

## **“The Aesthetic Fidelity Effect: How Design Aesthetics Shape Consumers’ Product Usage Behavior”.**

Abstract: Aesthetic designs are considered to be a significant factor in consumers’ buying decisions. While existing research has examined consumers’ responses to design aesthetics, there are no studies that have investigated how design aesthetics affect actual consumption behaviors. The present research addresses this gap by drawing from the literature on aesthetics, on procedural skills, and the cognitive lock-in phenomenon. A total of three studies show that aesthetic designs trigger more intensive product usage patterns, which, in turn, result in the development of incumbent-specific usage skills and form the basis for a cognitive lock-in. Hence, design aesthetics are an important antecedent of consumers’ product usage intensity and skill-based product loyalty, an effect we label as the aesthetic fidelity effect. The underlying cognitive mechanism of this effect is also revealed.