

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!