

The Role of Product Page Presentations in Sparking Consumer Engagement: Designing Outdoor Apparel Brands for USA

Jacob D. Hartsfield,

Oklahoma University,

USA

Email: hartfield@gmail.com

Received	Accepted	Published
02.12.2025	24.02.2026	28.02.2026

Abstract

As online shopping becomes more immersive, retailers must move beyond static product presentations to inspire consumer engagement. Traditionally, consumers formed impressions through multisensory experiences, whereas e-commerce often is dependent on minimal visual cues. This study treats online shoppers as active interpreters,

It employs Guilford's Divergent Thinking Theory to examine and analyze how product page format (lifestyle vs. interactive visualization) stimulates creative thinking. Using a within-subjects experimental design, participants (N=10) viewed product pages from companies Arc'teryx and Oakley and completed sketch tasks and alternative uses tests during November 2025.

The results indicate that there was no statistically significant difference in divergent thinking performance between the two brand presentations, suggesting a "threshold effect" for media richness. However, a significant discrepancy was found between self-reported creativity and expert evaluation, highlighting an "illusion of competence" among the consumers.

Keywords: Outdoor Gear, Divergent thinking, Media richness, E-commerce, Consumer creativities.

Introduction

As online shopping becomes more immersive and competitive, retailers face the challenge of creating product pages that do more than simply present product information. Instead, they must inspire consumer engagement and help shoppers mentally connect with the product. Historically, consumers formed impressions through multisensory experience seeing, touching, and imagining product use, which supported rich mental imagery and imaginative engagement (Hertenstein & Keltner, 2006). In contrast, traditional e-commerce product pages typically rely on static, white-background images and brief descriptions. Such minimal designs often fail to reduce cognitive load, spark divergent thinking, or convey a product's functional performance and lifestyle relevance (Scayle, 2024; Mittal, 2021).

This issue is particularly significant for outdoor gear, where purchase decisions often depend on perceptions of performance, functionality, and real-world application. Without the ability to physically interact with gear, consumers must rely entirely on digital representations to simulate use scenarios. Well-designed product pages that incorporate lifestyle imagery or

narrative storytelling have the potential to reduce uncertainty, stimulate mental simulation, and encourage consumers to engage in more flexible, open-ended thinking about product use and intent (Escalas, 2004).

Grounded in Guilford's (1967) Divergent Thinking Theory, this study treats online shoppers as active, creative interpreters, examining how product page format (lifestyle imagery vs. interactive storytelling) stimulates creative thinking and how individual baseline creativity moderates these effects.

In this context, this study examines the role of product page presentation in sparking consumer Engagement in outdoor apparel brands in the USA. Its aim is to further deepen theoretical understanding of how digital interfaces and the design of them influence the cognitive mechanisms of consumer creativity and imaginative engagement within the outdoor industry. Its specific objectives are:

- To ascertain the difference in consumers' divergent thinking performance (verbal and visual) after exposure to lifestyle imagery-based product pages versus interactive visualization-based product pages.
- To identify the relationship between product page richness and consumers' self-reported mental imagery vividness and imaginative engagement.
- To evaluate the moderating role of consumers' baseline creativity on the relationship between product page format and divergent thinking performance.
- To incorporate the findings into evidence-based strategies for digital retailers to enhance product page design.

Theoretical Framework

This study deals with a number of significant theoretical ideas such as creativity, media, thinking, product design, imagination and consumer engagement among others. Hence, it draws on Divergent Thinking Theory (Guilford, 1967) and Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) to examine how outdoor gear product pages can stimulate consumers' imagination and creativity.

Divergent Thinking Theory

Divergent Thinking Theory (Guilford, 1967) emphasizes the ability to generate multiple, varied, and original responses to a single prompt. Creativity is defined here through four dimensions: fluency (number of ideas), originality (novelty of ideas), flexibility (variety of categories), and elaboration (detail in ideas).

In this study, creativity will be measured directly using two established divergent thinking tasks. The Alternative Uses Test (AUT) captures verbal divergent thinking by asking participants to generate alternative uses for a common outdoor product (e.g., jacket or backpack), with responses scored for fluency, originality, and flexibility. The figural creativity task (adapted from the TTCT) will help to capture visual divergent thinking by having participants generate their own original design sketches. Each participant's design will then be scored for fluency, originality, elaboration, and flexibility.

By applying these measures, the study helps move beyond perception-based consumer research to directly evaluate divergent thinking performance in consumer responses to outdoor apparel product page stimuli, with a specific focus on functional and performance-oriented soft goods.

Media Richness and Creative Stimulation

Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) proposes that communication channels vary in their ability to transmit rich information through multiple cues, contextual detail, and emotional resonance. Richer channels reduce uncertainty, enhance message comprehension, and promote more vivid mental simulation. In digital retail, product pages act as a central communication interface between brand and consumer. Pages that integrate lifestyle imagery, narrative storytelling, or interactive visualization can be classified as high in media richness because they provide more cues and facilitate imaginative engagement with the product

(Wesierski, n.d.). In the context of research, this theory provides the lens through which the varying levels of digital product presentation will be analyzed.

