

Viewing responsible consumption as a personal project

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Abstract-

Previous research on "responsible consumption" (RC) has focused on the inconsistencies of responsible consumers and has used the term "gap" to refer to these inconsistencies. Observable difficulties, such as a lack of available responsible products and their higher associated costs, have been given as explanations for this gap. A much more complex explanation emerges when RC is seen holistically, a long-term perspective is adopted, when consumers are studied in their daily life, and consumption is seen as a social activity. The argument developed in this paper draws fundamentally on psychology, in particular on the literature on personal projects. By using an inductive methodology (grounded theory), a case is made for treating responsible consumption as one of many personal projects that an individual may undertake. Since consumers have a project network and projects are not always aligned with one another, there is frequently a clash between projects. This clash can be interpersonal (with other projects of the same individual) or intrapersonal (with the projects, beliefs, norms of his/her significant others). The main contribution of this paper is that it puts forward a holistic, dynamic, and socially embedded view of RC which leads to questioning the notion of "gap."

Index Terms-

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