

Can Luxury Brands Get You Hired? The Effects of Luxury Brand Use on Perception of  
Competence and Warmth in a Job Application Situation

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#### Abstract

This study investigates the effects of luxury brand use on the perceived competence and warmth in a job application situation. It was hypothesised that a job applicant who uses luxury brand would be perceived as more competent, especially by female raters. It was also hypothesised that a job applicant who uses luxury brand would be perceived as higher in warmth, especially among female raters. Eighty-seven undergraduate students rated a resume of a female job applicant, who either carried a brand name (Louis Vuitton or Chanel) or no brand handbag in terms of her competence and warmth. Findings revealed a significant main effect of brand on the perception of competence, but only in Louis Vuitton condition. Specifically, a female job applicant who used a Louis Vuitton handbag was rated as lower in competence than in no brand condition. There was no significant interaction of gender and brand on the perception of competence or warmth, indicating that women and men did not differ in how they perceived female job applicant with luxury brands and those who did not. Implications of the findings are also discussed.

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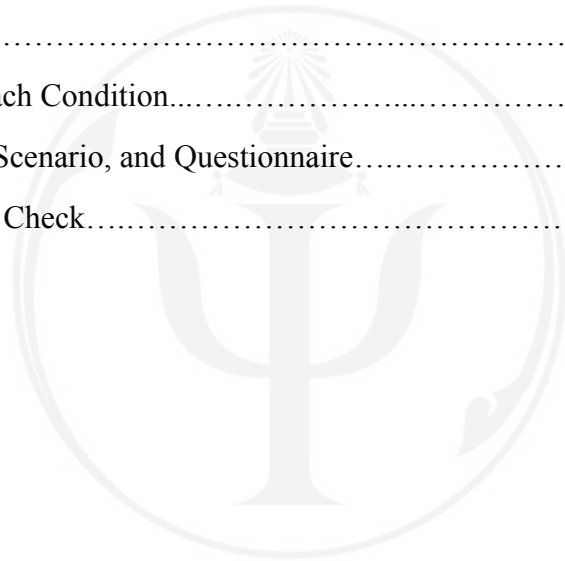
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## Chapter 1

### **Introduction**

In the social world, decisive judgments on others' attributes, qualities, and intentions are important, as they are one of the main driving forces in our social behaviour. This is especially crucial in a job application situation, where accurate perception of others' qualities is required for the screening and hiring process. In a different perspective, impression management is also critical in signaling others' of one's attributes, especially in a job application situation. Amongst a range of methods, the use of luxury brands have been utilised as a display of wealth, status, and competence (Berry, 1994; Hudders, 2012). With the high prevalence of luxury brand use in Thailand, it would be interesting to discover its effectiveness in displaying positive attributes in a job application situation. In this present study, we investigated the effects luxury brands have on person perception. Specifically, we examined whether users of luxury brands are perceived differently in terms of competence and warmth in a job application situation in Thai culture.

First we will discuss the theoretical framework of our study, followed by our research question. Then we will provide a literature review of past studies on social perception and luxury brands. Lastly, a summary of our hypotheses, objectives and research contributions will be provided.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Our theoretical framework will include two complementing theories; Social Perception Theory and the Signaling Theory. Both will be discussed below.

**Social perception in organization.** In the globalized, fast-paced, and highly competitive world, the capability in judging others is necessary (Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011), especially when there are tools such as luxurious brand products, which can help increase one's appealing. Accurate judgment about others is critical in making good decisions and choosing how we can behave towards targeted others; particularly in an organizational context where judgments about other people are crucial (i.e. hiring and recruiting people for specific jobs). Therefore, leaders must recognize and understand how others' behaviour and their appearances might influence their decisions and behaviours, as well as how their behaviours might affect others.

When it comes to judging people, especially in the organization context, such as hiring new employees, limited information is often presented. This frequently results in broad judgments that are usually less accurate, leading to many disadvantaged consequences (Cuddy et al., 2011). The important sources of error in our judgment often come from pervasive stereotypes based on particular information about the targeted person, such as their gender, race, nationality (Cuddy et al., 2011; Fiske, 2015; Russell & Fiske, 2008). Therefore, it is often the case that leaders make decisions related to hiring, firing, attacking, or even defending based on imperfect or flawed data. For this reason, the understanding of fundamental dimensions of social perception and stereotypes are necessary.

***Perception of warmth and competence.*** When judging others, more often than not, we do not have enough cognitive resources to make well studied decisions (Cuddy et al., 2011). As a consequence, broad judgments about the individuals are made. Such judgments are normally influenced by social perception and stereotypes. Social

psychologists often viewed interpersonal attitudes and social judgment as unitary entities of positive and negative perceptions (Wojciszke, Abele, & Baryla, 2009). However, according to various studies in person perception, the ways we perceive others can be categorized into two fundamental dimensions; competence and warmth (Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005; Kervyn, Yzerbyt, & Judd, 2010). In this study, we examined both dimensions in a job application setting.

Despite different terms used in their studies (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Rosenberg, Nelson, & Vivekananthan, 1968; Wojciszke et al., 2009), variables related to person perceptions can be characterized into two dimensions of warmth and competence as suggested in the stereotype content model (SCM) (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006; Judd et al., 2005; Kervyn et al., 2010; Russell & Fiske, 2008). According to recent theory and research, traits such as friendliness, trustworthiness, and kindness, can be captured by dimension of warmth, while, competence reflects traits such as intelligence, creativity and skills (Cuddy et al., 2011, Yzerbyt et al., 2008).

The reasons that warmth and competence are universal and essential in determining our perceptions of other individuals lie in their two socio-functional questions and answers in which they present (Cuddy et al., 2011). Warmth, firstly, answers our questions about intentions of others, whether they have positive or negative intentions towards us. Secondly, competence indicates the capability of particular person to carry out their intentions. Thus, such dimensions are not only essential in determining our interpersonal social cognition, but also how we view other social groups (Fiske et al., 2002, 2006; Russell & Fiske, 2008). Furthermore, these dimensions are also found in

cross-cultural studies measuring person and group perceptions across different cultures (Cuddy et al., 2009; Fiske, 2015).

***The primacy of warmth.*** Even though warmth and competence seem to appear steadily together, various evidence suggest that warmth judgments are mostly made quicker and have stronger impact on one's attitude and behavioural reactions than competence (Cuddy et al., 2011; Fiske et al., 2006). The warmth primacy effect can be explained by the needs of people to quickly judge the intentions of unfamiliar others (i.e. friend or foe), while competence is a secondary consideration of their capability; as both the actions of warmth and competence appear to serve as "other-profitable" and "self-profitable" of the judged person, respectively (Cuddy et al., 2011). However, competence can also take primacy; depending on the weights we assign for each dimension according to different contexts (it is context-sensitive). For example, decision-makers would focus on the candidate's competency due to the nature of the job (i.e. technicians, etc.) in the organizational context. For these reasons, many organizations normally judge their potential employees on both dimensions. Applicant's job suitability and company-fit evaluations would be affected by such judgments. Therefore, this current study examined both warmth and competence perceptions as dependent variables in order to capture all the factors affecting hiring decisions and the applicants' job suitability.

***Relationships between warmth and competence.*** Judgment of warmth and competence in different situational contexts can affect how the person is perceived. Particularly, relationships between the two dimensions may determine the reactions of the perceivers towards the targets (Kervyn et al., 2010). However, various findings in the literatures found contradicting results suggesting both positive and negative relationships

between warmth and competence. The evidence of a positive relationship lie in the classic findings of Rosenberg and colleagues (1968). In their study, the halo effect was suggested; as a candidate who is rated high on one dimension (either warmth or competence), would be more likely to have a higher score on the other dimension. However, it was suggested by later studies that such scenario only occur in the situation where a person is being judged alone or without any comparative context (Judd et al, 2005; Russell & Fiske, 2008). In contrast, more findings on this topic have suggested otherwise. Recent research has shown a negative relationship between warmth and competence, such that high rating on one dimension would result in low rating on the other (Cuddy et al., 2011; Fiske et al., 2002, 2006; Judd et al., 2005; Yzerbyt et al., 2008). This particular phenomenon was described in SCM as mixed stereotype (Fiske et al., 2002, 2006). Such effect normally occurs in comparative contexts where multiple targets of at least two people are being judged together (Judd et al., 2005). To illustrate, when two people are being compared, the person who is more competent (according to this effect) would be seen as less warm; whereas, the person who is rated as more warm would be perceived as less competent. Moreover, according to SCM, such phenomenon is especially prone to occur when the judgement is based on stereotypes of a particular group in which the person is judge to be from. For example, people who are categorized as wealthy would be judged as competent; while, also being perceived as less warmth (Cuddy et al., 2011; Fiske et al., 2002, 2006).

Despite the consistent findings about inverse relationship between warmth and competence, we cannot entirely presume that such effect is always true, as many of these studies did not directly examine the relationship (Kervyn et al., 2010; Yzerbyt et al.,

2008). Therefore, it was proposed by Kervyn and colleagues (2010) in their systematic study of the relationship between warmth and competence that there might be necessary conditions for the mixed stereotype to occur. Grounding on the previous studies, two conditions were deemed as important in eliciting such negative correlation between warmth and competence (Cuddy et al., 2011; Fiske et al., 2002, 2006; Judd et al., 2005; Kervyn et al., 2010; Yzerbyt et al., 2008). First condition is comparative context in which two or more targets are being judged (based on studies done by Judd and colleagues, 2005). Second condition suggested that it is only unique to the two fundamental dimensions of warmth and competence in social perception, as such compensation of mixed stereotype is not observed with other pairs of dimensions (Yzerbyt et al., 2008). Therefore, cautions to the contexts of social perception should be taken into considerations for future studies; as such matter is yet to be completely conclusive.

