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The effect of the appearance fake of function on perceived benefits and product attitude

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Abstract

This study empirically investigates how the type of fake product, particularly the Appearance Fake of Function, influences consumers' product attitudes and the underlying psychological mechanisms. Fake fashion products were initially classified into three types based on prior studies, with this research focusing on the Appearance Fake of Function. A survey of 796 adults (739 valid responses) was conducted online and offline, and data were analyzed using SPSS 22. Results showed that the Appearance Fake of Function negatively affected perceived functional benefits but positively influenced symbolic benefits. Perceived functional benefits reduced product attitude, whereas symbolic benefits enhanced it. The relationship between the fake type and product attitude was partially mediated by perceived benefits and moderated by product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic). The study suggests that while symbolic benefits improve attitudes, functional benefits may lower them due to cognitive dissonance. Therefore, marketing strategies should emphasize symbolic value, especially tailored to product type. Future research should empirically examine other fake types and explore more nuanced product categorizations.

Keywords: Appearance, Fake function, Perceived benefits, Product attitude, Product type.

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1. Background and Purpose of the Study

Since the 2000s, as industrialization has advanced, issues such as human alienation and the loss of self-identity have intensified. In response, themes centered on entertainment, fun, and enjoyment have emerged as major trends not only in popular culture but also in the design industry [1]. Reflecting these consumer characteristics, playful expressions have garnered increasing attention. In line with this trend, the trompe-l'œil technique—known for its use in surrealist art—has also gained renewed interest [2]. Recently, this trompe-l'œil approach has come to be referred to as fake design.

Fake design is characterized by two main features. First, there is a discrepancy between what is visually perceived and what is actually applied. In other words, a difference exists between the outward appearance and the actual substance. While the substance may indeed contain the outwardly expressed form, the two are not completely aligned. Second, fake design aims to evoke a sense of fun for the user. It is based on unique ideas and engages not only the functional or aesthetic aspects of a product but also stimulates consumer interest. In some cases, interest and humor are emphasized even more than function or aesthetics. In this study, fake design is categorized into three types: layered fake, material fake, and Appearance Fake of Function. Given that fake design inherently involves visual deception, the classification is based on how the product appears. This study focuses on the Appearance Fake of Function, which is further divided into two subtypes: transfigurement and maintenance of appearance.

Transfigurement refers to cases in which the actual function and the visually implied function differ, deceiving the viewer. That is, the function suggested by the appearance is fake, while a hidden function actually exists. For instance, trousers may appear to use buttons for fastening but actually use hooks; or shoes may visually appear to be fastened with a belt but are actually secured with Velcro. Maintenance of appearance, on the other hand, involves deceiving the viewer into thinking that a certain function still exists based on its appearance, while in reality, another component performs that function. For example, trousers may appear to have a functional zipper, but it is only a design element, and the trousers actually stretch due to an elastic waistband. Similarly, flat shoes may appear to fasten with a belt, but the belt is merely decorative, and the shoes are actually fastened with a zipper.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Appearance, Fake Function, and Perceived Benefits

Products evolve in response to consumers' recognition of specific problems or the arousal of latent needs. Product evolution refers to a change in a product's overall or partial characteristics, such as size, shape, and material, into a new state that better aligns with changing environmental conditions [3]. From the perspective of evolutionary direction, products generally develop toward improved performance, shaped by the intentions of both companies and consumers. According to Lee [3], product evolution can be classified into three types: functional evolution, form evolution, and symbolic evolution. Functional evolution addresses problems in functionality by improving or adding new functions. For instance, stairs evolved into escalators, then travelators, and eventually elevators, primarily for greater efficiency in vertical movement. In form evolution, the product's shape changes to enhance usability, as seen in scissors or chopsticks. Symbolic evolution occurs when a product that has already satisfied its functional purpose incorporates aesthetic or symbolic elements. An example is the tailoring of suit sleeves to be shorter on the left side to reveal a luxury watch, as seen in custom suits in Guangzhou. Such designs are driven by a desire for expression and symbolic gratification.

