

CONCEPTUALIZING A MODEL OF STATUS CONSUMPTION THEORY: AN EXPLORATION OF THE ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE MOTIVATION TO CONSUME FOR STATUS

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This paper examines the various motivations for consuming status products and proposes a conceptual model of status consumption that incorporates these differing motivations. Specifically, we propose that motivations for status consumption can be external (social) and/or internal (personal). Internal motivations focus on expressing inner values and tastes rather than group concerns, and include hedonism, perfectionism (a desire for quality), and self-reward and may result in more private and/or subtle consumption of status products. External motivations to consumer for status focus on the social effects of owning luxury products and include conspicuous consumption (the Veblen effect), exclusivity (the Snob effect), and social identity (the Bandwagon effect) and may result in more public and/or conspicuous consumption of status products. The managerial and research implications of the model are also explored.

INTRODUCTION

Despite recent economic downturns, there has been growth in the global luxury market (Amatuilli & Guido, 2012) with the luxury market estimated to become a trillion dollar market within the next five years (Bain, 2012). Identifying luxury consumers is difficult and confusion exists as to how to best market luxury products (Vickers & Renand, 2003; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Heine, 2010). Bain (2012) suggests that the luxury market is shifting and past strategies will no longer be effective as there is an increased emphasis on uniqueness, entertainment, and the experiential aspects of status products. Research though has been somewhat scarce on the topics of luxury, prestige, and status (Truong, Simmons, McColl, & Kitchen, 2008) with the construct of status consumption, in particular, neglected in consumer research (Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara, 2012). The motivation to consume status products goes beyond just income (Mason, 1992), and it is becoming more critical for managers of status brands to determine the factors that motivate status consumption and when consumers would most

desire status products (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). A better understanding of these motives is significant strategically because brands with the “right status image” can generate high value for both firms and consumers (Shukla, 2008; 2010, p. 112). Thus, it is critical to further conceptualize the construct of status consumption and suggest propositions for specific ideas to research to aid in better understanding of status consumption.

The literature suggests that the motives for status consumption can be external (Shukla, 2012), internal (Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009), or both (Dubois & Laurent, 1996; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Tsai, 2005; Truong et al., 2008; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Amatuilli & Guido, 2012). External motives are interpersonal (social) and extrinsic; such as, to signal wealth (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Truong et al., 2008), to demonstrate success to others (Richins, 1994b) or to be seen as elite (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Mason, 2001; Truong et al, 2008; Han, Nunes, & Dreze, 2010), or to fit in (Leibenstein, 1950). These motives have been described, respectively, as conspicuous consumption (Veblen effect), snob appeal, and the bandwagon effect (Leibenstein, 1950). In contrast, internal motives are personal (individual) or intrinsic; such as, to reward oneself (Truong et al., 2008), to derive

pleasure (Hudders, 2012; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999), or to ensure quality (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). We present these motives as hedonism, perfectionism, and self-reward. The purpose of this paper is to synthesize the literature discussing the possible motives for status consumption to aid managers trying to effectively segment the luxury market.

The external-internal dichotomy in the motivation to consume for status has not been addressed sufficiently in the marketing literature (Amatulli & Guido, 2012). This paper builds on the existing literature by proposing a model that describes how people may be motivated by different reasons to consume for status with consequence of consuming status products differently and what this means for managers. Specifically, we propose that externally-motivated status consumption relates to the classic idea of conspicuous consumption and/or the related ideas of snob appeal or the bandwagon effect. Externally-motivated status consumption may result in more public consumption of status products and/or more conspicuous-style consumption. Internally-motivated status consumption, however, relates more to the concepts of hedonic consumption, perfectionism, and the idea of rewarding oneself (even if these products are never seen by others) with luxury items. Internally-motivated status consumption may result in more private consumption and/or more subtle consumption of status products. For managers trying to market status products, we suggest that the marketing strategy to reach status consumers would differ significantly depending on the consumer's motivation leading to status consumption. While the need for status consumption would then result in the consequence of purchasing status products, how those consequences manifest themselves would depend on if the consumer was motivated internally and/or externally to consume for status. Finally, we discuss the research implications for this conceptual model.

RELEVANT LITERATURE AND MODEL DEVELOPMENT

The literature notes the difficulty in precisely defining luxury as perceptions of what is luxury may vary by consumer (Kapferer, 1998;

Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Weidmann, et al., 2009). Luxury has been described in the literature as the idea of sensuality, splendor, pleasure, and extravagance (Dubois, Czellar, & Laurent, 2005; Christodoulides, Michaelidou, & Ching Hsing, 2009; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Park, Reisinger, & Noh, 2010; Shukla, 2011) along with being associated with premium quality, craftsmanship and/or aesthetically appealing design (Dubois & Laurent, 1994; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Heine, 2010; Hudders, 2012), rarity, extraordinariness, and symbolic meaning (Dubois & Paternault, 1995; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Heine, 2010; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). We offer that luxury consumption is how consumers aim to enhance their prestige or level of status.

