

# **The Influence of Three Fundamental Factors on Conspicuous Consumption**

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# **The Influence of Three Fundamental Factors on Conspicuous Consumption**

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## **Abstract**

Prior research has shown various factors – from a range of research streams – that influence conspicuous consumption, yet the core factors that lead to conspicuous consumption are still not well understood. This dissertation investigates more deeply than hitherto the antecedents that influence conspicuous consumption, through consideration of three fundamental factors derived from a systematic literature review; self-focus versus other-focus, self-transformation motives versus self-expression motives and kin care mindset.

A series of eight experiments, including an experiment using eye-tracking, was conducted by employing size of logo as a proxy variable for the measurement of conspicuous consumption behavior. With regard to the selection of participants, I used undergraduates and panelists from Amazon Mechanical Turk. The experiment findings suggest that individuals who place more emphasis on external values (other-focused, self-transformational motives) desire conspicuous products that possess social value more than those individuals who place more emphasis on internal values (self-focused, self-expression motives and kin care mindset).

More specifically, this research finds three important facts. First, because other-focus individuals are more concerned about potential social criticism than self-focus individuals, such individuals desire more conspicuous products that have social value, in order to prevent any possible social harm (Experiments 1 and 2). Second, because a self-transformation motivation induces individuals to pursue an ideal self more than does a self-expressive motivation, individuals desire conspicuous products that are highly associated with an ideal self more when they motivate to transform themselves (Experiments 3, 4 and 5). Lastly, when the kin care mindset is active, individuals desire conspicuous products less, because such a mindset induces individuals to prioritise infants over external values such as pursuing social fame. The data further shows the boundary condition that when conspicuous products are baby-related, women with a kin care mindset crave conspicuous products more than in the control condition. However, because men are less psychologically connected with babies, this pattern is not observed in men (Experiments 6, 7 and 8). Together, this research builds on prior research on conspicuous consumption by deepening understanding of the fundamental factors that drive this behaviour.

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## Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Name: Sungeun (Ange) Kim

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

November, 2015

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The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee approved this research on March 26, 2014, (AUTEC reference number 14/33).

# **SECTION 1**

## **SETTING THE SCENE**

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Chase after money and security  
And your heart will never unclench.  
Care about people's approval  
And you will be their prisoner.  
Do your work, then step back.  
The only path to serenity.  
(Lao Tzu, Poem 9 from the Tao Te Ching)

#### **1.1 The Issue and the Research Question**

Although we nod our heads in appreciation of the ancient wisdom contained in the verse by Lao Tzu, in real life most are still searching for ways to pursue happiness through positive affirmation from others. This practice includes conspicuous consumption in capitalist societies. Veblen Thorstein critically describes this construct as lavishing money on unnecessary evident goods as a means to gain social status and recognition from others (Veblen, 1899). Following Veblen, to better understand this practice in depth, researchers have examined various antecedent and consequent factors of conspicuous consumption behaviour from broad research streams such as power, social class, culture and materialism (e.g., Berger & Ward, 2010; Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010; Lee & Shrum, 2012; Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014).

Though research on conspicuous consumption has received great attention over the past decade, and previous research discovered how various factors affect conspicuous consumption, the ways in which core factors influence conspicuous consumption are still not well understood. Thus, the first task undertaken in this research is a systematic literature review to discover the ulterior core motives hidden inside various factors that influence conspicuous consumption behaviour in the extant research. Three such factors are revealed; self-focus versus other-focus, self-transformative versus self-expressive motivation, and a much more recently developed construct, kin care. The general research question I seek to address in this

thesis is “What is the causal role of these three bottom-line factors, the most fundamental factors with regard to conspicuous consumption behavior?”

## **1.2 Research and Analytical Methods Employed**

This research employs several methods, all loosely classified as experiments. I consider this general method most appropriate, as this is causal research; external influences are controlled as far as possible, so the relationships under scrutiny can be reasonably inferred. In fact, I employ multiple experiments because the specific objectives and configuration of each enquiry demand a different treatment. Hence classic experiments using small sample groups of respondents and utilizing analysis of variance are mixed with experiments that gather data by survey and the consequently larger database is inspected by regression analysis. A third method involves a much smaller group of respondents who submitted to an experiment using an eye-tracking device.

In all, eight experiments were conducted, as can be seen from the research presentation schema contained in Figure 1.1. Following the lead of several other prominent researchers (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Lee & Shrum, 2012; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014), the major dependent variable in all the experiments is the logo size, which is generally accepted to reflect the conspicuous consumption intentions of the purchaser. Target products for the experiments cover a gamut from luxury cars, t-shirts, handbags, iPad cases, passport covers, travel suitcases and baby clothes.

## **1.3 Results and Findings**

Across all eight experiments, what stands out most from this research is that individuals who place more weight on external values, such as being focused on others and motivated to transform themselves into the person they wish to be, desire conspicuous products more than those who place weight on internal values of self-focus, self-expression and kin care.

More specifically, this research reveals the following three important findings. First, individuals have a greater desire for conspicuous products when they focus more on others than themselves, because of brand logo visibility. This is because focusing on others makes individuals more concerned about others’ opinions of them and social criticism (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975), thus leading individuals to gravitate towards the products that can guard against potential social criticism. This in turn, makes other-focused individuals place more value than self-focused individuals on conspicuous products that have socially favourable indicators.

Secondly, the current research shows that individuals who are motivated to transform themselves into the person they wish to be prefer conspicuous products more than those who are motivated to express their actual selves. This is because conspicuous products are highly associated with an ideal self.

Finally, this research shows that when the kin care mindset is activated, it attenuates the preference for self-rewarding conspicuous products. The reason is that the kin care mindset leads individuals to prioritize infants' needs over their individuals' own desires and needs such as social success and recognition. In fact, there is a boundary condition. That is, women influenced by the kin care motivation do desire conspicuous products when the products are baby-related, because the amount of money spent for their children represents how much they love their children (Haugen, 2005). However, this pattern is not observed in men, as women are generally more psychologically connected with babies than are men (Glocker et al., 2009).

#### **1.4 Research Contributions**

The current research offers several important contributions. First, the studies reported here will enrich the extant conspicuous consumption literature by unveiling the fundamental motivations lying behind the various factors that have been shown to influence conspicuous consumption in previous research (e.g., Lee & Shrum, 2012; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009).

Second, the findings of this research highlight ways to attenuate conspicuous consumption that affect the happiness of individuals; the self-focused, self-expression and kin care mindsets. Consequently, this research's findings advance understanding of conspicuous consumption as, to date, most research has focused more on antecedents that increase conspicuous consumption behaviour (e.g., Lee & Shrum, 2012; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014) than factors that decrease conspicuous consumption behaviour (Stillman, Fincham, Vohs, Lambert, & Phillips, 2012).

This research also makes theoretical contributions to the literature on conspicuous consumption by providing additional insight into the relationship between different sizes of logos and levels of conspicuous consumption (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Lee & Shrum, 2012). Consistent with the existing literature, this research indicates that the level of conspicuous consumption grows as the size of the logo increases. In other words, the average person perceives that luxury products with conspicuous logos, associated with an ideal self, are more high-class than luxury products with subtle logos.

Along with the conceptual implications, this research also has broad practical implications for marketing practitioners, social welfare agencies and governments. From a marketing practitioner's standpoint, because this research suggests that individuals desire conspicuous products more when they are engaged in external goals than internal goals, I suggest that when marketers promote conspicuous products they should link the promotional message to the external goals. For instance, they could employ a self-transformation motive message such as "Elevate Your Life to the Next Level."

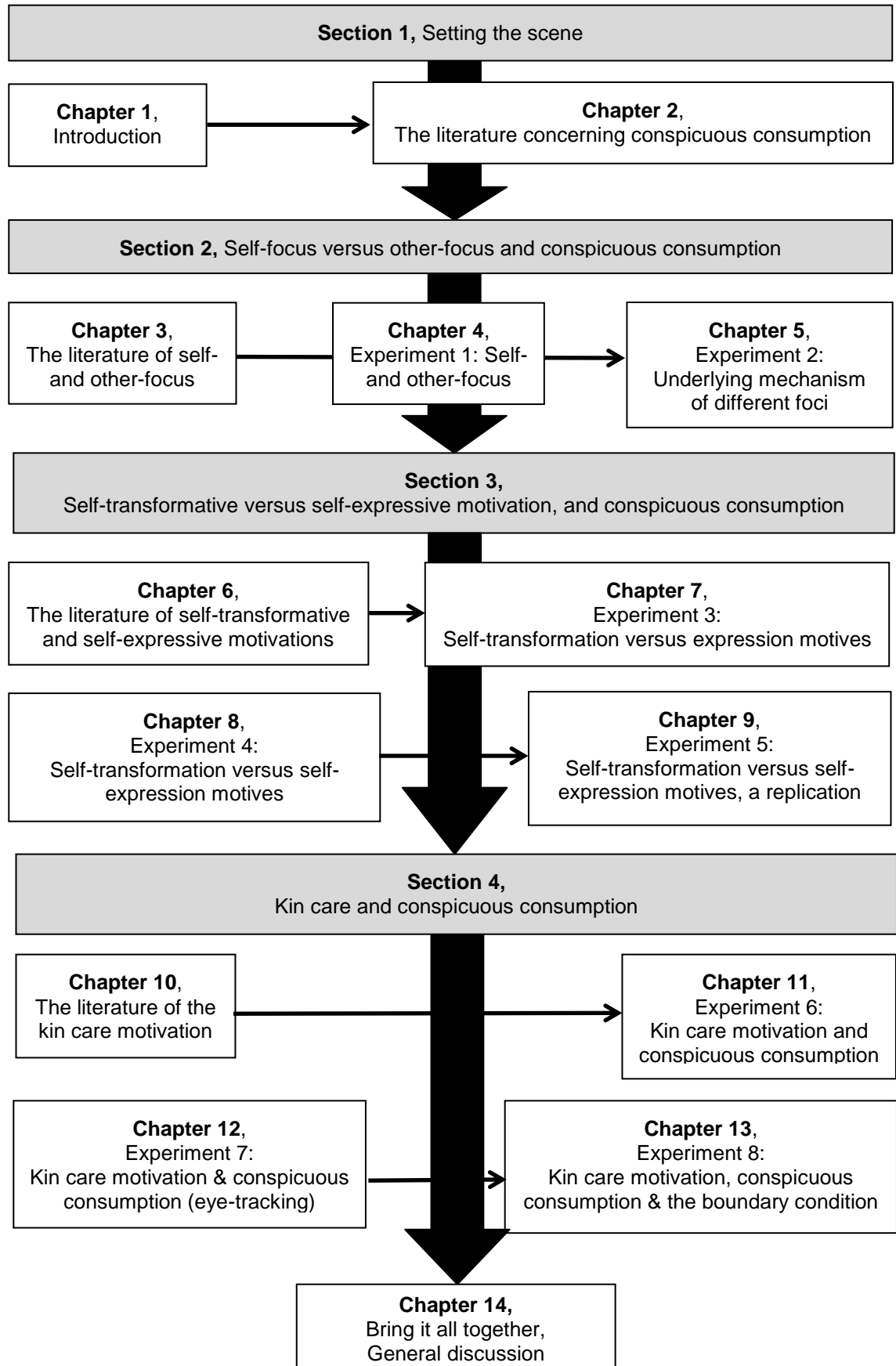
The findings are also of interest to governments and social welfare agencies. Conspicuous consumption is a public, conscious act that is unhelpful for individuals' happiness (Kasser, 2002). Because this research shows that focusing on internal factors leads individuals to be less attracted to conspicuous products, this research will help governments and social

welfare agencies facilitate control of the purchase of conspicuous products. For example, they could educate society about how to focus on the internal self more and on the external self less by arranging free social programmes. Furthermore, they should educate people that pursuing external goals such as social fame and success should not be an ideal life they should pursue. The research contributions will be discussed further and more thoroughly at the end of the each section.

## 1.5 The Remainder of This Dissertation

**Figure 1.1**

Thesis presentation schema



The remainder of this thesis is structured as in Figure 1.1. I set the scene of the thesis in Section 1 by providing an overview of existing literature on conspicuous consumption and discovering the bottom-line factors that have been found to influence conspicuous consumption in the previous research.

In Section 2, I look into one bottom-line factor, focused targets. I first review extant research on differently focused targets and develop research hypotheses. I then test the generated hypotheses with two experiments. Specifically, Experiment 1 tests the main effect, and the Experiment 2 tests the underlying mechanism. At the end of the section, I provide the overall summary of the findings, limitations and research contributions of Section 2.

In Section 3, I look into another bottom-line factor, different motivations. Similar to the procedure in Section 2, I first review extant research on self-transformation and self-expression motivations and develop a hypothesis. I then test this hypothesis across three experiments. I conclude this section by providing the overall summary of the findings, limitations and contributions.

In Section 4, I look into the last bottom-line factor that I discovered; the kin care mindset. Similar to the previous two sections, I first review the literature of the kin care motivation and generate hypotheses. I then test the hypotheses across three experiments. Experiments 6 and 7 test the main effect and Experiment 8 tests the boundary condition. As in other sections, I conclude this section by providing an overall summary, limitations and the research contributions of Section 4.

Lastly, I finish this thesis by bringing everything together and discussing the main findings, limitations, possible future directions of this research and this thesis's contributions. In the next chapter, I review extant research on conspicuous consumption.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW, CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

As a starting point, I begin with an overview of a theoretical and an empirical concept of conspicuous consumption. Next, I discuss the use of conspicuous consumption within the previous marketing, consumer psychology, economics, and evolutionary psychology literature.

#### 2.1 Conspicuous Consumption: A Theoretical Approach

What is conspicuous consumption? The late-nineteenth century was considered the golden age of conspicuous consumption in America. During the period from 1870 to 1910, newly rich industrialists, who lacked both the status and security than their counterparts in Britain were seeking to attain status and social recognition through conspicuous displays of wealth (Mason, 1981). So, for example, “guests at parties were given one hundred dollar bills with which to light their after-dinner cigars, waterfalls were installed in dining rooms for dinner dances then promptly removed after the entertainment had ended, garden trees were decorated with artificial fruit made of 14-carat gold” (Mason, 1981, p. 69). Economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen termed this behaviour as *conspicuous consumption*, meaning the wasting of money on unnecessary goods purely as a mean to gain status and social recognition from others (Veblen, 1899).

More importantly, Veblen notes that “in order to gain and to hold the esteem of men, it is not sufficient merely to possess wealth or power. The wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence” (Veblen, 1899, p. 42). In other words, in order to gain social recognition and status, the goods must be easily observable by others.

Following Veblen’s publication of *The Theory of the Leisure Class* in 1899, extensive research on conspicuous consumption began. Also, a number of new terms have been introduced by sociologists, evolutionary psychologists, and economists (see Table 1.1). Scholars have used the term “conspicuous” interchangeably with words and phrases including ostentatious display, loud, brand prominence, visible, explicit signal, and costly signal (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Lee & Shrum, 2012; Mason, 1981; Rucker & Galinsky, 2009). These words are used to convey the idea of attracting special attention with an easily observable brand logo, or symbol, that conveys superior qualities. In contrast, the terms “inconspicuous,” “quiet,” and “subtle” have been used by researchers to refer to attracting special attention with a less observable brand logo or symbol that conveys superior qualities (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Nunes, Drèze, & Han, 2011).

The term conspicuous consumption has also been used interchangeably with the terms “Veblen effects” and “status consumption” (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997) and they convey a similar meaning; of wasting money on

unnecessary product which visibly conveys status, in order to signify social status or attract social recognition from others. From an evolutionary perspective, costly signalling theory is related to the term conspicuous consumption, which suggests an individual conspicuously displays their costly quality (e.g., economic resources, risk, energy and time) to signal their high-quality genes to others (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Smith & Bird, 2000; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997). More specifically, in terms of the similarity with the term conspicuous consumption, showing off conspicuous product (e.g., a new Mercedes-Benz vehicle with a conspicuous logo) is one of the ways in which to publicly display economic resources to others; maybe a potential mate or same-sex rivals; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014.

To describe the antithesis of conspicuous consumption, two separate terms with different meanings have been used. One is inconspicuous consumption (Berger & Ward, 2010; Wilson, Eckhardt, & Belk, 2013). Berger and Ward (2010) define this as “the use of subtle signals that are only observable to people with the requisite knowledge to decode their meaning” (p. 558). The other is non-conspicuous consumption (Wang & Griskevicius, 2014; Winkelmann, 2012), meaning that the individual does not spend money on unnecessary products which visibly signify status. However, with the exception of a few studies (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Nunes et al., 2011), the majority of the currently available body of research has dealt with the concept described by the term non-conspicuous consumption (Gao, Wheeler, & Shiv, 2009; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Lee & Shrum, 2012; McFerran, Aquino, & Tracy, 2014; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009; Sundie et al., 2011).

In summary, in this research I will adopt Veblen’s conceptualization by defining the term conspicuous in the following way; attracting special attention with an easily observable brand logo or symbol that conveys superior qualities. Also, I define the term conspicuous consumption in the following way; conspicuous consumption is spending money on unnecessary products which visibly convey status regardless of their utilitarian function in order to signal social status and/or to gain social recognition from others. This research will use the term non-conspicuous consumption to mean the opposite; that is, not spending money on visible status products. Next, I discuss the empirical approach to conspicuous consumption which has been taken by previous researchers.

**Table 1.1**

**Conspicuous Consumption: Theoretical Evidence**

<b>Substituted term of “conspicuousness”</b>	<b>Inverse term of “conspicuousness”</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Brand prominence (Han et al., 2010)</li> <li>▪ Costly signal (Zahavi &amp; Zahavi, 1997)</li> <li>▪ Explicit signal (Berger &amp; Ward, 2010)</li> <li>▪ Loud (Han et al., 2010)</li> <li>▪ Ostentatious display (Mason, 1981)</li> <li>▪ Visible (Berger &amp; Ward, 2010; Lee &amp; Shrum, 2012; Rucker &amp; Galinsky, 2009)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inconspicuous (Nunes et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2013)</li> <li>▪ Quiet (Han et al., 2010)</li> <li>▪ Subtle signal (Berger &amp; Ward, 2010)</li> </ul>
<b>Substituted term of “conspicuous consumption”</b>	<b>Inverse term of “conspicuous consumption”</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Costly signalling theory (Zahavi &amp; Zahavi, 1975)</li> <li>▪ Status consumption (Sivanathan &amp; Pettit, 2010)</li> <li>▪ Veblen effects (Bagwell &amp; Bernheim, 1996)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inconspicuous consumption (Berger &amp; Ward, 2010)</li> <li>▪ Non-conspicuous consumption (Wang &amp; Griskevicius, 2014; Winkelmann, 2012)</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Conspicuous Consumption: An Empirical Approach

In a search of the literature related to conspicuous consumption, I identified over key 30 academic articles published in journals across marketing, consumer psychology, economics, and evolutionary psychology research. More complete details of each article, including research topics, measures, key findings, what conspicuous products indicate, and underlying mechanisms are presented in Appendix 1.

Although there is a long history of research in the domain, marketing researchers started to study conspicuous consumption more actively after 2005, and a large body of literature has focused more directly on why individuals purchase conspicuous products (antecedents) rather than on what happens following such purchases (consequences). Also, scales have been developed and used to measure individuals' conspicuous consumption behavior (Mazzocco, Rucker, Galinsky, & Anderson, 2012; Lee & Shrum, 2012; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009).

More importantly, modern research has moved beyond Veblen's (1899) original conceptualization and found that conspicuous products symbolize different things according to the situation. Concretely, conspicuous products denote social status to individuals most of the time, and this is consistent with Veblen's (1899) concept. However, depending upon the situation, conspicuous products can convey evidence of an individual's trophy (McFerran et al., 2014), high-quality genetic background (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Sundie et al., 2011) or other specific information (Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). For instance, powerless individuals seek conspicuous products to gain social power because, to them, the possession and use of conspicuous products denotes social status (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). However, when

considered from an evolutionary psychology perspective, when the mating mind-set is active, men desire to show off their high-quality genes to attract potential mates. Hence, they seek conspicuous products as they can symbolize the possession of high-quality genes (Griskevicius et al., 2007).

Moreover, researchers found that conspicuous products are utilized in different strategies according to different situations. Largely, three strategies can be discerned; a coping strategy, a status-signalling strategy, and a costly-signalling strategy. As a coping strategy, individuals desire conspicuous products as ways to alleviate emotional distress, restore a sense of psychological well-being, prevent any potential harm from others, or to deter rivals (Dubois, Rucker & Galinsky, 2012; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009). As a way to signal status, individuals desire conspicuous products to transform themselves; for example, such products can signal that an individual belongs to a particular social group with which he or she wishes to be associated (Belk, 2000; Han et al., 2010; Mazzocco et al., 2012). Lastly, conspicuous products were found to have been used to signal an individual's high-quality genetic background (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Sundie et al., 2011).

Finally, an extensive literature search identified 14 major topics, listed in Table 1.3. These topics are largely classified as being either antecedents or consequences of conspicuous consumption. Additionally, the antecedent factors are further classified as being external or internal. For the purposes of the literature review, I define external factors as a situation or environment that an individual has no control over and internal factors as an individual's psychological feeling and mind-set concerning the events in his/her life. Note that I understand that this classification may lead to a problem within the internal and external factors as they may overlap slightly. However, in the present context, this division is convenient and is not critical to the results. In the next section, I will discuss conspicuous consumption in the context of these 14 topics.

Over the past decade, a large number of studies have begun to try to understand the antecedents and consequences of conspicuous consumption. Moving beyond the idea of Veblen's (1899) conceptualization, a body of research has uncovered various motivations for conspicuous consumption and identified what a conspicuous product may mean to individuals in a particular situation.

**Table 1.3**

**14 Major Topics of Conspicuous Consumption**

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**External Antecedents**

- Power
- Social Class
- Culture
- Age
- Economic Situations (Recession, Supply and Demand)
- Social Exclusion

**Internal Antecedents**

- Materialism
- Psychological Needs (Security Need, Esteem Need, Self-efficacy Need)
- Spiritual Belief
- Emotion (Pride)
- Evolutionary Theory: Costly Signalling Theory (Mating Mind-set, Hormones , Same-sex Competition)

**Consequences**

- Self-perception
  - Others' Perceptions
  - Happiness
- 

**2.3 Summary**

This section has discussed both a theoretical and an empirical approach to the study of conspicuous consumption. Since Veblen (1899) coined the term conspicuous consumption in 1899, other related terms (e.g., explicit, loud, subtle, inconspicuous consumption) have been introduced in the body of research which focuses on this subject. In particular, two constructs are used in opposition to conspicuous consumption; inconspicuous consumption and non-conspicuous consumption. The former is defined as the use of products which display marks of status that most people cannot recognize, in order to communicate only with a minority or specific groups who are able to decode their meaning (Berger & Ward, 2010). The latter is defined as not spending money on conspicuous products, which is the term I will employ in this research. Consistent with Veblen's conceptualization, I define conspicuous consumption as follows: spending money on unnecessary products that visibly convey status, regardless of their utilitarian function, in order to signal social status or gain social recognition from others.

For an overview as well as an in-depth understanding of the notion of conspicuous consumption, I searched the existing literature on conspicuous consumption. I identified over 30 articles published in journals across marketing, consumer psychology, economics, and evolutionary psychology research which add to Veblen's (1899) concept of conspicuous consumption by uncovering various motivations for conspicuous consumption and what conspicuous products stand for according to individuals' situations. Overall, conspicuous products symbolize social status to individuals most of the time, consistent with Veblen's notion. However, depending on situation, such products can also be regarded as trophies, as evidence of individuals' high-quality breeding, or other specific information (Griskevicius et al., 2007; McFerran et al., 2014; Sundie et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014).

Also, in aggregate, I have divided motivation related to conspicuous consumption into three categories, coping, status-signalling and costly signalling strategies. Individuals use different strategies depending on their situation.

Altogether, 14 topics were identified. I have categorized these topics into antecedents and consequences, and further classified the antecedents into external and internal motivators. In what follows, I will first discuss why individuals purchase conspicuous products (antecedents, external and internal) and then discuss what happens after such purchases (consequences).

## **2.4 The Major Research Threads of Conspicuous Consumption**

In the previous section, I identified 14 topics that relate to conspicuous consumption and categorized those topics into antecedents and consequences. Also, I further sub-categorized antecedents into external and internal motivators. The discussion of these topics follows, first dealing with the external motivations of conspicuous consumption, followed by the internal motivations, then the consequences of conspicuous consumption.

## **2.5 External Antecedents**

### **2.5.1 Power**

Power has been described as "the ability to control others or that of having authority or influence" (Johnson & Lennon, 1999). Past research posits that power is a psychological state that varies depending on the individual's task, role, and environment (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). Individuals could experience being both powerful and powerless throughout the day. For instance, an individual may feel powerful when interviewing a potential employee in the morning and, by contrast, may feel powerless when meeting with the boss in the afternoon (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). Goodwin, Gubin, Fiske, and Yzerbyt (2000) acknowledge that the level of power people experience increases when they can control the outcomes of others, whereas their level of power decreases when their own outcomes rest in someone else's hands. Accordingly, a lack of power leads to individuals feeling a loss of control and a sense of uncertainty about their own behaviors. According to Langer (1975), individuals are instinctively

motivated to control their own environments. As a consequence, individuals experiencing a lack of power are motivated to restore a sense of power through a display of power to others in some form, thus their perceived power increases (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008; Rucker, Hu, & Galinsky, 2014). In contrast, individuals who have power feel more in control, psychologically secure, and confident about themselves. Consequently, powerful individuals are less likely to feel a need to display their power externally (Rucker et al., 2014).

Based on the notion that lack of power motivates individuals to alleviate feeling a loss of control through displaying power, the existing literature on power and conspicuous consumption suggests that conspicuous products are one of the implements that can exhibit power to others. This is because conspicuous products confer the value of high-status, which is associated with a sense of power (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). In addition, since conspicuous products are visibly evident (Veblen, 1899), they offer powerless individuals an easy way to exhibit their power to others. Thus, those who feel a lack of power gravitate towards conspicuous products more than those who feel powerful (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009). As empirical evidence, Rucker and Galinsky (2008) find that low-power individuals, for example, are more willing than those with high power to pay more for an executive pen with their university seal in gold. Consistent with this reasoning, Rucker and Galinsky (2009) also find that, compared to those in high power, powerless individuals are more likely to prefer conspicuous clothing such as clothing with visible logos over non-conspicuous clothing such as clothing with non-visible logos. By contrast, since powerful individuals feel less need to display their power externally, they tend to focus more on the functional value of the product regardless of its status value.

In a recent study, Rucker et al. (2014) further divided power into two constructs; the experience of the power, “the internal psychological and physiological tendencies that activate when one has or lacks power” (p. 381) and the expectations of power “cognitive associations or schemas people have regarding how people behave based on their position of power” (p. 383). In one study, they find that when individuals focus on the experience of power, powerless individuals who experience feelings of uncertainty are more willing than high-power individuals to pay more for conspicuous products, which finding supports prior research using consistent reasoning (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009). On the contrary, when individuals focus on the expectations of power the pattern reverses. Individual who are supposed to act powerfully desired conspicuous products such as a BMW vehicle more than those individuals who are supposed to act powerlessly. This reversal occurs because individuals stereotypically anticipate that powerful individuals possess more status-related products than powerless individuals.

To summarize, the literature on power and conspicuous consumption (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009) suggests that compared with powerful individuals, powerless individuals desire conspicuous products more, because they believe that acquiring these conspicuous products can make them feel powerful, causing others to see them as a powerful person. That is, individuals who experience powerlessness feel a loss of control and uncertainty about their own behaviour (Goodwin et al., 2000). Accordingly, powerless individuals naturally seek ways to regain power. One way to enhance an individual's perceived level of power is to display power to others. Individuals believe that exhibiting conspicuous products can facilitate this display,

because these products are visually evident and associated with power (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). Thus powerless individuals desire conspicuous products more than do powerful individuals who are psychologically secure. However, there is a boundary condition, that high-power individuals sometimes prefer conspicuous products more than powerless individuals (Rucker et al., 2014). That is, when individuals focus on an expectation, those individuals who are supposed to act powerfully seek out conspicuous products more than those who are supposed to act powerlessly. This is because, with regard to observers' stereotypes, powerful individuals are those who possess conspicuous products. In short, these findings suggest that when individuals are faced with helplessness, uncertainty or loss of control, they seek conspicuous products in order to divert their state into a more desirable one (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008).

### **2.5.2 Social Class**

Social classes are typically interpreted as groups of individuals with a similar social position in the eyes of others in their society. Likewise, individuals categorize others as being socially equal, superior, or inferior to them (Quester, 2007; Schiffman et al., 2005).

Work by Ordabayeva and Chandon (2011) finds that when equality is high, the social phenomenon of "getting ahead of the Joneses" comes into play, especially in low-class social groups. This is because a perception of high equality lessens the possession gap between what they have compared to the higher social group. This, in turn, increases satisfaction regarding distribution and, at the same time, fuels the low-class social group into magical thinking that they may have a chance to get ahead of the middle-class social group in some way. Since conspicuous products grant status value as well as communicate an ability to be regarded as akin to higher social class individuals, members of the low-class social class group who are focused on social position desire conspicuous products more than those who do not focus on it; for instance, a television with a 32-inch flat screen would be preferred over a 19-inch screen.

Another stream of research has focused on how price knowledge of luxury products differs depending on social class and, therefore, how it affects preference for conspicuous versus inconspicuous luxury products (Han et al., 2010). Field experiments by these latter authors show that, in general, inconspicuous luxury products such as luxury products with no logo are, in reality, more costly than conspicuous ones carrying a large logo. However, only the upper-class group have this price knowledge which, in turn, makes them more attuned to differentiate between the traits of luxury products than other social classes. In other words, other social classes (the mass market) generally misrecognize conspicuous products as being more expensive than inconspicuous luxury products.

Consequently, Han et al. (2010) further postulate that social classes use this price knowledge to meet their aims, their associate/disassociate motive. In terms of this associate/disassociate motive, upper-class groups desire to disassociate themselves with the upper-middle-class and middle-classes. In contrast, the upper-middle-class group desires to associate with the upper-class group and to disassociate with the lower groups. In addition, the



middle-class and working-class groups are less concerned about association. The corollary is that upper-class individuals prefer inconspicuous products in order to communicate only with individuals of their own social group and, at the same time, disassociate themselves from other social groups. In contrast, other classes who are not able to decode the true value of inconspicuous cues engage in *gauche* luxury consumption. That is, the upper-middle class group prefer conspicuous products in order to emulate the upper-class individuals and disassociate themselves from lower groups. Likewise, middle-class individuals prefer conspicuous products with the aim of emulating higher groups. On the other hand, working-class groups generally do not have a specific preference. In this domain of price knowledge of luxury products, Berger and Ward (2010) similarly demonstrate that individuals – such as fashion students – who have more detailed price knowledge about luxury products prefer inconspicuous products, such as luxury products with no logo, in order to disassociate themselves from the masses.

Taking a different approach, Mazzocco et al. (2012) recently examined how both chronic and temporary identification with a low-status social class influences conspicuous consumption. Their findings show that both low social class individuals who revealed their low-status identity (janitors) and high-social-class individuals (brain surgeons) who vicariously experienced the low-status social class of a janitor crave conspicuous products. The reason is that, compared with other social classes, a low-status class is accompanied by social inferiority, helplessness, and uncertainty. One of the ways to restore one's ego is to be regarded as similar to individuals with a higher-status social class in the perception of others in society. This may be because if others see them as akin to individuals in a higher status social class, individuals from the low-status social class may eliminate their undesirable inferiority feelings by deluding themselves into thinking that they have gained social position. Based on this reasoning, the more that people identify themselves as a member of a low-status social class, the greater their desire for conspicuous products that they believe will cause them to be seen as akin to individuals from a higher-status social class.

To summarize, conspicuous products have been utilized differently among social classes as a result of differing level of knowledge regarding the conspicuousness of the brand (Han et al., 2010). Research on social class finds that in comparison with upper-class individuals, middle and low social class individuals have a greater desire for conspicuous products because they believe that they can be seen as akin to higher-social class individuals in the eyes of others by exhibit conspicuous products. Consequently, they can alleviate the undesirable feelings such as inferiority and uncertainty associated with being in a lower social classes by elevating their egos and social position through display of conspicuous products. Additionally, the reason these groups of individuals particularly desire conspicuous products is that, in general, the masses misbelieve that luxury products with large logos or explicit patterns are more expensive than luxury products with no logo or pattern (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010). Furthermore, consistent behavior occurs even when individuals are temporarily identified with a low-status social class (Mazocco et al, 2012). In contrast, since only upper-class individuals can decode the meaning behind an inconspicuous cue, they seek

inconspicuous luxury products to meet their aims — that is, to communicate their higher social standing to others of the same group while disassociating themselves from individuals from a lower social class (Han et al., 2010).

In a nutshell, these findings suggest that individuals who have wishful thinking about changing their life by elevating their social class seek conspicuous products more than those who do not engage in this wishful thinking (Han et al., 2010). Further, it is worth emphasis that the masses generally misperceive luxury products with explicit signals – such as larger logos and explicit patterns – as being more costly than high-end than luxury products with implicit signals (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010).

### **2.5.3 Culture**

Culture is a broad concept and generally defined as a set of homogeneous groups of individuals who have similar values, beliefs, attitudes, rules, and behaviors (Hofstede, 1984, 1991; Quester, 2007). Hofstede (1984) provides one of the most widely accepted categorisation systems, stating that, broadly, cultural dimensions are divided into four types; individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity-femininity. Specifically, Hofstede defines individualism as “a situation in which people are suggested to look after themselves and their immediate family only,” whereas collectivism is defined as “a situation in which people belong to in-groups or collectivises which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty” (p. 419). In addition, Hofstede defines uncertainty avoidance as “the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations, and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these,” while power distance is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations accept that power is distributed unequally” (p. 419). Lastly, he defines masculinity as “a situation in which the dominant values in society are success, money, and things,” whereas femininity is “a situation in which the dominant values in society are caring for others and the quality of life” (p. 420). To date, most literature on culture and conspicuous consumption has centered on individualism-collectivism rather than other cultural dimensions (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2006; Sharma, Sivakumaran, & Marshall, 2014; Webster & Beatty, 1997; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

According to Hofstede (1980), individualism-collectivism is a contrasting concept where individualism is the highest in Western cultures such as the American and the British, whereas collectivism is high in East-Asian cultures such as China and India. Hence, individualists strongly hold an independent “I” self-concept, whereas collectivists strongly hold an interdependent “we” self-concept (Hofstede, 1984; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, McCusker & Hui, 1990). Thus individualists are more self-orientated, and tend to think of others’ behaviors as none of their business. In addition, they put more attention on the personal meaning of possessions (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). By contrast, collectivists are more other-oriented and thus define themselves by their families and ethnic groups. As a result, collectivists have pressure to live up to others’ expectations as they feel dishonour and disgrace if they are not socially accepted. Collectivists are willing to sacrifice their personal interests to gain social

approval (Oyserman, 2006; Triandis et al., 1990). Inglehart and Baker (2000) note a distinct self-concept within countries based on a society development perspective. That is, compared with under-industrializing countries, such as China and India, post-industrial countries that became more advanced and affluent focus more on self-expression values, such as freedom of making one's own judgement, rather than economic and physical security. The authors also demonstrate that the United States and Britain are representative of advanced societies (Inglehart & Baker, 2000).

Given that East-Asian culture puts more weight on external aspects of the self, such as living up to others' expectation to preserve face, than do Western cultures, prior research on culture and conspicuous consumption argues that East-Asians place a greater emphasis on the conspicuousness of luxury possessions (Belk, 2000; Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2006; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). The reason for this is because conspicuous products confer status and social value, thus allowing East-Asians to maintain their social position and gain social approval easily (Veblen, 1899; Wilcox, Kim & Sen, 2009). Consistent with this account, the empirical evidence of Webster and Beatty (1997) demonstrates that compared to Americans, Thais crave conspicuous products (luxury cars) more than non-conspicuous products (everyday furniture). In another example, Belk (2000) also finds that new elites in Zimbabwe desire conspicuous products to signal their social status. Although culture is a broad concept, surprisingly little research has examined cultural differences in conspicuous consumption.

In summary, individuals who are under social pressure seek conspicuous products more than those who are not. That is, as compared with Westerners who strongly value individualistic and self-directed characteristics, Eastern-Asians who strongly value collectivistic and characteristics with a focus on the perceptions of others, put more weight on external aspects of the possessions in order to maintain their social positions (Belk, 2000; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Consequently, Eastern-Asians place more emphasis on the conspicuousness of those luxury products that could easily exhibit one's social position than do Westerners (Webster & Betty, 1997). Put simply, these findings (Belk, 2000; Webster & Betty, 1997; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998) indicate that individuals who are other-directed rather than self-directed employ conspicuous products more frequently in order to hedge against potential threats such as social rejection and loss of face.

#### **2.5.4 Age**

Age is a factor that robustly influences product consumption (Schiffman et al., 2005). With relation to conspicuous consumption, several authors find that young individuals crave conspicuous products more than older individuals. For instance, Piacentini and Mailer (2004) show empirical evidence that adolescents (age 12 to 17 years old) crave wearing conspicuously branded clothing (Silver Predators from Italy). Similarly, Wooten (2006) also finds evidence that adolescents (age 18 to 23 years old) desire conspicuous products more than their seniors. By contrast, Belk (1988) notes that older individuals place more value on nostalgic possessions,

such as gifts from important others, that hold memories and evoke the identity of their youth rather than on status-related products.

The reason behind such patterns is highly associated with self-identity protection. When individuals are young, their self-identity is fragile and uncertain, as it is not yet fully formed. Hence, their self-identity is easily threatened by, for instance, being hazed or ostracised by the dominant peer group (Wooten, 2006). Therefore, young individuals turn to material solutions to unravel the identity issue through impression management (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). That is, they display conspicuous conformity products to alleviate psychological pressure, feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, and to avoid unwanted attention from the dominant peer groups (Wooten, 2006). However, as people grow old, their self-identity is relatively more stable than other age groups. Rather, they are heavily threatened by the limited time in their lives. Therefore, this leads older people to focus on self-identity preservation. In turn, older people become past-oriented and seek happiness from the possession that could evoke nostalgic memory, such as mementos and trophies instead of status-seeking possessions (Belk, 1988; Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014).

To summarize, people in all age groups seek certain possessions to protect their self-identity. More specifically, conspicuous products are more valuable for adolescents than older people. That is, because self-identity during adolescence is fragile and easily threatened by dominant peer groups, they employ a conspicuous conformity product that is easily identifiable to demonstrate their self-identity, as well as conformity, in order to withstand this social pressure (Wooten, 2006). By contrast, as individuals grow older, they are under pressure that their future time is limited. Thus, older individuals attach to past-oriented, memorable possessions that evoke memories of their youth rather than status-seeking possessions for self-identity preservation (Belk, 1988).

### **2.5.5 Economic Situations**

In this section, I review the literature on how economic situations such as economic recession, supply and demand influence conspicuous consumption.

#### **2.5.5.1 Economic Recession**

Recession is defined as “two or more consecutive quarters of negative GDP growth” (Kamakura & Du, 2012, p. 229). Consequently, recession affects individuals’ income which, in turn, makes them adhere to tighter budgets. In the conspicuous consumption domain, Kamakura and Du (2012) assert that shrunken budgets force individuals to fulfil survival needs such as food first, over other unnecessary luxury spending. The corollary of this situation is that individuals become demotivated to display conspicuous products to next-door neighbours and others, who also now care less about signalling status. Thus, when the budget effect increases, the positional effect decreases.

If this is the case, how do luxury marketing companies respond in a recession? Interestingly, Nunes et al. (2011) find that during the most recent major recession (January 2008), the luxury handbag brand marketers Gucci and Louis Vuitton mostly continued to produce luxury products with conspicuous brand logos or patterns because, unlike most of other social groups, the upper-middle-class group still desired to show others that they are constantly thriving, even in recessions. Consequently, leading luxury brand manufacturers mainly focus on making conspicuous products, those with large logos or explicit patterns, during period of recession.

Together, these prior findings suggest that recessions shift social norms on expenditure patterns. Specifically, individuals crave to satisfy survival needs first over other unnecessary expenditures (Kamakura & Du, 2012). Consequently, individuals are demotivated from acquiring conspicuous products because most become less concerned about displaying status during times of need, except for a particular social class group, the upper-middle-class. This group desires to show others that they are still thriving even in economically-strained periods by displaying newly-acquired conspicuous products.

#### ***2.5.5.2 Economic Supply and Demand***

In the prior section, I reviewed how economic recession influences conspicuous consumption. In a different economic situation, prior research links product supply and demand with conspicuous consumption. Supply and demand is a fundamental economic model where demand refers to “a schedule of the amounts of a firm’s product that consumers will purchase at different prices during a specified time period,” and supply refers to “a schedule of the amounts of a good or service that will be offered for sale at different prices during a specified period” (Boone & Kurtz, 2011, p. 613).

