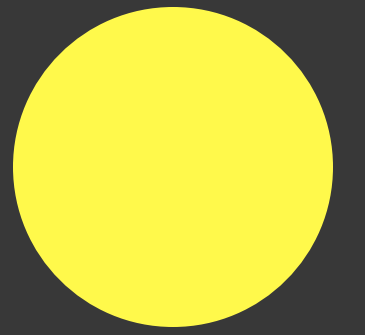Ondřej Konečný

January 2026
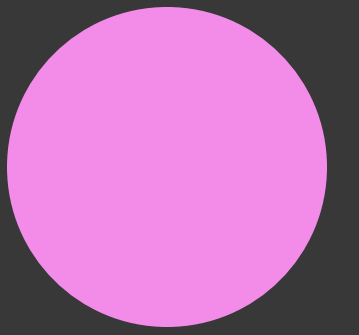
MUNI Arts / Information Services Design

# Does Aesthetics Make Things Seem More Usable?

# Why I choose this topic?
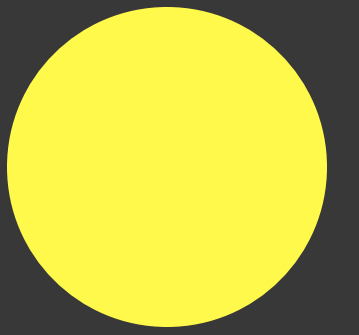
As a software designer and engineer, I make daily decisions about how interfaces look and function.

Does investing time in visual polish actually improve how usable people perceive my designs to be?

# Why this can be interesting for you?

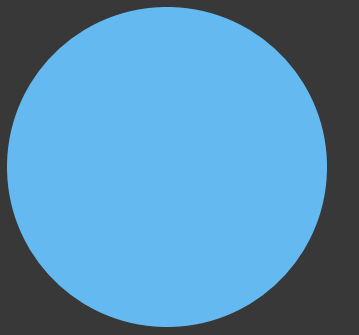You interact with dozens of apps and websites daily.

# Table of Content

# Aesthetic vs. Usability: What Do They Mean?

# Aesthetic

Visual appeal that creates positive emotional response.

# Example



Source: Apple.com website



Source: Bad Websites Examples: 20 Worst Website Designs

# Example



Source: The influence of design aesthetics in usability testing: Effects on user performance and perceived usability (Andreas Sonderegger , Juergen Sauer).

# Usability

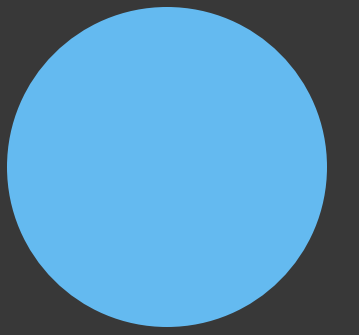Effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction in achieving goals.

# Example



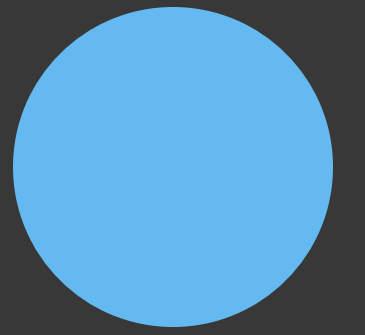Juicy Salif designed by Phillipe Starck.

