Green, Healthy, or Cheap? Exploring How Claim Types Influence Purchase Intention

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been growing interest in sustainable consumption and the role of advertising in influencing consumer behavior. While surveys show increasing concern among consumers about environmental and health-related issues, a significant intention-behavior gap persists between stated intentions and actual purchasing decisions. This study explores whether advertising claims emphasizing health, environmental impact, product quality, or price influence consumers' purchase intentions for food products, and whether this relationship is moderated by individual differences in health awareness, environmental awareness, and perceived quality.

To investigate these relationships, a between-subjects experimental design was employed with 234 participants, each randomly assigned to view one of four food advertisements featuring a distinct claim type. Participants completed validated scales measuring purchase intention, health awareness, environmental awareness, and perceived product quality. Manipulation checks ensured participants' attention and correct identification of the stimuli. Data analysis was performed via a regression.

The study found that not all types of advertising claims are equally effective in encouraging consumers to buy food products. While health, environmental, and quality claims did not generally lead to higher purchase intention than price-related claims, the results showed that context matters. In particular, environmental claims were more persuasive among consumers who were already environmentally aware. Additionally, the perceived quality of a product strongly influenced people's willingness to purchase it, regardless of the claim shown. These findings suggest that tailoring marketing messages to match consumers' existing values and perceptions can improve the impact of sustainability-focused advertising. No significant moderating effects were found for health awareness.

These findings contribute to the literature by reinforcing the importance of consumer segmentation in sustainable marketing strategies. While general claim effectiveness may be limited, environmental claims appear more persuasive among environmentally conscious consumers. From a practical perspective, this suggests that targeted messaging strategies—tailored to consumers' values and awareness levels—may be more effective in encouraging sustainable consumption. However, the study also notes several limitations, including the use of a fictional product, a one-time advertisement exposure, and a median-split method for categorizing awareness levels, which may reduce ecological validity and generalizability.

Future research should test these findings in more realistic environments, potentially through longitudinal or field experiments that more closely mimic actual advertising exposure and consumer decision-making processes.

KEYWORDS: Sustainable marketing, Purchase intention, Advertising claims, Environmental awareness, Consumer behavior

Introduction

"The material footprint per capita in high-income countries is 10 times the level of low-income countries" (United Nations, 2023, p. 36). This quote from the UN's SDG report accurately highlights the problem with overconsumption in developed countries and the urgency of promoting more sustainable consumption patterns. In response, businesses and policymakers have increasingly turned to sustainability-related marketing strategies to influence consumer behavior. While surveys indicate a growing interest among consumers in sustainability (NielsenIQ, 2023, p. 2), translating that interest into actual purchasing behavior has proven to be difficult. The core challenge, then, is not merely raising awareness, but rather determining how to effectively encourage consumers to buy more sustainable or green products.

Academic literature suggests that consumers tend to have a severe 'intention-behavior gap'. Prothero et al. (2011, p. 32) state that only a small percentage of consumers who indicate sustainable purchase intentions follow through with these intentions. However, this gap does not seem to be insurmountable. Research done by Muller et al. (2019, pp. 871, 891-892) found that well designed claims, presented in an effective way did significantly influence consumers' purchasing behavior. A focus on simplicity and transparency proved to be effective. This resulted in consumers purchasing products with lower CO2 emissions, thus being more sustainable. This suggests that the previously mentioned intention-behavior gap can indeed be overcome with the proper approach.

Among the most frequently used types of product claims are those related to price, health, environmental impact, and quality; each addressing different consumer values (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001, pp. 211-212). Price-related claims emphasize affordability, a functional concern particularly relevant in the cost-sensitive context of food (Dodds et al., 1991, pp. 307-319). Health claims tap into emotional value and personal wellbeing and have been shown to positively influence food purchase intention (Kaur et al., 2017, pp. 1, 5; Albornoz et al., 2024, pp. 1, 9-10). Environmental claims, meanwhile, often appeal to social norms and identity, offering psychological and reputational benefits for eco-conscious consumers (Griskevicius et al., 2010, pp. 396-401; Nguyen-Viet, 2022, pp. 95-97). Lastly, quality claims speak to perceptions of product excellence. Claims regarding taste, freshness, or ingredient integrity can significantly raise perceived value and purchase intention (Zeithaml, 1988, pp. 9-13; Schleenbecker & Hamm, 2013, pp. 423-427).

As mentioned by Prothero et al. (2011, p. 33), opportunities to increase sustainable consumption are highly important and should be further researched when possible. Turnwald et al. (2017, p. 1218) states that although their findings are valuable, they should be tested in different settings. A similar remark is made by Muller et al. (2019, p. 892), as their method could have influenced their findings.

While consumer behavior regarding sustainability has been studied extensively, most research to

date has focused either on general determinants such as values and norms (de Groot & Steg, 2007, pp. 331-335), or on isolated claim types. Comparatively little work has been done to examine and contrast the effects of different types of product claims within a single experimental framework. Studies by Aschemann-Witzel and Hamm (2010, pp. 52-53) and Grunert et al. (2014, p. 177) have examined consumer responses to health and sustainability labels, yet few have directly compared environmental, health, quality, and price-related claims simultaneously.

This study addresses this gap by investigating the relative effectiveness of health, environmental, price, and quality claims in shaping consumer purchase intentions for food products. Grounded in the Perceived Value (PERVAL) framework (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001), this research aligns each claim type with a corresponding value dimension; functional (Price & Quality), emotional, or social and examines how these relationships are moderated by individual differences such as health awareness, environmental awareness, and perceived product quality**.**

This creates the basis for this research and led to the formulation of the following research question: "*To what extent do different types of product claims, health, environmental, price and quality affect consumers' purchase intentions for food products?*"

Understanding what drives sustainable consumption is not only of academic interest but is also critical for addressing global environmental challenges. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2021, para. 1-2), the food sector alone is responsible for roughly one-third of all human-induced greenhouse gas emissions. Shifting consumption patterns in this area could yield significant environmental benefits.

However, consumer confusion over sustainable product labeling remains a well-documented barrier (Horne, 2009, pp. 175-177; Laubinger & Börkey, 2021, pp. 9-11). This study could provide empirical insights into which types of claims are most effective in influencing consumer behavior, particularly under different levels of consumer awareness. Such insights can inform public campaigns, regulatory strategies, and industry standards aimed at reducing this confusion and enhancing consumer trust.

From a marketing and business perspective, identifying which claim types are most persuasive can help firms align their sustainability communication with their target audience. According to Cone Communications (2017, p. 9), 87 percent of consumers said they would purchase a product because a company advocated for an issue they care about. Yet, without effective messaging, even the best sustainability efforts may go unnoticed.

Lastly, as the findings have implications for consumer education, particularly in enhancing environmental and health awareness, this research supports broader societal goals including the

achievement of SDG 12 (responsible consumption) and SDG 13 (climate action) outlined by the United Nations.

Theoretical framework

Drivers for purchase intention in food

Understanding what drives consumer purchase intention is a central theme in marketing and consumer behavior research. One of the most influential contributions to this area is the Perceived Value (PERVAL) model developed by Sweeney and Soutar (2001, pp. 211–212). In their study, they developed and validated a multi-dimensional scale to measure perceived consumer value for durable goods. This scale identified four distinct value dimensions that influence purchase intentions and behavior: functional value related to price, emotional value, social value and functional value related to quality. These dimensions were derived through rigorous item generation and refinement procedures, including focus groups, pilot testing, and factor analyses, and have since been widely applied in consumer research.

The present study builds upon this foundational framework and adapts it to the context of food products. Specifically, it seeks to examine how the original four value dimensions relate to purchase intention in the domain of food, and more precisely, in the domain of organic or health-positioned food products. In this context, the work of Hughner et al. (2007, p. 94) provides important insights. Their study offers a comprehensive literature review of research on organic food consumption published over the past twenty years. Among the fifteen identified themes influencing organic food purchase behavior, nine were found to have a positive relationship with purchase intention, including concerns about health and the environment. The remaining six themes, such as perceived high price and skepticism about organic labeling, were negatively associated with purchase intention.

Building on these findings, Bazhan et al. (2024, pp. 3469–3470, 3475) conducted a survey-based study and found that the most significant drivers of organic food purchase intention were health consciousness and environmental concern. These results further support the relevance of these two factors as central motivational drivers for food-related consumer behavior.

To align these empirically established food-specific drivers with the broader theoretical value framework proposed by Sweeney and Soutar, this study interprets the PERVAL dimensions through the lens of the findings from Hughner et al. and Bazhan et al. The price dimension is maintained as originally defined, given its universal relevance and its inclusion in the list of negative purchase drivers in Hughner et al.'s study (2007, p. 101). The emotional value dimension is interpreted in relation to health concerns, as decisions motivated by health consciousness often reflect a consumer's desire for psychological wellbeing and emotional reassurance. The social value dimension is interpreted in relation to environmental concern, since sustainable consumption behavior can be shaped by social norms and

identity signaling. Lastly, the quality dimension is retained without modification, as product quality was repeatedly emphasized in Hughner et al.'s review (2007, p. 104).

