

DO YOU PURCHASE YOU-PRODUCTS?

A quantitative study analyzing the mediating effects of self-congruence and satisfaction on the purchase intention of masstige home goods

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Abstract

In contrast to earlier times, middle-class consumers are now more inclined to purchase products that offer superior quality and taste. The new middle segment is called “masstige” as it bridges the “mass” production of “prestige” items. A phenomenon within the luxury market (not to be confused with the masstige market analyzed in this paper) is the effect of sensed discomfort evoking “self-alienation” when purchasing a luxury good. Such a state may originate from the fact that a luxury product reflects a customer’s ideal image of the self but not the actual self, causing incongruence and a gap between the ideal and actual identity. This paper examines how this phenomenon relates to customer behavior in the booming market for masstige products as compared to everyday products within the category of home goods. The empirics suggest that, just like in luxury consumption, masstige goods reflect the ideal identity of a customer better than the actual identity, but self-alienation is trivial. Instead, it enhances satisfaction and subsequent purchase intention.

Products generally function as informational cues that can signify customers’ identities. Customers tend to identify with the brands they patronize.

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Definition of Terms

Term	Definition
Masstige	A term that bridges <i>mass</i> and <i>prestige</i> . “Mass-produced products that offer luxury to the masses” (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003).
Everyday products	Low or regular-priced mass-market items, which are accessible to the masses.
Masstige products	Products sold at a price premium, moderately high price, which are accessible to the masses.
Luxury products	Exclusive, very high-priced items only accessible by a few, strict high pricing policy.
ISC	Abbreviation for the “Ideal Self-Congruity”. A measure of whether a brand or product image is reflective of a customer’s <i>ideal</i> self-image (Zhang et al., 2022).
ASC	Abbreviation for the “Actual Self-Congruity”. A measure of whether a brand or product image is reflective of a customer’s <i>actual</i> self-image (Zhang et al., 2022).
Nondurable goods	Tangible products that can be stored and that have an average life of <i>less</i> than three years (Bureau of Economic Analysis).
Durable goods	Tangible products that can be stored and that have an average life of <i>at least</i> three years (Bureau of Economic Analysis).
Product pairs	The term is used in the shopping simulation section of the questionnaire distributed. The simulation demonstrates 6 “product pairs” where each pair has one masstige option (e.g., masstige razor) and one everyday option (e.g., everyday razor).

1 Introduction

The global economy's growth is boosting the purchasing power of consumers, and this effect is most apparent in terms of financial ability for customers pertaining to the middle class (Park et al., 2022; World Bank, 2020). An article in the Harvard Business Review describes a trend of middle-class customers being more inclined toward paying a premium price for goods that are well-designed, well-engineered, and well-crafted (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). In other words, goods that possess some qualities of the traditional luxury market while simultaneously being available at a lower price point. These goods appeal to the mass market as opposed to luxury goods, which provides opportunities to sell masstige products at a price premium to a broader customer base than luxury products. With research showing that low-and-middle income consumers constitute half of the global economy, this segment constitutes a vital group to appeal to for businesses (World Bank, 2020). However, the effect of the global economy's growth is argued to be mitigated due to the recent economic stress that materialized in Europe with increasing inflation (Kammer, 2023), impeding the households' purchasing power.

These premium products cater to middle-class customers that aspire to consume products with higher quality and prestige but at a lower price point and are called masstige products. Masstige is a portmanteau of "*mass market*" and "*prestige*" and refers to the mass-produced products that offer luxury to the masses. The term was coined by Silverstein & Fiske in 2003. Hereafter, the term "masstige" is used synonymously with "premium" in this paper. A commonality of masstige and traditional luxury is the prestigious feeling, yet the pricing policy distinguishes the two. Masstige brands can have varying prices, whereas traditional luxury brands employ a strict high price-point strategy (Truong et al., 2009). Masstige brands are argued to have three subcategories, brands that operate mainly in the premium segment, luxury brands that engage in downward extensions, and mass-market brands that engage in upward extensions (Boisvert et al., 2023).

This study takes inspiration from how luxury purchases have previously been studied, from the standpoint of how we view products in relation to our self-image. These theories are applied to masstige products instead, to investigate whether this growing customer segment may experience a disconnection between how they view themselves in relation to the product (Zhang et al., 2022). Does the product purchased reflect the customer's self-image? Moreover, does that make customers more or less prone to purchase the goods? To investigate this phenomenon, the masstige products are compared to goods of an everyday nature, lacking premium features. This paper examines how a masstige product, as opposed to an everyday product, relates to customers' perception of the self and whether it affects shopper behavior in terms of satisfaction and purchase intention.

1.1 Purpose

This thesis aims to vitalize new thinking and foster modern and renewed research about consumer behavior regarding how the self-concept relates to the purchase of a masstige product as compared to an everyday product.

1.2 Expected Contributions

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first attempt to catalog some of the underlying theoretical mechanisms of customer psychology relating to the congruence of the ideal self-congruity (hereafter "ISC") and the actual self-congruity (hereafter "ASC") for purchases of masstige as compared to everyday products. The aim is to contribute with findings of a previously established theory tested in the luxury market onto a new contextual setting of the premium market to nuance its application across market segments. The findings in consumer psychology are expected to be helpful for both practitioners and researchers.

1.2.1 Expected theoretical contributions

The novel insights are expected to contribute findings to the unexplored domain of congruence effects of the ideal and actual self-concept for *masstige products*. The

relationships investigated are attributable to further research in other product categories within the market for masstige products. Additionally, it will contribute to research thus far centered around masstige compared to luxury products. In this paper, masstige is compared to everyday products (Quamina et al., 2023; Ho et al., 2022).

1.2.2 Expected practical contributions

The findings are expected to provide guidance for companies that currently operate in the middle-segment field or that are considering entering the middle “premium” segment. This paper aims to delineate consumer psychology in relation to the purchase of masstige (premium) products. For businesses to make well-informed decisions, insights into how customers perceive their product and brand are crucial. This study examines whether a potential mismatch of ideal self-congruence and actual self-congruence stimulates or, on the contrary, sedates satisfaction and subsequent purchase intention. The contributions are also relevant for marketing and brand strategists to understand the effects of communicating a masstige product as more ideal/premium.

2 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

2.1 Conceptual Model

The model proposes that the product type (i.e., masstige products as opposed to everyday products) increases purchase intention (H1), that masstige products increase incongruence between the ideal self exceeding the actual self (H2) and that masstige products increase satisfaction (H3). The complete model constitutes the relationship where the purchase intention of masstige products are mediated by variables of ISC/ASC incongruence and satisfaction (H4).

