

# Consumers' Perceived Brand Aspiration and Its Impact on Intention to Pay Price Premium: Moderating Role of Brand Jealousy

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## Abstract

The extant research suggests the role of consumers' perceived aspirations in driving behavior, including strong brand preference. Despite studies demonstrated the importance of managing aspirations, the branding literature yet to look at the relationship between consumers' perceived brand aspirations and their willingness to pay price premium. In this backdrop, this study used a four dimensional measure of consumers' brand aspiration and demonstrated its consequential effects on consumers' willingness to pay price premium. It also examined the role of a situational moderator, brand jealousy on these effects. The findings of the study offer a clear understanding of the assessment of consumers' brand aspirations and its consequential effect on consumers' behavioral related outcomes.

## Keywords

Brand Aspiration, Brand Attachment, Brand Commitment, Willingness to Pay Price Premium

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## 1. Introduction

Being a dream brand and distinctive among other competitors often results from the brand aspiration signals conveyed by the brand that the consumers choose to display and process. Conceptual models of social psychology recognize that an individual's strong aspiration works as a driving force towards the motives for action and creates behavior when time tends to be consistent with the aspiration that the individual pursues (Sheldon *et al.*, 2004 [1]). In branding context, building on these notions, the effect of aspirations on consumer luxury brand

preference has been demonstrated (e.g., Truong *et al.*, 2010 [2]). Recognizing the importance of goal oriented motives for developing strong behaviour, practitioners too focused on imparting aspirational values over and above their stiff price competition to get a competitive advantage. Mr. Michael Perschke observed “As a luxury brand, Audi’s key competitors in India are BMW, Mercedes and Jaguar Land, the company had no intention of playing the price game but stick to its target of being the ‘ultimate-in-aspiration’, Audi is the fastest growing luxury brand not only in volumes but in aspiration” (Audi Aims, 2012 [3]).

Despite this interest, branding literature offers limited guidance on how and under what conditions the observable characteristics of consumers’ brand aspiration might influence behavior, particularly consumers’ willingness to pay price premium. This understanding is vital for several reasons. First, increased attention on consumers’ aspirations in the academic literature has gained support for managing consumers’ brand attachment (Park *et al.*, 2006 [4]). There is a need for managing consumer’s emotional attachment to brands for understanding brand consideration, intention to perform difficult behaviors, and brand choice (Park *et al.*, 2010 [5]). It is recognized that consumers who are highly attached to the brand engage in restorative behavior that ensures the brand relationship continuation (Park *et al.*, 2010 [5]). Although this notion seems appealing, the branding literature hasn’t yet offered a framework which integrates the aspirations that the consumers develop towards brands and the consequent effects of emotional attachment. Second, the significance of brand aspirations for shaping consumer behavior is interesting as self-determination theory in social psychology. Ryan and Deci (2000) [6] suggest that individual motivation is concerned with the development and functioning of personality in the social environment. For instance, individuals develop strong aspiration to those objects which would enhance the functioning and development of their personality in social context. Analogously, consumers’ brand aspiration might predict their behavioral intention (e.g., brand commitment), and willingness to make financial sacrifices in order to obtain it (e.g., willingness to pay price premium), for the reason that this goal orientation will enhance and maintain their personality in social context. Third, an individual’s value laden goals, referred to as aspirations, determine their important life decisions, define specific perceived values and also influences and shape the perceptions, judgments and behaviors (Weinstein *et al.*, 2009 [7]).

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to construct an empirical model to expand the current level of understanding concerning the consequential effect of consumers’ brand aspiration and highlighting the practical usefulness of the manner in which consumers’ behavioural related outcomes can be “managed” within branding context so as to enhance brand’s profitability.

The paper is organized as follows. Beginning with the concept of aspirations, this paper will review the previous literature and augment this by presenting a conceptual model which will subsequently be subjected to empirical analysis. On the basis of the results, the paper will conclude with discussion of findings, research limitations, and recommendations for future research.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. What Is Aspiration?

