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Obtaining Premium When Luxury Is Far Away: Masstige's Antecedents, Moderators and Consequences

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the interplay between masstige brands and key consumer factors, including the need for uniqueness, pride, bandwagon effect, conspicuous consumption, and consumer brand engagement. Employing a two-stage sampling method and PLS–SEM analysis, the research focuses on middle-income individuals as prospective masstige consumers. Findings reveal that pride and the need for uniqueness significantly drive masstige consumption, while masstige consumption strongly influences conspicuous consumption and consumer brand engagement. The study contributes to the masstige literature by validating the MMI scale and demonstrating the pivotal roles of pride and uniqueness in navigating the masstige market. These insights underscore the strategic importance of masstige brands in fostering consumer-brand relationships and provide direction for targeted engagement strategies.

1 | Introduction

In recent years, the global economy has seen a notable shift toward advanced product innovation, production structures, and service delivery, propelled by changing consumer preferences and tastes. This shift is marked by an increased demand for sophisticated and prestigious products, driven by the rising disposable income of a burgeoning global middle class (Kapferer and Bastien 2009; Yao 2023). However, affluent consumption has encountered obstacles in the past decade due to a variety of geopolitical, sociocultural, and economic factors, including the 2008 global recession, the ascent of populism, and the COVID-19 pandemic (The Economist 2008; Danziger 2021; Lim et al. 2023). Specifically, the luxury goods market suffered from these challenges, evidenced by a significant 18.63% drop in market value from $316.16 billion in 2019 to $257.25 billion in 2020, precipitated by the pandemic (Fortune Business Insights 2021). This downturn appears to have prompted a behavioral shift among consumers, including the affluent, who began to view luxury purchases as deferable, seeking better value for their expenditure (Danziger 2019a, 2021). Furthermore, variations in luxury consumption patterns have been observed across different demographic segments (Accenture 2017; Bona et al. 2020; Danziger 2019b; Das, Jebarajakirthy, and Sivapalan 2022a; Yao 2023), with Millennials and Generation Z driving the entire growth of the luxury market in 2018, an increase from 85% in 2017 (Bain and Company 2019). Predictions indicate that by 2035, Generation Z will constitute 40% of the luxury market's consumer base (Deloitte 2021; The Nielsen Company 2015), characterized by their individualistic nature, digital savviness, and diminished brand loyalty (The Nielsen Company 2015). This aligns with Choi's (2014) assertion that the new luxury customer is characterized by high switching intentions and a lack of brand loyalty. Consequently, brands today rely less on exclusivity and rarity for profitability and market share, turning instead to relational and social factors like the bandwagon effect and consumer brand engagement as key elements defining "prestige" in today's market (Oyedele and Goenner 2021). This paradigm shift has given rise to "masstige" brands that blend mass appeal with luxury, catering to the expanding demographic of consumers with disposable income who desire accessible luxury (Paul 2019).

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Although the concept of masstige is relatively new, it has been discussed using various terms across the scholarly landscape, such as opuluxe, populous, premium, ultra-premium, trading up, and hyper luxury (Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan 2020; Kumar, Paul, and Starčević 2021; Paul 2019; Truong, McColl, and Kitchen 2009). Silverstein, Fiske, and Butman (2005) describe masstige brands as "premium but attainable", positioning them between traditional luxury brands and conventional brands (Paul 2015). Masstige brands are identified based on their social acceptance as premium and their price point and are driven by three of the four marketing P's: product, place, and promotion (Paul 2018). While some argue that the adoption of a masstige strategy may dilute brand exclusivity and pricing power (Kapferer 2014), there is a growing need for empirical studies to further define, understand, and operationalize the concept (Kapferer, Klippert, and Leproux 2014; Vogel, Cook, and Watchravesringkan 2019; Goyal 2020; Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan 2020;).

This study intends to bridge critical gaps in the understanding of masstige consumption. Initially, the study probes how inherent consumer traits, specifically uniqueness and pride, influence masstige product consumption (Ruvio, Shoham, and Brenčič 2008; Gelbrich 2011). Furthermore, the study delves into the nexus between masstige consumption and customer brand engagement, alongside conspicuous consumption, given that the flaunting of prestigious products and services now permeates lifestyles globally across both affluent and emerging markets (Kastanakis and Balabanis 2014). Lastly, the current study investigates the impact of bandwagon behavior within the masstige consumption landscape, where social influences and peer groups significantly dictate consumer patterns (Oyedele and Goenner 2021). Through this exploration, the study aims to enrich the masstige discourse, providing empirical clarity and offering strategic insights for effective brand management and growth.

The investigation into masstige consumption stands as a pivotal contribution to both academic discourse and market practice, addressing crucial gaps in the literature and responding to dynamic shifts in consumer culture. By analyzing the nuanced interrelations among consumer traits such as uniqueness and pride, and their influence on masstige consumption, the study delves into consumer psychology and market behavior, offering a more granular understanding of what drives the masstige market. This study also critically probes the complex relationship between masstige consumption and conspicuous consumption, shedding light on the paradox of attainable luxury—how it satisfies the desire for exclusivity while being accessible to a broader audience. This exploration is vital for decoding the evolving ethos of luxury consumption, particularly in an era where traditional notions of luxury are being disrupted by changing social norms, cultural homogenization, and digital advancements. Moreover, the analysis of bandwagon behavior and product categorization as moderating variables explains the social dynamics and market segmentation strategies crucial for navigating the masstige landscape. These elements are key to understanding how societal influences and product positioning collectively shape consumer engagement with masstige brands, thus offering a comprehensive framework for analyzing consumer behavior in this segment. Theoretically, this study enriches the masstige narrative by integrating and expanding upon existing models of consumer behavior, luxury consumption, and market strategy. This study not only explains the underlying psychological and sociological mechanisms of masstige consumption but also challenges and refines prevailing theories, thereby advancing scholarly understanding and opening new avenues for research in masstige consumption. Our findings have significant implications for how brands operate within the masstige space. By explaining the drivers and moderators of masstige consumption, this study provides brand managers and marketers with a strategic blueprint for aligning product offerings with consumer expectations and social trends. This insight is instrumental for crafting masstige marketing strategies that resonate with the target audience, optimize market positioning, and enhance brand loyalty in the competitive masstige market. In sum, this research serves as a critical lens through which the complexities of masstige consumption are viewed, offering a robust, empirically grounded perspective that advances our theoretical knowledge and practical understanding of this burgeoning field. The study's comprehensive approach not only captures the essence of masstige in the modern consumer landscape but also sets a precedent for future research and strategic market positioning in the realm of accessible luxury.

