Social benefits of brand logos in presentation of self in cross and same gender influence contexts

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ABSTRACT

This research predicts that luxury versus non-luxury self-display enhances status and produces advantages in human social interactions. Across three experiments, findings support the following conclusions. First, luxury versus non-luxury brand logos associate positively with displayer wealth and status. Second, people wearing clothes with luxury brand logos receive preferential treatment over those not wearing luxury brand logos. Third, a person wearing a luxury brand logo while soliciting charitable donations receives larger contributions than a person not wearing a luxury brand logo. Fourth, cross-gender contexts are more effective than same-gender contexts for requester and target in influencing consumer donation behavior. Conclusion: luxury self-display may increase deference and compliance in presentations-of-self because conspicuous displays of luxury qualify as a costly signaling trait that elicits status-dependent favorable treatment in human social interactions.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

People are willing to pay a premium to own and display luxury brand logos possibly in order to achieve social status in their "presentation of self in everyday life" (Goffman, 1959). Status is defined as a high status or position or rank in a society that can be compared with others on any dimension that is considered to be important by that society (Hyman, 1942). People interact with others in their everyday lives and want to be seen by others as valuable and worthy. For this reason, people often manipulate their symbolic image. By manipulating symbolism that is visible to others, people attempt to make other people evaluate their social status or wealth more favorably (Shin, 2002).

Specifically, research in charitable giving indicates that social comparison and compliance can increase donations. In natural field experiments involving fundraising for public radio, Shang and Croson (2006) find that potential donors compare themselves with other donors to the same nonprofit, and given an ambitious social comparison (i.e., mentioning a donor that gave a large amount) can induce lower-level donors to be slightly more generous. Weyant (1996) suggests modifying known compliance techniques (e.g., foot-in-the-door, door-in-the-face, low-ball, and legitimization-of-small-donation) to improve results of requests for charitable donations.

The preference for purchasing, using, and displaying expensive things — despite the ability to buy cheaper items that fulfill the same function — is known as conspicuous consumption. According to Veblen (1899/1994), the purpose of conspicuous consumption is public display of economic power and prestige in order to evoke envy in others. Veblen suggests that the leisure class cannot earn respect from people around them only by accumulating wealth; they must flaunt their wealth. Luxurious feasts or expensive gifts, for example, serve as a means to show off wealth. In the phenomenon of conspicuous consumption, luxuriousness is very important to the process of flaunting wealth effectively beyond practical interest or practical value. Veblen stresses that enormous costs are required beyond immediate usefulness or practical interest in order to flaunt one's wealth, even to the point of profligate squandering that may otherwise seem unreasonable.

In psychological research, the desire for status is an important driving force in the luxury consumption market (Dreze & Nunez, 2009; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Haselton, Mortezaie, Pillsworth, Bleske-Rechek, & Frederick, 2007; Mandel, Petrova, & Cialdini, 2006; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). Evolution theory argues that humans' preference for luxury consumption is attributable to a universal tendency toward signaling characteristics that may increase status (Cummins, 2005; Miller, 2009; Saad, 2007).

However, a comprehensive evolutionary explanation toward conspicuous consumption suggests that flaunting wealth is a psychological adaptation mechanism, which means that conspicuous consumption is the expenditure of cultural capital as status-signaling strategy. Thus,

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conspicuous consumption may be an adaptive status-signaling strategy (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011).

While providing support for the idea that people gradually adapt to displays of luxury, this study will reveal that wearing clothes with a luxury brand logo in Korea may produce benefits in social interactions. In particular, two experiments will be conducted to test the contention that people recognize luxury brands and preferentially treat people who display a luxury brand logo. This research will also compare the effects on perceived status and compliance to requests from a person wearing non-luxury brand clothes and another wearing luxury brand clothes.

1.2. Purpose and significance

In the 2008–12 global financial crises, consumption declined most obviously in developed countries. During the same period, however, emerging markets in the Asia–Pacific region experienced an annual growth rate of 15.7% (Global Industry Analysts, 2010). Between 2006 and 2010, South Korea's luxury market grew 12% annually and reached US$4.5 billion (about 4.8 trillion won) in 2010 (McKinsey, 2011). In a survey of 1000 Korean consumers who usually spend 1 million won or more for luxury brands annually, respondents who agreed with the statement, "Having a luxury brand is not a special thing as before," increased from 21% in 2010 to 45% in 2011.

Understanding this luxury fever or excessive consumption is important to understanding highly-developed economic societies, such as South Korea. In a modern advanced-economic society, desire is not likely just a desire for certain things, but a desire for differentiation (i.e., a desire as social meaning). Social difference here means that people differentiate themselves by purchasing and using goods that show social status. What creates this difference is no more than symbolism, the reason people prefer and desire luxury brands. The luxury brand logo is a symbol that shows off a person's status more so than simply trying to distinguish one's self from others, and consumers are willing to pay more to achieve this differentiation when the boundaries between classes are unclear. A luxury brand is an important means for improving social standards or status relative to other people in one's social group (Barkow, 1975).

As luxury markets continue to grow in Asia, and in South Korea in particular, research is needed to study the effects of brand logos on social status, preferential treatment, and other benefits. Accordingly, this research here aims to demonstrate in Experiment 1 that displaying a luxury brand logo in social interactions in Korea leads other's to recognize the social status or wealth of the wearer. Also, it aims to demonstrate in Experiments 2 and 3 that displaying a luxury brand logo can lead to preferential treatment and, in some cases, financial gain in social interactions.

