Sharing luxury possessions in the age of digital experience economy: Consumption type and psychological entitlement

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Abstract

With the advent of the digital experience economy, contemporary luxury brands have embraced social media as an important channel for improving brand perceptions and developing customer relationships. This is because encouraging consumers to share luxury purchases on social media offers a strategic value for luxury brands. The present research investigates the conditions under which consumers are more likely to share luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases on social media. Across two experiments, we establish that luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases are shared more when they are associated with material (vs. experiential) consumption, and among consumers with a high (vs. low) sense of entitlement. These findings make several theoretical and managerial contributions, providing avenues for future research on what consumers do with luxury brands on social media.

1. Introduction

Over the last three decades, luxury brands have engendered one of the most burgeoning global markets with an estimated value of US$1 trillion in 2018 (BCG-Altagamma, 2019). Just under fifty percent of these sales come from established markets in the U.S. and Europe. However, recent trends show that emerging markets in other regions, especially in Asia, have been growing at a much faster rate (Deloitte, 2019). For example, Chinese consumers accounted for ninety percent of the global market growth in 2019, while the sales in Europe grew only by one percent (Bain & Co, 2020).

With the advent of the digital "experience economy" that increasingly commercializes everyday life (Lonsway, 2009), luxury brands are embracing social media to improve brand perceptions and develop customer relationships within Asian markets (Charoennan and Huang, 2018, Duan and Dholakia, 2018, Duan, 2016). Indeed, Asia is leading the way in embracing social media platforms as a promotional channel, and the region dominates in the highest number of hours spent on social media (Digital Marketing Institute, 2018). Therefore, social media has become a quintessential marketing tool for engaging luxury consumers (Francois, 2020), making the investigation of how social media influences luxury consumer behaviors an important area of research. However, while there has been increasing interest in how social media influences consumer attitudes toward and purchases of luxury brands (e.g., Arrigo, 2018, Godey et al., 2016, Kim and Ko, 2012), what is lacking in the literature is an understanding of what consumers 'do' with luxury brands on social media, and the implications of these activities (Leban, Seo, & Voyer, 2020). One such activity is the online sharing of luxury consumption experiences, which is a key part of social media marketing in the context of the digital experience economy (Ordenes et al., 2019).

The unique aspect of social media usage in the context of luxury purchases is that it amplifies conspicuous consumption by motivating and allowing consumers to display their luxury purchases to a broader audience without location constraints (Duan and Dholakia, 2018, Lampel and Bhalla, 2007). In other words, consumers are able to actively share and showcase their purchases with many more people. Indeed, previous studies suggest that consumers are motivated to share their luxury purchases on social media to gain a sense of superiority (Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2014) and to acquire higher status (Lampel & Bhalla, 2007). Against this backdrop, the present research establishes important moderating factors that qualify when luxury (vs non-luxury) purchases are more likely to be shared online. Specifically, we hypothesize that luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases will be shared more on social media only under these specific conditions – when they are associated with material (but not experiential) purchases and when consumers feel highly entitled. Our prediction is based on the integration of prior research on conspicuous consumption of luxury brands (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010) with the theories of material versus experiential consumption (Gilovich, Kumar, & Jampol, 2015), as follows.

First, luxury versus non-luxury sharing depends on whether the shared experience involves material or experiential purchases (Bastos and Brucks, 2017, Gilovich and Kumar, 2015, Gilovich et al., 2015). Experiential purchases refer to purchases that involve life experiences such as travel (Gilovich & Kumar, 2015). In contrast, material purchases refer to purchases with the purpose of obtaining tangible products or services (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Because material purchases are more suited to the evocation of social comparison than experimental purchases (Gilovich et al., 2015) – an important attribute that enables conspicuous consumption (Han et al., 2010) – we expect that consumers would be more

likely to share luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases, when such purchases are associated with material rather than experiential consumption. In contrast, when consumers have made an experiential purchase, we expect that there is no difference between their preference for sharing online luxury or non-luxury purchases, as there is less differentiation in conspicuous value among experiential purchases (Krasnova et al., 2015, Kumar and Gilovich, 2015, Lin et al., 2018).

Second, we posit that luxury *material* purchases are shared more than non-luxury purchases when consumers feel that they 'deserve' to share their purchases – that is, they feel highly psychologically entitled. Psychological entitlement refers to an inflated self-view stemming from an innate feeling of being special and superior (Campbell et al., 2004, Goor et al., 2020). Entitlement can be a chronic disposition (i.e., a trait) or it can be situationally heightened (e.g., by special events such as birthdays). Notably, consumers with a high (vs. low) level of psychological entitlement are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption and to view luxury possessions as a means to signal their status (Lange, Redford, & Crusius, 2019). Thus, we would expect that highly entitled consumers would be more willing to share luxury (vs. non-luxury) material purchases on social media, because such purchases enable them to signal their superiority. In contrast, consumers with a low level of psychological entitlement would be more reluctant to engage in conspicuous consumption and, therefore, the effect of luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases on sharing is less likely to occur.

Taking these two factors into consideration, the present research proposes that consumers are more willing to share luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases on social media only when (1) such purchases involve material (rather than experiential) consumption and when (2) consumers, either chronically or situationally, experience high (rather than low) psychological entitlement. We conducted two experimental studies that confirm our prediction, which involved different manipulations of the purchase type (luxury vs non-luxury) using a recall technique (Study 1) and within advertisements (Study 2), and by employing both chronic measures (Study 1) and situational manipulations (Study 2) of psychological entitlement. In addition, we corroborate our findings across both Western (the U.S.; Study 1) and, importantly, the emerging Asian (Malaysia; Study 2) markets.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Sharing of luxury purchases

Luxury products or services are distinguished by high monetary value, scarcity, superior artisanship, hedonic value, and as important symbols of social and self-identity (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019, Tynan et al., 2010, Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). As such, an important function of luxury purchases is to display status and wealth, and to be a means of signaling self-identity, self-enhancement, and indulgence (e.g., Vigneron and Johnson, 2004, Wiedmann et al., 2009).

