

DIY for the holidays: Why do consumers enjoy gifts that require work?

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From gourmet cooking to assembling a flower bouquet, consumers thrive in a creative environment. A new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research* suggests a greater sense of appreciation and overall value is given to products that are customized during the design process.

According to the study, the process of participating in making a product should not only engage consumers, it should challenge them, which in turn will make their experience that much more rewarding.

"Infusing choice is particularly value enhancing for consumption activities that involve a great deal of effort and activity," write authors Eva C. Buechel (University of Miami) and Chris Janiszewski (University of Florida).

The researchers asked consumers to create holiday themed figures from a craft kit in an effort to understand how the act of customized assembly was valued. What they found was that not only does allowing consumers to take part in the assembly of a product lead to a positive experience, the more engaged the consumers are, the more value they place on the final outcome.

The authors also observed that higher assembly effort leads to a higher valuation of a to-be-assembled product when customization and assembly are integrated. This outcome occurs because the overall experience is perceived to be creative and positively engaging. Conversely, the researchers found that when assembly efforts were

segregated from the task they were perceived to be irritating and negatively engaging.

Companies that engage [consumers](#) in the creation of a product can harness the beneficial effects of customized assembly. "Customization should be incorporated into otherwise tedious activities whenever possible. Cookbooks, for example, should offer clear instructions, but they should also allow for choices when it comes to possible substitute ingredients, cooking techniques, and plating options. The end result may turn more novice chefs into aficionados," the authors conclude.

More information: Eva C. Buechel and Chris Janiszewski. "A Lot of Work or a Work of Art: How the Structure of a Customized Assembly Task Determines the Utility Derived from Assembly Effort." *Journal of Consumer Research*: February 2014.

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