This study is divided into five sections. It starts with an introduction, then moves on to the conceptual framework and research hypotheses. It further explains the methodology and findings, and finally concludes with a discussion of the study's implications, conclusions, and directions for future research.

2 | Conceptual Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1 | Masstige Theory and Masstige Brands

The concept of masstige, a portmanteau of the words "mass" and "prestige," represents a new category of products that combine elements of luxury with mass-market appeal (Silverstein and Fiske 2003). Masstige theory has emerged as a distinct research domain, differentiated from traditional luxury marketing, to understand and explain the unique characteristics, consumer perceptions, and marketing strategies associated with masstige brands (Paul 2019; Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan 2020). Masstige brands are positioned as affordable luxury, offering prestige and high quality at a price point accessible to middle-class consumers (Hong, Lee, and Yun 2010; Paul 2015). They bridge the gap between premium luxury brands and mass-market alternatives, catering to the aspirations and increasing purchasing power of the growing middle-income segment, particularly in emerging markets (Mundel, Huddleston, and Vodermeier 2017; Das, Saha, and Balaji 2022b). Masstige brands can originate from the downward extension of luxury brands, the upward extension of mass-market brands, or as "born masstige" brands (Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan 2020). The masstige theory proposes that the perceived prestige value of a brand is a function of its marketing mix strategies, specifically the product, promotion, and place elements (Paul 2018). Masstige brands maintain

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a premium price by offering superior product quality, selective distribution, and targeted promotional activities that communicate exclusivity to the masses (Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan 2020; Gilal et al. 2022). Research further reinforces that masstige brands provide high-end prestige and status associations at an affordable, mass-market price point compared to traditional luxury (Kapferer 2014; Truong, McColl, and Kitchen 2009; Park, Back, and Kim 2022).

Recent empirical works have shed new light on the masstige phenomenon. Gilal et al. (2022) examined the influence of product design on masstige brand passion, finding that reflective, affective, cognitive, and ergonomic design characteristics positively impact masstige brand passion. Park, Back, and Kim (2022) validated the dimensionality of masstige consumption value and identified key consumer segments based on their pursuit of various dimensions of value in masstige brands, such as intrinsic hedonic value, extrinsic hedonic value, and conspicuous value. Das, Jebarajakirthy, and Sivapalan (2022a) investigated how different luxury consumption values inspire masstige fashion purchases and the moderating role of perceived brand authenticity. Their findings highlight that while some traditional luxury values like functional, experiential, and symbolic drive masstige purchase, others like the zero-moment-of-truth value do not. Rosendo-Rios and Shukla (2023) demonstrated that masstige branding leads to lower purchase intentions and greater abandonment intentions among traditional luxury consumers, an effect mediated by perceived loss of scarcity. Bae and Jo (2024) found that older consumers in South Korea who felt threatened by old-age stereotypes were more likely to intend to purchase masstige brands, with this relationship being mediated by their motivation to dissociate from the "old-age" group and the symbolic value of masstige brands signifying a youthful, desirable identity. Importantly, they found that high self-brand connections can mitigate these negative effects. Das, Saha, and Balaji (2022b) further explored the role of consumer need for uniqueness (CNFU) dimensions, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII), and inspiration in influencing middle-class Indian consumers' behavioral intentions toward masstige brands. They found that creative choice and avoidance of similarity dimensions of CNFU inspire consumers toward masstige brands, while CSII moderates these effects. Burhanudin (2024) examined the relationship between self-control, self-indulgence, intention to purchase a masstige product, and both short-term and long-term happiness, finding that higher self-indulgence leads to stronger intention to purchase a masstige product. Kolańska-Stronka and Krasa (2024) explored how the image of a typical brand user influences brand masstige value and brand preference, finding that characteristics like sophistication, responsibility, and boorishness are significantly associated with brand masstige, which mediates the relationship between user image and brand preference. From a measurement perspective, Alagarsamy, Mehrolia, and Paul (2024) suggest that the masstige scale can be a viable alternative to measure consumer-based brand equity and masstige value simultaneously, providing further support for the distinctiveness of the masstige construct.

Building on these recent insights, there is a need for further research to refine our understanding of the motivational and behavioral drivers and outcomes of masstige brand consumption. Key questions remain around the relative importance of different psychological antecedents like the need for uniqueness, pride, and conspicuous consumption in shaping masstige brand passion and engagement (Kumar, Paul, and Starčević 2021). The current study aims to address these gaps and make important contributions to masstige theory, research, and practice. Table 1 presents a summary of how the concept of masstige has been defined and conceptualized in recent literature.

2.2 | Need for Uniqueness, Pride, and Masstige Brands

The drive for uniqueness and the quest for prestige are pivotal in navigating the masstige brand landscape, where consumer motivations are richly layered, spanning functional, experiential, symbolic, and social realms (Das, Jebarajakirthy, and Sivapalan 2022a; Park, Back, and Kim 2022). Although functional and experiential aspects initiate masstige engagement, it is the symbolic and social values that model consumer perceptions and behaviors. The allure of luxury often exceeds financial reach, prompting consumers to opt for masstige brands that deliver comparable perceived value and social prestige. Masstige brands, with their blend of premium quality and affordability, satisfy the consumer's social identity needs, prompting a reevaluation of their role within the consumer culture spectrum. The dialogue around luxury consumption traditionally centered on luxury goods is now expanding to include masstige brands, reflecting their rising prominence in the luxury market sector (Boisvert and Ashill 2018). This shift necessitates a deeper exploration of how consumer traits, particularly the need for uniqueness and pride influence masstige product consumption (Truong, McColl, and Kitchen 2009; Kauppinen-Räisänen et al. 2018; Kumar and Paul 2018).

Masstige offerings cater to middle-class aspirations for distinctiveness, self-expression, and social standing, balancing exclusivity with the allure of premium quality (Das et al. 2021; Das, Saha, and Roy 2022c). This balance enables consumers to meet their desire for individuality and social recognition without the full financial commitment to luxury, underscoring masstige's unique market position (Han, Nunes, and Drèze 2010; Shukla 2011; Purohit and Radia 2022).

The concept of Consumer Need for Uniqueness (CNFU) becomes a critical driver, representing the pursuit of distinctiveness within a societal framework (Ruvio, Shoham, and Brenčič 2008). Despite societal pressures toward conformity, individuals often strive for differentiation, using products and services as vehicles for personal identity, and social differentiation (Maslow 1943; Hopper 2020). This inclination toward uniqueness is not merely a trait but a strategic response to social dynamics, where individuals leverage masstige brands to carve out a unique identity (Das et al. 2021; Ho, Wong, and Brodowsky 2023). Empirical studies corroborate that CNFU significantly propels consumers toward masstige brands, with these products' creative and nonconformist attributes resonating with their desire for distinctiveness (Das, Saha, and Balaji 2022b; Park, Back, and Kim 2022; Gupta et al. 2023).