In the domain of conspicuous consumption, Gierl and Huettl (2010) demonstrate that scarcity due to supply (e.g., limited editions) induces individuals with different aims regarding conspicuous products – willingness to demonstrate status, uniqueness, and conformity with conspicuous products – to desire conspicuous products (in this instance, wrist watches) more than scarcity due to demand (e.g., nearly sold out). On the other hand, a reverse pattern occurs for non-conspicuous products such as shampoo. This pattern occurs due to the fact that conspicuous products that are in high demand lose their signalling value, whereas non-conspicuous products that are in high demand gain quality value (i.e., individuals perceive the product quality as superior since everyone is trying it).

In summary, the type of scarcity moderates attitudes towards conspicuous products. Scarcity due to limited supply boosts signalling value of conspicuous products which, in turn, makes individuals desire conspicuous products more. Conversely, scarcity due to high demand diminishes individuals’ attitudes towards conspicuous products. In conclusion, prior research on supply and demand suggests that exclusivity and signalling are the key values that individuals seek in conspicuous products (Gierl & Huettl, 2010).

Taken together, prior research on the economic situations of recession, and supply and demand suggests that people desire a conspicuous product only if it has signalling value. For instance, if the people around an individual care less about signalling status or if the masses all possess the same conspicuous product, the conspicuous product lose its signalling and exclusivity value (Gierl & Huettl, 2010; Kamakura & Du, 2012), and it accordingly becomes worth less.

### **2.5.6 Social Exclusion**

Humans are social creatures (Kasser, 2002; Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean, & Knowles, 2009). Thus, when individuals are socially excluded, they experience negative emotions, such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Furthermore, four essential human needs are threatened; belongingness, esteem needs, control, and meaningful existence (Williams, 2001).

More specifically, when individuals are socially rejected their relational needs of belongingness and esteem are threatened. Whereas, when individuals are socially ignored their self-efficacy needs of control, meaningful existence, and power are threatened (Lee & Shrum, 2012). In turn, individuals instinctively attempt to restore these fundamental needs through different behavioural responses (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). One of the ways to restore relational needs includes reconnecting with society by enhancing one's attractiveness, and engaging in prosocial behavior. In contrast, one of the ways to restore efficacy needs is by gaining attention from others, and the use of conspicuous products enables ignored individuals to be noticed (Lee & Shrum, 2012), because conspicuous products indicate high social value and are associated with social power (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009; Wilcox et al., 2009).

The empirical findings of Lee and Shrum (2012) show that compared with socially rejected individuals, socially ignored individuals desire conspicuous products in order to gain attention by impressing others. The reverse pattern occurs with prosocial behavior.

In summary, since humans are social creatures, when individuals are socially excluded, their basic human needs are threatened (Williams, 2001). In turn, these individuals attempt to fortify those needs through different behavioural responses. Specifically, being rejected threatens an individual's relational needs. Thus, individuals seek for ways to reconnect with society. They therefore engage more in prosocial behavior in order to give off their attractiveness. In contrast, being ignored threatens one's self-efficacy needs, which induces feelings of powerlessness, uncertainty, and ceasing to exist (Lee & Shrum, 2012). As a result, individuals desire conspicuous products because they believe that others will then perceive them as being a meaningful person if they display conspicuous products that possess high social value (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009). In short, consistent with the literature on power, the above findings indicate that when individuals are socially ignored, they are faced with aversive states such as powerlessness, helplessness, uncertainty or loss of control (Lee &

Shrum, 2012). Consequently, they seek conspicuous products in order to move to a more desirable state by gaining attention from others (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009).

### **2.5.7 Summary of External Antecedents of Conspicuous Consumption**

Up to this point, I have reviewed the existing research on the external antecedents of conspicuous consumption, including power, social class, culture, age, economic situations and social exclusion. Prior research on these external antecedents of conspicuous consumption provides strong clues in this regard. First, when individuals are faced with an aversive state that is caused by an external social situation, such as helplessness, uncertainty, or loss of control they seek conspicuous products in order to transform themselves into a more desirable state by exhibiting their power to others (Lee & Shrum, 2012). Second, compared with self-directed individuals, individuals who are other-directed due to social pressure such as being hazed or experiencing loss of face, employ conspicuous products more in order to hedge against potential threats and criticism (Wooten, 2006). However, it is important to note that conspicuous products are only of value in these circumstances when they possess signalling value (Gierl & Huettl, 2010). Together, individuals desire conspicuous products more when they are engaging in wishful thinking about conspicuous products.

In the following section, I will review how the internal antecedents of materialism, psychological needs, spiritual belief, emotion, and evolutionary theory affect conspicuous consumption.

## **2.6 Internal Antecedents**

### **2.6.1 Materialism**

Materialism is defined simply as putting heavy value on materialistic objects (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Materialism theorists' research demonstrates that high-materialism is generally driven by chronically unmet psychological needs such as feeling insecure and unsafe (Kasser & Kasser, 2001). When an individual is psychologically insecure, humans instinctively seeks a security blanket of some sort to alleviate these uncomfortable feelings of insecurity. Since current society suggests to people that highly materialistic objects will grant security, then the material value of prestige products becomes evident to psychologically insecure individuals (Kasser, 2002). Subsequently, they become deeply engaged with, even obsessed, with material possessions. In particular, this obsession leads very high-materialism individuals to have possessive, non-generous personality traits and also be envious of others' possessions (Belk, 1984). For instance, they are concerned about losing things, unwilling to share or give their possessions, and get upset when others possess things they cannot afford. As a consequence, high-materialism individuals judge personal success by materialistic possessions and the pursuit of happiness through possessing better things than others (Richins & Dawson, 1992).

Consistent with this conceptualization, emerging research on materialism and conspicuous consumption suggests those high-materialism individuals particularly desire conspicuous products such as diamond jewellery or branded sports cars, because they serve status and social value. These types of products or services are more likely to meet their aim of easily receiving admiration and envy from others through exhibiting evident high-end products (Richins, 1994; Wong, 1997). For example, by wearing a large eye-catching diamond necklace, one can easily display social success to others and, through this act, an insecure consumer may enhance their subjective well-being, as they may feel they possess something that is better than others have. To support this view, Kasser (2002) notes that "...materialism includes not only the desire to make money and have possessions, but also the desire to own things that impress others and that elicit some sense of social recognition" (p. 18). In a related study, Watson (2003) demonstrates that high-materialism individuals, when compared with low-materialism individuals, are less concerned about having debt as long as they possess better conspicuous products than others.

In summary, substantial research on materialism suggests that high-materialism individuals place heavy value on material items in their lives (Richins & Dawson, 1992). They tend to judge their own and others' successes by material objects and believe their lives will be happier if they possess better objects than others (Belk, 1984). Therefore, high-materialism individuals desire conspicuous products that can easily meet their aim; to receive admiration and envy from others (Richins, 1994; Wong, 1997). In addition, high-materialism individuals pay less attention to their debt as long as they can attain better conspicuous products (Watson, 2003). It is important to note that although materialism is highly related to conspicuous consumption, surprisingly little research has examined how materialism affects conspicuous consumption.

Put simply, compared with low-materialism individuals who focus on their internal selves, high-materialism individuals — who are constantly monitoring others' possessions — believe that their lives will be transformed for the better if they obtain conspicuous products (Richins, 2011), because they will gain admiration and envy from others, thus enhancing subjective-well-being (Richins, 1994; Wong, 1997).

## **2.6.2 Psychological Needs**

As noted by Kasser (2002), a need is "...something that is necessary to his or her survival, growth, and optimal functioning" (p. 24). Further, Kasser (2002) asserts that in order to have a high quality of life, essential psychological, as well as physical, needs must be satisfied. Accordingly, when essential needs are threatened, people immediately act in self-protective ways to defend threatened needs (Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001). However, the way to restore a sense of balance varies depending on which needs are threatened (Lee & Shrum, 2012).

Extant research on psychological needs and conspicuous consumption suggests that people desire conspicuous products particularly when their security, esteem and efficacy needs



are threatened (Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Lee & Shrum, 2012; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010). What reasoning lies behind this interesting fact? First, in terms of the security need, Braun and Wicklund (1989) argue that when an individual feels insecure he or she resists admitting their weakness to others. Thus, since possession reflects one's identity (Solomon, 1983), insecure individuals seek conspicuous products. For instance, an inexperienced tennis player may wear branded tennis clothes to aggrandize their identity to others. If they display conspicuous products that confer high status value in this way, they perceive that others may no longer see them as insecure which will, in turn, make the insecure individuals feel psychologically secure and safe.

In a similar context, Sivanathan and Pettit (2010) show that when an individual's self-esteem level is low they are motivated to seek out ways to indirectly restore their integrity. Again, since conspicuous products are associated with social success, low self-esteem individuals often desire conspicuous products. An example here is of an individual with low socioeconomic status attempting to restore self-worth by buying and wearing a high-status branded wrist-watch.

Finally, Lee and Shrum (2012) demonstrate that when an individual's self-efficacy need is threatened by being socially ignored, they desire to reinforce their existence by gaining attention from others. One of the ways to gain attention is to let others know they are a worthy individual and by displaying their power over others. Accordingly, individuals with a threatened self-efficacy need also gravitate towards conspicuous products; maybe by wearing a t-shirt with the Calvin Klein or some other easily-recognised and expensive brand logo.

To summarize, conspicuous products act as important psychological armour to individuals who feel that their security, esteem or efficacy need is threatened. That is, individuals with threatened psychological needs caused by social situations, such as a social comparison to a person with a more secure job (Lee & Shrum, 2012; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010), believe that if they can boost their image with the possession of conspicuous products that reflect social success and power, then others will view them as more important and worthy individuals.

### **2.6.3 Spiritual Belief**

Although people in most capitalist cultures believe that money is the most powerful social weapon, not all capitalists think this way. Prior work suggests that highly religious individuals such as Jesus, Buddha, Thoreau, and Gandhi who strongly believe in their respective deities are less likely to view money as a social weapon (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; McKibben, 1998; Stillman et al., 2012). Rather, religious people tend to believe that pursuing social fame, success, and power leads to conflict with neighbours, pain, and unhappiness. The Bible states that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy, 6:10). Highly religious individuals try to find happiness in relationships with family and God (La Barbera & Gürhan, 1997).

Consistent with this view, empirical evidence in the conspicuous consumption literature demonstrates that highly religious people avoid spending money on unnecessary conspicuous products compared to those less religious (Stillman et al., 2012).

Taken together, highly religious individuals are strongly tied to relationships with family and God, thus, they put less emphasis on economic accomplishments and social successes (La Barbera & Gürhan, 1997). Consequently highly religious individuals spend less money on conspicuous products that reflect social status (Stillman et al., 2012). In other words, individuals who focus more on internal values, such as relationships, rather than external values such as social success and fame, desire conspicuous products less (Stillman et al., 2012).

#### **2.6.4 Emotion**

Although research regarding the impact of emotion on consumer behavior has received growing attention (Andrade & Ho, 2009; Salerno, Laran, & Janiszewski, 2014; Coleman & Williams, 2013), little attention has been devoted to a direct understanding of how various emotions impact on conspicuous consumption. To date, I can identify one study only; this study examines how pride influences an individual's conspicuous consumption behaviour (Tracy & Robins, 2014).

##### **2.6.4.1 Pride**

The basic premise of pride is that it is a positive self-conscious emotion of satisfaction and fulfilment that is driven by one's achievements and capabilities (Cavanaugh, Cutright, Luce, & Bettman, 2011; Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007). Prior research on pride shows that prideful feelings enhance one's self-control and encourage prosocial behavior, such as caretaking, whereas loss of pride threatens one's ego, thus provoking antisocial behavior (Patrick, Chun, & Macinnis, 2009; Tracy & Robins, 2004). Moreover, Louro, Pieters and Zeelenberg (2005) propose that feelings of high-prevention-pride lessen individuals' repurchase intention compared to feelings of high-promotion-pride. Tracy and Robins (2007) further divided pride into two constructs; hubristic pride and authentic pride. Authentic pride is driven by some specific achievement such as attaining something through hard work, whereas hubristic pride is driven by an individual's narcissistic characteristics regardless of genuine attainment ("I am proud of who I am").

Recently, Tracy and Robins (2014) found that authentic pride leads individuals to acquire conspicuous products more than hubristic pride. Because authentic pride causes individuals to think that they have earned the right to reward themselves due to their hard work. Along this vein, Kivetz and Simonson's (2002) finding supports this notion by demonstrating that individuals desire luxury over necessity rewards, such as vouchers for designer wallets and sunglasses, when they think that they have earned the right to indulge. The reason for this is because, spending money on luxury products is hard to justify and associated with feelings of guilt. This desire for luxury rewards according to hard work is amplified among those individuals

who usually feel more guilty spending money on luxury items. Conversely, because hubristic pride is associated with socially undesirable emotions, such as arrogance, individuals exhibiting this pride construct are willing to act prosocially and refrain from social luxury consumption to compensate for their socially undesirable feelings. However, interestingly, in Tracey and Robins' work once individuals obtained the conspicuous products they no longer experienced authentic pride and instead experienced hubristic pride. The reason put forward for this sudden shift in pride construct is because typical luxury brand associations, such as social superiority, wealth, and ego-enhancement, involuntarily cause individuals to feel hubristic pride by the mere possession of them. Furthermore, such luxury brand images lead observers to speculate that individuals who use conspicuous products will feel hubristic pride and thus will be less prosocial. However, Tracy and Robins (2014) highlight that this pattern only occur among non-narcissists.

To summarize, there are two facets of pride, hubristic and authentic, that are interrelated in the conspicuous consumption domain (Tracy & Robins, 2007). Findings from a prior research study suggest that experiencing authentic pride leads individuals to think that they have the right to spend lavishly on the products they desire, and thus demonstrate the desire to acquire conspicuous products. However, once an individual obtains conspicuous products, associated images of luxury brands involuntarily change the feeling of authentic pride to hubristic pride.

Put differently, these findings lead to the interesting conclusion that regardless of the feelings that individuals experience before engaging in conspicuous consumption, possessing conspicuous products provokes a feeling of hubristic pride, which is associated with arrogance and snobbishness (Tracy & Robins, 2014).

### **2.6.5 Evolutionary Theory: Costly Signalling Theory**

One of the main theories used in evolutionary psychology research is the costly signalling theory, which has its roots in the handicap principle (Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997). According to costly signalling theory "individuals often engage in behaviours that are costly (i.e., involve significant amounts of economic resources, energy, risk, or time) as a way of signalling to others useful information about themselves" (Griskevicius et al., 2007, p. 86). However, not all costly behaviors possess signalling value. In order to have signalling value, the following four criteria must be met: The behaviour must be costly to the signallers (i.e., wasting one's energy or resources); the behaviour must be easily observable; one must gain a fitness advantage through the act (e.g., expressing a good sense of humour highlights one's intelligence); and the characteristics of the behaviour must be what the signallers are seeking (Bressler, Martin & Balshine, 2006; Melnyk, & van Osselaer, 2012; Smith & Bird, 2000; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997).

Considering these criteria, prior research asserts that conspicuous products possess a superlative costly signal that meets all four criteria for men who are in a mating mind-set, but not for women (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Sundie et al., 2011).

### **2.6.5.1 Mating Mind-Set**

To further elaborate on this last statement, evolutionary psychology theorists find that when the mating mind-set is active, men and women seek different fitness indicators from potential mates (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Sundie et al., 2011; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997). That is, when seeking a mate, women prioritize to men who have the ability to provide an abundant environment in which to raise their potential future children, whereas men prioritize to women with healthy genes for their future children (Li, Bailey, Kenrick, & Linsenmeier, 2002). In turn, women place more weight on the indication of economic strength when choosing a potential mate, whereas men place more weight on the physical attractiveness in a woman, which reflects healthy genes (Li et al., 2002). In support of this argument, empirical evidence shows that men in the mating mind-set desire conspicuous products, such as a new car or a branded watch, in order to highlight their economic strength to a potential romantic partner, more than do women (Griskevicius et al., 2006, 2007; Sundie et al., 2011).

### **2.6.5.2 Hormones (Ovulation)**

In addition, more recently, evolutionary psychology theorists have explored when exactly women place the most emphasis on a man's economic strength. According to prior published research, estrogens and luteinizing hormones amplify women's mating motives near their ovulation period (Durante, Griskevicius, Cantu, & Simpson, 2014; Lens, Driesmans, Pandelaere, & Janssens, 2012) which, in turn, places more weight on the value of a man's social status. For instance, Lens et al. (2012) find that women in their ovulation period recalled conspicuous masculine products (a Breitling watch, a Porsche, and an Aston Martin sports car) more than non-conspicuous products (a bucket or towel) compared to women in their non-ovulation period.

### **2.6.5.3 Same-Sex Competition**

Recently, another stream of research from the evolutionary psychological perspective has examined when women obsess over conspicuous products (Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). Interestingly, these authors demonstrate that women desire conspicuous products such as jewellery and luxury handbags with large logos when they want to deter other women rivals from poaching their romantic partner. This occurs because men are willing to use their economic resources on conspicuous products for their potential romantic partner, so conspicuous products indicate how much the man is committed to their romantic partner. Thus, women use this latent meaning in conspicuous products to their advantage, signalling to their rivals just how devoted their romantic partner is. Likewise, Wang and Griskevicius (2014) show that women who carry a conspicuous handbag purchased by their romantic partner are viewed by other women as having a devoted partner.

In sum, from an evolutionary perspective, conspicuous products serve to signal various messages depending on the gender of the user and who the signaller is (Griskevicius et al.,

2007; Sundie et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). Extant research shows that men desire conspicuous products to attract a potential mate (Griskevicius et al., 2007), whereas women desire conspicuous products for mate-guarding purposes (Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). More specifically, men use conspicuous products to signal a potential mate that they have the ability to take care of potential children, whereas women use conspicuous products to signal to their rivals that their romantic partner is devoted to them (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Sundie et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014).

From an evolutionary perspective conspicuous consumption has been employed mainly to show off to others, such as potential mates or rivals, in order to send an important message. Furthermore, it is worth noting that existing research on evolutionary psychology has only shed light on how a focus on external aspects such as these signals to potential mates or rivals influences conspicuous consumption by using the concept of costly signalling theory (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Sundie et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). It is thus worthwhile to examine how focusing on internal aspects, such as family or a baby, influences conspicuous consumption. I specifically propose that kincare will be one of the vital factors in regard to the recently re-built Maslow's pyramid of human needs established by Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg, and Schaller (2010), as parenting sits at the top of the pyramid. This gap will be discussed in further detail later in the overall summary section of this chapter.

## **2.6.6 Summary of Internal Antecedents of Conspicuous Consumption**

Up to this point, I have reviewed existing research on how the internal antecedents of materialism, psychological needs, spiritual beliefs, emotions and evolutionary theory affect conspicuous consumption. Similar to external antecedents, wishful thinking continues to be evident in internal antecedents. That is, individuals believe that their lives will be transformed for the better once they employ conspicuous products; others might be envious and respect them more, their egos might be enhanced, and others might see them as more attractive (Kasser, 2002; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Furthermore, extant research shows that individuals who put greater weight on the internal aspects of life, such as a relationship with God, rather than external aspects of life such as social success and fame, engage in conspicuous consumption less (Stillman et al., 2012). Additionally, I realize on reading that most existing literature has been focused on identifying the factors that increase conspicuous consumption: It would, then, certainly be worthwhile to explore possible factors that reduce conspicuous consumption.

In the following section, I will review the consequences of conspicuous consumption; self-perception, other's perception of self and general level of happiness.

## **2.7 Consequences**

### **2.7.1 Self-perception**

Extensive research indicates that individuals desire conspicuous products to achieve different ends in order to enhance their subjective well-being. For instance, high-materialism individuals believe that if they conspicuously show off better material products than others have, observers will be envious of them, thus their subjective well-being will be enhanced (Kasser, 2002). In a similar vein, socially ignored and powerless individuals believe that if they show off power through conspicuous products they will get positive attention from others, thus their existence will be repaired (Lee & Shrum, 2012; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008).

### **2.7.2 Others' Perception**

However, do observers perceive these individuals the way they wish to be seen? One study demonstrates that observers perceive individuals who use luxury clothes with large logos for dispositional reasons positively (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). For instance, individuals with conspicuous products are found to receive a more positive response (people donated more money to an individual wearing a conspicuous t-shirt than to someone in a non-conspicuous t-shirt), and are perceived as more preferable socially than those without. This pattern only occurs when individuals use conspicuous products for dispositional reasons. However, as Veblen (1899) points out, individuals desire conspicuous products in order to show off their wealth and power to others and to gain social approval. Likewise, prior literature argues that individuals desire conspicuous products to ostentatiously display them and thus impress others (Lee & Shrum, 2012; Richins & Dawson, 1992; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008; Tracy & Robins, 2014).

Recently, Ferraro, Kirmani, and Matherly (2013) found that individuals show more negative attitudes towards a person who conspicuously uses a Tiffany shopping bag or new iPad for impression-management purposes, than toward one who uses such brands for dispositional reasons. This is because people dislike the person who tries to impress others and promote themselves (Godfrey, Jones, & Lord, 1986). In addition, McFerran et al. (2014) recently showed that observers perceive individuals who use luxury products conspicuously as less prosocial, as observers speculate that they are experiencing hubristic pride.

### **2.7.3 Happiness**

Do conspicuous products indeed make their owners happier? According to Frank (1999), "increases in our stocks of material goods produce virtually no measurable gain in our psychological or physical well-being. Bigger houses and faster cars, it seems, don't make us any happier" (p. 6). As Frank (1999) says, prior research finds that individuals who purchase conspicuous products tend to end up having low product satisfaction and subjective well-being (Kasser, 2002; Wang & Wallendorf, 2006; Winkelmann, 2012). This is because an individual who tries to fulfil his or her needs with materialistic possessions usually has a wide gap between the actual and the ideal-self (Kasser, 2002).

In summary, in regard to the three aspects of the consequences of conspicuous consumption, the findings suggest that individuals desire conspicuous products in order to collect positive attention from others (Kasser, 2002; Lee & Shrum, 2012). However, against their expectations, observers perceive individuals who conspicuously use luxury products in a negative way, because most people do not like self-promoters (Godfrey et al., 1986). Furthermore, extant research indicates that individuals who purchase conspicuous products suffer low subjective well-being overall because there are never-ending discrepancies between the actual and ideal self (Frank, 1999; Kasser, 2002; Winkelmann, 2012). In the following section, I will provide an overview summary of literature view chapter.

## **2.8 Overall Summary of the Literature Review**

In this chapter, I discussed the theoretical and empirical concepts of conspicuous consumption. Subsequently, I discussed the ways individuals use conspicuous consumption, as identified in the previous literature in the areas of marketing, consumer psychology, economics, and evolutionary psychology.

Based on Veblen's (1899) definition of conspicuous consumption and building upon the more recent work introduced in the research of sociologists, psychologists, and economists (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996; Berger & Ward, 2010; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Winkelmann, 2012), I have defined the term conspicuous in the following manner: Attracting special attention with an easily observable brand logo or symbol that conveys superior qualities. In addition, I have defined the term conspicuous consumption as spending money on unnecessary products that visibly convey status, regardless of their utilitarian function, in order to signal social status and/or to gain social recognition from others. In contrast to the term conspicuous consumption, the term non-conspicuous consumption, which means not spending money on visible high-status products, will be used in the following chapters.

From an empirical perspective, research has actively investigated conspicuous consumption since 2005. Primarily, scales have been used to measure conspicuous consumption behaviour. In addition, moving beyond the idea of Veblen's (1899) conceptualization, more recent research has identified various motivations for conspicuous consumption, as well as a different understanding of what conspicuous products symbolize and how that interpretation depends upon an individual's situation. In regards to the symbolic meaning conveyed by conspicuous products, in aggregate such products most often represent social status to individuals. However, they can also symbolize trophies, individuals' high-quality genes, or other specific information, depending on the situation. In regards to the motivations for conspicuous consumption behaviour, these can be broadly categorized as three different strategies: A coping strategy; a status-signalling strategy; and a costly signalling strategy. A total of 14 major topics were identified, and I have categorized these topics largely as antecedents and consequences, and have further divided antecedents into external and internal factors.

Through a systematic literature review on conspicuous consumption, it seems in general that existing literature tells us that those individuals who focus on external aspects of social context and impression management desire conspicuous products more than those who focus on the internal aspects of inner-self and internal values of life. More specifically, collectivists and adolescents who place a greater emphasis on other people's evaluation of them crave conspicuous products more than individualists and more elderly people who tend to focus on their inner self. Moreover, the highly materialistic and psychologically threatened who believe that conspicuous products can change their life in meaningful ways desire conspicuous products more than low materialistic and psychologically secure individuals, who are less likely to engage in fantasy thinking connected to the use of conspicuous products.

Building upon these findings, it is of note that the factors that influence conspicuous consumption may be classified in terms of different targets; namely individuals who focus on themselves and those who focus on others. Furthermore, factors that influence conspicuous consumption may be classified as the different self-concept related motivations of self-transformation and self-expression motives (Table 1.4).



**Table 1.4**

**Different Focused Targets and Different Motivations**

<b>Other-focused</b>	<b>Self-focused</b>
Focus on others in a social context: Individuals place more value on self-presentation and exhibiting the social self to others (impression management).	Focus on an individual's own internal state-feelings, and thoughts. Individuals place their true selves to others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Middle and low social classes</li> <li>▪ Collectivists</li> <li>▪ Adolescents</li> <li>▪ Psychologically threatened individuals</li> <li>▪ Highly materialistic individuals</li> <li>▪ Mating (short-term) mind-set</li> <li>▪ Women near ovulation period</li> <li>▪ Individual who are in a same-sex competition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Individuals with feelings of high power</li> <li>▪ Individualists</li> <li>▪ Elderly people</li> <li>▪ Psychologically secure individuals</li> <li>▪ Low materialistic individuals</li> <li>▪ Individuals with feeling of authentic pride</li> </ul>
<b>Self-transformation motive</b>	<b>Self-expression motive</b>
The belief that one's self or life will be changed in a significant and meaningful way through the acquisition and use of a particular product (Richins, 2011, p. 145; Richins, 2013).	Individuals use possessions to signal their self-identity, 'who one is,' to others (Belk, 1988).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Individuals with feelings of low power</li> <li>▪ Middle and low social classes</li> <li>▪ Individuals with feeling of being socially ignored</li> <li>▪ Psychologically threatened individuals</li> <li>▪ Highly materialistic individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Individuals with feelings of high power</li> <li>▪ Individualists</li> <li>▪ Psychologically secure individuals</li> <li>▪ Low materialistic individuals</li> </ul>

Notably, while a considerable number of studies have been undertaken in order to understand how various factors such as power, culture and social class influence conspicuous consumption, surprisingly, how these “bottom-line” factors of self-focus versus other-focus/self-focussed, and transformation versus self-expression motive influence conspicuous consumption is not well understood. These fundamental factors are mentioned in the literature only indirectly. For instance, Lee and Shrum (2012) note that socially ignored individuals “...try to gain attention and be noticed by showing off to others” (p.3) to fulfil self-efficacy needs; thus, they desire conspicuous products that could facilitate drawing attention to themselves. Again, Wang and Griskevicius (2014) recently demonstrated that women’s conspicuous products are “... geared

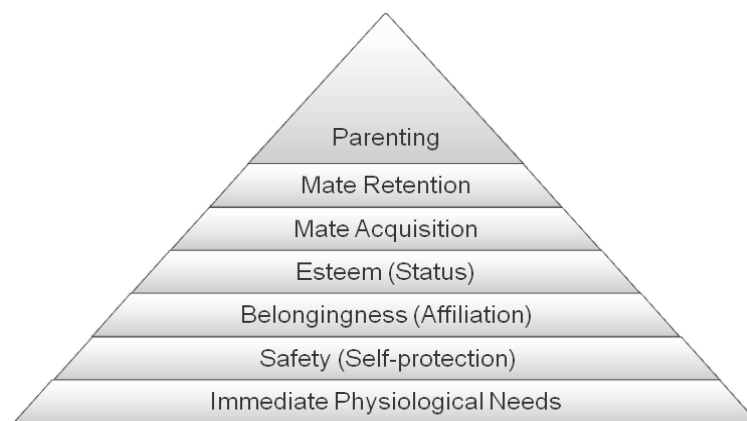
as signals to other women rather than men” (p. 847). In aggregate, much literature tells us that certain situations lead individuals to focus on others, which in turn leads to craving conspicuous products to cope with the situations they are in.

However, I believe that it is critical to understand how self-focus versus other-focus/self-focused, and transformation versus self-expression motives influence conspicuous consumption behaviour, because these factors are at the core of the existing factors of power, social class and culture, that affect conspicuous consumption. This opportunity is seized here and this research fills this conceptual gap by directly examining which of these fundamental factors are more closely associated with conspicuous consumption that decreases subjective well-being.

Kincare, which is related to human needs, is another worthwhile bottom-line factor that researchers have overlooked in this context, and also warrants further examination. To date, as mentioned earlier, existing research on evolutionary psychology has thoroughly examined the ways that a mating mind-set or same-sex competition influences conspicuous consumption (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Lens et al., 2012; Sundie et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). However, kincare is as important as mating and same-sex competition motives for several reasons. First of all, with regard to life-history theory, prior researchers note that all animals split their resources into three different levels: Their own survival and development, the acquisition of a mate, and the care of their offspring, kincare (Kenrick & Luce, 2000; Stearns, Allal, & Mace, 2008). Moreover, a recent reconstruction of Maslow’s pyramid of human needs, established by Kenrick et al. (2010) suggests that parenting is positioned at the very top of the pyramid (see Figure 2.1). However, researchers to date have not explored how the kincare motive influences conspicuous consumption behaviour. Thus, to extend prior research, my research will seek to fill a significant void currently present in the literature.

**Figure 2.1**

**An Updated Hierarchy of Fundamental Human Motives**



*Note.* The above pyramid was created based on Kenrick et al. (2010)

In summary, the current research seeks to examine the following research question: How do the bottom-line factors of self-focus versus other-focus/self-focussed, and transformation versus self-expression influence conspicuous consumption? Specifically, the following three questions are considered: How do the different focuses influence conspicuous consumption? How do different self-concept related motivations influence conspicuous consumption? And, how does kincare motivations influence conspicuous consumption? Taken as a whole and consistent with current research, I predict that individuals who focus on external values (i.e., focusing on others and motivated to meet an ideal self-image) will exhibit a stronger preference for conspicuous products than will those who focus on internal values (i.e., focusing on the internal self, motivated to meet an actual self-image, and to engage in kincare). In particular, this research will measure conspicuous consumption behaviour through the size of logos as a main proxy variable.

This research aims to make several notable theoretical advances. Foremost, the findings advance our understanding of the antecedents of conspicuous consumption by examining how the fundamental factors influence conspicuous consumption, which has yet to be explained. Second, this research aims to contribute to the literature on conspicuous consumption, in particular by highlighting a way to reduce conspicuous consumption that affects individuals' subjective well-being. Third, I hope to provide additional insights into the relationship between different logo sizes and the level of conspicuous consumption (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Lee & Shrum, 2012).

Finally, this research has important implications for marketers. For instance, by understanding whether conspicuous products are used for self-expression or self-transformation purposes could help marketers determine whether they should favour an authentic and realistic approach or an aspirational and fanciful approach to conspicuous products. In addition, by showing whether conspicuous products are used more in other-focus or self-focus situations could help marketers to create more persuasive and effective advertising. Furthermore, the present research may provide interest to governments and social welfare agencies. Conspicuous consumption is negatively related to well-being and happiness. By offering a deeper understanding of the motivations behind the purchase of conspicuous products, this research will help governments and social welfare agencies facilitate the control of the purchase of conspicuous products. For example, they could educate people about better ways to deal with the base need deprivation that leads to conspicuous consumption by arranging free social programmes. In particular, such programmes would be most beneficial for members of the lower class who have fewer resources and a lack of finances. Contributions of the present research will be discussed further and more thoroughly in the General Discussion section.

## **2.9 An Overview of the Remaining Chapters**

The remainder of this thesis is broadly divided into three parts. First, in order to explore how the different foci influence conspicuous consumption, I begin with a review of relevant literature on self and other-focus and present rational hypotheses. Then, I present two empirical

studies to support the hypotheses. Second, in order to explore how different motivations relate to self-concept influence conspicuous consumption, I review relevant literature regarding self-transformation and self-expressive motivations, and present corresponding hypotheses. Next, three studies provide evidence to address the proposed hypotheses. Lastly, in order to determine how a kincare motivation influences conspicuous consumption, I review the extant literature on kincare motivation and present the associated hypotheses. I then demonstrate the results of three experiments that tested these hypotheses. The thesis ends with a general discussion of the findings and research contributions, and provides avenues for future research.

In terms of the main proxy variable to measure the level of conspicuous consumption, as provided earlier in the empirical discussion section, there are various ways to measure individuals' conspicuous consumption behavior (Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). In one example, Griskevicius et al. (2007) asked individuals to imagine that they have \$5,000 in their bank account and then indicate how much money they were willing to spend on various conspicuous products such as a new car and non-conspicuous products such as basic toiletries. Individuals who were willing to spend more money on conspicuous products than non-conspicuous products were considered to have a high level of conspicuous consumption.

However, my research will employ logo size as the main proxy variable to measure conspicuous consumption behavior, in order to provide an additional insight into the relationship between different sizes of logos and levels of conspicuous consumption (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Lee & Shrum, 2012). More specifically, I will measure individuals' preference for the conspicuous brand and logo. Hence, individuals who prefer conspicuous brands (e.g., Gucci) and logos (e.g., Gucci with a large logo) over non-conspicuous brands (e.g., Leatherology) and logos (e.g., Gucci with no logo) will be considered to have a high level of conspicuous consumption.

Furthermore, with regards to the terms that will be used in the remaining chapters, consistent with the prior research (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014), "conspicuous brand" refers to the brand that sells visibly expensive status products with superior quality, such as Louis Vuitton, whereas "non-conspicuous brand" refers to the brand that sells inexpensive non-status products regardless of quality and visibility, such as the less expensive mass market brand Zap. Also, as per previous research (Gao et al., 2009; Lee & Shrum, 2012), "conspicuous logo" refers to status products with visible marking, whereas "non-conspicuous logo" refers to status products with no visible marking.

## **SECTION 2**

### **SELF-FOCUS VERSUS OTHER-FOCUS AND CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION**

#### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **THE LITERATURE OF SELF- AND OTHER-FOCUS**

Goukens et al. (2009) note that, "...people's attention may be focused on themselves or the environment, but not both" (p. 682), and individuals' behavior clearly varies depending on whether attention is directed toward the self or others (Bateson, Nettle, & Roberts, 2006). This suggests that individuals' attention can be either "inner directed," with a greater focus on the self, or "outer directed," with a greater focus on others. Given that there are two different-focused targets, which focus will exert a stronger influence on individuals' desire for conspicuous products? To address this question, I draw from the research on self-awareness and self-consciousness that may help explain how different focused targets may influence conspicuous products. According to Fenigstein et al. (1975), "the consistent tendency of persons to direct attention inward or outward is the trait of self-consciousness. Self-awareness refers to a state: The existence of self-directed attention, as a result of either transient situational; variables, chronic dispositions, or both" (p. 522).

Prior research hints that being other-focused refers to low self-awareness and public self-consciousness, whereas self-focused refers to high self-awareness and private self-consciousness (Fenigstein & Levine, 1984; Goukens, Dewitte, & Warlop, 2009). For instance, self-awareness research suggests that "when a person's attention is absorbed by a preoccupation with environmental stimuli, there is little awareness of the self" (Fenigstein, 1974, p. 8). Therefore, low self-awareness inclines individuals to be more concerned about others' opinions of them which, in turn, leads individuals to behave in ways that will result in them earning approval from others (Froming, Walker, & Lopyan, 1982). In contrast, high self-awareness is "the awareness of oneself from a personal perspective..." (Fejfar & Hoyle, 2000, p. 132).

A second theoretical perspective, similar to self-awareness, is self-consciousness. Schlenker and Weigold (1990) suggest that "people high in public self-consciousness are portrayed as outer-directed, conformist, and interested in getting along by going along" (p. 820). Because such individuals think of themselves as social objects, they fear possible social rejection and receiving negative reactions from others (Fenigstein, 1979; Fenigstein et al., 1975; Fenigstein, 1980). Thus, these individuals are more sensitive about others' opinions of them (Buss & Scheier, 1976) and are more inclined to seek social approval while avoiding social

disapproval (Doherty & Schlenker, 1991). Consequently, these individuals try to create a favourable public image, meet societal expectations, and gain social approval through self-presentation strategies (Buss & Scheier, 1976; Doherty & Schlenker, 1991; Scheier, 1980). Supporting these arguments, Bateson et al. (2006) positioned sets of eyes near one honour box and images of flowers near another, and found that when individuals perceive that they are being observed by others they put more money into the box, because they are concerned about how others would evaluate their behaviour.

In contrast, individuals described as having a high level of private self-consciousness focus more on inner aspects of the self; their own thoughts and feelings (Buss & Scheier, 1976) that involve “private, autonomous, egocentric goals. These are goals that do not necessarily involve considering, or even recognizing, the opinions or desires of other people” (Carver & Scheier, 1985, p. 166). Furthermore, Schlenker and Weigold (1990) note that “in social situations, they are depicted as simply ‘behaving’ not ‘presenting’ themselves to others” (p. 820).

To summarize, two theoretical constructs, self-awareness and self-consciousness, were created to understand how focused targets influence conspicuous consumption behaviour. The discussion above demonstrates that, compared to individuals who focus on the inner aspects of self, other-focused individuals tend to see themselves more as social objects (Fenigstein, 1979; Fenigstein et al., 1975; Fenigstein, 1980). Thus, they are more inclined to avoid potential social risks such as social disapproval and social rejection. This leads other-focused individuals to be more attentive and sensitive to others’ opinions of them (Froming et al., 1982; Buss & Scheier, 1976). As a result, these individuals attempt to behave in ways that will maximize social approval and meet social expectations (Buss & Scheier, 1976; Doherty & Schlenker, 1991; Scheier, 1980; Schlenker & Leary, 1982).

### **3.1. Social Focus and Conspicuous Consumption**

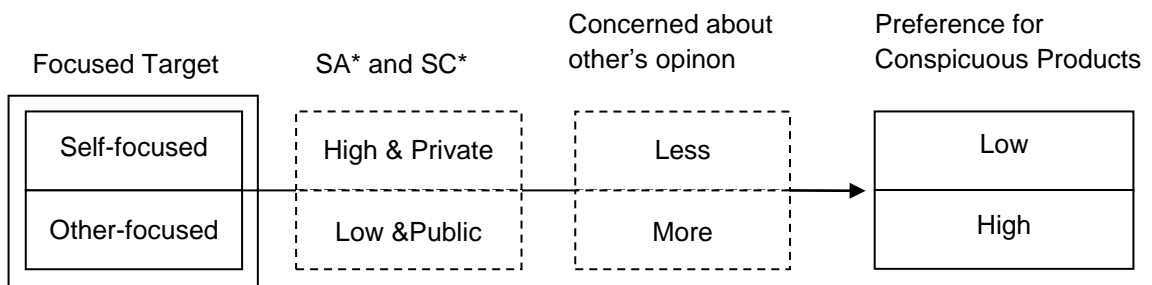
Prior research suggests that, in general, individuals who require social approval seek conspicuous products more often than those who do not require social approval and instead make purchases based on function and utility (Wilcox et al., 2009; Wong, 1997). Individuals requiring social approval seek these items because expensive and exclusive conspicuous products that have universally-recognized brand symbols are known to represent admirable social status (Mason, 1984). Therefore, conspicuous products facilitate individuals’ needs to impress others and gain social approval through universally-understood symbols (Belk, 1988; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009). Furthermore, by displaying such symbols, individuals may perceive that they can potentially prevent others from negatively evaluating them (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

Drawing upon the association between focused-target and conspicuous consumption, one may anticipate that, compared to self-focused individuals, other-focused individuals, who are more concerned about social approval (Schlenker & Leary, 1982) are more likely to desire conspicuous products (Figure 3.1). Because conspicuous products can easily communicate

one's valuable social status to others through their prominent symbolism, they can be used as the most effective tool to maximize social approval.

**Figure 3.1**

**Different Focused Targets and Conspicuous Consumption**



\* SA symbolizes Self awareness and SC symbolizes Self-consciousness.

*Note.* The em ( - - ) dashes represent the underlying mechanism in this thesis.

To support this argument, although prior research has not broached the topic of how different focused targets influence conspicuous consumption, the related research streams of self-consciousness and self-construal imply how different focused targets could affect conspicuous consumption. For instance, Bushman (1993) finds that highly self-conscious individuals with an audience present demonstrate a preference for a brand of peanut butter with a national-brand label over one with a bargain-brand label. These preferences occur because people generally perceive national-brand products more favourably than bargain-brand products, which many believe are inferior because they cost less. Thus, national-brand products provide a better opportunity for positive social impressions than generic-brand products. Along this same line of reasoning, Kim and Drolet (2009) show that, compared to Americans, Asians who place a greater value on others' evaluations desire expensive brand products over less-expensive generic-brand products such as Sprite brand over lemonade with no brand name.

