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Do brands make consumers happy?- A masstige theory perspective

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ABSTRACT

Happiness has been topic of research since ancient times. This study explores the theory of consumer happiness grounded in the tenets of mass prestige (Masstige), self-consciousness and social ideal self by linking it with brand-induced happiness (Brand Happiness). The relationship is explored in light of self-consciousness and social ideal self by taking them as moderators. Data was collected from a European country using a standard questionnaire measuring brand happiness, masstige, self-consciousness and social ideal self from 346 respondents for three mobile phone brands from America, South Korea and China – iPhone, Samsung and Huawei. Exploratory Factor Analysis, Structural Equation Modelling, and Moderation Analysis revealed that the consumption of masstige brands lead to brand happiness. This relationship is moderated by self-consciousness, whereas social ideal self is not moderating the relationship. The study also revealed that only iPhone is a masstige brand. Implications of the findings and managerial applications along with theoretical contributions are discussed.

1. Introduction

Everyone wants to be happy! Happiness is the ultimate goal that most people strive for (Bruhn and Schnebelen, 2017). People invest time, money, and energy to achieve a happy life, but it is quite difficult (Van Boven, 2005). A happy customer may not only tend to evaluate everything around him positively but thinking positive and being in a positive mood may also favorably impact future experiences (Peters et al., 2010) and decisions (Labroo and Patrick, 2009). Therefore, happiness construct has attracted great interest among researchers in the field of psychology and marketing (Barbosa, 2017). Despite that, one of the main unresolved question in consumer research is: "Can a brand make consumer happy?". This study calls for exploration of happiness in the consumer-brand encounter context.

The present study is an attempt to examine the relationship between masstige (mass prestige associated with brands) and brand happiness (happiness induced due to usage of a brand). These constructs are relatively new in literature and therefore research gaps exist. Brand happiness is the least explored (Schnebelen and Bruhn, 2018) and there is a dearth of studies on masstige brands (Paul, 2019). Prior studies measuring the role of brands in making consumers happy are not prevalent in literature. After reviewing the existing literature, just one study was found (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009) proposing a framework to understand the linkage of brands with happiness. They proposed to measure happiness from the brand's perspective through three stages: physiological, emotional and subjective well-being. There are traces in literature which indirectly supports the importance of this proposal (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991) as an important research area. Yet, such effect of brand consumption has hitherto been ignored in research (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Steenkamp, 2005). To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first attempt to understand the relationship between masstige brands and brand happiness. We attempt to address the evaluations of consumers' brand happiness as a result of the usage of brands in light of the masstige theory.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 is dedicated to a detailed literature review. This section starts with the theoretical underpinning of happiness. The reviewed literature is further divided into 4 sub-sections. The literature review section is followed by the method section (Section 3). After the method section, the implications are presented in discussion. The concluding remarks are given in the last section.

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2. Literature review, theory and hypotheses

Ancient Greek philosophers Epicure and Cicero viewed happiness as an absence of pain (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009). However, utilitarian philosophers considered happiness as the sum of material pleasures (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009) which means that an increase in the level of happiness comes from an increase in affluence and control over the material environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). The definition of happiness depends on the author and the discipline of the study (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009). Economists and psychologists have long ignored each other in the study of happiness and subjective well-being (SWB). Psychologists generally use the "subjective well-being" construct (Diener et al., 1999). The second wave of research in psychology considers happiness as one of the many human affects, ignoring the cognitive aspect of happiness. In addition, researchers in the field of neurobiology consider happiness as an activation state in a particular part of the human brain (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009). For economists, happiness is a function of personal income and utility derived from consumption (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009). Early economists and philosophers, from Aristotle to Bentham, Mill and Smith, incorporated the concept of happiness into the definition of welfare (Graham, 2016). According to the economic definition of well-being, "higher levels of income are associated with higher levels of well-being through greater levels of material consumption" (Fuentes and Rojas, 2001). In economics and marketing literature, the term happiness is used interchangeably with subjective well-being, utility, welfare, positive affect, and life satisfaction (Barbosa, 2017; Dominko and Verbič, 2019). Some authors have confirmed that happiness and well-being are interrelated concepts (Nicolao et al., 2009; Seligman, 2002) and that the rating of happiness is highly correlated with other measures of psychological and physiological well-being (Sutton and Davison, 2000). Although the measures of subjective well-being include other cognitive and affective items, happiness explains most of the variance in the construct of subjective well-being (Compton et al., 1996). The winner of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2017, Richard Thaler, has emphasized in behavioral economics and has advocated that consumers are irrational in decision making and they derive satisfaction and happiness psychologically while consuming physically (Committee for the Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobe, 2017; Dean and Croft, 2009). This advancement further dilutes the economists' perspective that happiness is entirely coming out of utilitarian consumption or materialism. The 2017 Nobel prize is a leap forward in giving more weight to the affect-based psychological perspective when it comes to happiness. This study takes into account this affect-based psychological perspective of happiness by operationalizing happiness with the construct of brand happiness.

2.1. Happiness research in marketing and consumption

Research on the concept of happiness in marketing is interesting and useful for many reasons. For example, how happiness affects consumer behavior and consumption (the search for information, evaluation, decision making, etc.); how consumption affects consumer happiness (satisfaction, experience, etc.); what are the outcomes of making consumers happy (loyalty, word-of-mouth, repurchase of product etc.) and how the concept of happiness can be integrated into a marketing strategy (Barbosa, 2017).

2.1.1. Influence of consumption on happiness

According to neoclassical economic theory, there is a direct positive relationship between consumption and happiness (Noll and Weick, 2015; Wang et al., 2019). Consumption is the only way to achieve satisfaction because people are insatiable. Consumption is a much more relevant measure of utility, life satisfaction and material standard of living than income (Headey et al., 2008). According to Wang et al. (2019), "consumption reflects an individual's spending behavior and directly reflects whether the acquisition of specific goods or services improves their happiness" (p.20). A large number of studies have been conducted on the impact of consumption on happiness. Most of the studies have measured the impact of absolute consumption on happiness (Headey et al., 2008; Noll and Weick, 2015; Stanca Vesenhoven, 2015; Zhang and Xiong, 2015), while few studies have measured the impact of relative consumption on happiness (Fafchamps and Shilpi, 2008; Wang et al., 2019). Wang et al. (2019) considered the impact of relative consumption on happiness in China and found that an increase in average consumption has positive effect on happiness.

