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경영학 석사 학위논문

“It’s Created from Inspiration”:

The Effect of Inspiration Information on

Perceived Product Uniqueness

제작자의 영감에 대한 정보(영감정보)가

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경영학과 마케팅전공

김승은

## ABSTRACT

# “It’s Created from Inspiration”: The Effect of Inspiration Information on Perceived Product Uniqueness

Kim, Seung Eun

Business Administration (Marketing)

The Graduate School

Seoul National University

How might information that a product was “inspired by” an inspiration source affect consumer perception towards a product? For example, how would consumers perceive a glass when its form is “inspired by the morning dewdrops”? Contrary to the frequent use of such information (referred to as “inspiration information”) in the market place, surprisingly few consumer studies have attempted to understand the impact of inspiration information on the consumer.

In the current research, I address the research question of how consumers are influenced by inspiration information by providing empirical study results. In detail, I compare the consumer perception towards a product with and without inspiration information and unearth the underlying psychological mechanism that makes such perception difference. To do so, I conduct two separate experiments on online panels of Amazon Mechanical Turk.

In sum, the results of two studies suggest that consumers perceive a product inspired by an inspiration source (vs. a product without such information)

as more unique. Consumers think of a product with inspiration information as original, unconventional, fresh, and even trendsetting.

What drives this inspiration information effect? Results show that inspiration information influences the way consumers perceive a creator's motivation of product creation. Unlike products without such information, products with inspiration information are perceived to be created from an intrinsic motivation of the creator; specifically the motivation to express what the creator has felt from an inspiration source. Thus, when consumers encounter a product with inspiration information, they perceive that the product was created by a self-expressive motivation of the creator, which elevates the thought that the product is unique.

Study 1 (N=298) tests the main effect of inspiration information on perceived uniqueness of a product. I examine whether consumers perceive an identically shaped product with identical features as more unique when given information about the source of inspiration. I also test how the perception of the product as a self-expression of a designer mediates the effect.

Study 2 (N=208) scrutinizes whether the effect mitigates when the product is created by a group of designers compared to a single designer. If, in fact, the effect is driven by the notion that inspiration information infers the self-expressive motivation of the creator, the effect should be mitigated when created by a group of designers since it is difficult to think that a group of designers created a single product to express oneself. Results support this proposition by showing the suggested interaction effect between inspiration information and the number of creators.

The current study not only aims to understand a prevalent but uninvestigated marketing phenomenon but also aims to enrich the recent stream of research regarding how inferences about a “human factor” within a product influences product evaluation (Fuchs, Schreier, & van Osselaer, 2015; Newman & Dhar, 2014). The study also has theoretical implications that it introduces a new antecedent of perceived product uniqueness. Results suggest that perception of a product as a creator’s self-expression elevates its uniqueness.

The study also provides managerial implications. The study suggests that firms can differentiate their products from other products by providing information about where the product design was inspired from. It also suggests that the perceived individuality embedded in a product is what elevates the uniqueness of it. Thus, when informing consumers about the inspiration source of a product, it is important to emphasize a single designer involved in the creation process rather than emphasizing the entire firm or a group of designers.

My investigation on the inspiration information effect has explored the effect in product categories such as glass cups and chairs, which may have more relevance to product design than other product categories. In future studies I aim to expand the current study and investigate if this effect is robust across various product categories and various inspiration sources. I also hope to find other possible moderators or boundary conditions to understand the effect thoroughly.

**Key words: perceived uniqueness, product perception, inspiration, information, product creation process, design**

**Student Number: 2016-20550**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

“Inspired by flower petals, this lamp is...” While shopping, consumers often encounter product descriptions of such, saying that a product has been “inspired by” an inspiration source (e.g., flower petals). For example, a number of Dior dresses are known to be inspired by flowers ([www.dior.com](http://www.dior.com)) while Danish designer Wegner’s shell chair is inspired by a shell. As shown in Figure 1, Iittala’s Alvar Aalto Collection vase informs consumers how it was inspired by “the waves in water.” There are even technological products such as watches or CD players inspired by inspiration sources. The Cartier watch is known to be inspired by the Renault tanks while the Muji CD player is inspired by an electric fan.

What could it mean to the consumer that a product design was created based on the designer’s inspiration? Despite its prevalence, not much is known about information that a product has been inspired by an inspiration source (referred to as “inspiration information”) or how it affects the perception consumers have towards the product. Previous psychology literature defines inspiration as an emotion (Fredrickson, 2009) and focuses on the behavior of inspired individuals (Thrash & Elliot, 2004; Thrash et al., 2010). Meanwhile, design literature investigates the effect of a designer’s inspiration source on a creative outcome (Mougenot, Bouchard, & Aoussat, 2008). Thus, previous research related to inspiration information heavily highlights the designer’s point of view in creating a product after being inspired by a source. Contrary to prior studies, the current study aimed to focus on the consumer’s part; the way consumers understand the act of a designer being inspired and creating a product from his or her inspiration.

Accordingly, the current research was conducted to achieve the following objectives. Most importantly, it aimed to identify the consumers' response towards a product with inspiration information. The study examined what consumers infer from inspiration information and how they perceive a product with inspiration information differently compared to a product without relevant information. In addition, the current study had the goal to dig deeper into the underlying mechanism of the effect. Specifically, it targeted to answer the following question: what specific aspect of inspiration information drives certain perception differences between products with and without the information?



**Figure 1. Example of Inspiration Information**

To obtain these objectives, I have conducted two separate studies. As a result, I found that consumers perceive products with inspiration information as more unique (i.e., different from convention) than products without the information. Moreover, results from both studies suggest that inspiration information increases perceived uniqueness of a product because consumers perceive a product with inspiration information to be created with an intrinsic motivation of the creator, specifically the motive to express oneself through product creation. When given

inspiration information, consumers seem to infer that the product designer felt a special affect while experiencing an inspiration source, which motivated the designer to express the feeling by creating a product.

By identifying a mediator and moderator of the effect, I strengthen that consumer perception about the creation motive underlies the effect of inspiration information on product perception. Particularly, across two studies, I examine how the perception of the product as a designer's self-expression mediates the inspiration information's effect on perceived uniqueness. In study 2, I establish that the effect is moderated by the number of designers. If the effect occurs because inspiration information implies that a designer expresses himself or herself, the effect should be mitigated once told to be created by a group of designers (compared to a single designer). When a product is created by a group of designers (vs. single designer) it is difficult for a consumer to infer that a product was made for a self-expressive motivation even if it is said to be "inspired by" an inspiration source.

Additionally, study 2 addressed an alternative explanation of the effect; that interestingness of a linkage between inspiration source and product elevates the perceived uniqueness. To rule out this explanation, I provide a linkage between inspiration source and product in all conditions of study 2 and examine if the effect maintains. Unlike the control condition of study 1 in which I simply exclude inspiration information, the control condition of study 2 informed consumers that the product "resembles" an inspiration source. Results of study 2 suggest that consumers perceive a product inspired by an inspiration source as more unique than a product that plainly resembles the source.

