

How intermittent feedback drives consumer impatience

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Researchers from Fudan University's School of Management have published a new paper in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* that

provides original insights about the impact different types of feedback consumers have on consumers' psychological state.

Specifically, the research examines "piecemeal" feedback informing consumers of their progress or performance during each step of an online process such as making a purchase, playing a computer game, or customizing a product. The work compares intermittent feedback with "lump sum" feedback offered at the end of a process.

The article is authored by Haichao Lin, Qian Xu, and Liyin Jin, and offers a deeper understanding of how external factors impact consumers' internal experience. Previous research has focused on how feedback reinforces [consumer behavior](#) but not on how different types of feedback affect consumers' mindset and subsequent actions.

The authors found that intermittent feedback helped consumers connect their actions to progress toward a goal. This association generated a sense of impatience compared to those who only received lump sum feedback at the completion of a goal. For example, piecemeal feedback such as "You have completed Step 1 in this customization, please proceed to Step 2..." provides consumers with the satisfaction of accomplishing an action. This reward boosts their motivation to quickly complete the next, generating greater impatience.

Through a series of five studies, the research team found that regular feedback forms a strong, reliable action-outcome association, spurring consumers to pursue prompt results in subsequent related or unrelated situations.

"This effect is robust regardless of whether the valence of feedback is positive or negative, whether the outcome involves gain or loss, and whether the form of feedback is monetary or informative," the authors found.

The timing of piecemeal feedback is significant. The researchers discovered that piecemeal feedback increases consumer impatience only when it is provided at a fixed pace (rather than at a varied schedule) and immediately following specific behaviors that are directed toward action (rather than inaction).

The researchers propose several avenues for future research related to their findings, including whether the effect of piecemeal feedback on consumer impatience holds if consumers are told beforehand about the feedback procedure. Given that the team measured consumer impatience immediately after receiving [feedback](#), they suggest future studies could delay such measurement to explore how long the activated action-outcome persists.

More information: Haichao Lin et al, Feedback-induced action–outcome associations increase consumer impatience, *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1002/jcpy.1347](https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1347)

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