

Product Customization to Affirm a Sense of Humanness: The Impact of AI-Induced Identity Threats on Customization Preferences

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Abstract

AI advancements are reshaping marketplace experiences and may be challenging how consumers view their identity. This research examines how AI exposure can trigger human identity threat, increasing the desire for product customization as a form of self-expression to affirm human identity. Study 1 demonstrates that AI-induced identity threat heightens the importance of individuality and the desire for uniqueness. Studies 2 to 4 reveal that threat leads to a stronger preference for self-expressive customization, but not for scarce products (Study 2) or functional customization (Study 3), unless they reflect the consumer's individuality. Study 4 further shows that when consumers affirm their identity through alternative means, the increased preference for customization diminishes. This research contributes to the literature on identity threat, humanness perceptions, and compensatory consumption, offering novel insights into consumer behavior in the context of AI-induced identity threats.

Track: Consumer Behaviour