Against this backdrop, social media enables consumers to share information about their purchases with a large network (Duan & Dholakia, 2018) and, in so doing, to express superiority (Vogel et al., 2014) and status in virtual spaces (Lampel & Bhalla, 2007). Such 'sharing' behavior is an important part of luxury consumption practices (Charoennan and Huang, 2018, Koivisto and Mattila, 2020). Therefore, in targeting consumers online, the luxury sector is increasingly acknowledging the need to develop new communication

strategies (D'Arpizio, Levato, Prete, Del Fabbro, & de Montgolfier, 2019), such as encouraging consumers to engage in viral marketing. For example, Burberry pioneered viral luxury branding practices by inviting their consumers to engage in the co-creation of brand content through the 'Art of the Trench' campaign in 2009 (Phan, Thomas, & Heine, 2011). Since then, various luxury brands have utilized the practices of user-generated content (UGC) in their marketing activities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Given the unique aspect of luxury purchases, such that consumers seek to share luxury purchases on social media to gain a sense of superiority (Vogel et al., 2014) and acquire higher status (Lampel & Bhalla, 2007), it remains unclear whether consumers' sharing behavior on social media is distinct in terms of luxury versus non-luxury (i.e., general) purchases. The present research addresses this important gap by drawing upon the theories of material versus experiential consumption (Gilovich et al., 2015) and psychological entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004), and showing that the sharing of luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases on social media depends on the combination of these two factors.

2.2. Experiential versus material purchases

Prior research has noted that there are two types of purchase when considering the nature of consumption: material and experiential (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Material purchases involve "spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a material possession – a tangible object that you obtain and keep in your possession", whereas experiential purchases involve "spending money with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience – an event or series of events that you personally encounter or live through" (Van Boven & Gilovich, 1194, 2003). We argue that these two purchase types have distinct properties that may influence the online sharing of luxury purchases.

On the one hand, there are fewer comparable attributes in experiential purchases (Van Boven, 2005), weakening social comparison associated with their consumption (Howell & Hill, 2009). Moreover, as Carter and Gilovich (2012) noted, experiential purchases tend to be less conspicuous than material purchases, and thus lack the power to convey wealth and status. On the other hand, material purchases are more visible and easily comparable (Gilovich et al., 2015, Yang and Mattila, 2017). For instance, it is easier to identify an expensive material object, such as a luxury wallet, than to calculate the cost of an experience, such as a luxury dining experience (Yang & Mattila, 2017). Hence, material purchases generate greater levels of social comparison (Carter and Gilovich, 2010, Yang and Mattila, 2014), and can elicit envy (Krasnova et al., 2015). Accordingly, if luxury brands are shared on social media as status symbols, then whether a product is a luxury (vs. non-luxury) brand would make more difference when such brands reflect material rather than experiential consumption.

Furthermore, several studies suggest that the sharing frequency and the sharing intention for experiential consumption, in general, tends to be higher than that for material consumption (Krasnova et al., 2015, Kumar and Gilovich, 2015, Lin et al., 2018). Thus, if purchases are experiential, whether they are luxury or non-luxury, there could be similar rates of online sharing due to satiation. Thus, when both luxury and non-luxury purchases are experiential in nature, there should be no difference in consumer propensity to share them online.

To sum up: because a) material (but not experiential) purchases enable social comparison, and that is an important attribute that enables conspicuous consumption (Han et al., 2010), and b) experiential consumption is generally shared more, regardless of whether the

purchases are luxury or non-luxury; we would expect that the distinction between sharing luxury versus non-luxury purchases on social media would be more pronounced when the sharing is associated with material purchases.

2.3. Psychological entitlement

We also expect that online sharing of material purchases will differ between luxury and non-luxury only when psychological entitlement is high (vs low). This is because sharing material purchases online may result in social comparison (including envy) (Krasnova et al., 2015, Kumar and Gilovich, 2015, Lin et al., 2018), and consumers with low entitlement may wish to avoid such an outcome. The term 'entitlement' refers to a belief that an individual is entitled to privileged treatment and is conceptualized as a component of narcissism (Campbell et al., 2004). Prior studies have established that psychological entitlement is related to the need for status and material wealth (Lange et al., 2019, Piff, 2014, Zemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2013). In particular, it is observed that entitlement occurs when materialistic individuals fulfil their material needs (Zemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2013), and as result of feeling highly entitled, the desire to attain status is increased (Lange et al., 2019).

Psychological entitlement guides people toward keeping up an elevated status vis-à-vis others (Campbell et al., 2004). As a result, consumers who purchase luxury products or services may also believe that they *deserve* to indulge in such products (Cavanaugh, 2014). Indeed, highly entitled individuals believe they are more deserving of positive outcomes than others (Campbell et al., 2004) and crave, expect, and feel that they deserve benefits (e.g., a higher salary or grade) without consideration of merit (Fisk, 2010). In the case of luxury consumption, consumers with high (vs. low) psychological entitlement are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption and view luxury possessions as a means to signal their status (Lange et al., 2019). These findings suggest that highly entitled consumers would be more willing to share luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases on social media, if such purchases enabled them to signal their superiority, believing that they deserve to share even if such sharing causes negative reactions (i.e., envy).

