Applied Research Quality Life (2015) 10:253–262
DOI 10.1007/s11482-014-9310-x

Is Having a Taste of Luxury a Good Idea? How Use vs. Ownership of Luxury Products Affects Satisfaction with Life

L. Hudders · M. Pandelaere

Received: 24 January 2014 / Accepted: 25 February 2014 / Published online: 29 April 2014

Keywords Luxury consumption · Satisfaction with life · Social comparison · Mere use

Introduction

Previous research suggests that luxury consumption positively affects an individual's subjective well-being (e.g., Hudders and Pandelaere 2012; Sivanathan and Pettit 2010). The study of Hudders and Pandelaere (2012), for instance, shows that the frequent spending of money on luxury brands in various product categories, such as accessories, clothing, or travel is positively related to Satisfaction With Life (SWL). This implies that spending money on *Gucci* bags, *Abercrombie & Kent* travel or *Godiva* chocolates has a more positive impact on an individual's well-being than spending money on less luxurious counterparts, such as *H&M* handbags, *Guylian* chocolates or *cheaptickets.com* travel. However, in these studies luxury consumption is equated with ownership of luxury goods. Because ownership implies that one retains possessions after product use, it remains unclear whether it is the mere use (i.e. using the product

L. Hudders (✉)
Department of Communication Sciences, Ghent University, Korte Meer 9, 9000 Ghent, Belgium
e-mail: Liselot.Hudders@Ugent.be

M. Pandelaere
Department of Marketing, Ghent University, Tweekerkenstraat 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium

without owning it) or the ownership of luxury products that positively affects an individual's well-being. The current paper therefore experimentally investigates whether mere use (i.e. use without ownership) versus ownership of luxury products differentially affect an individual's Satisfaction With Life (SWL) for two different consumer products, a consumable (i.e. chocolate) vs. durable (i.e. pen).

The notion of SWL refers to how happy and satisfied individuals are with their lives (Diener et al. 1999). It is perceived to be the cognitive aspect of subjective well-being as it gives an impression of how individuals evaluate their life in a whole against some standard (Sirgy 2012). It can be predicted by a combination of objective life circumstances, genetically determined personality traits and positive behaviors and cognitions (Sheldon and Lyubomirsky 2006). One particular aspect that may affect an individual's SWL is social comparisons (Diener and Fujita 1997; Fujita 2008). People have the tendency to compare their characteristics, skills, and life circumstances with those of other, similar people; and these social comparisons may affect how one feels about oneself (Diener and Fujita 1997; Festinger 1954). In particular, individuals' well-being may be negatively affected when a comparison turns out negatively (i.e. when individuals appear to be worse off than their peers) but positively affected when the comparison turns out positively (Dittman and Goebel 2010).

Social comparisons appear to be more important in some life domains than in other (Bogaerts and Pandelaere 2013) and one of the life domains where people are strongly concerned about their relative position within the reference group is income (Diener and Oishi 2000; Easterlin 2001; Frey and Stutzer 2002; Guven and SØrensen 2012). Indeed, various studies show that the earnings of neighbors, relatives, or co-workers strongly affect an individual's SWL (Boes et al. 2010; Brown et al. 2008; Luttmer 2005). Specifically, people seem to be more satisfied with their lives if they earn more than the people they compare themselves with (Mentzakis and Moro 2009).