Global Industry Analysts' global strategic business report (2010) projects that the global market for various luxury goods will reach US$307 billion in 2015. The report predicts that the Asia and Pacific regions will experience the fastest growth of market volume expansion of luxury goods consumption by continuing the region's high growth with an annual average growth rate of 16%. As spending on luxury goods continues to increase, even the poor in developing countries are willing to pay a premium to the brand item (Van Kempen, 2004). According to Van Kempen (2004), people in developing countries pay more for designer labels not because of their superior quality but for what they symbolize.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Costly signaling theory

Costly signaling theory (Grafen, 1990; Zahavi, 1975; Zahavi & Zahvi, 1997) explains why individuals will expend time, money, and other resources to indicate to others that they can afford to do so, and thus elevate their status in the eyes of others. Both humans and animals engage in costly signaling behaviors. Empirical support for costly signaling theory is available in behavioral ecology, anthropology, and animal signaling science (Gurven, Allen-Arave, Hill, & Hurtado, 2000; Lotem, Fishman, & Stone, 2002; Smith & Bliege Bird, 2000; Sosis, 2000). Anthropologists, ecologists, and biologists include altruistic or seemingly irrational behavior in decision-making to study adaptation based on the principal of "costly signaling" or "handicap" — concepts of social theory that have existed for a long time.

From the perspective of behavioral theorists, activities that cost too much individually but that benefit the group collectively (e.g., overt altruism or extravagant expenditure of resources for show) are a form of social competition. An individual who shows leniency a lot or sacrifices himself or herself gains much higher status (Fried, 1967; Veblen, 1899/1994). This approach appears in various forms including conspicuous consumption, extravagant ads, and accumulation of symbolic capital.

Akin to signaling in sociological theory, costly signaling involves strategic communication in an anthropological context. What is difficult to perceive directly can be enacted through expensive behaviors that differentiate the sender of the signal from the perceivers (other individuals or groups). Costly signaling theory maintains that obvious extravagant epideictic behavior may act as a reliable indicator of desirable individual characteristics that cannot be observed in other conditions. Self-advertising that he or she possesses certain attributes or items makes a person more attractive to other people (e.g., partner, spouse, or ally) to gain some benefit from this behavior. The cost that is spent on behavioral signals is an indicator of the underlying disposition or attribute and ensures trustworthiness. For example, excessive spending on costly brand labels (versus less expensive items) is a reliable indicator of wealth.

Signaling theory presents an interesting opportunity to combine meaning, social value, and ritual-centered approaches for strategic actors in the social sciences. Many social anthropologists acknowledge the role of symbolic capital that induces individuals' behaviors but do not include empirical-positivistic verification (i.e., findings from experiments with random assignment of participants to treatment and placebo groups). Costly signaling theory covers issues of symbolic value with empirical data as well as makes verifiable predictions drawn from the established individual strategies and theories associated with evolutionary dynamics (Bliege Bird & Smith, 2005).

2.2. Conspicuous consumption of status as costly signaling theory

Costly signaling theory serves to support the proposal that the display of luxury goods infers status onto the displayer (Miller, 2009; Saad, 2007). Costly signaling theory states that individual's extravagant behavior acts as a reliable signal of the displayer's exalted status (Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997). Signal is a recognizable act or form that represents a certain property of the environment. For example, the cost related to signaling in terms of energy, danger, time, and money guarantees the related trustworthiness of the signal conveying the underlying attribute or disposition. This is also called the "handicap principle" (Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997).

The handicap principle means that if a signal is to be reliable, the high cost of the property of the signal must accompany it. Displaying that the signaler has the ability to possess and show off such a property makes the entity that does not have such a property handicapped.

The peacock's tail is a typical example of the handicap principle. By making its large colorful tail stand, the peacock shows its ability to overcome parasites and predators. The high cost in resources to produce this brilliant tail constitutes a significant handicap. The peacock's big colorful tail increases its attractiveness to the peahen and accordingly increases the opportunity to mate. Such a display is seen as a sort of signal that trustworthiness (i.e., the biggest brightest tails belong to the best mates) derives from the cost spent. This handicap principle says that

only highly qualified animals are able to waste huge amounts of time, energy, and resources to produce expensive signals.

In the same manner, displaying luxury goods can act as costly signaling. People may rely on various behavioral strategies to increase their status. Status can be derived from academic performance, ability, or ability to drink too much, depending on environment (Langlois et al., 2000). Certain characteristics like physical attractiveness are universally related with exalted status. Another indicator of exalted status is possession of financial wealth or other resources (de Botton, 2004; Frank, 1999; Godoy et al., 2007). Financial wealth is a valuable characteristic since it means that a person possesses the resources required to buy luxury goods. Another valuable type of wealth is possession of abilities or technologies that can be used to obtain resources. In this context, a luxury logo can be seen as cost signaling that increases the status of the person possessing the luxury logo (Plourde, 2008).

Conspicuous consumption or certain behavioral strategies must meet four standards to qualify as costly signaling (cf., Bliege Bird & Smith, 2005). First, the signal must be easily observable. Brand logos are visual and designed to be easily noticed, so brand logos meet the first standard. The study here is designed to compare the effect of a luxury brand logo with that of a non-luxury logo and no logo. The different conditions will test whether a luxury brand logo can be observed as a signal, the basic premise behind conspicuous consumption affecting social interactions.

Second, the signal must be difficult to be forged or imitated with a lower cost alternative. Luxury brand logos meet the second criteria since they cost the displayer a lot in order to be able to deliver the signal. The luxury brand logo signals to others that the consumer paid more to obtain his or her clothes than people who wear functionally similar clothing with a non-luxury logo or no logo on it. Third, the signal should be related to a true underlying characteristic, such as good genes, that is difficult to identify but is associated with a valuable quality (e.g., good physical health). The signal should be perceived as status-enhancing since the disposition underlying the signal is socially valued and status-enhancing. The study here predicts that clothes with a luxury brand logo will correlate more strongly with wealth or status than the clothes with a non-luxury logo or no logo since people assume that conspicuous consumption is associated with wealth. Fourth, the signal should ultimately produce rational benefits. This means that the display of costly signaling should ultimately provide the signal deliverer with appropriate benefits. Specifically, the study here examines whether an observer prefers the person who wears expensive brand clothes to the one who wears ordinary brand or no brand clothes — regardless of the wearer's other characteristics.

