

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

## Exploring the Relationship Between Female Conspicuous Consumption and Mating Goals

Kumju Hwang<sup>1</sup>  | Lei Zhang<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Business School, Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Republic of Korea | <sup>2</sup>Graduate School, Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Republic of Korea**Correspondence:** Kumju Hwang ([kumju@cau.ac.kr](mailto:kumju@cau.ac.kr))**Received:** 3 May 2024 | **Revised:** 24 February 2025 | **Accepted:** 7 April 2025**Funding:** The authors received no specific funding for this work.**Keywords:** authenticity perception | female conspicuous consumption | mate-attraction goal | mate-guarding goal | power | signals of financial expectations to potential mates

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between female conspicuous consumption behaviors and mating goals (i.e., mate attraction or mate guarding) from an evolutionary psychology perspective as well as male response and attitude toward these behaviors. Study 1 demonstrates that females with high power are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption under mate-guarding conditions, whereas those with low power are more inclined to do so under mate-attraction conditions. Study 2 reveals that males associate females who prefer luxury brands with higher financial expectations from their partners and that conspicuous consumption may deter males' affiliative behaviors. Additionally, males tend to perceive females as more authentic when their conspicuous consumption aligns with their level of power, enhancing their perceptions of physical attractiveness and eliciting more positive reactions. Conversely, if there is a discrepancy between female power and consumption behavior, males respond negatively. These insights not only contribute to the fields of evolutionary and consumer psychology by illustrating how consumer behaviors can be interpreted through the lens of human mating strategies but also inform marketing strategies. The current research suggests that understanding the underlying motivations for consumer preferences for luxury goods can lead to more effective marketing approaches and open new avenues for research on the evolutionary psychology of human mating.

## 1 | Introduction

The luxury sector continues to demonstrate remarkable growth and resilience. A report from the Boston Consulting Group projected a 19%–21% increase in sales across the luxury sector by 2022, potentially reaching 1.38 trillion euros. This projection has been surpassed, as Bain and Company (2024) reports that the global luxury market reached an estimated €1.5 trillion in 2023, representing a significant growth of 8%–10% at current exchange rates compared with 2022. The firm forecasts that by 2030, the market value could reach between €540 billion and €580 billion, a substantial increase from its estimated 2022 value of €353 billion.

The luxury market landscape is undergoing significant shifts, with Bain and Company (2023) projecting China to become the dominant player by 2030, potentially accounting for 25%–27% of worldwide luxury purchases. The shift towards Chinese market dominance aligns with recent research on conspicuous consumption in emerging markets, particularly in developing nations like China (Barrera and Ponce 2020). Comparative studies have revealed that Chinese consumers place greater importance on social perceptions when making luxury purchases, contrasting with their American counterparts (Jenkins 2016).

Women are emerging as pivotal contributors to market growth. Euromonitor International (2021) reports that women constitute

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2025 The Author(s). *International Journal of Consumer Studies* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

over 70% of the personal luxury goods market, demonstrating significant purchasing power across various categories. Statista (2021) forecasts that luxury fashion will dominate the global luxury market by 2023, with estimated sales of 111.5 billion US dollars, with women representing about 60% of the market share. The Havas Media Network (HMN 2023) study reveals a notable gender disparity in high-end luxury expenditure, with 27% of female participants spending over £50,000 annually on luxury items, compared to 17% of male counterparts. In China, female consumers are particularly dominant, accounting for 70% of online luxury purchases (China Business News Datacenter 2019).

Luxury items are characterized by their exceptional quality, rarity, or craftsmanship, often incorporating premium materials and skilled production techniques (Da Silva et al. 2024). Conspicuous consumption, associated with the acquisition and display of these goods, is primarily aimed at showcasing one's wealth and social status (Barrera and Ponce 2020; Khair et al. 2021; Tafani et al. 2024).

Despite the substantial increase in female luxury consumption, the motivations behind women's luxury consumption require deeper examination (Shahbee et al. 2023). While men typically engage in conspicuous consumption to attract mates or build romantic relationships (Sedikides and Hart 2022; Zhu et al. 2023), women's motivations are more complex. Women may use conspicuous consumption to signal to potential rivals about their mates' fidelity (Wang and Griskevicius 2014) or as a self-promotion strategy to enhance their attractiveness (Hudders et al. 2014). Women's conspicuous consumption behavior contrasts with men's more direct approaches to confronting romantic rivals (Schmitt and Buss 2001).

Conspicuous consumption serves various functions within interpersonal relationships, particularly in signaling mate values (Apaolaza et al. 2023; Policarpo et al. 2023; Sundie et al. 2020). For males, engaging in luxury consumption enhances their perceived desirability, potentially facilitating new romantic connections (Da Silva et al. 2024). In contrast, females' luxury consumption appears to serve dual purposes: it not only aids in attracting potential partners but also plays a role in sustaining existing romantic relationships, particularly when faced with competition from other women (Da Silva et al. 2024).

Recent evolutionary psychology research has explored the concept of conspicuous consumption through the lens of mating strategies and signaling theory. Several scholars propose that this behavior may have evolved as a sexual adaptation (Griskevicius et al. 2007; De Fraja 2009; Kruger 2022; Palmer and Pomianek 2007; Sundie et al. 2020). Central to this hypothesis is the idea that the reliability of the signal is directly related to the cost of producing or maintaining it (Kolofotis 2021). Evolutionary psychology suggests that conspicuous consumption serves as a way to communicate one's fitness or status to potential mates, with the high cost of luxury goods acting as a guarantee of the signal's authenticity.

