

A Bibliometric Analysis of Brand Anthropomorphism Research: Trends, Themes and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT

The paper is a bibliometric review of the literature on brand anthropomorphism, which is an emerging and rapidly growing concept in marketing and whereby brands are given human qualities. Data was extracted from the Scopus database and the analysed using R Biblioshiny. The research articles analyzed were 530 articles published in 1921-2026 and revealed the publication trends, evolution of the theme, authorship trends, and research contributions globally. It has been found that, over the past years, publications have increased significantly, especially since 2017 as it demonstrates the relevance of anthropomorphic branding in digital and technology-driven settings. Thematic analysis highlights key research areas such as anthropomorphism, brand anthropomorphism, and marketing, with particular emphasis on social media interactions and influencer marketing. The study also identifies significant nations as contributors, with United States, China, and India leading in research output. The findings provide guidance for future research on brand anthropomorphism and are rich in terms of comprehending the discipline's intellectual foundation

Keywords: Anthropomorphism, Bibliometric Analysis, Brand Anthropomorphism, Brand Personality, Consumer Behavior, Influencer Marketing, Marketing, R Biblioshiny, Scopus Database

INTRODUCTION:

In the current competitive marketing environment, brands are becoming more human-like to create emotional bonds with consumers (Marmat, 2023). Brand anthropomorphism is a concept which helps companies to increase consumer engagement, trust, and loyalty by making brands seem more likable and human-like (Zaveri and Wilk, 2024). As digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and social media proliferate, anthropomorphic branding has gained significant attention in the academic and practical domains.

Regardless of the increased interest, brand anthropomorphism research is still fragmented across various themes, including consumer psychology, branding, and digital marketing (Chaturvedi et al., 2025). It requires a systematic study, which will help to comprehend the evolution, trend and the intellectual framework of this field (Pramesti et al., 2025). Thus, the study employs a bibliometric approach to synthesis of studies on brand anthropomorphism.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 1 presents

the Introduction, review of literature related to brand anthropomorphism and objectives of the study. Section 2 explains the research methodology, including search strategy, PRISMA framework, and analytical tools used for the study. Section 3 discusses the data analysis and key findings, including publication trends, thematic mapping, and country-wise contributions. Section 4 concludes the study, followed by practical implications in Section 5 and future research directions in Section 6.

The idea of brand anthropomorphism has attracted a lot of scholarly attention; foundational research has established how it is conceptualised, measured, and affects customer impressions. A scale assessing brand anthropomorphism, which is defined as the degree to which branded objects are viewed as human-like entities, was first empirically validated by (Guido et al., 2015). This assessment approach has served as a foundation for later studies examining the ways in which anthropomorphism affects different consumer-brand relationships.

Studies that concentrate on social media environments have emphasised the social aspect of brand

anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism on social networking platforms improves social presence and strengthens consumer-brand interactions, as shown by (Kim et al., 2020). Anthropomorphism has been shown to have a beneficial impact on consumer-brand identification and active engagement, particularly in corporate brand settings (Tuškej et al., 2017).

Brand anthropomorphism is based on psychological theories that explain why people attribute human characteristics to non-human entities. (Greilich et al., 2025). This concept has been greatly applied in marketing to enhance the brand personality, emotional attachment, and consumer-brand relations. Past research has indicated that anthropomorphic brands could increase trust, brand recall and positively affect purchase intention.

Recent literature sources have expanded the scope of brand anthropomorphism to include digital relationships, especially with reference to social media, virtual influencers, and AI-mediated communication (Husain, 2025). The anthropomorphism and its role in consumer engagement and brand loyalty have also been studied (Vernuccio et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the available literature is scattered across different domains, and it is not easy to identify the key trends and gaps in research.

Bibliometric analyses make it easier to identify gaps and developing themes, which are essential for directing future lines of inquiry. Understanding the dynamic field of brand anthropomorphism study requires the use of bibliometric analyses, which offer insights into its historical development, current areas of interest, and prospective future developments.

Bibliometric analysis offers systematic way of mapping intellectual landscape of a research area. Although a number of studies have investigated branding and consumer behavior, very few research has considered the bibliometric analysis of brand anthropomorphism (Tanwar and Verma, 2024). This research addresses this gap by doing a thorough review of the literature using Scopus Database.

