
HUMOROUS ANTHROPOMORPHIC TV ADS: A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS USING COLLECTIVIST AND INDIVIDUALIST ELEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how humorous anthropomorphic advertising designs are used in TV Ads in the context of collectivist and individualist elements. The research was conducted on ads from five different countries affected by their national cultures. In particular, the study identifies the characters' use in anthropomorphic-humorous adverts in the context of collectivism and individualism dimensions of national culture, construing their behavior and actions in the ad. The research employs a content analysis of 88 TV ads from five countries: France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, and the USA. As a result, two categories were determined for individualism: interiority and superiority, and three categories for collectivism: affiliation, dedication, and social distance. Based on the results, a hypothetical model was constructed.

Keywords: Humor, Collectivism, Individualism, Anthropomorphism, Advertising

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MİZAHİ ANTROPOMORFİK TV REKLAMLARI: KOLEKTİVİST VE BİREYCİ ÖĞELER BAĞLAMINDA KÜLTÜRLERARASI BİR ANALİZ

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, kolektivist ve bireyci unsurlar bağlamında TV reklamlarındaki mizahi antropomorfik reklam tasarımlarının nasıl kullanıldığını arařtırmaktadır. Çalışma, ulusal kültürlerinden etkilenen beş farklı ülkeden reklamlar üzerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma, özellikle, ulusal kültürün kolektivizm ve bireysellik boyutları bağlamında karakterlerin antropomorfik-mizahi reklamlarda kullanımını tanımlayarak, reklamdaki davranış ve eylemlerini yorumlamaktadır. Arařtırma, Fransa, Almanya, İtalya, Türkiye ve ABD olmak üzere beş ülkeden 88 TV reklamının içerik analizi üzerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Arařtırma sonuçları, bireycilik için iki kategori ortaya koymaktayken (interiority & superiority), kolektivizm için üç kategori (affiliation, dedication, & social distance) ortaya koymuştur. Çalışma sonuçlara dayanarak varsayımsal bir model oluşturularak tamamlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mizah, kolektivizm, antropomorfizm, bireycilik, reklam

1. Introduction

Humor is a universal tool to achieve effective marketing efforts for almost all companies worldwide. Although considered a universal notion, humor is also strongly influenced by cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes, and values (Alden et al., 1993). What is funny in one culture may not be the same in another (Crawford and Gregory, 2015; Cruthirds et al., 2012; Weiberger and Gulas, 1992; Lee and Lim, 2008). It may even be considered dull or offensive in another country with a different approach to humorous elements due to their culture and traditions (Alden et al., 2000; Spielmann and Delvert, 2014). Consequently, humor is also a culture-bound element for advertising activities despite being considered a universal fact. The use of humor is considered a key success factor by most marketing operatives and managers, and therefore, it is common in global advertising strategies (Hatzithomas et al., 2011).

Anthropomorphism describes the human tendency to attribute human characteristics, emotions, and/or behavior to non-human entities (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007; Waytz et al., 2010). The attribution of human characteristics results in observing a human in non-human forms. Anthropomorphism has been used worldwide in cartoons, comic books, fables, manga, and video games. Marketers have practiced anthropomorphic representations of products, brands, and spokescharacters for at least a century (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007; Brown, 2010; Delbaere et al., 2011; Wan, 2018; Waytz et al., 2014). Despite some global anthropomorphized entities, e.g., Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse, the tendency to anthropomorphize differs due to cultural differences, norms, experience, education, cognitive reasoning styles, and attachment to human and non-human agents (Epley et al., 2007). Consequently, although anthropomorphism is commonly considered a universal trait worldwide, it is culturally grounded (Brown, 2010; Veer, 2013).