This theoretical framework builds on the PERVAL model and contextualizes it within the domain of food consumption by aligning its core value dimensions with empirically supported drivers of organic food purchase behavior. This alignment offers a structured and theoretically grounded approach to examining the influence of specific advertising claims on consumer purchase intention for food products.

Price and food choices

Within the PERVAL framework (Sweeney & Soutar, 2002), price is conceptualized as part of the broader dimension of functional value, which captures the utility consumers perceive in relation to product quality and cost. This reasoning suggests that lower prices may lead to higher functional value for money and thus higher purchase intention. This relationship suggests that advertising claims that emphasize lower prices may increase purchase intention by increasing perceived value for money.

Zeithaml (1988, pp. 2-8, 14-22) takes a similar approach to the construct of price, conceptualizing it as a central component of value, arguing that it functions both as a monetary sacrifice and as a quality cue in situations where product attributes are difficult to evaluate prior to purchase. This is particularly interesting in the context of food products, where quality related attributes such as freshness or taste are often not able to be judged before consumption. However, while higher prices can enhance perceived quality, reduced price claims introduce an additional layer of interpretation.

Dodds et al. (1991, pp. 307–319) provide empirical support for this dual role of price through a controlled experiment that manipulated price, brand, and store reputation to examine their effects on perceived value and purchase intention. Their findings show that price has both a negative direct effect (as a cost) and a positive indirect effect (as a signal of quality) on purchase intention. In situations where consumers were unfamiliar with a product the positive indirect effect trumped the negative effect of price. However, in scenarios where the product was known this effect reversed and the negative effect of higher prices outweighed the positive impact of perceived higher quality. This finding is particularly relevant in the context of food products, where price sensitivity is typically high and expectations about fair pricing are well-established. For instance, Hughner et al. (2007, p. 103) found that higher prices are one of the most common objections for not purchasing organic foods. It is expected that in this context price reductions will have a positive effect on purchase intention as the general consumer has a good idea of what general prices should be. This further supports the assumption that reduced-price claims increase purchase intention.

The research of Chang and Wildt (1994, pp. 16–20) further builds on the work of Zeithaml and Dodds et al. by testing a model in which perceived value fully mediates the effect of price on purchase intention. Their findings indicate that price influences consumer choice not directly, but through its combined effect with perceived quality and value. This reinforces the PERVAL model of Sweeny and Soutar, indicating that price plays an ambiguous, but undeniably important role in the motivation for purchase intention.

The research by Grenwal et al. (1998, pp. 342-346) further explored this by developing and testing a conceptual model of the effect of price discount claims (and other factors) on consumers' purchase intention. Their research found that price discount claims positively influenced perceived value, leading to higher purchase intention. This suggests that claims regarding attractively priced products seem highly effective for increasing consumers' purchase intention.

What is particularly interesting to this study is the relationship between price and purchase intention in the context of food products, especially when it comes to organic or green foods. The research of Hughner et al. (2007, p. 103) states that consumers often report that they are willing, at least hypothetically, to pay a premium for organic foods. However, in practice they found that many consumers were not willing to pay as much as the current market price premiums. This discrepancy highlights a clear gap between stated intention and actual behavior.

While the role of price seems to vary in different contexts, it seems apparent that in the context of food products it plays a vital role in determining purchase intention. It therefore also seems reasonable to assume that claims regarding reduced or attractive prices will positively impact purchase intention. To further investigate the exact role that price claims play in this context we will take it into consideration for all upcoming hypotheses.

Health (claims) and food choices

The second dimension of the PERVAL model is emotional value, Sweeney & Soutar (2001, p. 211) defined this dimension as follows: "the utility derived from the feelings or affective states that a product generates". They also provide an interesting example, stating that the decision to smoke was a decision based on emotional value. This may suggest that the instant emotional gratification from smoking can outweigh rational considerations regarding its negative health consequences. While this example highlights how instant gratification can cause consumers to overlook long-term health goals, this research argues that emotional value does not exclusively pertain to short-term pleasures. The emotional utility derived from products can also be associated with the consumers' long term health goals. For instance, the recent study of García-Salirrosas et al. (2022, pp. 1, 10-11), who applied the PERVAL

model in the context of healthy foods found that emotional value significantly contributes to brand loyalty and purchase intention. Additionally, this relation was tested even more concretely by Albornoz et al. (2024, pp. 1, 9-10). For their research they conducted a large survey among healthy eaters, with the goal of analyzing the impact of health consciousness on purchasing behavior and how this can be used to create a healthier society. Their findings show that health consciousness significantly and positively impacts perceived value, meaning that these individuals report higher levels of pride, joy and well-being when choosing health-branded products. Confirming that emotional value is not exclusively linked to short term pleasures, thus we have decided to link emotional value to health awareness and claims for the purposes of this research.

The respondents in the research of Hughner et al. (2007, pp. 101-102) listed health concerns as the most important driver behind purchase intention of organic foods. They state that consumers buy organic and healthy foods out of their desire to avoid chemicals and bad ingredients used in conventional food products. Their findings also state that perceived healthiness is parameter of quality for many consumers, which increased purchase intention. The perceived healthiness was often derived from health claims on the package, labels or certain certifications such as organic. Their research also highlights an interesting paradox among consumers. Higher prices are often seen as an objection for not purchasing organic foods. Yet, when organic food is priced lower consumers tend to infer the food as lower quality and to have fewer benefits.

Additionally, Kaur et al. (2017, pp. 1, 5) conducted a meta-analysis of 31 in order to research the impact of health-related claims on dietary choices. The selected papers consisted of choice experiments that measured the likelihood of a product being chosen when a claim was present compared to when a claim was not present; intent-rating scale outcomes; consumption levels or an analysis of purchase data. Overall, 20 studies found that claims increase purchasing and/or consumption, 8 studies had mixed results and 2 studies showed a decrease in purchasing/consumption. The main results of the study found that in the choice experiments products with a health-related claim were 75% more likely to be chosen than an identical product without such claims. However, these results must be viewed with some caution, as the results derived from studies using continuous variables estimated that health-related claims led to an increase of 8.9% in purchases/consumption. While much lower than the first figure, it is still a meaningful increase and shows the effectiveness of these health-claims.

Furthermore, we can look to the research of Aschemann-Witzel & Hamm (2010, p. 53), who analyzed whether consumers prefer foods with nutrition and health claims. They did so by simulating a real purchasing environment, followed up with a face-to-face interview. Their results revealed that products with health claims were clearly preferred but differed per food group. Their research also

analyzed the effect of health claims in combination with low prices, this interestingly did not show a clear pattern. In some cases the combination was effective, while in others it was not.

While price-related claims appeal to consumers' desire for affordability, health-related claims tap into emotional value. Prior studies have shown that health claims are one of the strongest drivers of food purchase intention (García-Salirrosas et al., 2022; Hughner et al., 2007; Kaur et al., 2017; Aschemann-Witzel & Hamm, 2010), and that health-related choices provide intrinsic emotional satisfaction (Albornoz et al., 2024). In contrast, the effect of price on purchase intention is often indirect and mediated by perceived value (Chang & Wildt, 1994). Given these findings, this research hypothesizes that health-related claims may have a stronger positive influence on purchase intention than price-related claims.

H1: Positive health related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims

However, Gould (1990, p. 229), the creator of the health-consciousness scale states in his research that highly health-conscious individuals will tend to follow their internal health-related attitudes and respond more strongly to the consequences of their behavior. In contrast those who are less health-conscious are more influenced by external factors, such as price.

This might explain the findings of Turnwald et al. (2017, p. 1217). Their study compared the effectiveness of various descriptions for foods in a cafeteria setting. Their results showed that food products with no distinct label, simply the ingredient name, were more often chosen than when that same food was labeled in a healthy way. This contradicts the literature discussed before, but might be explained by the absence of moderation for health consciousness, as suggested by Gould (1990, p. 229)

During the research of Aschemann-Witzel & Hamm (2010, p. 53) participants were asked to motivate their reasoning for picking certain products after selecting them in their experimental store. In 21% of the responses good or low price was mentioned as the main motivator for their decision. Notably, taste (27%), previous product experience (25%) and ingredients (24%) were all mentioned more often, suggesting that price is not the only important predictor of purchase intention. It is also important to mention that in this study health consciousness was not accounted for. Thus it might create a similar situation as seen in the Turnwald et al. (2017) study.