2.1.1 Masstige Products

As mentioned, premium products aim to imitate some characteristics and qualities that traditionally pertain to luxury goods. Masstige is “a marketing strategy which envisages making brands prestigious while retaining its affordability for the mass consumers, by grounding in product and promotion strategies, and keeping prices relatively high” (Kumar et al., 2020). The associations of such products are outlined to understand how premium and luxury goods are different from everyday products. It should be noted that luxury is becoming increasingly democratized, which blurs the lines somewhat between what can be considered pure luxury and more premium products (Rosendo-Rios & Shukla, 2023). There are, undoubtedly, many ways to analyze how consumers view premium products and what makes them different from everyday products. According to Bhanot et al., uniqueness and prestige are essential drivers for luxury customers' satisfaction (2014). For female consumers, luxury brands deliver more “uniqueness values” than non-luxury brands (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2013). Finally, luxury goods are different from non-luxury goods in terms of quality, craftsmanship, and performance (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). While there is a clear definition of masstige, the lines between luxury, masstige (premium) and everyday products are becoming blurred. We will analyze quality, uniqueness and prestigiousness within luxury products to understand whether masstige and everyday products are different.

2.1.2 Self-Congruence Theory

The psychology of brands is examined to understand how the brand image relates to a customer's identity. Brands may be viewed as signifiers (descriptors) that function as informational cues and may transfer meaning. Brands can signal personal identities and be a way for customers to express themselves as a self-centered engagement with a brand (Schmitt, 2012). The act of identifying oneself with a brand can help customers understand themselves internally and signal to others who they are and how they should be perceived by others externally. Brands and products can reflect two distinguished types of customers' identities, namely one's ideal identity and the actual identity.

The self-discrepancy model examined by Zhang et al. discusses the emotional-related outcomes from discrepancies in the self-concept domain for *luxury goods* (2022). When the self-state representations are not aligned, discomfort may arise. The self-concept distinguishes between the actual, ideal, and ought self. The actual/own state compares the *ideal* and *actual* selves (Higgins, 1987). The more significant the discrepancy, the less reflective the ideal self-image is on the actual self (Ward & Dahl, 2014). Inauthenticity is the underlying reason why the discrepancy between the ideal self-concept and the actual self-concept contributes to unhappiness. A state of incongruence of the ideal and actual self describes a situation where individuals do not feel honest about themselves (Zhang et al., 2022).

Ideal self-congruity (ISC) describes consumers' perceived alignment of the ideal self with the brand image i.e., how consumers *would like* to see themselves. In contrast, the actual self-congruity (ASC) describes how consumers' perceived alignment between the actual self and the brand image, i.e. how consumers *actually* see themselves (Malär et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2022). The difference between the ideal self-congruity (ISC) and the actual self-congruity (ASC) is gauged by having customers respond to a brand or product as being reflective of their ideal and actual self. Ideal self-congruence is where the product is deemed similar to the subjective belief of a supreme product that reflects the respondents' ideal self, thus measuring ISC. Subsequently, the customers

reflect upon the proximity between themselves and what they believe is the “typical buyer” of the product, measuring ASC (Malär et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2022). The study conducted by Zhang et al. (2022) examines luxury products. However, for relevance of this scope and study, premium products will be the focal products representing the masstige domain, while everyday products will represent the low-price product segment.

The image of a brand or product may be highly aligned with consumers’ ideal self, without necessarily being reflective of their actual self, “*high ISC*” and “*low ASC*” hereafter. To investigate this concept in terms of masstige products, this thesis investigates the rate at which ISC *exceeds* ASC.

2.1.3 Customer Satisfaction

While customer satisfaction has been studied extensively during the last few decades, there has yet to be a consensus among scholars on a definition. Nevertheless, it has become an essential metric in marketing (Ball et al., 2004). Satisfaction is important to measure as it is closely linked to purchase behavior, such as purchase intention and loyalty (McQuitty et al., 2000). It can be defined as different emotional responses in the post-purchase phase of the customer journey within a defined time frame (Giese et al., 2000). In a framework developed by Kristensen et al., satisfaction is seen as customers’ expectations on a product and how well these expectations are met, which will result in higher or lower satisfaction (1999). Satisfaction can also be measured by how likely a consumer is to recommend a product or service to others, as showcased in a study conducted by Bitencourt et al. (2023).

2.1.4 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is defined as “an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand” (Spears & Singh, 2004). Consumers that state their intent to purchase a product are more likely to make a purchase (Indiani & Fahik, 2020; Lim, 2013). For this thesis, the purchase intention is therefore defined as the likelihood of

purchasing a product within a set time period of six months. A six-month timeframe has been used previously in research to measure behavioral intent within the retailing domain (Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008; Purani et al., 2019). Also, when measuring consumer intention with regards to consumption, the six-month time period is set as a reasonable time for both forward and backward-looking in terms of behavioral intentions (“Global consumer insights survey 2023”, 2023; “European retail trends driving 2023”, 2023). Further, the time frame of six months, as opposed to more extended periods or even infinite time horizons, is supported by the idea to shrink the intention-behavior gap, which can be done by measuring intention closer in time to an action (Sheeran, 2002).

2.2 Hypotheses

The “self-incongruence” variable below refers to which extent the ideal self *surpasses* the actual self, where a high incongruence can be explained by high ISC and low(er) ASC. This will be further elaborated on in the methodology section below.

2.2.1 Masstige products’ effect on purchase intention

Perceived quality or value may serve as an antecedent to consumer behavioral intentions or satisfaction (Cronin et al., (2000). However, it is not necessarily the same as an object’s actual quality (Rowley, 1998). The perceived quality of a product has been proven to directly affect the purchase intention in multiple industries (Tsiotsou, 2006; Wang et al., 2020). This suggests that the masstige products, which demonstrate higher quality than everyday products, are expected to positively affect purchase intention. The hypothesis can be summarized as follows:

H1: Masstige products have greater purchase intention than everyday products

2.2.2 Masstige products’ effect on self-incongruence

The masstige products possess characteristics associated with luxury goods, namely a price premium, prestigiousness, and uniqueness (Bhanot et al., 2014; Ko et al., 2019). Research shows that a luxury product/brand is what consumers dream of, although

consumers' might not achieve it (Zhang et al., 2022). This suggests an expected high ISC and low ASC for masstige products that imitate luxury products, as opposed to everyday products. Thus, we formulate the second hypothesis:

H2: Masstige products have greater incongruence than everyday products

2.2.3 Masstige products' effect on satisfaction

In a study by Tsiotsou, perceived quality was confirmed as a primary determinant explaining satisfaction (2006). Hence, the masstige products carrying product features of higher quality (among other features), as opposed to everyday products, are expected to have a positive effect on satisfaction. The same finding that quality drives satisfaction is presented by Khoironi et al. (2018), indicating that masstige products are expected to influence satisfaction positively. Thus, the third hypothesis is:

H3: Masstige products have greater satisfaction than everyday products

2.2.4 Masstige products' impact on purchase intention is mediated by incongruence and satisfaction

The phenomenon of incongruence has been studied in the discipline of academia in different ways. Researchers have found a mediation relationship where the ISC and ASC variables have been statistically proven to impact purchase intention through a mediating effect of brand attachment (Kaufmann et al., 2016). Furthermore, ISC and ASC show indirect effects on behavioral intention through indirect effects of attitudes and satisfaction (Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008). To refine existing theory, modifications are suggested by updating the selection of variables analyzed (Oh, 1999). To do so, this paper examines how the product type impacts the dependent variable of purchase intention through mediating effects of incongruence effect and satisfaction.

