

Coming soon in fall 2008: People do less research on products that have already launched

February 12 2008

When a new product is released – say, an even slimmer laptop or the next generation iPhone – people either find out about it beforehand through an announcement or see it after it hits stores. Does when you hear about a product matter? A new study from the April issue of the *Journal of Consumer Research* reveals that whether a new product is already available when people first find out about it can significantly alter how it is evaluated.

Susan Jung Grant (University of Colorado, Boulder) and Alice M. Tybout (Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University) found that consumers will be more comprehensive in their evaluations when considering new products to be released in the future.

“The temporal frame effect occurs because the future is inherently more uncertain than the past,” write Jung Grant and Tybout. “The plan to launch a new product may be altered or even aborted before it occurs; however, after the launch occurs, that event is fixed even though its success may be unknown.”

In a series of experiments, the researchers found that, when the product launch was in the future, consumers paid attention to both the strength of the brand launching the new product (i.e., Apple) and to marketplace conditions. However, when the product had already been released, evaluations of the item were only based on perceptions of the company.

“The results of this experiment offer further evidence that the future frame leads to more comprehensive use of available information when forming evaluations than does the past frame,” the researchers write. “These findings imply that market researchers studying consumers’ evaluations should be attentive to temporal frame both when conducting research and generalizing their results.”

Source: University of Chicago

Citation: Coming soon in fall 2008: People do less research on products that have already launched (2008, February 12) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-02-fall-people-products.html>

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