More recent literature seems to show the same effect. A study done by Iqbal et al. (2021, p. 7) focused on different drivers of purchase intention for organic foods, with a particular focus on the role of health consciousness. The results of their experimental design study revealed that health consciousness had significant positive relation to purchase intention of organic foods. Suggesting that the statements of Gould (1990) are still valid in contemporary society.

The research of Hughner et al. (2007, pp. 101-103) identify high prices as the most often mentioned objection for not purchasing organic foods. While consumers mention willingness to pay premiums for organic foods, actual market premiums seem to exceed this threshold. Their research did however point out that this willingness to pay a premium for organic foods was especially present in consumer with high health consciousness.

Taken together, the literature suggests that while price remains a commonly cited barrier to purchasing health-oriented or organic foods, its influence appears diminished among individuals with high health consciousness. These consumers are more internally driven by their health goals and are thus expected to be more responsive to health-related claims, as opposed to cues such as price. In contrast, those with lower health awareness tend to rely more on extrinsic motivators like affordability. Therefore, the persuasive power of health-related advertising claims is likely to depend on the degree of health consciousness of the individual consumer. This observation led to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

H2: Positive health related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims, but *only when health awareness is high.*

Environmental claims and food choices

The third dimension of the PERVAL model is social value. Sweeney & Soutar (2001, p. 211) define this as "the utility derived from the product's ability to enhance social self-concept". This dimension was mainly concerned with enhancing social status and perception by others. Sweeney & Soutar expand on their smoking example: while emotional value was the driver behind the decision to smoke, social value was the driver behind the decision on what kind of cigarettes to smoke. As the type of cigarette would influence how the consumers would be perceived by others.

Griskevicius et al. (2010, pp. 396-401) researched this phenomenon in the context of green products. Their experimental design research revealed that status concerns led consumers to choose green products over more luxurious (but non-green) counterparts. Indicating that in a social context appearing green was seen as highly desirable. Terlau & Hirsch (2015, p. 10) researched drivers behind sustainable consumption and their findings suggest a similar conclusion. They found that one of the main motivators for sustainable consumption was the desire to achieve 'social benefits' because of their enhanced perception by others due to purchasing sustainable products. Considering these findings, this study links the social value dimension to environmental awareness and claims, proposing that environmentally framed product information may derive part of its persuasive power from its potential to elevate social value.

To relate these findings to the context of food claims we can look to the research of Hughner et al. (2007, p. 102). Their research cited environmental concerns as the third most often stated motivator of organic food purchases. Stating that many studies have found environmental concerns to have a positive influence on consumer attitudes toward organic foods.

Nguyen-Viet (2022, pp. 95-97) reached a similar conclusion. Their research focused on the relation between environmental information, such as eco-labels and purchase intention of green foods. Their analysis of milk consumers show that there is a statistically significant positive relation between the presentation of this environmental information and purchase intention.

Duarte et al. (2024, pp. 6-7) found that, in the context of food products, consumers with a positive attitude towards sustainable packaging had a significantly positive relation with purchase intention of products with environmental claims. Highlighting the effectiveness of environmental claims in this context.

Additionally, Siuda & Grebosz-Krawczyk (2025, pp. 8-10) reached a notable conclusion. Their research compared the effectiveness of various statements on purchase intention, comparing categories such as budget, luxury and green. Their results showed that the products presented with an ecological claim where the most popular. With the ecological version being picked up to five times as often as price of luxury claims. It is important to note that this study was conducted on a small sample (N = 48) and might have been influenced by respondents picking the socially desirable answer. However, it still shows the potential effectiveness for these claims.

While price-related claims emphasize affordability and short-term economic benefit, environmental claims appear to offer broader psychological and social utility. These claims have shown to align with consumers' social values, enhance self-perception and public image (Griskevicius et al., 2010; Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). Moreover, experimental and survey-based studies have consistently found that environmental claims significantly increase purchase intention across a range of food contexts (Nguyen-Viet, 2022; Duarte et al., 2024; Siuda & Grebosz-Krawczyk, 2025). In contrast, the effect of price on purchase intention has been found to be more transactional and often mediated by perceptions of value rather than intrinsic motivation (Chang & Wildt, 1994). Given these findings, this research formulated the following hypothesis:

H3: Environmental claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims

Hughner et al. (2007, p. 102) state that while environmental concerns are one of the top listed motivators for purchase intention for organic foods, in practice this motivation does not seem to manifest. They note that in the general population perceptions of good health and nutrients are more important in

the purchase of organic foods. This may again be the result of a broad demographic. This assumption seems to be supported by the research by Teng & Lu (2016, pp. 95, 101-103). They investigated motives for organic food consumption among consumers in Taiwan. Via the analysis of their survey results they found environmental awareness to have a strong positive effect on purchase intention of organic food products. Suggesting that environmental claims may only be effective among consumers with high levels of environmental consciousness.

Yadav & Pathak (2016, pp. 733, 736-737) performed similar research. Through their experiment they analyzed drivers behind purchase intention to green products among young adults in India. Their analysis revealed that environmental awareness was a significant positive predictor of purchase intention to green products.

Additionally, Gleim et al. (2013, pp. 52, 58-59) conducted research investigating the barriers to green consumption. Their results revealed that consumers often were not even aware of the fact that they had neglected green alternatives to the products that they usually purchased. They compared these general responses with consumers who did purchase green regularly. This analysis made them reach the conclusion that a lack of awareness was the greatest differentiator between the groups.

Related to environmental awareness is the concept of environmental consciousness. Many studies use the terms in similar context. For example, Wang et al., (2020, p. 3) define environmental consciousness as "the degree to which consumers care about environmental issues". This is very related to the description of environmental awareness that we reached before. This assumption is also supported by Gericke et al. (2018, pp. 37-39). In their research they developed a scale to measure sustainability consciousness, with environmental knowingness being one of the sub constructs. This subconstruct was made up of environmental concern and awareness levels, they mixed these together as they found the results to be highly related.

The rest of the research of Wang et al. (2020, p. 9) focused on the relation between environmental consciousness and purchase intention of organic food. They did so by analyzing empirical sample data of 518 consumers in various retailers in China. Their research once again found environmental consciousness to have a positive impact on organic food purchase intention.

Joshi & Rahman (2015, pp. 132-135, 138) conducted a review of 53 empirical articles on green purchase behavior from 2000 to 2014. Their review focused on articles related to attitude - behavior inconsistencies in the context of green purchasing. Environmental concern also appeared in their research, again having a positive effect on green purchase intention. Additionally, their findings revealed that price sensitivity was typically lower among consumers with higher levels of environmental concerns & awareness.

The evidence provided by previous literature suggests a consistent positive relationship between environmental awareness and consumer purchase intentions for green or organic products. Studies consistently highlight the importance of environmental awareness as a differentiating factor between consumers who regularly purchase green products and those who do not (Gleim et al., 2013; Teng & Lu, 2016; Wang et al., 2020). Additionally, among consumers with high environmental awareness, these claims appear to have an even greater influence compared to other extrinsic motivators such as price (Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Yadav & Pathak, 2016; Siuda & Grebosz-Krawczyk, 2025). Therefore, the effectiveness of environmental claims in increasing purchase intentions may significantly depend on consumers' levels of environmental awareness. Taken together, these findings lead to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

H4: Environmental claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims, but *only when environmental awareness is high.*

Perceived quality (claims) and food choices

The final dimension in the PERVAL framework (Sweeney & Soutar, 2002) is perceived quality. This concept is conceptualized as part of the broader dimension of functional value, which captures the utility consumers perceive in relation to product quality and cost. This suggests that higher levels of perceived value will lead to higher functional value for money and thus higher purchase intention. This relationship suggests that advertising claims that emphasize higher quality may increase purchase intention by increasing perceived value for money.

This idea is reinforced by Chang and Wildt (1994, pp. 16, 18–20), who argue that purchase intention is better predicted by perceived value than by price alone. Perceived value is conceptualized as the trade-off between perceived quality and perceived price. Similarly, Dodds et al. (1991, pp. 312–315) found that perceived quality mediates the relationship between price and purchase intention: consumers are more likely to purchase a product when they perceive it to offer high quality, even at a higher price.

This suggestion is also supported by the research of Zeithaml (1988, p. 9-13). When researching different motivators behind purchase intention perceived quality was identified as the main predictor (along with price). The interesting conclusion that can be drawn from this is that as long as perceived value is high enough, price can become decreasingly important. This claim is further supported by the research of Schleenbecker & Hamm (2013, pp. 423–427) who found that consumers are willing to pay a premium for organic or high-quality products, showing price can be offset by quality.

The notion that perceived quality is a major driver behind purchase intention is also supported by the research of Hughner et al. (2007, pp. 101–102), their content analysis of relevant literature on organic consumptions identifies perceived quality as the second most occurring theme driving purchase intention

of organic foods, with quality being defined as better taste in this context. However, they mention that research indicates that in blind taste testing organic foods were never consistently perceived as tastier than non-organic foods. This led to the conclusion that the premium presentation and claims associated with organic products influenced the perception of consumers. This underpins the power of premium positioning and how it can be achieved via quality claims.

