

Psychological Needs and the Desire for Unique Consumer Products across Gender and Socioeconomic Status in Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT: -The objective of this study is to observe whether there is a relationship between psychological needs, desire for unique consumer products and self-attributed need for uniqueness in girls and boys from different socioeconomic statuses. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 404 undergraduate college students, aged between 17 and 22 years, belonging to different socio-economic backgrounds. The present study used the Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs Scale (Sheldon, 2012), the Desire for Unique Consumer Products Scale (Lynn & Harris, 1997), and the Self-Attributed Need for Uniqueness Scale (Lynn & Harris, 1997). The study found no significant differences in psychological needs, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products between undergraduate boys and girls with different socioeconomic status. Relatedness, competence, autonomy, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products were found to be positively correlated among students from different SES ($p < 0.05$). Results like these suggest that irrespective of buying power, there is a tendency among undergraduate students to view unique products as value additions to their social standing in comparison to their peers. The degree to which psychological needs exist in various cultural contexts and how they combine to drive uniqueness may be further examined. This may provide insight not only into differentiation itself but also the communication of identity across cultures and the integration of multiple needs more broadly.

Keywords: *consumer behaviour, gender, psychological needs, socioeconomic status, undergraduate students*

I. INTRODUCTION

Lynn and Harris (1997) stated that consumers differ in the extent to which they hold as a personal goal the acquisition and possession of consumer goods, services, and experiences that few others possess. It is said that “this goal-oriented, individual differences variable is the desire or unique consumer products.”

According to social theorists, people have a need for uniqueness—they find high levels of similarity to others unpleasant and seek to make themselves moderately different from others (Fromkin, 1968, 1970, 1972; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). This motivation varies across individuals as well as situations (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977, 1980). Snyder (1992) stated that people with stronger needs for uniqueness are more sensitive to similarity information and desire higher levels of dissimilarity to others. It is said that possessions are often extensions of the self (Belk, 1988; James, 1890), and one way that people satisfy their needs for uniqueness is by acquiring and possessing unique consumer products (Brock, 1968; Fromkin, 1970; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980; Snyder, 1992). Research suggests that the need for uniqueness is a major source of the desire for such products (Lynn, 1991).

Snyder and Fromkin's (1980) uniqueness theory deals with people's emotional and behavioural reactions to information about their similarity to others. According to this theory, people find high levels of similarity and dissimilarity unpleasant. Therefore, they seek moderate distinction from others. This suggests that if people perceive higher levels of similarity between themselves and others, they become more motivated to establish their dissimilarity or uniqueness. In several tests of this hypothesis, people who were led to believe that they were highly similar to others conformed less in a judgment task (Duval, 1976), generated more unusual uses for an object (Fromkin, 1968), and placed more value on scarce experiences (Fromkin, 1970) than others did. Hence, ample research shows that people do appear to seek uniqueness for themselves in comparison to others.

However, this uniqueness seeking is constrained by the need for social approval and social affiliation. So it is noticed that people strive to be unique in ways that do not result in social isolation or disapproval

(Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). The main principle of uniqueness theory is that everyone has a need to be moderately unique or dissimilar to others. However, Snyder and Fromkin (1977, 1980) argued that there are individual differences in the strength of this particular need. The stronger an individual's need for uniqueness, the more dissimilar to others he or she would want to be, and the more sensitive he or she is to similarity information (Snyder, 1992). To test these predictions, Snyder and Fromkin (1977) developed a scale that measures the individual differences in the need for uniqueness. They found that people who scored high on the scale were more likely to join unique groups, such as a women's liberation group and a gay rights group than people who scored low. Additionally, scores on the scale were positively related to how dissimilar they rated themselves in comparison to another person (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977).

