



Go loud or go home? How power distance belief influences the effect of brand prominence on luxury goods purchase intention

Eugene Cheng-Xi Aw^{a,*}, Stephanie Hui-Wen Chuah^b, Mohamad Fazli Sabri^c,
Norazlyn Kamal Basha^a

^a Department of Management and Marketing, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

^b Institute of Innovation and Circular Economy, Asia University, Taichung, Taiwan

^c Department of Resource Management and Consumer Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Brand prominence
Self-congruence
Value perception
Conspicuous consumption
Power distance belief
Emerging market

ABSTRACT

Based upon the signalling theory and self-congruity theory, this study theorizes and examines the effect of brand prominence on the purchase intention of luxury goods, with the mediating role of self-congruence and value-for-money perception. Furthermore, it explores the moderating effect of power distance belief. A single factor between-subject experiment study was conducted with a sample of 300 university students from Malaysia. Results suggest that the serial indirect effect of brand prominence on purchase intention through self-congruence and value-for-money perception is conditional upon the level of power distance belief. This study provides meaningful insight for marketing practitioners, as well as brand prominence literature by indicating *how* and *when* brand prominence works in evoking luxury goods purchase intention.

1. Introduction

In general, individuals are not only motivated to purchase luxury goods for utilitarian purposes, but also for symbolic meanings behind the products or brands (Ajitha and Sivakumar, 2017; Han and Kim, 2020; Loureiro et al., 2020; McCracken, 1986). Prior studies suggested that psychological factors constitute the primary factor for distinguishing luxury goods from non-luxury goods (Hennigs et al., 2012; Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000; Zhang and Zhao, 2019). This is even truer in emerging markets, where luxury goods are not only valued for their ability to signal identity, but also the associated emotional benefits that arise from audiences' reaction to wealth exhibited by the purchaser (Butcher et al., 2016). In the luxury goods industry, attractive aesthetic design of a product can be vital, sometimes even more so than that of its functional value (Greenberg et al., 2019). As a matter of fact, product design characteristics such as brand mark delivers symbolic meanings, and thus is highly relevant in consumers' psychological responses and consumption behaviour (Brunner et al., 2016; Greenberg et al., 2019; Homburg et al., 2015). As brand mark variation (e.g. whether visible or subtle) represents a crucial signalling element in interpersonal communications and identity development, this line of research is of high

strategic importance for brand marketers to identify the needs of the luxury brand target market, and thus the ultimate success of luxury brand marketing (Meyer and Manika, 2017).

Brands markers serve as an important communication medium for brand identity and brand image (Sääksjärvi et al., 2015). Han, Nunes, and Dreze (2010) pioneered a new concept in the branding field called, "brand prominence", which is conceptualized as the conspicuousness (visibility and observability) of a brand's mark. More specifically, a strong brand is described as being conspicuous and prominent (i.e. visible and observable brand mark) as they send a "louder" signal to others, as opposed to a weak brand. Brand marks often encompasses the company's logo, colors, designs, or pictures. Although conventional wisdom suggests that luxury brands with visible brand marks remain highly relevant in the contemporary marketplace, in recent times, there has been evidence of increasing demand for subtle brand marks (Berger and Ward, 2010). A classic example of goods with "visible" brand marks are Louis Vuitton wallets, with its flashy "LV" monogram as part of the product design. Louis Vuitton also offers optional choice of goods with subtle brand marks, with a much less obstructive logo placed at the corners of the goods. Brand prominence represents an important issue for marketers to address, as it signifies brand positioning, and

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: eugene.xi.aw@gmail.com (E.C.-X. Aw), hw.chuah@gmail.com (S.H.-W. Chuah), fazli@upm.edu.my (M.F. Sabri), norazlyn@upm.edu.my (N. Kamal Basha).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102288>

Received 16 March 2020; Received in revised form 10 August 2020; Accepted 25 August 2020

Available online 6 September 2020

0969-6989/© 2020 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

determines the associated image or meanings appropriated by consumers.

Several studies have attempted to explain prominent brand preferences through social influence and trait-related factors, such as need for uniqueness and need for status (Cheah et al., 2015; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018; Greenberg et al., 2019). Unfortunately, thus far there has been little research addressing *how* subtle vs. prominent branding influences luxury goods purchase intention. In particular, the mechanisms that underpin the effect of brand prominence is not fully understood. For example, a study by Pino et al. (2019) demonstrated the interactions between brand prominence and status consumption that affects consumers' willingness to buy. However, the study failed to provide more a nuanced reasoning of *how* this interaction works. This is of concern to both academicians and marketing practitioners alike, as simply assuming the effects of brand prominence levels on consumer behaviour without understanding the underlying reasoning may potentially result in ineffective strategic actions. Therefore, we aim to explore brand prominence and the mechanisms that undermine its relations, as well as its related outcomes, as warranted by previous researchers such as Kauppinen-Räsänen et al. (2018).

Notably, we seek to understand whether brand prominence can determine consumers' self-congruence and its downstream brand-related outcomes, a task which has not been undertaken by prior studies. *Self-congruence*, defined as the cognitive match between self-concept and product user image (Sirgy, 1982), has been deemed as the cornerstone for maintaining long term relationships between brands and consumers (Liu et al., 2012). It is a highly relevant concept to be studied, given that the purchase of luxury brands has always been associated with the means to accomplish and reflect aspects of "self" (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012; Aw et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2012). Meanwhile, it is important to ensure that consumers derive sufficient value-for-money perception, manifested as the perception of worthiness for high price paid in the consumption of luxury brands. The creation of positive value perception is vital in stimulating luxury purchase intention (Wu and Yang, 2018). In line with the self-congruity-value-intention framework (Aw et al., 2019), we seek to understand whether self-congruence mediates the relationship between brand prominence, and its related outcomes; i.e. value perception, and behavioural intention.

Furthermore, few studies have examined the effects of individual differences (i.e., beliefs) in relation to luxury brand prominence. Power distance belief denotes the extent to which people "accept and expect that power is distributed unequally" in a society (Hofstede, 2001, p. 79). People with a high level of power distance belief are more likely to be aware of, accept, and legitimate the unequal power distribution and categorization within a social hierarchy. The impact of power distance belief has extended to the studies of luxury brand consumption (Cui et al., 2019; Eastman et al., 2018). Studies have shown that consumers with high power distance belief exhibits greater brand social categorization tendency, and they prefer brands with high signalling ability (Kim and Zhang, 2014; Wang et al., 2018). Therefore, the inclusion of power distance belief in the present study is justified given its eminent role in luxury brand consumption and preference, and the understanding of cultural beliefs could empower marketers to introduce and align products that conform with the target market.

Previous literature on brand prominence has often been studied in the context of mature markets (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018; Greenberg et al., 2019), given its nature as a lucrative market in the purchase of luxury goods. Nevertheless, it is also important to not disregard the increasing demand for luxury goods in emerging markets, such as India, Thailand, and Malaysia. This corresponds with the increase in the discretionary purchasing power of emergent global class (Shukla, 2012). Therefore, redirecting attention of luxury branding to emerging markets is justifiable for marketers given the promising upside of the markets available. The importance of this shift in focus can be exemplified by Pino et al. (2019), who suggested that consumers in

mature and emerging markets may exhibit very different consumption patterns and needs. For example, in mature markets, luxury consumers may consume luxury goods for in-group association (Shukla and Purani, 2012). However, when such studies were repeated in emerging markets, researchers found that luxury consumers were more inclined to display wealth for purpose of differentiating themselves from the less well-heeled (Hennigs et al., 2012).

To address the aforementioned research gaps, we performed a survey-based experiment with young consumers from an emerging market. Our results demonstrate a serial mediation model, of which brand prominence results in purchase intention through the development of self-congruence and subsequent value-for-money perception. The study broadens the theoretical understanding of how brand prominence stimulates purchase intention, and complements the often-assumed simplistic direct effect in the existing literature. Furthermore, the results indicate that the serial mediation is moderated by power distance belief, highlighting the boundary condition of cultural belief in the relationship between brand prominence and luxury purchase. These findings enable luxury brand marketers to better position themselves through brand mark design, and effectively appeal to consumers in emerging markets.

