

**Why is it so difficult to effectively promote desired environmental behaviors? Getting a big picture to improve effectiveness.**

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**Abstract:** Throughout the world, numerous public and private organizations are strongly involved in a specific type of social marketing that consists of extending and intensifying environmentally-friendly attitudes with the goal that citizens change those behaviors that have a negative impact on the environment. Despite the massive and sustained effort of these organizations, the overall aim of having pro-environmental attitudes directly translated into pro-environmental behaviors is still very far from being achieved. Indeed, the inconsistency between environmental attitudes and behaviors (a phenomenon usually called environmental attitude-behavior gap) has been observed repeatedly in broad sectors of the population with very varied social, economic, and cultural conditions.

Previous studies have focused on how the environmental gap is related to demographic and psychographic characteristics, but there is no prior research on a potential connection between the environmental gap and other individual inconsistencies. This connection is supported by both simple intuition (individuals who regularly attempt to maintain thought-action consistency are expected to be more capable of performing the sustainable behaviors they consider reasonable) as well as a conceptual congruence with the theory of planned behavior (self-control, the capacity to perform consistent actions, is a significant moderator of the perceived behavioral control within this framework).

We confirmed the hypothesized connection in Spain by using a survey of 10,001 respondents that accurately matched the demographic profile of the Spanish population. We built a model in which the environmental inconsistency depended on the presence of personal inconsistencies in seven areas: Eating fast food, drinking alcoholic beverages, eating pre-cooked meals, consuming diet products, smoking, not doing any sport/fitness activity, and downloading music/movies. For the role played by these inconsistencies to be measured comparatively, we also included as independent variables seven demographics and seven psychographics.

The results showed that four individual inconsistencies (concerning fast food, alcoholic beverages, pre-cooked meals, and diet products) entered into the model that best explained the environmental gap and had a relatively high explanatory power in comparison with the other significant predictors.

These findings suggest that pro-environmental marketing should rely less on impersonal stimuli such as advertising campaigns, which are barely able to change individuals' tendency toward inconsistency, and focus more on personal stimuli such as integrative education programs, which are directly oriented toward strengthening the self-control needed to perform the actions judged reasonable.

**Keywords:** Environmental marketing, environmental attitude-behavior gap, attitude-behavior inconsistency, self-control.