

## It's not easy being green

Kermit the Frog once said, "It's not easy being green." I don't think one could say it any better than that. Green consumption is a challenging notion and consumers are faced with a number of daily decisions that impact their "green footprint". Yes, each and every person has a footprint that represents their green consumption and even though consumers care about the environment, their behaviour does not always reflect their attitude. So what influences people's decision to adopt green behaviour?

With all the environmental issues that have emerged over the past few years, one major cause is the overconsumption of natural resources, especially in developed countries. South Africa's food shopping environment is not yet as green as that of some developed countries, such as the United States.

There is a need for people to start practicing sustainable consumption and an even bigger need to make them aware of their green footprint. Although green consumption is on the increase globally, certain countries, such as South Africa, are only leaving baby footprints. The biggest issue in green consumption is that there is a noticeable attitude/behavioural gap where consumers state that they are concerned about environmental problems, but fail to follow through with making environmentally responsible purchases. There are, however, a number of barriers to green consumption and restrictions in society, making it difficult to embrace green consumption.

A study was conducted by Natasja Branca, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), aimed at discovering the barriers and determinants that may influence the primary household shopper to adopt green behaviour in South Africa. The study focused on the personal barriers to green consumerism. These personal elements include attitudes towards green food products, personal norms, confidence in product labels, perceived barriers and ecological knowledge. The study focused on Gauteng food shoppers, specifically looking at the primary shopper in each household.

The findings suggest that time barriers are the strongest influential factor among the perceived barriers, with the second strongest influential factor being attitudes towards green food. The results of the study suggest that green marketing of food products should address women, as they are still the primary shoppers in South African households. Furthermore, marketers should educate their consumers on green behaviour in their marketing, since the results suggest that better consumer knowledge would lead to an increase in green buying behaviour. Moreover, the study found that perceived time barriers reduce purchases of green food. So, we need to start somewhere, little by little we can paint the earth green!

*This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2011 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Natasja Branca, under the supervision of Dr Lené Ehlers.*