

## **Persuasive Form**

### *How do Ordinary Objects Communicate about Users and Themselves?*

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#### Abstract

Reconciling artistic approaches to industrial design and consumption studies present paper aims to give a proposition to assess the impact of industrial design, product form in the case of ordinary objects from two perspectives: in the context of making choices and its influence on the usage experience. Propositions are given to study relating consumer responses with respect to characteristics of product form: unity and prototypicality; and individual differences: materialism and processing preferences.

Underlying research is being executed in an attentive and responsive environment Hungary, in the case of a product category that has become widely available recently, and holds strong practical, but also symbolic and communicative implications: mobile phones. Key findings of a preliminary qualitative study are presented.

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## **Persuasive Form**

### ***How do Ordinary Objects Communicate about Users and Themselves?***

#### **Introduction**

The quality and nature of the consumption experience is not only determined by the type and application of its object itself and its context, but *also by the quality of the execution of this object: its form or design*. This form communicates to and persuades potential and actual consumers to make choices, but the *quality and nature of the usage experience* is also determined by this form. Furthermore, ordinary objects also serve as tools for communicating about and to users.

Until now product form has mainly been investigated as a decisive element of consumer choice and its role of attraction at the potential consumer and product encounter. Studies on consumption and usage experience have been more focusing on particular contexts, situations, occasions and on objects that were more special in their nature like the aesthetic products, the arts or extraordinary activities.

Building on the theoretical background of industrial design from an extended approach to the investigation of product form is suggested: its investigation in the context of choice and the context of usage. Present paper proposes to study product form related consumer responses in the two contexts with respect to characteristics of product form and individual differences. Underlining results of a preliminary qualitative study are presented.

#### **Phenomenon of Industrial Design - Manifestation of Product Form**

##### An Applied Artistic Perspective

Understanding the nature of industrial design and the impact of its product: *form*, lies in the understanding its process. The designer's task is to *express an abstract purpose* - for example providing a stable hold, facilitating a comfortable handling - *in a tangible, material form*.

The core idea of design is a *conscious effort* to impose *meaningful order*. "All men are designers.... Design is composing an epic poem, ... writing a concerto. But design is also

cleaning and reorganising a desk drawer, pulling an impacted tooth, ... and educating a child.” (Papanek, 1971, pp. 3-4). “The order and delight we find in frost flowers on a window pane, in the hexagonal perfection of a honeycomb..., reflect man’s preoccupation with pattern ...” (Papanek, 1971, p. 4). These things however are not the product of design. They possess only order we ascribe to them, they lack conscious intention.

In this process the artist has to *envision* his or her solution in operation (Dahl & Chattopadhyay, 1999), therefore not only needs to understand the core idea of the given purpose in general, but also user requirements, the nature and circumstances of use as well. Arnheim (1996) who writes about the psychological process of the act of creation in design stresses that the core of the design thinking remains *the ability to conceive, plan and present ideas about products*. The designer’s *knowledge* may be a source of inspiration, practical constraint, or criteria for evaluation, but this knowledge is useless unless it is transformed *in the designer’s imagination into ideas and images, visions of the world that may be effectively communicated to others*.

Krippendorf (1996) describes the designer as the *maker of meaning*. The way a designer makes meaning is the way a user will reconstruct meaning. However, he also addresses that “noone can assume that form (the designer’s objectified meaning) and (the user’s) meaning are the same; there is need for product semantics to study how they relate. “Designers are part of a broad ecological process, but their success depends upon their ability to understand the hidden governance of collectively shared archetypes and mythologies whose meanings must be respected, grasped, tapped, and drifted with.” (p. 161)

