



**THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING**

Boosting Strengths or Fixing Weaknesses?

A Preference Mismatch Between Product Providers and Choosers in Product Improvement Decisions

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Date: 28th Apr 2023 (Friday)

Time: 10:30 am – 12:00 pm

Venue: Room G003, Lee Shau Kee Business Building, HKUST

Abstract:

Every product has its relative strengths and weaknesses, albeit both usually have improvement potential. Product providers often make product improvement decisions yet are bounded by limited resources to choose only a subset of aspects to improve. Do Product providers make optimal decisions about boosting strengths versus fixing weaknesses? Nine experiments (N = 1951; 4 pre-registered), plus a secondary dataset spanning more than six years in the car market, converge to yield a product provider-chooser preference mismatch: Product providers prioritize fixing weaknesses more than choosers would like. We conceptualize the product improvement decision context in an evaluatee-evaluator framework and propose that the preference mismatch occurs because product providers (as evaluatees) feel apprehensive to be negatively evaluated by choosers (as evaluators) (i.e., experiencing evaluation apprehension), leading them to prioritize fixing weaknesses. Consistent with our theorizing, two remedies that alleviate evaluation apprehension – (1) boosting providers' task efficacy and (2) exempting providers from decision consequences – can reduce the preference mismatch. Together, this research offers both descriptive and prescriptive insights into the often-made yet under-studied product improvement decisions.