

Unpacking Ritual: Why Gift Givers and Recipients Respond Differently to Minimal Packaging

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Abstract

Drawing on insights from gift-giving and sustainability research, we propose that ritual-seeking motives can explain the discrepancy between givers and recipients in their responses to minimal (vs. regular) packaging. Five studies found that givers and recipients exhibited divergent reactions to minimally packaged products in terms of preference, choice, valuation, and willingness to have them. Specifically, givers perceive a diminished ritualistic feeling with minimal (vs. regular) packaging, leading to less favorable responses toward minimally packaged gifts. In contrast, recipients are less sensitive to unpacking rituals and do not exhibit such differences. In addition, this giver-recipient discrepancy is reduced when a consumption ritual is introduced as a substitute to the unpacking ritual. Finally, recipients' reactions to minimal packaging are moderated by the specialness of the gift-giving occasion. The findings highlight the important yet overlooked role of unpacking rituals in gift giving and offer practical recommendations to eliminate the barrier of selling environmental-friendly minimal-packaging gifts.

Track: Consumer Behaviour