

# Now or later? Consumer product evaluation depends on purchase timing

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Let's say you planned to buy a new car at the end of the year. But then your car conks out and suddenly you need to make a purchase. A new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research* says you'll use different criteria to evaluate vehicles in that situation than you would if you planned to buy a car immediately but then had to postpone the purchase.

Authors Yeung-Jo Kim and Jongwon Park (both Korea University Business School) and Robert S. Wyer, Jr. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) examined the way consumers evaluate immediate purchases versus purchases for future use.

The authors explain that when people consider products for future use, "desirability" is a primary consideration. When people consider a product for immediate use, "feasibility" considerations become a priority. "For example, consumers who contemplate purchasing a new word processor for future use give great weight to quality-related features only, whereas those who consider purchasing it immediately attach importance to the feasibility of learning how to use it as well," the authors explain.

So what happens when people have a chance to reevaluate a product they have considered earlier? In one example, participants read information about an apartment to evaluate it for occupancy the next day or six months later. One was considered a "desirability-positive" apartment (large living space, high moving expense) and another was considered

"feasibility positive" (limited living space, low moving expense).

"After making their initial judgments, participants returned to the experiment 48 hours later and reevaluated the apartment for either the same point in time or a different time. As expected, participants who reconsidered the apartment for future occupancy reevaluated the desirability-positive apartment more favorably than the feasibility-positive apartment, regardless of when they had considered occupying it initially," the authors write.

More information: Yeung-Jo Kim, Jongwon Park, and Robert S. Wyer, Jr. "Effects of Temporal Distance and Memory on Consumer Judgments." [Journal of Consumer Research](#): December 2009 (published online April 21, 2009).

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