However, conspicuous consumption can serve as a compensatory mechanism for individuals with low power or status (Landis and Gladstone 2017; Rucker and Galinsky 2009), challenging

the notion that luxury goods inherently signal authentic status. Consequently, potential mates may compare a woman's luxury displays with her actual power or status to verify the authenticity of the signal. The signal authenticity assessment allows potential partners to discern whether the conspicuous consumption accurately represents the individual's true social standing or is an attempt to project an inflated image.

Power, defined as the ability to influence or resist the influence of others (French and Raven 1959), plays a significant role in conspicuous consumption. Consumers with lower power levels may prefer high-status goods to compensate for their perceived lack of influence (Rucker and Galinsky 2008, 2009). However, the intersection of power with evolutionary psychology and mating goals remains underexplored, particularly among women. High-power women tend to engage in broader social comparisons, whereas those with lower power are more introspective (Zhao et al. 2017). Moreover, social comparison plays a crucial role in the dynamics of mating goals and influences women's conspicuous consumption behaviors (Chen et al. 2023).

The current research integrates mating strategies from evolutionary psychology and signaling theory to examine female luxury consumption as a power signal in mate attraction and retention. We explore the signaling role of power in females' mate-attraction and mate-guarding. The signaling effect of female luxury consumption potentially raises two key issues regarding male perceptions. First, males may perceive women's luxury brand use either as an authentic indicator of the women's power/status, or as an inauthentic/fake signal attempting to portray power they don't actually possess (Lai and Prendergast 2019). Second, males may form expectations about the financial costs they would need to incur to create and maintain relationships with females who display luxury brands, based on interpreting this display as part of females' mate screening strategy (Chen et al. 2022; Sundie et al. 2020). In essence, our research explores how males interpret and react to female luxury consumption as a power signal, considering both its perceived authenticity and its implications for potential relationship dynamics and costs. The complex understanding of male perceptions is crucial in examining the effectiveness and consequences of female luxury consumption as a mate attraction and retention strategy.

The present study seeks to clarify how men perceive and react to women's conspicuous consumption when motivated by mate-attraction goals by exploring whether women's conspicuous consumption sets a financial standard or signals financial expectations for potential mates (Chen et al. 2022; Wang et al. 2020). Crucially, we investigate how authenticity perception influences these dynamics. Authenticity perception, which refers to the perceived genuineness or sincerity of an individual's behavior or motivations, plays a significant role in how conspicuous consumption is interpreted and responded to by others (Smith et al. 2021). Authenticity perception is particularly important in the context of mate selection and interpersonal relationships, as it can significantly impact the effectiveness of conspicuous consumption as a signaling strategy.

Furthermore, the study examines how power interacts with authenticity perception to shape men's responses to women's conspicuous consumption (Smith et al. 2021). The interplay between

power and authenticity perception is critical in understanding the complex dynamics of interpersonal signaling through luxury goods, as it may reveal how power differentials affect the interpretation and effectiveness of conspicuous consumption signals.

Through two experiments, our investigation elucidates the complex interplay between female mating goals, their power, authenticity perception, and male responses to female conspicuous consumption from an evolutionary psychological perspective of human mating strategies. The first experiment assesses the impact of women's mating goals and power on their conspicuous consumption behaviors, whereas the second explores males' attitudes and reactions toward these behaviors, with a particular focus on how authenticity perception moderates these responses. By addressing these understudied aspects, our research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the luxury market, with implications for both marketing strategies and consumer psychology theory.

## 2 | Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

### 2.1 | Theoretical Background

#### 2.1.1 | Mating Goals and Female Conspicuous Consumption

Evolutionary psychology provides a robust framework for understanding cross-cultural consumer behavior and gender roles in marketing, explaining universal patterns such as males' preference for physical attractiveness in mate selection (Sundie et al. 2020). The evolutionary perspective aligns with women's higher concern for clothing and public body consciousness, suggesting an evolutionary basis for their focus on physical appearance in mate attraction (Sundie et al. 2020).

Signaling theory, related to evolutionary psychology, offers insights into how luxury items are used in mating strategies (Lai and Prendergast 2019). Men employ high-end products as status signals to attract potential mates, particularly in short-term scenarios (Kruger 2024). Women, however, use luxury goods for dual purposes: to maximize reproductive success and as a mate retention strategy (Wang and Giskevicius 2014). These gender differences arise from varying levels of investment in offspring, with typically higher investment from females (Buss and Schmitt 1993).

The current research integrates mate selection strategies from evolutionary psychology and status signaling theory to examine female luxury consumption as a power signal in mate attraction and retention. We explore the signaling role of power in females' mate-attraction and mate-guarding. The power signaling effect potentially raises issues of whether males perceive women's luxury brand use as women's authentic power or status signal or not (males' authenticity perception), and how males expect their financial costs for create and retain the relationships with those females based on the signal of female luxury brand display as females' mate screening strategy. Our research investigates female luxury consumption motivations and male reactions within the framework of conspicuous consumption.

This study defines "mate attraction" as the display of positive attributes to allure desirable partners and "mate guarding" as defensive behaviors against potential rivals. Men often engage in conspicuous consumption to attract mates (Borau et al. 2021), whereas women use it to guard against potential romantic rivals (Wang and Giskevicius 2014). Mate guarding is critical for ensuring reproductive success, especially for females who face greater reproductive costs if deprived of their partners' resources (Hurtado et al. 1992; Kaplan et al. 2000). The need for mate guarding drives females to prefer mates who can provide substantial resources and display high social status (Bradshaw et al. 2020).

