Back to Order: How to Preserve Future Brand Purchase Intentions When Things Go Wrong?

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Research question: Does “forcing” order into the consumers’ environment prevent them from blaming the brand(s) involved in goal failure?

Think of a time when you couldn’t accomplish something for reasons that escaped your control... Did you automatically blame the brand that was involved?...

Attribution theory meets compensatory control

Attribution theory: People are rational information processors whose actions are influenced by their causal inferences (Folkes 1984)

Compensatory control model: (Kay et al. 2008)

People have a basic need to perceive the world as orderly
When personal control is threatened, people seek order in their environment to satisfy this need

Causal dimensions of attribution in goal failure:

Correlational study

Method
Sample: N = 426 online participants
Design: two-condition (goal attainment vs. goal failure) between-subjects, based on a memory task

Pilot testing (N = 77): Goal failure (vs. goal attainment) lowers
• Personal control (p < .01)
• Consumer/perception of the brand’s assets: enabling-the-self and enticing-the-self (p < .01)

Multi-sample CFA

Experimental study A

Method
Sample: N = 113 online participants who performed the task on a computer
Design: two-condition (goal attainment vs. goal failure) between-subjects, based on real settings: an intelligence test

Results
Manipulation check (2 items on a 7-point scale):
M_goal attainment = 5.56 vs. M_goal failure = 2.59, t(111) = 9.84, p < .001; No effect on positive or negative mood (p > .10)

Figure 1: Structural model

Figure 2: Above: announcement for goal attainment (i.e., measuring one’s intelligence); below: announcement for goal failure

Experimental study B

Method
Sample: N = 102 online participants who performed the task on a computer
Design: 2 (Goal failure: goal attainment vs. goal failure) x 2 (Cue of orderliness: exposure vs. neutral) between-subjects, based on real settings: an intelligence test

Manipulation of goal failure: same as Exp. A
Manipulation of cue of orderliness: One sentence included as one of the questions of the test (based on Kay et al. 2014, study 1)

Results

Figure 3: Results of Exp. A

Figure 4: Results of Exp. B

Conclusion and next step

• Yes! Exposing consumers to the notion of order prior to goal failure prevents them from blaming the brand.
• Next step: Differentiating controllability when locus is firm-related: volitional vs. constrained

References


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