Conspicuous Consumption: Global and National Luxury Fashion Brands Purchase Intention

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Abstract

This research examines the conspicuous consumption of luxury goods by comparing the impact of the so-called "snob" and "bandwagon" effects on both global and national luxury fashion brands. Consumer culture theory was applied to develop the conceptual model in order to investigate self and social influences regarding luxury brand consumption by using self-identity projects and marketplace culture. We found that status seeking was used as the initial drive for luxury good consumption and this was mediated by snob and bandwagon effects. The sample are mostly drawn from Generation Y individuals with high incomes. A second-order factor modelling used in the SEM analysis program, and the overall model demonstrate a good fits with $\chi^2/df = 1.748$; GFI = .82; RMSEA = .057; and PCFI = 0.84. The results suggest that both snob and bandwagon consumption are related to global luxury fashion brand consumption. Surprisingly, the bandwagon effect was not seen to be related to national luxury fashion brands. This study extends our knowledge of conspicuous consumption into the area of national luxury fashion brands by illustrating the distinguishing points where national luxury brands combat global luxury fashion brands. The study also points out the importance of individuals' identity and the perceived value of status in consumer goods purchasing.

1. Introduction

The global personal luxury goods market, one of the markets that has stayed strong through economic crises with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) at 6 percent from 1996 to 2017, has grown worldwide to nearly $1.47 trillion in 2017 (Bain & Company, 2017). In addition, Vigneron and Johnson (2004) have pointed out that expansion of the luxury sector has been accelerated by the economic growth in Southeast Asia. Thailand, one of the Southeast Asian countries, is an emerging economy, coupled with an increasing number of middle-income households that provide growing opportunities for luxury product market (Shukla & Purani, 2012). Even with the economic depression during the past years, the luxury market in Thailand grew at the rate of 8 percent to reach $1.6 billion from 2015 to 2016 (Ho & Rekhraj, 2016). In the past, luxury consumption behavior was studied within the theory of conspicuous consumption by using the concept of the concern for status (Grossman & Shapiro, 1988; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2011; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014) as well as the utility perspective (Leibenstein, 1950), but all of these theories refer to luxury brands as a whole, leaning toward the study of global brands. The study of national brands however was conducted using more the concept of consumer ethnocentrism (Shankarmahesh, 2006; Watson & Wright, 2000; Wang & Chen, 2004). With the rise of national luxury brands in the Thai market and greater consumption of national brands, this paper aims to investigate luxury

consumption behavior for a better understanding of the change of such behavior. As prior research rarely includes both global and national brands in the same study, this study discusses the intention to purchase both global and national brands in order to compare the impacts of conspicuous consumption.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Part 1: Luxury purchase intention and consumer culture theory (CCT)

Despite the growing demand for luxury items in both the global and Thai marketplace, only a limited number of studies have investigated and explored the luxury brand market using the consumer culture theory (CCT) (Hung et al., 2011). Theorizing luxury consumption behavior, this paper draws on consumer culture theory within the consumer identity projects and marketplace cultures proposed by Arnould and Thompson (2005). Within consumer identity projects and marketplace culture, it conveys interconnected system frameworks of consumers' scope for conceivable thought, feeling, action, patterns of behavior, as well as interpretations by using the constraints of rules that groups use in the marketplace. It emphasizes how consumers actively rework and transform symbolic encoded meanings in material goods in order to demonstrate their particular personal and social circumstances, which later become their identity and lifestyle goals (Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

Within the area of CCT, luxury consumption has been further investigated and illustrated that conspicuous consumption may be caused by the social influences that reflect and accept the individuals' projected images or identities (Hung et al., 2011). According to previous studies, both self and social influences can affect conspicuous consumption because individuals pursue personal goals through consumer positions that enact and personalize to the marketplace ideals. This study investigates both the effects of self and the external world on conspicuous consumption in order to extend the concepts to the new contexts, especially Thai luxury consumption, which consists of both global and national luxury brands.

