Platform-Conditioned Visual Persuasion:

How Design Congruence Overrides Visual Style in FMCG E-Commerce

Chan, H. M. C.[a]* and Chan, T. H.[a]

[a]School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong Kong,

Hong Kong SAR, China

Correspondence: chanmanchun@link.cuhk.edu.hk

Abstract

In fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) e-commerce, product images serve as the key element for consumer evaluation, , yet visual persuasion research assumes that image effectiveness transfers uniformly across platform contexts. This study challenges that assumption by demonstrating that visual persuasion is conditioned by platform-specific visual affordances that shape early-stage cognitive accessibility. Drawing on processing fluency theory and a platform affordance framework, we conceptualise platform visual affordance (PVA) as the relational set of visual action-possibilities and normative expectations that a platform's interface design enables and reinforces through repeated user exposure. A 2 × 2 between-subjects experiment (N = 123) examined how visual style (minimalistic vs information-rich) and PVA congruence jointly influence processing fluency and purchase intention across various platform interfaces. PVA congruence was the primary driver of processing fluency, and processing fluency fully mediated both visual style and PVA congruence effects on purchase intention. Critically, the interaction reveals an asymmetry: sparse affordance environments (e.g., Amazon-style interfaces) amplify congruence effects, while constitutively dense affordance environments (e.g., Chinese e-commerce interfaces such as Taobao) absorb individual image style differences, rendering them negligible. These findings reframe visual persuasion as a platform-conditioned cognitive outcome.

Keywords: *processing fluency; platform visual affordance; visual persuasion; e-commerce; FMCG; purchase intention*