The paper is organized as follows: after a detailed presentation of the conceptual model, the study's methodology is discussed, followed by the empirical support for the study's model and hypotheses. Finally, the study's discussion and direction for future research are presented.

2. Conceptual development

2.1. Signalling theory

Signalling theory emerged from the information economics literature, and the theory offers an explanation to the asymmetric information market conditions in which buyers and sellers are placed (Spence, 1974). Often, informational cues are being delivered by one party (signaller) to another (receiver) in order to achieve certain outcomes. As demonstrated by Spence (1973), the possession of education qualifications by potential employees signal their abilities to employers, with the assumption that higher education qualification is positively associated with greater work ability, due to the considerable amount of time and effort required to obtain such qualification. In the marketplace, a signal represents an action taken by sellers to convey information about unobservable product attributes to buyers (Rao et al., 1999). In general, consumers tend to know less about the quality of products compared to the sellers, and thus they lack the effective means to differentiate between superior and inferior product quality. In order to resolve this issue, firms convey product information in the pre-purchase phase of consumer decision making process through various means, such as price and product warranties (Boulding and Kirmani, 1993). Subsequent studies extended the signalling approach further to the brand consumption context (Erdem and Swait, 2004; Shao, Grace and Ross, 2019a).

A brand is credible in signalling product quality, as it epitomizes a firm's present and past marketing activities and strategies (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Brand presence is often used by consumers as an informational cue to determine product quality, and it is deemed to be more credible than other marketing mix elements, such as charging higher prices and offering good warranties (Erdem et al., 2002). Conventionally, it is believed that sellers of low-quality products would not engage in brand-building, due to the unrealistically high cost and huge risk exposure when exaggerated claims are made. Hence, it is typically inferred that only sellers of high-quality products would engage in the brand-building and signalling strategy (Tsao et al., 2011). By managing and controlling a brand's marketing activities and strategies, firms are able to signal intended messages, including product attributes and position in the market to consumers.

Interestingly, a thorough literature search has indicated that there is

a dual direction process in the signalling theory. This means that, unlike the frequently presumed uni-directional signalling process from firms to consumers, the signalling theory highlights that signalling process works in two directions. As much as receivers (i.e., consumers) desire information about signallers (i.e., firms), signallers prefer receiving information about receivers, pertaining to the perception and interpretation of signals by receivers for future improvement (Connolly et al., 2011). While consumers infer information about trustworthiness and quality based on signals sent by firms, firms decide which/what information to signal based upon the inferences consumers will draw (Martín and Camarero, 2005). In fact, in today's society, luxury goods are a reflection of consumer feedback and signal to manufacturers. For instance, recognizing the shift in taste from "in the show" to "in the know", luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Gucci have started to respond to the rise of consumer demand in unique and understated luxury items by introducing products featuring subtle brand markings.

Adding to the common belief that consumption of luxury goods is motivated by impression management purpose, through the signalling of a desirable image to others (e.g., other-signalling), brand signalling stretches its role for self-expression and as a source of meaning to consumers (Fournier, 1991; McCracken, 1986). Purchasing and using self-expressive brands help consumers to satisfy their self-signalling desires through the affirmation and presentation of desirable qualities, and thus define, maintain, and reinforce their self-concept (Mathur et al., 2016; Trudeau and Shobeiri, 2016). Consuming branded products help to express one's self and value, either in an inner-direct (i.e., enhancing one's private self-concept) or an outer-direct manner (i.e., signalling one's status and satisfy one's social-self) (Eastman et al., 2020; Jacob et al., 2019). Signalling theory advocates the importance of signal observability, defined as the noticeability of signal by outsiders, for the communication between action insiders and intentional receivers (Connolly et al., 2011; Shao, Grace and Ross, 2019b). Brand prominence, which denotes the extent to which a product features visible brand marking represents a brand signalling approach, of which the manufacturer has the option to display conspicuous or discreet branding. In a similar vein, it reflects brand/product owner's signalling intention (Han et al., 2010). In other words, consumers perform signalling behaviour, such as choosing products with varying brand prominence to signal their intended image to others, as well as to present a desired self-concept (Shao et al., 2019b). On these grounds, signalling theory offers a fundamental tenet to explain the impact of brand prominence on consumer behaviour.

2.2. Brand prominence and conspicuous consumption

The focal essence of signalling theory is the intentional communication of positive information, aiming to portray a particular form of positive attribute. To this end, an efficacious signal would heavily rely on its observability, reflecting how noticeable the signal is to outsiders (Connolly et al., 2011). So, how would a luxury brand convey a signal to people in general? A luxury brand's signal goes beyond functional attributes, and is more prominent in non-functional attributes such as aesthetics, rarity, and extraordinariness (Lai and Prendergast, 2019). Commonly, the signalling process is facilitated by visible brand logos and explicit patterns, such as Nike's swoosh and Burberry's plaid (Berger and Ward, 2010), which are known for brand prominence.

Brand prominence reflects the extent to which a brand possesses highly observable markings, which aid recognition from observers (Han et al., 2010). Brand prominence has demonstrated an entangled relationship with status consumption and conspicuous consumption. Status consumption and conspicuous consumption represent two separate yet similar concepts. Previous scholars have identified status consumption as an individuals' motivation to improve their social standing, through the conspicuous consumption of consumer products that symbolizes status for them and their significant others (Eastman et al., 2018). This means that status driven consumers may be motivated to purchase

certain products that are able to either; reflect their self-orientation and tastes inconspicuously, or to ostentatiously display these products to the public (Eastman and Eastman, 2011; Shao et al., 2019b). Meanwhile, conspicuous consumers tend to purchase luxury products to explicitly symbolize success (Dubois and Ordabayeva, 2015), and social standing within their peers (O'Cass and Frost, 2002; Podoshen et al., 2011). Importantly, conspicuous consumption as an external motivator, can be significantly influenced by individuals' reference groups. Reference groups typically portray an image for others to refer to, and influence self-concept development (Bearden and Etzel, 1982). Hence, in line with other brand prominence studies (Greenberg et al., 2019; Meyer and Manika, 2017), we focus on conspicuous consumption in this research, as the main objective of this study is to investigate the effects of brand prominence, which is the presence of a brand marking that is highly observable to society on consumers' purchase intention of luxury goods.

As shown in Veblen's (1899) seminal work *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, people engage in conspicuous consumption of products to communicate their privileged status to others. Several studies have established the prominent role of brands in understanding conspicuous consumption. Most of them examined consumption of luxury brands from the lens of status portrayal, self-concept enhancement and extension, social comparison, and depiction of uniqueness (Ko et al., 2019). For instance, it was found that consumption of luxury brands is motivated by the desire to develop ideal self-concept through self-expression, and to gain social approval from others (Shao et al., 2019a). Liang, He, Chang, Dong, and Zhu (2018) found that people are compelled to consume luxury brands when they feel socially excluded, in effort to elevate their perceived threatened self-esteem.

Focusing on brand prominence literature per se, there is a considerable amount of literature on *what* motivates people to consume products with high brand prominence. Using a Chinese sample in their study, Siahitiri and Lee (2019) found that materialism fosters fashion consciousness (i.e., to gain social approval and recognition) and quality consciousness (tendency to select well-known brands), which in turn increases brand prominence consumption. A growing body of literature has identified the need for status and the need for uniqueness as motivators to consume prominent brands. To explain, consumers use prominent brands to express and present their social identity, either to signal the possession of wealth and superior status, or to differentiate themselves from the average person (Han et al., 2010; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018; Greenberg et al., 2019). Besides that, Song et al. (2017) found that consumers resort to conspicuous brands as a way to actively repair their self-concept, as it grants them attention from others, and thus the likelihood to communicate their intended self-image.