H4: The purchase intention of masstige home goods is mediated by self-incongruence and satisfaction.

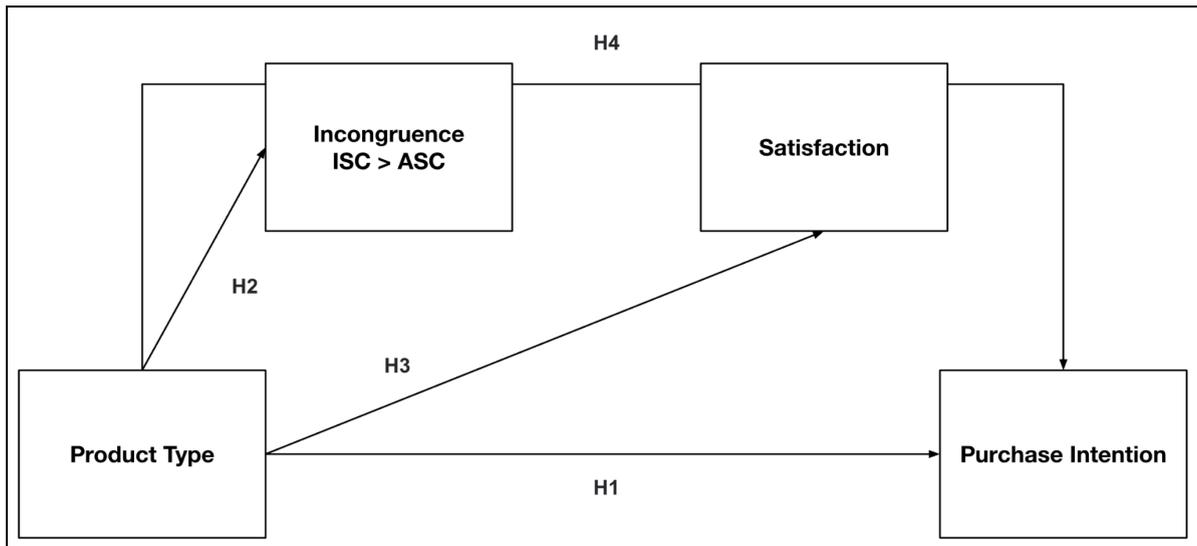


Figure 1: Conceptual model (H1-H4)

3 Methodology

In the following section, the research design, research method, model development, and variable constructions are outlined. Lastly, the sample is segmented and evaluated.

3.1 Research Design

The research design strategy provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.49).

The study aims to investigate the effect of the phenomenon ISC-ASC congruence on variables of satisfaction and purchase intention in two different market segments, namely the masstige market segment (premium products) and the everyday market segment (low-price products). The contexts are studied using identical scenarios and questionnaire items for a product pair, consisting of one masstige product and one everyday product. Hence, the study follows a comparative research design (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.72). The aim of comparing two cases (in this study, cases translate to segments) in relation to each other is to enable a comprehensive understanding of a social phenomenon. A comparative design structure describes a study logic where the

corresponding observations of two different cases (segments) aims to explain similarities and differences between the contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.72). The study also follows a cross-sectional design, given that the information is collected at one point in time (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.61, p.76).

With the objective of drawing inferences generalizable of the sample to the broader population, a quantitative research design is widely acknowledged and the appropriate research methodology (Polit & Beck, 2010; Eliasson, 2013, pp. 21, 30-31). Quantitative research is considered the most common approach for measuring causes and effects. Quantitative data concerns “why” rather than “how” things are (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.174).

The research follows a deductive approach given that the authors base the hypotheses formulation on previous knowledge and theory in research. Hence, the hypotheses were predetermined before collecting and analyzing data. This is the most common view of the relationship and process of theory and research and is explained as a way of “testing theory” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, pp. 23, 38). The congruence of ISC and ASC has been researched in academia previously in the luxury market (Zhang, 2022; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Sirgy et al., 1997). The contribution to extant research is to modify the contextual setting by testing how it relates to the masstige and everyday market segments.

3.2 Research Method

A research method refers to the technique for collecting data (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 49).

A quantitative self-completion questionnaire is distributed to address the aforementioned research questions of how the ISC-ASC concept relates to customer psychology in the masstige and everyday segment.

All survey formulations of questions and responses can be found in appendix 6.1.

3.3 Survey Design

The online survey contains three main sections: (1) understanding of the surveyee profile, (2) online shopping simulation, and (3) post-selection evaluation of the premium product and its corresponding everyday option of the product pair selected.

3.3.1 Surveyee Profile

Information about the surveyee profile is collected to get a comprehensive idea of what the sample looks like, which can be a way to detect potential biases from the answers.

3.3.2 Shopping Simulation

The shopping simulation is built upon a purchase-*interest* structure to predict purchase intention and the associated effects of selecting the product. Hence, no actual completed purchase is measured. The shopping situation is solely imaginative, a simulation. Although there might be an intention-behavior gap, it is proved that consumers who express an intent to purchase are more likely to do so (Indiani & Fahik, 2020; Lim, 2013).

3.3.3 Post-Selection Evaluation

After selecting a product, the surveyee is asked to respond to statements by imagining themselves having purchased that product. The survey extracts results from survey practitioners that are given the same conditions and that are assigned different groups depending on their product selection in the simulation. Hence, there is no random assignment into groups of different products. The personal relevance of the product affects the respondent's interest and involvement in the shopping task situation. Furthermore, the subjective belief of the relevance of the product influences the motivation to expend more cognitive effort on the decision and situation (Zaichkowsky, 1985).

