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Recycling To Be Richer or Cleaner: Empirical Evidences from Albania

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Albania has a general problem with waste management, the amount of wastes has been increased constantly during the last 30 years. Only during the last 6 years (2014-2020) the amount of solid waste in the country is increased by nearly 20%, and it is foreseen that solid waste production is going to be increased by 5% during the next 10. In this regard, recycling is a viable and effective way to reduce waste treatment costs and to bust a lucrative economic branch. It is calculated that one-third of the solid wastes produced in Albania can be recycled, but only a limited part of it is already recycled. The main objective of the paper is to identify the willingness of the consumers to recycle their own wastes, and if the recycling strategy is pushed by environmental drivers or economic ones. So our main concern is to understand if the consumers want to recycle in order to be cleaner or richer? In this paper, we have used a payment card method to assess the consumer's willingness to recycle. This contingent evaluation technique is suitable to analyze consumer behavior when the product market is lacking. The results show that 50% of the respondents are willing to recycle their domestic wastes. Similarly, 65% consider recycling as a very important process in which they will engage in the near future. About 73% of the respondents are willing to accept up to 200 Albanian Lek per month in order to start recycling. Regarding demographic effects in behavior, women are willing to accept a lower amount of money in order to change their recycling strategy. In conclusion, we can see that the consumers in Albania don't want only to be richer but as well to be cleaner. The amount of willingness to accept is not the only driver that changes the behavior towards recycling but also the environmental ones. This is a good basis for policymakers to build up an appropriate recycling strategy in the country.