

That's not Natural! Consumer Reactions to Disconfirmed Expectations about 'Natural' Food

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Abstract

Natural claims on food products create numerous positive expectations. This research aims to reveal consumer reactions when they learn that their expectations may be disconfirmed due to the lack of regulation. We show that consumers expect natural-claimed food to be organic, minimally processed, fresh, to ensure better animal welfare, and to be free from GMO, artificial ingredients, antibiotics, preservatives, and hormones. The claim increases product attitude, brand trust, and purchase intention. However, when consumers learn that their expectations may be disconfirmed, their purchase intentions decrease. Moreover, the effects of disconfirmed expectations do not only affect product attitude but even spill over to the brand. We suggest policy makers to clarify that natural-claimed food might disconfirm these expectations, for example through education. In the fight against obesity, policy makers should control the claim particularly for hedonic products since a natural claim increases perceived healthfulness while perceived taste remains equal.

Keywords: *Natural claim; Consumer expectations; Brand trust*

Track: Consumer Behaviour