Prior studies have shown various types of consumption resulting in happiness, such as car ownership, smoking, leisure activities, as well as the influence of certain demographic and economic factors such as income, employment, race, age, etc. (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009; Robertson, 2016). Earlier studies depict that consumption of products make life easier for people and improve their material status (housing, food, durable goods) (Cheng et al., 2016). Conspicuous or status products (cars, jewelry, luxury travel, cosmetics, etc.) improves the status of an individual in society (Duesenbery, 1949). Consumers engage in spending on leisure activities or charitable activities, because happiness is achieved through the "effect on social relationship" (Wang et al., 2019). Such engagement and consumption is testimony to the idea that consumption leads to happiness for consumer. Researchers have focused on consumption in general or consumption of a particular product category (cars, phones, etc.), while they have rarely shown the relationship between consumption of a particular brand and happiness. This entices us to study the influence of a specific brand's consumption on happiness.

2.2. Marketing, brand and consumer happiness

Can marketers play an important role in making a consumer happy? Literature suggests that through consumption, a marketer can influence consumer's happiness (Costley et al., 2007; Headey et al., 2008). This can be understood through a simple logic: Consumers spend their money on products because they expect and receive something (fulfillment of demand, satisfaction, etc.) in return. The experiential feeling is termed as an important reward of consumption (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). When people indulge in experiential purchase, they experience increased happiness in comparison to materialistic purchase (Van Boven, 2005; Nicolao et al., 2009; Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003; Bhattacharjee and Mogilner, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Dunn et al., 2011) and hence it should be looked as inherent part of consumption (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Hence, it can be claimed that marketing activities (Desmeules, 2002), purchase and usage of products (Chancellor and Lyubomirsky, 2011; Goldsmith, 2016) are associated with bringing happiness to an individual. Marketers can make consumers to spend money on brands to achieve happiness. They have to play an important role in using this strategy because people are not predisposed to spend their money in such a way that they can maximize their happiness (Hsee and Hastie, 2006). Conspicuous consumption theory gives strong reasons to believe that the usage of brands conspicuously increases happiness (Perez-Truglia, 2013). It is also believed that brands, when consumed conspicuously, may help consumers to accomplish their desired identity (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Having achieved the desired identity perceptually makes consumers happy. Happiness and self-identity relationship has been well documented in literature. Happiness is achieved through narrative identity (Bauer et al., 2008), and various elements of self identity (Vignoles et al., 2006; Christiansen, 2000; Kan et al., 2009; McGregor and Little, 1998). There are studies which are connecting long term and short term happiness with identities of humans (Leveto, 2016). For prestige brands, consumers give extended meaning to brands and enhance their identities along with the line of brand's image (Wiedmann and Hennigs, 2013). This depicts that literature has formidable evidence of happiness and self identity linkage irrespective of identity types and elements (Ğlu-AygÜn, 2004).

Hence, it can be summed up that consumption of brands make consumers happy in multiple ways.

2.3. Masstige theory and brand happiness

Consumers no longer consume a product for its basic utility, but they seek to fulfill multiple needs (Schiffman et al., 2012) including the need of happiness. Bruhn and Schnebelen's (2017) emphasized this and studied the happiness generated from usage of brand and operationalized this using brand happiness. They defined brand happiness as "a consumer's greatest emotional fulfillment, a moment-based experience of pleasant high and low arousal emotions, induced at different brand contact points" (p.102). Brand Happiness being a relatively novel construct need to be understood for its distinction from affective and cognitive constructs like customer satisfaction, brand experience (Schmitt et al., 2014) etc. (see Schnebelen and Bruhn, 2018) for the classical distinction of brand happiness from all other related constructs). For example, customer satisfaction is largely seen as the non-emotional evaluation and judgement related to brands (Yi and Nataraajan, 2018; Schmitt et al., 2014) whereas brand happiness is pleasant emotional experience as seen from its definition (Schnebelen and Bruhn, 2018). To be specific, customer satisfaction is largely seen as the difference between expectations and perceptions of customers (Yi and Nataraajan, 2018; Yuan and Wu, 2008; Peterson and Wilson, 1992) which is a cognitive evaluation. Studies looking for relationship between brand happiness and customer satisfaction are testimony to this distinction (Gong and Yi, 2018).

Bruhn and Schnebelen (2017) have developed a theoretical appraisal framework of the antecedents and consequences of brand happiness. According to them, there are brand appraisal determinants (brand self-relevance, brand relationship quality, actual and ideal brand self-congruence, and brand goal-congruence) and situational appraisal determinants (certainty, pleasantness, and fairness) of brand happiness. The most important factors influencing brand happiness can be rational (price, quality, services, etc.), situational (each situation differently affects brand happiness), and cultural (products in accordance with the cultural values can make consumers happy). Bettingen and Luedicke (2009) argue that there are three levels of brand experience (brand cues, brand systems for consumers, and brand systems for society) that may affect brand happiness. The emotional fulfillment that brands provide to consumers, as well as their power to influence consumer behavior, qualifies brand happiness as one of the most important branding goals and one of the key research areas of the future (Schnebelen and Bruhn, 2018). If a marketer can make brands to influence consumer happiness, such brands have a competitive advantage over other brands. This can affect preferences, purchase intentions, consumer loyalty and brand equity (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009; Mishra et al., 2014; Barbosa, 2017). According to Bruhn and Schneblen (2017), brand happiness strongly predicts (re)purchase intention and willingness to pay premium price (as problem-focused coping strategies), word of mouth, brand evangelism and brand forgiveness (as emotional coping strategies). Despite such robust evidences of brand happiness, the impact of brands usage on consumer happiness is underestimated in research. There are only a few studies related to this topic (Bettingen and Luedicke, 2009; Bruhn and Schnebelen, 2017; Schnebelen and Bruhn, 2018).