The current study has its significance in consumer literature in that it is one of the first studies that investigate the effect of inspiration information on consumer product perception. It identifies what specific impact inspiration information has on consumers, and when the information is more effective. By identifying the inspiration information effect, the study aids the understanding of consumer behavior towards product information implying the creation process of a product and how marketers can effectively present their products to consumers.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Inspiration Information

According to positive psychology literature, inspiration is one of the top ten positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2009). Specifically, inspiration occurs after a moving or emotionally uplifting experience. As a daily used word, “inspiration” is by definition someone or something that gives one ideas for doing something. Further, “to inspire” is to fill one with a specified feeling or thought, while “being inspired” is to be aroused or animated with the spirit to do something. In the creativity domain, inspiration is “a motivational state posited to energize the actualization of creative ideas” (Thrash et al., 2010).

Thrash and Elliot (2003, 2004) investigate the emotion in depth, and explain how inspiration has three core characteristics: transcendence, evocation, and motivation. One sees better possibilities when inspired (transcendence), inspiration is evoked and unwilling (evocation), and inspiration involves motivation to express which is newly apprehended (motivation). Here, transcendence and evocation are characteristics also related to other positive emotions. Positive emotions are known to broaden one’s attention (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005) and emotions are more than often mentioned to be evoked unwillingly (Gardner, 1985; Zentner, Grandjean, & Scherer, 2008). On the contrary, motivation explains the inherent characteristic of inspiration, due to the fact that inspiration, by definition, moves the actor to express something. From past literature, we can infer how inspiration includes the sense that an actor is stimulated to do a certain behavior in an internally motivated way.

While the features of the emotion are well established, previous literature on inspiration heavily fixates on the consequences of the emotion itself. For instance, an individual's level of inspiration predicts creativity in writing tasks (Thrash et al., 2010) and goal progress (Milyavaskaya et al., 2012), while the link between inspiration and nostalgia boosts exploratory activities (Stephan et al., 2015). Much less research is done on what individuals would think about the information that another person was inspired. The current study delves into this void of research by observing how consumers are influenced by information about a product designer's inspiration.

I specifically suggest that consumers would infer from inspiration information a process in which a designer feels something special from an inspiration source and then is motivated by the special feeling to create a product. Although it may be difficult to imagine what a designer has felt from an inspiration source, consumers would vaguely infer that a designer's feeling towards a source has driven the product creation process. More importantly, the current study claims that such inference leads to the perception that the product was created with the motivation of the creator to express what he or she has individually felt from an inspiration source.

A number of design studies support the idea that a designer's act of being inspired by something and then creating a product based on the inspiration is closely related to the designer's individuality. For instance, Eckert and Stacey (2000) show that designing a product always involves a designer's own creative action of transforming, combining and applying other objects and images. Other studies also emphasize how the creative process of transforming a source into a

product is linked with the creator's individual creativity (Chan, Dow, & Schunn, 2014; Mougenot, Bouchard, & Aoussat, 2008). Therefore, information that a product design was inspired by a source could in fact imply to the consumers that the creator has expressed oneself by creating a product.

## **2.2. The Self-Expressive Motivation of a Creator**

Consumers often infer the unseen motive of a firm based on product or firm information. For instance, information that a social venture is for-profit elevates consumer perception that the firm has the motive to pursue one's own self-interest (Lee, Bolton, & Winterich, 2017). Interestingly, Lee, Bolton, and Winterich (2017) show that consumers no longer perceive a firm to have a "greedy" motive once told that profit is to increase the firm's operational efficiency.

In the current study, I propose that inspiration information also influences how consumers perceive a designer's motive of product creation. Prior studies on inspiration state that inspiration "is a type of intrinsic motivational state" (Böttger et al., 2017) or a "motivational state that compels individuals to bring ideas into fruition" (Oleynick et al., 2014). These studies support the notion that inspiration information would influence consumers to perceive a product to be the result of intrinsic motivation of the creator. Further, related studies advocate the proposed influence of inspiration information on the perception of a product as a self-expression of a designer. Thrash and Elliot (2004) explain that inspiration involves the "motivation to extend the qualities exemplified in the evocative object," meaning that an inspired individual is motivated to express the unique feeling one has felt towards an inspiration source.

If this is the case, what would the consequences be of consumer perception that a product was created with a self-expressive motivation of the designer? Motivation related studies conceptualize self-expression as showing what is within the self, or showing and signaling an introspective state of oneself (Green, 2007; Kokkoris & Kühnen, 2015). Thus, perceiving a product to have been created from a self-expressive motivation would lead to the thought that a part of the creator's self is included in the product. Once the individuality of a creator is perceived to be embedded in a product, consumers would perceive the product to be one of a kind.

Previous studies support that consumers would perceive a product positively when created internal motives, by repeatedly showing that firms are positively evaluated when they are perceived to have a motivation other than external motivations (e.g., to earn money). A firm gains admiration when perceived to have socially responsible motives than simple motives to increase revenue (Aaker, Vohs, & Mogilner, 2010; Fogg et al., 2003), while attitude towards a firm's product was higher when a firm is perceived to be intrinsically motivated (vs. extrinsically motivated) to enact prosocial behavior (Folkes & Kamins, 1999).

In addition, consumer studies on the positive contagion effect suggest that consumers prefer products that include more of the unique individuality of the creator. Studies on the positive contagion effect show that consumers show a positive reaction towards a product when it is perceived to include more of the creator's intangible 'essence.' For example, products are preferred when created at the original factory compared to secondary factories (Newman & Dhar, 2014), it is an original creation of the creator rather than a duplicate (Newman & Bloom,

2011), or it has a lower serial number (Smith, Newman, & Dhar, 2016) because they are perceived to possess more of the creator's special aura. In research done by Fuchs, Schreier, and van Osselaer (2015), products are preferred when told to be made by hand (vs. machine) because this information increases the perception that the product contains the creator's love.

Aligned with previous studies, I claim that consumers would evaluate a product with inspiration information in positive terms. Particularly, due to the fact that inspiration information implies that a designer created the product to express the unique individuality of the designer, inspiration information is likely to elevate the perceived uniqueness of a product. A product with inspiration information will be perceived as both new and meaningful.

### **2.3. Perceived Product Uniqueness**

The perceived uniqueness of a product has great importance in the marketing context, especially since so many products are introduced to the market daily. In order to be selected for purchase among the vast number of competitor brands and products, it is important to be perceived as different from other products in a positive and meaningful way. Previous research explains that the perceived uniqueness of a product leads to positive evaluation (Pocheptsova, Labroo, & Dhar, 2010) and higher preference (Franke & Schreier, 2008) in specific consumption situations. Products that derive from the apparent norm are often evaluated in positive terms, such as said to be "cool" (Warren & Campbell, 2014).