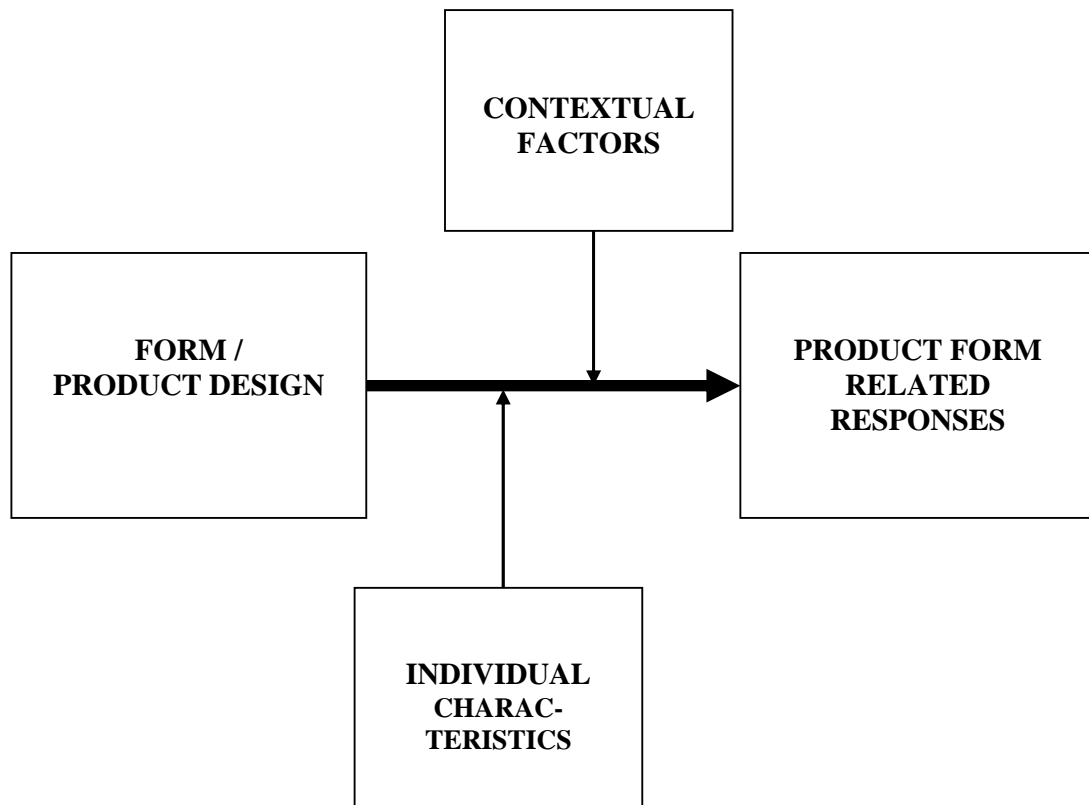
### The Relating Marketing Perspective

As a result, the designer-artist’s freedom of creation is limited: it is restricted by the common influence of the design, engineering and marketing disciplines and by production, market and consumption requirements and constraints. The result of the industrial designer’s work is a *final form* of a given purpose: *entirety* of product function, appearance, aesthetics and ergonomics *in accordance with market requirements* (Pye, 1978). The primary aim of this final form, is not only to attract consumer attention, but also to assist and facilitate use. Good design, therefore, derives from the interaction of the maker (designer) and the user (consumer).

Overall it is the designer's task to express a given purpose in a meaningful and *distinctive form that sells*. Nevertheless, it is also core nature of product form that it can only be *wholly explored* by the users only through and *during usage*. Setting the objective of investigating industrial design, product form requires the investigation of all of its manifestation: its power at the point of choice and its impact on the usage experience as well.

### Conceptual Model

Based on both, industrial design literature and relating marketing research the following conceptual model can be formed, that provides a framework for investigating product form.



### Applied Concepts

#### Product Form

Design as a problem-solving activity can *never, by definition, yield the one right answer*: it will always produce infinite number of answers, some “righter” and some “wronger.” Purely

functional designs are hardly possible to make. Whenever humans design and make a useful thing they invariably expend a good deal of unnecessary and easily avoidable work on it which contributes nothing to its usefulness. Never do we achieve a satisfactory performance. All useful devices have got to do useless things which no one wants them to do but they are also equipped *with new functions and meanings that was never intended by the designer* (Pye, 1978). It is those characteristics of design that determine consumer responses that are substantial to identify. Product form cannot be evaluated on single, separate compositional elements, it is a *combination* of compositional elements that are chosen and blended into a *whole* to achieve a particular sensory effect (Bloch, 1995).

### Dimensions for Describing Product Form

Studies of the *empirical aesthetics* provide possible dimensions for describing the relation of visual design qualities, for approaching product form as a whole. These are: *prototypicality* and *unity* already investigated in the case of products with the application of line drawings. (Veryzer & Hutchinson, 1998). It is important to note however that these studies have been concerned with product appearance in the case of constructed, not real products.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of industrial design suggest (Margolin & Buchanan, 1996) *extending the definition of unity and prototypically to the relations of appearance, shape and manner of fulfillment of purpose*. In this sense, *unity* can be defined as the level of *congruity* among the elements of form as well as the level of *congruity of the purpose of the given object and its material expression*.

