

Press Release

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Volvo Cars' World-first Experiment Reveals Emotive Power of Car Design

Research shows car design aligned with most basic human emotions

ROCKLEIGH, N.J. (Nov. 28, 2013) – The first scientific experiment of its kind has revealed beautiful car design can tangibly evoke a powerful range of feelings on par with the most basic human emotions. The scientific experiment, conducted by Volvo Car Group (Volvo Cars) in collaboration with EEG specialists Myndplay, tested respondents to analyze how the brain reacts emotionally to car design and how design aesthetics actually make us feel.

EEG is the recording of electrical activity along the scalp and measures voltage fluctuations resulting from ionic current flows within the neurons of the brain. The experiment proved humans react emotionally to the shape of a car, with men in particular seeming almost genetically programmed to like sleek design with beautiful lines.

The experiment was conducted to coincide with the launch of the Volvo Concept Coupé, the first expressive interpretation of Volvo's new design strategy aimed at building a more emotive connection with the brand. Participants were asked to rate a series of images while wearing a dry sensor EEG headset that measured brainwave activity in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain. The images included the new Volvo Concept Coupé alongside perceived 'bad' and 'outdated' car design, visuals of happy, crying babies, as well as men and women considered to be 'beautiful.' Thomas Ingenlath, senior vice president design at Volvo Cars, said: "This survey finally proves what we've always suspected. Beautiful car design can elicit strong emotional responses ranging from a positive frame of mind to a sense of empowerment."

- Men experienced more emotion while looking at images of beautiful car design than they did while looking at an image of a crying child
- Women displayed an emotional intensity to the picture of a crying baby at a level almost double that of male participants
- Men claimed good design made them feel positive (74 percent)
- Few women rated images of car design higher than an image of an attractive man (33 percent)
- Sixty percent of men claimed driving a beautiful car makes them feel confident and empowered.

Dr. David Lewis, a United Kingdom leader in the neuroscience of consumerism and communications, stated: "Appreciating an aesthetically pleasing design is an experience which combines understanding and emotions. These are so closely intertwined that it is impossible to distinguish between them. Aesthetic experience involves a unity of sensuous delight, meaningful interpretation, and emotional involvement."

A parallel survey conducted by OnePoll revealed 43 percent of men said they found the car shape and design to be the most appealing aspect—over the interior, gadgets, wheels and engine. The front of the car was the most attractive feature for men, in contrast to women for whom the rear of the car scored highest.

The only image to which both men and women shared the same reaction was that of a crying baby. Both sexes expressed the highest emotional intensity and the highest negative score of all images. Women displayed the most emotional response to the crying baby, whereas men demonstrated more emotion looking at pictures of beautiful car design than to the distressed child.

Visit www.EmotionOfDesign.com to explore the Volvo Concept Coupé in 3D and create your own personalized heat map.

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The survey of 2,000 respondents was conducted by [OnePoll](#).

The Volvo “Emotion of Design” study was designed to measure the emotional response of subjects while watching a series of images. To measure the emotional response of participants, a single dry electrode MyndPlay EEG headset, was placed on FpZ (middle of forehead) and Fp1 (left prefrontal forehead) to measure activation in the left prefrontal cortex.

The experiment was specifically looking for activation and spikes in the Beta and Gamma frequencies. The experiment used existing attention and meditation algorithms and user-generated scores to cross-reference the results. Participants were asked to rate how they felt about each image immediately after being shown the visual.

A picture of a smiling baby was included within the experiment to gauge emotional response to known positive emotional stimulus. To assess how subjects respond to old design in comparison with new design, images of a 30-year-old car was also included. A blank image was added to normalize and measure baseline.

During a follow-up study, further known positive stimulus was used to measure arousal response. For the purposes of validating arousal, ECG monitors were used during the second experiment to measure any increase in heart rate for specific images.

The data was cross referenced and analyzed against previous experiments to calibrate and substantiate the results and findings.

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