentioned, the mere use of a green product can lead to a spillover effect through positive usage experience, green self-identity perception, and product recommendation. The literature points to many barriers in purchasing green products, such as lack of awareness of green products' existence, difficulty finding them, uncertainty about their benefits, or distrust in the products themselves. Marketers have significant tools for reducing these barriers and influencing consumers to purchase and use green products.

Generally, consumers are aware of climate change and understand they can contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, they don't know how to act. Lack of knowledge and confusion can be significant barriers to purchasing green products. Consumers may find it difficult to identify green products or find such products on the shelf. Even products labeled as green can be confusing due to information overload, meaningless claims from the consumer's perspective, or a lack of standardization in label visibility, structure, and packaging information (Johnstone & Tan, 2015).

Marketing Activity Recommendations

Market Education: Although awareness of the climate crisis is growing, there are still populations unaware of the problem or how they can contribute to fighting it through using environmentally friendly products. Marketers can set up interactive displays where customers can learn about their carbon footprint and how purchasing certain green products will reduce it.

Similarly, marketers and retailers can place information kiosks in stores about green products and offer tips for greener consumption. For example, [P&G's campaign](#) teaches consumers how they can benefit the environment through proper use of their products, and the company awards global sustainability prizes to individuals and teams worldwide whose contributions help reduce environmental footprint while using the company's products.

Creating Awareness of Green Alternatives: Marketers must inform consumers about their green product offerings through advertising campaigns, thereby increasing awareness and driving demand. [H&M](#), for instance, marks its products in the conscious collection with a green tag, and customers receive green points each time they purchase from this collection.

Nudges: Nudges are targeted interventions that can guide consumers toward desired behavior. Human self-perception is flexible and can be changed through various cues, as people tend to use available information to understand and define themselves (Swann & Gilbert, 1990). Humans try to understand the world by seeking consistency between their perceptions, beliefs, and actions. Inconsistency between perceptions and behavior creates cognitive dissonance that people want to reduce. Therefore, when a certain self-identity is activated – such as green self-identity – people will act to maintain it through demonstrating more environmentally friendly behavior. In this context, marketers can encourage consumers to perceive themselves as environmentally friendly through nudges, thereby encouraging pro-environmental behavior.

For example, in a hotel study, an attempt was made to increase guests' towel reuse in hotel rooms. In the experiment, two types of signs were hung in bathrooms on towel racks. The standard signage read: "Help save the environment. You can show your respect for nature and help save the environment by reusing your towels during your stay." The sign describing a social norm read: "Most other guests at the hotel participate in the towel reuse program at least once during their stay." Through this message, customers received a nudge guiding them to consider towel reuse to evoke desired behavior. The findings showed that those who were informed that most previous guests reused their towels were more likely to participate in the towel reuse program, compared to those who received a standard environmental message that did not include descriptive norms (Goldstein, Cialdini & Griskevicius, 2008).

Ideas for nudges could include, for example, placing signage near environmentally friendly products with messages such as "How easy it is to be green," applying labels on products featuring messages like "Join the many making small but important changes for the environment," emphasizing messages demonstrating everyone's ability to impact environmental conditions even through small actions, such as "Your choice helps preserve Earth for future generations," manipulating green identity through placing mirrors near shelves with green products with the message "See how green you are. Choose a green product," and more.

2. Emphasizing Choice Autonomy: Increasing Variety and Availability of Green Products

Consumers who decide to purchase environmentally friendly products often struggle to find them, as they are not prominently positioned on shelves, or their quantity is limited compared to regular products. As mentioned, the sense of voluntary choice in green products is a condition for triggering the spillover effect. In this context, a limited product variety may harm consumers' sense of free choice.

Marketing Activity Recommendations

Marketers need to continue developing and expanding the supply of value-adding green products for consumers, ensuring they are available and accessible to as many customers as possible. A wide product range will allow consumers to choose an environmentally friendly alternative. As noted, voluntary choice increases the likelihood of a spillover effect leading to additional green behavior. Products that combine green attributes with additional benefits such as quality, uniqueness, convenience, and aesthetic design will be inherently attractive.

