

## Gender differences in self-identity motives for luxury consumption

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the gender differences in self-identity motives for luxury consumption. The concept of constructing self-identity through luxury consumption has been discussed by past research. Self-esteem is one of the widely used motives that has close connection to one's luxury buying behavior. Recent research has found that there are other motives that aid the construction of self-identity. Using the methodology developed by Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, and Scabini (2006), and the conceptual model created by Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2007), this quantitative pilot study is conducted to examine the contribution of the self-identity motives (self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, meaning, belonging, and efficacy) to construction of self-images and identities of different genders when they are engaged in luxury consumption. Respondents were given a questionnaire in which they answered questions about demographics and self-identity motives. The interpretation of the results revealed mild differences between genders in self-identity motives and luxury consumption. Results will be useful in marketing and product development of luxury goods.

Keywords: luxury consumption, self-identity, product development, gender differences

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's world, consumers are given a vast amount of choices in product selection, and in addition to that a vast number of brands to choose from when purchasing a product. When it comes to choosing a brand name product, consumer buying behaviors and decisions are influenced by many factors, including situational, economic, societal, political, personal and interpersonal factors. For many, the financial capabilities affect the buying decision in which the individual is led to purchase the low-cost brand product. However, for some, no matter what the price tag states, the higher priced brand products are always more charming and attractive to purchase and own. These products are usually not purchased for the same reasons that inferior products are because they do not follow the conventional wisdom of economical decision making (Rhee, 2012). These luxury goods are bought because they usually have more of a psychological value to the individual.

Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2007) state that interpersonal aspects like snobbery, conspicuousness, personal aspects such as hedonistic and perfectionistic motives and situational factors should all be taken into account while measuring consumers' luxury perceptions and explaining consumer behaviors when they engage in luxury consumption. The purchased luxury product represents a value to both the individual and their reference groups because the luxury is considered as the highest level of prestigious brands and products encompassing several physical and psychological values (Wiedmann et al., 2007). Modern thoughts on shopping also defines luxury buying as expressing an emotional and psychological need and constructing their self-image and building self-concept; consumers purchase luxury goods to intrinsically motivate and reward themselves to satisfy psychological needs (Tatt, 2010). This psychological need may tie back to being respected by the reference groups which may define one's level of self-esteem. As Maslow's hierarchy of needs explains, people often engage in activities to gain recognition and satisfy the need to be respected by others. Consumers' level of self-esteem may explain a big part of why luxury consumption maintains its popularity. Moreover, it may explain why different genders have different frequencies of luxury shopping. Despite the extensive number of studies conducted on the topic of the influence of reference groups on consumer buying decisions in relation to luxury consumption, many studies do not dive into the emotional and individual aspects of the consumer buying decisions and behaviors. Most of these studies are focused on individuals' intrinsic motives such as the hedonistic and perfectionistic motives. However, there is hardly any research that studies gender differences in self-identity motives for luxury consumption. It has been found that individuals construct their self-identity through luxury shopping (Harmon, 2007). The motives that persuade individuals to engage in luxury shopping can be affected by the same motives that help them build their identity in society. Moreover, Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, and Scabini (2006) confirmed that "self-esteem motive" is not the only motive that measures one's buying habits and decisions, and that there are several other self-identity motives.

Consequently, this research will focus more on consumer behavior in regards to self-identity motives and how these motives shape the consumers' buying process. It will attempt to answer if consumers construct their self-identity thorough luxury consumption and what these high-priced brands symbolize in the lives of these consumers. Besides the financial and functional utilities of luxury items, this paper will attempt to study the emotional connection between consumers and luxury based on different gender types, which will ultimately answer the questions: "What do luxury items provide these consumers intrinsically?" and, "Does luxury

buying help construct individuals' identities?" For this study, a purposive sample is selected from a target population that engages in luxury consumption. For the data analysis, a 15-question survey was given to 100 participants to answer online, which included mostly Likert-scale questions in order to measure the differences in gender. The researcher focused on the following motives: self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belonging, efficacy and meaning and how genders differ on use of each motive when engaged in luxury consumption.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Defining Luxury

The concept "luxury" has been discussed by many researchers throughout the years; most came to a conclusion that the reasoning behind luxury consumption has a lot more to do with the preference and desire of the consumers and not just being rich and able to afford high-priced products. For instance, Heine (2010) defines luxury brands as "images in the minds of consumers that comprise associations about a high level of price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, extra-ordinaries and a high degree of non-functional association." These products are not necessity and only offered to a small number of people. Hence, the rarity and availability of these products makes it exclusive for the consumers. Shukla (2010) makes the connection of the preference of the consumers to luxury and words it as a state of mind by describing it as how people carry themselves and fulfill themselves as well as the desires of others. His perspective of luxury focuses on mainly one's self and his/her connection to society. He believes that one's luxury consumption is directly linked to social motives.

Some may also consider luxury as high-priced products that the poor cannot have. The feeling of belonging to a certain social class that is capable of affording higher priced products makes acquiring luxury exclusive and exciting for those consumers who prove to society that they don't belong to the poor class. In the beginning of civilization, the difference between social classes made it clear that the higher elite classes acquired luxury items and the poor could not. Kapferer (1997) stated that "luxury is the appendage of ruling classes," whereas non-luxury items are utilitarian and symbolize lower classes. However, in the contemporary world, this view seems to be altering as researchers and marketers study consumer behaviors more and more and discover the underlying factors that affect luxury consumption. The concept of luxury has become ambiguous as the luxury market started to differentiate and the customer base expanded into lower social classes.

According to the vast studies existing in the literature, consumer buying behaviors are influenced by many factors, including the situational, financial, societal, personal, emotional, psychological, environmental and cultural factors. Even though every consumer goes through the same cognitive decision processes when purchasing a product, the external factors that affect one's self influence his/her purchase decision the most. Existing research demonstrates that the purchasing decisions vary between different people because they are affected by different consumer behavioral factors; hence businesses are constantly looking to improve their marketing efforts based on their target group buying behaviors. It is a constant challenge for businesses because trends change all the time, and consumer behaviors change accordingly. Especially in the luxury retail industry, there seems to be a change in the way the firms set their targeting strategies. According to the research report by the investment bank HSBC, the target group has changed from older individuals who had established a certain living and income and are able to

afford luxury goods to young urban males who are now the key to luxury market growth (Stock, 2014). In addition to that the gender type of these consumers was used to be mostly female groups. The research states that now the demographics for the luxury market have changed to males who live in urban cities and are at ages between 20 and 30 with lower incomes and who, interestingly, pursue the ownership of luxury items. Moreover, the report points out that many luxury companies are trying to find ways to attract these male shoppers by making huge investments and engaging in aggressive advertising. For instance, Coach, which is said to be a luring luxury brand for females, has expanded its sales to men from \$100 million in 2010 to \$700 million in 2014 (Stock, 2014). Interestingly, the reasoning behind such change in consumer behaviors can be explained by the factors that are not based on conventional wisdom of economical decision making, as mentioned earlier (Rhee, 2012). These young urban males are driven by psychological and social trends and prefer to display social status earlier on in their lives while older consumers with higher incomes may have less to prove and will tend to buy for themselves rather to impress others (Waldman, 2014).

