



## How do I look: The role of Brand Anthropomorphism and Implicit Self-Theories on Brand Evaluations?

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*Nowadays marketing practitioners are more interested to make a lifetime bond with consumers. Previous research studies have shown that brand anthropomorphism enhances consumer brand evaluations in terms of likability, positive sentiments, purchase intentions, and trust in that particular brand. Research reveals that consumers show a favorable attitude toward brands that are anthropomorphized. According to the implicit-personality theory, there are two broad human personalities, one who believes that people have fixed traits (“entity theorists”) while others deem that people’s personality is malleable (“incremental theorists”). However, less work is done to investigate this brand anthropomorphism-evaluation process in contingency with the personality of consumers. Hence this study aims to examine the role of implicit theory in brand humanization-evaluation phenomena. The results validate the existing research that anthropomorphizing the brands not only enhances consumer attitude towards the brand but also generates more trust and likeliness of purchase. Conversely, study data did not support the proposed hypothesis that the brand anthropomorphizing evaluation process is less positive for entity theorists. Nevertheless, this process remains same for the incremental theorists.*

**Keywords:** *Brand Anthropomorphism, Implicit Self-Theories, Entity Theorists, Incremental Theorists, Brand Evaluations, Attitude toward Brand, Brand Trust, Purchase Intentions*

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Consumers are exposed to several brands every day, increasing exponentially. This severe competition has made marketers differentiate their brands and enhance consumers' liking (Sheeraz et al., 2018). Therefore, marketing practitioners are more interested in building solid brand-consumer relationships and enhancing their likeliness of purchase. Previous research studies have highlighted that attributing the brand with human-like features increases the brand's likeness (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007) and the characteristics help develop strong brand perception and evaluation (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). A brand's unique resemblance to humans

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makes the consumers think of the brand as a living human and generates a positive association (Chandler & Schwarz, 2010).

The phenomenon of anthropomorphism (humanization) is not new and has evolved over the centuries. Guthrie (1995) mentions in his book that people fear the unknown. Hence, primitive man used humanization to make inferences about the unknown world as he only knew about himself then. He attributed the human-like features to clouds, mountains, and even his gods. This helped him associate with the unknown world and mitigate his inner fear. Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human-like qualities to non-human entities or objects.

Anthropomorphism is a widely used marketing technique that enables marketers to develop relatable and engaging brand personalities. Recent research studies have revealed that this primitive phenomenon of humanization is quite helpful in creating an association of consumers with brands (Chandler & Schwarz, 2010; S. Kim & McGill, 2011). Consumers positively evaluate anthropomorphized brands as compared to non-anthropomorphized brands. Humanization improves brand likability and generates positive sentiments toward the brand.

Anthropomorphism can have a significant impact on trust in brands. When individuals anthropomorphize brands or products, they perceive them as having human-like characteristics, behaviors, and intentions. This, in turn, can increase the brand's or product's trustworthiness. For example, research has shown that consumers are likelier to trust brands with human-like names or personalities (Agrawal et al., 2020; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017). Similarly, research has found that anthropomorphism of technology-based products, such as robots or virtual assistants, can increase consumers' trust (Blut et al., 2021). Similarly, research has shown that the anthropomorphism of products like cars or smartphones can lead to more positive attitudes toward those products (Bhalla & Pathak, 2023; Christoforakos & Diefenbach, 2022). Moreover, when consumers anthropomorphize a brand or product, trust and attitude toward the brand can develop, increasing purchase intentions (Kervyn et al., 2022).

However, the impact of anthropomorphism on brand evaluation, along with the contingency of the consumers' personality types (i.e., entity vs. incremental), is yet to be explored. Implicit personality theory refers to people having two beliefs about human traits. The ones who believe people have fixed traits and cannot be changed are indicated as entity theorists, and others who believe traits to be malleable are incremental theorists (Kim & Song, 2023; Park & John, 2018). Implicit theories are individuals' beliefs about the world and how it works. In marketing, implicit theories can influence how consumers interpret and respond to advertising messages. For example, research has found that individuals who hold a "fixed" mindset (i.e., they believe that abilities are innate and cannot be changed) are more likely to respond positively to messages that emphasize the inherent qualities of a product (Han et al., 2019). Conversely, individuals who hold a "growth" mindset (i.e., they believe that abilities can be developed through effort) are more likely to respond positively to messages that emphasize the potential for improvement (Han et al., 2019; Seo et al., 2021). The theory believes that humans are said to influence the evaluation process.

The aim of the study is twofold: first, to comprehend and examine the relationship between brand anthropomorphism and brand evaluations. Second, to examine the role of implicit theory in brand humanization-evaluation phenomena. By comparing the evaluation of brands for the two types of theorists concerning anthropomorphism, the study will enhance the understanding of managers and practitioners about their consumers. This, in turn, will help formulate sound branding strategies catering to consumers' personalities.