Retailers can position green products at eye level and ensure they are located in dedicated sections rather than sharing shelf space with conventional products. Walmart, for example, features a dedicated category of environmentally friendly products on its website.

3. Addressing Barriers - Minimizing Negative Perceptions of Green Products and Distrust in Products or Marketers

Environmentally friendly products suffer from an image problem. They are often perceived as inferior to regular products, less qualitative or less effective (for instance, green cleaning products are perceived as less efficient, hybrid cars initially had reduced engine power, etc.). Moreover, consumers not only doubt the quality of green products but their actual "greenness." Consumers are aware of greenwashing phenomena and intentional deception by companies and marketers (Bonini & Oppenheim, 2008).

Marketing Activity Recommendations

To rebuild public trust, companies must inform consumers about their true environmental impact. Honesty and transparency are required in company communications regarding production processes, raw materials used, packaging, recycling, compliance with standards and green certifications,

etc. Collaborations with environmental organizations can help validate these products. [Patagonia](#), for example, is known not only for supporting environmental groups and environmental policy but also for using recycled materials and being transparent about its production processes and supply chain. These messages are well communicated on the company's website, as well as in marketing campaigns and product tags.

4. Improving Price Perception of Green Products

Environmentally friendly products tend to be more expensive or are perceived as such (Gleim et al., 2013). High price is one of the prominent barriers to purchasing green products.

Marketing Activity Recommendations

Price Barrier Reduction: In situations of higher prices for green products, marketers can influence initial trial by offering consumers trial-sized products, discounts, coupons, or loyalty point accumulation for purchasing green products.

Many consumers notice the higher prices of green products but fail to consider potential long-term cost savings from their use. Therefore, marketers should communicate both the environmental and economic benefits of these products, especially the more expensive ones. For example, they can highlight how green products offer greater long-term savings by lasting longer, consuming less energy, or improving efficiency.

Loyalty club benefits can be used to encourage and reward green product purchases through point accumulation. A "green tag" can also be awarded to consumers who consistently purchase and use green products, and even reward them for it. For example, H&M awards "green" points for recycling green clothing that consumers bring to stores, for bringing shopping bags from home, and for purchasing products from the green collection. The green points convert to vouchers that can be redeemed in future purchases.

5. Encouraging the Word-of-Mouth Recommendation Stage

When consumers decide whether to purchase a specific product or service, they want to hear authentic reviews from real people with real experience. First-hand reviews and recommendations are considered User Generated Content, and data shows that most buyers report that content generated by other consumers (blogs, forums, discussions, recommendations, etc.) influences their purchasing decisions (Malthouse et al., 2016). For

example, [natural cosmetics company Lush](#) actively encourages its customers to share their experiences with products and the brand. These authentic contents are displayed on the brand's social media channels and product pages, building not only trust but allowing customers to see the products in use.

Recommendations for Marketing Activity

Marketers can encourage word-of-mouth diffusion of green products in various ways, including rewarding customers for sharing and promoting recommendations. This can be done through incentives such as prizes or testimonials featuring stories of customers who made green choices and the benefits they experienced. Additionally, celebrities and influencers can be enlisted to recommend green products, thereby clearly linking such products to status (especially for expensive products). Opinion leaders who are enthusiastic about sustainability and use green products daily and routinely can greatly influence consumers. Moreover, platforms for information sharing, forums, and green communities can be created around green brands. In these communities, consumers can share green consumption tips with each other, consult, read relevant content, learn about additional green products, etc.

Summary

Consumers must transition to sustainable consumption to reduce carbon emissions and protect the environment. However, although consumers report willingness to engage in green behavior, a significant gap exists between such willingness and actual behavior. Enforcement or requiring consumers to engage in green consumption is not effective over time, while green behavior driven by internal motivations has been found more effective in changing behavior.

This position paper demonstrates that positive experiences of green product consumption lead to green identity perception and a higher tendency to recommend green products to others when consumers feel they freely chose the green product, but not when they are forced to do so. Companies and brands have both the responsibility and the ability to expand green consumption by raising awareness of green products, educating consumers on their benefits and usage, and encouraging the sharing of positive recommendations with others.

Israeli brands can and should draw inspiration from international brands and be active participants in expanding green consumption circles and creating a positive and lasting impact on environmental quality.

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