

When the product was an animal. The role of representations and affective ties to the animal in relationships with meat products and their consumption

Arnaud Lamy^{*,**}, Sandrine Costa^{**}, Gilles Séré de Lanauze^{***},
Céline Vial^{**,****} and Lucie Sirieix^{**}

^{*}Centre de recherche de l'Institut Paul Bocuse, Ecully, France

^{**}MoISA, Univ. Montpellier, CIRAD, CIHEAM-IAMM, INRAE, Institut Agro, IRD, Montpellier, France

^{***}Université de Montpellier – Montpellier Business School – MRM, France

^{****}Pôle développement innovation et recherche, IFCE, Exmes, France

Abstract

• *Objective*

This research shows how the links between distance to the product, affective attachment to the animal from which the product originates and construal levels interact to impact on purchase intention.

• *Methodology*

It mobilises the theories of psychological distance and construal levels. The case of horse meat is chosen because it illustrates the internal conflict of the consumer torn between the pleasure of eating meat and the discomfort linked to the slaughter of the animal. A qualitative study was conducted with 21 consumers and non-consumers of horse meat.

• *Results*

Low-level construals are more closely related to close psychological distances to the product, and weak affective attachment to the animal: the individuals perceiving themselves as close to the product evaluate it on concrete characteristics and have few emotional links to the horse, and conversely. However, a weak affective attachment to the animal only allows for low-level construals of meat if the individual can get psychologically close to this product, which is impossible when it is not very visible.

• *Managerial implications*

Recommendations are made to the agri-food sector to improve the supply of meat products.

• *Originality*

The inclusion of affective attachment to the animal provides a better understanding of how this variable combines with psychological distance to the product and construal levels to improve our understanding of consumer attitudes and intentions.

- **Keywords:** food consumption, meat consumption, construal level, psychological distance, qualitative study.

To contact the author: arnaudlamy2@gmail.com ; sandrine.costa@inrae.fr ;
gilles.sere-de-lanauze@umontpellier.fr ; celine.vial@inrae.fr ; lucie.sirieix@supagro.fr

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