Possessions are often extensions of the self (Belk, 1988; James, 1890), so one way to establish difference of the self from others is by possessing unique consumer products (Fromkin, Olson, Dipboye, & Barnaby, 1971; Snyder, 1992). Consumers may express their feelings of self-uniqueness by acquiring products whose scarcity, newness, or relative unpopularity means that few others will possess them. They may also pursue self-uniqueness in shopping behaviours by purchasing from small, less frequented stores or by customizing commonly owned products (Lynn & Harris, 1997). Duval (1972) found that people who conformed less on a judgment task when their need for uniqueness was enhanced by false information; they were very similar to many others. This finding suggests that consumers with a strong dispositional desire to be unique may resist social influence in order to select less popular brands that convey more distinctiveness (Lynn & Harris, 1997).

The self is described to be a complex entity with many facets. Thus, it is found that there are many dimensions on which people can pursue their self-uniqueness. Researchers have also found evidence that creative abilities (Fromkin, 1968), personality traits (Snyder & Shenkel, 1976), judgments (Duval, 1972), experiences (Fromkin, 1970), group memberships (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977) and consumer products (Fromkin, Williams & Dipboye, 1974) all serve as a foundation for feelings of self-uniqueness. However, the following sources of uniqueness—group identifications, consumer products and experiences have received most attention from researchers.

Previous research (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) and (Brewer & Gardner, 1996) suggests that the need for uniqueness is a need derived from the needs for identity and self-validation. Consistent with this literature review, Campbell (1986) found that people underestimated the number of others who shared their positive abilities and this "false uniqueness" effect was stronger for those abilities that they rated as being more important to the self. It has been demonstrated that the tendency for people to expect peer similarity in behaviour, is termed as the "false-consensus" bias (Ross, Greene & House, 1977). Based on the aforementioned research findings, it is observed that individuals are more strongly motivated to seek uniqueness on dimensions or attributes relevant to their self-concepts than on less self-relevant dimensions.

Conversely, people view their unique traits as more central and self-defining than their common traits (Miller, Turnbull, & McFarland, 1988). This suggests that the self-reinforcing process may be started by some personal interest or source of distinctiveness in an individual's life and that an individual's uniqueness seeking may be concentrated especially in those particular areas or domains.

In line with self-determination theory, autonomy is defined as the experience of volition, choice, and self-regulation; competence is defined as the experience of effectance, mastery, and ability; and relatedness is defined as the experience of support, connection, and closeness with important others (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

A competent individual is one who is able to make use of his or her environmental and personal resources to achieve a favourable outcome. This statement is similar to the previous definitions of competence proposed, when psychologists had referred to the advantages of possessing a particular skill or ability (Waters & Sroufe, 1983). As Goldfried and D'Zurilla (1969) pointed out, the notion of competence is the ability to use resources. In the example of a study by Cook, Wayne, Keithly, and Connolly (2003), industry has segmented consumer markets based on certain psychological needs (stress relief, behavioural arousal, performance enhancement, obesity reduction) and psychosocial needs (social acceptance, personal image).

The ability of personality traits to predict important life outcomes has traditionally been questioned due to the minor effects of personality. It is compared that the predictive validity of personality traits with that of socioeconomic status (SES) and cognitive ability to test the relative contribution of personality traits to predictions of three critical outcomes: mortality, divorce, and occupational attainment. (Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi & Goldberg, 2007).

According to Rogers (1983) snob consumers may have higher socioeconomic status and may serve as "opinion leaders" since they are generally the first to adopt a product as an innovator.

Ample research has been carried out in the individual fields of consumer behaviour and psychological needs respectively. However, there is room for research that combines the two areas and finds a relationship between them. From the aforementioned literature reviewed, (Rogers, 1983) and (Cook, Wayne, Keithly & Connolly, 2003) have combined the two fields or areas. The rationale behind the present study is to expand on

such previous research and to contribute to this particularly fascinating and relevant interdisciplinary field. The present study aims to find whether there is an influence of socioeconomic status (viz., lower, lower middle, middle, upper middle, upper, and affluent) and gender of undergraduate students on psychological needs (3 dimensions, viz., relatedness, competence, and autonomy), self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products. The current research endeavour also intends to observe the relationship (if any) between psychological needs, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products in undergraduate students with different socioeconomic status.

