

Mar.10, 2008

ENG 119

Niya Sang

UWID: 20264084

Critical Comparison Assignment

Laptop vs. Desktop: Which is right for university students?

Introduction

Nowadays, computer plays a very important role in our society. Many university students are faced with a choice as to whether to purchase a laptop or a desktop computer to use for their study purposes. It seems so hard to make a decision. For university students who want to purchase computers, before they make the final decision, it is always necessary to ask themselves about the following types of questions:

1. Where will you use computer?
2. What are you going to be doing with your computer? What sort of demands will you place on this machine?
3. What sort of hardware upgrades do you plan on doing in the future?
4. How much money are you willing to spend?
5. What do you want for your money- power or convenience?

Consider answers to each of the questions, it might be easier for them to make a decision. My critical comparison will assess which of these choices would be best for the needs of university students. Based on the questions I mentioned above, I am going to look at the advantages and disadvantages of both laptops and desktops from four different areas. There are: 1. Performances; 2. Portability; 3. Size and space; 4. Price.

Performances

Generally speaking, in terms of performance, both laptops and desktops handle almost any computer task well. The expectations being role playing and games, computer aided drafting (CAD), movie editing and high end graphic design (Zisman 12). A laptop will performance all these functions like desktops do, but in general, not as well as a desktop. This is because of two reasons: storage and upgrades (13). First, let's talk about storage. One of the major places where laptops and desktops differ is in how much hard drive space they offer. Laptops use physically smaller drives, which can only offer so much storage place. Though larger drives are available, 100 GB is still common on a laptop, while 500 GB desktop drives are seen all the time, and bigger drives can be added on desktops easily (13-14). It is a fact that larger storage will help the computer performance better based on the faster speed it offers. In addition, speaking of upgrades, it's more difficult to upgrade a laptop. It is a fact that you can pop in a new hard drive later on your laptop, but adding a second hard drive means plugging in an external disk that you will be cumbersome to tote around with you (15). Many laptop optical can't really be upgraded at all, nor can motherboards or CPUs (15). But laptop does have advantages in performance. For internet surfing, word processing, email, spreadsheets, basic digit photography, ect, a laptop is a variable alternative to a desktop (Brown 56). Interestingly, all these functions are being widely used by university students now. So laptops seem very useful for basic programming tasks.

Portability

When talking about portability, of course, the main benefit of a laptop is the portability. This can be a huge benefit especially for university students. You can put a laptop into your bag and carry it everywhere as you want. This is very good for university students moving around on campus. Besides, it has a power source, you are not restricted, and therefore it can be carried to class or library for note taking. And one of the most important functions that laptops have is wireless network. By adding a wireless card provides easy access to university network and internet in many locations on campus. Moreover, laptops are very convenient for students to bring home during weekend or holidays visit. Compared to laptops, desktops are usually not portable and must remain in a fixed location. They cannot be carried to library or classes. And also it is difficult to ship if repaired/ replacement is needed. However, what students need to pay attention to is the portability of a laptop makes this a more attractive item to be stolen if it is not properly secured. And when the laptop is stolen, not only you lose the value of the computer, but also all of your valuable data. Fortunately, security cables can be purchased with laptops now that can reduce this threat (58).

Size and space

Space and size obviously go to the laptop. Laptops rarely weigh over ten pounds and can fit on a surface but much bigger than a piece of A4 size paper. However, the desktops take a lot more space than that. As we know that usually in universities, the dorms are not very big, so if student has a desktop, it will take up valuable real estate in cramped dorm rooms. In addition, for desktops, they are very complicated with many

cords to have to deal with. And those cords will take lots of space as well. However, besides a power cable and maybe a printer cable, there aren't many extraneous wires hanging from the back of a laptop.

Prices

For prices, it is true that laptops usually cost slightly more than a comparable desktop. And it also costs more to fix a laptop than a desktop. However, prices have dropped in recent years and laptop prices are very competitive now. More and more students are able to afford to buy laptop than in the past.

Conclusion

The type of computer the students choose will depend on how they intend to use it. Based on the areas that I have talked about in this paper, it sounds like I lean towards laptops. It is true. That's because of the simple setup, portability, and they have dropped in price significantly in recent years. All these facts are very important for university students to consider when they are purchasing computers. As university students, we will divide our time among many different locations- class buildings, student life centres, the library, and of course your dorm. For this reason, laptops are prevalent on many university campuses. As a student, we'll be glad that we can take our work with us anywhere. Therefore, according to my findings, if you are contemplating a new computer purchase, take a strong look at laptops.

References

Alan, Zisman. "Desktop computers still more reliable than laptops."

Business in Vancouver 875 (2006): 11-15.

Jennifer, Brown. "Laptop versus Desktop comparison." Rev. Mar.2008.

<<http://www.cheap-computers-reference.com/laptop-versus-desktop.html>>

(3 Mar, 2008).