***Prediction of social structural variables on two trait dimensions.*** According to SCM, social perception of warmth and competence can be affected by social structural variables; namely, status and competition (Fiske et al., 2002, 2015; Russell & Fiske, 2008). It was proposed that perceived competition in interpersonal or intergroup relations negatively indicates perception of warmth, such that higher competition leads to perception of lack of warmth (Russell & Fiske, 2008). In contrast, perceived status was suggested to predict perception of competence; for example, higher status people are perceived as more competent. Moreover, there were also no direct cross-relationships found between competition and competence, and status and warmth. However, mixed stereotype effect was observed in some of the studies, suggesting that the effect of

compensation might occur as consequences of the proposing relationships and necessary conditions described earlier.

**Backlash effect.** Furthermore, the negative relationships between perception of warmth and competence were also captured in the phenomenon called backlash effect. According to Basow (as cited in Rudman & Phelan, 2008, p. 63), research on gender stereotypes found that women are generally perceived as more sociable, caring, and interdependent than men. In contrast, William and Best (as cited in Rudman & Phelan, 2008, p. 63) found that men are perceived as more ambitious and independent than women. According to Bartol and Butterfield (as cited in Rudman & Phelan, 2008, p. 64), whenever someone violates one of these gender stereotypes, negative reactions are often elicited by perceivers. When a woman appears to be confident, competitive, independent, or assertive, she is likely to be perceived as low in social likeability and friendliness (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). This is called the backlash effect. Moreover, while this phenomenon occurs in both women and men, women are more susceptible to it. This is especially prevalent in workplace settings (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

There are reasons as to why the backlash effect occurs, and why it is more likely to occur to women in workplace settings. According to Bartow and Butterfield (as cited in Rudman & Phelan, 2008, p. 64), the backlash effect occurs because when one's gender stereotype expectation is violated, they form negative judgments. In addition, women had been perceived as less competent and competitive than men in the past (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Therefore, the usual qualities required for successful employees or managers (competency and competitiveness) are not perceived as woman-like. Consequently, when women violate this stereotype by being competent in her job, they

face repercussions by being perceived as lower in sociability and warmth (Rudman & Phelan, 2008).

Next section describes the theory of how one's behaviors and actions can be signals of certain qualities, which ties in one of our independent variables (luxury brand) to the predictors of perception of warmth and competence; particularly status.

**Signaling theory.** Signaling theory examines and explains impression management and quality display in individuals through the means of non-verbal communication. Evolutionarily, signaling others of one's positive attributes is crucial for gathering resources, mating chances, and survival (Bird & Smith, 2005). In the wild, young springboks spring their body up into the air in order to signal potential predators of their agility (Caro, 1986). This is to warn the predators they are not worth chasing after. Interestingly, similar principles can also be applied to humans in the modern day, social context.

Signaling involves at least one signaler and at least one perceiver who receives the signals. Furthermore, signaling allows a way for individuals to communicate their desirable attributes to others through the use of non-verbal behaviour. This could be done with several possible intents; mate searching, enhancing perceived status, wealth, intelligence, and other qualities (Bird & Smith, 2005). There are two components for a successful and efficient signaling, which are honesty and cost (Cronk, 2005). Honesty refers to the reliability of the signal, and cost refers to the resources (time, energy, and money) spent on the signal. Normally, the cost of the signal need not be excessive, but just enough in order to establish an efficiently honest signal (Cronk, 2005). However, the



greater the cost of the signal, the greater honesty is usually ensured (Cronk, 2005; Neissen & Meijers, 2011; Smith & Bird, 2000).

**Costly signaling.** Costly signaling is a type of signaling method individuals use to display certain qualities for others to perceive. The term is used to refer to the kind of signaling that possesses high honesty due to its excessively expensive cost. The cost spent on the signal may include time, energy, or money. For example, men from Murray Island often head out to sea to hunt turtles for village feasts during non-nesting seasons. The cost seems excessive, since it would be greatly less difficult to hunt turtles on land during their nesting season. Furthermore, other land animals would still be available to hunt. Due to the time and energy cost, this act of turtle hunting serves as an honest signal of charisma, skills, and knowledge (Bird & Smith, 2005; Smith & Bird, 2000). Another example, which is specific to our study, is the conspicuous use of luxury products. Conspicuously using luxury products is an expensive behaviour, therefore costly. Consequently, this behaviour serves as an honest signal of positive attributes. Next we review our main independent variable; luxury products.

**Luxury products.** Throughout human history, the act of displaying wealth and status through luxury possessions has persisted across time and cultures (Han, Nunes, & Dreze, 2010; Miller & Mills, 2012). In the middle ages, laws were made dictating what each social class was allowed and not allowed to wear, for example only the higher class could wear jewelry or gold (Berry, 1994). This was so that a distinct separation between the social classes could be made, and thereby the social hierarchy preserved (Berry, 1994). With the industrial revolution and the demise of the old social structures, these

laws have become redundant however, other social markers of class and status still exists. Today, luxury products have become the modern status marker (Han et al., 2010).

Luxury products are defined as relatively expensive goods that provide increase prestige and status without providing additional utilitarian value (Wang & Griskevicius, 2013). In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the luxury brand market, with the industry estimated to be valued at US\$240 billion dollars (Tungage, 2012 as cited in Wang & Griskevicius, 2013). Brands, such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci or Chanel, claim to offer products like leather handbags and jewelry with exceptional craftsmanship, innovative designs, prestige and sophistication (Hudders, 2012). However, the tangible and functional qualities that these products offer do not seem to account for its extremely high prices. According to the classical economic theory, humans are rational beings that aim to maximize usage and utility when purchasing a product (Hudders, 2012). This theory however, cannot justify why people buy these expensive luxury products that add no further utilitarian benefit compared to their ordinary, cheaper counterparts (Hudders, 2012).

Researchers have therefore been increasingly interested in why people use luxury products and what benefits such costly belongings offer (Tynan et al. as cited in Truong & McColl, 2010). Many studies have found that luxury products have a complex role in transmitting certain signals and attributes, such as status, wealth, prestige and success (Dreze & Nunez, 2009; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Mandel, Petrova & Cialdini, 2006). Furthermore, findings revealed that luxury products can help enhance user's self-esteem, prove a better sense of self and be a tool to express one's identity (Belk 1985; Han et al. 2010; Veblen 1899 as cited in Wang & Griskevicius, 2013). In a set of experiments,

Nelissen and Meijers (2011) found that those wearing brands were perceived as wealthier, had higher status ratings and received more donations than those who were wearing identical clothing but without a brand. Importantly, branded individuals were rated as more suitable for a job and were given a higher wage than non-branded individuals.

***Luxury brands and culture.*** The rapid economic growth and rising wealth in Asia has resulted in a fast expanding luxury market (20% predicted growth for 2013) (Nueno & Quelch as cited in Park, Rabolt, & Jeon, 2007). Asia is now the world's largest luxury market, accounting for 37% of all luxury brand consumption in the world. Even with the global economic decline, the Asian market still displayed continuous growth with the Chinese luxury market recently surpassing the USA (Yi-Cheon, Sauer, Williams, Lee, & Macrury, 2014). In addition, Bain Company published that the luxury brand industry planned to expand by 20% in South East Asia, shifting a focus from Europe due to its economic recession and lower population growth rate (Park et al., 2007). Furthermore, studies have claimed that Asian consumers may be more affected by luxury brands as countries with low individualistic ratings (Thailand, China, India, and Japan) may be more susceptible to interpersonal influence and social dynamics than Western consumers from a highly-individualistic culture (UK, Germany, America) (Yi-Cheon et al., 2014). Van Kempen (2004) found that in developing nations, those in poverty who are unable to pay for food or shelter are still willing to pay a higher price for branded luxurious goods. Therefore, because of the growing Asian luxury market and the nature of the Asian consumer, Asia is a very interesting and important population to study.

## Research Question

We were particularly interested in Nelissen and Meijers' (2011) finding that wearing branded clothing increased a person's competency rating. In combination with the social perception theory and the signaling theory discussed above, we will be extending this study further. Specifically, using the signaling theory, we want to explore how wearing luxury brands can affect the signals you transmit to others. Furthermore, we want to measure the effect of these signals using the two fundamental dimensions of the social perception theory: competence and warmth. In addition, despite the importance of Asia as a luxury market, studies that explore luxury brands and its effects in the Asian population are limited (Park et al., 2007; Truong and McColl, 2011). Therefore we aim to bridge this literature gap by conducting an experimental study exploring the effects of luxury brands, in a rapidly developing Asian nation of Thailand.

## Literature Review

**Status as indicator of competence but not warmth.** A study done by Russell and Fiske (2008) researched on the relationships between two primary elements of interpersonal relations (competition and status), on the two fundamental dimensions of person perception (warmth and competence). It was proposed that relationships of competition and status affect interpersonal experiences in everyday lives. Particularly, it was hypothesised that competition would predict interpersonal warmth, while status indicates competence, as there would be no intercepting relationships between competition to competence and status to warmth. Such hypothesis is based on theory and recent findings in intergroup perception, specifically SCM, which suggests that structural

intergroup relations of competition and status determine social group stereotypes of warmth and competence.

The research was divided into two studies measuring the influences of interpersonal competition and status on perceived warmth and competence of the target. However, the second study was done to particularly examine the participants' degree of awareness on the influences of these variables on interpersonal judgments.

In the first study, structural relationships between the participants and their fictional partners were manipulated such that they were made to learn about the biographical information of their fictional partners whom they expected to interact in either cooperative or competitive online game (manipulation for interpersonal competition). The status variable was manipulated by parental occupation of the target, distinguishing between high and low status. Other information about the target was controlled. Participants were to evaluate the target before and after their interaction, as similar scales measuring perceived warmth and competence were used.

In contrast, the second study was done with a live interpersonal interaction in a laboratory setting, with three focused primary goals: to find actuarial links between social class (perceived status) and perception of competence, to measure the perceptions only after the interaction in order to rule out any effects from pre-interaction questions, and to measure the hypothesized pattern of trait attribution in the actual unscripted situation. This time, status was manipulated by randomly assigning the participants to high- or low-status role, whereas competition was operated similarly to the previous study (competitive and cooperative game conditions).

