

Consumption | Individual communication

IC - (21120) - OVERCOMING DISTANCE: EFFECTS OF MESSAGE FRAMING ON PARTICIPANTS' WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR SUSTAINABLY PRODUCED CHOCOLATE

Hannes Campe¹; Shirin Betzler¹; Ann-Kathrin Koessler²; Karsten Müller¹; Stefanie Engel¹

1 - Osnabrück University; 2 - Leibniz University Hannover

Background and objectives

Social and ecological aspects in purchasing decisions are becoming increasingly important for consumers, but globalized value chains create social and cultural distance between consumers and producers. Thus, the environmental and social impact of consumer decisions are becoming more complex and therefore less comprehensible for consumers. However, companies lack the knowledge to communicate sustainability information to consumers effectively. Therefore, this study investigates how information on cocoa production in Ghana can be communicated to motivate socially and ecologically sustainable chocolate consumption.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

A written text manipulation in a 2x2 factorial design was developed. To manipulate a gain vs. loss frame, positive consequences of sustainable cocoa farming or negative consequences of non-sustainable cocoa farming in Ghana are made explicit. To manipulate proximity between producer and consumer, the messages focus on a subjective report by a Ghanaian cocoa farmer or an objective documentary-like report by an anonymous third party. Effects on participants' willingness to pay (WTP) a premium for a chocolate bar with fairtrade and organic certification in comparison to a chocolate bar without certification were examined.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Results of the manipulation check indicate that the personal message frame induced significantly higher perceived proximity to the producer than the objective message frame, as measured by a self-developed scale of perceived proximity. Also, in the loss frame condition, the consequences of cocoa farming were perceived as significantly more negative than in the gain frame condition. Thus, the manipulation can be regarded as effective. However, preliminary ANOVA results for WTP did not indicate any significant effects of proximity or gain/loss framing. The possibility of ceiling effects is discussed.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Examining the effects of information regarding distant producers on consumers' WTP is relevant for the design of product packaging, websites or campaigns, which aim to promote consumer decisions in favor of products that meet ecological and social standards.

Palavras-chave : consumer decision, sustainable consumption, experimental design, message framing, proximity