The current study focuses on conducting a bibliometric review of the studies on brand anthropomorphism. The objectives are:

1. To examine the overall research performance and development patterns in the brand anthropomorphism field.
2. To analyze the thematic development as well as research trends in the field using keyword frequency over time and thematic mapping.
3. To determine patterns of international contributions to research.

Research Methodology

The Scopus database, which is well known for having extensive coverage of high quality peer reviewed literature, was used to gather the data for the bibliometric analysis. A combination of search keywords and Boolean operators was used to formulate a structured search string to ensure extensive retrieval of relevant studies on brand anthropomorphism.

The search string was developed to include the range of interpretations and related concepts of anthropomorphism in branding such as humanization and personification. The final search string was as follows:

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TITLE-ABS-KEY ( ( "brand anthropomorph*" ) OR ( anthropomorph* AND brand* ) OR ( brand* AND ( "human-like" OR "human like" OR "humanization" OR "humanisation" OR "personification" OR "human traits" OR "human characteristics" ) ) ) OR ( "brand humanization" OR "brand humanisation" OR "humanized brand*" OR "humanised brand*" OR "humanizing brand*" OR "humanising brand*" ) OR ( "brand personification" OR "brand as a person" OR "brand as a human" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) )
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On January 27, 2026, the above search string was used and the search was limited to the title, abstract, and keywords fields to ensure maximum coverage. Only English-language documents were extracted using the additional filters, and the document type was restricted to articles.

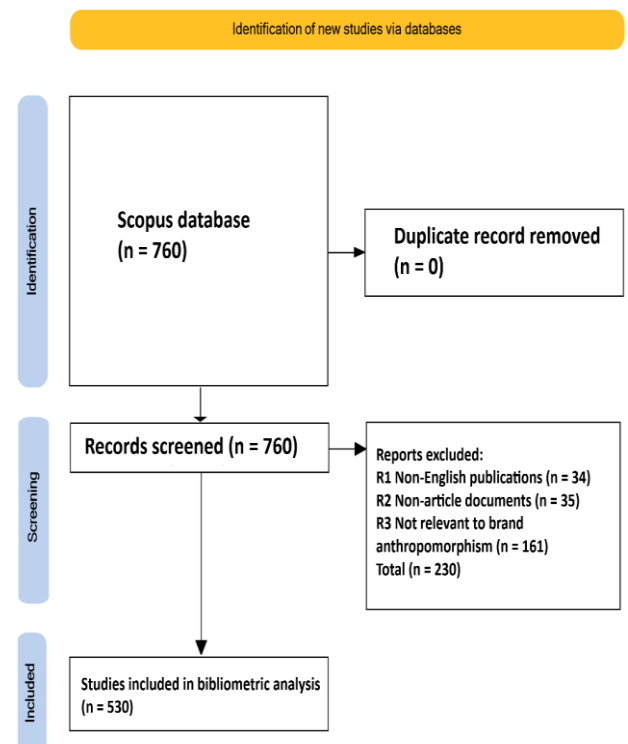


Figure 1: PRISMA Framework (Source: R biblioshiny)

The research adopts the PRISMA framework to provide a transparent and systematic selection of the useful literature. The identification phase started with the retrieval of 760 records in the Scopus database. No repetition of records was observed and all the 760 documents were retained for screening phase. At the screening stage, every record was thoroughly assessed in accordance with the set inclusion and exclusion criteria. The total number of documents that were filtered out was 230 (34 non-English publications, 35 non-article documents, and 161 studies that were not directly related to brand anthropomorphism). This stringent screening process did not compromise the quality and relevancy of the dataset. Finally, 530 documents were considered suitable for conducting bibliometric analysis. The PRISMA framework therefore helped in a systematic and effective filtering process by ensuring that only relevant and high-quality research articles were considered.

