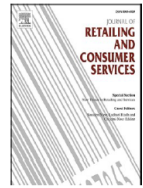




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How consumption values and perceived brand authenticity inspire fashion masstige purchase? An investigation

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ABSTRACT

Rising income and the aspirations of the middle-class have resulted in the emergence of a new category of luxury brands popularly known as “masstige brands”. Researchers have attempted to establish masstige branding and masstige marketing as a differentiated research domain from luxury marketing. As an attempt to this end, the current study, which is confined to women’s fashion clothing brands, investigates whether various *luxury consumption values* are equally applicable in inspiring masstige purchase. In addition, this study investigates whether dimensions of *perceived authenticity of a masstige brand* moderate the association between various consumption values and masstige purchase intention. By employing an online survey, 462 useable responses were collected from middle-income female consumers in India and analysed using PLS-SEM and multi-group analysis. The findings show that *functional, experiential* and *symbolic* consumption values inspire masstige fashion purchase but the *zero-moment-of-truth* consumption value does not. Quality and sincerity (but not heritage) dimensions of perceived brand authenticity enhance the consumption value perceptions leading to masstige purchase. This study is the first of its kind to examine the applicability of various luxury consumption values in masstige consumption besides testing the moderating effect of perceived brand authenticity.

1. Introduction

Global economic activities have resulted in an increase of the middle-income class as along with their associated spending ability and aspirations (Mundel et al., 2017). According to the ‘2021 Credit Suisse (CS) Global Wealth Report’, the size of the global middle-class, defined as ‘adults whose assets are between US\$10,000 and US\$100,000’, more than tripled between 2000 and mid-2020 that is, this figure increased from 507 million in 2000 to 1.7 billion in mid-2020 (Versace et al., 2021). The total spending of this segment of people is predicted to increase from \$37 trillion in 2017 to \$64 trillion in 2030 (Kharas, 2018). The increase in purchasing power and the desire for social status and self-improvement (Eckhardt et al., 2015) have resulted in growing interest in premium priced products and services among this group of people (Farrell et al., 2006). This desire for premium products has created a new market for products and services: ‘prestige brands for masses’ or ‘masstige’ (mass prestige) brands (Paul, 2015). Owing to such brands’ ability to charge comparatively premium prices over mass-market alternatives (Gilal et al., 2021), marketers and brand

managers are increasingly attempting to position their brands on the ‘prestige plank’ in the mass market. Complementing this phenomenon, branding and marketing research started exploring the means of making brands prestigious for the masses (Baber et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2020; Joshi and Garg, 2021; Kumar et al., 2021; Das, Saha & Roy, 2021a). Paul (2018) proposed two prominent equations for masstige marketing; Premium Price = f (Masstige); and Masstige = f (Product, Place, Promotion). Specifically, Paul (2019) proposed masstige marketing strategy as a judicious mixture of product, promotion, and place to fetch a premium price for a brand by appealing to mass-market consumers’ desire for prestige (Kumar et al., 2020; Paul, 2018).

Coined by Silverstein and Fiske (2003) as ‘new luxury’, masstige brands are positioned as “premium but attainable” (Paul, 2015). These brands are marketed to middle-income people to provide them with an upmarket feeling at a price below traditional luxuries but above the mass-market alternatives (Lo and Yeung, 2020). Both luxury brands and ordinary mass-market brands take advantage of ‘prestige for the masses’ as a marketing opportunity. While luxury brands have attempted to use this opportunity by employing downward brand extension strategy,

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