Therefore, when psychological entitlement is high (vs. low) we expect the propensity to share purchases online is greater for luxury material purchases. Prior studies have established that psychological entitlement is a trait commonly shared by consumers of luxury goods (Goor et al., 2020), and that it influences luxury consumer behavior (Goor et al., 2020, Mansvelt et al., 2016). Prior research also demonstrates that luxury material purchases (vs. experiential purchases) are a stronger indicator of status, thus such purchases are more likely to be shared by people who have a high need for status (Yang & Mattila, 2017). In the same vein, we propose that those who feel entitled will be more likely to share a luxury (vs non-luxury) material purchase. Conversely, those consumers who do not feel entitled – regardless whether the purchase is considered luxury or non-luxury – will be more motivated to avoid the social comparison and envy that sharing a material purchase online may elicit (Krasnova et al., 2015, Kumar and Gilovich, 2015, Lin et al., 2018).

To reiterate, we predict that one of the key dimensions of how consumers perceive sharing luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases on social media is that they are driven by status consumption. Accordingly, we posit that consumers are more likely to engage in the sharing of luxury purchases if such purchases involve material consumption and if they feel highly entitled. Formally, we hypothesize as follows.

Main Prediction: *Luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases will be shared more on social media when they are material (but not experiential) purchases, and among consumers with high (but not low) levels of entitlement.*

2.4. Overview of studies

Two experimental studies were conducted to test our main prediction. Study 1 recruited participants located in the U.S. from Amazon Mechanical Turk and examined sharing likelihood on Facebook, a social media platform which attracts 1.3 billion active users worldwide (Deprince & Geerts, 2019), and where there are more than two hundred and fifty billion photos being shared by users on a daily basis (Wagner, 2013). Facebook was also chosen for Study 1 because prior research has demonstrated its wide range of features that enable the sharing of brand-related user-generated content (Kim & Johnson, 2016). Study 2 then examined the likelihood of sharing in general on social media platforms among undergraduate students of a public university in Malaysia, which is an important Asian market for luxury brands. Furthermore, Study 2 used advertising stimuli to manipulate brand type and purchase type to provide practical implications. Fig. 1 describes the conceptual model of the present research.
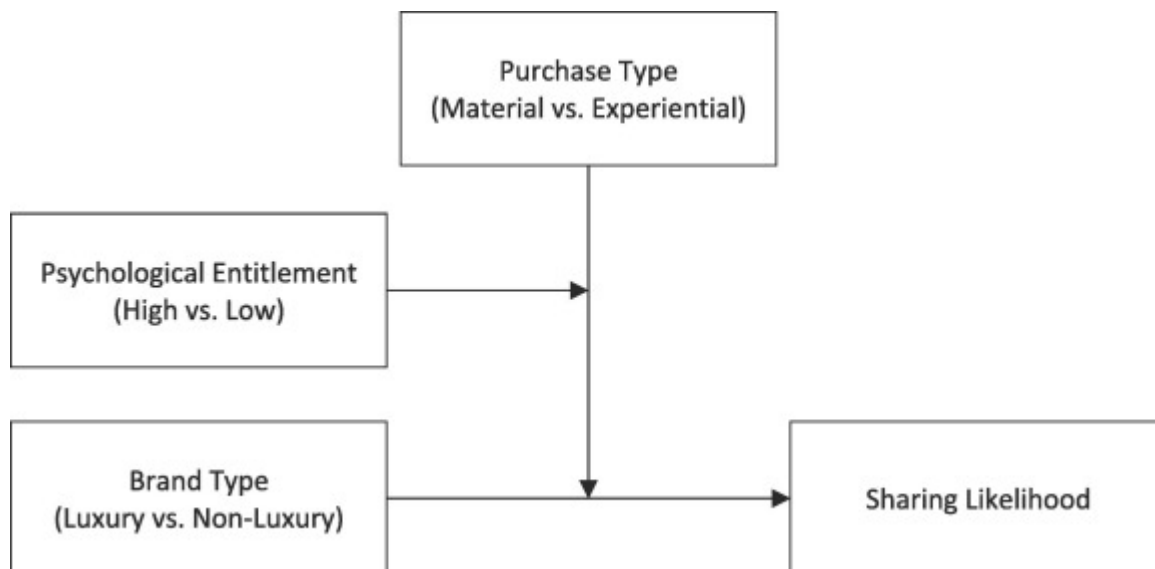

Fig. 1. Conceptual Model.

3. Study 1

Study 1 provides initial evidence for our hypothesis. Consistent with the prediction, it is expected that luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases will be shared more on Facebook when they are material (but not experiential) purchases, and among consumers with high (but not low) levels of entitlement.

3.1. Method

Participants and Design. Two hundred and eighty-nine participants located in the U.S. (58% female, $M_{age} = 38.40$, SD = 12.54) were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk in February 2020. Study 1 employed a 2 (brand type: luxury, non-luxury) × 2 (purchase type: material, experiential) × (psychological entitlement: continuous) between-subjects design.

We ensured data quality by applying three criteria in the participant recruitment (Puzakova & Aggarwal, 2018): (1) location in the U.S.; (2) at least 98% HIT approval rate; and (3) at least 100 approved HITs.

Procedure and Measures. Participants were assigned randomly to evaluate one of four conditions. Adapted from prior research (Carter & Gilovich, 2010), we manipulated brand type by asking participants to report a purchase of about $500 (the luxury condition) or $50 (the non-luxury condition). Participants were told to imagine that that they had spent a certain amount of money ($500 vs. $50) on an object or an experience (Carter and Gilovich, 2010, Yang and Mattila, 2017).

We also provided definitions of material and experiential purchases to make sure participants understood the meaning: "We often spend our money on two types of purchases: materials and experiences. Materials are tangible objects that the person gains ownership over and can keep in their possession for a while. Experiences are an event or a series of events that the person lives through" (Van Boven & Gilovich, 1194, 2003). To encourage participants' engagement in the task, participants were asked to describe what the object or experience was, and why they would spend money on it, in three to five sentences (adopted from Bastos & Brucks, 2017).