2.3. Relevance of this study to previous studies of status

Prior marketing studies demonstrate that possessions contribute to and reflect the possessor's identity (Belk, Bahn, & Mayer, 1982; Shavitt, 1990). In particular, Belk et al. (1982) discuss the concept that owning a product can become a status signal for the owner. In addition, luxury goods and brands suggest that consumers are willing to pay extra for clothes, for example, to demonstrate their enhanced social status rather than purchasing clothes for functional value alone. Lasswell and Peter (1961) support the argument that products, such as clothing someone chooses to wear, display the wearer's status to other consumers. Brands and products have long been perceived as a means to creating a person's social identity (Aaker, 1997; Belk, 1988), but little research on consumption's behavioral benefits in status-dependence social interactions has been undertaken. Bouska and Beatty (1978) show that clothing is a cue to social status important to a person's dignity in social interactions. In Bouska and Beatty (1978), however, status relates to the social role of the person wearing the clothes, not the cost of the clothes. Status, in this case, is not related to conspicuous consumption.

Additional studies support a luxury-display effect on social regulation. For example, when the traffic light turns green, a driver is slower to honk the horn if the car in front of him or her is expensive (Doob & Gross, 1968). The one explanation for this behavior is that a person who drives an expensive car is perceived to be more aggressive than one who drives a more modest vehicle (Diekmann, Gans-Jungbauer, Krassnig, & Lorenz, 1996). This finding suggests that when facing a situation in which luxury (i.e., expensive car) is displayed, instead of providing preferential treatment to the driver of the expensive car, people will tend to be wary because they perceive that the driver of the expensive car is potentially dangerous.

Another study reports that people assume an obedient attitude when they meet others who show off a luxury brand item (Fennis, 2008). Finally, another recent study suggests that displays of luxury can have a manipulating effect on observers that leads to preferential treatment — including financial benefits for those who engage in conspicuous consumption (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011).

The study here examines the impact of conspicuous consumption on behavior in social interactions. Displaying luxury brands is expected to lead to preferential treatment from observers for those wearing the luxury brand. In other words, the study will examine whether conspicuous consumption leads to behaviors that bring about intangible benefits to the displayer of a luxury brand.

Specifically, this research includes three experiments. The research first examines whether displaying a luxury brand logo as sign of conspicuous consumption in social interactions increases other people's perception of social status or wealth of the displayer. After that, the research tests whether displaying a luxury brand logo leads to preferential treatment, in general, and induces others to provide a larger financial benefit to the wearer of a luxury brand in social interactions.

2.4. The peacock effect

The evolutionary view is that peacocks (and other colorful birds) display their finery to attract the attention of peahens and entice them to mate. The peahens have an eye for beauty and usually respond heartily. In the human world it has been a reverse tradition. The idea of dressing with color and style to attract the opposite gender's attention has been left to the women. At least that was the perception for the decades of the early twentieth century (Jed, 2012).

The study here builds on findings by Schmitt and Buss (1996) as well as Carli (1980). Schmitt and Buss (1996) test and support evolutionary hypotheses about the context-specific nature of mate attraction; showing resource potential (e.g., a luxury-brand versus non-luxury logo versus no logo) was judged most effective for men seeking a long-term mate, whereas giving resources immediately was judged most effective for men seeking short-term female mates, confirming the hypothesized importance of temporal context in mate attraction effectiveness. They focus discussion on the context-specificity of human mating psychology and on linking evolutionary and traditional approaches to romantic attraction.

O'Donohoe (1994, p. 65) refers to the "peacock effect" to explain differences between how individual consumers respond to judgments about the use of male and female models in advertising. "This difference between male and female respondents in the use of role models may be attributed to the "peacock effect" of having male respondents talk in the presence of a female researcher. They may have been less willing to admit such behavior to a woman. Alternatively, given that they are relatively recent targets for the personal grooming and fashion industries, men may be simply less open in discussing such issues even among one another, or less conscious of their own behavior in this respect." Consequently, the study of gender influence on behavior may require behavior rather than self-report dependent measures.

A non-directional hypothesis that follows from this discussion is that gender serves as a moderator effect between manipulation of marketing variables and consumer responses. Directional hypotheses that follow from the discussion are that cross-gender persuasive attempts are

Table 1
Luxury brand ranking.
Sources: Millward Brown Top 100 Brands (2011), Interbrand Best Global Brands (2010),
L2 Think Tank, NYU Stren, Gen Y Prestige Brand Ranking (2010).

	Millward Brown Top 100 Brand (2011)	Interbrand Ranking (2010)	L2.NYU Stren, Gen Y Prestige Brand Ranking: Male (2010)	L2.NYU Stren, Gen Y Prestige Brand Ranking: Female (2010)
1	Louis Vuitton	Louis Vuitton	Ralph Lauren	Chanel
2	Hermes	Gucci	Hugo Boss	Marc Jacobs
3	Gucci	Hermes	Giorgio Armani	Prada
4	Chanel	Tiffany & Co	Burberry	Hermes
5	Cartier	Cartier	Gucci	Gucci
6	Rolex	Georgio Armani	Hermes	Salvatore Ferragamo
7	Hennessy	Burberry	Louis Vuitton	Burberry
8	Moet & Chandon		Prada	Christian Dior
9	Fendi		Ferragamo	Louis Vuitton
10	Burberry		Chanel	Ralph Lauren

more effective than same-gender persuasive attempts among male and female requesters and male and female targets.

2.5. Hypotheses

The prior discussions of theory and findings from relevant literature inform the following hypotheses. H1: A luxury brand logo enhances social status when the logo is perceived as a signal of wealth by others. H2: The signal of a luxury brand brings about preferential treatment for those who display their luxury brand in social interactions. H3: The signal of a luxury brand induces a greater willingness of others to pay (financial benefits for those who display their luxury brand) in social interactions. H4: Total donations are highest in cross-gender contexts of female requester and male target and male requester and female target and lowest in the same-gender contexts of male requester and male target and female requester and female target.

3. Experimental design and methods

3.1. Subjects and experimental design methods

3.1.1. Brand selection
The brand logo is an important variable in this research. Researchers referred to the brand rank of top 100 brands in 2011 by Millward Brown, Best Global Brands 2010 by Interbrand, Gen Y Prestige Brand Ranking 2010 by L2 Think Tank, and NYU Stren to select the luxury brand logo.

