

How anxiety—and hope—can drive new product adoption

12 August 2020, by Matt Weingarden

Researchers from University of New South Wales, University of Southern California, and Imperial College London published a new paper in the *Journal of Marketing* that analyzes how varying levels of hope and anxiety about outcomes from new products affect consequential adoption intentions and actual product adoption.

The study, forthcoming in the *Journal of Marketing*, is titled "Strong Anxiety Boosts New Product Adoption When Hope Is Also Strong" and is authored by Yu-Ting Lin, Deborah J. MacInnis, and Andreas B. Eisingerich.

New products offer [consumers](#) the opportunity to create [positive outcomes](#) that are congruent with the goals they hope to achieve. However, because they are new and untried, [new products](#) might also create [anxiety](#) about outcomes that are incongruent with consumers' goals. The research team demonstrates that strong anxiety about outcomes from a new product actually enhances (vs. weakens) consequential adoption intentions toward and actual adoption of that new product when hope is also strong. Lin explains that "We show that this effect occurs because strong hope and strong anxiety motivate individuals to engage in action planning—that is, to contemplate actions that support the occurrence of hoped-for outcomes and actions that avoid the occurrence of anxiety-arousing ones." Action planning boosts new product adoption by enhancing consumers' perceived control over outcomes from new product adoption. These findings aid marketers in understanding how emotions like hope and anxiety can affect new product adoption. They also aid policymakers by suggesting that disclaimers that make consumers anxious about potentially negative outcomes from new product purchase or usage could encourage thoughtful processing in the form of action planning when hope is also strong.

Specifically, if market research reveals that

consumers already have strong anxiety about outcomes from new product adoption, marketing communications should emphasize the product's relevance to the goals that consumers hope for, as opposed to downplaying consumers' anxiety about potential adverse outcomes. Conversely, if [market research](#) reveals that consumers have strong hope for the product but low anxiety, the results suggest that marketers might benefit by providing warning labels, disclaimers, and disclosures. Beyond encouraging new product adoption, such communications could also enhance product satisfaction. MacInnis adds, "In other words, to the extent that consumers consider goal-incongruent outcomes and plan for how they can be avoided, they may ultimately be more satisfied with the product than would consumers who never considered potential anxiety-evoking outcomes or engaged in action planning."

Relatedly, and from a public policy perspective, the findings suggest that disclosures or labels that evoke strong anxiety about goal-incongruent outcomes from new product use might encourage more thoughtful decision making when hope is also strong. Whereas marketers may be loath to use such disclaimers, this research suggests that when a new product evokes strong levels of hope, anxiety-inducing disclosures might not harm, and could potentially help, new product [adoption](#).

More information: Yu-Ting Lin et al, Strong Anxiety Boosts New Product Adoption When Hope Is Also Strong, *Journal of Marketing* (2020). [DOI: 10.1177/0022242920934495](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242920934495)

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