Consequently, there is a distinction between conspicuous consumption and luxury consumption. While conspicuous buying is more related to spending money to display economic power, luxury consumption can be done due to different reasons such as preference of the quality or exceptionality of the product.

### Defining Conspicuous Consumption

Displaying social status through luxury consumption was defined as conspicuous consumption: referring to the “ostentatious display of wealth for the purpose of acquiring or maintaining status or prestige” (Page, 1992). Throughout history many researchers explained why conspicuous consumption occurred in societies. *The Theory of the Leisure Class* argues that wealthy individuals consume highly conspicuous goods and services in order to show off their wealth, thus achieving higher social status (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996). Accordingly, Vigneron & Johnson (1999) state that “Veblenian” consumers value price as an display of prestige because their primary purpose is to impress others. These individuals are willing to pay a higher price for an item that is available cheaper with the same functionality. Veblen explains the reasoning behind this as follows: in order to gain and to hold the esteem of men, wealth must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only in evidence (Veblen, 1899). However, when Veblen proposed this theory in 1899, he was referring to rich Americans who were spending an extraordinary amount of time and money on leisure expenditures that weren't necessary (Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, & Ghoshai, 2011). With the increased consumption in the world and democratization of luxury, now a majority of individuals with different levels of income enjoy consuming luxury products. Therefore, it is believed that Veblen's description of conspicuous consumption may no longer explain the reason people display wealth to show off.

As stated earlier, there is no particular evidence that show that wealth is most effectively signaled by paying excessive prices for conspicuous goods (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996). Yet, researchers are constantly investigating the dynamics of a more modern perspective of status consumption. After Veblen's work in 1899, Duesenberry emerged with his own theory that was called *bandwagon-effect*, which was similar in a way but it was perceived as more of a social value than conspicuous value (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999) because these consumers attached less importance to price as an indicator of prestige and value the effect they made on others more while consuming these high-priced goods.

The snob effect was another category for consumers who bought luxury for social status and prestige. Leibenstein described snob consumers as individuals who were seeking to be exclusive and perceived price as a display of exclusivity (as cited in Gul, 2013). These consumers avoided using brands that a good number of people used. Chaudhuri, Mazumdar and Ghoshal (2011) state that consumers driven by social values choose products that convey an image harmonious with the social image they wish to project. The scarcity of and exclusivity of luxury items expressed the consumers' level of uniqueness to others.

Chaudhuri, Mazumdar and Ghoshal (2011) developed a conceptualization of conspicuous consumption based on the phenomenon of the Veblen effect and being exclusive through status consumption, which put Veblen, Bandwagon and Snob effect in one form. They re-described conspicuous consumption as "a deliberate engagement in symbolic and visible purchase, possession and usage of products and services imbued with scarce economic and cultural capital with the motivation to communicate a distinctive self-image to others" (Chaudhuri, Mazumdar and Ghoshal, 2011). Nevertheless, this description cannot explain the only attitudinal motive that influences conspicuous behavior. There are many factors that influence the reasons that people want to show a unique self-image. Showing off to others through luxury consumption led a vast number of researchers to conduct studies on individual's social and reference groups, especially after Bourne (1957) developed his typology of reference group influence on product ownership and brand decisions. Nelissen and Meijers (2011) found in their study that luxury consumption actually improves and benefits in social interactions and that luxury consumption can be a good a social strategy investment.

In addition to that, studies have shown that there are many other social utility reasons for conspicuous consumption; Kerremans (2009) states that cognitive orientations such as self-expression play an important role in conspicuous consumption. This self-expression is commonly used as a way for individuals to tie their self-concept to society and fit into certain social classes (Kerremans, 2009). Truong and McColl (2011) state that individuals engage in conspicuous consumption because they are trying to imitate the people who are directly above them in their social classification. Likewise, Shukla (2010) breaks status consumption into three groups, one being the socio-psychological antecedents: "social gains, esteem indication and ostentation behavior." Social emulation by conspicuous consumption shows that social gains, esteem indication and ostentation behaviors are interrelated motives when it comes to gaining higher status in the reference group.

### **Conceptual model of Luxury Value Dimensions**

In order to acquire more information regarding consumer motives and value perceptions, Wiedmann, Hennings, and Siebels (2007) developed a model that demonstrated the consumer perception of luxury consumption in order to develop a more stable structure of the luxury consumption effectors for businesses and marketers that wish to position their products in luxury consuming markets.

As shown in Figure 1, individual value focuses on consumer perception on luxury consumption and addresses personal matters such as materialism, hedonic values and self-identity values (Wiedmann, Hennings, Siebels, 2007).