As the research design follows a comparative method, each surveyee responds to 15 identical questions for the selected product's premium and everyday options separately. E.g., a surveyee whose selection is the razor product is first asked to imagine themselves having purchased the premium razor and respond to 15 statements about how the product reflects their ideal and actual self as well as post-selection satisfaction and purchase intention. Subsequently, the same respondent is asked to imagine themselves having purchased the everyday razor instead and answer the same 15 statements for the cheaper option. Hence, the number of participants amounts to 335, but given the within-subject design, the participant observations amount to 670.

3.4 Measurements and Variable Construction

When developing the instruments for the survey, existing validated formulations from previous research were employed. Some item formulations have been slightly modified to better represent the present research context. Both measurements and indicators are included in the questionnaire. Measurements provide insights about the respondent that are consistent over time and are consistent regardless of the situation, (e.g., age and gender). Indicators can be both a direct and indirect measure of a concept like "job satisfaction" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.164). This study includes indicators of social status, satisfaction, and purchase intention.

3.4.1 Surveyee Profile

Both cognitive and situational categorizations are measured to derive groups of psychological similarity, being either utilitarian- or hedonic-oriented, but also lifestyle and personality similarity measured through the occupation, age and subjective social status item.

3.4.1.1 Subjective social status variable

The MacArthur scale is used to measure the subjective social status ("SSS") of an individual. The variable is constructed as a variable where the surveyee is asked to rank

themselves on a scale from 1 to 10 in relation to others. The respondee places themselves on a scale ranging from 1, representing the lowest rank, to 10, representing the top level of social status (Goodman et al., 2001). The formulation is as follows “Where would you place yourself on the ladder in relation to others? 1 represents the lowest level of education, career, and income and 10 represents the highest level of education, career, and income”. The respondents were exposed to the image associated with the subjective social ladder construct to visualize the ladder concept and increase understanding. This variable is included to get a more thorough understanding of the respondents.

3.4.2 Online Shopping Simulation

The shopping simulation demonstrates product pairs where each premium product has a corresponding everyday option placed next to the premium product to the left in a chart. Hence, there are six product pairs which comprise 12 products in total. After looking at the products demonstrated in the shopping simulation, the respondent is asked to rank which of the six premium options they would be willing to pay a premium price for. At the top, the respondent placed the item with the highest likelihood of purchasing the premium option of the pair. At the bottom the product they are least likely to pay a premium price for is placed.

The shopping simulation graphic can be found in the appendix.

3.4.2.1 Category and product selection

The six different product pairs consist of home goods, and the product selection has been done carefully to ensure the relevance of the products for the surveyees. For this matter, gender-specific products are avoided, e.g., makeup. To nuance the analysis, both durable and nondurable goods are included. Three product pairs are of a nondurable nature: hand soaps, candles, and razors. The three other products-pairs are of a durable nature: hand towels, drinking glasses and water bottles.

3.4.2.2 Fictitious brands and products

Brand awareness affects consumer behavior. This aspect is considered in the shopping simulation, and to remove any bias, fictitious brands are used. The aspect of loss aversion describes the mechanism that a customer stands a lower risk when purchasing a product of a well-known brand that they have purchased products from before compared to purchasing a product of a novel brand, which benefits strong brands (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003). Furthermore, the aspect of “signaling” explains that a familiar brand indicates quality and credibility. Fictitious brands are used in the experiment to remove any familiarity bias of the two aforementioned aspects that might arise if the surveyees recognize only some of the brands in the simulation (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003).

Employing fictitious brands has been proven successful in previous research, which supports the decision of using fictitious brands in the shopping simulation. “Fictitious middle-quality brands produced the same patterns as real middle-quality flagship brands” (Heath et al, 2011). Thus, removing specific brand names from the experiment can be done to remove the familiarity bias of strong brands while still retrieving results that mirror shoppers’ attitudes towards brands of different quality levels.

3.4.2.3 Communicating everyday and premium attributes

Several informational cue elements are used to signify and emphasize the quality divide between premium and everyday products: price, packaging material, font of text, and product design. Previous research analyzing the stimulus-based bottom-up view of product similarity suggests that visually prominent surface-level attributes of products (that are salient) do influence the perceived similarity of the products. The degree to which the products resemble each other in surface-level attributes influences the perceived similarity (Lefkoff-Hagius & Mason, 1993; Ratneshwar, 2001). Hence, to emphasize the quality gap between the products in the simulation and emphasize the different levels of quality, typical visual features attributable to everyday and premium products were made salient when producing the product images.

3.4.3 Post-Selection Evaluation

3.4.3.1 Product type

The product type variable is computed into a dummy variable by aggregating the responses for the six masstige products into a “masstige product” value as “1”. The other six everyday products are also agglomerated into the “everyday product” value computed as “0”. The product type dummy variable serves as the independent variable (IV) in the process model conducted. Hence, the findings show the effects of masstige products as opposed to everyday products, which is the baseline.

3.4.3.2 Product perception

This item was included as a manipulation check to ensure that respondents perceived the masstige products as more premium in terms of quality, uniqueness, and prestigiousness as opposed to the everyday products. Identical formulations were employed in the survey for the two products answered in separate sections. All three items were answered on a 5-point Likert scale. The respondents were asked to imagine having purchased the product and indicate their perception of the product (Zhang & Zo, 2019; “The product has high quality”, “The product stands out from the crowd”, “The product is prestigious”; 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”).

3.4.3.3 ISC-ASC items

Two multi-item indexes are developed based on previous formulations in academia to analyze discrepancies between the ideal and actual self-concepts (Sirgy & Su, 2000; Sirgy et al., 1997; Malär et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2022). The surveyee responds to three statements, of which two have affirmative formulations where the product does reflect the individual’s ideal self-concept, and the third and last item, on the contrary, has a dissenting formulation, i.e., not reflective of the ideal self-concept. The latter is recoded in SPSS to create an index of the three items measuring to what degree the product corresponds to the ideal self (ISC index). The same logic applies to the actual self-concept, where the statement instead measures whether the product is consistent with their actual self-concept. The previously used formulations of both ISC and ASC

measures are adjusted for the relevance and context of our study. First, the ISC scale is developed (Malär et al., 2011; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Zhang et al., 2022; “The image of the [premium/everyday] product is consistent with how I would like to be perceived”, “The personality of the [premium/everyday] product mirrors the person I would like to be”, “The identity that the [premium/everyday] product communicates is different from my ideal identity”; 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”) and the three-items ASC scale follows (Sirgy & Su, 2000; Zhang et al., 2022; Sirgy et al., 1997; “The typical user of the [premium/everyday] product is very different from me”, “The premium [premium/everyday] product does not reflect my actual image”, “The image of the [premium/everyday] product’s typical user is similar to my image”; 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”).

