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 (α = .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 3
- (Conventional Expectation)

Study 4
- (Reversed Expectation)

Study 3
- Developed by “Fair Economy” working against financial inequity
  - The poor expect to be treated better than the rich

Study 4
- WTP ($) (High Financial Status) (Favorable Commercial Treatment Expectations) → High Agency Perception → Positive Product Evaluation

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