## Literature Review and Hypotheses

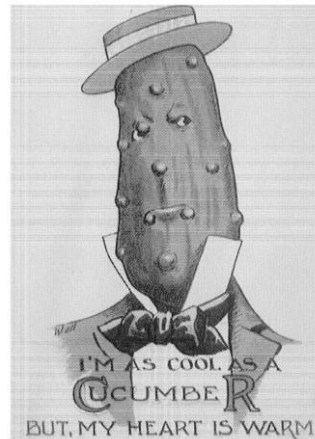
### *Anthropomorphism*

"Anthropomorphism describes the tendency to imbue the real or imagined behavior of non-human agents with human-like characteristics, motivations, intentions, or emotions" (Epley et al., 2007). It also includes seeing the human mind, intentions, and effortful thinking in non-human artifacts, such as products (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Puzakova et al., 2013; van den Hende & Mugge, 2014). The word anthropomorphism has been derived from the Greek words anthro\_pos ("human") and morphe\_ ("shape" or "form") (Epley et al., 2007). Philosophers have mentioned anthropomorphism for over two thousand years. Theologians have done so almost as long as scientists have since Francis Bacon nearly five centuries ago. Xenophanes, cited in Leshner (2001), first coined the term "anthropomorphism" and described the similarities between religious deities and their believers similarly, if human gods are like humans then lions and horses would present their gods as themselves i.e., lions and horses (Guthrie, 1995).

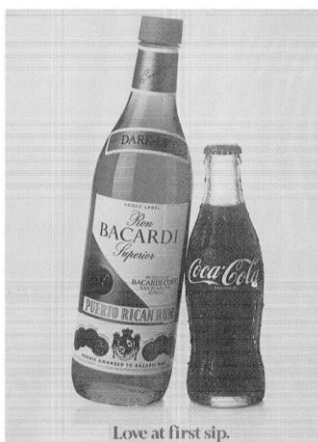
**Figure 1: First Lucky Rabbit Cartoon in 1927**



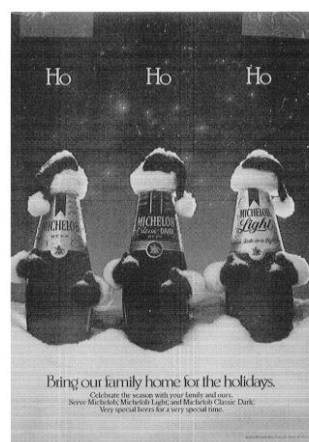
**Figure 2: American Postcard, 1915**



**Figure 3: Bacardi Advertisement, 1977**



**Figure 4: Michelob Advertisement, 1985**



Bacon (1960) and Root (1957) are of the view that all mankind tends to anthropomorphize every object around them and also in a religious context (Ferré, 1984; Guthrie, 1995; Wartofsky, 1977). In addition, anthropomorphism has also been mentioned by several writers from diverse fields, namely anthropology (Levi-Strauss, 1966), physics (Webb, 1935), and archaeology (Adams, 1981). Anthropomorphism encompasses intuitive perceptions of daily life. For instance, we see faces in the clouds, a sack of garbage as an older man sitting, grills of automobiles as faces, and headlights as eyes (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007). Similarly, we also tend to anthropomorphize our pets, which are dogs and cats (Guthrie, 1995). At the same time, In the 1920s, "The Walt Disney Company" anthropomorphized animals in the form of cartoon characters (as shown in Figure 1). Anthropomorphism is not restricted to such spontaneous perceptions only it also pervades into the conscious creation of writers, artists specifically speaking commercial artists. Guthrie (1995) further suggests that the reason visual artists anthropomorphize is they do not tend to simulate reality in fact, they try to highlight those aspects which are important to their audience i.e., human forms. Advertising artists use this phenomenon to capture the attention of the audience and to sell their products (as shown in Figure 2-4).

**Figure 5: Pepsi Television Advertisement**



Anthropomorphism is a psychological process involving human judgment and inferences (Chen & Lin, 2021; Epley et al., 2007). This inductive process is similar to the normal cognitive operations of the human mind, where one acquires knowledge from one's surroundings, stimulates this stored knowledge, and then applies it to the subject being

exposed (Higgins, 1996). This is also considered to be a spontaneous process. In brand/product terms, the anthropomorphized brand triggers human schéma. The triggered human schéma is then attached to the brand through associative brain networks. People attribute that brand to humans (Ha et al., 2022; Puzakova et al., 2013). PepsiCo Pakistan Pvt. Ltd started its Ramadan campaign in 2013, where it endorsed Pepsi as human (Shahid & Ashfaq, 2021). The TVC was released on 09 July 2013, developed by Walter creative agency and produced by Tin production. The ad shows a person fasting and thirsty in hot weather in an office setting. He assumes his boss a Pepsi bottle and hugs him (as shown in Figure 5).

Anthropomorphism is a mutable phenomenon, and therefore, some people have more ability to see humans in non-human forms. Similarly, children tend to anthropomorphize objects more than adults (Epley et al., 2007). In the same way, people neither anthropomorphize every object nor are they able to attribute human characteristics to non-humans with equal ease (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Nicolas & Agnieszka, 2021). Furthermore, the tendency to anthropomorphize may depend on the presence of specific features that creates a sense of humanity. It may include the object movement, the time period of that movement, the human-like shape of the object, voices, intentions, and facial features (Graham & Poulin-Dubois, 1999; Murphy et al., 2019; Tremoulet & Feldman, 2000). Hence, consumers anthropomorphize those objects that give a sense of humanity.

