

Latest and greatest technology: Consumers place too much emphasis on features, not enough on functionality

September 24 2012, by Neil Schoenherr



(Phys.org)—More than 2 million consumers got to gloat Friday about their shrewdness in procuring an iPhone 5, with its larger screen and 200 additional features through its new operating system.

But once the novelty wears off, will they still enjoy their purchase?

It depends on why they bought it, says new research from a marketing professor at Olin [Business School](#) at Washington University in St. Louis. Across five studies and four product domains, Joseph K. Goodman, PhD, assistant professor of marketing, found that consumers fail to estimate their feature usage rate before purchasing multifunctional products, which negatively affects product satisfaction.

The study, "[Having Versus Consuming: Failure to Estimate Usage Frequency Makes Consumers Prefer Multi-feature Products](#)," is forthcoming in the [Journal of Marketing Research](#).

"We propose that consumers focus on having features instead of elaborating on how often a feature will be used, and this can lead to a decrease in product satisfaction," Goodman says.

He and his co-author, Caglar Irmak, PhD, assistant professor at the University of South Carolina, show that this shift in preferences is due to a change in elaboration from using to having features.

The pair identifies three key moderators to this effect: need for cognition, feature trivialness and [materialism](#).

"Consumers focus too much on just having the latest features, and don't spend time elaborating on how often they will use the features," Goodman says. "When they do actually elaborating on usage, then they tend to buy lower featured products and they tend to be more satisfied with their purchase, regardless of whether they buy a high or low feature product."

What should consumers do?

"Our findings can't tell consumers what to buy, but they do suggest that [consumers](#) should at least stop and consider how often they are going to use each new additional feature before they make their decision," Goodman says. "This little act of consideration can lead to greater satisfaction down the road."

Provided by Washington University in St. Louis

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