Integrated Model

By integrating Divergent Thinking Theory and Media Richness Theory, this study examines whether richer product page presentations stimulate a broader range of mental imagery and engagement, ultimately enhancing participants' divergent thinking performance. Guo et al. (2025) illustrate how richness within information can create great impact on purchase intention through the effects of cognitive load, mental imagery, and the overall flow and fluidity of the experience, in this case the relationship the consumer creates with both companies' product pages.

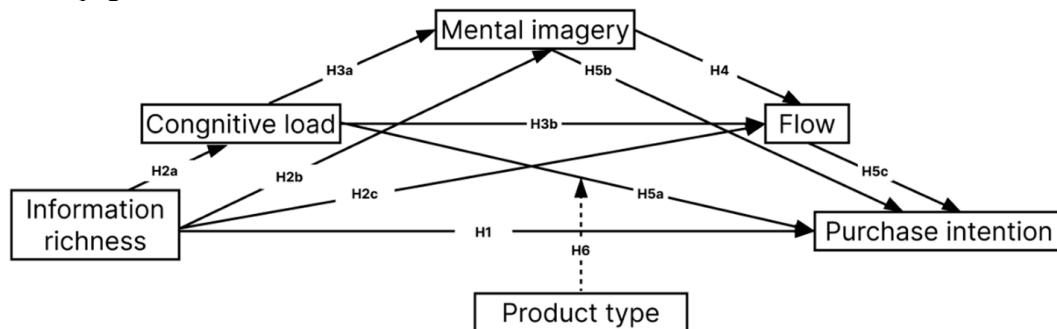


Fig. 1: Conceptual Model of Information Richness, Cognitive Load, Mental Imagery, and Flow Experience (Guo, Zhao, Zhang, Lu, Feng, & Xia, 2025)

Literature Review

The Literature Review section focuses on the exploration of prior research in relation to media richness, mental imagery, and the consumers' creativity within digital retail contexts. Altogether, these studies help form the foundation for understanding how product page design can help to persuade and influence consumers creative engagement and divergent thinking performance.

Media Richness and Communication Effectiveness.

Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) posits that communication channels differ in their ability to convey rich, nuanced information. Richer channels such as those that allow multiple cues, personalization, and immediate feedback, reduce ambiguity and enhance message comprehension. Within digital retail, product pages act as a primary communication channel between brand and consumer.

Simon and Peppas (2005) apply Media Richness Theory to product website design, concluding that richer communication channels help reduce consumer uncertainty and improve understanding of product features. This is particularly important for performance-based products, such as outdoor gear and apparel, where consumers must assess technical quality without physically handling the product. Immersive product pages that incorporate lifestyle imagery, interactive features, and contextual storytelling can increase mental stimulation, build confidence in product performance, and strengthen purchase intentions.

Maity, Dass, and Kumar (2018) argue that consumer choices rely on information sourced from diverse media environments. They suggest that media provides information within rich environments implementing video and audio, or lean environments relying solely on text. The authors further suggest that the medium between both rich and lean media is likely to increase as marketers adopt augmented and virtual reality to engage with target markets. Maity, Dass, and Kumar (2018) further find that improved media richness decreases search costs and broadens the consumers' overall choice options. Prior to the digital age, media richness was in terms of the ability of the information to further change the understanding of

the consumer within a specific time frame (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Not until recently had this concept been further set with more objective based characteristics such as feedback, variety within language, and personal focus which further helps to determine the mediums' overall ability to communicate richness.

Chao et al. (2020) examine how media richness within computer-mediated communication influences creativity in graduate students. The authors find that computer-mediated communication (CMC) deeply supports graduate students' overall creative thinking by allowing the students to generate, exchange, and refine their ideas asynchronously. Chao et al. indicate that computer-mediated communication (CMC) supports creativity specifically through the great flexibility within the realm of digital communication. When graduate students can interact solely through digital platforms, their ability to revisit messages and analyze alternative perspectives allows for deeper consideration. This lens of a slower, more reiterative cycle helps the graduate students generate more intuitive and thoughtful ideas, rather than statically reacting in a quick-paced manner as they might in a face-to-face discussion.

Mental Imagery and Product Evaluation

Mental imagery is a crucial cognitive process in which consumers mentally simulate a product's use and outcomes. Jeong and Yeu (2023) find that contextual background in product imagery significantly enhances mental imagery, which in turn increases review helpfulness and leads to more favorable product evaluations. Their results highlight the value of the inclusion of rich, realistic visual elements on product pages, suggesting that even subtle contextual cues can trigger mental simulation and deepen engagement.

Similarly, Huang and Ha (2021) examine consumers' cognitive processing of retail brands' Instagram content and confirm the mediating role of mental imagery between visual message fluency and brand attitude. They also identified a moderating effect of need for cognition, indicating that individuals who enjoy effortful thinking respond even more strongly to imagery-rich content. This finding parallels the present study's interest in baseline creativity as a potential moderator, suggesting that individual differences may amplify the benefits of rich product page design.