### *Brand Evaluations*

Giner-Sorolla (1999, p. 443) describes the evaluations as "implicit in beliefs, feelings, behaviors and other components and expressions of attitudes." Several studies have been conducted on brand/product evaluation; in these studies, different authors operationalized it in different ways (constructs). For example, Wadhwa and Zhang (2014) have considered purchase intentions as product evaluations. Naylor, Lamberton, and West (2012) used the term brand evaluations and purchase intention as how much one would like the brand. They used it in the context of liking the brand. Another research used three items, negative, not at all favorable and bad, which later averaged, forming an evaluation index (Chen et al., 2014).

In Addition, Spears and Singh (2004) are of the view that the marketing researchers commonly use attitude toward the brand along with purchase intentions for brand evaluations. Current research follows the work of Puzakova et al. (2013) and uses the following three primary brand evaluation measures: i). attitude towards the brand, ii). trust in the brand, and iii)—purchase intentions (Crolc et al., 2022). The purchase intentions could be turned into the actual purchase of a product (Carrión Bósquez et al., 2023; Khurram et al., 2018).

### *Attitude towards the Brand*

"Attitude toward the brand is a relatively enduring, uni-dimensional summary evaluation of the brand that presumably energizes behavior," as Spears and Singh (2004, p. 55) stated. Attitude constitutes of mainly two characteristics (Giner-Sorolla, 1999). Firstly, attitude is directed at a real or imagined object, and secondly, the nature of the attitude is evaluative, which means it can be organized around either "good" or "bad" (Bora Semiz & Paylan, 2023).

Giner-Sorolla (1999) explains the two effective processes underlying attitudes. One is "immediate effect," which constitutes feelings and emotions triggered promptly and effortlessly when encountered with the attitude object. The other one is the "deliberative effect" - feelings and emotions stimulated later, sometimes intentionally. Attitude contains nearly all mental phenomena. These may include feelings, emotions, beliefs, behavioral intentions (Natarajan et al., 2023; Sameeni & Qadeer, 2015), and conditioned responses (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

### *Trust in the Brand*

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001, p. 82) define brand trust as "the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function." Trust is "the confidence that one will find what is desired from another" (Deutsch, 1977). Hence, trust is a psychological state where one party is confident and predicts positive outcomes on behalf of the other Barney and Hansen (1994). Trust is associated with the degree of confident expectations resulting in mitigating the risk coupled with the brand. A brand is trusted when customers believe that the product/brand is "dependable" and "competent" (Herbst et al., 2011; Setiawan & Patricia, 2022). Consumers develop an implicit mutual bond with a high probability that the brand will perform as expected. The credibility of a brand and consumers' commitment to the brand, depends on brand trust (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Suhan et al., 2022). The consumers would not be loyal to the brand unless the brand earns their loyalty (Meyer-Waarden et al., 2023; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

These definitions emphasize the two dimensions of trust are motivation and competence. Consumers are said to trust the brand when they believe it will tend to satisfy their needs in the future. It has positive intentions to solve their problems and is willing to act in their favor. On the other hand, competence means that the brand can perform as expected; it has the potential to perform for consumers' welfare. When these two aspects are present, we say the consumers trust the brand/product (Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003).

### *Purchase Intentions*

Bagozzi and Yi (1988) have referred the purchase intentions as a person's inclination towards a brand. It indicates a person's motivation to make an effort to purchase a particular brand (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Venkatesh et al., 2022). Purchase intentions mean a personal tendency to make some effort to purchase a brand and/or pre-plan the purchase process (Khalid & Qadeer, 2017; Khurram et al., 2018). Spears and Singh (Spears & Singh, 2004, p. 56) defined it as "an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand."

The theory of reasoned action explains that attitudes affect behaviors through behavioral intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Many researchers have long supported this theory (Lim & Weissmann, 2023). This theory proposed that the attitudes and subjective norms towards behavior determine the intentions underlining to perform that behavior. Here attitudes are the positive or negative evaluation of behavior, while subjective norms refer to the normative beliefs about a referent's opinion (Roh, Seok, & Kim, 2022). The beliefs of an individual contribute to attitudes and formulate intentions, which in turn affect behavior (Al-Mamary & Alraja, 2022).

### *Anthropomorphism and Brand Evaluations*

Previous researches suggest that anthropomorphism has numerous positive effects on consumers' judgments and behavior (van den Hende & Mugge, 2014; Wang, Touré-Tillery, & McGill, 2022). Guthrie (1995) argues that in order to explain the non-human world, people tend to humanize as it reduces their fears and increases familiarity. Marketers have since then used this phenomenon, which yielded positive consumer responses. Rhetorical advertisements capture consumers' attention and enhance a positive attitude toward the ad (Delbaere, McQuarrie, & Phillips, 2011). Similarly, anthropomorphism enhances product liking and helps the consumers identify the brand family along with its extension (Huaman-Ramirez et al., 2022; Keaveney et al., 2012).