While the effects of humor in advertising are well-known, there have been far fewer studies on the use of anthropomorphism. However, there has been an exponential growth of computer animation studies and animation software in recent years, providing opportunities for marketers to use animated anthropomorphic elements while decreasing costs. At the same time, advancements in computer technologies have increased the media access rate of consumers around the world. There are different individualist and collectivist structures in the internal structures of the countries. The main starting point of the study is to determine and classify the individualist-collectivist elements in ads to have a deeper understanding of their use in the context of anthropomorphism, rather than evaluating individualism and collectivism as opposites in a spectrum. This study aims to explore humorous anthropomorphic marketing in different national cultural contexts. The individualistic/collectivistic tendency has always been a key phenomenon for studies in cultural context phenomena (Oyserman et al., 2002). The individualistic/collectivistic level serves as a useful tool to better understand a particular country's culture. This study examines the use of humorous anthropomorphic ads through

the lenses of national differences related to individualism and collectivism. First, an extensive literature research was given. Then, the content analysis process is presented with results and a brief discussion regarding the results and their practical and theoretical implications. We believe the results will provide insights for marketers to achieve better use of anthropomorphic-humorous advertising.

2. Literature Review

There are many cross-cultural studies regarding humorous ads, which mainly focus on the frequency of humorous ads, the types of humor used, the context of humor, and the content itself (Alden et al., 1993; Caillat and Mueller, 1996; Cruthirds et al., 2012; Hanna et al., 1994; Hoffman et al., 2014;). There are also studies on cultural adaptations in humorous advertising in terms of content, music, visual elements, product groups in the context of involvement, and the necessity of adapting humorous advertisements to different cultures (Benson and Perry, 2006; Cutler et al., 1992; De Pelsmacker et al., 2002; Geuens and De Pelsmacker, 1998; Kamins et al., 1991; Laroche et al., 2011; Toncar, 2001; Weinberger and Spotts, 1989). A lack of understanding of differences in perceiving humor will cause misunderstandings, resulting in communication issues with consumers. Linguistic differences and culture-specific notions (Alden et al., 2000; Spielmann and Delvert, 2014) may result in a negative attitude towards the ad, product, and/or brand (Cruthirds et al., 2012). For example, offensive elements in humorous ads may be considered repulsive in collectivist cultures (Crawford and Gregory, 2015). Likewise, in Confucianist cultures such as China, dignity and social formality are stressed, so public displays of humor, such as a loud laughter, tend to make Chinese people feel nervous and uncomfortable (Yue et al., 2016). Owing to cultural differences, it is often necessary to adapt humor across countries with unique cultural elements (Crawford and Gregory, 2015; Laroche et al., 2011).

2.1 Collectivism/Individualism and Advertising

Geert Hofstede presents dimensions for national cultures in his well-known studies and claims that countries differ based on these dimensions (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 2011). One of the most fundamental of these dimensions is the individualism/collectivism dimension (Hofstede, 2011). Individualistic cultures have loose interpersonal ties, and people feel responsible almost only for themselves and their immediate family. On the other hand, in collectivistic cultures, individuals are born into cohesive in-groups that often include the extended family, where members are incredibly loyal and oppose other outgroups. Hofstede presents the individualism/collectivism dimension as a linear structure, positioning countries in an individualistic-collectivistic axis. The popularity of diverse cultures in terms of individualism prompted Oyserman et al. (2002) to conduct a meta-analysis of related literature. They found that individualism is associated with personal autonomy, self-fulfillment, and small primary groups focused on certain individuals. In contrast, collectivism suggests an ingroup

orientation with an ascribed social status, where sacrifices for the common good and maintenance of harmonious relationships reign. The researchers also argue that it is best to view individualism and collectivism as domain-specific constructs rather than conceptual opposites.

Alden et al. (1993) and Toncar (2001) performed a global cultural conceptualization of ads focused on the power distance element, claiming incongruities could occur in different national cultures. Rustogi et al. (1996) examined the responses to humorous stimuli shaped by personal values in a multicultural study. Steenkamp (2001) focused on national culture in international marketing, emphasizing a unified structure with Hofstede's cultural conceptualization and Schwartz's scheme. All these studies show that culture is a key element in understanding consumers' perception of ads.

