

Carbon labels as warning labels. An inductive analysis of consumers discourses in the food industry

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Abstract

Very little is known of the key features that may drive awareness, understanding, and credibility in carbon labels. Drawing from literature on sustainable labels and eco-feedback, this paper identifies key design features that could improve the use of carbon labels on food products and explores consumers' assessments of a set of labels with these features. The main finding of this paper is that carbon labels should be reconceptualized as warning labels. Given the low environmental motivation of mainstream consumers, carbon label design should provoke bottom-up attention: attract the consumer curiosity, connect emotionally, create a message of urgency, and increase personal responsibility by bringing the environmental problem closer to their own concerns. For policy makers, this finding suggests that label design should evolve in time so to accompany consumers through the unfolding stages of awareness, understanding and credibility.

Keywords: *Carbon-labels; Design; Warning-labels*

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