Furthermore, it pervades human judgment positively by creating an emotional bonding with them (Rauschnabel et al., 2015). For example, people cooperated with the humanized robots compared to the machinery robots (Borau et al., 2021; Kiesler & Jennifer, 2002). Consumers responded likewise with other electronic objects like computers, slot machines, smartphones and cars (Burgoon et al., 2000; Goudey & Bonnin, 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Wonseok et al., 2021). And because of this bonding, people are more reluctant to substitute anthropomorphized products, resulting in greater loyalty (Chandler & Schwarz, 2010; Fazli-Salehi et al., 2022). Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1:* Brand anthropomorphism is positively associated with consumer's brand evaluation: a) attitude toward the brand, b) brand trust, and c) purchase intentions.

### *Implicit Personality Theory*

The term "implicit personality theory" was first introduced by Bruner and Tagiuri (1954) while explaining a person's perception. They were of the view that people perceive based on their attributes. The term introduced was relatively new; however, this concept was already in-debate. This theory proposes that some people believe that personal characteristics are malleable and can be changed, referred to as incremental theorists. Others believe that the individual personality consists of fixed and static traits and are considered entity theorists (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Dweck and his associate have done tremendous work on implicit personality theories. They have shown that these theories influence the judgments of the self. Chiu et al., (1997) explain the concept of this theory in the academic achievement case scenario. They say that those who believe intelligence is a fixed trait (entity theorists) will focus more on analyzing their level of intelligence. Entity theorists will tend to ascribe their achievements based on this trait and will try to evaluate how much intelligence they possess (Jain & Weiten, 2020). Based on limited academic failures, they will generate an opinion about their intelligence level. Contrarily, Incremental theorists believe their intelligence level to be a malleable trait that can be developed or changed (Ikeda et al., 2023). In case of impediments, they will tend to focus more on the other factors mediating the relationship, for instance, the effort put together for academics or the problem-solving strategies, instead of making any self-judgments.

Further, they say that the believers of entity theorists show more propensities to process any stimulus (situation or person) as a fixed trait or being trait evaluations. In contrast, incremental theorists focus less on judgments and more on process variables (Allan et al., 2022). Previous research shows that personality theories presume that personality traits, characteristics, intelligence, and morality are dynamic or static. People make inferences based on these theories and try to explain and predict human behavior (Butler, 2000; Danthony et al., 2020; Hong et al., 1997).

### *Moderating Role of Implicit Theories*

Cognitive and social psychologists have presented a great deal of work (Hong, Chiu, & Dweck, 1995; Hong et al., 1997) showing that the implicit theories of personality play a role in interpreting, explaining, and predicting the human behavior (other's as well as of self). The two theorists influence the evaluation process. In addition, they say that people try to understand others' underlying personality traits with the help of available behavioral information. These theories provide an interpretive framework to process the information and influence an individual's judgments (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995).

Individuals possessing different theories evaluate the target object or phenomenon in different ways. For example, McConnell (2001) discusses that the two theorists differ in processing information about an object, and their theories help them make social judgments naturally. He states that incremental theorists perceive using their memory-based evaluations while entity theorists form impressions online. Further, his studies show that entity theorists make more robust evaluations than incremental ones, where the later are more involved in the situational factors while judging the target (Devi & Mishra, 2023).

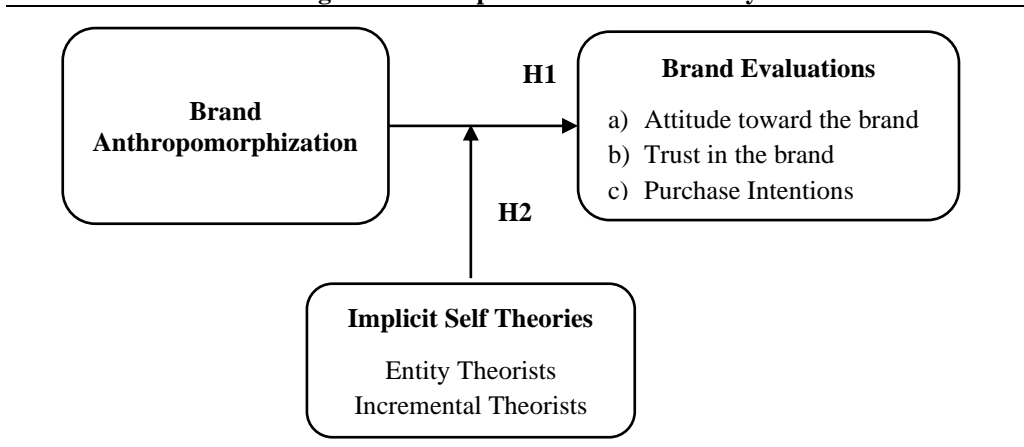
Recent studies have also shown that implicit theories get evoked in marketing activities, and people with incremental and entity theories respond differently. For example, making inferences about brand extensions (Jain & Weiten, 2020; Yorkston et al., 2010), brand personality judgments (Mathur et al., 2012) and when the brand gets involved in any scandal (Puzakova et al., 2013). Theorists do so because they possess different beliefs about the world around them; entity theorists perceive information about the traits, considering them immutable, whereas incremental attribute behavior more to situational factors.

