Motivating Consumers by Creating a Self-Fulfilling-Prophecy

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This research lends insight into the consumption situation wherein consumers are unmotivated to try new products or behaviors that they perceive as too difficult to adopt as a result of low self-efficacy. In this research, we introduce the distinction between specific self-efficacy (SSE) and general self-efficacy (GSE) and demonstrate, in three studies, that marketers can boost a consumer’s SSE by repositioning his or her sense of self. We identify the GSE trait as moderating the divergent effects of marketers’ fear appeals. We also demonstrate that a message that adds SSE-boosting appeals to fear appeals moderates such divergent effects. In a third study, we go beyond the construct of intentions and suggest that boosting consumers’ SSE, via marketing efforts, influences not only their intentions, but their commitment of behavior toward the product, thereby creating a self-fulfilling-prophecy in marketing. In addition, we reveal the response underlying these influences by demonstrating how consumers’ preferences and choices changed due to their new perception of themselves. We conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the findings and suggest that marketers can gain new tools to overcome consumer resistance by repositioning the consumer’s sense of self-efficacy. Our aim is to create the foundations of a new typology of marketing strategies, and their effectiveness under various circumstances, regarding the unique consumption situations of too-high goals. These strategies can assist not only the private sector, but even more importantly the public and not-for-profit sectors in the successful adoption of various products, services, and behaviors, such as health programs, new learning methods, do-it-yourself products, and new technologies, by various segments of the consumer population.