As the dependent variable, participants were asked to indicate how likely they were to share the purchase on Facebook using a 7-point scale (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely). As the manipulation checks, participants were asked to indicate how they would perceive their type of purchase, measured on a 9-point scale (1 = purely material, 9 = purely experiential) (Carter & Gilovich, 2010). We also assessed participants' perception of the purchase being a luxury purchase using six items: "rare", "unique" "exclusive", "luxury", "conspicuous", "expensive" ($\alpha = 0.72$) on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much) (Hudders, Pandelaere, & Vyncke, 2013).

Finally, participants were asked to complete a trait questionnaire to measure their psychological entitlement. We asked participants to rate their feelings on three items ($\alpha = 0.90$), measured on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). These items were: "I demand the best because I'm worth it"; "I deserve more things in my life"; and "I feel entitled to more of everything" (adapted from Campbell et al., 2004).

3.2. Results and discussion

Purchase Luxuriousness Check. As expected, participants perceived $500 purchases (M = 4.17, SD = 1.95) to be more luxurious than $50 purchases (M = 3.37, SD = 1.97; $F(1, 287) = 11.87$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$).

Experiential Purchase Check. Participants in the experiential purchase condition (M = 8.07, SD = 1.52) perceived their purchases to be more experiential than did those in the material purchase condition (M = 3.20, SD = 2.41; $F(1, 287) = 419.11$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.59$).

Sharing Likelihood. We conducted a three-way moderation analysis using PROCESS Model 3 (Hayes, 2017), with brand type (luxury [coded as 1] vs. non-luxury [coded as −1]) as the independent variable, purchase type (material [coded as 1] vs. experiential [coded as −1]) and psychological entitlement as the moderators, and sharing likelihood as the dependent variable. As can be seen in Table 1, the results revealed main effects of purchase type

(B = −1.04, SE = 0.31, t(281) = −3.35, p = .001) and psychological entitlement (B = 0.27, SE = 0.07, t(281) = 3.68, p < .001). More importantly, the results yielded a marginally significant three-way interaction (B = 0.13, SE = 0.07, t(281) = 1.84, p = .066).

Table 1. Moderation Results (Study 1).

Antecedents	Coeff	SE	t	p	95%LLCI	95%ULCI
Constant	2.877	0.310	9.291	< 0.001	2.267	3.487
Brand Type (Luxury vs. Non-Luxury [X])	0.457	0.310	1.477	0.141	−0.152	1.067
Purchase Type (Material vs. Experiential [W])	−1.037	0.310	−3.349	0.001	−1.647	−0.428
X × W	−0.359	0.310	−1.159	0.247	−0.969	0.251
Entitlement (Z)	0.265	0.072	3.680	< 0.001	0.123	0.406
X × Z	−0.061	0.072	−0.856	0.393	−0.203	0.080
W × Z	0.064	0.072	0.892	0.373	−0.077	0.206
X × W × Z	0.133	0.072	1.844	0.066	−0.009	0.274

Conditional X × W at Z:

Entitlement (Z)	Effect	F(1, 281)	p
2.234 (−1SD)	−0.063	0.131	0.718
3.949 (M)	0.164	1.797	0.181
5.665 (+1SD)	0.392	5.094	0.025

Conditional Effects of X at W and Z:

Purchase Type (W)	Entitlement (Z)	Effect	SE	t	p	95%LLCI	95%ULCI
Experiential	2.234 (−1SD)	0.383	0.247	1.553	0.122	−0.103	0.869
Experiential	3.949 (M)	0.050	0.175	0.286	0.775	−0.295	0.395
Experiential	5.665 (+1SD)	−0.280	0.243	−1.160	0.247	−0.762	0.197
Material	2.234 (-1SD)	0.257	0.246	1.044	0.297	−0.227	0.741
Material	3.949 (M)	0.379	0.171	2.210	0.028	0.041	0.716
Material	5.665 (+1SD)	0.501	0.247	2.024	0.044	0.014	0.988

