

**CONSUMERS' NEED FOR UNIQUENESS: EVALUATION OF THE READY TO
WEAR LINE OF LUXURY BRANDS**

Chelsey Latter

Chris Marchegiani¹

School of Marketing, Curtin Business School
Curtin University of Technology

2010021

Editor:

**Professor Ian Phau
School of Marketing**

**MARKETING
INSIGHTS
Working Paper Series
School of Marketing**

ISSN 1448 – 9716

¹Corresponding author:

Chris Marchegiani
School of Marketing, Curtin Business School
Curtin University of Technology
GPO BOX U1987
Perth, WA 6845
Australia
Tel (+61 8) 9266 7735
Fax (+61 8) 9266 3937
Email: Chris.Marchegiani@cbs.curtin.edu.au

CONSUMERS' NEED FOR UNIQUENESS: EVALUATION OF THE READY TO WEAR LINE OF LUXURY BRANDS

ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the subject of consumers need for uniqueness and status consumption with specific reference to a luxury apparel brands clothing and accessories in the Australian Generation Y market. Consumers need for uniqueness and status consumption has been explored in depth among adult consumers, but there has been less attention given to the symbolic consumption of Generation Y consumers especially in the field of luxury apparel. This allows the study to extend from areas regarding branded fashion apparel that are conceptually the same as other brands in the same category to branded fashion apparel that utilises a one off customisation approach.

BACKGROUND

The luxury fashion industry continues to be a lucrative, albeit competitive one, with global sales worth upward of US\$80 billion (Nuxoll 2007). Estimates of the luxury fashion industry have revealed numbers to be as high as 114 different fashion houses each of whom contributes to the luxury apparel market (Moore, Fernie, and Burt 2000). Due to the ultra-competitive market, brands look for ways to offer differentiation and avenues to extend and expand. As such, this study focuses on a luxury apparel brand with a distinct focus on the emerging Australian Generation Y market.

Despite the growing importance of Generation Y consumers', who according to Khoo and Conisbee (2008) are set to dominate retail trade in the next five years, limited research has been conducted using an Australian Generation Y sample in regards to their attitudes towards uniqueness and luxury brands. Research by Phau and Cheong (2009) show consumers between the ages of 30 – 50 years have been the traditional market for luxury goods. The importance of adult consumers has been explored in depth, but there has been less attention given to the emergence of symbolic consumption in young people. Studies on a Generation Y sample have been conducted throughout Asia and the US (Kumar, Kim, and Pelton 2009; Lee et al.

2008; O'Cass and Choy 2008; Park, Rabolt, and Jeon 2008; Ruvio, Shoham, and Brencic 2008; Knight and Kim 2007) allowing a basis for comparison.

This proposed study also endeavours to fill the gaps that are present in the existing literature on consumers' need for uniqueness and status consumption by looking at the luxury fashion market with a distinct focus on a haute couture fashion house. The study of uniqueness and status in relation to luxury goods has been examined, but not in a context where they are in direct relation to each other. This study attempts to understand how brand judgements and emotional responses will influence the purchase intentions of consumers towards the ready to wear range of luxury fashion apparel produced by a well recognised fashion house. The findings will benefit large fashion conglomerates that have utilised their brand status as a way of increasing market share by tapping into consumers' desire for rarity and uniqueness. This will allow these brands to enter the mindset of status and non-status consumers and understand what is involved in the purchase decision-making process.

Haute Couture is the prestigious front for French creative fashion (recently a number of fashion houses outside Paris have been afforded membership) and original design and refers to "wildly expensive garments made to measure for an elite cadre of the world's ultra rich...where designers unleash their creativity, using the finest materials and techniques" (Barchfield July 15, 2009, 3). A protected name in France, " " can only be used by fashion houses that meet strict, well-defined guidelines that delineate the practice, dictating a minimum number of original designs as well as a baseline number of technical workers. There are currently only 11 fully-fledged members of the Chambre Syndicale de la , and correspondents and guests make up the remaining twenty-four members (Barchfield July 15, 2009). Ready to wear lines are usually the more affordable, lower priced, but still costly designer label clothing which are designed, marketed and sold in standard sizes and are often mass produced.

