

**Re: Initial Post**

by [Ruben Marques](#) - Monday, 8 December 2025, 7:02 PM

I agree with your analysis. You have captured pretty well the paper from Gu et al. (2023, in the sense that while a product's "halo" (aesthetics) might be a main driving factor for the user initially, that influence inevitably decays, leaving functionality as the primary driver of user satisfaction over time.

And as you also wrote, the "novelty" wears off, and the user's priority shifts from "how does it look?" to "does it actually work?", which definitely shows us that aesthetics can be valuable, yet they hold lower long-term weight than usability.

To add a layer to your point about the "halo" being a source of bias: research by Lindgaard et al. (2006) shows just how fast that bias forms, since users judge visual appeal in as little as 50 milliseconds. For me, this suggests that aesthetics act as the gatekeeper (getting the user to engage), whereas functionality acts as the anchor (getting the user to stay).

So, while we definitely need the time to measure true usability, perhaps we should also view the initial aesthetic phase not just as being inaccurate, but simply as a different, shorter-lived stage of the lifecycle?

Do you think companies these days may sometimes prioritize that initial "50-millisecond" aesthetic impact over long-term functionality simply because it is easier to sell, even if it hurts the user experience later on? In your personal experience, have you ever chosen one system instead of another that may have had the exact same functionality, yet different aesthetic?

References

Gu, Q., Tang, W. and Xue, C. (2023) 'The Effect of Time Lapse on the Halo Effect in the Subjective Evaluation of Digital Interfaces', *Design, User Experience, and Usability*, pp. 171–183.

Lindgaard, G., Fernandes, G., Dudek, C. and Brown, J. (2006) 'Attention web designers: You have 50 ms to make a good first impression!', *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 25(2), pp. 115–126.

Sonderegger, A., Zbinden G., Uebelbacher, A. and Sauer, J. (2012) 'The influence of product aesthetics and usability over the course of time: a longitudinal field experiment', *Ergonomics*, 55(7), pp. 713-730.

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by [Ben Blakemore](#) - Thursday, 8 January 2026, 6:26 PM

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