

Research finds online shoppers are unconsciously motivated toward meeting their immediate needs

February 1 2019



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Coming home from a bone-chilling winter commute and buying a new coat online could lead to buyer's remorse, according to new research by University of Salzburg (UoS) and Cass Business School academics.

The study, by Dr. Jochim Hansen from UoS and Cass researcher Dr. Janina Steinmetz shows that when a product meets the immediate needs of an online shopper they pay more attention to a single positive [review](#) than they do to an average product [rating](#) based on other reviews.

According to the research, online shoppers should make sure they are warm before they go searching for clothes to keep the cold out, or a new heater for that matter.

Previous research by Dr. Steinmetz has shown temperature affects people's decision making processes and that people can even use detailed imagination of what it is like to be very hot or cold to mimic the effects of actually feeling hot or cold, respectively.

In this study, the researchers asked 60 students of an Austrian university to read, and imagine themselves in, a first-person narrative about waiting for a bus on either a very hot or very cold day.

Participants were then asked to evaluate two heaters and two ventilators on an online retail platform similar to Amazon.

For the purpose of the experiment, each product showed just one user-submitted review and an overall 'star rating' showing the average of other reviews that the participants could not see.

The results of the experiment found that when participants felt that they were cold, they paid more attention to the individual review of the heaters than the overall ratings, even if the two contradicted each other.

In other words, the product with a low star rating but a positive individual review was regarded as better than the product with a high star rating and a negative individual review.

Dr. Hansen and Dr. Steinmetz said the results of the study show that consumers are geared towards fulfilling momentary goals.

"Therefore, marketers could adapt the information shoppers receive, for example by giving very hungry consumers detailed information about tempting foods."

More information: Jochim Hansen et al. Motivated level of construal: How temperature affects the construal level of state-relevant stimuli, *Motivation and Emotion* (2019). DOI: [10.1007/s11031-018-09750-w](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-018-09750-w)

Provided by City University London

Citation: Research finds online shoppers are unconsciously motivated toward meeting their immediate needs (2019, February 1) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-online-shoppers-unconsciously.html>

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