As we have discussed earlier, brand anthropomorphism means presenting the brand as human by giving it human attributes (adding human features or presenting the product in first person rather than the third person). Marketers encourage consumers to think of a brand as a human, and previous researchers have provided evidence that people think of products as human (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Alvarez & Fournier, 2016; Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, when an anthropomorphized brand is presented to consumers, they ascribe it as human and apply their personality theories to make inferences about the target object like other humans (Jeong & Kim, 2021; Puzakova et al., 2013).

As per the framework depicted in Figure 6, we assume that consumers of different theorists' beliefs will perceive the anthropomorphized brand differently. Hence, we suggest that the two theorists will evaluate the same anthropomorphized brand differently and might evaluate the brand less positively because the entity theorists have more rigid and static views about the trait.

*Hypothesis 2:* The relationship between brand anthropomorphism and brand evaluation is moderated by implicit personality theories such that the relation is less favorable for entity theorists.

**Figure 6: Conceptual Model of the Study**





## Research Methodology

The research paper is a correlational and analytical study focusing on individual consumers, using cross-sectional data collection. The study used two sample groups; one reached through email and was provided with self-administered questionnaires, while the other was given questionnaires in person during their classes. The first group was composed of existing students who were given questionnaires in person during their classes. In contrast, the second group was made up of alumni who were emailed the questionnaire. The sampling technique used was multistage sampling, where two public and one private institution were randomly selected from the study population. The sample included existing students and alumni from the past three years. Seven of 67 in-person questionnaires were incomplete or incorrect, leaving 240 usable and completed questionnaires for analysis (120 in-person and 120 electronic).

Data collection for the first group involved sending a customized email with the attached questionnaire to a list of email addresses. Respondents were requested to return the completed questionnaire and were sent two reminder emails in case of non-response. For the second group, questionnaires were delivered to existing students during their classes, and students were provided with black and white copies of advertisements within the questionnaires. Additionally, PowerPoint slides were used to show color copies of advertisements on multimedia to overcome the color effects. In exchange for their participation, respondents were offered partial course credit.

### *Measures*

The measurements of the scales were adopted from prior studies published in the area. Attitude toward the brand was measured using four items on the seven-point semantic scale (1 = unfavorable, bad, unpleasant, dislike, and 7 = favorable, good, pleasant, like) adopted from the study of Puzakova et al. (2013). The trust in the brand has been gauged by 2 items on a seven-point scale (1 = not dependable, unreliable and 7 = dependable, reliable) (Puzakova et al., 2013). Two items estimate consumers' purchase intentions, and the first item was measured on a seven-point Likert scale where 1 = definitely will not buy and 7 = definitely will buy. The second item asked the respondent to rate their likelihood of purchasing the brand (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely) (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012). Brand anthropomorphism was measured by asking the participants to rate the two forms of advertisements on four items using a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much) (Puzakova et al., 2013). Implicit personality theories were measured by adopting the scales items from Levy, Stroessner, and Dweck (1998). The participants rated their extent of agreement with the statements on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). The reliability of the scales has been measured using Cronbach's Alpha. As shown in Table 2, all the variables' reliability falls in the excellent range and is higher than 0.80 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

In this study, the perception of respondents regarding anthropomorphized and non-anthropomorphized brands were measured using two advertisements for Orange Vie and Super Act (Appendix A & B). Minor changes were made to the Orange Vie advertisement, such as adding color effects. Two versions of the Orange Vie advertisement were used, one where the bottle was portrayed as sitting on a beach chair in an anthropomorphized condition and the other where the bottle was placed on a table next to the beach chair in a non-anthropomorphized condition. The layout of the questionnaire was customized to minimize ambiguity, including providing written one-liner explanations above each form of

advertisement and giving a one-liner detail of the brand at the upper left corner of the questionnaire page.

### Data Analysis and Results

Data has been analysed using the "Statistical Package for Social Sciences" (SPSS) IBM software. The data normality was confirmed by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test. Out of these, 16 are male, and 104 are female for the sample collected in-personally, while all are females (120) for electronically collected data. Moreover, most (66%) participants have achieved or are pursuing MS/M.Phil. degree. Only 28% have done master's and 6% are of bachelors. Table 1 exhibits the descriptive statistics of the key study variables. These have been illustrated while considering the advertisement type of the brand, either Non-anthropomorphized (Non-Anthro) or anthropomorphized (Anthro). In addition, these descriptive include the study variables' minimum value, maximum value, mean and standard deviation.