The overall results from the two related studies indicated supports for the main hypothesis suggesting that (1) interpersonal status indicates perceptions of competence and (2) interpersonal competition predicts perceptions of the target's warmth. These findings affirm the strength of the directed relationship between structural interpersonal relations towards social judgments dimensions, particularly perceived higher status would lead to higher perception of competence; whereas, perceived higher competition leads to lower perception of warmth. Furthermore, it was suggested that the unawareness of the participants to the influences of the interpersonal variables to their perceptions revealed implications for person perception accuracy; such that people's social judgments may unknowingly get affected by structural variables than they might be aware of. However, issues of ecological validity were noted, as future studies were suggested to operationalize competition and status in different ways.

In contrast, the second study was done in intergroup relations basing on SCM suggesting that social structural between groups would predict the out-group perceived trait dimensions (Fiske et al., 2002). It was specifically suggested that perceived status of particular out-group would lead to the perception of competence trait; whereas perceived competition between the groups would affect their perceptions of the out-group as negatively related to warmth. Three main hypotheses related to the theory of SCM and the relationships between the social structural variable and trait dimensions were made such that: (1) perceived competence and warmth were expected to differentiate out-group stereotypes, (2) mixed attribution of warmth and competence (specifically low on one dimension would be coupled with high rating on the other dimension) would be found in most of the stereotypes, and lastly (3) that stereotypes associate with high-status would

depict perceived competence; whereas perceived competition of the out-group is related to warmth trait dimension.

One preliminary study and three main studies with nine survey samples were done in relation to hypotheses suggested by Fiske and colleagues (2002). In each study, participants were to rate cultural stereotypes of the 6-25 out-groups currently viewed as important in the US on a list of trait adjectives derived from previous works. In response to hypothesis 1, factor analyses were used to examine the two trait dimensions of warmth and competence. The second hypothesis was then examined by looking at the proportions of the trait adjectives falling into different mixed and off-diagonal combination clusters of groups' differences on warmth and competence. Lastly, hypothesis 3 was studied through correlational techniques interconnecting status and competition scales with competence and warmth scales.

The overall results of the studies conformed to the three hypotheses regarding stereotype content (Fiske et al., 2002). Various group samples and variety of out-group selection methods conducted in their three studies provided evidences for the dimensional hypothesis (hypothesis 1) suggesting warmth and competence as fundamental trait dimensions for most of the group stereotypes. Furthermore, these studies also supported the second hypothesis proposing mixed stereotype model, suggesting that many out-groups are generally seen as mixed in the two trait dimensions of warmth and competence. Specifically, it was found that high rating on one dimension would result in lower rating on another dimension. However, it was also discovered in their studies that halo effects (i.e. low-low and high-high ratings of warmth and competence) may occur. Particularly, the high ratings on both warmth and competence were found when

evaluating in-groups, whereas low-low rating was discovered when the out-groups were obviously under-privileged. Finally, they also discovered that social structural variables are correlated to the trait dimensions of warmth and competence, such that social status indicated perceived competence, while social competition between groups negatively predicted warmth. Such effect was also found in both intergroup and interpersonal levels, suggesting similar results to the previous study mentioned before.

**Luxury brands.** What is a luxury brand and what are luxury products? The answer to this question can be complicated as there are many approaches surrounding this concept (Miller & Mills, 2011). The word luxury is derived from the Latin word 'luxus' which means indulgence of the senses no matter the cost (Berthon et al., 2009). A meta-analytic review of the different frameworks of luxury brands revealed 6 associated key factors; Individual meaning, social meaning, affordability, prestige, exclusivity and quality (Miller & Mills, 2011). A luxury product must be celebrated and indulged to a certain degree by the individual (Atwal & Williams, 2009; Berthon et al. 2009), hold a high value of prestige and considerable intangible worth (Juggessur & Cohen, 2009; Kim, Kim & Sohn, 2009), have an exclusive or rare aspect to it (Berthon et al., 2009) and have an exceptionally high standard of quality and design than ordinary products (Huisic & Cicic, 2009).

Miller and Mills (2011) mention two important concepts in luxury brands; old luxe and new luxe. Old luxe is focused on craftsmanship, quality, performance, uniqueness and rarity of the products. Customers can be viewed as connoisseurs who have specific tastes and value brands that have a well-established history and reputation



(Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Han et al. (2010) labelled these types of consumers ‘patricians’, who use quiet signals and do not have a high need for status.

Opposite to this is new luxe, where the brands and logos are conspicuously displayed. Consumers of this type, as Han et al. (2010) termed as ‘parvenus’, value products with large, visible and well-known logos, brands or trademarks. Parvenus use and display these goods as a way to enhance their status, self-image, as well as self-esteem (Belk, 1988). They are concerned with separating themselves from other people. By paying extremely high prices, new luxe consumers hope to gain status and distinguish themselves from others who are unable to afford such expensive products (Han et al., 2010).

#### **Luxury brands as signal for status.**

*Signaling of status through brand prominence.* Using and wearing luxury brands have its purpose in signaling others of one’s qualities. Han and colleagues (2010) conducted a series of studies examining the role of brand prominence in status signaling. They investigated whether or not the preference for “loud” and “quiet” luxury varied among different socioeconomic groups. Loud luxury (or new luxe) referred to luxury products that prominently displayed their brand symbol or logo, as well as being easily recognisable as luxurious. On the other hand, quiet luxury (or old luxe) referred to as luxury products that were more subtle in their brand identification. It was hypothesised that participants in the highest socioeconomic group (patricians) would prefer quiet and subtle luxury products, whereas participants in lower socioeconomic groups (parvenus and poseurs) would prefer loud and easily recognisable luxury products. This prediction

would be due to the desire to signal status in parvenus and poseurs, as they wanted to associate themselves with a higher socioeconomic group.

Han and colleagues (2010) conducted four separate studies that led up to the main findings. In the first study, three participants, who were trained to recognise luxury brand symbols and logos, were asked to judge luxury products (specifically handbags and shoes) of different luxury brands on their brand prominence (the scale ranged from 1=*quiet* to 7=*loud*). It was found that products with higher brand prominence rating were priced significantly lower than products with low brand prominence rating. In other words, louder luxury products were cheaper than quieter luxury products.

The second study investigated the counterfeit market (Han et al., 2010). Researchers gathered information on counterfeit luxury products from various sources, including a counterfeit handbag specialist website and law enforcement officials from Thailand (where counterfeit luxury products were prevalent). Data found that more of the louder products with high brand prominence were counterfeited than the subtle products. This study concluded that people, namely poseurs, who were more inclined to buy cheap counterfeit products instead of the genuine luxury ones desired products with high brand prominence. This was in order to signal status and wealth to others (Han et al., 2010).

The third study recruited participants from various socioeconomic groups (patricians, parvenus, and poseurs) (Han et al., 2010). Participants were presented with pictures of luxury handbags and were asked to rank the handbags pricewise. Results found that patricians were more likely to correctly rank the handbags. However, other participants ranked louder handbags as more expensive than quieter ones. It was

concluded that parvenus and poseurs judged the value of a product by its brand prominence.

The last study, like the previous study, recruited participants from various socioeconomic groups (Han et al., 2010). Participants were asked to rate their own desire for status. They also chose their most preferred luxury handbag out of the presented collection. It was found that parvenus scored highest in desire for status, followed closely by poseurs. Patricians scored lowest in desire for status. Results found that patricians were least likely to prefer loud handbags, whereas parvenus and poseurs were significantly more likely to prefer loud handbags. Researchers concluded that luxury products with high brand prominence are often used by people as a signal of wealth and status.

***Brand as a costly signal.*** Another series of experiments was conducted by Nelissen and Meijers (2011) in the Netherlands. They investigated the social benefits of using luxury products from a costly signaling perspective. They explained how wearing luxury products was a signal of one's qualities. Wasteful behaviour like buying and using excessively expensive products costs a great deal of resources, thus ensures the signal's reliability. Seven experiments were conducted for this study.

In the first experiment, participants were shown a picture of a male person and asked to rate several attributes (status, wealth, attractiveness, kindness, trustworthiness) of the person (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). The person was either wearing a t-shirt with a logo of a luxury brand, a regular brand, or no logo at all. Data showed that in the luxury logo condition, the person was rated higher in status and wealth than in other conditions. However, ratings in other attributes were not different across conditions. People who

display luxury logos are perceived as more wealthy and higher in status than those who do not.

In the second experiment, participants were stopped in a shopping mall by either a confederate wearing a sweater with a luxury logo, or a sweater without a logo (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). They were asked whether or not they had time to answer a few questions. Results found that more participants complied with the confederate's request when there was a luxury logo on the sweater than when there was no logo. Therefore, luxury logos had social interaction benefits.

In the third experiment, participants watched a video of a job interview and were asked to rate the interviewee in terms of status, job competency, and how much money he should earn (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). The interviewee was either wearing a t-shirt with a luxury logo or without a logo. The interviews were identical except for the logo. Data showed that the interviewee with the luxury logo was rated higher in job competency, status, and how much money he should earn than the interviewee without the logo.

In the fourth experiment, confederates wearing a T-shirt either with or without luxury logos approached participants and asked for donations for charity (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). Results showed that the average donation was higher when the confederates had luxury logos than when they had no logos. Therefore, luxury displays could be financially beneficial.

In the fifth experiment, participants played a game with their "partner", which was in fact a computer (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). Their partner was a picture of a person wearing a shirt either with or without a luxury logo. During the game they were asked to transfer money to the partner and also rate their status. It was found that

participants with partner wearing shirt with luxury logo rated their partner higher in status and transferred more money than participants with partner wearing shirt without logo.

In the sixth and seventh experiment, similar results as previous experiments were yielded (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). People wearing clothes with luxury logos were treated more favourably, and rated as higher in status than those without logos. Evidence from previous studies were clear and consistent; along with gaining social benefits, individuals who use and display luxury products are perceived by others as higher in status, wealth, and job competency than those who do not (Han et al., 2010; Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). Moreover, wealth and status had been found to be linked with intelligence (Han et al., 2010).

