

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### How do men perceive and react to an unknown woman's use of a luxury brand ?

Keung, Kwai Fun

*Date of Award:*  
2018

[Link to publication](#)

#### **General rights**

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent URL assigned to the publication

## **ABSTRACT**

An emerging body of research on signaling theory applies evolutionary psychology to explain the purpose of a signaler's use of a luxury brand. However, in response to visible signals displayed by an unknown woman's use of a luxury brand, the male receivers' decoding (perceptions) and reactions (counter-signals) on the signals are ignored in previous research. This research has the overarching objective of filling this research gap through the lens of evolutionary psychology. Through a series of experiments, it was found that an unknown woman using a luxury (vs. non-luxury) brand results in men believing that she is more likely to be in a committed relationship. Also, there is a moderating effect of an unknown woman's overall physical attractiveness on the effect of her use of a luxury (vs. non-luxury) brand on men's intentions to attract her; and men's attracting intentions mediate the moderating effect of an unknown woman's overall physical attractiveness on the effect of her use of a luxury (vs. non-luxury) brand on men's intentions to display material resources or physical fitness. These research findings not only offer theoretical contributions to signaling theory, but also generate managerial implications and future research directions.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND .....	7
2.1 Evolutionary Psychology .....	7
2.2 Intrasexual Competition .....	9
2.3 Signaling Theory .....	11
2.4 Research Gap in Signaling Theory .....	17
2.5 “Visible Signal” for Human Mate-Attraction .....	20
2.6 Men can Distinguish Women’s Luxury Brands from Non-Luxury Brands....	22
CHAPTER 3: HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT.....	24
3.1 Effect of an Unknown Woman’s Use of a Luxury (vs. Non-Luxury) Brand on Men’s Perceptions of the Woman being Perceived as in a Committed (vs. Non-Committed) Relationship .....	24
3.2 Moderating Effect of an Unknown Woman’s Overall Physical Attractiveness on the Effect of her Use of a Luxury (vs. Non-Luxury) Brand on Men’s Attracting Intentions .....	33
3.3 The 1st Mediated Moderation: Moderating Effect of an Unknown Woman’s Overall Physical Attractiveness on the Effect of her Use of a Luxury (vs. Non-Luxury) Brand on Men’s Intentions to Display Material Resources is Mediated by Men’s Attracting Intentions .....	43
3.4 The 2nd Mediated Moderation: Moderating Effect of an Unknown Woman’s Overall Physical Attractiveness on the Effect of her Use of Luxury (vs. Non-Luxury) Brands on Men’s Intentions to Display Physical Fitness is Mediated by Men’s Attracting Intentions .....	50
CHAPTER 4: EXPERIMENTS .....	59
4.1 Overview of Experiments .....	59
4.2 Pre-test 1 .....	61
4.2.1 Method (Pre-test 1) .....	61
4.2.2 Results (Pre-test 1) .....	62
4.2.3 Discussion (Pre-test 1).....	65
4.3 Experiment 1.....	66
4.3.1 Method (Experiment 1) .....	66
4.3.2 Results (Experiment 1) .....	69
4.3.3 Discussion (Experiment 1) .....	74
4.4 Experiment 2.....	75
4.4.1 Method (Experiment 2) .....	76
4.4.2 Results (Experiment 2) .....	83
4.4.3 Discussion (Experiment 2) .....	112
4.5 Pre-test 2 .....	113
4.5.1 Method (Pre-test 2).....	113
4.5.2 Results (Pre-test 2) .....	116
4.5.3 Discussion (Pre-test 2) .....	117
4.6 Experiment 3 .....	118
4.6.1 Method (Experiment 3).....	119
4.6.2 Results (Experiment 3).....	124
4.6.3 Discussion (Experiment 3) .....	147
CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION .....	150
5.1 Summary of Findings .....	150
5.2 Theoretical Contributions .....	152
5.3 Managerial Implications .....	158

5.4	Limitations and Future Research .....	163
5.5	Conclusion .....	169
REFERENCES	.....	172
APPENDICES	.....	188
Appendix A:	Photos Presented in Pre-test 1 .....	188
Appendix B:	Photos Presented in Experiment 1 .....	190
Appendix C:	Photos Presented in Experiment 2.....	191
Appendix D:	Photos Presented in Pre-test 2 .....	192
Appendix E:	Photos Presented in Experiment 3 .....	193
Appendix F:	Consent Forms signed by Women presented in Pre-tests and Experiments.....	194
CURRICULUM VITAE	.....	201