Several inter-cultural studies have examined humor in ads in individualism and collectivism (Gudykunst, 1998; Hatzithomas et al., 2011; Rustogi et al., 1996; Schwartz and Bardi, 2001; Toncar, 2001). Findings suggest that persuasion differs across cultures and consumer segments (Lee and Lim, 2008). For example, in individualist cultures, humorous ads are observed to have more dominant messages (Hatzithomas et al., 2011), direct communication (Taylor et al., 1997), and less humorous characters than in collectivist cultures (Alden et al., 1993). Hoffman et al. (2014) find that individualistic people can resolve conflicting messages with more enthusiasm than collectivist counterparts, who are more unlikely to accept ambiguity. Alternatively, collectivistic countries favor indirect communication approaches that are creative and informative. In collectivistic countries with high uncertainty-aversion attitudes, ads containing non-offensive humorous elements can be useful tools to deliver the desired message to the target group efficiently (Hatzithomas et al., 2011). Beneficial humor styles such as affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor are also positively related to collectivism (Chen et al., 2013; Cruthirds et al., 2012). Notwithstanding individualism/collectivism, humor in ads may also depend on other cultural dimensions, such as uncertainty avoidance (Hatzithomas et al., 2011).

After all, studies regarding consumer perceptions in different cultures for humorous ads seem quite a few (Alden et al., 1993; Cruthirds et al., 2012). Moreover, little is known about which type of humor is more effective in countries with different cultural norms (Laroche et al., 2011). Understanding the basic functioning of humorous activity in various cultures is essential in developing effective advertising strategies (Hoffmann et al., 2014) because national culture's influence on humorous ads is relatively strong (De Pelsmacker and Geuens, 1998; Toncar, 2001). What is funny and why may change depending on cultural values (Nevo et al., 2001). Consequently, it is necessary to decide if the humor phenomenon used in advertisements can be standardized or if it should be adapted to cultures (Hoffmann et al., 2014).

2.2 Humor, Anthropomorphism, and Advertising

Anthropomorphism is mainly based on attributing human features and/or ideas to non-human living/inanimate objects (Waytz et al., 2010), and its perception by humans who have such a tendency in their daily life (Başfıncı and Çilingir, 2015; Delbaere et al., 2011). Anthropomorphized characters may affect consumers' perceptions of ads, affecting products and brands (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007; Connell, 2013). Attributing human characteristics to non-human objects may serve as a powerful tool to communicate with lower-age consumer segments (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2004). Anthropomorphism is also an effective way to capture consumers' attention to ads (Waytz et al., 2010). Anthropomorphism affects consumers' mental processes (Hart and Royne, 2017) triggers certain emotions to interact with brands (Puzokova et al., 2017), with positive emotions relieving the audience (Tam, 2014). Of course, in the intercultural context, consumers' knowledge of the humorous character and cultural values is essential to respond to anthropomorphic elements (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014). In an intercultural context, studies on common consumption elements emphasize global consumer culture (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007; De Mooij, 2010). Lee and Lim (2008) reviewed whether consumers of different cultures respond differently to the ads in the context of incongruity and found a relationship with the uncertainty avoidance factor from Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Chen et al. (2013) have found a positive correlation between (1) self-enhancing humor and horizontal individualism and (2) aggressive humor and vertical individualism. Kirsh and Kuiper (2003) evaluated the humor dimensions of individualism in the context of personality traits.

Anthropomorphism is one of the most prevalent ways to create humor. Despite the risk of being perceived as 'juvenile' (Yeo et al., 2020), anthropomorphism may offer lots of opportunities for advertising humor with no prior knowledge requirement (Yeo et al., 2021). Anthropomorphic artificial identities help raise positive intentions, and mirth (Karimova and Goby, 2020) helps build positive perceptions. Aware of all these notions, brands use anthropomorphized elements in their ad campaigns to help their advertising efforts.

Anthropomorphized entities are also used universally in humorous advertisements. The underlying rationale for using anthropomorphism is that by attaching human qualities to non-human creatures and objects, anthropomorphism encourages a social or emotional connection or kinship with the product or brand (Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008; Delbaere et al., 2011; Epley et al., 2007; Epley, 2018; Veer, 2013). Given people's natural attentiveness to human-like cues, the use of anthropomorphism provides an effective way to increase attention (Waytz et al., 2014), generating a link between the symbolic meaning of the animated object and the brand or product (Miles and Ibrahim, 2013), thereby imbuing the brand or product with personality (Delbaere et al., 2011). Anthropomorphism is often used for low-involvement products where little emotional connection exists

naturally (Phillips, 1996). Recent research has also found that socially excluded consumers are more likely to choose humanized products over their unhumanized counterparts (Chen et al., 2017; Wan, 2018;). Anthropomorphism appeals can also enhance the brand and/or advertisement, increasing purchase intention.

