

Publication

Challenging the Status Quo through Social Influence: Changes in Sustainable Consumption through the Influence of Social Networks

JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)**ID** 4622487**Author(s)** Schubert, Iljana; de Groot, Judith I. M.; Newton, Adrian C.**Author(s) at UniBasel** [Schubert, Iljana](#) ;**Year** 2021**Title** Challenging the Status Quo through Social Influence: Changes in Sustainable Consumption through the Influence of Social Networks**Journal** Sustainability**Volume** 13**Number** 10**Pages / Article-Number** 5513**Keywords** social networks, injunctive and descriptive norms, sustainable food consumption, social influence, sustainability

This study examines the influence of social network members (versus strangers) on sustainable food consumption choices to investigate how social influence can challenge the status quo in unsustainable consumption practices. We hypothesized that changes to individual consumption practices could be achieved by revealing 'invisible' descriptive and injunctive social norms. We further hypothesized that it matters who reveals these norms, meaning that social network members expressing their norms will have a stronger influence on other's consumption choices than if these norms are expressed by strangers. We tested these hypotheses in a field experiment (N = 134), where participants discussed previous sustainable food consumption (revealing descriptive norms) and its importance (revealing injunctive norms) with either a stranger or social network member. We measured actual sustainable food consumption through the extent to which participants chose organic over non-organic consumables during the debrief. Findings showed that revealed injunctive norms significantly influenced food consumption, more so than revealed descriptive norms. We also found that this influence was stronger for social network members compared to strangers. Implications and further research directions in relation to how social networks can be used to evoke sustainable social change are discussed.

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