Three agencies' luxury-brand ranks (Millward Brown, Interbrand, and L2 ThinkTank) were consulted to select the luxury brand for the studies. The brands were narrowed down to Louis Vuitton, Hermes, Gucci, and Burberry since these brands were ranked as luxury brands by all three agencies (see Table 1). To find the luxury brand with the highest recognition among consumers, these four brands were pre-tested using 20 clothing majors at a major university in Seoul, Korea. Louis Vuitton was selected as the target luxury brand for the experiments since 80% of the pre-test respondents chose this brand.

To select the non-luxury brand to use in the experiments, the top five non-luxury fashion brands were selected based on the data from Millward Brown's Top 100 apparel brands (2011) and Interbrand ranking (2010) that appear in Table 2. Two non-sports brands, H&M and Zara, were ranked in the top five. H&M, the higher ranked brand of the two, was selected as the target non-luxury brand used in the experiments.

3.1.2. Brand logo production
After selecting the experiment target brands, shirts were made to be used in the three experiments. Plain white short-sleeved polo shirts were used to create three different types of shirts, one for each experimental condition.

White shirts with no logo were used as they were for the no logo condition. The logos of both Louis Vuitton (luxury brand condition) and H&M (non-luxury brand condition) were sketched and colored according to each brand's specifications. Two-and-a-half centimeter (2.5 cm) logos for each brand were embroidered by machine on shirts. Rather than purchase ready-to-wear shirts, the shirts were manufactured especially for the experiments to control for the impact of other variables such as size and location of the logo on the respondents. By manufacturing the shirts, they were identical to each other except for the brand.

4. Experiment 1: recognizing status

4.1. Method

To learn whether or not logos associate with wealth or status, the researchers examined people's perception of others wearing shirts with a brand logo (luxury brand logo or non-luxury brand logo) and shirts with no logo. This research also examined the impact of social interactions in the presence of individuals wearing different/no logos on perceived attractiveness, kindness, trustworthiness, and negative cognition, in addition to wealth and status. Furthermore, this research examined whether a logo might influence certain behaviors by affecting a responder's will or intention.

4.1.1. Participant and design
An experiment was conducted at a large urban university in Korea, September 12 to 20, 2011. Three logo conditions were tested in the experiment (luxury logo/Louis Vuitton/LV, non-luxury logo/H&M, and no logo). On hundred eighty students (M_{age} = 23.93 years, S.D. = 3.428, 43% females) were randomly assigned to one of the three logo conditions. Of these 180 participants, 163 (M_{age} = 24.13, S.D. = 3.416, 45% females) participant's questionnaires were used for analysis, eliminating the respondents who could not recognize the logos. The resulting sample size for each of the three experimental conditions was as follows: Woman_LV (n = 57), Woman_H&M (n = 46), and Woman_nologo (n = 60).

4.1.2. Research progress and materials
The questionnaire was three pages long. The first page showed the photo of a woman wearing a white polo shirt with one of the three logo conditions. The photos were digitally copied to maintain consistency across conditions.

The second page of the questionnaire included 12 items measuring the respondent's perceptions of the shirt wearer's status, wealth, attractiveness, kindness, trustworthiness, negative recognition, and others based on a previous study by Nelissen and Meijers (2011). Specifically, respondents evaluated the presented model's status (items: "This person has high status." "This person is respected." Cronbach's α = .80), wealth (items: "This person is rich." "This person has a lot of money." Cronbach's α = .84), attractiveness (items: "This person is attractive." "This person is good looking." Cronbach's α = .80), kindness (items: "This person is kind." "This person is friendly." Cronbach's α = .93), trustworthiness (items: "This person is trustworthy." "This person is honest." Cronbach's α = .82), and negative recognition (items: "This person is unfriendly." "This person is dangerous." Cronbach's α = .64) on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). One behavioroid item (Aronson, Brewer, & Carlsmith, 1985), "If we provide a lunch, would you like to join lunch with this person?" was measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = I don't agree at all, 7 = I strongly agree). This item was included to evaluate a respondent's willingness

Table 2
Non-luxury brand ranking.
Sources: Millward Brown Top 100 Brands (2011), Interbrand Best Global Brands (2010).

	Millward Brown Top 10 Apparel Brand (2011)	Interbrand Ranking (2010)
1	Nike	H&M
2	H&M	Nike
3	Zara	Zara
4	Ralph Lauren	Adidas
5	Esprit	Gap

Table 3
One-way ANOVA for the effect of brand logo on perception.

Perception	No logo (n=60)		H&M (n=46)		Louis Vuitton (n=57)		F
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Status	4.09[ab]	1.08	3.95[a]	.80	4.49[b]	1.18	3.724*
Wealth	4.60[b]	1.07	4.07[a]	1.10	4.78[b]	1.19	5.358**
Attractiveness	4.83[ab]	1.00	4.52[a]	1.04	5.03[a]	1.15	2.949
Kindness	5.15[a]	1.11	5.14[a]	.99	5.13[a]	1.24	.004
Trustworthiness	4.29[a]	1.04	4.10[a]	.99	4.33[a]	1.19	.600
Negative question	2.06[a]	.87	1.95[a]	.84	2.07[a]	.91	1.135

**$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, b > ab > a, Duncan test.

or intention to perform certain behaviors even though these behaviors were not mandatory.

The third page of the questionnaire included items measuring the demographic variables age, gender, address, and major. Another set of questions on page three asked about the purpose of the study and if respondents recognized the brand logo presented to them.

4.2. Results and discussion

One-way ANOVA was conducted to estimate if the three brand logo manipulations (luxury, non-luxury, and no logo) differed in their effect on measures of status, wealth, attractiveness, kindness, trustworthiness, and negative recognition. Results appear in Table 3.

A significant difference was found between recognition of status (F $(1,160) = 3.724$, $p = .026$) and recognition of wealth (F $(2,160) = 5.358$, $p = .006$) depending on the logo condition.