Both humor and anthropomorphism have been the focus of marketing research studies. Most of the findings suggest that consumers are more likely to prefer anthropomorphized products (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007; Hede and Watne, 2013; Portal et al., 2018). A key underlying assumption is that endowing products and brands with human traits is strategically advantageous as consumers may be more likely to prefer anthropomorphized products (Wan, 2018). Much of the research has been done with anthropomorphized products where the appearance resembles expected human physical features, e.g., the grille of a car resembles a person's smile (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007). Similarly, brands can also be anthropomorphized with human-like traits or personalities (e.g., trustworthiness, sophistication, excitement) (Cohen, 2014; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). The outcome of anthropomorphized brands' use includes increased brand personality attributions, increased loyalty to the product/brand (Karanika and Hogg, 2020), and increased emotional connections between consumers and the brand (Delbaere et al., 2011). The anthropomorphism phenomenon's power attributes personality and specific meanings to products and brands (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). Finally, by anthropomorphizing spokescharacters or mascots, these entities are seen as capable of evaluation and judgment and can serve as a source of normative social influence (Waytz et al., 2014).

3. Methodology

3.1. Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to observe the anthropomorphic animative discourses used in humorous ads and determine the main categories in the context of collectivist and individualist cultural dimensions.

3.2. Instrumentation and Coding Procedure

This study was carried out on TV ads from YouTube, the main sample framework of this study. In recent years, companies have also been broadcasting TV ads on YouTube to gain visibility on social media. In this context, we have accessed the ads via YouTube, taking the ease of access into account. As a result of consumers' interaction with the ads on the respective platform, relatively more popular TV ads were determined and included in the analysis.

The ads were chosen using several criteria. First, only the ads of domestic products/brands were selected, and in this way, the domestic perception was explored. In contrast, products/brands with a global perception were excluded from the analysis. On the other hand, linguistic differences were considered in the cultural

comparison. Also, ads only with domestic languages are preferred to provide context-geography unity. Searching for clues of individualistic and collectivistic notions, a wide array of ads were watched based on the search results on YouTube. The authors also prioritized ads that are prioritized by the YouTube algorithm. As a result, the analysis was carried out on 88 TV ads from five countries using the abovementioned criteria. The country distribution of ads was Turkey (27), Germany (14), the USA (15), Italy (16), and France (16). The total duration of the reviewed television advertisements was 3325 seconds (55.4 min). Television ads were found via YouTube channels for two months. Ads include forty animals, five fruits/vegetables, and twenty-five animated characters. Besides, the product itself was identified as a humorous anthropomorphic entity eighteen times. Also, the products' sectoral distribution is as follows: forty-seven food products, ten cleaning products, eighteen services, three technology products, and ten household products.

The multi-model discourse analysis by O'Halloran (2011) was used as a reference point for his study. We have conducted a content analysis regarding the communication patterns between anthropomorphized entities in ads and observed the use of humorous elements in the context of collectivism and individualism. Ads were selected from countries with diverse scores on the individualist-collectivist scale developed by Hofstede (1980).

Items from the Collectivism/Individualism scale of Oyserman et al. (2002) were used to classify the ads. The scale is based on a meta-analysis of 20 years of individualism/collectivism studies. In this study, the items have been used as a coding schema to understand the underlying meaning of the actions/scenes in the ads. Also, a couple of additions were derived from Hofstede (1980). We investigate individualism and collectivism as two different orientations rather than a bi-polarity of a single dimension. As a result, the main scale items are listed below:

Table 1. Coding Schema for Individualism, Collectivism

Main Themes	Sub-Themes
Individualism	
<i>Independency</i>	Freedom, self-sufficiency, and control over one's life
<i>Goals</i>	Striving for one's own goals, desires, and achievements
<i>Competition</i>	Personal competition and winning
<i>Uniqueness</i>	Focus on one's unique, distinctive qualities
<i>Privacy</i>	Thoughts and actions private from others
<i>Self-know</i>	Knowing oneself; having a strong identity
<i>Direct communication</i>	Clearly articulating one's wants and needs
Collectivism	
<i>Relation</i>	Considering close others an integral part of the self
<i>Belongingness</i>	Wanting to belong to and enjoy being part of groups
<i>Duty</i>	The duties and sacrifices of being a group member entail
<i>Harmony</i>	Concern for group harmony and that groups get along
<i>Advice</i>	Turning to close others for decision help
<i>Context</i>	Self-changes according to context or situation
<i>Hierarchy</i>	Focus on hierarchy and status issues
<i>Group</i>	Preference for group work

