

Cute on the outside, sweet on the inside: The effects of cute packaging on expected sweetness and sugar content of food products

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Abstract

Today's shopping environments are overflowing with cuteness. But how do cute stimuli on food packages influence consumers' expectations about product attributes? In two online studies, we investigated the effects of cute packaging on people's assumptions about sugar content and sweetness for three food products. In study 1, we found that yoghurt with cute (vs. neutral) packaging received higher sweetness (but not sugar content) ratings and was more often perceived as a child product. Study 2, conducted as a 2 (cute vs. neutral) x 2 (kids vs. adult product) experiment, corroborated our findings: Cute (vs. neutral) smoothies were expected to contain more sugar, and kids (vs. adult) smoothies were assumed to taste sweeter. With our study, we extend current knowledge on the effects of (implicit) packaging cues and target group labeling. If our findings can be transferred to the actual taste experience, cute packaging might be a tool for sugar reduction in food products.

Keywords: *food package design; cuteness; sensory expectations*

Track: Consumer Behaviour