

Does Chinese chocolate taste better than Swiss? Depends on when you find out

July 14 2011

When consumers taste a chocolate bar they think is made in Switzerland, they'll prefer it over one supposedly made in China, according to new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. But if you tell them where it's from after they taste the candy, they'll prefer the Chinese chocolate.

"Imagine being at a wine tasting and finding out that a wine is expensive after tasting it," write authors Keith Wilcox, Anne L. Roggeveen, and Dhruv Grewal (all Babson College). "Will learning the price afterwards affect your evaluation differently compared to if you had learned the price beforehand?"

The authors found that the answer seems to depend on whether the information is favorable or not. In the chocolate study, undergraduates were given unbranded squares of Trader Joe's chocolates to [taste](#). Half of the [participants](#) were told the chocolate was made in Switzerland; the remaining students were told the chocolate was made in China. But some were told this information before eating the chocolate and some were told afterwards. "When they were given the country of origin before tasting, the students liked the chocolate more when they were told it was from Switzerland," the authors write. "This was expected because Switzerland has a strong reputation for chocolate whereas China does not. Surprisingly, when they were given the country of origin after sampling, the students that were told the chocolate was from Switzerland liked it less than those told it was from China."

The authors found similar results when they told the participants that the

chocolate was expensive versus inexpensive. The students enjoyed the same [chocolate](#) less when they were told it was expensive after sampling.

Finally, the authors conducted a study in a Boston-area liquor store. Customers were told the store was conducting a blind taste test of a new wine. After tasting, half the customers were told the wine was from Italy; the remaining customers were told it was from India, a region not known for producing fine wines. "As in previous studies, people liked the wine more when they were told it was from India after sampling compared to when they were told it was from Italy," the authors write. And nearly twice as many people opted to take a \$5 coupon for the [wine](#) (instead of a gift of similar value) when they were told it was from India.

Provided by University of Chicago Press Journals

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