Part 2: "Luxury" concepts

The notion of luxury has been defined differently based on the perspectives proposed by many scholars. Some scholars have defined luxury by conceptualizing it based on three value dimensions: the functional, experiential, and interactional symbolic dimensions, where luxury goods are viewed based on occasions, the market segment, and the consumer's subjective individuality (Vickers & Renand, 2003; Berthon, Pitt, Parent & Berthon, 2009). Berthon et al. (2009) have indicated three dimensions of luxury. First, the functional dimension represents the world that views luxury as in what object 'does' not do what it 'represents' so quality and performance are usually used as the primary evaluation. Second, the experiential dimension represents the world based on the subjective taste of individuals, where personal value is found in the brand, and brand-related stimuli can evoke sensations, feelings, cognition, and behavioral responses. Last, the symbolic dimension represents the world in which individuals view luxury as signal value tools, both from the brand and from the signaler to others.

Others have stated that luxury is the combination of innovation, culture, quality of craftsmanship, symbols, and high price (Kapferer, 2012); the unification of high quality, expensiveness, and the non-essential that is perceived to be rare, exclusive, prestigious, and authentic (Tynan, McKechnie & Chhuon, 2010); or a mix of exclusivity, status, and quality (Phau & Prendergast, 2000). Phau and Prendergast (2000) have also pointed out that in the new era of luxury study, "new luxury" goods can be defined as having high quality and exhibiting a higher level of taste and aspiration that is not too expensive to be out of reach.

Luxury products are also must-have products that signify success and membership in groups because of the perceived value, which is derived from the social interaction in consumer groups that comes from popularity or social approval (Leibenstein, 1950). Even with many arguable definitions of luxury, it cannot be denied that the continuous growth of the luxury market is substantially globally (Shukla & Purani, 2012). Therefore, the study of the intention to purchase luxury items is crucial for the improvement of marketing in both academic and practitioner aspects.

Part 3: Antecedents of "snob" and "bandwagon" luxury consumption
3.1 Status consumption
Within the study of conspicuous consumption, status seeking is one of the crucial areas. Much prior research has investigated the notion of status and conspicuous consumption, as consumers desire to gain status from the consumption of the luxury goods that symbolize that status (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004; Truong, Simmons, McColl & Kitchen, 2008; Han, Nunes & Drèze, 2010; Eastman & Eastman, 2015). Luxury goods confer status, which consumers use as a rank claim in social relationships (Grossman & Shapiro, 1988). As mentioned, both snob and bandwagon effects occur when consumers want to gain status but using different practices. Snobs acquire status by differentiating themselves from others and creating an independent self (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014). On the other hand, bandwagons need status from popular luxury goods that carry social recognition (Berger & Ward, 2010). In addition, status goods must be publicly consumed in order to impress others in the status-seeking process (Mason, 1992). A review of the relevant literature led to the following hypotheses:

H1a: Status seeking relates positively to the consumer need to impress others (CNI).
H1b: Status seeking relates positively to the consumer need for uniqueness (CNFU).
H1c: Status seeking relates positively to the snob consumption of luxury brands.
H1d: Status seeking relates positively to the bandwagon consumption of luxury brands.

3.2 Consumer need for uniqueness (CNFU) and snob consumption
According to the original work of Snyder and Fromkin's uniqueness theory in 1977, it was suggested that people try to establish uniqueness or their dissimilarity from others when they perceive greater similarity between themselves and others (Lynn & Harris, 1997). Park, Rabolt, and Sook Jeon (2008) found that consumers' need for uniqueness is positively related to global luxury purchase intention, as in this way purchasers can promote their unique personal identity and social image. Among the prior research on consumption behavior regarding the purchase of luxury goods, some support that consumers enhance their uniqueness with particular purchase intention of luxury fashion items which reflects self, social images and emotional value (Knights & Young, 2007; Rahman, Saleem, Akhtar, Ali & Khan, 2014). Moreover, their uniqueness is established by using luxury brands as they are scarce and exclusive (Zhan & He, 2011). Since uniqueness is relatively important to luxury consumption and can be the antecedent of snob consumption, a review of the relevant literatures led to the following hypothesis:

H2: CNFU is associated positively with the snob consumption of luxury fashion brands.

3.3 Consumers' need to impress others (CNI) and bandwagon consumption
The social interaction of an individual and his/her social context in the external world suggest that material consumption results from vanity, especially regarding the conspicuous consumption of luxury fashion items (Hung et al., 2011). Consumers with vanity as a psychological trait could continue to spend on prestigious products in order to convey success (El Din & El Sahn, 2013). In terms of social externalities, people tend to purchase similar goods

to express their income or success, which (at least partially) is observable and understandable in physical terms (Grilo, Shy & Thisse, 2001).