Another stream of research examined the outcomes of brand prominence. For instance, Pino et al. (2019) did a cross-country comparison between India and the United States. The authors found that brand prominence leads to willingness to purchase for Indian consumers (but not in the U.S.) who exhibit high status consumption, indicating cultural differences at play (i.e., India having a larger discrepancy in social stratum due to its nature of higher social hierarchical orientation). In addition, Butcher et al. (2016) highlighted that brand prominence indirectly influence purchase intention of luxury fashion brands through evoking emotional value. Shao et al. (2019a) took a step further by indicating that consumers' preference for brand prominence depends upon consumer motivations and social functions of attitudes. For instance, high brand prominence combined with an extrinsic motivational goal (i.e., wealth, social approval, and appearance-focus) stimulate purchase intention of luxury fashion products.

In general, carrying a product with high brand prominence sends loud signal to others, reflecting conspicuous consumption. Correspondingly, it is not uncommon to expect that consumers want others to be aware of their possession of luxury branded products, and thus a more explicit branding strategy is expected for brands of this kind. Indeed, the strategy to feature visible and distinctive brand names and logos on

products has been typically practiced by many luxury brand marketers. Having said that, the conventional practice of prominently exhibiting brand marks on products may not be universally applied across all luxury goods markets. Correspondingly, there is a surge in the exhibition of “new luxury” in consumer behaviour, i.e., inconspicuous consumption, in the luxury marketplace (Wu et al., 2017). Hence, understanding the role of brand prominence, including its psychology and behavioural outcomes, and potential boundary conditions deserves further attention.

2.3. Brand prominence and self-congruence

Self-congruity theory denotes that, consumers tend to compare their self-concept with user image of a given product (Sirgy, 1982). To clarify, product-user image is known as “the stereotypical image of the generalized product user” (Sirgy, 1982, p. 288). In marketing literature, the terms self-congruity, self-congruence, self-image congruence, and image congruence are used interchangeably to describe the concept. Consumers purchase a brand not only for its functional benefits, but often more for its symbolic meaning embedded behind the brand. Brands can portray a distinctive image to support consumers’ self-expression, affirmation, or even enhancement (Roy and Rabbane, 2015), evidencing brand as extended selves in process (Mittal, 2006). Therefore, it is unsurprising to see a wide-range of consumption-related outcomes in relation to self-congruence in the marketing literature, such as brand attitude, brand loyalty, choice preference, perceived value, and purchase intention (Aw et al., 2019; Bajac et al., 2018; Govers and Schoormans, 2005; Huber et al., 2018).

A luxury brand enables consumers to express the image of wealth, typically through the display of brand marks, and thus how the brand mark is designed and placed on a product is crucial for the effectiveness of signalling. Luxury brands exhibit different approaches to signalling brand prominence; some using a “loud” strategy (featuring conscious brand markers), whereas other adopt a “quiet” strategy (featuring discreet and subtle brand markers) (Song et al., 2017). Grounded in identity theory that states, “people assemble role-related consumption stimuli to cultivate role-identities” (Kleine et al., 2006), implying that people display wealth possession ostentatiously, and connote social rank to accomplish their symbolic self-concept completion (Aw et al., 2019). As visibility is the core of conspicuous consumption, brand prominence offers cues for consumers to manifest their extended selves by integrating the symbolic meaning into their identity, and facilitate their signalling intention (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018; Le Monkhhouse et al., 2012; Song et al., 2017). Due to the fact that the consumption of luxury branded products is primarily for the purpose of signalling of status, particularly for consumers in emerging markets (Nabi, O’Cass and Siahtiri., 2019; Pino et al., 2019), it can be expected that brand user image and self-concept are more likely to be congruent when possessing a brand that is highly prominent, as products of this kind tends to facilitate status and position signalling within a social hierarchy. The formation of self-congruence facilitates subsequent product preferences and purchase intentions (Jacob et al., 2019).

Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1. Self-congruence mediates the relationship between brand prominence and purchase intention.

2.4. Value-for-money perception

Delivering superior value is paramount for brands, as it represents an imperative factor in forming brand perception and behavioural responses. Although it is generally believed that luxury goods are pursued for their symbolic and emotional values, studies have shown that consumers also seek utilitarian and economical values in purchasing luxury goods (Li et al., 2012). Consumers expect to derive adequate value from luxury purchase as compensation for the high price paid for the product (Wu and Yang, 2018). Perceived value-for-money is defined as

consumers’ evaluation of a product’s benefits relative to its price (Holbrook, 1994). In line with prior studies (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009; Wu and Yang, 2018), and in the context of this study, we do not refer value-for-money in relation to the pursuit of low price or economic benefits. Rather, it concerns whether or not a luxury possession is able to meet consumers’ subjective expectation for the high price paid. In other words, it is the perception on how well-worth the money is spent to obtain such luxury goods.

The purchase of luxury goods typically involves certain sacrifices of necessities of life in exchange for conveying an ideal self-image, often associated with being wealthy and superior in status. To this end, brand prominence serves as a signalling tool for such implicit communication between the possessor and the intended receiver. As demonstrated by Butcher et al. (2016), consumers tend to inflate the quality of luxury products with high brand prominence, that is, they perceive prominently marked brands to be of higher quality compared to those subtly marked. More importantly, a prominent brand is superior in helping consumers to “stand out” and distinguish themselves from the less wealthy others (Pino et al., 2019). Meanwhile, less prominent brands may elevate the likelihood of misidentification (Berger and Ward, 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that emotional and social values can be derived from signalling, and is part of the self-identity formation process (i.e, using a prominently branded product), and these values represent the benefits derived from the high price paid for luxury brands. Previous studies support the idea that self-congruence increases the evaluation of value received from consumption, including symbolic and monetary values (Aw et al., 2019; Shamah et al., 2018). Higher value-for-money perceptions implies that consumers will see worth in the large amount of money spent on luxury possessions, as it fulfils their emotional and social needs, and that in turn increases purchase intention (Yang and Mattila, 2016).

Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H2. Value-for-money perception mediates the relationship between brand prominence and purchase intention.

2.5. Serial mediation of self-congruence and value-for-money perception

In the present study, we theorize that brand prominence influences purchase intention through self-congruence and value-for-money perception in serial. To begin with, given that there are scant studies that explore how brand communication strategy activates self-congruence, we borrow closely relevant studies from retail and psychology fields to imply this relationship (Roy and Rabbane, 2015; Sirgy et al., 2000). The crux of our theorizing self-congruence as the mediator hinges on the argument that “the impact of symbolic product meanings on consumer decision making is mediated by self-concept” (Mehta, 1999, p. 83). Thus, it is inferred that the preference for brand attributes (e.g. prominent brand mark) serves to protect and enhance consumers’ self-concept (Jacob et al., 2019). Simply put, brand prominence determines the degree of fit between consumers’ self-concept and the brand user image. Subsequently, literature has provided evidence for the potential biasing effect of self-congruence on consumers’ value perception (Aw et al., 2019; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy et al., 1991). For instance, Shamah et al. (2018) and Baker et al. (2019) found that positive perception of self-congruence fosters positive evaluation towards the price and quality of offerings, as well as purchase intention. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that (high) brand prominence is an activator of self-congruence, and self-congruence is the psychological organism that determines value-for-money perception, which in turn, trigger purchase intention.

Accordingly, we propose the following:

H3. The relationship between brand prominence and purchase intention is serially mediated by self-congruence and value-for-money perception.

