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

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Blissfully Ignorant: Skip Those Pesky Details

Wouldn't you like some more information about that cream puff? Not if you just ate it.

A new study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#) examined what's known as the "Blissful Ignorance Effect," the way consumers' goals shift after they've made purchases.

According to authors Himanshu Mishra (University of Utah), Baba Shiv (Stanford University), and Dhananjay Nayakankuppam (University of Iowa) people who are about to make decisions want as many details as possible. But after a decision is made, people want to be happy with it. In that case, vague information increases optimism about the decision.

"It does appear that vagueness can actually make one more optimistic about one's own life choices and subjective well-being by allowing one to see what one wants to see—a case of ignorance truly being bliss!" the authors write. "The Blissful Ignorance Effect suggests that individuals have a tendency to expect more favorable outcomes with vague information after taking an action than prior to taking the action."

In three studies, the authors examined participants who made decisions on chocolates, hand lotions, and animated movies. They found in each case that participants felt more optimistic about the choices they had made when they were presented with vague information (such as incomplete nutritional information or sketchy reviews) after they made their decisions.

"Having documented the Blissful Ignorance Effect, we highlighted the underlying process based on the interplay of two goals—the goal of being accurate and the goal of feeling good about one's decision," the authors explain.

"It would behoove marketers to capitalize on this enhanced optimism as part of their "buzz-marketing" campaigns," the authors suggest.

Himanshu Mishra, Baba Shiv, and Dhananjay Nayakankuppam. "The Blissful Ignorance Effect: Pre versus Post Action Effects on Outcome-Expectancies Arising from Precise and Vague Information" *Journal of Consumer Research*: December 2008.



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