**Gender and luxury brands.** Women are socialised at a young age to care about their personal and physical appearance (Burton, Netemeyer & Lichtenstein, 1994; Russell & Taylor, 2002). They are encouraged to construct their identity through consumption and use and display of material possessions (Cook & Kaiser, 2004). Women in general are more fashion conscious (Mitchell & Walsch, 2004), care more about beauty products and clothing (Burton et al., 1994), are more involved about their looks and appearance (Feingold & Mazzella, 1998) and have been shown to spend more money with impulsive and conspicuous buying (Bus, 1988). Furthermore, a survey found that women had more positive attitudes towards luxury brands and products than men (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2011). Specifically, women rated luxury brands as higher in status, more unique and hedonic in value than their non-luxurious counterparts. Therefore it is clear that women have a higher preference for luxury products and conspicuous consumption than men

Studies have constantly shown that compared to men, women are more sensitive to cues of conspicuous consumption. This is because women's use of luxury products and conspicuous displays of wealth serve as mate-signaling strategies (Bus, 1998; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). Women rated other women as being more loved and cared for by their partner when in possession of luxurious goods (Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). When triggered to be in a mate-guarding mode (after reading a scenario describing their partner being flirty), women drew larger symbols indicating a higher preference for conspicuous consumption. This effect, however, was not seen when the women had a self-esteem threat that was not related to mate guarding (e.g. failing an exam). Furthermore, women were not as willing to pursue a man who had not paid for their partner's luxurious products, than a man who had (Wang & Griskevicius, 2013). Females also rated men with luxurious cars as more attractive than those without. Importantly, this effect was not seen in men (Dunn & Seale, 2013). All in all, these findings indicate that women are more responsive to cues of conspicuous consumption and luxury products than men.

### **Hypotheses**

From all of the theoretical frameworks and literature reviews described above, two main hypotheses involving interactions between the two independent variables; brand name use and gender of perceiver, in influencing perceiver's ratings of female job applicant's competence and warmth, were predicted.

**H1:** Individuals who conspicuously use luxury products are perceived as more competent than those who do not, and this perception will be more pronounced among female raters.

**H2:** Individuals who conspicuously use luxury products are perceived as less warm than those who do not, and this perception will be more pronounced among female raters.

Conceptual framework of the current study is shown in Figure 1.

### **Objectives**

The overall aim of our research is to investigate whether or not conspicuous luxury brands display effect one's perceived attributes in a job application situation. Furthermore, there are two specific aims of our research;

1. To examine the effects of luxury brand use on perceived job competency and warmth
2. To investigate the mentioned effects and interactions in Thai culture.

### **Research Benefits**

Our research will offer two potential benefits;

1. It will be a pioneer study as, to our knowledge; the present study is the first to examine effects of luxury brand usage in the job application context in Thailand.
2. It will help determine the influences luxury brands may have in a job employment setting. If the uses of luxury brands do increase the chances of getting hired, as we predict, then this will have important implications in the recruitment industry.

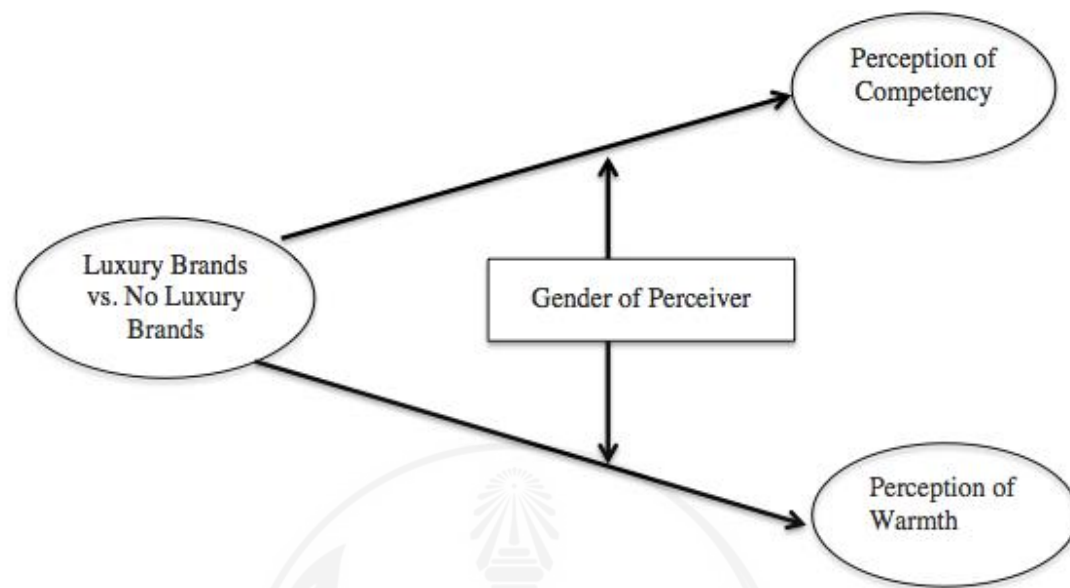


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



## Chapter 2

### Methodology

#### Operational Definition

In the current study, our operational definition of luxury brands is new luxe (discussed in Chapter 1) as our objective is to see what signals luxury products may convey in an Asian culture where people wear luxury products with clear brand logos. Because of this, it is necessary that our study use luxury products that have conspicuous, loud and visible logos that are easily perceived. In order to select such brands, a pilot study was conducted.

#### Pilot Study

Pilot study was done in order to determine the luxury brands to be used in the experimental conditions of the actual study. The size of the photo was also verified using measures of brand visibility of the photo. Moreover, the reliability of the newly generated competence scale was also determined through this pilot study.

**Pilot study measures.** First, the participants' demographic information (i.e. age, gender) were asked. In order to determine which luxury brand names to use in the actual study, we asked the participants to rank the brands that they think are most well-known amongst Thai people from the first to the sixth ranks with given brand choices. The brand visibility was also asked in the same manner, as to which brand names have the most brand visibility on their products. The brand choices given were arranged in an alphabetical order for the most objective results as follows: Chanel, Dior, Gucci, Hermes, Louis Vuitton, and Prada. The examples of the two questions were "Which brand do you think is more well-known amongst Thai people? Please rank from 1 (*the most popular*) to

6 (*the least popular*)”, and “Which brand do you think has the highest brand visibility on their products? (i.e. can immediately recognize the brand of the product after seeing it.) on a scale from 1 (*the most popular*) to 6 (*the least popular*)”. Furthermore, the brand visibility of the photo was also measured by asking the participants to rate the photo given with a person holding a brand name bag. A single-item Likert scale, asking “Please rate from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very high*) the brand visibility of the product in this picture”, was used. Moreover, they were asked to complete an 8-item Likert scale of perception of competence ranging from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 7 (*very strongly agree*). This is to determine the reliability of a new competence scale created in the current study according to the theory of person perception. Samples of the items were “This person is competence”, “This person is skillful”, and “This person is intelligent”. Please see appendix A for materials of the pilot study.

**Pilot study participants.** Twenty-two undergraduate students completed the online survey (6 males and 16 females). Their ages ranged from 21 to 23 years-old ( $M_{\text{age}} = 21.14$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ).

**Pilot study results.** An analysis of frequency indicated that the most popular brand name amongst Thai people, as well as the brand names which had the most brand visibility on their products was Louis Vuitton, while Chanel ranked in second place. Therefore, Louis Vuitton and Chanel were used in the actual study. Furthermore, descriptive statistics for brand visibility of the product in the photo were also calculated ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 1.76$ ). The mean score of the brand visibility in the photo leaned towards higher value, indicated that the brand was more easily recognized and was visible. Thus,

this determined the size of the photo, as well as how the elements of the photo were arranged in the real study.

An item analysis of the competence scale was also performed by examining corrected item-total correlations. Results showed that all items passed the critical  $r$  (criteria of  $r = .42$ ,  $df = 22$ ). Scale reliability of the perception of competence scale was then calculated. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was found to be .93, suggesting very high internal consistency of the items.

### **Design**

A 2 (luxury brands: brand products vs. no brand product) x 2 (gender of perceiver: male vs. female) between-subjects factorial design was used in this study. The dependent variables were perceptions of job applicant's warmth and competence. To address possible unique effect from brand, both Louis Vuitton and Chanel were used as luxury brands in the current study as a between subject factor.

### **Participants**

A total of 87 undergraduate students currently enrolled in international programs a target university in Bangkok, Thailand, were recruited. There were 40 male (46.00%), 45 female students (51.70%), and two unspecified (2.30%), all within the age range of 18 to 23 years old. Average age was 19.48 years-old ( $SD = 3.49$ ). All participants were recruited from two general education classes and one psychology class. All were volunteers, and their agreement to participate in the study was obtained via an informed consent form.

## Materials

**Demographics.** Participants were asked to fill in their gender, age, faculty, academic year, as well as their approximate monthly income. Moreover, the extent that they use brand products was also asked with a 1-item Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*never used at all*) to 7 (*use very extensively*). The question asked “To what extent that you consider yourself a user of brand name product of any kind?”

**Perception of competency scale.** Perception of competence of the target was measured using 8-item Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Direct statement such as “This person is competent” and “This person is intelligent” were used. Higher mean scores indicated higher levels of perception of competence. Internal consistency of the scale calculated on this sample was good ( $\alpha = .74$ ).

**Perception of warmth scale.** Reysen’s (2005) likability scale was used to measure perception of warmth of the target. A 10-item Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) was used. Sample statements included “This person is warm” and “I would like this person as a co-worker”. Higher mean scores indicated higher perception of warmth. The reliability coefficient of this scale was high, ranging from .90 to .91. Internal consistency of the scale calculated on this sample was high ( $\alpha = .81$ ).

**Job suitability scale.** Job suitability was also measured using a single-item Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all suitable*) to 7 (*very suitable*). The question asked “Overall, do you think this person is suitable for the position?” where a higher score indicates a higher level of perceived job suitability.