Positional concerns not only make people care about relative income but also incite individuals to use consumer goods to improve their relative position in society and do better than their peers (e.g., Christen and Morgan 2005). A recent study, for instance, found that neighbors of a lottery winner purchase more cars (Kuhn et al. 2011). Especially luxury products may be used to keep up with the Joneses as these products can be conspicuously consumed to impress others in order to gain a higher social status (Frank 1999; Veblen 1899/1979). This ostentatious display of luxuries enables consumers to improve their position by demonstrating that they are better off than their peers (Mandel et al. 2006), which may, in turn, positively affect their SWL (Hsee et al. 2008; Hudders and Pandelaere 2012). People may be especially likely to conspicuously consume luxury goods when they believe they may achieve considerable status gains (Ordabayeva and Chandon 2011). Because status is relative, the pursuit of status is a zero-sum game (e.g. Hopkins and Kornienko 2004; Layard 2005). When one individual gains in status, at least one other individual has to lose status. In this respect, luxury consumption may have a dual effect. On the one hand, an individual who engages in luxury consumption may experience feelings of superiority as it may lead to a perceived gain of relative position. Sense of superiority is positively related to various well-being measures (see e.g. Taylor and Brown 1988 for a review). On the other hand, previous research has shown that mere exposure to superior options, such as idealized advertising images of physical attractiveness or financial success, may decrease an individual's well-being as it induces disadvantageous social comparisons (e.g., Gulas and McKeage 2000; Richins 1991, 1995). Similarly, an individual's luxury consumption may evoke feelings of inferiority in other people and have a detrimental effect on others' SWL (Winkelmann 2012). In the current paper, we will further investigate whether these explicit social comparisons are a prerequisite to observe negative effects on an individual's SWL. In particular, we investigate whether temporary use of luxury products lowers one's SWL.

The Present Research

We propose that ownership of luxury products may positively affect SWL but that mere use, without ownership, may negatively affect SWL. We test this assumption for two different types of luxuries, namely consumables (i.e. a chocolate) and durables (i.e. a pen). We use both product types because 'product use' has a different implication for them. In particular, the use of a consumable results in the disappearance of the good. Consuming a chocolate, for instance, implies that it ceases to exist. In contrast, a durable remains intact after (limited) use. As a result, mere use implies that people need to hand back a durable after use to its owner while this is not the case for use of a consumable. While we propose that mere use will result in decreased SWL for both product types, the effect may be more pronounced for durables.

Method

Design and Procedure

A 2 (Product: consumable vs. durable) by 2 (Luxury: Luxury vs. non-luxury) by 2 (Consumption: Ownership vs. use) between-subjects experimental design was used to test the hypotheses. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of the conditions by the computer. Respondents came to the lab to participate in a set of (unrelated) experimental studies, taking in total about 50 min of their time. The current experiment was presented as a product evaluation task. They were asked to evaluate a product (either a consumable or a durable that was presented as a luxury or an ordinary product). After they completed these product evaluations, a new task appeared in which respondents had to complete the dependent variables.

Stimulus Material

As a consumable, we selected a chocolate and as a durable, we selected a pen. We selected these products because they are about equally appealing to the respondents and because the luxury versions are not very expensive. The latter is important given the large number of respondents we needed for this study. Do note, however, that the use of very affordable luxuries renders our test rather conservative. In addition, the use of affordable or *democratized* luxuries is also relevant in today's society as democratized luxuries are omnipresent. High-end luxuries (Ferrari cars, private yachts, etc.) are only available for the very small upper-class part of society. The largest group of consumers cannot afford these luxuries. However, these consumers, mainly from middle and lower classes, are willing to pay premiums for well-designed, well-engineered, and well-crafted new luxury goods which are – unlike old luxuries – produced in high volumes (Silverstein and Fiske 2003; Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie 2006). These goods enable them to take part in a luxurious lifestyle and accordingly, the emergence of these new luxury products has led to an enormous growth of the global luxury market (apart from an increasing demand from new luxury markets such as China, for instance). Although affordable, these luxury products cost a lot more than the ordinary versions, which leaves consumers with the consideration of purchasing for instance, ten pieces of ordinary clothing versus one luxury clothing item. Many consumers can, therefore, only afford few of those luxuries.

To avoid the possibility that differences in actual quality elicit differences in SWL, respondents in the luxury and non-luxury condition received the same product and the luxuriousness of the products was manipulated through the description of the product. The attributes that are used to describe the product are typical attributes that distinguish luxuries from non-luxuries (Hudders et al. 2013). The luxury product was described as a very expensive, exclusive, premium-quality, and unique product that is handmade (for the chocolate), and only available in a limited edition. The non-luxury product was described as a very cheap, rather low quality, mass-produced product that is available in many shops (discounters for the chocolate).

