

Are you a high achiever? Even the best products might leave you dissatisfied

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Make the honor roll, go for the promotion, or try the tastiest entrée on the menu. In almost every facet of our culture, we are told to "go for the gold." So, why settle for "good enough" when "something better" is within reach? According to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, constantly striving for the best may be magnifying negative feelings like regret and dissatisfaction in other parts of our daily lives.

"We found that individuals who have a 'must have the best' mindset experience more regret and are less satisfied with the products they purchase or consume. They are also more likely to return the items or switch brands entirely," write authors Jingjing Ma and Neal J. Roese (both Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University).

Across seven experiments, the authors examined the impact of what they term the "maximizing mindset" on participants' ability to make decisions when they are feeling or behaving in a certain way. Consumers with a maximizing mindset typically have a tendency to compare and adopt a goal of getting the best, even if it requires them to work harder, search more deeply, and ultimately perform better than their peers.

In one study, participants played a computer game that measured typing speed and were told the response times were a measure of their intelligence levels. Next, participants were asked to select a brand of backpack from a list of five choices and describe the features of their current backpack. The test takers were then given false computer game results that ranked them as either in the top 10% of intelligence level or

below average. The researchers found that the participants who received poor test results expressed more regret about their backpack choice than those who fell in the top 10%.

"Our research shows the potential impact of the maximizing mindset on post-purchase regret, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty, particularly for companies claiming to offer the best available product on the market. We also offer an insight on the impact the maximizing mindset has on our daily lives. Constantly comparing and focusing on getting the best can have a negative effect on our psychological well-being, particularly when we do not get the best," the authors conclude.

More information: Jingjing Ma and Neal J. Roese. "The Maximizing Mind-Set." *Journal of Consumer Research*: June 2014.

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