To further support the argument, Kim and Rucker (2012) suggest that when individuals anticipate a possible future threat they engage in proactive compensatory consumption. That is, they seek threat-related products as a buffer against any potential threat. For example, intelligence test participants were willing to pay more for a dictionary than those who were not taking an intelligence test. Applying this logic to the current context, other-focused individuals who are concerned about social approval will prefer to purchase conspicuous products because they are related to social risk, and these individuals feel that these products will guard them against potential social disapproval.

Based on the above discussion, I expect to see that, compared to individuals who focus on the inner self, individuals who focus on others' evaluations of them related to social risk will

have a greater desire to own conspicuous products. Moreover, such individuals perceive that they can maximize social approval while minimizing social disapproval by displaying symbols that convey admirable social status (Belk, 1988; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009). More formally, I propose the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Relative to self-focused individuals, other-focused individuals will have a stronger desire for highly conspicuous brand/logo products.

In addition to the direct effect of target focus on preference for highly conspicuous brand/logo products, the current research suggests that perceived brand/logo visibility will mediate the relationship between the target focus and the preference for a conspicuous brand/logo. Specifically, because other-focused individuals desire to earn social approval through presenting socially-favourable indicators, such individuals will prefer conspicuous brands or logos because of their visibility (Buss & Scheier, 1976; Doherty & Schlenker, 1991; Scheier, 1980; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). In contrast, because self-focused individuals do not necessarily need to present themselves to others, such individuals will pay less attention to brand/logo visibility (Carver & Scheier, 1985). Therefore, this lack of social approval desire will lead them to prefer fewer highly conspicuous brand/logo products, as depicted in Figure 3.1. These ideas are stated formally in the following hypothesis:

**H2:** Brand/logo visibility will mediate the impact of different focuses on the preference for highly conspicuous brand/logo products.

In the next chapter, I present two experiments that address the above two hypotheses. I first present Experiment 1 that tests Hypothesis 1, followed by Experiment 2 that tests Hypothesis 2 by approaching the underlying psychological process more closely. I conclude Section 2 with a short discussion regarding the findings, limitations, and contributions of the research thus far.



## CHAPTER 4

### EXPERIMENT 1: SELF- AND OTHER-FOCUS

#### 4.1 Research Method

First of all, the nature of this research is that it is conclusive, not exploratory, research, as the objective is to test hypotheses and investigate the relationship between variables (Malhotra, 2010). More specifically, the first hypothesis provided in the previous section involves concomitant variation of a cause (X), and an effect (Y) (Malhotra, 2010). Thus, the major aim is to understand the relationship between the independent variable, which is a differently focused target, and the dependent variable, which is the desirability of a product with conspicuous brands and logos (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Therefore, this research will take a causal research method approach.

Additionally, my intention is for my research to explain the relationship between variables by directly manipulating the independent variable in the same way other authors have (e.g., Khajehzadeh, Oppewal, & Tojib, 2015; Lasaleta, Sedikides, & Vohs, 2014). By doing this, I can eliminate outside or exogenous influences, by rigorous control, to help ensure an unambiguous demonstration of any relationship (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). To further support this argument, Bagozzi (1981) points out “if one can manipulate the experience of subjects in a controlled setting and then observe the impact on attitudes, intentions, and subsequent behaviour, then a strong basis exists for casual inferences” (p. 352). In sum, direct manipulation will be used in these experiments.

Moreover, I have randomly assigned participants to the treatment conditions throughout all the experiments in this thesis. This is because previous research suggests that “randomization is powerful tool for controlling extraneous variables” (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009, p. 212) and it can therefore minimize the chance of biased responses (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009; Malhotra, 2010).

With regards to research analysis methods, this research employed SPSS software over other statistical software packages such as SAS, R, Matlab, and Stata. The reason for this is that most of the extant research on conspicuous consumption (e.g., Griskevicius et al., 2007; Lee & Shrum, 2012; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Sundie et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014) employed SPSS for data analysis. Thus, by using this programme and employing the same internal analytic algorithms I can more confidently compare the results of the present study with results of the previous research. Specifically, ANOVA is preferred over other research analysis methods such as regression analysis and Chi-square analysis, because in this study the independent variables are categorical and the dependent variables are continuous (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Moreover, by using this method, I can supplement the hypothesis testing through reporting an effect size ( $\eta^2$ ) that will “provide information about the absolute size of

treatment effect that is not influenced by outside factors such as sample size” (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009, p. 463). Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) also has potential as a statistical method for this research as it attempts to analyse the causal relationship between the variables and researchers can create a concept via a pictorial diagram (Byrne, 2013). However, according to prior research, SEM is typically considered an extension of regression analysis and more beneficial to use when there are multiple variables and particularly when there is shared variance involved (Bentler, 1988; Florida, Mellander, & Stolarick, 2008). Since I only have two categorical independent groups, I did not use SEM for analyzing experiments. Furthermore, I conducted the bootstrapping method, Hayes’s PROCESS, for the mediation analysis. This is because PROCESS can be used to effectively determine which of the mediators are highly associated with the dependent variable (Hayes, 2012).

The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee approved this research on March 26, 2014, (AUTEC reference number 14/33).

## **4.2 Experiment 1**

### **4.2.1 Design**

The aim of this experiment is to test the first hypothesis, examining whether self-focused or other-focused individuals are more likely to desire products with conspicuous brands or logos. I predict that because other-focused individuals are concerned more about others’ evaluations of them than are self-focused individuals, such individuals are more likely to desire conspicuous products that convey admirable social status in order to prevent social disapproval, such as social rejection. To test this effect, I directly manipulate focused targets (Fenigstein & Levine, 1984) and then measure the preference for products with non-conspicuous or conspicuous brands or logos. More formally, the study design had a 2 (focus target; other-focus vs. self-focus) between-subjects design, and the key dependent variable is the self-declared preference for products with non-conspicuous or conspicuous brands or logos.

In what follows, I first describe the research participants. I then demonstrate and present the materials and scales used in this experiment. Next, I explain the procedure of the experiment and then provide findings. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the findings.

### **4.2.2 Participants**

Fifty-four adult participants located in the United States ( $M_{age} = 33.69$ ; 57.4% male) were recruited via an online panel (Amazon Mechanical Turk). To support the sample size used in this study, Gravetter and Forzano (2009) note that “a sample size of 25 or 30 individuals for each group or each treatment condition is [a] good target” (p. 142). This means that since there are two groups of independent variables (i.e., other-focused and self-focused), over 50 individuals is likely to provide sufficient power to show the desired effect.

Those 54 adults were recruited at Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and completed the uploaded online survey made via Qualtrics software. I am aware of disagreement among scholars regarding the reliability of MTurk data (e.g., Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2013; Rouse, 2015), however there are several reasons that MTurk was selected as an online panel for data collection in this thesis. First, MTurk has a function that can unselect professional survey takers who participate in surveys for a living (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). Thus, by unselecting them, researchers can prevent the demand characteristic and thus enhance internal validity (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). In fact, I have further restricted professional survey takers from participating in this survey. Second, MTurk provides a mechanism by which researchers can pay the survey participants; hence, researchers no longer need to pay for inferior work such as a series of questions that are all scored the same way (Amazon Mechanical Turk, 2014). Thus, researchers can utilize their research funds more wisely. Last, and most important, researchers have indicated that MTurk is a reliable tool for psychological and social science research projects (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). In further support, Buhrmester et al. (2011) state that “the quality of data provided by MTurk met or exceeded the psychometric standards associated with published research” (p. 5). More specifically, they demonstrate MTurk workers’ payment levels do not influence data quality, and that MTurk’s test-retest reliabilities are high. In addition, Wilson, Aronson, and Carlsmith (2010) suggest that panels are fairly representative and they are certainly good enough for psychological realism. Ultimately, since I wanted to develop the basic theory in this thesis, I was aiming at achieving control rather than the representativeness of the sample. For these reasons, MTurk was selected as an online panel for this experiment as well as for the rest of the experiments in this thesis.

In addition, extant research demonstrates that the majority of MTurk workers live in the United States (Paolacci et al., 2010; Ross, Irani, Silberman, Zaldivar, & Tomlinson, 2010). I can thus claim with reasonable assurance that the participants live in the United States. Incomplete data were automatically replaced by MTurk system, so all of the experiments using panel data have a 100 percent response rates. Furthermore, the survey participants were restricted to participants under the age of 55 because, according to prior research (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014; Belk, 1988), when people grow older they are more attach to past-oriented, memorable possessions that evoke memories of their youth rather than status-seeking possessions for self-identity preservation.

#### **4.2.3 Scales and Materials**

##### **4.2.3.1 Differently Focused Target Manipulation**

In order to directly manipulate differently focused targets, a well-established priming method used by Fenigstein and Levine (1984) was employed and modified. All participants were first asked to read the following instructions: “Please incorporate as many words in the [list] below as you [can] into a story which describes an event, its antecedents and outcomes, and the thoughts and feelings of persons taking part in the event” (Fenigstein & Levine, 1984, p.

233). Distinct manipulative words were given depending on the condition they were in. Participants in the other-focused condition were given the key words that were directed towards others that are “he” or “she,” “him,” or “her,” “his,” or “hers,” and “together.” In contrast, participants in the self-focused condition were given the key words that were directed towards the self that are “I,” “me,” “myself,” and “alone.” Additionally, participants in both conditions were given the same six filler words of “walk,” “park,” “flowers,” “bicycle,” “weather,” and “grass.” Please see Appendix 2 for the full survey instrument used in Experiment 1.

#### **4.2.3.2 Dependent Variable: Conspicuous Consumption Measures**

Three different kinds of conspicuous consumption were measured; non-conspicuous brand product versus conspicuous brand product, non- or less-conspicuous logo versus conspicuous logo within luxury products, and preference for damaged conspicuous logo versus damaged quality of product.

##### ***4.2.3.2.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand***

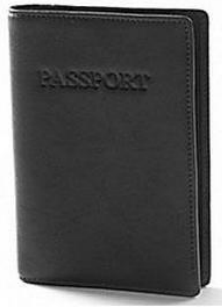
To assess desire for conspicuous brand products, participants were asked: “Imagine that you are going to buy a \_\_\_\_\_ at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.” Two different types of products were used; a passport holder and an item of travel luggage.

For the passport holder, participants were asked to choose between two passport holders of similar shapes and colours but with different brands (Figure 4.1). More specifically, one passport holder was a \$53, non-conspicuous, mass market brand (Leatherology), whereas the other passport holder was a \$120, conspicuous brand (Salvatore Ferragamo). In the case of the travel luggage, which has the same sizes and colours, participants were asked to choose between a \$45 non-conspicuous brand (Hartge) and a \$150 conspicuous brand (Calvin Klein). The photographs and product information in Figure 4.1 were shown to the participants. Participants indicated their preference on a 7-point scale (e.g., 1 = definitely Leatherology, 7 = definitely Salvatore Ferragamo). A higher score indicates a greater preference for the product with conspicuous brand.

Figure 4.1

**Products with Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Brand (Experiment 1)**

Passport Holder



Brand: Leatherology

Price: \$53



Brand: Salvatore Ferragamo

Price: \$120

Travel Luggage



Brand: Hartge

Price: \$45



Brand: Calvin Klein

Price: \$150

**4.2.3.2.2 Non/Less-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo**

To assess desire for high-end luxury products with conspicuous logos, participants were asked the same question as the one asked to measure preference for the conspicuous brand.

Three different types of products (bags, iPad cases, and cars), and three different types of high-end luxury brands (Prada, Gucci, and Mercedes Benz) were used (Figure 4.2).

One product is a Prada bag. Participants were asked to indicate their preference for two identically shaped Prada bags, one with a non-conspicuous Prada logo and the other with a conspicuous Prada logo. Similarly, participants were asked to indicate their preference for two identical Gucci iPad cases, one with a non-conspicuous Gucci logo and the other with a conspicuous Gucci logo. The last product is a Mercedes Benz automobile. Participants were asked to indicate their preference of two identically shaped Mercedes Benz automobiles, one with a less-conspicuous and the other with a conspicuous Mercedes Benz logo. Participants indicated their preferences of the three different types of products using a 7-point scale (1 = definitely Design A, 7 = definitely Design B). A higher score indicates a greater preference for a conspicuous logo.

Figure 4.2

**Non/Less-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Logos (Experiment 1)**

Gucci iPad case



Design A



Design B

Mercedes Benz



Design A



Design B

Prada Bag



Design A



Design B

**4.2.3.2.3 Defects on the Conspicuous Logo.**

Finally, to ascertain conspicuous consumption behavior, participants were asked to indicate preference for a conspicuous logo in a difficult buying situation. A difficult buying situation refers to a situation in which it is difficult to make a purchase decision due to a difficult

purchase setting such as poor product condition. More specifically, participants were given the following scenario:

“Imagine that you are shopping at a luxury store. Finally, you found the bag you have wanted for so long. Only two are left, but each item has some defects. However, because of these defects, the bag is selling at a 20% discount. Normally, this brand would never discount products. You decide to purchase one of the two bags. Which option would you prefer?” Option A: All conditions are fine, except the brand logo is damaged. Others may find out about this damage, but this defect would not affect the bag’s use. Option B: All conditions are fine except the zipper is damaged. Others would not find about this damage, but this defect makes the bag inconvenient to use.”

If participants chose Option A, it indicates that they care more about quality than conspicuousness, whereas if participants choose Option B, it indicates that they care more about the conspicuous logo. Participants indicated their preference on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely Option A, 7 = definitely Option B). A higher score indicates a greater preference for a conspicuous logo.

#### **4.2.3.3 Differently Focused Target Manipulation Check**

To ensure the differently focused target manipulation was successful, participants used a 7-point scale to indicate the degree to which the story they wrote was focused on another person or on the self (1 = focused on other person, 7 = focused on self). A higher score indicates greater self-focused thought.

#### **4.2.3.4 Control Variable and Additional Measures**

To control a potential confounding effect, the participants’ mood was measured. Participants indicated their mood on two items using a 7-point scale (1 = very sad / very bad, 7 = very happy / very good). The two items were highly correlated ( $r = .84$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Analysis of the data reveals no effect of the manipulation task on participants’ mood ( $M_{\text{self-focus}} = 5.29$  vs.  $M_{\text{other-focus}} = 5.52$ ;  $F(1, 52) = .68$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

#### **4.2.4 Procedure**

To test the first hypothesis, the survey was created online via Qualtrics and then a survey link was uploaded at MTurk. In order to prevent any potential suspicion, at the beginning of the experiment participants were told that they would be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies. Further, they were informed that if the questions or tasks seem very different from each other, this is because we are testing several different ideas. Additionally, in order to increase internal validity, participants were told that it is very important that they complete all questions without any distractions such as watching TV, listening to music, instant messaging,



or chatting. They were also asked not to complete the survey while completing other surveys at the same time.

After participants agreed to participate in the survey, they were asked to participate in the first task, the focused target priming task (Fenigstein & Levine, 1984). Half of the participants were randomly assigned to the other-focused condition, while the other half were assigned to the self-focused condition. To alleviate any potential suspicion, the priming task was entitled “Examining Thought Process” and used the cover story of Fenigstein and Levine (1984). This makes it difficult for participants to predict the true purpose of the experiment. More specifically, participants were told that the purpose of this task is to investigate how verbal stimuli affect their thought processes. After that, participants were engaged in an actual task. As described in the previous section, participants were asked to incorporate as many words as they could from the list into a story that describes an event, its antecedents and outcomes, and the thoughts and feelings of the persons taking part in the event (Fenigstein & Levine, 1984). The words included manipulative and filler words. There was no time limit on writing the story; however, a hidden timer question that measured how long participants spent on a page was included in order to filter out unqualified participants, such as participants who did not spend a long enough time or who spent too much time on the task page (Qualtrics, 2015).

Following the target focus manipulation task, participants were asked to participate in the second task, which measured the dependent variable (desire for conspicuous logos or brands). As in the first task, to avoid any potential suspicion, it was given a misleading title “Consumers’ Product Choice.” Participants were told that the purpose of this task is to investigate consumers’ product preference for various product categories. More specifically, five different product categories were used; passport holder, travel luggage, iPad case, car, and bag. Also, five different luxury brands were used; Salvatore Ferragamo, Calvin Klein, Gucci, Mercedes-Benz, and Prada. This provides convergent validity through showing consistent results across the dependent variables. Participants were asked to indicate their preference between two products of similar shape and colour, but different kinds of products in terms of conspicuousness as shown in the previous section.

Next, a manipulation check was conducted. Participants were asked to indicate whether they thought that the story they wrote in the priming task was focused on another person or on themselves. Finally, participants were asked to indicate their current mood in order to alleviate any potential confounding variables that could possibly influence the relationship between independent and dependent variables. After that, they were asked to answer general demographic questions. After the survey completion, participants were thanked, and the survey confirmation code was given; thus, MTurk participants were paid by entering the unique survey code that proved they had actually completed the survey (Amazon Mechanical Turk, 2014).

## 4.2.5 Results

### 4.2.5.1 Manipulation check

As expected, compared with participants in the self-focus condition, those in the other-focus condition thought the story they wrote was focused more on other person than themselves ( $M_{\text{other-focus}} = 1.50$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-focus}} = 6.46$ ,  $F(1, 52) = 223.03$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that the focused target manipulation was successful.

### 4.2.5.2 Conspicuous Consumption

I predicted that individuals would desire products with highly conspicuous brands or logos more when they are focused on others than themselves.

#### 4.2.5.2.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand

First, I examined the effect of preference of the conspicuous brand by averaging the data for two products (passport holder and travel luggage). As predicted, an ANOVA reveals that participants in the other-focus condition prefer the conspicuous brand more than participants in the self-focus condition ( $M_{\text{other-focus}} = 2.79$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-focus}} = 1.55$ ,  $F(1, 52) = 8.27$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ ). These results are visually depicted in Figure 4.3.

I also performed ANOVAs for each product separately, which shows the same pattern for each of the two products as follows; passport holder ( $M_{\text{other-focus}} = 2.92$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-focus}} = 1.64$ ,  $F(1, 52) = 5.91$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ ), travel luggage ( $M_{\text{other-focus}} = 2.65$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-focus}} = 1.46$ ,  $F(1, 52) = 5.49$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ ). According to Gravetter and Forzano (2009), the effect sizes of 0.01, 0.09, and 0.25 indicate small, medium, and large effects respectively.

#### 4.2.5.2.2 Non/Less-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo

I examined the effect of preference of the highly conspicuous logo within luxury product by averaging the results from the three products (Prada bag, Gucci iPad case, and Mercedes Benz). As predicted, an ANOVA reveals that participants in the other-focus condition prefer larger sized logos compared with participants in the self-focus condition ( $M_{\text{other-focus}} = 4.78$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-focus}} = 3.30$ ,  $F(1, 52) = 10.28$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .17$ ; see Figure 4.3).

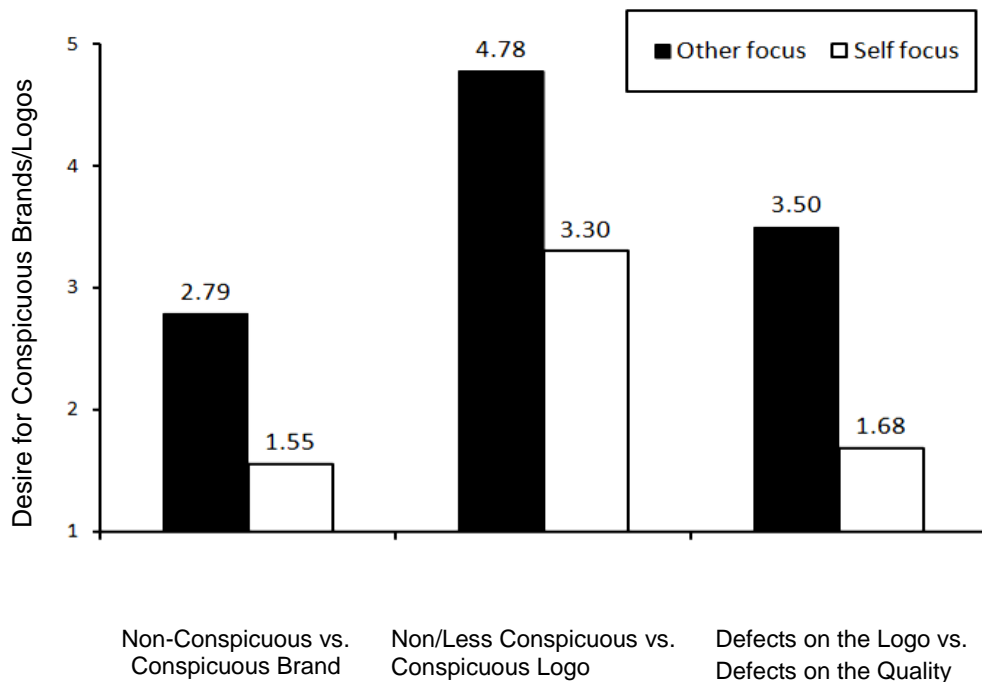
I also performed ANOVAs for each product separately, which shows a similar pattern for each of three products as follows: Prada bag ( $M_{\text{other-focus}} = 5.54$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-focus}} = 4.39$ ,  $F(1, 52) = 3.82$ ;  $p < .10$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ ), Gucci iPad case ( $M_{\text{other-focus}} = 4.73$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-focus}} = 2.86$ ,  $F(1, 52) = 8.41$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ ), Mercedes Benz ( $M_{\text{other-focus}} = 4.08$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-focus}} = 2.64$ ,  $F(1, 52) = 5.14$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ ).

#### 4.2.5.2.3 Defects on the Conspicuous Logo

Consistent with my prediction, an ANOVA reveals that participants in the other-focus condition prefer the luxury product without a damaged conspicuous logo more than participants in the self-focus condition ( $M_{\text{other-focus}} = 3.50$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-focus}} = 1.68$ ,  $F(1, 52) = 13.02$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .20$ ). In other words, when the other-focus is primed, individuals are less willing to sacrifice conspicuousness despite defects on the quality of the product.

Figure 4.3

Results of Experiment 1



#### 4.2.6 Discussion of Experiment 1 Results

The results of Experiment 1 support Hypothesis 1, that individuals desire products with highly conspicuous brands or logos more when they focus on others rather than themselves. One interesting finding from this experiment is that the same pattern occurred even in a difficult buying situation. That is, other-focused individuals were less willing to sacrifice conspicuousness regardless of defects affecting the luxury product's quality. This finding supports the argument that when individuals focus on others, they place more value on a conspicuous brand or logo visibility than on other product attributes.

In summary, the findings of the first experiment suggest that focusing on others leads individuals to place more value on highly conspicuous brands or logos that convey admirable social status than other product attributes such as the quality of the product. This may be

attributable to the fact that focusing on others makes individuals choose products with conspicuous logos if the products are to be used in public in order to guard against potential social criticism. To test this possible explanation, I directly manipulated the underlying mechanism in Experiment 2.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **EXPERIMENT 2: UNDERLYING MECHANISM OF DIFFERENT FOCI**

#### **5.1 Research Method**

In order to better understand the conceptual framework (Figure 3.1), the purpose of this experimental study has two primary aims. The first aim is to more closely approach the underlying psychological process. The second aim is to test Hypothesis 2, that the brand logo visibility will mediate the relationship between conspicuous product preference and a differently-focused target.

In order to achieve these aims, this research uses an experimental research strategy (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). More specifically, in order to more closely approach the underlying psychological process, this study will directly manipulate the underlying causes, the level of expectation that the subject will be evaluated by others. To support this method, Spencer, Zanna, and Fong (2005) suggest that the optimal strategy to test for the evidence of the psychological process is to manipulate the underlying psychological process using an experimental-causal-chain design. The experimental-causal-chain design refers to the use of the underlying psychological process as an independent variable and effect as a dependent variable (e.g., Aaker & Lee, 2001; Kim & Kim, in press; Kim, Kim, & Park, 2012; Monga & John, 2006). According to Spencer et al. (2005), researchers can provide compelling evidence on the causal chain of events by using this design. In order to achieve the second aim of testing Hypothesis 2, this study will measure the reasons for participants' preferences after they indicate product preference between the products with non-conspicuous brands and those with conspicuous brands. The mediation analysis will then be conducted.

With regards to the research analysis methods, since there is one categorical independent variable and one continuous dependent variable, as in experiment 1, this experiment was assessed using an ANOVA. Furthermore, Hayes's PROCESS bootstrapping method was conducted for the mediation analysis via SPSS software for the same reasons mentioned in the previous chapter (Hayes, 2012).

The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee approved this research on March 26, 2014, (AUTEC reference number 14/33).

#### **5.2 Experiment 2**

##### **5.2.1 Design**

In this experiment, I expect that when individuals highly expect their choices to be evaluated by others, they will prefer products with conspicuous logos and brands. The reason

for this is because conspicuous brands/logos are more visible and prominent compared to non-conspicuous brands/logos; such products are more helpful in preventing potential social criticism by demonstrating universally-favourable social status symbols (Belk, 1988; Wilcox et al., 2009). To further support this argument, prior research suggests that when individuals have a high expectation that their choices will be evaluated by others, individuals prefer the option that is most justifiable, in order to prevent any potential criticism from others (Simonson, 1989). In contrast, I expect that when individuals do not expect their choices will be evaluated by others, individuals are less concerned about others' opinions of them, as well as others' social approval (Simonson, 1989). Therefore, this may lead such individuals to place less value on conspicuous brand logo visibility which, in turn, will make them less likely to prefer conspicuous brands/logos.

Furthermore, I expect that the brand/logo visibility will mediate the relationship between the levels of expectation to be evaluated by others and the products with conspicuous brand/logo preference. More specifically, I expect that compared to individuals who do not expect their choices to be evaluated by others, when individuals strongly expect their choices to be evaluated by others, they will prefer products with highly conspicuous brands or logos because of the brand logo visibility, rather than other product attributes, such as product quality.

In order to test these predictions, the study design of Experiment 2 has a 2 (Level of justification; high-need vs. low-need justification) and the key dependent variable was the preference between products with non-conspicuous and conspicuous brands.

In what follows, I first discuss the research participants. I then demonstrate and present the materials and scales used in this experiment. Next, I explain the procedure of the experiments and then demonstrate the findings. I continue with a discussion of the findings. Lastly, I conclude Section 1 with the discussion of the findings, limitations, and research contributions of the two experiments.

## **5.2.2 Participants**

Seventy-nine adult participants located in the United States ( $M_{age} = 31.75$ ; 55.7% male) were recruited from an online panel (Amazon Mechanical Turk). According to Gravetter and Forzano (2009), a sample size of 25 to 30 individuals for each group condition is a good target; with having two groups in this experiment, a sample size of 79 should be more than sufficient. For the same reason as in experiment 1, the survey participants were restricted to under the age of 55.

## **5.2.3 Scales and Materials**

### **5.2.3.1 The “Expectation of being Evaluated” Manipulation**

In order to directly manipulate the expectation of being evaluated by others, the well-established priming method used by Simonson (1989) was employed. More specifically, participants in the *high-need for justification* condition read the following instructions: “Note that

your decision will be evaluated by others later and you might be asked to justify your decision. In order to do that, please print your first name below and initial each page of the choice part.” Conversely, participants in the *low-need for justification* condition were informed that their product choice would remain completely confidential (Simonson, 1989). Please see Appendix 3 for the full survey instrument of Experiment 2.

#### **5.2.3.2 Reason for Choice: Brand Logo Visibility versus Quality**

To assess whether or not brand logo visibility mediates the relationship between preference for products with conspicuous brands or logos and the two different levels of expectation to be evaluated by others, participants were asked to complete the following statement after they made a preference choice: “I made the above choice because of \_\_\_\_.” Two items, the brand logo visibility and the quality, were provided and participants indicated how much their reason for the product preference was because of the brand logo visibility and the quality on a 7-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). For instance, if participants indicated a higher score on the brand logo visibility but a low score on the quality, this indicates the brand logo visibility highly influenced their product preference, whereas the quality did not. Please see Appendix 3 for more details of the questionnaire format.

#### **5.2.3.3 Dependent Variable: Conspicuous Consumption Measures**

In this experiment, only one dependent variable was measured in order to test the mediation effect; non-conspicuous versus conspicuous brand product.

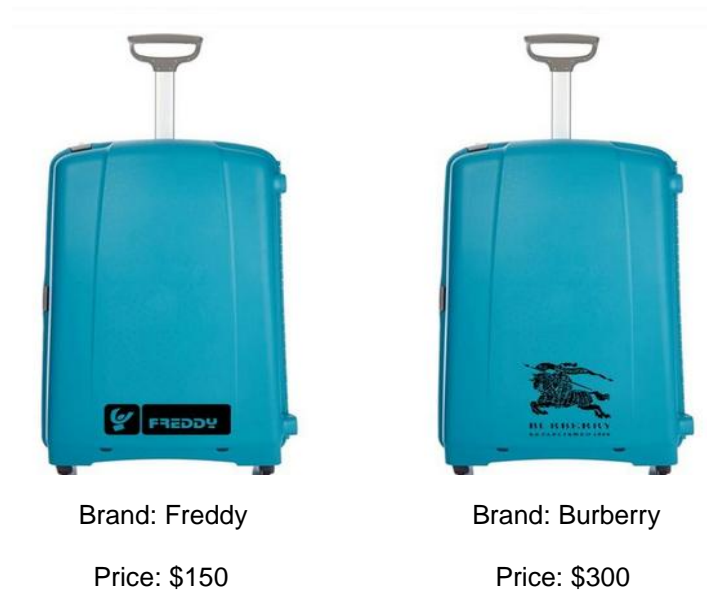
##### **5.2.3.3.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand**

To assess participants' desire for a conspicuously branded product, participants were asked the same question as in Experiment 1: “Imagine that you are going to buy a travel luggage at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the scale underneath to indicate your preference.” The choice is between two travel luggage pieces that look identical in terms of the size and colour. The differences are the brand name, brand logo and product price. More specifically, one travel luggage piece is a \$150, non-conspicuous, mass-market brand (Freddy), whereas the other travel luggage piece is a \$300, conspicuous brand (Burberry). Participants indicated their preference on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely Freddy, 7 = definitely Burberry). A higher score indicates a greater preference for the product with the conspicuous brand. The photographs and product information in Figure 5.1 were shown to the participants.

**Figure 5.1**

**Products with Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Brand (Experiment 2)**

Travel Luggage



**5.2.4 Procedure**

First of all, the survey was created online via Qualtrics and then a survey link was uploaded at MTurk. Also, as in Experiment 1, at the beginning of the experiment participants were informed by general information regarding the survey procedure. After participants agreed to participate in the survey, they took part in the first task, the “need for justification” task (Simonson, 1989). Before participants were randomly assigned to one of two different conditions, participants were given a misleading title of “Consumer Choice” in order to make it difficult for participants to predict the true purpose of this experiment. Moreover, participants were informed that the purpose of this task is to investigate consumer preference across many different situations.

Subsequently, half of the participants were randomly assigned to the high-need for justification condition, and other half were assigned to the low-need for justification condition (Simonson, 1989). As mentioned before, participants in the high-need for justification condition were told that their choice would be evaluated by others later, and were informed that they might be asked to justify their decision. After receiving this information, participants were asked to print their first name below this information statement. In order to do this, participants were presented with a small, blank square box underneath the phrase “Your first name.” After participants typed their first name, they proceeded to the next page in the survey. On the next page, participants were first asked to type their initial in a small, blank square box underneath the phrase “Your initial”, and then were asked to indicate their preference between the products with a non-conspicuous brand and a conspicuous brand. In contrast, participants in the *low-*



*need for justification* condition were asked to indicate their product preference after they were informed that their product choice would remain completely confidential (Simonson, 1989).

With regards to the dependent variable, an identical piece of travel luggage to that used in Experiment 1 was used in Experiment 2. However, the brand name, product prices, and size and colour of the brand logos were modified in order to increase the convergent validity through showing consistent results across two experiments. In fact, one of the weaknesses of Experiment 1 was that the size and colour of the brand logos of two brands were different. Therefore, in order to minimize such weakness, I made the colour of the logos the same, in addition to making the size of the logos similar (see Figure 5.1). Furthermore, in Experiment 1, the price of the non-conspicuous brand was below \$50. Thus, there is a possibility that some participants may have chosen the conspicuous brand product because they may have thought that the non-conspicuous brand product was below standard. Thus, this time, the price of the non-conspicuous brand travel luggage piece was increased to over \$100.

Following the dependent variable measurement, participants were asked to indicate why they had made such preference. More specifically, there were asked to indicate whether they made their preference because of the brand logo visibility or the quality. Afterwards, participants answered general demographic questions. After survey completion, participants were thanked, and as in Experiment 1, the survey confirmation code was given.

## **5.2.5 Results**

### **5.2.5.1 Conspicuous Consumption**

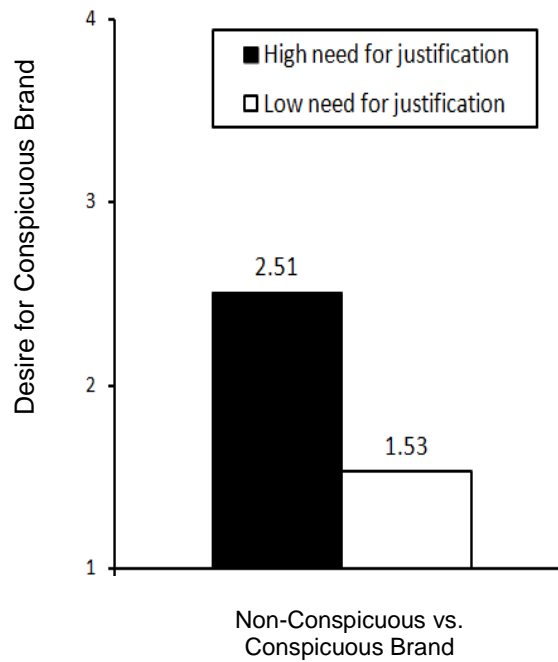
I predicted that when individuals strongly expect their product choice will be evaluated by others, they will prefer a conspicuous brand product more than those who have a lower expectation of being evaluated by others.

#### **5.2.5.1.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand**

The analysis reveals that participants in the high-need for justification condition prefer the Burberry travel luggage piece more than the participants in the low-need for justification condition ( $M_{\text{high-NFJ}} = 2.51$  vs.  $M_{\text{low-NFJ}} = 1.53$ ,  $F(1, 77) = 5.85$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ ). This result is visually depicted in Figure 5.2.

**Figure 5.2**

**Results of Experiment 2**



**5.2.5.2 Reason for Choice: Brand Logo Visibility versus Quality**

As expected, the results reveal that individuals in the high-need for justification condition indicate their preferences based on brand logo visibility more than those in the low-need for justification condition ( $M_{\text{high-NFJ}} = 3.80$  vs.  $M_{\text{low-NFJ}} = 2.65$ ,  $F(1, 77) = 5.92$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ ). However, there is no difference between conditions in their decisions about product quality ( $M_{\text{high-NFJ}} = 3.76$  vs.  $M_{\text{low-NFJ}} = 3.38$ ,  $F(1, 77) = .84$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

**5.2.5.3 Mediation Analysis**

To further test the process that underlies why individuals in the high-need for justification condition desire product with highly conspicuous brand, a mediation test was conducted (Hayes, 2012; PROCESS SPSS macro; model 4). Mediation analysis using 5000 bootstrapped samples with the different level of justification as the independent variables and the brand logo visibility and quality as the mediators, and the preference of the travel luggage as the dependent variable reveals that the direct effect is non-significant (direct effect =  $-.51$ ,  $t = -1.40$ ,  $p > .10$ ) and that the indirect path for brand logo visibility does not include zero (indirect effect =  $-.41$ , 95% CI =  $-1.03, -.08$ ), providing evidence of successful mediation. However, as expected, quality does include zero (indirect effect =  $-.07$ , 95% CI =  $-.48, .04$ ). Taken together, this full mediation analysis confirms that desirability for highly conspicuous brands with a high-need for justification is mediated by brand logo visibility, not by product quality; which provides support for Hypothesis 2.

### **5.2.6 Discussion of Experiment 2 Results**

In this experiment, I directly manipulated the underlying psychological process between differently- focused-targets and conspicuous consumption to see whether individuals who strongly expect their choice to be evaluated by others will prefer conspicuous brand products more than those who have a lower expectation of evaluation by others. Furthermore, I also measured the reason for preference between products with non-conspicuous brand and conspicuous brand to see whether participants who strongly expect to be evaluated by others prefer conspicuous product because of the brand logo visibility rather than other product attributes.

The findings reveal that participants who strongly expect to be evaluated by others prefer the products with highly conspicuous brands more than those who have a lower expectation of evaluation. Moreover, such individuals attached more importance to logo visibility, rather than product quality, when they made such a preference choice. The mediation analysis results further support the finding that the preference for highly conspicuous brands under the high justification need condition are driven by brand logo visibility, not product quality. These findings confirm that when individuals strongly expect to be evaluated by others they desire to protect themselves from potential social criticism by choosing the most justifiable product that more easily gains social approval (Bushman, 1993; Froming et al., 1982).

Both experiments provided evidence consistent with the hypotheses that in contrast with self-focused individuals, when individuals focus on others they are more concerned about others' evaluations of them. As a result, they seek products that have conspicuous brand logos, regardless of quality, to easily justify their choice and thus minimize potential threats, such as social disapproval.

### **5.3 Discussion of Section 2**

In this section, I investigate which of the two differently-focused targets would exert a stronger influence on individuals to desire conspicuous products more. Drawing upon two theoretical constructs, self-awareness and self-consciousness, I predicted that compared to individuals who focus on themselves, other-focused individuals would prefer products with conspicuous brands or logos more. This is because, compared to individuals who focus on the inner aspects of self, other-focused individuals who tend to see themselves more as social-objects, are more inclined to behave in ways that will maximize social approval and meet social expectations, while minimizing social risk (Buss & Scheier, 1976; Doherty & Schlenker, 1991; Fenigstein, 1979, 1980). In fact, conspicuous products can be used as one of the most effective tools to maximize social approval via demonstrating universally-recognized prominent symbols that convey admirable social status (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009). Accordingly, other-focused individuals who are concerned about social approval will prefer conspicuous products in order to protect themselves against potential social criticism (Kim & Rucker, 2012).

Furthermore, I predicted that because other-focused individuals desire to gain social approval through demonstrating socially-favourable indicators more than self-focused

individuals, such individuals will prefer products with a conspicuous brand because of its conspicuousness rather than other attributes of the product (Buss & Scheier, 1976; Doherty & Schlenker, 1991).

To test the above predictions, two experiments were conducted. The first experiment was conducted to test Hypothesis 1, to see whether individuals desire products with highly conspicuous brands or logos when they focus more on others than themselves. Across various types of products, the results support Hypothesis 1. I found that other-focused individuals prefer products with conspicuous brands and logos that convey admirable social status more than self-focused individuals. However, one of the weaknesses of Experiment 1 was that it is still ambiguous whether other-focused individuals indeed preferred conspicuous products because they were concerned about others' evaluations of them. Furthermore, it is also still unclear whether such individuals prefer conspicuous products because of the brand logo visibility rather than other product attributes such as product quality. In order to test these points, the second experiment was conducted.

In Experiment 2, I directly manipulated the levels of expectation of being evaluated by others to see whether individuals who strongly expect to be evaluated by others would prefer conspicuous products more than those who have a lower evaluation expectation. Moreover, the reason for participants' product preference was measured in order to test Hypothesis 2, to see whether the brand logo visibility acts as a mediator of the levels of expectation to be evaluated and preference for conspicuous products. I found that individuals who strongly expect to be evaluated by others prefer products with highly conspicuous brands more than those who have less expectation of being evaluated. I further found that the brand logo visibility is the reason for such preference. Therefore, the results of Experiment 2 provided evidence of psychological process, in addition to supporting Hypothesis 2.

In summary, the two experiments support my predictions. I found that other-focused individuals who are concerned about others' evaluations of them prefer conspicuous products more than self-focused individuals because of their brand logo visibility. One of the noteworthy findings from this research is that other-focused individuals still prefer conspicuous products regardless of defects affecting the luxury products' quality. This strongly suggests that the conspicuousness of the products' brand is a vital reason for preference for other-focused individuals.

Although this research found that other-focused individuals desire conspicuous products more than self-focused individuals, there are limitations. First of all, the desirability of conspicuous products in the other-focused condition was quite low. One possibility for this is that since participants across the two experiments were people who live in the United States, their culture may have influenced the results. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), Americans emphasize independent self-construal more than interdependent self-construal. Thus, although other-focused thought is primed, there is a possibility that the more customary independent self-construal may have influenced the results.

Another limitation lies in the dependent variable used in experiment 2. That is, since there is a high price discrepancy between non-conspicuous and conspicuous brand products, there is a possibility that participants under the high-need for justification condition may have chosen the conspicuous brand products as they perceived it being of higher quality than non-conspicuous brand products. If participants thought this way, participants who chose the conspicuous brand product under the high-need for justification condition should have indicated that their preference for conspicuous brand product was driven by quality rather than brand logo visibility. However, the results of experiment 2 show that preference for highly conspicuous brands under the high justification needs condition are driven by brand logo visibility, not product quality. In addition, there is a full mediation effect. Therefore, I can rule out this possible alternative explanation.