Clark, Zboja, & Goldsmith (2007) and Goldsmith & Clark (2012) describe status consumption as an individual difference variable that addresses a person's motivation to consume for status. In fact, while various definitions of status consumption exist in the literature, they are similar in that they tend to focus on the underlying motivations for such consumption. Some of these motivations are external, such as to signal wealth through public display (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004), to improve social standing (Eastman, Goldsmith, & Flynn, 1999), to gain social prestige (O'Cass and Frost, 2002), and to obtain the approval and envy of others (Truong, et al., 2008). Other motivations, however, are internal, such as self-esteem and self-respect (Truong, et al., 2008) or self-reward without public display of the products (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). Thus, the literature demonstrates that the construct of status consumption is somewhat different from that of conspicuous consumption (i.e., status consumption can occur that is not conspicuous), and both need to be considered when modeling status consumption.

The definition of status consumption used in our model updates the definition developed by Eastman, et al. (1999) to take into account this distinction between status and conspicuous consumption. Originally, status consumption was defined as "the motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through the conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer and symbolize

status both for the individual and surrounding significant others” (Eastman, et al., 1999, p. 41). We update this definition to recognize that: (1) consumers are trying to improve their standing for socially (for external reasons) and / or personally (for internal reasons); (2) it is this external and/or internal motivation that leads one to become interested in consuming for status and (3) status consumption may or may not be conspicuous. It is important to note though that the consumer products need to be seen as representing status both for the individual and others (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). The new definition is as follows:

Status Consumption is the interest a consumer has to improve one’s social and/or self-standing through consumption of consumer products that may be conspicuous and that confer and symbolize status for the individual and surrounding significant others.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Status consumption has been shown to be a stable one factor structure as defined and measured by Eastman et al. (1999) and as utilized in the literature (Han et al., 2010; Goldsmith, Flynn, & Kim, 2010; Phau & Cheong, 2009; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). However, questions remain about the antecedents of status consumption. Overall, the literature suggests that: (1) there are multiple antecedents (including individual, social, socio-psychological, brand, and situational) that can lead one to be motivated to consume for status; and (2) not all antecedents will impact all consumers equally (Vigernon & Johnson, 1999; Christodoulides, et al., 2009; Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Shukla, 2010). We adopt this construct and offer a conceptual model (see Figure One) in which a consumer can be motivated to consume for status for a multitude of reasons. Some of these reasons are internal, such as a desire for quality, hedonic/sensory/aesthetic needs, and addressing one’s self-concept by rewarding oneself. Others are external (interpersonal) effects, including the possibly contradictory needs to fit in and conform (the bandwagon Effect) and to stand apart (the Veblen and snob Effects) (Leibenstein, 1950).

This model categorizes the antecedents of status consumption into two broad groups, internal and external, with additional classifications within these two groups. In looking at these antecedents, we recognize that self can be relevant to both internal (from the perspective of self-reward) and external (from the perspective of self enhancement for the purpose of looking better to others). We propose in this conceptual model that one or more of these antecedents may motivate status consumption, an interest in status. Our discussion illustrates the positive relationship between each antecedent and status consumption. Finally, we propose that status consumption (an interest in status), may demonstrate itself in consumption of different types of status products, such as private or public consumption and subtle or conspicuous status symbols, depending on the antecedents that motivated one’s interest in status.

