

Consumer Vulnerability Revisited-The Invincibility-Emancipation Continuum

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Abstract

Life is precious though it is not uncommon for individuals to plough through it believing in their own invincibility, a fallacy shattered only when adversity strikes. Previous studies have examined the context of consumer vulnerability and empowerment, though a gap remains with regards to how individuals progress from perceived invulnerability to empowered emancipation when confronted with profound challenges. Drawing on the context of end-of-life care and via 257 qualitative interviews with service users across 9 palliative care units, we introduce an invincibility-emancipation continuum (IEC) to show how substantial crisis shatters perceived invincibility, thrusts individuals into a liminal vulnerable state, and given supportive interventions, enables a leap toward emancipation. We challenge the static view of vulnerable consumers, demonstrating instead how vulnerability can catalyze personal growth and collective resilience. We offer our IEC to practitioners in designing services and support systems that help individuals move from helplessness to empowerment.

Track: Public Sector and Non-Profit Marketing