

The Scarcity Trap: How Perceptions Of Resource Immutability Reduces Scarcity-Induced Present Bias

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Abstract

Consumers often find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle where financial resource scarcity decreases their psychological well-being, which in turn leads them to make present-biased financial decisions that contribute to the perpetuation of their condition. The present research explores how perceptions of resource immutability can help consumers disarm this scarcity trap. Results of six experiments ($n = 1,801$) and a secondary dataset ($n = 51,288$) reveal that perceptions of resource immutability reduce the present bias that characterizes the decisions of consumers facing scarcity episodes. Reported findings also show that this effect is contingent on consumers who perceive themselves to be socioeconomically vulnerable and is mediated by positive appraisals of the scarcity episodes. In addition to contributing to the literature on resource scarcity, this research provides substantial implications for interventions that can help consumers disarm the scarcity trap.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Customer Satisfaction and Delight*

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