# Example



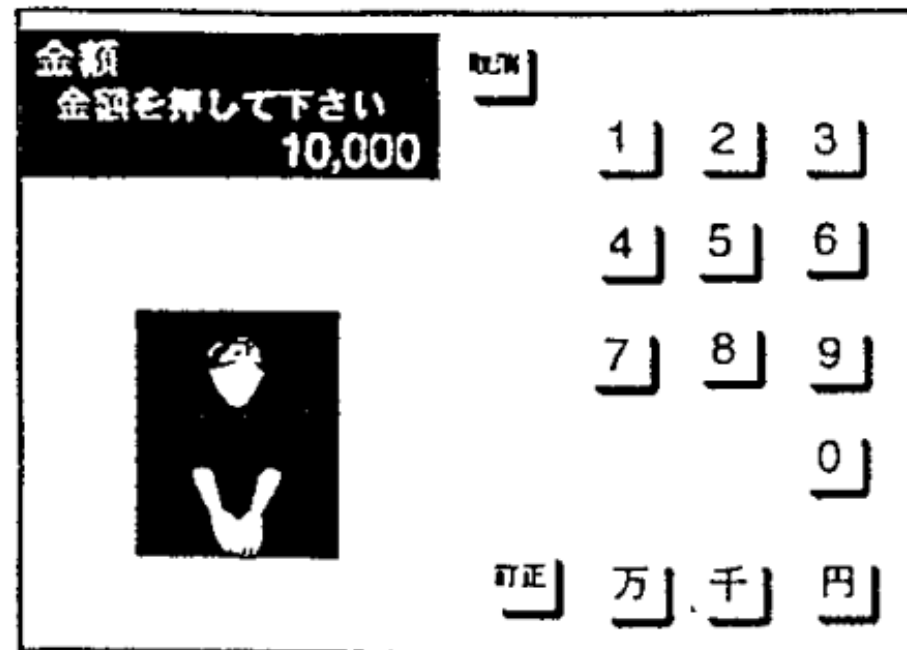"Tilting" teapot by Ronnefeldt. A, B, C steps. Donald Norman's collection.
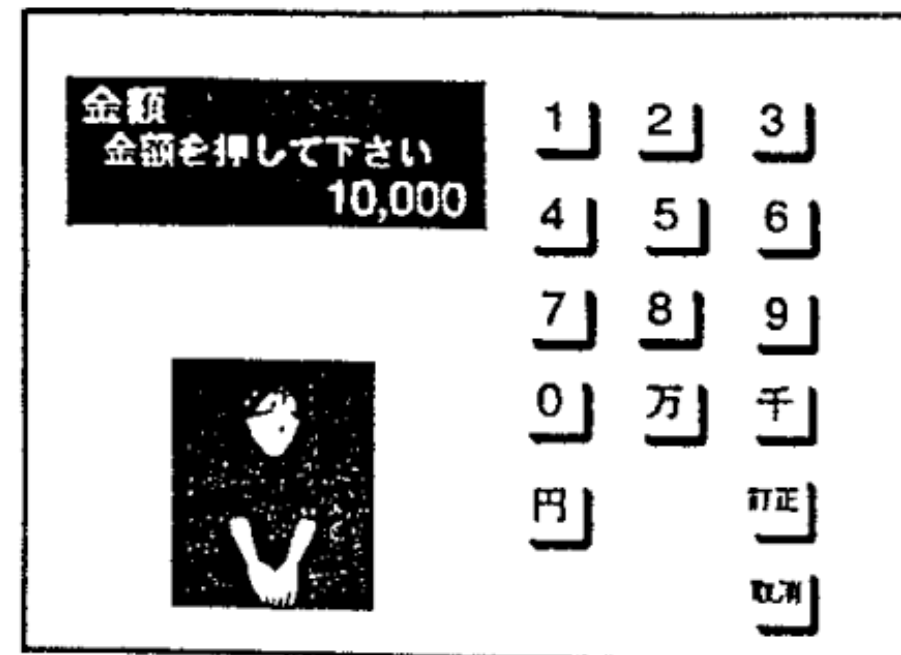
# The Aesthetic-Usability Effect

