

For Immediate Release: October 21, 2011

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

**

Why Does Explaining Why a Cupcake is Delicious Make Us Love It Less?

When consumers share their thoughts about products or experiences, their opinions can intensify, according to a new study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#). But it depends on whether they're talking about something sensory or practical.

"Consumers constantly share stories with others about products and services through word of mouth (WOM)," writes author Sarah G. Moore (University of Alberta). "How does sharing WOM change storytellers' feelings about their own experiences? Does sharing stories make consumers like the experience more or less than before? Moore asks.

In her experiments, Moore found that people have different reactions to explaining and sharing different types of experiences. She gives the example of a consumer who might explain that she bought some divine chocolate cupcakes for a friend's birthday—or that she loves her new USB stick because it holds all her files in one place.

People who are explaining and sharing *hedonic* (sensory or emotional) experiences have their emotions dampened, Moore found. "Explaining why a chocolate cupcake tasted so divine makes us love the cupcake a little less, while explaining why a movie was so horrible makes us hate the movie a little less," Moore explains. And people who share about hedonic experiences are less likely to spread word-of-mouth opinions about them in the future.

On the other hand, *utilitarian* (cognitive) experiences, such as using a USB stick or a cleaning product are based on functions instead of emotions; explaining helps consumers understanding the experience. "Explaining why a USB stick is so great makes us like the USB stick more, while explaining why a cleaning product is so horrible makes us dislike the cleaning product more," Moore writes. In addition, consumers who share about utilitarian experiences are more likely to spread word-of-mouth information about them in the future.

"In short, some things really are best left unsaid," writes Moore. "Although we have a natural tendency to explain the events in our lives, it is not always in our best interests to do so."

Sarah G. Moore. "Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid: How Word of Mouth Influences the Storyteller." *Journal of Consumer Research*: April 2012 (published online August 15, 2011). For more information, contact the author at sarah.g.moore@ualberta.ca or visit <http://www.ejcr.org>.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