3.4.3.4 Incongruence variable

An “incongruence” variable was computed to disclose whether a mismatch of the ideal self-concept and actual self-concept attributable to the products in the simulations affects consumer behavior. The variable is computed by subtracting the ASC index from the ISC index, not in absolute values but instead in actual values where a higher value of the variable represents observations where the ideal self-concept surpasses the actual self-concept. A negative value instead represents observations where the ideal self-concept is rated lower than the actual self-concept. In such an event, the respondent experiences that the product reflects their actual self to a greater extent than it reflects their ideal identity.

3.4.3.5 Satisfaction

The satisfaction variable is created by computing a multi-item indicator where three statements are computed into a satisfaction index. The first question measures how close the product is to the ideal product of the customer, which has been used in research to measure satisfaction recently, both for services and for products (Balci, 2021; Ong et al., 2023; Bezerra & Gomes, 2020; Ekström, 2010; “Imagine an ideal product. How close is the product to that product?”; 1 = “Not close at all” to 5 = “Very close”). The second question asks specifically how satisfied the customer is with the

product, which has been used in research to investigate how satisfied customers are with a product (Cheung & Lee, 2005; Nilashi et al., 2023; Widjadja & Yosua, 2018; “Generally, how satisfied are you with the [premium/everyday] product?” 1 = “Not satisfied at all” to 5 = “Very satisfied”). The third item is inspired by the NPS scale (Net Promoter Score), which is an established way of measuring satisfaction in the research discipline and a commonly used metric in practical terms employed by companies as well (Liu & Kao, 2022; Bitencourt et al., 2023; Bain & Company, 2023; “How likely is it that you would recommend a similar product to others?”; 1 = “Not likely at all” to 5 = “Very likely”).

3.4.3.6 Purchase intention

The purchase intention is measured using a single item. Employing single item constructs for the dependent variable is an increasingly common practice in research (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.167). A concern with using a single item is that it may be too general and only capture part of the concept. To avoid such pitfalls, the formulation is specific and asked in terms of likelihood (as opposed to attitude or interest). The formulation of the statement measures the purchase intention by anchoring the likelihood using a 5-point numeric Likert scale (Yoo & Lee, 2012; “How likely is it that you will shop similar products as the one selected within the coming 6 months?”; 1 = “very unlikely” to 5 = “very likely”).

3.5 Pretest

A pretest, also referred to as a pilot survey, was distributed to a group of surveyees (n=18). The feedback and responses guided the development and served as a basis for fine-tuning formulations, improving readability, and reducing ambiguity. Further, feedback was gathered from experienced researchers knowledgeable in the domain of conducting experiments and questionnaires. The consultation aimed to improve the quality of formulations in both questions and answering titles and scales and subsequently enhance the study’s quality.

3.6 Sample and Data Collection

The surveyees were selected mainly by employing a convenience sampling approach used as “the norm” when researching consumer behavior (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.201). To diversify the group of surveyees, the sampling was extended beyond the personal network of the authors. In the data collection process, students at universities in Stockholm were approached to reach people outside the personal network and collect a higher number of responses. However, given that a vast majority of the responses adhere to undergraduate students, the findings will not provide generalizable results for the entire population given that undergraduate students differ from the general population, e.g., people from lower socio-economic groups are underrepresented in such fields (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.202). Although the results may not hold true for the general population, the findings of a younger segment are still of interest to both practitioners (e.g., brands targeting a younger audience) and researchers, as the findings can guide future research and foster a new way of thinking in terms of customer psychology.

Out of all survey responses (n=589), not all surveyees finalized the entire survey. Incomplete answers were excluded from the dataset used in the analyses. Also, respondents who answered the control question incorrectly are excluded from all analyses due to inattentive behavior. The control question asks the respondents to restate what the survey was about to ensure that the surveyee had paid attention throughout the completion of the survey. After systematically altering and filtering the responses, the final data set comprised valid and reliable responses (n=335).

Table 1

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Man	119	35.5%
	Woman	213	63.6%
	Other	3	0.9%
Year of birth	≥ 2001	129	38,5%
	1997 - 2000	146	43,6%
	1976 - 1996	32	9,6%
	≤ 1975	28	8,4%
Occupation	Student	257	76.7%
	Employed	67	20%
	Other	11	3.3%
Subjective Social Status (SSS)	Upper (6-10)	200	59.7%
	Lower (1-5)	135	40.3%

Demographic/psychographic profile of surveyees (n=335)

Out of the 335 valid respondents, the majority of surveyees constitute people aged 20-25 years old. Given that the average age for leaving the parental home in Sweden is 19.6 years old (Haglund, 2015), the vast majority of respondents are assumed to be in charge of purchasing the home goods for their household.

3.7 Assessment of Reliability and Content Validity

It was with careful consideration that the survey instruments' formulations were developed. To ensure the quality of the items, established measurements and scales in the discipline of research in academia have been used. As previously mentioned, some statements and formulations have been altered from the original expression to enhance relevance and to be tailored to the scope of the study.

3.7.1 Multiple Indicator Measures

Using indexes (multiple-indicator measures) improves a variable's reliability, given that using a sole indicator can cover only a portion of the concept, or be too general (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.167). Reliability tests were conducted for all indexes to measure the internal consistency of items within an index. There has yet to be a consensus in academia about what is set to be the thresholds of Cronbach's Alpha (CA). However, a commonly accepted CA amounts to >0.7 (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.169). An alternative idea is presented by Gallais et al. (2017) where a CA value of >0.6 is considered acceptable and proves high reliability. Based on this, in the present study, a CA of >0.6 is deemed satisfactory and thus demonstrates an acceptable level of strength in the association of the instruments.

3.7.2 Cronbach's Alpha

Most reliability tests showed Cronbach's Alpha (CA) figures above the desired threshold when including all three items for the indexes. When conducting a "CA if item deleted" reliability analysis, it appeared that the third item (ISC3) in the ideal self-congruence index had little consistency and high variance from the other two items. The same results showed when conducting a factor analysis (Appendix 6.2.1). As such, the third item is not included in the ISC index to improve the internal strength of the index. The reasoning considered the trade-off in including all three items measuring a more nuanced and extensive view of the concept and excluding the third item to reach a higher internal consistency among the instruments in the index. Given the significantly increased strength in the association, the index is ultimately measured using only two of the items, as high association enhances the quality of the study.

Table 2

Index	Measure	No of items	CA (α)	CA iid	item removed
ISC	Aggregate	3	.666	.865	ISC3
ASC	Aggregate	3	.639		
Satisfaction	Aggregate	3	.822		

[CA(α)] Cronbach's Alpha; [CA iid] Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted

3.7.3 Manipulation Check of Product Perceptions

To ensure that the different quality levels of the everyday and premium products were communicated clearly, instruments measuring the product perceptions are included. Three aspects are established for measuring the degree to which a product is perceived as masstige, namely: quality, uniqueness, and prestigiousness. The manipulation check is included to prevent and avoid false conclusions (Söderlund, 2018, pp. 86-87). The manipulation check in this paper checks for whether the masstige and premium products are perceived as having disparate levels of quality, uniqueness and prestigiousness.