The first major work on aspiration was found in Cyert and March (1963) [8] in the realm of organizational aspiration relationships in their study on the behavioural theory of the firm-as “aspiration theory”. Behavioural theorists argued that the decision makers those who are aspiring are rational and satisfying (Simon, 1955 [9]). Aspirations are formed and adjusted based on past experience (Cyert and March, 1963 [8]). The core inputs of rational aspirations are the future performance expectations (Ansoff, 1979 [10]). Aspirations are a critical factor in determining strategic behaviour. Those who are aspiring are expected to act in order to enhance their degree of success in achieving their aspirations (Lant, 1992 [11]). Performance relative to aspirations will determine the intensity of behaviours (Ansoff, 1979 [10]; Cyert and March, 1963 [8]). Kasser (1996) [12] defined aspirations as a goal oriented motive which composed of two important elements; *intrinsic aspiration*: concern the pursuit of goals that in themselves satisfy basic psychological needs (e.g., personal growth, Intimacy, community); *extrinsic aspirations*: focus on externally valued goods that are not inherently rewarding but are sought to derive positive regard or rewards from others (e.g., money, image, fame). Strong aspirations in a pervasive way, they shape perceptions, judgments, and behaviours (Kasser, 2002 [13]).

Various behaviours reveal the existence of strong aspirations, such as strong relational emotion with aspiring object (example, Love and care; Vining *et al.*, 2008 [14]), relational mind sets and less selfish decision making (see Mayer and Frantz, 2004 [15]) and stronger connectedness to the aspiring object. Moreover, the increasing

connectedness to the aspiring object, it is possible that short period of exposure could elicit higher valuation of aspiring object.

The intensity of aspirations has typically been inferred from aforementioned behaviours, specifically from other contexts. The existing understanding of aspiration in organizational and other socio-cultural perspectives are unable to articulate aspiration towards brands in full sense. Unfortunately, the indicators used to capture aspiration in other contexts are often imperfect and non-compatible in branding context. Therefore, in studying consumers and their aspiration towards brands, it should be possible to measure directly the intensity of the aspiration itself.

## 2.2. The Relevance of Aspiration Construct to Consumer Behavior

Individuals may develop aspirations into a variety of forms, including aspiration for career and educational achievement (Beaman *et al.*, 2012 [16]), relationship aspirations, which is goal orientation toward developing close and satisfying relationships with other people (Weinstein *et al.*, 2009 [7]), aspirations shape life context and establish general life structures such as having a career, a family, a certain kind of lifestyle (Roberts and Robins, 2000 [17]), aspirations for financial success, an appealing appearance, and social recognition (Kasser and Ryan, 1996 [12]), health aspirations (Mortos *et al.*, 2010), organizational aspirations (Shinkle, 2011). Literature offers studies which examined aspirations for externally valued goods that are not inherently rewarding but are sought to derive positive regard or rewards from others (e.g. Money, image, fame) (Kasser and Ryan, 1996 [12]). Similarly, research in marketing (e.g., Amaldoss and Jain, 2005 [18]; Solomon and Englis, 2004 [19]; Truong *et al.*, 2010 [2]) suggests that consumers can develop aspirations to purchase luxury goods for their symbolic content such as status and prestige. The notion that such aspirations reflect an emotional bond is suggested by Markus and Nurius (1986) in their research on consumer behaviour. Park *et al.* (2006) [4] documented that variety of aspirations (e.g. Status, success, and achievement) characterize consumers' emotional attachment towards brands through representing one's ideal future self. For example, one's ideal future self as someone who is healthy (e.g. Atkins), athletic (Nike), famous (e.g. American Idol), or a good parent (e.g., Parents Magazine) involve other brands whose linkage to an ideal future self enriches the self (Park *et al.*, 2006 [4]).