This study was analyzed using R Biblioshiny, which is an interface of Bibliometrix package in R Studio. This tool was used for processing and performing comprehensive bibliometric analysis. It allowed extracting the key indicators, which included the annual scientific production, the country related contributions, the frequency of keywords in the long term and the essential information statistics. Additional outputs of Biblioshiny was used to produce more sophisticated types of analytical output including thematic map. These methods assisted in determining the publication trends, research trends and thematic development of the field of brand anthropomorphism. In general, the application of Biblioshiny gave a clear, consistent and repeatable structure to the analysis of the dataset, which guaranteed the accuracy of the results and the comprehensibility of the bibliometric pattern.

3. Data Analysis

A. Main Information

The primary data that has been obtained based on the dataset gives a general picture of the studies conducted on brand anthropomorphism. The data range covers timespan from 1921 to 2026 and consists of 530 documents published in 258 sources, which means that the research is widely distributed in academic sources. The annual growth rate of 3.22% per annum indicates the consistent growth of scholarly production. Furthermore, the average document age of 5.61 years suggests that the majority of research is recent, highlighting the growing and evolving nature of the field. Moreover, Average citations per document (34.57) is high enough to show satisfactory academic influence and applicability to the research community. The dataset comprises 951 Keywords Plus and 1,631 author keywords in content which reflects the richness

of themes and multidisciplinary field. Authorship structure has a total of 1,325 authors, out of which there are only 66 single-authored documents and 2.99 co-authors per document on average, which indicates a strong inclination toward collaborative research. Also, the international co-authorship percentage of 30.75% is moderate in terms of global research collaboration, which means that it is possible to develop additional cross-country academic partnerships. In terms of the type of documents, all the 530 publications are research articles. In general, the results suggest that brand anthropomorphism represents an emerging and dynamic research field that is marked by the rising academic interest, collaborative efforts and global involvement.

Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	1921:2026
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	258
Documents	530
Annual Growth Rate %	3.22
Document Average Age	5.61
Average citations per doc	34.57
References	55152
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	951
Author's Keywords (DE)	1631
AUTHORS	
Authors	1325
Authors of single-authored docs	62
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	66
Co-Authors per Doc	2.99
International co-authorships %	30.75
DOCUMENT TYPES	
article	530

Table 1: Main information (Source: R biblioshiny)

B. Annual Scientific Production

The long-term but disproportionate development of annual scientific output of brand anthropomorphism research between 1921 and 2026 has a long history of development. Despite the publication of the first article in 1921, the discipline itself was not very active during decades, and practically there were no works until the beginning of the 1990s. The nascent nature of the field is shown by the initial academic interest that was first published in 1994 and the limited research output until the mid-2000s. A gradual improvement of publications

starting in 2008, which market the start of a growth phase. This resulted in a rise in the number of articles, as there were 5 in 2008 and 16 in 2013, demonstrating that there has been an increased scholarly interest in the anthropomorphism of branding. This time represents the field's conceptual evolution, which is aided by the growth of digital marketing and an increased emphasis in consumer-brand relationships. There is a steep and steady increase in publications starting after 2017, which indicates the growth stage of the field. The number of articles increased significantly, reaching 36 in 2021, followed by 44 in 2022 and 57 in 2023. It reaches its highest point in 2025 and is followed by 114 publications, which shows that the interest in research had grown significantly, probably encouraged by the further development of artificial intelligence, social media and human-like interactions with a brand. Overall, the trend indicates that brand anthropomorphism has emerged as a rapidly growing and highly relevant field of study.

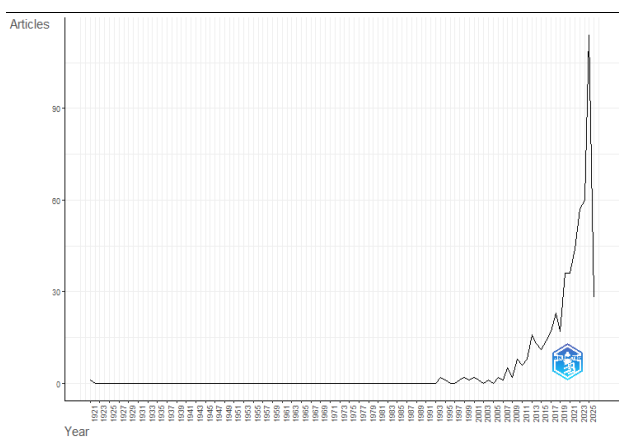


Figure 2: Annual Scientific Production (Source: R biblioshiney)

