

# ECR Academic Student Award 2018

**Name of the student:**

Anja Waldhör

**University and Department / Program of study:**

Vienna University of Economics and Business  
Department of Marketing (Institute for Retailing & Marketing)  
MSc Marketing Program

**Category of the thesis (Master Thesis, Bachelor Thesis, PhD Thesis):**

Master Thesis

**Supervisor of the thesis:**

Dr. Cordula Cerha

# Title of the thesis

***Cleaning Up the Personal Care Industry:  
The Role of "Free From" Claims on Personal Care Products in  
Consumer Decision-Making***

# Objective(s) / Research Question(s)

- ***RQ: What role do "free from" claims on personal care products play in consumer decision-making and choice behavior?***
  - **Objective:** examine whether "free from" claims featured on personal care products significantly influence consumer decision-making and choice behavior, and if so in which manner and to what extent
- ***Sub-RQ1: What is the effect of a "free from" claim on a personal care product on consumers' attitude towards and perceptions of the product?***
  - **Objective:** investigate whether the mere presence of a "free from" claim on a personal care product makes consumers hold more favorable attitudes towards the product
- ***Sub-RQ2: What is the effect of a "free from" claim on a personal care product on consumers' purchase intention of the product?***
  - **Objective:** find out whether a "free from" claim on a personal care product significantly affects consumers' purchase intention of the product, and if so in which direction
- ***Sub-RQ3: What is the effect of a "free from" claim on a personal care product on consumers' expected product performance?***
  - **Objective:** examine whether consumers associate the claimed absence of certain chemicals with losses in product performance or whether they expect such products to work just as well or even better than their non-labelled counterparts

# Methodology

- Conclusive / quantitative research approach
- Experimental design
  - Laboratory experiment (online)
  - Between-subjects design
  - Presence of “free from” claim on personal care product presented as the experimental manipulation between conditions

Treatment Condition



Control Condition



# Key-Results

- Significant **positive** effect of a “free from” claim
- A personal care product claiming to be **free from** certain chemicals is...
  - perceived as significantly **more appealing** in **general**,
  - considered as significantly **more favorable** in various **health-related** aspects,
  - and **expected** to **work** significantly **better** than its conventional, non-labelled counterpart
- Consumers are significantly **more likely to consider purchase** of the “free from” labelled product than of the conventional, non-labelled alternative
- However, the **positive effects** of the “free from” claim tend to vary in their strength with certain **involvement-related** factors, i.e.:
  - Consumers’ health consciousness
  - General importance placed on personal care products and ingredients of such products
  - Perceived link between ingredients and long-term health impacts
  - Familiarity with the underlying issue

# Relevance for ECR / ECR-Members

- Relevant insights for **both manufacturers and retailers**
  - Regarding which products in the personal care industry are perceived as more attractive and are more likely to be bought by the consumer
- ***Efficient Assortment, Product Introduction & Promotions:*** close collaboration between manufacturers and retailers
  - **Manufacturers:** producing such products and labelling them accordingly
  - **Retailers:** aligned decisions regarding assortment variety & depth, devotion of shelf space, favorable placements in stores, promotions, appropriate labelling of private labels, etc.
- **Providing Consumer Value**
  - By offering (a greater range of) personal care products free from certain chemicals
  - As a direct response to what consumers seem to favor and demand in the personal care aisles
- Meeting this consumer demand through close cooperation allows to **attract and retain customers, boost sales,** and ultimately **enhance** overall supply chain **efficiency**

# Contact details

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