Although the cover story that was used for the experiment was the same for both product categories (a product evaluation test), the manipulations of consumption (mere use vs. ownership) were slightly different. For the consumable, respondents were asked to either taste the chocolate before continuing the survey or evaluate the chocolate without tasting it. This group was told that they could take the chocolate home. For the durables, respondents were asked to either evaluate the pen and give it back before continuing the survey or take it home. Note that the source of ownership in this study was through gift and not through purchase. This is to exclude potential negative effects of the payment on an individual's well-being. As luxuries are much more expensive than non-luxuries, respondents could experience a greater pain of paying (Prelec and Loewenstein 1998) after the purchase of a luxury than a non-luxury which could have distorting effects on our dependent variable.

Measures

The product evaluation task and the survey were presented as unrelated tasks. First, respondents were asked to evaluate the product on a number of dimensions, writing comfort or taste, quality, exclusiveness, luxuriousness, design (one-item questions, to be rated on a seven-point likert-type scale). Second, in another questionnaire, but immediately following the product evaluation test, they were asked to fill in the questions to measure their well-being and some other filler questions. To measure SWL we used the five-item SWL scale of Diener et al. (1999, $\alpha=0.81$). In addition, we included the 20-item positive and negative affect scale of Crawford and Henry (2004, $\alpha_{PA}=0.89$, $\alpha_{NA}=0.84$) to check for potential mood effects and the 18-item materialism scale (Richins and Dawson 1992, $\alpha=0.87$). Materialism is included because a recent study suggests that materialistic consumers appear to be less happy after owning products than when they are anticipating owning them (Richins 2013).

Participants

Three hundred and seven participants took part in the study of which 116 men and 191 women. Ages ranged from 18 to 52 years (M_{age}=22.13, SD_{age}=4.17). Participants came to the lab to participate in this experimental study and received a participation fee of seven Euro.

Results

Manipulation Checks

First, a first manipulation check confirmed that the pen (M=4.88) was perceived to be equally appealing (measured by two items, product satisfaction and product attractiveness, r=0.28, p<0.001) to respondents as the chocolate (M=4.83; $t(178)$ = 0.35, p= 0.73). Next, the use of the consumable implied that respondents could consume the product, while the use of the durable implied that respondents had to hand in the product. The latter may have caused psychological discomfort which may have distorted the results. However, a three-way ANOVA with product, use and luxury condition as independent variables and negative affect as dependent variables revealed no significant interaction effect of product and use condition on negative affect ($F(1, 297)$ = 0.22, p= 0.64). A final manipulation check on the product evaluations (perceived quality, expensiveness, exclusivity, and luxuriousness) of respondents confirmed that the luxury product was perceived as having higher quality (M=5.29), and being more expensive (M=5.71), more exclusive (M=5.01) and more luxurious (M=4.94) than the non-luxury product ($M_{quality}$=4.59, $t(305)$ = 5.04, p<0.001; $M_{expensiveness}$=3.05, $t(304)$ = 16.26, p<0.001; $M_{exclusiveness}$=3.57, $t(290)$ = 8.35, p<0.001; $M_{luxuriousness}$=3.22, $t(305)$ = 11.08, p<0.001).

Hypothesis Testing

To test our main hypothesis that ownership of luxury products may positively affect SWL but that mere use, without ownership, may negatively affect SWL, we subjected the SWL scores to a 2 (product: chocolate vs. pen) * 2 (luxury: yes vs. no) * 2 (consumption: use vs. ownership) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA). This analysis revealed no significant main effects of any of the three factors, Fs<0.40, ps>0.54. The analysis did show a significant interaction effect between luxury and consumption, $F(1, 297)$ = 9.17, p<0.01, η^2_p=0.03, see Fig. 1. Respondents in the use-condition rated their SWL significantly lower if they received the luxury compared to the non-luxury version, $t(149)$ = 2.44, p=0.02, while respondents in the ownership-condition rated their SWL marginally significantly higher if they received the luxury compared to the non-luxury product, $t(152)$ = −1.81, p=0.07. In addition, the analysis revealed a significant two-way interaction effect between product and use (F(1, 297) = 4.66, p=0.032, η^2_p=0.02). In the use condition, respondents were more satisfied with their life after using the chocolate (M=4.38) than after using the pen (M=4.72, $t(149)$ = 1.81, p=0.072). In the ownership condition, there were no significant differences in SWL for respondents who owned the pen (M=4.59) vs. chocolate (M=4.38; $t(152)$ =