3.7.4 Significance

Scientific studies often use a significance threshold of 0.05, but this value is arbitrary (Alifieris, 2020). Although increasing the p-value threshold does increase the likelihood of a type 1 error (i.e., false-positive), it is proposed that the advantages of accepting this moderately higher risk outweigh the minor potential costs of an error. Consequently, for the purpose of this study, we have opted to use a significance level of 0.1 for the process model which shall be interpreted as *marginally* significant.

4 Empirical Results

4.1 Manipulation Check

To evaluate the manipulation check, paired t-tests were conducted. The results confirm that there is a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$) between the means for all three cues of the masstige and everyday products. The masstige products score higher on the masstige features of quality, uniqueness and prestigiousness.

Table 3

Informational Cue	Product Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. level
Quality	Masstige	4.07	.95	<.001**
	Everyday	2.49	1.19	
Uniqueness	Masstige	3.01	1.21	<.001**
	Everyday	1.65	.96	
Prestigiousness	Masstige	2.94	1.24	<.001**
	Everyday	1.62	.88	

*The mean values range in the response interval of 1-5; ** Supported at $p < .001$*

4.2 Main Findings

The empirical results are presented together with the accompanying hypothesis. Results are presented in Tables 4-7.

4.2.1. Purchase intention

H1: Masstige products have greater purchase intention than everyday products

To examine whether masstige products, as opposed to everyday products, result in higher purchase intention among the respondents, an independent t-test is conducted. The results indicate that the respondents are more likely to purchase the masstige option for the product they chose in the shopping simulation ($M_{\text{Masstige}} = 2.67$, $SD = .1.28$; $M_{\text{Everyday}} = 2.23$, $SD = 1.22$; $t(668) = -4.548$; $p < 0.001$).

4.2.2 Incongruence

H2: Masstige products have greater incongruence than everyday products

Just like with the first hypothesis testing, an independent t-test is conducted to examine where there is a difference for masstige as opposed to everyday products, this time in terms of incongruence. The incongruence variable subtracts ASC from ISC which means that a positive value explains a case where the product reflects the ideal self-image to a greater extent than the actual self-image. On the contrary, a negative value will appear if the product reflects the actual self-image better than the ideal self-image. The greater the positive value is, the higher is the discrepancy where the product speaks for the shopper's ideal self, but does not mirror how the shopper actually views themselves. The results from the t-test indicate that masstige products have a positive value where ISC surpasses ASC and the opposite appears for everyday products where the mean value is negative. ($M_{\text{Masstige}} = .17$, $SD = .82$; $M_{\text{Everyday}} = -.60$, $SD = .87$; $t(668) = -9.933$; $p < 0.001$).

4.2.3 Satisfaction

H3: Masstige products have greater satisfaction than everyday products

To examine the direct link between product type and satisfaction, independent t-tests are conducted. The results show that masstige products have greater levels of satisfaction than everyday products, i.e. customers are more likely to be satisfied with masstige products than everyday products. ($M_{\text{Masstige}} = 3.31$, $SD = .92$; $M_{\text{Everyday}} = 2.35$, $SD = 1.07$; $t(668) = -14.681$; $p < 0.001$)

Table 4

Variable	Product Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	One-Sided P	Two-Sided P
ISC - ASC	Masstige	.17	.82	<.001**	<.001**
	Everyday	-.60	.87		
Satisfaction	Masstige	3.31	.92	<.001**	<.001**
	Everyday	2.35	1.07		
Purchase intention	Masstige	2.67	1.28	<.001**	<.001**
	Everyday	2.23	1.22		

*The mean values range in the response interval of 1-5; ** Supported at $p < .001$*

4.2.4 Full mediation model

The process macro model “PROCESS” presented by Andrew F. Hayes is used in the analysis. The set of models allows for testing mediation effects, moderating effects, and conditional processes of variables. The sixth model is applicable to test the hypotheses outlined in this paper. This model presents a serial mediation between the variables. It hypothesizes a chain linking of the mediators (incongruence and satisfaction) with a specified direction flow. In this analysis, the two mediators, incongruence and satisfaction, are added to the relationship between product type (i.e., masstige vs. everyday) as the independent variable “X” and purchase intention as the dependent

variable “Y”. Further, to investigate the relationships between variables, a correlation table is presented (Table 5).

The purchase intention of home goods is mediated by self-incongruence and satisfaction. As seen in Table 7, the indirect effect is significant as the indirect effect (Ind3) is .0917 and significant (.0588, .1277), which means that the purchase intention of home goods is mediated by incongruence and satisfaction. The mediating variables positively impact the purchase intention.

Table 5

Corr. Table	n	Mean	SD	Product type	Incongruence	Satisfaction	Purchase intention
Product type	670			-	.359	.494	.173
Incongruence	670	-.2132	1.069	.359	CA: (.865, .639) [°]	.352	.140
Satisfaction	670	2.8318	.9728	.494	.352	CA: .822	.464
Purchase intention	670	2.45	1.267	.173	.140	.464	-

[°]Cronbach's Alpha for (ISC, ASC); All correlations are significant at $p < .001$ level

Table 6

Process Model 6				
Test	Model summary	Path	Beta (β)	Significance
1	F(1,668) = 98,6723	Product type → Incongruence	.7667	p = .0000, 90%
	p = .0000			CI = [.6395, .8938]
2	F(2,667) = 129.0984 p = .0000	Product type → Satisfaction	.8210	p = .0000, 90%
		Incongruence → Satisfaction	.1829	CI = [.7081, .9339]
				p = .0000, 90%
CI = [.1300, .2357]				
3	F(3,666) = 62.2920 p = .0000	Product type → Purchase intention	-.1794	p = .0801, 90%
		Incongruence → Purchase intention	ns.	CI = [-.3481, -.0108]
				p = .7651, 90%
				CI = [-.0866, .0600]
Satisfaction → Purchase intention	.6538	p = .0000, 90%		
				CI = [.5674, .7402]

* Supported at $p < .10$ level; ** Supported at $p < .001$ level

Table 7

Process model 6 indirect effects					
Indirect effects	Path	Effect	Remarks	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Ind1	Product type → Incongruence → Purchase intention	-.0102	Not supported	-.0722	.0468
Ind2	Product type → Satisfaction → Purchase intention	.0632	Supported	.4364	.6428
Ind3 (full model)	Product type → Incongruence → Satisfaction → Purchase intention	.0917	Supported	.0588	.1277

