

For Immediate Release: May 21, 2014
Contact: Mary-Ann Twist / 608-255-5582 / JCR@bus.wisc.edu

**

The Brand Tourism Effect: When Do Lower Status Consumers Boost Luxury Brands?

When people purchase luxury items like expensive watches and high-end automobiles, they often consider themselves members of a select group of consumers. According to a new study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#), when outsiders show an interest in a luxury brand, they help improve its overall value.



“Just as tourists boost the pride of citizens toward their home country and reinforce the attractiveness and desirability of the place they visit, brand tourists (as fans of the brand) inspire feelings of membership pride and enhance brand image,” write authors Silvia Bellezza and Anat Keinan (both Harvard University).

The authors use the terms ‘brand immigrant’ and ‘brand tourist’ to differentiate between consumers who either claim group membership (brand immigrants) or do not claim group membership (brand tourists). They explain that while brand immigrants pose a threat to the image and distinctiveness of selective brands, brand tourists can actually reinforce the brand’s prestige.

Over six lab and field studies, the authors studied how consumers of selective brands react to brand immigrants and brand tourists as well as brands that have expanded their product lines to offer less expensive and less exclusive products.

In one study, participants were asked to complete a survey that described a customer who received a free collector’s shopping bag just for visiting a Prada or Marc Jacobs boutique. The customer was given the role of a neutral consumer, a brand tourist, or a brand immigrant. Survey results indicated a more positive response for customers receiving the bag when they felt the consumer was not trying to falsely represent that they were using the bag to convey they had purchased something from the boutique.

Results reveal that the “brand tourism effect” also has positive implications for companies managing or monitoring brand communities that are perceived as selective and require effort to gain membership.

“Our research stresses the importance of embracing and cultivating brand tourism and demonstrates that brand tourists can serve as a source of pride and value for the brand,” the authors conclude.

Silvia Bellezza and Anat Keinan. “Brand Tourists: How Non-Core Users Enhance the Brand Image by Eliciting Pride.” *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2014. For more information, contact Silvia Bellezza (sbellezza@hbs.edu) or visit <http://ejcr.org/>.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

1427 EAST 60TH STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

www.journals.uchicago.edu



Journals Division