A review of the relevant literature provides some perspectives that consumers would purchase as brands are popular symbols that transmit some sort of individuals' success to the society. The idea that the consumer needs to impress others has been given less attention in the academic world, while it seems to be positively related to the bandwagon effect through the consumption of popular luxuries (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2011). Therefore, this study investigates this gap in the study area. The following hypothesis was generated then from prior studies:

H3: CNI is associated positively with the bandwagon consumption of luxury brands.

Part 4: Conspicuous consumption (snob and bandwagon consumption)

Since Veblen's Theory of the Leisure Class published in 1899, conspicuous consumption has played a significant role in luxury purchasing behavior for status, rather than utility, where social aspiration and social approval seem to influence status-related consumption (Mason, 1984). Within the Veblen effects, consumer willingness to pay a premium price for status goods compared to equivalent goods with similar quality and quantity (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996). In the luxury consumption studies, "conspicuous consumption" has been discussed as one of the most powerful topics for the neoclassical theory within the area (Shukla, 2008). Conspicuous goods are not just any ordinary goods, as they serve social needs such as the desire for uniqueness and conformism (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005), which consumers use to express their personality and emphasize their status through the brands by choosing to purchase rare products (Husic & Cicic, 2009). Not only to display one's individual's wealth, consumers also compare their self to others in reference groups, which in turn, creates consumer satisfaction that is not from utility in use (Shukla, 2008). A person's utility can depend on the absolute amount of spending and the spending amount relative to others, which leads to a consumption pattern that is created by the process of learning and habit formation (Ackley, 1951).

4.1 Snob consumption and bandwagon consumption

By using utility terms, Leibenstein (1950) proposed that the bandwagon and snob consumption effects could be crucial factors that influence conspicuous consumption. The bandwagon effect can refer to conspicuous luxury consumption, where consumers purchase as others also purchase. They gain status from assimilation with reference group and attractiveness to others while the snob effect differently refers to luxury consumption when consumers find that goods are less purchased by others. They find uniqueness and gain status from the contrast (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014). Furthermore, the bandwagon effect is associated with the luxury market, as it explains the demand for luxury goods because of their popularity co-created by complex interactions between social groups, both customers and brand communities (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2011). Thus, the purchasing of luxury goods can be inflicted by mass psychology (Leibenstein, 1950). Leibenstein (1950) stated that "by the bandwagon effect, we refer to the extent to which the demand for a commodity is increased due to the fact that others are also consuming the same commodity" (p. 189).

On the other hand, consumers can be influenced by the snob effect in purchasing luxury goods because these goods are owned by very few people and their exclusivity is for those that own them (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2011). In addition, in snob consumption, the popularity of luxury goods destroys their utility (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014). As luxury goods are used for both the individual's presentation of his or her uniqueness and exclusivity, as well as for

social integration, both snob consumption and bandwagon consumption could be seen as the antecedents of luxury brand purchasing intention.

      H4a: Snob consumption is related to global luxury brand purchasing intention.

      H4b: Snob consumption is related to national luxury brand purchasing intention.

      H5a: Bandwagon consumption is related to global luxury brand purchasing intention.

      H5b: Bandwagon consumption is related to national luxury brand purchasing intention.

Research Objectives

Based on the many gaps of study in prior research, this paper provides a clearer understanding of luxury consumption and examines the effects of conspicuous consumption to global and national luxury fashion brands purchase intention by using the snob and bandwagon effects as mediating variables.