In this context, functional and form evolution arise when functional needs are not fully met, whereas symbolic evolution occurs after functionality is satisfied and focuses on symbolic or aesthetic enhancements. Consumers form impressions of a product's function and quality based on its external appearance [4, 5]. Therefore, the perceived purpose and value of a product may vary depending on how its external form reflects its evolutionary intent. This variation, in turn, leads to different perceptions of benefits.

Perceived benefit refers to the degree to which a consumer's needs or desires are fulfilled through the use or consumption of a product [6]. Since Park et al. [7], numerous studies have classified perceived benefits into functional, experiential, and symbolic categories. This study focuses specifically on functional and symbolic benefits. Functional benefit is defined as the consumer's desire to solve a practical problem through product use [8], while symbolic benefit refers to the consumer's need for self-expression or social recognition through the use of a product [9].

According to Information Integration Theory [10], consumer perception is formed and revised sequentially through an anchoring and adjustment process. Initial information serves as an anchor, and subsequent information is interpreted and adjusted in relation to that anchor. When there is a large discrepancy between earlier and later information, greater cognitive adjustment occurs. In the case of design, visually exaggerated or modified elements may trigger a reinterpretation of product purpose or value.

Appearance Fake of Function can be divided into two subtypes: maintenance of appearance and transfigurement. In the maintenance of appearance type, although the visual design suggests the existence of a functional element, the actual function is performed by an alternative mechanism. Consumers are likely to perceive higher functional benefits in such cases. In contrast, transfigurement refers to cases where the visual appearance diverges significantly from the actual function. This often represents a form of symbolic evolution, where aesthetic or symbolic value is prioritized after functional needs have already been met. As such, consumers are more likely to perceive higher symbolic benefits. Based on the theoretical foundations and previous studies discussed above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Consumers will perceive lower functional benefits when the appearance of function is transfigured compared to when it is maintained.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Consumers will perceive higher symbolic benefits when the appearance of function is transfigured compared to when it is maintained.

2.2. Perceived Benefits and Product Attitude

According to the Means-End Chain (MEC) Model, consumers do not purchase products based solely on their physical attributes but rather based on the benefits and values they associate with those attributes [6]. In this view, the act of purchasing is not merely an evaluation of tangible features, but an assessment of the subjective rewards or expectations—namely,

benefits—that the product offers [11, 12]. Fundamentally, people buy products for the benefits they perceive, and thus, perceived benefit is generally positively associated with product attitude [13]. In other words, the higher the perceived benefit, the more favorable the product attitude is likely to be.

According to Cognitive Dissonance Theory, consumers are driven by a desire for internal consistency [14]. A state of cognitive dissonance arises when one cognitive element within an individual's mental framework conflicts with another opposing element [15]. In the case of Appearance Fake of Function products, this conflict occurs when a product appears to have a function but does not actually perform it, or when the function exists but is not visibly expressed. Such inconsistencies within the individual's cognitive structure create a state of dissonance. When one cognitive element contradicts another, it disrupts the harmony of one's attitudes and behaviors, resulting in psychological discomfort and tension.

When new stimuli are inconsistent with pre-existing schemas, individuals may experience cognitive dissonance, which in turn leads to dissatisfaction or a sense of imbalance. This process triggers the release of neurochemical substances associated with psychological tension and discomfort [16, 17]. Therefore, while perceived benefit is generally positively correlated with product attitude, particularly in the case of symbolic benefits, this relationship may not hold for functional benefits in the context of Appearance Fake of Function products. In such cases, even when functional benefit is perceived as high, the presence of cognitive dissonance may result in a negative product attitude due to the psychological discomfort experienced.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Perceived functional benefit will have a negative effect on product attitude.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Perceived symbolic benefit will have a positive effect on product attitude.

