

[Abstracts](#)

---

## **Experts of households responding to experts on households: The SusHouse consumer acceptance research**

Matthias Bode  
Department of Marketing and Consumer Research  
University of Hanover  
Hanover, Germany  
e-mail: [mb@muk.ifb.uni-hannover.de](mailto:mb@muk.ifb.uni-hannover.de)

### **Abstract**

In marketing science there are two different ways approaching the consumer. The so-called "selling approach" puts the focus on finding the best ways to sell a product to consumers. Alternatively, the modern "marketing approach" puts the focus on the needs of consumers and then developing a product that fits best existing needs. For a long time environmental movements have opted for the selling approach. The question was how to sell ideas for a better future to consumers. To a great extent this tendency rooted in the assumption of owning specific expert competencies to analyze environmental problems. Then solutions were developed and within a normative set of shared values the realization problem was tackled.

In the last 10 years the focus changed and consumer centered approaches gained considerable acceptance in environmental research and politics. The SusHouse research methodology tries to enhance this tendency in acknowledging the vital roles of consumers as experts of the household and pivotal protagonists in realizing a sustainable future.

In the SusHouse project along these lines the ideas about a sustainable future for the private household - developed in cooperation with traditional experts - were assessed by consumers, understood as specific experts of their own everyday reality. The paper describes the theoretical framework and practical approaches of the consumer acceptance research.

The theoretical framework is based on a lifestyle approach. The rationale are to connect the relevant stimuli with the everyday level of behavior, to cope with the subjective interpretation and incorporation of stimuli into group-specific lifeworlds and to describe potential adopter groups with a coherent set of objective and subjective features.

The research design combines an individual questionnaire and focus groups. The research process involves three sessions, lasting two hours and about 15 participants. The selection of participants is structured according to the techniques of theoretical, purposive sampling with representatives of green consumers, mainstream consumers and future adopters.

In summer 1999 this consumer acceptance research was carried out in five European countries with the focus on three household functions. Besides the theoretical description of the methodology, the paper will also include an overview of the results and an assessment of the methodology.