

Why some societies are more likely to buy eco-friendly products

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Materialism is not necessarily bad, it can actually do good in societies that put the community first, according to new research by Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU).

The study, conducted by Professor Bodo B. Schlegelmilch, compared the values of consumers in the US to consumers in China, India, and Thailand.

In Asia, rapid economic growth and increasing prosperity among the middle classes have led to a surge in consumption – this is often seen as a move towards materialism and individualism.

They found that materialists living in individualistic societies make the kind of expensive purchases expected from a self-serving brand of materialism that some people frown upon.

Whereas materialists from collectivist societies, often in Asian countries, who also make pricey purchases, do so in order to strengthen their reputation as a socially responsible member of society.

“A self-serving materialist in individually orientated countries may opt for a flashy sports car, but a materialist from a collectivistic society might opt for a high-end and eco-friendly car, which they can enjoy together with friends and family,” says Professor Schlegelmilch.

The researchers believe that these insights into the brighter side of materialism are valuable to international businesses and organisations looking to engage consumers in pro-social spending, whether it is buying socially responsible goods and services or donating to charities.

The research was published in the Journal of International Business Studies.

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For more information, a copy of the report, or to speak to Professor Schlegelmilch, contact Katie Hurley at BlueSky Education on khurley@bluesky-pr.com or call +44 (0) 1582 790708.