Individuals' aspiration towards the object predicts their pursuit of goals that in themselves satisfies basic psychological needs, namely relatedness, intimacy and affiliations (attachment) and intention to maintain relationships (commitment) (Winnel, 1987 [20]). Park *et al.* (2010) [5] defines the concept of brand attachment as the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self, this bond is exemplified by a rich and accessible memory network (or mental representation) that involves thoughts and feelings about the brand and the brand's relationship to the self. Commitment is defined as the extent to which an individual views the relationship from a long-term perspective and has a willingness to stay with the relationship even when things are difficult (van Lange *et al.*, 1997; Thomson *et al.*, 2005). The number of studies in marketing considered attachment and commitment as long term outcome oriented constructs and a measure of effectiveness (Park *et al.*, 2006, 2010 [4] [5]). In branding context the construct of attachment is characterized by a perception that the object is irreplaceable (Thomson *et al.*, 2005 [21]) and brand commitment is characterized by the extent to which the consumer remains loyal to the brand (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999 [22]). Considering this argument, one can state that a reliable and valid measure of consumers' brand aspiration should predict brand attachment and brand commitment, such as their emotional and intentional state of mind to stick with the brand, *i.e.*, brand loyalty.

## 2.3. Difference between Brand Aspiration and Status Consumption

Consumers who are aspiring a brand are also likely to have desires to gain prestige from the acquisition of status-laden products or brands. However, although status consumption is often reflected in brand aspiration, the construct differ in several critical ways. First, strong aspirations are a long-term goal oriented approach that a customer expects to accomplish over a lifetime, mainly to satisfy their psychological needs over and above physiological needs (Kassar and Ryan, 1993 [23]), namely compassion, attention, strength, trust, self-esteem, and companionship. Status consumption reflects one's desire to gain status or social prestige from the acquisition and consumption of goods (Goldsmith *et al.*, 1996 [24]) and these desires can develop without any long term goal or aspiration. Thus, a consumer might have a status desire towards an object without ever having had any aspiration with it at all.

Second, consumers can have status desire toward any number of consumption objects at a time from the same

product category, which all cater the same needs and other than status they all have little importance to their lives. The object to which consumer aspires for, however, are few in number and are generally regarded as profound and significant.

Third, individuals who have strong aspirations towards an object also display strong internal and external motives which will lead to brand engagement and strong intention to buy or commitment. These behavioral manifestations are not the characteristics of status consumption, the impact of which is highly situation driven and context dependent.

Finally, individuals who have strong aspirations towards the object are generally committed to the object, as and when time tend to be consistent with their goals, which in turn will develop into behaviors (Kassar and Ryan, 1993 [23]). This is not necessarily the characteristics of status consumption. For example, it would be unusual for a consumer with only status desire toward a brand to stay committed to the brand if an alternative brand comes up with more status orientation. Contrary to this, a strong aspiration towards an object is characterized by the perception that the object is not replaceable, because it's deeply rooted in consumers' internal memory as a goal to achieve the object in the near future. A consumer with a status desire toward an object may be willing to replace it with another object as and when an alternative object provides equally desirable status.

### 3. Hypotheses Development

The core concept of aspirations rooted in social psychology is its ability to predict individual behavioral intention and affiliations. Park *et al.* (2006 [4]) stated that one of the important routes to create self-connections and attachment is through an internalization process and this is achieved through the symbolization of one's ideal future self and its enrichment. A brand can enrich self-connections by symbolically representing one's ideal future (Markus and Norris, 1986 [25]). It is also stated that a brand can enrich the self by symbolically showcasing who one is or want to be linking the brand to an ideal future self (Park *et al.*, 2010 [5]). Those brands reflect one's aspirations and ideal future self will help to create self-connections and brand attachments (Thomson *et al.*, 2005 [21]). Symbolic brand representation through aspiration creates brand attachment (Park *et al.*, 2006 [4]). It is also stated that aspirations influences motivation and in turn behavioral intentions (Sheldon *et al.*, 2004 [1]). Therefore it hypothesizes that:

**Hypothesis 1:** *Consumers' brand aspiration dimensions will have a positive and direct effect on brand attachment.*

**Hypothesis 2:** *Consumers' brand aspiration dimensions will have a positive and direct effect on brand commitment.*

In psychology literature it is stated that individuals' emotional attachments predict their commitment to the relationship (Drigotas and Rusbult, 1992 [26]; Rusbult, 1983 [27]). The feeling part of relationship intention or commitment comes from the development of attachment with that relationship object. When a brand starts offering resources in the service of self-expansion, the consumer will attach to the brand (Park *et al.*, 2010 [5]). This brand attachment helps to develop commitment to the brand (Lacoeuilhe, 2000 [28]). The relationship between brand attachment and commitment is also supported by Lacoeuilhe and Belaid (2007) [29], stressed that brand attachment feed the attitudinal intention, *i.e.* commitment. Attitudinal loyalty or commitment would be higher when the positive mood and affect of a consumer is higher (Dick and Basu, 1994 [30]). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) [31] state that those brands make consumers happier, joyful or affectionate will elicit more purchase intention. Therefore, it hypothesizes that:

**Hypothesis 3:** *Consumers' attachment with the brand positively influences brand commitment.*

When the consumer believes that the brand symbolizes the ideal self in the future it will develop into brand attachment (Park *et al.*, 2006 [4]). This Brand attachment associated to investment with the brand, particularly willingness to forgo immediate self-interest to promote a relationship with the brand, such as willingness to pay price premiums (Van Lange *et al.*, 1997 [32]; Thomson *et al.*, 2005 [21]). Park *et al.* (2010) [5] using self-expansion theory into branding context stated that consumers who are attached to the brand are not just the recipient of brand resources, instead they actively participate in the investment of their own resources to the brand, particularly financial resources, such as willingness to pay a price premium. Intent to persist (commitment) and feeling of psychological attachment will have a positive impact on relationship building and maintenance (Rusbult, 1983 [27]). As a result, the study further hypothesizes as below:

**Hypothesis 4:** *Consumer' attachment with the brand positively influences their intention to pay a price premium.*

**Hypothesis 5:** Consumers' commitment with the brand positively influences their intention to pay a price premium.

Individuals who are driven by strong aspiration to an object are influenced by situations that shape individuals' affective and behavioral intention towards the object. This is because the aspiration of self-esteem is threatened when an individual perceives that others who have the same status are owned or possessing the same aspirational object (Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014 [33]). Thus, when an individual feels jealous, it is likely to change the aspiration and its consequential effects. Most of the conceptualizations around jealousy in interpersonal literature centered around the idea that jealousy is generated by threatening loss of one's self-esteem (Sharpsteen, 1991 [34]). This conceptualization supported by the definition of interpersonal romantic jealousy given by White (1981) [35] that the romantically involved partners become jealous when the person perceives a threat to one's self-esteem. Self-esteem is defined as the global feelings of self-liking, self-worth, self-acceptance and self-respect (Brown, 1993 [36]). Self-esteem is an essential part of the human ego and individuals naturally strive to enhance their self-esteem (Crocker and Nuer, 2004 [37]). Research in consumer behavior also states that acquiring goods helps to improve self-esteem by flattering the individual's ego (Kasser and Sheldon, 2004). In the brand consumption context a consumer can perceive a similar threat to self-esteem when he/she sees that an esteemed and deeply aspiring brand is owned by a neighbor or a friend which is not currently possessed by him/her (Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014 [33]). This threat also affects consumers' emotional connection and behavioral intention with the brands. When people feel threats to his/her self esteem and jealous, the motivational intention to maintain and efforts to protect the same will be high (Sharpsteen 1991 [34]). Hence, it is conceptualized that an individual can be jealous when he/she observes that a brand which he/she loves romance has been purchased by another person (may be a friend, neighbor any member of the social groups), given that he/she is not having the brand at present due to any constraint. In such condition, the potential customer (who is not having the brand now, but is romantically attached to the brand) can view another existing customer (who is using the brand currently) as rival (Sarkar and Sreejesh, 2014 [33]). Therefore, we hypothesize that: (Figure 1).

**Hypothesis 6:** During high brand jealousy provoking situations, the consequential effects of brand aspiration dimensions on brand attachment and brand commitment will be high, compared to low jealousy provoking situations.