The last limitation lies in the experimental-causal-chain design that Spencer et al. (2005) suggested. Although I noted that this experiment will be using the experimental-causal-chain design in the research methods section of experiment 2, it is possible that I was not using this design correctly in this experiment.

The findings on focused targets here support past research on situational self-construal (e.g., Aaker & Williams, 1998; Gardner, Pennington, & Bessenoff, 1999; Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000) by providing convergent evidence. Specifically, prior research posits that, regardless of ethnic origin, individuals have ideas of both an independent and interdependent self in their minds. Thus, a situational cue activates a different self-construal regardless of one's chronic self-construal (Aaker & Lee, 2001; Ybarra & Trafimow, 1998). For instance, Aaker and Williams (1998) demonstrated that Americans who were focused on self-related words such as 'me' and 'I' engaged more in self-focused thoughts, whereas those who were focused on other-related words such as 'family' or 'friends' engaged more in other-focused thoughts. Similarly, the present research demonstrates that, compared to American in the self-focused condition, Americans in the other-focused condition focused more on others, and thus was more attracted to conspicuous products.

Furthermore, this research adds to existing research on conspicuous consumption by introducing new operational definitions (e.g., Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Lee & Shrum, 2012). More specifically, in this research, instead of using the dependent variables used in prior research, various types of dependent variables were introduced, such as a Gucci iPad with no logo versus a conspicuous logo, a Mercedes Benz with a less conspicuous logo versus a highly conspicuous logo, and a question regarding difficult buying situation. Such operational definitions will enrich future research on conspicuous consumption.

There are also some managerial implications of these findings. For instance, luxury retailers should recommend conspicuous products over non-conspicuous products when consumers are seeking luxury products they want to carry where there are many people in attendance, such as musical events or social parties. By doing this, they may increase both customers' satisfaction and profits.

Another implication is that when advertising managers need to promote newly released conspicuous products, they should use social approval-related advertising messages. For example, they could use statements like “You will genuinely impress others” to attract potential customers. Furthermore, they should use images of the public or images of many people admiring the person who is holding a conspicuous product. Thus, when potential customers are looking at the advertisement, they may vicariously experience maximum social approval by putting themselves into the shoes of the person who is holding a conspicuous product in the advertisement.

Lastly, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, these research findings could demonstrate to governments and social welfare agencies how to make people less engaged in conspicuous consumption. I suggest, since other-focused individuals desire conspicuous products more than self-focused individuals, government and social welfare agencies should arrange free social programmes to help people by teaching them how they can be less focused on others’ evaluations and more focused on the inner-self.

In the next section, I investigate which of the two different types of motivations, self-expression and self-transformation, exerts a stronger influence on individuals’ desire for conspicuous products.

# **SECTION 3**

## **SELF-TRANSFORMATIVE VERSUS SELF-EXPRESSIVE MOTIVATION, AND CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION**

### **CHAPTER 6**

#### **THE LITERATURE OF SELF-TRANSFORMATIVE AND SELF-EXPRESSIVE MOTIVATIONS**

In this section, I draw upon literature on the self-concept (e.g., Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002), self-congruence (e.g., Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011) and psychological distance (e.g., Hansen & Wänke, 2011) to derive the hypothesis on how different motivations affect conspicuous consumption.

Ahuvia (2005) claims that self-expression and self-transformation are different in their motivation. Self-expressive motive refers to employing certain types of products to signal one's identity and inner state, whereas a self-transformative motive refers to individuals employing certain types of products to transform their lives more meaningful (Bargh et al., 2002; Belk, 1981, 2013; Richins, 2011). Several papers have linked these two motivations through self-concept. That is, self-expression involves the true self, the actual self, and what can be called the "real me," while self-transformation involves the ideal, desirable, and aspirational self (Belk, 2013; Bargh et al., 2002; Richins, 2011). Taken together, these findings suggest that self-expression involves an actual self, whereas self-transformation involves an ideal self.

In this manner, since the two types of motivation — self-expression versus self-transformation — possess distinctive self-concepts, it seems possible that they may lead individuals to prefer different types of products. If so, could one of these motivations lead individuals to seek out conspicuous products more than the other? According to Malär et al. (2011), "consumers are motivated to hold a set of beliefs about themselves (self-concept) that motivate them to act in ways (e.g., prefer, purchase, and use brands with a matching brand personality) that reinforce their self-concept" (p. 37). In other words, this literature indicates that individuals tend to seek out products that are congruent with their self-concepts (actual-self versus ideal-self).

Applying this logic to the current context, since self-transformation motivation induces individuals to strive to express their ideal selves, such individuals should gravitate towards products that reflect their ideal-selves. By contrast, since self-expression motivation induces

individuals to express their actual selves, they should show a preference for products that reflect their actual-selves.

If that is the case, which types of products, in general, would be particularly related to an individual's actual or ideal self-concept? The extant literature suggests that individuals generally perceive products that are psychologically distant (seldom encountered) from them as products related to the ideal-self. Likewise, individuals perceive products that are psychologically close to them as products related to the actual self (Hansen & Wänke, 2011; Liberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007; Malär et al., 2011). In particular, Hansen and Wänke (2011) suggest that individuals generally perceive high-priced conspicuous products as psychologically and socially distant from themselves compared to commonplace products that they encounter in their everyday lives. To elaborate, since individuals often cannot afford to obtain expensive conspicuous items and have few opportunities to encounter them, they perceive conspicuous items as inaccessible. Accordingly, the individuals perceive conspicuous products as psychologically distant. Furthermore, Kendall (2005) points out that media is one of the sources that present conspicuous products as those that most people cannot easily acquire. For instance, the formerly well-known American TV series of the 1980s called *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* personified the upper-class individuals' lifestyles as the ideal American dream lifestyle. The show provided insights into how these people who are socially distant from most of the population spend their money extravagantly on costly, conspicuous products such as BMW limited edition coupes and expensive yachts while enjoying their lives. Furthermore, reporter Nick Cannon regularly closed the show by saying "champagne wishes and caviar dreams," an expression with the potential to brainwash individuals to spend lavishly on conspicuous products that are part of many peoples' ideal lifestyle. Accordingly, middle and working-class viewers naturally perceive conspicuous products as items distant from their reality. In fact, Rucker et al. (2014) provide empirical evidence that individuals stereotypically anticipate that socially powerful individuals possess more conspicuous products than people with less social power.

In contrast to conspicuous products that are considered psychologically distant, people encounter non-conspicuous items such as non-luxury or affordable luxury products relatively easily in their everyday lives. Thus, compared to conspicuous products that individuals rarely encounter, non-conspicuous items are perceived by individuals as psychologically close to them.

In sum, the existing literature suggests that individuals perceive conspicuous products as more psychologically distant and thus reflecting an ideal state, whereas non-conspicuous products as more psychologically close and thus reflect an actual state.

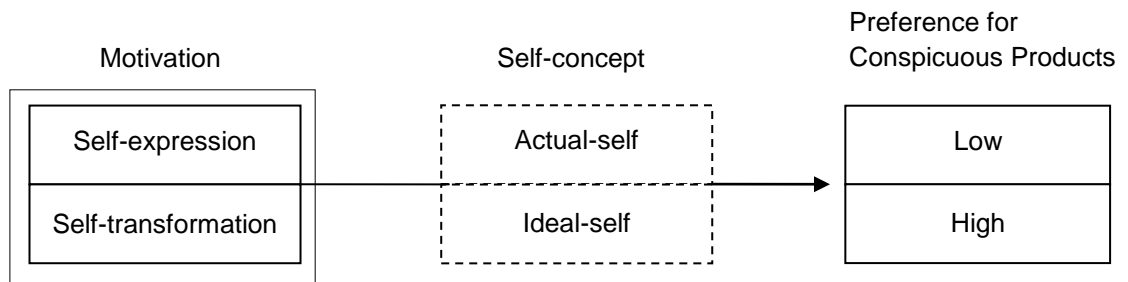
Building on the above streams of research on self-concept, self-congruence, and psychological distance, this research anticipates that, because self-transformation motivation induces individuals to pursue their ideal-self, this will lead them to seek conspicuous products that reflect an ideal-self. On the contrary, because self-expression motivation induces



individuals to pursue their actual-self, this will lead them to seek non-conspicuous products that more closely represent their actual-self (Figure 6.1).

**Figure 6.1**

**Self-Transformative versus Self-Expressive Motivation, and Conspicuous Consumption**



To further support the above anticipation, although prior research has not broached the topic of how the two different types of motivation (self-expression versus self-transformation) influence conspicuous consumption, research on conspicuous consumption hints at what individuals who are motivated to transform themselves might desire. For instance, Rucker and Galinsky (2008, 2009) demonstrate that individuals who lack power crave conspicuous products in order to transform an aversive, powerless, state. In a similar vein, Lee and Shrum (2012) show that socially ignored individuals desire conspicuous products in order to regain a meaningful existence by displaying a higher status over others.

Therefore, this leads to the following hypothesis:

**H3:** A Self-transformation (vs. self-expression) motivation will increase the preference for highly conspicuous brands/logos.

In the next chapter, I present three experiments that support the above hypothesis. I first present Experiment 3 to offer preliminarily support for Hypothesis 3 by assessing whether individuals who prefer conspicuous products hold greater expectations of self-transformation expectations or self-expression expectation. I then present Experiments 4 and 5 to test Hypothesis 3 by examining whether the self-transformation motive increases preference for products with highly conspicuous brands or logos more than the self-expression motive. I use a within-subject design for Experiment 4 and a between-subject design for Experiment 5. After that, I conclude Section 3 with a short discussion regarding findings, limitations, and contributions of the research of this stage.

## CHAPTER 7

### EXPERIMENT 3: SELF-TRANSFORMATION VERSUS EXPRESSION MOTIVES

#### 7.1 Research Method

Similarly to the research reported in Section 2, the research in Experiment 3 also has hypotheses that involve a concomitant variation of a cause (X), and an effect (Y) (Malhotra, 2010); thus, I can directly manipulate the different motivations to see the cause-and-effect relationship. That is, I examine which of the two motivations leads individuals to desire conspicuous products more, while rigorously controlling for exogenous influence. However, before I delve into this relationship, I seek to investigate whether the respondents holds greater expectations of self-transformation or self-expression resulting from the purchase of conspicuous products.

To test this, I employ a descriptive research strategy, specifically, a survey method. The reason is, according to Gravetter and Forzano (2009), that a descriptive research strategy is extremely useful in the early stage of a research project, as researchers can learn about individuals' attitudes and motivations more naturally compared to other research methods such as a true experimental strategy (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009; Hair, Wolfinbarger, Ortinau, & Bush, 2008). In this research, the survey was conducted through Amazon Mechanical Turk, as prior research suggests that large amounts of data can be more efficiently collected via the internet compared with other types of surveys methods such as mail or telephone surveys (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

The collected data were assessed via multiple regression analysis. This is because although I used the survey method, this study involves more than one continuous predictor variables (X) and a single continuous outcome variable (Y) (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009; Malhotra, 2010). SPSS software was used for the same reason mentioned in the previous section.

The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee approved this research on March 26, 2014, (AUTEC reference number 14/33).

#### 7.2 Experiment 3

##### 7.2.1 Design

The aim of this experiment is to provide preliminarily support for Hypothesis 3 by assessing whether individuals hold a greater expectation of self-transformation or self-expression resulting from the purchase of conspicuous products. I predict that because conspicuous products reflect an ideal self more than an actual self, individuals may hold a

greater expectation of self-transformation than they do of self-expression resulting from the purchase of conspicuous products (Hansen & Wänke, 2011; Kendall, 2005).

As aforementioned, in order to test this prediction a survey method was used, and rating-scale questions were used. The reason for using this type of question is that, according to Gravetter and Forzano (2009), “participants usually find them easy to understand and easy to answer” (p. 378).

For the sake of clarity and comparison, I will use the same order of description as in previous experiments; thus, I first describe the research participants. Next, I present the scales and materials used and then explain the procedures and, subsequently, present the findings and discuss them.

### **7.2.2 Participants**

One hundred and five adult participants located in the United States ( $M_{age} = 29.92$ ; 60.0% male) were recruited from an online panel (Amazon Mechanical Turk). As in the two previous experiments, the survey participants were restricted to under the age of 55. Since there are two different types of the predictor variables, self-transformation expectation and self-expression expectation, 105 participants were deemed to provide a sufficient sample size (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

### **7.2.3 Scales and Materials**

#### **7.2.3.1 Conspicuous Consumption Measures**

I measured two types of conspicuous consumption, of a non-conspicuous brand versus a conspicuous brand. These types are discussed below.

##### ***7.2.3.1.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand***

To assess desire for conspicuous brands, participants were asked to read the following instruction: “Imagine that you are going to buy an iPad case at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.” The colour and size of the two iPad cases are similar, as are the colour and size of the brand logo. The only difference is the brand name (see Figure 7.1). More specifically, one iPad case is from a mass-market brand (Amouage), whereas the other iPad case is from a conspicuous brand (Gucci). No product price information was given. Participants indicated their preference on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely Amouage, 7 = definitely Gucci). A higher score indicates a greater preference for the product with conspicuous brand.

**Figure 7.1**

**Products with Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Brand (Experiment 3)**



**7.2.3.2 Two Different Expectation Measures**

To assess the association between two different types of expectations and conspicuous products, participants were asked the following question after they indicated a preference: “How likely is it that each of the following would happen if you were able to buy the Gucci iPad case instead of the Amouage iPad case? If I own the Gucci iPad case rather than the Amouage iPad case...” This statement was modified from one developed by Richins (2011). Participants then were given the following self-transformation expectation and self-expression expectation scales (also see Appendix 4). 6-point scale was used to measure two different expectations, as the previous study originally used the 6-point scale (Richins, 2011). This, I can easily compare the result with the previous study.

**7.2.3.2.1 Self-Transformation Expectation**

To measure participants’ self-transformation expectation of conspicuous products, using a 6-point forced-choice scale (1 = very unlikely, 6 = very likely), participants indicated their thoughts on five items. These are, “Other people would respects me more,” “I would feel like a more important person,” “I’d feel more self-confident,” “I would become more attractive to other people,” and “My appearance would be improved.” Richins (2011) developed these scales.

**7.2.3.2.2 Self-Expression Expectation**

To measure participants’ self-expression expectation of conspicuous products, using the same 6-point scale (1 = very unlikely, 6 = very likely), participants similarly indicated their thoughts on five items. These items are “I can express who I really am,” “Other people would see my true self,” “I would be better able to show aspects of my inner self,” “I can express my

feeling publicly,” and “Other people would know my preference and opinion.” These scales were altered from a value expressive scale developed by Kim and Sherman (2007).

#### **7.2.4 Procedure**

To examine whether the respondents actually holds greater expectations for self-transformation rather than self-expression resulting from the purchase of conspicuous products, a survey was created via Qualtrics and the survey link was uploaded at MTurk. Before participants answered the online survey questionnaire they were given a consent form that explained the general procedure of the survey. For instance, participants were told that their participation in this research was entirely voluntary and that completion of the questionnaire would take about three minutes to complete.

After participants agreed to participate in the survey, they were asked to complete the “Consumer Choice” task. Participants were told that in this task they would be participating in a survey that investigates consumer preference. After that, participants were asked to indicate their preference between an iPad case from a non-conspicuous or conspicuous brand. To filter out possibly unqualified participants, a hidden timer question was included.

Following the product preference question, participants were asked to proceed to the next page. On the next page, participants were asked to indicate their thoughts about the likelihood that a given statement would be true if they were able to buy the Gucci iPad case rather than the Amouage iPad case. Again, a hidden timer question was included. Furthermore, since participants could not go back to the previous page on the Qualtrics online survey, product photos were presented again in order to help participants to indicate their thoughts easily. After that, participants answered general demographic questions, and after they completed the survey, they were thanked. Subsequently, the survey code was given.

After the data was collected, it was downloaded from the Qualtrics website “Download Data” section. The data was cleaned before it was analysed. First, when the data was downloaded from Qualtrics, only numbers were displayed under the “variable name” section, making it difficult for analysis. Thus, the variable names were re-named in order to make analysis easier. For instance, Q10 changed to IV or Q25 to Gender. Second, I ensured that the value labels of scales were recorded properly (e.g., 1 = definitely Amnounge, 7 = definitely Gucci). Third, I chose the appropriate scale out of four different options: Nominal, Ordinal, Interval, and Ratio. Fourth, I checked whether or not there is an outlier that would influence the results, such as participants who scored all the same way for a series of questions, participants who indicated an answer for fun (e.g., recorded age as 9 years old), or participants who did not have enough time or who spent too much time on task page (Qualtrics, 2015). I then ran descriptive statistics to see a general data pattern and checked other measures such as mean (measure of central tendency), standard deviation (the square root of the variance), or Kurtosis (“measures the relative peakedness or flatness of the curve” (Malhotra, 2010, p. 488). Regarding the normal distribution of the variables, the data reveal that preference for an iPad

case (skewness = -.67, kurtosis = .77) is not significantly skewed or platykurtic, as scores fall between -2 and +2 (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). Therefore, neither skewness nor kurtosis is an issue. Furthermore, outliers are not detected. Thus, I ran the main analysis in order to test the hypothesis. A similar data cleaning procedure was conducted for all other experiments.

## **7.2.5 Results**

### **7.2.5.1 Factor Analysis for Two Different Expectation Items**

A factor analysis was conducted, in order to check the validity of the scales. An orthogonal, Varimax, rotation was used over the other rotations in this experiment as I wanted the variables to be uncorrelated in order to facilitate their joint use in regression analysis later (Malhotra, 2010, p. 645).

Results from an exploratory factor analysis, using a Varimax rotation reveals that the five self-transformation expectation items load more highly on the first factor (eigenvalue = 7.43) and the five self-expression expectation items load more highly on the second factor (eigenvalue = .91). The eigenvalue of the second factor is less than 1, but it is not uncommon when using an orthogonal rotation that the first factor accounts for much of the variation and the following factors are less powerful. Notwithstanding, inspection of the scree plot shows that a two-factor solution is reasonable, and as it is important that the factors are not highly related and the scales load as they are theoretically expected to, I decided to accept this solution. The total variance accounted for by the two factors is high, at 83.47%. Thus, the five self-transformation items were averaged to form a composite score ( $\alpha = .94$ ). Likewise, the five self-expression items were also averaged to form a composite score ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

### **7.2.5.2 Results of Two Different Types of Expectation Regarding Conspicuous Products**

I predicted that the public would associate greater expectation of self-transformation than of self-expression with conspicuous products. Thus, compared to the self-expression expectation, if the self-transformation expectation is highly associated with the individuals who prefer conspicuous brand products, such prediction will be supported. As expected, a multiple regression analysis in which the independent variables are self-transformation and self-expression expectations and the dependent variable is preference for conspicuous product shows that the only predictor of self-transformation expectation is significantly associated with conspicuous products ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $t(102) = 2.00$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The self-expression expectation was not significantly associated with conspicuous products ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $t(102) = 1.20$ ,  $p > .10$ ). Therefore, my prediction is supported.

Multicollinearity was assessed to ensure that two predictor variables are not highly correlated. The VIF value for the two independent variables is 2.78. Hair et al. (2008) suggest a cut-off of 0.5, which indicates that multicollinearity is not an issue here.

### **7.2.6 Discussion of Experiment 3 Results**

The results of this research provide preliminary support for Hypothesis 3. More specifically, the results demonstrate that conspicuous products are more intensely associated with expectations of self-transformation than of a self-expression expectation. Therefore, the results support the prediction that conspicuous products elicit greater expectations of self-transformation than of self-expression, as these products are more associated with an ideal self (the person one has always wanted to be) rather than an actual self (the person one is now).

However, this argument is still only partly supported, as it remains unclear whether individuals really think that conspicuous products are more related to an ideal self-image more than are non-conspicuous products. In order to elucidate this mechanism, a follow-up experiment was conducted.

## **7.3 Follow-up Experiment: Are Conspicuous Products Related to the Ideal Self-Image?**

### **7.3.1 Research Method**

To provide evidence for whether individuals generally think that conspicuous products are more related to an ideal self-image than are non-conspicuous products, I conducted a follow-up experiment. Since the aim of this follow-up experiment was to seek out general thoughts from the respondents, as in Experiment 3, the survey method was again used (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). In this case, though, a one-sample *t*-test was conducted because there is only a single variable in this research (Malhotra, 2010).

### **7.3.2 Design**

I expected that individuals would think that conspicuous products reflect an ideal self-image more than non-conspicuous products do. This is because existing research suggests that individuals generally perceive conspicuous products as more psychologically distant from them due to media effects and due to their prices that prevent purchase (Kendall, 2005). Further, individuals generally perceive products that are psychologically distant from them as products related to the ideal self (Hansen & Wänke, 2011; Liberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007; Malär et al., 2011). As in the previous survey-experiment, rating-scale questions were used in order to make the questionnaire easy to understand and complete (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

### **7.3.3 Participants**

Forty-six adult participants located in the United States ( $M_{\text{age}} = 32.17$ ; 47.8% male) were recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk. Since there was only one experimental group, 46 participants were deemed to form a sufficiently large sample (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

### 7.3.4 Scales and Materials

#### 7.3.4.1 Association between Conspicuous Products and Ideal-Self Measures

To assess the association between conspicuous products and ideal self-image, two different kinds of conspicuous products were used; non-conspicuous versus conspicuous brand and non-conspicuous versus conspicuous logo. The differences between these similar-sounding constructs are explained below (Please see Appendix 5 for more details).

##### 7.3.4.1.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand

To assess which of the two types of brand products individuals would associate more with an ideal self-image, the passport holders that were used in Experiment 1 were employed (Figure 7.2). One is a \$53 passport holder from a non-conspicuous, mass-market brand (Leatherology), whereas the other is a \$120 passport holder from a conspicuous brand (Salvatore Ferragamo). Participants were asked: "Which passport holder do you think is more relatable to people's ideal self-image?" They indicated their thoughts on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely Leatherology, 7 = definitely Salvatore Ferragamo).

Figure 7.2

#### Products with Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Brand (Follow-up Experiment)



##### 7.3.4.1.2 Non-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo

To assess which of the two types of luxury product individuals associated more with an ideal self-image, two types of luxury products were used: Gucci iPad cases and Burberry t-shirts. The Gucci iPad cases were used in Experiment 1; one bears a non-conspicuous Gucci logo,



and the other a conspicuous Gucci logo. As with the passport holders, participants were asked: “Which \_\_\_\_\_ do you think is more relatable to people’s ideal self-image?” The white Burberry t-shirts are identical but for one bearing a non-conspicuous Burberry logo and the other bearing a conspicuous Burberry logo (see Figure 7.3). Participants were asked to indicate their thoughts about which of the t-shirt were more related to people’s ideal self-image. As a reminder to the reader, a non-conspicuous logo is likely to be hidden from view and thus the t-shirt appears to have no visible brand logo.

**Figure 7.3**

**Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Logos (Follow-up Experiment)**

Gucci iPad case



Design A

Design B

Burberry T-shirt



Option G

Option H

**7.3.5 Procedure**

First, the survey was created through Qualtrics and then the survey link was uploaded to MTurk. Afterwards, the consent form was used in the previous experiments was again given to the participants. After people agreed to participate, they were asked to complete the task called “General Thoughts about Product.” More specifically, they were told that in this task they would be participating in a survey that investigates people’s general thoughts. After that, participants were asked to indicate their thoughts about which of the pair of products reflected

an ideal self-image more. Participants indicated their thoughts about three types of products; passport holders, iPad cases, and t-shirts. A hidden timer question was measured in order to filter out possible unqualified participants (for instance, participants who took 15 minutes to answer a question that should have taken less than 2 minutes to complete). Afterwards, participants answered the general demographic questions. After completing the survey, the participants were thanked and given the survey confirmation code.

### **7.3.6 Results**

In this follow-up experiment, I expected that individuals would tend to think that conspicuous products reflected an ideal self-image more than non-conspicuous products did. The results validated this assumption. Individuals generally thought highly conspicuous products were more related to people's ideal self-image than were non-conspicuous products: Gucci iPad case ( $M = 5.09$  vs. 4 (middle point),  $t(45) = 3.6$ ,  $p < .01$ ); passport holder ( $M = 4.65$  vs. 4 (middle point),  $t(45) = 2.1$ ,  $p < .05$ ); and Burberry t-shirt ( $M = 5.20$ ,  $t(45) = 4.4$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, my assumption is supported.

### **7.3.7 Discussion of the Follow-up Experiment Results**

The follow-up study demonstrates that people generally think that highly conspicuous products are more related to an ideal self-image than are non-conspicuous products. Therefore, the results of this experiment and Experiment 3 confirm that conspicuous products are more strongly associated with expectations of self-transformation than self-expression as such products are more reflective of an ideal self-image. In order to provide more compelling evidence on this causal chain of events, I directly manipulated this psychological process; that is, two different motivations in the following experiment (Spencer et al., 2005).

In the next chapter, I present Experiment 4, which is designed to test Hypothesis 3 by examining whether the self-transformation motive increases preference for products with highly conspicuous brands or logos more than the self-expression motive.

## CHAPTER 8

### EXPERIMENT 4: SELF-TRANSFORMATION VERSUS SELF-EXPRESSION MOTIVE

#### 8.1 Research Method

The nature of this research is conclusive, as its purpose is to test Hypothesis 3. Specifically, Hypothesis 3 involves concomitant variation of a cause (X) and an effect (Y), so this research takes a causal research method approach (Malhotra, 2010). Furthermore, in order to rigorously control exogenous influences, I will directly manipulate the two different types of motivations to seek a causal relationship between the two motivations and conspicuous consumption (Bagozzi, 1981; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008).

Moreover, instead of using an online survey, this experiment is conducted via a paper-and-pencil survey. With regards to research analysis methods, this research employed SPSS software over other statistical software packages in order to more confidently compare the results of the present study with the results of the previous research in social psychology (e.g., Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Sundie et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). The data of this experiment were assessed using an ANOVA, which is appropriate because the independent variables are categorical and the dependent variables are continuous (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee approved this research on March 26, 2014, (AUTEC reference number 14/33).

#### 8.2 Experiment 4

##### 8.2.1 Design

The purpose of this experiment is to test Hypothesis 3, examining whether the self-transformation motivation increases the preference for conspicuous products more than the self-expression motivation. I predict that individuals prefer conspicuous products when they desire to transform themselves more than express themselves, since conspicuous products are associated more with the ideal self than the actual self.

The study has a 2 (motivation; self-transformation vs. self-expression) between-subject design, and the key dependent variable is the preference between products with a conspicuous or a non-conspicuous brand or logo.

Once again, the description of the experiment follows the same pattern I use throughout the thesis; first I describe the research participants, and then present the materials and scales used in this experiment. After that, I explicate the procedure of the experiment and reveal the findings. I conclude with a discussion of these findings.

### **8.2.2 Participants**

Ninety-two undergraduates at a large University in New Zealand ( $M_{age} = 20.52$ ; 45.7% male) participated in this experiment. As already mentioned, this experiment was conducted through a paper-and-pencil survey, and the participants were people who live in New Zealand. Thus, increasing the generalizability of the samples across the experiments that tested Hypothesis 3 could enhance external validity. With regards to the sample size, since there were two groups in this experiment, 92 people were deemed to provide a sufficient sample size (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

### **8.2.3 Scales and Materials**

#### **8.2.3.1 Different Motivations Manipulation**

In order to directly manipulate different motivations, the following procedure was implemented (Herbst, Gaertner, & Insko, 2003; Richins, 2011). Please also see Appendix 6a and 6b for survey instruments.

##### **8.2.3.1.1 Self-Transformation Motive**

To activate the self-transformation motive, participants were given the following instruction: "Write down the items (e.g., clothes, accessories, cars) that give you the feeling you have become the superior and ideal person you always wanted to be." To provide a clearer idea of what they should write about, an example was provided: "Whenever I carry my black bag, I feel as if I am representing my ideal future, the person whom I wish to become. The moment I carry this black bag, I instantly boost my confidence level and feel invincible. I like this feeling of being admired by others."

##### **8.2.3.1.2 Self-Expression Motive**

To activate the self-expression motive, participants were given the following instruction: "Write down the items (e.g., clothes, accessories, cars) that give you the feeling this item expresses who I am, my self-identify." Moreover, just as in the self-transformation priming task, an example was provided in order to provide a clearer idea of what participants should write about: "Whenever I carry my black bag, I feel as if I am the most "me" because it reflects my personality, of someone who likes simplicity. I think this item does a great job of communicating who I am and how I want to be seen by the world."

#### **8.2.3.2 Dependent Variable: Conspicuous Consumption Measures**

Conspicuous consumption was measured in three ways; non-conspicuous versus conspicuous brand, non-conspicuous versus conspicuous logo, and a drawing logo task.

#### 8.2.3.2.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand

To assess desire for conspicuous brands, a passport holder was used. Participants were first asked: “Imagine that you are going to buy a passport cover at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?” Participants were then asked to indicate their preference between two passport holders of similar shape and colour but with different brands (see Figure 8.1). One passport holder is a \$57 passport holder from a non-conspicuous, mass-market brand (Leatherology), whereas another is a \$110 passport holder from a conspicuous brand (Salvatore Ferragamo). Participants indicated their preference on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely product G, 7 = definitely product H). A higher score indicates greater preference for the product from a conspicuous brand.

Figure 8.1

#### Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Brand (Experiment 4)



#### 8.2.3.2.2 Non-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo

To assess desire for high-end products with conspicuous logos, participants were asked: “Imagine that you are going to buy a Gucci iPad case at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.” The Gucci iPad cases were the same as those used in Experiment 1 and are shown again in Figure 8.2. Using a 7-point scale (1 = definitely Design A, 7 = definitely Design B), participants were asked to indicate their preference of the two identically-shaped Gucci iPad cases, one bearing a non-conspicuous Gucci logo (no logo outwardly visible) and the other bearing a conspicuous Gucci logo. No price information was given. A higher score indicates a greater preference for a conspicuous logo.

**Figure 8.2**

**Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Logo (Experiment 4)**

Gucci iPad cases



**8.2.3.2.3 Drawing Logo**

To further assess desire for conspicuous products, participants were asked to custom design the size of the brand logo. Wang and Griskevicius (2014) recently developed this method. More specifically, participants were asked to read the following scenario: “Imagine that you are buying one t-shirt with a brand logo on the front. Your new t-shirt will have a logo that goes on the front of the shirt. You can custom design the size of the brand logo. Please draw the size of the logo that you would like to have on your t-shirt. You only need to draw the outline, not the details of the logo. You can have the logo as small or as large as you like.” Participants were given a plain unbranded white t-shirt photo and three brands from which to choose: Versace, Burberry, and Gucci (see Figure 8.3). The dependent variable was the size of the logo that participants drew. The larger the size of the brand logo that participants drew is large, the greater their preference for a product with a conspicuous logo.

Figure 8.3

**Drawing Logos (Experiment 4)**

Imagine that you are buying one T-shirt with a brand logo on the front. Your new t-shirt will have a logo that goes on the front of the shirt.



You can custom design the size of the brand logo. Please draw the size of the logo that you would like to have on your t-shirt. **You only need to draw the outline, not the details of the logo.** You can have the logo be as small or as large as you like.



### 8.2.3.3 Control Variable

To rule out the potentially confounding effect of mood, participants' mood was measured. Participants indicated their mood on two items, using a 7-point scale (1 = very sad / very bad, 7 = very happy / very good). The two items were averaged to form a composite score ( $\alpha = .79$ ). Analysis of the data reveals no effect of the manipulation task on participants' mood ( $M_{\text{self-transformation}} = 4.83$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-expression}} = 4.90$ ;  $F(1, 87) = .10$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

### 8.2.4 Procedure

To test Hypothesis 3, a paper survey was created. I then approached class instructors and requested their permission to conduct the survey in their classes. After the instructors agreed, I contacted instructors again a week before the survey was conducted and requested that they inform undergraduates that the survey would be conducted in their next class. I then went to their classes and conducted the survey when the instructors taught a topic related to the survey. In order to minimize the disruption, the survey was conducted before the classes started. In the beginning of the experiment, the participant information sheet was given to the participants. They were told that in this task, they would be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies and that the survey would take approximately 5 minutes total to complete. Additionally, they were told that their responses would be kept completely confidential and that their participation was totally voluntary. Also, they were informed that they did not need to answer any question they did not wish to. After that, the survey was administered. Since many people were participating in the survey at the same time, at the front cover of the survey, the following statement was inserted: "Please do not turn the page until instructed to do so." This was done for the purpose of maintaining rigorous control. While the surveys were being distributed, the participants were informed that they should not discuss the survey while filling it out. One of the two motivation conditions was randomly given to the participants. Participants then were asked to turn to the next page and start the survey.

Participants were first asked to participate in the first task, the different motivation manipulation task. To alleviate any potential suspicion, all participants were given the misleading title "Creative Writing Skills" and were told that the purpose of this particular task was to examine their creative skills through writing stories. Subsequently, depending on the manipulation condition they received, participants wrote the items that either represented the person they always wanted to be or the person they truly are in a blank, square box (also see Appendix 6a and 6b). Participants were given approximately 5 minutes to fill out the box. Again, in order to control rigorously, participants were asked not to turn the page until instructed to do so.

Following the manipulation task, participants were asked to participate in the second task, "Product Choice," in order to measure the dependent variables. They were told that in this task, they would be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preferences for various product categories. Furthermore, they were asked to fill out the survey completely and to remain silent after they have done. Each response is valid, with no outliers or missing data.



Participants finished the survey by filling out general demographic questions and questions regarding their current mood. After that, participants were thanked and debriefed.

## **8.2.5 Results**

### **8.2.5.1 Manipulation Pre-test**

To ensure the manipulation elicited the intended motivation, a separate sample of fifty-four participants located in the United States ( $M_{age} = 33.50$ ; 53.7% male) were recruited using an online panel (Amazon Mechanical Turk). They underwent one of the two manipulations using the same instructions as those given in the Experiment 4.

Following the writing task, participants indicated whether the items they wrote about represented who they actually are or who they would like to be on a 5-point bipolar scale (1 = represent who I actually am / is like me, 5 = represent who I would like to be / is like I want to be). Results from the two items were averaged to form a composite score ( $\alpha = .91$ ). As expected, compared with the self-expression condition, participants in the self-transformation condition thought the items they wrote down represent who they would like to be ( $M_{self-transformation} = 2.83$  vs.  $M_{self-expression} = 1.89$ ;  $F(1, 52) = 8.57$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

### **8.2.5.2 Conspicuous Consumption**

I predicted that individuals will desire products with highly conspicuous brand and logo more when they are motivated to transform themselves than when they are motivated to express themselves.

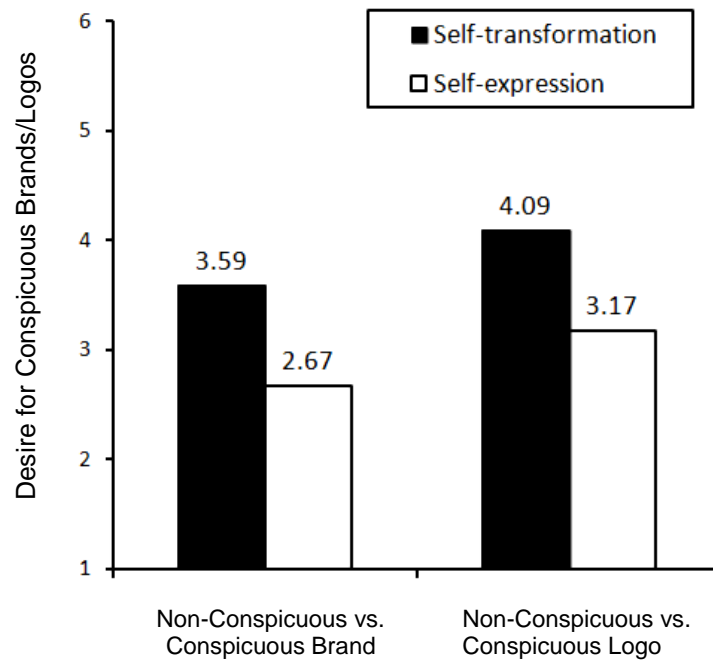
#### **8.2.5.2.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand**

As predicted, an ANOVA reveals that a self-transformation motive leads participants to prefer the conspicuous passport holder brand, that is, Salvatore Ferragamo, more than participants with a self-expression motive ( $M_{self-transformation} = 3.59$  vs.  $M_{self-expression} = 2.67$ ,  $F(1, 90) = 4.75$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ; see Figure 8.4).

#### **8.2.5.2.2 Non-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo**

A similar pattern is shown for the Gucci iPad case ( $M_{self-transformation} = 4.09$  vs.  $M_{self-expression} = 3.17$ ,  $F(1, 90) = 4.17$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ; see Figure 8.4). A self-transformation motive leads participants to prefer the conspicuous Gucci iPad case more than do participants with a self-expression motive. As mentioned earlier, the effect sizes ( $\eta^2$ ) of 0.01, 0.09, 0.25 indicate small, medium, and large effects respectively (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

**Figure 8.4**  
**Results of Experiment 4**

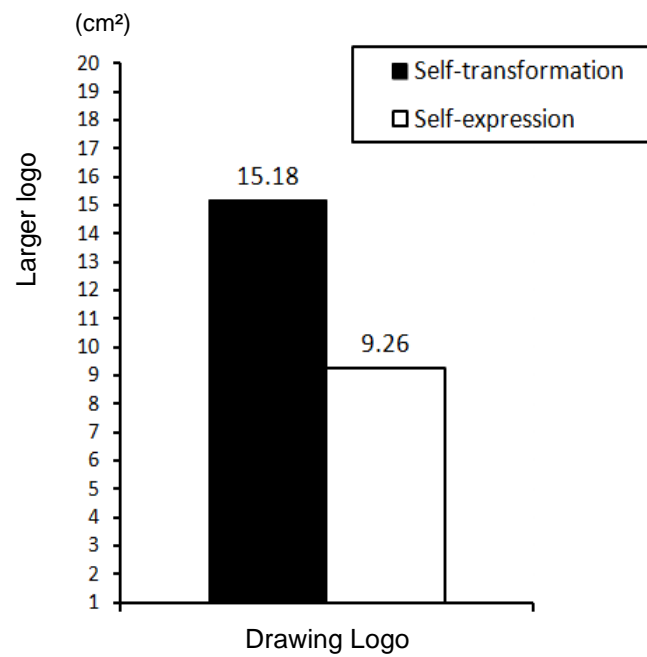


#### **8.2.5.2.3 Drawing Logo**

In addition, to assess whether participants draw larger sized logos in the self-transformation condition in comparison with the self-expression condition, logo size was measure by overlaying a one-centimetre square grid over the page and measuring the area of the drawn logo (Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). An ANOVA shows that participants in the self-transformation condition draw larger logo on the plain t-shirt than those in the self-expression condition ( $M_{\text{self-transformation}} = 15.18$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-expression}} = 9.26$ ,  $F(1, 89) = 4.54$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ; see Figure 8.5a and 8.5b).

**Figure 8.5a**

**Results of Experiment 4 (Drawing Logo)**



**Figure 8.5b**

**Examples of Logos Drawn by Participants (Drawing Logo)**

(Image degradation is due to image transmitting)

**Small Logo**



**Large Logo**



### **8.2.6 Discussion of Experiment 4 Results**

The results of Experiment 4 support Hypothesis 3. The results reveal that individuals in the self-transformation motive condition desire products with conspicuous brands and logos more than those in the self-expression condition.

However, one could still argue that the self-transformation condition may have activated a luxury mind-set, whereas the self-expression condition may have activated a non-luxury mind-set. In other words, there is a possibility that when the self-transformation motivation is primed, participants may desire to purchase any luxury product in order to transform themselves into the person they wish to be. If this possible alternative explanation is correct, participants should not have specific preferences when asked to choose between non-conspicuous and conspicuous Gucci iPad cases. However, the results show that the participants with self-transformation motives preferred the Gucci iPad case with a highly conspicuous logo over the case with a non-conspicuous logo. Furthermore, participants drew a larger sized logo in the self-transformation condition. Therefore, the alternative explanation regarding a relationship between the self-transformation motive and a luxury mind-set can be ruled out.

So far, the results of the three experiments, including the follow-up study, confirm that because individuals associate greater expectations of self-transformation than self-expression with conspicuous products that reflect an ideal self-image, individuals prefer conspicuous products more when they desire to transform themselves into the people they wish to be than when they desire to express their true selves. To ensure the robustness of Experiment 4's findings, one more experiment was conducted. More specifically, the next experiment seeks to replicate Hypothesis 3 by using a slightly different method from that of Experiment 4.