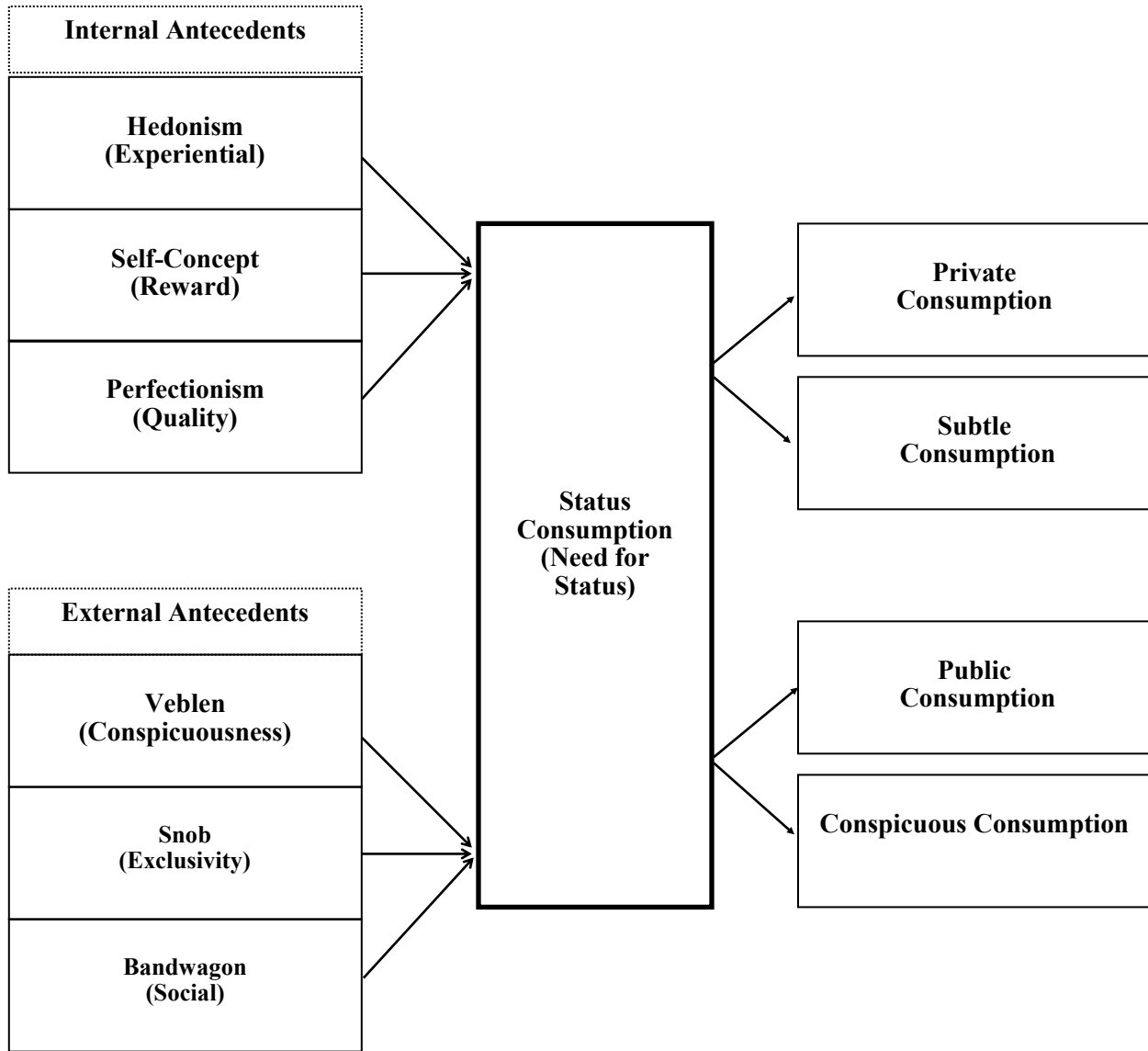
Internal Antecedents

Internal motivations to consume for status focus on expressing inner values and tastes rather than the concerns of the group (O’Cass & Frost, 2002; Tsai, 2005). There are three categories of internal antecedents in our model: (1) hedonic; (2) perfectionist (quality); and (3) self-reward.

Hedonic. Status products can provide substantial intangible, emotional benefits to consumers (Dubois & Laurent, 1994; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; O’Cass & Frost, 2002; Ivanic & Nunes, 2009). Thus, the consumption of status products can be motivated by a desire to obtain these emotional benefits or to fulfill emotional needs (Eng & Bogaert, 2010). These desires, in turn, can be triggered by lifestyle, emotions and culture (Amatulli & Guido, 2012).

The motivation to consume for status as a means of achieving emotional benefits is described as the “hedonic” motive or “hedonism” (Hudders, 2012; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). It relates to the multi-sensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of one’s experience with products (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), the satisfaction of intrinsic needs (Tsai, 2005; Christodoulides, et al., 2009), and the aesthetic beauty and emotional excitement that luxury products brings to

FIGURE 1:
Conceptual Model of Status Consumption



consumers (Weidmann et al., 2009). In this context, people buy luxury brands not for their functional features, but rather for their subjective emotional benefits, intrinsically pleasing aspects, and sensory gratification and pleasure (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999 and 2004; Vickers & Renand, 2003; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Eng & Bogaert, 2010). Such consumers are also often willing to pay a premium price for products that offer unique emotional experiences (Amatulli & Guido, 2012). Thus, we propose the following:

P₁: A consumer with a stronger motivation for hedonic experiences with products will have a stronger interest in status consumption.

Perfectionist/High Quality. Another internal motivation for status consumption is a desire for quality. Luxury brands are assumed to have a higher level of quality and performance compared with non-luxury brands in the same product category (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Tsai, 2005). Dimensions of quality include: consistent craftsmanship (Nueno & Quelch,

1998; Fionda & Moore, 2009); superior functionality and utility (Mason, 1992; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Vickers & Renand, 2003; Tsai, 2005; Fionda & Moore, 2009); enhanced features and durability (Hudders, 2012); and, in some cases, an element of innovation and/or uniqueness (Nueno & Quelch, 1998; Fionda & Moore, 2009). Vigernon and Johnson (1999) defined quality in terms of superior product characteristics and performance, and referred to the motivation to consume luxury products as an assurance of quality as “perfectionism.” For those internally motivated by quality, counterfeit products will not meet their status consumption needs due to quality concerns (Tsai, 2005).

