

Underlying Values of Prestige Seeking and Its Influence on Brand Loyalty in Clothing Consumption

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Abstract

Prestige products, such as apparel, are infrequently purchased and require a higher level of interest and knowledge because they are strongly related to an individual's self-concept. This study was designed to conceptualize prestige seeking behaviors by investigating the underlying motives and its influence on brand loyalty. This study adapts Vigneron and Johnson's (1999) framework as a conceptualization of prestige seeking apparel consumption. A survey questionnaire was developed to measure the five underlying values of prestige consumption and brand loyalty. Data from 554 college students were used for the analysis. Results of confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL indicated that apparel prestige consumption does not consist of five distinctive dimensions. Among five theoretically driven dimensions, prestige consumption due to conspicuous, social and emotional value were highly correlated. Structural equation modeling using LISREL showed that brand loyalty was significantly influenced by prestige consumption due to conspicuous value, hedonic value, and uniqueness value.

Key words : prestige seeking, apparel consumption, brand loyalty, LISREL.

I. Introduction

The private and public value of prestige goods stems from the inherent communicative characteristics of items.¹⁾ The previous research has shown the role that status plays in communicating information about their possessors and about social relationships²⁾. According to self-consciousness theory, publicly self-conscious individuals are particularly concerned about how they appear to others while privately self-con-

scious individuals are more focused on their inner thoughts and feelings³⁾. The motivations of prestige consumption are based on interactions with people, object properties, and hedonic values. According to Vigneron and Johnson⁴⁾, people employ prestige consumption (1) to signal their wealth, power, and/or status (Conspicuous value), (2) to express a need for uniqueness (Unique value), (3) to affiliate with a desired society to enhance their self-concept (Social value), (4) to have hedonic benefits such as sensory pleasure or aesthetic beauty (Emotional

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¹ S. Dawson and J. Cavell, "Status Recognition in the 1980s: Invidious Distinction Revisited", eds. M. Wallendorf and P. Anderson, *Advances in Consumer Research* 14 (1987): 487-91.

² H. Dittmar, "Material Possessions as Stereotypes: Material Images of Different Socio-Economic Groups", *Journal of Economic Psychology* 15 (1994): 561-85.

value), (5) to enjoy excellent function of quality (Quality value).

Although luxury products usually classified as high involvement products rather than low involvement products, Horiuchi⁵⁾ observed that "the consumer decision-making process in the luxury goods market does not follow the high-involvement decision-making process of consumer behavior, although the high involvement model is generally assumed to be applicable to both luxury goods and mass-produced high-quality goods". "On the other hand, when a product is very good but has not quite achieved the status of a luxury good, consumers seem to consider it as one of the mass-market, high-quality brands. In such a case, the high-involvement decision-making process does seem to apply".

Fashion clothing as prestige products has been considered as an example of extreme-end high-involvement decision-making. The assumption is that prestige products are infrequently purchased, require a higher level of interest and knowledge because they are strongly related to an individual's self-concept⁶⁾. Clothing is regarded as products of symbolic characteristics that reflect an individual's self-concept. Symbolic attributes can be key determinants of brand selection for clothing⁷⁾. The characteristic of clothing

products that is publicly consumed makes clothing a subject of conspicuous consumption with prestige seeking. Hence, the review and analysis of prestige seeking behavior in clothing consumption are necessary to enhance our understanding prestige brands of clothing.

We can consider brand loyalty of high-end clothing selection as a result of consumers' prestige seeking behaviors. Consumers likely associate prestige brands with high quality and certain symbolic value. In turn, consumers easily develop positive attitudes toward prestige brands, and an attached symbolic meaning of a certain brand likely results in strong brand loyalty⁸⁾.

The Korean culture, as in most of East Asia, is influenced by the dominance of the Confucian religion, which transcends into business, individual behavior, and family structure. Kahn⁹⁾ stated that, "the modern Confucian ethic is designed to create and foster loyalty, dedication, responsibility, and commitment and to intensify identification with the organization and one's role in the organization." Although Western knowledge and technology have entered the Korean culture, Confucian idealism still predominates in Korea today¹⁰⁾.

Confucius emphasized social harmony and community's well being. The most distinct and important difference compared to Western cul-

³ A. Fenigstein, M. F. Scheier, and A. H. Buss, "Public and Private Self-Consciousness: Assessment and Theory", *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 43 (1975): 522-7.