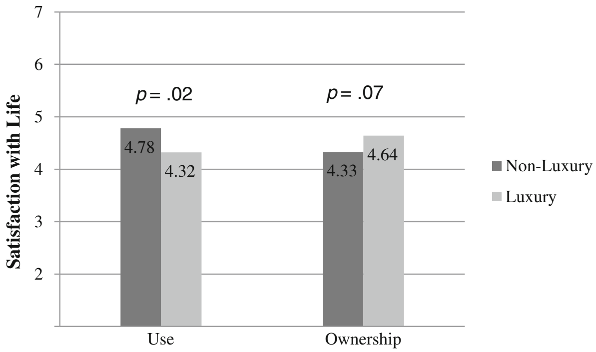

Fig. 1 Interaction effect between luxury and consumption condition on satisfaction with life

1.28, p=0.20). Finally, the analysis indicated no significant three-way interaction effect between luxury, product and consumption, $F(1, 297)$ = 0.39, p=0.54. This indicates that the effects of luxury ownership vs. use on SWL are not further moderated by product type.

We also investigated whether mood explained the interaction between luxury and consumption. Results revealed no significant interaction effect between luxury and consumption on positive mood, $F(1, 297)$ = 0.12, p=0.74, but a marginally significant interaction on negative mood, $F(1, 297)$ = 3.08, p=0.08. Respondents in the luxury condition experienced more negative mood in the use-condition (M=1.49) compared to the ownership-condition (M=1.29), $t(121)$ = 2.48, p=0.01, while there were no significant differences, $t(146)$ = 0.43, p=0.67, between use (M=1.34) and ownership (M= 1.31) for respondents in the non-luxury condition. Still the two-way interaction effect of luxury and consumption on SWL remained significant when controlling for positive and negative mood, $F(1, 295)$ = 7.80, p<0.01, η^2_p=0.01. In addition, a multiple mediation analysis conducted in *SPSS 21* using the process macro of Hayes (2013, model 4, 5000 bootstrap resamples) showed that neither positive (B=0.01, SE= 0.05, *95 %-LLCI*=−0.11, *95 %-ULCI*=0.11) nor negative mood (B=0.10, SE=0.07, *95 %-LLCI*=−0.01, *95 %-ULCI*=0.26) mediated this interaction effect on SWL. Further, the results revealed that although materialism negatively predicts one's SWL (B=−0.16, $F(1, 295)$ = 4.09, p=0.044), there were no significant interactions between materialism and the luxury, nor the use conditions (all Fs<0.70, all ps>0.40).

General Discussion

The current study adds to the literature in two ways. First, it adds to the literature on the relationship between consumption and subjective well-being. Previous studies already showed that different types of consumption may affect one's well-being differentially. For instance, while experiential purchases (Nicolao et al. 2009; Zhong and Mitchell 2010) and prosocial spending (Dunn et al. 2008) make consumers feel happy, addictive consumption behaviors, such as pathological gambling or compulsive buying, are detrimental for well-being (e.g., Roberts and Pirog 2004). Most relevant for the present research, luxury spending (Hudders and Pandelaere 2012) seems to benefit subjective well-being. The current paper shows, however, that the effects of luxury consumption differ when this consumption implies ownership versus mere use of luxury products. In line with prior research that equates consumption with ownership (e.g., Diener et al. 2010; Guillen-Royo 2008; Winkelmann 2012), ownership of luxury products is associated with a higher SWL compared to ownership of non-luxury products. In contrast, the mere use of luxuries seems to decrease an individual's SWL. This is observed for both a durable (a pen) and a non-durable (a chocolate). These results may provide some preliminary evidence that mere use of luxury products seems to be detrimental for one's SWL. Future research should further investigate if these effects are applicable to other affordable and high-end luxury products. With a similar sample of low and middle class consumers, the effects for more expensive luxuries could be even more pronounced. In addition, the study should be replicated with a sample of upper-class consumers as they may experience less negative effects of the mere use of luxury products on their SWL than middle or lower class consumers. Furthermore, the respondents in our study did not have to purchase the product, they received the product. Future research should therefore investigate whether the effects of ownership of luxuries on one's SWL is different when one has to pay for the product. Finally, the current study focused on the ownership vs. mere use of luxury products, so the effects for luxury experiences remain inconclusive. A majority of studies on the effects of material possessions versus experiences on an individual's well-being show that experiences lead to greater well-being levels than material possessions (e.g., Kashdan and Breen 2007; Nicolao et al. 2009). However, it seems that enjoying many (small) experiences is more beneficial for an individual's well-being than enjoying one (big) experience, at least for older consumers, who are more likely to have to budget to spend on luxuries (Bhattacharjee and Mogilner forthcoming). The latter would suggest that the effects of mere use of luxury experiences may also be detrimental for an individual's SWL.

