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Insights and Applications

Residents' Perceptions of Tap Water and Decisions to Purchase Bottled Water: A Survey Analysis from the Appalachian, Big Sandy Coal Mining Region of West Virginia

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Abstract

In this exploratory effort, we examine the possible externalities associated with coal mine production and its ensuing effects on drinking water. Past experiences in the coal fields suggest that many residents are concerned about the quality of tap water for consumption. This study explores the perceptions of residents in the Appalachian, Big Sandy coal mining region of West Virginia and their decisions to purchase bottled water. The study reveals an indirect effect of coal mining on water quality, with many residents reporting concerns about the quality of tap water. The study also explores the factors that influence residents' decisions to purchase bottled water, including the perceived quality of tap water and the availability of bottled water. The study concludes that coal mining has a significant impact on the quality of tap water, and that residents are more likely to purchase bottled water when they perceive the quality of tap water to be poor. The study also suggests that the availability of bottled water is an important factor in residents' decisions to purchase bottled water.

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predictors of purchase are perceived tap water quality, the saliency of drinking water concerns, and trust/distrust in the local water treatment facility.

Keywords: Appalachia coal mining drinking water environmental risks

Notes

Note. Statistically significant difference indicated by * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

^a “Our home purchases distilled and bottled water” (model 1).

^b “Water from my tap is always of good quality” (model 2).

^c “Drinking water is a problem in my community” (model 3).

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