⁴ F. Vigneron, and L. W. Johnson, "A Review and a Conceptual Framework of Prestige-Seeking Consumer Behavior", *Academy of Marketing Science Review [Online]* 99 (1) (1999). Available: <http://www.amsreview.org/amsrev/theory/vigneron01-99.html>

⁵ Y. Horiuchi, "A Systems Anomaly: Consumer Decision-Making Process for Luxury Goods", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (1984).

⁶ J. R. Rossiter, L. Percy, and R. J. Donovan, "A better Advertising Planning Grid", *Journal of Advertising Research* 31 (1991): 11-21.

⁷ E. C. Hirschman, and M. B. Holbrook. "Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Propositions", *Journal of Marketing* 46 (1982): 92-101.

⁸ S. Bhat, and S. K. Reddy, "Symbolic and Functional Positioning Brands", *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 15 (1998): 33-43.

⁹ H. Kahn, *World Economic Development: 1979 and Beyond*. Boulder: West-View Press (1979).

¹⁰ F. Elashmawi, "Improving Your Business in Korea", *Tokyo Business Today* 62 (1994): 38-41.

ture is importance of group influences especially regarding the decision making process. For example, problem recognition for Korean consumers is rarely internally generated. A person's behavioral intentions are greatly influenced by the social influences such as group conformity and face-saving pressures. As face-saving pressure is a reflection of one's own role in comparison with others, it is especially important when purchasing a socially visible product such as prestige brand clothing.

Due to the economic growth of Korea, more disposable income and expectations of improved quality and diversity of choice and style have increased among Korean consumers¹¹. It is expected that the patterns of consumption will continue to shift to high quality goods and amenities similar to those of advanced Western countries.

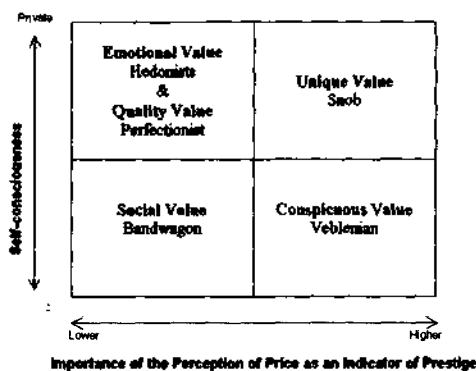
Recently, prestige brands of clothing have become to place as the first in the wish list Korean consumers. Especially, the sales of imported fashion goods has been dramatically increased through various distribution channels¹².

The present study was designed to conceptualize Korean consumers' prestige seeking behaviors by investigating the underlying motives and its influence on brand loyalty. This study adapts Vigneron and Johnson's¹³ framework as a conceptualization of prestige seeking behavior.

II. Theoretical Background

1. Underlying Values of Prestige Seeking

Vigneron and Johnson¹⁴ extended the prestige



(Fig. 1) Prestige Seeking Consumer Behaviors.¹⁵
(Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, p. 6)

-seeking framework based on self conscious theory and perception of price as an indicator of prestige (Fig. 2). Self-Consciousness theory recognizes two types of self-conscious people. (a) publicly self-conscious persons are particularly concerned about how they appear to others, and (b) privately self-conscious persons are more focused on their inner thoughts and feelings. They assume that the consumption of prestige may vary according to this susceptibility to others.

2. Conspicuous Value: The Veblen Effect

Bearden and Etzel¹⁶ showed that the conspicuousness of a product was positively related to its susceptibility to reference-group influence, suggesting publicly consumed luxury products were more likely to be conspicuous products than privately consumed luxury products. The utility of prestige products may be to display wealth and power and one could consider that

¹¹ D. Ekvall, "Quality beyond the 90s: The Pacific Rim", *Quality* 29 (1990): 16-8.

¹² A War in Prestige Fashion Goods through Department Stores and Specialty Stores, *Korea Textile News*, 8 December, 2000.

¹³ F. Vigneron and L. W. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 3.

¹⁴ F. Vigneron and L. W. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 3.

¹⁵ F. Vigneron and L. W. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 3.

¹⁶ W. O. Bearden and M. J. Etzel, "Reference Group Influence on Product and Brand Purchase Decisions", *Journal of Consumer Research* 9 (1982): 183-94.

highly visible prestige brands would dominate the conspicuous segment of the consumers.

