

**For Immediate Release: June 18, 2012**

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

\*\*

### **Does Background Noise Make Consumers Buy More Innovative Products?**

Moderate background noise enhances creativity and makes consumers more likely to buy new and innovative products, according to a new study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#).

“A moderate level of noise enhances creativity compared to both low and high levels of noise,” write authors Ravi Mehta (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign), Ryu (Juliet) Zhu (University of British Columbia), and Amar Cheema (University of Virginia). “Moderate background noise induces distraction which encourages individuals to think at a higher, abstract level, and consequently exhibit higher creativity.”

The authors created a noise environment similar to that of a roadside diner or a noisy mall and tested people’s creativity at different levels of background noise. When asked to come up with ideas for a new type of mattress or list uncommon uses for a common object, consumers were most creative when the background noise was moderate compared to lower or higher noise conditions.

“For individuals looking for creative solutions to daily problems, instead of burying oneself in a quiet room trying to figure out a solution, walking out of one’s comfort zone and getting into a relatively noisy environment (such as a café) may trigger the brain to think abstractly, and thus generate creative ideas,” write the authors.

The authors also found that consumers were more likely to choose an innovative product over a traditional one when there was a moderate level of background noise. For example, consumers were much more likely to choose a pair of running shoes with new and innovative features over a standard pair at this optimal level of background noise.

“A moderate level of noise not only enhances creativity but also leads to greater adoption of innovative products. In order to encourage adoption of new and innovative products, companies might consider equipping their showrooms with a moderate level of ambient noise,” the authors conclude.

Ravi Mehta, Rui (Juliet) Zhu, and Amar Cheema. “Is Noise Always Bad? Exploring the Effects of Ambient Noise on Creative Cognition.” *Journal of Consumer Research*: December 2012. For more information, contact Juliet Zhu (Juliet.zhu@sauder.ubc.ca) or visit <http://ejcr.org/>.



Journals Division

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

1427 EAST 60TH STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

[www.journals.uchicago.edu](http://www.journals.uchicago.edu)