

Consumers' Attribution of Mind to Possessions as an Impediment to Sharing

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Abstract

Mind attribution refers to the humans' tendency to attribute a humanlike mind to non-human beings; this tendency abounds and influences various consumer behaviors. In the current research, we examine a consequence of mind attribution, particularly on people's sharing behavior. Across five experiments, we show that attribution of mind to possessions reduced people's intention to share their possessions with others, in both social and transactional settings. We show that the impeding effect of mind attribution on sharing persisted regardless of the possessions being animals or artifacts. Furthermore, we demonstrate that this effect was driven by people's concern about potential mental harm that can occur to their possessions as a result of sharing. Finally, we discuss the implications of our research in the context of the sharing economy.

Keywords: *mind attribution; sharing ; collaborative consumption*

Track: Consumer Behaviour