Activating mate-attraction goals enhances both men's and women's efforts to increase their mate value through positive self-presentation and conspicuous consumption of luxury goods (Giskevicius et al. 2007; Sundie et al. 2020). Men display wealth to attract partners, aligning with women's preferences for resource-rich males (Bradshaw et al. 2020). Women under mate-attraction conditions might focus on enhancing physical attributes indicative of fertility (Buss and Barnes 1986) and may pursue riskier behaviors to boost attractiveness, including cosmetic enhancements (Durante et al. 2011; Hill and Durante 2011).

While conspicuous consumption is traditionally viewed as sub-optimal for women in attracting mates, the traditional view of women's conspicuous consumption may overlook the nuances of female strategies that involve enhancing attractiveness through conspicuous consumption of preferred items (Giskevicius et al. 2007; Hudders et al. 2014). The effectiveness of such strategies in attracting male attention remains underexplored, indicating the need for further research in this area (Sundie et al. 2020).

The threat of losing a mate to another, particularly if that rival might redirect the partner's resources, intensifies mate-guarding behaviors fueled by emotions like jealousy (Kupfer and Gul 2023). Men typically confront romantic rivals directly, whereas women are more inclined to fortify their existing relationships by signaling their partners' loyalty, often through conspicuous consumption (Wang and Giskevicius 2014). Despite the importance of these findings in marketing, there remains a significant gap in understanding how men interpret women's luxury brand signals, warranting further investigation (Sundie et al. 2020). Our investigation aims to bridge the knowledge gap in understanding male interpretations by examining the complex interplay between evolutionary psychology, signaling theory, and consumer behavior in the context of luxury consumption and mate selection strategies.

### 2.2 | Hypothesis Development

#### 2.2.1 | Female Power, Mating Goals, and Female Conspicuous Consumption

Traditionally, power has been defined as the capacity to influence others or to resist influence (French and Raven 1959). Research has extensively documented the psychological outcomes of power states, including the illusion

of personal control (Fast et al. 2009), enhanced feelings of power (Lammers et al. 2010), and increased perception of competitiveness (Tost et al. 2012). Power significantly influences various consumer behaviors, including compensatory consumption (Li et al. 2023; Rucker and Galinsky 2008) and specific consumption preferences (Rucker et al. 2011). Rucker and Galinsky (2008) found that low-power individuals are willing to pay more for products that symbolize power than their high-power counterparts when the product is directly associated with a power state.

From a conceptual standpoint, power is a social construct that emerges from interactions and comparisons between individuals (Magee and Galinsky 2008). The social construct of power fosters a sense of power, leading those in high-power states to adopt an agentic orientation, placing greater emphasis on the self (Rucker et al. 2012). High-powered individuals tend to exhibit increased interpersonal sensitivity (Mast et al. 2009) and are more inclined toward social comparisons, which boost their self-esteem more effectively than self-comparisons (Van den Bos et al. 2006). Conversely, low-power consumers often rely more on communal orientations and avoid comparisons that might underscore their inadequacy because of their greater social dependence (Rucker et al. 2011).

Social comparisons also vary with mating goals among females. High-power females driven by mate-guarding objectives are more likely to compare themselves with potential rivals to safeguard their relationships (Zhao et al. 2017). This sensitivity to threats may encourage conspicuous consumption as a strategy to deter competitors (Wang and Griskevicius 2014; Zheng et al. 2014). By contrast, low-power females pursuing mate-attraction goals might engage in more conspicuous consumption to enhance their attractiveness and appeal to potential partners, a tendency amplified by lower entitlement levels (Hudders et al. 2014).

Based on these insights, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H1.** *In the mate-attraction goal condition, low-power female consumers exhibit higher conspicuous consumption preferences.*

**H2.** *In the mate-attraction goal condition, high-power female consumers show lower conspicuous consumption preferences.*

**H3.** *In the mate-guarding goal condition, low-power female consumers demonstrate lower conspicuous consumption preferences.*

**H4.** *In the mate-guarding goal condition, high-power female consumers exhibit higher conspicuous consumption preferences.*

### 2.2.2 | Female Conspicuous Consumption Signals, Male Power, Reaction, and Attitude

Conspicuous consumption is traditionally seen as a way to display wealth, status, or prestige and serves as a form of symbolic capital that signals an individual's social standing and desirability (Bellezza 2023). Bourdieu (1977) posited that this type of consumption acts as economic capital and also enhances

social leverage by denoting wealth and attractiveness, particularly under the lens of mate attraction. Evolutionary theory has long examined the role of conspicuous consumption in interpersonal dynamics, where it has been shown to signify desirable mating qualities (De Fraja 2009). Specifically, women may use conspicuous consumption related to appearance as a strategy to enhance attractiveness and compete for mates as well as to signal mate fidelity to deter rivals (Hudders et al. 2014; Wang and Griskevicius 2014).

Although the focus has typically been on female–female competition in the context of mate attraction, the dynamics of how males perceive these signals warrant exploration (Sundie et al. 2020). Specifically, it is important to consider male perceptions of females who engage in conspicuous consumption when seeking mates. Assuming that females in such scenarios already have partners (mate-guarding conditions), males might generally overlook them, showing little interest in forming relationships with them. Therefore, the current research explored male responses to conspicuous female consumption in mate-attraction scenarios.

We propose that males actively seeking mates interpret the signals of conspicuous female consumption differently. According to Wang et al. (2020), high-status individuals are more likely to use wealth and status as self-defining tools to enhance their social identity. High-status individuals, often synonymous with high-power individuals, are hypothesized to show greater recognition of the link between status and conspicuous consumption, potentially leading to more critical views of conspicuous consumption by low-power females (Lai and Prendergast 2019). Furthermore, high-status individuals are more attuned to status signals, which could influence their judgments regarding a female's authenticity (Lai and Prendergast 2019) and the financial standards of her potential mates (Sundie et al. 2020). This sensitivity might lead high-power observers to perceive a female with luxury items as costlier than one with less conspicuous products (Sundie et al. 2020), thus affecting their attitudes toward her. Hence, our investigation aims to delve into how power and status influence male perceptions of and reactions to conspicuous female consumption in the context of mate attraction.