The research of Zeithaml (1988, p. 3) further underscores the power of quality claims. The research did not only look at the effect of perceived quality on purchase intention but also examined the factors that shape consumer perceptions of quality. She points out that there are many different drivers behind perceived quality. Many of these are product specific and relate to the visual features of the product, such as color, thickness, smell, etc. These could not be generalized and were thus not used in the research. Quality claims however were able to be generalized. Generic statements regarding ingredients, durability and freshness were able to be applied to entire product categories at once. This approach revealed that these types of claims were particularly effective at enhancing perceived quality. In the context of food products, ingredient and quality claimed seemed to be particularly effective. Based on this reasoning this study also chooses to focus on quality claims.

Taken together, these findings suggest that price does not have to be the primary driver of purchase intention if quality-related claims effectively enhance perceived quality. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Quality related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims.

Acebrón and Dopico (2000, pp. 229, 233) conducted a survey among 159 Spanish households. The objective of their research was to analyze the factors that influenced perceived quality of beef. Their findings reveal that consumers determined the perceived quality while shopping (in the supermarket or butcher). Alongside visual cues pertaining to the meat itself, the role of the presentation of the meat was also analyzed. Most relevant for the current study was the role of promotion & origin, both emphasizing certain qualities of the meat. These factors proved to be of no significance in predicting perceived quality. Suggesting that presentation and quality claims are of no significance in a general population.

The research of Zeithaml (1988, p. 5) seems to clarify this. She points out that perceived quality is highly dependent on the targeted demographic. An example is provided in the context of a car appliance, researchers asked consumers, dealers and managers to rate the perceived quality of the appliance. The answers wildly varied, suggesting that prior knowledge and current motivations are highly influential in determining perceived quality.

This research argues that this observation is also expected to apply in the context of food products. Only relevant demographics will have a high perceived quality and thus only that demographic will have a high likelihood of purchasing the presented product. This leads to the formulation of the following and final hypothesis:

H6: Quality related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims, but *only when perceived quality is high.*

Method

Justification of method

This study employs a between-subjects experimental design to investigate the influence of different types of advertising claims (health, environmental, quality, and price) on consumers' purchase intention of food products. Participants are randomly assigned to one of four conditions, each representing a unique type of product claim. This approach allows the manipulation of a single independent variable (claim type) while keeping all other elements constant, thereby isolating its causal effect on purchase intention.

The choice for an experimental design is grounded in the need to make causal inferences about the relative effectiveness of the claim types. By randomly allocating participants to conditions and using standardized stimuli, the study ensures internal validity and controls for potential confounding factors.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Participants were recruited using a non-random snowball sampling technique. The process was initiated by distributing the online survey through personal and professional networks via platforms such as WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and email. While snowball sampling can lead to sample homogeneity due to participants referring others with similar backgrounds, this study sought to mitigate that risk by targeting a broad and varied initial pool of contacts. These included university peers, friends from diverse educational levels, professional acquaintances from prior work experience, and contacts accessed through neighbors and family members. This approach was designed to promote a more heterogeneous and balanced respondent group.

The survey was created and administered via Qualtrics, allowing for efficient distribution, randomization, and data collection. To be eligible for participation, individuals had to be at least 18 years old and possess a sufficient understanding of the English language to complete the survey without assistance. This resulted in a dataset containing 234 complete responses (148 men; 84 women; 1 other; 1 preferred not to answer) with an age range between 19 and 80 years (M = 47.56, SD = 14.98). Participants were asked to report the highest level of educations that they had completed; 48.3% obtained an academic degree, 39.7% obtained an applied degree, 6% obtained a vocational degree, 2.6% obtained a high school diploma and the remaining 3.4% reported their education level as ‘other / not listed’. The total survey took roughly 5-10 minutes to complete. All demographics of the respondents can be found in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 – Participant demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Min.	Max.
Age (years)	-	-	-	47.56	19	80
Gender	Male	148	63.2%	-	-	-
	Female	84	35.9%	-	-	-
	Other	1	0.4%	-	-	-
	Prefer not to say	1	0.4%	-	-	-
Highest Level of Education	High school diploma	6	2.6%	-	-	-
	MBO	14	6.0%	-	-	-
	HBO	93	39.7%	-	-	-
	WO	113	48.3%	-	-	-
	Other / not listed	8	3.4%	-	-	-

Experimental Materials and Stimuli

The visual advertisements used in the experiment are constructed to be identical in every respect except for the content of the claim, following the approach taken in previous studies such as those by Turnwald et al. (2017, p. 1217) and Muller et al. (2019, pp. 879-881). These prior studies demonstrated that the content of the message, rather than the format or branding, plays a decisive role in influencing consumer response, thereby justifying a focus on claim manipulation through minimal visual designs. The four stimuli were created using the online design tool Canva to ensure consistent visual quality across all conditions. All elements of the advertisement, such as layout, color scheme, font, and product image, remained the same in every version. Only the textual claim differed to reflect the assigned condition.

The health condition emphasized personal wellness (e.g., “Packed with nutrients for a healthier you”), while the environmental condition focused on ecological impact (e.g., “100% carbon-neutral production”). The price-related claim emphasized affordability in combination with sustainability (e.g., “Best priced juice on the market”), and the quality condition emphasized premium production standards

(e.g., “Made with the highest quality ingredients”). These claims were designed in accordance with findings from Turnwald et al. (2017, pp. 1217), Schleenbecker and Hamm (2013, pp. 423-424), and Muller et al. (2019, pp. 879-881), which collectively highlight the importance of message clarity, informativeness, and emotional appeal in shaping consumer evaluations.

The choice to use a fictional product was made to ensure that participants' responses were not influenced by prior brand knowledge or personal associations. This aimed to enhance internal validity by isolating the effect of the claim content alone. However, this approach also has implications for the ecological validity of the study. In real-life situations, consumers are often exposed to advertisements for familiar products, shaped by brand reputation, trust, and repeated exposures across various channels. Since the product in this study was not real and was shown only once, it may not fully capture the complexity and realism of actual purchase environments.

Procedure

Upon accessing the survey via Qualtrics, participants were first presented with an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the research, estimated time commitment, data handling procedures, and their rights as participants. After indicating their consent, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions using Qualtrics’ built-in randomization function. Each participant was exposed to a single advertisement containing one of the manipulated claims. Immediately after viewing the advertisement, participants completed a three-item purchase intention scale (Dodds et al., 1991, p. 318), where they rated the likelihood, intention, and probability of purchasing the product.

This scale was followed by a perceived quality scale (Dodds et al., 1991, p. 318), measuring the perceived quality of participants. Additionally, the health awareness and environmental awareness of participants were measured. This was followed up by a manipulation check.

Finally, participants were asked to complete a brief questionnaire assessing demographic characteristics (age, gender, education). The survey then concluded with a debriefing message thanking participants for their time and explaining the broader goals of the study. Participants were informed about the identity of the researcher and his goals with this study, being the research of various types of advertising claims and their impact on purchasing intention. The role of the moderating variables were also briefly mentioned to the participants. At the end of the passage the contact information of the researcher was provided in case any of the participants were interested in the results of the study or had any further questions. The full survey can be found in Appendix B.

Measures and operationalization of variables

The dependent variable, purchase intention, was measured using the established three-item scale developed by Dodds et al. (1991, p. 318). Participants responded to statements such as "The likelihood of purchasing this product is…" and "The probability that I would consider buying this product is…", using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = very low to 5 = very high. This scale has been extensively validated in prior consumer behavior research and demonstrates high internal consistency.

To explore the underlying dimensions of the 3 purchase intention items, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted using direct oblimin rotation based on eigenvalues (>1.00). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .75 verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, as this exceeds the acceptable minimum value of .60 (Kaiser, 1970). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi 2(3) = 501.41$, $p < .001$, thereby indicating that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for a PCA (Bartlett, 1954). The resultant model consisted of 1 factor, which explained 85.2% of the variance in purchase intention. The factor included 3 items about the purchase intention

The factor loadings and the reliability statistics are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 – Factor analysis for purchase intention

Item	Purchase intention
The likelihood of purchasing this product is:	.94
The probability that I would consider buying the product is:	.93
My willingness to buy the product is:	.90
R^2	.86
Cronbach's alpha	.92

In addition to the main dependent variable, the study included several moderator variables. First, health consciousness was measured using the revised Health Consciousness Scale originally developed by Gould (1988, p. 230) and updated by Hong (2008, p. 222) to enhance contemporary relevance. This version comprises eleven items such as "Living life in best possible health is very important to me" and "I reflect about my health a lot," capturing cognitive and affective dimensions of health awareness. All items were answered using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The scale also included one reverse-coded item ("I only worry about my health when I get sick") to help increase the quality of the scale. This reverse coded item was recoded prior to analysis.

