

The effects of prior use on attribute weights in consumer preference

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Consumers' decisions are heavily determined by the comparisons they make between products. Three studies examine how making repeated evaluative judgments affects the weight given to the attributes that describe a product category in later judgments. The studies made use of a series of very simple choices between products that varied only along one attribute, such that one product dominated the other. The recency and frequency with which an attribute was diagnostic in these simple choices caused it to be given greater weight when posed with tradeoffs between attributes in later choices. That is, attribute weights shifted dynamically over the course of making repeated choices. This "prior use effect" can be thought of as a kind of background context effect that follows naturally from the way that the act of comparing products affects the structure and activation of knowledge of a product category.

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