The Impostor Syndrome from Luxury Consumption

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The present research proposes that luxury consumption can be a double-edged sword: while luxury consumption yields status benefits, it can also make consumers feel inauthentic, producing what we call *the impostor syndrome from luxury consumption*. As a result, paradoxically, luxury consumption may backfire and lead consumers to behave less confidently due to their undermined feelings of self-authenticity. Feelings of inauthenticity from luxury consumption may arise because consumers perceive luxury as an undue privilege. These feelings are less pronounced among consumers with high levels of chronic psychological entitlement, and they are reduced when consumers' sense of entitlement is temporarily boosted. The effects are robust across studies conducted in the lab and in field settings such as the Metropolitan Opera, Martha's Vineyard, a luxury shopping center, and the Upper East Side in New York, featuring relevant participant populations including luxury target segments and consumption contexts including consumers' reflections on their actual past luxury purchases.

Keywords: luxury, self-authenticity, psychological entitlement, symbolic consumption

> *Luxury is an enticing pleasure, a bastard mirth, which hath honey in her mouth, gall in her heart, and a sting in her tail.*
>
> —Quarles (1634, 17)

Luxury products and brands have an overwhelming and enduring universal appeal. Often labeled as a crisis-resistant industry, the global luxury industry has grown by 5% annually in the past 20 years. In 2017, consumers spent over $1.2 trillion on luxury goods (D'Arpizio and Levato 2017). This overpowering demand for luxury is often attributed to its experiential and symbolic benefits. Specifically, beyond the functional benefits of superior quality and craftsmanship, luxury symbolizes high status, a privileged lifestyle, and having the best, captivating consumers' deepest desires and aspirations.

However, we argue that luxury can be a double-edged sword because, paradoxically, the associations of superiority and privilege that often make luxury so desirable can backfire and make consumers feel inauthentic. Although

self-(in)authenticity has been understudied as a potential outcome of luxury consumption, it is an increasingly important consumer motivation. In today's age of authenticity, cultural observers note that "authenticity has become the foremost spiritual quest of our time" (Potter 2010), as people increasingly "see the world in terms of real or fake" (Gilmore and Pine 2007) and seek to "reconnect with the truth of their lives" (Zogby 2008). Because consumers seek self-authenticity in consumption experiences (Arnould and Price 1993; Chalmers Thomas, Price, and Schau 2013), it is important for marketers to understand how consumption behaviors may impact consumers' feelings of authenticity, and how these feelings, in turn, may shape consumers' experiences in the marketplace. Understanding the impact of consumption behaviors on self-authenticity will also benefit consumers, because maintaining self-authenticity significantly impacts well-being (Erickson 1995; Sheldon et al. 1997).

In the present research, we propose that luxury consumption, alongside providing desired status benefits, can also make consumers feel inauthentic, producing what we call the impostor syndrome from luxury consumption. This happens because luxury products are often perceived as a privilege that is undue and undeserved. In contrast, non-luxury products are less likely to make consumers feel inauthentic because they are not viewed as a privilege that needs to be deserved and justified. As a result, while past literature presumes that luxury consumption should empower consumers, we show that, paradoxically, luxury consumption may backfire and lead consumers to behave less confidently due to their undermined feelings of self-authenticity. We further propose that individual differences in consumers' chronic psychological entitlement (i.e., an inflated self-view stemming from an innate feeling of being special and superior; Campbell et al. 2004) moderate this effect. Consumers with high (vs. low) chronic psychological entitlement are less likely to feel inauthentic from luxury consumption. Finally, we propose that manipulations that temporarily boost consumers' psychological entitlement (i.e., feelings of being special) can reduce inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption. We find support for our predictions with relevant consumer populations in the field (at the Metropolitan Opera, a luxury shopping mall, Martha's Vineyard, and the Upper East Side in New York) and in the lab.

In addition to the practical implications of understanding how consumers' growing quest for self-authenticity may manifest in their luxury experiences, our research makes four important theoretical contributions. First, our work contributes to the literature on luxury consumption (Berger and Ward 2010; Dubois and Ordabayeva 2015; Griskevicius et al. 2007; Han, Nunes, and Drèze 2010; Nunes, Drèze, and Han 2011; Rucker and Galinsky 2008) by demonstrating that luxury consumption can backfire and have negative consequences—namely, for consumers'

feelings of self-authenticity. We highlight self-authenticity as an important aspect of consumers' luxury experiences, which can impact behavior and well-being. We also examine the importance of consumers' psychological entitlement when consuming luxury.

Second, our work advances the research on self-authenticity and consumption (Arnould and Price 1993; Arsel and Thompson 2011; Chalmers Thomas et al. 2013; Schouten and McAlexander 1995) by uncovering luxury consumption as an important driver of consumers' feelings of inauthenticity. Our research demonstrates the unique psychological process (perceptions of luxury products as an undue privilege) behind these feelings as well as important boundary conditions. More broadly, our research highlights an important tension by suggesting that consumers' need for self-authenticity may conflict with another powerful motivation—namely, consumers' need to dream, aspire, and self-enhance.

Furthermore, prior studies on inauthenticity in marketing have demonstrated that consuming inauthentic products such as counterfeits undermines consumers' feelings of authenticity. The general implication of these studies was that the more authentic a product is perceived to be, the more authentic consumers should feel consuming it (Beverland 2006; Bodner and Prelec 2003; Gino, Norton, and Ariely 2010; Wilcox, Kim, and Sen 2009). In contrast, we demonstrate that consumption of authentic products does not guarantee consumers' feelings of authenticity, and sometimes, authentic products can make consumers feel inauthentic.

Finally, our research contributes to the literature on psychological entitlement, which previously focused on professional, academic, and interpersonal relationship contexts (Anastasio and Rose 2014; Campbell et al. 2004; Piff 2014), by showing that psychological entitlement can impact individuals' self-authenticity feelings in certain consumption experiences, particularly in the luxury domain. We show that this effect of psychological entitlement holds in high-income luxury target segments. We thereby identify an important group of consumers who may be able to afford luxury, but may perceive it as an undue privilege and feel inauthentic consuming it.

Demonstrating the tension between aspirational consumption and desire for self-authenticity is not only theoretically interesting, but it also has important implications for consumers and marketers. Our findings can help consumers realize that luxury may have some unintended consequences and that inauthenticity feelings that they experience from luxury consumption are common across segments, even among affluent ones. Importantly, while it is commonly assumed that luxury consumption should empower consumers, we show that it can backfire and may make consumers behave less confidently because it makes them feel inauthentic. For marketers, we highlight the importance of considering self-authenticity in luxury

marketing. Our findings explain why some consumers who can afford luxury may avoid luxury or refrain from using the luxury items that they already own. We also show that it is essential to consider and determine consumers' psychological entitlement. Therefore, we offer practical ways to identify entitled (and unentitled) consumers in the marketplace.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Appeal of Luxury

Luxury goods are associated with high price, superior quality, service, design, craftsmanship, scarcity, exclusivity, heritage, indulgence, and aspirational lifestyle (Kapferer 1997). In marketing, luxury is often defined as products and brands that rank in the top tier of the product and brand hierarchy (Dubois and Duquesne 1993; Keinan, Crener, and Bellezza 2016; Keinan, Crener, and Goor 2019).

Research in economics, sociology, and consumer behavior has established the centrality of the symbolic meaning of luxury consumption (Belk 1988; Bourdieu 2011; Üstüner and Thompson 2012; Veblen 1899/1994). Luxury consumers are perceived to possess desirable qualities such as success, power, and influence (Bellezza and Keinan 2014; Han et al. 2010; Nave et al. 2018; Ordabayeva and Chandon 2011; Wang and Griskevicius 2014; Ward and Dahl 2014). These perceptions arise because the possession of luxury represents consumers' superior status compared to others (Berger and Ward 2010; Dubois and Duquesne 1993), and hence luxury consumption symbolizes being privileged, superior, and better than others (Berger and Ward 2010; McFerran and Argo 2014). As a result, consumption of luxury products may have psychological benefits such as making consumers feel like a part of an exclusive group (Nunes et al. 2011), powerful (Rucker and Galinsky 2008), and proud (Bellezza and Keinan 2014). It can also yield social benefits such as respect from others, social recognition, and preferential treatment (Belk 1988; Griskevicius et al. 2007; McFerran and Argo 2014; Nelissen and Meijers 2011). Thus, luxury consumption embodies a powerful consumer motive to aspire, self-enhance, feel superior, and enjoy a privileged lifestyle.

We propose that consumers' desire to dream and aspire through luxury consumption can conflict with another powerful motivation: the need to feel authentic. We examine how luxury consumption impacts consumers' self-authenticity and propose that, interestingly, the same aspect of luxury that makes it appealing (i.e., its symbolic association with privilege, superior positions, and having more than others) can also be a source of inauthenticity feelings. Given the increasing emphasis modern society places on self-authenticity, examining the tension between aspirational consumption and self-authenticity is not only intriguing for scholars, but also relevant for luxury marketers and consumers. Next, we discuss the concept of self-authenticity, why consumers increasingly care about it, and how it impacts their behavior and well-being.

Self-Authenticity

Social psychology studies have conceptualized the authentic self as a system of personal values that drives one's actions (Erickson 1995). To pursue self-authenticity, individuals commit to their true self by aligning their inner thoughts and feelings with their presented self (i.e., outward expressions and behavior). In contrast, inauthenticity feelings arise when individuals perceive that their actions violate their true identity and values (Glaser and Strauss 1964).