To explore the underlying dimensions of the 11 health awareness items, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted using direct oblimin rotation based on eigenvalues (>1.00). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .83 verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, as this exceeds the acceptable minimum value of .60 (Kaiser, 1970). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi 2(55) = 639.92$, $p < .001$, thereby indicating that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for a PCA (Bartlett, 1954).

The initial analysis yielded three components with eigenvalues exceeding 1.00, accounting for a cumulative 56.97% of the total variance. While this may suggest a multidimensional structure, the scale was theoretically constructed and previously validated as a unidimensional measure of general health awareness (Hong, 2008, p. 222). Given that the present study conceptually and analytically treats health awareness as a single construct and that all items loaded adequately on the first factor, while maintaining a sufficient Cronbach's Alpha. A one-factor solution was maintained for consistency with prior research and for theoretical alignment.

The resultant model consisted of 1 factor, which explained 57.0% of the variance in health awareness. The factor included 11 items about health awareness. The factor loadings and the reliability statistics are presented in Table 3.3

Table 3.3 - Factor analysis for health awareness

Item	Health Awareness
I reflect about my health a lot	.75
Living life in the best possible health is very important to me	.70
I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings about my health	.69
I'm very self-conscious about my health	.68
I notice how I feel physically as I go through the day	.63
I take responsibility for the state of my health	.58
Good health takes active participation on my part	.57

My health depends on how well I take care of myself	.54
I only worry about my health when I get sick (Reversed)	.39
Living life without disease and illness is very important to me	.44
I'm concerned about my health all the time	.46
R^2	.57
Cronbach's alpha	.80

Second, environmental awareness was measured using a three-item scale based on Gericke et al. (2018). Items included statements like: "I think that we need stricter laws and regulations to protect the environment" and "I think that it is important to take measures against problems which have to do with climate change." Respondents indicated their agreement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. One reverse-coded item ("I think it is OK that each one of us uses as much water as we want") was included to ensure attentiveness and response variability. The reverse coded item was recoded prior to analysis.

To explore the underlying dimensions of the 3 environmental items, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted using direct oblimin rotation based on eigenvalues (>1.00). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .56, which is below the commonly accepted minimum value of .60 (Kaiser, 1970), indicating marginal suitability for the factor analysis. However, all items showed strong loadings on a single factor and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi 2(3) = 140.71$, $p < .001$, thereby indicating that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for a PCA (Bartlett, 1954). The resultant model consisted of 1 factor, which explained 59.8% of the variance in environmental awareness. The factor included 3 items about environmental awareness,

The factor loadings and the reliability statistics are presented in table 3.4.

Table 3.4 - Factor analysis for environmental awareness

Item	Environmental Awareness
I think that it is important to take measures against problems which have to do with climate change.	.87

I think that we need stricter laws and regulations to protect the environment.	.87
I think that using more natural resources than we need does NOT threaten the health and well-being	.54
R^2	.60
Cronbach's alpha	.62

The final variable, perceived product quality was assessed immediately after the stimulus exposure using the five-item scale also from Dodds et al. (1991, p. 318), where participants rated the quality of the product depicted in the advertisement. These items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = very low to 5 = very high.

To explore the underlying dimensions of the 5 perceived quality items, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted using direct oblimin rotation based on eigenvalues (>1.00). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .87 verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, as this exceeds the acceptable minimum value of .60 (Kaiser, 1970). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi 2(10) = 653.14$, $p < .001$, thereby indicating that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for a PCA (Bartlett, 1954). The resultant model consisted of 1 factor, which explained 69.5% of the variance in perceived quality. The factor included 5 items about the perceived quality.

The factor loadings and the reliability statistics are presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 - Factor analysis for perceived quality

Item	Perceived Quality
The likelihood that the product would be reliable is:	.87
The workmanship of product would be:	.86
The chance that this product is of high quality should be:	.86
The likelihood that this product is dependable is:	.86
The chance that this product would be durable is:	.70
R^2	.69
Cronbach's alpha	.89

Finally, a manipulation check was included to assess the internal validity of the claim manipulation and participants' attentiveness to the experimental stimuli. Participants were asked two multiple-choice questions following the advertisement exposure: "What was being promoted/emphasized in the advertisement that you just saw?" and "What type of product was shown in the advertisement that you just saw?". The first question directly assessed whether participants accurately recognized the intended claim condition (e.g., health, environmental, price, or quality), thereby serving as a refined indicator of message processing. The second question functioned as an attentiveness check, as failure to correctly identify the advertised product could indicate disengagement with the stimulus. These questions jointly contributed to evaluating the internal validity of the manipulation and identifying cases of low engagement.

Reliability and Validity of Measures

To ensure measurement quality, multiple steps were taken to establish reliability and validity. Internal consistency of each construct was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all scales exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of .70, except environmental awareness (.62), which was retained based on theoretical justification and sufficient factor loadings. Construct validity was confirmed through the previously reported Principal Component Analysis for all multi-item scales, supported by significant Bartlett's tests and adequate KMO values in most cases. Content validity was ensured by selecting well-established scales from peer-reviewed literature and adapting them minimally to fit the food-related context.

Data cleaning & preparation

All survey responses were exported from Qualtrics into SPSS for analysis. Prior to statistical testing, the dataset underwent a cleaning process. Incomplete responses, defined as those missing more than 1 of required fields, were removed. All remaining data were anonymized and stored securely in accordance with data protection protocols.

To prepare the dataset for analysis, several recoding and transformation steps were performed in SPSS. First, the grouping variables imported from Qualtrics, which represented the experimental conditions, were consolidated into a single categorical variable labeled 'Manipulation'. This variable captured the specific advertising claim shown to each participant (price, health, environmental, quality).

Next, four new variables were computed to represent the core constructs: purchase intention, perceived quality, health awareness, and environmental awareness. For each scale, the individual item

responses were averaged to produce a single score ranging from 1 to 5. This resulted in a more compact and interpretable measure for each concept.

To test moderation hypotheses using regression analysis, three dummy-coded variables were created corresponding to the manipulated advertising claims. The variables "Health_Dummy," "Environmental_Dummy," and "Quality_Dummy" were coded as binary indicators, with a value of 1 assigned to participants who were exposed to the health, environmental, or quality claim conditions respectively, and a value of 0 to all other conditions. The price claim condition served as the reference group in these analyses, consistent with the formulation of this study's hypotheses.

Finally, interaction terms were computed to examine moderation effects. These were constructed by multiplying each dummy variable with its corresponding moderator variable: health awareness, environmental awareness, or perceived quality. This resulted in the variables "Health_Interaction," "Environmental_Interaction," and "Quality_Interaction," which allowed the investigation of whether the effects of the advertising claims on purchase intention were moderated by individual differences in awareness or perceived product quality.

Data analysis

To test the hypotheses regarding the effects of advertising claim type and potential moderation by participants' health awareness, environmental awareness, and perceived quality on purchase intention, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. This methodological choice was guided by the need to simultaneously assess main and interaction effects within a single analytical framework, thus increasing statistical rigor and interpretative clarity.

Specifically, the regression model incorporated the dummy-coded variables created earlier: Health_Dummy, Environmental_Dummy, and Quality_Dummy, with the Price condition serving as the reference category. Additionally, the analysis included three interaction terms, Health_Interaction, Environmental_Interaction, and Quality_Interaction, each representing the product of the respective dummy variable and its hypothesized moderator variable (health awareness, environmental awareness, and perceived quality, respectively). By including these interaction terms, the regression model enabled direct examination of whether the effect of advertising claims on purchase intention differed based on individual participant characteristics.

Conducting a single regression analysis incorporating all main and interaction effects provided a comprehensive approach to test all hypotheses simultaneously. This approach enhanced statistical power, reduced the risk of Type I errors associated with multiple comparisons, and allowed for clear interpretation of both main and moderating effects. Results of this regression analysis directly informed

the evaluation of each of the study's hypotheses concerning the effectiveness of different advertising claims and the moderating role of participants' awareness and perceived quality levels.

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards for research involving human participants. At the beginning of the survey, all participants were presented with an informed consent form that explained the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, the estimated time required to complete the survey, and the participants' right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. Only those who gave explicit consent were permitted to continue with the survey.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, no personally identifying information was collected. All responses were fully anonymized and stored securely in a password-protected environment accessible only to the primary researcher. Data were analyzed in aggregate form, and individual responses were never reported separately.

The study involved minimal risk to participants, as it consisted only of viewing a fictional advertisement and completing a brief questionnaire. No deception was used, and participants were provided with a short debriefing statement upon completion of the survey that explained the purpose of the study in more detail.