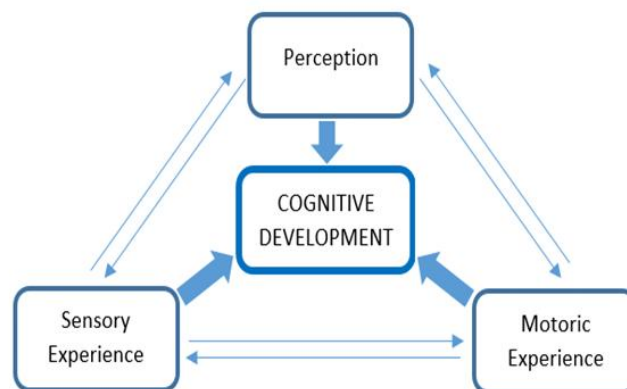


Fig. 2: Embodied Cognition Theory: The Interplay Among Perception, Sensory, and Motoric Experiences
Source: Putrawangsa & Hasanah, 2020

An extension of mental imagery research can also be found within Embodied Cognition Theory (Figure 2). At its core, this theory suggests that the body actively shapes cognitive processes (Barsalou, 2008). Rather than treating perception as a purely visual or symbolic activity, embodied cognition suggests that consumers mentally simulate their interaction with objects using representations grounded in real-world physical experience. As experiences unfold, the brain encodes sensory input across multiple modalities and integrates them into a coherent multimodal representation stored in memory. Within digital retail contexts, this theory

implies that visual information on product pages, such as imagery that communicates surface texture, material composition, or performance context, can activate tactile expectations, including softness, warmth, abrasion resistance, or waterproofing. Such visual-haptic indicators enable consumers to form impressions of product quality even in the absence of physical touch.

Design Thinking & User-Centered Experience

Design thinking emphasizes empathizing with users and designing experiences that address their evolving needs. Rahman and Musa (2024) show that businesses adopting design thinking principles during COVID-19 successfully enhanced customer experience, satisfaction, and loyalty. Their findings underscore the importance of continuously optimizing digital touchpoints, including product pages, to meet consumer expectations and foster deeper engagement.

Cyr, Head, and Ivanov (2006) examine the role of aesthetics within design of mobile commerce content. The authors find that visual design aesthetics significantly impact perceived usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment. They argue that these aesthetic features ultimately impact users' loyalty intentions, suggesting that the "pleasant or unpleasant component" of the experience is just as critical as utility within digital interfaces. Similarly, Ganguly et al. (2010) investigate the relationship between website design and intention of purchase within e-commerce. They theorize that trust acts as the general mechanism for website design that then influences purchase intention. They theorize design elements specifically being information, visual fluidity, and navigation design as the "soft attributes" that help deal with social and relational aspects such as care and warmth. Authors find that these characteristics help generate trust, which in return helps to reduce the perceived risk for that first time customer and creates an incentive to purchase.

Ganguly et al. (2010) further establish that cultural values are also an influential factor within this relationship, indicating that tailoring to your target markets overall culture orientation will also build this trust within the customer.

Applying these principles to e-commerce, product page design can be seen as an opportunity to actively shape consumer perception, encourage exploration, and imaginative thinking. Well-crafted pages can go beyond static product information to deliver emotionally resonant and cognitively stimulating experiences, which are associated closely with the goal of this study.

Synthesis and Research Gap

Smith et al. (2008) define the concept of divergence in terms of the degree to which a message containing new, unusual, or surprising interactive elements, widely known as the core characteristic of creativity within advertising. Guilford (1967) frames divergence as an important dimension of creativity. Yang and Smith (2009) demonstrate that ads with high divergence further help to capture consumer attention, stimulate curiosity, and create more favorable cognitive responses to the product.

Despite the importance of divergence, the concept sees little conceptual development in advertising literature, and limited research considers divergence within the context of digital product page design. The current study addresses this gap by testing whether product pages that incorporate divergent, creativity-stimulating elements (e.g., lifestyle imagery or interactive tools) can enhance consumers' divergent thinking performance, thereby extending divergence research into the domain of online retail and the digital realm.

Research Methodology

To address the research question outlined above, this study employs a pilot experimental design that exposes participants to two distinct product page formats from outdoor apparel brands and then measures their creative output through validated divergent thinking tasks. The methodology is designed to evaluate how lifestyle imagery and interactive visualization influence consumers' ability to generate original ideas, as well as to examine how

individual differences in baseline creativity interact with product page exposure. The following subsections describe the research design, participants, procedures, measures, and planned analyses in detail.

Research Design

This study uses a within-subjects, experimental design to investigate how product page presentation influences consumer creativity and imaginative engagement. Participants will view two product pages from well-known outdoor brands that differ in presentation style:

- Arc'teryx Product Page: features lifestyle imagery highlighting products in real-world outdoor use.
- Oakley Product Page: features an interactive “lens view” tool that allows participants to simulate ski runs through different lenses.

Following exposure, participants will complete two creativity assessments to measure personal divergent thinking performance.

