

How New Should It Be — How Product Newness and Brand Openness Jointly Influence Consumer Adoption Intention

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Abstract

Past research on consumer innovation adoption has primarily examined product newness apart from the identity of the launching brand. Drawing on brand personality theory and information integration theory, this research proposes that product newness and brand personality jointly shape consumer responses to new products. Focusing on the conservation–openness dimension of brand personality, we argue that the effect of product newness on adoption intention depends on the fit between a product’s newness and the perceived openness of the launching brand. When product newness aligns with brand openness, consumers experience greater processing fluency, which increases adoption intention; when such alignment is absent, adoption intention declines. We further propose that, for highly new products launched by low-openness brands, using a new brand name is more effective than using the existing parent brand name. These predictions were tested through three experiments in the automobile context. Study 1 manipulated product newness (high vs. low) and measured perceived openness of the launching brand in a purchase decision scenario. The results showed that the effect of product newness, including both design newness and technological newness, depended on perceived brand openness. When brand openness was high, participants showed stronger adoption intention toward high-newness than low-newness products; when brand openness was low, participants showed stronger adoption intention toward low-newness than high-newness products. This interaction was mediated by perceived processing fluency. Study 2 employed a quasi-experimental design involving 21 real automobile brands. Product newness was held constant across participants, while perceived brand openness varied across brands. The results showed that congruency between product newness and brand openness positively predicted adoption intention beyond the independent effects of product newness and brand openness. Study 3 examined whether launch strategy moderates consumer responses to highly new products by manipulating parent-brand openness (low vs. high) and launch strategy (new-brand vs. parent-brand launch). The results indicated that highly open parent brands generated higher purchase intention when the new product was introduced under the existing brand name, whereas low-openness parent brands benefited more from a new-brand launch. This effect was mediated by perceived brand–product congruency. Overall, this research demonstrates that innovation adoption depends not only on product newness itself but also on its congruency with brand openness. It contributes to innovation adoption and branding research and offers important implications for managers to enhance new product success through congruency-based brand strategies.

Keywords

Brand Openness, Product Newness, Innovation Adoption, Processing Fluency, Brand Architecture