2.3. Appearance Fake of Function and Product Attitude

When the appearance of function is altered rather than maintained, consumers tend to perceive lower functional benefits. However, in the case of the Appearance Fake of Function type, a higher perceived functional benefit may elicit psychological discomfort due to cognitive dissonance. As a result, lower perceived functional benefit can actually lead to a more favorable product attitude. In contrast, symbolic benefit is perceived to be higher when the appearance of function is more significantly transformed. In such cases, product attitude also tends to be more positive. Based on this reasoning, it is expected that perceived functional benefit and perceived symbolic benefit will mediate the relationship between the Appearance Fake of Function and product attitude. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Perceived functional benefit will mediate the relationship between the Appearance Fake of Function and product attitude.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Perceived symbolic benefit will mediate the relationship between the Appearance Fake of Function and product attitude.

2.4. The Moderating Effect of Product Type

Numerous prior studies have identified product type as a moderating variable that can influence various aspects of consumer behavior, particularly through differences in product attributes [18-20]. As discussed in the previous hypotheses, purchasing behavior is not simply an evaluation of product attributes but a process through which consumers assess the perceived benefits, including subjective rewards and expectations offered by the product [11-13]. Based on this stream of research, it can be inferred that product type significantly influences perceived benefits. In this study, it is proposed that the effect of the Appearance Fake of Function on perceived benefits is moderated by product type. Drawing on the theoretical background, product types are commonly classified into utilitarian and hedonic categories, depending on the nature of the attributes they offer [21]. Utilitarian products provide tangible and objective utility to consumers and emphasize functional attributes [22]. In contrast, hedonic products highlight sensory appeal and self-expressive value, offering consumers enjoyment and emotional satisfaction.

In Hypothesis 1, it was suggested that when the Appearance Fake of Function is maintained rather than transfigured, consumers perceive a higher functional benefit. Building on this logic, the current study posits that the relationship between Appearance Fake of Function and perceived functional benefit is moderated by product type, such that the strength of the perceived benefit will vary depending on whether the product is utilitarian or hedonic. In the case of utilitarian products, consistent with the logic of Hypothesis 1, consumers are expected to perceive higher functional benefits when the appearance of function is maintained rather than transfigured. However, the effect size is anticipated to be modest. This is because utilitarian products inherently emphasize functionality and provide visible and objective utility to consumers [22]. When the function is visibly expressed, it enhances the product's perceived reliability and stability, thereby increasing the perception of functional benefit [23]. Moreover, products with high design typicality are known to elicit stronger perceptions of rational value, which in turn elevates perceived functional benefit [24, 25]. For instance, when bladeless fans were first introduced, the absence of visible spinning blades made it difficult for consumers to trust the functionality, which led to lower purchase rates compared to traditional fans. Thus, for utilitarian products, the maintenance of visible function aligns with expectations and leads to higher perceived functional benefits.

In the case of hedonic products, consumers are also expected to perceive greater functional benefit when the appearance of function is maintained rather than transfigured, but the effect size is expected to be even greater. Hedonic products are typically purchased for sensory pleasure and self-expressive purposes. When the appearance of function is transformed, and consumers perceive higher functional benefit despite the incongruence with their purchase motives, a mismatch may occur between the product's benefits and their expectations. According to cognitive psychology, the degree to which incoming information deviates from schema-based category expectations can affect consumers' information processing strategies [26,

27]. When consumers detect incongruence between new information and preexisting schemas, they are more motivated to engage in deeper cognitive processing [28, 29]. This effortful processing, triggered by unexpected or novel information, enhances the number of associative pathways in memory, thereby improving recall [30]. In this sense, although hedonic products are originally purchased for emotional satisfaction, maintaining the visible function may produce schema incongruity, leading to deeper cognitive processing and ultimately stronger memory of the functional benefit [28, 30]. Therefore, similar to Hypothesis 1, both utilitarian and hedonic products are expected to generate higher perceived functional benefits when the appearance of function is maintained rather than transfigured. However, due to cognitive incongruity, the effect is likely to be stronger for hedonic products.