Consumers' desire for self-authenticity has been receiving a lot of attention in popular culture. Countless self-help and business books as well as workshops guide consumers on how to find their true self and be more authentic. In the last decade, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of the word "authenticity" in the popular press (Ibarra 2015). Consumers in today's age of authenticity are expected to find themselves, embrace who they are, and show their authentic selves to others, as reflected in popular slogans calling on individuals to "be themselves," "stay true to who they are," and "keep it real" (Grant 2016). To illustrate, as of July 2019, the hashtag "LiveAuthentic" was featured in over 30 million posts on Instagram.

Understanding what makes people feel authentic or inauthentic is important, because self-authenticity impacts individuals' well-being and life satisfaction. Expression of one's authentic self is associated with feeling intensely alive, and it increases personal satisfaction (Cable, Gino, and Staats 2013; Erickson 1995). Living in harmony with one's true self enhances self-fulfillment and both physical and psychological health (Kernis and Goldman 2006; Sheldon et al. 1997). Authenticity is also associated with improved self-regulation, moral judgments, and prosocial behavior (Gino, Kouchaki, and Galinsky 2015; Newman, De Freitas, and Knobe 2015). In contrast, feeling inauthentic increases individuals' stress, anxiety, and depression (Sheldon et al. 1997). In professional settings, individuals who experience the impostor syndrome (i.e., feelings of fraudulence) are not able to internalize their accomplishments, and they attribute their positive outcomes to external sources such as luck (Langford and Clance 1993). They doubt their success, avoid professional challenges, and forgo opportunities for learning and achievement due to the fear of being "found out" (Clance and Imes 1978).

Consumers' quest for authenticity plays a central role in consumption behaviors. In order to discover their authentic selves, consumers may turn to extraordinary adventures such as whitewater rafting (Arnould and Price 1993), subcultures, and brand communities (e.g., hipsters, *Star Trek*

fans, runners, and bikers) (Arsel and Thompson 2011; Chalmers Thomas et al. 2013; Kozinets 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Related work examines the consumption of authentic or inauthentic products. It shows that consumers feel inauthentic when they consume fake or counterfeit goods (Gino et al. 2010; Wilcox et al. 2009), which suggests that the more authentic a product is perceived to be, the more authentic consumers should feel consuming it (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). In contrast, as discussed next, we propose that consumption of *authentic* products can make consumers feel inauthentic.

Understanding the Tension between Luxury Consumption and Self-Authenticity

We propose that luxury consumption is an important context in which feelings of self-inauthenticity emerge, and we identify the unique psychological process behind these feelings. We further argue that consumers' desire for self-authenticity may conflict with their equally important motive to aspire, which manifests itself through luxury consumption. The tension between aspirations and authenticity is echoed in modern society. For example, advice to "keep it real" and "#LiveAuthentic" often coincides with encouragement to "reach for the stars" and "dare to dream." In popular culture, David Beckham famously tattooed "Dream Big Be Unrealistic" on the back of his hand, inspired by a quote from Jay Z and Beyoncé's concert.

Examining this tension, a pilot study (detailed in web appendix A) confirmed that both the goal to be authentic ("keep it real," "stay true to who you are," "be yourself") and the goal to dream and aspire ("dare to dream," "dream big," "reach for the stars") are important to consumers (scored significantly above the midpoint). Furthermore, products that advance the goal to dream and aspire were also considered to hurt the goal to be authentic.

To further explore this tension in the real world with affluent consumers and real luxury purchases, we interviewed consumers on the Upper East Side in New York—home to some of the most expensive luxury boutiques. Participants were asked to describe some luxury items they purchased and owned and how they felt when wearing or using these products (see web appendix B for the methodology). The items and product categories participants described included cars, designer clothes and accessories, luxury watches, and wine. The most frequently mentioned items were Burberry scarves and Chanel purses. Importantly, the interviews revealed that even affluent consumers experience inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption. For example, a 70-year-old long-term Upper East Side resident indicated that she owns several luxury purses including Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and Coach, but rarely uses them because she feels more authentic wearing her basic canvas bag from LeSportsac. Her friend who owns an apartment at Place Vendome in Paris said that she has always felt the same way about a Dior dress she still owns. Another respondent said, "These clothes just don't feel right for me…it is not who I am." A 55-year-old male respondent noted about the shirts and ties he purchased from Barney's, "I keep these clothes for a special occasion, but this special occasion never comes," explaining, "It's just not me." Thus, several participants reported that they avoid using luxuries that they own or even refrain from buying more luxuries, not because they cannot afford luxury, but because it is not aligned with who they are. The interviews also indicated that when consumers do use the luxury products they own, it impacts how they feel and behave. For example, one participant said she felt very shy when wearing a gold necklace with diamonds that she owned because it is not in her character to wear luxurious jewelry. These findings provided evidence for inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption and inspired the settings and products examined in the main studies.

Building from these initial insights, we argue that although consuming luxury is mostly associated with positive outcomes for consumers, luxury consumption can have an important psychological downside; namely, it can make consumers feel inauthentic. Luxury products are associated with privilege—that is, with having more than what others have. What makes the notion of privilege intriguing is that, while being aspirational and desirable (Drèze and Nunes 2009), privilege may also make people question whether or not it is due and deserved. This is related to the notion that individuals often doubt the legitimacy of superior social positions (Ordabayeva and Fernandes 2018). Hence, the symbolic association of luxury products with privilege can make luxury appealing and yield external benefits (e.g., respect, special treatment). However, the symbolic association of luxury products with privilege may also lead consumers to perceive this privilege as undue and undeserved (i.e., it may make consumers question whether or not they are worthy of this privilege). We define perceptions of undue privilege as the extent to which a product is associated with advantage and superiority enjoyed by certain people but not others, which causes consumers to doubt whether or not they are worthy of the superiority associated with the product.

Beyond being able to afford a product (Ward and Dahl 2014), consumers also need to feel that they deserve it (Cavanaugh 2014; Kivetz and Simonson 2002). We propose that perception of consuming something that is potentially undue may give rise to feelings of inauthenticity. Thus, while luxury holds the promise of elevated status, it can paradoxically make consumers feel inauthentic. In contrast, non-luxury is not associated with privilege; it therefore should not raise questions in consumers' minds about whether or not they are worthy of these products and hence not undermine their feelings of authenticity. Notably, in contrast to studies suggesting that inauthenticity feelings

arise from consumption of inauthentic products, we propose that self-inauthenticity can result from the consumption of real and authentic products.

> **H1:** Luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption increases consumers' feelings of inauthenticity.
>
> **H2:** Inauthenticity feelings from luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption emerge because consumers are more likely to perceive luxury (vs. non-luxury) products as an undue privilege.

Furthermore, we argue that inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption will have downstream behavioral consequences. It is typically presumed that luxury consumption should empower consumers and make them more confident (Bellezza and Keinan 2014; Cutright, Srna, and Samper 2017; Wickelgren 2012) and could even alter their behavior (Wang, John, and Griskevicius 2015). This assumption is based on the status benefits associated with luxury—that is, its ability to signal status and power (Griskevicius et al. 2007; Rucker and Galinsky 2008).

In contrast, we argue that, because luxury consumption makes consumers feel inauthentic, it can actually make consumers behave less, rather than more, confidently. Specifically, it may make consumers less likely to behave in ways that require confidence such as speaking up, standing up for themselves when undermined, initiating and leading conversations, and making sure they are being heard. This prediction adds to recent marketing studies showing that luxury may not always help consumers restore their sense of power (Rustagi and Shrum 2019), and it ultimately suggests that the effect of luxury consumption on consumer empowerment may be more nuanced than previously presumed. Supporting our prediction, psychology and organizational studies show that feeling inauthentic in the workplace can negatively impact not only individuals' emotions but also their behaviors: it can reduce willingness to take risks or pursue professional challenges and opportunities (Cable et al. 2013; Clance and Imes 1978). Feeling inauthentic may therefore make individuals less sure of themselves and lower their confidence about who they are, ultimately impacting behavior. We propose that inauthenticity feelings that arise from luxury consumption may translate to less confident outward behavior.

> **H3:** Inauthenticity feelings from luxury (vs. non-luxury) can lead to less confident behavior.

Moderating Role of Psychological Entitlement

Consistent with our prediction that perceptions of luxury (but not non-luxury) products as an undue privilege play an important role in determining how authentic consumers feel consuming luxury, we expect that consumers' chronic sense of entitlement should moderate the effect of luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption on inauthenticity feelings.
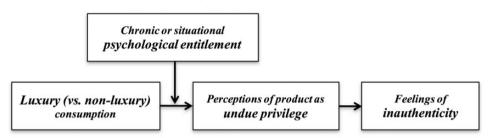
Psychological entitlement constitutes "a stable and pervasive sense that one is entitled to more [resources and praise] than others" (Campbell et al. 2004, 31). Entitled individuals believe that they deserve more than others because they are special (Campbell et al. 2004), and this does not depend on their objective effort or performance in specific contexts (Moses and Moses-Hrushovski 1990). Thus, the literature distinguishes psychological entitlement from deservingness that results from hard work (Campbell et al. 2004; Feather 2003). While deservingness is based on effort in a given situation, psychological entitlement is a stable trait and tendency to expect preferential rewards and praise regardless of actual qualities or performance level, even when there is little justification (Harvey and Dasborough 2015; Naumann, Minsky, and Sturman 2002). For example, entitled individuals expect to get better grades without necessarily working harder than others (Chowning and Campbell 2009), to be paid more than others who hold similar positions (Campbell et al. 2004), and to generally receive special treatment over others (Raskin and Terry 1988). Research suggests that psychological entitlement may be rooted in the "every kid gets a trophy" phenomenon (Alsop 2008; Campbell et al. 2004). Consistently praising and rewarding young individuals without actual achievement leads them to feel that they are special and can easily and effortlessly be anything they want to be (Alsop 2008; Moeller, Crocker, and Bushman 2009). This develops into a stable feeling of being special compared to others in adulthood (Moeller et al. 2009).