Although formal approval from an institutional ethics review board was not required due to the low-risk nature of the study, all procedures adhered to the ethical principles outlined by the host institution. The research was designed and conducted with full respect for the dignity, rights, and welfare of all participants.

Results

Manipulation check

To evaluate whether the experimental manipulation was effective, participants were asked to identify the type of advertising claim and the product shown in the advertisement. The first question measured the extent to which participants correctly recognized the claim type of the advertisement, while the second served as a general attentiveness check regarding the type of product shown.

Out of a total sample of N = 234 participants, 128 individuals (54.7 percent) correctly identified the advertising claim to which they were exposed, whereas 106 participants (45.3 percent) did not. In contrast, the product recognition question yielded stronger results. A total of 217 participants (92.7 percent) correctly identified the product as "fruit juice," while 16 participants (6.8 percent) incorrectly selected "vegetable mix," and only one participant (0.4 percent) selected the option "do not remember." (Table 4.1). These findings suggest that participants were generally attentive to the experimental stimuli, as supported by the high rate of product recall. However, the relatively lower rate of correct claim identification indicates a partial limitation in the effectiveness of the manipulation. Based on these outcomes, the manipulation is considered partially successful: participants were engaged with the stimuli, although recognition of the specific claim types was inconsistent. This will be further discussed in the limitations chapter.

Table 4.1 – Results of manipulation check

Variable	Value	Frequency	Percent
Type of claim correctly identified	No (.00)	106	45.3%
	Yes (1.00)	128	54.7%
	Total	234	100%
Product Shown in Advertisement	Fruit Juice	217	92.7%
	Vegetable mix	16	6.8%
	Do not remember	1	0.4%
	Total	234	100%

Hypothesis testing

Main Effect of Claim Type on Purchase Intention

A multiple linear regression was conducted to examine the extent to which advertising claim type, health awareness, environmental awareness, perceived product quality, and their respective interaction effects, with purchase intention as dependent variable. The dummy variables for claim types (health, environmental, and quality) were included in the model, with price-related claims serving as the reference category. Moderators and interaction terms between each claim type and its corresponding awareness construct were also included. Complete results of the regression can be found in appendix G.

The overall model was found to be statistically significant, $F(9, 222) = 10.62$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .30$. This indicates that the combined set of predictors terms provided a meaningful explanation of the dependent variable.

Regarding the main effects of the advertising claims, neither health-related claims ($\beta = –.56$, $p = .167$), environmental claims ($\beta = –.67$, $p = .028$), nor quality-related claims ($\beta = .15$, $p = .581$) emerged as significant positive predictors of purchase intention when compared to price-related claims. Although the environmental claim condition was statistically significant, its effect contradicted the initial hypothesis.

A similar inverse relationship was found for the environmental claims, although this relation was not statistically significant. As a result, no evidence was found that any of the claim types (health, environmental, or quality) significantly positively outperformed the price-related claim in influencing purchase intention. Therefore:

Hypothesis 1, which stated ‘Positive health related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims’, is rejected.

Hypothesis 3, which stated ‘Environmental claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims’, is rejected.

Finally, hypothesis 5 which stated, ‘Quality related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims.’, is also rejected.

Moderation effect on purchase intention

The analysis of the moderators revealed that perceived product quality positively and significantly influenced purchase intention ($\beta = .51$, $p < .001$). Conversely, health awareness had a significant negative relationship with purchase intention ($\beta = –.18$, $p = .008$), indicating that higher health

awareness was unexpectedly associated with lower overall purchase intention. Environmental awareness did not significantly predict purchase intention directly (β = .08, p = .234).

Interaction effect on purchase intention

The interaction between environmental claims and environmental awareness was a significant positive predictor of purchase intention (β = .68, p = .028). This suggests that environmental claims successfully increase purchase intention among individuals with high levels of environmental awareness.

Thus Hypothesis 4, 'Environmental claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims. Only when environmental awareness is high.' is accepted.

The interaction between health claims and health awareness (β = .53, p = .188) and quality claims and perceived quality (β = –.14, p = .606) were not significant predictors of purchase intention. This leads to the following conclusions:

Hypothesis 2, 'Positive health related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims. Only when health awareness is high.' is rejected.

Hypothesis 6, 'Quality related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims. Only when perceived quality is high.', is therefore rejected.

An overview of the complete regressions results is provided in Table 4.2

Table 4.2 – Results of hypothesis testing

Variable	Standardized β	p-value
Environmental Dummy	–0.667	.028
Environmental Awareness	0.076	.234
Environmental Interaction	0.677	.028
Health Dummy	–0.562	.167
Health Awareness	–0.175	.008
Health Interaction	0.534	.188
Quality Dummy	0.150	.581
Perceived Quality	0.505	<.001
Quality Interaction	–0.142	.606

Summary of findings

The multiple regression analysis did not reveal a significant main effect for any of the three advertising claim types—health, environmental, or quality—when compared to the price-related reference category. Specifically, neither the health dummy, the environmental dummy, nor the quality dummy were found to be significant positive predictors of purchase intention. As such, no evidence was found that any of the claim types outperformed price-related claims in predicting purchase intention across the overall sample. Consequently, hypotheses H1, H3, and H5 are rejected.

About moderation effects, environmental awareness significantly moderated the effect of the environmental advertising claim on purchase intention. The interaction term for environmental awareness and environmental claim was significant, suggesting that individuals with higher environmental awareness were more likely to respond positively to environmental advertising. This supports H4, which is accepted.

In contrast, the interaction between health awareness and health claims did not yield a significant effect. Although the direction of the effect was in line with expectations, the results do not provide sufficient evidence for a moderating effect of health awareness on the effectiveness of health-related claims. Therefore, H2 is rejected.

Similarly, the interaction between perceived product quality and the quality claim was not significant, providing no evidence that perceived quality moderates the effect of quality-related claims on purchase intention. Thus, H6 is also rejected.

Overall, the findings suggest that among the tested moderators, only environmental awareness significantly influenced the effectiveness of the corresponding advertising claim. Health awareness and perceived product quality did not moderate the relationships as hypothesized. The complete overview of hypothesis testing outcomes is provided in Table 4.3

Table 4.3 – Summary of hypotheses results

Hypothesis	Description	Results
H1	Positive health related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims	Rejected
H2	Positive health related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims. Only when health awareness is high.	Rejected

H3	Environmental claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims	Rejected
H4	Environmental claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims. Only when environmental awareness is high.	Accepted
H5	Quality related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims.	Rejected
H6	Quality related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims. Only when perceived quality is high.	Rejected

Discussion

This study set out to examine the influence of different types of product claims, specifically health, environmental, quality, and price, on consumers' purchase intentions for food products. Additionally, it explored whether individual levels of health awareness, environmental awareness, and perceived quality moderated this relationship. The central research question was:
To what extent do different types of product claims, such as health, environmental, and price or quality claims, affect consumers' purchase intentions for food products?

Hypothesis 1, stating "Positive health related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims" was rejected. Positive health claims did not lead to significantly higher purchase intention when compared to price claims.

Although not statistically significant, the fact that health claims performed worse than price claims is notable and contradicts expectations. It also stands in contrast to studies like those of Hughner et al. (2007), who identified health concerns as a primary reason for choosing organic food, and Kaur et al. (2017), whose meta-analysis found a modest but consistent positive effect of health claims on actual and intended purchase behavior.

A possible explanation lies in the contextual salience of competing value dimensions. According to the PERVAL model (Sweeney & Soutar, 2002), value is multidimensional, with emotional, quality, and price components all potentially influencing intention. In low-involvement settings or unfamiliar brand contexts, consumers may default to more concrete, cognitively accessible attributes such as price or perceived quality. This aligns with Turnwald et al. (2017), who found that indulgent framed claims (e.g., "rich buttery" or "slow-roasted caramelized") were more effective than traditional health-focused claims (e.g., "vitamin-rich or "low-sodium") in real-world cafeteria settings.

Additionally, as Zeithaml (1988) noted, perceived quality tends to dominate purchase intention when knowledge of the product is low, which is likely to have been the case as per the use of the fictional stimuli. This may help explain why health claims were not compelling on their own, lacking the emotional resonance, credibility, or familiarity needed to elevate purchase intention in such a context.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that "Positive health related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims. Only when health awareness is high." This hypothesis was also rejected. Although the interaction effect between health claims and health awareness was in the expected positive direction, it was not statistically significant.

Despite the lack of significance, the directionality aligns with previous research suggesting that health consciousness can strengthen the impact of health-focused communication. Gould (1990, pp. 228-231) found that consumers with high levels of health awareness were more likely to act consistently with

their internal attitudes regarding health, displaying stronger responses to health related (advertising) cues. Similarly, Iqbal et al. (2021) and Zanoli & Naspetti (2002) found that health-conscious consumers display a greater willingness to purchase organic and health-labeled food products.