Second, it adds to the literature on the effects of comparison on subjective well-being. A host of studies have focused on social comparison. By and large, these studies find that comparison with better-off peers decreases one's happiness, although in some cases it may also inspire people to try to improve their relative standing (see Collins 1996 for a review). While people do not need to engage in social comparison for several important life domains such as safety or the amount of sleep they get, one area in which people are particularly prone to compare with others is income (Bogaerts and Pandelaere 2013). Once absolute income passes a subsistence threshold, relative income becomes a driver of subjective happiness (Ball and Chernova 2008; Boyce et al. 2010). In a similar vein, exposure to other people's luxury consumption – a signal of their wealth – has a negative effect on one's SWL (Winkelmann 2012). The current paper extends this finding by showing that social comparison is not required to observe negative effects of exposure to luxury products. In fact, the mere knowledge of existence of these products, as happens when one uses them, may be sufficient to find these negative externalities.

This finding raises several questions for future research. First, future studies should further elaborate on the underlying mechanism that can explain the effects of luxury consumption on SWL. Prior findings on negative effects of disadvantageous social comparison have been interpreted as resulting from being worse off than others. However, others' consumption practices could also serve to establish a picture of one's ideal self. Similar to studies on exposure to idealized advertising images, the use of luxury brands can increase one's expectations and lead to self-comparison. As such, it makes salient a discrepancy between one's actual and one's ideal self (Higgins 1987).

This typically evokes psychological discomfort (e.g., Higgins 1987; Heidrich 1999) and accordingly, may negatively affect an individual's SWL. So, possibly not the negative comparison to others, but rather the implicit negative comparison between a current self and an ideal self may ultimately underlie negative feelings stemming from disadvantageous social comparison. In addition, loss aversion may further explain the differential effects of ownership versus use since people are more inclined to avoid losses than to acquire gains and accordingly, losses appear to have a stronger impact on individuals' SWL than gains (Kahneman et al. 1991; Tversky and Kahneman 1991). Future research is needed to establish how the processes of social comparison, actual-ideal self-discrepancies and loss aversion relate to one another. In addition, the study shows that in the non-luxury condition, an individual's SWL is lower in the ownership than in the use-condition. This might be explained by the fact that respondents perceive the take out of a non-luxury product as a hassle that yields nothing. However, future research is needed to further elaborate on this finding.

Next, a recent, and very popular trend within the luxury landscape is the rent of luxury items. Most famous is the rent of luxury cars (e.g. a Lamborghini Gallardo Spider and a Ferrari 430 Spider are waiting for you at the Champs Elysees for a drive on the most famous avenue in Paris) or handbags of luxury designers for a night out. Renting luxuries enables consumers to savor luxuries and take part in a glamorous and exclusive life style. While we show that mere use of luxury products may engender negative effects for one's SWL, it is possible that this is mitigated if people need to pay for the opportunity to use a product, as is the case for renting luxury items. Not only does paying for using luxury items imply that these are somewhat accessible, but in several cases, people may frame the use as an experience. Indeed, some studies have already demonstrated that experience spending may benefit subjective well-being (Kashdan and Breen 2007). Future research is needed to examine whether the effects of mere use of luxury items on SWL depend on whether one receives them or pays for them. In addition, it may be interesting to investigate the effects of mere exposure to luxury brands (compared to use), e.g. at a millionaire fair, on an individual's SWL.

Finally, future studies should investigate the effects of luxury ownership vs. use with different types of consumers, as gender and income for instance have a strong impact on people's perceptions of luxury and accordingly, it may also have a strong impact on its consequences (Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann 2011). Irrespective of the answer to these questions, our research shows that even the well-intended lending of luxury items to one's neighbor, colleague or friend, free of charge, could ultimately have inadvertent negative effects on the well-being of the target of one's charitable act.