## CHAPTER 9

### EXPERIMENT 5: SELF-TRANSFORMATION VERSUS SELF-EXPRESSION MOTIVE

#### 9.1 Research Method

The objective of this research is to replicate Experiment 4's results by using a slightly different method. More specifically, in Experiment 4 I exposed participants to products with two types of brands or logos simultaneously. That is, I asked participants to indicate their preference between a passport holder with a non-conspicuous brand and one with a conspicuous brand. However, this simultaneous presentation could possibly have influenced the product preference, because although the colours and sizes of the two passport holders are similar, the shapes are slightly different. Thus, this may have influenced the product preference. Therefore, to ensure the findings' robustness, instead of having a within-person design showing two judgement items to each participant, I use a between-group design where the same judgement items are exposed to two matched groups of participants. In addition to this change, I also modified the price level of the passport holder used in Experiment 4. Moreover, I also use another product category to that used in Experiment 1 (i.e., a Mercedes Benz car) in order to provide evidence of convergent validity (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008).

Since the purpose of this study is to replicate Experiment 4, the causal nature of this research is the same. I will also assess the data with an ANOVA (again using SPSS software) as the independent variables are categorical and the dependent variables are continuous (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee approved this research on March 26, 2014, (AUTEC reference number 14/33).

#### 9.2 Experiment 5

##### 9.2.1 Design

Although I will use a slightly different method in this experiment, the underlying theory remains the same so I expect it to produce the same results as Experiment 4. That is, individuals will desire products with highly conspicuous brands or logos more when they desire to transform themselves into the person they wish to be than when they desire to express their true selves.

Using a slightly different method from that of Experiment 4, the study has a 2 (motivation; self-transformation vs. self-expression) X 2 (brand logo/brand; non-conspicuous vs. conspicuous) between-subject design.

In the following section, similar to the previous experiments, first I describe the research participants. I then present the scales and materials I used in this experiment. Subsequently, I explain the procedure of this experiment and present the findings. I then discuss the findings of Experiment 5 and conclude Section 3 with a discussion of the findings of three experiments included in the Section, the research limitations and contribution.

## **9.2.2 Participants**

I recruited one hundred and fifty-one adult participants located in the United States ( $M_{age} = 30.93$ ; 57.6% male) from an online panel (Amazon Mechanical Turk). For the same reason already mentioned in the previous experiments, I restricted survey participation to those under the age of 55. One hundred and fifty-one participants is a sufficient sample size, as there are two groups in this experiment (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

## **9.2.3 Scales and Materials**

### **9.2.3.1 Two Different Motivations Manipulation**

In order to directly manipulate different motivations, I employed the exact same manipulation tool as that of Experiment 4. That is, I asked participants in the self-transformation motive group to write down the items that give them the feeling that they have become the superior and ideal person they always wanted to be. In contrast, I asked participants in the self-expression motive group to write down the items that give them the feeling they could express who they are and their self-identity. Since I have already specifically demonstrated the manipulation tool of two different motivations in Experiment 4, I will not go into depth here again (please see Appendix 7 for more details).

### **9.2.3.2 Dependent Variable: Conspicuous Consumption Measures**

I measured conspicuous consumption in two ways: participants either viewed a non-conspicuous or conspicuously branded product and a luxury product with either a less-conspicuous logo or a conspicuous logo.

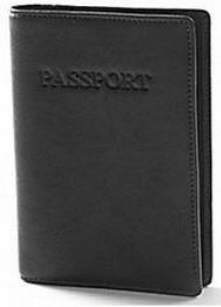
#### **9.2.3.2.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand**

To assess participants' desire for products with conspicuous brands, participants indicated their purchase intention for either a non-conspicuous or a conspicuously branded product. More specifically, participants indicated their preference for either a \$53 passport holder from a non-conspicuous, mass-market brand (Leatherology) or a \$120 passport holder from a conspicuous brand (Salvatore Ferragamo). Please see Figure 9.1 for more details. I asked participants: "Imagine that you are going to buy a passport cover. How willing are you to purchase the below product?" Respondents indicated their interest on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely would not purchase, 7 = definitely would purchase); thus a higher score indicates a greater desire to purchase the passport cover.

**Figure 9.1**

**Products with either Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Brand (Experiment 5)**

Non-Conspicuous Passport Holder



Brand: Leatherology

Price: \$53

Conspicuous Passport Holder



Brand: Salvatore Ferragamo

Price: \$120

**9.2.3.2.2 Less-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo**

Similarly, to assess respondents' desire for a luxury product with a conspicuous logo, I asked participants to indicate their purchase intention for either a product with a less-conspicuous logo or one with a conspicuous logo. I asked participants to indicate their purchase intention for a Mercedes-Benz automobile with a less-conspicuous logo or one with a conspicuous logo. The cars have an identical shapes and are in every way exactly the same except for the logo size. Please see Figure 9.2 for more details. In both conditions, participants indicated their purchase intention on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely would not purchase, 7 = definitely would purchase).

**Figure 9.2**

**Products with either Less-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Logo (Experiment 5)**

Less-Conspicuous Mercedes Benz



Conspicuous Mercedes Benz



**9.2.3.3 Manipulation Check**

To ensure that the manipulation elicited the intended motivation, I used an identical measurement to that of Experiment 4 manipulation pre-test. Participants indicated whether the items they wrote about represented who they actually are, or who they would like to be, on a 5-point bipolar scale (1 = represents who I actually am/is like me, 5 = represents who I would like to be/is like I want to be). I averaged the two items to yield a composite score ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

**9.2.3.4 Filler product**

Since participants viewed two similar types of products, either all conspicuous products or all non-conspicuous products, the filler question served to preclude a demand effect (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). The filler question was located between the two focal products, the passport holder and Mercedes-Benz. I asked participants, "Imagine that you have gone to a convenience store to buy two cans of soft drink for yourself. The store you went to sells only Coke and Sprite. What would you choose?" I asked participants to choose between four combinations of two soft drinks (Sprite/Coke, Sprite/Sprite, Coke/Sprite, and Coke/Coke). This instrument is the same that used by Mittelman, Andrade, Chattopadhyay, and Brendl (2014).



### 9.2.3.5 Control Variable and Additional Measures

To rule out the potential confounding effect of mood, participants' mood was measured. Participants indicated their mood on two items using a 7-point scale (1 = very sad / very bad, 7 = very happy / very good). The two items were averaged to form a composite score ( $\alpha = .94$ ). Analysis revealed no effect of the manipulation task on participants' mood ( $M_{\text{self-transformation}} = 5.08$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-expression}} = 5.31$ ;  $F(1, 149) = 1.14$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

### 9.2.4 Procedure

The procedure of this experiment was similar to that of Experiment 4. Firstly, I created the survey via Qualtrics, and then I uploaded the survey link at MTurk. I provided a consent form at the beginning of the experiment. After participants agreed to participate in the survey, they received an invitation to an identical manipulation task to that implemented in Experiment 4. As in Experiment 4, in order to prevent potential suspicion about the task, participants saw the misleading title "Creative Writing Skills," and I informed them the purpose of this task is to examining their creative skills through writing stories. Afterwards, the Qualtrics system randomly assigned half the participants to a self-transformation condition and the other half to a self-expression condition. To filter out possibly unqualified participants, I included a hidden timer question.

Following the priming of different motivations, participants were randomly assigned to one of two dependent variable conditions. Half of the participants indicated their desire to purchase products with conspicuous brands or logos, while the other half indicated their intent to purchase products with non-or less-conspicuous brands or logos. I used two types of products as dependent variables: a passport holder and a Mercedes-Benz. Also, a hidden timer question was included. The filler question was located between the questions regarding the focal products and the filler product was totally unrelated to the conspicuous products. More specifically, the filler question asked participants to choose between four different combinations of soft drinks.

After that, participants indicated their thoughts on manipulation check questions. Participants then answered questions about their current moods and general demographic questions. After they completed the survey, were directed to a "thank-you" page. Subsequently, the participants received a survey completion code.

### 9.2.5 Results

#### 9.2.5.1 Manipulation Check

As expected, compared with the self-expression condition, participants in the self-transformation condition thought the items they wrote down represent who they would like to be ( $M_{\text{self-transformation}} = 2.67$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-expression}} = 1.80$ ;  $F(1, 149) = 19.66$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

### 9.2.5.2 Conspicuous Consumption

As in Experiment 4, I predicted that individuals will desire products with highly conspicuous brand and logo more when they are motivated to transform themselves than when they are motivated to express themselves.

#### 9.2.5.2.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand

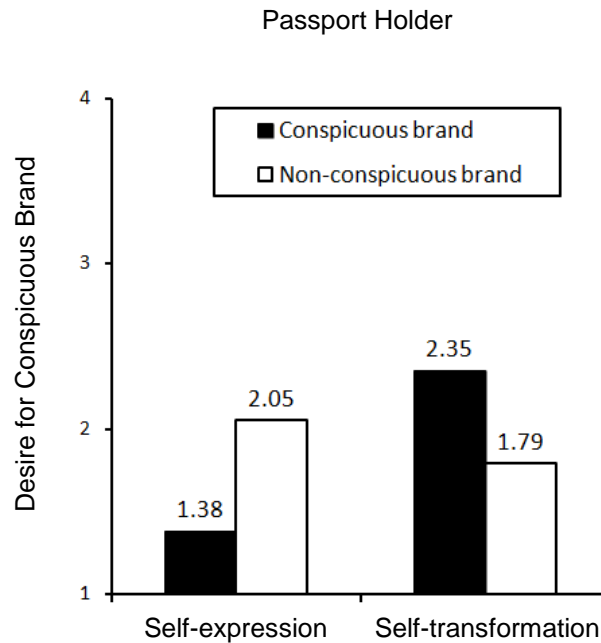
The analysis reported in the text here is shown pictorially in Figure 9.3. The main effect for types of brands/logos is non-significant ( $p > .10$ ). However, the main effect for motivations is marginally significant ( $p = .10$ ). The analysis shows a significant interaction effects between motivation and brand preference ( $F(1, 147) = 8.73$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ ).

Also, a planned contrast test shows that a self-transformation motive leads individuals to desire to purchase the conspicuous passport holder brand more than non-conspicuous passport holder brand ( $M_{\text{conspicuous brand}} = 2.35$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-conspicuous brand}} = 1.79$ ;  $F(1, 147) = 3.83$ ;  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ). A self-expression motive produces the opposite pattern. As expected, a self-expression motive leads individuals to desire to purchase the non-conspicuous passport holder brand more than the conspicuous passport holder brand ( $M_{\text{conspicuous brand}} = 1.38$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-conspicuous brand}} = 2.05$ ;  $F(1, 147) = 4.91$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ).

In addition, the planned contrast test reveals that the self-transformation motive leads individuals to desire to purchase the conspicuous passport holder brand more than those with the self-expression motive ( $M_{\text{self-transformation}} = 2.35$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-expression}} = 1.38$ ,  $F(1, 147) = 10.13$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ ). However, no difference was found for the non-conspicuous passport holder between the two motivation conditions ( $M_{\text{self-transformation}} = 1.79$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-expression}} = 2.05$ ,  $F(1, 147) = .87$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

Figure 9.3

Results of Experiment 5: Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand



9.2.5.2.2 Less-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo

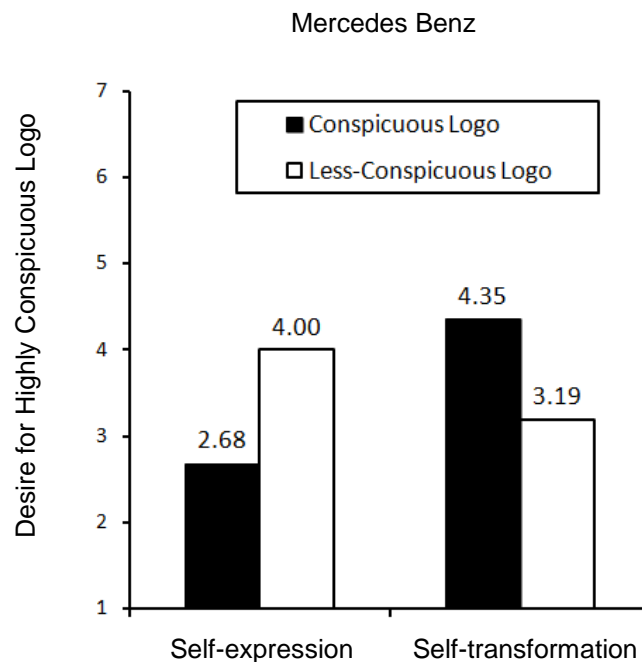
Again, these the results detailed here are illustrated simply in Figure 9.4. The main effects of both motivations and types of brands/logos are non-significant (all  $p$ -values  $> .10$ ). The results do, though, show significant interaction effects between motivation and logo preference ( $F(1, 147) = 12.63$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ).

Also, a contrast test shows that a self-transformation motive leads individuals to desire to purchase the Mercedes Benz with a highly conspicuous logo more than less a conspicuous logo ( $M_{\text{conspicuous logo}} = 4.35$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-conspicuous logo}} = 3.19$ ;  $F(1, 147) = 5.78$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ). A self-expression motive produces the opposite pattern. A self-expression motive leads individuals to desire to purchase the Mercedes Benz with less conspicuous logo more than the highly conspicuous logo ( $M_{\text{conspicuous logo}} = 2.68$  vs.  $M_{\text{non-conspicuous logo}} = 4.00$ ;  $F(1, 147) = 6.85$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ).

In addition, a test demonstrates that the self-transformation motive leads individuals to desire to purchase the Mercedes Benz with the highly conspicuous logo more than do those participants with the self-expression motive ( $M_{\text{self-transformation}} = 4.35$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-expression}} = 2.68$ ,  $F(1, 147) = 10.84$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ ). By contrast, the self-expression motive leads individuals to desire to purchase the Mercedes Benz with the less conspicuous logo more than those with the self-transformation motive ( $M_{\text{self-transformation}} = 3.19$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-expression}} = 4.00$ ,  $F(1, 147) = 2.85$ ;  $p = .09$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ).

**Figure 9.4**

**Results of Experiment 5: Less-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo**



**9.2.6 Discussion of Experiment 5 Results**

Regardless of the methodological variations between the two experiments (Experiments 4 and 5), the results offer convergent evidence that individuals desire to purchase products with highly conspicuous brands or logos more when they are motivated to transform themselves, rather than when they are motivated to express themselves. Additionally, it is important to note that this consistent pattern of results is displayed among participants in two different countries, New Zealand and the United States, which further highlights the validity of the Hypothesis 3.

In summary, the experiments in Section 3 (i.e., Experiments 3, 4, and 5) are consistent with the theories I have developed. That is, when individuals desire to transform themselves, they prefer conspicuous products that reflect an ideal self. In contrast, when individuals desire to express themselves, they prefer non-conspicuous products that reflect an actual self.

**9.3 Discussion of Section 3**

In this section, I investigate which of the two different types of motivation exert a stronger influence on individuals to desire conspicuous products more. Drawing upon literature on the self-concept (e.g., Bargh et al., 2002), self-congruence (e.g., Malär et al., 2011) and psychological distance (e.g., Hansen & Wänke, 2011), I predicted that when individuals are motivated to transform themselves into the people they wish to be, they will prefer conspicuous products that reflect an ideal self-image more than when they are motivated to express who they are.

Across the three experiments, my prediction was supported. More specifically, I found that conspicuous products are more intensely associated with expectations of self-transformation than expectations of self-expression (Experiment 3). Subsequently, through the follow-up experiment, I found that people generally think that highly conspicuous products are more related to an ideal self-image than non-conspicuous products. In order to observe a stronger basis of existence for the causal relationship between different motivations and conspicuous consumption, I directly manipulated two different motivations in Experiment 4. The results show that individuals desire conspicuous products more when self-transformation motivation is primed than when self-expression motivation is primed. Experiment 5 replicated the same findings with a different methodology.

Overall, the results of the three experiments indicate that because individuals associate greater expectations of self-transformation than self-expression with conspicuous products that reflect an ideal self-image, individuals prefer conspicuous products more when they desire to transform themselves into the people they wish to be than when they desire to express their true selves.

The present research has limitations that can seed future investigations. One limitation is that the mean scores on the self-transformation scale of the manipulation check for both Experiments 4 and 5 was quite low. More specifically, even though the experiment primed the self-transformation motivation, participants' indication of items they wrote about representing who they would like to be was quite low. Similar to the first set of the experiments in Section 1, I think the reason for this is because of the participants' culture. According to prior research, compared with Asians, Westerners hold strongly to an independent self-concept and are less likely to think that they should become a person that others want them to be. Thus, they are less willing to sacrifice their personal interests to gain social approval (Oyserman, 2006; Triandis et al., 1990; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Applying this logic, since the participants of this study were people who live in the United States, there is a possibility that the more-customary independent self-construal may have influenced the results.

Another limitation of this research is related to Experiment 5. As expected, I found that the self-expression motive led individuals to desire to purchase the Mercedes-Benz with the less-conspicuous logo more than those with the self-transformation motive. However, unexpectedly, I found no such difference for the non-conspicuous passport holder between the two motivation conditions.

### **9.3.1 Theoretical Contributions**

With regards to the theoretical contributions, the findings of this research add to the existing literature on self-concept (e.g., Bargh et al., 2002) as well as the self-congruence literature (e.g., Malär et al., 2011) by providing new insights. That is, conspicuous products are associated with an ideal self-image more than actual self-image. Furthermore, the findings suggest that when individuals desire to transform themselves into the people they want to be,

they crave conspicuous products that reflect an ideal self-image in order to reinforce their self-concept.

This research also makes an important contribution to the literature on motivation by providing new manipulations; that is, the self-transformation and self-expression motivations. Ahuvia (2005) posits that, while individuals tend to highlight self-expression, the self-transformation motivation is obscured. Thus, this research would allow scholars to further enrich their understandings of motivation theory by providing the manipulation of two important motivations.

The findings of this research also add to existing literature on conspicuous products (e.g., Griskevicius et al., 2007; Tracy & Robins, 2014; Stillman et al., 2012) in several ways. First of all, as mentioned above, the findings provide a new insight, which is that individuals desire conspicuous products more when they desire to transform themselves than they desire to express themselves.

Secondly, this research contributes to the literature on conspicuous consumption by confirming the existing operational definition of “conspicuous consumption” (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Lee & Shrum, 2012; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). More specifically, I show that the level of conspicuous consumption increases as the logo size increases (e.g., Lee & Shrum, 2012; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). This finding is consistent with the findings of past research showing that the general public tends to mis-perceive the value of subtle signals, and thus perceives luxury products with conspicuous logos and patterns as more expensive and high-end (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010).

Lastly, this research further contributes to the literature on conspicuous consumption by providing additional new measurements on top of measurements introduced in the first sets of the experiments in Section 1. That is, I measured the desirability of conspicuous consumption by providing two different types of Burberry t-shirts, one bearing a non-conspicuous Burberry logo and the other bearing a conspicuous Burberry logo. Furthermore, I measured the desirability of conspicuous consumption by providing two different types of iPad cases, one was from a mass-market brand (Amouage), and one from a conspicuous brand (Gucci).

### **9.3.2 Practical Implications**

The current research findings yield interesting managerial implications. In particular, advertising agency and retail managers may be able to use the findings to promote conspicuous products more effectively. The current experiments demonstrate that emphasizing external goals such as focusing on others or the motivation to transform oneself in order to attain an ideal self, leads individuals to desire conspicuous products. Based on this finding, I suggest that advertising manager should employ aspirational or fanciful approaches to promote conspicuous products. For instance, advertising manager could use aspirational message such as “elevate yourself to the next level one that everyone will admire” to stimulate potential customers’ to longing for conspicuous products.

The findings of this research may provide interest to governments and social welfare agencies that want to help people to control the purchase of conspicuous products. It is important to note that helping people to control the purchase of such products is vital because conspicuous consumption is negatively related to well-being and happiness (Kasser & Ryan, 2001). The findings of the present research suggest that people engage more in conspicuous consumption more when there is a desire to transform into someone others would admire rather than a desire to express who they really are. In sum, such findings propose that focusing on one's true self leads people to place less emphasis on conspicuous products. This finding could help government and social welfare agencies construct programmes to find better ways to deal with the base need deprivation, such as self-worth. For instance, government and social welfare agencies should also alert people that pursuing social fame and wealth lead to unhappiness and low well-being by organizing a programme such as "genuine happiness comes from expressing true-self." In particular, such programmes would be helpful for people in low-social classes with lower income and savings.

In the next section, I investigate how a kin care motivation influences conspicuous consumption via a series of three experiments.

## SECTION 4

### KIN CARE MOTIVATION AND CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

#### CHAPTER 10

##### THE LITERATURE OF KIN CARE MOTIVATION

Kin care has the power to change one's perspective on the value of their life and redefine one's life goals (Deutsch, Ruble, Fleming, Brooks-Gunn, & Stangor, 1988; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003). There are not only many academic works, but also many pop movies, such as *Big Daddy*, *The Kid*, and *Real Steel* that illustrate how an individual's behaviour and viewpoint could change after encountering kin care.

Kin care has been defined as "the full-time care, nurturing and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, godparents, stepparents, or other adults who have a kinship bond with a child" (Bell & Garner, 1996, p. 11). Particularly, kin care elicits kin altruism, specifically parental investment (Ashton, Paunonen, Helmes, & Jackson, 1998) whereby an "...individual risks its [*sic*] safety or limits its [*sic*] future fecundity by caring for its offspring" (p. 243) over prioritizing the benefits such as own survival, mating, and reproductive success; Trivers, 1972; Winkler, 1987).

For instance, studies in the animal kingdom have demonstrated that the male emperor penguin does not eat for more than two months while holding its offspring, despite the harsh Antarctic environment (Ancel et al., 1997). Similarly, St Peter's fish also shows devoted behaviour to offspring by orally incubating their fertilized eggs. This dedicated act leads to the fish losing weight since it is difficult to eat with a mouthful of offspring (Balshine-Earn, 1995). Similar to the ways in which non-humans show devoted behaviour to their offspring, human studies show similar devoted behaviour to offspring, with humans dedicating their time as well as their physical, psychological and emotional energy to caring for an infant (McCourt, 2006; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003). In fact, psychological science research has provided a biological cause for this dedicating behaviour to infants (Saturn, 2014). That is, exposure to the infants increases the neutron-hormone oxytocin, which promotes caretaking behaviour in both men and women and decreases the testosterone that promotes men's competition for higher status (Gordon, Zagoory-Sharon, Leckman, & Feldman, 2010; Mazur, 1985; Saturn, 2014). Of importance is the research of Glocker et al. (2009), who discovered that an infant exhibiting a high baby schema elicits caretaking motivation and behaviour even if the infant is not biologically linked to the individual. Note that the baby schema (*Kindchenschema*) refers to a set of infantile physical features that are perceived as cute, provoke caretaking behaviour, and include big eyes, a large head, a protruding forehead and a plump body shape (Lorenz, 1971).



Supporting this empirical evidence, recently Abraham et al. (2014) posit that "...assuming the role of a committed parent and engaging in active care of the young may trigger this global parental caregiving network in both women and men, in biological parents, and in those genetically unrelated to the child" (p. 9795).

Overall, research on kin care suggests that exposure to infants leads both males and females to engage in self-sacrificing behaviour, regardless of the biological relations involved. In other words, individuals naturally prioritize the benefits of the infants over their own survival and benefits

Given these findings, it follows that this self-sacrificing behaviour, driven by the kin care mindset, could affect conspicuous consumption. Research emphasizes that conspicuous consumption is a selfish-oriented, showy behaviour associated with drawing more attention to one over others (Lee & Shrum, 2012; Stillman et al., 2012; Sundie et al., 2011). Extant empirical studies have documented quite clearly that individuals make use of conspicuous products when they are pursuing extrinsic motivations, such as the desire to elevate one's social class or display one's social standing and power (Han et al., 2010; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008, 2009). This is because conspicuous products provide an easily observable demonstration of one's status and wealth (Mazzocco et al., 2012). For instance, Han et al. (2010) demonstrated that middle-class individuals seek to attain conspicuous products such as luxury products with large logos to emulate people of higher-social standing.

Taken together, drawing upon the association between the kin care mindset and conspicuous consumption, I predict that a kin care mindset will decrease conspicuous consumption for both men and women. This is because a kin care mindset induces selfless, devoting behaviour that naturally prioritizes the benefits of offspring over personal desires. Thus, a kin care mindset may decrease conspicuous consumption associated with extrinsic motivations such as self-rewards, social reputation, and social success. Although prior research has not connected conspicuous consumption directly to a kin care mindset, one study by Nenkov and Scott (2014) tends to support this claim by examining how a baby schema influences indulgent consumption. Nenkov and Scott demonstrated that because *kindchenschema* is associated with vulnerability, protective behaviour, and caretaking, individuals in contact with *kindchenschema* focus less on self-reward and indulgent consumption. For instance, individuals in the study preferred intellectually challenging and educational movies over box-office hits or fun-related movies when they were exposed to cute *kindchenschema* stimuli (a baby photo inserted in a gift card). Consistent with this notion, I expect that because a kin care mindset provokes caretaking behaviour, individuals will prioritize infants over themselves, thereby focusing less on selfish-oriented conspicuous consumption (also see Figure 10.1).

More formally, I suggest the following hypothesis:

**H4:** Kin care (vs. control) motive will decrease preference for highly conspicuous brands/logos in both men and women.

*Boundary Condition: Type of Conspicuous Product*

Although I expect the kin care mindset to decrease conspicuous consumption, I further propose that it may depend on the type of conspicuous product. Specifically, I predict that different patterns will show if the conspicuous product is baby-related. In fact, leading luxury manufacturers Gucci and Burberry have children's product lines including bodysuits, toys, bags, clothes and shoes targeting ages from newborns to 14 years. Further, Burberry Group's Annual report shows that from 2013 to 2014, the mainline revenue of Burberry was increased by 35% through children's outerwear (Burberry annual report, 2013-2014).

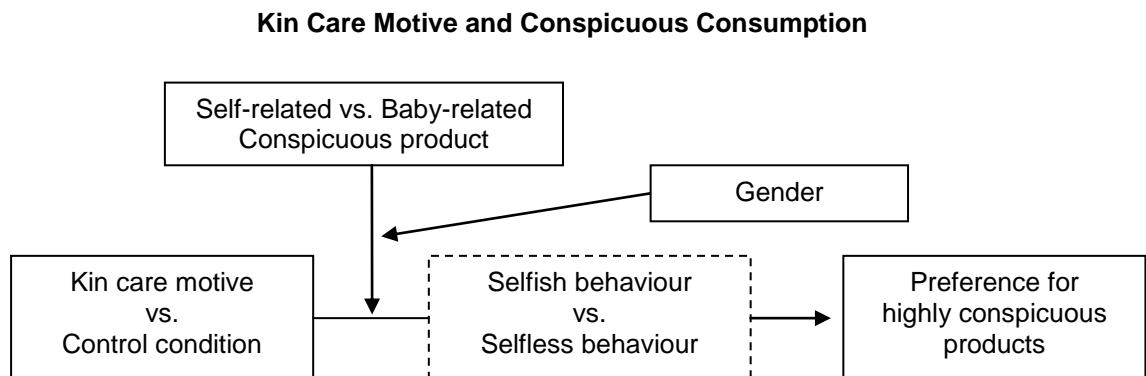
I expect that the kin care mindset will increase conspicuous consumption if the product is baby related, as the situation no longer holds self-reward value. Instead, if conspicuous products are baby-related, they may become one of the ways in which to express one's devoted, altruistic, behaviour (see Figure 10.1). Supporting this line of reasoning, Haugen (2005) notes that there is a correlation between money and love. That is, money spent represents how much parents love and take care of their children. Other researchers also support this notion. For instance, Richins and Chaplin (2015) recently suggested that "loving parents tend to provide their children with material rewards" (p. 1349). According to previous research, the general public tends to perceive conspicuous products with conspicuous logos or patterns as more expensive and high-end compared to luxury products with subtle signals or non-conspicuous products (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010). In addition, in terms of the relationship between conspicuous products and devotion, Wang and Griskevicius (2014) find that conspicuous products signal how much men are devoted to their romantic partner.

Therefore, in the current context, it seems reasonable to conclude that a kin care mindset leads individuals to express how much they love and care for infants by spending money on conspicuous baby brand named products such as Gucci and Burberry, rather than inexpensive non-conspicuous branded (non-luxury) products.

Accordingly, I propose the following formal hypothesis:

**H5:** A kin care (vs. control) motive will increase preference for highly conspicuous brands in both men and women when the product is baby-related.

Figure 10.1



That said, a different prediction can also be made. Although the kin care mindset may lead both men and women to focus less on self-reward conspicuous consumption, it is possible that when consumption is directly related to a baby, a different level of this consumption pattern will emerge, depending on the level of parental investment. Specifically, I propose that even though both men and women possess devoting behaviour towards infants, women will desire conspicuously branded baby products more than will men when a kin care mindset is active, because, typically, women are the more direct caretakers (Glocker et al., 2009). Support for this line of prediction can found in previous research showing that the baby schema elicits stronger caretaking behaviour in women than in men (Glocker et al., 2009). Furthermore, Hess and Polt (1960) investigated how pupil size, which dilates when individuals see pleasurable visual stimuli, changes when men and women see various visual stimuli such as a baby photo, a mother and baby photo, a nude male or female photo and a landscape photo. The results demonstrate that women's pupils dilate more when they view a picture of a mother and baby, whereas men's pupils dilate most when they view a picture of a nude female. Kenrick et al. (2009) suggest the underlying reason supporting these findings is that, compared to men, women put more effort into offspring by devoting physical and psychological resources. For instance, women suffer nine months of pregnancy and generally become primary caretakers afterward, whereas although men contribute internally (investing sperm), they usually take external responsibility by providing shelter and food for their offspring (Bjorklund & Kipp, 1996).

Consistent with the notion that women possess higher caretaking behaviour than do men toward infants, I predict that the kin care motive will lead women to strongly prefer conspicuous brands of baby products over non-conspicuous baby brand products. This pattern, however, may not occur for men or, at least, not to such a degree (see Figure 10.1). This reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

**H6:** Kin care (vs. control) motive will increase preference for highly conspicuous baby brand products over non-conspicuous baby brand products in women, but not in men.

In the following three chapters, I examine how the kin care motive is associated with conspicuous consumption via three experiments (Experiments 6, 7, and 8). Experiment 6 examines the main effect; whether kin care primed individuals prefer products with conspicuous logos less than those not primed (Hypothesis 4). Experiment 7 replicates the findings using an eye-tracking method. Lastly, Experiment 8 investigates the boundary condition of the relationship between the kin care mindset and conspicuous consumption to test whether Hypotheses 5 and 6 are valid.

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **EXPERIMENT 6: KIN CARE MOTIVATION AND CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION**

#### **11.1 Research Method**

The purpose of this research is to test Hypothesis 4 that involves concomitant variation of a cause (X) and an effect (Y) (Malhotra, 2010). That is, whether kin care motives lead to a decrease in products with conspicuous logos. Therefore, as in previous experiments, reported here, this conclusive research will take a causal research method approach. I will directly manipulate the independent variable (kin care) in order to be able to make causal inferences by rigorously controlling exogenous influences (Bagozzi, 1981). I collected data for this experiment using a paper-and-pencil survey, as the sample size is small and I had the opportunity to use an undergraduate class from a large New Zealand University to collect the data on a single occasion.

With regards to research analysis methods, for the same reason as in other experiments, this research used SPSS software over other statistical software packages. The data of this experiment were analysed using an ANOVA, as the independent variable is categorical and the dependent variables are continuous (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee approved this research on March 26, 2014, (AUTEC reference number 14/33).

#### **11.2 Experiment 6**

##### **11.2.1 Design**

The aim of this experiment is to test Hypothesis 4 by assessing the main effect I am interested in. That is, whether individuals prefer products with conspicuous logos less when a kin care motivation is active. As noted previously, I predict that both men and women will focus less on selfish-oriented conspicuous products when kin care motivation is primed. The reason for this is because when kin care motivation is active, it provokes caretaking behaviour in both men and women; thereby, individuals prioritize infants' needs over individuals' own desires and needs (Abraham et al., 2014; Nenkov & Scott, 2014). In order to test this effect, I will directly manipulate the kin care mindset.

This base study has a between group design, with motivation (kin care vs. control) as the independent variable. The key dependent variables are the preference between products with non- or less-conspicuous and conspicuous logos, and preference for a damaged conspicuous logo versus damaged quality of product. In the report that follows, I use the same pattern as I have used throughout the thesis. First, I discuss the research participants. I then

demonstrate and display the materials and scales used in this experiment then explicate the procedure of the experiments and demonstrate the findings. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the implications and comment on where the research then goes.

### 11.2.2 Participants

Forty-six undergraduates at a large University in New Zealand ( $M_{age} = 22.07$ ; 28.3% male) participated in this experiment. According to Gravetter and Forzano (2009), a sample size of 25 to 30 individuals for each group condition is a good target; with having two groups in this experiment, a sample size of 46 is an appropriate target. Note that these target groups are not gender-based.

### 11.2.3 Scales and Materials

#### 11.2.3.1 The “Kin Care Induction” Manipulation

The following procedure was used to manipulate a kin care mindset in participants. Essentially, manipulation of both the kin care and the control condition follows Griskevicius et al. (2007).

##### 11.2.3.1.1 *Kin Care Mindset Condition*

To induce a kin care mindset, I used a similar procedure to that used by Griskevicius et al. (2007). First, participants were asked: “Please choose one baby that you find the most desirable as a potential child.” Three photographs of babies were shown and participants selected one of the three babies (Figure 11.1). After participants chose a baby, they were instructed: “Please indicate how attractive the baby you have chosen above is.” Participants indicated their response on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all attractive, 7 = definitely attractive).

Participants then were given the following instruction: “Now, imagine you are preparing to take the baby on your first picnic. Please spend up to 1 minute writing about your ideas for the perfect first picnic with the baby you have chosen.” (Please see Appendix 8a and 8b for more details).

**Figure 11.1**

**Kin Care Mindset: Baby Photos (Experiment 6)**



### 11.2.3.1.2 Control Condition

For the control condition, a well-established method used by Griskevicius et al. (2007) was modified and employed. Participants were first asked: "Please choose one street that you find the most desirable to walk on." Three photographs of streets with buildings were shown, and participants selected one street they found most desirable to walk of the three (Figure 11.2). After that, similar to the kin care mindset condition, participants were asked: "Please indicate how attractive the street you have chosen above is." They indicated their response on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all attractive, 7 = definitely attractive).

Afterwards, similar to the kin care mindset condition, participants were given the following instruction: "Now, imagine being on the street you have chosen above. Please spend up to 1 minute writing about your ideas of the most pleasant weather condition in which to walk around and look at the buildings."

Figure 11.2

#### Control Condition: Building Photos (Experiment 6)



With regard to the attractiveness of the image, participants across the two conditions rate the attractiveness of their images: Kin care ( $M = 5.87$  vs. 4 (middle point),  $t(22) = 10.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Control ( $M = 5.22$  vs. 4 (middle point),  $t(22) = 5.60$ ,  $p < .01$ ). However, the scores for the attractiveness of the image of babies are higher than those for buildings ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 5.87$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 5.22$ ;  $F(1, 44) = 5.31$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

### 11.2.3.2 Dependent Variable: Conspicuous Consumption Measures

Two different kinds of conspicuous consumption were measured using proxies utilized in the prior experiments; non- or less-conspicuous logo versus conspicuous logo within luxury products, and preference for damaged conspicuous logo versus damaged quality of product.

#### 11.2.3.2.1 Non/Less-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo

To assess desire for high-end luxury products with conspicuous logos, participants were asked: "Imagine that you are going to buy a \_\_\_\_\_ at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference." Two different types of products were used; a Mercedes Benz automobile and a Gucci iPad case (Figure 11.3). For the

Mercedes Benz, participants were asked to indicate their preference of the two identically-shaped Mercedes Benz automobiles, one with a less-conspicuous and the other with a conspicuous Mercedes Benz logo. Similarly, for the Gucci iPad case, participants were asked to indicate their preference for the two identically-shaped Gucci iPad cases, one with no Gucci logo outwardly visible and the other with a conspicuous Gucci logo. Participants indicated their preferences of the two different types of products on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely Design A, 7 = definitely Design B). A higher score indicates a greater preference for a conspicuous logo.

**Figure 11.3**

**Non-/Less Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Logos (Experiment 6)**

Mercedes Benz



Design A

Design B

Gucci iPad case



Design A

Design B

**11.2.3.2.2 Defects on the Conspicuous Logo**

To ascertain conspicuous consumption behavior, participants were asked to indicate preference for a conspicuous logo in a difficult buying situation, as used in Experiment 1. Participants were given the following Scenario:



“Imagine that you are shopping at a luxury store. Finally, you found the bag you have wanted for so long. Only two are left, but each item has some defects. However, because of these defects, the bag is selling at a 20% discount. Normally, this brand would never discount products. You decide to purchase one of the two bags. Which option would you prefer?” Option A: All conditions are fine, except the brand logo is damaged. Others may find out about this damage, but this defect would not affect the bag’s use. Option B: All conditions are fine except the zipper is damaged. Others would not find out about this damage, but this defect makes the bag inconvenient to use.”

If participants chose Option A, it indicates that they care more about quality than conspicuousness, whereas if participants choose Option B, it indicates that they care more about the conspicuous logo. Participants indicated their preference on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely Option A, 7 = definitely Option B). A higher score indicates a greater preference for a conspicuous logo.

#### 11.2.3.3 Control Variable

To control a potential confounding effect, participants’ mood was measured. Participants indicated their mood on two items using a 7-point scale (1= very sad / very bad, 7= very happy / very good). The two items were averaged to form a composite score ( $\alpha = .83$ ). Analysis of the data reveals no effect of the manipulation task on participants’ mood ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 4.84$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 4.43$ ;  $F(1, 43) = .1.72$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

#### 11.2.4 Procedure

To test Hypothesis 4, a paper survey was created. In order to conduct this experiment, I used a similar approach to that used in Experiment 4. First, I approached class instructors who did not know about this experiment and requested their permission to conduct the survey in their classes. After receiving permission, I approached instructors again a week before and requested that they briefly inform their undergraduate students about the survey. By doing this, undergraduates had some time to think about whether they wished to participate in the survey. I then went to each class five minutes prior to the class start time in order to minimize the disruption, and distributed the participants’ information sheet. Participants were told that the survey would take between five to seven minutes total to complete and that the results of the study will be kept completely private and confidential. Further, they were informed that survey participation is totally voluntary and they do not need to respond to any question they do not wish to answer. After only participants who wished to participate in the survey remained in the classroom, participants were told that they should not discuss the survey while filling it out and they should remain silent after they completed the survey. The survey was subsequently

distributed and one of the two conditions (kin care or control condition) was randomly assigned to each participant.

Participants then completed the first task, the kin care manipulation task. In order to alleviate any potential suspicion, all participants were given the same misleading title, "Examining Visualization Ability." They were told the purpose of this particular task is to examine visualization ability through writing stories. As aforementioned, participants were to first choose one baby or one building they find the most desirable, depending on the condition they were given. Then, they indicated the attractiveness of their chosen baby or building. Participants were then invited to the writing task. In order to enhance participants' engagement, in the task, participants were informed that it is important that they write a substantial story. Thus, they did not need to worry about grammar, complete sentences, spelling, or punctuation. Moreover, they were told that if their thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over in the space provided until the time elapsed. Since I used a paper-and-pencil survey instead of an online survey, time was controlled manually. After approximately three minutes passed, participants were asked to move on to the next task.

For the second task, participants were again given the misleading title, "Consumer's Product Choice" in order to alleviate any potential suspicion. They were told that for this task, they would be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories. As already mentioned, three different product categories were used; iPad case, car, and bag. Also, two different luxury brands were used; Gucci and Mercedes-Benz. This provides convergent validity through showing consistent results across the dependent variables. Participants were asked to indicate their preference between two different kinds of products in terms of conspicuousness. Each response is valid, with no outliers or missing data.

Participants finished the survey by filling out general demographic questions and questions regarding their current mood. Participants were then thanked and debriefed.

## **11.2.5 Results**

### **11.2.5.1 Conspicuous Consumption**

I predicted that both men and women will desire products with highly conspicuous logos less under a kin care mindset condition compared to the control condition.

#### **11.2.5.1.1 Non-/Less Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo**

First, I examined the effect of preference for the highly conspicuous logo within luxury products by averaging the results from the two products (Gucci iPad case and Mercedes Benz car). As predicted, an ANOVA reveals that participants in the kin care condition prefer smaller sized logos compared with participants in the control condition ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 3.78$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 4.96$ ,  $F(1, 44) = 6.68$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .13$ ). These results are illustrated in Figure 11.4.