Follow-up analyses showed the differences across luxury versus non-luxury conditions and across the experiential and material conditions and among consumers with high (+1SD) and low (−1SD) levels of psychological entitlement (see Fig. 2). As predicted in our hypothesis, results revealed that luxury (vs. non-luxury) material purchases were significantly associated with a higher likelihood of sharing, among participants with high levels of psychological entitlement (B = 0.50, SE = 0.25, t(281) = 2.02, p = .044). In contrast, luxury (vs. non-luxury) material purchases were non-significantly related with a likelihood of sharing among those with low levels of psychological entitlement (B = . 26, SE = 0.25, t(281) = 1.04, p = .297).
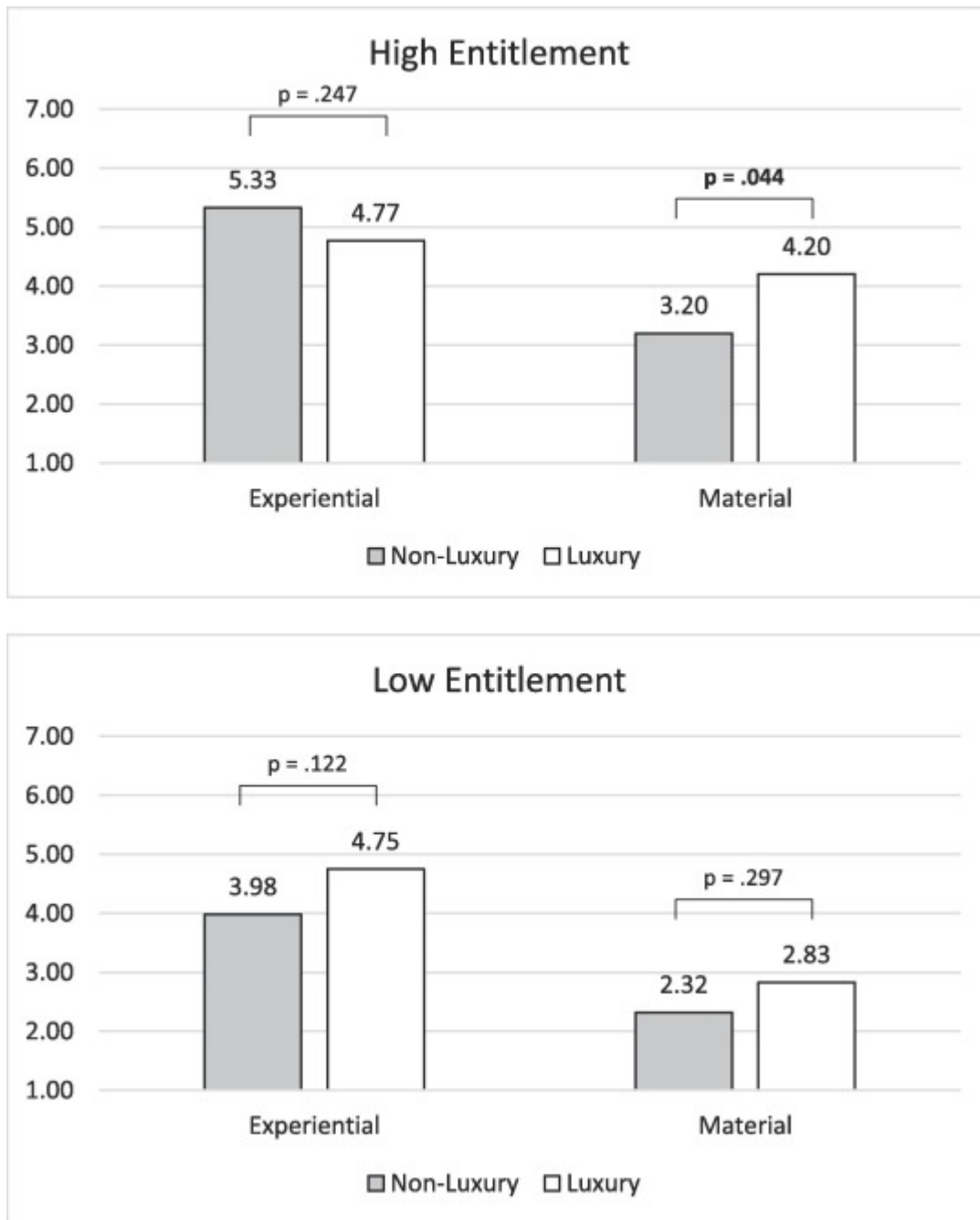
Fig. 2. Sharing Likelihood by Brand Type, Purchase Type, and Psychological Entitlement.

Further, luxury (vs. non-luxury) experiential purchases were non-significantly associated with a likelihood of sharing among participants with both high (B = −0.28, SE = 0.24, t(281) = −1.16, p = .247) and low levels of psychological entitlement (B = 0.38, SE = 0.25, t(281) = 1.55, p = .122). These results thus provided initial evidence for our hypothesis, such that participants reported a higher likelihood of sharing luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases when such purchases were material (but not experiential), and only among those with high (but not low) levels of psychological entitlement.

4. Study 2

Study 2 extends the results of Study 1 in three ways. First, it seeks to provide additional evidence to support our hypothesis and replicates Study 1 using a different sample – Malaysian undergraduate students. That is, we want to show that our prediction is consistent in different markets. This approach has been done by prior research (Govind et al., 2020, Seo et al., 2021, Septianto et al., 2018), in which participants across different countries (the U.S. via Amazon Mechanical Turk and student sample from a different country) are recruited across different studies to show that the effect holds, thus providing strong empirical evidence. Second, it aims to build on the results found in Study 1 by manipulating rather than measuring psychological entitlement, thus providing causal evidence. Finally, it extends external validity to the findings of Study 1 by manipulating the material versus experiential purchases with advertising stimuli.

4.1. Method

Participants and Design. Five hundred and twenty-one undergraduate students (75% female, $M_{age} = 22.28$, SD = 2.15) were recruited from a public university in Malaysia in April 2021. Study 2 employed a 2 (brand type: luxury, non-luxury) × 2 (purchase type: material, experiential) × 2 (psychological entitlement: high, low) between-subjects design.

Procedure. Participants were assigned randomly to one of eight experimental conditions. First, to activate high levels of psychological entitlement among participants temporarily, we employed the situational manipulation technique used in previous research (Goor et al., 2020). That is, participants were asked to imagine that it was their birthday, and that they had purchased a product (i.e., the HyperMOTION shoes) for themselves. In the low levels of entitlement condition, participants were simply told that they had purchased the product for themselves.

In each psychological entitlement condition (high vs. low), participants were randomly shown one of four advertisements that we developed, in which we manipulated brand type (luxury vs. non-luxury) and purchase type (material vs. experiential) for the product (see Appendix A). To manipulate the brand type, we used Prada (luxury) versus Gap (non-luxury) (Ward & Dahl, 2014). To manipulate the material versus experiential purchase condition and to assure that the objective quality was held constant across the material and experiential conditions, we used the same product with a different framing approach (adapted from Escalas, 2007, Gallo et al., 2019).

In the material purchase condition, participants were presented with a mock print advertisement, which contained the brand logo and a short description about the product: "With an energy-returning heel and maximum midsole cushioning, new HyperMOTION shoes deliver comfort and responsiveness. The design of these light, versatile running shoes gives a bold look to the breathable upper. Details: Weight, 10.876 oz. per shoe. Non-slip lining for safety and performance, even on wet surfaces. HyperMOTION with leaf-shaped springs in the heel for return energy" (adapted from Escalas, 2007, Gallo et al., 2019).

In the experiential purchase condition, participants were presented with a mock print advertisement, which contained the brand logo, a short description, and an image portraying a woman running on a coastline during sunrise. The description read, "Imagine yourself running with a pair of GAP HyperMOTION shoes. With every step, you can sense how the

leaf-shaped springs in the heels return energy to your feet and legs. Your feet feel light – 10.875 oz. of shoe – and comfortable, resting on the maximum midsole cushioning. You are safe even on wet surfaces, due to the non-slip lining. And you are confident, propelling forward and glancing down at the shoe's bold look" (adapted from Escalas, 2007, Gallo et al., 2019).