References

Ball, R. E., & Chernova, K. (2008). Absolute income, relative income, and happiness. *Social Indicators Research, 88*(3), 497–529.

Bhattacharjee, A., & Mogilner, C. (forthcoming). Happiness from ordinary and extraordinary experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*. doi: 10.1086/674724.

Boes, S., Staub, K., & Winkelmann, R. (2010). Relative status and satisfaction. *Economics Letters, 109*(3), 169–179.

Bogaerts, T., & Pandelaere, M. (2013). Less is more: why some domains are more positional than others. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 39*(December), 225–236.

Boyce, C. J., Brown, G. D. A., & Moore, S. C. (2010). Money and happiness: rank of income, not income, affects life satisfaction. *Psychological Science, 21*(4), 471–475.

Brown, G. D. A., Gardner, J., Oswald, A. J., & Qian, J. (2008). Does wage rank affect employees' well-being? *Industrial Relations, 47*(3), 355–389.

Christen, M., & Morgan, R. M. (2005). Keeping up with the Joneses: analyzing the effect of income inequality on consumer borrowing. *Quantitative Marketing and Economics, 3*(2), 145–173.

Collins, R. L. (1996). For better or worse: the impact of upward social comparison on self-evaluations. *Psychological Bulletin, 119*(1), 51–69.

Crawford, J. R., & Henry, J. D. (2004). The positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS): construct validity, measurement properties and normative data in a large non-clinical sample. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 43*(3), 245–265.

Diener, E., & Fujita, F. (1997). Social comparisons and subjective well-being. In B. P. Buunk & F. X. Gibbons (Eds.), *Health, coping, and well-being: Perspectives from social comparison theory* (pp. 329–357). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Diener, E., & Oishi, S. (2000). Money and happiness: Income and subjective well-being across nations. In E. Diener & E. M. Suh (Eds.), *Subjective well-being across cultures* (pp. 185–218). Cambridge: MIT Press.

Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin, 125*(3), 276–302.

Diener, E., Ng, W., Harter, J., & Arora, R. (2010). Wealth and happiness across the world: material prosperity predicts life evaluations, while psychosocial prosperity predicts positive feeling. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 99*(1), 52–61.

Dittman, J., & Goebel, J. (2010). Your house, your car, your education: the socioeconomic situation of the neighborhood and its impact on life satisfaction in Germany. *Social Indicators Research, 96*(3), 497–513.

Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Spending money on others promotes happiness. *Science, 319*(5870), 1687–1688.

Easterlin, R. (2001). Income and happiness: towards a unified theory. *The Economic Journal, 111*(473), 465–484.

Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations, 7*(2), 117–140.

Frank, R. H. (1999). *Luxury fever. Money and happiness in an era of excess*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Frey, B., & Stutzer, A. (2002). What can economists learn from happiness research? *Journal of Economic Literature, 40*(2), 402–435.

Fujita, F. (2008). The frequency of social comparison and its relation to subjective well-being. In M. Eid & R. J. Larsen (Eds.), *The science of subjective well-being* (pp. 239–257). New York: Guilford Press.

Guillen-Royo, M. (2008). Consumption and subjective well-being: exploring basic needs, social comparison, social integration and hedonism in Peru. *Social Indicators Research, 89*(3), 535–555.

Gulas, C. S., & McKeage, K. (2000). Extending social comparison: an examination of the unintended consequences of idealized advertising imagery. *Journal of Advertising, 29*(2), 17–28.

Guven, C., & SØrensen, B. E. (2012). Subjective well-being: keeping up with the perception of the Joneses. *Social Indicators Research, 109*(3), 439–469.

Hayes, A. F. (2013). *An introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. New York: Guilford Press.

Heidrich, S. M. (1999). Self-discrepancy across the life span. *Journal of Adult Development*, *6*(2), 119–130.

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: a theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review, 94*(3), 319–340.

Hopkins, E., & Kornienko, T. (2004). Running to keep in the same place. Consumer choice as a game of status. *American Economic Review, 94*(4), 1085–1107.

Hsee, C. K., Xu, F., & Tang, N. (2008). Two recommendations on the pursuit of happiness. *The Journal of Legal Studies, 37*(3), 115–132.