In light of the above discussion, the brand induced happiness (brand happiness) seems an existing possibility. We extend the prior research about brand happiness towards a new field of research - masstige brands-as masstige value is considered as an important measure of brand equity (Paul, 2018, 2019). Silvestein and Fiske (2003) introduced the term masstige in Harvard Business Review and argued that even non-luxury brands or mass brands can have prestige associated with it. Masstige strategy is about making the prestige attainable to masses by downward extension by mixing product, promotion and place factors appropriately (Paul, 2018). Therefore, where luxury is just for a few people, masstige is for masses (Kumar and Paul, 2018). Since long, luxury, conspicuous and prestigious brands have been associated with rarity (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999) and has been linked to the experience of happiness. Does it mean that only few consumers who can afford to buy luxury brands can experience happiness? It will be interesting to note whether the consumption of masstige brands can also lead to happiness in consumers. Where the studies directly exploring the masstige brands and brand happiness are scare, yet literature indirectly has been pointing towards this relationship since long. Hwang and Hyun (2012) confirmed this relationship when he found that consumption of prestige product enhances the happiness of consumers. Similar results were documented by Hwang and Han (2014) for prestige products. Hwang and Han (2014) clearly depicts that prestige of a product/brand leads to happiness for consumers. Similarly, Loueriro and Cunha (2017) found that consumption of prestige wine brand positively influences the happiness and overall satisfaction. Kruger (2018) depicts that ownership of prestige brand, its appearance and other related associations makes consumer happy. Evidences like engagement with brands having symbolic representations enhances consumer happiness because of brands (Niedermeier et al., 2019) is a testimony to the idea that consumption of prestige brands leads to brand induced happiness in consumers.

Following Gilliam and Voss's (2013), we searched for what constitutes the brand happiness and for the studies linking the constituents of brand happiness and prestige (this was done because the studies related to brand happiness and prestige associated with brands are not available). To find out constituents, we used the definition of brand happiness given by Bruhn and Schnebelen (2017). We identified 'pleasant emotions, experiences' induced as result of brand contact as to be the main constituent. We therefore looked for the papers linking pleasant experiences and prestige. This scrutiny again reaffirmed that prestige and brand happiness are related. It is because, buying prestige and luxury brands have been associated with pleasant experiences (Perez et al., 2010; Norton, Durgee and VanDeVelde, 2010) since long. Marketers have also looked at experiences as an important vehicle to communicate the prestige of a brand (Choi et al., 2017).

Pertaining to the above literature, we propose to explore brand induced happiness for regular consumers, who do not consume luxury brands but yet attempt for the attainment of happiness as a result of the consumption of brands. Masstige brands would be a better fit in understanding this relationship between brand consumption and happiness as masstige theory is underlined by many of the concepts (masstige is related to prestige consumption, consumers who are high on self-consciousness are more prone to prestigious brands), which are specifically held responsible for generating happiness due to brand usage. We therefore hypothesize:

H1. Consumption of a masstige brands lead to brand happiness among consumers.

2.4. Social ideal self, self consciousness, masstige, and brand happiness

The general factors identified in the literature that influence happiness includes personal traits, attitudes towards self/others' life, socially developed traits, relationships with other people, and the wider economic, political and social environment (Dolan et al., 2008). Studies have shown a stronger correlation between relative income and happiness (Ball and Chernova, 2008; Frey and Stutzer, 2002). According to the relative income hypothesis, developed by James Duesenberry, "the satisfaction (or utility) an individual derives from a given income level depends on its relative magnitude in the society (e.g., relative to the average income) rather than its absolute level." (as cited in Ozglen, 2019, p.14). This hypothesis is based on the old claim of economists and psychologists that people attach great importance to their social status and relationships.

Engaging in relations is an important predictor of happiness for consumers (Aksoy et al., 2015; Munzel et al., 2018). It is even depicted that lack of relationships can result in lack of happiness. From branding

perspective, we have been witnessing formation of relationships with brands (Fournier, 1998; Long-Tolbert and Gammoh, 2012). It is evident that prestige associated with brands affect the quality of relationship which a consumer shares with brand (Choi et al., 2017). We have evidence of translating the relationship and happiness connection in branding theory. For example, brand owners when get engaged in social relationships with other brand owners, it brings happiness to them (Kruger, 2018). In other words, brands consumption can make consumers happy because of the social relationships generated due to consumption (Costley et al., 2007). Online brand communities of prestigious brands is great example of the notion that getting in social relationship due to brands bring a definitive happiness in consumers (Niedermeier et al., 2019). Similar results were reported by Duan and Dholakia (2017) when they found that interpersonal relationships are influenced by brand purchases and it ultimately leads to happiness. This literature supports that consumption of brands is considered as an important factor influencing social relationships and self. Prestige brands which are consumed for symbolism, experiences, and status attainment are meant to enhance specific social relationships and help in attainment of desired self. Prosocial spending on such brands would result in enhancing social relationships and promoting happiness (Yamaguchi et al., 2016). We are referring to this induced happiness as brand happiness. Therefore, it can be said that brand happiness can alternatively be formed through social relations of humans. Prior research has identified many external, situational, and social status factors that can affect happiness (Bruhn and Schnebelen, 2017). Manifesting the above perspective with the literature on consumer behavior, we have enough evidence to believe that consumers give enormous weight to social consumption. The importance given to foreign brands in terms of prestige is one such example (Kumar and Paul, 2018; Lee and Nguyen, 2017; O'Cass and Siahtiri, 2013). It also culminates that consumers draw increased happiness from their social presence. Branding literature also has enough evidence that consumers see brands as partners (Coelho et al., 2018). Brands are strong means of attaining ideal self, be it in the form of attaining membership of an ideal group or attaining ideal self in general (Schiffman et al., 2012). This is even true in the case of masstige brands as consumers tend to get in masstige consumption to fulfill their social image (Kumar et al., 2019).

It is an established fact that one who wishes to use brands as a means of attaining an ideal self (Kumar et al., 2019) is more prone to impression management (Solomon, 2016). These people are more concerned about their social image and would, therefore, be sensitive to their social appearance. Engaging in a specific consumption can give a desired social face to a consumer (Swinyard et al., 2001). Those who wish to attain their ideal self would eventually be more interested in using brands socially. This is because brands are strong means to fulfill one's identity (Kumar and Paul, 2018). There are robust proofs in the literature that happiness, especially the short-lived state of happiness is impacted by an ideal-self depending on the situation (Mikulincer and Peer-Goldin, 1991). This might be true when one talks of social setting (ideal social self). There is confirmed evidence that the consumption of brands is related to the actual and ideal self of consumers (Huber et al., 2018). Those who have a larger gap between their actual and ideal self would psychologically be yearning towards positive goals (Carver et al., 1999) like happiness. It is said that avoidance of undesired self is equally or even more important than approach of ideal self or desired self; and this can strongly influence happiness (Ogilvie, 1987; Phillips et al., 2007). Social comparison theory, self-esteem, and upper mobility construct stress on the notion that people generally are optimistic about their future (Schiffman et al., 2017). People tune to their ideal self, especially social ideal self for fulfilling the valence created by the above concepts. Therefore, it is important to consider the self-related constructs (like social ideal self) to understand happiness (Reich et al., 2013). The social ideal self is exercised by people to attain happiness. This connotes that those who wish to fulfill their social ideal self would use the brands to attain it. We, therefore, propose that those who are more concerned about their social ideal self would draw more happiness from the consumption of masstige brands. It is hypothesized that:

H2. Social ideal self would positively moderate the relationship between masstige brands' usage and brand happiness.

