

Paying More for Victoria than Tonya: The Moderating Effect of Brand Anthropomorphism on Phonetic Symbolism

Brooke Reavey, Yanliu Huang, and Trina Larsen Andras

Abstract Women’s fashion items are frequently sold with women’s names (i.e. the Victoria dress); however, this trend does not occur in men’s fashion very often. When brands humanize the product by naming it with a person’s name (i.e. Lucky Jeans’s Lolita jeans), the brand is subtly anthropomorphized. Previous research finds that there is a universal positive effect for anthropomorphized brands. Additionally, previous literature also finds that there is a gender effect regarding the preference for the sounds of brands, where men like the sound of back vowels (o, a), and women like sound of front vowels (i, e). In a series of two experiments we find, consistent with previous literature, that women prefer brands with front vowels and that men prefer brands with back vowels in non-anthropomorphized ads. Conversely, the effect is reversed in anthropomorphized ads; we find that women prefer brands with back vowels and that men prefer brands with front vowels. We believe that the mechanism influencing this reversal is narrative transportation.

Keywords Anthropomorphized Brands • Advertising • Gender • Phonetic Symbols

References

References Available Upon Request

B. Reavey (✉)
Dominican University, River Forest, IL, USA
e-mail: breavey@dom.edu

Y. Huang • T.L. Andras
Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA, USA
e-mail: yh364@drexel.edu; larsent@drexel.edu