2.6. Moderating role of power distance belief

Prior literature has shown that the perception of people's perceived power inequalities varies along a continuum (Han et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2010), and this is commonly known as power distance belief. Although often assessed at country level, power distance belief can be manifested at the individual level as well. For the latter, power distance belief reflects an individual's normative belief in the role of power disparity and hierarchy in society (Han et al., 2017; Oyserman, 2006). In other words, an individual with high power distance belief is in favour of, and will abide to societal hierarchy. The implications of power distance belief on consumer responses have often been evidenced in the marketing literature. Unsurprisingly, status/conspicuous consumption is one realm strongly associated to the power distance belief concept (Gao et al., 2016; Souiden, M'Saad and Pons, 2011). For instance, Gao et al. (2016) demonstrated that consumers with high power distance belief believe that status consumption is effective for social signalling, especially when surrounded by others' with on-par or inferior status. This is rationalized by the fact that these consumers think and abide to the idea that people should be ranked and placed at their defined position in a social stratum. Such thought limits their expression of superiority to similar peers and inferiors but not the superiors.

As highlighted earlier, power distance belief results in individuals' different perception towards social hierarchy between people. It is noteworthy to mention that this impact can be extended to consumers' perception towards categorizing social objects, such as brands (Wang et al., 2018). The underlying principle of power distance belief is the need for ordered structure and abstention of ambiguity (Hofstede, 2001; Lalwani and Forcum, 2016). Consumers with high power distance belief are motivated to discriminate and rank brands, while their counterparts are less likely to be cognizant with the differences in brand social categorization (Lalwani and Forcum, 2016; Wang et al., 2018). Bearing in mind of brand prominence as a notable social signalling attribute, we presume the potential moderating role of power distance belief with regards to the impact of brand prominence. For consumers with high power distance belief, prominently branded products are more desirable compared to subtle brands. They are likely to perceive congruence with products that exhibits high brand prominence, as it aids in social comparison. Additionally, consumers with high power distance belief value simplifies cognitive structures, and they are more likely to depend on schema and heuristics, such as brand marks and self-image congruence to infer value-for-money perception. Based on the above reasoning, we propose that the serial mediating effect of self-congruence and value-for-money perception is contingent on the level of power distance belief Fig. 1:

H4. Power distance belief moderates the effect of brand prominence on self-congruence. In high power distance belief condition, the effect of brand prominence on self-congruence is stronger.

H5. Power distance belief moderates the indirect effect of brand

prominence on purchase intention through serial mediation of self-congruence and value-for-money perception. The positive indirect effect is stronger at high level of power distance belief.

2.7. Methodology

We adopted a single factor between-subject design, with brand prominence as the independent variable (manipulated: high vs. low). A sample of 300 undergraduate students were recruited by the researcher from attendees of a course during lecture hours. Seventeen responses were discarded due to incomplete responses, leaving 283 useable responses (79 per cent female, 21 per cent male, mean age = 23). The selection of young sample was justified as i) their behaviour in relation to brand prominence in emerging markets requires further exploration, ii) are typically brand conscious and interested in luxury goods, iii) represent an attractive segment for luxury marketers (Eastman et al., 2018; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018; Mundel et al., 2017). After being briefed on the basic information on the experiment (e.g. assurance of anonymity), respondents were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, featuring different versions of the purchasing scenario. Firstly, respondents were asked to answer questions of power distance belief using five items measures Likert scales (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree") from Lam et al. (2009) ("People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions", "People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently", "People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions", "People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions", "People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions").

Subsequently, to manipulate brand prominence, respondents were instructed to read an imaginative scenario regarding shopping for a wallet in a luxury shop. The scenario was adapted from (Pino et al., 2019). The selection of a wallet as the study's test product is justifiable as wallets are; (1) often viewed as a product relevant to conspicuous consumption due to its wealth signally properties, and (2) categorized as a unisex product (Amatulli et al., 2020; Sundie et al., 2011) which caters to the study's population. In the high brand prominence condition, respondents were exposed to a condition where wallets featured big and very visible logos; while in the low brand prominence condition, respondents were exposed to wallets that featured small and unnoticeable logos. The price and quality of wallets as well as respondents' budget were identical across the two versions of scenario. After exposure to the scenario, respondents were asked two items measuring brand prominence on a five-point scale ("To what extent the wallets are recognizable?"; anchored at the extremes by "Not recognizable at all" and "Very recognizable"; "How visible is the wallet's logo?"; anchored by "Not visible at all" and "Very visible").

Afterwards, based on the scenario read, respondents rated the statements on self-congruity ("I think I am like typical users who use this

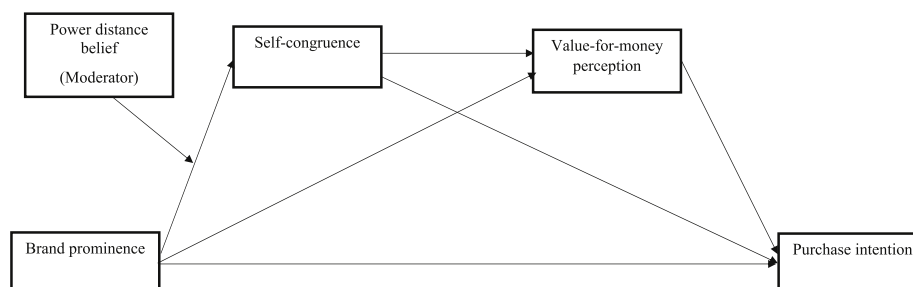


Figure 1. Research model

Fig. 1. Research model.

kind of wallets”, “I see myself as very similar to typical users who use this kind of wallets”, “In general, the personality of typical users who use this kind of wallets is similar to mine”) (Bajac et al., 2018), value-for-money perception (“This kind of wallets is excellent value-for-money”, “I think I would be happy with the value-for-money I will get from this kind of wallets”, “This kind of wallets is valuable”) (Baker et al., 2019), and purchase intention (“I would purchase one of the wallets in the store”, “I would consider buying a wallet from this store”, “The probability that I would consider buying a wallet from this store is high”). All scales were measured using five-point Likert scales (1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”). Lastly, respondents’ demographic information was provided and they were debriefed.

Prior to the start of the main study, we conducted a pre-test with 30 respondents to ensure the treatment works as intended. The results of pre-test showed significant difference in terms of brand prominence ($p < 0.01$). Respondents who read the purchase scenario of wallets with a big and very visible logo indicated higher brand prominence ($M = 4.230$) compared to those exposed to purchase scenario of wallets with a small and not visible logo ($M = 2.774$). In addition, respondents evaluated the price of the wallet on a two items scale (1 = inexpensive/economy, 5 = expensive/luxury). The result indicated wallet at this price to be luxury ($M = 4.40$).

3. Data analysis

3.1. Manipulation checks

An independent t -test was performed to check the effectiveness of scenario presented. In line with our expectation, results revealed significant differences in brand prominence ($t = -9.471$, $p < 0.01$), where respondents who read the purchase scenario of wallets with big and very visible logo indicated higher brand prominence ($M = 3.728$) compared to those exposed to purchase scenario of wallets with small and not visible logo ($M = 2.924$).

3.2. Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM)

Structural equation model (SEM) was employed as the model requires simultaneous estimation of causal relationships between multiple latent variables. In this respect, we opted for PLS-SEM over covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) for several reasons. Firstly, based on the PLS-SEM literature (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019), the present study is exploratory in nature rather than testing well-established theory, rendering PLS-SEM a suitable analysis tool. Secondly, PLS-SEM is less restrictive with distributional assumptions on the data. Thirdly, PLS-SEM is appropriate when the proposed model is complex (i.e. involving mediation and moderation). Fourthly, PLS-SEM provides latent variable scores to be used in subsequent moderated mediation analysis. PLS-SEM is executed in two phases, with the assessment of measurement model followed by structural model.

3.3. Assessment of measurement model

The assessment of measurement model was conducted by examining internal reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As shown in Table 1, all constructs exhibited composite reliability and outer loadings above threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, convergent validity was established as the average variance explained (AVE) of all constructs was greater than 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Lastly, we examined the discriminant validity by using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of the correlations approach (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 1 indicates that all HTMT ratios were below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Kline, 2011), thus the discriminant validity was established (Table 2).

