

Consistent designs: How formal and symbolic design consistency affects brand and product line recognition

Sarah Johann

Technische Universität Berlin

Katrin Talke

TU Berlin

Cite as:

Johann Sarah, Talke Katrin (2019), Consistent designs: How formal and symbolic design consistency affects brand and product line recognition. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 48th, (10037)

Paper presented at the 48th Annual EMAC Conference, Hamburg, May 24-27, 2019.



Consistent designs: How formal and symbolic design consistency affects brand and product line recognition

Abstract

Prior research emphasizes that a visual connection between a product and its brand is a determinant for success. So far, design consistency has only been attributed to a product's aesthetics, such as form, shape and proportions. Drawing from categorization theory, we argue that symbolic information should be at least equally relevant for design consistency perceptions. In addition, we also consider product line recognition as a category. Applying construal level theory, we argue that more abstract information which relates to the symbolic level is suitable for general categories such as brands, whereas more concrete information is used for narrower categories such as product lines. Based on an analysis of the German automotive market, we confirm that symbolic consistency has a stronger impact on brand recognition than formal fit. Contrary, when looking at the product line category, a product has to share formal elements with other category members to be recognized.

Keywords: *design consistency; design DNA; recognition*

Track: Innovation Management & New Product Development