

Reduced vs. Recyclable: The Effect of Minimal Packaging Style on Consumer Response to the Brand

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Abstract

Product packaging plays an important role in the retailing of products. As a marketing strategy, minimal packaging is a rising trend that aims to limit waste by reducing the amount of material used in product packages. Yet, little research has studied how consumers respond to brands that adopt such a sustainable strategy. The present research thus examines how minimal packaging influences consumers' perceptions of and responses to brands. Across five studies, we find that consumers perceive brands that adopt a minimal (vs. recyclable or regular) packaging style as more moral. This positive brand morality perception is jointly driven by vertical differentiation in brand sustainability and horizontal differentiation in brand uniqueness. Moreover, the increased brand morality has positive downstream impacts on consumers' behavioral reactions. Consumers' green consumption value moderates their responses towards the brands, such that the positive effect of minimal packaging on consumer responses is stronger among consumers with high green consumption value. The findings have important theoretical and practical implications for designing effective and sustainable packaging, and implementing systematic changes for mitigating climate change.

Track: Consumer Behaviour