

“Why and How Aesthetic Product Design Matters when Choosing Marketing Instruments”.

The authors investigate the impact of aesthetic product design on marketing effectiveness. Theoretically, processing fluency theory predicts that global and local features of product form relate to affective and cognitive consequences, which moderate the impact of marketing on demand. Empirically, the authors examine a unique database from the U.S. automobile market consisting of an objective coding of 456 exterior car designs, marketing decisions and market share covering a 13-year period. We find that the four Ps of marketing are moderated by visual typicality and complexity in expected and meaningful ways. Specifically, a typicality of exterior designs has positive, large and consistent effects on advertising and distribution elasticities. In addition, vehicles with prototypical designs of low complexity respond less sensitively to price and quality than atypical and more complex ones. Overall, the findings suggest that marketing and aesthetic design need to be coordinated by taking objective measures of product design into account.