### 2.2.3 | Mating Sociometer, Female Financial Standards for Mates and Male Reactions and Attitudes

Evolutionary psychology posits that partner selection aligned with individual expectations presents a significant challenge in relationship formation, particularly for women (Chen et al. 2023). The difference in mate selection preferences between genders, rooted in parental investment theory, suggests that females face greater selective pressure in mate choice due to their higher biological investment in offspring (Trivers 1972). Bradshaw et al. (2020) argued that females exhibit approximately twice the inclination toward economically secure partners compared to their male counterparts, for both long-term and short-term mate preferences.

Sundie et al. (2020) proposed that a woman's conspicuous display of luxury items may lead observers to infer her high



financial expectations in potential romantic partners. The researchers suggested that in social settings, such overt displays of affluence could effectively communicate a woman's elevated economic criteria for a mate. Consequently, the conspicuous display of luxury items might discourage approaches from men who perceive themselves as unable to meet these presumed financial standards, thereby influencing mate selection dynamics.

Fisher et al. (2008) conceptualized self-perceived mate value as an individual's assessment of their attractiveness as a partner based on traits such as physical attractiveness, reproductive health, social status, and family background. A high mate value is associated with greater success in attracting and retaining partners, whereas a low mate value may lead to rejection (Edlund 2008). From an evolutionary psychology perspective, such rejection can threaten survival and reproduction, prompting individuals to adopt adaptive mating strategies based on their perceived mate value (Pass et al. 2010). Individuals tend to choose partners whose mate values align with their own to optimize mating benefits and minimize risks (Back et al. 2011; Penke et al. 2007).

Sociometer Theory, introduced by Leary and Baumeister (2000), posits that self-esteem acts as a gauge of social acceptance or rejection and regulates the quality of interpersonal relationships. A decrease in self-esteem following social rejection triggers negative emotions (Freedman and Dainer-Best 2022). Extending this, Kirkpatrick and Ellis (2001) developed the "mating sociometer" concept within the domain of evolutionary psychology, suggesting that self-esteem is particularly attuned to rejection in mating contexts. Penke et al. (2007) argued that self-esteem helps individuals adjust their mating strategies by monitoring their self-perceived mating values.

The mating sociometer is instrumental in ensuring that individuals pursue appropriately valued partners, thus enhancing mating success and preventing the squandering of resources on unsuitable partners (Kavanagh et al. 2010). Furthermore, Chen et al. (2023) proposed that women might utilize luxury consumption as a strategic signal to communicate high mating standards and potentially deter unsuitable suitors. This hypothesis aligns with evolutionary psychology's emphasis on women's prioritization of economic status in mate selection. The researchers noted that luxury items, characterized by their high cost and association with affluence, serve as effective tools for conveying elevated financial expectations in potential partners. The use of luxury items as a signaling mechanism may function as a screening process in mate selection, reflecting the intersection of evolutionary mate preferences and conspicuous consumption behaviors.

Conversely, we expect that males in the mating arena might use indicators such as conspicuous consumption to gauge female financial expectations and adjust their courtship strategies accordingly, ensuring that their efforts align with the financial standards of their potential partners (Chen et al. 2022; Sundie et al. 2020). The interplay between female financial expectations and male courtship strategies suggests that high financial standards for females can influence male behavior and attitudes in the context of mating.

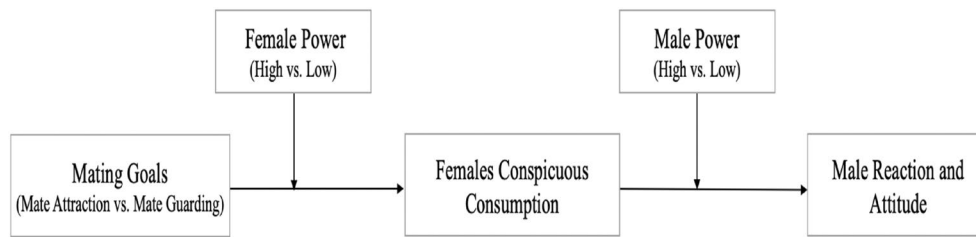
#### 2.2.4 | Authenticity Perception, Conspicuous Consumption, and Male Reaction and Attitude

Conspicuous consumption can serve as a compensatory mechanism for individuals with low power or status (Rucker and Galinsky 2008, 2009), which challenges the notion that the high cost of luxury goods inherently guarantees the authenticity of the signal. The use of luxury goods as a compensatory mechanism raises questions about the reliability of luxury displays as indicators of genuine power or status. Consequently, potential mates may engage in a comparative assessment, evaluating the congruence between a potential female partner's conspicuous consumption and their actual power or status level. The comparative assessment of luxury displays allows potential mates to discern whether the luxury display can be perceived as an authentic representation of the individual's true social standing or merely as an attempt to project an inflated image.

The connection between innateness and authenticity in consumer culture is deeply entangled with essentialist beliefs about oneself. The essentialist belief system posits that individuals are endowed with a predetermined essence that defines their identity from birth, a concept supported by research on psychological essentialism (Christy et al. 2019; Gelman 2003; Newman and Dhar 2014). Under this framework, the "true self" is conceptualized as originating from this inherent essence and is thus immutable and fundamental to the individual's identity (Schlegel et al. 2012). Essentialist reasoning reinforces the belief that the true self should be resistant to change and naturally predetermined, leading to perceptions that self-enhancements, particularly those achieved through artificial means, such as drugs that enhance cognitive performance, are inauthentic (Christy et al. 2019; Gelman 2003; Levy 2011; Williams and Steffel 2014). The concept of congruence between self and innateness stems from the congruence between the self and innateness, where any modification not aligned with one's innate characteristics is seen as inauthentic. Smith et al. (2021) added that this essentialist view is often implicitly utilized when individuals evaluate the authenticity of others, equating a person's true self to their innate nature.