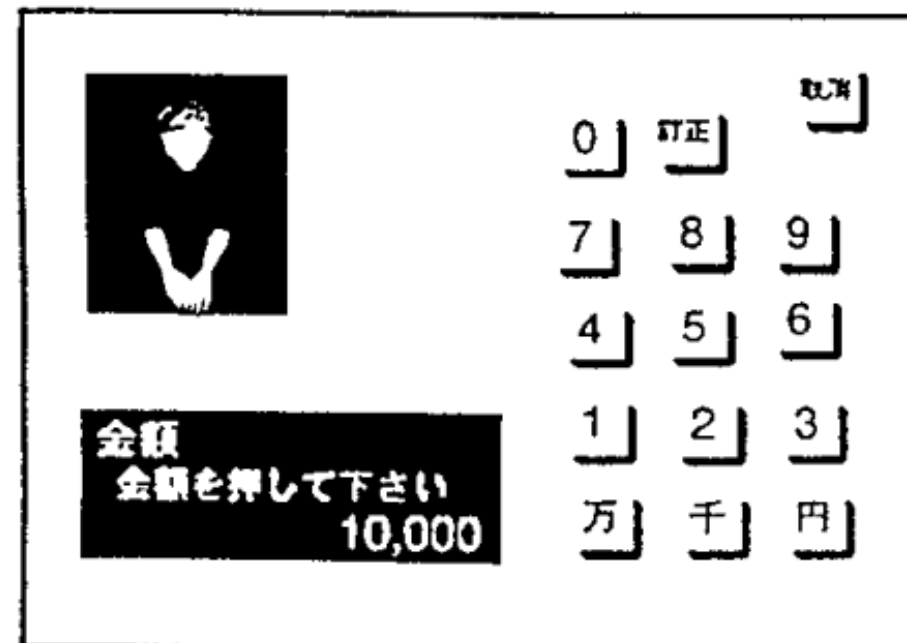Users are more tolerant of minor usability issues when they find an interface visually appealing.
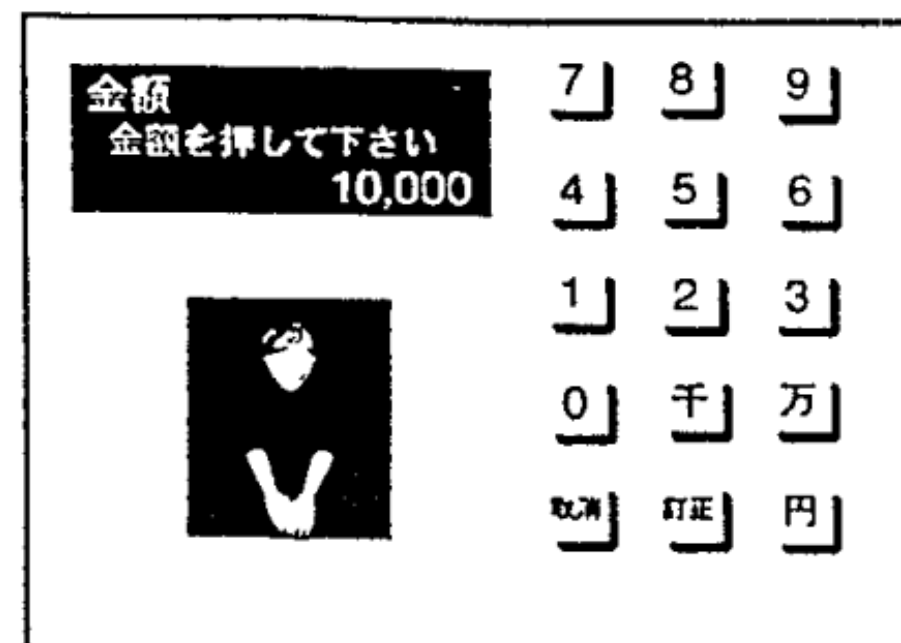
High Usability Score and Low Beauty Score (No.6)

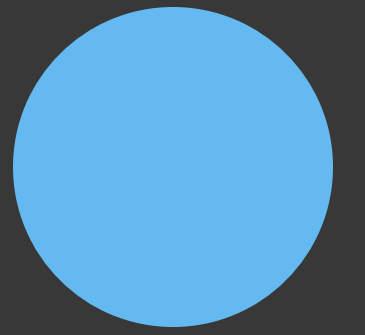High Usability Score and High Beauty Score (No.23)

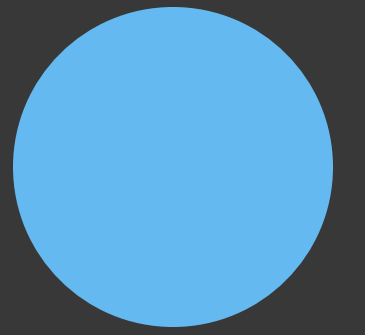Low Usability Score and Low Beauty Score (No.17)