Means for both status and wealth were highest in the luxury logo condition. In post-hoc comparisons, the model wearing the luxury brand logo (i.e., Louis Vuitton) had the highest perceived status score and the highest perceived wealth score. Recognition of status or wealth did not interact with any of the other dependent variables. There was no significant difference in perceived attractiveness (F $(2,160) = 2.949$, $p = .055$), kindness (F $(2,160) = .004$, $p = .996$), trustworthiness (F $(2,160) = .600$), and negative items (F $(2,160) = 1.135$, $p = .324$) among the three logo manipulations.

This finding partially supports Nelissen and Meijers' (2011) finding that a person wearing a luxury brand label is more likely to be perceived as having higher status and wealth than a person wearing a non-luxury label. In the study here, those who wore the shirts with the luxury brand logo were expected to be perceived as having higher status or wealth than those who wore the non-luxury brand logo or no logo based on the theory of conspicuous consumption.

For the behavioroid item on the respondent's willingness or intention to have lunch with the woman in the photograph, the three logo conditions are not significantly different. Results of this analysis appear in Table 4.

5. Experiment 2: preferential treatment

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participant and design

This experiment was conducted using 150 students from a large urban university in Korea, September 13 to 22, 2011 ($M_{age} = 23.41$ years, S.D. = 3.579, 66% females). The logo conditions in this experiment were the same as those used in the first experiment (luxury logo, non-luxury logo, and no logo). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three logo conditions so that each level of the logo manipulation received 50 respondents. Among the 150 participants, 136 ($M_{age} = 23.43$, S.D. = 3.657, 70.6% females) questionnaires were used in analysis, excluding the respondents who could not recognize the logo presented to them in assigned conditions. The resulting sample size for each of the three experimental conditions was as follows: Woman_LV (n = 45), Woman_H&M (n = 41), and Woman_nologo (n = 50).

5.1.2. Research progress and materials

Respondents received information about a scenario in which a movie agency interviews a job applicant for an internship position. Each respondent was allowed to view only one applicant's video of the interview in order to limit comparison in the evaluation. All respondents watched the video on the computer screen furnished in a lecture room.

Three videos were created for this experiment. In each video, a female job applicant responded to a few questions asked by the male interviewer (who was not visible on screen). All three versions of the video were identical — in both verbal and nonverbal behaviors of the job applicant — except for the logo manipulation. In the luxury brand version of the video, a female wearing a white polo shirt with the Louis Vuitton logo on it was being interviewed for the movie agency internship. In the non-luxury brand version, the same female was being interviewed only this time she was wearing a white polo with the H&M logo on it. In both of these versions of the video, the logo was clearly visible to the viewer throughout the interview. In the no brand version of the video, the female job applicant wore a white polo shirt with no logo on it.

5.1.3. Measurement

After watching the video, respondents completed a questionnaire. First, respondents were asked to evaluate how suitable they thought the applicant was to the job of movie planning on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all suitable, 7 = highly suitable). Next, respondents were asked what they thought the applicant should be paid (response choices: less than 4000 won, 4000 won–7000 won, 7000 won–10,000 won, 10,000 won–13,000 won, and more than 13,000 won). Next, respondents evaluated the applicant's status (items: "This person has high status." "This person is respected." Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$), wealth (items: "This person is rich." "This person has a lot of money." Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$), attractiveness (items: "This person is attractive." "This person is good looking." Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$), kindness (items: "This person is kind." "This person is friendly." Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$), trustworthiness (items: "This person is trustworthy." "This person is honest." Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$), and negative recognition (items: "This person is unfriendly." "This person is dangerous." Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$) items on a seven-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). On the last page, respondents completed items measuring demographic variables of age, gender, address, and major, and were asked about the purpose of the study and whether or not they recognized the brand logo presented to them.

5.2. Results and discussion

In this experiment, one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a perceived difference in suitability for the job, status, wealth, attractiveness, kindness, trustworthiness, and negative recognition among the job applicants in the three logo conditions. Findings appear in Table 5.

Table 4
One-way ANOVA for the effect of brand logo on behavioroid.

Behavioroid	No logo (n = 60)		H&M (n = 46)		Louis Vuitton (n = 57)		F
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Lunch	4.62[ab]	1.68	4.41 [a]	1.30	5.11[b]	1.50	2.865

b > ab > a, Duncan test.

Participants responded that the applicant was more suitable for the internship in the luxury brand logo condition (F (2,133) = 7.12, $p = .001$, $M_{no\ logo} = 3.86$, S.D. = 1.16, $M_{H\&M} = 3.16$, S.D. = 1.10, $M_{LV} = 4.53$, S.D. = 1.01). A significant difference occurred in both perceived status and perceived wealth. When wearing a luxury brand logo shirt, the job applicant received higher status ratings [F (2,133) = 7.12, $p = .019$, $M_{no\ logo} = 3.71$, S.D. = 1.19, $M_{H\&M} = 3.61$, S.D. = 1.10, $M_{LV} = 4.53$, S.D. = 1.01], and was perceived as wealthier [F (2,133) = 6.191, $p = .003$, $M_{no\ logo} = 3.51$, S.D. = .90, $M_{H\&M} = 3.34$, S.D. = 1.13, $M_{LV} = 4.12$, S.D. = 1.24] than when a shirt with a non-luxury H&M logo or a shirt with no logo.

A one-way ANOVA was also conducted to find out whether a difference occurred in the applicant's expected salary per hour according to the three logo conditions. There was a significant difference between groups [(F (2,133) = 24.465, $p = .000$)] as shown in Table 6.

In Table 6, 48% of the people who viewed the applicant with no logo responded that the applicant should receive a salary in the 4000 to 7000 won range. In the no logo condition, 100% of respondents pegged the salary at less than or equal to 13,000 won; 90%, at less than or equal to 10,000 won; and 54%, at less than or equal to 7000 won. In contrast, almost 10% of the non-luxury logo condition and more than 15% of the luxury logo condition said the applicant's salary should be more than 13,000 won, the highest salary category. Roughly half of the non-luxury logo group (46.3% cumulative frequency) said the applicant's salary should be less than or equal to 7000 won. Compare this to the median break for the luxury brand where 47% of the respondents reported that the salary should be less than or equal to 10,000 won. In fact, none of the respondents in the luxury logo condition said that the applicant's salary should be in the lowest range.