In fact, literature suggests that consumers have an innate need for uniqueness. Consumers gain intrinsic satisfaction from the perception that they

themselves are unique, special, and separable from the masses (Fromkin & Snyder, 1980; Snyder, 1992). Individuals feel this need for uniqueness especially when they feel an identity threat, or when they perceive themselves to be similar to others (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977; Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). This need for uniqueness drives consumers to own unique products (Bloch, 1995; Simonson & Nowlis, 2000) or search for products that are innovative (Lynn, 1991).

Most related studies shed light on the consequences of consumers' need for uniqueness, while not many studies are done on the antecedents of product uniqueness. What characteristic of a product makes it unique? Here I aim to identify a possible antecedent, which is information about the product creator's individuality. When a product is told to obtain a human creator's individuality, it is perceived as unique.

Prior research on the perceived uniqueness of a product implies that consumers often associate human individuality to uniqueness. For example, mass customization studies explain that self-designed products are related to the perceived uniqueness of a product (Franke & Schreier, 2008; Lynn & Harris, 1997) while other studies demonstrate that consumers try to buy unique products when they want to signal their identity (Berger & Heath, 2007). As these studies suggest, we often think that an individual's identity is unique and thus products associated to a human identity may also be perceived as unique. In this study I propose that inspiration information heightens the uniqueness of a product because it makes consumers imagine an embedded identity in the product.

### III. RESEARCH MODEL

#### 3.1. Hypotheses Formation

Based on such logic, I hypothesize that a product's perceived uniqueness will be influenced by inspiration information. Consumers that encounter a product with inspiration information (vs. without inspiration information) will perceive the product to be created from a self-expressive motivation of the creator, which would elevate the level of perceived meaningful uniqueness within a product. Formally:

**H<sub>1</sub>.** Consumers will perceive a product as more unique when the product is told to be inspired by an outer source (vs. when not).

**H<sub>2</sub>.** The effect of inspiration information on perceived uniqueness will be mediated by the perception that a designer has created the product in order to express oneself.

If the effect truly occurs because the information implies the embedded individuality of the creator, the inspiration information effect should be mitigated when the product is created by a group of designers instead of a single designer. In this case, the product can no longer be created as a self-expression of the creator, even if the inspiration information is given. Accordingly, I propose that inspiration information would no longer give the inference that the product embeds a unique part of the creator, thus would not increase the perceived uniqueness of the product. As a result, I propose the following hypotheses. The conceptual models for the

proposed hypotheses are presented in Figure 2.

**H<sub>3</sub>.** The effect of inspiration information on perceived uniqueness will be moderated by the number of creators. When told that the product was created by a group of designers (vs. a single designer), the effect should be mitigated.

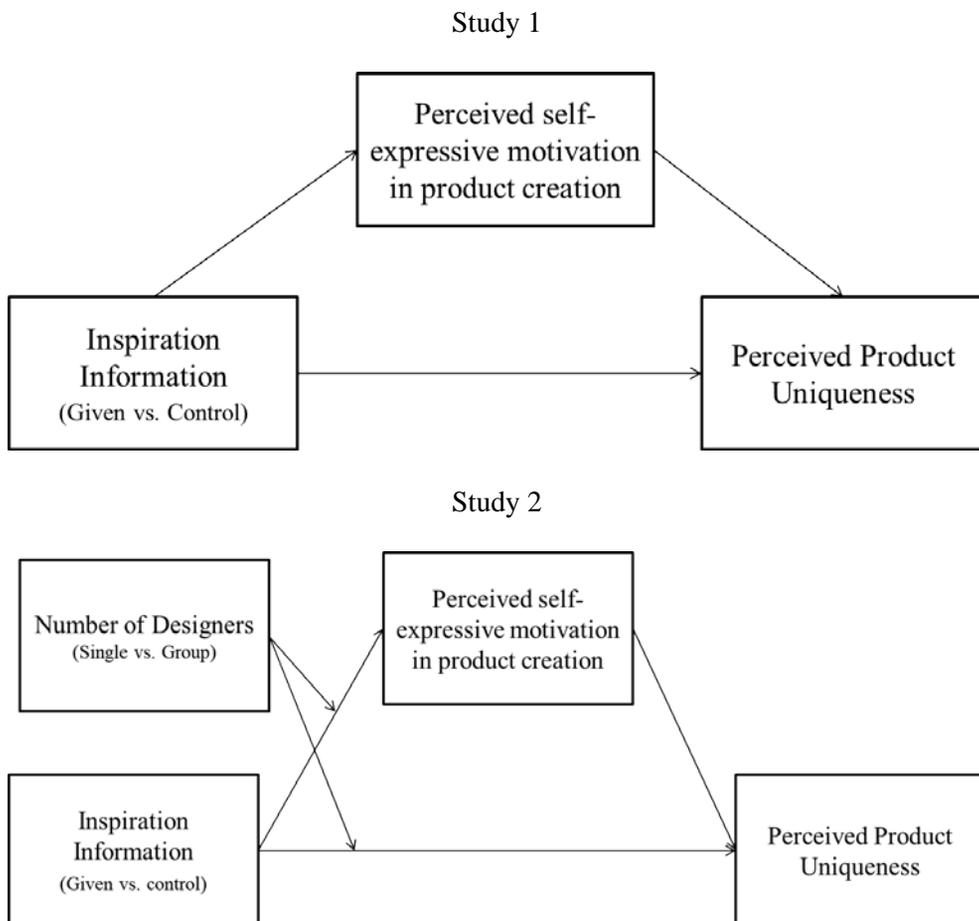
**H<sub>4</sub>.** The effect of inspiration information on perception of a product as the self-expression of a designer will be moderated by the number of creators. When told that the product was created by a group of designers (vs. a single designer), the effect should be mitigated.

**H<sub>5</sub>.** Moderated Mediation: The mediation effect of perceived self-expressive motivation for product creation will be moderated by the number of creators. Perception of product creation as designer's self-expression will mediate the effect of inspiration information on perceived uniqueness only when told to be created by a single designer (vs. group of designers).

### **3.2. Overview of Studies**

Study 1 was conducted to provide evidence to the first two hypotheses (H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>). I compare the perceived uniqueness and perceived self-expressive motivation in product creation between conditions, where I provide inspiration information in only one of these two conditions. Particularly, I provide a product description about a glass cup with or without inspiration information. In study 2, I

examined the proposed moderation effect of the number of creators. Thus I tested the remaining hypotheses (H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub>). To illustrate, I gave an elaborated product description about a chair and compared how participants evaluate the product's uniqueness differently. This study also rules out an alternative explanation related to the effect, which is that inspiration information increased perceived uniqueness in study 1 because the linkage between an outer source and product is perceived as interesting.