RELEVANT LITERATURE AND THEORY DEVELOPMENT

A vast body of knowledge exists regarding the attitudes involved in the consumption of luxury brands. The purchase of products for their symbolic and social value rather than for their inherent utility is now widely recognised as a significant determinant of consumer behaviour (Mason 1992). This research plans to integrate earlier research

from two academic areas that have examined uniqueness. First, there is considerable research in psychology on how consumers use possessions to define identity (Goldsmith and Clark 2008; Phau and Leng 2008; Knight and Kim 2007; Clark, Zboja, and Goldsmith 2007; O'Cass and Frost 2002; Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001; Simonson and Nowls 2000; Campbell 1995; Belk 1988). Second, marketing examines how a variety of factors influence the consumption of certain products and brands, with studies finding status seeking consumers are concerned with their peer's approval and use brands to convey this message / desire (Ruvio, Shoham, and Brencic 2008; O'Cass and Frost 2002).

Australian Generation Y as Global Consumers

The Australian Generation Y market is a dynamic and extremely competitive environment (Phau and Leng 2008). It encompasses 26% of the adult population (Khoo and Conisbee 2008) with the benefit of offering a market segment open to generalisations. Though there appears to be a plethora of opportunities for new entrants and a great scope for innovations, the target audience is notoriously hard to please and has been exposed to marketing since birth (Phau and Leng 2008; Khoo and Conisbee 2008). These consumers are impacted by all facets of technology, which makes them difficult to target and very savvy consumers. According to Khoo and Conisbee (2008) Generation Y consumers have an apt cynicism towards marketing, they take risks, aspire to be creative and unique and are prepared to try fresh and unknown products and brands (Simonson and Nowls 2000).

Limited brand loyalty within this segment means traditional brands can quickly lose touch with these consumers. Spurred by 17 years of uninterrupted economic growth (until recently), this market is cash rich (Khoo and Conisbee 2008). Thanks to a decrease in the affordability of the housing market the average disposable income has increased and as a result Generation Y has enormous spending potential. In 2015 Generation Y will have the largest share of the consumer market and is set to dominate retail trade (Khoo and Conisbee 2008).

Generation Y women have a higher comparative disposable income with significantly greater spending power and potential than both their predecessors the Baby Boomers and Generation X. Generation Y men are a lot more liberal about the purchase of

luxury products and stylish living. Consequently Generation Y men shop more than their predecessors and have increased their range of purchase (Khoo and Conisbee 2008).

However, limited research has been conducted using the Australian Generation Y market in regards to their attitudes towards uniqueness and luxury brands. Research conducted by Phau and Cheong (2009) demonstrate the importance of adult consumers, particularly between the of ages 30 – 50 but the emergence of symbolic consumption in young people has been relatively neglected.

Consumers' Need for Uniqueness

The theory of consumers' need for uniqueness stems from Snyder and Fromkin's (1977) work on uniqueness theory. The theory operates on the premise that consumers find a high level of similarity to others highly undesirable and seek to differentiate themselves adopting various behaviours in order to seek differentiation. Material expressions of uniqueness are highly valued as the social risks associated with this form of display and consumption is seen to be relatively low (Tian and McKenzie 2001; Snyder 1992). The level of uniqueness consumers seek is constrained only by the need for social affiliation and social approval, leaving consumers to seek avenues to explore and demonstrate their uniqueness in ways that do not inhibit or result in social isolation and disapproval (Snyder and Fromkin 1977).

Research has found consumers' need for uniqueness is more specific than simply the need for individualisation and is also distinct from independence (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001). Consumers' need for uniqueness reflects both the self-image and social image enhancement process and is dependent on the product becoming a publicly recognised symbol (Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001; Snyder and Fromkin 1977).

According to research conducted by Tian, Bearden and Hunter (2001) in the validation of consumers' need for uniqueness scales, it is found that neither gender or education had an impact on consumers' need for uniqueness. However a negative correlation is found with consumer age as need for uniqueness decreases with age, which makes studying Generation Y consumers a key market segment.

There are three facets to which consumers need for uniqueness is apparent: creative choice counter-conformity, unpopular choice counter-conformity and avoidance of similarity (Ruvio, Shoham, and Brencic 2008; Knight and Kim 2007; Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001).

- (1) Creative choice counter-conformity refers to the search for social differentiation through the consumption of products that are acceptable to others (Knight and Kim 2007; Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001).
- (2) Unpopular choice counter-conformity is where consumers willingly risk social disapproval to establish their uniqueness. They consume products considered outside group norms (Knight and Kim 2007).
- (3) Avoidance of similarity refers to the consumers' avoidance of mainstream products and the tendency to favour products or brands that are unpopular or not likely to become popular (Knight and Kim 2007).