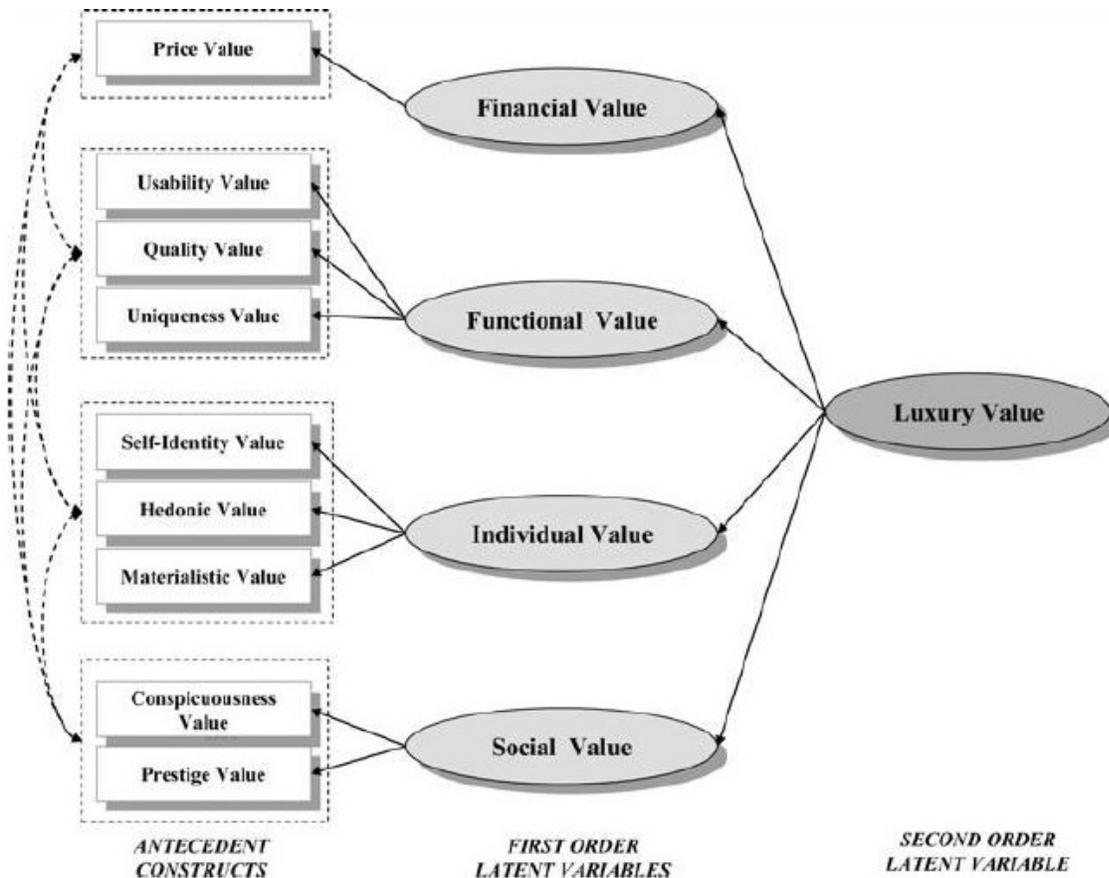


Figure 1: The Conceptual Model (Wiedmann, Hennings & Siebels, 2007)

Wiedmann, Hennings, and Siebels (2007) define materialism as the extent to which individuals acquire materialistic possessions to be the center of their lives. The more materialistic these individuals are the more luxury goods they want to acquire. Another study found the reasoning behind consumer materialism; individuals may use materialistic possessions for self-image impairment. A study by Dong et al. (2013) confirmed that repairing self-image by choosing luxury products reduced their aversive emotions such as embarrassment and motivated them to mingle in social settings (Cisek et al., 2014). A study by Sivanathan and Pettit (2010) showed that individuals saw the conspicuous goods as a remedy that would restore their threatened self-image, thus treating consumption as an indirect source of self-affirmation (Cisek et al., 2014).

Past research also argued that consumers are motivated to purchase luxury goods for self-rewarding reasons. Some investigations such as the conceptual model by Wiedmann, et al. (2007) refer to these experiences as hedonic motivations. One of the indicators of these hedonic motivations is that there are many consumers who are not wealthy but still dispose their income on luxury brands for self-pleasure (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). These self-directed motives go beyond utilitarian motivations; they enhance individuals' self-esteem and establish consistency in their self-concept and how they perceive themselves (Pandya & Venkatesh, 1992). Khan and Dhar (2004) distinguish utilitarian and hedonic motivations as follows: while hedonic pleasure goods are multisensory and provide experimental consumption, fun, enjoyment and excitement, utilitarian goods are more instrumental and bought for its functional aspects in which the consumer is only getting value for money to the extent that the product fulfills its specific

purpose (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009). Therefore, a luxury brand has a higher hedonic potential than a value brand.

### **Self-Identity Value**

Wiedmann, Hennings, and Siebels (2007) define “Self-Identity Value” as one’s internal facet in terms of the way he/she perceives him or herself. In addition, self-congruity theory states that various products and brands are perceived as reflecting the buyer’s personality traits (Cisek et al., 2014). This theory proved that there was a significant impact of self-congruity on luxury-brand purchase, thus engaging consumers into using luxury to integrate a symbolic meaning into their own identity (Wiedmann, Hennings & Siebels, 2007). This theory confirmed that when consumers make these buying decisions, they pick brands that match their actual or ideal self-image and that these consumers are usually influenced by two motives, self-consistency and self-esteem. Research has shown high self-esteem is associated with greater consistency (Elliot, 1986). When individuals accomplish the fulfillment of their emotional and hedonic needs, they may boost their self-esteem by engaging in symbolic consumption more to maintain their self-consistency (Pandya & Venkatesh, 1992). Therefore, humans tend to naturally strive to enhance their self-esteem and one way to accomplish that is to engage in luxury consumption.

### **Self-identity Motives**

Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, and Scabini (2006) developed certain *identity motives* in order to understand what influences how we value ourselves. In their recent literature, they argue that self-esteem is not the only motive that affects identity construction; and thus possibly not the only motive that influences luxury consumption. After Vignoles et al. (2006) reviewed the theories of the self-concept, social identity and identity of threat, they identified the key motives that influence identity construction. As mentioned earlier, individuals are motivated to enhance their self-esteem and build consistency in their self-image. It is said that they are more likely to maintain that consistency in their identities when it is more central. As the model developed by Vignoles et al. (2006) show, the motives influencing individuals’ perceived self-image are “self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belonging, efficacy and meaning.” Based on literature review, these motives should have an impact on a person’s connection to willingness to buy luxury products. Because people engage in ownership of luxury products and services to show a distinctive self-image to others (Chaudhuri et al., 2011), these motives must be taken into account when analyzing the underlying sources of such behaviors and consumption.

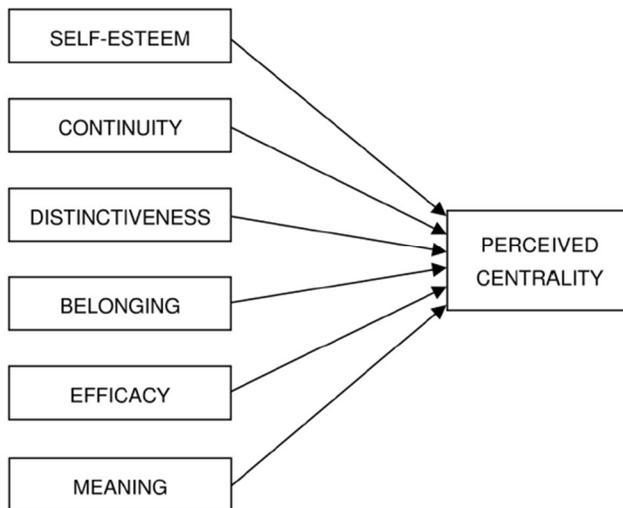


Figure 2: Conceptual model of motivational influences on perceived centrality ( Vignoles et al., 2006).

