

# The influence of romantic crushes on buying behavior

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Have you ever felt the urge to increase the variety in your purchases at the grocery store or the mall rather than sticking to your usual favorite foods or brands?

Findings from a new study suggest that this desire to increase variety may be more common in people who have a romantic crush on someone. Here's why: Crushes often evoke a sense of uncertainty because it's unclear whether an individual's romantic feelings for another will be reciprocated, and "variety seeking" can be a symbolic means of reasserting one's sense of control, according to the study authors.

The [researchers](#) discovered this trend in a series of studies, including one when they asked [participants](#) to imagine that they were planning to buy yogurt at a local grocery store. They could either purchase a variety pack that included five different flavors or a pack that contained five servings of one flavor. Then the participants answered demographic questions, including one about whether they currently had a romantic crush. The results revealed that people who had a romantic crush were more interested in purchasing the variety pack of yogurt than people who did not have a crush.

"Having a variety of choices can create a sense of mastery over one's environment and serves as a source of personal control," says study author Irene Huang, a professor at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

In another experiment, participants were told that the researchers were collaborating with a writers' workshop to generate articles related to the daily lives of different people. One group of participants was asked to write a personalized, vivid story entitled "I Am Having a Crush on Somebody," while participants in the other group wrote about "My Typical Day."

After writing their stories, the participants were invited to select four pieces of chewy candies among five flavors as a token of appreciation from the researchers. As predicted, those who had written about romantic crushes selected more flavors than those who had written about

a typical day.

In a similar experiment, the researchers compared how romantic crush behavior compared to those who had recently fallen in love with someone—so romantic feelings had been reciprocated. After writing about one of the two scenarios, participants were asked to imagine that they would be served one snack each week for the following five weeks. They selected one snack per week out of six options, and again, participants in the romantic crush condition preferred more variety in their snack options.

Although people often assume that they are objective in decisions, the findings suggest that the desire to buy a variety of products may also surface when [people](#) feel a lack of control in any stage of a relationship, Huang says. The findings also have implications for marketers, she says. Many contemporary consumers choose to disclose their relationship status through [social media](#), and companies could target those who have a crush with promotional campaigns involving a high variety of options. Crushes are also a theme in television and movies, and marketers could promote products with variety during these shows.

The abstract for this study was first published in September 2018 in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, and the final publication date is scheduled for January 2019.

**More information:** Xun Irene Huang et al. Romantic Crushes Promote Variety-Seeking Behavior, *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1002/jcpy.1070](https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1070)

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