Indirect effects are statistically significant (supported) when both the upper limit and lower limit CI are either both positive or both negative

Table 8

Summary of hypotheses		CI	Accept/Reject
H1	Masstige products have greater purchase intention than everyday products	0.95	Accept**
H2	Masstige products have greater incongruence than everyday products	0.95	Accept**
H3	Masstige products have greater satisfaction than everyday products	0.95	Accept**
H4	The purchase intention of masstige home goods is mediated by self-incongruence and satisfaction	0.9	Accept*

** Supported at $p < .10$ level; ** Supported at $p < .001$ level*

5 Discussion

5.1 Summary of Main Findings

All hypotheses measuring the links within the model (H1-H3) show significant results. Additionally, the full model presented in H4 is deemed marginally significant (at $p < 0.1^*$), meaning that the study presents statistical evidence for purchase intention of masstige home goods being mediated by both incongruence and satisfaction. However, given that the model is marginally significant at $p < 0.1^*$ at the $CI = 0.9$, one should be careful when interpreting and applying the results.

Our findings in the shopping simulation show that product type impacts how customers experience an incongruence between ISC and ASC. A higher discrepancy of ISC and ASC is more likely for masstige products than for everyday products. The empirics also suggest that customers are more likely to be satisfied with a masstige product. The fourth and last hypothesis can be marginally supported by statistical evidence, which means that the purchase intention of masstige home goods is mediated positively by incongruence and satisfaction. The results show that masstige products increase incongruence, which in turns increases satisfaction, which finally increases purchase intention, i.e. mediating purchase intention positively. When both the upper limit confidence interval “ULCI” and the lower limit confidence interval “LLCI” are either both positive or both negative, the indirect effect can be statistically supported. The positive mediation is contrasting to the results of the phenomenon of ISC ASC discrepancy in the luxury market. What distinguishes the two scenarios of incongruence in the luxury and masstige market is the extent of the gap between the self-concepts. It can be argued that when shopping for masstige products, consumers can experience a state where they close the gap and reach their goal and achieve their ideal-self, as it is not too far from their actual self-image. For luxury shopping on the other hand, the gap can

be argued to be too large causing the sense of self-alienation rather than the feeling of achieving the better version of themselves.

As suggested by research, indirect effects can be found to be significant in the absence of a significant direct effect. Hence, researchers are encouraged to analyze potential indirect effects regardless of what the direct effect of the independent and dependent variable looks like (Rucker et al., 2011). In this case, this means that the impact of the indirect effects of incongruence and satisfaction can prove an effect that is not explained by the direct effect. It can also be the opposite. Hence, regardless of whether the respondents are more or less likely to purchase a masstige product compared to an everyday product, the indirect effect of incongruence and satisfaction can affect the purchase intention positively.

5.2 Contributions to Research

This thesis contributes to research on masstige products. While the topic has been getting traction in recent years, with the topic becoming more researched since the late 2010s and early 2020s, this study contributes with the aspect of comparing masstige goods with everyday goods, as masstige products have often been compared with luxury goods previously (Ho et al., 2023; Truong et al., 2009; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). We also contribute to research on predictors of masstige consumption (Purohit & Radia, 2022).

This thesis has also taken a different approach than most other research papers regarding ISC ASC incongruence. Because research has shown that many customers experience ISC>ASC for luxury products, we decided to subtract the ASC from the ISC to analyze its joint influence, which has recently been done by Zhang et al., but only for the luxury market (2022). This gave us the advantage of looking at this incongruence specifically, in contrast to other research that primarily analyzed either ISC or ASC or that separated the concepts (Nam et al., 2011; Ha & Im, 2012).

5.3 Practical Implications

The results of the masstige products affecting satisfaction and purchase intention positively is in line with existing literature that describes how higher quality is a primary descriptor of satisfaction and purchase intention (Oh, 1999). However, the incongruence variable does not indicate a sense of self-alienation for masstige products as the variable instead enhances satisfaction and purchase intention.

The thesis has shown that masstige products make customers experience a higher ideal self-congruence than actual self-congruence, i.e., the masstige products reflect their ideal self-image to a greater extent than it reflects their actual self-image. This effect has a positive impact on their satisfaction with the product, which subsequently impacts their purchase intention positively. This means that while the products need to have high quality and prestige, they should also stimulate this dream aspect of the product because the customer becomes more satisfied when they perceive the product as aligning more with their ideal self-view than it reflects their actual self-view. The product needs to speak to the ideal self-view of the customer because even though an incongruence between ISC and ASC can contribute to discomfort for a luxury product (Zhang et al., 2022), incongruence does lead to higher customer satisfaction for masstige products.

Masstige products can suggest different marketing and merchandising strategies for suppliers and retailers. As previously outlined, through extensions of the brand, the masstige market is relevant for both mass-market brands, luxury brands, and standalone premium brands that mainly operate in the masstige field. This means vast potential for many B2C industries considering the asymmetric effects of extensions where an upward extension (for low-price brands) increases brand equity more than a downward extension harms a brand (for brands employing a higher price point). Hence, different types of brands can potentially enter the masstige segment successfully (Heath et al., 2011). Consumers are more satisfied by masstige products. This may be because of the supposed higher quality, uniqueness, and prestigiousness. Therefore,

for customers to be satisfied, companies need to fulfill the higher expectations for customers to be likely to pay a higher price. Although the potential is substantial for masstige products, companies should not stop prioritizing their low-price product lines, as these are still desired by customers, which could be explained by accessibility and affordability. However, the discussion of affordability explaining why customers choose the everyday product remains an assumption suggested to be tested for in future research.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

As with every empirical study, there are limitations. The experiment was conducted in an artificial setting, which means that it lacks a natural environment. Hence, the realism shortage is a drawback of the experiment (Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2019). What surveyees imagine during shopping might differ from their actual behavior when shopping for products organically. However, research has shown that consumers that express an intent to make a purchase are more likely to do so (Indiani & Fahik, 2020; Lim, 2013). It would be interesting to apply this framework to customers during an actual online shopping setting or by sending the questionnaire to a customer positioned in the post-purchase phase of the customer journey to investigate whether this holds to be true for actual purchases as well. The experiment was also comparative, i.e., surveyees answered questions for both the masstige and the everyday products, as opposed to just one. This means that, because masstige products are evaluated before the everyday products, consumers may think that the everyday products are comparatively worse and answer accordingly. In future studies, it could have been conducted blindly, i.e., with surveyees only answering for one or the other.