Identity signaling theory adds another layer to our understanding of consumer behavior, suggesting that individuals purchase products and brands to signal their identities to others (Cheah et al. 2015; Ferraro et al. 2010; Pino et al. 2019; Raimondo et al. 2022). However, the effectiveness of these signals depends on the perceived authenticity of the signal sender. If observers believe that identity signals are motivated by external influences rather than genuine self-expression, they may perceive these signals as inauthentic. The perception of inauthenticity leads to negative reactions from observers as they perceive the individual as misrepresenting their true self (Ferraro et al. 2010). Therefore, the perception of authenticity is pivotal in determining an observer's reaction to identity signals.

The complexity of these dynamics is particularly evident in the context of sex-specific consumption perceptions. Lai and Prendergast (2019) highlighted that male observers may perceive luxury brand consumption by females as an indicator of



**FIGURE 1** | Theoretical model.

increased attractiveness and social status, provided the brand and consumer's image are congruent. However, discrepancies between a female's attributes (e.g., age and social status) and brand image can lead to negative evaluations. Such discrepancies are seen as attempts at impression management or social climbing, which are perceived as inauthentic (Lai and Prendergast 2019). Furthermore, social expectations and norms, which dictate that individuals should behave in ways consistent with their social status, play a significant role in these perceptions (Anderson et al. 2008, 2006; Rudman 1998). When individuals act in ways that are incongruent with these expectations, they often face social penalties or backlash, which further influence their perceptions of authenticity.

Research suggests that men's perceptions of women using luxury brands are context-dependent. When luxury items appear incongruent with the situation, men view them negatively, interpreting such displays as deliberate attention-seeking behavior (Sundie et al. 2020). Men's negative view of incongruent luxury displays may stem from the perception of ulterior motives in impression management, a key driver of conspicuous brand usage (Ferraro et al. 2010). Studies show that observers generally dislike individuals perceived as having hidden agendas (Godfrey et al. 1986). Consequently, men tend to view women displaying excessively conspicuous luxury brands as inauthentic or attempting to project a false social status, leading to unfavorable impressions (Sundie et al. 2020).

In particular, Lai and Prendergast (2019) identified a gap in understanding men's interpretation of women's luxury brand signals. Their study revealed that men's perceptions depend on the congruence between the brand, the user's image, and the usage context. Men reported negative views of women who display luxury items incongruent with their perceived financial status. The study's findings suggest that effective signaling relies not solely on the brand itself, but on its perceived appropriateness relative to the woman's financial situation and the usage context (Lai and Prendergast 2019).

Based on this theoretical foundation, we propose several hypotheses to test the relationship between male perceptions of female consumption patterns and the authenticity attributed to these behaviors.

**H5.** *High-power males have a positive reaction and attitude toward high-power females engaged in conspicuous consumption.*

**H6.** *High-power males have a negative reaction and attitude toward high-power females engaging in non-conspicuous consumption.*

**H7.** *High-power males have a negative reaction and attitude toward low-power females engaged in conspicuous consumption.*

**H8.** *High-power males have a positive reaction and attitude toward low-power females engaged in non-conspicuous consumption.*

**H9.** *Low-power males have a negative reaction and attitude toward high-power females who engage in conspicuous consumption.*

**H10.** *Low-power males have a negative reaction and attitude toward high-power females who engage in conspicuous consumption.*

**H11.** *Low-power males have a negative reaction and attitude toward low-power females engaged in conspicuous consumption.*

**H12.** *Low-power males have a positive reaction and attitude toward low-power females engaged in non-conspicuous consumption.*

Figure 1 depicts our research model.

### 3 | Method—Experiment 1

The current study explored the impact of female mating goals—mate attraction and mate guarding—on conspicuous consumption behavior. We hypothesized that females pursuing mate attraction would engage in conspicuous consumption to enhance their attractiveness, whereas those focused on mate guarding would use conspicuous consumption to deter rivals and demonstrate loyalty to their partners. Additionally, we anticipated that the power status of females would moderate the relationship between their mating goals and their engagement in conspicuous consumption.

To test these hypotheses, we differentiated between high- and low-power females by considering how their relative social status influences their consumption patterns in the context of their mating strategies. This approach allowed us to examine the nuanced ways in which personal goals and social power interact to shape consumer behavior in a mating context.

#### 3.1 | Design and Participants

The experiment was conducted online with 172 Chinese females recruited through the Credamo questionnaire platform.

Each participant received a monetary reward of 4 CNY for their participation. The online recruitment strategy aligns with methodologies used in previous studies on conspicuous female consumption (Hudders et al. 2014; Sundie et al. 2020; Wang and Griskevicius 2014). Following the sampling criteria outlined by Hudders et al. (2014), our participants were women in their childbearing years (i.e., under 50 years of age), representing a range of income levels, expenditures, and educational backgrounds. The study adhered to the university guidelines for research involving human participants, ensuring anonymity and obtaining informed consent.

The demographic profile of the participants included a predominant age range of 20–29 years (57.6%), followed by 30–39 years (34.9%), and 40–49 years (7.6%). Educational levels were high, with 98.8% having higher education (high school diploma or university degree). The relationship status varied, with 26.2% reporting being single and 73.8% reporting a relationship. Monthly incomes ranged widely, with 2.9% earning below 2000 CNY and 34.9% earning above 8000 CNY. Monthly expenditures followed a similar trend.

