



Does race matters in consumers' stated preferences for water and carbon footprints labelled food products? Insights from black and white South Africans

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In recent years, governments, policy-makers, and managers of private food companies and agribusinesses are interested in understanding how consumers will react to environmentally sustainable attributes and information on food product labels. This study examines consumers' stated preferences for water and carbon footprints labelled food products from the viewpoint of black and white South Africans. Discrete choice experimental data was collected from black and white consumers to possibly assess cross-ethnic variations in preferences for environmentally sustainable products. Two widely purchased livestock products were chosen for the choice experiment. We found that consumers' preferences for environmentally sustainable attributes vary significantly between black and white South Africans. Our findings revealed that there are profound heterogeneous consumer segments within black and white respondents. The heterogeneity within both sub-samples is better explained at the segment level, rather than at individual level. For both product categories, the findings revealed that there are more distinct consumer segments among black respondents, relative to white respondents. The black respondents consist of water sustainability advocates, carbon reduction advocates, keen environmentalist and environmental neutrals. The white respondents entail keen environmentalist, environmental cynics, and environmental neutrals. The inherent significant variations in preferences for environmentally sustainable attributes across segments and racial groups would help in formulating feasible, and segment-specific environmental sustainability policies and marketing strategies aimed at changing consumers' attitude towards environmentally sustainable products. Demographic targeting of consumer segments, sustainability awareness and segment-specific educational campaigns meant to enhance subjective and objective knowledge on environmental sustainability are important tools for food companies and agribusinesses to promote and market environmentally sustainable food products.