## 4. Research Methodology

### Data Collection Procedure

Four hundred seventy nine non-student respondents were solicited at a shopping mall was selected as the study participants to assess consumers' brand aspirations. Mall patrons exiting the mall would be requested to partici-

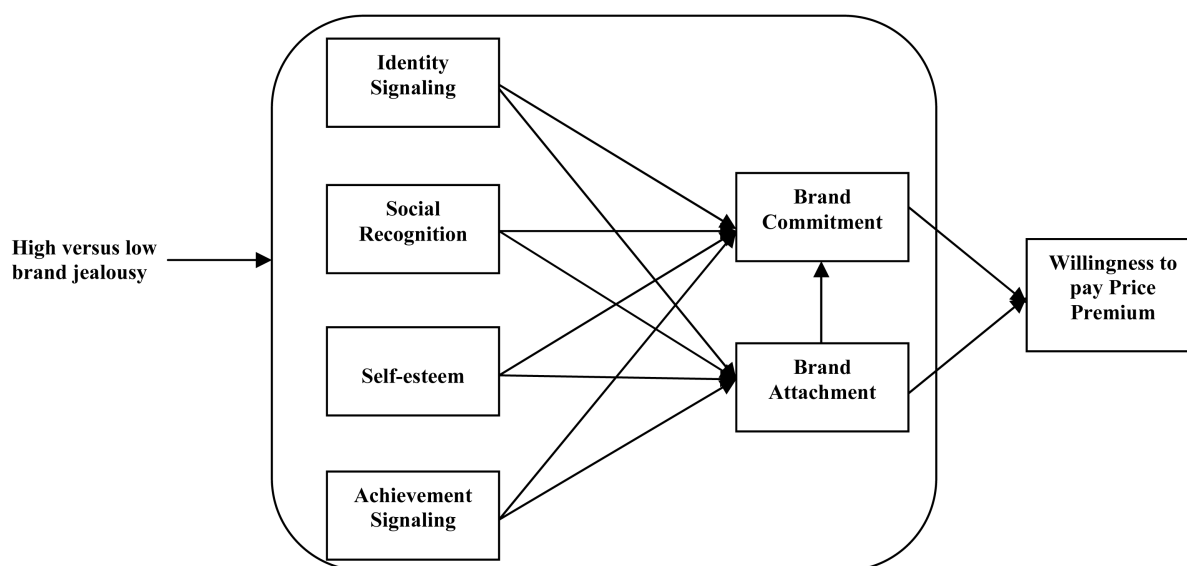


Figure 1. Hypothesized model.

pate in the study. Those who agreed to participate in the study would be given Rs. 500 food coupons which could be redeemed in the same mall. The design was a  $1 \times 2$  between-group design with approximately half of the respondents were presented with a questionnaire describing to think about their respective aspirational brand first and read the five high jealousy provoking situations later. After reading the high jealousy provoking situations (See [Appendix](#) for jealousy provoking situations), they were asked to answer the measures of consumers' brand aspiration and other measures, namely brand attachment, brand commitment and willingness to pay a price premium. Measures used in this study include four dimensional 14 items consumers' brand aspiration scale, adapted from Sreejesh *et al.* (2015) [38]. These latter constructs were measured using items derived from prior research in marketing. Building on brand attachment literature, brand attachment measurement ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ) has taken from Park *et al.* (2010) [5] with anchors of 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. The brand commitment ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ) has adapted from Tsai (2011) [39], anchored on a scale of 1 = totally disagree and 7 = totally agree. Two items on the willingness to pay a price premium ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ) scale was taken from Thomson *et al.* (2005) [21]. The same procedure was carried out for the second group except the jealousy provoking situation (low jealousy provoking situations). Subjects were also asked to rate their likelihood that they would become jealous, under the circumstances described in each situation, on a 1 (not at all likely) to 7 (very likely). For the first group (high jealousy), those subjects shown a mean value of less than four for any the situations were dropped from the analysis. For the second group (low jealousy), those subjects shown a mean value of greater than four for any of the situations were dropped from the analysis. This mainly carried out to confirm that these twogroups were different in terms of jealousy.

