

FROM NON-USABLE TO DESIRABLE: CONSUMERS PREFER UPCYCLED PRODUCTS MADE FROM NON-USABLE ITEMS

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Cite as:

Biliciler Göne? (pia), Armut Hanife (2026), FROM NON-USABLE TO DESIRABLE: CONSUMERS PREFER UPCYCLED PRODUCTS MADE FROM NON-USABLE ITEMS. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 55th, (133041)

Paper from the 55th Annual EMAC Conference, Bath, United Kingdom, June 2-5, 2026



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Abstract

Upcycled products are becoming increasingly prominent in the marketplace, yet little is known about what shapes consumer preferences for them. This research examines a key characteristic of the source item used to create upcycled products: its usability—whether the source product could still serve its original purpose (e.g., a sailcloth still fit for sailing before being transformed into a jacket). Across four studies, we show that consumers evaluate the design of upcycled products more favorably and show higher purchase intentions when they are made from non-usable rather than usable source items. This effect arises because consumers perceive the upcycling process to involve a greater degree of transformation when non-usable source products are used. These findings extend research on upcycled products and product life extension and offer insights for managers promoting upcycled products and policymakers encouraging consumer participation in upcycling.

Track: Consumer Behaviour