The insignificant moderation effect may be attributed to the simplicity of the stimulus and the fictitious nature of the brand. This may have limited the credibility of the health claim, especially in the eyes of health-aware consumers, who often rely on trust and credibility when evaluating health-related messaging (Lähteenmäki et al., 2010). From a value theory perspective (Sweeney & Soutar, 2002), it is also worth considering that highly health-aware individuals may still weigh functional and monetary value (e.g., quality and price) over abstract health signaling, especially in scenarios where claims are generic or lack personalization.

Although the hypothesis was not supported statistically, the results provide partial conceptual support for existing theory and suggest promising directions for further investigation.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that "Environmental claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims". This hypothesis was also rejected. Unexpectedly, environmental claims did not produce a positive effect; instead, they had a statistically significant *negative* impact on purchase intention when compared to price claims. This result stands in direct contrast to earlier literature, such as Duarte et al. (2024) and Nguyen-Viet (2022), who all found that green or sustainability-focused claims increased purchase likelihood, either by enhancing perceived value or reinforcing ethical motivations.

One possible explanation for this contradiction lies in the experimental context. Unlike some of the cited studies that utilized well-known brands or validated eco-labels, this study employed a fictional brand and minimalistic stimuli. As shown by Gleim et al. (2013) and Lähteenmäki et al. (2010), the effectiveness of green messaging often depends on the perceived credibility and familiarity of the source. In this light, the negative result may not necessarily imply rejection of environmental values per se, but rather skepticism toward the claim's authenticity.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that "Environmental claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims. Only when environmental awareness is high." This was the only accepted hypothesis, as the interaction effect was not only significant, but also showed a positive relation.

This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that environmental concern moderates the relationship between sustainability messaging and consumer behavior. Gleim et al. (2013) identified low environmental awareness as one of the primary barriers to green consumption, emphasizing that environmentally themed messages are most effective when targeted at individuals already engaged with or attuned to ecological issues. Similarly, Joshi and Rahman (2015), in their meta-analysis of 53 empirical studies, concluded that environmental concern is one of the most reliable predictors of green

purchase behavior. Additional support for this finding can be found in the work of Duarte et al. (2024), who reported that consumers with strong environmental concern were significantly more willing to purchase products with sustainable packaging.

Taken together, these findings highlight that environmental claims are not universally persuasive but can be highly effective when aimed at the right demographic.

Hypothesis 5 proposed that "Quality related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims." This hypothesis was rejected. The effect of quality claims on purchase intention was not statistically significant. Moreover, while the relationship was slightly positive, the magnitude of the difference between quality and price claims was very minor, suggesting that both price and quality claims had similar influence on purchase intention.

This result aligns with prior theoretical expectations based on the framework of Zeithaml (1988), who identified perceived quality and price as the central drivers of consumer value and purchase intention. Chang & Wildt (1994) discussed the same in their research, both attributing price and quality equally important roles in determining purchase intention.

Lastly, hypothesis 6 proposed that "Quality related claims will lead to higher purchase intention when compared to price related claims. Only when perceived quality is high." This hypothesis was also rejected. The interaction effect, similar to H5, was not significant and showed no major differences between price and quality claims when perceived quality was high. This again suggests that price and quality are equally important and show to be the main motivators driving purchase intention.

When related back to the research question we can conclude that price and quality are the most important predictors of purchase intention. Environmental & health claims seem to play a secondary, mediating role, but have potential to become the most important factors in specific demographics.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study provide meaningful implications for existing consumer behavior theory, particularly in relation to the PERVAL model (Sweeney & Soutar, 2002) and broader frameworks of value-based decision-making. While PERVAL conceptualizes consumer value as multidimensional it implicitly suggests that these different value types exert comparable influence on purchase intention. The results of this study challenge that assumption. Among the four types of claims tested only price and quality demonstrated consistent positive influence on purchase intention. Health and environmental claims, by contrast, showed no significant effect or, in some cases, even a negative association.

The results point toward a hierarchy of claim effectiveness**,** with price and quality claims emerging as primary drivers, like suggested by the research of Zeithaml (1988) and Chang & Wildt (1994). Health and environmental claims seem to form a secondary tier of influence. This second tier appears less impactful in general populations, although it may become relevant when specific individual differences (such as high environmental awareness) are present. This differentiation suggests that value dimensions are not equally weighted but instead depend on both message context and consumer characteristics.

Interestingly, a result not tied directly to the hypotheses but nonetheless theoretically noteworthy is the finding that health awareness was a significant negative predictor of purchase intention. This result runs counter to prior research (e.g., Gould, 1990; Iqbal et al., 2021), which typically associates health consciousness with stronger intention to buy health-promoting products. A possible explanation may be found in consumer skepticism, especially when health-aware individuals are presented with generic claims from unknown sources, as was the case in this study. This raises important questions about credibility, source trustworthiness, and claim specificity, which may moderate the theoretical effect of value dimensions across different consumer segments.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for both marketing professionals and policymakers who aim to encourage sustainable and health-conscious consumer behavior. First and foremost, the results underscore the effectiveness of price and quality-related claims in influencing purchase intention. These value dimensions proved to be more persuasive than health or environmental claims in the general sample, suggesting that claims grounded in economic and functional value remain dominant in consumer decision-making.

For companies aiming to enhance purchase intentions, this raises an important strategic question: how can value be emphasized without compromising pricing strategy? Since lowering prices is often not in the company's financial interest, a more sustainable approach is to focus on increasing perceived quality. This can be achieved through storytelling around ingredient sourcing, production standards, or brand heritage—methods that have been shown to enhance consumer perceptions of quality even in the absence of tangible product differences.

Additionally, the only accepted hypothesis in this study (H4) showed that environmental claims can be highly effective when environmental awareness is high. This reinforces the importance of market segmentation and targeted communication. Rather than using a one-size-fits-all message, companies

should invest in demographic and psychographic research to identify and tailor messages to audiences with higher environmental or health awareness (or other mediators if found). In such segments, previously less impactful claim types may become highly persuasive

The findings also highlight the importance of trust and message credibility. The use of a fictional brand in this study may have contributed to skepticism toward health and environmental claims, which rely heavily on perceived authenticity. In practice, this suggests that companies seeking to make such claims should support them with trusted certifications, scientific backing, or third-party endorsements. Without such credibility signals, even well-intentioned claims may be dismissed or ignored.

From a policy perspective, the results support the idea that awareness plays a key role in shaping the effectiveness of advertising claims. Since environmentally aware participants were more responsive to environmental claims, public campaigns that aim to increase environmental literacy may have a positive impact on sustainable purchasing behavior. Educational initiatives, public awareness programs, and clearer environmental labeling can all help consumers better understand the sustainability implications of their choices.

The observation that health awareness had a significant negative effect on purchase intention, though not tied to a specific hypothesis, further suggests that highly aware consumers may be particularly sensitive to weak or generic messaging. This reinforces the need for carefully crafted, specific, and credible communication strategies when appealing to informed or skeptical audiences.

Overall, the study emphasizes that the effectiveness of marketing claims is strongly influenced by the context in which they are received. Advertising and public campaigns should therefore not only focus on the message itself but also on the audience's level of awareness and motivation. This approach can help businesses increase consumer engagement and support broader societal goals such as improving public health and reducing environmental impact.

Limitations

Despite the contributions of this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample was obtained using non-random snowball sampling. While efforts were made to ensure diversity in age, gender, and educational background during initial outreach, this method may still introduce sampling bias. A more randomized sampling approach might have resulted in a more representative cross-section of the population and could potentially reveal different patterns, particularly in how different demographics respond to claim types or value dimensions

Secondly, the study relied on a fictional brand and advertisement, which may have impacted participants' responses. Real brands often evoke existing associations, trust, or emotional attachment—factors that can significantly influence how consumers interpret advertising claims. In this study, the lack of such associations may have diminished the perceived credibility or relevance of the claims, especially for participants with higher health or environmental awareness. Future research could replicate the experiment using known brands to assess whether existing brand familiarity amplifies or mitigates claim effectiveness.

A third limitation involves the choice of product. Although the product was intentionally selected to be neutral and broadly appealing, it is possible that the observed effects are product-specific, or influenced by the product. Health and environmental claims may be more or less effective depending on the category of product. For instance, such claims might resonate more strongly in personal care or cleaning products, where ethical considerations are often more prominent. Further research could explore whether the observed hierarchy of value claims holds across diverse product types.