Table 1
Reliability and validity assessment.

Constructs	Indicators	Loading	CR	AVE
Brand prominence	BP1	0.780	0.841	0.727
	BP2	0.919		
Self-congruence	SC1	0.929	0.918	0.788
	SC2	0.926		
	SC3	0.803		
Value-for-money perception	VP1	0.845	0.888	0.725
	VP2	0.881		
	VP3	0.839		
Purchase intention	PI1	0.879	0.908	0.767
	PI2	0.864		
	PI3	0.884		
Power distance belief	PD1	0.715	0.851	0.533
	PD2	0.698		
	PD3	0.786		
	PD4	0.735		
	PD5	0.713		

3.4. Assessment of structural model

The initial step in the assessment of structural model involves performing the collinearity test. The variance inflation factor (VIF) values of all constructs ranged from 1.004 to 1.476, well below the conservative threshold of 3.3 (Hair et al., 2017), indicating absence of collinearity issue. Furthermore, the variance explained (R^2) for key endogenous construct (i.e., purchase intention) was 0.383, thus indicating satisfactory level of explanatory power. Subsequently, a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples was conducted to examine the main effects. As shown in Fig. 2, all structural paths are statistically significant, except for the direct relationship between brand prominence and purchase intention.

Following the standard procedure applied in the literature (Leal-Rodríguez et al., 2015; Nel and Boshoff, 2019), we used the latent variable scores generated in the PLS-SEM analysis as input for mediation, moderation, and conditional indirect effect (serial moderated mediation) analysis executed using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2015). Table 3 shows two significant simple indirect effects, suggesting the established mediating role of self-congruence and value-for-money perception in the relationship between brand prominence and purchase intention. In addition, the results evidenced the serial mediation in play, whereby brand prominence influences self-congruence, which affects value-for-money perception, and in turn, influences purchase intention.

As illustrated in Fig. 3, the moderating effect of power distance belief was significant ($\beta = 0.159$, $p < 0.05$), thus H4 was supported. The significant moderating effect permits the subsequent examination of conditional indirect effects (brand prominence \rightarrow self-congruence \rightarrow value-for-money perception \rightarrow purchase intention). A bootstrapping with 5000 resamples revealed that the index of serial moderated mediation (0.036) is significant, with no 0 straddle in between 95% confidence interval (CI [0.004, 0.077]) (Hayes, 2015). The conditional indirect effect results reported in Table 3 show that as the moderator (i.e., power distance belief) increases, the conditional indirect effect increases. Hence, H5 was supported.

4. Discussion

So should a brand shout aloud or whisper? This is the brand communication strategy question that attracts considerable interest from both academicians and practitioners in recent times. The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between brand prominence and purchase intention, and more specifically, on its underlying mechanisms (i.e., self-congruence and value-for-money perception) and potential boundary conditions (i.e., power distance belief). It is important to note that the subsequent discussion and study implications presented are based on the perspective of a young and

Table 2
Discriminant validity (HTMT 0.85 criterion).

	Purchase intention	Self-congruence	Power distance belief	Brand prominence	Value-for-money perception
Purchase intention					
Self-congruence	0.567				
Power distance belief	0.296	0.322			
Brand prominence	0.182	0.187	0.095		
Value-for-money perception	0.684	0.636	0.179	0.366	

Note: Shaded boxes are the standard reporting format for HTMT ratios.

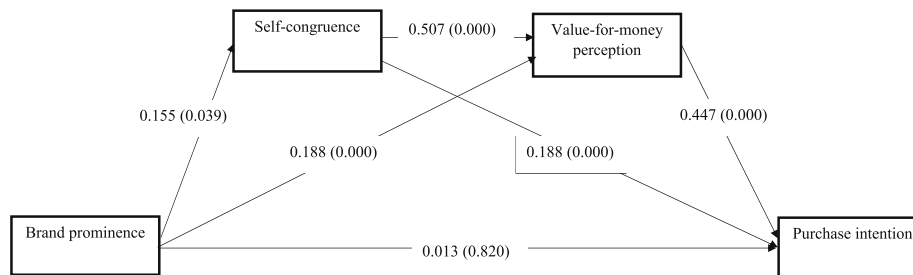


Figure 2. Main effects

Fig. 2. Main effects.

Table 3
Mediation and conditional indirect effects.

A) Indirect effect of brand prominence on purchase intention				
	Effect	95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval		
		Lower limit	Upper limit	
H1	BP→SC→INT	0.039	0.003	0.089
H2	BP→VP→INT	0.084	0.041	0.137
H3	BP→SC→VP→INT	0.035	0.002	0.072
B) Conditional indirect effects of brand prominence on purchase intention through self-congruence (SC) and value-for-money perception (VP) in serial, at values of power distance belief as moderator				
	Effect	95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval		
		Lower limit	Upper limit	
H5	Index of moderated serial mediation	0.036	0.004	0.077
Power distance belief				
	Low (-1SD)	0.001	-0.049	0.048
	Medium (Mean)	0.037	0.007	0.071
	High (+1SD)	0.073	0.029	0.128

Notes: BP= Brand prominence, SC= Self-congruence, VP= Value-for-money perception, INT= Purchase intention.

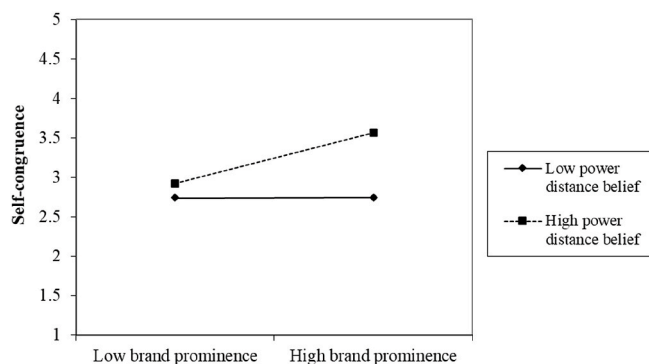


Fig. 3. Moderating effect of power distance belief.

predominant female sample.

The results suggest that consumers' purchase intention is not directly driven by brand prominence. The acceptance of proposed serial mediation infers that brand prominence stimulates purchase intention by evoking psychological response (self-congruence), and subsequent cognitive evaluation (value-for-money perception). In contradiction to prior studies (Butcher et al., 2016; Cheah et al., 2015) which found that brand prominence is a predictor of luxury brand purchase intention, this study reveals a non-significant direct effect. This is not particularly surprising given the fact that consumer behaviour is complex, and goes way beyond stimulus-response simplicity. It would be rather dubious to conclude that consumers' luxury brand purchases are simply based on brand prominence alone. In this regard, we substantiate the self-congruence-value perception-behaviour model by Aw et al. (2019) and Shamah et al. (2018), highlighting the indispensable role of self-congruence and its biasing impact on brand evaluation in luxury brand marketing (Sirgy et al., 1991). The significant role of self-congruence stems from the symbolic nature of luxury brand purchases which heavily lies in self-fulfilment or "pecuniary emulation" (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012). Interestingly, the findings connote the idea of consumers' irrationality in rationality—the pursuit of value-for-money, and yet make inferences based on non-functional product-based attributes. This implies that consumers seek equivalent symbolic benefits, in exchange of high price paid for luxury goods. Apparently, possessing products with high brand prominence matches consumers' self-image. By maintaining and reinforcing consistency in self-image, consumers are able to sense the worthiness in spending money on luxury goods, which in turn induces their purchase intention.