Linked as it is to the concept of conformity, consumers' need for uniqueness deserves study as a motivating factor in purchase intentions as extant research shows it can have a significant effect on purchase decisions. An individual's need for uniqueness is ultimately a psychological variable (Snyder and Fromkin 1977). It is found that psychological (including the need for uniqueness) and brand antecedents of an individual has a significant and positive effect on conspicuous consumption, "the tendency for individuals to enhance their image, through overt consumption of possessions, which communicates status to others" (O'Cass and McEwen 2004, 34). Furthermore, the congruency of self-concept, brand-image and brand aroused feelings contribute towards the antecedent for purchase decisions of conspicuous and unique brands.

The study of uniqueness on replacement behaviours can be applied to the fashion industry where trends and styles are ever changing (Bertrandias and Goldsmith 2006). Many prior studies on fashion consumption, consumers' need for uniqueness and status consumption are conducted on a predominately Asian or a European sample (Kumar, Kim, and Pelton 2009; O'Cass and Choy 2008; Park, Rabolt, and Jeon 2008; Ruvio, Shoham, and Brencic 2008; Knight and Kim 2007). Few studies are conducted using an Australian sample, in particular a unified gender Generation Y sample, thus there continues to be a lack of cross-cultural studies.

Previous research has been conducted on consumers' need for uniqueness in several countries throughout Asia using Generation Y (Kumar, Kim, and Pelton 2009; O'Cass and Choy 2008; Knight and Kim 2007). Knight and Kim (2007) found Japanese consumers purchase and use brands to fulfil their needs for uniqueness and individuality. Furthermore it is found that brand image perceptions are influenced by consumers need for uniqueness. Further research on Korean consumers established that there is a positive relationship between the need for uniqueness and the usage of global luxury brands (Park, Rabolt, and Jeon 2008). In comparison Amaldoss and Jain (2005) found consumers steer clear of the purchase of luxury and high quality goods due to their desire for uniqueness also finding that demand for a product among consumers who desire uniqueness increases with price. However, research by Bemheim (1994) shows that when status is sufficiently important relative to intrinsic utility, many people conform to a single standard of behaviour, despite underlying heterogeneous preferences (Amaldoss and Jain 2005).

Luxury Apparel/Brands and Status

Social determinants play a large role in the selection of brands. Research shows the interaction between individuals and society demonstrates society's responses and attitudes toward the inherent symbolic meaning of brands. Thus, consumer's behaviour and likely purchase of a brand is determined by others (Shukla 2008). When consumers purchase and endorse a specific brand, they are communicating their desire to be associated with the kind of people also perceived to consume the brand (Phau and Prendergast 2000) and the image and the lifestyle projected by the brand (Husic and Cicic 2009). Luxury brands possess a desirability that extends beyond their utilitarian functions and provides the consumer with a perceived status through ownership. Consequently luxury brands can command premium prices (Moore and Birtwistle 2005). According to O'Cass and Frost (2002), brands are increasingly seen as an important factor in creating and maintaining a sense of identity and achievement. The subsequent argument is such that luxury brands are often consumed to indicate status and as such displayed conspicuously to provide a visual representation (O'Cass and McEwen 2004) meaning consumers are "motivated by a desire to impress others with their ability to pay particularly high prices for prestigious products" (Husic and Cicic 2009, 234). Clark, Zboja, and Goldsmith

(2007) characterise status as the relative position in the hierarchy of a group accorded to them by other members of the group, and is based on characteristics such as honour and prestige.

“Status is a form of power that consists of respect, consideration, and envy from others and represents the goals of a culture. Many people desire status and devote a lot of energy to acquiring it” (Barkow 1992 as cited by Eastman and Goldsmith 1999, 42).

Scholars distinguish three different types of status:

1. Status by assignment (e.g. royalty)
2. Status by achievement, and
3. Status by consumption

Here the focus is on the final type of status, that which is acquired through possession. Products, as previously mentioned, have symbolic uses. “Consumers acquire, own, use and display certain goods and services to enhance their sense of self, to present an image of what they are like, to represent what they feel and think, and to bring about the types of social relationships they wish to have” (Eastman and Goldsmith 1999, 42).

