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1 - The Healthcare Conundrum at the Bottom-of-the-Pyramid

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Abstract

BEHAVIORAL TRACK SUBMISSION **The Healthcare Conundrum at the Bottom-of-the-Pyramid (BOP)** The need to examine health care issues have been continually emphasized in consumer research due to its significant consumer welfare and public policy implications (Menon et al., 2006). Recent research on health care in the BOP context have focused on the legitimacy and sustainability of health care practices (Agarwal et al., 2017; Bucher et al., 2016), but there has been scant research addressing the healthcare-seeking behavior of BOP consumers. Our research aims to extend this body of work by examining 1) how financial deprivation levels lead BOP consumers to focus on different aspects of health care, which subsequently influence their preferences toward different healthcare campaigns and 2) the mediational role of self-esteem. Employing the theories of financial deprivation and goal hierarchy, we posit that BOP consumers with low levels of financial deprivation will prefer health campaigns that are framed at a higher level (vs. a lower level) as it helps repair their self-esteem and eliminate self-discrepancy. However, we don't expect to find differences in sensitivity to framing of health campaigns amongst BOP consumers who experience a chronic high level of financial deprivation. The results from a field experiment (financial deprivation (high, low) X framing of healthcare campaign (higher-order goal, lower-order goal)) conducted in east India confirmed these predictions and illustrated that self-esteem mediated these effects. This research sheds light on the underlying motivations that guide BOP consumers' preferences toward healthcare campaigns. From a practical standpoint, this research upholds that the BOP consumers cannot be interpreted as a homogeneous group implying that differentiated segmentation strategies should be implemented when marketing healthcare to the BOP audience.