

Is aesthetic liking more influential for weak or for strong brands? It depends..

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Cite as:

Creusen Mariëlle, Mugge Ruth, Schoormans Jan (2019), Is aesthetic liking more influential for weak or for strong brands? It depends... *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 48th, (9590)

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



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Abstract

This research provides insight into the conditions in which aesthetic liking is more influential for weak or for strong brands and explains the underlying process. We posit that whether aesthetic liking is more influential in the purchase decision for a weak or for a strong brand depends on how aesthetic design influences consumers; as a cue for quality, or because of its expressive (hedonic and symbolic) value. We varied aesthetic design and brand strength in four product categories varying in utilitarian and expressive importance, assessing both product evaluation and perceived quality. We showed that aesthetic liking is more influential on product evaluation for weak than for strong brands when perceived quality is more and expressive value is less important to consumers. This adds to the current literature, as until now only the opposite effect, that aesthetic liking is more influential for strong brands, or no interaction effect (when perceived risk is low), have been found.

Keywords: *Product design; Brand strength; Product perception*

Track: Product and Brand Management