Participants granted more financial benefits to the applicant wearing the shirt with the luxury brand logo than they did to the applicant wearing a non-luxury logo or no logo. In this experiment, the applicant that wore the shirt with a luxury logo was perceived to be more suitable for the internship position and was perceived to deserve a higher salary for the position than the applicants wearing a non-luxury brand logo or no logo (Fig. 1).

6. Experiment 3: financial benefits

6.1. Method

This experiment examines whether or not exposure to a fundraiser's clothing with a luxury logo versus a non-luxury logo or no logo increases donations to a charity. The fundraising campaign was conducted for the experiment and the influence of brand logos was examined. The experiment was supported by the Korean committee of UNICEF, an organization that helps children in difficult situations in developing countries through voluntary fundraising. The "Collection of Love Coins" campaign was conducted for this experiment. "Collection of Love Coins" is a unique fundraising campaign for UNICEF in collaboration with an airline, and all the donations in the collection box were used for children in this study. All of the donations raised through this study were donated to UNICEF.

6.1.1. Participants and design

The experiment was conducted at a large urban university in Korea, over seven days excluding the weekend. The campaign was conducted

Table 5
One-way ANOVA for the effect of brand logo on perception and job suitability.

Perception	No logo (N=50)		H&M (N=41)		Louis Vuitton (N=45)		F
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Suitability	3.86[a]	1.16	3.61[a]	1.10	4.53[b]	1.01	7.124**
Status	3.71[ab]	1.19	3.41[a]	1.08	4.07[b]	.92	4.084*
Wealth	3.51[a]	.90	3.34[a]	1.13	4.12[b]	1.24	6.191**
Attractiveness	3.62[a]	1.34	3.25[a]	1.19	3.73[a]	1.13	1.734
Kindness	3.29[a]	1.45	3.14[a]	1.22	3.56[a]	1.10	1.218
Trustworthiness	4.13[a]	1.36	3.93[a]	.99	4.33[a]	1.00	1.270
Negative question	3.50[a]	1.50	3.25[a]	1.33	2.95[a]	1.37	1.763

$*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, b > ab > a, Duncan test.

in the university's main student center within the context of a large fluctuating student population. Male and female fundraisers dressed in one of the three brand logo shirts (luxury, non-luxury, or no logo) approached students and requested a donation for UNICEF. Each fundraiser approached 60 students — 30 males and 30 females — for a donation, for a total sample size of 360 (30 students per treatment × 2 genders of fundraisers × 2 genders of responders × 3 logo conditions).

The two fundraisers conducted the campaign for six consecutive afternoons. The fundraisers alternatively wore shirts with one of the brand logos (LV, HM) or no logo, and each day the sequence for wearing each type of shirt was alternated. Alternating the sequence created a completely counterbalanced between-subjects design among the randomly assigned participants under 6 conditions in a 2 (gender of the fundraiser / male, female) × 3 (LV, HM, or no logo) design.

Among the 360 students approached for donations, 100 made a donation. Where the capitalized gender represents the fundraiser, the lower-case gender represents the student subject, and LV, HM, and none represent the luxury brand logo, non-luxury brand logo, and no brand/no logo conditions, respectively, the 100 donations broke out as follows: Male_male_none (8 donors), Male_male_HM (7), Male_male_LV (9), Male_female_none (2), Male_female_HM (5), Male_female_LV (7), Female_male_none (14), Female_male_HM (10), Female_male_LV (11), Female_female_none (12), Female_female_HM (8), and Female_female_LV (7).

6.1.2. Research process and materials

The male and female fundraisers approached the students randomly and asked for a donation. Then the fundraisers selected either a notebook or a file case to give as a gift to each student who donated. Each fundraiser carried a collection box provided by UNICEF to collect donations. The researcher observed the scene in progress, immediately counted the number of donors and non-donors, and recorded the amount of money donated under each condition. This process of counting on the scene allowed for calculating total donations, average donation, and number of donations under each of the logo and gender conditions.

6.2. Results and discussion

6.2.1. Influence of brand logo type on charitable donation (financial benefit)

Donations were categorized into three groups, less than 500 won, 500–999 won, and 1000 won or more. A chi-square analysis was conducted to ascertain whether or not the number and size of donations differed by the gender of the fundraiser and the brand logo worn when requesting donations in a fundraising campaign.

Table 7 shows a significant main effect of logo type on size of the donation received ($X^2 = 10.964$, $p = .027$). While 22% of students in the no logo condition and 33% in the non-luxury logo (H&M) condition donated more than 1000 won, almost 53% of donors in the luxury brand logo (Louis Vuitton) condition donated more than 1000 won. Donors gave smaller donations to fundraisers wearing shirts with the less expensive brand logo or no logo and donated more to fundraisers wearing

Table 6
Cross-tab analysis for brand logo and net hourly income (cumulative frequencies in parentheses).

Logo	Net hourly income (%)					X²	p
	Under 4000 won	4000 won–7000 won	7000 won–10,000 won	10,000 won–13,000 won	Above 13,000 won		
None	6% (6%)	48% (54%)	36% (90%)	10% (100%)	0	37.416	.000
H&M	7.3% (7.3%)	39% (46.3%)	41.5% (87.8%)	9.8% (97.6%)	2.4% (100%)		
Louis Vuitton	0	8.9% (8.9%)	37.8% (46.7%)	37.8% (84.5%)	15.6%[a] (100%)		

[a] Rounding differences.

shirts with an expensive brand logo. In other words, donors based the amount of their donations on the brand logo present when they were solicited for donations.

