

Sick of the same old thing? Researchers finds satiation solution

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Have you ever gotten sick of pizza, playing the same computer game, or had a song stuck in your head for so long you never wanted to hear it again? If you have, you may suffer from variety amnesia. In new research, Joseph Redden, professor of marketing at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management, may have found a cure for your satiation blues.

"People forget about the abundance of different experiences they have had and tend to focus on the repetition," said Redden. "Simply thinking about the variety of songs they have listened to or meals they have eaten will make people enjoy the activity again."

Satiation, the process of consuming products and experiences to the point where they are less enjoyable, is a big problem for consumers and retailers. In the past, time and variety have been seen as the only ways to cure satiation. In their new article forthcoming in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#), Redden and co-authors find that just recalling variety may cure satiation faster. "Intuition says that if time passes we will like something again: we call this 'spontaneous recovery,' " said Redden. "This isn't the whole story. People don't fully recover on their own with the mere passage of time. If I'm sick of [chocolate](#), simply thinking about all the other desserts I've had since the last time I had chocolate helps cure my satiation. Time doesn't seem to do that very well."

In one of the three studies conducted for this research, Redden and his

co-authors asked participants to listen to the chorus of a favorite song 20 times in a row. Then they were asked to rate the clip. Not surprisingly, after 20 repetitions their enjoyment of the song dropped a great deal. Three weeks later, the participants came back and half were asked to recall any television shows they'd seen since the study, while the other half listed all of the musicians they'd listened to since the first session. The group that listed the TV shows was still just as satiated - they didn't like the song. However, those recalling variety in the music category almost totally recovered. "The participants' comments were the most revealing," said Redden. "Those who recalled the TV shows were actually angry to have a song they like 'ruined,' but the ones who recalled musicians enjoyed taking a study with music, etc. If something seems like 'more of the same,' people are just less interested."

Satiation is a friction. It prevents people from enjoying favorite activities and it prevents retailers from gaining repeat business. "The solution to satiation is to take the time to appreciate all the variety you have," said Redden. "The recommendation is straightforward: if consumers wish to keep enjoying their favorite experiences, then they should simply think of all the other related experiences they have recently had. So next time you get sick of healthy smoothies and think about grabbing a burger instead, try to recall all of the other drinks you have had since your last smoothie. Our findings suggest this will make your smoothie taste just a little bit better."

More information: The paper "Variety Amnesia: Recalling Past Variety Can Accelerate Recovery from Satiation," forthcoming in the *Journal of Consumer Research* was co-authored by Jeff Galak (Carnegie Mellon) and Justin Kruger (NYU).

Source: University of Minnesota ([news](#) : [web](#))

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