The continuity motive motivates individuals to preserve “continuity across time and situation” within their identity” (Breakwell, 1986). Past studies have shown that people with higher continuity motive receive more attention in their social classes because they are seen as more consistent and reliable. They manage to stay that way by being in social groups that provide self-verification (Vignoles et al., 2006). Those people create connections to brands used by their social groups in order to verify or maintain consistency with their self-image (MacInnis, Park, & Priester, 2009).

Individuals also strive for distinctiveness in order to create a meaningful existence in their social context (Vignoles et al., 2006). When distinctiveness is threatened in a social context, the individual will engage in a coping mechanism that will differentiate his/her identity from others (Harmon, 2007). Luxury products are known to be non-utilitarian and distinct products; hence an individual can easily find himself/herself willing to buy luxury to distinguish himself/herself from others.

With the belonging motive, individuals wish to feel that they are accepted by other people, whether in dyadic relationships or within a group (Vignoles et al., 2006). Studies show that belonging is a positive predictor of self-brand connections (Harmon, 2007), thus confirming that individuals who purchase luxury may be motivated by the belonging motive.

The efficacy motive is defined as individuals’ behavior to maintain and enhance feelings of “competence and control” (Breakwell, 1993). Self-efficacy perceptions help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have in selecting a specific brand and it is a critical motive in presenting identity due to the enduring beliefs that motivate behavioral capabilities of competence and mastery (Harmon, 2007).

The meaning motive is explained as finding the importance and purpose of one’s existence. (Baumeister, 1991) The need for meaning in one’s life is the key motivator for his/her self-identity construction. Moreover, presenting a good self-image to others to receive approval helps maintain self-esteem and make their lives meaningful (Heine et al., 2006).

## Gender Differences in Self-Identity Motives

Gul (2013) states that overall, women have a more positive attitude towards and a higher purchase intention of luxury brand versus non-luxury brand and are more likely to have higher levels of brand consciousness than male consumers. Gul's study proves that overall, women have a higher luxury consumption level than men. Similarly, this research will attempt to investigate if the gender types have a different impact on luxury consumption and if personal motives such as self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belonging, efficacy and meaning affect these buying decisions. Past research in luxury consumption behavior studied and focused on mostly motives for conspicuous consumption whether the causes for those motives were self-rewarding, emulating reference groups, and status reasons. Nowadays, even the consumers who do not have the income to engage in luxury consumption, find themselves purchasing luxury items and disposing of their money on a product that has the same functionality of a cheaper brand item because their emotional desires can often dominate functional motives in the choice of products (Khan & Dhar 2004). Global lower-middle-class consumers have become occasional luxury consumers and they pursue their lifestyles by owning luxury items. To address the emotional reasoning behind this, this study will attempt to examine if there is a relationship between one's self-identity motives based on gender and luxury buying behaviors. Moreover, it will study whether women or men tend to engage in constructing their self-identities more through buying luxury products.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the gender differences in self-identity motives for luxury consumption and test if luxury consumption contributes to constructing one's self-identity. To better understand the purpose of the study and identify what this is research particularly looking for, below is the combination of two conceptual models by Vignoles et al. (2006) and Wiedmann et al. (2007). It is important to acknowledge that this study does not focus on all the factors that affect luxury consumption but only on the "perceived centrality" which is said to be affected by the self-identity motives: "self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belonging, efficacy and meaning."

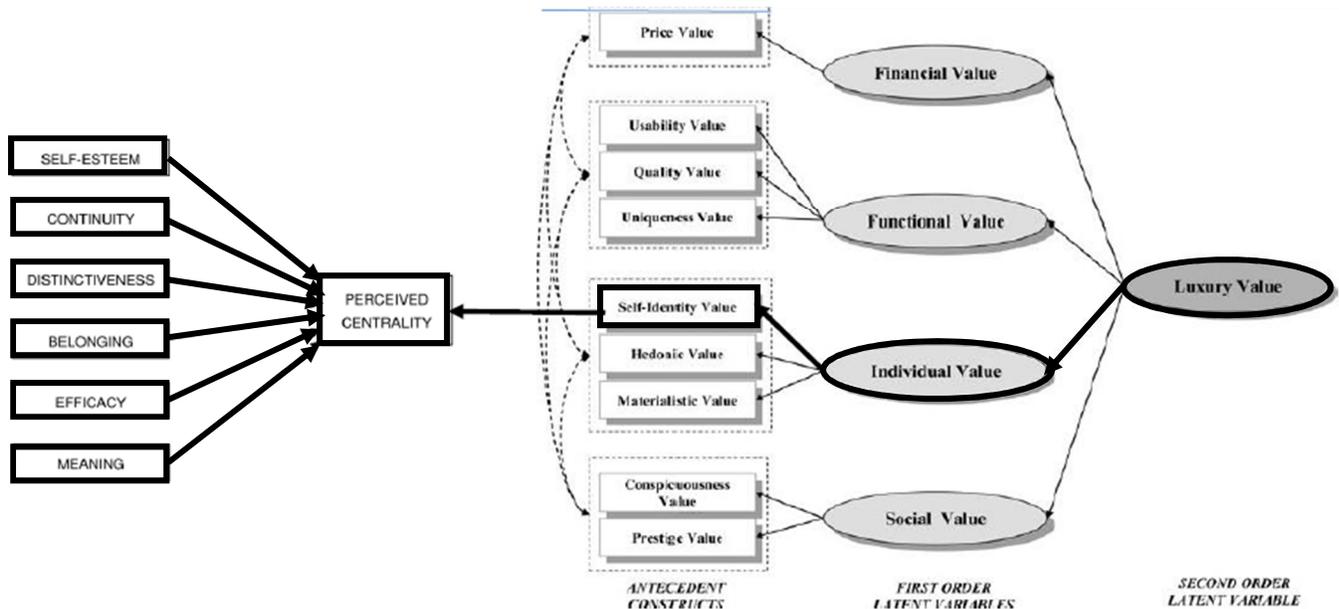


Figure 3: Combined Conceptual Models

**Self-esteem motive:** According to one study, individuals whose self-esteem was harmed sought affirmation in high-status goods (Tuttle, 2010). In order to repair the self-threat, those individuals engaged in conspicuous consumption. A recent report by the investment bank HSBC states that young urban males who are at ages between 20 and 30 with lower incomes and interestingly pursue the ownership of luxury items are now the key to luxury market growth (Stock, 2014). These men may possibly feel that their self-esteem is threatened due to their lower income and their attempt belong to their social status. Women also seek to buy luxury items to prevent the self-threat from other women and protect their relationships. Therefore, it is proposed here that:

