

Exploring Alignability Effects and the Role of Information Structure in Promoting Uptake of Energy Efficient Technologies

Authors : Rebecca Hafner, David Elmes, Daniel Read

Abstract : The current research applies decision-making theory to the problem of increasing uptake of energy efficient technologies in the market place, where uptake is currently slower than one might predict following rational choice models. We apply the alignable/non-alignable features effect and explore the impact of varying information structure on the consumers' preference for standard versus energy efficient technologies. In two studies we present participants with a choice between similar (boiler vs. boiler) vs. dissimilar (boiler vs. heat pump) technologies, described by a list of alignable and non-alignable attributes. In study One there is a preference for alignability when options are similar; an effect mediated by an increased tendency to infer missing information is the same. No effects of alignability on preference are found when options differ. One explanation for this split-shift in attentional focus is a change in construal levels potentially induced by the added consideration of environmental concern. Study two was designed to explore the interplay between alignability and construal level in greater detail. We manipulated construal level via a thought prime task prior to taking part in the same heating systems choice task, and find that there is a general preference for non-alignability, regardless of option type. We draw theoretical and applied implications for the type of information structure best suited for the promotion of energy efficient technologies.

Keywords : alignability effects, decision making, energy-efficient technologies, sustainable behaviour change

Conference Title : ICEPDM 2017 : International Conference on Environmental Policy and Decision Making

Conference Location : Zurich, Switzerland

Conference Dates : April 20-21, 2017