**Manipulation check items.** Manipulation check measure of luxury brand manipulation was administered after participants have completed the measures of dependent variables. For those in the luxury brand condition, after all information about the applicant has been taken away, participants were given a scale that asked “Did you see any luxury brands? If so, please indicate the brand you saw”. If the participants were able to correctly recall the brands they saw, this would mean that the manipulation was correctly done. Brand product’s visibility was confirmed using a 3-item Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Example of items included “The brand of the bag in the photo is obvious” and “The brand of the bag in the photo is explicit”. Higher mean scores on this scale indicated that the participants clearly perceived the brand product placed in the photo, suggesting high brand visibility. Lastly, an open-ended question asking about their knowledge on this research was also included, in order to check how much the participants were aware about the aims of the experiment; as this might affect their responses on the questionnaire. Participants were asked, “What do you think this research is about? Please briefly explain down below”. Please refer to Appendix F.

**Brands in the current study.** As mentioned earlier, the current study utilized two brands; Louis Vuitton and Chanel, as this was found to be the most well-known amongst Thai samples in our pilot study. We used two brands to make sure that the effects discovered will not be contingent on a particular brand. Analyses of the brand names conditions were performed by grouping the two brand names together under the brand condition, as we assumed that there should be no significant differences between the effects of the two brands on the dependent variables. However, necessary statistical

analyses were performed in order to confirm such assumptions prior to the main analyses testing.

### **Procedure**

The experiment was carried out in classroom setting. The experimenters asked the lecturers' permission for approximately 15 minutes of their time at the end of the class. First, the experimenters entered the classroom, introduced themselves, and handed out informed consent forms for each student to sign. The participation was not mandatory, and participants could leave at any point of the experiment. Next, the participants were assigned to sit separately from each other and told to sit quietly without discussion, as if they were in an examination.

Four sets of materials were created in the study for the two conditions of luxury brands (brand vs. no brand), and two conditions of different brands (Chanel vs. Louis Vuitton) within the brand condition. First, for all conditions, there was a sheet of paper containing a set of instructions and a scenario (see Appendix E). The researcher clearly asked participants to read the scenario carefully and quietly without discussion with others. The instruction sheet asked participants to imagine themselves as a manager at a popular magazine company. The paper also contained a mock-up resume of an applicant applying for a creative writer position (see Appendix C). All details regarding the applicant, such as gender, age, degrees, and work experiences, are controlled for all conditions. Creative writer was used as the hiring position because qualifications were ambiguous (it is not appearance-related and does not require specific set of skills like doctor or engineer would) and it was a less formal job type (therefore we could include informal photos of the target, i.e. with luxury brands, which was an important part for our

manipulation). Moreover, the gender of the applicant was chosen to be female only, as it would be natural for females to use conspicuous luxury brand products (Russell & Taylor, 2002; Lury, 2011). Furthermore, the backlash effect is more typically seen in female target (Rudman & Phelan, 2008), therefore we expected that the effect would be heightened with female applicants.

Each participant was given the materials of a random condition. In the luxury brand conditions, participants received a photo of the applicant wearing a bag with a luxury brand, either Chanel or Louis Vuitton. However, in the no brand condition, the photo of the applicant was the same in every way (same person, clothing, pose, size, background) as the brand condition, except the handbag which was presented as a generic bag without a brand, matching in size, colour and shape as the luxury brand bag (see Appendix D). The perceptions of warmth, competence, and job suitability questionnaire were then administered.

After participants had completed all scales, experimenters collected existing material and gave them the manipulation check scale to complete. Participants received a small chocolate bar as a gift for their participation.

**Data analysis.** Data was analysed using SPSS statistical software. All manipulation checks were evaluated. Participants in the brand condition who did not acknowledge the luxury brand in the photos were eliminated. Participants in the no brand condition who did acknowledge the luxury brand were also eliminated. To test the main hypotheses, two-way independent group factorial ANOVA between brand name conditions (brand vs. no brand) and gender (male vs. female) was conducted for each dependent variable. Furthermore, a significant interaction effect of luxury brands

conditions and gender of perceivers would be followed up with pairwise comparisons looking at the simple effect of gender at each level of luxury brands. Necessary data preparations were also performed prior to the main analyses, as every procedure was done as objectively and thoroughly as possible.



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## Chapter 3

### Findings

#### Preliminary Analysis

This section describes our data preparations. The total number of participants initially recruited was 87. However, two participants mistakenly gave wrong demographic information out of misunderstanding, and thus their actual gender could not be identified. These two participants were excluded, leaving 85 participants (40 males and 45 females) in our data analysis.

**Manipulation check.** Firstly, our manipulation checks for each participant were evaluated in order to test if our manipulations in each condition worked as intended. All participants answered correctly regarding the brand/no brand condition that they were in; however, 13 of those who were in brand condition could not recall the brand presented in the picture. Thus, analysis of brand visibility in the photo using 3-item Likert scale was necessary in determining whether to include or exclude these participants, since the effects of independent variables might get influenced by such factor of brand exposure. Participants in brand condition were then divided into two groups; brand and unknown brand, while the participants in no brand condition were also included in the analysis. A one-way ANOVA was performed on these three groups using their means scores on brand visibility rating. The omnibus results indicated significant difference between the mean scores of brand visibility rating among the three group,  $F(2,83) = 70.69, p < .001$ . Post Hoc analysis using Bonferroni method was then performed. Results indicated that the mean scores of brand visibility rating of brand group ( $M = 5.92, SD = 1.40$ ) was significantly higher than that of the unknown brand group ( $M = 4.18, SD = 2.04$ ),  $p <$

.001. These results indicated that the 13 participants in the unknown brand group within brand condition did not perceive the same brand visibility in the photo compared to the rest of the participants. As their brand exposure in the condition differed from those participants of the brand group, they were excluded from further analyses. This exclusion was due to the fact that the brand exposure measured by brand visibility rating might potentially affect how they rated the targeted applicant in the photo. Therefore, this left the total of 72 participants in further data analyses.

In addition, an open-ended question asking the participants to explain what the research was about was also disregarded from the analysis of manipulation checks. This is because more than half of the participants were able to recognize the nature of our study, as the item was put after our manipulation checks of brand visibility (e.g. “Is the brand of the bag obvious?”, “Did you see any brands in the photo?”), which might have made the research objective obvious to them. However, their responses on the questionnaire for dependent variables should not have been affected, as all manipulation checks were given to the participants after they had finished all items in the questionnaire.

**Missing data.** The second step in data preparation procedure was to inspect and handle missing data, as some data were missing from the responses due to some unknown reasons. The first step in this process was to determine the type of missing data presented. The results of Little’s MCAR test indicated non-significant results,  $\chi^2(126, N = 72) = 113.65, p = .777$ , indicating that missing data occurred completely at random (MCAR). In addition, our data missing analysis had shown that the missing values were accounted as less than one percent from the total of values responded in the sample. To handle

missing data, estimation-maximization (EM) algorithm was used for imputation of the missing data using SPSS program. In the process of EM imputation, the items from each scale were used separately in order to generate maximized fitting patterns of the data associating in each scale. Thus, relying on the EM imputation technique and the data analyses mentioned above, all missing data in the sample were estimated in the manners which fitted the rest of the data the most.

**Outliers.** Next, analyses for detecting multivariate outlier were performed using Mahalanobis distance  $D^2$  and DFfit. In this procedure, no outlier was detected, as no case indicated significant probability for the Mahalanobis  $D^2$  of equal or less than  $p = .001$ . Moreover, no case has scored exceeded criterion of 2 in DFfit (Habing, 2004).

**Statistical assumption check.** Data analyses evaluating the acquired data according to the assumptions of factorial ANOVA design were also performed. Normality of the data on each scale was tested using Shapiro-Wilk's test. The results indicated that perception of competence and warmth scales were both normally distributed in the samples, as the tests did not show any significant results of the difference and extremes in the data. Furthermore, the assumption of homogeneity of variance on each scale was also verified using Levene's test in each of the analyses made. The outcomes from all analyses showed that this assumption was also met, as no scales indicated any significant results on the particular test. Therefore, our data preparations were done, as everything was ready to be analysed for the final results using 2 x 2 factorial ANOVA analyses.

## Results for Hypothesis Testing

**Demographics.** Descriptive statistics of our sample are shown in Table 1. There were 72 participants in total, as 33 (45.80%) of them were male participants, while 39 (54.20%) were female. Their ages ranged from 16 to 26 year-old ( $M_{age} = 20.04$ ,  $SD = 1.82$ ), as all were undergraduate students. Moreover, the participants' academic years ranged from freshmen to seniors, as all were from six different faculties as follow: engineering (27.8 %), psychology (43.1 %), science (5.6 %), fine arts (13.9 %), language (2.8 %), and architecture (6.9 %). Their approximate income per month was also asked, as this ranged from 2,500 to 150,000 baht per month. However, such information was not representative, as many of the participants did not answer this item. Moreover, the extent to which they consider themselves to be brand name products users was also examined, as this information will be used later on in the data analyses.

Out of the total participants, half (36 participants) of them were in brand condition; 19 were in Louis Vuitton group (26.4 %) and 17 were in Chanel group (23.6 %). The rest of the participants (36 participants) were in the no brand condition. Moreover, in the brand condition there were 10 males and 9 female participants in the Louis Vuitton group and 7 males and 10 females were in Chanel group. Sixteen male participants and 20 females were in no brand condition.

**Correlations among continuous variables.** Pearson's correlation analysis was also performed between the scale of brand name usage and the rest of dependent variables in order to examine whether there were any significant relationships between such variables. This is because brand name usage might affect the ways participant perceived our target. According to SCM, people generally rate others who they perceive

as in-group better than those which they perceive as out-group. Therefore, the participants who rated themselves as high on their brand name usage are more likely to perceive the applicant in the brand condition as an in-group member, and consequently rate them higher in competence and warmth. This phenomenon might also appear in the opposite direction, as the participants who rarely use brand name products might perceive the target in brand names conditions as less in competence and warmth, because of the out-group effect. Thus, such relationships were necessary to be tested for objective results; as it could appear to covariate with the overall results.

As shown in Table 1, correlations between brand name usage and other scales did not show any significant relationships. Furthermore, the results of Pearson's correlation showed significant positive relationship between our two dependent variables, perception of competence and perception of warmth,  $r = .34, p = .004$ . In addition, the relationships between these two variables and job suitability were also discovered. Perception of competence and perception of warmth were found to be positively correlated with job suitability,  $r = .43, p < .001$  and  $r = .38, p = .001$ , respectively. Such outcomes verified the validities of our scales in the study.

