

# Eating our eco-anxieties away: How climate change threat and collective impotence fuel the consumption of vice food

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## **Abstract**

Climate change is a topic that requires an emotional response from individuals. However, it is important to be cautious about which eco-emotions are being elicited, as some emotions can have detrimental effects on consumers' health through increased unhealthy eating behaviors. In this study, we adopt appraisal theory of emotion as a theoretical perspective and investigate consumers' appraisals of climate change, the discrete emotions that appraisals of climate change elicit, and the downstream effects of these emotions on vice food consumption. Using a mixed-method approach, combining semi-structured interviews (N=40) with four experiments (N=1,038), we find that when consumers perceive that climate change is a severe threat to human security and they are impotent to tackle it, they experience strong eco-emotions of anxiety and fear (Studies 1-3). Anxiety, not fear, is a harmful eco-emotion, as it fuels increased consumption of vice food (Study 4), especially among consumers with impaired self-control (Study 5).

**Subject Areas:** *Consumer Behaviour, Hedonic Products, Public Policy*

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