

Executive Summary

The Effect of Consumer versus Industry Effectiveness on Willingness to Reduce Waste and Reuse Products

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Although many consumers are aware of the negative environmental impact of generating waste, they often fail to dispose of unwanted products in an environmentally friendly manner and to consume less. Building upon the appraisal theory of emotion, the present study postulates that educating consumers about their low (versus high) effectiveness when compared to industry can counterintuitively increase behavioural intentions to reduce waste and reuse products. Perceived (in)effectiveness refers to the belief that the efforts of consumers (or the industry) can(not) make a difference in helping protect the environment via reducing waste at the population level.

A pre-study was conducted to find out which appraisal-based emotions can be identified when consumers are informed about the industry's effectiveness (versus consumer effectiveness) in helping protect the environment by reducing waste at the population level. The results revealed that anger was the most salient negative emotion identified by appraisals. Three experimental studies in different cultural contexts (Brazil and the USA) then showed that informed states of industry effectiveness (versus consumer effectiveness) increased anger, which in turn had a positive effect on intentions to reduce waste and reuse products. The relationship was stronger for individuals with low (versus high) concern for immediate consequences. A low (versus high) concern indicates that people are not primarily interested in immediate, pleasure-directed benefits at the expense of long-term benefits. There was no moderation effect for consideration of future consequences.

The study makes three major contributions to the literature by (1) revealing the detrimental effects of consumer effectiveness (versus industry effectiveness) states (as opposed to previous correlational studies which found that high levels of perceived consumer effectiveness have

positive effects); (2) identifying the mechanism for motivational pathways via anger (an emotion that has primarily been studied in terms of its negative effects); and (3) revealing that consideration of immediate consequences moderates the effects between consumer effectiveness (versus industry effectiveness) and intentions to reduce waste and reuse products out of anger in the sense that the indirect effect via anger is present at low levels, but absent at high levels of consideration of immediate consequences. The results indicate that policymakers should be cautious when informing consumers about their effectiveness compared to industry, because behavioural intentions to dispose sustainably can decrease. Instead, they may concentrate on informing consumers that their actions may not be sufficient as of today, that joint efforts are necessary, and that higher determination is needed to protect the environment.