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Contact: Mary-Ann Twist / 608-255-5582 / JCR@bus.wisc.edu

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It's About Time: Consumers May Be More Likely to Enjoy Purchase When Ads Mention Time



Journals Division

Do consumers respond more positively to advertisements that mention time (“Miller Time”) or money (“Perfection Has Its Price”)? A new study in the [*Journal of Consumer Research*](#) found that mentioning time makes consumers more likely to purchase and enjoy products.

When consumers are primed to think about time, they are more likely to feel personal connections with products, explain authors Cassie Mogilner and Jennifer Aaker (both Stanford University).

The researchers conducted five experiments: one field experiment (a lemonade stand), three in-lab surveys with university students, and one online survey with a national sampling. In the surveys, researchers directed participants to think about either money or time. They then measured consumer satisfaction with products using questionnaires.

In the case of the lemonade stand, the researchers rotated a sign that read “Spend a little money and enjoy our lemonade,” “Spend a little time and enjoy our lemonade,” or “Enjoy our lemonade.” The stand’s customers who responded to the “time” sign expressed the most satisfaction with the product.

“The effect was demonstrated amongst consumers purchasing a cup of lemonade from a lemonade stand promoted by a sign that mentioned time (vs. money), amongst university students led to think about the amount of time (vs. money) they had spent on their iPods, amongst restaurant patrons considering the amount of time (vs. money) they spend eating out, and amongst typical consumers evaluating their cars,” write the authors.

There were two notable exceptions to the findings regarding time. When it came to status products, like designer jeans, participants responded better to money references. The researchers also found that highly materialistic individuals responded better to money references than time-related ones.

“Despite marketers’ frequent decisions to references to these concepts in their communications, surprisingly little is known about the downstream effects of directing consumers’ attention to time or money,” write the authors. “This research offers insight into not only how marketers can make their products more appealing, but also how consumers can extract greater enjoyment from the products they consume.”

Cassie Mogilner and Jennifer Aaker. “The Time vs. Money Effect”: Shifting Product Attitudes and Decisions Through Personal Connection.” *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2009.

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1427 EAST 60TH STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

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