This discussion can be extended to self-consciousness. Masstige brands that fit well in social consumption are best suited for maintaining self-image in society (Hawkins et al., 2014). The theory of self encompasses the components of self-consciousness and social ideal self (Schiffman et al., 2017). It is evident to note that the evaluation of self is influenced by these components. Concept of self-consciousness projects that people high on self-consciousness (specifically public self-consciousness) would be more observant towards their possessions including brands (Solomon, 2016). Arousal of self-consciousness would influence the happiness (Tracy and Robins, 2004). In a study, a related construct to self-consciousness (face consciousness) is found to be moderating the relationship between income and well-being (Zhang and Cao, 2010). It is also proved that to be happy, being aware of oneself plays an important role (Harrington and Loffredo, 2011). There is even biological evidence that changes in self-consciousness may affect the state of happiness of an individual (Martins et al., 2016). It, therefore, is elementary to believe that the level of public self-consciousness a consumer has would influence one's evaluation of himself (Solomon, 2016), which in turn would bring a noticeable effect on happiness. Literature evidences are also available depicting relationship between self consciousness and happiness (Harrington and Loffredo, 2001; Harrington et al., 2014). The above evidences project that public self-consciousness shares a relationship with happiness, and it can also influence the relationship of happiness with other constructs as a moderator. Self-consciousness as moderating variable is not new to behavioral research (Carver et al., 1985; Kemmelmeier, 2001; Bartholow et al., 2000; Carver and Scheier, 1981; LaBrie et al., 2008; Park et al., 2006). Based on this and following the prior literature on moderating variables (Baron and Kenny, 1986), we hypothesize that:

H3. Public Self-consciousness would positively moderate the relationship between masstige brands' consumption and brand happiness.

3. Method

3.1. Product category and brands

The study aims to address the overall objective of exploring the relationship between masstige and brand happiness. It also attempts to check the influence of social ideal self and self-consciousness as moderators on the relationship between masstige and brand happiness. The study was carried out in Serbia, an emerging country in Europe (US News, 2018) with an approximate population size of 7 million. Emerging markets set ideal context to study masstige value of brands (Paul, 2015; Kumar et al., 2019). To explore the relationship between masstige and brand happiness, the study was conducted in the context of three popular mobile phone brands - iPhone, Samsung, and Huawei (Country of Origin- United States, South Korea, and China respectively). All users of these three mobile phone brands were invited to fill up the questionnaire designed for the purpose. Reasons for choosing these mobile brands are multiple: 1) Mobile brands are almost owned by everyone in Serbia. In December 2018, the tele density of Serbia was recorded to be above 97 (CEIC, 2019); 2) Mobile phone brands are an important category that fits well in the masstige study. Even one of the brands in the current study - iPhone is recommended to be studied for its mass prestige (Kumar and Paul, 2018); 3) Certain brands of smartphones are used by consumers to display their status (Suki, 2013) and consumers generate happiness from these mobile phones (Chan, 2015).; 4) Samsung, Huawei and Apple, recently captured more than 50% of the smartphone global market, with the rest of the market left for hundreds of other brands to compete fiercely. In the first quarter of 2020, global market share of these brands

was 20% for Samsung, 17% for Huawei and 14% for Apple (Counterpoint Technology Market Research, 2020). In Europe, market share of these three brands is 34.42% for Samsung, 25.71% for iPhone, and Huawei stands at 18.6%. Therefore, globally and in the European region, these three brands are the top brands. Prior research (Kumar and Paul, 2018) has already pointed out that best selling brands are expected to be having prestige associated with them. This makes a strong case of selection of these three brands.

3.2. Measure

A structured questionnaire was designed to measure four constructs in the study (Masstige, Brand Happiness, Self-consciousness and Ideal Social Self). The questionnaire was divided into six parts. The first part measures the ownership of the phone by the respondent. The second part measures the masstige associated with the mobile phone concerned. Masstige is operationalized by the only available scale propounded by Paul (2015, 2019) (Appendix 1). Schnebelen and Bruhn's (2018) brand happiness scale is used to measure brand happiness (Appendix 2) in third part. Bruhn and Schnebelen developed a scale for measuring brand happiness, which is stable across brands, cultures, and respondents (Bruhn and Schnebelen, 2017; Schnebelen and Bruhn, 2016). For now, this is the only scale for measuring brand happiness in the extant scientific literature. Self-consciousness is operationalized using public self-consciousness part of the self-consciousness scale proposed by Fenigstein et al. (1975) in fourth part. The public self-consciousness scale (Appendix 3) was chosen because, in the context of this study, we measure the self-consciousness, which one experiences due to the usage of a brand (mobile phone) in the public domain. The ideal social self is operationalized by scale propounded by Sirgy et al. (1997) as fifth part of questionnaire. Sirgy et al. (1997) scale of self-congruity has four operational dimensions of which one is Ideal Social self-congruity. The dimension "Ideal social self-congruity" is used to operationalized the ideal social self (Appendix 4) in this study. Questions relating to demographics are kept in the sixth part of the questionnaire as suggested by Malhotra (2008). On all the four scales used in this study, the scoring instructions as advocated by original authors are followed.

The final questionnaire was transcribed in google forms and the link of the google form was provided to the potential respondents using social media (Facebook and WhatsApp). Following the convenience sampling, we got 346 useable responses. These responses were analyzed using factor analysis, structural equation modelling and moderation analysis for addressing the objectives.

4. Analysis

Data revealed that among the three brands of mobile phones in this study, Samsung is the most used brand followed by Huawei and iPhone. From the sample, 191 respondents were female whereas 155 respondents were male. Almost all respondents are living in urban parts of Serbia. The majority of the respondents are earning 50,000 to 100,000 dinars monthly (see Table 1).

