



Consumer Attachment and Anthropomorphism in the Secondhand Market

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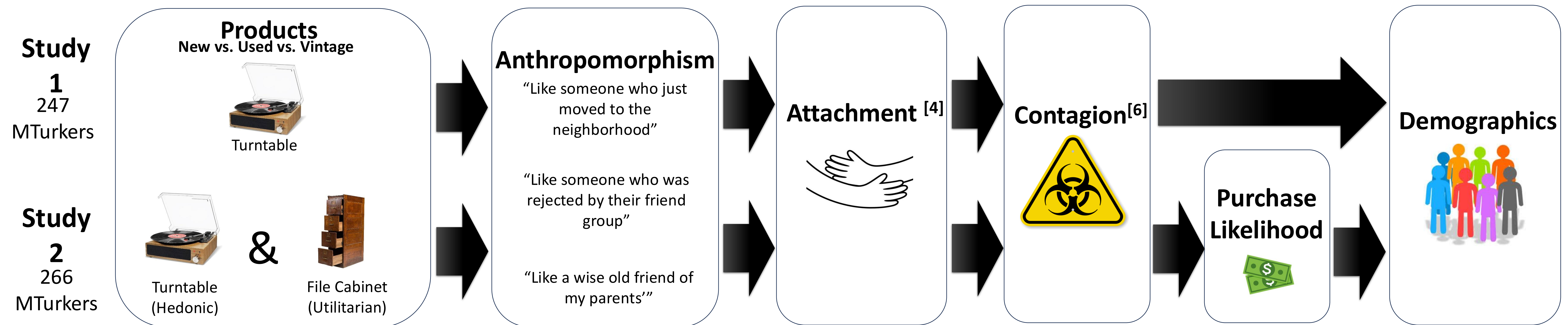
Abstract

Across two studies, we build on existing product-attachment and anthropomorphism theories in a novel domain: secondhand goods. Study 1 demonstrates how shoppers' attachment to used, vintage, and new products is mediated by perception of the products' different human-like characteristics (rejected person, wise mentor, or new neighbor, respectively). Study 2 extends these findings via moderated serial mediation; specifically, anthropomorphism mediates product attachment, which in turn mediates purchase intentions—but only for hedonic (not utilitarian) products. We subsequently offer suggestions to prospective sellers on how product description/narrative might favorably induce these effects.

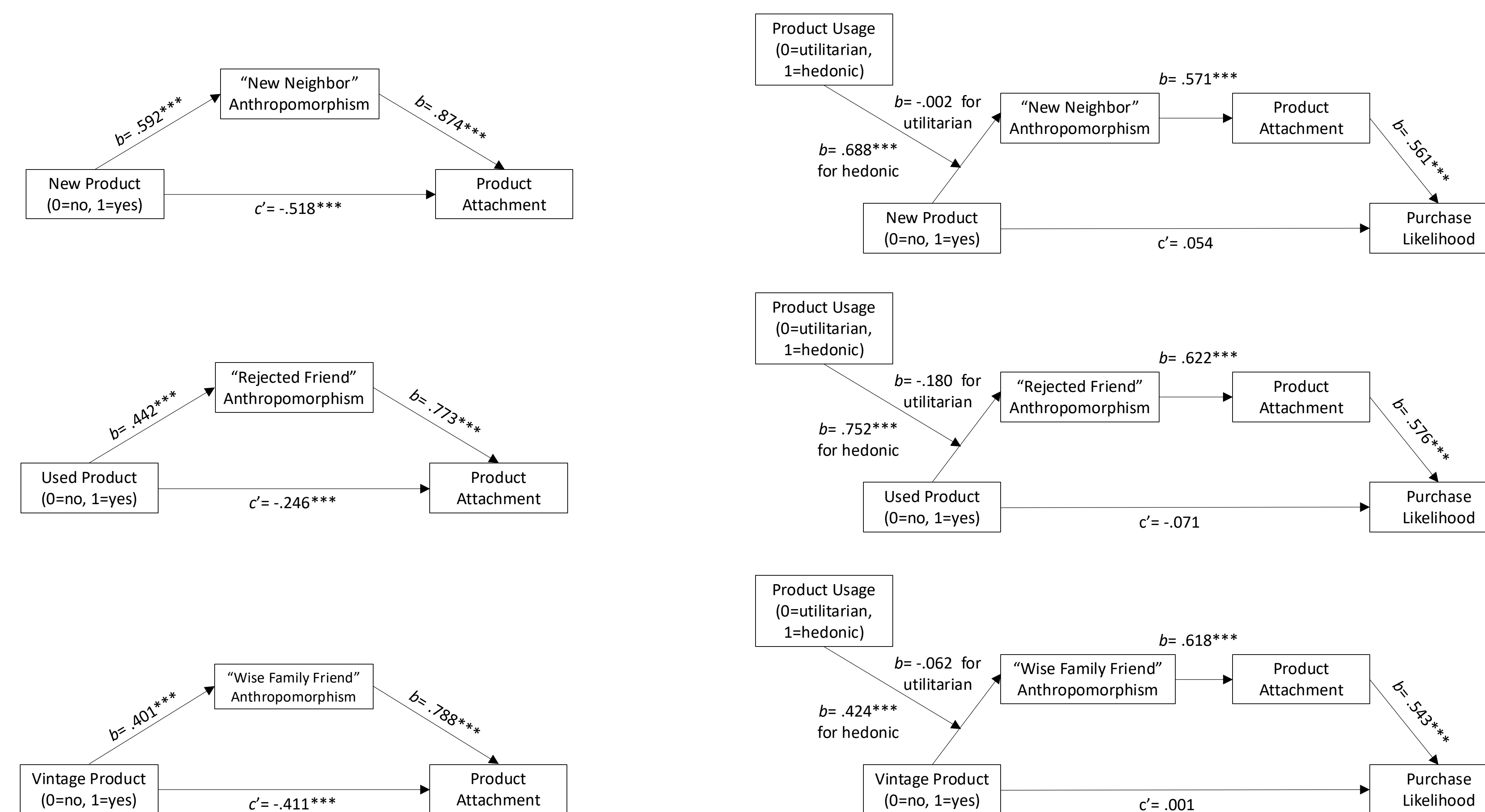
Introduction

- Products can evoke human-like identities based on their condition and history (e.g., new, used, or vintage) [1,2].
- Anthropomorphized products foster emotional attachment by making them feel socially connected to consumers [3,4].
- Hedonic usage strengthens anthropomorphism and attachment, while utilitarian usage emphasizes functionality over emotion [5].
- Anthropomorphism leads to increased purchase likelihood by enhancing emotional connection and personal meaning [3,5].

Studies



Results



Study 1

- Anthropomorphism significantly mediates the effect of all three product types (new, used, and vintage) on product attachment
- Contagion had no significant effects

Study 2

- Anthropomorphism and attachment significantly mediate the effect of product type on purchase likelihood for hedonic (but not utilitarian) products
- Contagion had no significant effects

Conclusions

Our findings illustrate how product anthropomorphism varies by type and usage, influencing consumer attachment and purchase intent. Study 1 confirmed that new products evoke a "new neighbor" identity, used products a "rejected friend," and vintage products a "wise family friend." Study 2 extended these insights, showing that these effects occur only for hedonic, not utilitarian, usage. Together, the studies underscore the nuanced role of product type, anthropomorphic identity, and intended usage in shaping attachment and consumer decisions, offering valuable implications for targeted marketing strategies.

References

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