

Love-smitten consumers will do anything for their cars and guns

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The way people treat their possessions looks like love, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"Is it possible for consumers to be in love with their possessions?" ask authors John L. Lastovicka (Arizona State University) and Nancy J. Sirianni (Texas Christian University). When it comes to cars, computers, bicycles, and firearms, the answer seems to be a resounding yes.

The researchers visited five car shows in Arizona and conducted in-depth interviews with car enthusiasts (males and females, aged 19-68). They found that love-smitten consumers were more likely to use pet names than brand names when describing their cars and that some people seemed to use their attachment to cars to remedy pain and disappointment in their romantic lives.

"Material possession relationships may reduce the [negative consequences](#) of [social isolation](#) and loneliness, and can contribute to consumer well-being, especially when considered relative to less-desirable alternative responses like substance abuse, [delinquency](#), and the side-effects of anti-depressant medications," the authors write.

The researchers found various combinations of passion, intimacy, and commitment in consumers' relationships. "Consumers felt a passion, or a relentless drive to be with their beloved possession, and this often manifested in gazing at and caressing their cars, and even some love-at-first-sight purchase decisions," the authors write.

People nurture relationships with their beloved possessions, investing time and money into improving them and becoming fluent in understanding their details. "We found love-smitten consumers spent six times more on accessories and enhancements for their prized guns than firearm owners who did not demonstrate passion, intimacy, or commitment toward their guns," the authors write.

These findings have significance for firms that sell accessories and after-purchase services such as cleaning, enhancements, and repairs. "For those in the throes of material possession love, it should be no wonder that they so freely spend their time and money on their beloved," the authors conclude.

More information: John L. Lastovicka and Nancy J. Sirianni. "Truly, Madly, Deeply: Consumers in the Throes of Material Possession Love." *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2011. Further information: ejcr.org

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