

Product Management in Asia*Product Management in Asia***Automobiles as Anthropomorphized Products:****The Possibilities of Customizing Cars’ “Faces”**

Akinori Ono, Keio University, Japan*

Kenya R. Hirashima, Keio University, Japan

Ray Arai, Keio University, Japan

Shingo Kajita, Keio University, Japan

Daiki Ito, Keio University, Japan

ABSTRACT

Purpose: In recent years, anthropomorphism is a research topic for marketing researchers. Anthropomorphism is a tendency for consumers to attribute human characteristics to nonhuman objects. Some researchers pointed out that consumers anthropomorphize car’s headlights as eyes and their front grilles as a mouth, and indicated that products with slanted eyes and upturned mouth are the most preferred by consumers. However, they considered only a 2 (slanted and arched eyes) × 2 (upturned and downturned mouths) product design with only two factors of product personality (friendliness and aggressiveness). And, they have neglected heterogeneity in preference for product designs. In response to these problems, this study attempts to develop a consumer evaluation model of anthropomorphized products.

Method and Data: In Study 1, we adopt a 4 (slanted, arched, squared, and round eyes) × 3 (upturned, downturned, horizontal mouths) car face design. To identify a set of personality dimensions perceived from car faces, we conducted an exploratory principal factor analysis. In Study 2, to examine the congruity between the consumer’s actual/ideal personality and product personality, we conducted a multiple regression analysis.

Findings: In Study 1, we identified four personality dimensions, *i.e.*, vitality, warmth, intelligence, and uniqueness. In Study 2, we showed that consumers choose cars that have high congruity with ideal or actual self-image.

Key Contributions: Whereas previous research has considered only four patterns of car faces and two kinds of car personality, we considered twelve patterns of car faces and four kinds of car personality. Also, while previous research has assumed homogeneity in preference for the product design, we employed the construct of congruity between product image and self-concept and assumed the relationship between congruity and preference. By doing so, we contribute to developing the research field of product anthropomorphism.

*Corresponding author <akinori@keio.jp>. References available upon request.

