

When self-perceived effort leads to perseverance: A new perspective on the design of incentives promoting pro-environmental behavior

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Abstract

In the present study, we provide novel evidence on the mechanism underlying perseverance in pro-environmental behavior. Based on three experiments, we demonstrate that actions perceived as effortful increase subsequent pro-environmental behaviors, whereas actions perceived as effortless do not. We document the key role of self-identity underlying perseverance, whereby self-perceived effort increases environmental self-identity and therefore induces perseverance in subsequent behaviors. By contrast, we also show that perceived effort does not affect effort justification or perception of efficacy, two alternative mechanisms that could trigger perseverance in behavior. Our results have important implications for research focusing on incentivizing pro-environmental behavior, including the design of nudges. We also raise a number of new research questions in how manipulating self-perceived effort through informational interventions could be used to reinforce perseverance in the adoption of pro-environmental behaviors.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Decision-Making, Public Policy*

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