To achieve the overall objective of understanding whether masstige brands leads to brand happiness, the reliability of all the constructs was checked. All the scales were found to be reliable as cronbach alpha for masstige, brand happiness, social ideal self, and self-consciousness was 0.851, 0.967, 0.973 and 0.762 respectively. To begin with, the masstige score of the three brands was calculated. To calculate the masstige score, the score of all 10 items on the Masstige Mean Score scale (Paul, 2019) was summed up. Analysis reveals that iPhone is scoring 72 percent (highest) on the masstige score (36.06) followed by Huawei, 68 percent (34.16) and Samsung, 65 percent (32.91). The difference between the masstige scores of three brands were further subjected to ANOVA and *t*-test to see if the three brands in study statistically differ in their masstige scores from each other or not. ANOVA gave significant result depicting that masstige score of brands under study are different

Table 1
Demographics of respondents.

Demographics	Demographic Categories	Mobile Phone Brand			
		Samsung	iPhone	Huawei	Total
Gender	Male	59	40	56	155
	Female	93	46	52	191
	Total	152	86	108	346
Living Area	Urban Area	145	86	106	337
	Rural Area	7	0	2	9
	Total	152	86	108	346
Monthly Income	Nil	23	22	14	59
	Less than 30.000 Dinars	10	1	3	14
	Between 30.000 and 50.000 Dinars	23	8	19	50
	Between 50.000 and 70.000 Dinars	31	17	31	79
	Between 70.000 and 100.000 Dinars	35	17	15	67
	Between 100.000 and 130.000 Dinars	16	9	11	36
	Above 130.000 Dinars	14	12	15	41
	Total	152	86	108	346

(Table 2). We also applied one sample *t*-test by taking the benchmark value of masstige to check mass prestige of brand (Paul, 2015). Result of *t*-test depict that masstige score of Huwei and Samsung are significantly different from the test value (35.71) depicting that Huwei and Samsung's score is significantly less than the benchmark score required to call a brand as masstige brand. Corroborating these two findings (ANOVA and *t*-test) clearly depicts that only Apple's iPhone is a masstige brand. Huawei and Samsung have not been perceived as masstige brands in Serbia.

The scale of brand happiness has 11 items in it. These 11 items were subjected to factor analysis with principal component analysis as an extraction method and varimax as a rotation method to find dimensions of brand happiness if any. Factor analysis gave one-factor solution explaining 75 percent of variance (KMO: 0.930, Bartletts test of sphericity's significance: 0.00). The gross mean of 11 items was calculated as a score of this factor which is called brand happiness (see Table 2). As suggested by propounders of scales of social ideal self and self-consciousness, the scoring for social ideal self was done by taking a gross mean of the three statements of the scale and the score of self-consciousness was calculated by summing up the 7 items of self-consciousness scale (Table 2).

To evaluate the relationship between masstige and brand happiness, and whether this relationship is moderated by social ideal self and self-consciousness individually or both together, a structural model was built in AMOS.

Masstige was taken as an independent variable and brand happiness was taken as a dependent variable. Social ideal self and self-consciousness were taken as moderating variables in the model. A hybrid model was run in AMOS (taking the masstige, brand happiness, social ideal self and self-consciousness as latent variables). A simple line-based description of the model is shown in Fig. 1. First, this model was tested in AMOS for its reliability, validity and model fit. The composite reliability for masstige, social ideal self, and self-consciousness in the AMOS model were calculated as 0.839, 0.923 and 0.726 respectively. The square root of AVE for masstige, social ideal self and self-consciousness were reported as 0.598, 0.871 and 0.532 respectively. These figures confirm the reliability and validity of the model.

The model was also found to be having a good fit (Chi-square significance: 0.00, CMIN/DF: 2.57, CFI: 0.92, RMSEA: 0.03). This model gave significant regression weight (0.227) for the relationship between masstige and brand happiness. The relationship between the social ideal self and brand happiness is also found out to be significant (regression weight: 0.407). But the relationship between self-consciousness and

Table 2
Score of constructs in study.

Brand	Masstige		Social Ideal Self		Self-Consciousness		Brand Happiness	
	Masstige (Maximum Score - 50)	ANOVA/ Welch Sig	Social Ideal Self (Maximum Score - 5)	ANOVA/ Welch Sig	Self-Consciousness (Maximum Score - 35)	ANOVA/ Welch Sig	Brand Happiness	ANOVA/ Welch Sig
Apple	36.06 (72%)	0.00	2.81	0.85	25.63	0.42	3.26	0.03
Samsung	32.92 (65%)		2.75		25.19		2.90	
Huawei	34.16 (68%)		2.60		25.59		2.96	

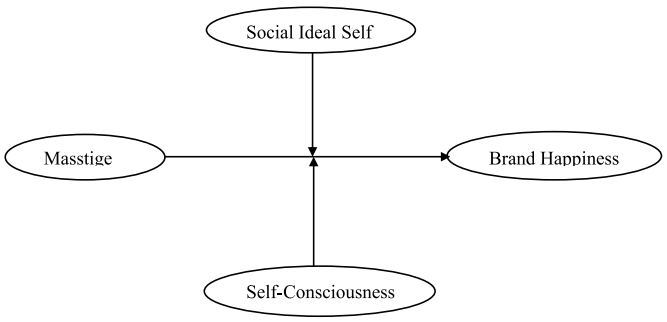


Fig. 1. Masstige brand happiness model.

brand happiness is not significant. This depicts that the masstige and social ideal self are positively contributing to the brand happiness for the three brands under study. This means that the more masstige value a brand has, the more happiness in owning that brand will produce. This finding supports the first hypothesis (H1). As the masstige value of Apple's iPhone is the highest among the three brands, so it can be said that iPhone has been able to establish mass prestige in Serbia and this mass prestige can be helpful for iPhone in increasing the perceived brand happiness for iPhone users. It further depicts that having a masstige brand is helpful for the marketer as it makes its consumers happy.