The acquisition of material goods is one of the strongest measures of social success and achievement with research demonstrating the prevalence of expressing status through possessions more often than through any other avenue (Sangkhawasi and Johri 2007). Eastman and Goldsmith (1999) express the views of Packard (1959) who defines ‘status seekers’ as consumers who continually seek to surround themselves with visible evidence of the superior rank they are claiming. The variance comes in the form of the extent to which consumers seek products that are seen to confer status, moreover consumers differ in how much they seek to gain prestige by consuming status goods (Eastman and Goldsmith 1999).

Status consumption is viewed as the driving force behind the enhancement of social standing through the overt consumption of possessions (Phau and Leng 2008; Piacentini and Mailer 2004; O’Cass and McEwen 2004; O’Cass and Frost 2002). According to Husic and Cacic (2009), luxury items are becoming a necessity. As discretionary income increases and the media promotes immediate self-indulgence, consumers are seeking recognition from others.

According to recent research the consumption of luxury products is less about price and more about the pleasure derived from their use (Piacentini and Mailer 2004) with price only serving to act as a proof of quality. Research conducted by Piacentini and Mailer (2004) show young adults from wealthier families are less likely to engage in status consumption with further research by Deeter-Schmelz et al. (2000) and O'Cass and McEwen (2004) ascertaining that consumers income has little effect on status seeking behaviour (Husic and Cicic 2009; Khoo and Conisbee 2008; Piacentini and Mailer 2004).

Even though status consumers and consumers with a high need for uniqueness buy luxury products for apparently opposite reasons, their basic motivation is the same; the enhancement of self image (Husic and Cicic 2009). A paradox exists; status consumers will purchase products with visible logos to conspicuously display status and wealth whereas consumers' with a need for uniqueness will also purchase luxury brands but pay a higher amount for a hidden brand label (Husic and Cicic 2009). According to extant literature this behaviour illuminates the present situation in luxury apparel. On one side consumers wish to distinguish themselves while on the other side there are those who imitate the 'trend setters' including their aspiration to distinguish themselves.

Normative Influence

"Susceptibility to reference group influence (normative) directly relates to an individual's status consumption tendencies" (O'Cass and McEwen 2004, 34). Conceptually this means certain products and brands are used to provide entry into certain groups. It would appear that the need to identify with, or enhance one's image in the opinion of significant others operates closely with both status consumption and conspicuous consumption. This finding is important as both the consumption for status and uniqueness requires the impact of interpersonal influence (O'Cass and McEwen 2004; Tian and McKenzie 2001). Symbolic consumption is employed not only to create and maintain self but to distinguish a place in society (Wattanasuwan 2005) and cannot be achieved without the presence of others (O'Cass and McEwen 2004). Extant literature denotes the consumption of conspicuous goods is determined by normative group influence (Clark, Zboja, and Goldsmith 2007; Knight and Kim

2007; O'Cass and McEwen 2004; Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001). "Individuals who plan on using items publicly are more likely to be influenced by others so as to decrease the risk of choosing the 'wrong' brand or product" (Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel 2006, 527).

Clark, Zboja, and Goldsmith (2007) see group membership as a necessity along with being psychologically satisfying. As consumers seldom operate in a vacuum, reference groups become paramount to decisions on product and brand purchases. People imitate group members in order to be accepted as group members themselves (Eastman and Goldsmith 1999) but despite the influence of normative pressure many consumers choose to intentionally go against the group and distinguish themselves. The purchase of prestigious products and brands can alleviate the feelings of similarity and help consumers to feel unique. Similarly, status consumers desire to be elevated to a unique position within the group.

Scarcity/ Rarity Principle

Luxury products do not exist today as they did in the past, where only a very select few could afford the high prices; they now operate in a paradox. Prices are high based on the attribute of exclusivity whilst selling to everyone (Husic and Cicic 2009). In order to appeal to consumers desire for uniqueness, marketers develop advertising messages that employ the product-scarcity principle (Tian, Bearden, and Hunter 2001). The product-scarcity principle operates on the notion that the perceived scarcity of the product enhances the desirability. The rarity principle operates on the same premise. As defined by Phau and Prendergast (2000, 122) the rarity principle suggests that "in order to maintain prestige, luxury brands must sustain high levels of awareness and tightly controlled brand diffusion to enhance exclusivity".

Irrelevant of monetary value, scarcity can increase the attractiveness of the product, as it can add a sense of specialness to the individual's self-concept. Products and brands considered to be both scarce and rare are particularly desirable to consumers who are high in need for uniqueness. The possession of scarce products is also fuelled by the desire for status, having rare possessions can also be a marker of one's higher social standing, one of the elite (Snyder 1992). According to Snyder (1992) as children we are taught that scarce objects offer more intrinsic value than plentiful ones denoting a

sense of uniqueness and the status afforded to the product. Extant literature shows luxury consumers' want to be different no matter the price, so they turn to products to which others have limited access (Husic and Cicic 2009).

