

Abstract

In contemporary marketing philosophy, conspicuous consumption is a most imprecise concept, and one that could be defined to have an infinite number of meaning in both scholarly and every day discussions. It only acquires a more useful meaning when it makes a reference for theories, contexts, and practices concerning the luxuries market. Clearly, it is an evaluative concept that establishes the ground rules for debate what motivate conspicuous consumption and how marketers can inculcate consumers by adding different symbolic meanings to their products. In this focus, this research addressed three main research questions. First, can the structure and nature of motives for the consumption of conspicuous products be identified? Second, are there differences between consumers from different nationalities in their motives for consuming conspicuous products? Third, how consumers with different demographic characteristics differ in conspicuous consumptions?

For this research, data was obtained from four nationalities using stratified random sample technique. Since an urban setting leads to a greater need to use visible consumption to gain status, this research purposely excluded the views of rural respondents. A total of 2,382 (Sinhalese N=1020; Indian Tamils N=335; Sri Lankan Tamils N=427; Muslims N=600) usable responses were obtained.

In respect of the first research question, a model of motives for conspicuous consumption was developed and then it was empirically tested. This model proposed that four forms of motives would exist; status, uniqueness, conformist, and hedonic. In this study, a four factor model of consumer motives was uncovered, consisting of all four forms of conspicuous motives stated above. Hedonic motive emerged as the most important motive for the consumption of conspicuous products. This is followed

by uniqueness and status motives. Conformist motive was the least important form of motive for conspicuous consumption. This finding suggests that the conventional emphasis in the conspicuous products literature, on status as a motive of conspicuous consumption, may be misplaced.

In respect of the second research question, statistically significant differences were found in cultural value orientations based on respondents' nationality. Correlation analysis and a series of multiple regressions were conducted in order to investigate the relationship between cultural orientation and motives for consuming conspicuous products. PDI, IDV, MAS, and UAI were found to be related to status motive. PDI, IDV, MAS, and LTO were related to uniqueness motive, and PDI, MAS, UAI, and LTO were found to be related to hedonic motive. Other than PDI, all other cultural value dimensions were related to conformist motive.

In order to investigate the third and final research question, it was needed to explore the respondents' demographic characteristic. Correlation analysis and a series of multiple regressions were conducted to investigate the relationship between respondents' demographics and motives for consuming conspicuous products. According to the findings, uniqueness motive was found to be related to respondents' gender, age, income, education, and nationality and status motive was related with respondents' gender, income, education, and nationality. Further, results reveal that the respondents' age, income, and education were significantly contributed to the prediction of hedonic motive, whereas their income, nationality, and household size were significantly contributed to the prediction of conformist motive.