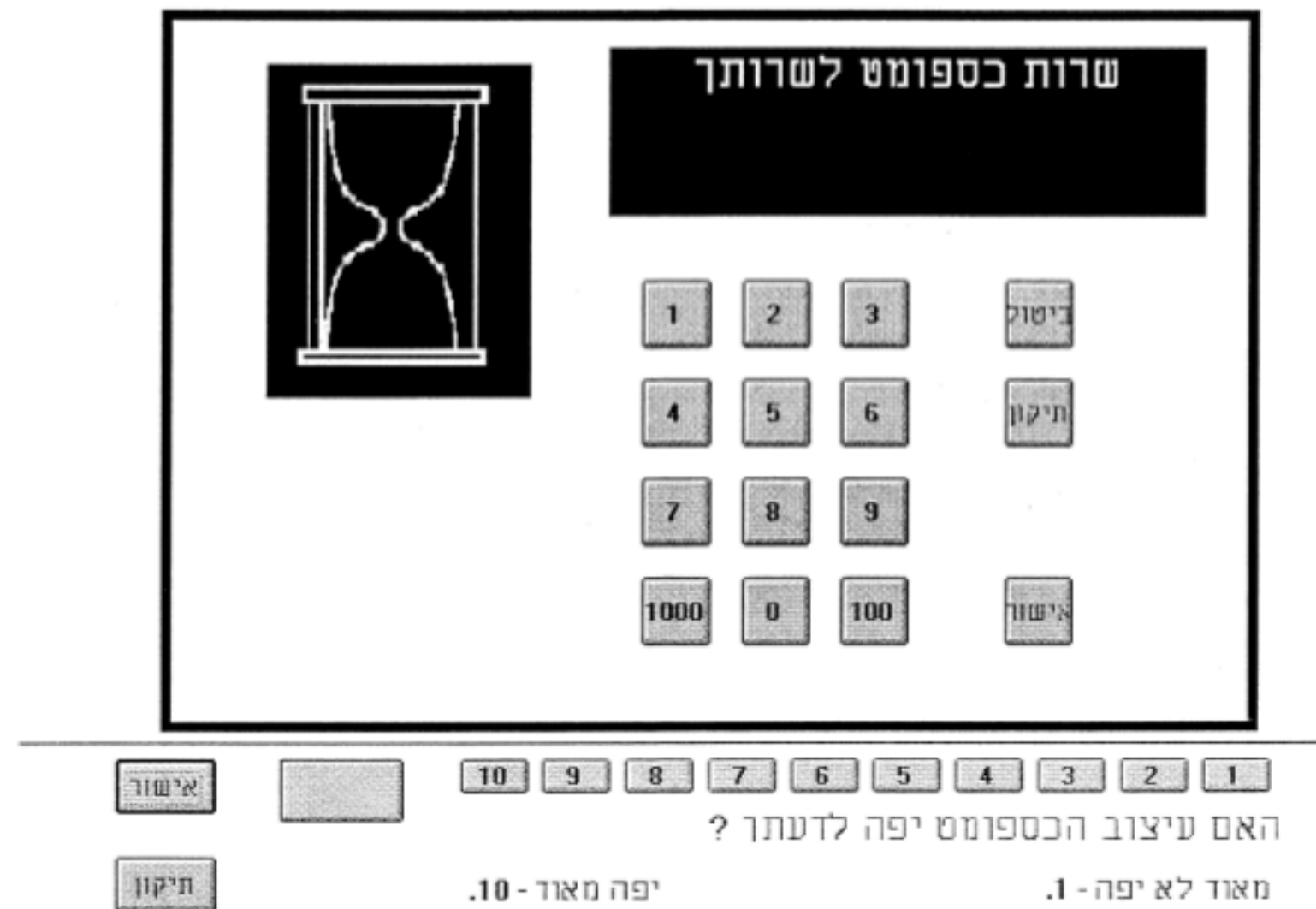Low Usability Score and High Beauty Score (No.13)

In 1995, Japanese researchers, Masaaki Kurosu and Kaori Kashimura, from Hitachi Design Center did a famous ATM test.

