

Abstract

The issue of poverty may be as important as it is understudied. Some evidence suggests that consumers living in poverty may be better off without access to vice products but with external parties taking control over their purchase decisions. We question these assumptions across three studies. Upon confrontation with unaffordable goods in a consumer context poor consumers seem to devalue otherwise attractive items. They do so only after autonomously refraining from purchasing them. The devaluation generalizes to other items that share important dimensions. The suggestion is that, under some circumstances, exposure to vice products may help, rather than hurt, the poor's resistance to purchasing them.