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TABLE 1 | Conceptualizations and definitions of masstige in recent literature.

Authors (Year)	Conceptualization/Definition
Gilal et al. (2022)	Masstige is conceptualized as the intersection of mass market appeal and prestige positioning, with masstige brands providing accessible luxury experiences to a broader middle-class consumer base at prices above mass-market goods but below traditional luxury.
Rosendo-Rios and Shukla (2023)	Masstige is conceptualized as a strategy employed by luxury brands to engage the growing aspirational middle-class segment by making luxury brands more accessible through greater availability at relatively affordable prices while still maintaining an aura of prestige.
Park, Back, and Kim (2022)	Masstige is conceptualized as prestige for the masses, a new category of luxury products that are priced above mid-range brands but below super premium products to cater to the growing aspirational middle-class segment.
Das, Jebarajakirthy, and Sivapalan 2022a	Masstige is conceptualized as prestige for the masses, which are premium but attainable brands positioned to fuel the aspirations of the middle-income segment by providing them an upmarket feeling at a price below traditional luxuries but above the mass-market alternatives.
Das, Saha, and Balaji (2022b)	Masstige products are conceptualized as high-quality status-granting non-exclusive brands priced reasonably below traditional luxuries but at a premium to similar mass-market alternates in that product category.
Saha, Das, and Paul (2023)	Masstige brands are conceptualized as those that "succeed in building mass prestige, and consumers are willing to pay relatively higher prices for such brands compared to mass brands."
Purohit and Radia (2022)	Masstige brands are conceptualized as prestigious but attainable, even if from the non-luxury category, that "succeed in building mass prestige, and consumers are willing to pay relatively higher prices for such brands compared to mass brands."
Nobre et al. (2023); Bilro, Loureiro, and Dos Santos (2022)	Masstige is conceptualized as a "marketing strategy that makes luxury and prestige accessible to the mass market, sometimes through regular products, mainstream brands, and unexpected forms of luxury consumption."

Moreover, the concept of conspicuous value, intertwined with the need for uniqueness and status, substantially influences masstige brand equity, indicating that consumers inclined toward uniqueness gravitate more toward masstige brands, valuing and desiring them (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al. 2018; Geng, Yang, and Xu 2019). This behavior underscores a broader trend where consumers prefer products that not only align with their self-image but also amplify their social persona, reinforcing the intrinsic link between individual identity and consumer choice (Kastanakis and Balabanis 2014; Cheema and Kaikati 2010). Scholars have advocated for a nuanced examination of the interplay between the consumer's need for uniqueness and their consumption behavior, urging a detailed analysis of how this need shapes purchasing decisions and consumption patterns (Gelbrich 2011; Latter, Phau, and Marchegiani 2012; Gupta et al. 2023). Given these insights, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1a. *Consumers' need for Uniqueness positively influences the consumption of masstige brands.*

Research further underscores pride as a pivotal emotion driving the consumption of unique products and services (Chatterjee, Chaudhuri, and Vrontis 2023). Distinguished as either authentic (positive) or hubristic (negative), pride influences consumer behavior differently: authentic pride is associated with respect and prestige, while hubristic pride is linked to dominance and aggression (McFerran, Aquino, and Tracy 2014). Brands strategically evoke these facets of pride to bolster their product consumption. Authentic pride, in particular, has been recognized as crucial in the acquisition of premium products and services (McFerran, Aquino, and Tracy 2014; Agrawal, Gupta, and Vora 2020). The current study aims to extend this understanding to the masstige context, exploring how pride influences consumers' engagement with masstige brands. Based on the above, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1b. *Consumers pride positively influences the consumption of masstige brands.*

The current study responds to scholarly calls by proposing hypotheses that investigate the intricate dynamics between consumers' need for uniqueness and pride and their engagement with masstige brands. It aims to enrich the understanding of masstige consumption within the broader luxury market context.

2.3 | Masstige and Conspicuous Consumption

The interplay between masstige and conspicuous consumption is significantly influenced by brand positioning, which plays a crucial role in determining the value and appeal of products and services in the consumer's mind (Keller and College 2006; Lalaounis 2020; Ho, Wong, and Brodowsky 2023). Luxurious or

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prestigious brands often command desirability, but this allure is contingent upon the evolving perceptions of luxury. As individuals navigate their needs and preferences, their consumption trajectory oscillates between utilitarian and hedonic motivations, with the latter often associated with luxury brands that resonate with personal identity and social relevance (Childers et al. 2001; Gilal et al. 2020). The success of modern luxury brands is increasingly reliant on their appeal to the mass market, prompting the integration of masstige brands into their offerings (Paul and Rosenbaum 2020).

Conspicuous consumption, defined as the acquisition of goods and services to signal economic stature and achieve elevated social status, emerges as a natural byproduct of indulgence in luxury (Podoshen and Andrzejewski 2012; Kapferer, Klippert, and Leproux 2014). This trend is becoming entrenched in contemporary lifestyles, fuelled by global wealth growth and the aspirational desires of individuals (Kastanakis and Balabanis 2014). Masstige brands, catering to a demographic of youthful, affluent consumers, serve as vehicles for these individuals to navigate and ascend social hierarchies (Park, Rabolt, and Sook Jeon 2008a; Eastman et al. 2018; Goyal 2020). The pursuit of status, often homogenous across consumers of luxury and premium products, underscores the behavioral paradigm steering conspicuous consumption (Eastman, Goldsmith, and Flynn 1999; Latter, Phau, and Marchegiani 2012; Danziger 2021).

Given the accessible premium nature of masstige offerings, they are uniquely positioned to facilitate conspicuous consumption, allowing individuals to showcase their distinctiveness and social standing. The discourse on luxury consumption and conspicuous consumption has predominantly focused on traditional luxury goods, leaving a gap in understanding how masstige brands fit into this narrative (Park, Rabolt, and Sook 2008b). Addressing this gap, our study aims to explain the link between masstige brands and conspicuous consumption, especially since more recent studies have identified conspicuous value as a key facilitator to masstige purchase intentions (Gupta et al. 2023). Therefore, it is proposed in this study that:

H2. *Masstige brands positively influence conspicuous consumption.*

2.4 | Masstige and Consumer Brand Engagement

The dynamic between masstige and consumer brand engagement has evolved significantly, shifting from firm-dominated relationship management to a consumer-empowered paradigm (Hollebeek et al. 2020; McLean, Osei-Frimpong, and Barhorst 2021). Technological advancements and new media have transformed how brands interact and maintain narratives, placing the power of brand perception increasingly in the hands of consumers (Perkins and Fenech 2014). This shift represents a fundamental change in marketing dynamics, where consumer interaction and feedback play a pivotal role in brand positioning.

