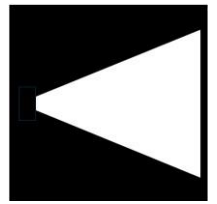


Sustainability Scepticism



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Research Papers

De Wijk, R. A., Janssen, A. M., & Dwyer, L. (2025). *The consumer journey: A new methodology to study the effects of store and product information on consumers' responses to sustainable foods and clothing fabrics.* Food Quality and Preference, 126, 105381. DOI: [10.1016/j.foodqual.2024.105381](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2024.105381).

Overview

This research uses a virtual consumer journey methodology to explore how store environments & product information influence reactions to sustainable foods and fabrics. It combines physiological (heart rate, skin conductance), facial expression & verbal feedback to assess reformulated foods and alternative clothing materials in controlled settings.

Key Findings & Insights

Foods

Store Context: Foods from sustainable store assortments triggered higher arousal and more negative facial expressions compared to identical foods from regular assortments.

Reformulations: Some reformulated products (e.g., cookies) were received positively, while others (e.g., lentil burgers) elicited negative responses. Reformulations were associated with changes in perceived taste attributes like sweetness or saltiness.

Physiological Effects: Sustainable foods generally increased skin conductance (arousal), suggesting they are still viewed as non-mainstream.



Fabrics

Material Perception: Fabrics believed to be made from organic cotton or polylactic acid (PLA) were associated with positive responses, while reused clothing fabrics triggered negative reactions.

Store Type: Upscale stores enhanced positive reactions to organic cotton but amplified negative responses to reused fabrics, reflecting consumer expectations tied to store image.

Consumer Emotions: Fabrics linked to recycling were less negatively perceived than reused fabrics, highlighting the importance of remanufacturing in overcoming consumer disgust.

Consumer Journey Methodology

The study underscores the impact of pre-consumption stages (e.g., store type, product information) on product acceptance, emphasizing the importance of the full consumer journey beyond intrinsic product characteristics.

Mechanisms

Consumer reactions are shaped by contextual cues, such as sustainability framing and store type, which interact with intrinsic product features to influence sensory and emotional responses.



Conclusion

The consumer journey methodology reveals significant effects of contextual cues on product evaluation, offering a valuable tool for developing sustainable products. While sustainable framing may sometimes trigger scepticism, tailored messaging and product reformulations can enhance acceptance. Future research should validate these findings in real-world contexts to optimise marketing strategies and product designs.