3.3. Content Analysis

The main communication message for each ad was determined using the table above in the content analysis process to determine each humorous element's main dimensions and items. Hence, we attribute much significance and meaning to the words, statements/sentences, and shared discourse. The discursive relativity principle applied in those propositions is influenced by previous schemes concentrating on the context (van Dijk, 1997). We have observed that anthropomorphism in TV ads can occur in three different ways:

- Attributing human characteristics to the product itself
- Attributing human characteristics to living/non-living beings related to the product/brand
- Attributing human characteristics to an animated mascot or a symbol

The actions, quotes, and rhetoric of anthropomorphic characters represent individualistic elements examined for each ad. Subtle or overt features of anthropomorphism elements were also considered in advertisements. As a result, the following seven sub-themes under two categories were determined for individualism based on the content analysis of the advertisements of five countries:

• **Interiority**

Three themes emerged for the interiority category as a result of ad analysis.

- Priority on individual life (Germany, USA, France)
- Happiness with one's self (Turkey, Italy, Germany, France)
- Making one's life fun (Germany, France)

The focal point of these sub-bases is defined as Interiority. Themes “individual life,” “happiness,” and “entertainment” seem to be in parallel with the themes of independence, direct communication, and goals within the framework of individualistic culture and expand them. Situations where an animative character finds fun on its own and the cases that make its life enjoyable with its jokes can be specified as examples of this theme.

• **Superiority**

The second category for individualism consists of four sub-themes reflecting the elements of competition, uniqueness, privacy, and self-know in the coding scheme. The sub-themes are:

- Competing with the others (Turkey, Germany, France)
- Priority on individual goals (Turkey, Germany, USA, France)
- Superiority to others (Turkey, Germany, USA, France)
- The focus on self beauty (Turkey, Italy, USA)

Situations where the character prioritizes its beauty and care, where the characters in the same team compete for higher scores, and the character claims and expresses its expertise in the field of study, can be given as examples of this theme.

Based on these results, we observe a sense of self-supremacy/priority on individual goals based on competition in individualist elements. Self/priority on own goals feature supports the idea that advertising messages should be compatible with the self-concept (Hosany and Martin, 2012). Two basic facts can be noted in the distinction of countries in the context of individualism. Germany and France seem to prioritize making one's own life more enjoyable. Considering that individualism has a remarkable mediating effect on the relations between the concepts of happiness and entertainment (Joshanloo and Jarden, 2016), it can be said that Germany and France see individualism as a tool in the context of their country's culture. Considering that happiness is an important indicator of individualism (Lu et al., 2001), it can be said that these two countries contain the building blocks of individualism. Findings from Turkey show that consumers attach importance to comparison with society and positioning themselves according to society. This

situation can be interpreted as an indication that individuals position themselves externally in the context of social desirability and act according to society's judgments. French and Turkish consumers attaching importance to status symbols in advertisements (Cutler et al., 1997) supports the findings.

Also, for collectivism, three main categories were identified. The behavior and discourse of anthropomorphic characters representing collectivist elements were examined in ads, and the following sub-elements were also determined for each category:

• **Affiliation**

The first category for collectivism is named Affiliation and consists of six sub-themes. The themes listed below mainly focus on happiness being together overlapped with Relation, Harmony, and Advice themes in the coding scheme. Sub-themes for the Affiliation category are:

- Happy to be together (Turkey, USA)
- Friendship (Turkey, Germany, France)
- Glad to be a member of the group (Turkey, Germany, Italy, France)
- Enjoying group activities (Turkey, USA, Italy, France)
- Asking the group for a recommendation (Turkey, Italy, France)
- Group action (Turkey, Germany, USA, Italy, France)

The acceptance of the common reality by the whole group, the celebrations held together, the conversations and celebrations around a table, the activities enjoyed together for business life, the entertainment and activities accomplished as a family, transforming human love words and sincerity indicators on animative characters and benevolent feelings towards humans are observed as examples in advertisements.

