Consequences of Product Ownership for Performance: A Categorization Perspective

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Abstract

Feelings of product ownership lead consumers to categorize themselves along product-relevant dimensions. Based on this notion of product-self categorization, we theorize that consumers who experience psychological ownership over a product perform better (worse) on product-related (vs. product-unrelated) tasks. Four experiments provide support for the hypothesis. Compared to a baseline condition, results reveal performance enhancement in product-relevant tasks as well as attenuation in product-irrelevant tasks.

For example, participants who feel psychological ownership over a calculator perform better (worse) on the arithmetic quiz (visual sensitivity quiz) compared to the baseline condition. Performance enhancement is driven by assimilation of behavior to the active self whereas performance attenuation is driven by inhibition of non-active aspects of the self.