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Consumers' Willingness to Waste Food: Attitude toward Environmentally Responsible Behavior and Food Expiration

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Objective

To study consumer's perception of different expiry labels, and their food consumption and waste behavior with respect to different expiry labels.

Introduction

- 21% of food available for consumption is wasted during purchase and consumption by the consumers.
- Wilson et al (2015) suggest that people's WTW is dependent on the type of food items, size of products, and the expiry dates.
- Follows and Jobber (2000) show that individuals with environmentally responsible behavior base their food purchase decisions on the evaluation of the environmental consequences.
- We extend the existent literature by unifying three important aspects of consumers' behavior: their attitudes, awareness and opinions towards food waste, their purchasing behavior and their WTW in consumption stage.

Methodology

- Mixed-design ANOVA model for the choice experiment
- Ordered logit model for the survey – to better understand relation between consumers' awareness, attitudes and opinions, and their personal household attributes

Data

1,500 American grocery shoppers using Qualtrics
Online choice experiment:
- 6 choice sets – no opt out option
- Attributes: price, organic produce, different types of expiry dates (best by, use by)
- 2 food products: yogurt and fresh salmon
- 2 choices offered: Eat it and Toss it

Online survey:
- Consistently designed to produce comparable results
- Composite scales – environmentally responsible behavior
  - Environmental consequences
  - Individual consequences
  - Self-transcendence values
  - Conservation values
  - Self-enhancement values
- Five-point Likert scale
  - Food consumption behavior
  - Attitude, awareness and opinion towards food waste
- Demographics

Results

- Significant for policy makers, food producers, and marketing managers to efficiently reduce food waste generated in consumption stage.
- Significance in two areas: 1) policies related to labeling and food packaging 2) consumer attitude towards sustainable environment.
- Better understanding the impact of food labeling and consumer attitude in reduction of household level food waste.
- The policy implications.

An example of a choice set:

Conclusions

- Decision makers concerned about this issue cannot make important decisions without additional information – about consumers' attitudes, awareness, and opinions towards food waste, their purchasing behavior, and their WTW in consumption stage.
- An analysis that links the pro-social and purchasing behavior of individuals with their willingness to waste food is crucial for the efficient reduction of food waste.

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