Table 1.

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Variables*

	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	1	2	3	4
1. Brand name usage	3.43 (1.35)	-	.13	-.17	.03
2. Perception of warmth	4.11 (0.70)		-	.34**	.38**
3. Perception of competence	4.62 (0.63)			-	.43**
4. Job suitability	4.60 (0.98)				-

*Note.* \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Testing brand effect.** As we assumed that the perception of different brand names of handbag (Louis Vuitton and Chanel) should not differ from one another. To check for effects of the unique brands, independent sample *t*-test analyses comparing the mean scores of participants in Louis Vuitton and Chanel groups on all dependent variables were performed. Results on brand visibility as manipulation check of brand perception showed no significant difference between Louis Vuitton ( $M = 5.82$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ) and Chanel ( $M = 6.02$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) groups,  $t(34) = -0.413$ ,  $p = .682$ . This result indicates that both brand names elicited similar brand visibility. Secondly, an independent sample *t*-test of both brand name groups on perception of warmth revealed no significant differences between mean scores of Louis Vuitton group ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ) and Chanel group ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ),  $t(34) = -0.431$ ,  $p = .669$ . In contrast, the mean scores of the two group on perception of competence were found to be significantly different, such that the participants perceived the applicant who uses the Chanel bag as

more competent ( $M = 4.79$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ) than the applicant who uses the Louis Vuitton bag ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ),  $t(34) = 2.91$ ,  $p = .006$ .

The significant results on the perception of competence scale indicated that there might be differences in the way participants perceived the applicant as a function of the brand that the applicant displayed (Louis Vuitton vs. Chanel). Therefore, we were obliged to analyse the data independently between Louis Vuitton and Chanel versus no-brand name. Thus, the data analyses will be separated into two sections. Firstly, the analyses were done using Chanel as a brand name and secondly, the analyses were done using Louis Vuitton as a brand name. Both analyses were performed together with other variables in the same manner as the study had been originally designed.

### Main Analyses

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations of All Scales (N = 72)*

	Perception of competence		Perception of warmth		Job suitability	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Male	4.70	0.61	4.13	0.75	4.70	1.05
Female	4.55	0.64	4.08	0.66	4.52	0.94
Louis Vuitton	4.28	0.54	3.90	0.56	4.37	1.07
Chanel	4.79	0.51	3.98	0.62	4.86	0.78
No brand	4.72	0.66	4.27	0.76	4.60	1.02

### **Chanel as brand name.**

**Perceived warmth.** Results of a 2 x 2 between groups factorial ANOVA on perception of warmth showed no significant main effects of brand manipulation,  $F(1,49) = 1.42, p = .239, \eta^2 = .028$ , nor gender,  $F(1,49) = 0.64, p = .427, \eta^2 = .013$ . Moreover, there was no significant interaction effect between the two variables,  $F(1,49) = 0.53, p = .471, \eta^2 = .011$ . The results indicate that perceived warmth was not significantly different between the participants from Chanel and no brand groups. Moreover, there was no significant difference of perceived warmth between male and female participants. Specifically, gender was not found to be the moderator of the main effect of brand manipulation.

**Perceived competence.** Results of an omnibus test indicated no significant main effects of brand manipulation,  $F(1,49) = 0.09, p = .767, \eta^2 = .002$ , nor gender,  $F(1,49) = 0.16, p = .694, \eta^2 = .003$ , on perception of competence of the job applicant. Moreover, there was no significant interaction between the two variables on perceived competence,  $F(1,49) = 0.16, p = .687, \eta^2 = .003$ . These results indicate that perceived competence was not significantly different between participants from Chanel group and no brand group. Furthermore, male and female participants did not show significant difference of perceived competence on the applicant. Particularly, gender was not found to moderate these effects.

### **Louis Vuitton as brand name.**

**Perceived warmth.** Results of a 2 x 2 factorial ANOVA showed no significant main effects of brand manipulation,  $F(1,51) = 3.35, p = .073, \eta^2 = .062$ , nor gender,  $F(1,51) = 0.01, p = .906, \eta^2 = .000$ , on perception of warmth. Furthermore, there was no



significant interaction effect,  $F(1,51) = 0.04, p = .843, \eta^2 = .001$ . The results indicate that perceived warmth was not significantly different between the participants from Louis Vuitton group and no brand group. In addition, there was no significant difference in perception of warmth between male and female participants. Specifically, gender was not a moderator of the effects of Louis Vuitton brand manipulation.

**Perceived competence.** Results of a 2 (Louis Vuitton and no brand) x 2 (male and female) omnibus test indicated a significant main effect of brand name use on the perception of competence, such that overall participants in brand condition ( $M = 4.28, SD = 0.54$ ) perceived the female applicant who used Louis Vuitton bag as less competent than did those in no brand group ( $M = 4.72, SD = 0.66$ ),  $F(1,51) = 6.97, p = .011, \eta^2 = .120$ . There were no main effect of gender,  $F(1,51) = 2.37, p = .130, \eta^2 = .044$ , nor interaction effect between the two variables,  $F(1,51) = 0.48, p = .493, \eta^2 = .009$ , on perception of competence. The results indicate that participants in the Louis Vuitton condition perceived the applicant as significantly lower in competence than those from the no brand condition, regardless of gender of perceivers. Specifically, gender was not a moderator of the effects of brand manipulation.

**Additional analyses.**

**Job suitability: Chanel as brand name.** Additionally, in relation to the context of recruitment of a new employee in the job application context, the effects of both independent variables were also tested on job suitability. A 2 (Chanel and no brand) x 2 (male vs. female) factorial ANOVA analysis indicated no significant main effects of brand manipulation,  $F(1,49) = 1.24, p = .271, \eta^2 = .025$ , nor gender,  $F(1,49) = 2.45, p = .124, \eta^2 = .048$ , on job suitability scale. There was also no interaction found between the

two variables on job suitability scale,  $F(1,49) = 1.02, p = .318, \eta^2 = .020$ . These results indicate that perceived job suitability was not significantly different between Chanel and no brand conditions. Furthermore, female and male participants did not perceive the applicant's job suitability differently. Again, gender was not a moderator of the effects of brand manipulation.

***Job suitability: Louis Vuitton as brand name.*** Moreover, the omnibus test between brand names conditions (Louis Vuitton vs. no brand) and gender (male and female) on job suitability indicated no significant main effects of brand manipulation,  $F(1,51) = 0.62, p = .433, \eta^2 = .012$ , nor gender,  $F(1,51) = 0.00, p = .983, \eta^2 = .000$ . There was also no significant interaction between the two variables on job suitability scale,  $F(1,51) = 0.25, p = .616, \eta^2 = .005$ . These results indicate that perceived job suitability was not significantly different between Louis Vuitton and no brand conditions. Furthermore, female and male participants did not perceive the applicant's job suitability differently.

## Chapter 4

### Discussion

The aim of the current study is to examine how the use of luxury products may affect competence, warmth and job suitability ratings in a job application situation. Preliminary analyses revealed that the Louis-Vuitton-branded applicant and the Chanel-branded applicant had significantly different competency levels but not warmth levels. Therefore we had to split our data into two sets and analysed each separately for the following hypotheses.

#### **Competence & Luxury Brands**

According to the costly-signaling theory, preference for luxury brands may stem from its ability to signal certain desirable traits, such as wealth, intelligence, competence, status and ability to acquire resources (Cummins, 2005; Hudders, 2012; Nelissen & Meijers, 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). Furthermore, extending the social perception theory of SCM, those that are perceived as higher in status are also seen as higher in competence (Fiske et al., 2002, 2015; Russell & Fiske, 2008). Therefore, in combination of both theories, we predicted that the applicant wearing a luxury brand bag would be perceived as higher in status and hence, higher in competence, than those wearing a non-luxurious branded bag. Our results revealed that, for the Chanel condition, no significant differences in competence were found between applicants wearing a Chanel bag and those wearing a non-brand name counterpart. However, for the Louis Vuitton condition, applicants wearing a Louis Vuitton bag were rated as significantly less competent than those wearing a non-brand name counterpart. Therefore this hypothesis was not supported.

To explain these findings, difference in results between the two brands will be discussed. Then an explanation of the results will be offered; namely, that luxurious brands may have become an untrustworthy costly-signal. The difference in results between the Chanel condition and Louis Vuitton condition may be due to inherent differences between the brand image. Louis Vuitton is well-known to be a popular, luxurious brand that has an ever-increasing market share (Willet, 2015). Accordingly, our pilot study revealed that amongst 5 other brands, Louis Vuitton was found to be the most popular for Thai people. However, this is a double-edge sword, as more sales and growth for the brand also means that it is more common to the masses and consequently, the brand has less exclusivity and appeal (Han et al., 2010; Willet, 2015). According to a Chinese market research study, a billionaire quoted, “Louis Vuitton has become too ordinary. Everyone has it. You see it in every restaurant in Beijing. I prefer Chanel or Bottega Veneta now. They are more exclusive.” (Rein, 2011).

Chanel, on the other hand has a more exclusive brand image, with increasingly high price tags to cater for the super-rich (Digital Luxury Group, 2013). Furthermore, it should be noted that the bags used in the current study between the two brands have significant price differences. According to the Louis Vuitton website, the Never-full bag with the LV monogram is priced around THB31,900. On the other hand, the classic Chanel flap bag is around THB150,000 to 170,000. The differences in the brand image, as well as the prices of the bags could be the reason for the different perceptions of the two brands.