Conceptual Framework

From the past researches and consolidated knowledge, the conceptual framework is generated for this study, together with hypotheses in Figure 1.
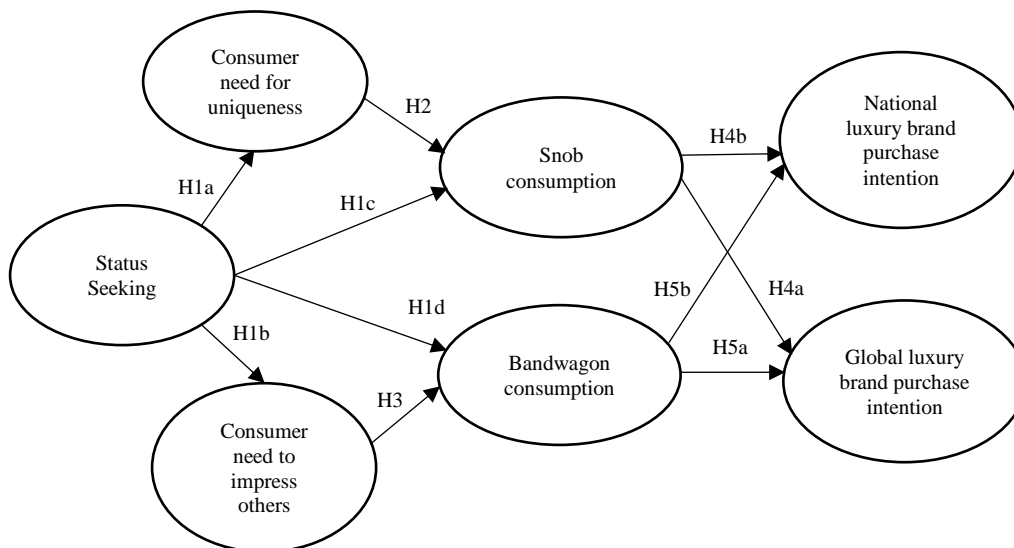

Figure 1: Conceptual framework and hypotheses for study of conspicuous consumption

3. Research Methodology

Part 1: Research design and data collection

An online survey was used to collect the data for this study, and a web link for the online survey was created. It directed respondents to the questionnaire, which consisted of 3 sections: (1) screening questions, (2) personal information, and (3) attitude questions on the studied variables. Respondents were qualified by two procedures. First, the researchers initially distributed the web link to sample those individuals that used both global and Thai luxury fashion brands and asked them to pass on the questionnaire's link to their friends and acquaintances that actually used both types of luxury fashion brands. In order to ensure that the respondents that have passed on the questionnaire actually met the requirements, screening questions were asked: "Have you ever purchased any global luxury brands?" and "Have you ever purchased any Thai luxury brands?" If the respondents answered "no" to any of the screening questions, they were dropped from the survey. There were 230 respondents that entered the online survey. The samples that used both global brands and Thai brands were somehow difficult to access because Thai luxury fashion brands are new to the luxury market in both national and global scales.

Their popularity is small and so are their targeted consumers. The sample reflected precisely those that had experience with the consumption of both global and national luxury fashion brand items. According to Bryant and Yarnold (1995), the ratio of 5 observations for variable was purposed as optimal. This size of 230 respondents met the minimum numbers in analysis to generalize as this study uses 34 variable questions. The names of global and national fashion luxury brands were provided in the questionnaire in order to help the respondents clearly understand the questions and to be able to recall and evaluate each question based upon the luxury brands that they were familiar with. The lists of brands were created by asking 10 respondents that has shopped for luxury fashion brand items regularly to mention any luxury fashion brands that they were familiar with, as much as they could. The lists are found to be familiar by the respondents. The luxury global brands that were shown, together with the online questionnaire, were Louis Vuitton, Hermès, Gucci, Prada, Burberry, Rolex, Cartier, Christian Dior, Chanel, Ralph Lauren, Hugo Boss, Coach, Micheal Kors, Issey Miyake, Calvin Klein, Marc Jacobs and Bottega Veneta. These brands are top players in the luxury market all around the globe. The national luxury fashion brands provided were Disaya, Flynow, Suvimol, Tu'i, Greyhound, Kloset, Senada, Sretsis, Milin, Vickteerut, Patinya, Issue, Poem, Vatanika, Asava, Kingkan, Nicha, and Soda. These brands are available at high-end department stores in Thailand, such as The Mall Group and Central department stores, where most global luxury brands are located.

In Table 1, the sample demographics and lifestyle behaviors are shown. Most of the individuals in the sample in this study were aged between 20 and 45 years (in the age range of Generation Y). They were the main potential buyers of luxury fashion products. The entire sample was at the higher education level and earned a high income, above the average Thai household income of 26,915 Thai Baht per year in 2015 (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2015). The sampled individuals were mostly owners of companies or corporate employees that were at middle to high management levels. In addition, they frequently travelled abroad.

