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Contact: Mary-Ann Twist / 608-255-5582 / JCR@bus.wisc.edu

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Do Ads Showing Sexy Women Make Male Consumers Less Charitable?

What happens when you use images of sexy women to attract men's attention? According to a new study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#), male consumers who are shown images of sexy women feel less connected to other people and are less likely to purchase products advertised as benefiting others or make charitable contributions.



“Images of sexy women are ubiquitous in modern society and heavily used in advertising. Our primary focus is to show how exposure to pictures of sexy women could temporarily decrease the male consumer's sense of psychological connectedness with others,” write authors Xiuping Li (National University of Singapore) and Meng Zhang (Chinese University of Hong Kong).

In a series of studies involving men between the ages of 18 and 24, participants either viewed pictures of sexy women, viewed pleasant pictures such as landscapes, or did not view any pictures. Men who viewed the images of sexy women focused more on how their body felt (tired, excited, sleepy, or bored) and less on their social roles and what kind of person they are (smart, team player, outgoing, etc.).

Men who viewed the images of sexy women saw themselves as having fewer similarities with other people and also felt a sharpened disconnectedness between themselves and others, making them less likely to view a product favorably when it was advertised as having benefits to others. These men were also less likely to behave charitably. In one study, men who were shown the images of sexy women were less willing to give \$10 to another student (regardless of whether the other student was male or female) and less likely to show support for wildlife protection by purchasing and wearing a t-shirt that promoted the protection of endangered species.

“Important implications can be drawn from our findings. For example, charities that appeal for donations and brands selling environmentally friendly products might want to reconsider placing advertisements in media that are rich in visual sexual cues (such as popular men's magazines or late-night TV shows) since these strategies may backfire,” the authors conclude.

Xiuping Li and Meng Zhang. “The Effects of Heightened Physiological Needs on Perception of Psychological Connectedness.” *Journal of Consumer Research*: December 2014. For more information, contact Xiuping Li (bizlx@nus.edu.sg) or visit <http://ejcr.org/>.

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1427 EAST 60TH STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

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