

Innovating Mass Customization with Strict Uniqueness

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Abstract

This paper investigates extensions of mass customization systems that highlight the uniqueness of the product that a consumer has configured. It examines the behavioral consequences of informing consumers that they are the first ever to have created a particular product configuration (strict uniqueness feedback) and in addition assuring that this product configuration will remain unique (strict uniqueness blocking). We hypothesized that both strict uniqueness feedback and blocking increase consumers' valuation of a product, and that they do so due to heightened perceptions of exclusivity. Evidence from a series of field, lab, and online experiments provides compelling support for this theorizing. It also shows that these effects are attenuated when the (large) number of possible product configurations is made transparent to consumers. This research advances our understanding of the psychological forces that govern consumers' appreciation of self-configured products.

Keywords: *mass customization; product uniqueness; exclusivity*

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