Table 1: Sample demographics and lifestyle behavior

	(n=230)	%
Gender		
Male		27.4
Female		72.6
Age		
20 - 25		17.4
26 - 35		65.6
36 - 45		15.7
46 - 50		1.3
Education level		
Bachelor degree		41.3
Master Degree		54.8
Doctoral Degree		3.9
Occupation		
Government officer		2.6
Corporate employee		35.7
Business owner		46.1
Student		7.4
Housewife		1.7
Specialist professional		3.5
Freelance		3.0

	(n=230)	%
Income (Baht)		
≤ 20,000		7.0
20,001 – 50,000		30.4
50,001 – 100,000		31.3
≥ 100,001		31.3
Frequency of travelling aboard per year		
0 -1		27.0
2 - 4		53.9
≥ 5		19.1

Part 2: Measures

The measurement approach for each of the theoretical constructs in our model is described briefly in Table 2, which contains the items for each scale. All of the variable questions were placed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

- *Consumer need for uniqueness (CNFU).* This scale describes how consumers exhibit their uniqueness of self and social image by acquiring and displaying distinctive products to others (Ruvio, Shoham & Makovec Brenčič, 2008). The scales originally consisted of 31 items based on Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001) and were further developed into 12 items (Ruvio et al., 2008), which consisted of 3 categories: avoidance of similarity (AOS), creative choice (CC), and unpopular choice (UC).

- *Status seeking.* This scale is described as the status consumption that results from internal reasons (self-satisfaction) and/or external reasons (signaling wealth to others) (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). It consists of 5 items originally from Eastman, Goldsmith, and Flynn (1999).

- *Consumer need to impress others (CNI).* This scale describes the concern of consumers regarding their outward appearance. As a result, they want to pursue better physical appearance in order to increase their social popularity and power (Durvasula, Lysonski & Watson, 2001). This paper uses physical vanity to measure the level of CNI. The scales consist of 2 aspects: physical-concern and physical-view from Durvasula et al. (2001).

- *Snob consumption and bandwagon consumption.* Snob scale describes the consumption that results from the consumer's need for uniqueness while the bandwagon scale describes the consumption that results from social norms (Tsai, Yang & Liu, 2013). The scales in this study were developed based on Tsai et al. (2013), which were originally developed from the theory of consumer demand of Leibenstein (1950).

- *Luxury fashion brand purchase intention (both global and national brands).* These scales indicate the consumers' willingness to buy both global and national luxury fashion brand items. These scales were adapted from the willingness to buy indicators of Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991).

After of the data collection and analyses, the 34 variable questions remained, as some questions were not appropriate to be used in the Thai context, coupled with the confusion of the respondents, who found that some questions were repeated. In sum, CNFU remained with 8 items by using only 2 categories, AOS and CC; status seeking was reduced to 4 items; CNI was reduced to 8 items; snob and bandwagon contained 4 items each; and the intention to purchase global and national brand items contained 3 items each. They are shown in Table 2.

Part 3: Measurement model assessment

A second-order factor model using structural equation modeling (SEM) was executed for the data analysis in this study, as CNFU and CNI consist of 2 factors each.

Table 2: Measurement model and items of each construct

No	Measurements	Factor Loading (Component Matrix)	Reliability Test		
			Cronbach's Reliability Test	Scale composite reliability (SCR > 0.7)	Average variance extracted (AVE.0.5)
Consumer need for uniqueness (adapted from Ruvio et al., 2008)					
	Creative choice		0.79	0.80	0.50
1.	I often mix & match my style in such a way that I create a personal image that cannot be duplicated.	0.65			
2.	I often try to find a more interesting version of ordinary products because I enjoy being original.	0.78			
3.	I actively seek to develop my personal uniqueness by buying special products or brands.	0.85			
4.	Having an eye for products that are interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive image.	0.83			
	Avoidance of similarity		0.87	0.88	0.64
5.	When a product I own becomes popular among the general population, I begin to use it less.	0.82			
6.	I often try to avoid products or brands that I know are bought by the general population.	0.87			
7.	As a rule, I dislike products or brands that are customarily bought by everyone.	0.88			
8.	The more commonplace a product or brand is among the general population, the less interested I am in buying it.	0.84			
Status seeking (adapted from Eastman et al., 1999)			0.89	0.90	0.71
9.	I would buy a product just because it has status.	0.88			
10.	I am interested in new products with status.	0.92			
11.	I would pay more for a product if it had status.	0.92			
12.	A product is more valuable to me if it has some elite appeal.	0.77			