**Figure 2. Conceptual Models**

## IV. STUDY 1

Study 1 employed a single factor (inspiration information given vs. control) between-subjects design to test my prediction that consumers would perceive a product as more unique when inspiration information is given compared to when not. The study also aimed to see if consumers perceive a product creation as a self-expression of the designer when given inspiration information, and if this perception mediates the effect of inspiration information on perceived uniqueness.

### 4.1. Method

298 participants (165 females, Mean age=36.6) were recruited from the online panel Amazon's Mechanical Turk (M-Turk). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions: the *inspiration information given* condition and the *control* condition. All participants were asked to read a product description then answer questions below. Then, they were given a product description on a glass named Tiare, which included information about the glass's form, dimension, and year of creation. While other information (e.g., dimension and year of creation) was identical across conditions, participants in different groups read a different "form" description. Participants in the *inspiration information given* condition read that the Tiare glass form was "designed with smooth curves and a transparent surface inspired by raindrops falling from the sky," while those in the *control* condition simply read that the glass was "designed with smooth curves and a transparent surface." Thus the only difference between the two conditions was the presence of inspiration information or that the glass was "inspired by raindrops falling from the sky" (Appendix B).

On the next page of the survey, I measured the level of perceived uniqueness with ten items ( $\alpha=.95$ ). Specifically, I asked participants to indicate what the Tiare glass was closer to, when completing a given sentence: “The glass is...” Then participants were given opposite adjectives such as “unique” vs. “ordinary,” or “commonplace” vs. “original,” to report their level of perceived uniqueness of the product (Table 1). The scale was adjusted from related literature (Andrews & Smith, 1996; Sethi, Smith, & Park, 2001). These studies have used the suggested scale to measure the meaningful uniqueness of various subjects. Andrews and Smith (1996) measured the creativity of marketing programs, which are marketing programs that “deviate from conventional practice in ways that are meaningful to customers.” The article also stresses that creativity is what “sets the product apart from competitors in meaningful ways.” Sethi, Smith, and Park (2001) have used an innovativeness scale, which is defined to be the level of “meaningful uniqueness” of a product. In order to find if consumers positively evaluate a product when given inspiration information, I measured the level a product is unique to the consumer in a meaningful way.

On the bottom of the page, participants reported the extent to which they thought the product was created as the designer’s self-expression. They were to indicate, on a 7-point Likert scale, the extent they agreed to the following statement: “Expressing his or her self seems to be one of the reasons that the designer made the chair.” On the final page I asked for basic demographic information, including their age, gender, SES (socio-economic status), and level of interest in product design. Then the survey was over.

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**Table 1. Perceived Uniqueness Scale**

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In the following scale, indicate what the Tiare glass is closer to, when completing the following sentence.

“The glass is...”

Dull	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Exciting
Fresh	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Routine <sup>a</sup>
Conventional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unconventional
Novel	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Predictable <sup>a</sup>
Usual	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unusual
Unique	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ordinary <sup>a</sup>
Commonplace	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Original
Trendsetting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Warmed over <sup>a</sup>
Average	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Revolutionary
Nothing special	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	An industry model

a. reverse coded

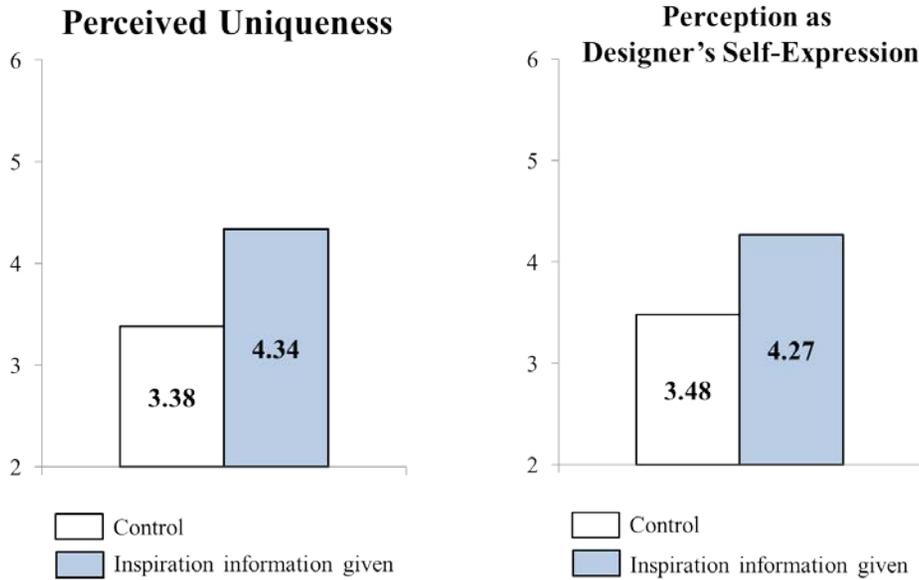
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## 4.2. Results and Discussions

### *Perceived Uniqueness and Self-Expressive Motivation*

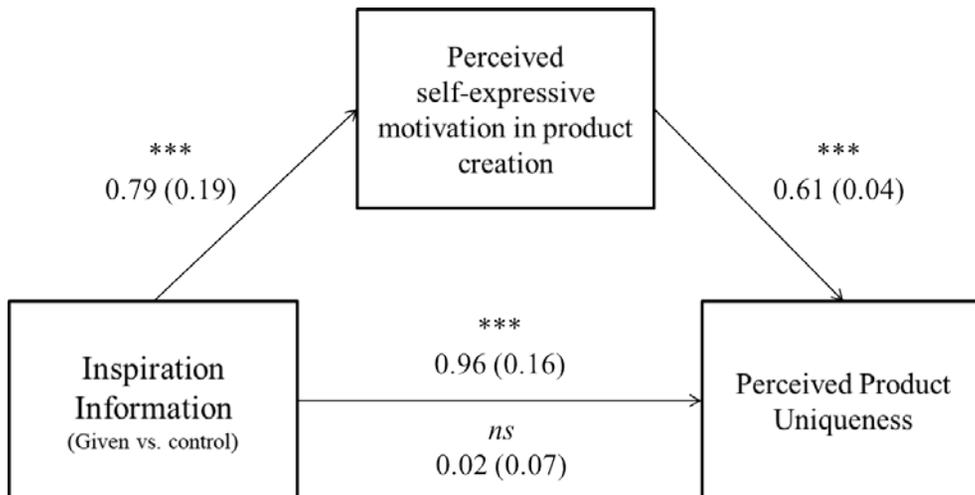
Supporting our hypothesis, a t-test suggests that participants perceived the product as more unique when told to be inspired by raindrops ( $M=4.34$ ,  $SD=1.35$ ) compared to when the product description lacked such information ( $M=3.38$ ,  $SD=1.39$ ,  $t(296)=6.04$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Also, participants agreed to a greater extent that the product was created as a self-expression of the designer when given inspiration information ( $M=4.27$ ,  $SD=1.60$ ) compared to the control condition ( $M=3.48$ ,  $SD=1.66$ ,  $t(296)=4.17$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Therefore, consumers perceive a product as more unique and more as a designer’s self-expression when given inspiration information. Results are presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Results for Study 1: Main Effects**