To study the role of psychological entitlement in higher education, workplace dynamics, taxation, social and distributive justice, romantic relationships, and interpersonal behaviors, researchers have used a scale that is reliable, valid, and consistent across time and situations (Campbell et al. 2004; Pryor, Miller, and Gaughan 2008). The scale includes nine items such as, "I feel entitled to more of everything," "Great things should come to me," and "If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the *first* lifeboat!" Yet surprisingly little work has examined how psychological entitlement impacts consumer behavior.

We expect that chronic psychological entitlement will moderate inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption. Consumers with high psychological entitlement should be less likely to perceive luxury products as an undue privilege and therefore be less likely to experience inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption. Furthermore, temporarily boosting consumers' psychological entitlement by enhancing their feelings of being special in a specific situation should similarly weaken perceptions of luxury products as an undue privilege and reduce inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption. We do not expect psychological entitlement to impact how authentic consumers feel when consuming non-luxury products, which do not carry associations with privilege. Notably, we expect chronic psychological entitlement to be more powerful in

FIGURE 1

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

moderating inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption. This is because while chronic entitlement is a pervasive and stable trait (Campbell et al. 2004), prompts of situational entitlement should temporarily change perceptions of entitlement in a specific, narrow context.

> **H4:** Inauthenticity feelings from luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption are less pronounced among consumers with high (chronic or situational) psychological entitlement.

Figure 1 summarizes our theoretical model.

Summary of Studies

Seven studies conducted in the field and in the lab document inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption using different product categories and brands, consumption contexts, and populations, including luxury target segments such as the patrons of the Metropolitan Opera, shoppers at a luxury shopping center, consumers spending the summer at Martha's Vineyard, and a panel of high-earning US consumers. Table 1 provides an overview of the studied populations and consumption contexts. Studies 1A and 1B show that while luxury consumption increases status benefits, it also produces feelings of inauthenticity. Studies 2A and 2B show the mediating process and downstream consequences of inauthenticity feelings. Studies 3A and 3B examine the moderating role of chronic psychological entitlement and the process behind this moderating effect. Study 4 proposes that temporarily boosting consumers' psychological entitlement can reduce inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption. In the general discussion, we demonstrate an observational measure of psychological entitlement in the luxury consumption context and report additional findings that enhance the applicability of our results.

STUDY 1A: THE PARADOX OF LUXURY CONSUMPTION

Study 1A sought to establish the basic phenomenon that luxury consumption increases status benefits, but that it can also increase consumers' feelings of inauthenticity (hypothesis 1). To ensure that the phenomenon is relevant for a typical target market of luxury products, we surveyed female opera patrons during an intermission of a flagship show ("Manon Lescaut") at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Opera patrons possess the characteristics (financial and cultural capital) that luxury marketers deem desirable, and opera performances at renowned theatres present a common setting for wearing luxury brands (Dimaggio and Useem 1978). Dressing up is an important part of the Met Opera experience. The Met Opera website (http://www.metopera.org/Visit/what-to-expect/) emphasizes the "glamorous off-stage scene," and a popular blog titled "Last Night at the Met" (http://lastnightatthemet. com/) highlights some of the patrons' luxurious outfits.

Procedure

We recruited 78 women ($M_{age} = 38.7$) during an intermission of an opera performance in exchange for a chocolate bar. All participants were instructed as follows: "Imagine that you are at Bloomingdale's looking to buy a dress to wear to the Opera. You find two dresses that you like and that fit you well, one that costs \$150 and one that costs \$2,000." A post-test with high-income consumers ($N = 103$, $M_{age} = 51.6$, $M_{income} = \$127,961$) verified that these two dresses were perceived as luxury and non-luxury, respectively. Web appendix C provides the detailed description and results of the post-tests (featuring relevant populations for each study) of all product stimuli used in our studies.

Participants indicated which dress would yield greater *status benefits* in terms of garnering recognition from others (two items: (1) which dress would lead you to receive more attention; (2) which dress would lead you to receive better treatment and better service; $r = .58$, $p < .001$). Participants also indicated which dress would make them feel more *authentic* (two items: (1) which dress would make you feel more authentic; (2) which dress would make you feel more true to yourself, $r = .72$,

TABLE 1

OVERVIEW OF POPULATIONS AND CONSUMPTION CONTEXTS EXAMINED IN EACH STUDY

Study	Unit of analysis	IV: Luxury vs. non-luxury	DVs	Mediation, moderation
Pilot (reported in the Theory section)	Consumers on the Upper East Side in New York	Interviews about past luxury consumption	Self-inauthenticity	
Study 1A	Patrons of the Metropolitan Opera in New York	Luxury vs. non-luxury dress to wear to the opera	Self-inauthenticity Status benefits	
Study 1B	Shoppers at a luxury shopping center	Gold-plated vs. metallic iPhone cover (engaging with a real luxury product)	Self-inauthenticity	
Study 2A	Consumers spending the summer at Martha's Vineyard	Luxury (Hermes) vs. non-luxury (Zara) beach towel	Self-inauthenticity	Mediation by perceptions of product as undue privilege
Study 2B	Adults of legal drinking age	Luxury (Dom Perignon) vs. non-luxury (Costco) champagne	Self-inauthenticity Downstream consequences	Serial mediation of downstream consequences by perceptions of product as undue privilege and self-inauthenticity
Study 3A	Lab participants reflecting on their past purchases	Recalled past luxury vs. non-luxury consumption	Self-inauthenticity	Moderation by chronic psychological entitlement
Study 3B	Qualtrics panelists with high income (over $100K)	Luxury (Tiffany) vs. non-luxury (Pandora) necklace	Self-inauthenticity	Moderation by chronic psychological entitlement Moderated mediation by perceptions of product as undue privilege
Study 4	Online respondents	Luxury vs. non-luxury restaurant	Self-inauthenticity	Moderation by context in which consumers should feel more entitled Moderated mediation by perceptions of product as undue privilege
Follow-up (reported in the general discussion)	Shoppers entering a flagship Louis Vuitton store	Observational study examining objective manifestations of chronic psychological entitlement		Correlation between observed psychological entitlement and observed luxury consumption

$p < .001$) on three-point scales ($1 =$ non-luxury dress, $2 =$ equal for both dresses, $3 =$ luxury dress). One participant did not complete the better treatment item and two participants did not complete the authenticity and true-to-self items, which left us with slightly different degrees of freedom across measures.

We also asked participants whether they were visiting New York City to control for the possibility that New York visitors feel differently about luxury from residents. We recorded the floor (one through six) on which the data for each participant was collected as a proxy for participants' affluence (since seats on lower floors are more expensive).

Results

We recoded participants' dress preferences on each of the four items, such that 1 represented preference for a luxury dress, 0 represented indifference between the two dresses, and –1 represented preference for a non-luxury dress. This way, a positive mean for an item would reflect preference for a luxury (over a non-luxury) dress on that item, and a negative mean would reflect preference for a non-luxury (over a luxury) dress on that item. We

conducted t-tests to compare the mean of each measure to 0. The means of status benefits measures were significantly higher than 0 (attention item: $M = .15$, $t(77) = 2.17$, $p = .03$, $d = .246$; special treatment and service item: $M = .22$, $t(76) = 3.12$, $p = .003$, $d = .356$; two-item index: $r = .58$, $p < .001$, $M = .19$, $t(77) = 2.97$, $p = .004$, $d = .336$) indicating that the luxury dress was significantly more likely than the non-luxury dress to be considered as generating status benefits. However, the means of self-authenticity measures were significantly lower than 0 (authenticity item: $M = -.43$, $t(75) = -5.74$, $p < .001$, $d = -.658$; true-to-yourself item: $M = -.55$, $t(75) = -8.74$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.003$; two-item index: $r = .72$, $p < .001$, $M = -.49$, $t(75) = -7.64$, $p < .001$, $d = -.877$), indicating that the luxury dress was significantly more likely than the non-luxury dress to decrease feelings of authenticity. Web appendix D includes further analyses of the data, including additional analyses demonstrating that the results hold when we control for floor (proxy for income) and locals (vs. visitors). In addition, in a follow-up study reported in web appendix E, we use a much larger and diverse panel of participants with respect to key demographics (income, gender) to test the effects of consumers' demographic characteristics more comprehensively.

Discussion

Study 1A provided support for our hypothesis that luxury products, while improving consumers' status benefits (in terms of garnering recognition from others), may also increase consumers' feelings of inauthenticity (hypothesis 1), giving rise to the paradox of luxury consumption. It thereby demonstrates the tension arising from luxury consumption in a real-world setting.

Study 1B tests this phenomenon using a real luxury product in the field and a between-subjects manipulation of product type.