The unsuccessfulness of both luxurious brands in being good signals of competence may be due to its ambiguity and untrustworthiness as a costly-signal. Some

scholars have argued that luxury branded products may not serve as adequate costly-signals anymore. Costly signals is a term used for signals that have high honesty due to its expensive costs and the excessive resources (such as time, energy or money) spent on it (Smith & Bird, 2000). In the days of our ancestors, certain types of luxury products may have indeed been trustworthy signals of desirable traits as acquiring said goods were quite difficult, required lots of resources and were unattainable for the masses (Lens et al., 2011; Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). However, in the modern day, with credit cards, mortgages and loans, luxurious products can be obtained without having the wealth to purchase them, and hence may not be 'costly' anymore. Even worse, this process can result in debt. In fact, those who are actually wealthy may prefer less loud signals of conspicuous consumption, such as an expensive watch, than luxury branded-products, such as a Louis Vuitton or Chanel bag (Berger & Ward, 2010). In a series of study, Han and colleagues (2010) found that those who were truly wealthy (dubbed as patricians) were the least likely to prefer loud handbags (such as the Louis Vuitton Never-full bag used in the study). Oppositely, consumers who are not as rich (dubbed as parvenus), had a higher desire for status and a higher preference for loud handbags. This is so that they can distinguish themselves from the 'have-nots.' Furthermore, the use of luxurious brand is heightened when people's self-esteem is threatened (Sivanathan & Petit, 2010 as cited in Lens et al., 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014) and when they feel powerless (Lens et al., 2011). Therefore, it could be argued that using loud-logos, such as a Louis-Vuitton bag, may not only serve as ambiguous signals, but also, oppositely, signify undesirable traits, such as a lack of self-confidence or lack of true wealth. This could have led to

lower competency ratings for the applicant wearing the Louis Vuitton bag compared to the other two conditions.

In addition, Thailand is notoriously known for its widespread prevalence of counterfeit goods, defined as illegal, low-priced and low-quality copies that have identical labels, trademarks, packages as the genuine products (Chuchinprakarn, 2003; Comuti, 2009; Phau & Teah, 2009). The counterfeit market in Asia is considered to be the world's third largest consumer industry, with a \$2 billion annual revenue (Ernst & Young China, 2005 as cited in Phau & Teah, 2009). The prevalence of counterfeit brand-name products could have impacted our results in twofold. Firstly, since our participants were mostly Thai University students, those in the branded-condition could have a higher tendency to assume that the applicant was using a counterfeit rather than a genuine bag. Participants in European countries, such as in Nelissen and Meijers' (2011) study, may not have been as affected by this, since counterfeit products are not as common. This could have led to an unsuccessful manipulation of brand effect and hence, the unsupported hypotheses.

Secondly, and most importantly, the prevalence of counterfeit-brand name products could have compromised the reliability of the luxury brands as a costly-signal in the Thai population. By having more products on the market, whether real or fake, brand exclusivity is diminished (Comuti, 2009). Louis Vuitton is a prime victim of this, as the brand is now seen as 'a brand for secretaries' due to its commonness (Willet, 2015). Furthermore, the reliability of these brands as a costly-signal of wealth and status is also severely impacted as less wealthy people can acquire and use these inexpensive counterfeit products, with the intention to mimic the same signals that genuine products

would send, but without the costs. According to Comuti (2009), due to the increase in counterfeit products, one of the strategies that the social elite genuine brand users adopt is to conceal their consumption habits. They gravitate to quieter brands that lower-income consumers cannot detect (such as an Armani Suit or a Breitling watch), and therefore cannot copy (through the use of counterfeits). This is to maximize exclusivity of the products that they use, and hence to improve the signals that these luxurious products may send out. Again, this shows that certain loud, common-place luxurious products such as Louis Vuitton Never-full bag, used in the current study, may have become untrustworthy signals of competence and status.

### **Warmth & Luxury Brands**

The backlash effect, in line with SCM, claims that women who appear as competent, confident, rich and high in status are more likely to be perceived as lower in likeability and friendliness as this violates the gender norms (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Therefore, extending from the previous hypothesis, we predicted that our female applicant would be perceived as more competent while wearing a luxury branded bag, and hence less warm. Results revealed no significant differences in warmth between either of the luxury brand conditions (Louis Vuitton and Chanel) and the no-brand condition. Therefore, our second hypothesis was not supported.

A plausible explanation for our results is that the backlash effect (perceived as lower in warmth) is contingent on the subject being perceived as high in competence. In our study, the applicant was perceived to be lower in competence when wearing a Louis Vuitton bag compared to a non-branded counterpart. Therefore, the backlash effect could not occur as no gender norm (of perceived higher competence) is violated.

It should also be noted that our current results might not actually reflect the real-world phenomena, as our experiment was not as ecologically valid as previous studies. In a similar study, Nelissen and Meijers (2011) found that applicants wearing a branded t-shirt were found to significantly be more suitable for a job, be of higher status, and should earn more money, than those wearing an identical non-branded t-shirt. However, the study used a recorded video of the applicant in an interview, who was applying for a University research assistant position, which was a job that was familiar to the target participant (university students). On the other hand, due to certain restrictions, our study used a photograph of the applicant, which can be argued to have low ecological validity to the real-world hiring setting. Furthermore, our participants, who were all university students, had to imagine themselves as a manager looking to hire a new applicant, which can also be argued as low in ecological validity. Overall, this could have lowered our ability to detect the effect.

### **Gender & Luxury Brands**

Many studies have shown that women are more sensitive to luxury brands and cues of conspicuous consumption than men (Bus, 1998; Dunn & Seale, 2013; Wang & Griskevicius, 2013). Therefore, we predicted that there would be a greater effect of the first two hypotheses for female participants. Specifically, we predicted that, compared to men, women would rate the applicant using brand name products as even higher in competency but lower in warmth than applicants using non-brand name counterparts. Results revealed no significant interactions between gender of perceiver and brand name use. Compared to men, women did not significantly rate the branded applicants (both



Chanel and Louis Vuitton) as higher in competence or lower in warmth than non-branded applicants. Therefore this prediction was not supported.

The findings in regards to gender indicate that in Thailand, women may not be more sensitive to luxury goods than men. A study by Chuchinprakarn (2003) found that amongst Thai university students, men were the highest users of counterfeit luxury goods. Additionally, in a similar market to Thailand, Chinese men were found to be the biggest spenders with a total annual sum of 7 billion yuan, compared to 4.2 billion yuan for women in 2010 (Jetley, 2011). Another explanation for our findings could be that women may only be more sensitive to cues of conspicuous consumption than men, when in a mating context. Past research has only found significant findings when women were triggered to be in a mate-guarding mode but not in non-mate related threat mode (e.g failing an exam) (Wang & Griskevicius, 2014), or when directly asked about opposite-sex attraction (Dunn & Seale, 2013).

### **Strengths of the Current Study**

Firstly, our study was the first study to explore how luxury brands can affect the job application setting in Asia. This is important as Asia is the largest luxury brand market in the world with a rapidly increasing consumer profile (Yi-Cheon et al., 2014). One of our key strengths is our rigorous material preparation. We used a pilot study to confirm that our scales had high reliabilities, that the brands used were considered well-known amongst our population, and the photo had high visibility. Furthermore, the photo of the applicant between the conditions was carefully controlled, including the person's posture, smile, attire, background and lighting. For the non-branded bag condition, instead of using another non-branded bag, we decided to use the same bag as in the brand

condition, but took out the logo using a sensitive photo-editing procedure (see Appendix D). This is to ensure that the bags between the two conditions were completely identical except for the brands, hence excluding potential confounds. Furthermore, the resume was written so that it was ambiguous and could not lead to competency or warmth confounds. We also used two luxurious brands in our study (LV and Chanel) to ensure that the effects discovered would not only be specific to the characteristics of one brand. Participant's demographics were asked last to ensure that they were not primed by their identity. Furthermore, we had a stringent manipulation check for the brand-condition, opting for recall of the brand rather than recognition to make sure that participants were actually aware and recognized the brand. In addition, our data preparation process was stringent, including preliminary checks, handling missing data, and detecting outliers leading to objective results (see Results section). Lastly, our study was conducted in three controlled classroom sessions, so all participants received the same experimental procedure (i.e. instructions, questionnaire) in a distraction free environment.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

One of the key limitations to our study, as mentioned above, is the ecological validity of our study. Future studies should improve on this by either using a video of an applicant's interview, similar to Nelissen and Meijers' (2011) study or perhaps conduct a real interview setting. Furthermore, most of our participants were university students who may not be experienced in recruiting settings. Future research should employ real-world hiring managers to help increase the ecological validity of the experiment.

In addition, the photo could be argued to have a very prominent brand image, as it clearly shows that the applicant is holding a brand name bag (which might not be natural

in a job application setting). This might have caused the participants to be aware of the aim of the study or become psychologically re-active. Specifically, the Hawthorne effect claims that when participants know they are being studied, they may alter their performance and attention. Future research, should try to either have photos with less brand prominence, or use an interview where the brand can be more naturally place.

Another key limitation is that our control for the brand's luxuriousness used in the study was weak. Our pilot study only assessed the brand's popularity within a Thai-context, but not how luxurious it is. This was one of the key factors that impacted our results as we later found out that Louis Vuitton has a poor luxurious brand image, as well as high associations with counterfeits in Thailand. Furthermore, the bag used in the study for Louis Vuitton was significantly different in price to the Chanel one. Future studies should first control for this to ensure that the brand, as well as the product used has the appropriate luxurious factors. For example, Louis Vuitton can be used as the luxurious brand but the bag must be more expensive or from the upper-tier. An in depth pilot study could also be conducted to assess for the brand's luxurious appeal. It would also be interesting to see other high-end brands being used, such as Hermes, or Porsche, as well as lower-end brands such as Tommy Hilfiger and Coach.

Furthermore, our study only used a female applicant and female related products (hand-bag). A similar study should be conducted using male applicants and male related products (such as watches, cars, suits) to see if differences between the two genders exist. Studies have been done on male's attractiveness with luxurious cars (Dun & Seale, 2011) but not in a job application setting.

Even though we tried to regulate the experimental condition, participant's interest in the study could not be controlled. Experiments were conducted in a classroom environment, some as part of class-credit. Students may have not taken the exercise as seriously due to the classroom environment. Hence, with more time and more resources, experiments should be conducted in a more serious manner, such as a smaller group or one-on-one session in a laboratory environment.