To test moderation effects, there are two methods prevalent. One is multi-group testing by having the moderating variable as a categorical variable and another is using interaction effects by taking moderating variables as a continuous variable. We decided to adopt both methods to arrive at a comprehensive picture. We can take moderating variables as categorical and continuous variables both as both of these variables are measured on a continuous scale. First, moderation was checked using a multi-group method. For this, the social ideal self and self-consciousness were converted into categorical variables. This was done by creating a new variable for both social ideal self and self-consciousness. New variables were created in SPSS by ranking the existing responses as first or second depending on the score on these two variables. Rank one was given to those respondents who have larger than average scores on social ideal self and self-consciousness. Those having lower than average scores on these two constructs were given the second rank. The first moderation effect of social ideal self was checked using a multi-group method. The relationship between masstige and brand happiness was tested twice, with a low social ideal self group and high social ideal self group. Groups were picked up from the ranking which was done on social ideal self. Thereafter, the difference in significance of the relationship was checked for the significant difference using regression weights of both groups and their critical ratios. To check the moderation, a trimmed hybrid model in AMOS was built and effects for masstige and brand happiness were checked for their significance (model fit for the trimmed model: chi-square significance: 0.00, CMIN/DF: 2.80, CFI: 0.92, RMSEA: 0.04). Checks for significant group effects revealed that for low social ideal self users, the relationship between masstige and brand happiness is significant while it is not the case for high social ideal self. Overall, the difference between the relationship between low and high social ideal self is not significant. This depicts that social ideal self is not moderating the relationship between masstige and brand happiness. This finding is not supporting the second hypothesis (H2). A similar analysis for self-consciousness revealed opposite results. This means that self-consciousness is moderating the relationship between masstige and brand happiness (see Table 3).

To further understand the moderation effect of self-consciousness, standardized regression weights of the relationship (Masstige → Brand Happiness) were looked at, when self-consciousness was low and high. Regression weight in case of low self-consciousness was 0.32 and for high self-consciousness was 0.22. This depicts that self-consciousness dampens the relationship between masstige and brand happiness. This signifies that as users become more conscious about themselves, they are able to draw less happiness from the brand they are using. To get a comprehensive picture of the moderation effects, in the second phase, we checked the moderation effects using interaction effects. To check the moderation, we looked at the significance of three relationships for one moderating variable. For example, to check whether social ideal self moderates the relationship between masstige and brand happiness, we checked the significance of 1) Masstige → Brand Happiness, 2) Social Ideal Self → Brand Happiness, and 3) Masstige x Social Ideal Self (Interaction) → Brand Happiness. Masstige x Social Ideal Self is checking the interaction effects. We did this analysis on standardized values of the three variables under study for social ideal self-moderation.

To check these effects, we used the hybrid model. After adding the variables of interaction effects, the model fit for the model was not impacted (chi-square significance: 0.00, CMIN/DF: 2.23, CFI: 0.90, RMSEA: 0.04).

Results revealed that there is a significant relationship between 1) Masstige → Brand Happiness, and 2) Social Ideal Self → Brand Happiness. The relationship between self-consciousness and brand happiness is not significant. In addition, none of the effects of the interactions were significant. Interesting to note that social ideal self individually is leading to brand happiness, but its interaction is not significant. This reveals that none of the moderating variables taken in the study are moderating the relationship between masstige and brand happiness (see Table 4).

To arrive at the final conclusion about the moderation effect of ideal social self and self-consciousness on the relationship between masstige and brand happiness, we looked at the results of moderation analysis from two phases in aggregation. The aggregated results are shown in Table 5.

The aggregate results show that out of the two analysis techniques used to check moderation, the social ideal self is clearly depicted as a variable that does not have a moderation effect. For self-consciousness, the results in the case of group differences are significant and in case of interaction effects, it is not significant. As self-consciousness is found to be a moderating variable in group differences moderation analysis only, we looked at the interaction graph for self-consciousness in moderation analysis using interaction effects (Fig. 2).

Though the interaction effects are not statistically significant, since one analysis depicts it significant, we decided to look at the interaction plot to take a final call on moderation of self-consciousness. The interaction effect plot is plotted taking the unstandardized regression weights for masstige (independent variable), moderator (self-consciousness) and interaction (masstige x self-consciousness). The interaction plot depicts that as masstige increases, brand happiness is increasing for the low value of self-consciousness. The same is the case for the high value of

Table 3
Moderation analysis - group differences table.

For Relationship Masstige– > Brand Happiness						
Moderating Variables	Significance for Relationship for Low Value of Moderating Variable[1]	Significance for Relationship for High Value of Moderating Variable	Is There Significant Difference in Relationship Among Two Groups	Moderation Exist	Standardized Regression Weights for Relationship if Moderation Exists	
					For Low Value of Moderating Variable	For High Value of Moderating Variable
Social Ideal Self	Significant (0.01)	Non-Significant (0.07)	No	No	NA	NA
Self -Consciousness	Significant (0.00)	Significant (0.00)	Yes	Yes	0.32	0.22

self-consciousness. It is clearly seen that the low self-consciousness and high self-consciousness lines are almost intersecting at a low value of masstige. If we stretch the low self-consciousness (blue line) and high self-consciousness (orange line) backward, they are definitely going to intersect and that would lead to interaction (Fig. 2). Considering this along with the significant results of self-consciousness as moderating variables in group differences moderation analysis, we conclude that self-consciousness is moderating the relationship between masstige and brand happiness. Standardized regression weights for low (0.32) and high (0.22) self-consciousness reveals that self-consciousness as a moderator is dampening the positive relationship between masstige and brand happiness. This is not in support with the third hypothesis (H3). Snapshots of the above analysis, findings, and their implications are depicted in Table 6.

5. Discussion

This study addresses the forgotten perspective of consumer behavior – consumer happiness. Study depicts that brands can make consumers happy. It therefore makes strong support to the argument that situations and circumstances can affect happiness of consumer (Etkin and Mogilner, 2016; Zhong and Mitchell, 2013). Placing the findings of this study in the literature, the current study contributes in de-confusing the mixed claims relating to this relationship. It is because earlier researches about consumption and happiness have given mixed results (Laisawat et al., 2012). The debate of products, consumption and materialism bringing happiness for consumer or not is not new. Many studies have favored the notion (Helm et al., 2019; Ahuvia, 2002; Segev et al., 2015; Aksoy et al., 2015; Duan, 2020; Netemeyer et al., 2018; Suzuki et al., 2019; Chaplin, 2009) and many are against it (Drennan et al., 2011; Pera and Viglia, 2015; Laisawat et al., 2012; Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002). This study is in support to those results which proposes that there is possibility of drawing happiness from such purchases which are experiential (Bastos and Brucks, 2017; Mayer et al., 2020), affective (Pera and Viglia, 2015; Hwang and Lyu, 2015) and symbolic (Kim, 2010). Making consumers happy, marketers may be rewarded with loyalty and word of mouth (El et al., 2013).