In Hypothesis 2, it was proposed that the Appearance Fake of Function would lead to higher perceived symbolic benefit when the appearance of function is transfigured, rather than maintained. In the present study, it is expected that this relationship will be moderated by product type, with a slight difference in perceived symbolic benefits between utilitarian and hedonic products. For utilitarian products, symbolic benefits are expected to show little variation depending on the visual manipulation of function. This is because utilitarian products are typically evaluated based on whether they fulfill their functional purpose, with less attention paid to symbolic or aesthetic elements [31]. In contrast, hedonic products are evaluated based on impressions, feelings, and intuitive judgments [32]. As such, when hedonic products incorporate transfigured appearances that enhance aesthetic value, consumers are likely to perceive significantly greater symbolic benefits.

Therefore, for hedonic products, symbolic benefit is expected to be much higher when the appearance of function is transformed than when it is maintained. As for functional benefit, following the logic of Hypothesis 1, both utilitarian and hedonic products are expected to yield higher perceived functional benefit when the appearance of function is maintained. However, the degree of this perception is anticipated to differ. For utilitarian products, a maintained appearance will result in a modest increase in perceived functional benefit. For hedonic products, on the other hand, a schema incongruity may occur when the appearance of function is maintained, highlighting the functional aspect in a product typically purchased for emotional satisfaction. This incongruity may trigger deeper cognitive processing, causing consumers to perceive even stronger functional benefits. In summary, both utilitarian and hedonic products are expected to generate greater perceived functional benefits when the appearance of function is maintained. However, due to cognitive dissonance, this effect will be amplified in hedonic products. With respect to symbolic benefit, it is expected—consistent with Hypothesis 2—that transfigured appearances will lead to greater perceived symbolic benefit than maintained appearances. Yet this effect is expected to be strong only for hedonic products, as utilitarian products are primarily evaluated based on functional attributes and may not elicit significant differences in symbolic benefit [31]. Hedonic products, being more sensitive to emotional and aesthetic cues, are likely to demonstrate stronger symbolic responses when aesthetic value is enhanced through visual transformation.

Based on these considerations, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 7 (H7): The effect of the Fake Function type on perceived functional benefit will be moderated by product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic).

Hypothesis 8 (H8): The effect of the Fake Function type on perceived symbolic benefit will be moderated by product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic).

Based on the hypotheses presented above, the relationships among the variables are summarized in the research model. In the model, a (+) sign indicates a positive relationship, while a (−) sign indicates a negative relationship. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Appearance Fake of Function type is negatively (−) related to perceived functional benefit, but positively (+) related to perceived symbolic benefit. Both perceived functional benefit and perceived symbolic benefit exhibit a positive (+) relationship with product attitude. Lastly, the overall relationship between the Appearance Fake of Function type (maintenance vs. transfigurement) and product attitude is also positive (+).