Amatulli and Guido (2012) offer that those who buy luxury items for individual lifestyle, rather than as an external display of status, pay more attention to the quality of the products. One possible explanation is that those with internal motivations to consume for status may be more concerned with quality, while those with external motivations may be more concerned with status brands and images and what they mean in their social circle. While there are consumers who attribute their social motivations for status to be quality concerns, there are also consumers motivated for status not because of the external (social) implications of their purchase, but rather because they want the very best for themselves and do not care if others are aware of their purchases. Thus, we propose the following:

P2: Consumers with a stronger motivation for perfectionism/high quality will have a stronger interest in status consumption.

Self-Concept Leading To Self-Reward. A third internal motivation for status consumption is to reinforce personal self-image through self-reward (Tsai, 2005; Trigg, 2001). The assertion here is that consumers purchase luxury products as an expression of themselves and their identity, and ultimately as a means of rewarding themselves for their hard work and effort (Vigernon & Johnson, 2004).

Sirgy (1982) asserts that self-concept relates to all of an individual’s thoughts and feelings about himself/herself as an object and that there are differing views of self that lead to different self-concept motives: (1) self-esteem

motivation; and (2) self-consistency motivation. According to Sirgy (1982), people purchase products they feel represent, define, and/or enhance who they are, and the consumption and use of these products can be utilized to communicate one’s self-concept to others. A similar view is expressed by Solomon (1983, p. 323), who asserts that a person’s self-concept is “a result of appraisals, both real and imagined by the self and others, of how one appears to others.” Likewise, Richins (1994a, p. 507) states that possessions “have value for their role in expressing or reinforcing the sense of self.”

Consumers can express themselves and their identity through luxury brands (Vigernon & Johnson, 2004) as they select status products with images that are congruent with their own self-image (Tsai, 2005; Fionda & Moore, 2009). “Individuals have a perceived self-image relating to their self-concept and attempt to preserve, enhance, alter, or extend this image by purchasing and using products that they consider relevant” (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012, p. 1401). Those with a more independent self-concept demonstrate a personal orientation in the way they consume luxuries, while those with a more interdependent self-concept care more about the social function of luxury consumption (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012).

Hudders (2012) suggests that the impressive (i.e., internal) motivation for luxury includes both the fit with one’s self-image and personal reward. Tsai (2005) discusses the idea of self-gifting based on affective consumption theory and mood-regulation theory – that is, people will reward themselves with status products as a means to enhance their self-concept. This idea differs from Veblen’s original idea of conspicuous consumption in that here the individual is using status as evidence of, or as a reward for, their hard work and effort, rather than to show that they did not have to earn it.

It is important to recognize that aspects of self can be expressed both internally (through developing one’s self concept as well as reward) and externally (through symbolizing the image one wants to send out to others). Those consumers more motivated to consume for status for internal reasons may be those who have a more independent self-concept or self-

product congruity and use products to enhance their self-concept or reward themselves. Thus, we propose the following:

- P₃: Consumers with a stronger motivation to reward themselves with status products will have a stronger interest in status consumption.

External Antecedents

External motivations to consume for status focus on the social effects of owning luxury products rather than emotional benefits or inner values. With external dimensions of luxury, interpersonal influences play a significant role (Shukla, 2011; Amatulli & Guido, 2012). Products can be purchased for their symbolic and social value rather than their functional utility (Mason, 1992), and also as a signal to others of wealth and success, exclusivity and/or personal identity (Berger & Ward, 2010; Hudders, 2012). Thus, the research suggests three key external impacts on status consumption: (1) conspicuous consumption (the Veblen effect); (2) exclusivity (the snob effect); and (3) fitting in socially (the bandwagon effect). In each of these external antecedents, the symbolic aspect of consumption comes into play. Accordingly, we begin with a discussion of the impact of symbolism, and then move into a more detailed explanation of each external antecedent.

The Impact of Symbolism. There has been significant discussion in the literature regarding how people make inferences about others and their level of success based on their possessions (Solomon, 1983; Dittmar, 1994; Richins 1994a; O’Cass & McEwen, 2004). Solomon (1983) suggests that others evaluate individuals based on the products they consume, and this symbolism is used to create one’s own social identity. Consumption allows consumers to “integrate self and object, thereby allowing themselves access to the object’s symbolic properties” and these properties can serve to classify consumers to build affiliations and/or enhance distinctions (Holt, 1995, p. 2; Christodoulides et al., 2009; Goldsmith & Clark, 2012). Nelissen and Meijers (2011) in a series of field and lab experiments found that luxury clothing labels work as a costly signaling trait that enhances one’s status and provides status consumers with favorable

treatment in a social setting. Wang and Griskevicius (2014) suggest that luxury products can be used as signals for males to attract mates and women to deter female rivals. Rucker and Galinsky (2008) suggest consumers purchase high-status products to demonstrate status and restore power.