Historically, luxury brands communicated their premium nature with minimal consumer input, influencing societal perceptions through targeted marketing strategies (Dessart, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas 2015). However, the rise of interactive technology has enabled consumers to actively engage with and shape brand identity, challenging brands to navigate this new consumer-driven landscape (Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie 2014; Perkins and Fenech 2014). Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE) has emerged as a critical construct, encompassing cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and brand-related consumer activities that foster deep-rooted brand relationships (Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie 2014; Dessart, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas 2015). These engagements, ranging from word-of-mouth and online reviews to co-designing products and participating in brand communities, not only enhance brand satisfaction and loyalty but also allow consumers to assert their influence and personal connection with the brand (Palmatier, Kumar, and Harmeling 2017; Oyedele and Goenner 2021).

In this context, masstige brands, by leveraging new technologies, can effectively communicate their premium yet accessible status, distinguishing themselves from both luxury and mainstream brands. This strategic positioning is likely to resonate with consumers seeking both prestige and relatability, thereby fostering stronger brand engagement. As consumers engage with these brands, they often share their experiences across social networks, further amplifying the brand's presence and prestige (McLean, Osei-Frimpong, and Barhorst 2021). Based on these observations, the study posits:

H3. *Masstige brands will positively influence consumer brand engagement.*

2.5 | Moderation Effect of Bandwagon

The bandwagon effect plays a pivotal role in the success of masstige brands, underpinned by the social dynamics that drive consumer behavior. Individuals purchasing masstige brands often seek to fulfil their social identity needs, aspiring for self-actualization and enhanced self-esteem within their peer groups (Bahri-Ammari, Coulibaly, and Ben Mimoun 2020; Oyedele and Goenner 2021). This behavior aligns with the bandwagon effect, where consumers are drawn to products that are perceived as popular or trendy within their social circles, thus fostering a sense of belonging and recognition (Dessart, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas 2015; Shaikh et al. 2017).

Masstige brands, straddling the line between luxury and mainstream, uniquely satisfy this craving for social endorsement and connectivity (Eastman et al. 2018). They offer an accessible form of luxury that allows individuals to project a desired image and status, thereby facilitating their integration into desired social groups. The bandwagon effect, therefore, not only influences individual consumer choices but also catalyzes the formation of brand communities, where shared preferences and brand allegiance foster collective identity and social capital (Bahri-Ammari, Coulibaly, and Ben Mimoun 2020; Oyedele and Goenner 2021).

Given the significance of social validation and the desire to conform to group norms in driving masstige consumption, This study posits that the bandwagon effect serves as a crucial moderator in the relationship between masstige brands and CBE. This effect likely enhances the appeal of masstige brands, as consumers are

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drawn to products endorsed by their peers, thus strengthening brand engagement and loyalty (Kastanakis and Balabanis 2014). Consequently, in this study, it is hypothesized that:

H4a. *Bandwagon Effect will moderate the relationship between Masstige brands and CBE.*

Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014) characterized bandwagon consumption as a subset of conspicuous consumption, highlighting that the allure of popular products significantly influences consumer behavior. This inclination suggests that consumers perceive the adoption of popular items as a means to accrue social capital and bolster their acceptance within groups. While conspicuous consumption primarily reflects individual choices aimed at displaying wealth or status, bandwagon consumption stems from the intricate dynamics within social networks, where the popularity of a product amplifies its appeal (Taylor and Strutton 2016; Eastman et al. 2018).

Given that masstige brands are inherently crafted to satisfy the social aspirations of consumers—enabling them to forge and display their identities and status—the current study, therefore, posits that these offerings naturally align with both conspicuous and bandwagon consumption patterns. As masstige brands gain popularity, they are likely to trigger bandwagon behavior, influencing and shaping consumption trends. Therefore, the study asserts that the bandwagon effect will play a critical role in moderating the relationship between masstige brands and conspicuous consumption, suggesting that as these products become increasingly popular, they will likely enhance conspicuous consumption behaviors among consumers. Hence, in this study it is hypothesized that:

H4b. *The Bandwagon Effect will moderate the relationship between Masstige brands and Conspicuous Consumption.*

2.6 | Masstige and Product Categories

Masstige brands intersect with a wide array of product categories, reflecting the complex hierarchy of human needs as established in societal literature (Oleson 2004; Hopper 2020). While basic human needs remain consistent across individuals, the social values and beliefs of a person significantly dictate how these needs are manifested and fulfilled through product choices (Das, Saha, and Balaji 2022b; Małecka, Mitręga, and Pfajfar 2022). This variation suggests that even among individuals with similar needs, the pursuit of products and services diverges, driven by the desire for social alignment and self-identification (Ruvio, Shoham, and Brenčič 2008).

This divergence is notably pronounced within masstige. Masstige brands traverse the spectrum of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and cater to both fundamental and complex consumer demands (Park, Back, and Kim 2022). For instance, masstige food and beverage options might meet basic physiological needs while offering a touch of luxury or distinction that elevates the consumer's sense of esteem. Similarly, masstige fashion and accessories can fulfill the need for belongingness through the adoption of shared social symbols and simultaneously cater to self-esteem needs with their premium aesthetic.

This adaptability of masstige brands across various need levels and product categories underscores their unique position in the market (Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan 2020). By straddling the line between necessity and luxury, masstige brands offer consumers a way to satisfy their diverse needs and desires, from the essential to the aspirational. The relationship between masstige and product categories is thus critical in understanding how these brands can effectively meet the multifaceted needs of consumers while maintaining their market positioning and appeal.

Given this, the study seeks to explore the nuanced interplay between masstige brands and product categories, aiming to shed light on how these relationships shape consumer behavior and brand strategy. It is anticipated in this study that this exploration will yield strategic insights crucial for the development and management of masstige brands, enabling them to capitalize on their market position and optimize market share. Therefore, the study proposes to investigate the role of product categories in influencing the appeal and consumption of masstige brands. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H5. *Product categories will moderate the relationship between masstige brands and (a) CBE and (b) Conspicuous Consumption* (Figure 1).

3 | Method

In the methodological framework of the study, masstige offerings are positioned as premium yet accessible, characteristically more expensive within their respective categories. The global economic landscape is increasingly shifting toward the developing world, heralding the rise of a burgeoning middle-class demographic endowed with disposable income and an appetite for luxury (Suisse 2019). This group is keen on acquiring products and services that symbolize their elevated status and newfound wealth, particularly within their social circles.

