

How information framing shapes consumer preferences for sustainability indicators: a Best-Worst Scaling experiment on the Sustainable Rice Platform standard

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Abstract

The Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard offers a multidimensional framework for sustainable rice production, yet its market success depends on whether consumers value its underlying performance indicators. This study investigates Vietnamese urban consumers' preferences for the 12 SRP performance indicators and tests how exposure to one-sided versus two-sided information about SRP rice shapes those preferences. A Best-Worst Scaling (BWS) survey was administered to 430 consumers, who were randomly assigned to receive either benefits-only (Treatment 1, "one-sided") or benefits-and-challenges (Treatment 2, "two-sided") information before completing 12 BWS choice sets. Random Parameter Logit models and bootstrap difference-in-differences analyses were used to estimate preference shares and consumer heterogeneity. Food Safety dominated consumer preferences in both treatments, capturing 40.9% of preference share under one-sided information and rising sharply to 79.9% under two-sided information, while Worker health and safety attracted 18.5% and 8.9%, respectively. Environmental indicators (greenhouse gas emissions, water productivity, biodiversity) and social indicators (women empowerment, child labour) each received less than 6% under either treatment. Heterogeneity analyses revealed that male, lower-income, familiarity with quality certifications and label-reading consumers most strongly anchored on Food Safety, while younger consumers and those with stronger ethical orientations placed greater value on social indicators. The amplification of Food Safety preference under two-sided information suggests that transparent communication about implementation challenges sharpens the perceived signal value of certification. Implications for SRP communication and segmented marketing in developing rice markets are discussed.