### 3.2 | Materials and Procedure

A 2 (power: high vs. low)  $\times$  2 (mating goals: attraction vs. guarding) between-subjects design was used. The participants were randomly assigned to high- or low-power groups, creating four subgroups within the mating goals of attraction and guarding. Scenarios to manipulate these independent variables were derived from existing evolutionary psychology research, which is a common tool in this field (Wilson and O’Gorman 2003).

For power manipulation, following Rucker et al. (2011), High Power Condition participants read: “As a boss, you are in charge of guiding your subordinates in creating various products and managing the work team. You decide the scheduling for product creation and the evaluation of employees’ work. You have complete control over the instructions you give to your employees. Additionally, you evaluate your employees at the end of each month through a private questionnaire—the employees never see your evaluation. They also do not have the opportunity to evaluate you” (Rucker et al. 2011).

Low power condition participants read: “As an employee, you are responsible for implementing your boss’s directives to create various products. The boss has determined the scheduling for product creation and the evaluation of your work. You must follow your boss’s directions. Furthermore, your boss evaluates you each month in a private setting; you never see your boss’s evaluation of you. This evaluation helps determine the bonus you receive. You will have no opportunity to evaluate your boss” (Rucker et al. 2011).

Mating goals were manipulated using scenarios inspired by studies by Griskevicius et al. (2006), Griskevicius et al. (2009), Li et al. (2012), and Zhao et al. (2017). For the mate

attraction condition: Participants then read: “Imagine you are a young woman who feels lonely and strongly desires to start a new relationship. Tonight, you will attend a party where your desired mate will also be present. You will meet him at the party.”

For the mate guarding condition: Participants then read: “Imagine you have a boyfriend. You and your boyfriend attended a party a month ago, where an admirer of your boyfriend was also present. You went to get a drink on the other side of the room, and while waiting in line, you noticed that your romantic rival had started flirting with your date.”

The participants’ responses to the likelihood of choosing luxury versus ordinary brands were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale. This measurement was used to assess conspicuous consumption orientation, focusing on handbags—a product category known for its association with luxury and conspicuous consumption (Han et al. 2010). Wang and Griskevicius (2014) tested four different product categories in their study. Female luxury handbags are considered a typical example of luxury brand products for women (Han et al. 2010). To avoid the effects of product category, this experiment focused solely on handbags, the most popular product for conspicuous consumption among women. Therefore, only handbags were used for testing in this experiment.

### 3.3 | Measures

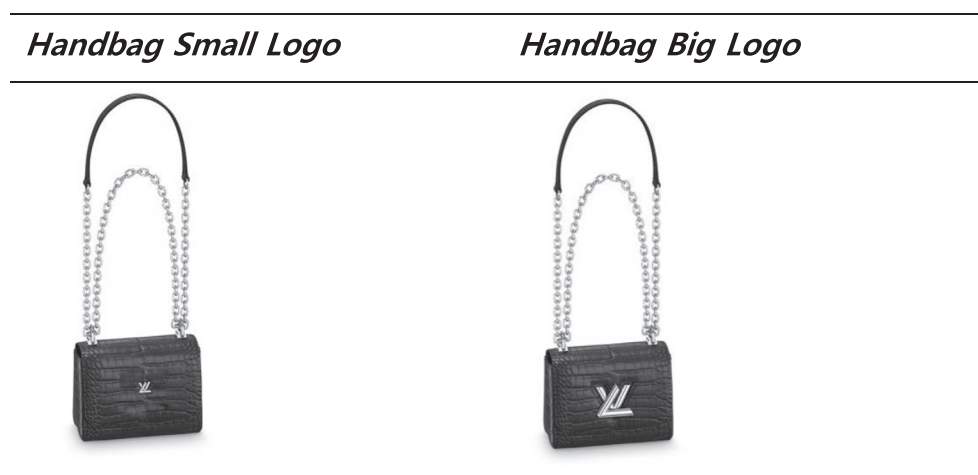
Power was assessed using an 8-item scale reflecting perceived control and influence (Anderson and Berdahl 2002; Anderson and Galinsky 2006; Rucker and Galinsky 2009). Mate attraction and guarding were measured using scales adapted from Zhao et al. (2017) and Cousins et al. (2009), respectively, with a focus on participants’ motivations and behaviors related to romantic relationships.

Orientation toward conspicuous consumption was primarily evaluated through preferences expressed between luxury and ordinary brand handbags, as well as variations in logo size. This methodology builds on the approach of Wang and Griskevicius (2014), who correlated logo size with the desire for conspicuousness. Participants were first shown two pictures of identical-looking handbags that differed only in brand: one from a luxury brand (Prada) and the other from an ordinary brand (COS). They were then asked to choose between them. Subsequently, participants were presented with two pictures of identical-looking handbags differing only in logo size, categorized into large and small logos, and were asked to make a choice in Figures 2 and 3. In the study by Wang and Griskevicius (2014), participants were also asked to draw logos for four different types of goods. The size of the logo they drew for each product was used to measure their orientation toward conspicuous consumption, with a larger logo indicating a greater desire for conspicuous products.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 27.0. T-tests and ANOVA were employed to test the study’s hypotheses



**FIGURE 2** | Pictures of luxury brand handbags and ordinary brand handbags.



**FIGURE 3** | Pictures of handbag logo size.

and assess the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments.

### 3.4 | Reliability and Validity

The experiments were analyzed by SPSS 27.0 for reliability and validity analysis of each variable, and Cronbach's values were derived. The Cronbach's alpha were power (0.990), mate attraction (0.992), and mate guarding (0.991), showing all above 0.7, and the questionnaire items were appropriately composed with a high degree of reliability.