Consumer need to impress others (adapted from Durvasula et al., 2001)

Physical-concern		0.827	0.862	0.620
13. The way I look is extremely important to me.	0.88			
14. I am very concerned about my appearance.	0.90			
15. Looking my best is worth the effort.	0.69			
16. It is important that I always look good.	0.79			
Physical-view		0.89	0.89	0.69
17. People notice how attractive I am.	0.90			
18. My looks are very appealing to others.	0.91			
19. People are envious of my good looks.	0.84			
20. I am a very good-looking individual.	0.85			
Snob Consumption (adapted from Tsai et al., 2013)		0.80	0.80	0.51
21. The luxury products that I would like to purchase/use are worn by a few elite and are not necessarily well-known.	0.75			
22. When products or brands I like become extremely popular, I lose interest in them.	0.82			
23. I avoid luxury products that have already been accepted and purchased by the average customers.	0.88			
24. People rarely wear the brand of luxury products that I would like to purchase/use.	0.72			
Bandwagon Consumption (adapted from Tsai et al., 2013)		0.88	0.87	0.51
25. The luxury products that I purchase are very popular.	0.87			
26. The luxury products that I purchase are worn by many celebrities.	0.83			
27. The luxury products that I purchase are recognized by many people.	0.89			
28. The luxury products that I purchase are fashionable and approved by everyone.	0.85			
Purchasing Luxury Product Intention (Global) (adapted from Dodds et al., 1991)		0.89	0.89	0.56
29. If I were going to purchase a luxury product, I would consider buying a global brand.	0.91			
30. If I were shopping for a luxury brand, the likelihood that I would purchase a global luxury brand is high.	0.92			
31. My willingness to buy this luxury brand would be high if I were shopping for a global luxury brand.	0.91			

Purchasing Luxury Product Intention (Thai) (adapted from Dodds et al., 1991)	0.92	0.92	0.59
32. If I were going to purchase a luxury product, I would consider buying a Thai brand.	0.91		
33. If I were shopping for a luxury brand, the likelihood that I would purchase a Thai luxury brand is high.	0.95		
34. My willingness to buy this luxury brand would be high if I were shopping for a Thai luxury brand.	0.92		

After the careful consideration of the removal of items that had low mean scores, we further analyzed and conducted a confirmatory factor analysis. Both the reliability and validity tests showed good fit for all scales. The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.79 to 0.92 and the composite reliabilities were well above .70, while variance extracted also exceeded the .50 threshold. These reliability and validity tests supported the internal consistency and convergent validity of this study. See Table 2 for these values, and Table 3 provides the correlations of the constructs and their descriptive statistics. The IBM SPSS AMOS version 22 software was used for the SEM analysis.

In table 3, it provides descriptive statistics and correlations of constructs used while table 4 presents all of the hypotheses in this study, the overall model fits, the standardized estimations and results from SEM analysis for supporting the study.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. CC	3.48	.78									
2. AOS	3.48	.87	.48**								
3. Status seeking	2.99	.92	.21**	.10							
4. PC	3.72	.71	.33**	.11	.38**						
5. PV	3.28	.76	.30**	.14*	.32**	.61**					
6. Snob	3.08	.74	.38**	.53**	.37**	.29**	.33**				
7. Bandwagon	2.91	.89	.13*	.04	.56**	.350**	.37**	.28**			
8. GlobalPI	3.55	.89	.09	.08	.26**	.22**	.26**	.28**	.45**		
9. NationalPI	3.05	.77	.06	.10	.17**	.08	.11	.14*	.08	-.06	

