

## Love DIY projects? It's the Ikea effect

October 12, 2011 1:45 AM Mark Miester  
mark@tulane.edu

So it turns out there's a reason why you could never throw out that wobbly old bookcase you put together in college. Call it the Ikea effect. In a forthcoming article in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Tulane researcher Daniel Mochon argues that consumers value products they build themselves—such as furniture from Ikea—more than similar professionally built products.



Assemble-it-yourself products and You Tube videos prove that “people actually come to love the things they have created,” says Daniel Mochon of the A. B. Freeman School of Business. (Photo by Sabree Hill)

“Usually when people think of building their own furniture, they think it's sort of foisting cost onto the consumer, and therefore it reduces value,” explains Mochon, assistant professor of marketing. “But what we find is that people actually come to love the things they have created.”

In experiments, [Mochon](#) and co-authors Michael I. Norton and Dan Ariely asked subjects to build simple items ? such as Ikea storage boxes or origami figures ? and compared their willingness to pay for those items to their willingness to pay for similar preassembled products. Surprisingly, participants were willing to pay more

for the items they put together.

Mochon attributes the phenomenon to what psychologists refer to as the need for effectance.

“People just have a fundamental need to feel like they can intervene in the world,” says Mochon. “By creating stuff, they have a way to signal to themselves and others that they can intervene.” Do-it-yourself projects are a way to “show you have control over the world.”

The findings also help to explain the popularity of sites like YouTube, which rely on user-generated content. Mochon says users get the same kind of satisfaction from uploading a self-made video that they get from assembling furniture.

“They see that badly focused video of their cat jumping on a sofa bed as the most amazing thing in the world because they created it themselves,” says Mochon, who teaches social media marketing at the [A. B. Freeman School of Business](#).