

Perceived Financial Status, Motivated Anthropomorphism, and Preference for Anthropomorphized Products

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Abstract

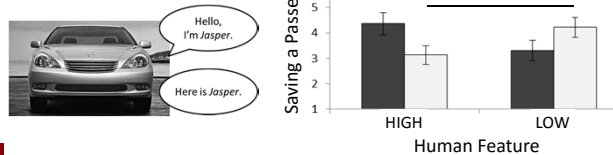
The current research tested the hypothesis that consumers' perceptions of a product with marketer-intended human **features** as possessing human **agency** and their evaluations of the anthropomorphized product depend on consumers' **perceived financial status**. This effect is linked to consumers' expectations of the types of treatment they are likely to receive at the hands of others in the marketplace.

Background

- Anthropomorphism
 - People tend to extend and apply their social beliefs to the anthropomorphized world (i.e., interpersonal trust [Touré-Tillery & McGill 2015], entity vs. incremental personality theory [Puzakova et al. 2013])
 - Q. Financial standing → Treatment expectations → Evaluation on anthropomorphized products**
- Commercial Treatment Expectations
 - Consumers commonly experience preferential treatment based on their spending (i.e., VIP marketing, loyalty program)
 - High-priority consumers believe they are entitled to additional effort and special treatment from companies and employees (Lacey et al. 2007)
- Marketer-Intended Human Features vs. Consumer-Perceived Anthropomorphism
 - Marketers signal humanity in a product with human features ≠ Consumers accept and perceive agency
 - Especially with products providing interaction
 - Q. Financial standing → Motivation to give agency to humanlike products**

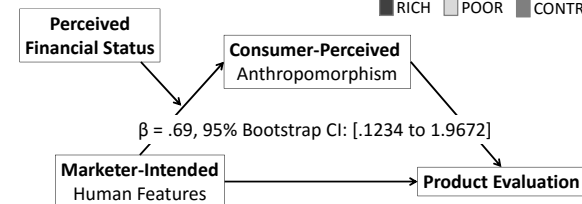
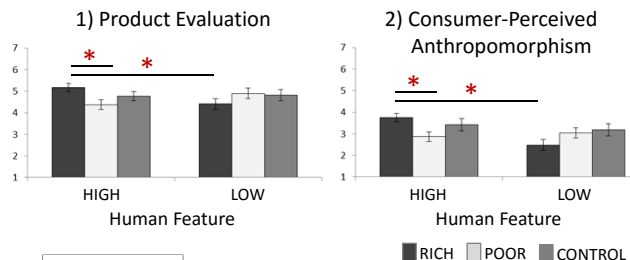
Study 1

- Design: 2 (Perceived financial status: high vs. low) X 2 (Human feature: high vs. low) between-subjects design
- Perceived financial status manipulation: 1) imagining winning a lottery 2) reporting annual income with different scales
- Stimuli: an autonomous car in a moral dilemma situation
 - 1: Injuring a passenger & Saving 10 pedestrians
 - 10: Saving a passenger & Injuring 10 pedestrians



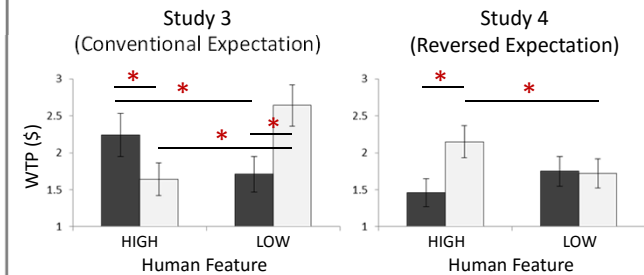
Study 2

- Design: 3 (Perceived financial status: high vs. low vs. control) X 2 (Human feature: high vs. low) between-subjects design
- Stimuli: an entertainment recommendation program
- Dependent Variables
 - 1) Product Evaluation: Liking, Wanting, Intention to Use, Performance expectation ($\alpha = .93$)
 - 2) Consumer-Perceived Anthropomorphism



Study 3 & 4

- Design: 2 (Perceived financial status: high vs. low) X 2 (Human feature: high vs. low) between-subjects design
- Stimuli: a movement-tracking smartphone application
- Testing a boundary condition: **When the treatment expectation is reversed?**
- Study 4
 - Developed by "Fair Economy" working against financial inequity → The poor expect to be treated better than the rich



Conclusion

- Consumers evaluate products conveying human features differently depending on their perceived financial status
- High **Financial Status** (Favorable Commercial Treatment Expectations) → High **Agency Perception** → Positive **Product Evaluation**

References

- Lacey, Russell, Jaebeom Suh, and Robert M. Morgan (2007), "Differential Effects of Preferential Treatment Levels on Relational Outcomes," *Journal of Service Research*, 9 (3), 241-56
- Puzakova, M., Marina, Hyokjin Kwak, and Joseph Rocereto (2013), "When Humanizing Brands Goes Wrong: The Detrimental Effect of Brand Anthropomorphization Amid Product Wrongdoings," *Journal of Marketing*, 77 (3), 81-100.
- Touré-Tillery, Maferima, and Ann L. McGill (2015), "Who or What to Believe: Trust and the Differential Persuasiveness of Human and Anthropomorphized Messengers," *Journal of Marketing*, 79 (4), 94-110.