• **Group Dedication**

Another collectivist dimension, group dedication, includes sub-themes such as group monitoring and common values. This theme overlaps with Belongingness, Duty, Context, and Group themes in the coding scheme. Ad observations include animative characters joining forces with the team, empathizing with and helping a character with human characteristics, resolving conflicts, uniting around a common value for the group, uniting against outside threats, and preparing a New Year's gift as a team. Sub-themes for the Group Dedication category are listed down below.

- Overall dedication (Turkey, Germany, France)
- Helping the group (Turkey, Italy, France)
- Sacrifice for the group (Turkey, USA, France)
- Following the group and the group leader (Turkey, Italy, France)
- Priority on shared values (Turkey, USA, Italy, France)
- Teamwork (Turkey, USA, Italy, France)

• **Social Distance**

The last dimension, reflecting the collectivist culture framework named Social Distance, was matched to Hierarchy, one of the themes in the coding scheme. Ad examples related to this dimension are an animated character giving directives to other characters, situations where the whole group approves of one's superiority with verbal expressions, and one member of the group shown to be superior and has a higher status than the others.

- Superior-subordinate relationship (Turkey, Italy)
- Chain of command (Turkey, Germany, France)
- Status (Turkey, France)

Collectivism assumes that all individuals are responsible for the group's actions (Finkelstein, 2011; Realo et al., 1997), directing all members to be involved in the group's actions. Turkey, Italy, and France are predominantly included in all subgroups to form a common cluster in this context. In addition, the emphasis on humor in French advertisements (Biswas et al., 1992) supports these findings. The fact that collectivist societies display a more distant attitude towards outgroups (Johnson and Van de Vijver, 2003) explains the issue of devotion to one's group. While individuals with individualistic cultures show themselves in the foreground and personal gains take place in group work, collectivists focus on the dynamism and interest of the group (Wagner, 1995). The fact that Turkey is included in all sub-elements shows the depth of the level of collectivism. In contrast, the fact that the USA is less involved indicates that the individualist logic is dominant in collectivist actions. In a collectivist structure, it is an important input to set a distance from the outgroup by giving importance to its ingroup dynamics according to group norms (Jetten et al., 2002).

Results suggest that collectivism is driven by adaptation and sacrifices made for the group. These classifications, of course, may vary based on countries' national cultural elements (Moon and Chan, 2005; Nevo et al., 2001). Collectivism focuses on the interconnectedness of individuals bound into tight groups and the primacy of group needs over individuals' (Chen et al., 2013; Kazarian and Martin, 2006).

Sacrifice for the group element is an expected feature in ‘vertical collectivist’ cultures in which individuals sacrifice their own goals for the group (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). This finding is particularly important in the advertising context to make consumers feel like a part of the brand or group. Collectivist elements can support consumption by providing social interaction with the desired group by strengthening the sense of belonging. Advertising messages that unite the community can create a sense of commitment through shared values in mainstream consumer products for a broad audience.

4. Discussion

Ad campaigns’ success depends on efficient transmission and delivering the right message, and multinational enterprises should adapt their advertising campaigns to cultural structures. Today, the rapid digitalization process made individuals value the social aspects of life more and reflect this in consumption behavior (Cova, 1997). Humor is undoubtedly a powerful communication tool. Humorous anthropomorphic elements shape and soften consumers’ attitudes towards brands and products in advertising communication. In this study, the spokescharacters’ behaviors in humorous anthropomorphic television ads were examined, and the main notions that Express collectivist/individualistic values were determined. Consumers have an attitude toward using ads and brands as a social validation tool (Fransen et al., 2015). Here, the use of humorous elements in daily life as a part of social cohesion is essential. In particular, humorous-anthropomorphic advertising messages should be aligned with the sense of self in a global or national context and contains assessments regarding self-enhancing humor (Cruthirds et al., 2012).