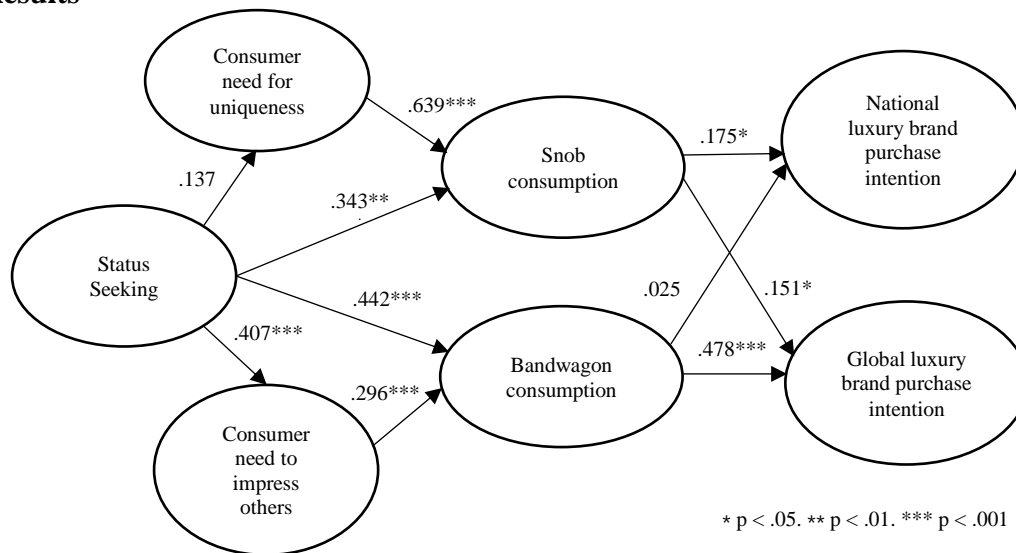*Note: CC = Creative choice, AOS = Avoidance of similarity, PC = Physical view, PV = Physical view,*

GlobalPI = Global luxury fashion brands purchase intention, NationalPI = National luxury fashion brands purchase intention (□ p < .05. □□ p < .01.)

Table 4: Hypotheses testing and standardized estimation

Hypotheses & constructs path	Standardized estimation	Sig.	Hypothesis supported
H1a: Status seeking → CNI	.407	***	Yes
H1b: Status seeking → CNFU	.137	.091	No
H1c: Status seeking → snob consumption	.343	***	Yes
H1d: Status seeking → bandwagon consumption	.442	***	Yes
H2: CNFU → snob consumption	.639	***	Yes
H3: CNI → bandwagon consumption	.296	***	Yes
H4a: Snob consumption → global luxury brands purchasing intention	.151	*	Yes
H4b: Snob consumption → national luxury brands purchasing intention	.175	*	Yes
H5a: Bandwagon consumption → global luxury brands purchasing intention	.478	***	Yes
H5b: Bandwagon consumption → national luxury brands purchasing intention	.025	.738	No
Fit statistics			
Chi-square/df			1.75
GFI			0.82
RMSEA			0.05
PCFI			0.84

□ $p < .05$. □□ $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

4. Results

Figure 2: Results for study of conspicuous consumption

The results in Table 4 and Figure 2 show that the overall model exhibited a good fit: $\chi2/df$ = 1.748; GFI = .82; RMSEA = .057; PCFI = 0.84. Even though the GFI was below the 0.90 threshold, it was above 0.80, which is an acceptable value as proposed by Baumgartner and Homburg (1996) and Doll, Xia, and Torkzadeh (1994).

The results supported most of the hypotheses, except for H1b and H5b. According to H1b, status-seeking behavior might not be related to consumers that would like to be unique or outstanding. Status seeking effects all CNI, snob and bandwagon consumption variables. The CNFU positively affected snob consumption while CNI was positively related to bandwagon consumption.

Surprisingly, the consumers that chose to purchase national luxury fashion brand items seemed to not be associated with bandwagon consumption. The assimilation to reference group and national luxury fashion brand purchase intention were irrelevant but the snob consumption played some part here. Comparing global and national brands, snob consumption seemed to have a greater effect on the intention to purchase national luxury fashion brand items than global brand items. In the meanwhile, bandwagon consumption was seen to have much more effect on the intention to purchase global luxury fashion brand items than national ones.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The globalization and growth of the luxury market domestically and internationally has caused considerable opportunities and challenges. Conducting conspicuous consumption research on both national and global brand purchases intention could contribute to our knowledge of the "national consumer segment" and "individual consumer values toward both global and national luxury brands by comparison."