- experiment from 90'
- 26 variations of an ATM interfaces
- 252 study participants

Kurosu and Kashimura concluded that users are strongly influenced by the aesthetics of any given interface.

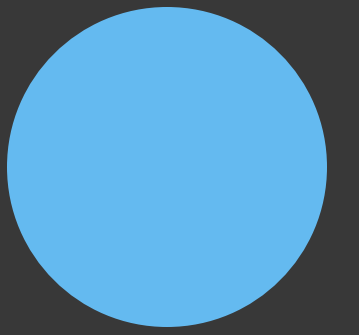Source: Be Aware of Aesthetic-Usability Effect in User Research (Medium)

- Noam Tractinsky repeated the experiment
- Not sold on the Japanese experiment
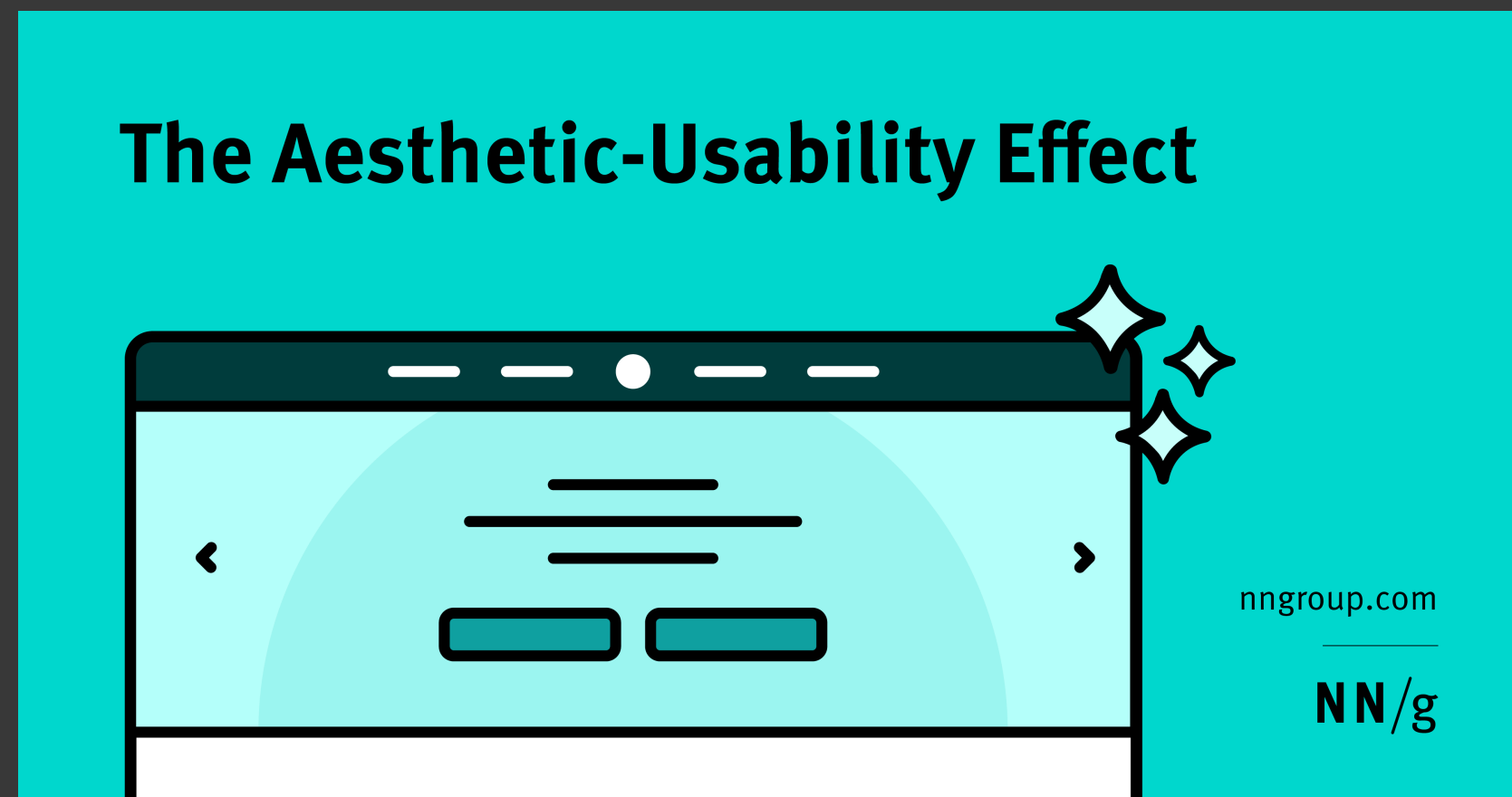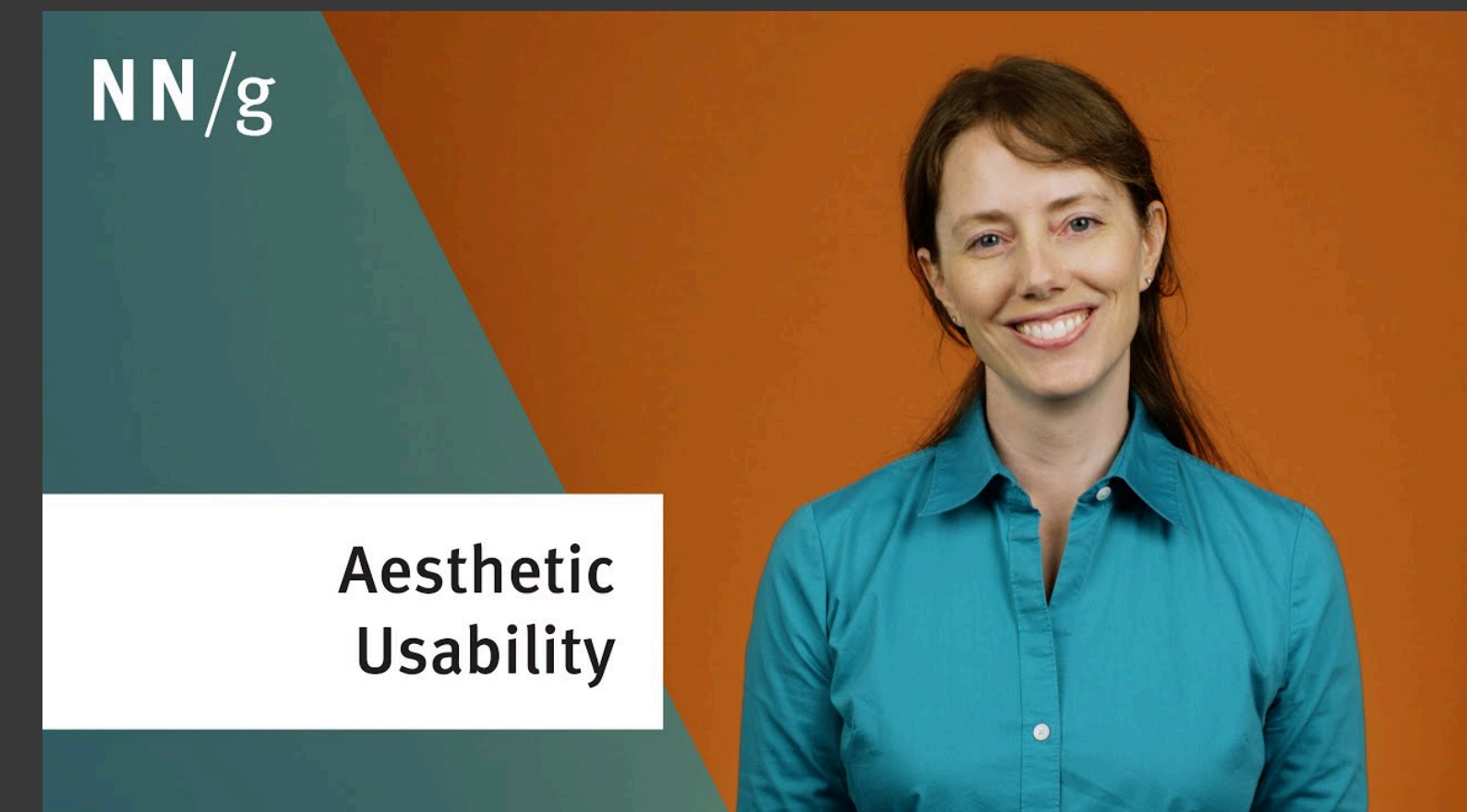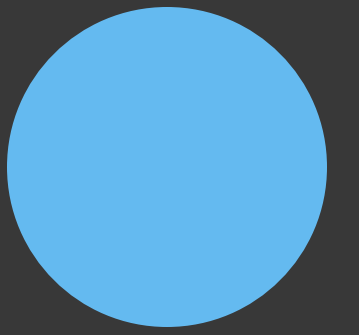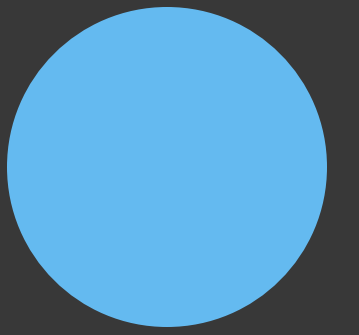- The results were even stronger in Israeli

