

Gift as an Instrument of Justice: Intentional Suboptimal Gifting

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ABSTRACT

While gifting research has extensively studied why givers unintentionally fail to please recipients with their gifts, little is known about why they intentionally do so. Overall, for the first time, we propose that consumers possess an inherent proclivity to indulge in counter-consumption tactics in order to cope with relationship consumption-based offenses arising due to failed gifts. Therefore, a gift acts as an instrument of justice in social relationships. With the help of six studies, this research establishes that if people develop an unfairness perception when they receive undesirable gifts then they may address it by reciprocating with a suboptimal gift. However, an appropriate justification behind an undesirable gift diminishes this behavior. This tendency is so strong that people prefer to spend additional money on a suboptimal gift instead of regifting an unwanted gift. Lastly, a recipient's power limits this behavior due to a threat of repercussions.

Keywords: Suboptimal gifts, unfairness perception, consumption-based offense, counter-consumption tactics, gifting