To assess the adequacy of the items, the factor loading coefficients of the variables with 18 items were tested and found to be greater than 0.95, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values of the other eight items were 0.779, and the Bartlett values were also significant,  $p < 0.001$ . Thus, the results indicated that the questionnaire had good validity.

## 3.5 | Manipulation Check

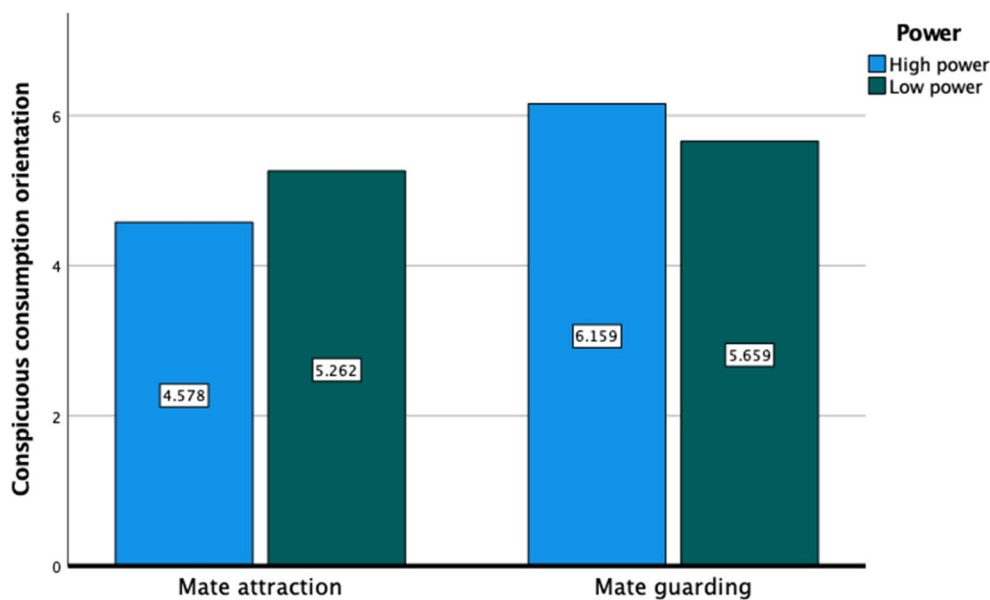
### 3.5.1 | Power Manipulation Validity

Participants rated their perceived power using an eight-item scale on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The high-power group reported higher perceived power ( $M = 6.35$ ,  $SD = 0.416$ ) than the low-power group ( $M = 1.95$ ,  $SD = 0.501$ ). A  $t$ -test confirmed that these differences were statistically significant ( $t = 62.688$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.459$ ), indicating the successful manipulation of perceived power.

### 3.5.2 | Mate-Attraction Manipulation Validity

A three-item scale on a 7-point scale measured mate attraction. The scores were similarly high in both the high-power ( $M = 5.85$ ,  $SD = 0.871$ ) and low-power groups ( $M = 5.97$ ,  $SD = 0.660$ ), with no significant differences between them ( $t = -0.701$ ,  $p = 0.485$ ,





**FIGURE 4** | Association of power with participants' conspicuous consumption between mating goals.

Cohen's  $d = 0.776$ ). The result supports the successful manipulation of mate attraction under different power conditions.

### 3.5.3 | Mate-Guarding Manipulation Validity

Mate guarding was measured using a 10-item scale. The scores were nearly identical in the high-power ( $M = 5.36$ ,  $SD = 0.521$ ) and low-power groups ( $M = 5.32$ ,  $SD = 0.651$ ), with no significant differences observed ( $t = 3.62$ ,  $p = 0.718$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.587$ ). This uniformity across conditions indicated effective control over the mate-guarding variable.

These findings confirm the successful manipulation of power and mating goals, allowing for robust testing of their effects on conspicuous consumption.

## 3.6 | Results

In an experiment focusing on mating goals and power dynamics, conspicuous consumption orientations varied significantly across groups.

In the mate-attraction group, low-power females exhibited a higher mean conspicuous consumption orientation ( $M = 5.26$ ) compared with their high-power counterparts ( $M = 4.58$ ), with a statistically significant difference ( $t = -2.063$ ,  $p = 0.042$ ). This finding supports H1 and H2.

Conversely, in the mate-guarding group, high-power females demonstrated a significantly greater mean conspicuous consumption orientation ( $M = 6.16$ ) than low-power females ( $M = 5.66$ ) ( $t = 2.251$ ,  $p = 0.027$ ), aligning with H3 and H4. Figure 4 depicts the association between power and participants' conspicuous consumption under different mating goals.

The ANOVA results showed no significant main effect of power ( $F = 0.209$ ,  $p = 0.648$ ) but a significant effect of mating goal,

with mate-guarding participants displaying higher conspicuous consumption orientation scores ( $F = 24.314$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The interaction between mating goal and power was significant ( $F = 8.772$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ), suggesting that power dynamics influence consumption differently depending on the mating goal. Figure 5 illustrates the handbag brand preferences of participants with varying power levels under mating goal conditions.