Participants

A total of 10–20 adult participants (aged 18–45) will be recruited through social media, peer networks, and personal contacts. Inclusion criteria includes being U.S.-based, fluent in English, and having an interest in outdoor activities and the gear used for those activities. Participants will be asked whether they currently work in the outdoor industry; however, this is not a required criterion. Participation is entirely voluntary, with informed consent being obtained digitally before beginning the study & data collection.

Procedure

The study will be conducted entirely online using a secure survey platform (Qualtrics). Participants will complete the following steps:

1. Participant Information & Consent: Participants review the consent form and confirm eligibility through pre-screening.
2. Product Page Exposure: Participants view the two outdoor brand product pages (Arc'teryx and Oakley) for a combined 2–3 minutes.
3. Creativity Tasks:
 - Sketch Task: Participants design an outdoor jacket or gear item, incorporating prompts such as logo placement, stitching, and design features (5–10 minutes).
 - Alternative Uses Test (AUT): Participants list as many alternative uses for the item as possible (5 minutes), focusing on creative applications or reimagining its functions.
4. Post-Task Questionnaire: Participants complete a brief survey rating mental imagery vividness, perceived richness of the product pages, and purchase intention.

The overall total estimated time commitment per participant is approximately 20–25 minutes.

Measures

Independent Variable:

- Product page format (lifestyle imagery vs. interactive visualization).

Dependent Variables:

Divergent Thinking (Creativity):

- Measured through the quantity and originality of ideas generated in the AUT and the novelty/complexity of sketches.

Imaginative Engagement:

- Measured through self-reported mental imagery vividness.

Control Measures:

- Demographic information (age, gender, shopping habits) is collected for descriptive purposes but not used to identify participants.

Data Collection

- Platform: The study will be conducted online using Qualtrics.
- Exposure: Participants will view both product pages (Arc'teryx and Oakley) in the same session meaning the use of a within-subjects design.
- Order: Each participant sees both pages in a set order.
- Tasks: After exposure, participants complete two creativity assessments — the sketch task and the Alternative Uses Test (AUT) all within the same Qualtrics session.
- Time: Total participation time is about 20–25 minutes.
- Recruitment: Participants are recruited through personal networks/social media and complete the study voluntarily.
- Confidentiality: No identifying information is collected beyond what is needed to distribute the study link, and data are stored securely.

Data Analysis

Creativity task responses will be scored using standard divergent thinking metrics: Fluency (Number of Ideas), Originality (Novelty of ideas), Flexibility (Variety of categories), and Elaboration (Level of detail). AUT responses will be coded and analyzed quantitatively, while the sketches will be rated within the same dimensions. Descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests will also be conducted to help further compare creativity outcomes across the product pages' conditions. The correlations will also be analyzed using baseline creativity and the overall task performance of the participants.

Ethical Considerations & IRB Approval

The current study involves slight risk to the participants. All the procedures are reviewed and submitted to the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The study is classified as social/behavioral research involving adults ages 18-45 and will be conducted entirely online through Qualtrics.

Participation is always voluntary, and all the participants completed a digital participation Information & Consent Form before starting the study. The consent process clearly states that the participant can decline to answer any question or remove themselves at any time without penalty. There was no identifying information collected beyond the optional contact details for survey distribution, remaining confidential. The data was collected anonymously and stored on a secure password protected computer, only accessible to the research team. No names or personal identifiers are linked to creativity task responses, and results are reported in aggregate form. Any unexpected issues or adverse events have been documented and reported to the IRB in accordance with university policy.

Case Studies

This study examines two distinct examples of media richness in outdoor apparel. Arc'teryx.com (2025) product pages employ a high-end aesthetic characterized by minimalist design, clear product photography, and precise attention to detail that highlights technical craftsmanship. Many pages feature clean gear photos on neutral backgrounds to showcase materials and construction, while others integrate the product with natural textures such as rocks or mountain imagery. This blending of technical clarity with subtle lifestyle context creates aspirational relevance for consumers, helping them imagine both the performance and the aesthetic fit of the product in authentic outdoor environments.

Oakley.com (2025) product pages, in contrast, emphasize interactivity through a “lens view” tool for their ski goggles. When shopping, consumers can virtually compare lens options, simulating how a ski run would look through different lenses. This feature supports consumers in evaluating clarity, color contrast, and overall visual performance, making the selection process more immersive, personalized, and cognitively engaging.

These two-page types were chosen because they represent contrasting approaches to rich product presentation within the outdoor industry. Arc'teryx leans on high-end aesthetics and lifestyle storytelling, and Oakley offers immersive product visualization tied directly to decision-making. Together, they provide an opportunity to analyze how different forms of media richness influence consumer creativity, mental imagery, and divergent thinking performance. All product pages are publicly available and sourced directly from the official websites of the companies (Arc'teryx, 2025; Oakley, 2025).

Findings

There were two primary tasks in this research to measure divergent thinking: the Visual Creative Concept Task and the Verbal Alternative Uses Test. The data from these tasks are presented below using descriptive statistics and qualitative observation, followed by an analysis of the discrepancy between expert and self-reported creativity questions asked.

