

"Face to Face: The Perception of Automotive Designs"



The research conducted by Windhager et. al concludes with the finding that people perceive car fronts as they perceive human faces. This might be due to a perception error that has been developed through human evolution. In a way we overcompensate by seeing "faces" in everything from clouds, trees and even cars. Our minds seem to be programmed to do this, even though the representation might be abstract, which is certainly the case for cars. For early human beings mistaking a bear for a tree might have ended deadly. However, mistaking a tree for a bear would have had little consequences. During their various experiments conducted in Austria and Ethiopia, participants were asked whether they see a face in the presented car fronts, and if so, what kind of attributes they would associate with the given car front (face). Traits were then assigned to the car fronts and the cars placed on a chart. This chart had two axis, one for power and one sociability. The placement of the particular car on the chart depended on the traits and characteristics that were assigned by the subjects of the experiment.

Initial research was done in Austria, but in order to eliminate possible biases from people who come in contact with cars and are bombarded with car advertisements every day, the research was repeated in a rural area of Ethiopia, where some of the people they asked had never seen a car advertisement, or a car for that matter. (Windhager et al., 2008.) (Windhager et al., 2010) (Windhager et al., 2012)

From their research the following conclusions and assumptions can be made:

HEADLIGHTS	are perceived as the	EYES.
GRILLES	are perceived as the	NOSE or MOUTH.
Additional AIR INTAKES	are perceived as the	MOUTH.