II. HYPOTHESES

- H1.** There will be a significant difference between undergraduate boys and girls from different socioeconomic statuses with respect to (a) the 3 dimensions of psychological needs (i) relatedness (ii) competence (iii) autonomy; (b) self-attributed need for uniqueness; and (c) desire for unique consumer products.
- H2.** There will be a significant relationship between the relatedness dimension of psychological needs and (a) self-attributed need for uniqueness and (b) desire for unique consumer products in undergraduate students from (A) lower (B) lower middle (C) middle (D) upper middle (E) upper and (F) affluent socioeconomic status.
- H3.** There will be a significant relationship between the competence dimension of psychological needs and (a) self-attributed need for uniqueness (b) desire for unique consumer products in undergraduate students from (A) lower (B) lower middle (C) middle (D) upper middle (E) upper and (F) affluent socioeconomic status.
- H4.** There will be a significant relationship between the autonomy dimension of psychological needs and (a) self-attributed need for uniqueness (b) desire for unique consumer products in undergraduate students from (A) lower (B) lower middle (C) middle (D) upper middle (E) upper and (F) affluent socioeconomic status.
- H5.** There will be a significant relationship between self-attributed need for uniqueness and the desire for unique consumer products in undergraduates from (A) lower (B) lower middle (C) middle (D) upper middle (E) upper and (F) affluent socioeconomic status.

III. METHOD

Research Design

The present study adopts a between groups design to determine whether there are any gender differences between undergraduate students with different socio-economic status (viz., lower, lower middle, middle, upper middle, upper and affluent) in terms of the three dimensions of psychological needs (viz., relatedness, competence, and autonomy), self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products. This study also adopts a correlational design to determine whether there is any relationship between psychological needs, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products among undergraduate boys and girl with different socio-economic status.

IV. SAMPLE

A non-probability purposive sampling method was used to select a sample of 404 undergraduate college students aged 18 – 21 years. Out of the total sample, 60 belonged to lower SES (30 Boys and 30 Girls), 61 belonged to lower middle SES (31 Boys and 30 Girls), 71 belonged to middle SES (31 Boys and 40 Girls), 73 belonged to upper middle SES (31 Boys and 42 Girls), 76 belonged to upper SES (35 Boys and 41 Girls) and 63 belonged to the affluent SES (31 Boys and 32 Girls).

V. INSTRUMENTS

Four questionnaires were used in this research. They were:

- **Information Schedule**

Participants were asked to provide their gender, age, education, family information (monthly family income, family type, number of siblings), living arrangements and the like in the Information Schedule.

- **The Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs (BMPN)**

The Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs (Sheldon & Hilpert) 2012 measures need satisfaction and psychological needs in participants. It contains 6 items each for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, out of which 3 are positively worded and 3 are negatively worded. Reliability analyses of the six 3-item BMPN subscales found coefficients of .71 and .85 for positively and negatively worded relatedness, .71 and .70 for positively and negatively worded competence, and .69 and .72 for positively and negatively worded autonomy.

After reverse scoring the negatively worded items, reliabilities for BMPN autonomy, competence, and relatedness were .78, .79, and .78, respectively. Satisfaction (odd items) and Satisfaction (even items) scores should be computed for each need (6 subscale scores in all).

• **The Self-Attributed Need for Uniqueness (SANU) – (Lynn & Harris, 1997)**

It is a 4-item scale, which evaluates an individual's perception of his or her own need for uniqueness. For scoring, a = 1, b = 2, c = 3, d = 4 and e = 5. The total score reflects the sum of the responses to the four items. Higher scores are indicative of a higher need for uniqueness. This scale has a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.80 was obtained.