STUDY 1B: TESTING THE PARADOX OF LUXURY CONSUMPTION WITH A REAL LUXURY PRODUCT IN THE FIELD

In study 1B, we sought to examine the effect of a real luxury product on feelings of inauthenticity. For this purpose, we used a gold-plated luxury iPhone cover made by an Italian brand La Mela, and we surveyed Apple customers while they were shopping in a luxury shopping center. Furthermore, we used a new five-item scale to measure feelings of inauthenticity.

Procedure

We recruited 80 female iPhone owners inside and around a flagship Apple store in a luxury shopping area in a midsize US city. Participants completed the survey in exchange for a chocolate bar.

Compared to study 1A, we used a lower-ticket item as a stimulus and manipulated luxury between-subjects (rather than within-subjects). Participants were handed a phone cover by the brand La Mela, and they were asked to use it for several minutes. Participants in the luxury (vs. non-luxury) condition read: "La Mela is a brand of luxury gold-plated (vs. a brand of metallic) phone covers. A La Mela phone cover costs $320 (vs. $20)." A post-test confirmed that these descriptions were perceived as luxury and non-luxury, respectively (see web appendix C).

While using the La Mela cover, participants indicated the extent to which they felt inauthentic using the cover on a five-item scale (authentic*, honest*, true to myself*, fake, like an impostor; from 1 = "not at all" to 7 = "very much"; Cronbach's α = .78, M = 4.37, SD = 1.35).

Results and Discussion

An ANOVA on feelings of inauthenticity with the luxury manipulation as a fixed factor revealed a significant effect ($F(1, 78) = 14.881$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .160$), confirming that using the luxury phone cover increased feelings of inauthenticity ($M = 4.90$, SD = 1.18) compared to using the

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*   Reverse-scaled.

non-luxury phone cover ($M = 3.83$, SD = 1.30, $d = .862$) (hypothesis 1). Study 1B thus corroborated the findings of study 1A that luxury consumption increases feelings of inauthenticity using a real luxury item.

Studies 2A and 2B build on the findings of studies 1A and 1B about the effect of luxury consumption on inauthenticity feelings, and they seek to test the psychological process behind this effect using a relevant population in the field (study 2A) and a controlled setting (study 2B).

STUDY 2A: PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESS

The goal of study 2A was to investigate the psychological mechanism underlying the paradox of luxury consumption (hypothesis 2). We predicted that luxury would make consumers feel inauthentic because it may be perceived as an undue privilege. To test the phenomenon with a relevant population of luxury consumers in yet another context, we surveyed consumers at a luxurious vacation destination, Martha's Vineyard.

Procedure

One hundred ten consumers (68% female; M_{age} = 41.5) who were spending the summer at Martha's Vineyard completed the study and were given a chocolate bar to thank them for participation. The island of Martha's Vineyard is located next to Cape Cod in Massachusetts, and it is considered to be an affluent summer colony, which is home to upper-class resorts and estates. We recruited male and female adult consumers on the island in various public spaces including the beach, the harbor, promenades, parks, restaurants, bars, cafés, and shopping areas. Across the island there is a variety of stores that sell beach accessories; therefore, the study examined the purchase of a beach towel at a Martha's Vineyard store.

Participants were given a description of two beach towels: a Hermès beach towel ($250) and a Zara beach towel ($25). Consumers indicated how inauthentic they would feel using each towel, using the five-item scale from study 1B (α = .78, M = 4.00, SD = 1.45). They also indicated the degree to which they perceived the luxury and the non-luxury towel as an undue privilege, using a two-item scale ("I would feel unworthy of the product" and "Using the product would make me question whether or not I really deserve it"; from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree"; r = .75, $p < .001$, M = 2.34, SD = 1.49). Two responses were missing on the undue privilege scale for Hermès, and one response was missing on the undue privilege scale for Zara, which left us with slightly different degrees of freedom across measures.

Results

Feelings of Inauthenticity. We conducted an ANOVA on feelings of inauthenticity with product (luxury

vs. non-luxury) as a within-subjects factor. The results revealed a significant effect of luxury (vs. non-luxury) product ($F(1, 109) = 51.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .319$): Inauthenticity feelings were higher for the luxury product ($M = 4.60$, SD = 1.43) compared to the non-luxury product ($M = 3.39$, SD = 1.18, $d = .926$).

Process. An ANOVA on perceptions of the product as an undue privilege, with product as a within-subjects factor, revealed a significant effect of luxury (vs. non-luxury) ($F(1, 107) = 27.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .206$): consumers were more likely to perceive the luxury product as an undue privilege ($M = 2.79$, SD = 1.68) compared to the non-luxury product ($M = 1.90$, SD = 1.11, $d = .627$). (Although these results were significant in the predicted direction, the overall means were low, possibly because of the unique sample of very affluent consumers. In the next study, we examine this pattern with a different population, and while the pattern is very similar, the overall means are higher.)

A mediation analysis (model 4 in PROCESS within SPSS with 10,000 Bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected intervals, Hayes 2013) confirmed that consumers' perceptions of the product as an undue privilege mediated the effect of luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption on feelings of inauthenticity ($a \times b = .1015$, SE = .0587, 95% CI = [.0055, .2420]).

Discussion

Study 2A provided further evidence that luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption increases feelings of inauthenticity in the field (hypothesis 1). Importantly, the study showed that this happens because luxury (vs. non-luxury) products are perceived as an undue privilege (hypothesis 2). In study 2B, we examine the psychological process behind inauthenticity feelings more comprehensively, in a more controlled setting with an experiential luxury purchase.

STUDY 2B: DOWNSTREAM CONSEQUENCES

In study 2B, we pursued three goals. First, we sought to replicate the mediating process found in study 2A (hypothesis 2). Since study 2A was conducted in the field, it included a short measure of the mediator. In this study, we used additional items in order to measure the mediator more comprehensively. Second, we sought to replicate the phenomenon using a perishable product category—champagne. Third, we sought to investigate the downstream consequences of inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption for confident behavior (hypothesis 3). We predicted that luxury consumption would decrease consumers' likelihood to behave confidently because it would make them feel inauthentic.

Procedure

We surveyed 198 adults of legal drinking age (32% female; $M_{age} = 35.5$) in exchange for financial compensation on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Participants were randomly assigned to two conditions. All participants imagined they moved to a new neighborhood and were throwing a housewarming party at which they were going to serve champagne. Participants read they were either going to serve luxury champagne by Dom Perignon or non-luxury champagne by Kirkland from Costco.

To measure downstream consequences of inauthenticity feelings for confident behavior, participants indicated how likely they would be to do the following at the party (1 = "definitely no" to 7 = "definitely yes"; 7 items, $\alpha = .89$; $M = 4.38$, SD = 1.52): stand up for themselves if someone undermines them, lead a conversation in a group, make sure they are being heard in a conversation, express their opinions, admit if they don't understand something and ask for clarification, speak up if someone is being inconsiderate, and express unpopular opinions. Then, participants indicated their feelings of inauthenticity using the five-item scale ($\alpha = .94$, $M = 3.60$, SD = 1.77).
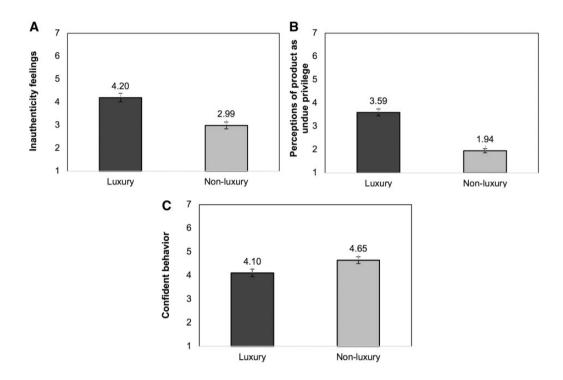
Finally, to measure our mediator (perceptions of the product as an undue privilege), we used a four-item scale (two items from study 2A and two additional items: "I would feel unworthy of the champagne," "Serving the champagne would make me question whether or not I really deserve it," "I associate the champagne with an undue privilege," "The champagne symbolizes excessive privilege"; 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree"; $\alpha = .84$; $M = 2.77$, SD = 1.45). To verify the discriminant validity of undue privilege perceptions from inauthenticity feelings, we conducted exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses on inauthenticity and the complete scale of undue privilege. The results confirmed that the items pertaining to the two scales loaded on separate factors (undue privilege: $\alpha = .84$; inauthenticity: $\alpha = .94$), and that a two-factor structure fit the data better than a one-factor structure ($\chi^2 = 279.34$, $p < .001$; Carter 2016). The items shared more variance with their respective factors (undue privilege: average variance extracted (AVE) = .74; inauthenticity: AVE = .57) than the two factors shared with each other (AVE = .12) (Fornell and Larcker 1981). This confirmed that undue privilege perceptions are related to, but discriminant from, inauthenticity feelings. One response was missing on the confidence scale, which left us with slightly different degrees of freedom across measures.

Results

Feelings of Inauthenticity. We conducted an ANOVA on feelings of inauthenticity with product (luxury vs. non-luxury) as a fixed factor. As seen in figure 2, there was a significant effect of luxury (vs. non-luxury) product

FIGURE 2

STUDY 2B: INAUTHENTICITY FEELINGS FROM LUXURY (VS. NON-LUXURY) CONSUMPTION (A), MEDIATING PROCESS (B),
DOWNSTREAM CONSEQUENCES (C)

$(F(1, 196) = 25.796, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .116)$: inauthenticity feelings were higher for the luxury product ($M = 4.20$, SD $= 1.85$) than the non-luxury product ($M = 2.99$, SD $= 1.47, d = .722$).

