

# How do mood and emotional arousal affect consumer choices?

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When they're in a positive mood, people tend to choose products that match their mood and their level of emotional arousal, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. But crabby, low-energy people will seek products to reverse those states of mind.

"We examine how consumers' choices are affected by the interplay between their level of arousal (i.e., the intensity of a consumer's [mood state](#)) and the valence (the direction of their [mood state](#)—whether [consumers](#) are in a positive or negative mood) of their current affective state," write authors Fabrizio Di Muro (University of Winnipeg) and Kyle Murray (University of Alberta).

Although the vast majority of [products](#), services, and experiences offered for sale are designed to be pleasant, the authors say there is a much greater variance in the level of arousal to which these offerings are designed to appeal. For example, lying on a beach and surfing are both pleasant, but lying on a beach is a low-arousal activity, as opposed to surfing, a high-arousal (intense) experience. And tea and energy drinks are both pleasant, but one is more arousing than the other.

The authors conducted experiments using scents and music to elicit arousal and mood states among participants. Then they measured people's preferences for experiences and products that are perceived to be either low or high arousal.

They found that in addition to regulating mood (positive or negative),

consumers also make choices that are consistent with regulating their level of arousal. "For example, people who are feeling relaxed tend to choose relaxing products, whereas those who are feeling excited tend to choose exciting products," the authors write. On the other hand, when consumers are in a negative mood they prefer products that are incongruent with both their level of arousal and their current mood. "For example, people who are in an unpleasant low-arousal mood will tend to choose pleasant high-arousal products, whereas those who are in an unpleasant high-arousal mood will tend to choose pleasant low-arousal products," the authors write.

"In general, we find that people will demonstrate a strong preference for products that make them 'feel better,'" the authors write. "Consumers' product choices will be consistent with pursuing pleasant moods and mitigating unpleasant moods."

**More information:** Fabrizio Di Muro and Kyle Murray. "An Arousal Regulation Explanation of Mood Effects on Consumer Choice." *Journal of Consumer Research*: October 2012.

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