

A Bird in the Hand is Yours: Psychological Proximity influences Feelings of Ownership

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Abstract

Consumers' lives and daily activities are largely structured by ownership. People feel ownership over a host of material and nonmaterial targets, which has profound effects on perception, cognition, and behavior. While a diverse body of literature discusses antecedents and consequences of feelings of ownership, the mental association between consumers and targets of ownership itself has received less scrutiny, even though crucial to understanding various ownership-related phenomena. In three studies we document the link between feelings of ownership and psychological distance, which may have been assumed by prior research. We demonstrate that proximity in time and space between a consumer and an object causes feelings of ownership. These findings present a theoretical perspective that enriches the nomological network of ownership while corroborating a broad range of prior findings. This work provides evidence for the usefulness of this perspective in marketing practitioner contexts.

Keywords: *Psychological Ownership; Psychological Distance; IAT*

Track: Consumer Behaviour