

# 'GREEN CONSUMERISM' IN THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN



Paul Sutherland of think M. assisting with the regional Smarter choices sustainable travel campaign



**Many of us think a little greener these days, whether it's recycling or leaving the car to travel to work by Metro, but has our 'consumer conscience' been hampered by the financial gloom?**

With increasing pressures on both personal and business finances, has price become an overbearing factor for consumers and business decision makers? Many would consider that our 'consumer conscience' would suffer, so where does this leave the eco-marketing scene?

You would perhaps expect that in these challenging times price would overwhelm our interest in fair trade and sustainable consumerism, but in point of fact demand for more expensive local produce for example, is increasingly strong. Mintel research shows 42 per cent of adults would like more retailers or manufacturers to source their products from local suppliers, while almost 28 per cent are happy to pay more for food if it means supporting local farmers.

Our client Daisy Green, a rapidly growing online magazine created in the North East engages consumers in contemporary ethical issues and up-to-date sustainability news in fashion and beauty. With a fresh take on green, the editorial team are focussed on the practical benefits for eco-living and the lifestyle interests of its reader base. As a result readership is continuously increasing as is the magazine's national profile. (See [www.daisygreenmagazine.co.uk](http://www.daisygreenmagazine.co.uk))

It is certainly true that given the frugality of recent months, there is heightened focus on economic benefit. As a consequence, the green message is adapting. Successful eco-friendly solutions not only emphasise environmental benefits but drive home associated financial gains too.

Several regional enterprises demonstrate this approach. EOL Logistics is developing new consultancy services in support of recycling aircraft. While UK based hulk recycling offers aircraft owners a more environmentally sound solution to exporting the problem, importantly, adopting this strategy is also financially advantageous. EOL Logistics secures greater returns through better parts and materials recovery, while improving fleet owners' carbon footprint.

The car club network, Option C was founded in Durham but is rapidly spreading. The company provides organisations and individuals access to a car for a flat hourly rate. They have built their business on eco-friendly values but the proposition offers a whole host of practical benefits and financial savings for those organisations and individuals who need occasional access to a first or second vehicle. ([www.optionc.co.uk](http://www.optionc.co.uk))

It seems successful advocates of eco-solutions are still enjoying ample opportunity despite tougher times, but in the downturn, better succeed by fully

integrating sustainability, strong environmental credentials and economic sense into their propositions.

As marketers, we need to keep up with changing values, leveraging research insight and identifying what really matters to our customers. The enterprises outlined are testament to the fact that green values are thriving, and the environment remains a key consumer and business priority, as long as the choice is competitive, and makes sound economic sense.

There is plenty of financial assistance available for those seeking professional strategic marketing support in the North at present. If you would like to discuss your business, and how we can help, please feel free to contact us on 0191 211 1957.

*think M. is a specialist strategic marketing and research agency based in the North East. The company has a growing team of marketing, research and intelligence specialists who support strategic marketing planning, channel development and the introduction of new products and services. Clients range from multinationals to regional enterprise.*