Luxury consumption is fuelled on the notion of scarcity. Seemingly luxury apparel is inhibited by consumers' ability to pay high prices, meaning fewer consumers can afford the high price tags thus limiting the perceived scope of distribution and purchase. As stated in Vuitton bags the affluent customers: How luxury goods companies woo the wealthy (2005) why would consumers want to spend thousands of dollars on a one of a kind designer item if it's perceived to be a mass commodity? This alludes to the principle of the more you succeed in selling the less exclusive your product becomes, leading luxury brands to walk the fine line between mass market appeal and exclusivity and prestige.

Consumers' Brand Perceptions and Purchase Intentions

Increasingly brands are seen as important in creating identity, a sense of achievement and identification for consumers. They have become "part of a new social protocol where your identity and self worth are determined by the visible brands on your body" (Husic and Cicic 2009, 3). According to Belk (1988) the purchase of objects offers consumers a means of investing in self; therefore "brands strive to elicit strong, positive relationships with their target consumers" (Knight and Kim 2007, 272). Consumers' consider many aspects of the brand when making a purchase including evaluating if the brand satisfies their emotional needs (Kumar, Kim, and Pelton 2009). According to Keller (2008) more and more companies are attempting to tap into consumer emotions with their brands. Previous research found emotional response plays a key role in determining purchase intention and is twice as likely to account for purchase intention than cognition (Knight and Kim 2007). This has lead researchers to recognise that consumers respond to brands in two ways; cognitively and emotionally during the decision making process (Knight and Kim 2007; Babin and Babin 2001). Consumers' who feel good and are pleased about the purchase of a brand will according to Kumar, Kim, and Pelton (2009) purchase and even re-purchase the brand even when given alternative options.

Knight and Kim (2007), who surveyed Japanese Generation Y consumers, found emotional value has a significant impact on purchase intention as did Babin and Babin

(2001) who surveyed American consumers. Consumers perceived emotional value refers to their affective reactions to a brand, this is especially true for fashion because a preoccupation with appearance and socially consumed goods is directly linked to the personality of consumers (Knight and Kim 2007; Bertrandias and Goldsmith 2006). As a product category, fashion induces a high level of involvement and interest due to its symbolic and hedonic nature (Kumar, Kim, and Pelton 2009) exposing consumers to others judgement making it both a socially and emotionally risky product (Bertrandias and Goldsmith 2006). As outlined by Park, Rabolt, and Jeon (2008) young Korean consumers consider global luxury brands as status-oriented possessions. It is therefore assumed that this perception reinforces the purchase intentions of luxury brands for status seeking consumers.

According to Hoyer and Brown (1990) as outlined by Knight and Kim (2007, 273) consumers have a variety of different attitudes towards brands; however perceived quality is the most important attitude in terms of purchase intention particularly for unfamiliar brands. Knight and Kim's (2007) results support this finding adding yet another dimension creative choice, which they found had a positive effect on perceived quality, implying that brands with a superior image play an important role in expressing uniqueness and individuality and ultimately impact purchase intention. This coincides with research by O'Cass and Choy (2008) who found a relationship exists between brand status and brand attitude.

A multitude of factors including self-concept, need for uniqueness and the level of clothing interest can influence brand judgements. This proposed study is designed to determine the factors influencing Australian consumers purchase intentions toward a luxury apparel brand (Kumar, Kim, and Pelton 2009).

GAPS IN THE LITERATURE AND RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

