

Research links sexual imagery and consumer impatience

July 26 2012

How do sexual cues affect consumer behavior? New research from USC Marshall School of Business Assistant Professor of Marketing Kyu Kim and Gal Zauberan, associate professor of marketing at The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, reveals the reasons why sexual cues cause us to be impatient and can affect monetary decisions.

Their paper, "[Can Victoria's Secret Change the Future: A Subjective Time Perception Account of Sexual Cue Effects on Impatience](#)," departs from earlier theories indicating that impatience in response to sexual cues is solely an outcome of escalated desire for immediate gratification. Kim and Zauberan hold that the [cognitive processes](#) put into play by sexual cues are more complicated; arousal, the researchers contend, actually affects our perception of time.

For example, in one of five studies conducted, male subjects were presented with sexually charged imagery. Afterwards, the subjects were asked to judge whether three and six-month time frames were "very short" or "very long" distances away from the present time. Those who had been exposed to individuals to whom they were attracted, reported the three and six-month time frames to be further into the future than others in the control group, according to the study.

In another study, the researchers presented 116 males with images from an online Victoria's Secret catalog and gauged their response to receiving one of two fictitious Amazon.com promotions: a gift certificate available that day or one available three months from now. They asked the

subjects the dollar value that would compensate for having to wait. Those exposed to sexually charged imagery (versus those in a control group exposed to nature images) were found to be more impatient and expressed that future discounts would have to be steeper to compensate for the time delay.

Sex and Promotion:

The research, published in the [Journal of Experimental Psychology: General](#), has implications for marketers. For those exposed to sexually charged imagery, future rewards were even less appealing than those with more immediate promotions. Marketers, therefore, who invoke sexual imagery to sell products, must make sure promotions are offered in a more immediate time frame. Consumers with sex on the brain, might be more inclined to spend money more quickly.

Provided by USC Marshall School of Business

Citation: Research links sexual imagery and consumer impatience (2012, July 26) retrieved 20 September 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-07-links-sexual-imagery-consumer-impatience.html>

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