

Climate change, need frustration, and consumer responses

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Abstract

Consumers today live under the menace of climate change. They respond to this menace based on the type of needs that climate change frustrates. Adopting a need frustration perspective, we investigate the needs climate change frustrates and the downstream self-protective response strategies consumers develop. Using a mixed-method approach, we find that climate change majorly frustrates immediate physiological and safety needs, posing an existential threat to consumers (Study 1). A higher existential threat activates flight responses (Study 2), especially when consumers perceive themselves as having a low impact on climate change (Study 3). Flight responses relating to emotions of fear and anxiety stimulate emotion regulation consumption (hedonic overconsumption) among consumers with low self-control (Study 4).

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