Consumers would use a price cue as a surrogate indicator of prestige¹⁷. This argument is further supported by the marketing literature which recommend the use of "prestige-pricing strategy" when appealing to status-conscious consumers¹⁸.

3. Unique Value: The Snob Effect

"Snob effect is in evidence when status sensitive consumers come to reject a particular product as and when it is seen to be consumed by the general mass of people"¹⁹. Research reveals that a perceived limited supply of products enhances the consumers' value and preference for a brand²⁰. "Items that are in limited supply have high value, while those readily available are less desirable. Rare items command respect and prestige"²¹. In addition, Verhallen and Robben²² stated that scarcity of products has an even greater effect on demand if people also perceive the product as unique, popular and expensive. Groth and McDaniel²³ stated that "brand exclusivity is the positioning of a brand

such that it can command a high price relative to similar products". They suggest applying a prestige-pricing strategy to support the marketing of luxury or high-quality products.

4. Social Value: The Bandwagon Effect

One of the motives people desire to possess prestige brands comes from the bandwagon effect. People's desire to possess prestige brands may serve as a symbolic marker of group membership. The previous research has suggested that the bandwagon effect makes an individual affiliate with prestige groups and/or be distinguished from non-prestige reference groups²⁴⁻²⁶. Bandwagon consumers might use the perceived extended-self value of prestige brands to enhance their self-concept. Leibenstein²⁷ regarded the effect made from the lower-end brand extension as the bandwagon effect. The bandwagon effect may be conceptualized as the antecedent of the snob effect^{28,29}. Dubois and Duquesne³⁰ argued, even though snobs and followers buy luxury products for apparently opposite reasons, their basic motivation is really the same; whether through differentiation or group affiliation,

¹⁷ D. R. Lichtenstein, N. M. Ridgway, and R. G. Netemeyer, "Price Perceptions and Consumer Shopping Behavior: A Field Study", *Journal of Marketing Research* 30 (1993): 234-45.

¹⁸ J. C. Groth, and S. W. McDaniel, "The Exclusive Value Principle: the Basis for Prestige Pricing", *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 10 (1993): 10-6.

¹⁹ R. S. Mason, *Conspicuous Consumption*, New York: St. Martin's Press (1981), 128.

²⁰ I. Pantzalis, *Exclusivity Strategies in Pricing and Brand Extension*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona (1995).

²¹ M. R. Solomon, *Consumer Behavior* (2nd ed.), Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon (1994), 570.

²² T. M. Verhallen, and H. S. Robben, "Scarcity and Preference: an Experiment on Unavailability and Product Evaluation", *Journal of Economic Psychology* 15 (1994): 315-31.

²³ J. C. Groth, and S. W. McDaniel, "The Exclusive Value Principle: the Basis for Prestige Pricing", *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 10 (1993): 10-6.

²⁴ R. W. Belk, "Possessions and the Extended Self", *Journal of Consumer Research* 15 (1988): 139-68.

²⁵ H. Dittmar, "Material Possessions as Stereotypes: Material Images of Different Socio-Economic Groups", *Journal of Economic Psychology* 15 (1994): 561-85.

²⁶ M. R. Solomon, "The Role of Products as Social Stimuli: a Symbolic Interactionist Approach", *Journal of Consumer Research* 10 (1983): 319-29.

²⁷ H. Leibenstein, "Bandwagon, Snob, and Veblen Effects in the Theory of Consumers' Demand", *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 64 (1950): 183-207.

they want to enhance their self-concept.

5. Emotional Value: The Hedonic Effect

From time to time, consumer choice might be driven by noncognitive and unconscious motives. Certain goods and services have been known to possess emotional value in excess of their functional utility^{31,32}. Especially, luxury products are likely to be subject to hedonic consumption. The emotional value of hedonic consumption was an essential characteristic of luxury product consumption, mentioning that "...a vast majority subscribes to the hedonic motive ('One buys luxury goods primary for one's pleasure')..."³³. Research has identified the emotional values associated with the luxury consumption, such as sensory pleasure, aesthetic beauty, or excitement³⁴. Vigneron & Johnson³⁵ referred to the hedonic effect when consumers value the perceived utility acquired from a prestige brand to arouse feelings and affective states. Therefore, people who relate to personal values that depend upon the individual alone for fulfillment, such as self-respect, for example, role-relaxed consu-

mers or inner-directed consumers, and who are not susceptible to interpersonal influence, for example, conformity to groups' norms, when purchasing and using prestige brands may represent hedonist type of consumers.

