

# Say it Concrete! A Construal Level Approach to Increase Sustainable Consumption

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## **Abstract**

Extant research describes sustainability to be an abstract, future-oriented concept (high Construal Level), which is also reflected in advertisements for sustainable consumer goods. However, no study comprehensively tested the assumption whether sustainable products are perceived on a high or low Construal Level. Contradicting these results and applying the Construal Level Theory in an Implicit Association Test (n=216), we show in this paper that organic food is actually associated with concrete benefits and depicted as psychologically close in consumers' minds (low Construal Level). A second field study, an experiment at the point of sale with aggregated sales data, reveals that a fit between these associations and the design of an advertisement message is able to significantly increase the sales of organic milk. Thereby, this paper not only enhances the understanding of sustainable consumer behavior, but also offers valuable implications for sustainability marketing practice.

**Keywords:** *Sustainable Consumption; Construal Level Theory; Implicit Association Test*

**Track:** Social Responsibility & Ethics