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics of the Variables**

Variables	Advertisement Type	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Implicit Personality Theorists	-	1.13	7.00	4.54	1.16
Anthropomorphism	NonAnthro	1.00	5.00	2.13	1.06
	Anthro	1.00	7.00	5.40	1.41
Attitude Towards the Brand	NonAnthro	1.25	7.00	4.46	1.26
	Anthro	1.00	7.00	5.06	1.65
Trust in the Brand	NonAnthro	1.00	7.00	4.30	1.40
	Anthro	1.00	7.00	4.71	1.58
Purchase Intentions	NonAnthro	1.00	7.00	4.21	1.39
	Anthro	1.00	7.00	4.90	1.72

NonAnthro = Non-Anthropomorphized; Anthro = Anthropomorphized

It is evident from Table 2 that entity theorists are negatively correlated to trust in the brand and purchase intentions for the anthropomorphized brand. Furthermore, anthropomorphism negatively correlates to the attitude towards the brand and purchase intentions of the brand's non-anthropomorphized advertisement. While attitude towards the brand, trust in the brand, and brand purchase intentions in anthropomorphized brand advertisement positively correlate to anthropomorphism. These results provide initial support to our anticipated relationship in H1.

In addition, two demographic variables have been included in this matrix, i.e., employment status and economic class, in Table 2. The employment status shows a positive association with trust in the non-anthropomorphized brand, while economic class is negatively associated with the purchased intentions of the anthropomorphized brand. On the other hand, economic class appears to be associated with anthropomorphism (both non-anthropomorphized brand advertisement condition and anthropomorphized brand advertisement), respectively. Similarly, purchase intentions of the brand and attitude towards the brand are negatively associated with the economic class of the respondents (both for a non-anthropomorphized brand).

Brand anthropomorphism has been manipulated by giving humanized features to the brand (Puzakova et al., 2013). Collectively four advertisements were developed featuring two brands. The first two advertisements were of Orange Juice, where the bottle of Orange Juice was depicted in a beach setting. In the anthropomorphized condition, the bottle is illustrated

as involved in humanized behavior by sitting on a beach chair and wearing a human hat. While on the second non-anthropomorphized advertisement it was placed on a table next to a beach chair. Alternatively, the other brand (smoothie maker) was manipulated as if talking like humans by describing the brand using first person and adding limbs and eyes.

The non-anthropomorphized advertisement contained no limbs to the smoothie makes and was described in third person pronouns. In order to test the manipulation of brand anthropomorphism Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test has been used, as shown in Table 3. The mean values trend is similar in both brands' non-anthropomorphized and anthropomorphized brand conditions. This shows that the choice of brand does not affect brand humanization.

**Table 3**  
**Manipulation Check of Brand Anthropomorphism**

Advertisement	Anthropomorphism				Test of Significance	
	Non-Anthro Brand		Anthro Brand		Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Orange Juice	2.14	1.01	5.30	1.45	.00	***
Smoothie Maker	2.13	1.10	5.49	1.38	.00	***
Both	2.13	1.06	5.40	1.41	.00	***

\*\*\* P < 0.001; NonAnthro = Non-Anthropomorphized; Anthro = Anthropomorphized

Table 4 illustrates that the interaction between anthropomorphism and attitude toward the brand is positive and highly significant. Similarly, Tables 5 and 6 demonstrate highly significant and positive interaction between anthropomorphism and trust in the brand, anthropomorphism and brand purchase intentions, respectively.

It can be observed in Table 4 that the mean value for the anthropomorphized brand (Orange Juice = 5.086; Smoothie Maker = 5.027) is higher than the non-anthropomorphized brand (Orange Juice = 4.505; Smoothie Maker = 4.410), exhibiting a more positive attitude towards the anthropomorphized brand. Here we must note that the values are not much different for the two brands being manipulated (Table 4).

**Table 4**  
**Anthropomorphism and Attitude towards the Brands**

Advertisement	Attitude Towards the Brands				Test of Significance		
	Non-Anthro Brands		Anthro Brands		Paired t-test	Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Orange Juice	4.51	1.21	5.09	1.59	.01	.00	***
Smoothie Maker	4.41	1.31	5.03	1.71	.01	.01	***
Both	4.46	1.26	5.06	1.65	.00	.00	***

\*\*\* P < 0.001; NonAnthro = Non-Anthropomorphized; Anthro = Anthropomorphized

In the same way, as shown in Table 5, the mean value for trust in the anthropomorphized brand is higher than the non-anthropomorphized brand (Orange Juice = 4.704 > 4.292; Smoothie maker = 4.725 > 4.300). The same trend can be seen in brand purchase intentions and anthropomorphism (Table.5). These results presented in Table 4, Table 5, and 6 collectively supported our first hypothesis that anthropomorphism positively affects consumers' brand evaluation.