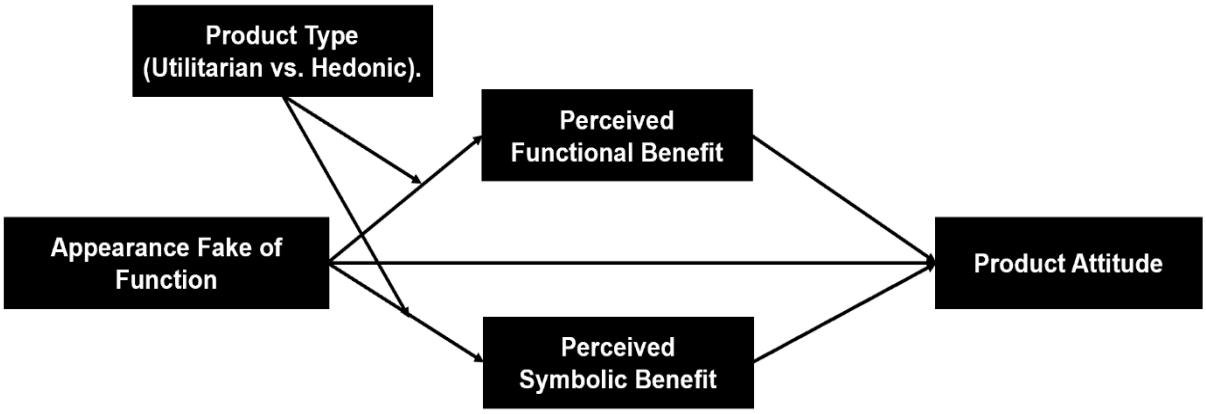

Figure 1.
Research Model.

3. Research Design and Analysis

3.1. Experimental Design

3.1.1. Experimental Design

The experiment employed a 2 (Appearance Fake of Function type: maintenance vs. transfigurement) × 2 (product type: utilitarian vs. hedonic) between-subjects design. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, two types of products, shoes and pants were used, resulting in a total of eight advertisement conditions. These stimuli were incorporated into the survey. In order to facilitate a clearer understanding of the Appearance of Function manipulation, each stimulus was presented with a corresponding message describing the design feature.

3.1.2. Stimuli Development

In relation to the Appearance Fake of Function, various existing products in the market were analyzed to identify examples that visually simulate a functional feature without actually performing the function. Based on this analysis, two distinct types were identified: (1) transfigurement, where the visible appearance of a function is altered to resemble a different function, and (2) maintenance of appearance, where the visual aspect of the function remains unchanged while the actual function is performed by an added mechanism. Product selection was carried out through an idea generation session involving 16 graduate students from the GBC Lab in the Department of Business Administration at Kumoh National Institute of Technology. Although individual products may possess both utilitarian and hedonic characteristics, prior research suggests that clear categorization is often challenging in modern consumer markets [21]. Nonetheless, grounded in earlier studies and market characteristics, this research classified products as follows: Utilitarian products: 2cm flat shoes and jeans, both commonly used for practical and everyday purposes. Hedonic products: 9cm high heels and dress pants, which are more likely to serve expressive, aesthetic, and emotional functions, such as self-identity expression and enjoyment. The distinction between the two product categories was further validated through a focus group interview (FGI), which confirmed that consumers perceive these products as fulfilling different purchase motivations.

3.2. Data Analysis

The empirical analysis was conducted using SPSS 22.0. During the pretest phase, regression analysis and t-tests were performed to verify the appropriateness of the experimental stimuli. In the main study, the same statistical techniques were applied, including regression analysis, t-tests, and ANOVA, to analyze the data and test the hypotheses.

3.3. Results of Analysis

3.3.1. Factor Analysis and Reliability Test

The results of the factor analysis showed that all factor loadings exceeded the threshold of .60, ranging from .661 to .933, indicating strong construct validity of the measurement items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values were all above .820, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at $p < .001$, confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis and the presence of statistically significant correlations among the variables. Furthermore, the Cronbach's α values for all constructs were above .890, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency and reliability. These results suggest that the measurement items used in this study are both valid and reliable.

3.3.2. Hypothesis Testing

3.3.2.1. Test of Hypothesis 1

The results showed that the mean value of perceived functional benefit was M = 3.90 when the Appearance Fake of Function was transfigured, and M = 5.24 when it was maintained. This indicates that perceived functional benefit was higher in the maintenance condition. The difference was statistically significant ($t = -15.071$, $p < .05$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Therefore, it can be concluded that consumers perceive lower functional benefits when the appearance of function is transfigured compared to when it is maintained.

Table 1.
Appearance Fake of Function and Perceived Functional Benefit.

Appearance Fake of Function	PFB	N	S.D	*t*	*p*
Transfigured	3.90	292	1.289	-15.071	.000
Maintained	5.24	361	0.986		

Table 2.
Appearance Fake of Function and Perceived Symbolic Benefit.

