

Is it recycled or recyclable? Improving consumers' perceptions of recycled plastic packages for food products.

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## **Abstract**

Sustainable strategies for food packaging often focus on circularity, proposing “recycled” or “recyclable” solutions. Even though different perceptions of these two alternatives have been ignored by previous research, food products in recycled packages are negatively evaluated because of contamination inferences. The latter represents a main barrier to the adoption of recycled materials in FMCGs. Building on the theory of time perspective we develop a model to mitigate this negative effect. Across two experimental studies we investigate how packaging circularity (recycled vs. recyclable) may affect perceived food quality showing that (a) recycled (vs. recyclable) plastic package negatively affect perceived food quality because of higher contamination perceptions; (b) when consumers are less future-focused, the negative effect of recycled packaging on food quality is mitigated; (c) present-focused appeals increase quality perception, reducing contamination inferences.

**Subject Areas:** *Consumer Behaviour, Product Management*

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