

We've got your number: Consumers choose products with more technical specs

December 15 2008

Many products have numbers attached: megapixels for cameras, wattage ratings for stereos, cotton counts for sheets. A new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research* shows that consumers are heavily influenced by quantitative specifications, even meaningless ones.

"We find that even when buyers can directly experience the underlying attributes and the specifications carry little or no additional information, they are still heavily influenced by the specifications," write authors Christopher K. Hsee (University of Chicago), Yang Yang, Yangjie Gu, and Jie Chen (Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China).

In the five related studies, researchers asked participants to choose between two options of digital cameras, towels, sesame oil, cell phones, and potato chips. In every study, participants preferred the products with the most specifications.

"The tendency to seek specifications is tested and confirmed in several studies involving different product categories. In one of the studies, for example, we asked participants themselves to generate specifications on the basis of their experiences," write the authors. "Hence, by design, the specifications carried no additional information beyond what the experience conveyed."

While the participants clearly chose products with more specifications, they didn't necessarily like the products more after they chose them.

"This research yields both theoretical implications for how preferences are formed, and practical implications for how marketers can use specifications to influence consumer choice and how consumers can resist such influences," the authors conclude.

More info: Christopher K. Hsee, Yang Yang, Yangjie Gu, and Jie Chen. "Specification Seeking: How Product Specifications Influence Consumer Preference." *Journal of Consumer Research*: April 2009.

Source: University of Chicago

Citation: We've got your number: Consumers choose products with more technical specs (2008, December 15) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-12-weve-consumers-products-technical-specs.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.