# Suggested article and video

# What does it mean for interface designers?
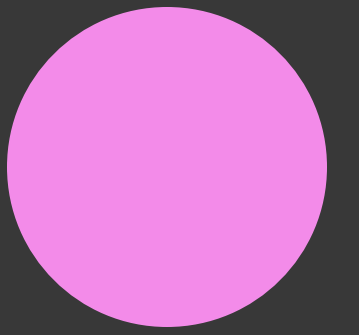
If designers care mostly about usability, they still need to make their designs look good.
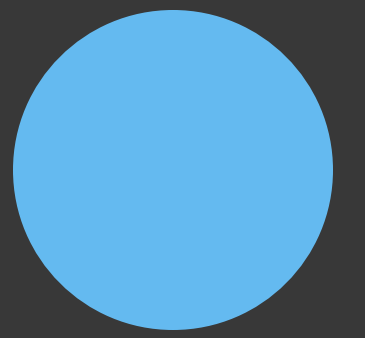
# Beauty gone wrong: Pitfalls!

"Have you ever used a beautiful website that turned out to be frustrating or confusing?"

# So does aesthetics make things seem more usable?
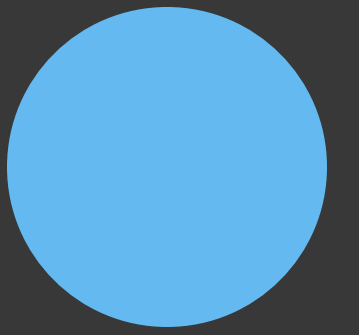
## 01

Positive response to aesthetics
↓
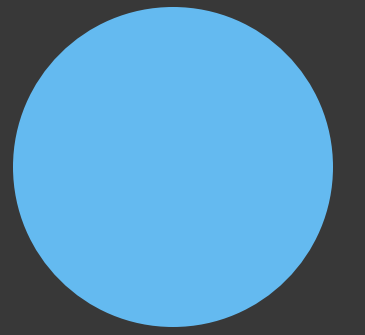More tolerant of usability issues.

## 02

Attractive interfaces
↓
Reduced task completion

The best design is one that uses aesthetics to support and enhance the content and functionality of the product.

# Sources

01   N. Tractinsky*, A.S. Katz, D. Ikar (24. 3. 2000) What is beautiful is usable

02   Andreas Sonderegger , Juergen Sauer (2010) The influence of design aesthetics in usability testing: Effects on user performance and perceived usability

03   Guillermo Valverde (April 2012) Empirical Studies in Aesthetic Computing: Aesthetics, Usability & Performance

04   Eline Jongmans, Florence Jeannot, Lan Liang & Maud Dampérat (2022) Impact of website visual design on user experience and website evaluation: the sequential mediating roles of usability and pleasure

# Thank you!