At micro level, among iPhone, Samsung, and Huawei, only iPhone is perceived as masstige brand in Serbia. Apple as a brand has earlier also reported to bring satisfaction (Cockrill, 2008) and in turn happiness to consumer. This is supporting the earlier literature propagating iPhone as a masstige brand (Paul, 2018). The mass prestige to iPhone may be coming from ideal, independent design-thinking (Chang et al., 2013; Saardchom, 2014) and its ability to give huge importance to its concept (Brown, 2006), in comparison to Samsung and other brands. In other countries like Taiwan, Apple is also found to be efficient and won the loyalty of consumers (Chen and Ann, 2016). iPhone has even enjoyed the loyalty of jailbreakers (those who use the iPhone but uses unauthorized software on iPhone to run third-party apps which Apple does not allow to be used) (Lee and Soon, 2017). Despite being the only brand in the study to be called a masstige brand in Serbia, consumers are buying the iPhone the least because of low discretionary income. Serbia being a low/middle income (average income is only 350 euros) and price-conscious country, might be considering the iPhone as expensive (the most basic version of the cheapest new iPhone is $ 749) and hence opting to buy android phones. This shows that Serbians are not "obsessed" for the iPhone but they consider it as a mass prestige brand. While the experience of happiness from iPhone usage has been reported in the media world over (Telegraph, 2011; Guardian, 2014), the present study provides an empirical base to this report. It has already been reported that the iPhone's use may be attributed to hedonic and experiential outcomes (Arruda-Filho et al., 2010; J.M. Arruda-Filho and Lennon, 2011). The present study fills up the gap that it is because the iPhone is a masstige brand, it is making its users enjoy experiential outcomes like happiness. Combining the above findings with the evidence that experiences lead to happiness in consumers (Nicolao et al.,

Table 4
Moderation analysis – interaction effects.

Moderating Variable	Relationship	Significance		Moderation Exists
		P-Value	Significant?	
Social Ideal Self	Masstige– > Brand Happiness	0.01	Yes	No
	Social Ideal Self– > Brand Happiness	0.00	Yes	
	Masstige x Social Ideal Self– > Brand Happiness	0.37	No	
Self-Consciousness	Masstige– > Brand Happiness	0.01	Yes	No
	Self-Consciousness– > Brand Happiness	0.43	No	
	Masstige x Self Consciousness– > Brand Happiness	0.46	No	

Table 5
Aggregate moderation effects table.

Moderating Variable	Relationship	Moderation Analysis		Moderation Exists
		Group Differences	Interaction Effects	
Social Ideal Self	Masstige– > Brand Happiness	No	No	No
Self-Consciousness		Yes	No	Yes

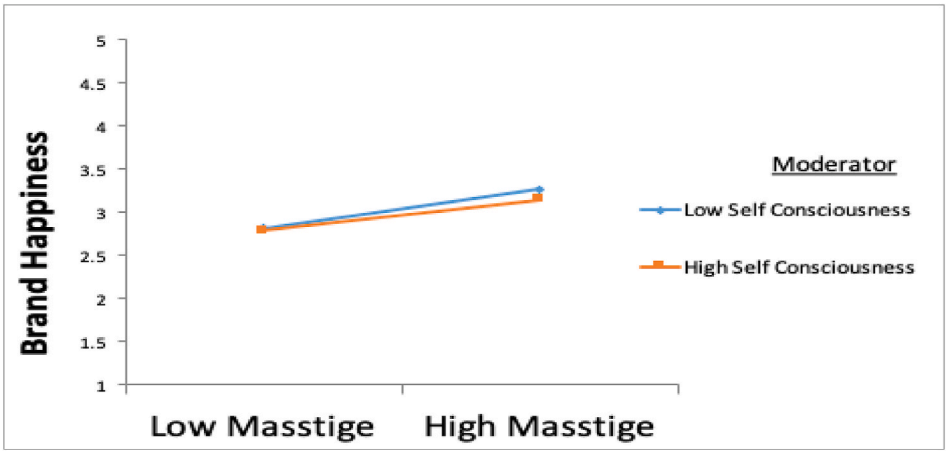


Fig. 2. Interaction plot for self-consciousness.

2009), it becomes evident for marketers to generate favorable experiences in the context of the brand encounter. It can be concluded that the mass prestige of the brand, has the potential to make its users happy. As masstige is a mass phenomenon, marketers can adopt a masstige strategy to make their consumers happy.

Findings indicate that those who are more concerned about how they are being perceived and those who anthropomorphize their personality through brands are found to be deriving happiness due to brand consumption. This is perhaps the first empirical evidence of such a relationship. This result is advancing the earlier understanding where it was inferred that consumers were in the process of finding convergence between how they would like to be seen as, and how they can use brands to achieve that and therefore feel happy. The importance of self-congruity directly or indirectly has been constantly highlighted by scholars. Here are some examples: self-congruity is an important dimension of relationship which consumers share with brands (Albert et al., 2008); consumption of brand is an inevitable mirror of social self (Liao and Wang, 2009), etc. Therefore, the results supports the scattered argument that components of self have a role to play between purchase and happiness (Duan, 2020). Current literature is not very vocal about the moderating role of components of self. This study fills up this less explored area.

No conclusive evidence of the impact of one's social ideal self on the relationship between mass prestige brands and the happiness they generate was found in this study. What if someone looks up to a brand to attain their ideal self or not, he/she shall still draw happiness as a result of the usage of a masstige brand. It is interesting to note that the iPhone has the highest score for masstige, social ideal self, and brand happiness. iPhone users are surely happier because they have iPhone, but these users are not the ones who would like to use iPhones to project who they are socially. Can we say that in Serbia, the iPhone is not perceived as something special? People know that the iPhone is the most expensive brand; yet it is popular among young people in Serbia. Yet, why is it not considered an option to achieve social ideal self? One possible explanation could be that despite being expensive, communication regarding the iPhone in Serbia is stressing on functional benefits. We cannot even find commercials for the Serbian market, only texts about product benefits. Premium price points iPhone towards luxury, yet it is positioned on functional benefits, which drags the iPhone towards the category of masstige brands. This could be why the social ideal self is important for brand happiness in general, but not recognized as a moderating variable as the social ideal self is connected to the symbolic values of brands.

This study found self-consciousness to be dampening the relationship between masstige and brand happiness. Self-consciousness is not leading to brand happiness. The results are in support of those studies where self-consciousness is found to be negatively affecting happiness (Argyle and Lu, 1990; Xu, 2008; Csikszentmihalyi and Wong, 2014). It connotes that happiness induced by iPhone's usage is less for those whose self-consciousness is high and vice versa. For a masstige brand user, being self-conscious would negatively affect the happiness one is drawing from a brand in Serbia. Self-consciousness has been increasing

Table 6
Summary table of analysis, findings, and implications.

