

Department of Marketing



Research Seminars Series

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Material over Size? Understanding Consumer Evaluations of a Product's Environmental Impact

Consumers often rely on product cues when intuitively evaluating the product's environmental impact. While multiple sustainability cues exist (e.g., package color or country of origin), any physical product has at least two objectively important features that are salient and simultaneously presented to consumers: the product's size and the material(s) it is made of. In this talk, we explore the extent to which consumers rely on these two core features when assessing the perceived environmental impact of products. In a series of studies using a diverse set of samples and various types of products, sizes, and materials, our research consistently reveals that consumers tend to overlook size when evaluating a product's environmental impact while placing particular emphasis on material. Considerations of product size are low not only compared to the product's material but also relative to participants' own injunctive norms and arise even when consumers acknowledge not knowing which material is more harmful to the environment. Differences in perceived cue diagnosticity and cue processing help explain this phenomenon.