

'Fashionably' Late: Signaling Sociometric Status Through Conspicuous Consumption of Leisure Time

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Abstract

This research examines how arriving late to social gatherings may operate as signals of social connectedness, leading to elevated sociometric status attributions. Drawing from costly signaling theory (Grafen, 1990; Spence, 1974; Zehavi & Zahavi, 1997), works on sociometric status (Anderson, Hildreth, & Howland, 2015) and research on consumption mimicry (e.g., Rueviov et al., 2013; Tanner, Ferraro, Chartrand, Bettman, & Van Baaren, 2008) we argue that such tardiness, as a costly and visible signal, can act as a particular form of conspicuous consumption and lead to positive inferences of sociometric status. A series of studies demonstrate that people confer higher status to late rather than on time arriving individuals. More specifically, when social targets are perceived as late, they would be perceived of having higher sociometric status - having more friends and receiving more admiration from others. Consequently, individuals would like to be in the same social network with such individuals, favor their product choices and imitate their consumption behaviors. Furthermore, an investigation of moderating condition demonstrates that the tendency to imitate consumption behaviors of late-arriving individuals is exacerbated among people whose chronic desire for status is relatively high. This research contributes to the conspicuous consumption of time literature and to research on costly signaling by revealing the powerful influence of signaling (through late arriving to a social event) on perceptions of sociometric status.

Keywords: *costly-signaling; status; mimicry*

Track: Consumer Behaviour