• **The Desire for Unique Consumer Products (DUCP)**

The Desire for Unique Consumer Products (Lynn & Harris, 1997) is an 8-item scale which measures the extent to which consumers hold as a personal goal the acquisition and possession of consumer goods, services, and experiences that few others possess (Lynn & Harris 1997). Total scores are obtained by summing the responses to the eight items. Higher scores are indicative of a higher desire for unique consumer products. Each item was operationalized using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Item scores are summed to create the DUCP score. These items were selected because they had high factor loadings (above .50) and represented several different manifestations of the desire for unique consumer products. Coefficient alpha estimates for both the student and nonstudent samples were .78. The test-retest reliability (assessed by administering the scale to a new sample of 50 business students, 2 weeks apart) was .85.

VI. RESULTS

Table 1(a) – Results of the mean and standard deviations of balanced measure of psychological needs and its dimensions, self-attributed need for uniqueness (SANU) and desire for unique consumer products (DUCP). (n=404)

SES	Gender	Relatedness		Competence		Autonomy		SANU		DUCP	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Lower	Boys (30)	3.33	3.80	4.03	3.48	4.27	3.06	11.53	3.33	27.80	5.06
	Girls (30)	2.40	3.52	2.60	3.15	2.97	3.47	11.37	4.30	25.97	5.58
	Total (60)	2.87	3.66	3.32	3.37	3.62	3.31	11.45	3.82	26.88	5.36
Lower Middle	Boys (31)	2.90	3.94	3.55	3.04	2.55	2.79	11.35	3.41	25.48	5.18
	Girls (30)	3.13	3.04	2.73	2.75	3.40	2.47	11.60	3.55	25.43	6.18
	Total (61)	3.02	3.50	3.15	2.91	2.97	2.65	11.48	3.45	25.46	5.65
Middle	Boys (31)	3.16	3.93	2.84	1.83	3.00	2.54	12.00	2.71	25.23	4.58
	Girls (40)	4.33	3.35	3.53	3.09	2.63	2.85	12.48	2.96	25.13	5.79
	Total (71)	3.82	3.64	3.23	2.62	2.79	2.71	12.27	2.84	25.17	5.26
Upper middle	Boys (31)	3.61	2.99	3.55	3.01	3.42	2.20	12.61	3.48	26.61	5.44
	Girls (42)	2.90	2.58	3.17	2.75	3.02	2.07	12.17	2.57	24.98	3.73
	Total (73)	3.21	2.76	3.33	2.85	3.19	2.12	12.36	2.98	25.67	4.57
Upper	Boys (35)	3.09	3.04	3.14	2.22	3.54	2.74	11.74	3.16	27.14	5.24
	Girls (41)	2.88	3.50	2.46	2.70	2.88	2.79	11.63	3.10	25.93	6.05
	Total (76)	2.97	3.28	2.78	2.50	3.18	2.77	11.68	3.11	26.49	5.68
Affluent	Boys (31)	3.90	2.97	2.68	3.44	3.26	2.99	11.61	3.23	26.16	5.15
	Girls (32)	4.09	2.84	3.47	2.65	2.59	2.71	11.59	3.27	26.72	4.29
	Total (63)	4.00	2.88	3.08	3.07	2.92	2.85	11.60	3.23	26.44	4.70
Total	Boys (189)	3.33	3.43	3.29	2.88	3.34	2.75	11.81	3.21	26.41	5.13
	Girls (215)	3.30	3.19	3.00	2.85	2.90	2.71	11.85	3.25	25.65	5.29
	Total (404)	3.31	3.30	3.14	2.87	3.11	2.73	11.83	3.23	26.00	5.22

Table 1(b) – Results of Two-Way ANOVA with socioeconomic status and gender as the IVs and the 3 dimensions of balanced measure of psychological needs, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products as the DVs