6. Quality Value: The Perfectionism Effect

Prestige brands are expected to show evidence of greater quality, and luxury or premium brands should display even greater levels of quality³⁶. People likely perceive higher prices as evidence of greater quality³⁷. In practice, "high prices may even make certain products or services more desirable"³⁸. It was proposed that the quality cue might also be used by consumers to evaluate the quality cue might also be used by consumers to evaluate the level of prestige of brands. It could be assumed that a low level of quality would play a negative role over the perception of prestige. In contrast, if the buyer or the consumer perceives the brand as having an excellent level of quality, his or her quality perception would play a positive role over his or her perception of prestige on the

²⁸ C. J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation*, New York: Cambridge University Press (1994).

²⁹ C. M. Miller, S. H. McIntyre, and M. K. Mantrala, "Toward Formalizing Fashion Theory", *Journal of Marketing Research* 30 (1993): 142-57.

³⁰ B. Dubois and P. Duquesne, "The Market for Luxury Goods: Income versus Culture", *European Journal of Marketing* 27 (1993): 35-44.

³¹ E. C. Hirschman, and M. B. Holbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

³² J. N. Sheth, I. N. Bruce, and B. L. Gross, "Why We Buy What We Buy: a Theory of Consumption Values", *Journal of Business Research* 22 (1991): 159-70.

³³ B. Dubois, and G. Laurent, "Attitudes toward the Concept of Luxury: an Exploratory Analysis", eds. S. M. Leong and J. A. Cote, *Asia-Pacific advances in consumer research* (1994), 273-8.

³⁴ E. Benarrosh-Dahan, "Le Contexte Lexicologique du Luxe", *Revue Française du Marketing* 132/133 (1991): 45-54.

³⁵ F. Vigneron, and L. W. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³⁶ R. T. Garfein, "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Dynamics of Prestige", *Journal of Services Marketing* 3 (1989): 17-24.

³⁷ A. R. Rao, and K. B. Monroe, "The Effect of Price, Brand Name, and Store Name on Buyers' Perceptions of Product Quality: an Integrative Review", *Journal of Marketing Research* 26 (1989): 351-7.

³⁸ J. C. Groth, and S. W. McDaniel, "The Exclusive Value Principle: the Basis for Prestige Pricing", *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 10 (1993): 10-6.

same brand. Consumers might purchase and wear prestige brands of clothes because they are confident in the judgment of style from the designer. Vigneron and Johnson³⁹ referred to the quality effect when consumers value the perceived utility acquired from a prestige brand to suggest superior product characteristics and performance. Therefore, people who relate to personal values and who assess the value of prestige brands according to the value of reassurance expected from prestige brands (e.g., comfort and speed for a prestige car, or precision for a prestige watch), may represent perfectionist types of consumers.

III. Brand Loyalty

Consumers' brand loyalty is affected by prestige seeking behaviors. Consumers are found to easily accept a branded product, especially a prestige brand due to its symbolic value, and an attached symbolic meaning of a certain brand likely results in strong brand loyalty. Symbolic brands satisfy symbolic needs such as those for self-expression and prestige, and their practical usage is only incidental⁴⁰. The researchers argued that the right positioning of a brand using the brand image is a cornerstone of brand marketing. Brands (and their associated images) let consumers express who they are, what they are, and how they want to be viewed by others because people act in ways that maintain and

enhance their self concept and one important way people do this is consumption of products⁴¹.

The symbolic benefit of a brand is more important in apparel brands because clothing itself has high level of symbolic characteristics. In the previous studies, even though a brand name is generally associated with product quality in other products⁴², the influence of apparel brand name on quality has not been clear^{43,44}. Rather an apparel brand is likely associated with status characteristics⁴⁵ or prestige price⁴⁶. According to Sproles and Kendall⁴⁷, the brand conscious consumer is oriented toward buying expensive, well-known national brands whereas the quality conscious consumer searches for the very best quality in products carefully.

IV. Method

According to the previous discussion on the influence of prestige consumption on brand loyalty and multidimensionality of prestige consumption construct, the following hypotheses were presented.

