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"The Malleability of Satiation"

Consumers frequently consume products and experiences to the point where they no longer enjoy them, a process commonly referred to as "satiation". This happens for a variety of stimuli ranging from the primarily physiological like food, to the primarily non-physiological like music, television programs, art, homes, and cars. In fact, satiation is often cited as a primary barrier to enduring happiness since, regardless of how satisfying a stimulus might be initially, that satisfaction tends to fade with repetition. One way to reduce unwanted satiation is to change the consumption experience. Prior work has shown that people satiate less when they consume slower, can more easily perceive the variety of an assortment being consumed, or can subcategorize the consumption episodes. These approaches all act as preventive measures that slow satiation. In the present work, we instead explore remedies that can be used after satiation has occurred. If people can recover quickly and easily from a satiated state, then satiation poses a smaller problem for consumer enjoyment and happiness. In other words, people can fight satiation by either limiting it in the first place, or reversing it after the fact. We focus on the latter. Specifically, we demonstrate three ways in which satiation can be manipulated immediately before the point of consumption. First, we demonstrate that the subjective sense of how long it has been since one last consumed affects the degree to which a person desires to consume again. Second, we find that people can recover from satiation (for friends, music, and food) by simply recalling the variety of alternative items they have consumed in the past. Finally, we demonstrate that while memory for past experiences (TV shows and food) is central in informing satiation, the subjective feeling of how much one has consumed is as, if not more, important.