As the dependent variable, participants were asked to indicate how likely they were to share the purchase on their social media using a 7-point scale (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely). As manipulation checks, participants completed measures for perceived purchase luxuriousness ($\alpha = 0.87$), experiential purchase, and psychological entitlement ($\alpha = 0.86$) using identical measures to those in Study 1.

4.2. Results and discussion

Purchase Luxuriousness Check. As expected, participants perceived purchasing Prada shoes (M = 4.82, SD = 1.18) to be more luxurious than purchasing Gap shoes (M = 4.36, SD = 1.15; $F(1, 519) = 20.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$).

Experiential Purchase Check. Participants in the experiential purchase condition (M = 4.46, SD = 1.37) perceived their purchases to be more experiential than did those in the material purchase condition (M = 4.21, SD = 1.46; $F(1, 519) = 4.20$, $p = .041$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$).

Psychological Entitlement Check. Participants in the high entitlement (birthday) condition (M = 4.61, SD = 1.35) reported higher levels of psychological entitlement than those in the low entitlement condition (M = 4.36, SD = 1.31; $F(1, 519) = 4.63$, $p = .032$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$).

Sharing Likelihood. A three-way ANOVA was conducted with brand type (non-luxury vs. luxury), purchase type (material vs. experiential), entitlement (high vs. low), their two-way interactions, and their three-way interactions as independent variables, and sharing likelihood as the dependent variable (see Table 2). As expected, the results revealed a significant three-way interaction effect ($F(1, 513) = 3.93$, $p = .048$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$).

Table 2. ANOVA Results (Study 2).

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	27.562	7	3.937	1.278	0.259	0.017
Intercept	9447.229	1	9447.229	3066.122	< 0.001	0.857
Entitlement	0.407	1	0.407	0.132	0.717	< 0.001
Purchase Type	3.939	1	3.939	1.278	0.259	0.002
Brand Type	2.806	1	2.806	0.911	0.340	0.002
Entitlement × Purchase Type	3.222	1	3.222	1.046	0.307	0.002
Entitlement × Brand Type	1.797	1	1.797	0.583	0.445	0.001
Purchase Type × Brand Type	2.712	1	2.712	0.880	0.349	0.002
Entitlement × Purchase Type × Brand Type	12.107	1	12.107	3.929	0.048	0.008
Error	1580.638	513	3.081			

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Total	11,136	521				
Corrected Total	1608	520				

To further investigate the three-way interaction effect, two separate two-way ANOVAs were conducted (brand type × purchase type) for each entitlement level condition. In the low entitlement condition, results revealed non-significant main effects of brand type (F(1, 253) = 0.02, p = .893) and purchase type (F(1, 253) = 2.30, p = .130), and a non-significant interaction effect (F(1, 253) = 0.54, p = .462). That is, there were non-significant differences between luxury versus non-luxury purchases among participants in both experiential purchase (M$_{luxury}$ = 4.51, SD = 1.72, M$_{non-luxury}$ = 4.32, SD = 1.72, F (1, 253) = 0.38, p = .537), and material purchase conditions (M$_{luxury}$ = 4.01, SD = 1.76, M$_{non-luxury}$ = 4.15, SD = 1.78, F (1, 253) = 0.18, p = .673).

