

Keeping Distance! How Disease Threat Lowers Consumers' Attitude towards Densely Displayed Products

Sahar Karimi

University of Liverpool

Wangshuai Wang

International Business School Suzhou, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

Yanxi Yi

Graduate School of Economics, Osaka University

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Abstract

Infectious diseases have been posing frequent and significant threats to society and the economy. However, research on how disease threat affects consumer behavior, especially sensory response, is still limited. In this paper, we draw on the theory of compensatory consumption and show that consumers under disease threats are less willing to buy products in a dense display. The underlying mechanism for this effect is crowding avoidance. Moreover, when disease threat comes from in-group members, its effect on product display preferences is reversed. A set of five studies were conducted, adopting both lab and field settings. Using different manipulations and measures, these studies provide convergent evidence for these effects. Implications of research findings are then discussed.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Retailing*

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