### *Mediation Analysis*

I conducted a bootstrapping analysis using Model 4 from PROCESS (Hayes, 2013), and results suggest the proposed mediation. In detail, I identified that perception of product creation as a self-expression of designer completely mediated the effect of inspiration information on perceived uniqueness (Indirect effect=.4546, CI 95% [.2458, .6856]). The inspiration information increased the perception that the product was created as the self-expression of the designer, which lead to elevation of perceived uniqueness of the product. The results are presented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4. Results for Study 1: Mediation Analysis**

The results from study 1 suggest that inspiration information elevates the thought that a product has been created as a designer’s self-expression, thereby boosting the perceived uniqueness of the product. In the next study, I aimed to dig deeper into the effect so that I can pinpoint the role of perceived individuality embedded in a product.

## V. STUDY 2

In study 2 I investigate deeper into the inspiration information effect by identifying a possible moderator of the main effect and mediation effect. If inspiration information increases product uniqueness because it implies that a designer has expressed his or her self in the product, the effect should be mitigated when the product is told to be created by a group of designers. Thus in this study, I investigate an interaction effect of inspiration information and the number of designers. I also examine the moderated mediation effect of the number of designers.

Even when consumers are given inspiration information, when a product is created by a group of designers, it is difficult to infer the designers expressing what they have felt into a single product. Now, rather than the self-expression of the designer, the product creation would be perceived simply as the result of a decision to make a product in a certain way or strategy. In order to test this notion, study 2 employed a 2 (inspiration information given vs. control)  $\times$  2 (single designer vs. group of designers) between-subjects design.

Study 2 also rules out an alternative explanation of the inspiration information effect. One might say that products with inspiration information may be perceived as more unique because the relation of an outer source (e.g., the raindrops falling from the sky) and the product (e.g., glass) is interesting. In study 2, I rule out this alternative explanation by providing the linkage between the outer source and product to participants in all conditions. Precisely, I tell participants that the product was inspired by a source (e.g., deer) in the inspiration information

given condition while I tell them that the product simply resembles the source in the control condition.

## 5.1. Method

208 participants (129 females, Mean age=37.1) were recruited on Amazon M-Turk for an award of payment. First, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: *inspiration information given –single designer* condition, *control – single designer* condition, *inspiration information given – group of designers* condition, and *control – group of designers* condition. All participants read a product description about a dining chair named Valor. The instruction was as follows: “The following product description is an extract from a furniture magazine. Please read the description carefully and answer the following questions.” Unlike study 1, I provided a detailed description about the chair, as products would be presented in furniture magazines. The description included information about the creation process and number of designers. To all participants, I gave identical information such that “the base and legs can be finished in walnut or natural oak, while upholstery options include all fabric options” (Appendix C).

The manipulation for the two factors was done by different information in the product description. First, those in the *inspiration information given* condition read that the chair was “inspired by the delicate shape of a deer” while those in the *control* condition read that the chair looks “much like the delicate shape of a deer.” Also, those in the *single designer* condition read that the chair was created by “the designer Alex Karsson” while those in the *group of designers* condition read that the chair was created by “the Valor product design team.” Specific differences are

shown in the Appendix. The product description also included the dimension or size of the product (L. 58cm, W. 60cm, H. 75cm).

On the next page of the survey, I measured the extent to which participants perceived the product creation as a self-expression of the designer. I measured the perception as self-expression of the designer similar to study 1. Next, I measured the perceived uniqueness of the product with a scale similar to study 1, with 10 separate items. The instruction was as follows: “In the following scale, indicate what the Valor chair is closer to, when completing the following sentence.” The difference was that, instead of asking participants to complete the sentence “The glass is...” I asked them to complete the sentence “The chair is...”

On the final page, I asked for basic demographic information, such as age, gender, one’s interest in furniture design, SES, and ended the survey.

## **5.2. Results and Discussions**

### *Perceived Uniqueness*

A two-way ANOVA suggests that there is no main effect for both factors inspiration information ( $F(1,204)=.93, p=.337$ ) and the number of designers ( $F(1,204)=.21, p=.646$ ) on perceived uniqueness. Importantly, as predicted, there was a significant interaction effect between inspiration information and number of designers ( $F(1,204)=4.37, p=.038$ ). Specifically, the results from study 1 were replicated in the single designer condition, where those in the inspiration information given condition reported a marginally higher level of perceived uniqueness ( $M_{\text{inspiration}}=4.93, SD=1.07$ ) compared to those in the control condition ( $M_{\text{control}}=4.45, SD=1.20, F(1,102)=2.93, p=.090$ ). Meanwhile, the effect was

attenuated in the group of designers condition in that there was no difference of perceived uniqueness between conditions ( $M_{\text{inspiration}}=4.53$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}}=4.70$ ,  $F(1,102)=.64$ ,  $p=.425$ ).

I have done additional analysis, and found that the perceived uniqueness between a single designer and a group of designers is marginally significant when given inspiration information ( $M_{\text{single}}=4.93$  vs.  $M_{\text{group}}=4.53$ ,  $F(1,102)=3.18$ ,  $p=.077$ ) while there is no difference in perceived uniqueness for those in the control condition ( $M_{\text{single}}=4.45$  vs.  $M_{\text{group}}=4.70$ ,  $F(1,102)=1.36$ ,  $p=.247$ ). The results support that the inspiration information effect is mitigated due to the fact that inspiration information no longer elevates the uniqueness of a product when created by a group of designers.

#### *Perceived Self-Expressive Motivation*

Similar results were suggested for the perception of a product as the self-expression of the designer. A two-way ANOVA showed that there were no main effects of inspiration information ( $F(1,204)=.69$ ,  $p=.407$ ) and the number of designers ( $F(1,204)=.86$ ,  $p=.354$ ). Only the proposed interaction was significant ( $F(1,204)=5.29$ ,  $p=.023$ ). In the single designer condition, those given inspiration information agreed to a greater extent that the product is created by the designer to express his or her self ( $M_{\text{inspiration}}=5.48$ ,  $SD=1.35$ ) compared to control ( $M_{\text{control}}=4.87$ ,  $SD=1.46$ ,  $F(1,102)=5.00$ ,  $p=.028$ ). On the contrary, in the group of designers condition, there was no significant difference between the two conditions ( $M_{\text{inspiration}}=4.85$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}}=5.14$ ,  $F(1,102)=1.06$ ,  $p=.306$ ).