Our resume also had some limitations, since we mentioned that the applicant worked as a part-time cashier and waitress. In the Thai society, this type of job has quite a low income, therefore participants might have questioned the genuineness of the bag that applicants were using as a cashier or waitress might be unable to afford a 150,000 bag Chanel bag. Future studies should pay attention to the construct of the resume to make sure there are no potential confounds.

Lastly, since the applicant's job was a creative-writer, it limits how much our results can be applied to the general population. We can only say that our results would apply to the specific genre of job (e.g. creative designer, journalist etc.), not other jobs that may require different or specific sets of skills or have a different job profile (e.g. doctor, engineer, high ranking managers). Future studies should explore whether the effects are present in different types of jobs and to increase the generalizability of our results.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have many implications in the recruiting and hiring industry. However, we need to acknowledge that the results of our study are only

generalisable to the Thai population and only to jobs related to creative-writing and journalism. Broader generalisations should be made with caution.

Firstly, those who are applying for a job, or about to do an interview, should not use loud-signal luxury brand name bags as it could potentially lead to them being perceived as lower in competence. This is specific however, in the creative journalism industry. Furthermore, hiring managers and recruiting officers should take into account that certain facets about an applicant, such as their bag and the brand name products they use, could lead to false misconceptions and judgments about a person. Therefore, more objective methods of judgment should be implemented in order to avoid erroneous evaluations, and hence loss of potential candidates.

Our results also have implications for brand management and marketing approaches. Louis Vuitton, for example, may need to consider how their brand is perceived, specifically for the Thai consumer. Our study has found that their brand has significant negative effects in a very critical context: job application setting. In the luxury world, brand image is the most important component, as the brand needs to be able to justify to consumers why they should pay an excessively high amount for a product that might not add further utilitarian benefits to their cheaper counterparts (Hudders, 2012; Mandel et al., 2006). If a luxurious product, is unable to offer only benefits, but instead is detrimental to the consumer, this can result in severe implications to the brand.

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## Appendix A

## Pilot Study

**Demographics**

What is your age?.....

What is your gender?.....

Which academic year are you in?.....

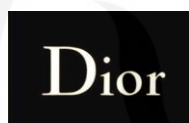
**Brand Awareness**

- Which brand do you think is more well-known amongst Thai people?  
Please rank from 1 (*the most popular*) to 6 (*the least popular*).

..... Chanel



..... Dior



..... Gucci



..... Hermes



..... Louis Vuitton



..... Prada



- Which brand do you think has the highest brand visibility on their products?  
(i.e. can immediately recognize the brand of the product after seeing it.)


Please rank from 1 (*the most popular*) to 6 (*the least popular*).


..... Chanel 

..... Dior 

..... Gucci 

..... Hermes 

..... Louis Vuitton 

..... Prada 

**Brand visibility**

Please rate from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very high*) the brand visibility of the product in this picture. ....



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Faculty of Psychology, Chulalongkorn University

**Perception of Competence.**

Based on the picture above, please rate this person's competence on the questionnaire down below.

<b>Statement</b>	Very Strongly Disagree	Very Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Very Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1. This person is competence.							
2. This person is skillful.							
3. This person is intelligent.							
4. This person is knowledgeable.							
5. This person is motivated.							
6. This person is organized.							
7. This person is hard-working.							
8. This person is self-disciplined.							



## Appendix B

### JIPP Informed Consent Form

RESEARCH TITLE: The Perception of Competence and Warmth in a Job Application Situation

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATORS: Kananon Chiewtamai, Nont Teerakanok, Srisakul Chittapaneeerat

CONTACT INFO: JIPP program. The faculty of psychology, Chulalongkorn University.

TEL. 02-218-1189

#### STUDY PROCEDURE:

Participants will be required to sit separately in an examination-like fashion. Each participant will be given a set of papers containing instructions, a job applicant's resume, the applicant's photographs, and a rating scale. Participants will be required to read the instructions carefully, read the resume, and observe the photographs... Next, participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire about their perceptions of the provided information.

#### RISK AND BENEFITS:

There is no known risk of participating in the study as participant will be asked to imagine a scenario that should pose no risk, both psychologically and physically.

Compensation for the study includes a chocolate candy.

#### VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

It is up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. If you decide to take part but later change your mind, you are still free to withdraw at anytime without giving a reason. Refusal to participate or the decision to withdraw from this research will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Your data will be kept confidential. Any information that you provide during your participation will be recorded and employed for research purposes only. This information will be stored anonymously and kept confidential. A code number will identify your data, and no one will be able to link your responses with your name at the conclusion of our study.

#### PERSON TO CONTACT *Psychology, Chulalongkorn University*

If you have questions, complaints or concerns about this study, or feel that you have been harmed as a result of participation, please call Dr. Watcharaporn Boonyasiriwat at 02-218-1187 who may be reached during 9 A.M.-5 P.M.

#### CONSENT

**By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read the information in this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.**

Signature .....Date .....

(.....)

Researcher

Signature .....Date .....

(.....)

Participant

## Appendix C

## Resume

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# MISS KRITSANA THONGSUK

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## Career Focus

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Recent university graduate with journalism and creative writing abilities. Searching for a vocational opportunity in magazine writing.

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## Core Qualifications

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- Basic English Skills
- Fast English Typing
- Punctuality
- Creative Writing Skills
- Efficient Thai Language Skills
- Fast Thai Typing

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## Education and Training

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### Bachelor of Arts: Journalism

Ramkamhaeng University

Bangkok, Thailand

2010-2014

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## Interests

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Reading

Writing short stories

Badminton

Cooking Thai food

Traveling

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## Work Experience

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### Part-time Cashier

Coffee Berry Cafe

2011-2013

Bangkok

### Part-time Waitress

Suki Suki Hot Pot Restaurant

2013

Bangkok

Appendix D  
No Brand Condition



Brand Conditions



Louis Vuitton

Chanel

## Appendix E

### **Instructions**

Please sit and read the instructions and scenario quietly. It is very important to us that you conduct this task seriously and with effort as your answers will greatly affect our results. Please also work on your task individually without discussing with your classmates. Thank you for participating in our experiment.

### **Scenario**

Imagine yourself being a recruiter of a new opening position in your company. A resume was given to you along with a photo of the applicant that was taken at your office. As a manager, you are to rate this person based on your own perception from the information provided. Your company is a magazine publisher, and the opening position involves writing a weekly article on the magazine.

**Please view the resume and picture given, and complete the questionnaire provided.**

After reviewing the applicant's resume, please answer the following questions. For each statement, please indicate your agreement according to how you actually think/feel as if you are a recruiter in this scenario. There's no right or wrong answer.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. This person is friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. This person is competent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. This person is likeable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. This person is skilful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. This person is warm.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. This person is intelligent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. This person is approachable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. This person is knowledgeable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I would ask this person for advice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. This person is motivated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I would like this person as a co-worker.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. This person is organized.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I would like this person as a roommate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. This person is hard-working.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I would like to be friends with this person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. This person is self-disciplined.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. This person is physically attractive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. This person is similar to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. Overall, do you think that this person is suitable for the position?

1            2            3            4            5            6            7  
 Not at all suitable                          Moderately suitable                          Very suitable



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## Appendix F

**Manipulation Check**

1. Did you see any luxury brands in the photo? Yes / No
2. If so, please indicate the brand you saw:  
.....
3. Please complete the questionnaire down below, and for each statement, indicate your agreement according to how you think/feel about the content of the photo.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. The brand of the bag in the photo is obvious.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. The brand of the bag in the photo is explicit.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. The brand of the bag in the photo is easily spotted.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**7. Demographic Information**

Gender : Male / Female

Age: .....

Faculty: Faculty of Psychology.....Chulalongkorn University

Academic Year: .....

Approximate Income (per month): .....

8. To what extent that you consider yourself a user of brand name product of any kind?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

Never used at all

Use moderately

Use very extensively

9. What do you think this research is about? Please briefly explain down

below.....

## Biographies

### Srisakun Chittapraneerat

Srisakun is a current undergraduate student enrolled in the Joint International Psychology Program at Chulalongkorn University. Her childhood years were spent in New Zealand, where she achieved the National Certification of Educational Achievement with Excellence. She now has graduated with a Bachelors of Arts with an extended major in Psychology at the University of Queensland, Australia. During her time at the University of Queensland, she was awarded the Dean's Commendation for Academic Excellence for two consecutive semesters. This award is given to an elite group of students who achieve exceptionally high levels of academic achievement. As a fulfilment of her second degree, Bachelors of Science in Psychology at Chulalongkorn University, she conducted a research exploring luxury brand use in a hiring context. Throughout her years at university she has discovered many fields of interests, including Evolutionary Psychology, Consumer Psychology and Neuropsychology, specifically understanding the brain mechanisms that govern human behaviour. She hopes to pursue postgraduate studies in one of these fields. Srisakun likes to spend her spare time travelling around the world, tasting delicious food and enjoying the company of her friends and family.

### Kanenon Chiewtamai

Kanenon is a current undergraduate student in the Joint International Psychology Program at Chulalongkorn University. Growing up, he had the opportunity to study in four different continents and countries, Thailand, Slovenia, America and Australia. As part of the Joint-Program, he spent three semesters studying at the University of Queensland where he received a Bachelors of Arts with an extended major in



Psychology. Currently, he is pursuing his second degree, Bachelors of Science in Psychology, at Chulalongkorn University. As a fulfilment of the curriculum, he conducted a research investigating the effects of Luxury brand use in an organizational context, integrating evolutionary and social perception theories. In this research, he was the chief investigator during data analysis procedure, using his strengths in statistics. Throughout his years at university, he was known to be responsible, caring, generous and trustworthy amongst his colleagues.

### Nont Teerakanok

Nont Teerakanok is currently studying in the Joint International Psychology Program (JIPP) at Chulalongkorn University. Furthermore, as part of the program, he spent three semesters studying psychology at the University of Queensland. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree with an extended major in Psychology from the University of Queensland in December of 2014, and is eligible to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology at Chulalongkorn University in October of 2015. As part of the course, he had given a chance from the JIPP committee to conduct a research on the effects of luxury brand use on the perception of competence and warmth in a job application situation.