The Sweet Escape: Effects of Mortality Salience on Consumption Quantities for High and Low Esteem Consumers

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Abstract
This research demonstrates that exposure to death-related stimuli can increase consumers’ amounts of purchasing and consumption. We demonstrate that consumers who have been recently reminded of their own impending mortality wish to purchase higher quantities of food products (and actually eat higher quantities) than do their control counterparts. This effect occurs primarily among low self-esteem consumers. We explain our findings in terms of escape from self-awareness. Low (but not high) self-esteem participants overconsume in response to a mortality salience activation as a means to escape from self-awareness. We also address alternative explanations for these effects.

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