

CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF RENEWABLE ENERGIES – TARGET GROUP SEGMENTATION BASED ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF PRIVATE END USERS INTO LIFESTYLE TYPOLOGIES IN GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

Global challenges have moved the potential of renewable energies into the focus of science, society, and economy (e.g., Duncan 2001; Smil 2003; Schwartz et al. 2006). The usage of renewable energies is no longer merely a playing field of alternative tinkers or idealists, but has emerged into a significant economic factor and job generator (e.g., Keppler 2007; Zoellner et al. 2008). The target group segmentation based on lifestyle typologies as developed in this empirical paper shall facilitate the target specific allocation of marketing budgets (e.g., Day 1981; Srivastava 1988; Hunecke 2007). The construct of acceptance is based on the three-component theory (affective, cognitive, conative) of attitude research (e.g., Rosenberg 1966; Ajzen 1989; Koufaris 2002). In contrast to attitude, acceptance is particularly manifested in the adoption of the product (e.g., Davis et al. 1989; Venkatesh et al. 2000). The components of the construct are *attitudinal and behavioral acceptance*, *acceptance to use* as well as *behavioral restrictions*. Furthermore, the acceptance of private end users is set into direct relationship with their lifestyles, in order to develop a lifestyle typology. For this reason, different variables are included into the study, which cover demographic and psychographic variables as well as various behavioural characteristics. The subsequent analysis follows the proceedings of a multi-stage market segmentation. Its first step thereby includes the differentiation between renewable-energy interested and non-interested. On the second level, the group of interested, the target group, is further classified into four homogeneous segments (Day 1981; Kotler 2000):

The Active Performance Oriented (31.4% of the sample, n=50, 50% male, 50% female) This segment is characterized by the lowest attitudinal and behavioral acceptance. The environmental consciousness of those affiliated with this cluster is lowest. Presumably because of the low income, this lifestyle type is characterized by the second highest willingness-to-save. With respect to their personal values and beliefs, the respondents value performance-orientation, diligence, proactiveness, self-fulfilment and a multifarious life higher than those in other segments.

The Technophile Educated (15.7% of the sample, n=25, 60% male, 40% female) The respondents in this segment are characterized by the second highest behavioral acceptance and acceptance to use of all segments. 20 percent use renewable energies. Technophilia is highest in this cluster. With respect to personal values and beliefs, assets and property are of most interest. This segment is characterized by the lowest values with respect to tolerance, altruism, solidarity and the highest value with respect to egoism. An increased interest in nature and consumer magazines can be noticed.

The comfortable Bon Vivants (25.9% of the sample, n=41, 49% male, 51% female) The attitudinal acceptance is the second highest behind cluster four. However, the smallest number of respondents actually uses renewable energies (2.4 percent). Furthermore, members of this cluster show the second highest value with respect to environmental consciousness and act in the environmentally friendliest way. The willingness-to-save is by far the lowest in this cluster. Likewise are the values performance orientation, diligence and proactiveness. Only with respect to enjoyment of life this cluster dominates.

The Environmentally Aware Social (27.0% of the sample, n=43, 72% male, 28% female) The strongest advocates of renewable energies belong to this lifestyle type. 60.5 percent of the private end users use renewable energies. Not only the acceptance to use, but also attitudinal and behavioral acceptance are highest in this segment. Furthermore, private end users in this cluster are by far the most environmentally conscious; accordingly, environmentally benign behaviour is above average as well. This is in accordance with the personal values and beliefs.

The strength of the approach as pursued in this paper lies in the breadth of considered and integrated marketing theoretic concepts and variables. While the case of Germany served as a viable example for a first empirical application of the introduced model – Germany has made significant progress with respect to renewable energies, technologically as well as economically –, climate change and energy shortage are global challenges so that the approach as suggested in this paper should be further pursued in an international context.

References Available on Request.