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Do Cold Consumers Like to Warm Up to Romance Movies?

Do romance movies warm people up? A new study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#) finds that yes, consumers choose romance movies over other genres when they feel cold.

“We often think of love as being warm. This link between love and warmth appears in everyday language, songs, and poems,” write authors Jiewen Hong (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology) and Yacheng Sun (University of Colorado, Boulder). “But is the connection between romantic love and warmth just a metaphor or is there indeed a direct link between romance and physical warmth?”

In their study, the authors examined the association between romance and warmth in the context of movie preference. The research involved four laboratory studies and an analysis of data from an online movie rental company. In their studies, the authors tested a prediction that romance movies are more desirable when people are physically cold, because coldness activates a need for psychological warmth.

In one study, the authors found that participants who drank cold tea were more likely than people who drank warm tea to choose romance movies over movies from other genres. In another study, the researchers varied the temperature in the room where participants were seated and found the same results.

Interestingly, when participants were made aware of their physical coldness before being asked to make a movie choice, the preference for romance movies disappeared.

To show that the laboratory findings also exist in the real world, the authors analyzed a set of movie rental data from an online DVD rental company. They matched customers’ rental records with historical temperature information and found that, after controlling for customers’ movie genre preferences, people were more likely to rent romance movies when the temperature outside was lower.

“This research offers implications for the movie industry,” the authors write. “Movie studios might be better off releasing their romance movies in the winter season, when the temperatures are low.”

Jiewen Hong and Yacheng Sun. “Warm It Up with Love: The Effect of Physical Coldness on Liking of Romance Movies.” *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2012 (published online October 7, 2011). For more information, contact Jiewen Hong (mkjiewen@ust.hk) or visit <http://ejcr.org/>.

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