

PROJECT

Economics
Consumer Policy
Sustainability
Food

Real World Consumer Behaviour

How does real-world consumer behaviour deviate from that predicted by rational choice theory? This project compiled insights emerging from the parallel disciplines of behavioural economics as well as commercial and social marketing with respect to sustainable consumption in Europe. The project analysed the applicability of these disciplines to European environmental consumer policy. As a result, the project formulated real-world recommendations for environmental consumer policy in five specific areas: food and drink, consumer electronics, vehicles, white goods and energy.

Rational choice theory has dominated consumer policy design in the past. This project reviewed insights from the parallel disciplines of behavioural economics as well as commercial and social marketing. Furthermore, real-world examples were looked at in order to assess the applicability of behavioural economic theories to European environmental consumer policy.

All of the partners conducted a thorough literature review that served to identify influences on consumer choice that may have deviated from those predicted by rational choice theory. The project team formulated policy-relevant summaries of the main influences on consumer behaviour outside of rational choice theory, focusing on five distinct areas: food and drink, consumer electronics, vehicles, white goods and energy.

The Ecologic Institute was predominantly responsible for the research on white goods and developed a special policy brief on white goods. The results of the project provide decision-makers in the European Commission important insights about the effectiveness of different policy options in terms of fostering environmentally desirable behaviours and sustainable consumption habits.

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Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), Netherlands
Ecologic Institute, Germany

Team

Max Grünig

Team

Zoë Robaey

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