Appearance Fake of Function	PSB	N	S.D	*t*	*p*
Transfigured	4.66	326	1.214	-9.436	0.000
Maintained	3.80	413	1.251		

When the Appearance Fake of Function was transfigured, the mean value of perceived symbolic benefit was M = 4.53, whereas it was M = 3.78 when the appearance was maintained. This indicates that symbolic benefit was perceived to be higher in the transfigured condition. The difference was statistically significant ($t = 8.063$, $p < .05$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 2.

Table 3.
Appearance Fake of Function and Perceived Symbolic Benefit.

Appearance Fake of Function	PSB	N	S.D	*t*	*p*
Transfigured	4.53	292	1.128	8.063	0.000
Maintained	3.78	361	1.214		

3.3.2.2. Test of Hypotheses 3 and 4

The effect of perceived functional benefit on product attitude was found to be statistically significant (t = -6.319, p < .05), indicating a negative relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Table 4.
Perceived Functional Benefit and Product Attitude.

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	*t*	*p*
	B	S.D.	*B*		
(Constant)	5.774	0.187		30.893	0.000
PFB	-0.245	0.039	-0.240	-6.319	0.000

The effect of perceived symbolic benefit on product attitude was found to be statistically significant (t = 5.498, p < .05), supporting Hypothesis 4.

Table 5.
Perceived Symbolic Benefit and Product Attitude.

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	*t*	*p*
		S.D.	*B*		
(Constant)	3.696	0.179		20.677	0.000
PSB	.229	0.042	0.211	5.498	0.000

3.3.2.3. Test of Hypothesis 5

When the Appearance Fake of Function was transfigured, the mean value of product attitude was M = 5.18, whereas it was M = 4.20 when the appearance was maintained. This indicates that product attitude was perceived to be higher in the transfigured condition. The difference was statistically significant (t = -10.099, p < .05), thus supporting Hypothesis 5.

Table 6.
Appearance Fake of Function and Product Attitude.

Appearance Fake of Function	Product Attitude	N	S.D	*t*	*p*
Transfigured	5.18	292	1.064	-10.099	0.000
Maintained	4.20	361	1.374		

3.3.2.4. Test of Hypothesis 6

In the case of functional benefit, a three-step regression analysis was conducted. In Step 1, the Appearance Fake of Function had a significant effect on perceived functional benefit (B = -0.509, p < .1). In Step 2, the Appearance Fake of Function also significantly influenced product attitude (B = 0.368, p < .1). In Step 3, when both the Appearance Fake of Function and perceived functional benefit were included in the model, the effect of the Appearance Fake of Function on product attitude decreased to B = 0.331, compared to B = 0.368 in Step 2. Additionally, the effect of perceived functional benefit on product attitude was significant (B = -0.072, p < .1). These results indicate that perceived functional benefit partially mediates the relationship between the Appearance Fake of Function and product attitude.

Table 7.
Mediating Effect of Perceived Functional Benefit.

Mode		B	S.E	*B*	*t*	*p*
Appearance Fake of Function	Perceived Functional Benefit	-1.342	0.089	-0.509	-15.071	0.000
Appearance Fake of Function	Product Attitude	0.990	0.098	0.368	10.099	0.000
Appearance Fake of Function	Product Attitude	0.891	0.114	0.331	7.843	0.000
Perceived Functional Benefit		-0.073	0.043	-0.072	-1.699	0.090

In the case of symbolic benefit, a three-step regression analysis was conducted. In Step 1, the Appearance Fake of Function had a significant effect on perceived symbolic benefit (B = 0.301, p < .1). In Step 2, the Appearance Fake of Function significantly influenced product attitude (B = 0.368, p < .1). In Step 3, when both the Appearance Fake of Function and perceived symbolic benefit were included in the model, the coefficient for Appearance Fake of Function decreased to B = 0.335, indicating a reduction from Step 2. Both the effect of Appearance Fake of Function on product attitude (B = 0.335, p < .1) and the effect of perceived symbolic benefit on product attitude (B = 0.110, p < .1) were statistically significant. These findings confirm a partial mediating effect of perceived symbolic benefit. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

Table 8.
Mediating Effect of Perceived Symbolic Benefit.