C. Thematic Map

The thematic map on the basis of author keywords provides the information about the conceptual structure of the research on brand anthropomorphism research. Three key clusters were identified: anthropomorphism, brand anthropomorphism, and marketing. The ‘anthropomorphism’ cluster is relatively central and dense, indicating that it is a well-developed and internally unified topic. Influencer marketing and social presence are the keywords most closely associated with this cluster, suggesting that anthropomorphism is increasingly being studied in relation to digital and interactive marketing environments.

The cluster of ‘brand anthropomorphism’ seems to be a more specialized and narrowly-focused theme with a

moderate density and less centrality. It means that it is conceptually significant but rather isolated in comparison to more general themes. However, the ‘marketing’ cluster which include terms like social media and general marketing shows a high density, indicating robust internal development. It is somewhat less central, suggesting that it may be more of a transversal or supportive concept rather than a driving one.

Overall, the thematic map shows that the study of this field is moving out of general marketing contexts to more narrow terms of anthropomorphism into branding and digital interactions. Anthropomorphic branding is also being shifted towards with the presence of new trends like virtual influencers and IoT-driven consumer relationships. This implies that there are a lot of prospects of future research in terms of combining artificial intelligence, social media, and human-like brand communication strategies.

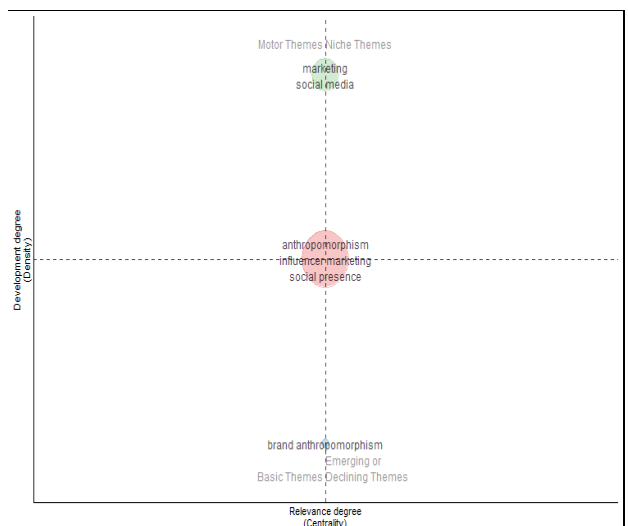


Figure 3: Thematic Map (Source: R biblioshiney)

D. Word's frequency over time

The time-frequency analysis of the word frequency can be quite useful in understanding how the key themes of brand anthropomorphism research emerged. The study was mostly characterized by generic words during the initial years (1994-2009) with very few specialized keywords. ‘Anthropomorphism’ is a term that is recurrent within this time frame but with a very low frequency indicating that the concept existed, but it had not yet received great academic interest and conceptual clarity within the marketing field.

From 2010 onward, there is a noticeable shift in the prevalence of terminology like ‘anthropomorphism’ and related terms like ‘brand personality’. Terms like ‘social media’ and ‘marketing’ begin to be mentioned more often between 2015 and 2019 as the anthropomorphism of branding become more

commonly implemented in digital and interactive tools. The shift of the concept to a more definite and more specialized area of research is indicated by the introduction of a new keyword, 'brand anthropomorphism', which became a separate keyword around 2017.

The years 2020–2026 are a period of rapid expansion, and all significant keywords become more common. Significant increase was seen in 'anthropomorphism', 'brand anthropomorphism', and 'social media', as well as in novel concepts like 'artificial intelligence', 'purchase intention', and 'brand love'. Overall, the findings show that the field has been actively developing, moving from basic conceptual discussions to high-tech application.

