

When sustainability doesn't matter: Comparing category and touchpoint evaluations through construal level theory

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Abstract

While many individuals express concerns about climate change and other sustainability issues, they often fail to adjust consumption choices accordingly. This study suggests a novel explanation for this discrepancy, proposing that the salience of products' sustainability attributes differs between consumers' evaluations of product categories and their evaluations of product touchpoints. Using construal level theory, a product category is expected to evoke attributes high in psychological distance, but a product touchpoint evokes attributes low in psychological distance. Hence sustainability attributes of a product touchpoint are less salient and influential on purchase intention than those of the product category, due to construal matching. We find support for this phenomenon in field touchpoint reports about the category of vegan food and drink. As well as throwing light on sustainable consumption, this phenomenon contributes to the touchpoint perspective on customer experience.

Keywords: sustainability; construal level theory; customer touchpoints

Track: Social responsibility & Ethics