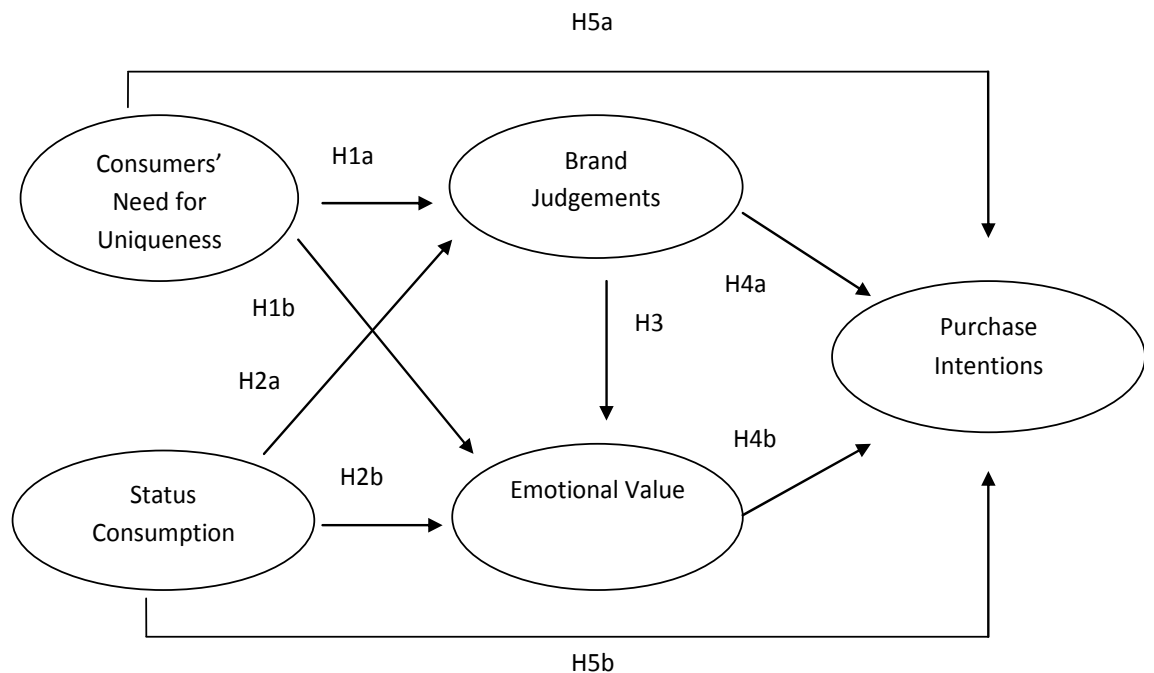
Building on the preceding directions, the primary objective is to assess how status and non-status consumers' attitudes in relation to their need for unique luxury apparel products and brands may affect their purchase intentions, as shown in figure 1. This helps to highlight attitudinal and behavioural variables that marketers should consider when they introduce or market luxury fashion apparel. This research will allow marketers to achieve a better understanding of how consumers perceive and evaluate

high-end luxury apparel brands. The research builds on prior research by Knight and Kim (2007) and Ryan (2008) and leads to the following research objectives:

- To determine whether consumers' need for uniqueness affects and influences brand judgements and emotional value of a luxury brands ready to wear range.
- To determine whether status consumption affects and influences brand judgements and emotional value of a luxury brands ready to wear range.
- To determine whether brand judgements influence purchase intentions of a luxury brands ready to wear range.
- To determine whether emotional value influences purchase intentions of a luxury brands ready to wear range.

Figure 1

Model diagrammatically depicting the proposed relationships between consumers' need for uniqueness, status consumption and purchase intentions.



Prior research has concluded that there is a high degree of correlation with brand responses (attitude toward the brand) and purchase intentions (behavioural intentions) (Knight and Kim 2007). Research also indicates purchase intentions are a positive

consequence of emotional value, in relation to both brand responses and indirectly for consumers' need for uniqueness and status consumption (Lee et al. 2008; Knight and Kim 2007). Therefore, when consumers believe that their actions will have the desired consequences, they have the added incentive to engage in those actions. In this study, the relationships between purchase intention and brand judgements are examined, in relation to the theory of planned behaviour. Leading to the following propositions:

P1: Consumers' need for uniqueness and status consumption is positively related to brand judgements.

P2: Consumers' need for uniqueness and status consumption is positively related to emotional value.

P3: Brand judgements' are positively related to emotional value.

P4a: Consumers' perception of judgements of a brand will influence purchase intentions.

P4b: Consumers' brand perceptions of emotional value will influence purchase intentions

P5: Consumers' need for uniqueness and status consumption will influence purchase intentions.

All propositions that have been developed to this point only test and measure casual relationships. It is not certain if any mediating effects are present within the constructs, therefore, building on the literature the following mediations are proposed:

P6: Emotional value and brand judgements have a mediating effect between consumers' need for uniqueness and purchase intentions.

P8: Emotional value has a mediating effect between brand judgements and purchase intentions.

P9: Emotional value and brand judgements have a mediating effect between status consumption and purchase intentions.

