

## UPPER INTERMEDIATE UNIT 1

## 1 Work in pairs and discuss.

- 1 How often do you buy a new mobile phone, a pair of new shoes or get a new car or bike?
- 2 What influences you to buy a new product?
- 3 Are there any things which you don't need to replace often?
- 4 Look at the title of the article. What do you think the 'novelty factor' is?



## The novelty factor

We've all been there ... You're standing in the supermarket looking at shelves of food and a product with 'new' written on it pops out at you. You read the label and, before you know it, it's sitting in your shopping trolley. You have just been seduced by the 'novelty factor' - the need to try something new at least once.

This well-known marketing strategy works on the premise that if it's new, it must be better. But how does this really work and how come we fall for it every time? One of the reasons, of course, is that new things are often cheaper. Next to the 'new' sign there may be a sticker saying 'introductory offer' or something similar. And then we are naturally curious to try out something different as we are bored by the same old purchases.

There's new and then there's 'almost new', or 'the old reinvented', which I see as dressing up a familiar brand in a new 'costume'. So, if you are a fan of Oreo biscuits, you will also be persuaded to try Oreo ice cream and Oreo milkshakes, as well as all the limited-edition cookie

## 2 Read the article about the appeal of buying new things and answer the questions.

- 1 Why do we like buying new things?
- 2 What criticism do some manufacturers receive from consumers?

## 3 Read the article again. Underline the correct alternative.

- 1 The author says that people in shops *are usually aware/can be unaware* that they have bought a new product.
- 2 We often buy new things because they seem more *interesting/modern*.
- 3 According to the author, 'almost new' products are about *creating a new brand from an old one/giving an old brand a new look*.
- 4 The author *is critical of/gives no strong opinion about* hybrid products such as the 'cronut'.
- 5 The text says that it is *easier/more difficult* to see how companies deceive us in the technology sector.
- 6 Designing products to last a short time is something that manufacturers do *consciously/unconsciously*.
- 7 The 'novelty factor' marketing strategy is well known *but not always/and usually* easy to identify.
- 8 The author's final piece of advice is *be careful when buying new products/buy what you know and don't experiment*.

flavours released on a monthly basis. New hybrids are everywhere in the food industry. Think about the recently invented 'cronut' - it's half-croissant, half-donut! And you can find that same idea with pets - notice the success of the new 'Labradoodle' dog breed - so cute because it's half-Labrador, half-Poodle!

We can clearly see how the novelty factor works in these contexts, but it may be more imperceptible in other industries. What about your mobile phone, for example? Many consumers have criticised manufacturers for making their products deliberately difficult to repair. This forces consumers to upgrade to the new version more quickly than they would like to. Here, 'planned obsolescence' - designing a product with a short life so it becomes no longer functional - would appear to be the norm.

The novelty factor is all around us, yet it's sometimes difficult to spot. Every year, your football team has a new design of shirt for you to buy, and your favourite car manufacturer brings out a new model that makes your car look pathetic. The pressure to consume is high!

If you're hooked on novelty, just remember: if it's new, it's not always going to be better. It may be hard to admit it, but you can always stick with what you know!

- 4** Read the article again. Complete the sentences with the words in the box. Which of the sentences are true for you?

strategy premise purchases persuade  
upgrade model hooked stick with

- I \_\_\_\_\_ my smartphone every year or two, they go out of date so quickly these days.
- Any marketing campaign can \_\_\_\_\_ me to buy a product. I'm really easy to convince!
- I don't need to have the latest \_\_\_\_\_ of any product, I'm happy with what I have.
- I like shopping and I don't mind if I'm the victim of a marketing \_\_\_\_\_!
- I make most \_\_\_\_\_ online these days, I find it easier than going to a physical shop.
- I think I'm immune to the 'novelty factor'. I always \_\_\_\_\_ the products I know.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ behind the 'novelty factor' is that everybody thinks new things are better, but I don't agree – I like old things!
- I'm \_\_\_\_\_ on the latest things. It doesn't matter what it is, I need to have the new one!

- 5** Work in pairs or small groups and discuss your sentences in Exercise 4. Which of you is the biggest 'novelty addict'? What kinds of products do you have to upgrade continuously? Why?

- 6**  **1.1** Listen to four people discussing new and old products and answer the questions.

- Which products do they mention?
- Rank the four people from the most (1) to the least (4) consumerist.

- 7** Listen again and match the speakers 1–4 with the facts about them a)–h). There are two pieces of information per person.

- Brad \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- Karen \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- Colin \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- Hannah \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

- He/She doesn't approve of throwing things away.
- He/She experiments with new things out of boredom.
- He/She likes things which are good value.
- He/She realises that he/she has a problem with trying new things.
- He/She really likes being the first to listen to or watch something.
- He/She likes things which are collectors' items.
- He/She generally doesn't like new things but can make exceptions.
- There are some things which he/she won't buy second-hand.

- 8** The words and phrases in the box are from the recording. Complete the sentences with the words and phrases in the box.

a must bargain to get rid of release date  
in advance merchandising to try out  
an easy target

- If you buy things \_\_\_\_\_, before everyone else, you can sometimes get a good deal.
- I think it's good \_\_\_\_\_ old things and buy new ones, it makes me feel better, that's all.
- I can't resist a \_\_\_\_\_, some things are so much cheaper if you have the time to check out the prices.
- I always check the \_\_\_\_\_ of new films, books and music – I like to be there on the first day!
- I'm \_\_\_\_\_ when it comes to shopping, I always buy the latest thing that comes out, the latest gimmick.
- When a new movie comes out or something like that, I like to look at all the \_\_\_\_\_ – the posters, the T-shirts and so on.
- It's good \_\_\_\_\_ new products, to experiment with them and see what they're like.
- Going to the sales every year is \_\_\_\_\_. You find some good offers but I hate the crowds.

- 9** Work in pairs and discuss.

- Which of the four people in the recording do you most identify with? Why?
- Do you agree that new things are always better? Explain your answer.
- Which things are you happy to buy second-hand? Why?