**Cute Scam: How product cuteness influence consumers' perception in negative ways**

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**Abstract**

Today, many companies have invested their resource in product design. They believe that product design can result in positive result. However, product aesthetics can negatively influence consumers’ quality perception and purchase intention. When consumers face cute products, they infer that those products have lower product functionality. This is because of consumers’ lay theory of zero-sum heuristics; consumers assume that superiority of one product dimension, cute design, is compensated by inferiority on another dimension, functionality. The double mediation results also support consumers’ perception of firm’s resource allocation and product attribute trade-off.

**Cuteness**

Being attractive in adorable or endearing way (Hellen & Sääksjärvi 2011)

- **kindchenschema (baby schema)** collection of cute features of newborns such as bulging forehead, large eyes, and rounded cheeks
- **Whimsical Cuteness** (Nenkov and Scott 2014) cuteness associated with fun and playfulness

**Zero-sum heuristics**

Consumers have a lay theory that firm resources are zero-sum; the superiority on one product dimension is compensated by inferiority on other dimension

- Chernev (2007) Toothpaste cavity-fighting ability vs. tartar control
- Newman, Gorlin, and Dhar (2014) Environmental friendly vs. washing capability

**Stimuli**

[Portable Battery Charger (Control)]

[Portable Battery Charger (Experiment)]

**Results**

N=202 (M=36.7, Female=94)

Manipulation Check: Control (M=3.39, SD=1.59) < Experiment (M=5.34, SD=1.57)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Perception</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Experiment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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**Double Mediation Results**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicted Pathway</th>
<th>Indirect Effect</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02 to .21</td>
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**References**


**Acknowledgements**

Extend irrationality of human being
Expand literature on effect of cuteness
Demonstrate negative effect of product design on purchase intention
Propose underlying mechanism of reverse product design effect