Pre Screening Data

Data that was derived from the pre-screening questions confirmed the background and demographics of the sample population. A total of 10 participants successfully completed the study. The initial data collection helped ensure that all participants met the necessary inclusion criteria, specifically an active interest in outdoor activities where high-performance gear is required. The final participant pool met the following criteria:

- Age: All participants fell within the adult range of 18-45 years old.
- Location and Language: All 10 participants were confirmed to be U.S.-based and fluent in English
- Interest Alignment: All participants confirmed an interest in outdoor activities and the usage of performative and technical gear.
- Industry Experience: Employment data was collected to assess professional relevance. The participant pool included individuals from non-outdoor industry roles, those with varying degrees of industry experience, and university students.

Quantitative Analysis of Divergent Thinking

To evaluate the impact of product page presentation using a creativity lens, a two-factor ANOVA with replication was performed. Preliminary checks further confirmed that the assumption of normality was met. The analysis compared the effects of Product Page Type (Lifestyle Imagery/Arc'teryx vs. Interactive/Oakley) and Rater Source (Self-Reported vs. Expert) over divergent thinking performance.

Task 1: Visual Divergent Thinking (Creative Concept Task)

Aspect	Arc'teryx	Oakley
Self-Perceived Creativity:	3.20	3.00
Expert Ranking of Creativity:	3.60	3.50

For the visual Creative Concept Task, participants were asked to design an outdoor related product such as a jacket or other gear item. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference within creativity scores between Arc'teryx (Lifestyle) and Oakley (Interactive) conditions ($F = 0.28$, $p = 0.60$). This further suggests that the type of media richness, whether static lifestyle imagery or interactive visualization, does not significantly alter participants' ability to generate creative visual creative concepts.

Moreover, there was also no significant difference between how the participants rated their own sketches in comparison to the expert rating ($p = 0.12$). As illustrated in the Figure 3, the mean of scores for both self-evaluation and expert evaluation stayed consistent across each brand presentation, with Expert Scores ($M = 3.6$ for Arc'teryx, $M = 3.5$ for Oakley) slightly outperforming self-scores, though not anything to a significant degree. Finally, no significant

interaction effect was found between brand presentation and rater source ($p = 0.86$), confirming that the rater discrepancy remained consistent with both Arc'teryx and Oakley.

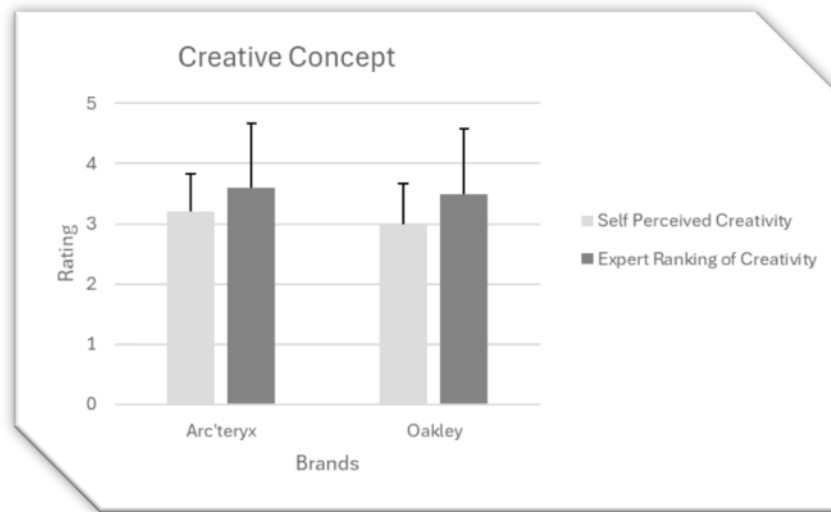


Fig. 3: ANOVA Two-Factor with Replication (Creative Concept)

Task 2: Verbal Divergent Thinking (Alternative Uses Test)

Aspect	Arc'teryx	Oakley
Self-Perceived Creativity:	4.40	4.50
Expert Ranking of Creativity:	2.90	3.1

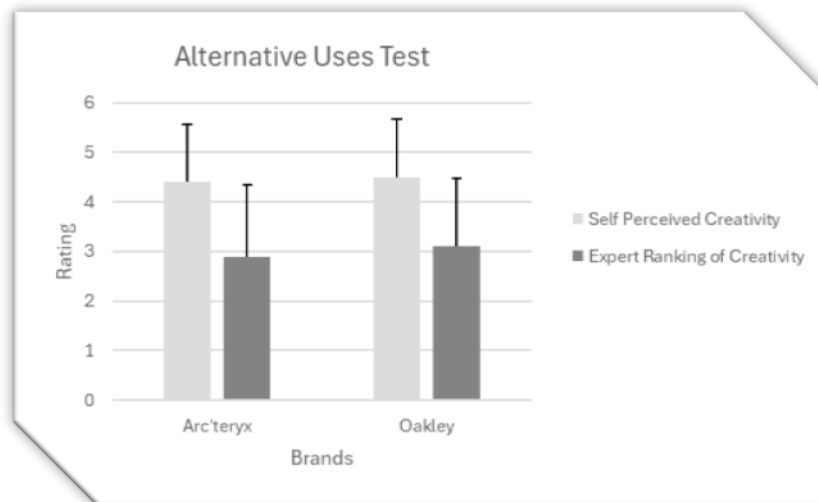


Fig. 4: ANOVA Two-Factor with Replication (Alternative Uses Test)

Verbal Alternative Uses Test (AUT), participants listed alternative functions for the products created by themselves. Like the visual task, ANOVA showed no real significant main effect for the brand presentation ($F = 0.13$, $p = 0.72$). Both lifestyle imagery and the interactive tool resulted in nearly identical creativity outcomes.