Characteristics of product form have an impact on product form related consumer responses. It is stated in the industrial design literature that form should guide and facilitate use. Product form in itself is to express all about the product (Margolin & Buchanan, 1996; Papanek 1971; Lissák, 1998). Consistency in appearance and consistency between the fulfilled purpose supports choice and use, therefore consumers' product related responses. In their study Veryzer & Hutchinson (1998) have shown that higher level of unity in appearance results in more positive aesthetic responses.

Proposition 1.:

The level of unity of a product's form enhances consumers' responses to it: more functional, utilitarian characteristics are attributed to it; more enjoyable, aesthetic it is perceived; the

more communicative, expressive power is attributed to it.

The concept of *prototypicality* refers to how the given object is *representative* of its category not only in the sense of its *appearance and shape*, but also its *purpose and operation*.

When a product is more prototypical, more representative of its category involves that it is better known, more familiar (Loken & Ward 1990; Veryzer & Hutchinson, 1998), therefore better liked in its appearance and better understood in its operation. It is the information value of a prototypical object that can create positive product form related responses. On the other hand common designs already existing in the marketplace can become boring, and old-fashioned in the marketplace and less appreciated. Products with weaker design properties have to fulfil requirements of freshness and novelty (Bloch, 1995). While increasing exposure to a particular design may make consumer reactions more positive; after a wide acceptance of a given design may lose its appeal if it becomes too common. Therefore, the systematic alteration of these common designs can reserve the information value of prototypicality and bring in the sense of newness, freshness as well. However, the opposite is also true. For those consumers who seek variety, not prototypical, even atypical products are also liked for their exclusive novelty and distinctiveness (Meyers Levy & Tybout, 1989). Forms' commonness or very unusual forms both communicate about their users.

Proposition 2.:

The level of prototypicality of a product's form enhances consumers' responses to it: The more prototypical a form is, the more functional it is perceived, the more utilitarian characteristics are attributed to it. Prototypicality does influence the anticipation of enjoyment and quality of the experience of use. The more prototypical a form is the more expressive, communicative power attributed to it. The less prototypical (more atypical) a form is the more expressive, communicative power attributed to it.

### Individual Differences

Despite the best efforts of designers to determine the precise nature of products, the career of products in human experience depends as much on the ability of human beings to make sense of the artificial world as it does on the intentions of the designer. The meaning of products is constructed through personal interactions, and user - object interactions that are not entirely within the control of designers (Margolin & Buchanan, 1996). Consumers' relation to design,

product form is dependent on their personal characteristics, their personal relations to products that surround them, but also their preference, proneness to considering visual qualities such as product appearance.

### Materialism

The importance consumers attach to products plays a role in their choices and judgements. The judged importance of products can be approached as a kind of consumer orientation (Csíkszentmihályi & Prochberg-Halton, 1988) as a consumption style (Holt, 1995) and as a basis of consumers' judgement of values (Richins & Dawson, 1992). The value that products embody can develop in three ways: through their acquisition, by themselves and as a means of expression of personal success. According to these dimensions Richins & Dawson (1992) differentiate between materialist and non-materialist consumers. For materialist consumers the acquisition of products plays a very important role, it can be object of plans, a goal in itself (*acquisition centrality*); can be a source of personal well-being in life (*acquisition as the pursuit of happiness*); and basis for judgement of own and others' success that lies in the amount and quality of products owned (*possession defined success*).

According to level of materialism (Richins & Dawson, 1992) consumers are more receptive to different manifestations of product form. Richins (1994a) showed that for materialist consumers it is products' utilitarian benefits, their potential to express personal success, enjoyment of their acquisition that is important; product appearance and qualities of form determine their choices. On the contrary, non-materialist consumers appreciate their possessions, for them, enjoyment lies in their use and also memories they evoke.

Proposition 3.:

Individuals' materialist or not materialist orientation determines their susceptibility to considering different aspects of the consequences of form. More materialistic consumers tend more to seek higher level of utility / functionality and expressive power in products. Not materialist consumers are more attentive to the enjoyment, aesthetic characteristics of a product.

