

The effect of positive versus negative framing on the Negative Footprint Illusion

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Abstract

Given the complexity of assessing the environmental sustainability of products, consumers rely on heuristics when processing eco-information. As a result, they fall prey to a bias called ‘the negative footprint illusion’: consumers erroneously estimate the total environmental impact of a combination of a green and non-green product lower than the same non-green product alone. In this research we test this bias and explore its underlying mechanism. We evoke a more summative vs more evaluative mindset by framing the response scales negatively (in terms of environmental damage) vs positively (in terms of environmental friendliness). We show that the negative footprint illusion prevails among consumers with higher levels of environmental concern and that among these consumers, adding an eco- component to a non-green meal strengthens the illusion when the response scale is positively framed. As our main contribution, our findings will provide insight in the mechanism behind the negative footprint illusion which is of theoretical as well as of managerial importance in order to find ways to reduce this bias.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Information Processing, Intention-Behavior Link*

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics