

DO YOU WANT TO LOSE THE ONE PLANET WE HAVE?

RHETORICAL QUESTIONS IN GREEN ADVERTISING

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ABSTRACT

While the use of questions has garnered some attention in the broader marketing and advertising literature, scant research has examined how rhetorical questions in green advertising influence consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. Rhetorical questions often capture consumer attention and enhance persuasion. But when could this message strategy generate adverse consumer responses? Applying expectancy violation theory to a specific rhetorical question type – erotesis – the current research investigates how and when interrogative advertising may be less effective than traditional imperatives. Two experimental studies reveal that erotesis weakens brand attitudes, particularly among those with high levels of environmental concern. Anger is a critical mediating factor. The current research contributes to advertising scholarship by addressing the need for novel messaging research in green advertising, introducing a specific rhetorical question type into the discourse, and revealing an unintended effect of turning away those most concerned about the environment.

KEYWORDS

Green advertising, message design, rhetorical questions, environmental concern