**Table 2**  
**Correlation Matrix**

Variables	Ad Type	1	2	3	4a	4b	5a	5b	6a	6b	7a	7b
1. Employment Status	-	-										
2. Economic class	-	-.04	-									
3. Implicit Personality Theorists	-	-.02	.04	(.87)								
4. Anthropomorphism	NA	.05	.20**	-.10	(.84)							
	A	-.03	-.16*	-.11	-.25**	(.89)						
5. Attitude Towards the Brand	NA	.12	-.20**	.11	.10	-.14*	(.92)					
	A	-.01	-.01	-.11	-.10	.61**	-.30**	(.96)				
6. Trust in the brand	NA	.17*	-.12	.10	.07	-.06	.69**	-.24**	(.90)			
	A	-.11	.04	-.16*	-.04	.50**	-.32**	.79**	-.26**	(.89)		
7. Purchase Intentions	NA	.03	-.14*	.07	.15*	-.19**	.76**	-.34**	.71**	-.34**	(.91)	
	A	-.13*	-.02	-.15*	-.06	.60**	-.32**	.86**	-.26**	.80**	-.35**	(.95)

\* P < 0.05; \*\* P < 0.01; NA = Non-Anthropomorphized; A = Anthropomorphized;

Notes: The values in parentheses are reliability coefficients

**Table 5**  
**Anthropomorphism and Trust in Brands**

Advertisement	Trust in Brands				Test of Significance		
	Non-Anthro Brands		Anthro Brands		Paired t-test	Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Orange Juice	4.29	1.42	4.70	1.50	.05	.02	**
Smoothie Maker	4.30	1.38	4.73	1.66	.06	.06	*
Both	4.30	1.40	4.72	1.58	.01	.00	***

\*P < 0.05; \*\* P < 0.01; \*\*\* P < 0.001; NonAnthro = Non-Anthropomorphized; Anthro = Anthropomorphized

**Table 6**  
**Anthropomorphism and Purchase Intentions of Brands**

Advertisement	Purchase Intentions				Test of Significance		
	Non-Anthro Brands		Anthro Brands		Paired t-test	Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Orange Juice	4.34	1.29	5.02	1.62	.00	.00	***
Smoothie Maker	4.08	1.47	4.79	1.82	.01	.01	***
Both	4.21	1.39	4.90	1.72	.00	.00	***

\*\*\* P < 0.001; NonAnthro = Non-Anthropomorphized; Anthro = Anthropomorphized

Linear Regression Models have been used further to test the hypothesis and the moderation of the relation. It can be observed in Table 7 that the first model exhibits the control (dummy) variables. The two variables Employment Status and Economic class, has no significant relation on brand evaluation (R2 = 0.012). Model 2 confirms our previous findings using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test that anthropomorphism significantly impacts brand evaluation (R2 = 0.568, p < 0.001) with R2 = 0.328. Therefore, this model provides full support to the first hypothesis.

**Table 7**  
**Linear Regression Models for Brand Evaluation**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Control (Dummy)</i>				
Employment Status	-.11	-.07	-.07	-.08
Economic Class	.02	.09	.092	.10
<i>Independent</i>				
Anthropomorphism		.57***	.55***	.89***
<i>Moderator</i>				
Implicit Personality Theorists			-.08	.23
Implicit Personality Theorists X Anthropomorphism				-.43
R <sup>2</sup>	.01	.33	.34	.34
ΔR <sup>2</sup>		0.32	.01	.01

\*P < 0.05; \*\* P < 0.01; \*\*\*P < 0.001

In Model 3, the moderator Entity Theorists have been added along with anthropomorphism. The model shows that the entity theorists do not significantly impact the anthropomorphism-brand evaluation relation. Similarly, Model 4 illustrates that the entity theorists and anthropomorphism interaction still have no significant impact on the anthropomorphism and brand evaluation relationship. Therefore, our data do not provide support for hypothesis 2.

## Discussion

The study established that consumers who believe more on traits to be consistent than malleable, show less trust in anthropomorphized brands and less likelihood of purchasing that brand compared to non-anthropomorphized brands. Our first hypothesis gets initial support from the correlation matrix. The results indicate that the more the product is anthropomorphized, the more consumers develop a positive attitude towards it; in the same way, the more trust in the brand and the more tendency to purchase that brand as compared to the non-anthropomorphized brand. Similarly, the study also illustrated that anthropomorphism has a highly significant and positive relationship with attitude towards the brand, trust in the brand, and purchase intentions.

The results illustrate that consumers evaluate the anthropomorphized brand more positively than the non-anthropomorphized brand. Consumers show a more positive attitude towards the anthropomorphized brand and develop trust in that brand. Brand anthropomorphism also enhances their intentions to purchase that brand. The study elucidates that brand anthropomorphism has a positive effect on brand evaluation and is very significant. These results conform to previous studies (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Crolig et al., 2022; Ha et al., 2022; Puzakova et al., 2013). The study utilized two hypothetical brands of different categories to rule out any alternative explanation of the results. The results revealed no difference in consumers' perception of advertisements for different products (i.e., having human-like limbs, feet, eyes, and ears). As said, the earlier brand category does not affect anthropomorphism. Here, another point is pertinent to note that the type of brand anthropomorphism also does not affect consumers' perception.

