

Experiential Purchases as a Status Signal: Exploring the Role of Intrinsic Motivation

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Abstract

Despite a large number of studies that compared material and experiential purchases with respect to their effects on consumers, there are far less studies that explored what different purchase types communicate to others about the consumer. This study aims to address this literature gap by comparing experiential and material purchases with respect to status signaling. Two experiments were conducted to assess people's perceptions of an actor based on the actor's consumption behavior. We show that people infer higher levels of prestige from experiential purchases than from material purchases. The effect of purchase type on perceived prestige is mediated by intrinsic motivation perceptions; such that experiential purchases, as compared to material purchases, lead others to perceive the consumer as more intrinsically motivated, which in turn leads to increased prestige perceptions. Finally, we show that participants with lower socioeconomic status (SES) infer higher SES from experiential purchases than from material purchases.

Keywords: *status; prestige; motivation*

Track: Consumer Behaviour