Status products can serve symbolic purposes in two ways: (1) by expressing social standing, wealth, and status as part of signaling group membership; and (2) as self-expressive symbols to represent one’s unique qualities and to signify interpersonal relationships (Dittmar, 1994). Individuals use the symbolic properties of brands to convey meaning on the broad cultural level, the group level, and the individual level (O’Cass & Frost, 2002). This is particularly true for luxury status products, for which the symbolic value (i.e., what they mean) may exceed the functional value of the product (Dubois & Paternault, 1995; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012).

Product meaning can be derived from other people’s estimation of the extent to which the product expresses the status of its owner (Eastman, et al., 1999). Thus, status consumers are more likely to be impacted by the symbolic characteristics of a brand (O’Cass & Frost, 2002). Ownership of luxury products conveys a certain identity by matching the symbolic meanings of luxury with consumption. This identity relates to the values of wealth, status, and socio-economic success (Eng & Bogaert, 2010), as well as to self-enhancement to look better to others and a desire for membership in a superior group (Vickers & Renand, 2003). Mason (1992, p. 91) stresses that for consumers to buy for interpersonal (Veblen, snob or bandwagon) effects, the product must have social visibility and be “seen as having the appropriate status-conferring values.” Likewise, O’Cass and Frost (2002, p. 67) assert that the “status-conscious market is more likely to be affected by the symbolic characteristics of a brand.”

The Veblen Effect (Conspicuous Consumption). Conspicuous consumption is the ostentatious, public display of wealth to indicate status (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004; Truong et al, 2008). It is pursued to enhance one’s position in society, as displays of wealth become important

social symbols to enhance the likelihood of ascending the social status hierarchy (O’Cass & Frost, 2002; Shukla, 2008). Due to the mobility of society, the display of wealth through consumption becomes even more critical than the display of wealth through leisure (Veblen, 1899; Trigg, 2001). Nelissen and Meijers (2011, p. 344) suggest that status consumption serves as an evolutionary adaptive function as “conspicuous consumption increases the signalers’ social capital through the formation of alliances that yield protection, care, cooperation, and even mating opportunities.” Wang and Griskevicius (2014) suggest that women use conspicuous consumption to signal to other women that their romantic partners are devoted to them and deter other women from poaching their mate.

The social status of a brand is critical in conspicuous consumption (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Dubois and Duquesne (1993, p. 43) state that conspicuous consumption is “motivated by a desire to impress others with the ability to pay particularly high prices” and is “primarily concerned with the ostentatious display of wealth.” Podeshen and Andrzejewski (2012, p. 322) see conspicuous consumption as an effort for one to be seen more favorably in terms of the social hierarchy since “conspicuous purchases can be seen as compensatory – making up for societal or situational marginalization.”

Vigneron and Johnson (1999) suggested two external motivations related to conspicuous consumption: Veblenian and snob. In both cases, price is used as a cue to indicate status. In the Veblenian motivation, price is an indicator of prestige because a higher price can impress others as a show of ostentation. However, in the snob motivation, price is an indicator of exclusivity and non-conformity because snob consumers avoid using popular brands (Mason, 1992; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999).

According to Bagwell and Bernheim (1996, p. 349), the Veblen effect “arises from a desire to achieve social status by signaling wealth through conspicuous consumption.” They continue: “Members of higher classes voluntarily incur costs to differentiate themselves from members of lower classes

(invidious comparison), knowing that these costs must be large enough to discourage imitation (pecuniary emulation)” (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996, p. 350). A decrease in price would cause status products to be seen as less exclusive and less desirable (Amatulli & Guido, 2012). Thus, we propose that conspicuous consumption can be a key antecedent to status consumption because, before consumers would be interested to consume for status, they may feel the need to impress others through consumption. This suggests the following proposition:

P₄: Consumers with a stronger motivation to conspicuously consume will have a stronger interest in status consumption.

The Snob Effect (Exclusivity). Some consumers are motivated to purchase status products because of their rarity and uniqueness; that is, as a sign of exclusivity. With the snob effect, market demand decreases if others are purchasing the product (Liebenstein, 1950); conversely, the desire for distinction encourages purchases of products with aesthetic quality and scarcity value (Mason, 1992). Consumers seek uniqueness in order to enhance self and social image, either by breaking the rules or avoiding similar consumption, and the desirability of the brand is enhanced when it is also seen as expensive (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Part of what makes something rare is its price, so higher-priced products may be perceived as socially positive, and signal status to others, for reasons other than quality perceptions (Bao & Mandrik, 2004). In fact, a high price may add “snob appeal” to an otherwise pedestrian product (Eastman et al., 1999; O’Cass & Frost, 2002; Han et al., 2010).