- H1: Conspicuous value has significant influence on brand loyalty.
- H2: Unique value has significant influence on brand loyalty.
- H3: Social value has significant influence on brand loyalty.
- H4: Emotional value has significant influence

³⁹ F. Vigneron, and L. W. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 3.

⁴⁰ S. Bhat, and S. K. Reddy, "Symbolic and Functional Positioning Brands", *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 15 (1998): 33-43.

⁴¹ T. R. Graeff, "Using Promotional Messages to Manage the Effects of Brand and Self-Image on Brand Evaluations", *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 13 (1996): 4-19.

⁴² J. S. Nevid, "Effects of Brand Labeling on Ratings of Product Quality", *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 53 (1981): 407-10.

⁴³ D. F. Baugh, and L. L. Davis, "The Effect of Store Image on Consumers Perceptions of Designer and Private Label Clothing", *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 7 (1989): 15-21.

⁴⁴ S. M. Forsythe, "Effect of Private, Designer, and National Brand Names on Shoppers' Perception of Apparel Quality and Price", *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 9 (1991): 1-6.

⁴⁵ D. F. Baugh, and L. L. Davis, *op. cit.*, p.12.

on brand loyalty.

H5: Quality value has significant influence on brand loyalty.

A survey questionnaire was developed to measure the five underlying values of prestige seeking consumption and brand loyalty. Questionnaire items were adapted and developed from the existing measures. Lichtenstein, Ridgeway and Netemeyer's⁴⁸⁾ scale was adopted and modified to measure conspicuous value, hedonic value and quality value of prestige consumption. In addition, questionnaire items for perceived unique value as well as social value were developed based on various previous measures^{49,50)} (i.e. Thomas, Cassill, & Forsythe, 1991; Shim & Bickle, 1994). Table 1 shows the scale items as well as reliability of the scale items using Cronbach's alpha. The results of the reliability assessment were in the acceptable range for all five underlying values of prestige consumption of apparel products ranging .58 to .77. Scale for brand loyalty was adopted from Baumgartner and Steenkamp⁵¹⁾. Most item scores were greater than 2.5 of the 5-point Likert type scale. Thus, responses to the various aspects of prestige consumption scale were more positive in general.

College students who were attending five universities in Korea participated in the study. A pilot test was conducted to validate the instru-

ment with 50 potential subjects. Feedback was obtained about the length of the instrument, the format of the questionnaire items, construct validity, and question ambiguity. In this way the content validity of the instrument was assessed. Data from 554 questionnaires were used for the final statistical analysis.

In order to examine the dimensional structure of apparel prestige consumption by underlying values, confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL VII⁵²⁾ was conducted. Confirmatory method rather than exploratory method was employed due to the fact that the prestige consumption measures from five different factors were theoretically driven, not empirically driven. The relationship among these underlining dimensions and brand loyalty was tested by employing causal modeling through LISREL VII.

V. Results

1. Dimensionality of Prestige Seeking

The theoretically driven five underlying aspects of prestige seeking were tested in terms of empirical dimensionality. Confirmatory factor analysis results are shown in Table 2. The fit indexes shows that the confirmatory factor analysis was a good fit to data (χ^2 ($df=93$) = 267.00; GFI=.94; AGFI=.91).

Coefficient *lambdas* represent factor loadings of individual items on each factor. All factor

⁴⁶ S. M. Forsythe, *op. cit.*, p.12

⁴⁷ G. B. Sproles, and E. L. Kendall, "A Methodology for Profiling Consumers' Decision-Making Styles". *The Journal of Consumer Affairs* 20 (1986): 267-79.

⁴⁸ D. R. Lichtenstein, N. M. Ridgeway, and R. G. Netemeyer, "Price Perceptions and Consumer Shopping Behavior: A Field Study", *Journal of Marketing Research* 30 (1993): 234-45.

⁴⁹ J. B. Thomas, N. L. Cassill, and S. M. Forsythe, "Underlying Dimensions of Apparel Involvement in Consumers' Purchase Decisions", *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 9 (1991): 45-8.

⁵⁰ S. Shim, and M. C. Bickle, "Benefit Segments of the Female Apparel Market: Psychographics, Shopping Orientations, and Demographics", *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 12 (1994): 1-12.

