Is human likeness always best? Human- vs. cartoon-like virtual models

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Abstract

In this article, we investigate the question of how virtual models should be designed to generate positive advertising effects. The question is not whether virtual models can keep up with human models, but how their visual appearance and their "virtual personality" should be designed for a positive model and advertising evaluation. Virtual characters today can be modeled on real existing people (think, for example, recently of the ABBA avatars that caused a lot of furor). Virtual models however, can also be created completely lifelike or as characters more reminiscent of cartoons. We first deal with different forms of appearance; then, based on anthropomorphism theory and the relevance of additional information (backstory) we will derive hypotheses on the advertising effect and social media follow intention of different virtual model types. Our experiments show, that a highly realistic depiction prevails, but the addition of a backstory benefits the less realistic model more strongly.

Keywords: *Virtual models; Anthropomorphism; human-like vs. cartoon-like*

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