

Public Abstract

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Title:ECO-LABELED FOOD: HOW ENVIRONMENTALLY-CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS PERCEIVE, INTERPRET, AND USE ECO-LABELS AS SIGNALS

This research explores how different characteristics of eco-labels signal environmental qualities of a food product to environmentally-conscious consumers. Signaling theory is the theoretical framework for the study. The guiding research questions for this research are: how do environmentally-conscious consumers interpret and use eco-labels on food products? Why do they use them? How do visual and textual aspects act as signals and shape environmentally-conscious consumers' perceptions and interpretations of eco-labels? Semi-structured interviews with a photo-elicitation component were conducted as part of this study, which focused more specifically on Millennials. By seeking out environmentally-conscious consumers who already pay attention to eco-labels, the research produced several answers to how the intended audience for eco-labels (environmentally-conscious consumers) interacts with eco-labeled products. These answers lead to suggestions to make eco-labels more effective signals and to better communicate environmental product benefits to consumers.