Mediator: Undue Privilege. A similar ANOVA on perceptions of the product as an undue privilege, with product as a fixed factor, revealed a significant effect ($F(1, 196) = 93.191, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .322$): perceptions of undue privilege were higher for the luxury product ($M = 3.59$, SD $= 1.43$) compared to the non-luxury product ($M = 1.94$, SD $= .90, d = 1.372$).

Downstream Consequences: Confident Behavior. A similar ANOVA on consumers' confident behavior, with product as a fixed factor, revealed a significant effect ($F(1, 195) = 6.611, p = .011, \eta_p^2 = .033$): the luxury product decreased confident behavior in social settings ($M = 4.10$, SD $= 1.57$) compared to the non-luxury product ($M = 4.65$, SD $= 1.42, d = -.366$).

Process. A serial mediation analysis (model 6 in PROCESS within SPSS with 10,000 Bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected intervals, Hayes 2013) confirmed that product perceptions of undue privilege mediated the

effect of luxury (vs. non-luxury) on feelings of inauthenticity, which, in turn, translated to consumers' less confident behavior and well-being ($a \times b = -.1686$, SE $= .0764$, 95% CI $= [-.3351, -.0332]$). Perceptions of undue privilege alone ($a \times b = .2603$, SE $= .1741$, 95% CI $= [-.0896, .5944]$) as well as feelings of inauthenticity alone ($a \times b = -.0706$, SE $= .0611$, 95% CI $= [-.2162, .0243]$) did not mediate the effect of luxury (vs. non-luxury) on consumers' less confident behavior.

Discussion

Study 2B was conducted in a controlled environment and thus provided further evidence that luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption increases feelings of inauthenticity because it is perceived as an undue privilege (hypothesis 2). Importantly, the study showed that this phenomenon leads consumers to be less confident and therefore decreases their well-being (hypothesis 3). The next studies examine the characteristics of consumers (studies 3A and 3B: chronic psychological entitlement) and situations (study 4: situational psychological entitlement) that may moderate inauthenticity feelings form luxury consumption.

STUDY 3A: MODERATING ROLE OF CHRONIC PSYCHOLOGICAL ENTITLEMENT

Study 3A had two goals. First, to complement the manipulations of luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption used in our previous studies (price, brand, product description), and to make the product experience even more relevant, in study 3A we asked participants to recall a personal experience with a luxury product that they actually owned. This ensured that the luxury experience was meaningful to all participants. Second, we measured consumers' chronic psychological entitlement using an individual difference scale (Campbell et al. 2004). Consistent with hypothesis 4, we predicted that inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption would be less pronounced among consumers with high chronic psychological entitlement. We did not expect chronic psychological entitlement to impact consumers' inauthenticity feelings from non-luxury consumption (hypothesis 4).

Procedure

Three hundred eighty-five respondents (58% female; M_{age} = 30.1) were recruited through the behavioral lab of a large private US university. Lab participation is open to the university's students and community members. Participants completed the survey as part of a one-hour session and received $20 for participation in a series of unrelated studies. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (luxury vs. non-luxury). In the luxury (vs. non-luxury) condition, participants read: "Please recall a situation in the past in which you wore in public a very expensive luxury (vs. a relatively inexpensive basic) clothing item or accessory."
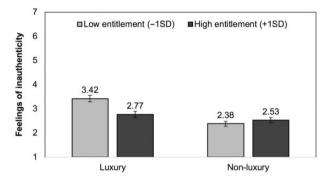
After recalling and describing the product experience, participants indicated the extent to which they felt inauthentic wearing the product on a five-item scale from our prior studies (α = .81, M = 2.76, SD = 1.24; one response was missing on the inauthenticity scale). Finally, participants completed the nine-item psychological entitlement scale from the literature (Campbell et al. 2004; e.g., "I feel entitled to more of everything," "I demand the best because I'm worth it," "Great things should come to me," and "If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the *first* lifeboat!"; from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree"; α = .89, M = 3.28, SD = 1.21).

Results

First, we conducted an ANOVA on feelings of inauthenticity with product (luxury vs. non-luxury) as a fixed factor. The results revealed a significant effect of luxury (vs. non-luxury) product ($F(1, 382)$ = 25.90, p < .001, η_p^2 = .064): replicating the results of our prior studies, inauthenticity feelings were higher for the luxury product (M = 3.07, SD = 1.36) than the non-luxury product (M = 2.45, SD = 1.02, d = .518).

STUDY 3A: CHRONIC PSYCHOLOGICAL ENTITLEMENT MODERATES THE EFFECT OF LUXURY (VS. NON-LUXURY) CONSUMPTION ON FEELINGS OF INAUTHENTICITY

We then regressed the feelings of inauthenticity on product (.5 for luxury, –.5 for non-luxury), mean-centered chronic psychological entitlement, and their interaction. The results revealed a significant positive coefficient of product (b = .64, t = 5.32, p < .001, 95% CI = [.404, .879]) indicating that people felt more inauthentic from wearing luxury than non-luxury, consistent with the ANOVA results and supporting hypothesis 1. The coefficient of entitlement was significant and negative (b = –.10, t = –2.10, p = .036, 95% CI = [–.202, –.007]), indicating that chronically entitled individuals felt less inauthentic. Importantly, the coefficient of the product × psychological entitlement interaction was significant and negative (b = –.33, t = –3.31, p = .001, 95% CI = [–.524, –.133]), consistent with hypothesis 4. Chronic psychological entitlement predicted feelings of inauthenticity in the luxury condition (b = –.27, t = –3.46, p = .001, 95% CI = [–.422, –.116]), but it had no influence on feelings of inauthenticity in the non-luxury condition (b = .06, t = .97, p = .33, 95% CI = [–.062, .182]).

The floodlight (Johnson-Neyman) analysis (Spiller et al. 2013) showed that luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption increased inauthenticity feelings among individuals who scored 4.29 or lower on the 1–7 psychological entitlement scale (b_{jn} = .31, SE = .16, t = 1.97, p = .05), but it did not impact authenticity feelings among chronically entitled individuals who scored higher than 4.29 on the psychological entitlement scale. These findings confirmed our prediction (hypothesis 4) that feelings of authenticity from luxury consumption are less pronounced among individuals with high chronic psychological entitlement. Figure 3 summarizes the results.

Discussion

Study 3A supported our hypothesis that consumers' chronic psychological entitlement—that is, the inherent

belief that one is special and should receive more resources and praise than others—attenuates the effect of luxury consumption on feelings of inauthenticity (hypothesis 4) using participants' own definitions and relevant experiences of luxury. As expected, in the non-luxury condition, there was no effect of chronic psychological entitlement on feelings of inauthenticity. Furthermore, consistent with our interviews, study 3A showed that inauthenticity feelings arise in response to actual (past), not just predicted, luxury consumption. Study 3B builds on these findings to examine whether the moderating effect of chronic psychological entitlement would also emerge in a sample of affluent consumers and to test the underlying psychological process.

STUDY 3B: MODERATED MEDIATION

The goal of study 3B was to test our entire conceptual model (mediation by perceptions of undue privilege, moderation by chronic psychological entitlement) in a sample of high-income consumers who would represent a relevant target market for luxury brands.

Procedure

We surveyed a Qualtrics panel consisting of 214 US women ($M_{age} = 50.3$) with a household income exceeding \$100,000 per year ($M = \$127,583$, SD = \$19,526).

Since the study took place before New Year's Eve, participants read that they were invited to a New Year's Eve dinner and purchased a necklace to wear at the dinner. In the luxury (vs. non-luxury) condition, they imagined wearing a Tiffany & Co. (vs. Pandora) necklace that cost \$1,000 (vs. \$100). While reading, participants saw a picture of a Tiffany & Co. (vs. a Pandora) store and a picture of a necklace (held identical across conditions). Participants indicated the extent to which they would feel inauthentic wearing the necklace, using the five-item scale from prior studies ($\alpha = .91$, $M = 3.18$, SD = 1.66). Participants also indicated the extent to which they perceive the necklace as an undue privilege, using the four-item scale from study 2B ("I would feel unworthy of the necklace," "Wearing the necklace would make me question whether or not I really deserve it," "I associate the necklace with an undue privilege," and "The necklace symbolizes excessive privilege"; $\alpha = .85$, $M = 2.66$, SD = 1.38). At the end of the study participants completed the nine-item psychological entitlement scale from the literature used in study 3A (Campbell et al. 2004; $\alpha = .89$, $M = 3.31$, SD = 1.10).

Results

Feelings of Inauthenticity. First, we conducted an ANOVA on feelings of inauthenticity with product (luxury vs. non-luxury) as a fixed factor. The results revealed a significant effect of luxury (vs. non-luxury) product

($F(1, 212) = 5.243$, $p = .023$, $\eta_p^2 = .024$): Consistent with our prior studies, inauthenticity feelings were higher for the luxury product ($M = 3.44$, SD = 1.86) than the non-luxury product ($M = 2.92$, SD = 1.42, $d = .313$).