Importantly, we make the clear distinction that there is no clear-cut answer to the "be loud or be quiet" brand mark strategy question. Instead, it very much depends on consumers' interpretations towards brand prominence, which hinges on the personal beliefs they uphold. The findings indicate that the ability of brand prominence to develop self-congruence and subsequent downstream behavioural outcomes depends on consumers' power distance belief. This concurs well with the findings of Song et al.'s (2017), who stressed that cultural elements (i.e., values and beliefs) should be considered in the equation, as it may affect the decipherment and preference towards a brand marker. High brand prominence can lead to greater self-congruence for consumers with high power distance. As such, prominently branded products are favored by

high power distance consumers as it portrays visible social superiority. Walking down the street wearing the eye-catching Gucci's iconic "double G" logo belt may certainly help consumers to distinct themselves from their peers, and move a step forward in defining their self-concept as being a part of the wealthier populace. Hence, it explains the strengthening power of power distance belief on significant positive indirect effect of brand prominence on purchase intention through self-congruence and value-for-money perception. On the flip side, it is observed that such effect is diminished for consumers with low power distance belief. One can conjecture that consumers with low power distance are less inclined to status expression, and are reminded of equality inherent in social interactions (Hofstede, 2001), and thus brand prominence may be less relevant for their self-congruence.

4.1. Theoretical implications

The study makes important contributions to brand prominence literature. We propose a moderated serial mediation framework that provides conceptual and empirical insight on *how* luxury product design (i.e., conspicuous vs. subtle brand mark) result in purchase intention. Firstly, prior studies have largely emphasized on *why* consumers select a high (or low) prominently branded product (Greenberg et al., 2019; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018; Nabi et al., 2019). However, relatively less attention has been directed to investigate the perception and behavioural outcomes of brand prominence. To this end, we unearth self-congruence and value-for-money perception as two salient outcomes of brand prominence, suggesting that high brand prominence fosters brand user image congruence and perception of worth-spending, within a young, predominantly female sample. Secondly, the current study unpacks internal mechanisms salient to the brand prominence outcome, by revealing the sequential mediating role of self-congruence and value-for-money perception. The sequential mediation identified answers to the question of *how* brand prominence evokes purchase decision, complementing prior studies that assumed direct relationships between brand prominence and purchase intention of luxury goods (Cheah et al., 2015; Pino et al., 2019). Thirdly, we underscore power distance belief as a salient moderator, even at the individual level, suggesting that cultural belief distinguishes the effectiveness of brand prominence. Remarkably, the heretofore-untested moderated mediation outlines the boundary condition (i.e., power distance belief) as to when brand prominence works best in reinforcing downstream consumer responses, especially in shaping consumers' self-congruence. This finding indicates that brand prominence should not be designed with a "one size fit all" approach, and heterogeneity must be taken into account as individual cultural beliefs can vary, even within a single country. Hence, we add to the understanding of signalling theory by demonstrating the need of aligning signal with the characteristics (i.e., cultural belief) of signallers. Finally, heeding the call by Shao et al. (2019a), we make a contextual contribution by examining brand prominence in an emerging market, highlighting that conspicuous brand marking as a marketing strategy is still highly relevant in the emerging market.

4.2. Practical implications

The study's findings pose important marketing implications for luxury brand markers. Different brand marketing communication strategies (whether loud or quiet) may yield fruitful results, under the premise that brand marketers can grasp a thorough understanding of their target market. In the context of emerging markets, a prominent brand strategy should be adopted to stimulate young consumers' purchase intention. To further optimize the branding strategy, a normative source such as opinion leaders can be utilized to mirror the image consumers trying to match as younger consumers are often driven by self-image motive. For instance, embodying Huda Kattan, a highly famed social media influencer, carrying a handbag emblazoning the big "LV" may reflect the image that young consumers are in pursue of and

resonance with the purchase of prominently branded products. Also, solely basing power distance from a country level view may undermine the effectiveness of a marketing strategy, as there are apparent individual variations even from within the same country. In line with Kim and Zhang (2014), luxury brand marketers need to recognize that their prominent brand strategy must align with consumers' power distance belief to derive optimal outcomes. To this end, marketers may want to engage in segmentation and profiling to accurately identify and engage with high power distance belief consumers. In addition, marketers who are selling prominently branded products may prime power distance belief through advertising appeal (e.g., "for those who want to reach the top"; Lalwani and Forcum, 2016, p. 330) to elicit high power distance belief. Even better yet, brand marks should be endowed with classy symbolic meanings that convey prestigious feelings to satisfy the needs of high-power distance consumers.

4.3. Limitations and future research

The study has gone some ways towards understanding the concept of brand prominence. However, there are several limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, the sample is limited to students from a single country. Despite being valid in achieving the study's objectives, future studies may expand the diversity of the sample to increase its generalizability. A cross-cultural comparison may be meaningful in testing the proposed model. Secondly, as brand prominence is saliently associated with status signalling, it is unlikely to work without the presence of others, thereby bringing in the potential role of self and others' status. Future studies could explore and develop a more sophisticated theoretical apprehension that encompasses these constructs beyond a two-way interaction. Thirdly, this study only considers the value-for-money dimension. Future studies could include and test a more detailed value dimensions (e.g., emotional and social value) to identify the most salient value in the brand prominence context. Fourthly, it would be fruitful for future research to extend the current research model by incorporating different dimensions of self-concept for a more comprehensive understanding. Fifthly, the present study considers only a single product type, while future research could explore the realm of other luxury goods, such as clothes, sunglasses, and watches. Sixthly, the current study is situated on personal consumption. It would be interesting to see whether results would hold in the context of gifting instead. Finally, literature has acknowledged the rise of inconspicuous luxury consumption, presenting another valuable path waiting to be explored. For instance, *when* and *why* is a subtle brand preferred by luxury consumers? *What* segment should be catered to and targeted for inconspicuous brand? Will there be any differences in terms of psychological and behavioural response as well as brand evaluation for this market? Addressing these pressing queries would provide a more thorough understanding of brand prominence in luxury goods consumption.

Appendix

Scenarios adopted from Pino et al. (2019).

High prominence condition

Please imagine that you are in a luxury store because you need to buy a new wallet for yourself, and your budget is up to \$400. The sales staff shows you all the best quality wallets they have in stock. Those wallets are characterized by big and very visible logos of the luxury brands. Their average price is \$300.

Low prominence condition

Please imagine that you are in a luxury store because you need to buy a new wallet for yourself, and your budget is up to \$400. The sales staff shows you all the best quality wallets they have in stock. Those wallets

are characterized by very small logos of the luxury brands, stitched inside the products. Their average price is \$300.

