

# Consumer Trends: Sadness Dampens Urge to Indulge

CORAL GABLES, Fla. (PRNewswire-USNewswire) — Finally there is an official benefit to being sad on Valentine's Day. According to a new University of Miami School of Business Administration study to be published in the [Journal for Consumer Research](#) [1] in June, sadness can combat over-indulgence in unhealthy foods.

"We found that when people who are sad are exposed to pictures of indulgent food or indulgent words, their sadness highlights the negative consequences of indulging and encourages them to indulge less," says Anthony Salerno, a doctoral candidate at the University of Miami School of Business, who conducted the research with Juliano Laran, associate professor of marketing at the School of Business and Chris Janiszewski of the University of Florida.

In a series of five experiments, the researchers studied the behavior of participants who were exposed to advertisements with either indulgent words or images (i.e. pizza, chocolate cake), or neutral words or images (i.e. washing machines, electric cars), and then they were instructed to write about something that made them feel sad. At the end of the study, the participants were given the opportunity to eat indulgent foods like M&M's or chocolate chip cookies.

Study results showed that when people were first exposed to pleasurable information and then made to feel sad, they:

- Decreased their consumption of indulgent foods;
- Were more likely to indicate how consuming indulgent foods could lead to health problems.

In contrast, when people were exposed to neutral information and made to feel sad, they increased their consumption of indulgent foods.

"In the fight against obesity in the U.S., our research has implications for both consumers and marketers," said Laran. "It can show people how to better understand the link between advertisements and their emotional state and how this impacts their eating behavior. For marketers of products encouraging a healthy lifestyle, this work offers more data regarding primes that help or hinder one's ability to eat healthy or not."

*About the University of Miami School of Business Administration*

*The University of Miami School of Business Administration is a comprehensive business school, offering [undergraduate business](#) [2], [full-time MBA](#) [3], [Executive MBA](#) [4], [MS](#), [PhD](#) [5] and [non-degree executive education programs](#) [6]. One of 12*

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*colleges and schools at the [University of Miami](#) [7], the School is located in a major hub of international trade and commerce and acclaimed for the global orientation and diversity of its faculty, students and curriculum. The School delivers its programs at its main campus in Coral Gables as well as at locations across Florida and abroad. More information about the University of Miami School of Business Administration can be found at [www.bus.miami.edu](http://www.bus.miami.edu) [8].*

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