### Processing Styles

Several studies have been dealing with consumers' affective and cognitive responses to product related verbal or visual stimuli. Relating research, where visual stimuli are used and

individual processing styles are assessed vary according to research objectives, research objects and subjects. Several of the researches offer measurement instruments to assess visual processing styles (Childers 1985; Bamossy, Scammon and Johnston 1983; Hirschman 1986; Veryzer 1993) and / or estimate underlying design dimensions of research objects (Veryzer 1993, Henderson & Cote 1996). Research objects take the form of paintings (Bamossy et al. 1983), logos (Henderson & Cote 1996) and products (Hirschman 1986; Veryzer 1993). Research objects also vary according to being constructed according to selected dimensions (Veryzer 1993), or being an existing, real constructions (Bamossy et al.; Hirschman; Henderson & Cote).

Gould (1990) has shown that there is a relationship between involvement with different types of products and individual processing styles. Consumers with visual processing preferences are more involved with products that are more visual oriented in their use i.e. cameras, clothes. As a result of higher involvement in these, they are more concerned about all product characteristics that are a result of their own form or design.

Proposition 4.:

Consumers with visual processing preferences are more concerned about the form and appearance of products, their expressive and aesthetic characteristics.

### Contextual Factors

#### Context of Choice

Product form determines the first potential consumer and product encounter, the moment of making choices, purchase decisions. "Industrial design is *to be extended to the act of the interpretation, perception of the product.*" (Lissák, 1998, p. 161). Design is not only for giving a tangible, physical form of an abstract function, but it is to give a *distinctive* form (Rassam, 1995). Design as the tool of expression plays a crucial role in market competition: communicates and positions, influences choices, attracts consumers, users and is capable of communicating with them - catches attention, provides information (Bloch, 1995).

#### Context of Use

The use, consumption of products does not simply imply their primary functional use, but they also serve as sources of expression, self-expression, enjoyment and hedonism. When

buying a particular product consumers not only seek its primary function, but further contents and value. Consumption and product use is a kind of creative process, source of individuality and difference (Hirschman & Holbrook 1982; Holbrook & Hirschman 1982; Richins 1994a; 1994b, Solomon 1983, Belk 1988, Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

One of the primary roles of product form is distinction in market competition, but its core essence lies in giving an abstract function a tangible format. The designer's task is not only the creation of an attractive object, which sells well, but it is also of significant importance *how it does fulfil its function*: what the users' experiences are: whether they are enjoyable, useful, satisfying or aesthetic. The user and the product may be linked with each other as a result of personal experience. (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

A given product communicates about its user on the one hand, but conveys meanings as well that are only relevant to its owner, user on the other. By the purchase of a certain product consumers not only seek its basic function, but seek further contents and values. Consumption is itself a creative process, source of difference and identity. "Consumption is not just a personal act of destruction by the consumer, but very much a social act where symbolic meanings, social codes, and relationships, in effect, the consumer's identity and self, are produced and reproduced" (Poster as cited in Firat & Venkatesh, 1993). Product functions can be taken for granted today. It is not only primary function, excellent quality, but aesthetic values (Cova & Swanfeldt, 1993) that also distinguish.

It is *through use that a product can wholly be explored and therefore the impact of product form be investigated* (Margolin & Buchanan, 1996; Lissák, 1998). Anticipation of future experience with a given product may not be as expected, may not be correct.

Proposition 5.:

Different product judgements are made in the context of choice and the context of usage. Evaluations of functionality, experience, enjoyment of use and expressive characteristics differ and determined by the contexts.

#### Consumer Responses to Product Form

Product form determines *every manifestation* of the product. Consumer evaluations of,

responses to products influenced by the quality and the nature of the form: like and dislike, its perceived usefulness, utility, enjoyment of its use, communicative and expressive power.

Products that have very powerful design *properties not only fulfil the functions for which they were intended*, they also possess an aesthetic and societal dimension that builds up entirely new relations between themselves and their users. These products with extremely strong design characteristics are labelled as societal innovations by Cova & Swanfelt (1993). "A societal innovation should be understood as the process by which new meanings are introduced into the social system. Although these innovations may seem like lucky accidents, ... that there is a design process that leads to such discontinuous innovations." (Cova, 1996, p. 32).

#### Utility, Usefulness

A given form contributes to the fulfilment of the product's purpose. It determines whether this purpose is fulfilled in a comfortable and efficient way, whether it advances the quality of the users' life. (Margolin & Buchanan, 1996).

