

'Green' scale helps predict how consumers buy environmentally friendly products

April 3 2014, by Victoria Fryer

(Phys.org) —How do consumers decide when faced with the option of buying a traditional product or a competing product that is marketed as "green?" Penn State Smeal College of Business faculty member Karen Winterich and her colleagues set out to develop a scale of "green consumption values" to help predict which consumers will prefer to purchase environmentally friendly products.

The [researchers](#) define "green [consumption values](#)" as the tendency of [consumers](#) to express the value of environmental protection through the goods and services they purchase. To measure those values, researchers developed a six-item measure they call the GREEN scale, consisting of the following statements:

- It is important to me that the products I use do not harm the environment.
- I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions.
- My purchase habits are affected by my concern for the environment.
- I am concerned about wasting the resources of our planet.
- I would describe myself as environmentally responsible.
- I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more [environmentally friendly](#).

"Our primary goal is to develop a concise measure of exclusively green consumption values, as opposed to broader attitudes toward socially

responsible behavior or environmental consciousness," the researchers wrote in an article to be published in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

In applying the GREEN scale across a series of six studies, the researchers also found that green consumption values tend to exist within a larger network of ideas and beliefs about conservation.

"We demonstrate that green consumption values are strongly related to the careful use of not just collective, environmental resources, but also personal resources," the researchers wrote. "That is, both the tendency to use financial resources wisely ... and the tendency to use physical resources wisely ... are positively correlated with green consumption values."

In other words, consumers that value green consumption also tend to value financial savings and reuse and repurpose goods rather than quickly disposing of them. Consumers with this set of values may experience some conflict if environmentally friendly products are more expensive or less effective than their traditional counterparts. How do consumers resolve this?

The researchers found that consumers with high green consumption values tend to evaluate products that align with these values more favorably. This "motivated reasoning" tends to counteract the perception that environmentally friendly products are less effective and/or more costly.

The GREEN scale, say the researchers, can be useful to marketing practitioners in predicting consumer preference for environmentally friendly products in a particular market or demographic.

"For example, marketers may need to continue to emphasize a value-

conscious focus when positioning [environmentally friendly] products to reach consumers with higher green consumption values that also value personal financial resources," the researchers wrote.

In addition, it can help marketing researchers understand how a consumer's values affect his or her responses to environmentally based marketing actions.

Because of the motivated reasoning aspect, marketers "may need to focus more on what can be done to increase purchase of [environmentally friendly] products among consumers with weaker green consumption values since those with stronger green consumption values are motivated to do so on their own," the researchers wrote.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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