Current global trends underscore the expansion of this new middle class, a phenomenon transcending the boundaries between developed, developing, and emerging markets (Hodgson 2020). Ghana exemplifies an emerging economy where this demographic shift is pronounced. The discovery of oil has precipitated a substantial increase in middle-income earners, with over 1.3 million people now classified within this economic bracket. Urbanization has also been significant, with more than half of the population residing in urban areas since 2013. Notably, consumer spending in Ghana is predominantly driven by personal expenditure, with a significant portion directed toward the food and beverage sector, accounting for over 41% of total consumer spending (Oxford Business Group 2020).

Given this backdrop, the study zeroes in on the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector, specifically selecting product categories like chocolate, beer, and fast food from masstige brands. These categories are emblematic of the masstige phenomenon, offering premium experiences at accessible price points, and are thus ideal for examining the consumption patterns and preferences of the rising middle class in Ghana.

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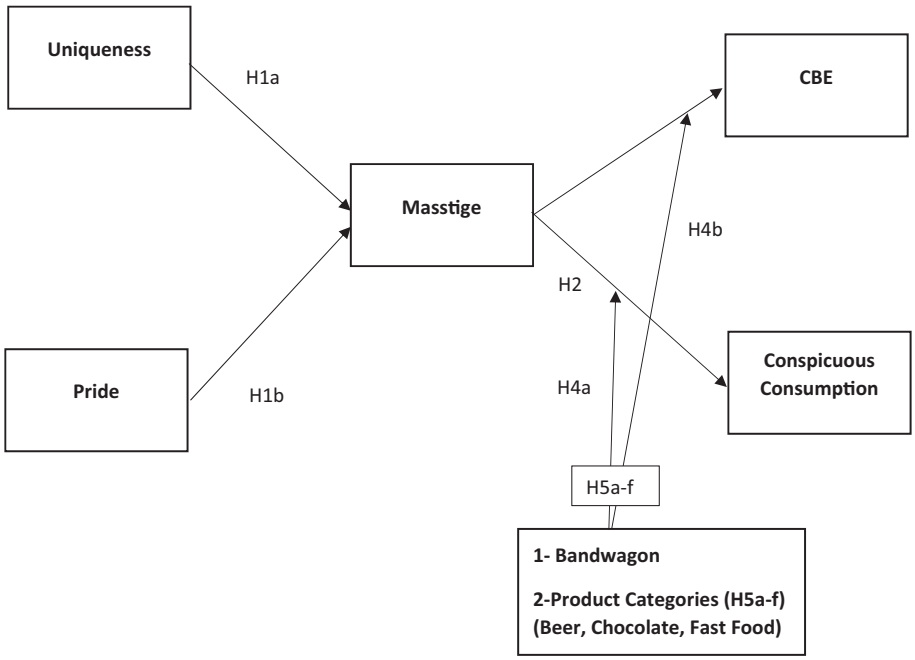


FIGURE 1 | Conceptual framework.

3.1 | Sample, Design and Procedure

In the current study, participants were screened purposively based on their financial prowess to engage in the consumption of masstige brands and services. All participants, on average, had between $500 and $3000 monthly for miscellaneous spending after savings and expenditure. Using an online survey form, a snowballing approach was used to disseminate the questionnaire over a three-month period (January 2021—March 2021) across the length and breadth of Ghana. Participants were encouraged to share the questionnaire with other people they believed were of the same or similar social standing. In order to increase the probability of reaching high-earning individuals, initial participants were selected from the highest stations within social and economic circles in Ghanaian society. The purpose of the study was explained to participants, the selective nature of the study, the assurance of anonymity attached to participation, and the convenience of an online tool that attracted participation and referrals. A research assistant whose sole role was to follow up with each referral was employed. At the end of data collection, 861 participants participated in the survey. Of this figure, 74.2% of participants were women, with the remaining 25.8% being men. Participants were generally between the ages of 26–55 years (60.3%). All participants had a university degree.

3.2 | Measurement

Using three product categories of masstige brands—chocolate, beer, and fast food. The research instrument was divided into two main sections. The first part of the questionnaire comprised screening questions based on respondents' demographic data to establish their ability to purchase masstige goods and services. The second section comprised the measurement scales of study variables adopted from the literature—masstige (Paul 2019), need for uniqueness (Ruvio, Shoham, and Brenčič 2008), pride (Gelbrich 2011), consumer brand engagement (Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie 2014), conspicuous consumption (Taylor and Strutton 2016), and bandwagon effect (Oyedele and Goenner 2021). A 5-point Likert scale was used consistently for all constructs in our study.

4 | Analysis and Results

Because of the complexity of the current study model (comprising formative and reflective higher-order constructs), the partial least squares path modeling (PLS–SEM) method was used to analyze the collected data using the SmartPLS package version 4.0. Research has asserted the growing importance of PLS–SEM within the social sciences, which is being used in a myriad of marketing-related studies (Cao et al. 2021).

4.1 | Measurement Model Evaluation

Based on the PLS–SEM requirements, the internal consistency reliability and convergent and discriminant validity were assessed to evaluate the measurement model of the current study (Hair et al. 2016). The reliability and validity assessments are detailed in Tables 2–6. To arrive at the final measurement model for the study, items with outer loadings less than the specified 0.7 were expected to be removed so long as they improved the model's internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity (Hair et al. 2017; Kock 2017). As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for the study variables are greater than 0.6, indicating that the study variables have a high degree of internal consistency and reliability (Nunnally and Bernstein 1999; Hair et al. 2009). Additionally, the study's convergent validity found results greater than the 0.5 criterion advocated in the literature (Nunnally 1978). Using the HTMT table, all values were less than the 0.85 criterion, indicating that the constructs were

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TABLE 2 | Reliability and validity analysis.

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)	R^2
Bandwagon effect	**0.673**	**0.827**	**0.625**	
CBE	**0.927**	**0.939**	**0.606**	**0.50**
Cognitive processing	0.877	0.925	0.803	0.63
Activation	0.856	0.913	0.777	0.75
Affection	0.918	0.942	0.803	0.87
Conspicuous consumption	**0.843**	**0.889**	**0.617**	**0.26**
Masstige	**0.897**	**0.915**	**0.520**	**0.25**
Pride	**0.668**	**0.809**	**0.529**	
Uniqueness	**0.827**	**0.862**	**0.344**	
Creative choice	0.801	0.870	0.627	
Unpopular choice	0.779	0.859	0.604	
Avoidance of similarity	0.895	0.927	0.761	

Note: Two of the constructs, CBE and Uniqueness, include sub-constructs. The bold formatting is used to represent the main constructs and to differentiate them from their respective sub-constructs.