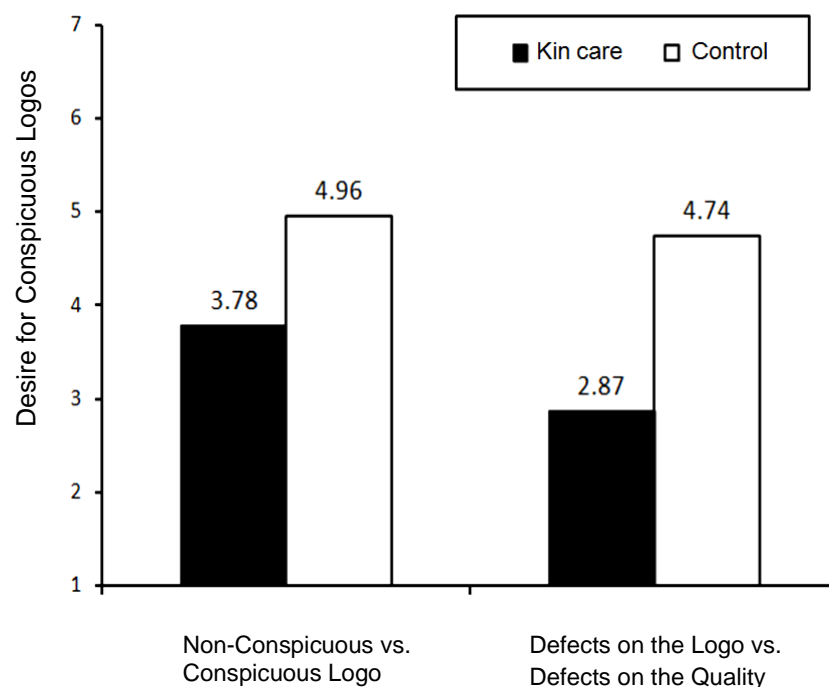
I also performed ANOVAs for each product separately, which shows a similar pattern for each of the products, as follows: Gucci iPad case ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 3.91$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 5.04$ ,  $F(1, 44) = 3.16$ ;  $p < .10$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ ), Mercedes Benz ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 3.65$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 4.87$ ,  $F(1, 44) = 3.83$ ;  $p < .10$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ).

#### 11.2.5.1.2 Defects on the Conspicuous Logo

Consistent with my prediction, an ANOVA reveals that participants in the kin care condition prefer the luxury product with a damaged conspicuous logo, but intact quality, more than participants in the control condition ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 2.87$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 4.74$ ,  $F(1, 44) = 9.99$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .18$ ). In other words, when a kin care mindset is induced, individuals are less willing to sacrifice quality, despite defects on the conspicuousness of the logo on the product. These results are illustrated in Figure 11.4.

Figure 11.4

#### Results of Experiment 6



#### 11.2.6 Discussion of Experiment 6 Results

The results of Experiment 6 support Hypothesis 4. The results reveal that kin care mindset reduces preference for products with highly conspicuous logos. Therefore, this finding supports the notion that a kin care mindset leads individuals to attach less importance to external values, such as desire to show off one's social status to others. As a consequence, individuals desire self-rewarding conspicuous products less.

In the next chapter, I use an eye-tracking device to acquire a clearer picture of the underlying mechanism of the effect shown here, and promote the robust findings from Experiment 6.

## CHAPTER 12

### EXPERIMENT 7: (EYE-TRACKING)

#### KIN CARE AND CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

##### 12.1 Research Method

The purpose of this research is to reconfirm Hypothesis 4 by providing convergent evidence of the findings of Experiment 6 that a kin care prime lessens the desire for conspicuous products for both men and women. For this reason, the nature of this research is conclusive (Malhotra, 2010).

Specifically, I use eye-tracking technology to indirectly measure the desirability of a conspicuous product. I will show how a kin care prime influences individuals' thought processes through visual attention to objects in the conspicuous brand's advertisement. As support for this experiment's methodology, prior research notes that "eye movements reflect the human thought process[.] So the observer's thought may be followed to some extent from records of eye movements" (Yarbus, 1967, p. 190), "even during the brief moments that [a] consumer chooses to attend to ads" (Pieters & Wedel, 2007, p. 231). Duchowski (2007) notes that individuals attend more to objects in which they are interested. Thus, calculating the eye fixation duration provides clues about an observer's ulterior motivations and what he or she finds interesting through attention processes. In addition, an empirical finding of Pieters and Wedel (2007) shows that activating a particular processing goal (i.e., brand learning) leads individuals to attend more to a certain part of the advertisement (i.e., body text) that is relevant to the processing goal.

For these reasons, this experiment will show the underlying process of low desirability of conspicuous products in the kin care condition by measuring, with an eye-tracking device, which part of the advertisement participants look at more, the conspicuous logo itself or the product's information content. I predict that the kin care motive will lead individuals to prioritize infants' needs more than external aspects of the self, such as gaining social power. This, in turn, will lead individuals in the kin care motive condition to desire conspicuous products less. Therefore, such individuals will pay less attention to the conspicuous logo. This evidence will be provided via the relative lengths of the fixation durations when observing the advertisement. By using such method, I can increase a convergent and external validity and understand the underlying mechanism in-depth. Grinbath's EyeGuide eye tracker was used to examine this prediction.

I will also measure another dependent variable, that is, attitude towards the conspicuous brands. By the same logic as mentioned above, I anticipate that kin care motivation will lead individuals to show less positive attitudes towards the conspicuous brand.

To support this prediction, Percy and Rossiter (1992) note that “brand attitude depends upon the currently relevant motivation. As a result, if a buyer’s motivation changes, so might the buyer’s evaluation of the brand” (p. 266).

In addition, I anticipate that the eye movement acting on the conspicuous brand advertisement in the kin care condition will mediate the relationship between the kin care stimuli and the attitude toward the conspicuous brand. This prediction is slightly risky, as it is also possible that time spent looking at a logo, although caused by motivation, is simply a correlate of attitude. However, there is also an argument, that I find persuasive, that participants in the kin care mindset will show a less positive attitude towards the conspicuous brand, and this pattern will be *caused*, at least partially, by paying less attention to the conspicuous logo. Hence there is, I believe, a justification to test for mediation. I will employ a set of baby photos to prime a kin care mindset and the dependent variables, in order to increase convergent validity.

With regards to the research analysis methods, since the independent variable is categorical and the dependent variable is continuous, this experiment uses an ANOVA. Hayes’s PROCESS bootstrapping method is conducted for the mediation analysis (Hayes, 2012).

The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee approved this research on March 26, 2014, (AUTEC reference number 14/33).

## **12.2 Experiment 7**

### **12.2.1 Design**

The aim of this experiment is to further support Hypothesis 4 by replicating the findings of Experiment 6. Therefore, I expect that individuals in the kin care condition will pay less attention to a conspicuous logo and show a less positive attitude towards a conspicuous brand. The study design is similar to that of Experiment 6. The study has a 2 (motivation; kin care vs. control) between-subject design. The key dependent variable is the fixation duration (Cian, Krishna, & Elder, 2014; Krugman, Fox, Fletcher, Fischer, & Rojas, 1994; Pieters & Wedel, 2007; Townsend & Kahn, 2014) of the conspicuous product advertisement, and attitude towards the conspicuous brand.

As in the descriptions of the other experiments, I first discuss the research participants and then describe the materials and scales used for this experiment. Next, I explain the procedure by which I conducted the experiment using an eye-tracking device, and then I demonstrate the findings. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the findings.

### **12.2.2 Participants**

Thirty-five undergraduates at a large university in New Zealand ( $M_{\text{age}} = 22.40$ ; 34.3% male) participated in the experiment, in exchange for a \$10 gift voucher. The results of four participants who failed, due to a system error or not follow the instructions, were discarded. This left 31 undergraduates for the analysis. After reviewing a number of other eye-tracking research

studies, I concluded that 31 participants is a sufficient sample size for an eye-tracking study (e.g., Townsend & Kahn, 2014).

### 12.2.3 Scales and Materials

#### 12.2.3.1 The “Kin Care Induction” Manipulation

In order to directly manipulate kin care motivation, I employed the exact same manipulation tool as that of Experiment 6. That is, I asked participants to choose one baby or building photo they found the most desirable, depending on the conditions they are assigned to, and then I asked each to rate the attractiveness of the chosen baby or building. Participants then were asked to write a short story about a picnic with the baby they chose or the most pleasant weather condition for walking around and looking at buildings. The only differences were the photos of babies and buildings (Figure 12.1a and 12.1b, respectively), and participants were given 2 minutes to write the story instead of 1 minute (see Appendix 9 for more details).

**Figure 12.1a**

#### **Kin Care Mindset: Baby Photos (Experiment 7)**



**Figure 12.1b**

#### **Control Condition: Building Photos (Experiment 7)**



With regard to the image’s attractiveness, participants across the two conditions think their chosen image is attractive: Kin care ( $M = 6.18$  vs. 4 (middle point),  $t(16) = 8.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Control ( $M = 6.00$  vs. 4 (middle point),  $t(13) = 11.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In addition, there is no significant difference between the attractiveness of the photo images that participants chose ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 6.18$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 6.00$ ;  $F(1, 29) = .28$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

### 12.2.3.2 Dependent Variable: Fixation Duration of the Conspicuous Logo (Eye-Tracking)

To measure how much attention individuals paid to the conspicuous logo when the kin care motivation is active, participants viewed a full-page advertisement for a product of the conspicuous brand, a Burberry t-shirt. A t-shirt with a conspicuous Burberry logo and the Burberry Prorsum brand logo was positioned on the left, whereas the product's information content was positioned on the right (Figure 12.2). The advertisement page was advanced automatically after 20 seconds.

Figure 12.2

#### Full-Page Advertisement of the Conspicuous Brand (Experiment 7)



### 12.2.3.3 Motivation Booster

After viewing the advertisement, a motivation booster was provided to ensure participants remained in the same mindset. The procedure was identical to the first part of the manipulation task. Participants were again shown exactly the same photographs used in the Experiment 6 kin care manipulation task and asked to choose the most desirable baby and building. This motivation booster method was used by Griskevicius et al. (2007).

### 12.2.3.4 Dependent Variable: Attitude towards Brand (Survey Measure)

To measure attitude towards the brand Burberry, after participants' eye movement was measured, participants were re-invited to an online survey. Participants first completed the motivation booster task, and then they were asked to view the advertisement illustrated in Figure 12.2 again in order to make it easy for them to answer the given question. Participants



were asked: "Please indicate your attitude towards the brand Burberry." Participants indicated their thoughts by responding to two items ( $\alpha = .92$ ) on a 7-point scale (1 = bad / dislike quite a lot, 7 = good / like quite a lot). These scales were developed by Biehal, Stephens, and Curio (1992).

#### **12.2.3.5 Control Variables**

##### ***12.2.3.5.1 Attitude towards Conspicuous Brand Advertisement***

Since the advertisement was created only for this experiment, there is a possibility that attitudes toward the created Burberry advertisement could influence attitudes towards the brand Burberry itself, depending on which object in the advertisement participants look at more. For instance, even though findings demonstrate that participants in the kin care condition show a less positive attitude towards Burberry compared with those in the control condition, there is a possibility that this result was driven by the quality of the advertisement objects rather than the low desirability of the conspicuous product itself. To elaborate more on this, as an example, if participants think poorly of the Burberry advertisement caused by a poor description of the product's information content, this perception may be projected onto the Burberry brand. Thus, to eliminate this possible alternative explanation, participants indicated an attitude toward the advertisement by responding to two items ( $\alpha = .91$ ) on a 7-point scale (1 = bad / dislike, 7 = good / like). These scales were developed by Biehal et al. (1992).

##### ***12.2.3.5.2 Mood***

Participants' mood was also measured. Participants indicated their mood on two items using a 7-point scale (1 = very sad / very bad, 7 = very happy / very good). The two items were averaged to form a composite score ( $\alpha = .82$ ). However, it appears that participants in the control condition are in a slightly better mood than are those in the kin care condition ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 5.12$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 5.71$ ;  $F(1, 29) = 4.04$ ;  $p = .05$ ). To exclude this potential alternative explanation, that participants in kin care condition show less positive attitudes towards the conspicuous brand because of their mood, a mediation test was conducted (Hayes 2012; PROCESS SPSS macro; model 4). Mediation analyses using 5000 bootstrapped samples with two different conditions as the independent variables, and mood as the mediators, and the attitude towards the Burberry brand as the dependent variable, reveals that the direct effect remains significant (direct effect = .36,  $t = 1.57$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Furthermore, the indirect effect of mood does include zero (indirect effect = .21, 95% CI = -.05, .81), providing evidence that mood does not influence the attitude towards the brand. Therefore, this potential alternative explanation can be eliminated.

#### **12.2.4 Procedure**

First, I created an online survey via Qualtrics, and a conspicuous brand advertisement in PowerPoint. After that, in order to gather the research participants, I approached class

instructors who did not know about this experiment and requested their permission to invite participants to the experiment. After I received their permission, I went to each class before it started and invited participants by explaining the experimental procedure and distributing an invitation paper. The invitation paper contained general information about the experiment, such as the date on which the experiment will be conducted, what will happen in the experiment and the researcher's email address. Some undergraduates promptly volunteered to participate in the experiment and some approached by email. Reminder emails that confirmed the date, time, and the location of the lab were sent to the participants the day before the experiment was to be conducted.

Participants entered the lab and sat in front of the computer with a screen measuring 27 inches wide and having a screen resolution of 1600 x 900 pixels. The distance between the eyes of the participants and the computer screen was approximately 60 centimetres (Figure 12.3). First, I recorded each participant's unique code in order to match the eye-tracking data with the online survey data for data analysis. Meanwhile, the participants' information sheet was distributed and participants were asked to sign the consent form. Next, before the experiment, participants mounted the EyeGuide eye tracker on their heads and underwent calibration. Participants were told to hold their heads quite still with their hands, and to open their eyes widely and then were asked to look at nine different circles on the screen in front of them, until the circles disappeared. After the calibration, in order to alleviate any potential suspicion, participants were informed that the main task was beginning and they will be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies.

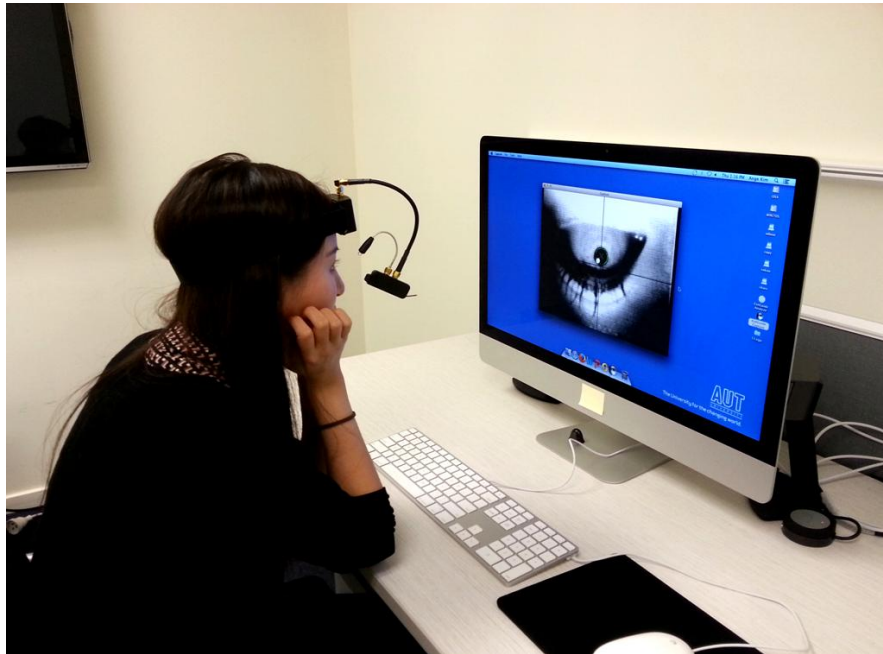
The first task was the same as in Experiment 6, including the same scenario to prime kin care and control condition, and the same cover story. This task was conducted through an online survey using Qualtrics. In order to eliminate possibly unqualified participants, a hidden timer question was inserted, but no unqualified participants were found.

Afterwards, in order to measure how much attention participants paid to the conspicuous logo, participants in both conditions were invited to the second task. In order to alleviate any potential suspicion, participants were told that they will view an advertisement and they will be asked to answer various questions about it. Participants were asked to assume the position they took for the calibration. Afterwards, one full-page, colour, Burberry advertisement was shown. The advertisement was displayed on a PowerPoint slide and was automatically advanced after 20 seconds.

After viewing the advertisement, participants removed the eye tracker and continued the online survey. They received a booster shot to refresh the kin care mindset before they move onto the last task. In order to minimize potential suspicion, participants were informed that this task was related to the first task, the manipulation task. After that, participants were asked to indicate an attitude towards the Burberry advertisement they saw. In order to facilitate their response, the advertisement was shown again. Participants indicated an attitude towards the advertisement and attitude towards the Burberry brand.

Participants completed the survey by answering a question on their current mood and general demographic questions. After that, participants were thanked, debriefed and given a gift voucher.

**Figure 12.3**  
**Eye-tracker in Operation (Experiment 7)**



## **12.2.5 Results**

### **12.2.5.1 Dependent Variable: Fixation Duration of the Conspicuous Logo (Eye-Tracking)**

To analyse the eye-tracking data, the horizontal full-page advertisement was divided and coded into two parts (1 = conspicuous logo, 2 = content) by measuring the pixels of the monitor and the advertisement. Then, the screen page underwent analysis, with ANOVA, for the total percentage of the fixation duration of the conspicuous logo during the same amount of 20 seconds between the two conditions.

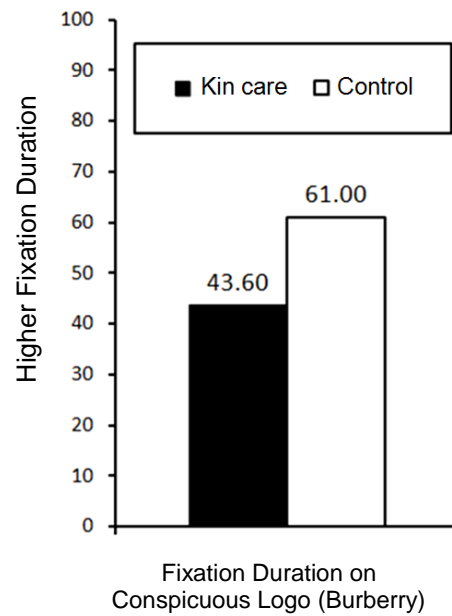
Results of the ANOVA reveal a significant effect of fixation duration of the conspicuous logo between the two conditions. As expected, participants in the kin care condition pay less attention to the conspicuous logo than do those in the control condition ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 43.6\%$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 61.0\%$ ,  $F(1, 29) = 4.71$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ ; see Figure 12.4a).

### **12.2.5.2 Dependent Variable: Attitude towards Brand (Survey Measure)**

In support of the prediction, participants in the kin care condition show less positive attitudes towards the Burberry brand than do those in the control condition ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 4.00$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 5.32$ ,  $F(1, 29) = 12.42$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .30$ ; see Figure 12.4b).

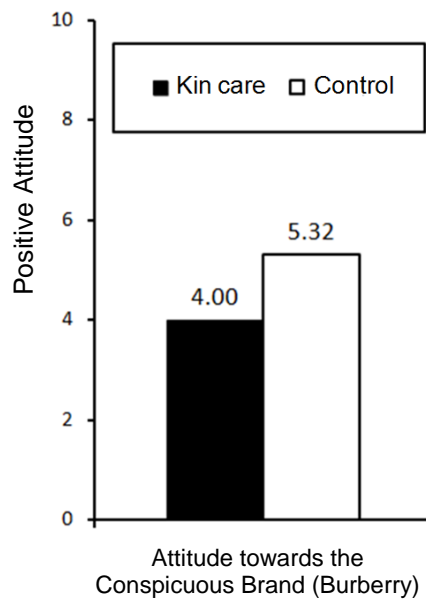
**Figure 12.4a**

**Fixation Duration of the Conspicuous Logo (Experiment 7)**



**Figure 12.4b**

**Attitude towards the Conspicuous Brand (Experiment 7)**



### 12.2.5.3 Mediation Analysis

To test further for the underlying processes, the mediation test, justified earlier in this chapter, was conducted. This is to determine whether a negative attitude towards the conspicuous brand in the kin care condition is mediated by the act of fixation duration of the conspicuous brand logo advertisement (Hayes, 2012; PROCESS SPSS macro; model 4). Mediation analyses, using 5000 bootstrapped samples with two different conditions as the independent variables, fixation duration on the conspicuous logo as the mediator, and the attitude towards the Burberry brand as the dependent variable, reveal that the direct effect is reduced, but remains significant (direct effect = 1.04,  $t = 2.70$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Furthermore, the indirect effect of the fixation duration of the conspicuous logo does not include zero (indirect effect = .02, 95% CI = .02, .80), providing evidence of successful partial mediation. Taken together, these results present evidence that attitude towards the conspicuous brand is indeed partially mediated by fixation duration on the conspicuous logo, which provides support for Hypothesis 4.

### 12.2.5.4 Additional Analysis

#### 12.2.5.4.1 Attitude towards Conspicuous Brand Advertisement

Attitude towards the advertisement is no different between the two conditions ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 3.06$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 3.18$ ,  $F(1, 29) = .07$ ;  $p = .80$ ). Thus, a possible alternative explanation, that is, less positive attitudes towards the conspicuous brand in the kin care condition may be driven by the quality of the advertisement objects and not the low desirability of the conspicuous product itself, can be eliminated.

#### 12.2.5.4.2 Interaction Effect between Genders on Dependent Variable

Also, to check whether or not there is an interaction effect between genders on the dependent variables, an additional analysis was performed. However, there are no significant interaction effects between the two conditions and gender on attitude towards the conspicuous brand or of the fixation duration on the conspicuous logo (all  $p$ -values  $> .10$ ).

### 12.2.6 Discussion of Experiment 7 Results

The results of Experiment 7 further support Hypothesis 4. That is, the kin care mindset reduces conspicuous logo preference. More specifically, the results show that the kin care mindset leads individuals to pay less attention to the conspicuous logo and show less positive attitudes towards a conspicuous brand than do those in the control condition. Notably, such findings demonstrate that kin care motivation leads individuals to gravitate less towards conspicuous products.

Furthermore, the results of the mediation analysis provide additional support for Hypothesis 4. That is, less positive attitudes towards the conspicuous brand in the kin care

condition are partially driven by paying less attention to the conspicuous logo, which shows the low desirability of the conspicuous product.

This experiment shows convergent results to those of Experiment 6, by using different methodologies (eye tracker), different primes (baby and building photos), different dependent variable measures and a motivation booster.

The next chapter examines the boundary condition of kin care motivation and conspicuous consumption. More specifically, as discussed earlier, different patterns may be revealed depending on the types of conspicuous products. That is, individuals with the kin care mindset may prefer conspicuous products if the products are baby-related (Hypothesis 5). Furthermore, because women exhibit higher caretaking behaviour towards infants than men, it is also possible that such pattern will only be observed in women (Hypothesis 6). Experiment 8 seeks to test these possibilities.

Furthermore, although the findings thus far are consistent with the hypothesis across the two experiments, this effect invites an alternative explanation. That is, participants may prefer small-sized logos if they are exposed to small babies compared to participants in the control condition, who are exposed to large buildings. Therefore, the next experiment also examines this alternative possibility by giving participants small and cute products (staplers, and computer mouse) in the control condition.

## CHAPTER 13

### EXPERIMENT 8: KIN CARE MOTIVE AND BOUNDARY CONDITION

#### 13.1 Research Method

The objective of Experiment 8 is threefold: First, this research aspires to explore the boundary condition on the relationship between the kin care mindset and conspicuous consumption (Hypotheses 5 and 6). I predict that when the kin care mindset is primed, spending financial resources on baby-related conspicuous products denotes how much individuals love and care about the baby for whom the products are intended. Based on this notion, I address two different possibilities: 1) the kin care mindset will increase preference for baby products with highly conspicuous brands or logos in both men and women (Hypothesis 5), or 2) Because women possess higher caretaking behaviour than men towards infants (Glocker et al., 2009; Kenrick et al., 2009), the kin care mindset will increase preference for baby products with highly conspicuous brands or logos for women, but not men (Hypothesis 6). Taken together, Experiment 8 examines two competing hypotheses.

Second, as mentioned, this research aims to eliminate an alternative explanation that states participants may prefer small-sized logos as they were exposed to photographs of small babies. To rule out this alternative explanation, this experiment uses two different types of small products (staplers and computer mice) as control variables. Finally, this research will use brand patterns (that is, the Burberry check-pattern) as well as brand logo to ensure the robustness of the findings and support the theoretical notion.

Considering the research aim, of testing hypotheses by means of the concomitant variation of a cause and an effect, this research again takes a causal research method approach (Malhotra, 2010). To determine which of the two competing hypotheses is supported, the research will directly manipulate the kin care motivation using priming methods similar to those used in the prior two experiments and suggested by Bagozzi (1981).

In order to conduct this experiment, I will use an online survey. With regards to the research analysis methods, in order to more confidently compare the results with the prior experiments in this thesis as well as other previous research (e.g., Sundie et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014), SPSS software will be used over other statistical software packages. The independent variables of this experiment are categorical and the dependent variables are continuous. However, I anticipate that there could be an uncontrolled independent variable (Malhotra, 2010). That is, there is a possibility that individuals who like luxury products in general might view the priming stimuli in the control conditions (staplers and computer mice) as luxury items because of their attractive design and shape. This, in turn, could activate an unintended mindset such as the luxury mindset and influence the results. Therefore, I asked participants to indicate whether they like luxury products in general at the end of the survey and

used this information as a covariate. Therefore, the data of this experiment were assessed using an ANCOVA (Malhotra, 2010).

The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee approved this research on March 26, 2014, (AUTEC reference number 14/33).

## **13.2 Experiment 8**

### **13.2.1 Design**

In order to test Hypotheses 5 and 6, the study has a 3 (motivation; kin care vs. control I (stapler) vs. control II (computer mouse)) x 2 (gender; men vs. women) x 3 (type of product; self-related products with non- or less-conspicuous logo, vs. highly conspicuous logo / baby-related products with non-conspicuous brand, vs. conspicuous brand / baby-related products with non-conspicuous logo vs. highly conspicuous logo) mixed-design. Motivation and gender are between-subject factors, whereas types of conspicuous and non- or less-conspicuous brands or logos are within-subject factors.

In what follows, I first describe the research participants and then present the materials and scales used in this experiment. After that, I explicate the procedure of the experiment and reveal the findings. I continue with a discussion of these findings. Lastly, I conclude Section 4 with the discussion of the findings, limitations and research contributions of the three experiments.

### **13.2.2 Participants**

Ninety-four adults who live in the United States ( $M_{\text{age}} = 33.12$ ; 47.9% male) were recruited from an online panel (Amazon Mechanical Turk). For the same reason as the prior experiments in this thesis, the survey participants were restricted to under the age of 55. With regards to the sample size, since there are largely four different groups in this experiment (as the stapler and computer mouse conditions are both control conditions, and the types of products are within-subject design), 94 people were deemed to provide a sufficient sample size (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

### **13.2.3 Scales and Materials**

#### **13.2.3.1 The “Kin Care Induction” Manipulation**

##### **13.2.3.1.1 Kin Care Mindset Condition**

To manipulate a kin care mindset, I subjected participants to a similar procedure, with identical stimuli photos to those used in Experiment 5 (see Figure 13.1). I asked participants in the kin care condition to choose one baby photo they found the most desirable as a potential child among three, and then asked them to indicate the attractiveness of the chosen baby.



Afterwards, participants were given 2 minutes to write a short story about their first picnic with their chosen baby (also see Appendix 10).

**Figure 13.1**

**Kin Care Mindset: Baby Photos (Experiment 8)**



**13.2.3.1.2 Control Condition I and II: Stapler and Computer Mouse**

Participants in the control conditions underwent a procedure that was similar to that used in the kin care condition. More specifically, participants in the stapler condition were first asked: “Please choose one stapler that you find the most desirable to own.” Three photographs of staplers were shown, and participants selected one stapler they found the most desirable to own. Participants were shown the photographs illustrated in Figure 13.2a. After that, similar to the kin care condition, participants were asked: “Please indicate how attractive the stapler you have chosen above is.” They indicated their response on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all attractive, 7 = definitely attractive).

Afterwards, similar to the kin care mindset condition, participants were given the following instruction: “Now imagine owning the stapler you have chosen above. Please spend up to two minutes writing about how you will use this stapler (e.g., I will use this stapler for a fun/work project).”

**Figure 13.2a**

**Control Condition I: Stapler (Experiment 8)**



Participants in the computer mouse condition underwent the same procedure. Participants were first asked: “Please choose one mouse that you find the most desirable to own.” Three photographs of computer mice (Figure 13.2b) were shown to the participants and they selected the computer mouse they found most desirable to own among the three. Participants were then asked: “Please indicate how attractive the mouse you have chosen

above is.” They indicated their response on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all attractive, 7 = definitely attractive).

Afterwards, participants were given the following instruction: “Now imagine owning the mouse you have chosen above. Please spend up to two minutes writing about how you will use this mouse for if you owned it.” Instructions for writing the short story about the stapler and computer mouse were modified from Nenkov and Scott (2014).

**Figure 13.2b**

**Control Condition II: Computer Mouse (Experiment 8)**



With regard to the attractiveness of the image, participants across the three conditions think that the image they chose is more attractive than the others: Kin care ( $M = 5.53$  vs. 4 (middle point),  $t(35) = 7.5$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Stapler ( $M = 4.91$  vs. 4 (middle point),  $t(32) = 3.1$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Mouse ( $M = 4.92$  vs. 4 (middle point),  $t(45) = 2.87$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Significance tests are based on a one-sample  $t$ -test against the midpoint, 4. Also, there are no differences between the three motivation conditions (kin care vs. stapler vs. computer mouse) on the attractiveness of the image ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 5.42$  vs.  $M_{\text{stapler}} = 4.91$  vs.  $M_{\text{mouse}} = 4.92$ ;  $F(2, 91) = 1.87$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

### **13.2.3.2 Dependent Variables**

#### **13.2.3.2.1. Self-related Conspicuous Consumption Measures**

To assess participants’ desire for self-related conspicuous products, the following type of conspicuous consumption was measured; non- or less-conspicuous logo versus conspicuous logo within luxury products.

##### **13.2.3.2.1.1 Non/Less-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo**

To assess desire for a luxury product with a highly conspicuous logo, participants were asked: “Imagine that you are going to buy a \_\_\_\_\_ at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.” Two different types of products were used; a Gucci iPad case and a Mercedes-Benz automobile (Figure 13.3).

For the Gucci iPad cases, participants were asked to choose between two Gucci iPad cases of an identical shape and colour, one bearing no outward logo and the other bearing a conspicuous Gucci logo. Similarly, for the Mercedes-Benz automobile, participants were asked

to choose between two automobiles of an identical shape and colour, one bearing a less-conspicuous logo and the other bearing a highly conspicuous logo. In both conditions, participants indicated their preference on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely Design A, 7 = definitely Design B).

**Figure 13.3**

**Self-related Products with Non-/Less Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Logos  
(Experiment 8)**

Gucci iPad cases



Design A

Design B

Mercedes-Benz Automobiles



Design A

Design B

**13.2.3.2.2 Baby-related Conspicuous Consumption Measures**

To assess participants' desire for baby-related conspicuous products, two types of products were measured; non- or less conspicuous logo versus conspicuous logo within luxury products and non-conspicuous brand versus conspicuous brand.

**13.2.3.2.2.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand**

To assess desire for a baby-related conspicuous brand, participants were asked: “Imagine that you have a newborn baby and you are going to buy a baby \_\_\_\_\_ at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?” Two different types of products were used; baby shoes and baby hoodies.

For the baby shoes, participants were asked to choose between two baby shoes of similar shape and colours but with different brands. One pair of baby shoes was a \$34, non-conspicuous, mass market brand (Zap), whereas the other pair of baby shoes was a \$110, conspicuous brand (Burberry). In the case of the baby hoodies, which also have similar shapes and colours, participants were asked to choose between a \$54 non-conspicuous brand (Stitch) and a \$170 conspicuous brand (Burberry). To enhance the convergent validity, brand pattern was used instead of brand logo. The photographs and product information in Figure 13.4 were shown to the participants. Participants indicated their preference on a 7-point scale (e.g., 1 = definitely Stitch, 7 = definitely Burberry). A higher score indicates a greater preference for the baby-related products with conspicuous brand.

**Figure 13.4**

**Baby-related Products with Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Brands  
(Experiment 8)**

**Baby Shoes**



Brand: Zap

Price: \$34



Brand: Burberry

Price: \$110

**Baby Hoodies**



Brand: Stitch

Price: \$54



Brand: Burberry

Price: \$170

#### **13.2.3.2.2 Less Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo**

To assess desire for baby-related products with a highly conspicuous logo within luxury products, participants were asked: “Imagine that you have a newborn baby and you are going to buy a baby Gucci baby bodysuit at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?” Participants were asked to indicate their preference between two identically shaped and coloured of Gucci baby bodysuits, one bearing no outward Gucci logo and the other bearing a conspicuous Gucci logo. Participants were shown the photos displayed in Figure 13.5. Participants indicated their preference on a 7-point scale (1 = definitely design A to 7 = definitely design B). A higher score indicates a greater preference for the Gucci baby bodysuit with highly conspicuous logo.

**Figure 13.5**

#### **Baby-related Products with Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Logos (Experiment 8)**

##### **Gucci Baby Bodysuits**



**Design A**

**Design B**

#### **13.2.3.3 Motivational Booster**

After responding to the initial set of conspicuous products, a motivational booster was provided to ensure that participants remained in the same mindset. The procedure was identical to the first part of the manipulation task. Participants were asked to choose another desirable baby, stapler, or computer mouse they found the most desirable. Three different photographs from the manipulation task were shown to the participants (see Figure 13.6). The baby photos were identical those used in Experiment 7, the eye-tracking experiment manipulation task. After they made a choice, participants responded to the counterpart set of conspicuous products (either baby-related or self-related). Detailed information about this procedure will be demonstrated later in the procedure section.

**Figure 13.6**  
**Motivational Boosters (Experiment 8)**



#### **13.2.3.4 Manipulation Check**

To ensure that the manipulations elicited the intended mindset, after the dependent variables measure, participants were told that the following question is related to the short writing story task they completed at the beginning of the survey and then were asked to complete the following sentence: “The image that I have chosen makes me think of the words .....

Participants responded on a 6-point scale (1 = not at all, 6 = extremely) to a total of six items; fun, whimsical, playful, vulnerability, innocence and caretaking. Vulnerability, innocence and caretaking pertain more to kin care, while fun, whimsical and playful pertain more to whimsical cute objects (stapler and mouse). Thus, I expect that the rate of the vulnerability, innocence and caretaking items will be higher under the kin care condition than the control conditions. This scale was modified from Nenkov and Scott (2014). 6-point scale was used for manipulation check, as previous research originally used the 6-point scale (Nenkov & Scott, 2014). This allows me to easily compare the result with the previous study.

### **13.2.3.5 Control Variables**

#### **13.2.3.5.1 General Interest towards the Luxury Products**

As already mentioned in the research method section, there is a possibility that individuals who generally like luxury products may perceive the stapler or computer mouse they view as a luxury item, thus influencing the results of the experiment by activating an unexpected mindset such as the luxury mindset. To eliminate this possibility, participants indicated whether they like luxury products in general on a dichotomous scale that is, yes or no, and the information was used as a covariate.

#### **13.2.3.5.2 Mood**

In addition, participants' mood was measured. Participants indicated their mood on two items using a 7-point scale (1= very sad / very bad, 7= very happy / very good). The two items were averaged to form a composite score ( $\alpha = .87$ ). However, from the results, it appears that the manipulation task has no effect on participants' mood ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 5.42$  vs.  $M_{\text{control (stapler \& mouse)}} = 5.37$ ;  $F(1, 92) = .03$ ;  $p > .10$ ). Additionally, I compared mood differences between the two control conditions (stapler and mouse), but find no difference ( $M_{\text{stapler}} = 5.35$  vs.  $M_{\text{mouse}} = 5.40$ ;  $F(1, 56) = .03$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

### **13.2.4 Procedure**

To test Hypotheses 5 and 6, an online survey was created using Qualtrics and then the survey link was uploaded at MTurk. Similar to the other experiments that used an online survey in this thesis, at the beginning of the experiment, a consent form was given. Participants were told that their participation in this research is voluntary and they could withdraw at any time, without any adverse consequences. Participants were also told that they will be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies and this survey will take about seven minutes to complete.

After participants agreed to participate in the survey, they were invited to the first task, the manipulation task. Participants first saw the misleading title "Examining Visualization Ability" in order to alleviate any potential suspicion. They were told that the purpose of this task is to examine visualization ability through writing stories. Afterwards, Qualtrics software randomly assigned participants into one of the three conditions; kin care, stapler, or computer mouse. As demonstrated earlier, participants were first asked to choose one baby, stapler, or computer mouse they found the most desirable as a potential child or as an object to own, depending on the condition to which they were assigned. Then, they were asked to indicate the attractiveness of the chosen baby, stapler, or computer mouse. After that, participants in the three conditions were invited to write a short story. To filter out possibly unqualified participants, I included a hidden timer question. Furthermore, just as in the two previous experiments, in order to



enhance participants' engagement in the task, participants were informed that it was important that they write a substantial story. Thus, they were told that they did not need to worry about grammar, complete sentences, spelling, or punctuation. Moreover, they were told that if their thoughts or feelings recurred over and over, they should simply keep writing them down over and over.

Following the first manipulation task, participants were invited to the second task that measured the dependent variables. For the same reason as the first task, participants saw the misleading title "Consumer's Product Choice" and were told that the purpose of this task is to investigate consumers' product preference for various product categories. Participants indicated their preference on both self- and baby-related products with non- or less conspicuous logos and conspicuous logos. Participants also indicated their preference between baby-related products with non-conspicuous brands and conspicuous brands. Unlike other experiments in this thesis, since this experiment has two distinctive type of products; self-related and baby-related, the order of the types of products was counterbalanced in order to prevent an order effect. Moreover, after participants indicated their preferences for initial sets of conspicuous consumption products, in order to ensure that participants maintained the same mindset, they undertook a motivational boost. They were asked to choose one more baby, stapler, or computer mouse (Figure 13.6), depending on the condition to which they were assigned. To reduce any potential suspicion, participants were told that this question is related to the first task. Following the motivational booster question, participants were asked to indicate their preference for a counterpart set of conspicuous products, either self- or baby-related products.

Following the dependent variable measures, to ensure that the manipulation elicited the intended mind-set, participants were asked to indicate which words they associated with the images to which they were exposed. The manipulation check was measured after the dependent variable measures in order to prevent demand characteristics.

Lastly, participants' current mood was measured. They were also asked to indicate the general likeability of the luxury products. Participants completed the survey by answering general demographic questions regarding gender and age. After they completed the survey, they were directed to a "thank-you" page. Subsequently, the participants received a survey completion code.

### **13.2.5 Results**

#### **13.2.5.1 Manipulation Check**

Firstly, the score for whimsical cute-related items ("fun," "whimsical" and "playful") were averaged to form a composite score ( $\alpha = .86$ ) and kin care-related items ("vulnerability," "innocence," and "caretaking") were averaged to form a separate composite score ( $\alpha = .73$ ). Before comparing the difference between the kin care and control conditions, I performed an additional analysis to test whether there is a difference between the two control conditions on kin care-related items (vulnerability, innocence and caretaking) and whimsical cute-related items



(fun, whimsical and playful). However, I find no difference between kin care-related items ( $M_{\text{stapler}} = 3.14$  vs.  $M_{\text{mouse}} = 2.87$ ,  $F(1, 56) = .52$ ;  $p > .10$ ) and whimsical cute-related items ( $M_{\text{stapler}} = 4.16$  vs.  $M_{\text{mouse}} = 3.82$ ,  $F(1, 55) = .78$ ;  $p > .10$ ). Therefore, the two control conditions were aggregated.

As expected, participants in the kin care condition report that the image to which they were exposed to triggered the kin care-related words in their minds (vulnerability, innocence and caretaking) more strongly than those in the control conditions ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 3.89$  vs.  $M_{\text{control (stapler \& mouse)}} = 3.02$ ,  $F(1, 92) = 9.80$ ;  $p < .01$ ). However, in both the kin care and control condition, participants relate the whimsical cute-related items (fun, whimsical and playful) with the images to which they were exposed ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 4.36$  vs.  $M_{\text{control (stapler \& mouse)}} = 4.01$ ,  $F(1, 91) = 1.57$ ;  $p > .10$ ).

### **13.2.5.2 Conspicuous Consumption**

#### **13.2.5.2.1 Self-related Conspicuous Consumption**

As in Experiment 6 and 7, I predicted that both men and women will desire self-related products with highly conspicuous logos less under a kin care mindset.

##### **13.2.5.2.1.1 Non-/ Less Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo**

Before comparing the difference between kin care and control conditions, I performed an additional ANCOVA with likeability of luxury products as a covariate to test whether there is a difference between the two control conditions on preference for a highly conspicuous logo. However, there is no difference between the Mercedes-Benz ( $M_{\text{stapler}} = 3.64$  vs.  $M_{\text{mouse}} = 3.68$ ,  $F(1, 53) = .10$ ;  $p > .10$ ) and the Gucci iPad case ( $M_{\text{stapler}} = 4.33$  vs.  $M_{\text{mouse}} = 4.56$ ,  $F(1, 53) = .08$ ;  $p > .10$ ) for the two control conditions. Also, there are no significant interaction effect between motivation and gender association on preference for highly conspicuous logos in both product conditions (all  $p$ -values  $> .10$ ). Therefore, the two control conditions were aggregated.