Price has been used as an indicator of prestige and luxury with brand positioning (Truong et al., 2008), as luxury brands have a significantly higher price relative to other products with similar tangible features (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Bagwell and Bernheim (1996) offer that for some consumers, price is a surrogate indicator of power and status as it is utilized to impress others. Thus, we propose the following:

P₅: Consumers with a stronger motivation to consume for the snob effect will

have a stronger interest in status consumption.

The Bandwagon Effect (Social). Anthropologists have recognized the importance of goods in forming and symbolizing relationships (Richins, 1994a, p. 507). Social influences are important in terms of status consumption (Tsai, 2005; Weidmann, et al., 2009). Consumers are motivated to create a positive social image (Shukla, 2010; 2011), and interpersonal influences (both normative and informational) may play a significant role in consumption (O’Cass & Frost, 2004; Shukla, 2011).

Eastman et al. (1999) describe how an important motivation in consumer behavior is the desire to gain social prestige from the acquisition and consumption of status goods. Prestige value in social networks relates to the idea of luxury products being utilized as a symbol of membership to relevant others (Weidmann et al., 2009). Ownership of luxury brands allows consumers to be associated with certain prestige groups while, at the same time, disassociating with non-prestige reference groups (Christodoulides, et al., 2009, p. 398). “People who are concerned with social acceptance and conformity with affluent reference groups may value possessions that are more socially visible and expensive” (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004, p. 490). Wilcox, Kim, and Sen (2009) suggest that these social needs to fit in may even be met by counterfeit status products. Conversely, status consumption has been negatively related to consumer independence; i.e., those consumers who are less concerned about how they are seen by others are less interested in consuming for status (Goldsmith & Clark, 2012).

Clark et al. (2007) found those more motivated to consume for status are more likely to conform to group norms. This desire for social distinction can lead buyers to ignore a product’s economic utility and to purchase solely for the social recognition (Mason, 1992). This social impact is not only top-down, as trickle-up emulation can also occur (Trigg, 2001). Thus, status products can increase a consumer’s perceived status level by others (O’Cass & Frost, 2002; Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara,

2012) and is a strong measure of social success (O’Cass & Frost, 2002).

Vigneron & Johnson (1999) describe the external antecedent related to the social aspect of consumption as the bandwagon effect. Bandwagon consumers are concerned less about price and more with group affiliation, conforming, and fitting in (Mason, 1992; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Hudders, 2012). They buy luxury products merely because many other people have already bought them, and they follow their reference group in buying the same thing (Amatulli & Guido, 2012, p. 193; Leibenstein, 1950). So, the bandwagon effect exists where consumers’ valuation and demand for a good increases when they see others consuming the same good; that is, when people’s individual preferences depend on aggregate behavior (Leibenstein, 1950; Hudders, 2012).

As described by Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012, p. 1401), bandwagon-type products “gain additional utility (i.e., attractiveness), because others are buying and using them.” This type of luxury consumption comes in sharp contrast to Leibenstein’s (1950) snob effects, where consumers only value a luxury product when very few own it. It also differs from Veblen effects, where consumers increase consumption when a luxury price is increased. Bandwagon effects are aggregate consumption behaviors having both social origin and social valence. While Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012) suggest that an interest in status motivates one to consume bandwagon-type products, we propose that the social need exemplified in the bandwagon effect propels someone to be motivated to consume for status. Thus, we propose the following:

P6: Consumers with a stronger motivation to consume for the bandwagon effect will have a stronger interest in status consumption.

Consequences Of Status Consumption

The key consequence of status consumption is the actual purchase of status products. What status products are purchased though can vary tremendously from traditional luxury products to new-luxury products (Park, et al., 2010), to even counterfeit products. Reeves (2005) suggest that services will play an increasing

role as status products as consumers will define wealth in terms of the services busy consumers buy. Kapferer and Bastien (2009) stress that exclusive services are a key component of luxury brands. The luxury category is constantly expanding with new products, services, and offerings developed to meet the growing desire of the luxury market (Park, et al., 2010). Nelissen and Meijers (2011) stress the need for research to examine status consumption behavioral benefits in social interactions. Thus, we hope to start to answer this call by proposing that there may be differences in what status products are purchased based on whether the motivation to consume for status is driven internally or externally.

For internally motivated consumers, two of Silverstein and Fiske (2003, p. 54) “emotional pools” could relate to how consumers behave in terms of new-luxury goods: (1) Taking Care of Me where consumers reward themselves for their hard work, (2) Questing in which consumers look for experiences that challenge and define them both in terms of their own eyes and how others see them. Gardyn (2002) suggests that luxury consumers can be segmented into three groups: (1) those who see luxury as functional and are looking for quality and enduring value; (2) those who see luxury as a reward and demonstrative of their success to others in a “smart” manner that does not leave them open to criticism; and (3) those who see luxury as an indulgence and are focused on the unique emotional qualities of the luxury product.

