

← Back to Original Article

CAPSULE

## That feels tasty

March 24, 2008 | Susan Brink | Times Staff Writer

That morning shot of espresso probably tastes better in an Italian, thick-walled cup than in a burn-your-fingers paper one, reports an April study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. "People always say wine tastes better in crystal glasses than in plastic glasses," says lead author Aradhna Krishna, marketing professor at the University of Michigan. "Rationally, the feel of a container should not affect taste."

She and Maureen Morrin, marketing professor at Rutgers University, blindfolded nearly 1,000 college students and gave them water to sip from firm and flimsy plastic cups. They found that many subjects did indeed give more negative evaluations of the taste of water from the flimsy cups -- but it depended on who they were. The worst flimsy-cup evaluations came from students who had a low sensitivity to touch (as measured on a scale). In contrast, touch-sensitive students -- the kind of people who lovingly caress scarves and leather and complain about scratchy sweaters -- were less likely to have their taste influenced by the feel of a cup.

Maybe people with a high need for touch have a greater sophistication in knowing when touch is important and when it's not, like when you're drinking coffee, Krishna says.

--

susan.brink@latimes.com