

# **The Risk of Tradition-Washing: Why Communicating Traditionality Increases Green Perceptions**

A. Larrañaga Muguerza; C. Valor Martínez; P. Antonetti

## **Abstract-**

**This study addresses the phenomenon of tradition-washing where consumers may infer that food products staged to appear traditional are green due to the associations of traditionality with naturalness, healthiness, tastiness, safety or authenticity. This inference persists despite limited evidence that traditional production methods result in lower environmental impact. This study tests whether communication of traditionality activates judgments of greenness and the psychological mechanisms that may explain this effect. We also examine two boundary conditions: product category and consumer dispositional nostalgia. An online experiment with 280 participants shows that the communication of traditional production significantly enhances consumer preferences and perceptions of greenness by eliciting feelings of groundedness. The effect is greater among consumers lower in nostalgia and similar across vice and virtue product categories. This study calls attention to the risk of tradition-washing as consumers conflate traditionality with greenness perceptions. Moreover, this study extends past work on the effects of traditional production methods on consumers by showing the mediating role of feelings of groundedness: because traditionality makes consumers more grounded, they elicit product perceptions of being greener and more desirable. Our findings have practical implications for stakeholders, namely companies, policymakers and consumer organizations to attenuate the risk of tradition-washing.**

**Index Terms-** Lay theories; processed food; groundedness; tradition-washing; perceived greenness.

Due to copyright restriction we cannot distribute this content on the web. However, clicking on the next link, authors will be able to distribute to you the full version of the paper:

[Request full paper to the authors](#)

If your institution has an electronic subscription to Environmental Communication, you can download the paper from the journal website:

[Access to the Journal website](#)

## **Citation:**

*Antonetti, P.; Larrañaga, A.; Valor, C. "The Risk of Tradition-Washing: Why Communicating Traditionality Increases Green Perceptions", Environmental*