Han, et al. (2010) addresses brand prominence (the conspicuousness of a brand’s mark or logo on a product) and status-signaling using brand prominence. They classified consumers into one of four groups based on their level of wealth and need for status: (1) patricians, or wealthy consumers who are low in need for status and want quiet, inconspicuous goods, that signal wealth only to those in their group; (2) parvenus, or wealthy consumers high in need for status who want loud luxury goods to signal to the less affluent that they are not one of them; (3) poseurs, who have low wealth but high status needs and use loud counterfeit status goods to emulate the wealthy; and (4) proletarians, who have both low wealth and low

need for status and thus do not engage in signaling (Han et al., 2010). Han et al. (2010) also note that across different categories of luxury products that quieter, luxury products tend to charge even more than those status brands with louder brand markings; such as Mercedes places larger emblems on its lower priced models. The idea is that there are those who are willing to pay a higher premium to have luxury products that display the brand name less conspicuously (Patricians) and that these Patricians are able to read subtle brand signals that quietly convey status horizontally to other Patricians (Han et al., 2010).

We offer for those more internally motivated to consume for status may be more likely to buy subtle status symbols to meet their need for hedonic value, for quality, and /or self concept and willingness to self-reward with quieter status symbols in private. This fits with Han et al. (2010) who suggested that products without logos are less apt to serve social functions. Thus, we propose the following:

P_{7a}: Consumers with a stronger internal motivation for status (whether it is driven by hedonism, quality, and/or self-reward) will be more likely to meet their need for status through private consumption of status products than those consumers more externally motivated.

P_{7b}: Consumers with a stronger internal motivation for status (whether it is driven by hedonism, quality, and/or self-reward) will be more likely to meet their need for status through more subtle status consumption of status products than those consumers more externally motivated.

For externally motivated consumers, status-enhancing brands may be used as a means to an end, such as making a desired impression on others via their symbolism. Per Eng and Bogaert (2010) this may be shown through purchases of status symbols, expensive gifts, and global luxury brands. Two of Silverstein and Fiske’s (2003, p. 54) “emotional pools” could relate to externally driven status consumers: (1) Connecting which involves the social aspect of consumption (such as attracting mates, spending times with friends, and nurturing family), and (2) Style in which

consumers use their product choice to demonstrate their success, individuality, and personal values.

For those who cannot afford luxury products, but still want to display status, such as through counterfeit goods, they want their status brand markings to be loud and prominent (Han et al., 2010). Per Phau and Teah (2009), ones' level of status consumption is the most significant factor for who is most likely to purchase counterfeit luxury brands (i.e., status consumers may be willing to buy counterfeits to meet their status needs). Finally, Wilcox et al. (2009) suggest that consumers whose luxury brand attitudes serve a social-adjustive (i.e., external) function are more likely to prefer counterfeit status products rather than a real status brand, while those consumers whose luxury brand attitudes serve a value-expressive (i.e., internal) function are more likely to prefer real status brands to counterfeits.

We offer for those more externally motivated to consume for status, they would be more likely to conspicuously consume as they need the product to symbolize status to significant others to show that they can afford it and/or to fit in and thus would want to consume louder status symbols publicly. Thus, we propose the following:

- P_{8a}**: Consumers with a stronger external motivation for status (whether is driven by a Veblen, snob, and/or bandwagon effect) will be more likely to meet their need for status through public consumption of status products than those consumers more internally motivated.
- P_{8b}**: Consumers with a stronger external motivation for status (whether is driven by a Veblen, snob, and/or bandwagon effect) will be more likely to meet their need for status through more conspicuous consumption of status products than those consumers more internally motivated.

Finally, it is important to note the relationship between the internal and external motivations for status consumption, and status purchase behaviors may be moderated by one's socio-economic situation. For example, the literature

also suggests that ultra-rich or old-money consumers prefer status goods that are not flashy and are noticeable only to others in their group, such as with the use of smaller logos (Husic & Cicic, 2009; Han, et al., 2010).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

An important benefit of a stronger conceptualizing of status consumption and its antecedents and consequences is that this may provide better guidance for marketers trying to better reach and serve the status market. Based on our model, we suggest that marketers would target status consumers differently based on whether they are internally or externally motivated to consume for status as discussed below. Future research is needed though to test these ideas to determine their ability to aid managers in better serving the status market.

Internal Motivations

Marketing managers trying to reach those consumers motivated for status for hedonic reasons need to stress the sensory and experiential aspects of their products and the status buying process. This need for hedonic, experiential luxury purchasing may be even stronger for younger consumers (Bain, 2012). For marketers trying to reach the quality motivated status consumer, they need to stress the quality and craftsmanship of the product. This segment will demand higher quality, which may involve higher product costs and a strong focus on maintaining excellence. To reach this segment, marketers will want to stress the enduring, long-lasting quality in promoting these status products; for example, watchmakers that stress the heirloom nature of their watches (Kirkland, 2012). Finally, for marketers, trying to reach those utilizing status products to express oneself and/or as a reward this suggests the need to promote their status products not as an ostentatious display for others, but instead as an intrinsic reward to boost the self. So marketers need to convey a message that the consumer worked hard and earned the right to buy this product. With internal motivations to consume for status, consumers may not need conspicuous symbols of status.

