Impress Yourself: How Beautiful Products Influence Self-Perceptions of Performance

Abstract:

Do consumers believe that the cookies they baked using attractive cookware taste better than the same cookies made with less attractive equipment? In our research, we address this question by examining the influence of product attractiveness on consumers’ self-perceived task performance. We present three experiments that engage participants in real usage tasks, requiring them to use either more or less attractive products to achieve their goal. These studies ensure that the actual efficacy (i.e., functionality) of the different products is held constant, enabling us to examine the influence of attractiveness on consumers’ self-perceptions of their performance. Across three different product categories, our results show that when consumers use beautiful products, they believe they have performed better on the task than when they use their less attractive counterparts. A self-signaling mechanism explains these effects, and our last two studies identify this process as an implicit one.