

Context Matters: How Product Type Moderates Consumer Responses to Sustainable Packaging Labels

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Abstract

While sustainable packaging labels aim to promote environmentally friendly consumption, they may reduce consumer acceptance of the product. Grounded in the disease avoidance mechanisms from the fundamental motives theory, we demonstrate that product type (edible vs. non-edible) systematically moderates consumer responses to "made from recycled materials" labels. An experiment with 658 participants reveals that for all examined psychological mechanisms—disgust, contamination perception, scepticism, and perceived usefulness—recycled material labels (compared to recyclable material labels or no labels) activate disease avoidance responses more strongly for edible than for non-edible products, altering consumer acceptance. These findings highlight that sustainable packaging strategies must account for product-specific contamination threats to be effective.

Track: Product and Brand Management