Technostress and Consumer Coping

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Technostress is an inability to cope with problems with technological products in a healthy manner. The purpose of this study is to (a) investigate the technostress levels and key stressors which consumers experience, and to (b) identify consumers who are more vulnerable to technostress than others. In addition, the study aims to show how to relieve technostress and to find the effective coping strategies. We examined technostress resulting from mobile phones and coping behaviors in a sample of 1000 Korean adults (50% female and 50% male participants), ages 15 to 54 years. The study researched a total of six stressors: obsolete products, constant renewal, and technological complexity in purchasing process; runtime error, incompetence, and dependence on technology in consumption process. And three coping strategies were selected for this study: active coping, expressive support seeking, and avoidance.

Our study showed consumers who purchased or consumed mobile phones experienced high levels of technostress; the means of all stress levels were more than three out of five. The main stressor in the purchasing process was the fear of buying obsolete products. Runtime error was shown to be the key stressor in the consumption process. In order to cope with technostress, consumers chose active coping strategies most frequently. The findings from structural equation modeling suggest that active coping led to the most desirable results, such as stress reduction and user satisfaction, and self efficacy and controllability appraisals appeared to be key predictors of active coping.

In support of previous findings (Kim and Yeo 2007; Mick and Fournier 1998), it was noted female consumers were more vulnerable to technostress, experiencing significantly higher levels of stress than their male counterparts. Female, low-income, or less-educated consumers chose active coping strategies less frequently and, thus, had more undesirable coping consequences such as dissatisfaction. Therefore, consumer educators and policy makers should guide those consumers to choose active coping strategy more frequently, and develop additional effective coping programs for them.

References

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Endnotes

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