However, a statistically significant main effect was found for the Rater Source ($F = 12.47$, $p = 0.001$). As shown in Figure 4, participants consistently rated their own verbal creativity significantly higher ($M = 4.45$) than the expert judges did with a rating of ($M = 3.0$).

This revealed a distinct discrepancy between the participants perceived imaginative engagement overall and their overall objective creative performance.

Qualitative Observations

Though the quantitative scores came out to be consistent across both brands Arc'teryx and Oakley, a qualitative review of the responses reveals strong thematic patterns in how participants engaged with the products.

7.3.1 Function and Survivalist Themes

When reflecting on the principles of Embodied Cognition (Barsalou, 2008), participant responses were seen to be heavily grounded in utility and survival themes, regardless of the product pages viewed. The technical aspects of both Arc'teryx and Oakley pages appeared to further prime the participants to think about “performance” rather than abstract vision or modular gear.

- Arc'teryx (Jacket): Common alternative uses included “tourniquet,” “wind sail,” “trail marker,” and “emergency water-resistant wrap”.
- Oakley (Goggles): The interactive lens tool prompted quite similar survivalist responses/uses, such as using the lens as a “fire starter,” or “signal mirror,” and the frame as a “digging tool”.

Abstract Creativity

While most responses were functional, higher-scoring divergent thinking appeared in ideas that detached from the product's intended context of design. Examples of this was using goggles for a “rage room” environment and using the jacket concept as a “costume piece”.

Exemplars of High Divergent Thinking

To furthermore understand specific qualities that constituted “high creativity” within the visual task, two participants sketch that received maximum scores (5/5) from expert raters were analyzed. These exemplars demonstrate high levels of Elaboration (detail) and Technological Integration (originality).

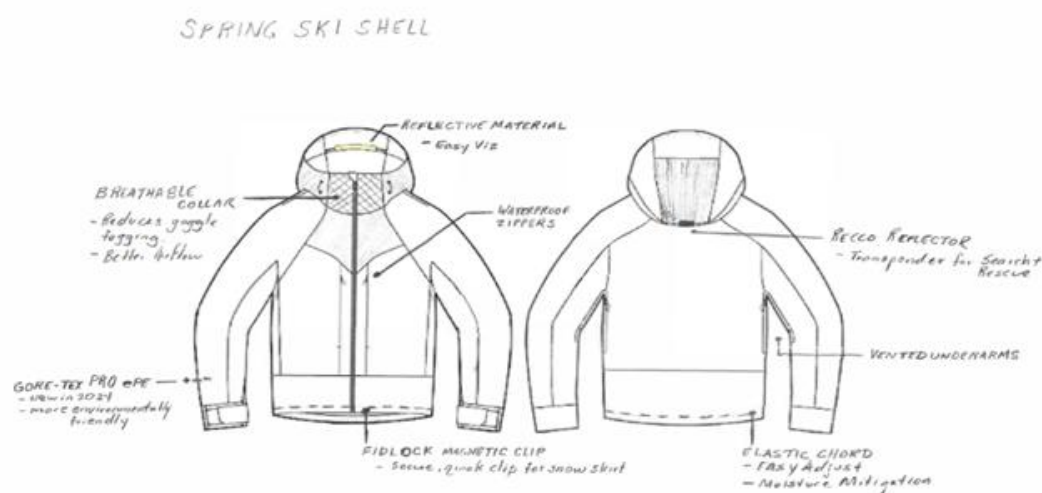


Fig. 5: A high-scoring design from the Arc'teryx condition

Source: Author

This sketch received a 5/5 expert rating for Elaboration. Rather than a simple quick fashion sketch, the participant treated the prompt as a technical design challenge. The sketch includes specific functionally cohesive annotations (e.g., “Fidlock Magnetic Clip,”

Waterproofed Zippers,” and “Gore-Tex PRO ePE”), effectively communicating a multi-purpose functional item of gear, demonstrating a deep cognitive engagement with the “performative/functional” aspect of the brand Arc’teryx. The Figure 6 below) displays a high-scoring design from the Oakley Condition.