6.2.2. The influence of logo type and gender of the fundraiser on financial benefits

Chi-square analysis was conducted to test the influence of logo type and gender of the fundraiser on donations (financial benefits) received. Fundraisers wearing the Louis Vuitton logo received the highest average donation among the three logo conditions under three of the four fundraiser (capitalized) and donor (lower case) gender combinations shown in Table 8: male_male_LV = 8901 total won/297 average won, male_female_LV = 6202 total/207 average won, and female_male_LV = 10,560 total/352 average won.

When the male fundraiser wore the luxury brand logo, he collected more donations from both males and females than he did while wearing the non-luxury or no brand shirt. Females soliciting males for donations achieved the most dramatic financial benefit (largest donations) especially while wearing the luxury brand. Ironically, when females called on females, the luxury brand had a dampening effect on donations.

Accordingly, if the female fundraiser wants to maximize her donations, she should wear a luxury brand (in this case, a shirt with the Louis Vuitton logo on it) but solicit males only and allow the male fundraisers to solicit females. Male fundraisers can receive a high level of donations by approaching both males and females — as long as the male fundraiser is wearing a luxury brand (a shirt with the Louis Vuitton logo, in this case). Fig. 2 graphically shows these effects by plotting the means and dispersions (±1.96 standard errors) of the twelve gender × gender × logo treatment conditions.
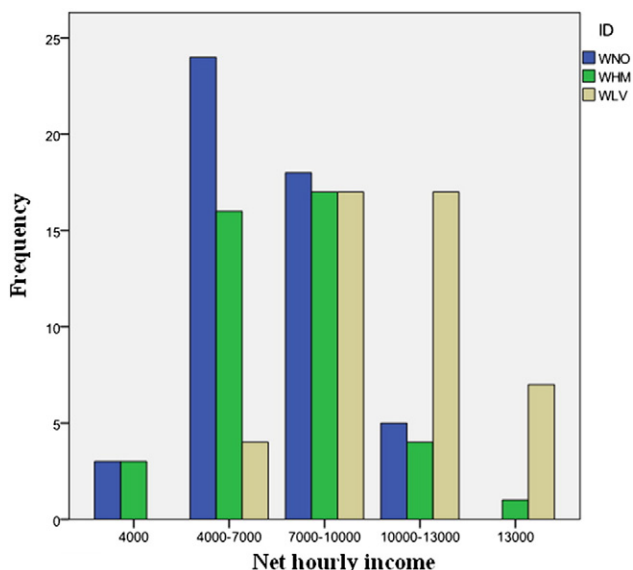

Fig. 1. Frequency of net hourly income about brand logo.

7. Conclusions and suggestions

7.1. Summary and implications

This research includes three experiments. Experiment 1 examines whether brand logos associate with wealth or high status by examining people recognize a brand logo versus no logo (no brand) and a luxury brand logo versus a non-luxury brand to test the three logo conditions to be used in all of the experiments. One hundred eighty students participated in Experiment 1; 163 recognized the brand logos, so their responses were used in the analysis. Experiments 2 and 3 examine whether or not wearing a luxury brand (versus a non-luxury brand versus no brand) conveys preferential to the wearer. Experiment 2 examines whether or not the brand logo influences the perceptions of a job applicant's suitability for the job and the appropriate salary to offer the job applicant. One hundred fifty students participated in Experiment 2; 136 responses were analyzed. Experiment 3 tests whether or not wearing a luxury brand conveys preferential treatment in the form of financial benefits; specifically, does a fundraiser wearing a luxury brand collect more monetary donations than one wearing a non-luxury brand or no brand at all. In Experiment 3, 360 people were approached and asked for charitable donations and 100 people actually donated to the cause.

The proposal that financial wealth is a desirable characteristic is one premise for this research since the wealthy can control valuable resources or have the ability to obtain them. Wealth associates with social status (e.g., de Botton, 2004; Frank, 1999). Costly signaling theory predicts outcomes of the research questions examined in this research: (1) Can a luxury brand logo enhance social status when it is perceived as a signal of wealth by others? (2) Will the signal of a luxury brand bring about preferential treatment for those who display their luxury brand in social interactions? (3) Will the signal of a luxury brand induce a greater willingness of others to pay (financial benefits for those who display their luxury brand) in social interactions?

In the first experiment, the luxury versus non-luxury brand-logo display does associate positively with wealth and status. This finding was also confirmed in the second experiment where people wearing clothes with a luxury brand logo received preferential treatment over those wearing clothes with no logo, even though the clothes were otherwise the same.

In the second experiment, conspicuous consumption (displaying a luxury brand) brought the wearer of the luxury brand preferential treatment. The job applicant wearing the luxury brand received two forms of financial benefit. First, he or she was more likely to get hired for the job (higher suitability score). Second, once hired, he or she would receive a higher salary. These results support Nelissen and Meijers (2011). In the third experiment, the fundraiser wearing the luxury brand received more charitable donations than those wearing the non-luxury brand or no brand. Small donations were given to fundraisers wearing a non-luxury brand logo or no logo on their shirts, and large donations were given to fundraisers wearing luxury brand logos on their shirts. In other words, the experiment demonstrated that conspicuous consumption (displaying a luxury brand) increased perceptions of the wearer's social status which became manifest in the giving behavior of

Table 7
Main effect of logo treatments on donation segments.

Logo	Donation groups				Total	p
	0 won	<500 won	500–999 won	1000 won +		
None	84 (70.0%)	17 (14.2%)	11 (9.2%)	8 (6.7%)	120 (100.0%)	$X^2 = 11.956$ (.063)
HM	90 (75.0%)	17 (14.2%)	3 (2.5%)	10 (8.3%)	120 (100.0%)	
LV	86 (71.7%)	11 (9.2%)	5 (4.2%)	18 (15.0%)	120 (100.0%)	
Total	260 (72.2%)	45 (12.5%)	19 (5.3%)	36 (10.0%)	360 (100.0%)	

potential donors solicited by the luxury brand wearer; donors contributed more to the luxury brand wearers.