External Motivations

For managers, publicly consumed (Bearden & Etzel, 1982) status products may be more appropriate for targeting externally motivated status consumers (Richins, 1994a). Care must be taken to ensure that the symbolic signal sent by the product matches the level of subtlety needed by the segment. Per Han et al. (2010), higher income consumers may prefer more subtle signals of status that is noticeable only within their social group, compared to lower income consumers who may prefer more conspicuous signals of status. For those motivated more by the Veblen effect, i.e., the traditional “keeping up with the Joneses” or status seekers segment (Packard, 1959), this suggests the need for louder or more conspicuous status symbols. In reaching externally motivated consumers, marketers must take care when adjusting pricing for status products. While there is an increasing market for discount status products (Eastman & Eastman, 2011; Bain, 2012), for those motivated by the Veblen or snob effect, a lower or discount price (or discount outlet) may devalue the status products (Amatulli & Guido, 2012). Additionally, marketers targeting the Veblen or snob effect segment must be vigilant about shutting down counterfeit versions of their products as that will devalue the product to those segments for whom a higher price is important to either publicly demonstrate wealth (Veblen effect) or to demonstrate rarity (snob effect).

Finally, for consumers motivated by the bandwagon effect, marketers may be able to sell status products through discounting or in discount outlets, especially during economic downturns (Eastman & Eastman, 2011). Consumers motivated by the bandwagon effect however, may also be more open to the purchase of counterfeit versions of status products to try to fit in at lower prices. Additionally, these consumers may want to ensure that their status markers are visible to significant others, suggesting the need to make status symbols more conspicuous. Thus, marketers aiming for the bandwagon segment need to recognize that this segment is price sensitive, need to demonstrate their fitting in and are possibly open to counterfeit options in their attempt to fit in their peer group. Thus,

research is needed to test this model to better determine the managerial implications of status consumption.

FUTURE RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Future research is needed to test the proposed model in this paper. Survey research could initially be utilized to test the fit of the model. Many of the measures needed could be adapted from past research. For example, the five-item status consumption scale from Eastman et al. (1999) can be used to measure the need for status. To test the antecedents, items can be adapted from several scales that exist in the literature. However, psychometric analysis would be needed to determine the reliability, validity, and dimensionality of the measures before testing the model. A final proposition to be tested is whether there is a positive relationship between the internal and external antecedents. While the literature suggests that people can have both internal and external motivations to consume for status, it has not addressed whether there is any association between these two categories of motivations. Thus, research is needed to determine if there are relationships among antecedents. We propose there will be positive significant correlations between the internal and external motivations impacting the need for status consumption. For marketers, research is needed to determine the size of the segments of the status market based on these antecedents.

To measure the internal antecedents, several items from Tsai (2005), Weidmann et al. (2009), and Hudders (2012) can be utilized. Perfectionism (quality) can be measured with some of Tsai’s (2005) quality assurance items and Hudders’ (2012) impressive purchase motivations. Hedonism (experiential) can be measured with Tsai’s (2005) self-directed pleasure items and Weidmann et al.’s (2009) measures dealing with self-identity. Self-concept and self-reward can be measured with some of Tsai’s (2005) items dealing with self-gift giving and congruity with internal self, Weidmann et al.’s (2009) hedonic items, and Hudders’ (2012) impressive purchase motivations. To measure the external antecedents, items could be adapted from O’Cass and Frost (2004) and Truong et al. (2008), Weidmann et al. (2009), and Hudders

(2012). The Veblen (conspicuous consumption) effect could be measured by revising three conspicuous consumption items (O’Cass and Frost, 2004; Truong et al., 2008) to measure how important it is for a brand to be a symbol of prestige, attract attention, and impress other people, along with some of Hudders’ (2012) expressive purchase motivation items. The snob (exclusivity) effect could be measured with some of Hudders’ expressive purchase motivation items. And, the bandwagon (social) effect could be measured with some of Weidmann et al.’s (2009) social items and some of Hudders’ (2012) expressive purchase motivation items.

While this model broadly addresses the internal and external antecedents for status consumption and suggests possible consequences based on these antecedents, more research is needed to determine if there are other antecedents not included in this model that have a significant impact on status consumption. Additionally, research is needed to determine if there is a difference in consequences, based on which antecedent impacts status consumption, in the types of status products, that are purchased (public versus private or subtle versus conspicuous). Research is also needed to see what mediates the relationships between the model’s constructs, for example, emotion may play a role and impact how someone meets their need for status. Finally, research is needed to examine the impact of culture on our model of status consumption and to determine if this model holds in different cultures and countries. Thus, this paper hopes by conceptualizing the antecedents and consequences of status consumption to encourage future discussion and research of the construct of status consumption.

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