Concluding Comments

A review of past literature has highlighted certain key areas that have either not been studied before or have been studied in a limited capacity which serve to make this study more unique and meaningful and an important contribution to the current literature.

The study extends the application of consumers' need for uniqueness and status consumption into the context of mass customisation using a luxury apparel brand. This allows the study to extend from areas regarding branded fashion apparel that are conceptually the same as other brands in the same category to branded fashion apparel that utilises a one off customisation approach. Since material goods have been identified as a good form of demonstrating differentiation, consumers' need for uniqueness has slowly gained popularity as a topic in the marketing discipline. The consumption patterns of consumers' with varying degrees of uniqueness has been widely studied and applied to a number of consumer goods with the exclusion of luxury apparel, in particular the mass customisation of luxury apparel. The results of this study will enable brands to see if the luxury end of the range effectively targets consumers with either a need for uniqueness or a status consumption need.

Previous studies that examine the effect of uniqueness and status on the consumption of fashion products have utilised the generic use of fashion clothing rather than a particular brand or product (Park, Kim, and Forney 2006; Amaldoss and Jain 2005; Chao and Schor 1998). The use of a particular brand or product might increase the involvement and the reliability of the study and provide a more robust study of this avenue of consumption.

The study of uniqueness and status in relation to luxury goods has been examined, but not in a context where they are in direct relation to each other. Since uniqueness is identified as a component of status this calls for more research into the effects consumers' need for uniqueness has on luxury apparel brands and how this compares to that of status seeking consumers. This represents a gap in the research relating to these prevalent consumer behaviours and will be consequently filled this study.

Despite the growing importance of Generation Y consumers' who according to Khoo and Conisbee (2008) are set to dominate retail trade in the next five years, limited research has been conducted using an Australian Generation Y sample in regards to their attitudes towards uniqueness and luxury brands. Research by Phau and Cheong (2009) show consumers between the ages of 30 – 50 years have been the prime market for luxury goods. The importance of adult consumers has been explored in

depth, but there has been less attention given to the emergence of symbolic consumption in young people. Studies that have been conducted with a Generation Y sample have been conducted throughout Asia and the US (Kumar, Kim, and Pelton 2009; Lee et al. 2008; O'Cass and Choy 2008; Park, Rabolt, and Jeon 2008; Ruvio, Shoham, and Brencic 2008; Knight and Kim 2007) allowing a basis for comparison but nevertheless a lack of cross cultural studies have been conducted on this demographic.

REFERENCES

- Amaldoss, W., and S. Jain. 2005. Pricing of Conspicuous Goods: A Competitive Analysis of Social Effects. *Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)* 42 (1): 30-42.
- Babin, B. J., and L. Babin. 2001. Seeking something different? A model of schema typicality, consumer affect, purchase intentions and perceived shopping value. *Journal of Business Research* 54: 89-96.
- Barchfield, J. July 15, 2009. Couture in crisis. *The West Australian*, July 15, .
- Belk, R. W. 1988. Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research* 15: 139 - 168.
- Bernheim, D. 1994. A theory of conformity. *The Journal of Political Economy* 102 (5): 841 - 877.
- Bertrandias, L., and R. E. Goldsmith. 2006. Some psychological motivations for fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 10 (1): 25-40.
- Blackwell, R., P. Miniard, and J. Engel. 2006. *Consumer Behavior, tenth edition*. Canda: Thomson South-Western.
- Campbell, C. 1995. The Sociology of Consumption. In *Acknowledging Consumption*, ed. D. Miller, 96-126.
- Chao, A., and J. B. Schor. 1998. Empirical tests of status consumption: Evidence from women's cosmetics. *Journal of Economic Psychology* 19 (1): 107-131.
- Clark, R. A., J. J. Zboja, and R. E. Goldsmith. 2007. Status consumption and role-relaxed consumption: A tale of two retail consumers. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 14: 45 - 59.
- Eastman, J. K., and R. E. Goldsmith. 1999. Status Consumption in Consumer Behavior: Scale Development and Validation. *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice* 7 (3): 41.
- Goldsmith, R. E., and R. A. Clark. 2008. An analysis of factors affecting fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 12 (3): 308-322.
- Husic, M., and M. Cicic. 2009. Luxury consumption facts. Pre-print of a paper Emerald Group Publishing Limited. Bosnia and Herzegovina. University of Sarajevo.
- Keller, K. L. 2008. *Strategic brand management: Building, measuring, and managing brand equity*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall
- Khoo, M., and N. Conisbee. 2008. *YTopia- Capturing Retailers' Paradise*. Jones Lang LaSalle. May 19, 2009).
- Knight, D. K., and E. Y. Kim. 2007. Japanese consumers' need for uniqueness: Effects on brand perceptions and purchase intention. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 11 (2): 270 - 280.
- Kumar, A., Y.-K. Kim, and L. Pelton. 2009. Indian consumers' purchase behaviour towards US versus local brands. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management* 37 (6): 510 - 526.
- Lee, M.-Y., Y.-K. Kim, L. Pelton, D. K. Knight, and J. Forney. 2008. Factors affecting Mexican college students' purchase intention toward a US apparel brand. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 12 (3): 294 -307.
- Mason, R. 1992. Modeling the demand for status goods. *Association for Consumer Research Special Volumes*: 88 -95.