Mode		B	S.E	*B*	*t*	*p*
Appearance Fake of Function	Perceived Symbolic Benefit	0.747	0.093	0.301	8.063	0.000
Appearance Fake of Function	Product Attitude	0.990	0.098	0.368	10.099	0.000
Appearance Fake of Function	Product Attitude	0.901	0.102	0.335	8.813	0.000
Perceived Symbolic Benefit		0.119	0.041	0.110	2.886	0.004

3.3.2.5. Test of Hypotheses 7 and 8

The results of the analysis showed that the interaction term between Appearance Fake of Function and product type was statistically significant ($p < .05$), indicating a meaningful moderating effect. In other words, product type moderated the relationship between Appearance Fake of Function and perceived functional benefit, thus supporting the moderation proposed in Hypothesis 7.

To further examine the nature of this moderating effect, a t-test was conducted to compare the means between the two product type groups. In this analysis, Appearance Fake of Function was treated as the independent variable, perceived functional benefit as the dependent variable, and product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) as the moderating variable.

Table 9.
The Effect of Appearance Fake of Function on Perceived Functional Benefit and the Moderating Role of Product Type.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	p-value	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	SE	β			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	6.582	0.136		48.299	***		
	AFF	-1.342	0.089	-0.509	-15.071	***	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	5.652	0.182		30.985	***		
	AFF	-1.339	0.086	-0.507	-15.627	***	1.000	1.000
	PT	0.625	0.085	0.238	7.337	***	1.000	1.000
3	(Constant)	9.105	0.381		23.881	***		
	AFF	-3.724	0.249	-1.411	-14.960	***	0.102	9.762
	PT	-1.709	0.244	-0.650	-7.002	***	0.106	9.470
	AFF*PT	1.613	0.159	1.300	10.115	***	0.055	18.130

Note: $^{***}p<.001$, $^{**}p<.01$, $^{*}p<.05$.

The analysis results for Hypothesis 7, which proposed that the effect of Appearance Fake of Function on perceived functional benefit would be moderated by product type, showed statistically significant effects for both hedonic products ($t = 19.943$, $p < .05$) and utilitarian products ($t = 4.144$, $p < .05$). For hedonic products, the mean values of perceived functional benefit were $M = 5.29$ (maintained) and $M = 3.18$ (transfigured), indicating a statistically significant difference of 2.11 ($t = 19.943$, $p < .05$). For utilitarian products, the mean values were $M = 4.41$ (maintained) and $M = 4.12$ (transfigured), with a smaller but still statistically significant difference of 0.29 ($t = 4.144$, $p < .05$). These results confirm the moderating effect of product type in the relationship between Appearance Fake of Function and perceived functional benefit.

Table 10.
Perceived Functional Benefit of Appearance Fake of Function by Product.

Product Type	AFF	Perceived Functional Benefit		S.D	*t*	*p*
		M	N			
Hedonic Product	Maintained	5.29	187	.929	19.943	0.000
	Transfigured	3.18	153	1.020		
Utilitarian Product	Maintained	4.41	.998	1.045	4.144	0.000
	Transfigured	4.12	1.04	1.068		

The analysis revealed that the interaction term (Appearance Fake of Function × Product Type) was statistically significant ($p < .05$), indicating a meaningful result at the conventional significance level. This confirms that product type moderated the relationship between Appearance Fake of Function and *perceived symbolic benefit. To further explore the differences between product types, a t-test was conducted to compare the group means. In this analysis, Appearance Fake of Function was treated as the independent variable, perceived symbolic benefit as the dependent variable, and product type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) as the moderating variable.