However, and as predicted, in the high entitlement condition, even though results revealed non-significant main effects of brand type (F(1, 260) = 1.49, p = .224) and purchase type (F(1, 260) = 0.01, p = .939), the interaction between brand type × purchase type was significant (F(1, 260) = 4.30, p = .039, η_p^2 = 0.02; see Fig. 3), and these results were in the predicted patterns consistent with Study 1. Further analysis of simple effects revealed that participants reported a higher likelihood of sharing their luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchase in the material purchase condition (M$_{luxury}$ = 4.65, SD = 1.92, M$_{non-luxury}$ = 3.94, SD = 1.63, F(1, 260) = 5.26, p = .023, η_p^2 = 0.02); however, such differences were non-significant in the experiential purchase condition (M$_{luxury}$ = 4.22, SD = 1.77, M$_{non-luxury}$ = 4.40, SD = 1.72, F(1, 260) = 0.38, p = .541). These results offered stronger support for our hypothesis, such that participants – but only those with high (but not low) levels of psychological entitlement – reported a higher likelihood of sharing luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases on their social media when such purchases were material (but not experiential).
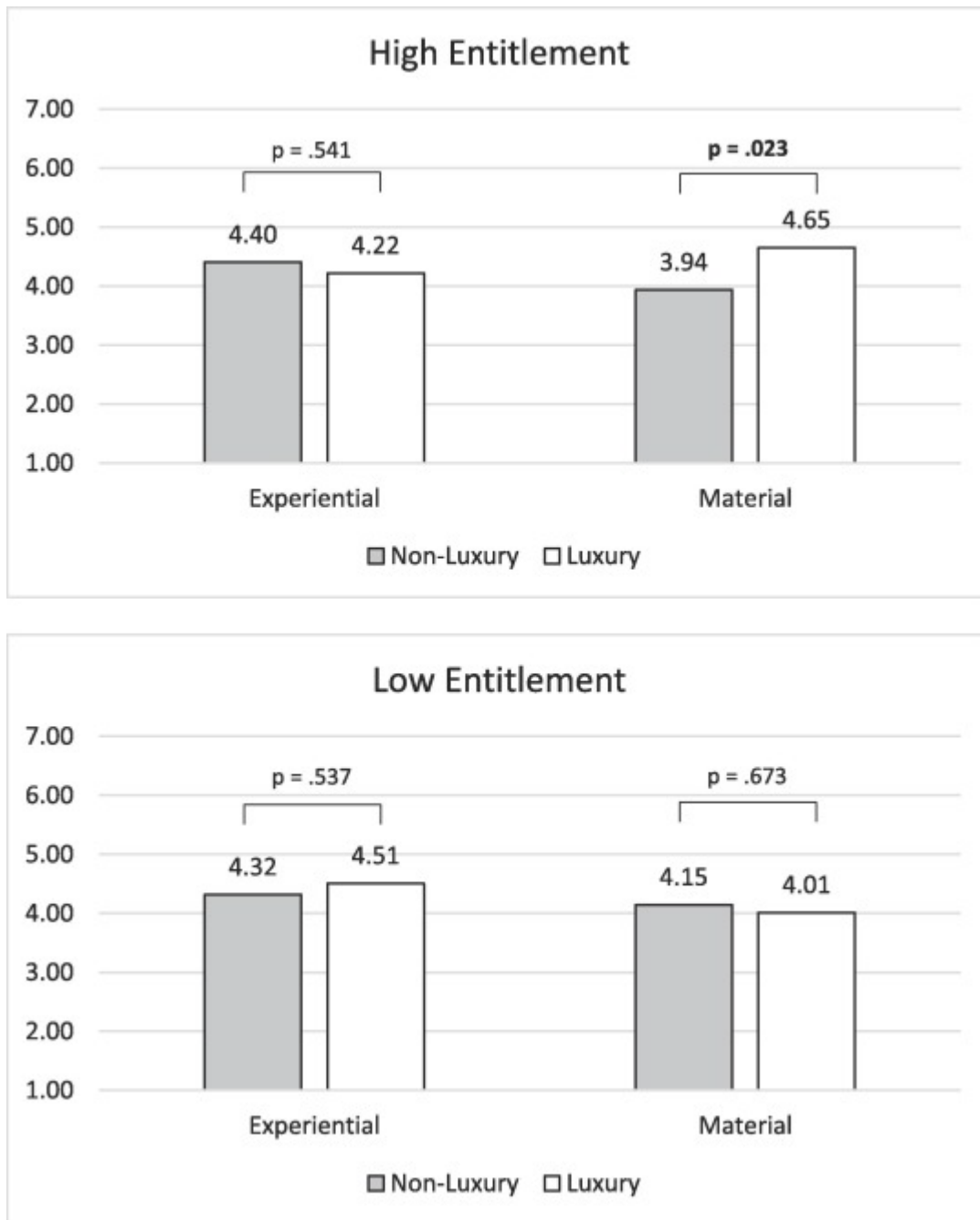
Fig. 3. Sharing Intentions by Brand Types, Purchase Types, and Psychological Entitlement.

5. General discussion

Many luxury brands are turning to social media as an important channel for enhancing brand perceptions and engaging customers. This is especially the case for the Asian market, as consumers engage with other consumers and brands through social media (i.e., WeChat) at an increasing rate (Digital Marketing Institute, 2018). Considering consumer skepticism of advertising, consumer-to-consumer influence is of growing importance to brand managers who wish to build a positive brand image and reputation (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). Therefore, encouraging consumers to share their luxury purchases on social media is an important task for luxury brand managers.

The present research investigates the conditions under which consumers are more likely share luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases on social media. In this endeavor, we found that luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchases will be shared more on social media only when the purchase is material (but not experiential), and only among consumers with high (but not low) levels of entitlement. We found this was the case in situations both when an individual already feels highly entitled and when consumers are made to feel highly entitled (situational manipulated entitlement task such as seeing a birthday message). We contribute to the theory and practice of luxury branding in several ways.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

Our research demonstrates how sharing of luxury consumption is different from sharing non-luxury consumption – but only in some conditions. Specifically, our findings suggest that highly entitled consumers are more motivated to share luxury (vs. non-luxury) material purchases, as such purchases may offer more status and comparison value. Therefore, our research demonstrates that online sharing of luxury purchases are influenced by two important factors: whether such purchases involve (1) material (vs. experiential) consumption and whether (2) consumers, either chronically or situationally, experience high (vs. low) levels of psychological entitlement.

Notably, while this research finds a three-way interaction of brand type (luxury vs non-luxury), product type (experimental vs material), and psychological entitlement (high vs low), individually these constructs do not lead to propensity to share on social media. This finding extends previous literature on sharing and luxury marketing, which previously suggested (albeit has not empirically investigated) that luxury goods may be more likely to be shared because motivations for sharing (e.g., posting pictures) for luxury brands – such as the need for status, self-expression, self-enhancement, the desire for developing relationships, obtaining feedback and recognition from others (Pentina, Bailey, & Zhang, 2018) – are greatly heightened on social media (Duan and Dholakia, 2018, Lampel and Bhalla, 2007). Specifically, we find evidence that, only for those consumers who feel highly entitled, sharing luxury material purchases online is preferred because this route offers the most visible sign of status. Thus, despite a turn towards 'subtle' luxury (Wu, Luo, Schroeder, & Borgerson, 2017), 'entitled' luxury consumers enjoy consumption that is of a conspicuous nature.

Further, previous research has suggested that luxury consumption is considered to be more experiential in nature (Cristini et al., 2017, Hemetsberger et al., 2012). In general, prior research has argued that experiential (vs material) purchases are more likely to be shared because there are better sharing outcomes (e.g., less envy) (Howell and Hill, 2009, Krasnova et al., 2015, Kumar and Gilovich, 2015, Lin et al., 2018). However, our research demonstrates that, when we consider the effect of brand type (i.e., luxury vs. non-luxury), it has a greater effect on sharing for material purchases.