TABLE 3 | HTMT table (discriminant validity analysis).

	Bandwagon effect	CBE	Conspicuous consumption	Masstige	Pride	Uniqueness
Bandwagon effect						
CBE	0.549					
Conspicuous consumption	0.560	0.561				
Masstige	0.395	0.729	0.415			
Pride	0.383	0.460	0.464	0.456		
Uniqueness	0.494	0.486	0.481	0.494	0.597	

"discriminantly" valid and conceptually distinct from one another (Hair et al. 2016). The measuring model demonstrated good reliability and validity, with convergent validity issues present with one of the higher-order constructs (Uniqueness). The study, therefore, validated the model using a Sarstedt et al. (2019) higher-order validation method. The study model comprised two higher-order constructs, that is, uniqueness, which was a formative higher-order construct and consumer brand engagement, which was a higher-order reflective construct. Using the repeated indicator approach and bootstrapping, the model showed both higher constructs with *t*-statistics values greater than 2, indicating the validity of the constructs (Sarstedt et al. 2019). Once validity concerns were addressed, the path for the structural model's validation was paved.

4.2 | Structural Model Evaluation

The second stage of the PLS–SEM process, evaluating the structural model, was assessed using the criteria specified by Hair et al. (2016). A number of assessments were conducted to check that the model was sufficiently robust for interpretation. Collinearity analysis of the model reveals that all VIF values from combinations of endogenous and exogenous constructs are less than 5 (Kock and Lynn 2012), indicating that the model is not collinear. Additionally, the model has VIF values less than 5 at the factor level, indicating that it is free of common method bias (Kock 2017). The results of the analysis revealed that with regard to the coefficient of determination, a 25% change in masstige can be explained by a consumer's need for Uniqueness. Masstige can cause a further 50% variation in consumer brand engagement and a 26% variation in a consumer's conspicuous consumption. Effect sizes (f^2) were calculated to assess the practical significance of the relationships in our model. The f^2 values ranged from small (0.02) to very large (> 2.0), with particularly strong effects observed for the components of consumer brand engagement (2.96–6.62) and uniqueness (> 6000). Masstige showed a large effect on consumer brand engagement ($f^2 = 0.62$) and a small to medium effect on conspicuous consumption ($f^2 = 0.09$) (See Table 7). Lastly, on the predictive relevance of the model, running the blindfolding technique in SmartPLS with an omission distance ($D = 9$), the model generated values which

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TABLE 4 | AVE bootstrap (convergent validity)—2nd order.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	*T* statistics (|O/STDEV|)	*p*
Bandwagon effect	**0.625**	**0.626**	**0.011**	**56.106**	**0.000**
CBE	**0.606**	**0.606**	**0.014**	**44.352**	**0.000**
Activation	0.777	0.778	0.013	61.403	0.000
Affection	0.803	0.803	0.011	70.745	0.000
Cognitive processing	0.803	0.803	0.011	71.438	0.000
Conspicuous consumption	**0.617**	**0.617**	**0.014**	**43.619**	**0.000**
Masstige	**0.520**	**0.521**	**0.016**	**31.608**	**0.000**
Pride	**0.529**	**0.528**	**0.015**	**34.192**	**0.000**
Uniqueness	**0.344**	**0.344**	**0.015**	**22.364**	**0.000**
Creative choice	0.627	0.627	0.016	38.280	0.000
Unpopular choice	0.604	0.603	0.016	37.584	0.000
Avoidance of similarity	0.761	0.761	0.013	57.924	0.000

Note: Two of the constructs, CBE and Uniqueness, include sub-constructs. The bold formatting is used to represent the main constructs and to differentiate them from their respective sub-constructs.

TABLE 5 | Composite reliability bootstrap—2nd order.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	*T* statistics (|O/STDEV|)	*p*
Bandwagon effect	**0.827**	**0.826**	**0.008**	**106.014**	**0.000**
CBE	**0.939**	**0.939**	**0.003**	**281.978**	**0.000**
Activation	0.913	0.913	0.006	156.337	0.000
Affection	0.942	0.942	0.004	239.969	0.000
Cognitive Processing	0.925	0.924	0.005	185.966	0.000
Conspicuous consumption	**0.889**	**0.889**	**0.006**	**151.019**	**0.000**
Masstige	**0.915**	**0.915**	**0.005**	**176.586**	**0.000**
Pride	**0.809**	**0.808**	**0.009**	**87.344**	**0.000**
Uniqueness	**0.862**	**0.862**	**0.008**	**103.239**	**0.000**
Creative choice	0.870	0.870	0.008	108.450	0.000
Unpopular choice	0.859	0.858	0.008	103.927	0.000
Avoidance of similarity	0.927	0.927	0.005	189.042	0.000

Note: Two of the constructs, CBE and Uniqueness, include sub-constructs. The bold formatting is used to represent the main constructs and to differentiate them from their respective sub-constructs.

were greater than zero. The test of relationship significance and relevance likewise showed interesting results after a bootstrap of 5000 subsamples with *t*-statistic values for all the direct relationships above the 1.96 critical value threshold.

The first hypotheses of the study were fully supported, where both pride and uniqueness had an effect on the consumer's consumption of masstige brands and offerings. The second hypothesis, that sought to examine the relationship between masstige and conspicuous consumption, and confirmed the study's hypothesis. Masstige was also found to have a significant positive effect on consumer brand engagement, thus confirming the proposed third hypothesis. Two moderation analyses were conducted on the study model involving the effect of bandwagon (hypothesis four) on the direct relationship between masstige, conspicuous consumption and CBE, and a subgroup analysis of masstige product categories (hypothesis five) along CBE and conspicuous consumption lines.

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TABLE 6 | Cronbach's bootstrap—2nd order.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	*T* statistics (|O/STDEV|)	*p*
Bandwagon effect	**0.673**	**0.673**	**0.018**	**37.773**	**0.000**
CBE	**0.927**	**0.927**	**0.004**	**218.717**	**0.000**
Activation	0.856	0.856	0.011	80.687	0.000
Affection	0.918	0.918	0.006	153.718	0.000
Cognitive processing	0.877	0.877	0.009	100.397	0.000
Conspicuous consumption	**0.843**	**0.843**	**0.009**	**92.306**	**0.000**
Masstige	**0.897**	**0.897**	**0.007**	**130.830**	**0.000**
Pride	**0.668**	**0.667**	**0.019**	**35.512**	**0.000**
Uniqueness	**0.827**	**0.826**	**0.012**	**71.168**	**0.000**
Creative choice	0.801	0.800	0.014	56.573	0.000
Unpopular choice	0.779	0.778	0.015	51.528	0.000
Avoidance of similarity	0.895	0.895	0.008	116.976	0.000

Note: Two of the constructs, CBE and Uniqueness, include sub-constructs. The bold formatting is used to represent the main constructs and to differentiate them from their respective sub-constructs.