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Relatedness	Family Income	68.26	5	13.65	1.25	0.28
	Gender	0.19	1	0.19	0.02	0.89
	Family Income*Gender	47.72	5	9.54	0.88	0.5
Competence	Family Income	14.22	5	2.84	0.35	0.88
	Gender	9.27	1	9.27	1.13	0.29
	Family Income*Gender	61.88	5	12.38	1.51	0.19
Autonomy	Family Income	26.43	5	5.29	0.71	0.62
	Gender	17.93	1	17.93	2.4	0.12
	Family Income*Gender	38.37	5	7.67	1.03	0.4
SANU	Family Income	54.95	5	10.99	1.04	0.39
	Gender	0	1	0	0	0.99
	Family Income*Gender	9.05	5	1.81	0.17	0.97
DUCP	Family Income	148.38	5	29.68	1.09	0.37
	Gender	50.59	1	50.59	1.85	0.17
	Family Income*Gender	77.44	5	15.49	0.57	0.73

The results in table 1(b) revealed differences between psychological needs, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products with respect to undergraduate boys and girls with different socioeconomic status. However, none of the differences were statistically significant ($p>0.05$). In other words, the undergraduate boys and girls from lower, lower middle, middle, upper middle, upper or affluent socioeconomic status did not differ significantly with respect the 3 dimensions of balanced measure of psychological needs, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products. Hence, hypothesis **H1** was rejected.

Table 2(a) – Results of the correlation between psychological needs and its dimensions, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products in undergraduate students from lower socioeconomic status ($n=60$)

	Self-attributed Need for Uniqueness	Desire for Unique Consumer Products	Relatedness	Competence
Desire for Unique Consumer Products	0.239			
Relatedness	-0.076	0.25		
Competence	-0.109	.289*	.520**	
Autonomy	-0.098	.328*	.424**	.522**

* $p<0.05$
** $p<0.01$

Table 2(a) shows that there is significant positive correlation between the competence dimension of psychological needs and desire for unique consumer products ($r=0.28$, $p<0.05$), and the autonomy dimension of psychological needs and desire for unique consumer products ($r=0.32$, $p<0.05$) in undergraduate students with lower socioeconomic status. In other words, students with higher focus on the competence needs of effectance, mastery, and ability and students with higher focus on the autonomy needs of volition, choice, and self-regulation had higher desire for unique consumer products. Hence, hypotheses **H3b(A)** and **H4b(A)** were accepted.

Table 2(b) – Results of the correlation between balanced measure of psychological needs and its dimensions, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products in undergraduate students from lower middle socioeconomic status. (n=61)

	Self-attributed Need for Uniqueness	Desire for Unique Consumer Products	Relatedness	Competence
Desire for Unique Consumer Products	.305*			
Relatedness	0.233	0.114		
Competence	.346**	.398**	.300*	
Autonomy	.293*	.337**	.410**	.333**

*p<0.05

**p<0.01

Table 2(b) shows that there is a significant positive correlation between competence dimension of psychological needs and self-attributed need for uniqueness (r=0.34, p<0.01), competence dimension of psychological needs and desire for unique consumer products (r=0.39, p<0.01), autonomy dimension of psychological needs and self-attributed need for uniqueness (r=0.29, p<0.05), autonomy dimension of psychological needs and desire for unique consumer products (r=0.33, p<0.01), and self-attributed need for uniqueness and the desire for unique consumer products (r=0.30, p<0.05) in undergraduate students with lower middle socioeconomic status. In other words, students with higher focus on the competence needs of effectance, mastery, and ability had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness and higher desire for unique consumer products. Students with higher focus on the autonomy needs of volition, choice, and self-regulation had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness and higher desire for unique consumer products. Students with higher desire for self-attributed need for uniqueness had higher desire for unique consumer products. Hence, hypotheses **H3a(B)**, **H3b(B)**, **H4a(B)**, **H4b(B)** and **H5B** were accepted.

