

# Sex sells the belief that price signals quality

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# Sex sells the belief that price signals quality

## **Abstract**

The current research investigates the impact of exposure to sexual images on the perceived relation between price and quality. Past research suggests that sexual imagery increases men's, but not women's, interest in buying branded and more expensive products, for the sake of their signaling function. We propose that, in turn, this heightened interest in status goods strengthens the belief that price signals quality. Studies 1 and 2 demonstrate that exposure to sexual images indeed enhances the perceived strength of the relationship between price and quality, due an increase in men's prestige sensitivity, while ruling out arousal as alternative explanation. Study 3 further shows that exposure to sexual images strengthens price-induced biases in actual consumption. Study 4 shows that the impact of sexual imagery on price-quality beliefs does not apply to women. Studies 5 and 6 establish that the price-quality relationship serves as justification of status consumption.

**Keywords:** *price-quality beliefs; status consumption; decision-making*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour