

# Don't Trash These Tiny Treasures! – How Humanization and Tailored Communication Enhance Consumers' Liking of Visually Imperfect Produce

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## **Abstract**

In this paper, we investigate how humanization and executional style of point-of-sale communication influence consumers' liking (product evaluation, purchase intention, and amount taken) of visually imperfect produce. Extending research with three experimental studies, we show that humanization's effect is leveraged using a combination of pictorial and textual elements (vs. pictorial only), and that message contents conveyed by an imperfect humanized product should rather position flaws as a trademark (vs. blemish). Finally, we demonstrate that for some dependent variables, the effect of humanization on product liking is mediated by compassion and/or sympathy. Consumers' higher perception of produce's humaneness evokes stronger emotions, commonly translating to increased liking. The insights of this paper are relevant for both academy and practice, particularly for food retailers and policy makers aiming to reduce food waste in the strive for a more sustainable development.

**Keywords:** *food waste; humanization; message content*

**Track:** Transformative Consumer Research