

Slippery slope: 1 tiny truffle can trigger desire for more treats

December 15 2008

Indulging in just one small chocolate truffle can induce cravings for more sugary and fatty foods—and even awaken a desire for high-end status products, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

In a study that examined goals and behavior in consumers, authors Juliano Laran (University of Miami) and Chris Janiszewski (University of Florida) found that study participants who consumed a chocolate truffle desired ice cream, pizza, and potato chips more than people who were told to resist eating a truffle.

When participants were allowed eat a truffle, they unconsciously activated a goal of indulgence, the authors explain. Likewise, those who were asked to resist the treat activated health goals. Once people felt their goals were met, they tended to reverse their behaviors. For example, when people who resisted the truffle were told they did a good job, they indicated that they desired fatty foods more than healthy foods.

"Once people feel like they have achieved a certain goal, they tend to pursue the opposing goal. When asked about their behaviors, no participant related their desires to the initial chocolate consumption, indicating the operation of a non-conscious system that guides people's behaviors," write the authors.

Interestingly, truffles served as triggers for more expensive indulgences as well. "A second study again had people eat or resist a chocolate truffle

and asked them to indicate how much they desired several products that are symbols of status (a nice shirt, an Apple computer, a fine watch). People who ate the truffle desired the status products significantly more than those who had to resist the truffle," the authors write.

The researchers believe this new study has important implications for both marketers and consumers. Stores may want to use samples as way to motivate consumers. And consumers may want to resist small acts of indulgence, knowing they can lead to larger ones.

"Consumers many times may perceive that a small act will be enough to stop cravings of fatty food items, but our research shows that small acts may lead people to unconsciously seek more indulgence," the authors conclude.

Citation: Juliano Laran and Chris Janiszewski. "Behavioral Consistency and Inconsistency in the Resolution of Goal Conflict." *Journal of Consumer Research*: April 2009.

Source: University of Chicago

Citation: Slippery slope: 1 tiny truffle can trigger desire for more treats (2008, December 15) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-12-slippery-slope-tiny-truffle-trigger.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.