Hudders, L., & Pandelaere, M. (2012). The silver lining of materialism: the impact of luxury consumption on subjective well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 13*(3), 411–437.

Hudders, L., Pandelaere, M., & Vyncke, P. (2013). Consumer meaning making: the meaning of luxury brands in a democratized luxury world. *International Journal of Market Research, 55*(3), 69–90.

Kahneman, D., Knetsch, J., & Thaler, R. H. (1991). The endowment effect, loss aversion, and status quo bias. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 5*(1), 193–206.

Kashdan, T. B., & Breen, W. E. (2007). Materialism and diminished well-being: experiential avoidance as a mediating mechanism. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 26*(5), 521–539.

Kuhn, P., Kooreman, P., Soetevent, A., & Kapteyn, A. (2011). The effects of lottery prizes on winners and their neighbors: evidence from the Dutch postcode lottery. *American Economic Review, 101*(5), 2226–2247.

Layard, R. (2005). Happiness: Lessons from a new science. USA: Penguin Press.
Luttmer, E. (2005). Neighbors as negatives: relative earnings and well-being. *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 120*(3), 963–1002.
Mandel, N., Petrova, P. K., & Cialdini, R. B. (2006). Images of success and the preference for luxury brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 16*(1), 57–69.
Mentzakis, E., & Moro, M. (2009). The poor, the rich and the happy: exploring the link between income and subjective well-being. *The Journal of Socio-Economics, 38*(1), 147–159.
Nicolao, L., Irwin, J. R., & Goodman, J. K. (2009). Happiness for sale: do experiential purchases make consumers happier than material purchases? *Journal of Consumer Research, 36*(2), 188–198.
Ordabayeva, N., & Chandon, P. (2011). Getting ahead of the Joneses: when equality increases conspicuous consumption among bottom-tier consumers. *Journal of Consumer Research, 38*(1), 27–41.
Prelec, D., & Loewenstein, G. F. (1998). The red and the black: mental accounting of savings and debt. *Marketing Science, 17*, 4–28.
Richins, M. L. (1991). Social comparison and the idealized images of advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research, 18*(1), 71–83.
Richins, M. L. (1995). Social comparison, advertising, and consumer discontent. *American Behavioral Scientist, 38*(4), 593–607.
Richins, M. L. (2013). When wanting Is better than having: Materialism, transformation expectations, and product-evoked emotions in the purchase process. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *40*(June), 1–18.
Richins, M. L., & Dawson, S. (1992). A consumer values orientation for materialism and its measurement: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *19*(3), 303–316.
Roberts, J. A., & Pirog, S. (2004). Personal goals and their role in consumer behavior: the case of compulsive buying. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 12*(3), 61–73.
Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). Achieving sustainable gains in happiness: change your actions, not your circumstances. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 7*(1), 55–86.
Silverstein, M. J., & Fiske, N. (2003). *Trading up: The new American luxury*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.
Sirgy, J. M. (2012). *The psychology of quality of life. Hedonic well-being, life satisfaction, and Eudaimonia* (2nd Edition). Social Indicators Research Series (Vol. 50). London: Springer.
Sivanathan, N., & Pettit, N. C. (2010). Protecting the self through consumption: Status goods as affirmational commodities. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 46*(3), 564–570.
Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., & Teichmann, K. (2011). Is luxury just a female thing? The role of gender in luxury brand consumption. *Journal of Business Research, 66*(7), 889–896.
Taylor, S. E., & Brown, J. D. (1988). Illusion and well-being: A social psychological perspective on mental health. P*sychological Bulletin*, *103*(2), 193–210.
Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1991). Loss aversion in riskless choice: a reference-dependent model. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 106*(4), 1039–1061.
Veblen, T. (1899/1979). The theory of the leisure class. New York: Penguin Books Ltd.
Winkelmann, R. (2012). Conspicuous consumption and satisfaction. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 33*(1), 183–191.
Yeoman, I., & McMahon-Beattie, U. (2006). Luxury markets and premium pricing. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management, 4*(4), 319–329.
Zhong, J. Y., & Mitchell, V. (2010). A mechanism model of the effect of hedonic product consumption on well-being. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 20*(2), 152–162.