#### Experience, Enjoyment of Use

Product form determines the *quality and nature* of fulfilling a given purpose, it is capable of creating enjoyable activities, sensual pleasure, aesthetic experience. (Richins 1994a; Holbrook & Hirschman 1982).

"For weeks I've been playing with an Olivetti tabletop calculator (Divisuma 18; design by: Mario Bellini) ..., something unusual took place that had not occurred to me until now. I played around with it and found, to my surprise, *that handling the thing was not bound to its function, that it was free from any goals*. The instrument had tangible weight, plasticity, and an extraordinary haptic quality, *which functioned sensually with no hidden agenda but merely as a material body that "serves" playfully*. I recall the slight pressure of sensitive, warm skin on tangible, rubber-covered keys and buttons, which offered a slight resistance; then the apparatus made a delayed and attractive clicking noise, without causing any dismay and which was similar to the spontaneous pressure that produces playful rhythmic patterns on a percussion instrument." (Selle, 1996, p. 241)

#### Communicative Power, Expression

Objects fulfil an important role in the expression and symbolization of personal roles and influencing personal relations. Most products hold messages that are meaningful to a particular group, and that *its owner wants to communicate about him- or herself (public meaning)* (Richins 1994b). Furthermore, objects are assimilated into personal, private lives and are given symbolic meanings as expressions of the order of private experiences. Objects

take on symbolic value, *private meanings with reference to one's own personal history* (Csíkszentmihályi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

## **Empirical Research**

### Context and Background of the Research

Underlying research is being executed in Hungary. As a result of changes in the economic conditions and the society, therefore, ways of living, consumption itself, acquiring, possessing material things has become especially important. The general availability of all sought goods on the one hand, and the increased importance of their expressive power from the other explains current strong general attentiveness and sensitivity to material objects and their quality of design and form in Hungary.

### Applied Research Objects: Mobile Phones

The objects that are investigated are mobile telephones that became increasingly popular and wide spread among a wide range of groups. Within the past four years the number of subscribers of mobile telephone services has increased sevenfold. This year the number of subscribers has exceeded 1 million (close to 10 % of the population). Service providers estimate 15-16 % further increase for the coming year. It is mainly entrepreneurs and company owners (29 %), highly educated employees (17,2 %), but the portion of students among mobile phone owners is also surprisingly high (10 %).

### Insights from a Preliminary Research

A preliminary qualitative research was conducted for exploring the existence of the above described product form related consumer responses and further investigating their contents. The research was conducted among third year university students, for whom it was part of their course requirements (Marketing Principles) to participate in the research.

368 third year students participated in the research of which 33 % own and 67 % do not own a mobile telephone. Special about the students of the university of economic sciences as respondents is that they are to fill in managerial positions, become decision makers, even

opinion leaders in the near future, of which they are already aware of, behave and hold attitudes accordingly already. This special position is reflected in the responses.

In the preliminary qualitative research sentence completion technique was used. Uncompleted sentences related to respondents' view about the utility, usefulness; experience, enjoyment of use and communicative power of mobile telephones. Below a summary of the major insights of the qualitative study is given. The relating uncompleted sentences are included and the most characteristic answers are quoted for illustration.

As a result of the circumstances of the research in the case of each question some respondents (10-15 %) gave rejecting answers expressing their unwillingness and objection to their participation in the research. However, even these responses were most of the time meaningful and possible to interpret.

#### Utility, Usefulness

Sentences for completion: "*Having a mobile telephone means ...; A typical mobile telephone is ...; A mobile telephone is practical / useful if ...*"

For owners, the mobile telephone is a natural everyday communication tool, that serves the efficiency and convenience of their lives. In the answers of non-owners a narrower interpretation of a mobile telephone's function is reflected: according to them a mobile telephone is and / or should be a tool *for work*. According to them, those who own a mobile telephone

"may not use it in an appropriate way; may be rude or foul; either needs or uses it for showing off; envy them."

Non-owners describing the utility, function of a mobile telephone already express their views on its expressive power.

In describing a typical mobile telephone owners mention good operation, primary parts or primary functions of the telephone. Non-owners are more concerned with aspects that are externally perceptible like

"the style of ringing; moderate or striking appearance"

However, majority of respondents both owners and non-owners expressed their perception of a typical telephone as being small in size, which underlines their expectation of form to serve usage, carrying, being delicate and easy to hide, but size is also an aspect that communicates

about the telephone and its user.

