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Abstract

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In order to reduce negative impacts of consumption eco-labeling systems have been introduced. Since efforts to change people's environmentally destructive behavior often have met little success studies of determinants of choice of eco-labeled alternatives are required. The present doctoral dissertation includes four research papers with results from one panel study and two experimental studies. In **Study I** it was shown that individuals that regularly chose eco-labeled alternatives attached more importance to the purchase criterion environmental consequences and to their own health. They also had more positive beliefs about eco-labeled products and experienced a stronger norm to chose such products. **Study II** revealed that importance attached to the purchase criterion environmental consequences predicted if a buyer of conventional food products would try out eco-labeled alternatives at a later stage. Consumers with previous experience of eco-labeled alternatives, who also expressed positive beliefs about eco-labeled products, were more likely to increase their relative purchase frequency. In **Study III** it was noted that eco-labels in use today signify environmentally benign outcomes. Another strategy would be to use eco-labels that indicate negative environmental outcomes with the purpose of making consumers avoid a product. In an experimental design it was shown that individuals who had a weak or no interest in environmental issues were unaffected by both positive and negative outcome eco-labels. The negative outcome label affected individuals with an intermediate interest in environmental issues more than a positive label did. Individuals with a strong interest in environmental protection changed product preference about equally much for both kinds of labels. An obvious parallel to an eco-label that signals a positive outcome would be a price label that signals a price below average. The negative outcome eco-label has an equally obvious parallel in a price label that signals a price above average. **Study IV** used an experimental design to examine how positive and negative outcome eco- and price labels affected preference for some everyday products. For both environmental protection and price there was a positive correlation between rated importance of the attribute and a change in preference due to informational change on the same attribute. However, individuals that rated environmental friendliness as very important were affected more by positive than by negative information. Individuals that rated environmental friendliness as moderately important were affected more by negative as compared to positive information. The price attribute showed an opposite pattern.

Key words : Eco-labeled products, Purchase criteria, Beliefs about product characteristics, Negative versus positive information.

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