References

- Aguirre-Rodríguez, A., Bosnjak, M., Sirgy, M.J., 2012. Moderators of the self-congruity effect on consumer decision-making: a Meta-analysis. *J. Bus. Res.* 65 (8), 1179–1188.
- Ajitha, S., Sivakumar, V.J., 2017. Understanding the effect of personal and social value on attitude and usage behavior of luxury cosmetic brands. *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 39, 103–113.
- Amatulli, C., De Angelis, M., Donato, C., 2020. An investigation on the effectiveness of hedonic versus utilitarian message appeals in luxury product communication. *Psychol. Market.* 37 (4), 523–534.
- Aw, E.C.-X., Flynn, L.R., Chong, H.X., 2019. Antecedents and consequences of self-congruity: replication and extension. *J. Consum. Market.* 36 (1), 102–112.
- Bajac, H., Palacios, M., Minton, E.A., 2018. Consumer-brand congruence and conspicuousness: an international comparison. *Int. Market. Rev.* 35 (3), 498–517.
- Baker, T.L., Chari, S., Daryanto, A., Dzenkowska, J., Ifie, K., Lukas, B.A., Walsh, G., 2019. Discount venture brands: self-congruity and perceived value-for-money? *J. Bus. Res.* 116, 421–419.
- Bearden, W.O., Etzel, M.J., 1982. Reference group influence on product and brand purchase decisions. *J. Consum. Res.* 9 (2), 183–194.
- Berger, J., Ward, M., 2010. Subtle signals of inconspicuous consumption. *J. Consum. Res.* 37 (4), 555–569.
- Boulding, W., Kirmani, A., 1993. A consumer-side experimental examination of signaling theory: do consumers perceive warranties as signals of quality? *J. Consum. Res.* 20 (1), 111–123.
- Brunner, C.B., Ullrich, S., Jungen, P., Esch, F.R., 2016. Impact of symbolic product design on brand evaluations. *J. Prod. Brand Manag.* 25 (3), 307–320.
- Butcher, L., Phau, I., Teah, M., 2016. Brand prominence in luxury consumption: will emotional value adjudicate our longing for status? *J. Brand Manag.* 23 (6), 701–715.
- Cheah, I., Phau, I., Chong, C., Shimul, A.S., 2015. Antecedents and outcomes of brand prominence on willingness to buy luxury brands. *J. Fash. Mark. Manag.* 19 (4), 402–415.
- Connelly, B.L., Certo, S.T., Ireland, R.D., Reutzel, C.R., 2011. Signaling theory: a review and assessment. *J. Manag.* 37 (1), 39–67.
- Cui, H., Zhao, T., Smyczek, S., Sheng, Y., Xu, M., Yang, X., 2019. Dual path effects of self-worth on status consumption: evidence from Chinese consumers. In: *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-06-2019-0364>. Retrieved from.
- Dubois, D., Ordabayeva, N., 2015. Social hierarchy, social status, and status consumption. In: Norton, M.I., Rucker, D.D., Lambertson, C. (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Consumer Psychology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, pp. 332–367.
- Eastman, J.K., Eastman, K.L., 2011. Perceptions of status consumption and the economy. *J. Bus. Econ. Res.* 9 (7), 9–20.
- Eastman, J.K., Iyer, R., Shepherd, C.D., Heugel, A., Faulk, D., 2018. Do they shop to stand out or fit in? The luxury fashion purchase intentions of young adults. *Psychol. Market.* 35 (3), 220–236.
- Eastman, J.K., Shin, H., Ruhland, K., 2020. The picture of luxury: a comprehensive examination of college student consumers' relationship with luxury brands. *Psychol. Market.* 37 (1), 56–73.
- Erdem, T., Swait, J., 1998. Brand equity as a signaling phenomenon. *J. Consum. Psychol.* 7 (2), 131–157.
- Erdem, T., Swait, J., 2004. Brand credibility, brand consideration, and choice. *J. Consum. Res.* 31 (1), 191–198.
- Erdem, T., Swait, J., Louviere, J., 2002. The impact of brand credibility on consumer price sensitivity. *Int. J. Res. Market.* 19 (1), 1–19.
- Fornell, C.G., Larcker, D.F., 1981. Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *J. Market. Res.* 18 (1), 39–50.
- Fournier, S., 1991. A meaning-based framework for the study of consumer-object relations. *Adv. Consum. Res.* 18 (1), 736–742.
- Gao, H., Winterich, K.P., Zhang, Y., 2016. All that glitters is not gold: how others' status influences the effect of power distance belief on status consumption. *J. Consum. Res.* 43 (2), 265–281.
- Govers, P.C., Schoormans, J.P., 2005. Product personality and its influence on consumer preference. *J. Consum. Market.* 22 (4), 189–197.
- Greenberg, D., Ehrensperger, E., Schulte-Mecklenbeck, M., Hoyer, W.D., Zhang, Z.J., Krohmer, H., 2019. The role of brand prominence and extravagance of product design in luxury brand building: what drives consumers' preferences for loud versus quiet luxury? *J. Brand Manag.* 27, 195–210.
- Hagtvedt, H., Patrick, V.M., 2009. The broad embrace of luxury: hedonic potential as a driver of brand extendibility. *J. Consum. Psychol.* 19 (4), 608–618.
- Hair, J.F., Hult, G.T.M., Ringle, C.M., Sarstedt, M., 2017. *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*, second ed. SAGE Publications.
- Hair, J.F., Risher, J.J., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C.M., 2019. When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *Eur. Bus. Res.* 31 (1), 2–24.
- Han, D., Lalwani, A.K., Duhachek, A., 2017. Power distance belief, power, and charitable giving. *J. Consum. Res.* 44 (1), 182–195.
- Han, S.-L., Kim, K., 2020. Role of consumption values in the luxury brand experience: moderating effects of category and the generation gap. *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 57, 102249.
- Han, Y.J., Nunes, J.C., Drèze, X., 2010. Signaling status with luxury goods: the role of brand prominence. *J. Market.* 74 (4), 15–30.
- Hayes, A.F., 2015. An index and test of linear moderated mediation. *Multivariate Behav. Res.* 50 (1), 1–22.
- Hennigs, N., Wiedmann, K.P., Klarmann, C., Strehlau, S., Godey, B., Pederzoli, D., et al., 2012. What is the value of luxury? A cross-cultural consumer perspective. *Psychol. Market.* 29 (12), 1018–1034.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C.M., Sasterd, M., 2015. A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *J. Acad. Market. Sci.* 43 (1), 115–135.
- Hofstede, 2001. *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Holbrook, M.B., 1994. The nature of customer's value: an axiology of service in consumption experience. In: Rust, R.T., Oliver, R.L. (Eds.), *Service Quality: New Directions in Theory and Practice*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, pp. 21–71.
- Homburg, C., Schwemmler, M., Kuehl, C., 2015. New product design: concept, measurement, and consequences. *J. Market.* 79 (3), 41–56.
- Huber, F., Eisele, A., Meyer, F., 2018. The role of actual, ideal, and ought self-congruence in the consumption of hedonic versus utilitarian brands. *Psychol. Market.* 35 (1), 47–63.
- Jacob, I., Khanna, M., Rai, K.A., 2019. Attribution analysis of luxury brands: an investigation into consumer-brand congruence through conspicuous consumption. *J. Bus. Res.* 116, 597–107.
- Kastanakis, M.N., Balabanis, G., 2012. Between the mass and the class: antecedents of the "bandwagon" luxury consumption behavior. *J. Bus. Res.* 65 (10), 1399–1407.
- Kauppinen-Räsänen, H., Björk, P., Lönnström, A., Jauffret, M.N., 2018. How consumers' need for uniqueness, self-monitoring, and social identity affect their choices when luxury brands visually shout versus whisper. *J. Bus. Res.* 84, 72–81.
- Kim, Y., Zhang, Y., 2014. The impact of power-distance belief on consumers' preference for status brands. *J. Global Market.* 27 (1), 13–29.
- Kleine, S.S., Kleine, R.E., Laverie, D.A., 2006. Exploring how role-identity development stage moderates person-possession relations. In: Belk, R.W. (Ed.), *Research in Consumer Behavior*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 127–163.
- Kline, R.B., 2011. *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, third ed. Guilford Press, New York.
- Ko, E., Costello, J.P., Taylor, C.R., 2019. What is a luxury brand? A new definition and review of the literature. *J. Bus. Res.* 99, 405–413.
- Lai, S.M., Prendergast, G., 2019. How men interpret women's luxury brand signals. *J. Fash. Mark. Manag.: Int. J.* 23 (2), 209–223.
- Lalwani, A.K., Forcum, L., 2016. Does a dollar get you a dollar's worth of merchandise? The impact of power distance belief on price-quality judgments. *J. Consum. Res.* 43 (2), 317–333.
- Lam, D., Lee, A., Mizerski, R., 2009. The effects of cultural values on word-of-mouth communication. *J. Int. Market.* 17 (3), 55–70.
- Le Monkhouse, L., Barnes, B.R., Stephan, U., 2012. The influence of face and group orientation on the perception of luxury goods. *Int. Market. Rev.* 29 (6), 647–672.
- Leal-Rodríguez, A.L., Eldridge, S., Roldán, J.L., Leal-Millán, A.G., Ortega-Gutiérrez, J., 2015. Organizational unlearning, innovation outcomes, and performance: the moderating effect of firm size. *J. Bus. Res.* 68 (4), 803–809.
- Li, G., Li, G., Kambele, Z., 2012. Luxury fashion brand consumers in China: perceived value, fashion lifestyle, and willingness to pay. *J. Bus. Res.* 65 (10), 1516–1522.
- Liang, S., He, Y., Chang, Y., Dong, X., Zhu, D., 2018. Showing to friends or strangers? Relationship orientation influences the effect of social exclusion on conspicuous consumption. *J. Consum. Behav.* 17 (4), 355–365.
- Liu, F., Li, J., Mizerski, D., Soh, H., 2012. Self-congruity, brand attitude, and brand loyalty: a study on luxury brands. *Eur. J. Market.* 46 (7/8), 922–937.
- Loureiro, S.M.C., Jiménez-Barreto, J., Romero, J., 2020. Enhancing brand coolness through perceived luxury values: insight from luxury fashion brands. *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 57, 102211.
- Martín, S.S., Camarero, C., 2005. Consumer reactions to firm signals in asymmetric relationships. *J. Serv. Res.* 8 (1), 79–97.
- Mathur, P., Chun, H.H., Maheswaran, D., 2016. Consumer mindsets and self-enhancement: signaling versus learning. *J. Consum. Psychol.* 26 (1), 142–152.
- McCracken, G., 1986. Culture and consumption: a theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods. *J. Consum. Res.* 13 (1), 71–84.
- Mehta, A., 1999. Using self-concept to assess advertising effectiveness. *J. Advert. Res.* 39 (1), 81–81.
- Meyer, H.M., Manika, D., 2017. Consumer interpretation of brand prominence signals: insights for a broadened typology. *J. Consum. Market.* 34 (4), 349–358.
- Mittal, B., 2006. I, me, and mine—how products become consumers' extended selves. *J. Consum. Behav.: Int. Res. Rev.* 5 (6), 550–562.
- Mundel, J., Huddleston, P., Vodermeier, M., 2017. An exploratory study of consumers' perceptions: what are affordable luxuries? *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 35, 68–75.
- Nabi, N., O'Casey, A., Siahitiri, V., 2019. Status consumption in newly emerging countries: the influence of personality traits and the mediating role of motivation to consume conspicuously. *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 46, 173–178.
- Nel, J., Boshoff, C., 2019. Online customers' habit-inertia nexus as a conditional effect of mobile-service experience: a moderated-mediation and moderated serial-mediation investigation of mobile-service use resistance. *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 47, 282–292.
- Nia, A., Zaichkowsky, J.L., 2000. Do counterfeits devalue the ownership of luxury brands? *J. Prod. Brand Manag.* 9 (7), 485–497.
- O'Casey, A., Frost, H., 2002. Status brands: examining the effects of non-product-related brand associations on status and conspicuous consumption. *J. Prod. Brand Manag.* 11 (2), 67–88.
- Oyserman, D., 2006. High power, low power, and equality: culture beyond individualism and collectivism. *J. Consum. Psychol.* 16 (4), 352–356.