#### Experience, Enjoyment of Use

Sentences for completion: “*A mobile telephone is entertaining, because ...; A mobile telephone is enjoyable, because ...*”

When explaining why a mobile telephone is enjoyable respondents explain *additional supplementary and not primary functions*. Owners mention games provided by the telephone and possibilities of sending SMS’, while non-owners mention the possibilities and enjoyment of keeping contacts with friends and others. In the case of non-owners this is a supplementary function as they already expressed that a mobile is characteristically necessary for work, otherwise unnecessary. It is also very important to note that both groups mentioned the experience of touching, pushing the bottoms of the telephone as a source of entertainment, as a source of sensory experience that quality of product form, design makes possible.

#### Communicative Power, Expression

Sentences for completion: “*A mobile telephone tells about its users ...; A mobile telephone dresses its user by ...*”

Both groups admit the potential of a mobile telephone to communicate about its user. Owners are more neutral in their attributions

“... visible; ... not visible”

Non-owners give more emotional responses

“... matches appearance; ... influences behavior”

Many of the respondents however do not admit *directly* the communicative characteristic of the mobile telephone.

The list of uncompleted phrases contained two more sentences, that further elicited what the mobile telephone means to the owner or potential owner *himself or herself* and contained strong and unambiguous product form related implications – expectations and requirements.

The uncompleted sentence “*Someone without a mobile telephone is like...*” shows owners and non-owners ultimate concern of mobile telephones’ meanings to themselves.

One third of respondents, both owners and non-owners (30-35 %) gave neutral answers

"... a person without a mobile telephone"

Nevertheless, rest of the respondents gave associating responses that characteristically covered some kind of relations, connections between different kinds of things.

1. Matching things. Respondents mentioned things that are closely related, belong to each other implying that the mobile telephone is a possession that is close to its owner, and is also close to the body. Respondents admitted that the telephone and its user strongly relate and interact. Here non-owners more strongly acknowledged that the mobile telephone is a tool that belongs to people in everyday life.

"... dishes without salt<sup>1</sup>; ... goat without cabbage<sup>2</sup>, ... coat without buttons"

2. All respondents, owners with more notable emphasis, expressed the feeling of dependence, lack of connection, sense of deprivation being without the mobile telephone. The need of control, keeping contacts, and its enjoyment comes through these answers.

"... being in a dark room; ... hitchhiking at night"  
"... snail without house; ... fish out of water"

3. A group of respondents even more strongly expressed their sense of the mobile telephone close to themselves, their body. Not having the mobile telephone implies the feeling that there is something missing from the owner, experiencing the lack of certain personal capabilities. These associations further underline the *user - possession relatedness and their interaction*.

"... without hands and ears; ... bird without wings"  
"... horse without saddle; ... sailor without compass; ... conductor without baton"  
"... one handed giant; ... soldier without guns; ... blind person without white stick"

4. Lack of the mobile telephone is associated by backwardness and lag. Both owners and non-owners acknowledge the mobile telephone as a sign and tool of being up-to-date.

"... conservative old man; ... like in 1990; ... 100 years before; ... ancient man without a hairdryer<sup>3</sup>"

5. Especially non-owners also explain the lack of mobile telephone as a consequence of not

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<sup>1</sup> reoccurring motive in Hungarian folk tales

<sup>2</sup> common Hungarian folkloristic motive

<sup>3</sup> This is one example of objecting to the participation in the research, still indicates respondent's direction of association.

being in a hurry and living in peace.

6. Not having a mobile is only associated with freedom and being unbounded only by non-owners.

"... little red ridding hood without wolf; ... cattle without bell; ... dog without lead/lash; ... a person having private life"

7. In many of their answers non-owners hold a two-sided perspective and admit the necessity of mobile telephone on the one hand, but indicate circumstances (e.g. plain reasons of fashion, wanting to be hip) where it is not at all necessary, but could be nice to have at the same time.

"... depends on, a person without a cap in the winter, it would be better having a cap"

"... depends on the importance, lack of one hand in case it is important, otherwise not"

Responses to the uncompleted sentence, "*The future mobile telephone will be...*" also further underlines users' and potential users' direct feeling, sense of the impact and importance of a mobile telephone's form.

