

Ecodesign in the Era of Symbolic Consumption

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Abstract

When dealing with environmental issues, society tends to focus either on the innovation of green technologies or on promoting sustainable behavior. This either/or approach is problematic. First, if designers ignore the potential influences of the product on the users' behaviors in the design process, it will lead to the "rebound effect" which may even offset the environmental merit of the technologies by "backfiring." Second, many products are disposed of not for their "material form of defect", but for its "immaterial form of defect." As this happens, it does not matter how "green" a product is. This situation becomes more serious in the era of symbolic consumption, because goods are consumed mainly as a symbol. For these reasons, this paper proposes an integrated "both/and" approach to ecodesign, in which the relation between humans and products takes center stage, instead of focusing only on humans or products.

Keywords: ecodesign, symbolic consumption, green technology, sustainable behavior, sustainability.