

Only time will tell: Impact of temporal framing on sustainable behavior

Arpita Pandey
IIM Bangalore, India
Arpit Shah
IIM Bangalore
Shailendra Jain
University of Washington

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Abstract

How is sustainable behavior influenced when climate change impacts are framed as happening now versus in the distant future? Using field and lab studies we demonstrate that when climate change impacts are temporally (proximate) distant, consumers prefer (prevention-framed) promotion-framed sustainable options that (reduce guilt) induce warm glow from (not) helping the environment. The effects are moderated by factors related to the consumer (attribution of responsibility for climate change), and by the climate message (whether the message is repeated through a reminder). Our results hold for a number of sustainable behaviors, ranging from user engagement on Google ads, online information search, recycling decisions, and e-shopping for a sustainable product. Our results contribute to the literature on sustainable decision-making. We make an important methodological contribution by demonstrating the utility of Google ads in inferring regulatory and temporal orientation of consumers.

Subject Areas: *Advertising, Consumer Behaviour, Goal-Derived Categorization, Public Policy*

Track: Consumer Behaviour