Firstly, I examined the effect of preference for highly conspicuous logos by averaging the results from the two products (Gucci iPad case and Mercedes-Benz automobile). I expect that a kin care motive will trigger a decreased preference for highly conspicuous logos for both men and women compared to the control condition. Consistent with the prediction, there is a significant main effect for different motivations on preference for highly conspicuous logos. Specifically, participants in the kin care condition prefer highly conspicuous logos less than do participants in the control condition ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 2.74$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 4.04$ ,  $F(1, 89) = 10.01$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ ; see Figure 13.7a). In addition, as expected, no gender difference is found ( $F(1, 89) = .76$ ;  $p > .10$ ). Also, there are no significant interaction effects between motivation and gender on preference for highly conspicuous logos ( $F(1, 89) = .42$ ,  $p > .10$ ).

In addition, separate ANCOVA analysis for each product shows a similar pattern for each of two products. The results reveal a significant main effect of different motivations on both

products; Gucci iPad case ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 2.86$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 4.43$ ,  $F(1, 89) = 9.49$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ ), and Mercedes-Benz automobile ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 2.61$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 3.66$ ,  $F(1, 89) = 3.78$ ;  $p < .10$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ). Also, no gender difference is found for either product (all  $p$ -values  $> .10$ ), and the results reveal no significant interaction effect between motivation and gender on preference for highly conspicuous logos (all  $p$ -values  $> .10$ ). Therefore, the findings support Hypothesis 4.

### **13.2.5.2.2 Baby-related Conspicuous Consumption**

With regards to the baby-related conspicuous consumption, I made two predictions. One prediction was that both men and women will desire baby-related products with highly conspicuous brands or logos less under a kin care mindset (Hypothesis 5). Another prediction was that because women possess higher care taking behaviour than do men towards infants, only women will prefer baby products with highly conspicuous brands or logos (Hypothesis 6).

#### **13.2.5.2.2.1 Non-Conspicuous Brand versus Conspicuous Brand**

Before comparing the difference between the kin care and control conditions, I performed an additional analysis to test for any difference between the two control conditions on preference for baby-related conspicuous brands (Burberry baby shoes and baby hoodies). However, no difference is found for the two different types of baby-related products; baby shoes ( $M_{\text{stapler}} = 2.21$  vs.  $M_{\text{mouse}} = 2.80$ ,  $F(1, 53) = .32$ ;  $p > .10$ ), baby hoodie ( $M_{\text{stapler}} = 2.39$  vs.  $M_{\text{mouse}} = 2.56$ ,  $F(1, 53) = .000$ ;  $p > .10$ ). Also, there are no significant gender effect or significant interaction effect between motivation and gender on preference for highly conspicuous brand in either product conditions (all  $p$ -values  $> .10$ ). Therefore, the two control conditions were aggregated.

First, I examined the effect of preference for baby-related conspicuous brands by averaging the results from the two baby products (baby shoes and baby hoodies). There is no main effect of different motivations on preference for baby-related conspicuous brands ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 2.74$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.47$ ,  $F(1, 89) = .71$ ;  $p > .10$ ). Also, there is no gender difference for preference for baby-related conspicuous brands ( $F(1, 89) = .29$ ;  $p > .10$ ). However, there is a marginally significant interaction effect between motivation and gender on preference for highly conspicuous brands ( $F(1, 89) = 3.68$ ;  $p < .10$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ). Planned contrast shows that women in the kin care condition desire baby-related conspicuous brands more than women in the control condition do ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 3.00$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 1.94$ ,  $F(1, 89) = .416$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ; see Figure 13.7b). However, this effect is not observed among men ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 2.47$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.90$ ,  $F(1, 89) = .56$ ;  $p > .10$ ; see Figure 13.7b).

In addition, the results show a similar pattern for each of the two products. No main effect for different motivations on preference for baby-related conspicuous brands is found for either baby shoes ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 2.94$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.47$ ,  $F(1, 89) = 1.55$ ;  $p > .10$ ) or baby hoodies ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 2.53$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.47$ ,  $F(1, 89) = .05$ ;  $p > .10$ ). Also, there is no gender difference on preference for both the baby-related conspicuous brands; baby shoes ( $F(1, 89) = .91$ ;  $p > .10$ ),

or baby hoodies ( $F(1, 89) = .00$ ;  $p > .10$ ). However, the results reveal a marginally significant interaction effect between motivation and gender on preference for highly conspicuous brands for both baby shoes ( $F(1, 89) = 2.75$ ;  $p = .10$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ) and baby hoodies ( $F(1, 89) = 2.82$ ;  $p < .10$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ). Planned contrast shows that women in the kin care condition desire baby-related conspicuous brands more than women in the control condition for both baby shoes ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 3.12$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 1.83$ ,  $F(1, 89) = .458$ ;  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ) and baby hoodies ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 2.89$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.05$ ,  $F(1, 89) = .198$ ;  $p = .16$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ). However, there is no significant effect found for men on either of the baby products (all  $p$ -values  $> .10$ ). Taken together, these results support Hypothesis 6.

#### **13.2.5.2.2 Non-Conspicuous Logo versus Conspicuous Logo**

Before comparing the difference between kin care and control conditions, I performed an additional analysis to test for any difference between the two control conditions on preference for the highly conspicuous Gucci baby bodysuit. However, no difference is found ( $M_{\text{stapler}} = 3.42$  vs.  $M_{\text{mouse}} = 4.36$ ,  $F(1, 53) = 1.90$ ;  $p > .10$ ). Also, there are no gender effect or significant interaction effect between motivation and gender on preference for highly conspicuous logo (all  $p$ -values  $> .10$ ). Therefore, the two control conditions were aggregated.

There is a significant main effect of different motivations on preference for the highly conspicuous Gucci baby body suit. Participants in the kin care condition prefer the highly conspicuous Gucci baby bodysuit less than participants in the control condition do ( $M_{\text{kin care}} = 2.36$  vs.  $M_{\text{control}} = 3.83$ ,  $F(1, 89) = 9.09$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ ; see Figure 13.7a). Surprisingly, the gender difference is also marginally significant. Women desire the highly conspicuous Gucci baby bodysuit more than men do, regardless of the motivation conditions ( $M_{\text{men}} = 2.73$  vs.  $M_{\text{women}} = 3.76$ ,  $F(1, 89) = 3.25$ ;  $p < .10$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ). There is no significant interaction effect between motivation and gender on preference for highly conspicuous logos ( $F(1, 89) = .64$ ,  $p > .10$ ).

Figure 13.7a

**Results of Experiment 8:**  
**Self versus Baby-related Luxury Products with**  
**Non/Less Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Logo**

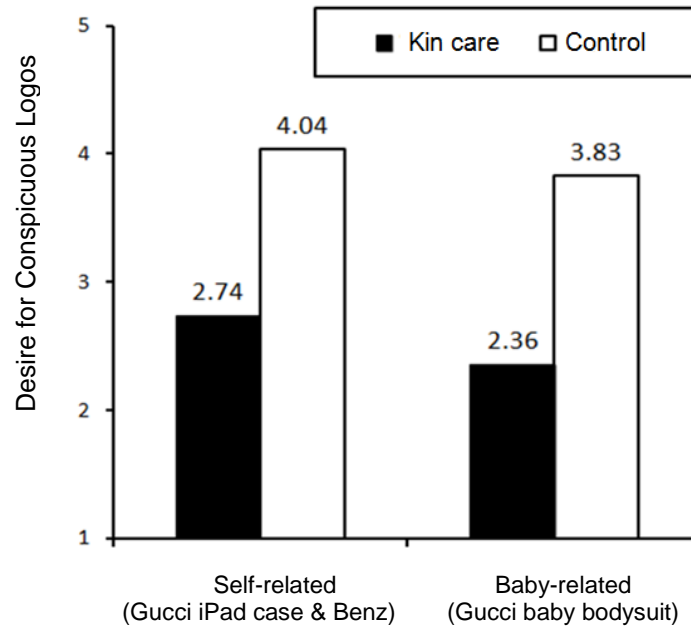
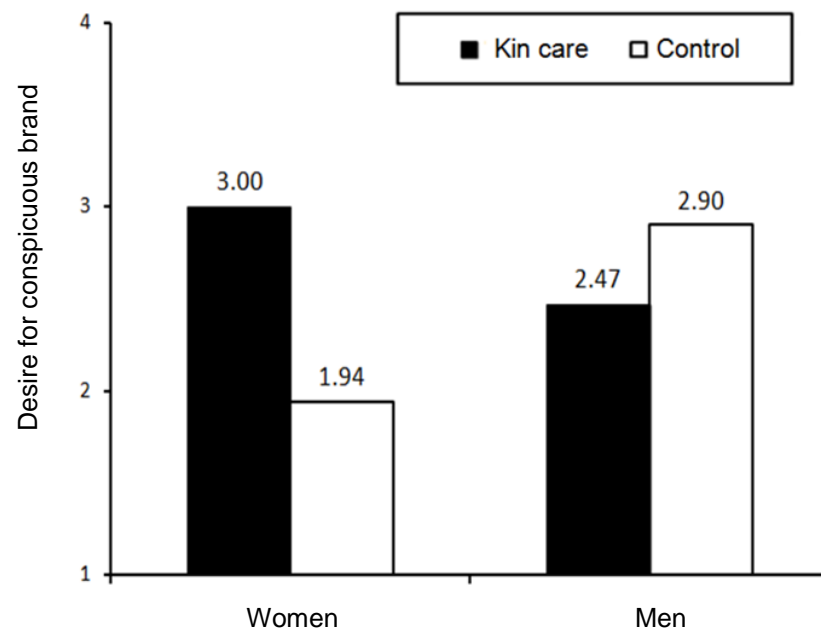


Figure 13.7b

**Results of Experiment 8:**  
**Baby-related product with Non-Conspicuous versus Conspicuous Brand**



### **13.2.6 Discussion of Experiment 8 Results**

This experiment extends the results of Experiments 6 and 7 regarding the relationship between a kin care mindset and conspicuous consumption by providing the boundary condition, types of conspicuous product. Findings show that when a kin care mindset is induced, women prefer baby products with highly conspicuous brands more, but not men. Thus, the results support Hypothesis 6, not 5. In fact, I also anticipated that a kin care mindset will lead women to desire baby luxury products with conspicuous logos more than baby luxury products with non-conspicuous logos compared to men; however, this prediction is not supported. In the next section, I address this limitation. Additionally, the results indicate that a kin care mindset reduces preference for self-related products with conspicuous logos for both men and women, which replicates the results of Experiments 6 and 7.

Furthermore, in this experiment, using a different dependent measure (brand pattern instead of logo) showed convergent results. In addition, this experiment ruled out an alternative explanation that participants may have preferred the small-sized logo as they were exposed to small babies compared with the control condition for those who were exposed to larger buildings.

In summary, the last sets of experiments (Experiments 6, 7 and 8) provide support for Hypothesis 4 and 6, revealing that the kin care mindset makes both men and women less likely to prefer products with highly conspicuous brands or logos. However, the kin care mindset leads women but not men to prefer conspicuous products more when these products are baby-related.

## **13.3 Discussion of Section 4**

In this section, I investigate how kin care mindset affects conspicuous consumption. Based on previous literature on caretaking motivation (e.g., Abraham et al., 2014; Ancel et al., 1992; McCourt, 2006), I predicted that because kin care motivation leads individuals to naturally prioritize the benefits of the infants over their own survival and benefits, individuals will focus less on selfish-oriented conspicuous consumption (Hypothesis 4).

In addition, as a boundary condition, I further predicted that although kin care mindset leads individuals to decrease conspicuous consumption, different patterns will be shown depending upon product type. More specifically, if a conspicuous product is baby-related, it no longer holds self-reward value. Instead, spending financial resources on baby-related conspicuous products represents how much the individual loves and cares for infants (Haugen, 2005; Richins & Chaplin, 2015). With this logic, I made two different predictions. First, kin care motive will increase preference for highly conspicuous products in both men and women when the product is baby-related (Hypothesis 5). Second, since women possess intensified behaviour regarding the care of infants when compared to men (Glocker et al., 2009; Hess & Polt, 1960), such a pattern will be observed only in women (Hypothesis 6).

Across the three experiments, two of the three hypotheses were supported. More specifically, the results reveal that kin care motive leads both men and women to desire highly conspicuous logos less by showing low preference towards luxury products with conspicuous logos and they were less willing to sacrifice quality of the luxury product (Experiment 6). Experiment 7 strengthens these findings using an eye-tracking technology. The results show that kin care motive leads both men and women to pay less attention to the conspicuous logo and show less positive attitudes towards a conspicuous brand. Additionally, the findings show that less positive attitudes towards the conspicuous brand in the kin care condition are partially driven by paying less attention to the conspicuous logo, which is caused by the low desirability of the conspicuous product. Taken together, Experiments 6 and 7 support Hypothesis 4. Experiment 8 examined the boundary condition. The results show that kin care motive leads women to prefer baby products with highly conspicuous brands more than women in a control condition. However, this pattern is not observed in men. Therefore, the results support Hypothesis 6, but not Hypothesis 5.

Overall, the results of the three experiments indicate that because kin care mindset provokes self-sacrificing caretaking behaviour, individuals prioritize infants' needs over their own desires and needs such as social success and recognition. Thus, individuals gravitate less towards the self-related conspicuous products under the kin care mindset. However, when conspicuous products are baby-related, purchasing such items represents how much one loves and cares for their infants. Therefore, a kin care mindset leads individuals to prefer conspicuous products more when they are baby-related. However, because women possess stronger caretaking behaviour than men, such patterns only observed in women, not men.

### **13.3.1 Limitations**

There are some limitations that will introduce several avenues for future research. First, one key limitation of the present research is that I did not measure the underlying process between a kin care mindset and conspicuous consumption. More specifically, because this research did not measure why women chose baby-related conspicuous brands over non-conspicuous brands in the kin care condition, it is still unclear whether or not women did indeed believe that spending money on conspicuous baby-related products is part of exhibiting devotion for their infants. Thus, future research should extend this research on kin care by examining such processes more closely.

Another limitation lies in kin care priming. Although I changed the baby photos in the experiments in order to increase convergent validity, this research used the same method throughout. That is, I showed baby photos and asked respondents to write the story to induce them into the kin care mindset. Future research should attempt to use different priming methods, such as asking respondents to read a scenario or to view a short video clip, or even using baby toys to elicit caretaking behaviour.

In addition, there is a possibility that the kin care priming method used in this thesis may have activated other motivations, such as warm feelings, as well as a kin care mind-set. Also, since the kin care mind-set condition involves interaction with a human (i.e., a baby) and the control condition does not, it is possible that social interaction could have been a confounding variable. Future research should consider these possible confounding factors when attempting to create kin care priming methods.

A third limitation revolves around Experiment 8. In particular, when asked to choose between products with a highly conspicuous brand (Burberry) and a non-conspicuous brand (e.g., Zap), women in the kin care mindset are more attracted to the highly conspicuous brand over the non-conspicuous brand. However, when asked to choose between a Gucci baby bodysuit with a highly conspicuous logo or a non-conspicuous logo, there was no specific preference. If the logic I addressed is correct—because there is a correlation between money and love, women in the kin care mindset should desire baby products with conspicuous logos over non-conspicuous logos—women in the kin care mindset should be more attracted to the Gucci baby bodysuit with the conspicuous logo than the bodysuit with the non-conspicuous Gucci logo. In fact, it is possible that since the Gucci baby bodysuit with no outwardly-visible logo is still a luxury product, women may have thought that, regardless of conspicuousness, the luxury product itself is costly enough to express their devotion to their infant. Future research should continue this path of study by further examining this possibility.

Lastly, the third limitation leads to yet another limitation. If my assumption regarding the belief that the luxury product itself is costly enough to express their devotion to their infant is correct, it is also possible that the reason women preferred baby-related products with conspicuous brands over non-conspicuous brands could be because they are luxury products, not because of the level of conspicuousness. Therefore, it will be worthwhile to test this possibility in the future research.

### **13.3.2 Theoretical Contributions**

The present research makes several theoretical contributions. First, this research makes a theoretical contribution to the evolutionary psychology literature (e.g., Griskevicius et al., 2007; Lens et al., 2012; Li et al., 2002; Sundie et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014) by demonstrating how kin care motivation influences conspicuous consumption. As demonstrated earlier, kin care is one of the important psychological evolutionary factors positioned at the top of Maslow's recently reconstructed pyramid of needs (Kenrick et al., 2010).

Furthermore, work in the area of evolutionary psychology has been paying more attention to the factors that heighten conspicuous consumption (e.g., Griskevicius et al., 2006, 2007; Sundie et al., 2011). Therefore, this research also contributes to evolutionary psychology literature by demonstrating the evolutionary factor that attenuates conspicuous consumption. To elaborate more on this, in terms of the mating mindset, prior work has shown that because women prioritize men's economic status when they select a potential mate, the mating mindset

leads men, but not women, to engage more in conspicuous consumption (Griskevicius et al., 2006, 2007; Sundie et al., 2011). As another example, in terms of same-sex competition, Wang and Griskevicius (2014) recently show that women in the same-sex competition desire conspicuous products, such as a Louis Vuitton handbag with a large LV logo, in order to defeat potential rivals. The reason for this is that conspicuous products represent how much their romantic partner is devoted to them. In contrast to prior research, the current research introduces the evolutionary factor that attenuates conspicuous consumption. That is, kin care mindset leads individuals to be less attracted to conspicuous products.

This research also contributes to the literature on evolutionary psychology by providing a new priming method. By modifying the existing mating mindset priming method of Griskevicius et al. (2007), this research introduces a kin care priming method that could induce individuals into the kin care mindset. To briefly remind the reader of the priming procedure, I exposed respondents to baby photos and asked them to choose one baby that they found to be the most desirable as their potential child. They were then invited to write a short story about that baby and the respondent. When using this priming method, participants in the kin care mindset are less attracted to conspicuous products than those in the control condition. Therefore, the current research offers evidence that the manipulation of kin care priming works. It is my hope that this kin care priming method will allow evolutionary psychologists to extend the research on kin care.

The findings of this research also contribute to the conspicuous consumption literature (e.g., Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008) by providing new insights. That is, a kin care mindset leads individuals to prefer conspicuous products less. This finding is important because considering the overall conspicuous consumption literature, little research has focused on the antecedents that attenuate conspicuous consumption, such as religion (e.g., Stillman et al., 2012). Discovering the factors that reduce conspicuous consumption is important for society, as conspicuous consumption is negatively related to well-being and happiness (Kasser, 2002; Wang & Wallendorf, 2006; Winkelmann, 2012).

Furthermore, this research also adds to the existing literature on conspicuous consumption by showing individuals' thought processes regarding low desirability of conspicuous products through an eye-tracking measurement. More specifically, the findings of Experiment 7 reveal that individuals in the kin care condition pay less attention to a conspicuous logo when they view a conspicuous brand advertisement, compared to those in the control condition. This finding is consistent with Pieter and Wedel's (2007) study, which shows that activating a particular processing goal leads an individual to pay more attention to a certain part of the advertisement that is relevant to the processing goal. When kin care motivation is active, individuals indeed think less about their own desires and social recognition. Therefore, they pay less attention to the conspicuous logo that is associated with social success and recognition, instead of the infant's benefit.

### **13.3.3 Practical Implications**



In addition to theoretical contributions, this research has important practical implications. For instance, the findings of Experiment 8 could be used in luxury brand retail stores selling baby-related items. Given that women are more highly attracted towards luxury baby products than men, retailers will benefit by targeting women and sending catalogues or email promoting their luxury baby products. Moreover, with regards to the promotional message, advertising managers should employ parental-devoting messages such as “as valuable as a mother’s love” or “show your unconditional love.” Furthermore, they should insert infant photos with these messages, as it provokes caretaking behaviour in their potential customers.

In addition, if women who have infants come into the store to look around at the items, it will be a good idea for retailers to lead them to the section that sells baby products, instead of products for the mother herself, such as a wallet or sunglasses.

In the final section, I conclude this thesis with a general discussion of the findings, limitations, future directions of the research, and general research contributions of the three sections.

## CHAPTER 14

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

#### 14.1 Overall Summary of the Findings

In this thesis I first identified, via a systematic literature review, three core factors that influence conspicuous consumption; self-focus versus other-focus, self-transformation versus self-expression motivation, and a kin care mindset. By considering these factors, I addressed the general research question of what the causal role of these bottom-line factors on conspicuous consumption behaviour is.

I sought to answer this research question through eight experiments, and the overall findings highlight that individuals engage in conspicuous consumption more when focusing on external goals rather than internal goals. More specifically, this finding divides into three key findings:

First, I investigated how focused targets influence conspicuous consumption. I predicted that individuals will have a greater desire for conspicuous products when they focus on others more than on themselves. The reason for this behaviour is that when individuals focus on others they become more concerned about the social criticism they might potentially receive from others (Fenigstein et al., 1975). This in turn, leads them to seek a means to prevent any potential criticism. As a consequence, other-focused individuals will be more attracted to conspicuous products with socially-favourable indicators than will self-focus individuals (Buss & Scheier, 1976; Scheier, 1980).

The findings support this prediction. The findings show that other-focused individuals who are concerned about others' criticism crave products with highly conspicuous brands or logos more than self-focused individuals do, because of the brand logo's visibility.

Next, in Section 3, I examined which of the two fundamental motivations exert a stronger influence on individuals desire for conspicuous products. I theorised that, compared with when individuals are motivated to express who they are, when individuals are motivated to transform themselves into the people they wish to be, then they will be more attracted to conspicuous products. This is because people associate conspicuous products with their ideal selves.

The findings indicate that individuals prefer products with conspicuous logos or brands more when they desire to transform themselves into the people they wish to be than when they desire to express who they are. In addition, the findings reveal that individuals indeed associate greater expectations of self-transformation than of self-expression with conspicuous products.

Lastly, I shed light on how a kin care mindset influences conspicuous consumption. I predicted that because a kin care mindset leads individuals to prioritize infants' benefits over self-rewarding external goals such as social fame and recognition, individuals under the influence of the kin care mindset will be less attracted to self-pleasing, conspicuous products. Additionally, I addressed the boundary condition and made a further prediction. I predicted that when conspicuous products are baby-related, individuals will show greater attraction to conspicuous products. The reason is for this behaviour is that the amount of money spent is one of the ways parents express how much they love their children (Haugen, 2005), and people generally perceive conspicuous products to be costly items (Han et al., 2010). I further anticipated that such a behaviour pattern will be observed in either both men and women or only in women, because women possess higher caretaking behaviour toward infants than do men (Glocker et al., 2009).

The findings highlight that individuals influenced by a kin care mindset gravitate less towards products with conspicuous logos or brands than do those not influenced by the kin care mindset. However, when conspicuous products are baby-related, women under the kin care mindset show greater attraction towards conspicuous brand baby products.

In summary, the findings of the three sets of experiments have one important factor in common. That is, focusing on external goals, such as the desire to obtain social approval or admiration, leads individuals to desire to show off items as evidence of their success; to earn social approval from others. This, in turn, influences individuals to desire conspicuous products that have universally recognized symbols that are known to represent admirable social status. Notably, such findings support the line of Veblen's argument (1899) that "in order to gain and to hold the esteem of men, it is not sufficient merely to possess wealth or power. The wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence" (p. 42). In contrast, the findings also highlight that focusing on internal goals, such as expressing their true selves, decreases individuals' attraction to conspicuous products that are associated with public self-conscious acts. This confirms that focusing on intrinsic values causes individuals to value materialistic items less than those who focus on extrinsic values (Kasser, 2002).

## **14.2 Limitations and Future Direction of the Research**

Although the findings of this thesis support both the literature and my predictions based upon that literature, the research is not without limitations. Since I have already addressed the specific details of the limitations of the experiments at the end of each section, here I only discuss the substantial limitations.

I address multiple hypotheses in this thesis, and some are quite intuitive. This is acceptable in the sense that one purpose of academic research is to show that a layperson's naïve views and opinions may, in fact, be scientifically correct. Thus, what scholars form and also confirm theory. In this research, I provide basic hypotheses in order to develop the

fundamental theory. These basic hypotheses address the ulterior core factors hidden inside the variables that influence conspicuous consumption behavior.

Another key limitation lies in the scores that relate to social desirability. More specifically, with relation to the different focused targets, although the findings support the prediction, the desirability of conspicuous products for people in the other-focused condition is actually quite low. Likewise, even though a self-transformation motivation was primed, participants' indication of items they wrote about representing who they would like to be was also quite low. As already mentioned, the common factor of two experiments is that the participants live in the United States. Thus, there is a possibility that the more customary independent self-construal may have influenced the results (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). If so, does this denote that people who live in the United States are biased against social desirability? This might be possible as according to prior research people who live in collectivist cultures, such as the developing capitalist economies of China and India, put greater emphasis on the conspicuousness of luxury possessions compared to people who live in individualistic cultures, as they focus more on social approval (Belk, 2000; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

Also, the dependent variables used in this thesis involve some limitations in terms of the sizes and shapes of the brand logos. For instance, in experiment 2, the shapes of the brand logos are different (i.e., dynamic vs. static shape), as are their size. Additionally, in experiments 3 and 4, the Leatherology brand's image does not conspicuously display the logo, while the Salvatore Ferragamo brand's image does. Such factors could have been potential alternative explanations. Thus, dependent variables in future research should be more strictly controlled by considering these possible confounding factors, in order to minimize the alternative explanation.

Moreover, a limitation lies in the choice of non-conspicuous brands in this thesis. For instance, the non-conspicuous brands used in this thesis (i.e., Leatherology, Zap) are relatively unknown compared to the conspicuous brands (i.e., Gucci, Prada). Thus, the familiarity of the brands may be a possible confounding variable. Future research should consider this factor by using more familiar non-conspicuous brands, such as using the "Gap" brand instead of the brand "Zap".

Furthermore, another key limitation revolves around the experiments on the kin care mindset. First, although the findings support the main effect, the underlying mechanisms are still unclear. Future research should measure whether the reason that individuals with a kin care mindset prefer products with conspicuous logos less than those without a kin care mindset is indeed because they prioritize infants' needs over their own benefits. Furthermore, future research should also look more closely at whether the reason women with a kin care mindset prefer baby products with conspicuous logos more is really because they believe spending money on conspicuous baby products demonstrates their devotion to their infants.

The last key limitation relates to the findings regarding the boundary condition of the kin care mindset. Although I did not make this prediction in the hypothesis development section, I further anticipated that women in the kin care condition will be more attracted to luxury baby products with conspicuous logos over non-conspicuous logos, because there is a correlation

between money and love (Haugen, 2005) and people generally perceive conspicuous products as more expensive than luxury products with subtle signals (Han et al., 2010). However, because women in the kin care condition showed no specific preference for either luxury baby products with highly conspicuous logos or luxury baby products with non-conspicuous logos, it is also still unclear why the women in the kin care condition prefer baby products with conspicuous brands over non-conspicuous brands. Future investigation is needed to further clarify the underlying mechanism of this effect.

Future research could also attempt to provide mediating evidence for the process between kin care mindset and conspicuous consumption by measuring hormone levels of each gender. Prior research suggests that self-sacrificing behaviour occurs in the kin care mindset because of changes in hormonal levels. That is, exposure to infants increases subjects' levels of the neuronal hormone oxytocin, which promotes nurturing behaviour in both men and women and decreases men's testosterone levels (Gordon et al., 2010; Mazur, 1985; Saturn, 2014). Thus, future research could further shed additional light on whether hormonal changes do act as a mediator between the kin care mindset and a preference for conspicuous products.

Furthermore, future research should identify additional potential moderators of the kin care mind-set. For instance, it could examine how materialism acts as a moderator between the kin care mindset and conspicuous consumption. According to Kasser (2002), individuals with strong materialistic orientations are highly self-conscious and thus see themselves as social objects. Therefore, it is possible that they also see their infants as social objects. Building on this logic, I predict that individuals experiencing high materialism under a kin care mindset will desire baby-related conspicuous products for impression management, as opposed to demonstrating devoted and altruistic behaviours. Moreover, I particularly predict that individuals with strong materialistic orientations will show more positive attitudes toward self-related conspicuous baby products such as a pram, diaper bags, and baby carriers that one has to use as opposed to others that are more discretionary, such as baby bodysuit, baby hat, and bibs.

In addition, it would be worthwhile to identify potential moderators of the relationship between self-transformation and conspicuous consumption. For instance, it would be interesting to examine how self-theories act as a moderator. Prior research posits that incrementalists believe individuals can improve their personal qualities through their efforts, whereas entity theorists believe that people's personal qualities and abilities are fixed (Dweck, 2000; Dweck & Leggett, 1998). Applying entity theory, because entity theorists believe that personal qualities are fixed (Dweck, 2000) it is possible to speculate that, when the self-transformation motive is active, such individuals may be attracted to conspicuous products that have the potential to transform them into desirable persons by granting social power. In contrast, taking the incrementalist approach such individuals' behaviour may be explained by their having less need to rely on brand personalities for self-transformation. Thus, they will be less attracted to conspicuous products.

Lastly, in future research it would be interesting both theoretically and empirically to explore the interaction effect between different focused targets and different self-concept related

motivations. More specifically, I predict that individuals under both the self-focused and self-expression motive conditions would strongly prefer non-conspicuous products over conspicuous products, because they do not need to express their true inner selves as much through conspicuous products, which have socially-favourable indicators. Also, I speculate that it is possible that individuals under both the self-focused and transformation motive conditions would prefer non-conspicuous products, but less so. This is because they are less concerned about how others evaluate them, and therefore may gravitate less toward social indicators that convey a higher social status. As a consequence, they may believe that the luxury product itself provides enough transformation value. Moreover, I predict that individuals under the other-focused and transformation motive conditions would strongly prefer conspicuous products. The reason for this is that by choosing this option, individuals can have products that have transformation value and possible protection from potential social risks, such as social disapproval. Lastly, individuals under the other-focused and self-expression motive conditions would prefer conspicuous products but to a lesser degree, because there will be conflict between the social-self concerned about others' evaluation of them and the desire to express who they really are.

### **14.3 Theoretical Contributions**

This thesis offers several substantial theoretical contributions. First and foremost, the research makes an important contribution to the conspicuous consumption literature by identifying three core factors that influence conspicuous consumption. This makes an important contribution because, while past studies have shown how various factors such as power, culture and social class affect conspicuous consumption (e.g., Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008), they did not determine how the ulterior factors hidden inside such factors influence conspicuous consumption behaviour.

A second important contribution to the literature on conspicuous consumption is that while prior research has focused heavily on how antecedents such as the mating mindset heighten conspicuous consumption (e.g., Lee & Shrum, 2012; Sundie et al., 2011), this research sheds light on the antecedents that attenuate conspicuous consumption. This thesis highlights that focusing on internal factors (self-focus, self-expression motive and kin care mindset) leads individuals to place less emphasis on social approval. This, in turn, makes individuals less attracted to conspicuous products that have social communicative value.

Third, this thesis also contributes to the conspicuous consumption literature by providing results consistent with those of prior research in terms of the operational definitions. Across the eight experiments, the findings show that the level of conspicuous consumption increases as the logo size and pattern are enlarged. Such findings confirm those of prior studies which concluded that the general public tends to misperceive the value of subtle signals, and thus perceives luxury products with conspicuous logos and patterns as more expensive and high-end (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010).

Lastly, this thesis contributes by providing new operational definitions, such as difficult consumption situation, and by operationalizing priming methods such as different motivations and kin care mindset priming. Unlike other prior study in the domain, the present research shows the desirability of conspicuous products through using eye-tracking measurement.

#### **14.4 Practical Implications**

The findings of this thesis also yield interesting managerial implications. Firstly, advertising managers could use the findings of this research to promote conspicuous as well as non-conspicuous products more effectively. This research reveals that individuals seek out conspicuous products when they are engaged in pursuing external goals. These external goals include focusing more on others and having desire to transform themselves into the person they wish to be. On the other hand, individuals seek out non-conspicuous products when they are engaged in pursuing internal goals. These internal goals include focusing more on the inner-self or having desire to express who they really are. Based on these findings, when advertising managers promote conspicuous products, they should associate promotional messages with external goal-related words such as “transform,” “admire,” and “others,” as well as use social appeal. For example, in terms of the advertising message, they could use a message such as “Elevate yourself to the next-level – everyone will admire” with a picture of a woman or man holding a conspicuous brand product at a social events and guests looking at the person with admiration. In contrast, when advertising managers promote non-conspicuous products, they should associate promotional messages with internal goal-related words such as “true-self” or “who you are.” In terms of the advertising message, an example might be messages such as “This is who I really am,” “It defines who I am,” or “I like what I like.” Also, advertising managers should use personal appeal rather than social appeal when they promote non-conspicuous products.

The findings could also be of interest to luxury store retailers. They should recommend conspicuous products to customers who are looking for a luxury item they could carry to a social function or event to gain social approval or attention. However, if mothers who have infants enter the store, they should lead them to the baby product section instead of showing products for the mothers themselves. Doing so will allow them to maintain long-term relationships with customers by recommending appropriate luxury goods.

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, the findings will be of interest to government and social welfare agencies that want to help people control their purchases of conspicuous products. Government and social welfare agencies should construct free programmes or create a public service campaign to educate people about ways to create a solid connection with oneself and be less concerned about others’ opinions and social approval.

## **14.5 Concluding Remarks**

The present work contributes novel insights to the literature on conspicuous consumption (Griskevicius et al., 2007; Mazzocco et al., 2012; Rucker & Galinsky, 2009) and lays a strong foundation for further research investigating this fascinating and important topic. The work demonstrates that focusing on external values, such as being focused on others and motivated to transform themselves into the person they wish to be leads individuals to engage in conspicuous consumption more than focusing on internal values, such as self-focus, self-expression and kin care does. Overall, this thesis highlights that the “desire for approval by society” in order to fulfil external goals encourages individuals to spend money on unproductive conspicuous products.



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## Appendix 1

**Table 1.2**

### Conspicuous Consumption: An Empirical Evidence

Authors	Topics of Conspicuous Consumption			Conspicuous measure	Key findings	What conspicuous product mean	Target's ulterior motives
	External	Internal	Consequence				
Rucker & Galinsky (2008)	Power			A single measure of willingness to pay using a 12-point scale and an open-ended response.	Powerless individuals have a higher willingness to pay for conspicuous products than powerful individuals.	Social status	Alleviate emotional distress and restore psychological well-being.
Rucker & Galinsky (2009)	Power			A single measure of purchase intention (a 12-point scale), a single measure of target's attitudes toward status advertisement (a 12-point semantic differential scale), an open-ended question to generate a slogan for a picture of a BMW automobile, four items to measure overall preference for conspicuous product using a 12-point scale (visible/non-visible, very small/very large, unnoticeable/noticeable, and conspicuous/inconspicuous).	Powerless individuals exhibit more interest in conspicuous product than powerful individuals.	Social status	Alleviate emotional distress and restore psychological well-being.
Dubois et al. (2012)	Power			A single choice of food or containers among a set of three or five options (small to large) and a number of foods taken or eaten.	Powerless individuals prefer larger option within a set than powerful individuals.	Social status	Alleviate emotional distress and restore psychological well-being.

Rucker et al. (2014)	Power	A single measure of willingness to pay using a sliding scale.	Individuals who experience powerlessness have a higher willingness to pay for conspicuous products than powerful individuals. In contrast, powerful individuals who focus on expectations of power have a higher willingness to pay for conspicuous products compared to powerless individuals.	Social status	(Experience powerlessness) alleviates emotional distress and restores psychological well-being.  (Expectation of power) desire to meet expectations of others around them.
Han et al. (2010)	Social class	A single choice of handbag among three pairs of purses.	Middle class individuals prefer conspicuous product at higher rate more than high class individuals.	Social status	Transform their lives by belonging to the social group that individuals want to associate with.
Ordabayeva & Chandon (2011)	Social class	A single choice of whether to spend money on a conspicuous product or a utilitarian product.	When equality is low, low social class individuals desire to acquire conspicuous products more than when equality is high.	Social status	Transform their lives by belonging to the social group that individuals want to associate with.
Mazzocco et al. (2012)	Social class	A single measure of product desirability using a 10-point scale and a single measure of desire to own/purchase various conspicuous products using a 10-point scale.	Temporary feelings of low-social class motivate individuals to desire conspicuous products.	Social status	Transform their lives by belonging to the social group that individuals want to associate with.
Belk (2000)	Culture	In-depth-interview	Collectivists (Zimbabwe) engage in	Social status	Transform their lives by belonging to the

				conspicuous consumption to imitate individuals from more developed countries (American and British).		social group that individuals want to associate with.
Üstuner & Holt (2010)	Culture	In-depth-interview		Collectivists (Turkish) high-social class individuals engage in conspicuous consumption to imitate individuals from more developed countries (American).	Social status	Transform their lives by belonging to the social group that individuals want to associate with.
Shukla & Purani (2012)	Culture	A single measure of importance of conspicuous value (other-directed symbolic/expressive value) of luxury product using a 5-point scale.		Collectivists (Indian) place more value on conspicuous value of luxury products than individualists (British).		
Wooten (2006)	Demographic (age)	Interview		Adolescents (age 18-23) use conspicuous products to avoid any potential criticisms from their dominant peer group.		Prevent any potential harm from others (security blanket).
Lee & Shrum (2012)	Social Exclusion (social exclusion)	Rucker and Galinsky's (2009) preference for a conspicuous products scale (modified 12-point to 9-point scale), a single choice between T-shirts (Nike, Calvin Klein) and cap (Nike) with different logo sizes (no logo/logo, small /large).		Being ignored threatens self-efficacy needs; thus, individuals seek conspicuous products to reinforce their existence.	Social status	Alleviate emotional distress and restore psychological well-being.
Nunes,	Economic	Compared secondary data		During recession	Social status	

<i>Drèze, &amp; Han (2011)</i>	situation (recession)		during recession period (January 2008 - May 2009).	period, leading luxury product companies made their brand logo more conspicuous on their products to attract individuals who wish to display social status.		
Kamakura & Du (2012)	Economic situation (recession)		Secondary data	In recession, individuals spend less money on conspicuous products compared to spending during economic expansion.	Social status	
Richins (1994)		Materialism	Measure list of individuals' most important possession by open-ended response.	High-materialism individuals possess more conspicuous products than low-materialism individuals.	Social status	Alleviate emotional distress and restore psychological well-being.
Watson (2003)		Materialism	A single measure (a 5-point scale) of how individuals feel about people borrowing money for over 90 days to purchase 24 different types of products.	High-materialism individuals show more positive attitude toward borrowing money to purchase conspicuous products than low-materialism individuals.	Social status	Transform their lives by belonging to the social group that individuals want to associate with.
Braun & Wicklund (1989)		Psychological (security need)	Open-ended by asking to list products that participants own which display any logo or color and write down participant's favourite brand.	Insecure individuals showed more positive attitude toward conspicuous products.	Social status	Alleviate emotional distress and restore psychological well-being.
Sivanathan & Pettit (2010)		Psychological (esteem need)	A single measure of willingness to pay using an open-ended response.	Individuals with low self-esteem (low social class) desire conspicuous products to restore self-worth.	Social status	Alleviate emotional distress and restore psychological well-being.

Stillman et al. (2012)	Belief (spiritual)	Griskevicius et al.'s (2007) willingness to pay for conspicuous products scale.	Highly religious individuals spend less money on conspicuous products.	Social status	
McFerran, Aquino, & Tracy (2014)	Emotion (pride)	Measure attitude towards the brand, and a desire to purchase conspicuous products (e.g., Mercedes Benz automobiles, Prada sunglasses) using a 7-point scale.	Individuals who experienced authentic pride desired conspicuous products more than individuals who experienced hubristic pride.	Trophy	Reward themselves
Griskevicius et al. (2007)	Evolutionary psychology (mating mind-set)	Measure willingness to pay for five conspicuous products by using 11-point scale.	Mating mind-set motivates men to acquire conspicuous products more than women.	High-quality genes	Signal individual's high-quality genes to attract mate,
Sundie et al. (2011)	Evolutionary psychology (mating mind-set)	\$2000 budget allocation among 36 products and services that varied in conspicuousness, purchase intention on conspicuous product using a 9-point scale.	Mating mind-set (short-term) motivate men to acquire conspicuous product more than women.	High-quality genes	Signal individual's high-quality genes to attract mate.
Lens et al. (2012)	Evolutionary psychology (female ovulation)	Recall task	Around ovulation, women recalled larger proportion of men's conspicuous products than women in other phases.		
Wang & Griskevicius (2014)	Evolutionary psychology (same-sex competition)	Draw a brand logo on blank designer handbag, dress shoes, t-shirt, and sports car photos, measure how much participants are willing to	Activating a motive to guard a mate triggered women to seek conspicuous products to deter rivals and	Signal information to others (their romantic partner is especially devoted to them).	Mate guarding (to deter rivals).

		spend to win a \$200 gift card to a luxury store using open-ended response, measure willingness to pay for four different conspicuous products (mobile phone, handbag, dress shoes, and jewellery).	guard their romantic partner.
Park & John (2010)	Self perception	Participants carried either conspicuous product (Victoria Secret's shopping bag, MIT pen) or inconspicuous product (Old Navy, Uni-Ball pen) and measured product experience.	Entity theorists affected by conspicuous products (i.e., Victoria's Secret shopping bag, MIT pen) than incremental theorists.
McFerran et al. (2014)	Self-perception	Participants wrote luxury products they own using an open-ended response.	Individuals who describe their ownership of a luxury brand exhibit greater hubristic pride than who didn't.
Nelissen & Meijers (2011)	Others' perceptions	Same experimenter wore both conspicuous (Ralph Lauren Polo, Tommy Hilfiger) and inconspicuous t-shirt (logo/no logo, luxury/non-luxury), measured how observer's perception varies by product conspicuousness.	Displaying conspicuous product enhances others' status perception of them. Thus, when individual wore a conspicuous t-shirt, others were more likely to comply with the request, and wearer received more financial benefits than when the same individual wore an inconspicuous t-shirt.