1. Respondents anticipate continuous functional development and the increase of existing functions in the future as well as the application of more advanced and state-of-the-art technology.

2. Respondents look for further development in size and form, so that the future mobile telephone will become more closer to the body, which will more facilitate use and wear, increasingly being moderate and modest.

"... like a headphone; ... suitable at the smallest locations; ... like a watch; ... like a matchbox"

3. Respondents also imagine that future mobile telephones will increase human capabilities, will be less visible, more moderate, and very close to the owner's body. The object, the telephone itself may disappear, it will increase personal communicational abilities, multiply users' senses. These responses further underline users' concern about form. Both owners and non-owners admit and accept mobile telephones as being a very close, even intimate device, that of course have to achieve a good harmony with the holder, which involves several form

related requirements.

"... will be built in your head; ... understands speech...; ... will have no button, ... telepathy without button; ... unrecognizable"

4. Especially non-owners expect future mobile telephones without having to occupy users' hands. This latter characteristic is an abstract design content element that designers could directly consider in the planning process.

"... as if it was not with me; ... it won't occupy the hands during use; ... don't have to use, still being able to communicate; ... does not have to be touched; ... will be built in"

5. Characteristically non-owners anticipate that future mobile telephones will become even more nicer, even aesthetic and better designed.

"like a Mackintosh"

6. Non-owners also consider that future mobile telephones will be less disturbing for external observers, for those who do not participate the actual conversations.

### Preliminary Conclusions

All the above insights suggest that in the *case of mobile telephones form plays a crucial role* for owners and non-owners in the formation of choices, but also product related responses such as the quality of the experience of use, expression, communication about oneself to others, but also to the user himself or herself as well. From several perspectives in their answers both owners and non-owners have indicated their preferences *of a modest and delicate, but at the same time state-of-the-art form, which was not a representation of a status symbol*. Respondents admitting that the telephone is a very close, might even be built in the users, involves very strong user concern and high consumer expectations of mobile telephones' form.

In the case of mobile telephones' form, especially appearance communicates to users, forms expectations (even by such characteristics as size, external color and shape) and even the experience of use. Users and especially non-users draw conclusions upon form about functionality and even aesthetics of use.

Mobile telephones on the other hand can serve as a handy gadget that can be a sign of personal excellence, achievement or sophisticated taste, but also a tool for someone himself or herself having his/her own choice of being or not being alone, being reachable.

### Consecutive Research

A mail survey research will be conducted among mobile telephone service subscribers, users of pre-selected models therefore ensuring to record consumer responses in the context of use. For those respondents who return the questionnaire, optional prizes - one of four state-of-the-art models – will be offered according to their choices.

Choice, evaluation criteria that is provided to research subjects in present research will be predetermined by practising design experts. All models of mobile phones used in the research - used by owners and offered as prizes - are described by experts on the dimensions of prototypicality and unity. "Predetermined standards of value agreed upon by experts provide an 'informed judgement' of the aesthetic worth of a stimulus. Subjects' judgements of the stimulus along various dimensions are then rated as more or less relevant with these expert opinions as *benchmarks*." (Bamossi et. al, 1983, p. 686).

Consumers' responses, like and dislike, evaluation of utility and usefulness, experience and enjoyment of use (Spangenberg, Voss and Crowley, 1997), expressive characteristics (Richins, 1994b) are recorded in the case of the model used and chosen as a prize. Consumer characteristics materialism (Richins & Dawson 1992; Price & Ridgway 1983), processing styles (Childers, et al., 1982) and relevant demographic characteristics are also recorded.

### **Contribution of the Research**

Current research builds on a definition of industrial design which not only considers product form as determinant of product appearance as a decisive element of choice but, but extends the investigation of design, product form to the context of use. Contrary to previous research in present research real, existing products are used for the assessment of consumer responses. Responses in the context of use and choice are recorded and compared. The concept of materialism is applied in an Eastern European setting, with relation to responses to a very popular object: mobile telephones.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Building on the theory of industrial design it is important to investigate the impact of product of form not only in the context of choice, but also in the context of use as well. Responses to product form not only derive from the aspects of product appearance, but also from the consequences of the way form and appearance influence the usage experience. Using the proposed conceptual framework in the case of other groups of products, in other cultural environment would provide further insights how product form does influence, how it communicates to and about users.

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