Abstract

This paper proposes and tests a trait-specific motivational account of product anthropomorphism. Earlier research suggests that two key motives – the need to stay socially connected (sociality motive) and the need to control one’s environment (effectance motive) - both induce anthropomorphizing. Integrating this premise with the literature on motivated perception and that on brand personality, our account posits that even though both motives lead consumers to anthropomorphize, they differ in terms of the specific human-like traits that the product is endowed with. As a way of satisfying salient needs, the sociality (effectance) motive leads people to perceive products as being warm (dependable). This trait-specific account carries unique implications for effective brand positioning strategies, and also for how consumers themselves get transformed as a result of engaging in anthropomorphism.

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All interested are welcome.