Table 2(c) – Results of the correlation between balanced measure of psychological needs and its dimensions, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products in undergraduate students from middle socioeconomic status. (n=71)

	Self-attributed Need for Uniqueness	Desire for Unique Consumer Products	Relatedness	Competence
Desire for Unique Consumer Products	.425**			
Relatedness	0.093	0.037		
Competence	0.207	0.197	.343**	
Autonomy	0.178	0.061	0.219	.329**

*p<0.05

**p<0.01

Table 2(c) shows that there is a significant positive correlation between self-attributed need for uniqueness and the desire for unique consumer products (r=0.42, p<0.01) in undergraduate students with middle socioeconomic status. In other words, students with higher self-attributed need for uniqueness had higher desire for unique consumer products. Hence, hypothesis **H5C** was accepted.

Table 2(d) – Results of the correlation between balanced measure of psychological needs and its dimensions, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products in undergraduate students from upper middle socioeconomic status. (n=73)

	Self-attributed Need for Uniqueness	Desire for Unique Consumer Products	Relatedness	Competence
Desire for Unique Consumer Products	.296*			
Relatedness	.242*	0.009		
Competence	.248*	-0.024	.381**	
Autonomy	0.084	0.154	.240*	0.171

*p<0.05

**p<0.01

Table 2(d) shows that there is a significant positive correlation between the relatedness dimension of psychological needs and self-attributed need for uniqueness (r=0.24, p<0.05), competence dimension of psychological needs and self-attributed need for uniqueness (r=0.24, p<0.05), and self-attributed need for uniqueness and the desire for unique consumer products (r=0.29, p<0.05) in undergraduate students with upper middle socioeconomic status. In other words, students with higher focus on the relatedness needs of support, connection, and closeness had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness. Students with higher focus on the competence needs of effectance, mastery, and ability had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness. Students with higher self-attributed need for uniqueness had higher desire for unique consumer products. Hence, hypotheses **H2a(D)**, **H3a(D)** and **H5D** were accepted.

Table 2(e) – Results of the correlation between balanced measure of psychological needs and its dimensions, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products in undergraduate students from upper socioeconomic status. (n=76)

	Self-attributed Need for Uniqueness	Desire for Unique Consumer Products	Relatedness	Competence
Desire for Unique Consumer Products	.259*			
Relatedness	0.154	0.091		
Competence	0.154	0.153	.321**	
Autonomy	.289*	.438**	0.161	.399**

*p<0.05

**p<0.01

Table 2(e) shows that there is a significant positive correlation between autonomy dimension of psychological needs and self-attributed need for uniqueness (r=0.28, p<0.05), autonomy dimension of psychological needs and desire for unique consumer products (r=0.43, p<0.01), and self-attributed need for uniqueness and the desire for unique consumer products (r=0.25, p<0.05) in undergraduate students with upper socioeconomic status. In other words, students with higher focus on the autonomy needs of volition, choice, and self-regulation had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness and higher desire for unique consumer products. Students with higher self-attributed need for uniqueness had higher desire for unique consumer products. Hence, hypotheses **H4a(E)**, **H4b(E)** and **H5E** were accepted.

Table 2(f) – Results of the correlation between balanced measure of psychological needs and its dimensions, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products in undergraduate students from affluent socioeconomic status. (n=63)

	Self-attributed Need for Uniqueness	Desire for Unique Consumer Products	Relatedness	Competence
Desire for Unique Consumer Products	0.237			
Relatedness	.260*	0.245		
Competence	0.127	0.23	.556**	
Autonomy	0.037	0.169	.385**	.465**

*p<0.05
**p<0.01

Table 2(f) shows that there is a significant positive correlation between relatedness dimension of psychological needs and self-attributed need for uniqueness (r=0.26, p<0.05) in undergraduate students with affluent socioeconomic status. In other words, students with higher focus on the relatedness needs of support, connection, and closeness had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness. Hence, hypothesis **H2a(F)** was accepted.