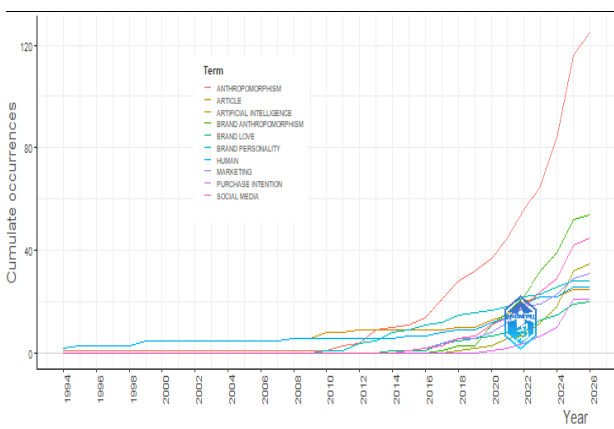


Figure 4: Word's frequency over time (Source: R biblioshiny)

E. Country Scientific Production

The distribution of scholarly output by country indicates that the contribution to brand anthropomorphism research is also worldwide. The United States leads significantly with 234 publications, which means that the country has been dominant in the field of research in this area. This is followed by China (155 publications) and India (106 publications) in terms of increased contribution of developed as well as emerging economies. There is also a strong presence of the United Kingdom (99 publications) which reflects the role of the Western academic institutions in the development of the field.

The other contributors that are significant are South Korea, Australia and Germany, which have made significant contributions to the literature. Consistent research output can also be seen in other European countries like Italy, France, Netherlands, and Spain, which means that the region is highly engaged. Additionally, a moderate contribution from nations like Malaysia, Canada and the United Arab Emirates shows how the field of geographical study is expanding.

The high density of the presence of countries with smaller contributions, including the developing and emerging ones, is the evidence that brand anthropomorphism as a tendency has become and is becoming popular in the world. Even though the studies are concentrated in several major nations, the variety of the contributing areas implies the growing internationalization of the discipline.

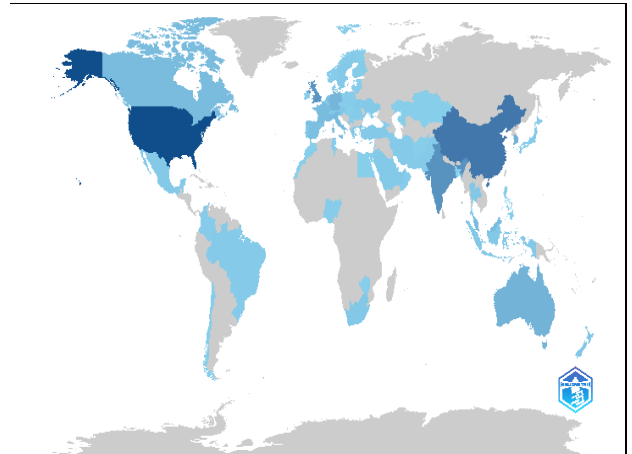


Figure 5: Country Scientific Production (Source: R biblioshiny)

CONCLUSION

This research gives a comprehensive bibliometric review of the brand anthropomorphism literature. The results show the development of the topic over the years where a concept that was not well known has now developed into a fast growing research area. The increasing number of publications, especially since 2017, reflects the increasing importance of anthropomorphic branding in terms of modern marketing practices. Another aspect of this analysis is that it is extremely collective and worldwide distributed, with a significant contribution of both developed and developing economies to the study of this area. Thematic and key-word search indicates that the context has shifted to digital and technology-based. Overall, the research validates that brand anthropomorphism is an evolving and vibrant research area with great scholarly and practical implications.

4. Practice Implication of the study

The findings of this study have valuable insights to the marketers and practitioners. The organizations can use brand anthropomorphism to form stronger emotional connections with consumers that enhance brand loyalty and engagement. The increasing relevance of both social media and AI means that businesses should be focused on the development of human-like brand communication channels, such as chatbots, artificial influencers and personal interactions. In addition, the

firms can adjust their branding strategies to meet preferences and cultural differences in the regions based on the knowledge of current research trends in the world. The study also mentions that there is the necessity to integrate technology and branding in an attempt to remain competitive in the digital era.

6. FUTURE DIRECTION

The paper offers numerous research possibilities in the future. Firstly, there is a need to research the way in which artificial intelligence and virtual influencers can be used to affect anthropomorphic brand interactions.

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