

Product aesthetics: The effects of formal and symbolic consistency on brand identifiability  
and product-line identifiability

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## **Abstract**

The identifiability of a brand is a core concern for several areas of marketing research. Interestingly, the question how well the product itself, i.e., its exterior appearance, is suitable for identifying the parent brand and product line has not yet been thoroughly studied. Building on the growing research on product aesthetics, we suggest that aesthetic consistency between a product and its brand portfolio, as well as between different generations of a product line is crucial for consumers to attribute a product to its brand and product line. We propose to consider aesthetic consistency from both a formal and a symbolic perspective to fully capture consumers' perception of products' relatedness within a brand's product portfolio. Our expectations are tested with data from the German automotive industry. We find that to achieve a high brand identifiability, a high symbolic consistency is a prerequisite, whereas formal consistency is more important for product line identifiability.

**Keywords:** *product aesthetics; brand identifiability; symbolic consistency*

**Track:** Product and Brand Management