

When are consumers more likely to rely on feelings to make decisions?

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Why do some consumers make choices based on their feelings instead of rational assessments? According to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, consumers who consider themselves independent are more inclined to rely on feelings when making decisions.

"When making a [decision](#), we can either base the decision on how we feel about the different options or on our logical reasoning about the specific features of the options. Our feelings often contradict logical assessments and the product that appeals more to our feelings is not the one that 'makes more sense' based on careful consideration," write authors Jiewen Hong (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology) and Hannah H. Chang (Singapore Management University).

In one study, [consumers](#) were asked to imagine they were looking for an apartment to rent. They were asked to choose between a more aesthetically appealing apartment (smaller, prettier, with better views) and an apartment that is functionally better (larger, more conveniently located). Consumers who consider themselves more independent were more likely to choose the smaller, prettier apartment whereas consumers who consider themselves less independent were more likely to choose the larger, more conveniently located apartment.

In another study, when choosing between a beautifully designed laptop and a more powerful laptop, consumers who viewed themselves as more independent were more likely to choose the beautifully designed laptop, whereas those who viewed themselves as less independent were more

likely to choose the more powerful laptop.

"Advertising often encourages consumers to use either [feelings](#) or reason to make decisions. However, the effectiveness of either advertising strategy may depend on the audience's self-view. Specifically, advertising that encourages a feeling-based decision strategy might be more effective for more independent consumers. On the other hand, advertising campaigns promoting a reason-based decision strategy might be more effective for more interdependent consumers," the authors conclude.

More information: Jiewen Hong and Hannah H. Chang. "'I' Follow My Heart and 'We' Rely on Reasons: The Impact of Self-Construal on Reliance on Feelings versus Reasons in Decision Making." *Journal of Consumer Research*: April 2015.

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