The underlying phenomenon is quite simple and similar to the inductive processes of our daily life, using cognitive operations. As Guthrie (1995) says, humans are afraid of the unknown, so they try to explain strange things or phenomena with the help of known things. For instance, when we meet a person for the first time, our brain starts relating them to the people already known to us; we make inferences and ultimately judgments about that person. Perhaps that's why an old folk saying was written, "first impression is the last one." The word "impression" is essential here, implying that we develop some perception about that person after the first meeting; we make an inference based on our previous knowledge.

Moreover, the results revealed that entity theorists do not significantly impact anthropomorphism and brand evaluation relationships. Therefore, our second hypothesis states, "the relationship of brand anthropomorphism and the brand evaluation is moderated by implicit personality theories such that the relation is less positive for entity theorists." However, the results of the data analysis have not supported the hypothesis. The results reveal that our respondents are more incremental theorists than an entity. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis says the relation (brand anthropomorphism-evaluation) will be less favorable for entity theorists. However, the data turned out to be a little biased. Moreover, Morris and Peng (1994) have indicated in their research that people from collectivist cultures tend to have more total views than individualistic cultures, where people are more entity theorists. Another reason that illustrates our data to consist of more incremental theorists is age. Leclerc and Hess (2007) elucidated that consumers from older age are more likely to be entity theorists.

Whereas our data contains consumers below 25 to 35, they have more incremental beliefs than the other.

### **Implication, Contributions, Limitations and Future Directions**

Our findings present a number of managerial implications. Firstly, managers should consider applying this human analogy to develop the consumers' positive attitude towards the brand while making them trust it and, most importantly, enhancing the likelihood of their purchase. Secondly, the results also posit that managers can get a more positive response from the consumers if they draw their attention toward these surprising and unique human-like features. Further, this study provides evidence that the type of anthropomorphism does not alter its positive effects on consumers. Hence, managers can use any anthropomorphism. Finally, marketers should better understand their targeted consumers' implicit personality view to formulate sound strategies specifically in this Asian region.

The current study entails several contributions to consumer psychology, brand management, and advertising. First, it adds to the literature on brand anthropomorphism and its effects on brand evaluation by consumers. A significant contribution of this study is that it analyses the interplay of an important marketing strategy and consumer psychology along with the outcomes it generates, specifically in a collectivistic culture. It adds empirical evidence to the concept that the consumers belonging to collectivistic culture are believers of incremental theorists. The previous research on implicit theory have seen their role in the acceptance or rejection of brand extensions and consumer relation to scandalized-humanized brands. However, the study at hand is one that investigates the moderation of implicit personality theory on brand anthropomorphism-evaluation relation.

We wish to have grasped some points while conducting research to make it more generalizable. We collected data through a random sampling technique, and our respondents were postgraduates. They also have a marketing knowledge background; this was necessary because we emailed self-administered questionnaires to one of the samples. The sample with these mandatory characteristics turned out to be of female majority. This may inculcate some cognition of female psychology. Hence, future research might consider this factor.

This study opens a new avenue for future research regarding implicit personality theorists. The data collected consisted of incremental theorists as the respondents were younger and belonged to collectivistic culture. This study should be replicated in individualistic culture with older consumers and see what findings might come. The new aspirants should use different instruments and procedures to measure consumers' implicit personalities. Moreover, we used eight items scale to measure the extent of consumers having entity beliefs or incremental. We didn't manipulate or trigger their personality theory beliefs. Future research should address this issue, and they can manipulate or induce these beliefs.

Further, we developed fictitious brand advertisements and compared anthropomorphized and non-anthropomorphized brands. Consumers encounter these brands for the first time and rated them on the evaluation index, but what if they already know the brand or the brand they are strongly associated with gets humanized features/characteristics? Will they rate that brand similarly, or will they need some time to accept that new look? It would be an exciting horizon to look at.

### **Conclusion**

The results of our study show that consumers have a positive view of brands that are given human-like qualities, also known as anthropomorphism. This finding holds true for people with a certain mindset called "incremental theorists." As a result, marketers should

take into account the implicit personality theory of their target audience before creating a brand strategy that uses anthropomorphism. This means they should understand how their audience perceives human-like qualities and tailor their approach accordingly. In addition, advertisements should feature more distinct and well-defined human-like characteristics to create a stronger connection between the brand and the consumer.

#### Appendix A: Normal Vs anthropomorphized Advertisements for Orange Vie



#### Appendix A: Normal Vs anthropomorphized Advertisements for Super Act

***Super Act!***  
*It is the most reliable and leading brand on the market. Its revolutionary Cyclone Creator blending system continuously pushes any mixture down to the blade level, resulting in chunk-free smoothies every time. Super Act's innovative Razor-Tech stainless-steel blades slice through the thickest fruits and vegetables and are guaranteed for life.*

[www.superact.com](http://www.superact.com)



***Hey, my name is Super Act!***  
*I am the most reliable and leading brand on the market. I have a revolutionary Cyclone Creator blending system continuously pushes any mixture down to the blade level, resulting in chunk-free smoothies every time. My innovative Razor-Tech stainless-steel blades slice through the thickest fruits and vegetables and are guaranteed for life.*

[www.superact.com](http://www.superact.com)



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