There are both advantages and drawbacks to using a manipulation check in the main study as compared to the pre-study. We used the manipulation check in both the pre-study and the main study but only reported the findings of the main study as it better proved that the check is true for the observations analyzed. Also, the pre-study had a rather small sample. The manipulation check could have been included at the

end of the survey instead of being in the middle to be confident that the manipulation check did not affect the other responses in the questionnaire (Söderlund, 2018, pp. 86-97).

Incongruence can be measured in different ways, either in relative values subtracting ASC from ISC (Zhang et al., 2022) or by computing the incongruence in absolute terms, irrespective of which is bigger (Ibrahim & Najjar, 2008). Hence, the concept has been studied in different ways. A suggested approach that future research could look into is splitting up the respondents based on how they answered in this respect. Previous research showcased that when ISC and ASC are both high, the purchase intention is the highest, compared to customers that score $ISC > ASC$, $ISC < ASC$, or with both ISC and ASC being equally low (Sirgy, 2018). It would have been interesting to analyze the purchase intention of masstige goods from this scope, not only through the scope of ISC subtracted by ASC. However, to do so, it is argued that a larger sample size would be desirable.

In the survey, the respondents were asked to reflect upon which product they would be willing to pay a premium and rank the products based on that. Subsequently, the surveyee responded to statements for both options in the product pair. This meant they answered questions about the product that they were most interested in. However, there may be great undisclosed variance in terms of which products lead to factors such as incongruence, satisfaction, and purchase intention. The analysis of this paper does not disaggregate the results on the specific product level. This may be the reason why the results lacked significance for how incongruence impacts purchase intention, as it may differ greatly between the products.

This study did not include how likely customers are to shop for masstige products in general. The willingness to spend money on quality, prestige, and uniqueness differs between consumers. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study on consumers that are interested in masstige products specifically, or at least include this aspect as a controlling variable. The study also did not consider the fact that masstige

products, because of their price, are not as affordable as everyday products. Therefore, consumers may want to purchase masstige products within the near future, but because they can't afford to, they are not able to. While the study did ask consumers to rank themselves compared to others in terms of income, career, and education, it is inevitably subjective. Moreover, it does not capture economic capability alone, which means that the complete understanding of a surveyee's economic status cannot be derived. Additionally, because the sample population was generally quite young, a share of them could potentially live at their parents' house, which decreases their control over purchases made for the home.

To further ensure that purchasing home goods is relevant for the respondents, this could have been checked for by having the respondents express their living situation and financial ability. It is therefore suggested that variables of income and socioeconomic status are included as controlling variables for future studies on the topic of purchase intention for masstige as opposed to everyday products.

6 Appendices

6.1 Questionnaire Questions

Constructs	Source	Items	Response	Response structure
Surveyee demographics		What do you identify as?	Male/Female/Other	Categorical
		What year were you born?	yyyy	Dropdown scale
		What is your current primary occupation?	[Full time employee] [Part time employee] [Entrepreneur/ Self-employed] [Unemployed and job-seeking] [Unemployed and not job-seeking] [Sick-leave] [Student] [Retired] [Other, namely: __]	
	Goodman et al., 2001	Where would you place yourself on the ladder in relation to others? 1 represents the lowest level of education, career and income and 10 represents the highest level of education, career and income.	1-10	MacArthur SSS Scale
Shopping orientation	Büttner et al., 2014	When shopping, I mainly carry out what I have planned	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
	Büttner et al., 2014	When shopping, I am usually looking for entertainment	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
		I enjoy purchasing products that enhance my social status	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
Experiment		You will now participate in a shopping simulation. In this part of the survey, we ask you to imagine that you are shopping at an established e-commerce retailer of your own choice. We ask you to have a close look at the 6 product categories below. Within each category there is an everyday option with a price of around 25 kr and a premium option of around 400 kr.		Product rank

Below, please rank the products based on how likely you are to purchase the premium option within that category.

At the top, place the item you are most likely to purchase the premium option, at the bottom, place the item that you are least likely to purchase the premium option.

To proceed in the survey you must rank all options and drag them in the box to the right. Note that you will only respond to questions about one product category.

Product perceptions	Zhang & Zhao, 2019	The product has high quality	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
	Zhang & Zhao, 2019	The product stands out from the crowd	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
	Zhang & Zhao, 2019	The product is prestigious	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
3-item ISC scale	Malär et al., 2011; Sirgy & Su, 2000	The image of the [premium/everyday] product is consistent with how I would like to be perceived	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
	Malär et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2022	The personality of the [premium/everyday] product mirrors the person I would like to be	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
	Sirgy & Su, 2000; Zhang et al., 2022	The identity that the [premium/everyday] product communicates is different from my ideal identity	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
3-item ASC scale	Sirgy & Su, 2000; Zhang et al., 2022	The typical user of the [premium/everyday] product is very different from me	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
	Sirgy et al., 1997; Zhang et al., 2022	The premium [premium/everyday] product does not reflect my actual image	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
	Sirgy & Su, 2000; Sirgy et al., 1997	The image of the [premium/everyday] product's typical user is similar to my image	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
Perceived social status	Purohit & Radia, 2022	The [premium / everyday] product signal high status	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale
	Purohit &	This [premium / everyday] product enhances my social status	[SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]	Likert scale

Radia,
2022

Satisfaction (CSI)	Ong et al., 2023; Ekström, 2010	Imagine an ideal product. How close is the product to that product?	[Not close at all] [Somewhat far] [Neither close nor far] [Somewhat close] [Very close]	Likert scale
	Widjadja & Yosua, 2018	Generally, how satisfied are you with the [premium/everyday] product?	[Not satisfied at all] [Somewhat dissatisfied] [Indifferent] [Somewhat satisfied] [Very satisfied]	Likert scale
	Bitencourt et al., 2023	How likely is it that you would recommend a similar product to others?	[Not likely at all] [Somewhat unlikely] [Indifferent] [Somewhat likely] [Very likely]	
Purchase intention	Yoo & Lee, 2012	How likely is it that you will shop similar products as the one selected within the coming 6 months?	[Very unlikely] [Unlikely] [Indifferent] [Likely] [Very likely]	Likert scale

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither agree nor disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

6.1.2 Shopping Simulation Graphic

	Everyday 25 SEK	Premium 400 SEK
Hand Soap		
Scented candle		
Hand towel		
Water bottle		
Drinking glass		
Razor		

Shopping simulation graphic

6.2 Variable Output

6.2.1 Rotated Component Matrix (Factor Analysis)

	Component	
	1	2
ISC1	.869	.040
ISC2	.900	.003
ISC3	.119°	.694°

°Suggesting to remove item 3 due to low correlation with item 1 and item 2

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