TABLE 7 | Effect size (f^2).

	Activation	Affection	CBE	Cognitive processing	Conspicuous consumption	Masstige	Pride	Uniqueness
Activation								
Affection								
Avoidance of similarity								6689.34
Bandwagon effect			0.10		0.13	0.02		
CBE	2.96	6.62		1.73				
Cognitive processing								
Conspicuous consumption								
Creative choice								7916.13
Masstige			0.62		0.09			
Pride						0.03		
Uniqueness						0.10		
Unpopular choice								6979.48

Hypothesis four established that bandwagon behavior did not exhibit a moderating effect on the relationship between consumers' masstige consumption and CBE. However, the bandwagon effect had a moderating effect on the relationship between masstige and conspicuous consumption. The final hypothesis tested in the current study established that there were no significant differences between the product categories in this study (See Tables 8 and 9).

5 | Discussion

This exploration into the masstige domain has yielded insights that corroborate and deepen the theoretical underpinnings of the proposed hypotheses, drawing a comprehensive picture of the consumer dynamics at play. The significant influence of pride and uniqueness on masstige consumption, as demonstrated in the results, echoes the established narratives in luxury consumption

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TABLE 8 | Hypotheses testing.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	*T* statistics (|O/STDEV|)	*p*
H1a—Uniqueness—> Masstige	0.314	0.313	0.042	7.500	0.000
H1b—Pride—> Masstige	0.177	0.182	0.036	4.908	0.000
H2—Masstige—> Conspicuous consumption	0.283	0.284	0.030	9.306	0.000
H3—Masstige—> CBE	0.594	0.596	0.024	24.568	0.000
Moderation					
H4a—Mod bandwagon effect—> CBE	0.007	0.004	0.022	0.304	0.761
H4b—Mod bandwagon effect–> Conspicuous consumption	−0.072	−0.070	0.033	2.164	0.031

TABLE 9 | Moderation 2 (sub-group analysis).

Moderation 2 (Subgroup)	Path coefficients—diff	*p*
H5a—Masstige—> CBE (beer vs. fast food)	−0.019	0.856
H5b—Masstige—> Conspicuous consumption (beer vs. fast food)	0.127	0.130
H5c—Masstige—> CBE (chocolate vs. fast food)	−0.033	0.529
H5d—Masstige—> Conspicuous consumption (chocolate vs. fast food)	−0.024	0.744
H5e—Masstige—> CBE (beer vs. chocolate)	0.014	0.843
H5f—Masstige—> Conspicuous consumption (beer vs. chocolate)	0.150	0.126

literature (Das et al. 2021; McFerran, Aquino, and Tracy 2014). Specifically, the findings for H1a and H1b validate the notion that these personal traits are fundamental in guiding consumers toward masstige brands, suggesting a synergy between masstige consumption and the broader luxury consumption patterns where individual differentiation and esteem play critical roles (McFerran, Aquino, and Tracy 2014; Das et al. 2021).

The positive relationship between masstige consumption and conspicuous consumption further solidifies this argument, underscoring masstige's role in enabling consumers to signal status and wealth, in line with theories of conspicuous consumption and status signaling (Truong, McColl, and Kitchen 2009; Eastman et al. 2018). This relationship suggests that masstige brands serve as a tool for consumers to navigate social hierarchies and fulfill their aspirational desires, seamlessly blending into the narrative of luxury consumption as accessible yet status-affirming choices.

The confirmation of H3, indicating a strong positive influence of masstige consumption on CBE, aligns with the discourse on brand engagement and loyalty in the context of luxury and premium markets (Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie 2014; Dessart, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas 2015). This consistency across various product categories illustrates the effectiveness of masstige brands in fostering deep consumer connections, reflecting a broader trend where masstige brands are perceived as valuable and engagement-worthy.

The mixed outcomes from the moderation analysis in H4a and H4b provide a nuanced view of the bandwagon effect's role in masstige consumption. While the bandwagon effect did not moderate the relationship between masstige consumption and CBE as initially hypothesized, its inverse moderating influence on the relationship between masstige and conspicuous consumption (H4b) adds a layer of complexity, highlighting the social intricacies affecting consumer behavior in the masstige market (Shaikh et al. 2017; Dessart, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas 2015).

Lastly, the lack of significant differences in product category effects on CBE and conspicuous consumption (H5) indicates a universal appeal of masstige, suggesting that these brands have successfully transcended product boundaries to establish a coherent identity in the eyes of consumers, a phenomenon well-documented in the luxury consumption literature (Kapferer, Klippert, and Leproux 2014; Kastanakis and Balabanis 2014).

Through these findings, the current study offers a robust discourse on masstige consumption, enriched by empirical evidence and grounded in existing scholarly work. This discussion not only advances the understanding of masstige in the luxury market landscape but also provides strategic insights for practitioners looking to navigate this evolving space effectively. The enduring appeal of masstige, underscored by its ability to meet diverse consumer needs and aspirations across different product categories, positions it as a formidable force in the contemporary market, promising continued relevance and growth in the luxury sector.

5.1 | Theoretical Implications

The investigation into masstige consumption and consumer behavior contributes significantly to the extant scholarly discourse, offering nuanced insights into the psychological and social

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intricacies of this consumption pattern. First, by employing and expanding the use of the MMI scale (Paul 2019) for measuring masstige consumption, this research enhances the understanding of the underlying psychological and social motivations driving individuals toward masstige brands. Aligning with prior studies, the findings underscore the critical roles of pride and uniqueness in propelling luxury consumption (McFerran, Aquino, and Tracy 2014; Das et al. 2021), and extend this narrative by illustrating their relevance in masstige markets. This bridge between individual traits and masstige consumption not only deepens the comprehension of consumer characteristics and social influences but also enriches the discourse on the psychological and social catalysts of masstige consumption.

Second, the exploration of the interplay between masstige consumption, conspicuous consumption, and the bandwagon effect unveils complex social dynamics at play. While the established relationship between luxury consumption and conspicuous consumption is well-documented (Kapferer, Klippert, and Leproux 2014; Podoshen and Andrzejewski 2012), this research brings to light the nuanced moderating role of the bandwagon effect in masstige settings. This novel finding not only extends the theoretical boundaries of consumer behavior in the masstige context but also paves the way for future scholarly endeavors to dissect the intricacies of these interactions, potentially exploring the balance between the bandwagon and snob effects as outlined by Das, Jebarajakirthy, and Sivapalan (2022a); Das, Saha, and Balaji (2022b); Das, Saha, and Roy (2022c).