Ferraro, Kirmani, & Matherly (2013)	Others' perceptions	Manipulated conspicuous brand usage by the way experimenter interacted with their conspicuous brand (Apple ipad, Tiffany shopping bag) and then measured observer's attitude toward the brand and the experimenter.	When observers have low self-brand connection, they exhibit less favourable attitude toward both the conspicuous brand user and the brand itself, especially when users are using brand products for impression management purpose.
McFerran et al. (2014)	Others' perceptions	Participants read the short-story which manipulated product level (luxury or non-luxury) and measured author's feeling of pride and prosocial qualities.	Individuals who possess conspicuous products (e.g., Gucci, Rolex, and Bose) were evaluated negatively (less prosocial).
Wang & Wallendorf (2006)	Happiness		High-materialism individuals dissatisfied with their conspicuous product (sunglass, car) purchase because of never-ending discrepancies between actual and ideal-self.
Winkelmann (2012)	Happiness	Secondary data	Individuals who purchased conspicuous products (Ferrari and Porsches) exhibited low income satisfaction.

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## Appendix 2

### Experiment 1: Self- and Other-focus

#### SURVEY INTRO

## Consumer Survey

#### CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates your thoughts and behaviour across many different situations. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Completion of the questionnaire will be taken as indicating your consent to participate. You may withdraw from this research at any time, without any adverse consequences.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies. If the questions or tasks seem very different from each other, this is because we are testing several different ideas. It will take about 7 minutes to complete. Please be as honest and accurate as you can. There is no physical risk involved in this study to you. The records of this study will be kept completely private and confidential. Any report of this study will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participant.

\*It is very important that you complete all questions without any distractions (e.g., watching TV, listening to music, instant message, chatting). And please do not complete this survey while completing other surveys at the same time.

Your consent to participate is indicated by clicking the button below.

#### FOCUSED TARGET INTRO

## TASK #1: Examining Thought Process

The purpose of this particular task is to investigate how verbal stimuli affect your thought process.

#### MANIPULATION\_OTHER-FOCUS

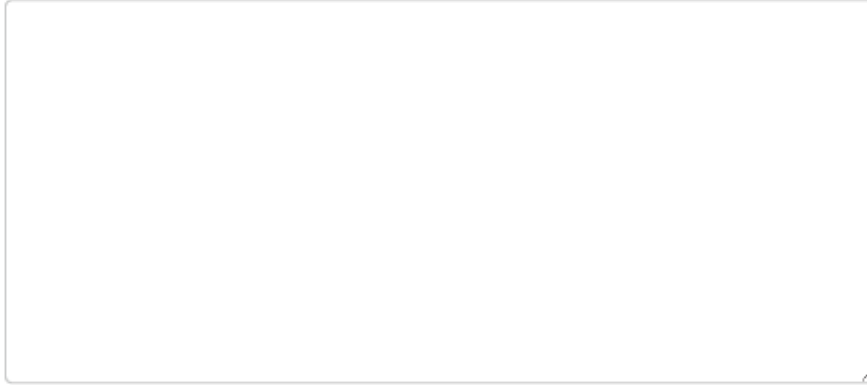
These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.  
First Click: 0 seconds  
Last Click: 0 seconds  
Page Submit: 0 seconds  
Click Count: 0 clicks

Please incorporate as many words in the below as you could into a story which **describes an event, it antecedents and outcomes, and the thoughts and feelings of person taking part in the event.**

(Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).

Words:

"he" or "she," "him" or "her," "his" or "hers", "together," "walk," "park," "flowers," "bicycle," "weather," "grass."



#### MANIPULATION\_SELF-FOCUS

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

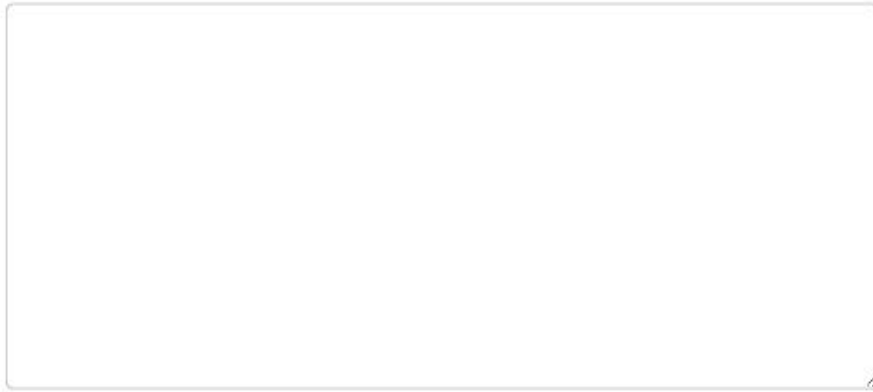
Click Count: 0 clicks

Please incorporate as many words in the below as you could into a story which **describes an event, it antecedents and outcomes, and the thoughts and feelings of person taking part in the event.**

(Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).

Words:

"I," "me," "myself," "alone," "walk," "park," "flowers," "bicycle," "weather," "grass."



DV INTRO

## TASK #2: Consumers' Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories.

DV MEASURES

Imagine that you are going to buy a passport cover at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Brand: Leatherology  
Price: \$53



Brand: Salvatore Ferragamo  
Price: \$120



Imagine that you are going to buy a Prada bag at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Definitely Design A

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Definitely Design B

Imagine that you are shopping at a luxury store. Finally, you found the bag you have wanted for so long. Only two are left, but each item has some defects. However, because of these defects, the bag is selling at a 20% discount. Normally, this brand would never discount products. You decide to purchase one of the two bags. Which option would you prefer?

Option A	Option B
All conditions are fine except the <u>brand logo is damaged</u>  (Others may find out about this damage, but this defect won't affect the bag's use).	All conditions are fine except the <u>zipper is damaged</u>  (Others won't find out about this damage, but this defect makes the bag inconvenient to use).

Definitely option A

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Definitely option B

Imagine that you are going to buy a Gucci iPad case at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Design A



Design B

Definitely  
design A



Definitely  
design B

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Mercedes-Benz** car at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Design A



Design B

Definitely  
design A



Definitely  
design B

Imagine that you are going to buy a **travel luggage** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Brand: Hartge  
Price: \$45



Brand: Calvin Klein  
Price: \$150

Definitely Hartge | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely Calvin Klein

#### M\_CHECK

**\*\*Question regarding TASK #1: WRITING STORY**

When I wrote the story in the TASK 1, the story was....

Focused on OTHER PERSON  
(e.g., he or she, him or her, his or hers, together) | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Focused on the SELF  
(e.g., I, me, myself, alone)

#### DEMO

How do you feel at the moment?

Very sad | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Very happy

How is your mood right now?

Very bad | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Very good

What is your gender?

Male  
☐

Female  
☐

What is your age? (\_\_\_\_years old)

**SURVEY CODE INTRO**

**SURVEY CODE WILL BE SHOWN IN THE NEXT PAGE.**

**CODE1**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**SURVEY CODE: nhfg123**

**CODE2**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**SURVEY CODE: ydqe245**

**CODE 3**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**SURVEY CODE: htye246**



## Appendix 3

### Experiment 2: Underlying Mechanism of Different Foci

#### SURVEY INTRO

## Consumer Survey

#### CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates your thoughts and behaviour across many different situations. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Completion of the questionnaire will be taken as indicating your consent to participate. You may withdraw from this research at any time, without any adverse consequences.

It will take about 3 minutes to complete. Please be as honest and accurate as you can. There is no physical risk involved in this study to you.

\*It is very important that you complete all questions without any distractions (e.g., watching TV, listening to music, instant message, chatting). And please do not complete this survey while completing other surveys at the same time.

Your consent to participate is indicated by clicking the button below.

#### MANIPULATION\_INTRO

### TASK: Consumer Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumer preference across many different situations.

#### HNJ CONDITION

**Note that your decision will be evaluated by the others later and you might be asked to justify your decision.**

**In order to do that, please print your first name below and initial each page of the choice part.**

**Your first name:**

YOUR INITIAL:

Imagine that you are going to buy a travel luggage at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the scale underneath to indicate your preference.



Brand: Freddy  
Price: \$150

Brand: Burberry  
Price: \$300

Definitely Freddy | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely Burberry

*I made the above choice because of ...*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
the brand logo visibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
the quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

LNJ CONDITION

Note that your choices will remain totally confidential.

Imagine that you are going to buy a **travel luggage** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the scale underneath to indicate your preference.



**Brand: Freddy**  
**Price: \$150**



**Brand: Burberry**  
**Price: \$300**

Definitely Freddy | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely Burberry

***I made the above choice because of ...***

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
the brand logo visibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
the quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**DEMO**

What is your gender?

Male  
☐

Female  
☐

What is your age? (\_\_\_\_ years old)

SURVEY CODE INTRO

SURVEY CODE WILL BE SHOWN IN THE NEXT PAGE.

CODE1

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

SURVEY CODE: WETW8

CODE2

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

SURVEY CODE: YUIYI9

CODE 3

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

SURVEY CODE: HMJKY8

## Appendix 4

### Experiment 3: Self-Transformation versus Expression Motives

#### SURVEY INTRO

## Consumer Survey

#### CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates your thoughts and behaviour across many different situations. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Completion of the questionnaire will be taken as indicating your consent to participate. You may withdraw from this research at any time, without any adverse consequences.

It will take about 3 minutes to complete. Please be as honest and accurate as you can. There is no physical risk involved in this study to you. The records of this study will be kept completely private and confidential. Any report of this study will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participants.

**\*It is very important that you complete all questions without any distractions (e.g., watching TV, listening to music, instant message, chatting). And please do not complete this survey while completing other surveys at the same time.**

Your consent to participate is indicated by clicking the button below.

#### DV INTRO

## TASK: Consumer Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumer preference.

#### DV MEASURE

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Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Imagine that you are going to buy an iPad case at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Brand: Amouage



Brand: Gucci

Definitely  
Amouage



Definitely  
Gucci

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

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Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Please read the following question and indicate your thoughts.



Brand: Amouage



Brand: Gucci

How likely is it that each of the following would happen if you were able to buy the Gucci iPad case instead of the Amouage iPad case?

*If I own the Gucci iPad case (rather than the Amouage iPad case).....*

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Moderately Likely	Likely	Very Likely
Other people would respect me more	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would feel like a more important person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd feel more self-confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would become more attractive to other people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My appearance would be improved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Please read the following question and indicate your thoughts.



**Brand: Amouage**



**Brand: Gucci**

How likely is it that each of the following would happen if you were able to buy the Gucci iPad case instead of the Amouage iPad case?

*If I own the Gucci iPad case (rather than the Amouage iPad case).....*

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Moderately Likely	Likely	Very Likely
I can express who I really am	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other people would see my true self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be better able to show aspects of my inner self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can express my feeling publicly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other people would know my preference	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

and opinion



#### DEMO

What is your gender?

Male

☐

Female

☐

What is your age? (\_\_\_\_ years old)

#### SURVEY CODE INTRO

**SURVEY CODE WILL BE SHOWN IN THE NEXT PAGE.**

#### CODE1

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**SURVEY CODE: rr55**

#### CODE2

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**SURVEY CODE: 1w1w**

#### CODE 3

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**SURVEY CODE: 33gg**



## Appendix 5

### Follow-up Experiment:

### Are Conspicuous Products Related to the Ideal Self-Image?

#### SURVEY INTRO

## Consumer Survey

#### CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates your thoughts and behaviour across many different situations. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Completion of the questionnaire will be taken as indicating your consent to participate. You may withdraw from this research at any time, without any adverse consequences.

It will take about 3 minutes to complete. Please be as honest and accurate as you can. There is no physical risk involved in this study to you. The records of this study will be kept completely private and confidential. Any report of this study will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participants.

\*It is very important that you complete all questions without any distractions (e.g., watching TV, listening to music, instant message, chatting). And please do not complete this survey while completing other surveys at the same time.

Your consent to participate is indicated by clicking the button below.

#### DV INTRO

### TASK: General Thought about Product

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigate people's general thought.

#### DV MEASURES

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Which Gucci ipad do you think is more relatable to people's ideal-self image?



Design A



Design B

Definitely  
design A



Definitely  
design B

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Which Burberry t-shirt do you think is more relatable to people's ideal-self image?



Option G



Option H

Definitely  
Option G



Definitely  
Option H

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Which passport do you think is more relatable to people's ideal-self image?



Brand: Leatherology  
Price: \$53



Brand: Salvatore Ferragamo  
Price: \$120

Definitely  
Leatherology



Definitely  
Salvatore Ferragamo

DEMO

What is your gender?

Male  
☐

Female  
☐

What is your age? (\_\_\_\_ years old)

SURVEY CODE WILL BE SHOWN IN THE NEXT PAGE.

SURVEY CODE1

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

SURVEY CODE: DSF23

SURVEY CODE2

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION  
SURVEY COD23

## Appendix 6a

### Experiment 4: Self-Transformation versus Self-Expression Motive (Self-Expression Condition)



# Marketing Survey

*Thank you for participating in this survey. This is collaborative research study. So, you will be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies. If the questions or tasks seem very different from each other, this is because we are testing several different ideas. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes total to complete. Please provide accurate, thorough, and thoughtful information while completing the survey. Note that your response of this study will be kept completely private and confidential.*

*By completing this questionnaire, you are indicating your consent to participate in this research. You do not need to answer any question you do wish to.*

*Thanks.*

# TASK#1: CREATIVE WRITING SKILLS

The purpose of this particular task is to examining your creative skills through writing stories.

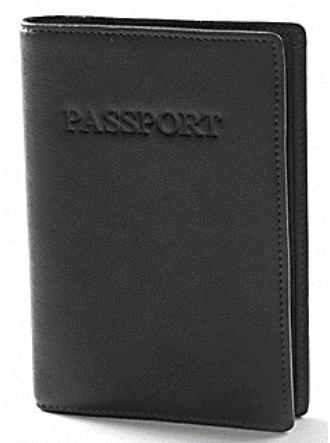
**Write down the items (e.g., clothes, accessories, car) that give you the feeling this item expresses who I am, my self-identity.**

(e.g., Whenever I carry my black bag, I feel like I am the most “me” because it reflects my personality of someone who likes simplicity. I think this item does a great job of communicating who I am and how I want to be seen by the world.)

# TASK#2: Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories.

Imagine that you are going to buy a **passport cover** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



**Product G**  
**Brand: Leatherology**  
**Price: \$57**



**Product H**  
**Brand: Salvatore Ferragamo**  
**Price: \$110**

Definitely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Definitely  
product G product H

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Gucci ipad case** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



**Design A**



**Design B**

Definitely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Definitely  
Design A Design B

Imagine that you are buying one T-shirt with a brand logo on the front. Your new t-shirt will have a logo that goes on the front of the shirt.



You can custom design the size of the brand logo. Please draw the size of the logo that you would like to have on your t-shirt. **You only need to draw the outline, not the details of the logo.** You can have the logo be as small or as large as you like.





**\*\*Questions regarding yourself**

**1. How do you feel at the moment?**

Very sad    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Very happy

**2. How is your mood right now?**

Very bad    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Very good

**3. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_years old**

**4. Please specify your gender.    \_\_\_\_\_Male,    \_\_\_\_\_Female**

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix 6b

### Experiment 4: Self-Transformation versus Self-Expression Motive (Self-Transformation Condition)



# Marketing Survey

*Thank you for participating in this survey. This is collaborative research study. So, you will be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies. If the questions or tasks seem very different from each other, this is because we are testing several different ideas. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes total to complete. Please provide accurate, thorough, and thoughtful information while completing the survey. Note that your response of this study will be kept completely private and confidential.*

*By completing this questionnaire, you are indicating your consent to participate in this research. You do not need to answer any question you do wish to.*

*Thanks.*

# TASK#1: CREATIVE WRITING SKILLS

The purpose of this particular task is to examining your creative skills through writing stories.

**Write down the items (e.g., clothes, accessories, car) that give you the feeling you have become the superior and ideal person you always wanted to be.**

(e.g., whenever I carry my black bag, I feel like I am representing my ideal future, whom I wish to become. The moment I carry this black bag, I instantly boost my confidence level and feel invincible. I like this feeling of being admired by others.)

# TASK#2: Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories.

Imagine that you are going to buy a **passport cover** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



**Product G**  
**Brand: Leatherology**  
**Price: \$57**



**Product H**  
**Brand: Salvatore Ferragamo**  
**Price: \$110**

Definitely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Definitely  
product G product H

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Gucci ipad case** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



**Design A**



**Design B**

Definitely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Definitely  
Design A Design B

Imagine that you are buying one T-shirt with a brand logo on the front. Your new t-shirt will have a logo that goes on the front of the shirt.



You can custom design the size of the brand logo. Please draw the size of the logo that you would like to have on your t-shirt. **You only need to draw the outline, not the details of the logo.** You can have the logo be as small or as large as you like.



**\*\*Questions regarding yourself**

**1. How do you feel at the moment?**

Very sad    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Very happy

**2. How is your mood right now?**

Very bad    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Very good

**3. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_years old**

**4. Please specify your gender.    \_\_\_\_\_Male,    \_\_\_\_\_Female**

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix 7

### Experiment 5: Self-Transformation versus Self-Expression Motive, A Replication

#### INTRO

## Consumer Survey

#### CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates your thoughts and behaviour across many different situations. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Completion of the questionnaire will be taken as indicating your consent to participate. You may withdraw from this research at any time, without any adverse consequences.

If you are agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies. If the questions or tasks seem very different from each other, this is because we are testing several different ideas. It will take about 5 minutes to complete. Please be as honest and accurate as you can. There is no physical risk involved in this study to you. The records of this study will be kept completely private and confidential. Any report of this study will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participants.

\*It is very important that you complete all questions without any distractions (e.g., watching TV, listening to music, instant message, chatting). And please do not complete this survey while completing other surveys at the same time.

Your consent to participate is indicated by clicking the button below.

#### MANIPULATION TASK INTRO

### TASK #1: CREATIVE WRITING SKILLS

The purpose of this particular task is to examining your creative skills through writing stories.

#### SELF-TRANSFORMATION

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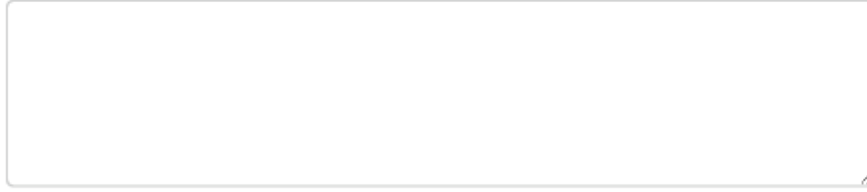
Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Write down the items (e.g., clothes, accessories, car) that give you the feeling

**you have become the superior and ideal person you always wanted to be.**

(e.g., whenever I carry my black bag, I feel like I am representing my ideal future, whom I wish to become. The moment I carry this black bag, I instantly boost my confidence level and feel invincible. I like this feeling of being admired by others.)



#### SELF-EXPRESSION

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

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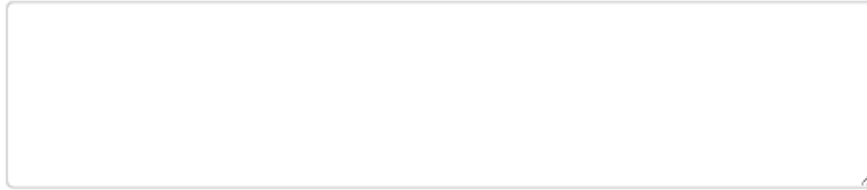
Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

**Write down the items (e.g., clothes, accessories, car) that give you the feeling this item express who I am, my self-identity.**

(e.g., whenever I carry my black bag, I feel like I am the most "me" because it reflects my personality of someone who likes simplicity. I think this item does a great job of communicating who I am and how I want to be seen by the world.)



#### DV INTRO

## TASK#2: Consumer's Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories.

#### DV NON-CONSPICUOUS

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Last Click: 0 seconds



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Click Count: 0 clicks

Imagine that you are going to buy a passport cover. How willing are you to purchase the below product?



Brand: Leatherology  
Price: \$53

Definitely would not purchase | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely would purchase

Imagine that you have gone to convenience store to buy two cans of soft drink for yourself. The store you went to sells only Coke and Sprite. What would you choose?

My choice would be:



These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds  
Last Click: 0 seconds  
Page Submit: 0 seconds  
Click Count: 0 clicks

Imagine that you are going to buy a car. How willing are you to purchase the below Mercedes-Benz?



Definitely would not purchase | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely would purchase

#### DV CONSPICUOUS

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Imagine that you are going to buy a passport cover. How willing are you to purchase the below product?



Brand: Salvatore Ferragamo  
Price: \$120

Definitely would not purchase | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely would purchase

Imagine that you have gone to convenience store to buy two cans of soft drink

for yourself. The store you went to sells only Coke and Sprite. What would you choose?

My choice would be:



These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Imagine that you are going to buy a car. How willing are you to purchase the below Mercedes-Benz?



Definitely would not purchase



Definitely would purchase

M\_CHCEK

### Question regarding the first task: Creative writing

Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

*The items I wrote down in the first task...*

represent who I actually am  
is like me



represent who I would like to be  
is like I want to be

**DEMO**

How do you feel at the moment?

Very sad | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Very happy

How is your mood right now?

Very bad | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Very good

What is your gender?

Male  
☐

Female  
☐

What is your age? (\_\_\_\_ years old)

**SURVEY CODE WILL BE SHOWN IN THE NEXT PAGE.**

**CODE1**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**SURVEY CODE: EYT46**

**CODE2**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**SURVEY CODE: EGR5**

## Appendix 8a

### Experiment 6: Kin Care Motivation and Conspicuous Consumption (Kin Care Condition)



# Marketing Survey

*Thank you for participating in this survey. This is a collaborative research study. So, you will be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies. If the questions or tasks seem very different from each other, this is because we are testing several different ideas. The survey will take between 5 to 7 minutes total to complete. Please provide accurate, thorough, and thoughtful information while completing the survey. Note that your responses are anonymous and that there are no right or wrong answers. The record of this study will be kept completely private and confidential.*

*By completing this questionnaire, you are indicating your consent to participate in this research. You do not need to answer any question you do not wish to. Thanks.*

## Task #1: Examining visualization ability

The purpose of this particular task is to examining visualization ability through writing stories.

1. Please choose one baby that you find the **most desirable as a potential child** (Please check one box)



1  
☐

2  
☐

3  
☐

2. Please indicate how **attractive** the baby that you have chosen above is.

Not at all attractive      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Definitely attractive

3. Now imagine you are preparing to take the baby on your first picnic. Please spend up to 1 minutes **writing about your ideas for the prefect first picnic with the baby you have chosen** (*Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).*

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---

---

---

## TASK #2: Consumer's Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories.

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Mercedes-Benz car** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Design A



Design B

Definitely Design A      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Definitely Design B

Imagine that you are shopping at a luxury store. Finally, you found the bag you have wanted for so long. **Only two are left, but each item has some defects.** However, because of these defects, the bag is selling at a 20% discount. Normally, this brand would never discount products. You decide to purchase one of the two bags. Which option would you prefer?

Option A	Option B
All conditions are fine except the <b><u>brand logo is damaged</u></b> (Others may find out about this damage, but this defect won't affect the bag's use).	All conditions are fine except the <b><u>zipper is damaged</u></b> (Others won't find out about this damage, but this defect makes the bag inconvenient to use).

Definitely option A      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Definitely option B

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Gucci ipad case** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



**Design A**



**Design B**

Definitely Design A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Definitely Design B
------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------------------



**\*\*Questions regarding yourself**

**1. How do you feel at the moment?**

Very sad    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Very happy

**2. How is your mood right now?**

Very bad    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Very good

**3. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_years old**

**4. Please specify your gender.    \_\_\_\_\_Male,    \_\_\_\_\_Female**

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix 8b

### Experiment 6: Kin Care Motivation and Conspicuous Consumption (Control Condition)



# Marketing Survey

*Thank you for participating in this survey. This is a collaborative research study. So, you will be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies. If the questions or tasks seem very different from each other, this is because we are testing several different ideas. The survey will take between 5 to 7 minutes total to complete. Please provide accurate, thorough, and thoughtful information while completing the survey. Note that your responses are anonymous and that there are no right or wrong answers. The record of this study will be kept completely private and confidential.*

*By completing this questionnaire, you are indicating your consent to participate in this research. You do not need to answer any question you do not wish to. Thanks.*

## Task #1: Examining visualization ability

The purpose of this particular task is to examining visualization ability through writing stories.

1. Please choose one street that you find **most desirable to walk on** (Please check one box)



1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

2. Please indicate how **attractive** the street that you have chosen above is.

Not at all  
attractive

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Definitely  
attractive

3. Now imagine being on the street you have chosen above. Please spend up to 1 minutes **write about your idea of the most pleasant weather condition in which to walk around and look at the buildings** (*Note*: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).

---

---

---

---

## TASK #2: Consumer's Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories.

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Mercedes-Benz car** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Design A



Design B

Definitely Design A      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Definitely Design B

Imagine that you are shopping at a luxury store. Finally, you found the bag you have wanted for so long. **Only two are left, but each item has some defects.** However, because of these defects, the bag is selling at a 20% discount. Normally, this brand would never discount products. You decide to purchase one of the two bags. Which option would you prefer?

Option A	Option B
All conditions are fine except the <b><u>brand logo is damaged</u></b> (Others may find out about this damage, but this defect won't affect the bag's use).	All conditions are fine except the <b><u>zipper is damaged</u></b> (Others won't find out about this damage, but this defect makes the bag inconvenient to use).

Definitely option A      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Definitely option B

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Gucci ipad case** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



**Design A**



**Design B**

Definitely Design A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Definitely Design B
------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------------------

## **\*\*Questions regarding yourself**

**1. How do you feel at the moment?**

Very sad    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Very happy

**2. How is your mood right now?**

Very bad    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Very good

**3. What is your age?** \_\_\_\_\_years old

**4. Please specify your gender.**    \_\_\_\_\_Male,    \_\_\_\_\_Female

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix 9

### Experiment 7: Kin Care Motivation & Conspicuous Consumption (Eye-Tracking)

Participant code

Participant code  
(Instructor will fill in this area):

CONDITION\_INTRO

#### TASK #1: Examining Visualization Ability

The purpose of this particular task is to examining visualization ability through writing stories. Please press the button to start the task!

MP\_KINCARE

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Please choose one baby that you find the most desirable as a potential child.



1

Baby1



2

Baby2



3

Baby3



Please indicate how **attractive** the baby that you have chosen above is.

Not at all attractive | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely attractive

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

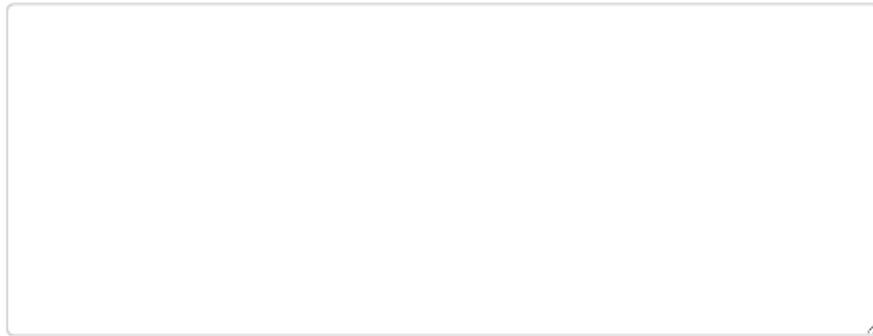
First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Now imagine you are preparing to take the baby on your first picnic. Please spend up to 1~2 minutes **writing about your ideas for the prefect first picnic with the baby you have chosen** (Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).



**Thank you. Your first task has finished.**  
**Please wait for the instructor to start the second task.**

**\*\*Question related to the TASK #1**

Please choose one more baby that you find the **most desirable to have.**





1

2

3

☐ Baby1

☐ Baby2

☐ Baby3

#### MP\_CONTROL

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Please choose one street that you find the **most desirable to walk on**.



1



2



3

Street1

☐

Street2

☐

Street3

☐

Please indicate how **attractive** the street that you have chosen above is.

Not at all attractive



Definitely attractive

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Now imagine being on the street you have chosen above. Please spend up to 1~2 minutes **writing about your ideas of the most pleasant weather condition in which to walk around and look at the buildings** (Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).

Thank you. Your first task has finished.  
**Please wait** for the instructor to start the second task.

**\*\*Question related to the TASK #1**

Please choose one more street that you find the **most desirable to walk on.**



1



2



3

- ☐ Street 1
- ☐ Street 2
- ☐ Street 3

DV

## \*\*QUESTIONS ON TASK 2

You just saw the advertisement, please indicate your answers on the below scales.

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks



Please indicate your attitude towards the advertisement above.

bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	good
dislike	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	like

Please indicate your attitude towards the brand Burberry.

bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	good
dislike quite a lot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	like quite a lot

DEMO

How do you feel at the moment?

Very sad | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Very happy

How is your mood right now?

Very bad | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Very good

What is your gender?

Male  
☐

Female  
☐

What is your age? (\_\_\_\_years old)

**The survey has finished.  
Thank you for your participation!**

## Appendix 10

### Experiment 8: Kin Care Motive and Boundary Condition

#### SURVEY INTRO

## Consumer Survey

#### CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates your thoughts and behaviour across many different situations. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Completion of the questionnaire will be taken as indicating your consent to participate. You may withdraw from this research at any time, without any adverse consequences.

If you are agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a series of unrelated studies. If the questions or tasks seem very different from each other, this is because we are testing several different ideas. It will take about 7 minutes to complete. Please be as honest and accurate as you can. There is no physical risk involved in this study to you. The records of this study will be kept completely private and confidential. Any report of this study will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participants.

\*It is very important that you complete all questions without any distractions (e.g., watching TV, listening to music, instant message, chatting). And please do not complete this survey while completing other surveys at the same time.

Your consent to participate is indicated by clicking the button below.

#### TASK INTRO

### TASK #1: Examining Visualization Ability

The purpose of this particular task is to examining visualization ability through writing stories.

#### ORDER 1MP\_KINCARE

Please choose one baby that you find the most desirable as a potential child.



Please indicate how **attractive** the baby that you have chosen above is.

Not at all attractive | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely attractive

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Click Count: 0 clicks

Now imagine you are preparing to take the baby on your first picnic. Please spend up to 2 minutes **writing about your ideas for the perfect first picnic with the baby you have chosen** (*Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).*

## TASK #2: Consumer's Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product

preference for various product categories.

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Gucci** **ipad case** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Imagine that you are going to buy a **Mercedes-Benz** car at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



**\*\*Question related to the TASK #1**

Please choose one more baby that you find the **most desirable to have**.





1



2



3

- ☐ Baby1
- ☐ Baby2
- ☐ Baby3

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby shoes** at this moment.  
Which one would you like to buy now?



Brand: Zap  
Price: \$34



Brand: Burberry  
Price: \$110

Definitely  
Zap



Definitely  
Burberry

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby hoodie** at this moment.  
Which one would you like to buy now?





**Brand: Stitch**  
**Price: \$54**



**Brand: Burberry**  
**Price: \$170**

Definitely  
Stitch

● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Definitely  
Burberry

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **GUCCI** baby bodysuit at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



**Design A**



**Design B**

Definitely  
Design A

● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Definitely  
Design B

ORDER 1 MP\_STAPLER

Please choose one stapler that you find the most desirable to own.



1

Stapler1



2

Stapler2



3

Stapler3



Please indicate how **attractive** the stapler that you have chosen above is.

Not at all attractive | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely attractive

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Click Count: 0 clicks

Now imagine owning the stapler you have chosen above. Please spend up to 2 minutes **writing about how you will use this stapler (e.g., I will use this stapler for a fun/work project)** (Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).

## TASK #2: Consumer's Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories.

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Gucci** iPad case at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Imagine that you are going to buy a **Mercedes-Benz** car at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



**\*\*Question related to the TASK #1**

Please choose one more stapler that you find the **most desirable to own**.



1



2



3

- ☐ Stapler 1
- ☐ Stapler 2
- ☐ Stapler 3

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby shoes** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



Brand: Zap  
Price: \$34



Brand: Burberry  
Price: \$110

Definitely  
Zap



Definitely  
Burberry

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby hoodie** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



**Brand: Stitch**  
**Price: \$54**



**Brand: Burberry**  
**Price: \$170**

Definitely  
Stitch



Definitely  
Burberry

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **GUCCI** baby bodysuit at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



**Design A**



**Design B**

Definitely  
Design A



Definitely  
Design B

ORDER 1 MP\_MOUSE

Please choose one mouse that you find the most desirable to own.



1

Mouse1



2

Mouse2



3

Mouse3



Please indicate how **attractive** the mouse that you have chosen above is.

Not at all attractive | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely attractive

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

First Click: 0 seconds

Last Click: 0 seconds

Page Submit: 0 seconds

Click Count: 0 clicks

Now imagine owning the mouse you have chosen above. Please spend up to 2 minutes **writing about how you will use this mouse for if you owned it** (Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).

## TASK #2: Consumer's Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories.

Imagine that you are going to buy a Gucci iPad case at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Imagine that you are going to buy a Mercedes-Benz car at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



**\*\*Question related to the TASK #1**

Please choose one more mouse that you find the **most desirable to own.**





1



2



3

- ☐ Mouse 1
- ☐ Mouse 2
- ☐ Mouse 3

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby shoes** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



**Brand: Zap**  
**Price: \$34**



**Brand: Burberry**  
**Price: \$110**

Definitely Zap | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely Burberry

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby hoodie** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?





Brand: Stitch  
Price: \$54



Brand: Burberry  
Price: \$170

Definitely  
Stitch



Definitely  
Burberry

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **GUCCI** baby bodysuit at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



Design A



Design B

Definitely  
Design A



Definitely  
Design B

ORDER 2 MP\_KINCARE

Please choose one baby that you find the most desirable as a potential child.



1

Baby1



2

Baby2



3

Baby3



Please indicate how **attractive** the baby that you have chosen above is.

Not at all attractive | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely attractive

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

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Last Click: 0 seconds

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Now imagine you are preparing to take the baby on your first picnic. Please spend up to 2 minutes **writing about your ideas for the perfect first picnic with the baby you have chosen** (*Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below*).

## TASK #2: Consumer's Product Choice

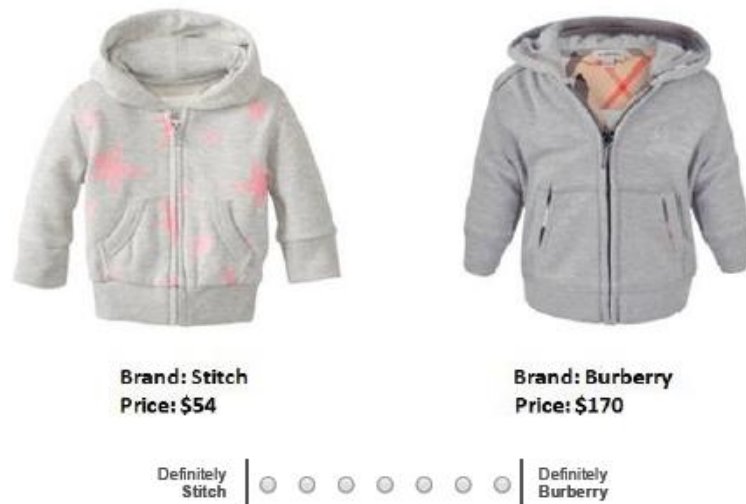
In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product

preference for various product categories.

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby shoes** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby hoodie** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **GUCCI baby bodysuit** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



Design A



Design B

Definitely Design A | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely Design B

**\*\*Question related to the TASK #1**

Please choose one more baby that you find the **most desirable to have.**



1



2



3

- ☐ Baby1
- ☐ Baby2
- ☐ Baby3

Imagine that you are going to buy a Gucci **ipad case** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Design A



Design B

Definitely  
design A



Definitely  
design B

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Mercedes-Benz** car at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Design A



Design B

Definitely  
design A



Definitely  
design B

ORDER 2 MP\_STAPLER

Please choose one stapler that you find the most desirable to own.



1

Stapler1



2

Stapler2



3

Stapler3



Please indicate how **attractive** the stapler that you have chosen above is.

Not at all attractive | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely attractive

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

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Click Count: 0 clicks

Now imagine owning the stapler you have chosen above. Please spend up to 2 minutes **writing about how you will use this stapler (e.g., I will use this stapler for a fun/work project)** (Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).

## TASK #2: Consumer's Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories.

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby shoes** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



**Brand: Zap**  
**Price: \$34**



**Brand: Burberry**  
**Price: \$110**

Definitely Zap | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely Burberry

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby hoodie** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



**Brand: Stitch**  
**Price: \$54**



**Brand: Burberry**  
**Price: \$170**

Definitely Stitch | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely Burberry



Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **GUCCI baby bodysuit** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



Design A



Design B

Definitely Design A | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely Design B

**\*\*Question related to the TASK #1**

Please choose one more stapler that you find the **most desirable to own**.



1



2



3

- ☐ Stapler 1
- ☐ Stapler 2
- ☐ Stapler 3

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Gucci ipad case** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.





Design A



Design B

Definitely  
design A



Definitely  
design B

Imagine that you are going to buy a **Mercedes-Benz** car at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Design A



Design B

Definitely  
design A



Definitely  
design B

ORDER 2 MP\_MOUSE

Please choose one mouse that you find the **most desirable to own.**



1

Mouse1



2

Mouse2



3

Mouse3



Please indicate how **attractive** the mouse that you have chosen above is.

Not at all attractive



Definitely attractive

These page timer metrics will not be displayed to the recipient.

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Click Count: 0 clicks

Now imagine owning the mouse you have chosen above. Please spend up to 2 minutes **writing about how you will use this mouse for if you owned it** (Note: it is important that you write a substantial story. Don't worry about grammar, complete sentences, spellings, or punctuation. If your thoughts or feelings recur over and over, simply keep writing them down over and over until time is up in the space below).

## TASK #2: Consumer's Product Choice

In this task, you will be participating in a survey that investigates consumers' product preference for various product categories.

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby shoes** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



**Brand: Zap**  
**Price: \$34**




**Brand: Burberry**  
**Price: \$110**

Definitely Zap


☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Definitely Burberry

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **baby hoodie** at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



**Brand: Stitch**  
**Price: \$54**



**Brand: Burberry**  
**Price: \$170**

Definitely Stitch

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Definitely Burberry

Imagine that you have a new born baby and you are going to buy a **GUCCI baby bodysuit** at this

moment. Which one would you like to buy now?



Design A



Design B

Definitely Design A | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Definitely Design B

**\*\*Question related to the TASK #1**

Please choose one more mouse that you find the **most desirable to own.**



1



2



3

- ☐ Mouse 1
- ☐ Mouse 2
- ☐ Mouse 3

Imagine that you are going to buy a Gucci ipad case at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Design A



Design B

Definitely  
design A



Definitely  
design B

Imagine that you are going to buy a Mercedes-Benz car at this moment. Which one would you like to buy now? Please use the following scale to indicate your preference.



Design A



Design B

Definitely  
design A



Definitely  
design B

M\_CHECK

**\*\*Question regarding TASK #1: WRITING STORY WITH THE IMAGE YOU HAVE CHOSEN.**

The image that I have chosen makes me think of the words.....

	Not at all					Extremely
fun	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
whimsical	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
playful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
vulnerability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

innocence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
caretaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### DEMO

How do you feel at the moment?

Very sad | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Very happy

How is your mood right now?

Very bad | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | Very good

Do you like luxury product in general?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

What is your gender?

Male ☐ Female ☐

What is your age? (\_\_\_\_years old)

#### SURVEY CODE INTRO

**SURVEY CODE WILL BE SHOWN IN THE NEXT PAGE.**

CODE1

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**SURVEY CODE: EYT46**

CODE2

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION  
SURVEY CODE: RTYRTY3

CODE 3

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION  
SURVEY CODE: DFGDFG3