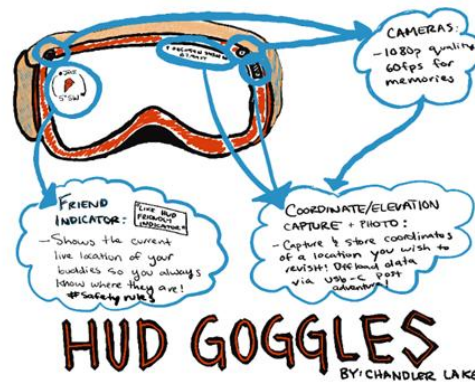


Fig. 6: High-Scoring Oakley Exemplar (Participant 6).
Source: Author

Similarly, this Sketch received a 5/5 rating for Originality. Influenced by the interactive nature of the Oakley product page, the participant created a concept “HUD (Heads-Up Display) Goggles.” This creative concept integrates digital technology within the physical gear, further imagining a product with a HUD overlay displayed within the goggles that then overlays that information to the user wearing the goggle. This leap from “protective gear” to “wearable technology” represents a great shift in category thinking.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings: The Threshold of Media Richness

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether interactive product visualization (Oakley) stimulates greater divergent thinking than lifestyle imagery (Arc’teryx). Contrary to the initial hypothesis, the results indicated no statistically significant difference between the two conditions ($p > .05$). This suggests that a “threshold effect” for media richness; once a product page reaches a higher standard of visual quality, the specific format (static vs. interactive) becomes less critical in stimulating the consumers imagination and divergent thinking.

The “Illusion of Competence” in Creative Perception

A critical finding was the main discrepancy between both self-perception and expert evaluation within the verbal task ($p = 0.001$). Participants rated their own ideas as highly creative ($M \approx 4.5$), however expert raters viewed them as average ($M \approx 3.0$). This aligns with the Dunning-Kruger Effect or “Illusion of Competence.” The overall immersive nature of the product pages likely induced a state of engagement that led participants to possibly overestimate the originality of their own contribution.

8.3 Embodied Cognition and Problem-Solving

Qualitatively, the study further supports Embodied Cognition Theory. Many sketches were grounded in survival (e.g., fire starters, tourniquets), communicating that visual cues successfully helped “prime” participants to mentally simulate a physical interaction between them and the gear/product. However, the high scoring exemplars (Figures 5 & 6) help to demonstrate and communicate that for highly creative individuals, media richness serves as a launching zone for complex problem-solving, such as integrating digital interfaces (HUDs) into physical gear products that we don’t typically see within the industry other than a small pool of companies, who are also mainly other startup companies.

Conclusion

This paper concludes with the following regarding the role of digital product presentation in stimulating consumer creativity. The findings revealed that within the high-performance outdoor apparel sector, the specific format of media richness, whether static or interactive, does not significantly alter viewer's creative output. This suggests that once a retailer meets a high threshold of quality visually, consumers are both equally primed for functional creativity regardless of the tool used.

Though a critical insight from this study is the psychological impact the study had with these interfaces. The significant discrepancy between high self-reported creativity and lower expert ratings communicates that rich media does indeed create an "illusion of competence." While participants did not necessarily generate novel ideas, they felt highly creative and engaged. For the outdoor industry, results such as these help to imply that expensive interactive tools are not ultimately necessary to build consumer engagement; high-quality storytelling and lifestyle photography are equally effective at making a consumer feel like a proficient part of the outdoor narrative.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is the small sample size ($N = 10$), which restricts the generalizability of the statistical findings. While the within-subjects design allowed for a direct comparison between both brands, a larger participant pool is necessary to achieve robust statistical power and minimize the impact of individual outliers who are not well connected and versed within the outdoor industry.

Furthermore, while the current sample consisted of some outdoor enthusiasts as well as participants currently working within the industry, the study did not require each participant to be currently employed within the outdoor industry. Given the highly performance-driven nature of each brand like Arc'teryx and Oakley, future research would greatly benefit from exclusively recruiting industry professionals (e.g., gear testers, technical designers, product managers, merchandisers, retailers, and their associates). These individuals would possess a higher knowledge of domain-specific areas of the outdoor industry, regarding material properties, construction techniques, personal experiences with their own gear and the sides they liked and disliked that general consumers may overlook. Incorporating a specific demographic, such as being an "Industry Professional" demographic would help create more accurate responses and data regarding how effectively a product page can descriptively communicate complex functional abilities, further providing a clearer distinction between both aesthetics and true technical and functional understanding of the product.

Acknowledgements: This research was conducted as a part of the requirements for the course Theories of Creative Process in Design and Merchandising (DM 5113 – Fall 2025). The author is grateful to the instructor of the course Dr. Nishan Wijetunga in overseeing and supporting the inquiry. His guidance was immense and without his perseverance, this paper would not have been published.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in conducting this research and publishing this paper

Ethical Research Practice: The research adopted standard ethical procedures. The respondents were free to participate and had no objections to performing the tasks required. They were not forced and were free to withdraw at any time.

Availability of Data: Data produced for this research is available for further scrutiny if required by any legitimate party.