In summary, the three experiments demonstrate that a luxury brand logo is a means of displaying conspicuous consumption to others who confer higher perceived status upon the displayer of the luxury brand consumption. The higher perceived status of the wearer of a luxury brand (versus the wearer of no brand clothes that are otherwise identical) produces benefits in social interactions including preferential treatment and, sometimes, financial benefits.

Few prior studies examine the perceiver's actual or intended behavior in reaction to a brand logo displays. The research here makes an important contribution to the academic literature on luxury brands in that the research aims to verify experimentally the effects of the luxury brand logo. This research demonstrates that displaying a luxury brand logo is a costly signal indicating valuable fundamental quality interpreted as wealth. The findings in this research are consistent with costly signaling theory. Conspicuous consumption satisfies the criteria of costly signaling in that it is observable, costly, related to status, and ultimately accrues benefits to the signaler. The three experiments support the assumption that people tend to prefer those who wear luxury brand clothes to those who wear non-luxury brand logo or no brand clothing even if the clothes are not fundamentally different. The findings of the three experiments support the theoretical explanation of the general preference for luxury brands over otherwise similar but cheaper products and the potential benefits of conspicuous consumption in social interactions. In other words, this research demonstrates how individuals can obtain social benefits by displaying costly behaviors.

This research suggests that displaying a luxury item can be a socially learned strategy to induce beneficial treatment from others. Companies should be carefully looking at how consumers react to the logo rather than simply considering the logo's esthetic and design aspects. Also, companies should communicate associations between the attributes and benefits consumers seek in products and the company's brand. A brand can be used to advertise (or display) the owner's status. The product by itself, however, does not elevate its owner's status. The mind of the observer plays a large role in determining the status of the other person. So when someone purchases a product to show off his or her

Table 8
Average donation amount by requester and responder gender.

Requester	Responder	Logo	Mean (won)	Std. Error	Total won donated	N
Male	Male	None	143.33	50.44	4304	30
		HM	214.67	90.74	6440	30
		LV	296.67	100.06	8901	30
	Female	None	53.33	38.28	1600	30
		HM	93.67	48.00	2810	30
		LV	206.67	73.96	6202	30
Female	Male	None	245.33	64.70	7364	30
		HM	152.33	53.01	4570	30
		LV	352.00	171.21	10,560	30
	Female	None	229.33	67.25	6876	30
		HM	143.00	60.15	4288	30
		LV	126.33	52.79	3787	30
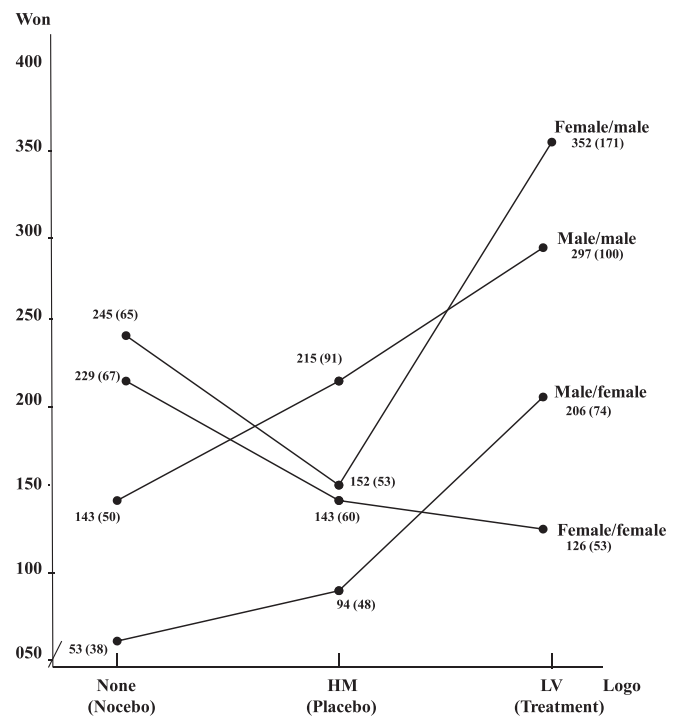
Fig. 2. Means (standard errors) for three logo groups by requestor/participant combinations.

status, he or she is actually purchasing a product to display physical, mental, and moral superiority to the comparison group.

This research is valuable in that the study analyzes the impact of conspicuous consumption on behavior in social interactions. The display of a luxury brand may induce preferential treatment from others that leads to accrual of actual benefits for the one who displays the luxury brand.

The following suggestions for future research mostly arise from the limitation of this research. First, in this research, the sample was limited to college students, mostly people in their twenties and thirties. Future studies should expand the sample to include people from various social strata as well as from different age groups. For example, one way to collect data from a broader spectrum of working adults is to analyze data collected from actual headhunters.

Second, logo selection is an important part of the experimental design. To control for extraneous variables in the stimulus object, the logos used in these studies were created especially for this research. If subjects perceived that the shirts with the logos were designed by the researchers rather than purchased from the manufacturer of the luxury brand, the logo might not serve as a reliable signal of status. This also means that the manipulation would not lead to preferential treatment and benefits for the wearer of the luxury brand logo. In future research, the process of selecting brand logos and the decision to create, manufacture, or purchase items with the logo on them should be a systematic consideration in the design process.

Third, future studies may provide more detailed perspectives on different types of status enhancement stemming from the display of a luxury item. These studies incorporated the researchers' views on both the configuration of luxury item and the method to explain the results. Future studies should investigate whether a certain evolutionarily-related disposition can be delivered as a signal of wealth. Wealth may not be the only message, or even the most important message, among the many messages conveyed through conspicuous consumption. Individuals purchasing and consuming luxury items might be signaling wealth and status, but that wealth could have been acquired through conscientiousness, intelligence, passion, or some other abilities or attributes.

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Finally, a sample that includes people of different cultural back-grounds who may possess variant perspectives on the value of material possessions as an indicator of social status would improve the value of this body of research As luxury markets continue to grow, especially in Asia where growth is the greatest, studies that include cross-cultural comparisons of the social benefits of brand logo displays comparing findings in Korea, Japan, and China, for example, could make a valuable contribution to the literature on this phenomenon.

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