The tendency of Thai consumers to convey their personality with the acquisition of both global and national luxury fashion brand items elaborates the status-seeking concern on the part of Thai consumers. They collectively share two forms of conspicuous luxury consumption behaviors regarding global brands, snob and bandwagon, while they share only snob consumption behavior towards the purchase of national luxury fashion brand items.

Part 1: Theoretical implications

This study is important regarding theory in several ways. First, it illustrates how people reflect their self-identity by expressing themselves to the external world in which individuals project what society influences as well as their identity based on their own terms. In this study, consumer culture theory, both consumer identity projects and marketplace cultures (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), was investigated in the real luxury market and it was affirmed that both self and society influence the individual's intention to purchase luxury fashion brand items, especially global brands. This finding also validates the research of Hung et al. (2011), where conspicuous consumption was used by individuals to express certain identities that were caused by social influences. On the other hand, the national luxury fashion brand purchase intention did not illustrate social influences, as it only supported the self-identity project. Further study is needed in this area.

Second, the present study contributes to the topic of conspicuous consumption and provides a clearer view of why people consume luxury products of both national and global brands. Thai consumers, especially Generation Y that have a high income, are still seeking status through uniqueness and assimilation, and snob and bandwagon effects, which trigger a higher global luxury product' purchase intention. However, the bandwagon effect still does not exist within the national luxury fashion brand purchase intention in Thailand. This might be caused by the unpopularity of national brands or the shift in the luxury consumption trend. The assimilation to the social influence already exists with global brands, so consumers might find more and more uniqueness from their national brands that they want to narrow themselves to specific group by avoiding purchase of similar goods to the mainstream which is referred as the rise of 'inconspicuous consumption' (Berger & Ward, 2010). These findings open up new perspectives on luxury consumption.

Third, snob and bandwagon consumption patterns were affirmed in the present study. Snob consumption is carried out by consumers that seek status through the expression of their uniqueness by purchasing less popular luxuries, while bandwagon consumption takes place on the part of consumers that purchase luxury products, as they are popular, in order to impress others (Leibenstein, 1950; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2011; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014). In some aspects, status seekers do not view uniqueness as a way to directly create status because uniqueness refers to being different, and this might not be accepted by the mainstream.

Part 2: Managerial implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for practitioners in terms of the development of marketing strategies. Global luxury marketers can continue to develop and serve material products that contain prestigious status images for consumers as in developing countries such as Thailand, and people evidently seek status through materials. For the product extension strategies, some easy-to-use and/or affordably-priced product categories could be provided to the market in order to create higher purchase intention because the bandwagon effect has greater influence than the snob effect in relation to global brands. However, the number of these product categories should not be too great, as global luxury brands should maintain their exclusive character. Even though a new category could create higher purchase intention, the distribution channel should be selective or even an exclusive strategy. In terms of marketing communication, "gaining status from being popular and outstanding" by purchasing global luxury brand items should be emphasized.

On the other hand, national luxury marketers should consider communicating uniqueness and being out of the mainstream. Pricing strategies should be high in order to maintain prestige and to communicate high quality. This study illustrates that Thai luxury brand items are not being consumed because of their popularity but contrastingly, because consumers prefer being in the in-group and being different. As this study investigated in part wealthy consumers, it can be stated that they consume global luxury brand items because of their popularity, because they value the acceptance from social as a whole, and because they consume national luxury brands for their uniqueness, in order to differentiate themselves from other social classes.

Part 3: Limitations and future research

This study is not free from limitations. First, the sample might reflect upper-class luxury consumption but it might not generalize the luxury consumption of the whole population in Thailand. Second, the use of luxury fashion brands provides an overall view of luxury consumption, but this cannot be applied to all other luxury product or service categories. Third, a research of this type could be conducted in terms of other aspects, such as culture or consumer demographics, which can also influence luxury consumption behaviors. Despite these limitations, this study provides some new perspectives on conspicuous consumption based on the comparison between global and national luxury brands, and advances marketing knowledge for both academics and practitioners.

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