

# Do cold temperatures result in heat-of-the-moment purchases?

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In 2005, the New York Times reported that high end retailer Bergdorf Goodman kept its stores chilled to 68.3 degrees, whereas Old Navy's was kept at a balmy 80.3. Meanwhile, the swanky IFC mall in Hong Kong is kept at a frigid 59 degrees Fahrenheit. There may be a reason why luxury retailers keep their stores so cold aside from keeping heating bills down. When consumers are uncomfortably cold, they rely more on their emotions rather than calculations when making decisions.

In the paper "Warm Hearts and Cool Heads: Uncomfortable Temperature Influences Reliance on Affect in Decision Making," published in the latest issue of the *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, authors Rhonda Hadi and Lauren Block explore how temperature-related comfort affects [decision making](#) and how that may affect [consumer behavior](#).

In the study, the authors conduct experiments where subjects are exposed to uncomfortably [cold temperatures](#) before making decisions in scenarios such as purchasing insurance for a piece of furniture with sentimental value, or being asked to donate to a cause to protect endangered animals. The cold temperature led people to rely more on their emotions in making decisions.

Their results with other studies show that an inclination towards emotional products and experiences (like romantic movies or nostalgic music) is valued in colder temperatures. When a consumer is uncomfortably cold, relying on emotions (e.g., thinking about how happy

a product will make them) rather than calculations (e.g., thinking about how functional a product is) will make him or her feel warmer and more comfortable.

Thus, high-end stores selling emotion-laden products, like Bergdorf Goodman or the IFC Mall in Hong Kong, may benefit from a low temperature that draws attention towards sentiment and away from the rationality of the [decision](#).

**More information:** Rhonda Hadi et al, Warm Hearts and Cool Heads: Uncomfortable Temperature Influences Reliance on Affect in Decision Making, *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* (2019). [DOI: 10.1086/701820](#)

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