

SCARCITY & CONSUMER DECISION MAKING

Issue Editors: Kelly Goldsmith, Vlad Griskevicius and Rebecca Hamilton

[Call for Papers](#) | *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* / Volume 5, Issue 4

Consumers regularly face resource scarcity and reminders of resource scarcity, both in their personal lives and in the marketplace. Many consumers contend with chronic resource shortages, and even those who live in relative abundance often find that certain resources are insufficient to meet their needs. Independent of these more personal resource considerations, the popular press regularly emphasizes how macro-level resources (e.g., jobs, oil, drinking water) are falling short of societal demands. Further, marketers routinely engender a sense of scarcity among consumers through the use of promotional tactics designed to emphasize the limited nature of products. As a consequence, it is common for consumers to think about, worry about, and discuss “not having enough.”

To date, research across various academic disciplines has investigated how scarcity shapes human behavior. For example, effects of scarcity have been examined in anthropology, biology, cognitive, social and evolutionary psychology, economics, marketing, and sociology. However, fundamental questions related to the consequences of resource scarcity for consumer decision making remain unaddressed, and the current body of findings lacks integration. For instance, while chronic poverty, experimentally induced financial deprivation, childhood resource uncertainty, hunger, and scarcity marketing promotions have all been described as antecedents to feelings of resource scarcity, it is unclear whether these various operationalizations of scarcity produce the same or different effects on consumers' cognition, motivation, and behavior.

The central goal of this special issue is to bring together novel research that advances the understanding of how resource scarcity impacts consumer decision making. We define resource scarcity broadly, as being a state in which a consumer experiences the sense that their resources are insufficient to meet their needs, goals and/or desires. This definition would include, but not be limited to, objective states of resource scarcity (e.g., poverty, hunger, childhood socioeconomic status), subjective states of resource scarcity (e.g., when one's resources feel scarce due to an upward social comparison), and other experimentally induced states of real or imagined resource scarcity (e.g., manipulations that activate cognitions related to scarcity either consciously or non-consciously). Thus, it encompasses both long-term (chronic) states of scarcity and short-term states of scarcity.

Consumers may experience scarcity of relevant resources, such as:

- Money
- Time
- Food
- Material resources at the individual level (e.g., gasoline needed to drive one's car)
- Material resources at the macro-level (e.g., gasoline needed to meet societal demands)
- Non-material resources relevant to goal attainment (e.g., chances to win in a game)
- Products (i.e., limited supply or availability)

Research questions that might be examined include:

- Does resource scarcity produce different consequences for consumer decision making as a function of which resource is scarce (e.g., scarcity of time vs. money vs. food)?
- Does resource scarcity produce different consequences for consumer decision making as a function of whether one experiences scarcity that is strictly personal (e.g., I do not have enough gasoline to drive my car) versus scarcity that is shared with others (e.g., there is not enough gasoline to meet societal demands)?
- Does a perception of scarcity relative to others generate the same effects as objective resource scarcity?
- When do consumers exposed to the resource scarcity of others (e.g., through charitable appeals) experience a sense of scarcity themselves versus experience a relative sense of abundance?
- When does scarcity impair versus improve decision making? In instances when scarcity impairs decision making, what interventions can be used to help correct these effects?
- Do short-term and longer-term (chronic) experiences with resource scarcity have different downstream consequences for consumers' self-assessments?

Manuscripts that help to answer questions such as these and/or shed new light on the theoretical and practical implications of resource scarcity on consumer decision making are welcomed. We also encourage different methodological approaches, including traditional experiments, field studies, archival data analysis, and qualitative methods. Finally, we suggest that, when possible, authors draw out relevant policy implications of their work that may be used to improve decision outcomes for consumers contending with resource scarcity in their daily lives.

Editorial Timeline

Deadline for Initial Submission: June 1, 2019

Deadline for Final Manuscripts: June 15, 2020

Details

Papers appearing in the issue should not exceed 8,000 words. Submissions will receive double-blind peer review. Author guidelines may be found at the *JACR* home page. Authors who would like additional information about the issue or would just appreciate feedback on a potential project are encouraged to contact the editors:

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About the Editors:



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Kelly Goldsmith is an Associate Professor at the Owen Graduate School of Management at Vanderbilt University. Her research focuses primarily on scarcity, uncertainty, goals and self-regulation.



Vlad Griskevicius

Vlad Griskevicius is the Carlson Foundation Endowed Chair in Marketing at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management. He has extensive background in psychology and studies social influence, communication, green marketing, and the evolutionary roots of modern behavior.



Rebecca Hamilton

Rebecca Hamilton is the Michael G. and Robin Psaros Chair in Business Administration, Professor of Marketing, and Marketing Area Coordinator at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business. Professor Hamilton's research examines the effects of contextual factors – such as the social environment, stage of decision making and presentation format – on consumer decision making.