



The Joint Effect of Self-Monitoring and Self-Ideal Discrepancy on
Consumer Attitude toward Luxury Fashion Brands

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Introduction and Significance: The purpose of this study was to investigate the joint effect of self-monitoring and self-ideal discrepancy on consumer attitude toward luxury fashion brands. While each of these two constructs may have its own main effect as it relates to consumer behavior, little research has examined their interactive, joint effect in the context of luxury fashion brands. With that in mind, the following research question was formulated: What specific aspects of self-ideal discrepancy can trigger a joint effect with self-monitoring in the formation of consumer attitude toward luxury fashion brands?

Literature Review: Self-monitoring refers to the way one adapts one's behavior accordingly directed by situational cues and social appropriateness (Snyder, 1974). High (versus low) self-monitors tend to be concerned with their social self-image and sensitive to normative social influence (Snyder, 1974). In this regard, luxury fashion brands may be more appealing to high (versus low) self-monitors due to their conspicuous nature (Graeff, 1996). According to Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory, people evaluate themselves based on the specified types of internalized standards. The core principle of the theory is that people compare attributes of the actual self-state representations (i.e., the attributes that they actually possess) to attributes in the ideal self-state representations (i.e., the attributes that they hope or wish to hold for themselves). The discrepancies between the actual self-state and ideal self-states result in emotional discomfort. In this study, we investigated whether consumers vary by self-monitoring and self-ideal discrepancy in predicting their attitude toward luxury fashion brands.

Methods: Participants ($n = 316$) who have purchased a luxury fashion brand within the past three years were recruited from a marketing research company. They completed an online questionnaire including attitude toward luxury fashion brands, self-monitoring, and self-ideal discrepancy. The mean age of the participants was 40.2 years old and 51 % of them were women. All income levels were represented with \$60,000- \$69,999 as the median annual income. Participants (58.9%) held a four-year college degree and were married or lived with a partner (63.6%).

Results: The measurement items drawn from relevant literature were first factor analyzed to assess their dimensionality and measurement properties: self-monitoring ($\alpha = .75$) and attitude ($\alpha = .75$). For self-ideal discrepancy, 28 items were reduced to five factors: (a) physical appearance (e.g., appearance, weight); (b) self-efficacy (e.g., self-control, power to control my own life); (c) economic well-being (e.g., income, job satisfaction); (d) relational well-being (e.g., good relationship); and (e) experiential well-being (e.g., excitement, novelty in life). A median split

was used to create groups in each independent variable. A series of two-way ANOVA analyses showed that there was a significant interaction effect between self-monitoring and self-ideal discrepancy in: (b) self-efficacy ($F = 12.52, p < .001$), (c) economic well-being ($F = 9.50, p < .01$), and (e) experiential well-being ($F = 5.06, p < .05$). High self-monitors had more positive attitude toward luxury fashion brands when their actual self was close to ideal than far from ideal in each of the following dimensions: (b) self-efficacy ($M_{\text{high}} = 4.27, M_{\text{low}} = 4.68$), (c) economic well-being ($M_{\text{high}} = 4.43, M_{\text{low}} = 4.63$), and (e) experiential well-being ($M_{\text{high}} = 4.39, M_{\text{low}} = 4.62$). For low self-monitors, only economic well-being was significant ($F = 5.82, p < .05$). Under the high discrepancy condition ($M_{\text{high}} = 4.52$), low-self-monitors had more positive attitude than those under the low discrepancy condition ($M_{\text{low}} = 4.29$).

Discussion: This study contributes to a refined understanding of luxury consumers. Prior research suggest that high (versus low) self-monitors have an overarching concern for their social image (Sullivan & Harnish, 1990) and know well about the impressions or messages that brands send or portray to others about themselves (Snyder & Cantor, 1980). However, our findings suggest that high self-monitors should not be viewed generically in luxury fashion brand contexts and defined simply on the basis of their attunement to social norms, as has been done in past research, and that they vary across diverse self-ideal discrepancy dimensions. This study provides empirical evidence that high self-monitors have more positive attitude toward luxury fashion brands when their actual self is close to ideal self in terms of self-efficacy, economic well-being, and experiential well-being. For managers to effectively design and implement luxury fashion branding strategies for high self-monitors who are inherently conspicuous, our findings suggest that they should convey such messages as self-efficacy, economic well-being, and experiential well-being (e.g., this luxury fashion brand is for already high achievers, exclusively upper class, and/or experience seekers). For inherently less conspicuous, low self-monitors, luxury fashion brands may function as a tool to reduce the gap between their actual self and ideal self in terms of economic well-being. Further research is needed to corroborate our findings in a particular luxury category (e.g., leather, cosmetics, clothing).

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