Table 11.
The Effect of Appearance Fake of Function on Perceived Symbolic Benefit and the Moderating Role of Product Type.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	p-value	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	SE	β			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.038	0.142		21.443	***		
	AFF	0.747	0.093	0.301	8.063	***	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	2.563	0.195		13.110	***		
	AFF	0.748	0.092	0.302	8.153	***	1.000	1.000
	PT	0.319	0.091	0.129	3.495	**	1.000	1.000
3	(Constant)	-1.710	0.398		-4.298	***		
	AFF	3.700	0.260	1.493	14.244	***	.102	9.762
	PT	3.207	0.255	1.301	12.597	***	.106	9.470
	AFF*PT	-1.996	0.166	-1.713	-11.993	***	.055	18.130

Note: $^{***}p<.001$, $^{**}p<.01$, $^{*}p<.05$.

The analysis results for Hypothesis 8, which proposed that the effect of Appearance Fake of Function on perceived symbolic benefit would be moderated by product type, showed statistically significant effects for both hedonic products ($t = -14.333$, $p < .05$) and utilitarian products ($t = 2.522$, $p < .05$). For hedonic products, the mean values of perceived symbolic benefit were $M = 3.20$ (maintained) and $M = 4.90$ (transfigured), indicating that symbolic benefit was significantly higher when the Appearance Fake of Function was transfigured ($t = -14.333$, $p < .05$). In contrast, for utilitarian products, the mean values were $M = 4.41$ (maintained) and $M = 4.12$ (transfigured), showing that symbolic benefit was perceived to be significantly higher when the appearance was maintained ($t = 2.522$, $p < .05$). These results confirm that product type moderates the relationship between Appearance Fake of Function and perceived symbolic benefit.

Table 12.
Perceived Symbolic Benefit of Appearance Fake of Function by Product Type.

Product Type	AFF	symbolic benefit		S.D	*t*	*p*
		M	N			
Hedonic Product	Maintained	3.20	187	1.102	-14.333	0.000
	Transfigured	4.90	153	1.075		
Utilitarian Product	Maintained	4.41	174	.998	2.522	0.012
	Transfigured	4.12	139	1.041		

4. Conclusion

4.1. Conclusion

The present study investigates the impact of appearance fake of function types on product attitude and the underlying psychological mechanisms. First, as the degree of appearance modification increased, perceived functional benefits decreased, whereas symbolic benefits increased (H1, H2). Second, functional benefits exerted a negative influence on product attitude, while symbolic benefits had a positive effect (H3, H4). Third, a greater degree of appearance modification was associated with a more favorable product attitude (H5), and this relationship was partially mediated by perceived benefits (H6). The effect of appearance fake types on perceived benefits varied depending on the product type (H7, H8). In particular, the difference in functional benefits was more pronounced in hedonic products.

4.2. Implications

Based on the above findings, the theoretical implications are as follows. First, despite the commonality of being categorized as appearance fakes, product attitudes varied depending on the type, which was empirically verified. Second, it was confirmed that the influence of appearance fakes on product attitude is mediated by perceived benefits. Third, unlike previous studies, it was revealed that in the case of appearance-retaining fakes, product attitudes may become more negative as functional benefits increase due to cognitive dissonance.

The practical implications are as follows. While previous research generally suggested that higher perceived benefits lead to more favorable product attitudes, the present study demonstrated that in the case of appearance fake products, functional benefits may, in fact, induce negative attitudes. Therefore, marketing strategies that enhance symbolic rather than functional benefits are required. Second, since consumers perceive higher symbolic benefits when appearance is modified in hedonic products and when it is retained in utilitarian products, differentiated marketing strategies based on product type are necessary.

4.3. Limitations and Future Research

The present study has several limitations. First, although the appearance of the function was operationally defined within the study, the definition lacks clarity and generalizability, which may allow for subjective interpretation. Second, only two

products were used for each category of utilitarian and hedonic goods, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings. Follow-up research is warranted to address these issues. Future studies should consider further segmenting product types to gain a more nuanced understanding of consumer responses.

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