Animism is a cultural phenomenon that tends to reflect life better and is studied similarly to one’s own life (Spatola et al., 2021). It is emphasized that the cultural background is important for consumers to prefer products with animal content with an anthropomorphic context (Velasco et al., 2021). It is stated that some superstitious and mystical beliefs are related to these attitudes (Sierra et al., 2015). In the context of anthropomorphism, the social distances between countries toward nature are also important; proximity to nature and urbanization may be decisive (Luis et al., 2021). There may even be attitudes towards alienation from one’s reality and developing a new sense of belonging through anthropomorphic elements (Grasso et al., 2020). Results show that the cultural structures of the consumers in the advertisements merge or diverge in certain sub-fields.

The reflections and patterns in showing the superiority over anthropomorphic elements relate to one’s inner world and self-thinking (Wen Wan et al., 2017). The superiority finding obtained in the study becomes evident as an inference consistent with previous studies. With the evaluation effect perceptually represented by the anthropomorphic anime elements (Huang et al., 2020), the desired understanding of the advertising message can be used as a cultural response. The effect of interaction over social distance as a determining factor (Zhu et al., 2019) supports

the finding of social distance perception specific to collective cultures. On the other hand, as a more comforting phenomenon, the theoretical perspective on the role of anthropomorphism in the bonding process (Wan and Chen, 2021) can be considered a response to the pursuit of happiness and pleasure in individual cultures. Elements such as friendship, teamwork, and cooperation, which are examined in the content analysis of individual cultures, are considered mediating values with moral and relational contexts (Rokeach, 1973). Our findings also parallel the conceptualization that anthropomorphic elements strengthen mediator values (Kwok et al., 2018).

Consumers with high individualistic characteristics have a high attachment level to objects and instrumentalize them (Hirschman, 2003). Since anthropomorphism functions as a representation of personalization and self (Kwak et al., 2017), it refers to an individual quality by its nature. In their study, Gelbrich et al. (2012) found that the level of individualism increases the effect of absurd approaches (including anthropomorphism) in advertising. At this point, individuals' motivation to follow more specific elements is effective in an individualistic context. On the other hand, anthropomorphism increases the connection level of individuals who are relatively distant from society with the object via instrumental and emotional values (Kwok et al., 2018). Considering that individualist societies are more distant about attachment than collectivist societies (Frías et al., 2014), the effect of anthropomorphic elements on consumers can be considered higher in collectivist societies. The collectivist perspective can positively affect the acceptance of ads with anthropomorphic elements in the context of social affirmation and acceptance (Awanis et al., 2017). Beyond that, collectivistic elements may strongly influence individuals' self and relationships between the consumer and the brand (Lin and Huang, 2018), enabling mental implications as a translator of the communication system in certain cultures (Wood, 2019). Also, individuals approach the ads with anthropomorphism-related elements with a sense of social inclusion (Yang et al., 2020), which affects consumer preferences as an indicator of social exclusion/acceptance (Chen et al., 2017). This quality can provide a sense of attachment in societies with high individualistic characteristics. Another issue is whether or not anthropomorphism has an intermediary role depending on the goal of differentiation (Puzakova and Aggarwal, 2018). In this case, the need for differentiation is more specific to individualist societies. It should also be noted that anthropomorphic elements focus on and support consumers' decisions in the purchasing process (Puzakova et al., 2013). In this respect, using a collectivist structure, an effort to show the product more attractive in ads to create a buying trend towards the product or brand (Shao et al., 2020; Wen Wan et al., 2017) is observed.

On the other hand, in individualist cultures, consumers' desires are more important than the groups, and they want to express themselves while being unique (Watkins and Liu, 1996). Here, unique expressions and discourses that encourage consumption focused on specific goals impact individualist consumers. Personalized product

offerings for consumers who want to feel unique and valuable can be realized through individualist messages. At the same time, advertising motifs that involve the sharing of common values and relations with the group can direct the sense of belonging and the consumption patterns that reflect harmony. The main constraint for this paper is the number of ads we could reach. Future research with a crowded ad pool will provide more insight into the topic. We believe that individualist-collectivist attitudes of individuals will continue to offer a remarkable analysis ground in the context of anthropomorphism. For future research, the analyses to be carried out in similar country clusters and the advertising on digital media to be diversified by ad type will also contribute to the literature.

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