Finally, the results from the manipulation check cannot be ignored. 45.3% of participants did not correctly recall the type of claim they were shown. While a case can be made that claim interpretation can often occur subconsciously, the low recall rate suggests that the manipulations may not have been sufficiently distinctive. In future studies, claim visibility could be enhanced by using stronger phrasing, bolder design elements, or incorporating claims multiple times across different touchpoints within the advertisement. A pilot test could also help assess and refine the clarity and recognizability of the stimuli before launching the main study.

Directions for Future Research

First, future research could further explore why environmentally and health-motivated claims were relatively ineffective compared to price and quality claims. This study found that only environmental claims became effective when matched with high levels of environmental awareness (h4). Future studies could build on this by examining under which psychological or contextual conditions these claims become more persuasive. For instance, research could test whether message framing, visual design, or the use of credible third-party certifications enhances the effect of environmental or health claims in low-awareness segments.

Second, it would be valuable to explore whether the observed "second-tier" positioning of health and environmental claims is a product-specific phenomenon or generalizes across product categories. This study focused on a single food product, but consumers may respond differently in other domains

such as personal care, fashion, or household cleaning products, where ethical or health-related claims may play a larger role. Testing across product types would clarify the boundary conditions of these effects.

Third, the study revealed an unexpected negative effect of health awareness on purchase intention, suggesting that health-conscious consumers may respond critically to health claims, possibly due to skepticism. Future research could incorporate constructs like advertising skepticism or trust in marketing as moderators or mediators, as Lähteenmäki et al., (2010) suggested as an important factor in predicting purchase intention. For example, Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) developed a well-validated scale to measure general advertising skepticism that could be useful in future survey designs.

Conclusion

Taken together, the findings of this study provide new insights into the relative effectiveness of different product claims in influencing food-related purchase intention. Contrary to expectations derived from the PERVAL framework, emotional and social value dimensions underperformed functional value drivers like price and quality. However, the study also demonstrated that consumer characteristics, particularly environmental awareness, can meaningfully moderate these effects, highlighting the importance of audience segmentation. While the findings are subject to certain methodological limitations, they offer both theoretical and practical contributions by refining our understanding of value-based communication strategies in marketing. Future research should build on these insights to test their validity across contexts, product types, and consumer traits. Ultimately, this study underscores that persuasive communication in food marketing is not one-size-fits-all; effectiveness depends as much on the message as on the mindset of the audience receiving it.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Age

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Please enter your age in years	234	19.00	80.00	47.5641	14.98061
Valid N (listwise)	234				

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	148	63.2	63.2	63.2
	Female	84	35.9	35.9	99.1
	Other	1	.4	.4	99.6
	Prefer not to say	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	234	100.0	100.0	

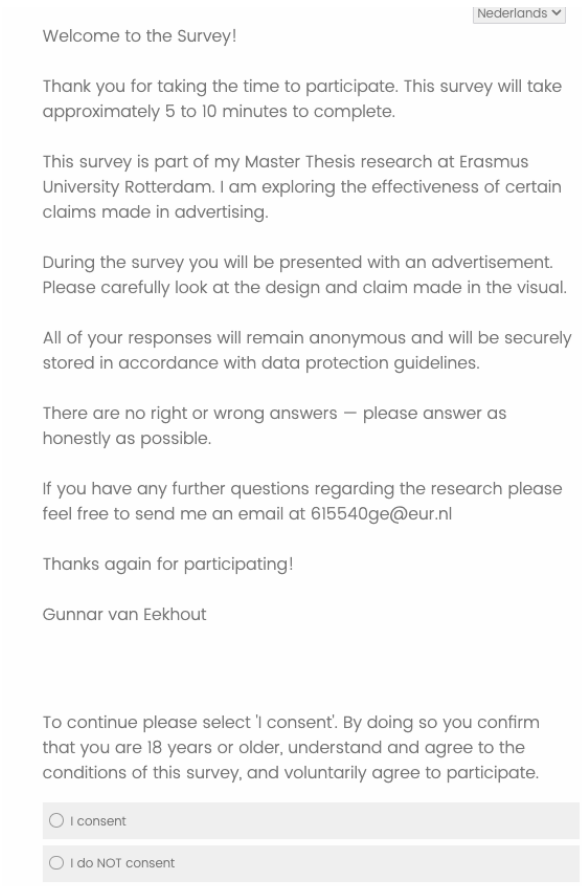
Level of education

What is your highest level of achieved education?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school diploma	6	2.6	2.6	2.6
	MBO	14	6.0	6.0	8.5
	HBO	93	39.7	39.7	48.3
	WO	113	48.3	48.3	96.6
	Other / not listed	8	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	234	100.0	100.0	

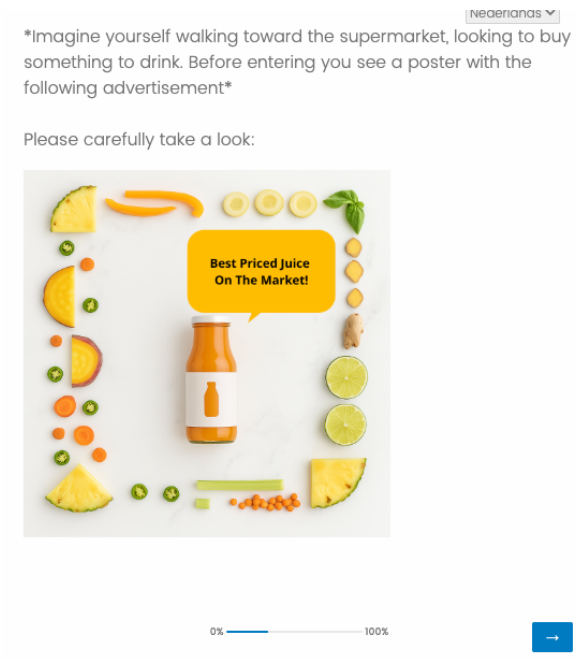
Appendix B – Survey

Welcome page



One of 4 manipulations:

Price



Environmental

Imagine yourself walking toward the supermarket, looking to buy something to drink. Before entering you see a poster with the following advertisement

Please carefully take a look:

0% 100%

→

Quality

Imagine yourself walking toward the supermarket, looking to buy something to drink. Before entering you see a poster with the following advertisement

Please carefully take a look:

0% 100%

→

Health

Imagine yourself walking toward the supermarket, looking to buy something to drink. Before entering you see a poster with the following advertisement

Please carefully take a look:

0% 100% →

Based on the advertisement that you just saw, please answer the following questions:

	Very low	Low	Neutral	High	Very high
The likelihood of purchasing this product is:	○	○	○	○	○
The probability that I would consider buying the product is:	○	○	○	○	○
My willingness to buy the product is:	○	○	○	○	○

0% 100% →

Based on the advertisement that you just saw, please answer the following questions:

	Very Low	Low	Neutral	High	Very High
The likelihood that the product would be reliable is:	○	○	○	○	○
The workmanship of product would be:	○	○	○	○	○
The chance that this product is of high quality should be:	○	○	○	○	○
The likelihood that this product is dependable is:	○	○	○	○	○
The chance that this product would be durable is:	○	○	○	○	○

0% 100%

→

Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I'm very self-conscious about my health	○	○	○	○	○
I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings about my health	○	○	○	○	○
I reflect about my health a lot	○	○	○	○	○
I'm concerned about my health all the time	○	○	○	○	○
I notice how I feel physically as I go through the day	○	○	○	○	○
I take responsibility for the state of my health	○	○	○	○	○

0% 100%

→

Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Good health takes active participation on my part	○	○	○	○	○
I only worry about my health when I get sick	○	○	○	○	○
Living life without disease and illness is very important to me	○	○	○	○	○
My health depends on how well I take care of myself	○	○	○	○	○
Living life in the best possible health is very important to me	○	○	○	○	○

0% 100%

→

Please answer the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I think that using more natural resources than we need does NOT threaten the health and well-being of people in the future.	○	○	○	○	○
I think that we need stricter laws and regulations to protect the environment.	○	○	○	○	○
I think that it is important to take measures against problems which have to do with climate change.	○	○	○	○	○

What was being promoted/emphasized in the advertisement that you just saw?

- (●) Health benefits
- ( ) Environmental benefits
- ( ) Quality benefits
- ( ) Price benefits
- ( ) Do not remember

What type of product was shown in the advertisement that you just saw?

- ( ) Fruit Juice
- ( ) Meat
- ( ) Vegetable mix
- ( ) Do not remember

0% 100% →

Please enter your age in years

What is your gender

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

What is your highest level of achieved education?

- High school diploma
- MBO
- HBO
- WO
- Other / not listed

0% 100% →

Thank you for the time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded!

Your input will help us research the impact of various different types of advertising claims on purchase intention. This research also took into account the moderating effect of environmental and health awareness, as well as perceived quality.

If you have any question or are interested in the results of the research, please contact the researcher: Gunnar van Eekhout, 615540ge@eur.nl.

0% 100%