⁵¹ H. Baumgartner, and J. E. M. Steenkamp, "Exploratory Consumer Buying Behavior: Conceptualization and Measurement", *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 13 (1996): 121-137.

⁵² K. G. Jöreskog, and D. Sörbom, *LISREL VII: A Guide to the Program and Applications*. Chicago: SPSS Inc (1989).

〈Table 1〉 Item Mean, Standard Deviation and Reliability (n = 554)

Variables	Items	Mean	SD
Conspicuous Value	I have purchased prestige apparel brands just because I knew other people would notice.	3.71	1.45
	It says something to people when you buy the high priced version of an apparel product.	3.57	1.42
	Your friends will think you are cheap if you consistently buy the lowest priced version of an apparel product.	3.34	1.32
Alpha = .64			
Hedonic Value	Buying prestige brands of a product makes me feel classy.	4.01	1.34
	Buying a high priced apparel brand makes me feel good about myself.	4.35	1.50
	I enjoy the prestige of buying a high priced apparel brand.	3.66	1.43
Alpha = .77			
Quality Value	You always have to pay a bit more for the best.	4.02	1.64
	Generally speaking, the higher the price of an apparel product, the higher the quality.	4.82	1.37
	The old saying "you get what you pay for" is generally true.	4.29	1.50
Alpha = .58			
Social Value	Wearing prestigious brand clothes give me a social status.	3.96	1.55
	You can tell a lot about a persons social status by the brand of clothes he/she wears.	3.96	1.46
	The brands I wear help me express who I am.	3.36	1.36
Alpha = .74			
Uniqueness Value	I do not prefer to wear the same apparel as others.	5.38	1.24
	I prefer prestige apparel because only a limited number of other consumers can wear such apparel.	3.38	1.44
	I stop purchasing a certain prestige apparel brand when it is seen to be consumed by the general mass of people.	4.77	1.56
	I prefer apparel brands that only a few other people are able to purchase.	3.87	1.34
Alpha = .60			
Brand Loyalty	I would rather stick with a brand I usually buy than try something I am not very sure of.	3.27	1.46
	I think of myself as a brand-loyal consumer.	3.68	1.39
	If I like a brand, I rarely switch from it just to try something different.	4.44	1.69
Alpha = .60			

<Table 2> Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results of Five Underlying Factors of Prestige Consumption

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
	Conspicuous Value	Unique Value	Social Value	Emotional Value	Quality Value
Factor Loading					
C22	.59	-	-	-	-
C25	.81	-	-	-	-
C40	.45	-	-	-	-
U16	-	.33	-	-	-
U28	-	.76	-	-	-
U33	-	.38	-	-	-
U35	-	.68	-	-	-
S06	-	-	.64	-	-
S23	-	-	.79	-	-
S30	-	-	.68	-	-
E26	-	-	-	.79	-
E32	-	-	-	.66	-
E37	-	-	-	.73	-
Q15	-	-	-	-	.62
Q19	-	-	-	-	.65
Q34	-	-	-	-	.39
Factor Intercorrelation (ϕ)					
Factor 1	1.00				
Factor 2	.72	1.00			
Factor 3	.98	.72	1.00		
Factor 4	.99	.83	.89	1.00	
Factor 5	.73	.74	.68	.79	1.00

Note: All parameters shown are standardized estimates.

Note: t-values for all parameters shown are > 2.00 .

Note: C: Conspicuous value, U: Unique value, S: Social value, E: Emotional value, Q: Quality value.

loadings in this model were statistically significant ($t > 2.00$). Several items had relatively lower factor loadings than the acceptable level of .50 (λ_{C40} , λ_{U16} , λ_{U33} , and $\lambda_{Q34} < .50$).

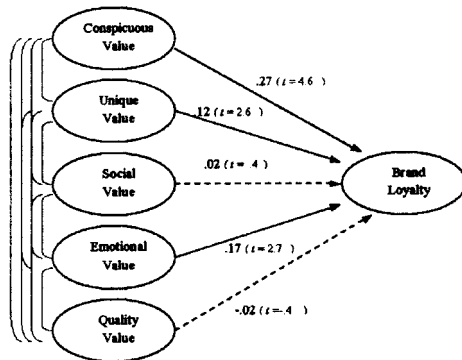
In Table 2, correlations among the five factors are presented. Correlations among conspicuous, emotional and social values were extremely high ($\phi = .89$ to .99). The results indicated that apparel prestige consumption does not consist of five distinctive empirical dimensions.