**H:** Women and men both engage in conspicuous consumption at equal levels when they want to repair self-threat.

**Continuity motive:** Studies show that women are more likely than men to desire verification of self-image (Chen, English, & Peng, 2006). As mentioned earlier, those people create connections to brands used by their social groups in order to verify or maintain continuity with their self-image (MacInnis, Park, & Priester, 2009) Thus:

**H:** Women have higher continuity motive than men in luxury consumption.

**Distinctiveness motive:** In a recent study, it was said that women seek designer goods to intimidate other women and protect romantic relationships with men while men buy luxury to attract women (Ohikuare, 2013). Women may be influenced by the distinctiveness motive to cope with the threat. Consequently:

**H:** Women are motivated by the distinctiveness motive more than men when buying luxury products.

**Belonging motive:** In gender differences in social belonging in Western societies, males tend to be higher individualism than females (Cross & Madson, 1997). This leads to:

**H:** Women are affected by belonging motives more than men in luxury consumption.

**Efficacy motive:** Efficacy perceptions are based more on what individuals believe than what is objectively true (Harmon, 2007). Therefore, it gives the individual the feeling of enhancing competence and control. Men want to look more dominant and have control over possessions to attract women. Therefore, the proposal is that:

**H:** The efficacy motive is higher in men than women in luxury consumption.

**Meaning motive:** Presenting a good self-image to others to receive approval makes both men and women's lives meaningful. While men buy luxury products to attract women and receive approval, women buy to intimidate other women (Ohikware, 2013). While it doesn't mean that women do not prefer to use luxury products to construct their identities, meaning motive may be higher in men when it comes to luxury consumption. In sum, then:

**H:** The meaning motive is higher in men in luxury consumption.

## METHODOLOGY

### Background

Using the methodology developed by Vignoles et al. (2002), and the conceptual model created by Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2007), this quantitative pilot study is conducted to examine the contribution of the self-related motives to construction of self-images and identities of luxury consuming between genders.

### Approach

The research revolves around hypotheses proposing that each self-identity motive differs between genders. The authors intend to find out, for which of the motives the hypotheses are true and for which they are not. A purposive sampling (judgement sampling) is used in order to focus on a selected group of participants who are in upper-middle social class and purchase luxury goods. The participants were college-level educated (completed or in progress). The questionnaire was developed based on the feedback collected from a pilot survey. It was given to 100 participants in the author's social circle. The survey participants were directed to an online survey through Google Docs, answering demographic questions about gender, age, home area, gross income and marital status, and also questions about motives on luxury consumption. Some of the questions on motives for luxury consumption were used and inspired from a published thesis written by Salmela (2010). Most questionnaire items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Confidentiality was ensured, as the participants were asked not to identify themselves. A total of 100 survey requests was sent to participants, and usable data of 58 was obtained.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

To test the hypotheses, the independent T-test, correlations and multiple regression analyses in SPSS were used in order to examine the gender differences in self-identity motives for luxury consumption. After obtaining the data from the completed survey, the results were summarized to useful data.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and the independent sample T-test values in which the differences between genders are examined. The authors aim to find out if there is a significant difference in answers for self-identity motives between females and males. According to the p-values listed in the Table 1, there is not a significant difference between the males and females because p-values are higher than the significance level of 0.05. The mean of the answers of each group were taken into consideration to find out which group scored higher in self-identity motives. Even though the T-test revealed that there were no statistically significant findings, the means of the answers were compared to find out which group had a higher value. For self-esteem motive, the means for both men and women were close to 3, with women's mean being 2.91 and men's mean being 2.96; they were both neutral about engaging in conspicuous consumption when they wanted to repair self-threat. For that reason, we can say that the number support the self-motive hypotheses, women and men both engage in conspicuous consumption at equal levels when they want to repair self-threat.

Continuity motive means revealed that men disagreed more than women in buying luxury items bringing their lives more to their ideal self-image while women stayed between disagreeing and being neutral about the statement. Both women and men were neutral about using certain luxury brands of clothes and accessories because they suited their self-images. For that reason, the results do not support the continuity hypothesis that women have a higher continuity motive than men in luxury consumption.

Both men and women disagreed that they bought luxury products to distinguish themselves from other people. The p-value stated that there wasn't a significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported; women are not motivated by the distinctiveness motive than men when buying luxury products.

Women scored closer to neutral while men disagreed in the meaning motive. The T-test showed that there was no significant difference between two groups; for that reason, the meaning motive is not higher in men in luxury consumption.

Both women and men both scored close to each other for the belonging motive. The T-test didn't reveal any significant difference. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported; both women and men are not affected by the belonging motive in luxury consumption. The results for the efficacy motives did not support the proposed hypothesis either. Both women and men are neutral in efficacy motive in luxury consumption.

Table 1 presents the values for the demographics for both men and women. While age, home area, marital status and children stayed in similar values, income fluctuated between genders. Gross income for men was between \$11,000 and \$40,000 on average while women's gross income was between zero and \$10,000. For that reason, the authors analyzed the correlation between gross income and the self-identity motives.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and independent sample T-test values for ages 20-30 and age 31 and more. There was a significant difference in the self-esteem motive between ages 20-30 and ages 31 and more. The participants who were 31 and older disagreed that they bought luxury items to make themselves feel better, while participants who were at ages between 20 and 30 were neutral about making themselves feel better by buying luxury products. Participants that are at ages 31 and more also had a higher gross income than the participants that are at ages 20 and 30. And more of the participants that are at ages 31 and more lived in EuroAsia and the Americas, whereas the participants at ages 20-30 lived mostly in Asia. No significant differences appeared in the rest of the motives and demographics.

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics by home area in which the home areas are separated into 3 groups: Europe, the Americas and Other and compared to each other. There was a significant difference in the continuity motive between Europe and the Americas. According to the results, participants with the home area of the Americas strongly disagreed that buying luxury items brought their lives more to their ideal self-images, whereas participants from Europe were closer to neutral about the statement.