VII. DISCUSSION

The present study reported no significant differences in psychological needs, self-attributed need for uniqueness and desire for unique consumer products between undergraduate boys and girls with different socioeconomic status. In other words, the undergraduate boys and girls from lower, lower middle, middle, upper middle, upper or affluent socioeconomic status did not differ significantly with respect to the above mentioned variables. This is backed by previous research that socioeconomic status may not necessarily determine uniqueness in an individual, especially among young adults.

According to Christin (2010) socioeconomic status strongly influences aesthetic tastes and in turn plays a part in the reproduction of social inequalities through the creation of symbolic boundaries with real, material consequences, in a variety of social spheres such as education or in the workplace. It is acknowledged that socioeconomic status influences musical tastes: upper-status people are more likely to appreciate highbrow musical genres than lower-status groups. However, these highbrow respondents also appreciate more popular types of music than other respondents. They are “omnivores” characterized by their eclectic musical tastes (Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996; Alderson et al. 2007). This trend has been documented in several countries (Peterson, 2005) including France (Coulangeon&Lemel 2007; Coulangeon 2003; Lahire 2004; Donnat 1994). These results have several important implications for research on the relationship between class and culture. It was also found that younger cohorts are more omnivorous than older cohorts in the two countries.

Findings by White (2001) support the argument that over time people in general are becoming more omnivorous in their musical preferences. At the most rudimentary level, it could be due to the fact that today there are simply more choices available to people. Additionally, this cultural capital argument is supported by findings, which show that the argument does indeed hold up with regards to social class, age, and race. While White’s (2001) and Christin’s (2010) research focusses on music, it can be applicable to the many choices available to consumers with regard to fashion, cuisine, customizable products and so on.

As the proliferation of American culture leads to what Weiner (2000) calls a “global culture,” we can therefore expect global variations of culture and distinction to decrease over time. Alfrey (2010) also proposed that socioeconomic changes have initiated new social structures in which collectives emerge via networks of shared interests and taste.

Additionally, Alfrey (2010) sought to light the inverse relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and smoking which is typically seen in terms of the greater economic and social resources of advantaged groups, but it may also relate to cultural resources. It was observed that preferences for classical music were associated with lower smoking, while preferences for bluegrass, jazz, and heavy metal music were associated with higher smoking. Such results suggest that SES groups may use smoking, like other cultural tastes, to distinguish their lifestyles from those of others.

The present study reported that in lower income families, students with higher focus on the competence needs of effectance, mastery, and ability and students with higher focus on the autonomy needs of volition, choice, and self-regulation had higher desire for unique consumer products. In lower middle income families, students with higher focus on the competence needs of effectance, mastery, and ability had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness and higher desire for unique consumer products. Students with higher focus on the autonomy needs of volition, choice, and self-regulation had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness and higher desire for unique consumer products. Students with higher desire for self-attributed need for uniqueness

had higher desire for unique consumer products. In middle income families, students with higher self-attributed need for uniqueness had higher desire for unique consumer products. In upper middle income families, students with higher focus on the relatedness needs of support, connection, and closeness had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness. Students with higher focus on the competence needs of effectance, mastery, and ability had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness. Students with higher self-attributed need for uniqueness had higher desire for unique consumer products. In upper income families, students with higher focus on the autonomy needs of volition, choice, and self-regulation had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness and higher desire for unique consumer products. Students with higher self-attributed need for uniqueness had higher desire for unique consumer products. In affluent income families, students with higher focus on the relatedness needs of support, connection, and closeness had higher self-attributed need for uniqueness.

The following results can be supported by Rogers (1983) who stated that: "Undoubtedly one of the important motivations for almost any individual to adopt an innovation is the desire to gain social status. For certain innovations, such as new clothing fashions, the social prestige that the innovations convey to its wearer is almost the sole benefit that the adopter receives. In fact, when many other members of a system have also adopted the same fashion, the innovation (such as longer skirts or designer jeans) may lose much of its social value to the adopters. This gradual loss of status given on the part of a particular clothing innovation provides a continual pressure for yet newer fashions. One way in which snobs gain their competency is by serving as an avenue for the entrance of new ideas into their social system."