2. Influence of Prestige Consumption on Brand Loyalty

In order to examine the influence of apparel

prestige consumption on brand loyalty, a structural equation model with five prestige consumption factors (conspicuous, unique, social, emotional, and quality value) as exogenous variables and brand loyalty as an endogenous variable was analyzed (Fig. 1). Since correlations among the five underlying factors of prestige consumption were detected from the confirmatory factor analysis, in the model, correlations among exogenous variables (underlying dimensions of prestige consumption) were allowed.

Results showed that prestige consumption due to conspicuous value had the strongest impact



〈Fig. 2〉 Lisrel Results of Influence of Prestige Seeking Dimensions on Brand Loyalty.

Note : Standardized paths coefficients are indicated; t-values are in parentheses; dotted arrows indicate insignificant paths.

on brand loyalty ($\gamma = 2.7$, $t = 4.6$). Also, brand loyalty was significantly influenced by prestige consumption due to emotional value ($\gamma = 1.7$, $t = 2.7$), and uniqueness value ($\gamma = 1.2$, $t = 2.6$). However prestige consumption due to social value as well as quality value did not have significant influence on brand loyalty. Therefore, hypothesis 1, 2, and 4 were accepted, whereas hypothesis 3 and 5 were rejected.

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

This study generated a framework to help academicians understand consumers' apparel prestige consumption behavior and marketers build and monitor the prestige of brands. In order to generate loyalty of prestigious brands among Korean consumers, the conspicuous, unique and hedonic motifs of a brand should be emphasized rather than quality of the product or social values. In particular, we sought to examine the latent structure of, and the interrelations among, the primary meanings of the prestige concept that underlie the decision-making process of prestige brands. Basically, the conceptual framework identified five types of prestige seekers that were influenced by five perceived prestige

values and self-consciousness. This study affirmed the importance of prestige seeking behavior on brand loyalty. This implicates that Korean consumers are loyal to a prestige brand for a conspicuous value, showing off their wealth that clothing of prestige brands offer. In turn, they feel emotional satisfaction like hedonism from the brand choice. They seem to think purchasing prestige brands as a privilege seeking unique value from prestige brands. On the other hand, consumers do not seem to use the quality cue to evaluate prestige of a brand. Consumers may perceive the price cue as evidence of greater quality and a branded product to a certain degree; however, they may not necessarily relate the quality cue with prestigiously branded products. In addition, the social value, a well-known cause of buying a branded product, was not related to loyalty of prestigious brands. This may be due to measure of social value employed in this study in that social status was emphasized, but may indicate that contemporary consumer would value more private and emotional side of prestige brands than symbolic characteristics of prestige brands and would be more loyal to those brands.

The benefits of the present study reside in helping researchers understand how consumers view prestige brands. The contribution is both useful from a market segmentation point of view and from a market positioning point of view. From a market segmentation point of view, clustering groups according to their primary perceived values of prestige for a brand may reveal other demographic or psychographic characteristics which may better represent these consumers. The proposed factor structure for the concept of prestige suggested during the literature synthesis provided a basis for developing several profiles of consumers. These different consumer's profiles may indicate distinct market segments to which different products appeal or advertising strategies could be implemented.

From a market positioning point of view, if monitoring a prestige brand indicated a declining level of prestige, researchers could identify

and concentrate on the specific prestige value that is weakening. Accordingly, researchers may change the advertising message, stressing the perceived values, and emphasizing benefits of the brand over competing brands.

The perceived values are useful for comparing several prestige brands and thus for recognizing competitive advantages. Relative strengths and weaknesses can be identified in the target market along either each of the underlying values comprising the prestige concept.

The findings for dimensions of prestige consumption must be interpreted with caution, because generalizability is limited by participants of this study, students. Future studies should examine the dimensional structure of prestige consumption and its influence on brand loyalty with wider range of consumer groups. This study also took the micro scope of prestige consumption and brand loyalty. Future study should employ more consumer variables such as demographic variables to suggest empirical strategies for marketers and advertiser. In addition, apparel products are composed of variety of different product categories. Certain product categories such as handbags are prone to be more prestigiously branded than others. Further studies on the dynamics of different types of apparel product categories are needed to examine patterns of prestige consumption of apparel.

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