

Why does love of bargain hunting run in families?

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Headlines like "Black Friday Shoppers Trampled in New York" and popular television shows such as "Extreme Couponing" remind us how

crazy consumers can get about retail sales promotions. This enthusiasm for getting bargains has been termed "deal proneness."

Past research has indicated that, to some degree, people become deal prone through being taught by their parents. But a new paper, "Born to Shop? A Genetic Component of Deal Proneness," published in the *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, provides evidence that our genes also play a role in causing bargain-hunting enthusiasm.

To demonstrate this genetic factor, authors Robert Schindler, Vishal Lala, and Jeanette Taylor compared the deal-proneness similarity among 78 pairs of identical (monozygotic) twins with that among 43 pairs of fraternal (dizygotic) twins reared together. They measured interest in various types of deals, like promotions that involve discounts (e.g., "Receiving cash rebates makes me feel good") and promotions that involve bonuses (e.g., "I enjoy buying products that come with a free gift"). The results indicated that 70 percent of the variability in deal proneness is associated with variability in [genetic factors](#).

"The greater deal-proneness similarity among [identical twins](#) than among [fraternal twins](#) provides strong evidence for the existence of a heritable component to deal proneness," the authors write. However, the fraternal twins who lived together did show more similarity in deal proneness than those who did not live together, which the authors note is evidence that it's not all heredity—shared experience also is a source of deal proneness.

Knowing that interest in bargains runs in families might suggest to retailers the value of using parent-child, grandparent, or other family settings in communicating about deals. However, this research also raises the question of how such a modern, culturally-dependent phenomenon such as [deal](#) proneness could be, even partially, in our genes. Future research that will help answer this question may also guide us to a deeper

understanding of the sources of consumers' often striking enthusiasm for retail bargains.

More information: Robert M. Schindler et al, Born to Shop? A Genetic Component of Deal Proneness, *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* (2020). [DOI: 10.1086/710244](https://doi.org/10.1086/710244)

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