The present research links the construct of psychological entitlement to consumer social media behavior. While prior research endeavored to explore the role of entitlement in the domain of luxury consumption (Goor et al., 2020, Mansvelt et al., 2016), its effect on luxury consumption-related sharing behavior has not received attention. We demonstrate the importance of psychological entitlement to help explain when luxury (vs. non-luxury) material purchases are more likely to be shared online. The reason for our findings may be that highly entitled consumers are more concerned about conveying their status (Lange et al.,

2019) and are more inclined to appreciate the difference in luxury versus non-luxury material purchases as a means to convey status.

5.2. Managerial implications

Considering the rise of the luxury market in Asia (Deloitte, 2019) as well as the ubiquity of social media in marketing activities (Francois, 2020), marketing managers need to implement strategies to encourage consumers' online engagement with luxury brands. Conspicuous consumption is usually associated with luxury brands (Charoennan and Huang, 2018, Duan and Dholakia, 2018, Duan, 2016), especially in Asia (Buckley, Clegg, & Tan, 2010). Our findings suggests that luxury brand managers can encourage consumers in their material purchases by emphasizing entitlement. Our findings support the notion that psychological entitlement can be boosted temporarily (Goor et al., 2020, Lange et al., 2019, Redford and Ratliff, 2018, Zitek and Vincent, 2015). Specifically, boosting entitlement can be achieved through highlighting the self (i.e., "you're deserving") or an event (i.e., birthday, Mother's Day). Thus, when planning an advertising campaign, practitioners might consider emphasizing the importance of the consumer and reminding them of their worthiness. Marketers may wish to promote such messages in personalized ways such as through email or post on the consumers' birthday connecting to frequently used promotions or offerings on ones' birthday. Other marketing strategies may be used such as utilizing language – "*you deserve it*" – in a simple thankyou card upon the completion of the purchase. Utilizing such phrasing works well in conjunction with luxury brand advertising, which frequently highlights indulgence (Brun & Castelli, 2013) and pride (McFerran, Aquino, & Tracy, 2014). Such 'nudges' could encourage luxury consumers' social media sharing intention for luxury material purchases.

The findings of our research may also be relevant to non-luxury brand managers who wish to increase the sharing of material purchases online, as they may struggle with encouraging consumers to share their purchases with others (Kumar and Gilovich, 2015, Lin et al., 2018). As a luxury (vs. non-luxury) material purchase is more likely to be shared on social media by highly entitled consumers, brand marketers could make their (material) product offerings perceived more luxurious while also boosting consumer entitlement. This is possible because the perception of luxury is subjective and malleable (Tynan et al., 2010), whereby they can be enhanced through storytelling (Hughes, Bendoni, & Pehlivan, 2016), using artistic references (Seo et al., 2021), and imagery (Septianto, Ye, & Northey, 2021). Highlighting entitlement through targeted self-worth or event messages and campaigns such as these would provide an emphasis both on luxury and psychological entitlement to boost online sharing of (non-luxury) material products.

5.3. Limitations and future research

This research has several limitations that open avenues for future research. First, although various stimuli were used in experiments, they were all hypothetical scenarios, and we did not examine consumers' actual purchase experiences. While we demonstrate under what conditions material consumption is shared on social media, there are different ways posts can be shared. Most social media platforms allow consumers to select the size of their target audiences: users can choose to narrowcast or broadcast their posts. Prior research has demonstrated that the size of audience determines what and how people communicate (Barasch & Berger, 2014). Therefore, future research can consider the effect of another potential moderating variable – audience size – on consumers' social media sharing intention.

In addition, examining further the motivations for not-sharing (i.e., rejecting sharing) is also of importance as our research does not specifically investigate such motivations. Combining luxury material and experiential purchases with another attribute, such as sustainability, would also be of interest – as this may result in greater sharing tendencies (i.e., buy green to be seen) (Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010).

In conclusion, we establish that luxury (vs. non-luxury) purchase experiences will be shared more when they are associated with material (vs. experiential) consumption, and among consumers with high (vs. low) entitlement. The present research provides a theoretical foundation for further research into the relationship of psychological entitlement and consumer social media behavior, specifically in the domain of luxury consumption.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix A.

HyperMOTION shoes from **PRADA**

Imagine yourself running with a pair of PRADA HyperMOTION shoes. With every step, you can sense how the leaf-shaped springs in the heels return energy to your feet and legs. Your feet feel light – 10.875 oz. of shoe – and comfortable, resting on the maximum midsole cushioning. You are safe even on wet surfaces, due to the non-slip lining. And you are confident, propelling forward glancing down at the shoe's bold look.

1. Download : Download high-res image (254KB)
2. Download : Download full-size image

Luxury, Experiential Purchase

HyperMOTION shoes from **PRADA**

With an energy-returning heel and maximum midsole cushioning, new PRADA HyperMOTION shoes deliver comfort and responsiveness. The design of these light, versatile running shoes gives a bold look to the breathable upper.

Details

Weight: 10.875 oz. per shoe.

Non-slip lining for safety and performance, even on wet surfaces.

HyperMOTION with leaf-shaped springs in the heel for return energy.

Luxury, Material Purchase

HyperMOTION shoes from **GAP**

Imagine yourself running with a pair of GAP HyperMOTION shoes. With every step, you can sense how the leaf-shaped springs in the heels return energy to your feet and legs. Your feet feel light – 10.875 oz. of shoe – and comfortable, resting on the maximum midsole cushioning. You are safe even on wet surfaces, due to the non-slip lining. And you are confident, propelling forward glancing down at the shoe's bold look.

Non-Luxury, Experiential Purchase

HyperMOTION shoes from **GAP**

With an energy-returning heel and maximum midsole cushioning, new GAP HyperMOTION shoes deliver comfort and responsiveness. The design of these light, versatile running shoes gives a bold look to the breathable upper.

Details

Weight: 10.875 oz. per shoe.

Non-slip lining for safety and performance, even on wet surfaces.

HyperMOTION with leaf-shaped springs in the heel for return energy.

Non-Luxury, Material Purchase

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