## 5. Data Analyses

Following the confirmation of the measurement model fit for the proposed constructs in the nomological network for both samples, first, we examined the influence of the situational moderator using two different path models. The two models were compared against each other in terms of its path coefficients to examine the difference. The path coefficients, namely identity signalling ( $\gamma = 0.09$ ;  $\gamma = 0.11$ ) social recognition ( $\gamma = 0.09$ ;  $\gamma = 0.13$ ), self-esteem ( $\gamma = 0.53$ ;  $\gamma = 0.62$ ) and achievement signalling ( $\gamma = 0.11$ ,  $\gamma = 0.13$ ) were significantly affected brand attachment and found to have a high effect in a high jealousy provoking situation compared to low jealousy provoking situation. The path coefficients, identity signalling ( $\gamma = 0.27$ ;  $\gamma = 0.39$ ), social recognition ( $\gamma = 0.12$ ;  $\gamma = 0.19$ ), self-esteem ( $\gamma = 0.02$ ;  $\gamma = 0.10$ ) and achievement signalling ( $\gamma = 0.18$ ;  $\gamma = 0.20$ ) found to have a significant and high influence on brand commitment in a high jealousy provoking situation compared to low jealousy provoking situation. The same high effect of path coefficients was also found in other cases in high jealousy provoking situations, such as brand attachment to brand commitment ( $\beta = 0.16$ ;  $\beta = 0.18$ ); brand attachment to willingness to pay price premium ( $\beta = 0.34$ ;  $\beta = 0.54$ ) and brand commitment to willingness to pay price premium ( $\beta = 0.32$ ;  $\beta = 0.41$ ).

However, the comparison of the path coefficients is not a formal test of difference between two samples. Therefore, next, we examined the influence of the situational moderator through running three global path model (similar to regression using multiple dependent variables simultaneously) to examine the equivalence of both models as described by Joreskog and Sorbom (1993) [40] using LISREL 8.72. In the first case, the constant and the coefficients were assumed to be equal (equal regression). The test of equal regression path coefficients gives a chi-square of 265.52. In the second case, a parallel regression test was conducted in which the constant for both the models were assumed to be different. The results ( $\chi^2 = 259.95$ ,  $df = 16$ ) showed that the second model is not significantly different from the first model or it is insignificant ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 5.57$ ,  $p = 0.134511$ ). In the third case, the regression coefficients or paths between the constructs were set free or allowed to be different across the two groups. The examination of the chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 205.50$ ,  $df = 9$ ) is found to be statistically different from the equal model ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 60.02$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). Therefore, one can conclude that the path coefficients are statistically different across these two groups and the effects of consumers' brand aspiration on its consequential effects is high during high jealousy provoking situations. Hence, all the proposed set of hypotheses got statistical support. See [Table 1](#) for detailed hypotheses testing results.

## 6. Discussion and Limitations

Despite wide acceptance and interest in aspirations to create strong brand preferences, to date the efforts to understand the consequential effect of consumers' perceived aspirations on their behavioral related outcomes is li-

**Table 1.** Hypotheses testing results.

Hypothesized paths	Low jealousy provoking situation		High jealousy provoking situation	
	Path coefficients	R <sup>2</sup>	Path coefficients	R <sup>2</sup>
Identity Signalling → Brand Attachment	0.09*		0.11*	
Social Recognition → Brand Attachment	0.09*	0.52	0.13*	0.69
Self-esteem → Brand Attachment	0.53*		0.62*	
Achievement Signalling → Brand attachment	0.11*		0.13*	
Identity Signalling → Brand Commitment	0.27*		0.39*	
Social Recognition → Brand Commitment	0.12*	0.34	0.19*	0.52
Self-esteem → Brand Commitment	0.02*		0.10*	
Achievement Signalling → Brand Commitment	0.18*		0.20*	
Brand Attachment → Brand commitment	0.16*		0.18	
Brand Attachment → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.34*	0.36	0.54*	0.48
Brand Commitment → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.32*		0.41*	
Structural Model Fit Statistics	$\chi^2 = 394.54, df = 4; CFI = 0.95; IFI = 0.95; SRMR = 0.074$		$\chi^2 = 244.13, df = 4; CFI = 0.96; IFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.061$	
Global Model Fit Statistics (Equal Regression)	$\chi^2 = 265.52, df = 19; CFI = 0.98; IFI = 0.98; SRMR = 0.027$			
Global Model Fit Statistics (Parallel Regression)	$\chi^2 = 259.95, df = 16; CFI = 0.98; IFI = 0.98; SRMR = 0.026$			
Global Model Fit Statistics (Concurrent Regression)	$\chi^2 = 205.50, df = 9; CFI = 0.99; IFI = 0.99; SRMR = 0.027$			

