

# **Examining the Impact of Assimilation-Contrast Effects and Product Semantics on Consumer Behavior When Marketing Challenges Pre-Existing Product Perceptions**

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## **Abstract**

In the ever-evolving landscape of changing consumer behaviour, marketers need to understand the psychological mechanisms prevailing in consumer behavior that lead to certain purchasing decisions in an attempt to challenge them. The present study shows how assimilation-contrast effects have come into play in the way product semantics influences consumer behavior. Minor deviations of product presentations are part of what the consumer expects (assimilation), and sharp ones induce contrast, even to the point of rejection, in accordance with assimilation-contrast theory. These augmentations to product semantics, or the symbolic attributes that are built into products with design and presentation, will influence much more consumer understanding and emotional responses.

Using these two effects in a mixed-method approach with quantitative surveys and qualitative sheets, the research aims to bring out some market findings into how marketers can ride the thin line between innovation and tradition. Major findings indicate that the locus of assimilation was consumer trust and preference while contrast had effect within situational appeal, especially with novelty and attention. Most importantly, it highlights the very critical aspects of product aesthetics, branding, and contextual placement in reshaping consumer perceptions and engaging them better. The lesson learned will set the stage for further innovation by businesses without separating themselves from their customers in a competitive marketplace.

## **I. Introduction**

At the core of effective marketing is behavioral insight — particularly in cases where companies market products that challenge established beliefs about a brand or a category. Think of a traditional coffee company releasing an unlikely cold brew energy drink. And will consumers accept this innovation or reject it? This type of decision-making may be influenced by two

psychological effects: assimilation-contrast effects and product semantics.

A relevant theoretical framework here is the assimilation-contrast theory. Assimilation happens when a product integrates sufficiently with consumer expectations such that differences are negligible and is thus accepted. Small deviations from pre-existing perceptions