Second, we regressed the feelings of inauthenticity on product (.5 for luxury, −.5 for non-luxury), mean-centered chronic psychological entitlement, and their interaction. The results revealed a significant positive coefficient of product ($b = .65$, $t = 2.97$, $p = .003$, 95% CI = [.219, 1.086]), confirming our ANOVA results, and a significant negative coefficient of psychological entitlement ($b = −.36$, $t = −3.62$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [−.560, −.165]) indicating that chronically entitled individuals generally felt less inauthentic. Importantly, the coefficient of the product × psychological entitlement interaction was significant and negative ($b = −.45$, $t = −2.23$, $p = .027$, 95% CI = [−.841, −.052]), consistent with hypothesis 4. Chronic psychological entitlement predicted feelings of inauthenticity in the luxury condition ($b = −.59$, $t = −3.89$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [−.884, −.287]), but it had no influence on feelings of inauthenticity in the non-luxury condition ($b = −.14$, $t = −1.07$, $p = .29$, 95% CI = [−.397, .119]).

Third, a floodlight (Johnson-Neyman) analysis (Spiller et al. 2013) showed that luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption increased inauthenticity feelings among chronically unentitled individuals who scored 3.73 or lower on the 1–7 psychological entitlement scale ($b_{jn} = .47$, SE = .24, $t = 1.97$, $p = .05$), but it did not impact authenticity feelings among entitled individuals who scored higher than 3.73 on the psychological entitlement scale. These findings confirmed our prediction (hypothesis 4) that feelings of inauthenticity from luxury consumption are less pronounced among individuals with high chronic psychological entitlement.

Process. First, an ANOVA on perceptions of the product as an undue privilege, with product (luxury vs. non-luxury) as a fixed factor, revealed a significant effect of the luxury (vs. non-luxury) product ($F(1, 212) = 32.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .132$). As in studies 2A, 2B, and 3A, perceptions of undue privilege were higher for the luxury product ($M = 3.16$, SD = 1.35) than the non-luxury product ($M = 2.16$, SD = 1.22, $d = .777$).

Second, we regressed perceptions of undue privilege on product (.5 for luxury, −.5 for non-luxury), mean-centered chronic psychological entitlement, and their interaction. The results revealed a significant positive coefficient of product ($b = 1.03$, $t = 5.86$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [−.687, 1.383]), confirming our ANOVA results, and a non-significant coefficient of entitlement ($b = −.09$, $t = −1.11$, $p = .268$, 95% CI = [−.248, .069]). Importantly, the coefficient of the product × psychological entitlement interaction was significant and negative ($b = −.37$, $t = −2.28$, $p = .024$, 95% CI = [−.684, −.049]). Chronic psychological entitlement predicted perceptions of undue privilege in the

luxury condition ($b = -.27$, $t = -2.38$, $p = .019$, 95% CI = [$-.500$, $-.046$]), but it had no influence in the non-luxury condition ($b = .09$, $t = .83$, $p = .407$, 95% CI = [$-.129$, $.317$]).

Third, a floodlight (Johnson-Neyman) analysis (Spiller et al. 2013) showed that luxury (vs. non-luxury) consumption increased perceptions of the product as an undue privilege among individuals who scored 4.63 or lower on the 1–7 psychological entitlement scale ($b_{jn} = .55$, SE = .28, $t = 1.97$, $p = .05$), but it had no impact among chronically entitled individuals who scored higher than 4.63 on the psychological entitlement scale.
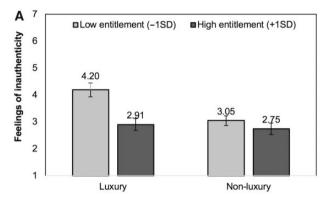
Finally, to test whether perceptions of undue privilege explained feelings of inauthenticity from luxury consumption, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis (model 7 in PROCESS with 10,000 Bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected intervals, Hayes 2013). The results revealed a significant index of moderated mediation ($a \times b = -.2182$, SE = .0987, 95% CI = [$-.4162$, $-.0302$]). The indirect effect of chronic psychological entitlement on inauthenticity feelings through perceptions of undue privilege was significant in the luxury condition ($a \times b = -.1624$, SE = .0737, 95% CI = [$-.3036$, $-.0153$]). However, this indirect effect was not significant in the non-luxury condition ($a \times b = .0559$, SE = .0595, 95% CI = [$-.0584$, $.1798$]). Therefore, chronic psychological entitlement reduced inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption because it lowered perceptions of the product as an undue privilege. However, as expected, psychological entitlement did not impact consumers' inauthenticity feelings or perceptions of undue privilege in the non-luxury condition. Figure 4 summarizes the results.
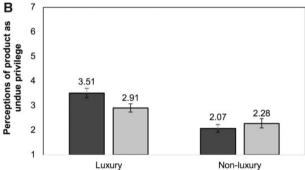
Discussion

Study 3B provides support for our entire conceptual model (moderation by psychological entitlement, mediation by perceptions of undue privilege). By demonstrating the role of chronic psychological entitlement among high-income consumers, this study also helps to identify a segment of consumers who may feel inauthentic with luxury even though they could potentially afford it. Furthermore, by showing that psychological entitlement impacts self-authenticity only when consuming luxury, and not when consuming non-luxury, studies 3A and 3B highlight the distinction between psychological entitlement and self-authenticity. In the general discussion, we further elaborate on the construct of chronic psychological entitlement, how it relates to other relevant variables (demographics such as income, self-esteem), and how well it predicts inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption compared to these variables. Furthermore, in a follow-up study described in the general discussion, we propose an observational method to objectively identify psychologically entitled and unentitled consumers.

STUDY 3B: CHRONIC PSYCHOLOGICAL ENTITLEMENT MODERATES THE EFFECT OF LUXURY (VS. NON-LUXURY) CONSUMPTION ON FEELINGS OF INAUTHENTICITY (A) AND PERCEPTIONS OF PRODUCT AS UNDUE PRIVILEGE (B)

Index of moderated mediation: $a \times b = -.2182$, SE = .0970, 95% CI = [$-.4125$, $-.0288$].

Indirect effect of psychological entitlement via perceptions of product as undue privilege:
- Luxury condition: $a \times b = -.1624$, SE = .0734, 95% CI = [$-.3018$, $-.0119$].
- Non-luxury condition: $a \times b = .0559$, SE = .0593, 95% CI = [$-.0572$, $.1752$].

STUDY 4: MODERATING ROLE OF SITUATIONAL ENTITLEMENT

In study 4, we pursued three goals. First, we sought to test our entire conceptual model (mediation by perceptions of undue privilege, moderation by situational psychological entitlement). Second, we sought to generalize the phenomenon to an experiential purchase—dining at a restaurant. Third, we examined whether inauthenticity feelings are attenuated in a situation that made consumers feel special and hence more entitled. Since the pervasive feeling that one is special fuels individuals' psychological entitlement (Alsop 2008; Moeller et al. 2009), we expected that situations that boost consumers' feelings of being

special (hence their situational sense of entitlement) would lower inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption (hypothesis 4).

Procedure

We recruited 412 participants (49% female; $M_{age} = 35.2$) on MTurk for financial compensation. The study used a 2 (luxury vs. non-luxury) × 2 situational entitlement (birthday vs. control) between-subjects design. Participants imagined going out for dinner with friends to an Italian restaurant. In the luxury (vs. non-luxury) condition they read: "A dinner at this restaurant costs $150 (vs. $25) per person." To manipulate consumers' feelings of being special and boost situational entitlement, participants either additionally read that they were going to the restaurant to celebrate their birthday or they were not provided with this additional information (control).

A pretest ($N = 200$, $M_{age} = 36.8$) confirmed that entitlement (defined as feeling special; Campbell et al. 2004; single item: 1 = "not at all" to 7 = "very much") was higher in the birthday condition ($M = 4.02$, SD = 2.17) than in the control condition ($M = 2.62$, SD = 1.86, $F(1, 195) = 11.23$, $p < .001$, $d = .697$) and deservingness (defined as earning a reward for effort or achievement; Feather 2003; single item: 1 = "not at all" to 7 = "very much") was not ($M = 3.67$, SD = 1.86; $M = 4.10$, SD = 1.82, respectively; $F(1, 195) = 1.86$, $p = .17$, $d = .237$). The pretest included three additional conditions associated with objective deservingness (excellence: "you excelled in all the exams"; hard work: "you worked very hard all semester"; or both; Kivetz and Simonson 2002). The results showed that feelings of entitlement were higher in the birthday condition than in each of the three objective deservingness conditions (where $Ms < 2.58$, $ps < .001$, $ds > .700$). In contrast, deservingness was lower in the birthday condition than in each of the three objective deservingness conditions (where $Ms > 5.64$, $ps < .001$, $ds > 1.205$).

In the main study, after reading the birthday or the control scenario, participants indicated the extent to which they would feel inauthentic dining at the restaurant, using the five-item scale from prior studies ($\alpha = .82$, $M = 3.71$, SD = 1.47). Participants also indicated the extent to which they perceive the product as an undue privilege using the two-item scale adapted from study 2A ("I would feel unworthy of this restaurant" and "Dining at this restaurant would make me question whether or not I really deserve it"; $M = 3.91$, SD = 1.24).