- Moore, C. M., and G. Birtwistle. 2005. The nature of parenting advantage in luxury fashion retailing - the case of Gucci group NV. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management* 33 (4): 256 - 270.
- Moore, C. M., J. Fernie, and S. Burt. 2000. Brands without boundaries. The internationalisation of the designer retailer's brand. *European Journal of Marketing* 34 (8): 919-937.
- Nuxoll, K. 2007. *Why brand obsession is the new status quo*. www.atimes.com (accessed 10th November).
- O'Cass, A., and E. Choy. 2008. Chinese generation Y consumers' involvement in fashion clothing. *Journal of Product and Brand Management* 17 (5): 341-352.
- O'Cass, A., and H. Frost. 2002. Status brands: examining the effects of non-product-related brand associations on status and conspicuous consumption. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management* 11 (2): 67-88.
- O'Cass, A., and H. McEwen. 2004. Exploring consumer status and conspicuous consumption. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 4 (1): 25-39.
- Park, E. J., E. Y. Kim, and J. C. Forney. 2006. A structural model of fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 10 (4): 433-446.
- Park, H.-J., N. J. Rabolt, and K. S. Jeon. 2008. Purchasing global luxury brands among young Korean consumers. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 12 (2): 244-259.
- Phau, I., and E. Cheong. 2009. Young consumers' evaluations of diffusion brands. 10 (3): 210 - 224.
- Phau, I., and Y. S. Leng. 2008. Attitudes toward domestic and foreign luxury brand apparel: A comparison between status and non status seeking teenagers. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 12 (1): 68 - 89.
- Phau, I., and G. Prendergast. 2000. Consuming luxury brands: The relevance of the 'rarity principle'. *The Journal of Brand Management* 8 (2): 122-138.
- Piacentini, M., and G. Mailer. 2004. Symbolic consumption in teenagers' clothing choices. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 3 (3): 251-262.
- Ruvio, A., A. Shoham, and M. M. Brencic. 2008. Consumers' need for uniqueness: short-form scale development and cross cultural validation. *International Marketing Review* 25 (1): 33-53.
- Ryan, H. Z. 2008. Uniqueness and innovativeness: A look at controversial men's fashion products, Curtin Business School, Curtin University of Technology, Perth
- Sangkhawasi, T., and L. Johri, M. 2007. Impact of status brand strategy on materialism in Thailand. *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 24 (5): 275 - 282.
- Shukla, P. 2008. Conspicuous consumption among middle age consumers: Psychological and brand antecedents. *Journal of Product and Brand Management* 17 (1): 25 - 36.
- Simonson, I., and S. M. Nowls. 2000. The role of explanations and need for uniqueness in consumer decision making: Unconventional choices based on reasons. *Journal of Consumer Research* 27: 48-68.
- Snyder, C. R. 1992. Product Scarcity by Need for Uniqueness Interaction: A Consumer Catch 22 Carousel? *Basic & Applied Social Psychology* 13 (1): 9-24.
- Snyder, C. R., and H. Fromkin. 1977. Abnormality as a positive characteristic: The development and validation of a scale measuring need for uniqueness. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 86 (5): 518-527.

- Tian, K. T., W. O. Bearden, and G. L. Hunter. 2001. Consumers' need for uniqueness: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Consumer Research* 28: 50-66.
- Tian, K. T., and K. McKenzie. 2001. The Long-Term Predictive Validity of the Consumers' Need for Uniqueness Scale. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 10 (3): 171-193.
- Wattanasuwan, K. 2005. The self and symbolic consumption. *Journal of American Academy of Business* 6 (1): 179 -185.