- Pino, G., Amatulli, C., Peluso, A.M., Natarajan, R., Guido, G., 2019. Brand prominence and social status in luxury consumption: a comparison of emerging and mature markets. *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 46, 163–172.
- Podoshen, J.S., Li, L., Zhang, J., 2011. Materialism and conspicuous consumption in China: a cross-cultural examination. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* 35 (1), 17–25.
- Rao, A.R., Qu, L., Ruekert, R.W., 1999. Signaling unobservable product quality through a brand ally. *J. Market. Res.* 36 (2), 258–268.
- Roy, R., Rabbane, F.K., 2015. Antecedents and consequences of self-congruity. *Eur. J. Market.* 49 (3/4), 444–466.
- Sääksjärvi, M., van den Hende, E., Mugge, R., van Peursem, N., 2015. How exposure to logos and logo varieties fosters brand prominence and freshness. *J. Prod. Brand Manag.* 24 (7), 736–744.
- Shamah, R.A., Mason, M.C., Moretti, A., Raggiotto, F., 2018. Investigating the antecedents of African fast food customers' loyalty: a self-congruity perspective. *J. Bus. Res.* 86, 446–456.
- Shao, W., Grace, D., Ross, M., 2019a. Consumer motivation and luxury consumption: testing moderating effects. *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 46, 33–44.
- Shao, W., Grace, D., Ross, M., 2019b. Investigating brand visibility in luxury consumption. *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 49, 357–370.
- Shukla, P., 2012. The influence of value perceptions on luxury purchase intentions in developed and emerging markets. *Int. Market. Rev.* 29 (6), 574–596.
- Shukla, P., Purani, K., 2012. Comparing the importance of luxury value perceptions in cross-national contexts. *J. Bus. Res.* 65 (10), 1417–1424.
- Siahtiri, V., Lee, W.J.T., 2019. How do materialists choose prominent brands in emerging markets? *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 46, 133–138.
- Sirgy, M.J., Grewal, D., Mangleburg, T., 2000. Retail environment, self-congruity, and retail patronage: an integrative model and a research agenda. *J. Bus. Res.* 49 (2), 127–138.
- Sirgy, M.J., Johar, J.S., Samli, A.C., Claiborne, C.B., 1991. Self-congruity versus functional congruity: predictors of consumer behavior. *J. Acad. Market. Sci.* 19 (4), 363–375.
- Sirgy, M.J., 1982. Self-concept in consumer behavior: a critical review. *J. Consum. Res.* 9 (3), 287–300.
- Song, X., Huang, F., Li, X., 2017. The effect of embarrassment on preferences for brand conspicuousness: the roles of self-esteem and self-brand connection. *J. Consum. Psychol.* 27 (1), 69–83.
- Souiden, N., M'Saad, B., Pons, F., 2011. A cross-cultural analysis of consumers' conspicuous consumption of branded fashion accessories. *J. Int. Consum. Market.* 23 (5), 329–343.
- Spence, M., 1973. Job market signalling. *Q. J. Econ.* 87 (3), 355–374.
- Spence, M., 1974. Competitive and optimal responses to signals: an analysis of efficiency and distribution. *J. Econ. Theor.* 7 (3), 296–332.
- Sundie, J.M., Kenrick, D.T., Griskevicius, V., Tybur, J.M., Vohs, K.D., Beal, D.J., 2011. Peacocks, porsches, and thorstein veblen: conspicuous consumption as a sexual signaling system. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 100 (4), 664–680.
- Trudeau, S., Shobeiri, S., 2016. The relative impacts of experiential and transformational benefits on consumer-brand relationship. *J. Prod. Brand Manag.* 25 (6), 586–599.
- Tsao, H.Y., Berthon, P., Pitt, L.F., Parent, M., 2011. Brand signal quality of products in an asymmetric online information environment: an experimental study. *J. Consum. Behav.* 10 (4), 169–178.
- Veblen, T., 1899. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Macmillan, New York, NY.
- Wang, X., Wang, X., Fang, X., Jiang, Q., 2018. Power distance belief and brand personality evaluations. *J. Bus. Res.* 84, 89–99.
- Wu, B., Yang, W., 2018. What do Chinese consumers want? A value framework for luxury hotels in China. *Int. J. Contemp. Hospit. Manag.* 30 (4), 2037–2055.
- Wu, Z., Luo, J., Schroeder, J.E., Borgerson, J.L., 2017. Forms of inconspicuous consumption: what drives inconspicuous luxury consumption in China? *Market. Theor.* 17 (4), 491–516.
- Yang, W., Mattila, A.S., 2016. Why do we buy luxury experiences? *Int. J. Contemp. Hospit. Manag.* 28 (9), 1848–1867.
- Zhang, L., Zhao, H., 2019. Personal value vs. luxury value: what are Chinese luxury consumers shopping for when buying luxury fashion goods? *J. Retailing Consum. Serv.* 51, 62–71.
- Zhang, Y., Winterich, K.P., Mittal, V., 2010. Power distance belief and impulsive buying. *J. Market. Res.* 47 (5), 945–954.