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No Regrets: Close That Menu and Enjoy Your Meal More

Certain physical acts of completion provide consumers with a sense of closure that makes them happier with their purchases, according to a new study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#).

“Choice closure, the psychological process through which consumers perceive a decision as complete and stop reassessing their choice, can increase satisfaction with decisions involving many alternatives. Subtle physical acts that symbolize closure can trigger choice closure and increase satisfaction,” write authors Yangjie Gu, Simona Botti, and David Faro (all London Business School).

After making a purchase, consumers often revisit their decision and think about other options that were available. This tendency can lower satisfaction with a decision, especially when the choice is a difficult one.

In a series of studies, consumers were asked to choose from a large selection of products (chocolates, teas, biscuits) and then either performed or didn't perform a physical act of closure. In one study, consumers were asked to choose one of twenty-four chocolates displayed on a tray covered by a lid and then either put the lid back on the tray or not before eating the selected chocolate. In other studies, consumers chose an item from an extensive menu and either closed the menu or not before tasting the chosen item. Consumers who closed the lid or the menu liked what they ate more than those who didn't perform an act of closure.

Not all acts of completion are equally effective in facilitating choice closure. For example, acts of closure performed by the decision maker *after* making a choice are more likely to lead to choice closure.

“Consumers are less likely to be satisfied with a purchase when they compare it to other options. Physical acts of closure enable consumers to perceive a difficult decision as complete and limit their tendency to compare their selection with the options they have rejected. Since such comparisons tend to be unfavorable, closure triggered by acts of closure will increase consumer satisfaction when there are many choices,” the authors conclude.

Yangjie Gu, Simona Botti, and David Faro. “Turning the Page: The Impact of Choice Closure on Satisfaction.” *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2013. For more information, contact Yangjie Gu (ygu.phd2008@london.edu) or visit <http://ejcr.org/>.

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