

When are consumers loyal to brands? New model helps explain

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What makes consumers choose certain products over others? A new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research* helps explain why consumers change their minds or switch their loyalties.

"Recently, more and more experiments have shown that consumers' product evaluations and choices can be extremely unstable," write authors Stijn van Osselaer (Erasmus University, The Netherlands) and Chris Janiszewski (University of Florida, Gainesville). "What product they choose can change a lot from situation to situation and is influenced by the slightest exposures to information in the environment."

For example, quickly flashing the word "health" increases the attractiveness of healthy products, even when a consumer is not consciously aware of it.

The authors developed a model that helps explain the instability in consumers' [product choices](#) and choices. "The model assumes that product evaluations and choices are motivated by consumers' expectations about the benefits of consumer a product (for example, we expect that eating fruit instead of cheesecake will benefit our health)." These benefits serve as goals for [consumers](#), and goals need to be activated during moments of [consumer choice](#).

Momentary goal activation is influenced by many factors, the authors explain. Activation occurs from exposure to the goal (seeing or hearing the word "health"), cues in the environment (seeing someone work out),

recent goal satisfaction (you just worked out), or exposure to goal-consistent products (like healthy snacks).

The authors' model provides a consistent explanation for goal-based product evaluations and choices and provides a theory for the way goal activation influences product evaluation and choice. "Thus product evaluation and choice depend on the extent to which a product is expected to be a good means for achieving a consumer's currently active goals," the authors write.

More information: Stijn van Osselaer and Chris Janiszewski. "A Goal-Based Model of Product Evaluation and Choice." *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2012 (published online October 24, 2011). ejcr.org/

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