According to Rogers (1983) snob consumers may have higher socioeconomic status and may serve as opinion leaders since they are generally the first to adopt a product. "The most innovative member of a system is very often perceived as a deviant from the social system". Typically, it is expected that followers or bandwagon consumers seek an opinion leader of somewhat higher status than their own.

As found by Snyder & Fromkin (1980) uniqueness striving is constrained by the need for social affiliation and social approval, so people strive to be unique in ways that do not result in social isolation or disapproval.

As noted by Cook, Wayne, Keithly and Connolly (2003) the tobacco industry has targeted cigarette product design towards individuals with varying psychological/psychosocial needs. Internal industry documents segmented consumer markets based on psychological needs (stress relief, behavioural arousal, performance enhancement, obesity reduction) and psychosocial needs (social acceptance, personal image). Associations between these segments and smoking behaviours, brand and design preferences were used to create cigarette brands targeting individuals with these needs. Cigarette brands created to address the psychological and psychosocial needs of smokers may increase the likelihood of smoking initiation and addiction. Awareness of targeted product development will improve smoking cessation and prevention efforts. Similarly, awareness of unique and targeted product development on positive consumer products may improve the chances of consumption of said product. Lee and Hwang (2011) noted that for example, a customer can book a night at one of the Starwood's luxury collection hotels at nearly half of the retail price on luxurylink.com. Previous research on luxury consumption in the context of hospitality has mainly focused on customer motivation and attitude, service quality evaluations, brand value and customer relationship management and little is known about the influence of mass luxury in the hospitality industry. Which can prompt further research into how luxury can be made accessible to the masses and people from lower SES backgrounds as it is evident that these groups have a high need for uniqueness as well.

A growing body of research states that materialistic values are linked to lower well-being. Self-determination theory offers an explanation through the low fulfilment levels of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. However, recent research suggests that frustration of these psychological needs may also play an additional role. Using structural equation modelling in adult samples Unanue, Dittmar, Vignoles and Vansteenkiste (2014) carried out research from an established mass consumer society, the United Kingdom and a fast-developing new economy, Chile. It was found that a materialistic value orientation related negatively to well-being and positively to ill-being and that both psychological need satisfaction and psychological need frustration played an explanatory role.

According to Rucker and Galinsky (2008) "Low power increased consumers' willingness to pay for auction items and consumers' reservation prices in negotiations but only when products were status related." This link between powerlessness and compensatory consumption has broad implications both for consumers' health and well-being and for understanding the psychological state of power (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008).

It is also stated by Roth (1995) that cultural power distance, cultural individualism, and regional socioeconomics affect the performance of functional (problem prevention and solving), social (group membership and symbolic), and sensory (novelty, variety, and sensory gratification) brand image strategies.

Finally, Lynn and Harris (1997) have found individual differences in the tendency to pursue uniqueness through consumption that are consistent with such reasoning. "Identifying other domain-specific individual differences in uniqueness seeking would be a fruitful direction for future research" (Lynn & Harris 1997).

VIII. IMPLICATIONS

It is observed from the present study that lower socioeconomic groups tend to regard competence and autonomy to influence their self-attributed need for uniqueness, whereas, higher socioeconomic groups perhaps already feel a sense of uniqueness. Thus in the latter, relatedness influences their self-attributed need for uniqueness rather than autonomy and competence. This study also highlights that irrespective of socioeconomic status undergraduate students do experience similar levels of desire for unique consumer products. Results like these suggest that there is a tendency among undergraduate students to view unique products as value additions to their social standing in comparison to their peers. This may provide insight not only into differentiation itself but also the communication of identity across class and cultures and the integration of multiple needs more broadly.

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