

Symbolic product design: Conceptualization, operationalization, and its impact on design liking as a function of processing fluency

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## **Abstract**

Previous research on product design has focused on the aesthetic dimension of design and has tended to neglect its symbolic dimension. In reality, however, consumers usually have multiple associations with a design that have strong evaluative connotations, which gives the symbolic dimension an eminent importance. The present research presents a new conceptualization and operationalization of symbolic design that is based on the average value of the most salient associations that people have with a design, and shows that the more positive the average value of these associations, the more positive the design liking evaluations. In addition, we find that the symbolic dimension of design and the aesthetic dimension, operationalized through a design's processing fluency, interact such that the aesthetic dimension boosts the effect of the symbolic dimension. Our results have important implications for marketing managers, as well as for the literature on product design and processing fluency.

**Keywords:** *product design; design associations; processing fluency*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour