

A Typology of Barriers to Pro-Environmental Behaviors: Evidence from a Three-Country Study

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Abstract Major issues in pro-environmental marketing are the physical, social and psychological barriers to adoption or maintenance of such behaviors, including psychological reactance to pressures (McGoldrick et al., 2009). Reactance is exemplified by people reacting to perceived threats to freedom by changing attitudes and/or acting against societal pressure or persuasive attempts (Brehm and Brehm, 1981), such as pro-environmental social marketing. Threats may be characterized variously as social influence, self-imposed or barrier threats (Wicklund, 1974), personal or impersonal threat (Brehm and Brehm, 1981), or economic, social-psychological or contractual threats (Wendlandt and Schrader, 2007).

Based on a three phase, mixed-methods series of investigations, we explore and develop the concept of reactance and related constructs relevant to the (non)adoption of six contrasting pro-environmental behaviors. Using innovative online elicitation methodology (n=342), we develop items for the measurement of the main dimensions of resistance, testing the reliability and validity of these measures in the USA, UK, and Australia (total n=8397). Using an expanded form of the Stages of Change model, we identify areas of resistance most relevant at each point of stage transition, exploring different resistance profiles. We identify practical implications for policy makers and practitioners in pro-environmental marketing, as well as further opportunities for researchers.

References: Available upon request

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