Note: \* shows significant at 0.01 level of significant.

mitted. The current research extends it by demonstrating that in branding context the aspirations matter, and these aspirations can explain the variations in outcome measures, such as brand attachment and brand commitment. The results support was provided about the usefulness of the consumers' brand aspirations to predict theoretically and practically important relationships. Particularly, the consumers' brand aspirations measures effectively predicted consumers' brand attachment and brand commitment. Also consistent with extant literature, consumers' brand attachment and brand commitment were strong predictors of willingness to pay a price premium. Overall, study provides a strong support for the consequential effects of consumers' brand aspiration. In addition to the examination of this consequential effect, we examined how the situational moderator (jealousy) influences the nomological network. The results supported that during a high jealousy provoking situation the consequential effect of the consumers' aspirations would be high compared low jealousy provoking situations.

Even though the study is rich in its theoretical advancement, it must be tempered by several caveats. First, although the study results supports that consumers' brand aspirations predicts brand attachment and brand commitment, we do not wish to recommend that the measures are able to predict the consequences in all circumstances and all product categories. Rather, we would like to suggest the consumers' brand aspiration is more valid in luxury branding context, as consistent with the theory that aspirations are particularly relevant to luxury consumption (Truong *et al.* 2010 [2]). Hence, the study is more of industry focused, specific to luxury branding.

## 7. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The results of the study extend and comprehend several existing theoretical frameworks, specifically with Self-determination theory, which explains the motivation that incorporates personality, developmental, and situational influences on optimal individual psychological well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2008 [41]). This theory is considered to be a theory of optional relationship development and functioning (La Guardia and Patrick, 2008, [42]). An individual being self-determined means that his/her actions are relatively autonomous, freely chosen and fully endorsed by the person rather than coerced or pressured by external forces or internal expectations. From the results, it's clear that consumer aspire a brand when that brand incorporates identity, self-esteem, so-

cial recognition, and achievement orientation, which ultimately influences individuals' affective bonds and behavioural intention or commitment. A strong aspiration creates individual's brand attachment, behavioural intention or commitment when he/she has a core principle to improve and grow, and he/she feels that being in relationship with brand facilitates this self-expression and growth, then his/hers involvement is integrated and self-determined.

Second, the study found support for social identity theory, in which social identity is the individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002 [43]). Here in branding context the findings support with social identity theory in such a way that the extent to which a consumer identifies with a brand to internalize that brand membership as an aspect of their self-concept and provides a ground for comparison. For academic researchers, the findings provide an opportunity for further research that investigates the extent to which the improvements in the consumer brand aspiration can drive improvements in identification with brands.

Finally, extant research has shown that consumers possess an inherent motivation for self-expansion, a desire to incorporate brands into one's conception of "self." The more a brand is included in the self, the closer is the bond that connects them (Park *et al.*, 2010 [5]). The study extends the knowledge of self-expansion theory to explain consumers' aspiration in branding. The model introduced in this study offer a way for researchers to more comprehensively determine what is driving consumers' aspirations and thereby creates or incorporate strong and deep rooted relationships with brands.

Creation of brand-based differentiation is the most influential approach for the development and maintenance of competitive advantage, particularly customer focused competitive advantage. For customers, these differentiating aspects would act as a signal of achieving expectation, which will provide more confidence and believability that the brand will meet their expectations. At a broader level, leveraging insights from consumer brand aspiration dimensions could help the brand managers of luxury brands to impart these differentiating effects through generating aspirations, which would help them to keep away from intense price competition and to generate a competitive edge over other brands. Similarly, the insight from consumer brand aspiration dimensions could also help brand managers to better understand who are the "right" customers for their brand and design communication strategies accordingly to retain these customers. In the same fashion, brand managers could also identify the customers who do not fit well with the brand. Such a strategy could help the company reduce the wastage of investment in relationship building and maintenance to those who do not fit well with the brand.