References

- Acar, S., Lee, L. E. & Scherer, R. (2024) A reliability generalization of the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking-Figural. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 40(5), 396–411. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759/a000819>
- Arc'teryx. (2025). Men's shell jackets | Softshell and lightweight. <https://arcteryx.com/us/en/shop/jacket-finder/mens>
- Barsalou, L. (2008) Grounded cognition. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 59(1), 617–645. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.59.103006.093639>
- Chao, S.-H., Jiang, J., Hsu, C.-H., Chiang, Y.-T., Ng, E. & Fang, W.-T. (2020) Technology-enhanced learning for graduate students: Exploring the correlation of media richness and creativity of computer-mediated communication and face-to-face communication. *Applied Sciences*, 10(5), 1602. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app10051602>
- Cyr, Dianne & Head, Milena & Ivanov, Alex. (2006) Design aesthetics leading to m-loyalty in mobile commerce. *Information & Management*. 43(1). 950-963. 10.1016/j.im.2006.08.009.
- Daft, R. L. & Lengel, R. H. (1986) Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design. *Management Science*, 32(5), 554–571. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.32.5.554>
- Escalas, J. E. (2004) Imagine Yourself in the Product: Mental Simulation, Narrative Transportation, and Persuasion. *Journal of Advertising*, 33(2), 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2004.10639163>
- Ganguly, B., Dash, S. B., Cyr, D. & Head, M. (2010) The effects of website design on purchase intention in online shopping: The mediating role of trust and the moderating role of culture. *International Journal of Electronic Business*, 8(4/5), 302–330. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220300397_The_effects_of_website_design_on_purchase_intention_in_online_shopping_The_mediating_role_of_trust_and_the_moderating_role_of_culture
- Ganjar Rahman, A. & Musa, S. (2024) The relationships of design thinking, customer experience, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and word of mouth. In M. H. Bilgin, H. Danis, E. Demir, E. A. Alp, & S. Çankaya (Eds.), *Eurasian Business and Economics Perspectives* (Vol. 27). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-51212-4_10
- Duignan, B. (2025, November 28) Dunning-Kruger effect. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/science/Dunning-Kruger-effect>
- Guo, J., Zhao, Y., Zhang, W., Lu, K., Feng, X. & Xia, T. (2025) The influence of the information richness of interfaces on consumers' purchase intention: The sequential mediating effects of cognitive load, mental imagery, and flow experience. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(5), 673. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15050673>
- Hertenstein, M. J. & Keltner, D. (2006) Touch communicates distinct emotions. *Emotion*, 6(3), 528–533. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.6.3.528>
- Huang, R. & Ha, S. (2021) The role of need for cognition in consumers' mental imagery: A study of retail brand's Instagram. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 49(2), 242–262. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-04-2020-0146>
- Jeong, J., & Yeu, Y. (2023) The influence of contextual background in product imagery on review helpfulness and product evaluation: The mediating role of mental imagery. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 40(3), 524–541. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jrim-08-2022-0237>
- Kwon, H. (2014) Effect of advertising type on purchase intention of eco-friendly outdoor fashion products [Master's thesis, Seoul National University]. SNU Open Repository and Archive. <https://hdl.handle.net/10371/133798>
- Maity, M., Dass, M. & Kumar, P. (2018) The impact of media richness on consumer information search and choice. *Journal of Business Research*, 87(1), 36–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.02.003>

- Oakley. (2025) Oakley ski eyewear and ski equipment. <https://www.oakley.com/en-us/category/goggles/snow>
- Putrawangsa, S. & Hasanah, U. (2020) Sensorimotor-based digital media: An alternative design of digital tools in mathematics education, in Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Islam, Science and Technology (ICONIST 2019) (pp. 160–165). Atlantis Press. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Embodied-Cognition-Theory-The-interplay-among-perception-sensory-and-motoric_fig2_339624003
- Ccayle (2024, October 9) Immersive shopping: Step up your eCom game. <https://www.scayle.com/library/blog/immersive-shopping/>
- SCUBE Marketing. (2025). Performance marketing for outdoor gear & adventure equipment ecommerce. <https://www.scubemarketing.com/industries/outdoor-gear-adventure-equipment>
- Simon, S. J. & Peppas, S. C. (2005) Attitudes towards product website design: A study of the effects of gender. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 11(2), 129–144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1352726042000286507>
- Smith, R. E., MacKenzie, S. B., Yang, X., Buchholz, L. M. & Darley, W. K. (2008) Modeling the determinants and effects of creativity in advertising. *Marketing Science*, 26(6), 819–833. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228401560_Modeling_the_Determinants_and_Effects_of_Creativity_in_Advertising
- Thakral, P. P., Yang, A. C., Addis, D. R. & Schacter, D. L. (2021). Divergent thinking and constructing future events: Dissociating old from new ideas. *Memory*, 29(6), 729–743. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658211.2021.1940205>
- Wesierski, S. (n.d.). Creating a cohesive omnichannel strategy: Blending eCommerce with in-store experience. *Commerce-UI*. <https://commerce-ui.com/insights/creating-a-cohesive-omnichannel-strategy-blending-ecommerce-with-in-store-experience>
- Yang, X. & Smith, R. E. (2009). Beyond attention effects: Modeling the persuasive and emotional effects of advertising creativity. *Marketing Science*, 28(5), 935–949. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.1080.0460>