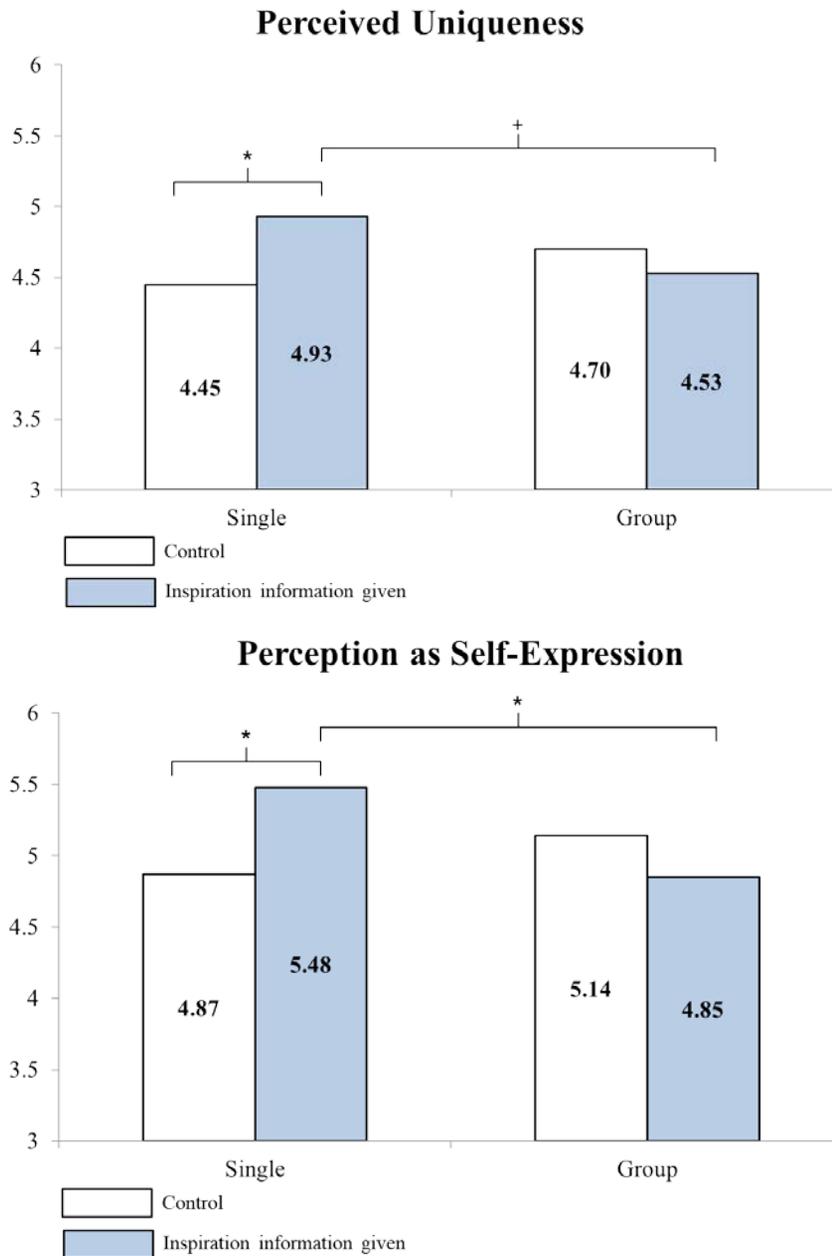
I have also done additional analysis and found that the perception that the product is created to express the designer's self was significantly different, in that the agreement was greater for those in the single designer condition compared to those in the group of designers condition, for those given inspiration information ( $M_{\text{single}}=5.48$  vs.  $M_{\text{group}}=4.85$ ,  $F(1,102)=4.86$ ,  $p=.030$ ). On the contrary, those in the control conditions did not differ ( $M_{\text{single}}=4.87$  vs.  $M_{\text{group}}=5.14$ ,  $F(1,102)=1.01$ ,  $p=.317$ ). This also supports that the inspiration information effect is attenuated because the information does not lead to the inference that the product was created as the self-expression of the designer when created by a group of designers. Results are shown in Figure 5.

#### *Moderated Mediation Analysis*

I used Model 8 of PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) to analyze the moderated mediation, and the results suggest a significant moderated mediation effect (Indirect effect=.4073, CI 95% [.0694, .7878]). As proposed, the mediation of perception of product as the designer's self-expression was significant in the single designer conditions (Indirect effect=.2773, CI 95% [.0383, .5421]) while it was not significant in the group of designers conditions (Indirect effect= -.1300, CI 95% [-.3986, .1048]).

In sum, results indicate that the effect is mitigated once consumers are given the information that the creation was done by a group of designers rather than a single designer. This hints how the individuality of the designer is the important in identifying the effect. When consumers are given inspiration

information, consumers infer that the individuality of the designer has been embedded in the product, making it look more unique.



**Figure 5. Results for Study 2**

## **VI. GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Across two studies, I investigated the effect of inspiration information on product perception. In study 1, I examined how informing that a product design was “inspired by” something increases the meaningful uniqueness of a product. I additionally examined the underlying psychological mechanism of the effect. Consumers infer from inspiration information that the creator (in this case, the designer) expressed himself or herself in the product. This perception that the product was created from a self-expressive motivation of the designer elevates perceived product uniqueness. In study 2, I saw if this effect was driven by the notion that the product is indeed the expression of oneself by examining how the effect mitigates when a product is created by a group of designers.

### **6.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Besides revealing the effect of a prevailing phenomenon on the consumer’s perception towards a product, I add to recent consumer literature regarding the effect of information about a creator on product perceptions. Previous studies on contagion have reported that consumers find more value in a product that had physical contact with a particular person, place, or event (Belk, 1988). More recent studies demonstrate that, even when there is no physical contact between a person and product, perception about a psychological contagion of a person may also influence product valuation (Newman & Dhar, 2014; Smith, Newman, & Dhar, 2016). Particularly, these studies demonstrate that information that infers the creator’s psychological contagion within a product elevates positive evaluation towards the product.

I add to this recent stream of consumer research on psychological contagion by showing that inspiration information increases perceived uniqueness of a product because it infers that the designer's individuality is expressed in the product. It is also important to mention that the products are simply "designed" rather than physically crafted by the designer, and yet consumers still infer that the product is a self-expression of the creator when given inspiration information.

I also add to product design literature by demonstrating that the way a product design is communicated to consumers also has a big impact on product perception. Past studies on product design heavily focus on how the different shapes affect consumer perception or purchase intention (Landwehr, Wentzel, & Herrmann 2013; Rahinel & Nelson, 2016). For instance, Landwehr, Wentzel, and Herrmann (2013) elaborate the effect of product design typicality on consumer liking. In the current study, I keep the product design identical across different conditions, and I emphasize that the story behind the design also alters how consumers interpret a product design.