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## Appendix

### 1. Procedures for Generating Jealousy Provoking Situations

To obtain a set of jealousy provoking situations that varied in levels, we randomly selected 78 postgraduate students (35 males and 43 females) from a top rated Business School. These respondents were asked to think about their aspirational brand in mind and instructed to write down the situation in which a jealousy towards their aspirational brands would be provoked. This process helped the study to generate a pool of 15 jealousy provoking situations. Face validity of the situations was judged by a panel of psychology professors. Based on their opinions, 7 jealousy provoking situations were deleted. Remaining 8 jealousy provoking situations were administered in a scale ranging from 1 (low jealousy provoking) to 7 (high jealousy provoking) through a questionnaire to a random sample of 65 respondents from the same business school. Based on their rating five situations were identified (mean ratings greater than 4) as high jealousy provoking situations and remaining three situations were identified (mean ratings less than 4) as low jealousy providing situations. The representative situations identified in two levels of jealousy as follows:

#### High Jealousy Provoking Situations

1. My neighbor who has similar status and financial conditions possesses my aspirational brand (Mean = 5.5).
2. My neighbor who has similar status and financial conditions possesses and talk about the brand (aspirational brand) in front of those people who are near to me (Mean = 5.2).
3. People admire my friend or neighbor because of the possession of the brand (aspirational brand) (Mean = 5).
4. My friend or neighbor is getting unique identity among peer groups because of the possession of the aspirational brand (Mean = 4.8).
5. My friend or neighbor is getting positions or power because of the possession of the brand (aspirational brand) (Mean = 4.2).

#### Low Jealousy Provoking Situations

1. One of the top rated celebrities uses this brand (aspirational brand) (Mean = 3.8).
2. When I do a conversation with my friend or neighbor about buying the product (same aspirational brand category) he says he want to buy a brand which is cheaper than the aspirational brand, because of financial condition (Mean = 3.6).
3. When my friend or neighbor says that the brand (aspirational brand) is suited to you not for me (Mean = 3.2).

### 2. Items Used in Survey Questionnaire

#### Consumer Brand Aspiration

##### Identity Signalling

1. I believe that this brand will surely make me stand out of the crowd.
2. I believe that this brand will surely showcase my identity.
3. I believe this brand provides me a social status.
4. I believe that this brand portrays my personality.
5. I believe that this brand makes me feel royal.

##### Social Recognition

1. I believe that this brand helps me to be recognized wherever I go.
2. I believe that this brand helps me to introduce myself to others.
3. I believe that this brand helps me to be appreciated by many people.
4. I believe that this brand helps me to get noticed amongst the elite.

##### Self-esteem

1. I believe this brand will add an elevated sense of self respect.
2. I believe this brand will add an elevated sense of pride.
3. I believe this brand will brings fulfilment of my goals.

##### Achievement Signalling

1. I believe that this brand portrays me as a role model.

2. I believe that this brand will help me to portray my ambitiousness.

#### **Brand Commitment**

1. It makes sense to continue with the brand.
2. I am committed to the brand.
3. Intention to stay with the brand gives me emotional gratification.
4. Intention to stay with the brand is a very reasonable choice.

#### **Brand Attachment**

1. To what extent is (brand name) part of you and who you are?
2. To what extent do you feel personally connected to (brand name)?
3. To what extent do you feel emotionally bonded to (brand name)?
4. To what extent are your thoughts and feelings toward (brand name) often automatic, coming to mind seemingly on their own?

#### **Willingness to Pay Price Premium**

1. Your brand (aspirational) is one of many brands in the product category. What do you estimate is the average price of brands in the product category?"
2. What price are you willing to pay for your self-selected aspirational brand?