

When Insects Meet the Menu: Product Category Effects on Consumer Acceptance of Insect-Based Foods

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Abstract

Edible insects are increasingly promoted as sustainable protein alternatives, yet their acceptance in Western markets remains low. This study examines how product type (animal-based versus non-animal-based) shapes consumer responses to insect-based foods. In a between-subjects experiment, participants evaluated either cricket burgers (animal-based) or cricket chips (non-animal-based) and reported taste expectations, attitudes, anticipated emotions, desire to eat, and interest in a purchase incentive. Results show that cricket chips elicited higher taste expectations than cricket burgers, which in turn increased desire to eat and coupon interest. Taste expectations, but not attitudes or emotions, differed significantly between product types. Mediation analyses confirmed that taste expectations mediated the effect of product type on purchase interest. The findings highlight the importance of sensory expectations and product framing in promoting consumer acceptance of sustainable food innovations.

Track: Consumer Behaviour