Table 4 provides the descriptive statistics by income. The two groups that are compared are gross income of zero to \$10,000 and gross income of \$41,000 to \$100,000. There was a significant difference in the efficacy motive between those groups. The participants with zero to \$10,000 of gross income disagreed that they preferred to buy expensive products because they were capable of affording those, whereas participants with \$40,000 to \$100,000 of gross income were neutral about the capability of buying expensive products. The results didn't reveal any significant differences for the other motives.

Table 5 presents the results for the correlation between the self-esteem motive and the gender, age, home area and income. According to the results, there were only negative correlations among all the variables. For instance, when the age increased, the self-esteem motive decreased. The results did show a small but weak positive correlation between the gender and self-esteem motive. Table 6 showed the results for the correlation between the continuity motive and gender, age, home and income. They were all negatively correlated. There were no positive correlations between the distinctiveness motive and all the other variables (Table 7). The meaning motive was positively correlated with the home area and negatively correlated with gender, age and income (Table 8). Belonging was positively correlated to age and home but Pearson's R-value is close to zero. Therefore, we conclude that the variables were not strongly correlated (Table 9). According to Table 10 results, the correlation between efficacy motive and gender, age, home and income were positively correlated but they were still close to zero that they were not strongly correlated.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine if any other relationship could be found between different independent variables and self-identity motives. Table 11 summarizes the first regression analysis the authors performed to see if there was any relationship between self-identity motives and females at ages 20 to 31 that are from Europe. For that reason, dummy variables were used to sort gender, age and home area data into exclusive categories. A significance level of 5% was used for this analysis. According to the results all three independent variables were negatively correlated and none of the variable contributed to the regression model. On the other hand, when the dummy variables were changed in Table 13 to males that are at ages 31 and more and have gross income \$41,000 to \$100,000, there was a significant difference in the efficacy motive. The p value was lower than 0.05 which meant the relationship was reliable and can be used to make predictions. According to the results, the participants with gross income \$41,000 to \$100,000 had a higher efficacy motive when they were engaged in luxury consumption, which could indicate that they maintain and enhance feelings of competence and control through luxury consumption and that they prefer to buy expensive products because they are capable of affording those. All the other negative coefficients for male could indicate that males at ages 31 and more with gross income \$41,000-\$100,000 are in general is less likely affected by those self-identity motives than others.

Table 13 summarizes the relationship between the independent variables, males at ages 31 and from Asia with gross income of \$41,000 to \$100,000, and self-identity motives. A significant difference occurred between Asia and the belonging motive. The independent

variable Asia was positively correlated with Age 31 and more, which can mean that participants at ages 31 and more from Asia may have a higher belonging motive when they are engaged in luxury consumption. Owning luxury products may help them maintain feeling of closeness to their socio-economic groups. The independent variables, male and gross income of \$41,000 to \$100,000 are negatively correlated with the independent variables age 31 and more, and Asia, so it can mean that males at ages 31 and more with \$41,000 to \$100,000 are less likely to be affected by belonging motive compared to participants at ages 31 and more and from Asia. They may wish more to feel that they are accepted by other people whether in dyadic relationships or within a group (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, & Scabini, 2006) and do this by engaging in luxury consumption.

Table 14 summarizes the regression analysis 4 that examines the relationship between independent variables, females at ages 20 to 30, from EuroAsia, with gross income of zero to \$10,000, and the self-identity motives. A significant difference occurred between negatively correlated EuroAsia and the self-esteem coefficient, which could mean that participants from EuroAsia are less likely to be affected by the self-esteem motive when engaged in luxury consumption and that they don't buy luxury products to boost their self-esteem.

The results for Table 15 indicate that there was a significant difference in the meaning motive for the participants from the Americas and it was positively correlated with the independent variables, females at ages 20-30 with gross income of 0 to \$10,000, which can mean that when females at ages 20-30 with gross income of 0 to \$10,000 are from the Americas they are most likely to be affected by the meaning motive; they present a good self-image to others through luxury consumption to receive approval and make their lives meaningful (Heine et al., 2006).

The final regression model (Table 16) summarizes the relationship between the independent variables, age 31 and more, Europe, and gross income of \$41,000 and \$100,000, and self-identity motives. A significant difference occurred between the meaning motive and the independent variable Europe, which can mean that the result is reliable and open to predictions. According to the results, participants at ages 31 and from Europe are less likely to be affected by the meaning motive when they engage in luxury consumption; they less likely tend to use luxury items to show people that they are from certain social-economic groups to make their lives meaningful. However, that is positively correlated with the gross income of \$41,000 to \$100,000, so the prediction may show changes when the gross income is \$41,000 to \$100,000.

## **DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

It has been demonstrated that luxury products are not bought for the same reason that inferior products are bought; they are purchased because they have a psychological and an individual value to one's self (Rhee, 2012). One's individual value is affected by his/her perception of materialistic, hedonic and self-identity values (Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2007). The purpose of the study was to find differences in how different genders perceive the luxury products and if they use those as support factors in their identity construction.

The results of this study suggested that there were no significant but mild differences in self-identity motives in genders when they engage in luxury consumption. There is yet room for improving the study by using a sample that definitively identified by individuals that utilize luxury goods.

One of the major limitations of this study were the uncertainties associated with the sample; there were only 58 participants, all from the author's social circle. These participants differed in ages, income and home area. However, there were only a few participants married with children; this may be an indicator as to why there were no significant differences in the results. Purposive sampling was chosen for this particular study. The sample for a future study is suggested to be taken from luxury retail store customers, who frequently shops for luxury product, thus making the study more focused. However, this particular purposive sampling may not be representative of the population but then again it may give more accurate results. First these participants can be analyzed for their identity centrality and then examine whether if centrality plays an important role in their lives. The participants that are perceived more central to identity elements may score higher in the self-identity motives suggested by Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, and Scabini (2006) who found in their study that those typically perceived as more central to identity elements provided a higher sense of self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, meaning, belonging and efficacy. It is suggested that the future studies focus more on up specific home areas such as Europe and Asia, to be able to test the differences. It is also suggested that the sampling of homogeneous group would be a better way for collecting useful data and results since the research question will be addressed specifically to the characteristics of the particular group of interest. Consequently, future research could use the findings of this pilot exploration and improve upon this study to accept or reject the same hypotheses, or add more variables to examine more relationships.

## MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study can be used in the design of how luxury retail stores advertise their luxury products. The study could help businesses market and develop their products to genders by using the motives they scored higher in. For instance, if women were affected by the distinctiveness motive when buying luxury products, they would buy the product to look unique in their social group. A business can use this fact to target their advertising on selling products that are unique and distinct by expanding its sales to women. According to the research report by HSBC, the key growth market are the "yummies" who are young urban males that are at ages between 20 and 30 and have lower incomes (Stock, 2014). These male shoppers are driven to buy luxury products to display social status earlier on their lives to impress others and fit into upper-social class. Many of these males may be influenced by the self-identity motives found by Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, and Scabini (2006).

Even though study did not show significant results, the efficacy motive was higher in men than women. Efficacy perceptions are based more on what individuals believe than what is objectively true (Harmon, 2007). For instance, an individual may so much knowledge and skills about a certain luxury brand that he/she will not prefer to a different product with the same capabilities due to enduring beliefs that motivate behavioral capabilities of competence and mastery (Harmon, 2007). In this study, men's efficacy perception gave them the feeling of enhancing competence and control. A business can use this result towards advertising to its male shoppers by emphasizing the competence and mastery of the luxury products to men.

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## APPENDIX A

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics by gender (N=58)**

	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	
	Mean (Standard deviation)	Mean (Standard deviation)	p-value
<b><u>MOTIVES</u></b>			
Self-esteem 1	2.91 (1.22)	2.96 (1.08)	0.88
Self-esteem 2	2.79 (1.15)	2.50 (1.14)	0.34
Continuity 1	2.24 (1.18)	1.75 (0.99)	0.10
Continuity 2	2.68 (1.17)	2.42 (1.28)	0.44
Distinctiveness	2.06 (1.21)	1.92 (1.14)	0.65
Meaning	2.50 (1.11)	2.08 (1.35)	0.22
Belonging	1.94 (1.04)	1.75 (0.85)	0.45
Efficacy 1	2.06 (0.95)	2.29 (1.23)	0.44
Efficacy 2	2.38 (1.18)	2.17 (1.24)	0.51
<b><u>DEMOGRAPHICS</u></b>			
Age	2.15 (0.36)	2.21 (0.42)	0.56
Home Area	3.44 (1.44)	3.42 (1.53)	0.95
Marital Status	1.12 (0.33)	1.08 (0.28)	0.67
Children	1.97 (0.17)	1.92 (0.28)	0.41
Income	1.62 (0.82)	2.33 (0.87)	0.03

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics by age (N=58)**

	<b>Age 20-30</b>	<b>Age 31 and more</b>	
	Mean (Standard deviation)	Mean (Standard deviation)	p-value
<b><u>MOTIVES</u></b>			
Self-esteem 1	3.00 (1.15)	2.60 (1.17)	0.34
Self-esteem 2	2.81 (1.14)	2.00 (0.94)	0.03
Continuity 1	2.08 (1.18)	1.80 (0.79)	0.36
Continuity 2	2.63 (1.27)	2.30 (0.95)	0.37
Distinctiveness	2.04 (1.22)	1.80 (0.92)	0.49
Meaning	2.38 (1.28)	2.10 (0.88)	0.42
Belonging	1.85 (1.03)	1.90 (0.57)	0.85
Efficacy 1	2.10 (1.10)	2.40 (0.97)	0.40
Efficacy 2	2.27 (1.23)	2.40 (1.08)	0.74
<b><u>DEMOGRAPHICS</u></b>			
Gender	1.40 (0.49)	1.50 (0.53)	0.58
Home Area	3.19 (1.36)	4.60 (1.43)	0.01
Marital Status	1.08 (0.28)	1.20 (0.42)	0.42
Children	1.98 (0.14)	1.80 (0.42)	0.22
Income	1.79 (0.87)	2.50 (0.85)	0.03

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics by home area (N=58)**

	<b>Europe</b>	<b>Americas</b>		<b>Other</b>
	Mean (Standard deviation)	Mean (Standard deviation)	p-value (Europe& Americas)	Mean (Standard deviation)
<b><u>MOTIVES</u></b>				
Self-esteem 1	3.04 (1.12)	3.00 (1.09)	0.90	2.69 (1.30)
Self-esteem 2	2.88 (1.19)	2.61 (1.04)	0.45	2.44 (1.21)
Continuity 1	2.29 (1.12)	1.61 (0.85)	0.03*	2.12 (1.31)
Continuity 2	2.67 (1.13)	2.39 (1.34)	0.48	2.63 (1.26)
Distinctiveness	2.00 (1.06)	2.00 (1.46)	1.00	2.00 (1.03)
Meaning	1.96 (0.86)	2.78 (1.56)	0.06	2.38 (1.15)
Belonging	1.75 (0.94)	1.83 (0.92)	0.78	2.06 (1.06)
Efficacy 1	2.08 (1.02)	2.33 (1.19)	0.48	2.06 (1.06)
Efficacy 2	2.00 (1.06)	2.78 (1.40)	0.06	2.19 (1.05)
<b><u>DEMOGRAPHICS</u></b>				
Gender	1.50 (0.51)	1.50 (0.51)	1.00	1.19 (0.40)
Age	2.08 (0.28)	2.33 (0.49)	0.06	2.13 (0.34)
Marital Status	1.08 (0.28)	1.17 (0.38)	0.45	1.06 (0.25)
Children	2.00 (0.00)	1.83 (0.38)	0.83	2.00 (0.00)
Income	1.83 (1.01)	2.22 (0.88)	0.19	1.69 (0.70)

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics by income (N=58)**

	<b>0 to \$10,000</b>	<b>\$40,000 to \$100,000</b>	
	Mean (Standard deviation)	Mean (Standard deviation)	p-value
<b><u>MOTIVES</u></b>			
Self-esteem 1	2.96 (1.26)	2.75 (1.29)	0.66
Self-esteem 2	2.78 (1.17)	2.75 (1.29)	0.94
Continuity 1	2.22 (1.28)	1.75 (0.97)	0.24
Continuity 2	2.61 (1.20)	2.25 (1.29)	0.43
Distinctiveness	2.22 (1.38)	1.67 (0.89)	0.16
Meaning	2.30 (1.22)	2.42 (1.51)	0.83
Belonging	1.91 (1.08)	1.58 (0.79)	0.31
Efficacy 1	2.13 (1.10)	2.17 (1.19)	0.93
Efficacy 2	2.04 (0.93)	3.17 (1.40)	0.02*
<b><u>DEMOGRAPHICS</u></b>			
Gender	1.17 (0.39)	1.67 (0.49)	0.07
Age	2.04 (0.21)	2.33 (0.49)	0.07
Home Area	3.04 (1.43)	3.75 (1.42)	0.18
Marital Status	1.04 (0.21)	1.25 (0.45)	0.16
Children	2.00 (0.00)	1.92 (0.29)	0.34

