

# Closer look at consumers' gazes: Research proves shoppers are drawn to centrally placed products

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Rows of new toys, endless racks of sweaters on clothing store shelves, long lines of books arranged in the bestsellers section at the bookstore. From mall displays to boutique exhibits, long lines of horizontally arranged products are the norm when it comes to the holiday shopping experience.

But how does a product's placement on the storeroom shelf influence which one a consumer ultimately chooses? It turns out that the shopper's eye has a very central focus.

"Consumers are more likely to purchase products placed in the middle of a display – without even being aware of it," says Onur Bodur. The associate professor from Concordia's John Molson School of Business is co-author of a recent study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#), along with marketing researchers at HEC in France and the Aston Business School in England.

Using eye-tracking devices, Bodur and his colleagues investigated how location influences choices for a variety of [products](#), including cosmetics and food items.

They found that consumers would increase their [visual focus](#) on the central option in a product display area in the final five seconds of the decision-making process – and that was the point at which they

determined which option to choose.

It turns out that the process is a subconscious one. When asked how they had come to choose which product to buy, consumers did not accurately recall their reasons for their decision. What's more, they were not aware of any conscious visual focus on one area of the display over another.

What does uncovering these unconscious habits mean for the average shopper? Greater awareness of buying behaviours should lead to more informed choices. Says Bodur, "by using this newfound knowledge that [visual attention](#) is naturally drawn to the center of a display, consumers can consciously train themselves to make a more thorough visual scan of what's on offer."

When it comes to [holiday shopping](#), the visual equivalent to thinking outside of the box just might lead to savvier selections.

Provided by Concordia University

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