Results

Feelings of Inauthenticity. A two-way ANOVA on inauthenticity feelings, with product (luxury vs. non-luxury) and situational entitlement (birthday vs. control) as fixed factors, revealed a significant effect of product ($F(1, 408)$ $= 93.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .186$). Consistent with hypothesis 1, feelings of inauthenticity were stronger in the luxury ($M = 4.33$, SD = 1.42) than in the non-luxury ($M = 3.05$, SD = 1.22, $d = .969$) condition. The effect of situational entitlement on feelings of inauthenticity was also significant ($F(1, 408) = 5.24$, $p = .02$, , $\eta_p^2 = .013$): inauthenticity feelings were weaker in the birthday ($M = 3.59$, SD = 1.35) than in the control condition ($M = 3.80$, SD = 1.55, $d = -.139$). Importantly, consistent with hypothesis 5, the product × situational entitlement interaction was significant ($F(1, 408) = 9.47$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .023$). Whereas situational entitlement reduced inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption ($M_{birthday} = 3.97$, $SD_{birthday} = 1.19$ vs. $M_{control} = 4.67$, $SD_{control} = 1.52$, $F(1, 408) = 15.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .061$, $d = .509$), it did not impact inauthenticity feelings from non-luxury consumption ($M_{birthday} = 3.11$, $SD_{birthday} = 1.40$ vs. $M_{control} = 3.01$, $SD_{control} = 1.09$, $F(1, 408) = .30$, $p = .59$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$, $d = -.082$).

Process. A similar two-way ANOVA on perceptions of undue privilege revealed a significant effect of product ($F(1, 408) = 70.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .147$): perceptions of undue privilege were stronger in the luxury condition ($M = 4.38$, SD = 1.21) than in the non-luxury condition ($M = 3.42$, SD = 1.06, $d = .843$). The main effect of situational entitlement manipulation was marginally significant ($F(1, 408) = 3.31$, $p = .07$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$): consumers were less likely to perceive the product as an undue privilege when situational entitlement was high ($M_{birthday} = 3.83$, $SD_{birthday} = 1.04$) rather than low ($M_{control} = 3.97$, $SD_{control} = 1.37$, $d = -.109$). Importantly, the product × situational entitlement interaction was significant ($F(1, 408) = 4.93$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .012$). Situational entitlement lowered perceptions of undue privilege in the luxury condition ($M_{birthday} = 4.14$, $SD_{birthday} = .96$ vs. $M_{control} = 4.60$, $SD_{control} = 1.38$, $F(1, 408) = 8.56$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .036$, $d = .385$), but it had no effect in the non-luxury condition ($M_{birthday} = 3.44$, $SD_{birthday} = 1.00$ vs. $M_{control} = 3.40$, $SD_{control} = 1.10$, $F(1, 408) = .08$, $p = .78$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$, $d = -.043$).

To test whether perceptions of undue privilege explained inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis (model 7 in PROCESS with 10,000 Bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected intervals, Hayes 2013). The results revealed a significant index of moderated mediation ($a \times b = -.3470$, SE = .1589, 95% CI = [−.6678, −.0521]). The indirect effect of the situational entitlement (birthday) manipulation on inauthenticity feelings through perceptions of undue privilege was significant in the luxury condition ($a \times b = -.3156$, SE = .1196, 95% CI = [−.5619, −.0939]). However, this indirect effect was not significant in the non-luxury condition ($a \times b = .0314$, SE = .1041, 95% CI = [−.1744, .2363]). Thus, the situational entitlement manipulation reduced inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption

because it lowered people's likelihood to perceive the product as an undue privilege. However, as expected, situational entitlement did not impact consumers' inauthenticity feelings or perceptions of undue privilege in the non-luxury condition. Figure 5 summarizes the results of study 4.

Discussion

Study 4 generalized the effect of luxury consumption on inauthenticity feelings (hypothesis 1) to an experiential product category (dining). It also corroborated the proposed mediating process (hypothesis 2). Furthermore, study 4 demonstrated that situations that make consumers feel special and thus more entitled reduce inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption (hypothesis 4). Taken together, studies 3a, 3b, and 4 demonstrate the instrumental role of psychological entitlement in shaping consumers' authenticity feelings from luxury consumption.
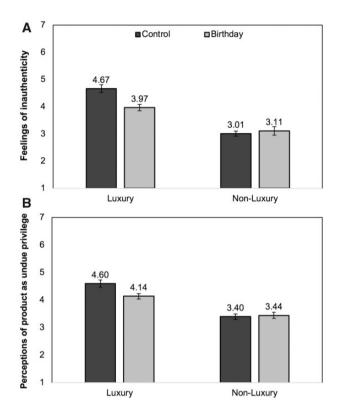
GENERAL DISCUSSION

Seven studies conducted in the field and in the lab demonstrate that luxury consumption can make consumers feel inauthentic. We demonstrate this effect across contexts, product categories and brands, and populations including luxury target segments. We demonstrate that inauthenticity feelings emerge because luxury products are perceived as an undue privilege, and these feelings are moderated by consumers' (chronic and situational) psychological entitlement. Importantly, we show the consequences of inauthenticity feelings for well-being and behavior. A single-paper meta-analysis further validates the robustness and consistency of the key effect across studies and stimuli (the effect was estimated at 1.13, 95% CI = [.87, 1.39]).

Theoretical Implications and Directions for Future Research

Our findings contribute to prior work on luxury consumption by demonstrating its potential negative psychological consequences. This stands in contrast with conventional wisdom suggesting that luxury consumption yields psychological benefits (e.g., consumer empowerment, recognition, and influence; Griskevicius et al. 2007; Nelissen and Meijers 2011; Rucker and Galinsky 2008). Our research examines an overlooked consequence of luxury consumption—namely, inauthenticity feelings—which is important for understanding consumers' luxury experience. This makes a broader contribution to the authenticity research by suggesting that consumers' desire for self-authenticity may conflict with an equally important motive: the need to dream and aspire. Identifying the tension between self-inauthenticity and self-enhancement through luxury consumption opens the door to a host of new research questions.

Index of moderated mediation: $a \times b$ = .3470, SE = .1579, 95% CI = [.0441, .6644].
The indirect effect of situational entitlement (birthday) through perceptions of undue privilege:
- Luxury condition: $a \times b$ = .3156, SE = .1188, 95% CI = [.0920, .5582].
- Non-luxury condition: $a \times b$ = −.0314, SE = .1040, 95% CI = [−.2405, .1691].

First, it is important to understand how consumers and marketers can reconcile this tension. The manner in which consumers resolve it may depend on the norms, objectives, and expectations for luxury consumption on a given occasion, as determined by other people's consumption on the same occasion or one's own consumption on other occasions. While we document the tension across settings (including ones where luxury consumption is the norm, e.g., opera), additional consumption contexts could impact: (a) how authentic consumers feel when consuming luxury, and (b) how consumers prioritize other goals over their authenticity feelings. For example, when are consumers willing to forgo their inauthenticity feelings for the benefits of luxury? Initial results from an exploratory study suggest that

in professional contexts consumers forgo feeling authentic in order to reap the status benefits of luxury.

Second, while prior research in marketing, and luxury marketing in particular, has examined the perceived authenticity of *products and brands* (Beverland 2006; Napoli et al. 2014; Wang, Stoner, and Roedder John 2019; Wilcox et al. 2009), the present research focuses on consumers' perceptions of *self*-(in)authenticity. It identifies perception of undue privilege as an important driver of these self-inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption because privilege perceptions are specific to luxury products. It would be interesting to examine additional contexts in which consumers might feel inauthentic beyond luxury consumption. For example, owning a grand piano while being an amateur musician could produce feelings of inauthenticity. Furthermore, consuming a brand that is strongly associated with a specific identity (e.g., dining at a vegan restaurant, wearing Nike) without subscribing to that identity (e.g., without being a vegan or athletic) may lead to self-inauthenticity as well. It would be useful to explore the factors that may drive consumers' self-authenticity feelings in such settings. For example, consuming products for extrinsic motives may make consumers feel inauthentic compared to consuming products for intrinsic motives in the pursuit of internal gratification (Hahl, Zuckerman, and Kim 2017; Ryan and Deci 2000).

Relatedly, our findings advance the research on the link between product authenticity and consumer authenticity (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Grayson and Martinec 2004) by suggesting that, sometimes, consuming authentic products can make consumers feel inauthentic. It will be interesting to compare how authentic individuals feel when consuming counterfeit rather than authentic luxury. Do counterfeit luxury products lack the privilege perceptions that consumers associate with luxury and therefore reduce inauthenticity feelings compared to authentic luxury products? Or, does counterfeit luxury consumption make consumers feel inauthentic because they are consuming a product that they know is fake? Future research can investigate how degrees of brand authenticity, stemming from the origin of the product and the material (e.g., sterling silver vs. platinum or gold necklace) or method (e.g., natural vs. lab-grown or synthetically engineered diamonds) used in production, may affect consumers' self-authenticity and experience. Relatedly, with the proliferation of new forms of ownership and consumption (Price and Belk 2016), which has resulted in the democratization of luxury (Kapferer 2012), consumers' access to luxury may be taking on new forms and meanings. It would be interesting to examine how authenticity feelings may be affected by how a product was obtained (e.g., purchased at full price, at a discount, or secondhand; received as a gift; rented; or borrowed). For example, initial findings from a follow-up exploratory study suggest that consumers feel inauthentic wearing a borrowed luxury item, which implies that

inauthenticity feelings go beyond the pain of paying and the guilt (Keinan and Kivetz 2008; Kivetz and Keinan 2006; Kivetz and Simonson 2002; Prelec and Loewenstein 1998) associated with incurring the high expense of luxury.