Variable	Findings	Implications in the Context of This Study	Managerial Implications
Masstige	Lead to Brand Happiness	Apple's iPhone has established itself as a masstige brand, so possession and usage of the iPhone make its users happy. iPhone users in Serbia are feeling happy because of owning of iPhone (brand happiness score of iPhone is maximum).	The higher the mass prestige of a brand, the higher the potential to make its users happy. As masstige is a mass phenomenon, marketers can adopt a masstige strategy to make their consumers happy.
Social Ideal Self	Do not positively moderate the relationship (Masstige —> Brand Happiness)	For iPhone users, its mass prestige is making them happy as iPhone users are having the highest score in brand happiness. This happiness effect is not impacted by the social ideal self of a consumer in Serbia.	The social ideal self does not have any impact on the relationship between masstige and brand happiness. Irrespective of the social ideal self, masstige will result in happiness for consumers.
Self-Consciousness	It negatively moderates the relationship (Masstige —> Brand Happiness)	Only the iPhone is a masstige brand. Apple iPhone users have the highest self-consciousness score. Apple iPhone users in Serbia who are extra conscious about themselves are drawing less happiness from iPhone usage in comparison to those who do not give importance to their consciousness.	Self-consciousness is dampening the positive relationship between masstige and brand happiness. The more one is conscious about himself, the less happiness he will be able to draw due to the usage of a masstige brand.
Brand Happiness	Apple's users have maximum perceived happiness followed by Huawei and Samsung.	Apple iPhone users in Serbia are the happiest people because of their consumption of the masstige brand. Samsung and Huawei are not masstige brands. Users of Samsung and Huawei are not certain whether they are happy because of owning the mobile phone.	Brands can be used to make consumers happy. Marketers should attempt to adopt a masstige strategy for brands. This would alternatively make their consumers happy.

for consumers worldwide (Belk and Pollay, 1985). There is evidence that it is good for a marketer to have high consciousness (Bushman, 1993; Nan and Heo, 2007). But current results depict a counter picture to that. It, therefore, requires more empirical evidence.

In this study, brand happiness is found to be influenced by mass prestige of a brand positively. It corroborates the findings of prior studies that brands can make consumers happy (Woodside et al., 2008; Bianchi et al., 2014). We can say that adopting a masstige strategy is an important alternative for marketers to make consumers happy. Samsung and Huawei users are not having a considerable score on brand happiness, nor are they a masstige brand. Contrary to this, the iPhone has not only been perceived as a masstige brand but also a brand that results in happiness for its users. A low score for Samsung on brand happiness can also be explained through the opinion of Serbians. Many consumers in Serbia own two to three phones. People in Serbia are not treating mobile phone brands as "lifestyle things" and Samsung is not an exception. Close scrutiny of the brand happiness scale reveals that the score for some items is relatively high (glad, relaxed and comfortable - greater than 3.2) and for some items is much lower (lively, energetic, proud, superior - less than 3). The first set of items represents functional attributes and the second one symbolic attributes/benefits/values. This depicts that people in Serbia are looking at mobile phones as more of a functional product rather than a symbolic one. This could be one reason that only the iPhone has qualified as a masstige brand. Even looking further, the iPhone has the highest score among all three brands on functional attributes of brand happiness (glad - 3.71, relaxed - 3.44, comfortable - 3.62). Having scored highest on functional attributes is contrary to masstige image. The answer lies in the scores of symbolic attributes. It is only the iPhone that has scored more than 3 on symbolic attributes. Samsung and Huawei both have less than 3 on all those symbolic variables. This explains why the iPhone is the only masstige brand and gives happiness to its users. iPhone is functional and symbolic both whereas Samsung and Huawei are functional only mobile brands in Serbia.

6. Conclusion

Studies connecting the usage of brand and happiness are not many. This study affirms that the usage of masstige brands by consumers may make them happy. This can be seen as theoretical extension of masstige theory. The relationship between prestige brands and happiness can be explained through simple fulfillment of need which in turn may make consumers happy. It is depicted that only iPhone is a masstige brand among Samsung, iPhone, and Huawei. It is also established that those who look at brands to attain their social ideal self are better targets for masstige brands as these people would derive happiness from brand usage. Because one is sensitive towards social ideal self, this does not impact the relationship between prestige associated with brands and happiness derived from its usage. On the contrary, self-consciousness is dampening the relationship between masstige and brand-induced happiness. Marketers have to attempt to create their brand as a masstige brand. This would solve two problems for a marketer: A) Doing so would give symbolic value to the brand; B) It would make users of such brands attain happiness. Marketers do not need to concentrate on those consumers who use brands to attain their social ideal self to make them happy because of a brand. Brand induced happiness is independent of the social ideal self and reduced by self-consciousness.

The best efforts have been undertaken to have a robust study. However, there are some limitations that can be addressed in future studies. The current study specifically addresses the impact of brands consumption on happiness. This relationship can be influenced by many other factors. For example, individuals' general happiness can strongly influence the choice specific happiness. We have studies which are putting happiness first and gauges its influence on product and services perceptions (Hellén and Sääksjärvi, 2011; Ganglmair-Wooliscroft and Lawson, 2012; Laisawat et al., 2012; White and Yu, 2019). Happy people tend to perceive services better (Hellén and Sääksjärvi, 2011) and expected to involving more in repurchase (Septianto et al., 2019). Future research in this area may include this aspect when studying choice specific happiness of consumers.

Another aspect to keep in mind is the fact that the current study was conducted using dana from consumers in Serbia, as small emerging country in Europe. It would be interesting to conduct similar studies with a sample composed of residents in countries with a similar level of development (emerging countries), in different regions in the world and compare these results with a sample composed of residents of developed European countries. Such a study would overcome cultural and economic differences, and provide answers to some important questions, such as whether brand perception as masstige depends on levels of country development, especially average income and cultural differences. Second, this study did not include the possible impact of advertising and other promotional activities on brand perception as masstige and influence of such kind of perception on happiness. Advertising (in a particular country) may have a moderating effect on the perception of the brand as masstige and consequently, happiness. For example, Samsung in Serbia often uses price promotions to attract consumers, while the promotion of more expensive (lifestyle) models is less intensive. Lifestyle-focused advertising usually shows the achievement of higher values, such as happiness. Specifically, although iPhone, Samsung and Huawei are global brands, the focus of their promotional activities may

vary between countries, especially between developed and developing countries.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102318.

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