Third, the demonstration of masstige consumption's uniform influence across various product categories significantly broadens the conceptual landscape of masstige, asserting its relevance beyond specific market niches. This revelation is instrumental in supporting the view that masstige represents a strategic orientation adoptable by diverse industries, aiming to cater to consumers desiring premium yet accessible experiences (Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan 2020; Paul 2018). Consequently, the study lays a more concrete theoretical foundation for crafting and implementing effective strategies within the vibrant and ever-changing masstige market. This research not only fortifies the theoretical framework of masstige consumption but also reveals the complex mechanisms through which individual and social factors coalesce to shape this market phenomenon. By expanding the scope of existing models and introducing new perspectives on consumer interactions with masstige brands, the study's findings offer a richer, more comprehensive understanding that is vital for navigating the intricate landscape of modern consumer behavior and market strategy.

5.2 | Practical Implications

The empirical findings have concrete practical implications for firms and brands within the masstige market, offering strategic insights for enhancing brand engagement, customization, and consistent premium positioning. First, the critical role of consumer engagement in masstige brand success is evident. To capitalize on this, brand managers should facilitate environments where consumers can actively interact with and advocate for the masstige brands. Enhanced engagement not only improves customer satisfaction and loyalty but also augments marketing outcomes (Nobre et al. 2023; Rodrigues et al. 2024). Strategies such as fostering online communities, incentivizing user-generated content, and creating immersive brand experiences can significantly amplify consumer interaction with masstige brands, potentially leading to increased upselling, and cross-selling opportunities.

Second, the demand for uniqueness among consumers indicates a valuable opportunity for brands to integrate customization features into their masstige offerings. Personalization can serve as a key differentiator, allowing consumers to align the products more closely with their individual identities and social aspirations (Ruvio, Shoham, and Brenčič 2008; Das, Saha, and Balaji 2022b). By offering customizable aspects in masstige brands, firms can enhance the perceived value and exclusivity of their offerings, setting them apart from competitors and fortifying their premium market positioning.

Lastly, the importance of consistent premium positioning across various product categories cannot be overstated. Managers should ensure that all masstige brands and services reflect the brand's premium image, irrespective of the category (Paul 2018; Gilal et al. 2022). This uniform premium positioning across the product spectrum is crucial for building consumer trust and reinforcing brand loyalty, as it communicates a coherent brand identity and value proposition.

In light of these insights, it is recommended that managers devise strategies that actively promote consumer engagement with masstige brands, leveraging digital platforms to foster community and interaction. Incorporating customization options into product offerings will meet the consumers' desire for uniqueness and elevate their perception of the brand's value. Ensuring consistent premium branding across all product lines and communication channels will help maintain the masstige brand's allure and appeal, ultimately enhancing consumer trust and loyalty in the brand.

5.3 | Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study offers substantial insights into masstige consumption, its interplay with consumer factors, and brand engagement, recognizing its limitations is crucial for framing future research avenues. First, the reliance on cross-sectional data constrains our capacity to ascertain causality among the explored variables. Prospective studies could benefit from adopting longitudinal designs to capture the evolving nature of masstige consumption and its long-term impact on consumer behavior.

Second, the study's focus on a single geographical context may impede the universal applicability of the findings. To enhance external validity, future research should extend to diverse cultural and economic landscapes, allowing for a comparative analysis that could unveil potential variances in how different regions and cultures interact with masstige brands. Such studies would enrich our global understanding of masstige markets and aid in crafting culturally attuned brand strategies.

Third, although the study investigated the moderating influence of product categories, future research endeavors should aim to

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expand and dissect the masstige phenomenon across distinct industries like fashion, beauty, home decor, and travel, to explain industry-specific dynamics and consumption drivers. Exploring masstige in new contexts such as business-to-business markets (Saha, Das, and Paul 2023) and understanding its impact on consumer outcomes like brand happiness (Purohit and Radia 2022; Nobre et al. 2023) and social media sentiments (Bilro, Loureiro, and Dos Santos 2022) are promising avenues for future research. This approach would empower brands with industry-specific insights, enabling them to formulate bespoke strategies that resonate with masstige market segments.

Lastly, the analysis was confined to a select group of consumer factors and outcomes, leaving room for a broader exploration of the myriad elements that may shape masstige consumption. Future scholarly work could widen this scope to include additional psychological, social, and cultural variables, such as self-identity, social comparison, and cultural norms. Investigating these dimensions could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted influences on masstige consumption. Moreover, examining the long-term ramifications of masstige consumption on brand loyalty, advocacy, and other pivotal consumer behaviors such as self-brand connection warrants further investigation (Rosendo-Rios and Shukla 2023) and would greatly benefit brand strategy and longevity in the market.

6 | Conclusions

The objective of the study was to explain the dynamics between masstige brands and critical consumer factors such as the need for uniqueness, pride, the bandwagon effect, conspicuous consumption, and consumer brand engagement, alongside the moderating influence of product categories. This investigation confirms that the drives for uniqueness and pride are pivotal in steering masstige consumption, resonating with established paradigms in luxury consumption literature. The study also shows a significant positive relationship between masstige consumption and conspicuous consumption, with an intriguing inverse moderation by the bandwagon effect, suggesting a nuanced interplay within the masstige landscape. A key finding from this research is the substantial influence of masstige consumption on consumer brand engagement, a phenomenon that persisted across various product categories. This consistency underscores masstige's broad appeal and its strategic importance for brands across diverse sectors. This study not only enriches the masstige conceptual framework but also provides practical insights for brands in the masstige market, aiding in the development of targeted strategies and initiatives.

By employing and validating the MMI scale for masstige measurement, the study's findings have deepened the comprehension of the complex psychological and social undercurrents that fuel masstige consumption. The study's empirical results advocate for brands to actively cultivate consumer engagement and to innovate through customization, thereby enhancing the perceived value and exclusivity of masstige offerings. This reinforces Purohit, Arora, and Radia (2024) study, which found that for service brands, masstige consumption positively affects brand advocacy by increasing brand happiness. This finding supports the impact of masstige on consumer-brand relationships.

Finally, the study not only propels the theoretical discourse on masstige consumption forward but also delineates actionable strategies for brands aiming to capitalize on evolving consumer preferences and market trends. As masstige continues to capture the imagination of a diverse consumer base, the insights derived from this study offer a valuable roadmap for navigating the complexities of the masstige market, ensuring sustained brand growth and consumer engagement in an increasingly segmented and dynamic marketplace.

Disclosure

The authors have nothing to report.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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