

Worried About BPA? Pray for Divine Intervention



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It's not hard to find products labeled as BPA-free these days. For example, you'll find more than 100,000 results if you search Amazon.com for the term "BPA-free." Even manufacturers of products that never contained BPA in the first place get in on the action, for example the BPA-free glass food storage containers shown on the first page of the Amazon.com results. Some manufacturers go further to provide information on BPA and why they think you should avoid it.

Given the ubiquity of BPA-related product information, it's not surprising that researchers are interested in how people react to the information, including a [recent study](#) that examined the influence of thoughts of God. The case study included groups of volunteers who were shown ads for reusable water bottles described in different ways, including ones labeled as BPA-free and ones that included information on potential health effects of BPA, as well as ads with no specific information on BPA.

Groups of volunteers were first reminded of God in various ways before seeing the ads and providing their response to survey questions that probed their response to the ads. For example, in the first phase of the study, one group of participants met in a chapel while another group met in a classroom, with all other study parameters constant. In another phase, groups first read a magazine article about religious buildings or government buildings.

By controlling how the participants were reminded of God and which information on BPA they received, the researchers were able to evaluate how thoughts of God influenced participant reaction to the ads. Overall, the study demonstrated that thoughts of God had a significant impact. According to the researchers, one reason for the "God impact" is that

people associate God with unlimited support that will help them cope with potentially negative events and emotions, in this case potential health effects of BPA.

So why did the researchers do this study? The first clue is found in the name of the journal in which the study was published: **Journal of Marketing Research**. The BPA-free ads were used as examples of a “fear appeal,” which the authors define as “a persuasive message that attempts to elicit fear by depicting a personally relevant and significant threat and then outlines feasible and effective suggestions for deterring it.”

Another clue is in the title of the last section of the paper: **Marketing Implications and Future Research**. A key conclusion is that “marketers should exercise caution in using fear appeals in situations where God may be salient to consumers.” In this case, if you’re trying to sell BPA-free water bottles with a fear appeal, it would be a good idea to avoid any religious influences since the study showed that consumers are less likely to buy your product if they are thinking of God.

But what if you’re a consumer, in particular one who doesn’t like being manipulated by fear appeals? One solution that might provide at least some immunity to the appeal is to think of God, which is exactly what the marketers don’t want you to do.

Another solution is to listen to the science. In recent years, scientists from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Toxicology Program (NTP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have conducted a comprehensive set of in-depth studies on the safety of BPA.

From [these studies](#) we know that:

- 1) Consumer exposure to BPA is extremely low (including from reusable water bottles),
- 2) BPA is rapidly eliminated from the body, and
- 3) There is no risk of health effects at typical consumer exposure levels.

Based on the science, [government bodies around the world](#) have concluded that BPA is safe for use. There’s no need to buy that BPA-free product after all.

But there's even more to come. In the near future, FDA scientists will release results from the largest study on BPA ever conducted. The results aren't available yet but you can [read about the study now](#) and come back later for the results, which the marketers won't be showing you in their fear appeals.