Finally, our findings identify the important role that psychological entitlement can play in consumption experiences, thereby going beyond past work, which has focused on the role of psychological entitlement in interpersonal, work-related, and academic settings. To directly compare the predictive power of entitlement to demographics such as income and gender, which marketers traditionally use to segment consumers, and thus to rule out the possibility that our results could be explained solely by variations in income, we conducted a follow-up study that examined the effect of psychological entitlement in a sample of consumers with wide-ranging incomes. We consistently found a significant effect of luxury consumption on inauthenticity feelings across income brackets. Psychological entitlement emerged as a stronger predictor of inauthenticity feelings from luxury consumption than income and gender (see web appendix E).

More generally, psychological entitlement is a useful concept that could expand understanding of individual characteristics that may contribute to consumers' perceptions of self-discrepancies (Mandel et al. 2017; Sirgy 1982). Psychological entitlement is different from another prominent self-related construct, self-esteem (Campbell et al. 2004; Moeller et al. 2009; Stuppy, Mead, and Van Osselaer forthcoming). While both entitlement and self-esteem involve positive self-evaluations, individuals with high psychological entitlement have an *unrealistic* positive self-view, whereas the positive self-view of high-self-esteem individuals tends to be more realistic (Stronge, Cichocka, and Sibley 2016). Consistently, in a different follow-up study (web appendix F), we found that psychological entitlement predicted feelings of inauthenticity from luxury consumption, but self-esteem did not. It will be interesting for future research to examine how psychological entitlement can interact and explain other marketing phenomena (e.g., consumer satisfaction and complaints, sustainable consumption).

Practical Implications

Our work has an urgent takeaway for luxury marketers that, despite its benefits, luxury consumption also has important psychological costs for consumers. While luxury marketers seek to empower their customers, luxury products may actually have the opposite effect. Luxury consumption may be a double-edged sword for consumer well-being, and managers should take the psychological costs of luxury into account in their branding and marketing strategies.

Our findings that psychological entitlement plays an important role within the luxury target market, as well as across income brackets (as discussed above), can explain why some consumers who can afford luxury may avoid it

or refrain from using the luxury items that they already own. This emphasizes the importance of understanding and influencing consumers' post-purchase behavior in the luxury sector. It also suggests the importance of finding ways to boost consumers' psychological entitlement and reduce inauthenticity feelings. Indeed, many premium and luxury brands use messages such as "you're worth it" or "you deserve it," and emphasize objective reasons to feel deserving (e.g., hard work, Kivetz and Zheng 2006). Hence, from the perspective of luxury marketers, instead of downplaying the privilege connotations of luxury products, designing marketing strategies (communications, services) that boost consumers' entitlement can help them enjoy the benefits of luxury while minimizing its psychological cost.

Importantly, identifying psychologically entitled and unentitled consumers would be essential for luxury marketers. While our findings show that psychological entitlement can be more useful for luxury marketers than demographic variables, it may not be as readily observed. To address this challenge, in a follow-up study discussed next, we examined how psychological entitlement manifests in a retail setting in order to help marketers determine consumers' psychological entitlement, and we further assessed its relationship with luxury consumption.

Follow-up Study: Observable Expressions of Entitlement in a Luxury Shopping Context

We examined visible behavioral manifestations of low versus high chronic psychological entitlement in the luxury shopping context. Identifying objective observational measures of psychological entitlement by directly observing shoppers' behavior is also useful because psychological entitlement is typically assessed based on self-reports (Campbell et al. 2004).

One important defining characteristic of entitled people is that they are less likely to feel gratitude and express gratitude toward others; they generally feel the world owes them more than they actually contribute. Psychologically entitled people expect special treatment and feel that they deserve it. They are therefore more likely to take gestures that convey special treatment for granted rather than feel that it is something they should be thankful for. Building on the notion that gratitude reflects the opposite of entitlement (Twenge and Keith Campbell 2009), we conducted a study examining consumers' likelihood to show gratitude in shopping contexts.

Method. We observed the behavior of 173 shoppers who entered the flagship Louis Vuitton (LV) store in New York. We selected the LV store because at the entrance of the store there is an LV employee who indiscriminately opens the door to every shopper who enters the store. Other luxury boutiques and department stores in the area either had a revolving door (instead of one heavy main door), a standard door but no one opening it to shoppers, or all the required characteristics we were looking for, but did not have enough foot traffic in order to quantitatively analyze the behavior of a considerable number of shoppers.

The main observational measure in this study was noting whether or not the shopper entering the store said "thank you" to the person who opened the door for them or ignored him. A pretest with 209 Qualtrics panel participants (M_{age} = 53.7) making above \$100,000 annually (M = \$128, 852, SD = \$19, 479) confirmed that self-reported chronic psychological entitlement (Campbell et al. 2004; α = .87, M = 3.44, SD = 1.12) is negatively correlated with individuals' general gratitude (r = −.157, p = .023; two items: "It's important not to take anything for granted and to be grateful when people treat you well," "Generally, I take any opportunity to thank people") and with individuals' likelihood to thank an employee who would open the door for them at an LV store (identical to the situation observed in the main study; r = −.356, p < .001; three reverse-scaled items: "It is the employee's job to open the door so there is no need to thank him," "Since it's a Louis Vuitton store, it's the least that I can expect," and "I don't feel there is much to be grateful for because opening the door is customary in these kinds of stores").

In addition to observing shoppers' behavior, the experimenter took note of whether or not the shopper had any shopping bags from purchases made in other stores and recorded the shopping bag brands, which served as an observational proxy for whether or not the shopper made a luxury brand purchase (i.e., it served as a proxy for luxury consumption). Since the LV store is located in a central luxury shopping area (57 Street and 5th Avenue), it is in close proximity to other luxury brand flagship stores and several luxury department stores. Of the 173 shoppers we observed, 40 shoppers were holding a shopping bag from a luxury brand. Many of these were Bergdorf Goodman bags, which is located across the street from the LV store, and some shoppers carried Chanel or Tiffany's shopping bags, which are also located on the same block (57 St. and 5th Ave). Other luxury shopping bags held by shoppers were Burberry, Longchamp, Armani, Salvadore Ferragamo, Coach, Cole Hann, and Dolce & Gabbana.

Results. Of shoppers entering the store, 54.3% thanked the person who opened the door for them. Among shoppers with no shopping bag (or a shopping bag from a non-luxury brand), 60.2% thanked the person opening the door for them. In contrast, among shoppers with a luxury shopping bag, only 35.0% thanked the person opening the door (χ^2 = 7.8; p = .005). These findings offer a practical observational approach to help identify consumers with low vs. high levels of psychological entitlement (i.e., by observing how shoppers behave when someone opens the door for them) and suggest that the proposed measure is associated with luxury consumption. Building on these findings, this approach

could be extended and applied to other contexts in which it is important to quickly assess individuals' psychological entitlement (e.g., when assessing job candidates and prospective students, a first date, or a professional collaboration).

Additionally, in a different exploratory follow-up study, we found that, whereas chronic psychological entitlement was not correlated with consumers' current income or socioeconomic status (SES), it is correlated with consumers' childhood SES. This emphasizes that consumers' upbringing and background is as important as their current status in determining how authentic they would feel consuming luxury. This insight is particularly important since a recent Wealth-X report (2018) highlights that the share of individuals who made (rather than inherited) their fortune in the world's ultra-rich population has increased over the past decade.

Finally, while luxury marketers and scholars traditionally appreciate the importance of authenticity and storytelling, this authenticity and storytelling typically pertain to the luxury brand and the specific product (i.e., heritage, origins, brand biography, craftsmanship of the product). Our work highlights the importance of authenticity and storytelling that has to do with the consumer, rather than the brand. Indeed, respondents in our Upper East Side interviews (discussed in the theoretical section) indicated that meaningful personal stories connected to luxury products and consumption can help them feel more authentic when consuming luxury. The interviews revealed that consumers felt more comfortable wearing luxury items when they were associated with personal stories and meaning such as their personal travel, people in their lives (family, a spouse), or special memories, rather than privilege. These findings highlight the importance of leveraging narratives that are personally meaningful, unique, and connected to consumers' (rather than brands') own lives, as they may help consumers feel more authentic consuming luxury.

Conclusion

Our hope is that this research can help consumers realize that luxury may have some unintended consequences and that inauthenticity feelings that they experience from luxury consumption are common across segments, even among affluent ones. This is important because consumers may typically expect to feel empowered by luxury and may not feel comfortable realizing and admitting that they feel otherwise. We therefore hope that recognizing the prevalence of this phenomenon and openly talking about it can help consumers understand their inauthenticity feelings and potentially alleviate the impact of these feelings on well-being.

DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

The first and third authors managed the collection of data at the Metropolitan Opera for study 1A (fall 2016), on the Upper East Side for the pilot study mentioned in the theoretical section (fall 2018), and in front of the Louis Vuitton store in New York City for the follow-up study mentioned in the general discussion (fall 2018). The first, second, and third authors jointly managed the collection of study 1B data among iPhone owners inside and outside of the Apple store in the Prudential Center shopping area of Boston (fall 2017), study 2A data among vacationers on Martha's Vineyard (summer 2018), study 2B (fall 2018), study 3B data in a Qualtrics panel (fall 2018), and study 4 data on Amazon Mechanical Turk (summer 2018). Participants for study 3A (spring 2016) were recruited at Harvard University, where data collection was administered by lab managers with the support of research assistants. The authors jointly designed the studies and analyzed the data.

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