

MARKETING COLLOQUIA

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Where: 741 JMHH

When: 12:00 PM to 1:20 PM

WHEN DO CONSUMERS PREFER NATURAL?

ABSTRACT: Consumers value “naturalness” in some contexts more than others. For example, genetically engineered foods and vaccines are avoided in part due to their perceived unnaturalness, but genetically engineered insulin and synthetic antibiotics are widely accepted. We propose a systematic explanation for variation in the preference for naturalness. Across multiple product categories, we find that natural is more strongly preferred when it is used to prevent a problem than when it is used to cure a problem. This increased preference for natural occurs because natural is perceived as safer and less potent, and when preventing, consumers prefer safer, less potent alternatives. Consistent with this explanation, when natural alternatives are viewed as more risky and more potent, then natural alternatives are more preferred for curing than for preventing. This research sheds light on when the marketing of “natural” can be most appealing to consumers.