The study has important managerial implications, especially since most products searched online contain a product description for the consumer. Unlike offline markets, the online shopping malls always present a product with important information, such as the form and size of the product. Accordingly, products will have to be introduced with information that makes it meaningfully unique from other products in order to boost consumer interest. From our study results, I suggest that products will be perceived as unique when the individuality of the creator is emphasized in the product design story. Even with identical product designs or shapes, one can make his or her product more unique by showing that

the designer's own expression is captured within the product. Another important point is that, when providing such information about the inspiration source, it is important to emphasize the individuality of the creator. Thus, highlighting the head designer or main creator of the product would be favorable when giving inspiration information to the consumers.

## **6.2. Limitations and Further Research**

Due to the fact that this research is one of the first studies to have examined the effect of inspiration information, there are many possible questions to answer regarding what a creator's inspiration means to the consumer. These questions provide a new possibility for future research. For example, in the current study I examine the effect of inspiration information on daily products such as cups and chairs. Although these products are more utilitarian than hedonic, I am also curious about whether this effect will hold on more function based products such as high-technology products (e.g., smartphones or laptops). I could also examine further whether the valence of the inspiration source alters the effect. Would products inspired from unfavorable sources also be perceived to be unique?

I also hope to examine the post-perception behavior of consumers towards products inspired by an outer source. For instance, will the perceived uniqueness of the product lead to actual purchase intention of the consumers? What I am especially interested in is, whether the product seems positively differentiated from other products. Thus, I aim to find, in future studies, whether consumers prefer a product created from inspiration when compared to other ordinary products. Moreover, will this uniqueness elevate the perceived value a product has? Previous

study results have consistently found that products perceived as “scarce” increase the value it has (Brock, 1968; Lynn, 1991). Uniqueness and scarcity are constructs that are closely linked, and studies prove that consumers with a high need for uniqueness have stronger preference for scarce commodities (Fromkin 1970; Powell, 1974). If this is the case, would a high level of perceived uniqueness also lead to the notion that a product is more valuable?

Despite the limitations of the research, I claim that the attempt to dig deep into the effect of messages related to the human creator is worth the challenge. Due to the rapid technological advancement, the prevalence of a fully machine-made production ironically seems to provoke a special appreciation from the consumer towards a human factor in the production process (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2011; Fuchs, Schreier, & van Osselaer, 2015). My study shows how even the implicit inferences of a product embedding human related factors boosts a positive evaluation towards the product. Hopefully, results of the current study *inspire* new studies related to inspiration information and the effect of specific product descriptions on product perception in the near future.

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## VIII. APPENDIX

### A. IRB Approval Certificate

#### 심의결과 통보서

수신

책임연구자	이름: 김승은	소속: 경영대학 경영학과	직위: 석사과정
지원기관	서울대학교		

과제정보

승인번호	IRB No. 1702/001-016		
연구과제명	제품 디자인에 대한 정보가 제품 인식에 미치는 영향		
연구종류	학술 연구, 학위 논문 연구, 설문조사		
심의종류	신속심의		
심의일자	2017-02-13		
심의대상	연구계획서(신규), 연구참여자용 동의서 또는 동의서 면제 사유서, 연구책임자 경력 사항, 연구결과정리양식, 연구참여자 모집 광고, 연구참여자에게 제공되는 서류, 지도교수 서약서 또는 소속기관장확인서, 생명윤리준수서약서		
심의결과	승인		
승인일자	2017-02-13	승인유효기간	2018-02-12
정보보고주기	12개월		
심의의견	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 심의결과 제출하신 연구계획에 대해 승인합니다.</li> <li>2. 연구자께서는 승인된 문서를 사용하여 연구를 진행하시기 바라며, 만일 연구진행 과정에서 계획상에 변경사항(연구자 변경, 연구내용 변경 등)이 발생할 경우 본 위원회에 변경 신청을 하여 승인 받은 후 연구를 진행하여 주십시오.</li> <li>3. 유효기간 내 연구가 끝났을 경우 종료 보고서를 제출하여야 하며, 승인유효기간 이후에도 연구를 계속하고자 할 경우, 2018-01-13까지 지속심의를 받도록 하여 주십시오.</li> </ol>		
검토의견	계획서 검토 의견 동의서 검토 의견 기타 검토 의견		

2017년 02월 13일

서울대학교 생명윤리위원회 위원장



**B. Stimuli for Study 1**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Stimuli</b>
<p><b>Inspiration Information Given</b></p>	<p><b>Tiare Glass</b></p> <hr/> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p><b>FORM</b></p> <p>Designed with smooth curves and a transparent surface inspired by raindrops falling from the sky</p> <hr/> <p><b>DIMENSION</b></p> <p>W. 8cm D. 8cm H. 14cm</p> <hr/> <p><b>YEAR OF CREATION</b></p> <p>2016</p> </div> </div>
<p><b>Control</b></p>	<p><b>Tiare Glass</b></p> <hr/> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p><b>FORM</b></p> <p>Designed with smooth curves and a transparent surface</p> <hr/> <p><b>DIMENSION</b></p> <p>W. 8cm D. 8cm H. 14cm</p> <hr/> <p><b>YEAR OF CREATION</b></p> <p>2016</p> </div> </div>

## C. Stimuli for Study 2

Condition	Stimuli
<p><b>Inspiration Information Given</b></p> <p>-</p> <p><b>Single Creator</b></p>	<p><b>VALOR CHAIR</b></p> <p><i>A dining chair created from a designer's inspiration</i></p>  <p>This stylish and modern dining chair is one of the latest pieces exquisitely created by the designer Alex Karsson. Inspired by the delicate shape of a deer, the designer created the chair with slender legs and smooth lines. Karsson states, "Nature is always a wonderful muse for my design. It teaches me so much about myself and life." The base and legs can be finished in walnut or natural oak, while upholstery options include all fabric options.</p> <p><b>DIMENSIONS</b> L. 58cm W. 60cm H. 75cm</p>
<p><b>Control</b></p> <p>-</p> <p><b>Single Creator</b></p>	<p><b>VALOR CHAIR</b></p> <p><i>A dining chair created by a skillful designer</i></p>  <p>This stylish and modern dining chair is one of the latest pieces exquisitely created by the designer Alex Karsson. The designer created the chair with slender legs and smooth lines that look much like the delicate shape of a deer. Karsson states, "It is interesting how the final outcome of a creation process often resembles nature." The base and legs can be finished in walnut or natural oak, while upholstery options include all fabric options.</p> <p><b>DIMENSIONS</b> L. 58cm W. 60cm H. 75cm</p>
<p><b>Inspiration Information Given</b></p> <p>-</p> <p><b>Group of Creators</b></p>	<p><b>VALOR CHAIR</b></p> <p><i>A dining chair created from a design team's inspiration</i></p>  <p>This stylish and modern dining chair is one of the latest pieces exquisitely created by the Valor product design team. Inspired by the delicate shape of a deer, the design team created the chair with slender legs and smooth lines. The team states, "Nature is always a wonderful muse for design. It teaches us so much about ourselves and life." The base and legs can be finished in walnut or natural oak, while upholstery options include all fabric options.</p> <p><b>DIMENSIONS</b> L. 58cm W. 60cm H. 75cm</p>
<p><b>Control</b></p> <p>-</p> <p><b>Group of Creators</b></p>	<p><b>VALOR CHAIR</b></p> <p><i>A dining chair created by a skillful design team</i></p>  <p>This stylish and modern dining chair is one of the latest pieces exquisitely created by the Valor product design team. The design team created the chair with slender legs and smooth lines that look much like the delicate shape of a deer. The team states, "It is interesting how the final outcome of a creation process often resembles nature." The base and legs can be finished in walnut or natural oak, while upholstery options include all fabric options.</p> <p><b>DIMENSIONS</b> L. 58cm W. 60cm H. 75cm</p>

