

Consumers value handmade products: What's love got to do with it?

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Machine-made products today are often of very good quality, and many are relatively cheaper than their handmade counterparts. But they are missing the key ingredient of "love," according to a new study in *Journal of Marketing*.

"Handmade [products](#) might be perceived to contain and transmit the artisan's "essence" in the form of his or her love for the product in a way that machine-made products cannot," write authors Christoph Fuchs (Technische Universität München), Martin Schreier (WU Vienna University of Economics and Business), and Stijn M.J. van Osselaer (Cornell University). "The customer then perceives the handmade product itself to be literally imbued with love."

Study participants were instructed to imagine that they were in the market for a gift for someone with whom they had a close relationship. They were given a list of items including ceramic mugs, soap, leather goods, and stationery which were described as machine-made. They were then shown images of the handmade equivalents, some labeled "made with love" or accompanied by heart-shaped graphics and other visual "love" cues.

Participants clearly favored handmade items when they were making a purchase for a loved one, and many were willing to pay up to 17% more for handmade items in general. Consumers seemed to believe that the creator's love for the handmade product had somehow transferred to the product itself, and that the product now "contained love." This was

found to be the case even when the customer did not personally know the creator or even who the creator was.

"Few products today are purely machine-made or handmade, and managers have a great deal of freedom in choosing how to market an item. Emphasizing the handmade aspect of a product can make it significantly more attractive, especially when consumers want to convey love to someone. This approach might be particularly promising during Christmas or Mother's Day, for example," the authors conclude.

More information: Christoph Fuchs, Martin Schreier, and Stijn M.J. van Osselaer. "The Handmade Effect: What's Love Got to Do with It?" Forthcoming in the *Journal of Marketing*

Provided by American Marketing Association

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