

Differentiating State- and Trait-Based Range Anxiety: A New Perspective to Enhance Electric Vehicle Adoption

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Abstract

One of the barriers in the transition to electric vehicles is skepticism about their range. We develop a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of range anxiety by differentiating between a situation-based state and a more permanent trait that may stem from a resistance to change. We show in two experiments that both trait and state range anxiety can reduce the appeal of electric vehicles. Trait-based range anxiety increases consumers' demand for even longer ranges irrespective of other car features (i.e., short charging), and state-based range anxiety can be triggered by range-related communication. Our findings suggest to refrain from emphasizing range in the marketing of electric vehicles altogether. Focusing on other benefits—especially the ones distinguishing electric from carbon fuel-based vehicles—avoids feeding the dominant narrative of insufficient range that certain industry members and political parties are perpetuating.

Keywords: *range anxiety, purchase intention, sustainability*

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