## 요약 (국문초록)

### 제작자의 영감에 대한 정보(영감정보)가

### 제품의 인지된 독특성에 미치는 영향

제품이 영감의 대상에 의해 “영감 받았다”는 정보는 제품에 대한 소비자들의 인식에 어떠한 영향을 미칠까? 예를 들어, “아침 이슬로부터 영감 받아” 디자인된 유리잔을 소비자들은 어떻게 인지할까? 이러한 영감정보는 시장에서 자주 사용되고 있음에도 불구하고 이러한 영감정보가 소비자들에게 어떠한 영향을 미치는지에 대한 소비자 연구는 놀라운 정도로 부족하다.

본 연구에서 저자는 실증 연구를 통해 “소비자들이 영감정보에 어떻게 영향 받는가?”라는 질문에 대한 해답을 얻고자 한다. 구체적으로, 저자는 소비자들이 영감정보가 있는 제품과 없는 제품을 어떻게 달리 인지하는지 비교하고 그 인지의 차이를 만드는 기저의 심리적 메커니즘을 탐구하고자 한다. 이를 위해, 저자는 Amazon Mechanical Turk를 이용해 온라인 패널들에게 두 가지 별도의 실험을 진행한다.

두 개의 실험에 대한 결과는, 소비자들이 무언가로부터 영감 받아 만든 제품을 그렇지 않은 제품에 비해 더욱 독특하다고 느낀다고 제시한다. 소비자들은 영감정보가 주어진 제품을 더욱 독창적이며, 전통으로부터 벗어나고, 새로우며, 심지어 유행을 결정할 만한 제품이라고 판단한다.

그렇다면 이러한 영감정보 효과를 주동하는 것은 무엇일까? 연구 결과에 의하면 영감정보는 소비자들이 인지하는 제품의 제작 동기에 영향을 준다. 영감정보가 없는 제품에 비해 영감정보가 주어진 제품은 제작자의 내제적 동기(intrinsic motivation)에 의해 만들어졌다고 인지되는데, 특히 제작자가 영감의 대상으로부터 느낀 것을 표현하고자 하는 동기에 의해 만들어졌다고 생각하게 된다. 즉, 소비자들이 제품을 영감정보와 함께 접하게 되면, 그들은 제품이 제작자의 자기표현 동기 (self-expressive motivation)에 의해 만들어졌다고 생각하게 되며, 이는 제품의 독특성에 영향을 준다.

실험 1(N=298)은 영감정보가 제품의 인지된 독특성에 주는 주효과를 검증한다. 저자는 소비자들이 동일한 모습을 가지며 동일한 기능을 가진 제품에 대해 영감정보가 있을 때 그렇지 않을 때보다 더 독특하게 여긴다는 것을 관찰하고자 한다. 저자는 또한 이러한 효과를 제품의 제작 동기에 대한 인지가 매개한다는 것을 증명한다.

실험 2(N=208)에서는 제품이 여러 명의 디자이너에 의해 만들어졌다고 하는 경우 (한 명의 디자이너에 의해 만들어졌다고 하는 경우와 비교해) 효과가 사라지는지 확인한다. 만일 영감정보가 제품의 인지된 독특성을 높이는 이유가 제품이 제작자의 자기표현적 동기에 의해 만들어졌다는 생각 때문이라면, 제품이 여러 명의 제작자에 의해 만들어졌다는 것처럼 자기표현적 동기에 의해 제품을 만들었을 것이라고 생각하기 어려운 경우 영감정보의 효과가 사라질 것이다.

실험 2의 결과들은 제작자 수와 영감정보의 상호작용효과가 유의함을 보임으로써 이를 지지한다.

두 개의 실험을 통해 도출된 결과들은 제품에 대한 정보, 구체적으로 제품의 제작 과정과 관련된 정보를 제공하는 것이 소비자의 제품 인식에 주는 영향을 봄으로써 소비자 연구에 공헌한다. 본 연구는 널리 사용되지만 분석되지 않은 마케팅 현상에 대한 이해를 도울 뿐 아니라 제품에 암시된 “인간다움”이 제품 평가에 주는 영향과 관련된 최근 연구들에 공헌한다는 목표가 있다 (Fuchs, Schreier, & van Osselaer, 2015; Newman & Dhar, 2014). 본 연구는 또한 제품의 인지된 독특성에 영향을 주는 새로운 변수를 발견했다는 의의가 있다. 연구 결과들은 제작자가 자기 표현 동기를 바탕으로 제품을 제작했다는 사실이 제품의 독특성을 높여준다고 설명한다.

본 연구는 영감정보가 소비자들의 긍정적인 제품 평가에 영향을 준다는 것을 밝힘으로써 기업들이 자신의 제품을 어떻게 소비자들에게 설명할지에 대한 실무적인 시사점을 제공한다. 본 연구는 기업들이 제품이 어디로부터 영감 받아 만들어진 제품인지 설명함으로써 자신의 제품을 타사 제품과 구별시킬 수 있다고 제안한다. 또한 제품의 독특성을 높이는 것은 제품에 포함된 인지된 개인적임(individuality)이라는 것 또한 밝힌다. 따라서, 제품의 영감정보를 소비자들에게 줄 때에는 영감을 받아 제품을 제작한 개인을 강조하는 것이 전체 기억이나 디자이너 그룹을 강조하는 것보다 효과적이라는 것을 보인다.

저자의 영감정보에 대한 고찰은 유리잔과 의자와 같이, 어쩌면 제품 디자인의 중요성이 클 수 있는 제품군들을 사용해 진행되었다. 추후 연구에서는 본 효과가 다양한 제품군과 영감 대상에 걸쳐 유효한지 검증하고자 한다. 이에 더해, 효과에 영향을 줄 수 있는 조절변수들을 찾는 것은 영감 정보의 효과를 이해하는 데 더욱 도움이 될 것으로 예상된다.

**Key words:** 인지된 독특성, 제품에 대한 인식, 영감, 정보, 제품 제작 과정, 제품 디자인

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