

Shop when you're happy: Positive feelings improve consumer decision-making abilities

July 14 2011

Consumers who are in a positive mood make quicker and more consistent judgments than unhappy people, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"There has been considerable debate about how affect (moods, emotions, feelings) influences the quality of people's decisions," write authors Paul M. Herr (Virginia Tech), Christine M. Page (Skidmore College), Bruce E. Pfeiffer (University of New Hampshire), and Derick F. Davis (Virginia Tech). "We join this debate by looking at affect's influence on a very basic element of decision-making: deciding if an object is liked or disliked."

The authors manipulated study participants' moods by showing them pictures of likable objects (puppies) or unpleasant images (diseased feet) or asking them to recall pleasant or unpleasant events from the past. After these "affect inductions" the participants viewed pictures of common objects one at a time. They then chose from a list of evaluative adjectives, positive and negative, which were presented in a random order.

"Our prior research found that people respond faster to positive adjectives than negative adjectives," the authors write. "The present work finds that this difference disappeared for people in the positive affect conditions." Not only did people in the positive condition respond more quickly to adjectives, but they also responded more consistently. For example if they responded that they liked an object, they were less

likely to respond later that they disliked it.

"These results have implications for how we navigate our world," the authors write. "The decisions we make about liking or disliking objects around us are fundamental to which things we approach and which things we avoid."

Retailers who want to create good shopping conditions may want to be aware of factors that can induce negative moods, like abrasive salespeople and negative shopping environments, the authors suggest. "The results may also be relevant for understanding consumer responses to new products in which an initial judgment of liking/disliking is critical to the product's success," the authors conclude.

Provided by University of Chicago Press Journals

Citation: Shop when you're happy: Positive feelings improve consumer decision-making abilities (2011, July 14) retrieved 20 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-07-youre-happy-positive-consumer-decision-making.html>

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