**Table 5**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

		Gender	Age	Home	Income	Self-esteem 1	Self-esteem 2
Gender	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	-	-	-	-	-
Age	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.080 .551	1	-	-	-	-
Home	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.008 .951	.368** .005	1	-	-	-
Income	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.393** .002	.299* .023	.135 .314	1	-	-
Self-esteem 1	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.020 .881	-.132 .322	-.024 .860	-.107 .425	1	-
Self-esteem 2	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.128 .340	-.270* .040	-.144 .279	-.062 .646	.780** .000	1

**Table 6**

		Gender	Age	Home	Income	Continuity 1	Continuity 2
Gender	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	-	-	-	-	-
Age	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.080 .551	1	-	-	-	-
Home	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.008 .951	.368** .005	1	-	-	-
Income	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.393** .002	.299* .023	.135 .314	1	-	-
Continuity 1	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.215 .106	-.096 .473	-.233 .078	-.170 .203	1	-
Continuity 2	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.106 .428	-.102 .447	-.150 .261	-.034 .798	.435** .001	1

**Table 7**

		Gender	Age	Home	Income	Distinctiveness
Gender	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	-	-	-	-
Age	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.080 .551	1	-	-	-
Home	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.008 .951	.368** .005	1	-	-
Income	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.393** .002	.299* .023	.135 .314	1	-
Distinctiveness	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.060 .653	-0.79 .557	.051 .703	-.183 .170	1

**Table 8**

		<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Gender	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	-	-	-	-
Age	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.080 .551	1	-	-	-
Home	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.008 .951	.368** .005	1	-	-
Income	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.393** .002	.299* .023	.135 .314	1	-
Meaning	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.170 .203	-.086 .521	.175 .189	-.038 .779	1

**Table 9**

		<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Belonging</b>
Gender	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	-	-	-	-
Age	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.080 .551	1	-	-	-
Home	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.008 .951	.368** .005	1	-	-
Income	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.393** .002	.299* .023	.135 .314	1	-
Belonging	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.099 .462	.018 .893	.018 .893	-.155 .246	1

**Table 10**

		<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Efficacy 1</b>	<b>Efficacy 2</b>
Gender	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	-	-	-	-	-
Age	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.080 .551	1	-	-	-	-
Home	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.008 .951	.368** .005	1	-	-	-
Income	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.393** .002	.299* .023	.135 .314	1	-	-
Efficacy 1	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.108 .420	.105 .432	.068 .610	-0.76 .569	1	-
Efficacy 2	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.089 .505	.041 .760	.206 .120	.169 .204	.359** .006	1

**Table 11: Regression Analysis 1**

	<u>Self-esteem</u> Coefficient	<u>Continuity</u> Coefficient	<u>Distinctiveness</u> Coefficient	<u>Meaning</u> Coefficient	<u>Belonging</u> Coefficient	<u>Efficacy</u> Coefficient
Female	.168	.554	.125	.296	.168	-.236
Age 20	-.021	.095	.233	.412	-.021	-.240
Europe	-.163	.506	-.017	-.649	-.163	-.121

Table 11 includes independent variables (prioritized female, age 20 and Europe)

**Table 12: Regression Analysis 2**

	<u>Self-esteem</u> Coefficient	<u>Continuity</u> Coefficient	<u>Distinctiveness</u> Coefficient	<u>Meaning</u> Coefficient	<u>Belonging</u> Coefficient	<u>Efficacy</u> Coefficient
Male	.110	-.434	-.053	-.468	-.126	-.484
Age 31	-.367	-.196	-.149	-.302	.138	-.119
\$41,000- \$100,000	-.189	-.180	-.373	.323	-.339	1.28**

Table 12: includes independent variables (prioritized male, age 31 and more and income \$41,000 to \$100,000)

**Table 13: Regression Analysis 3**

	<u>Self-esteem</u> Coefficient	<u>Continuity</u> Coefficient	<u>Distinctiveness</u> Coefficient	<u>Meaning</u> Coefficient	<u>Belonging</u> Coefficient	<u>Efficacy</u> Coefficient
Male	.154	-.140	.003	-.383	-.030	-.490
Age 31	-.316	-.189	-.085	-.204	.250	-.126
Asia	.421	.392	.524	.804	.921**	-.057
\$41,000- \$100,000	-.203	-.309	-.391	.296	-.369	1.28**

Table 13 includes independent variables (male, age 31 and more, Asia and \$41,000 to \$100,000)

**Table 14: Regression Analysis 4**

	<u>Self-esteem</u> Coefficient	<u>Continuity</u> Coefficient	<u>Distinctiveness</u> Coefficient	<u>Meaning</u> Coefficient	<u>Belonging</u> Coefficient	<u>Efficacy</u> Coefficient
Female	.360	.301	.043	.558	.191	.485
Age 20	.915	.357	.171	.382	-.067	.085
EuroAsia	-1.014*	-.196	-.527	-.507	-.082	-.492
0- \$10,000	-.037	-.107	.368	-.282	.032	-.567

Table 14 includes independent variables (Female, Age 20-30, EuroAsia, 0-\$10,000)

**Table 15: Regression Analysis 5**

	<u>Self-esteem</u> Coefficient	<u>Continuity</u> Coefficient	<u>Distinctiveness</u> Coefficient	<u>Meaning</u> Coefficient	<u>Belonging</u> Coefficient	<u>Efficacy</u> Coefficient
Female	-.057	.421	.009	.547	.184	.472
Age 20	.474	.046	.159	.570	-.084	.242
Americas	.206	-.550	.127	.805**	-.033	.693
0- \$10,000	.010	.001	.352	.196	.022	-.496

Table 15 includes independent variables (Female, Age 20, Americas and 0 to \$10,000)

**Table 16 Regression Analysis 6**

	<u>Self-esteem</u> Coefficient	<u>Continuity</u> Coefficient	<u>Distinctiveness</u> Coefficient	<u>Meaning</u> Coefficient	<u>Belonging</u> Coefficient	<u>Efficacy</u> Coefficient
Age 31	-.817**	-.111	-.163	-.487	.084	-.248
Europe	.241	.402	-.052	-.694**	-.205	-.462
\$41,000- \$100,000	.288	-.296	-.392	.141	-.389	1.105**

Table 16 includes independent variables (Age 31, Europe and \$41,000-\$100,000)