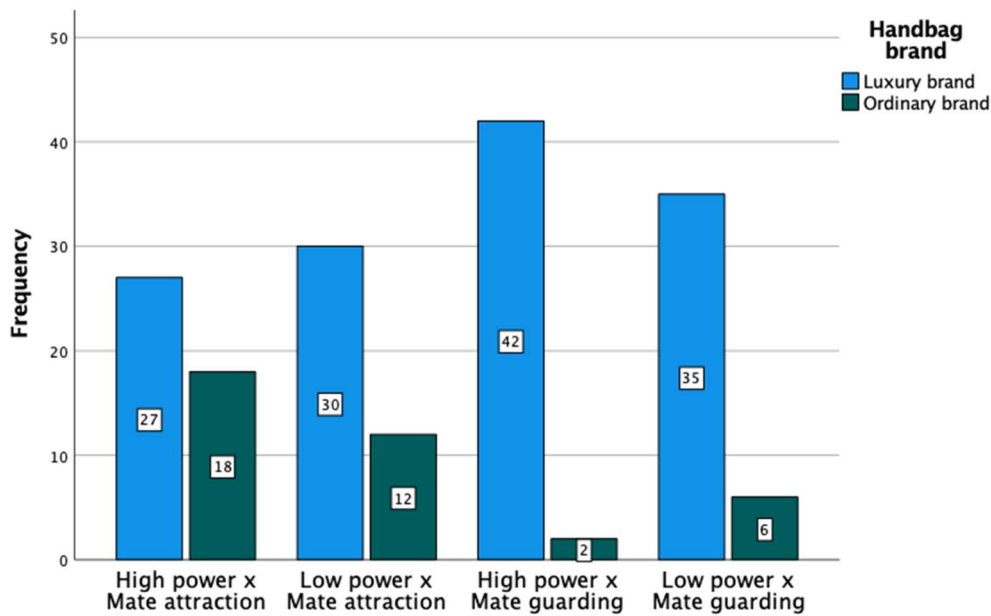
Further analysis of product choices revealed that in the mate-attraction condition, low-power females chose luxury brands ( $N = 30$ ) and big-logo handbags ( $N = 27$ ) more frequently than high-power females ( $N = 27$  for luxury brands,  $N = 23$  for big logos). In the mate-guarding condition, high-power females selected luxury brands ( $N = 42$ ) and big-logo handbags ( $N = 42$ ) more often than low-power females ( $N = 35$  for luxury brands,  $N = 36$  for big logos). Figure 6 depicts the handbag logo size preferences of participants with varying power levels under mating goal conditions.

These results corroborate the ANOVA findings and substantiate all four hypotheses concerning the influence of mating goals and power on conspicuous consumption behavior.

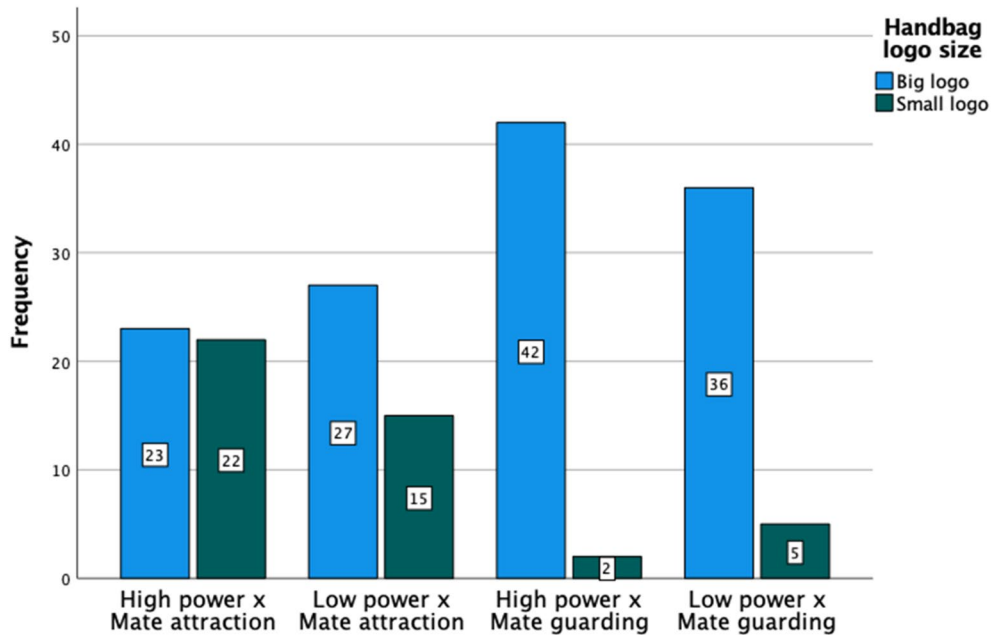
## 3.7 | Method—Experiment 2

The second experiment sought to elucidate male responses to conspicuous female consumption across varying levels of female power and to determine whether males' power status moderates these reactions. In the context of mate guarding, females are generally perceived as committed to an existing relationship, which could lessen male interest in these women for potential mating opportunities. Consequently, our investigation focused exclusively on the reactions to females engaged in conspicuous consumption in the mate-attraction paradigm.

Conspicuous consumption among females may often be motivated by a desire to signal high financial expectations to potential mates, effectively discouraging the interests of males who perceive themselves as having lower mate value (Chen



**FIGURE 5** | The choice of handbag brand by participants with different power levels in mating goals.



**FIGURE 6** | The choice of handbag logo size by participants with different power levels in mating goals.

et al. 2022). From the perspective of Mating Sociometer theory, males aim to optimize their reproductive success by selecting mates whose perceived mate value aligns with their own, thus minimizing inefficient mating efforts (Smith et al. 2021). This process involves males assessing the signals of female financial standards and adjusting their social behaviors to align with these perceived standards. Consequently, males might develop negative perceptions and behaviors toward females whose conspicuous consumption suggests a requirement for higher expenditures in initiating or maintaining a relationship.

Additionally, this experiment explored how perceptions of authenticity influence male reactions to conspicuous consumption.

According to the identity signaling theory, purchasing behaviors are often intended to communicate an individual's identity or aspirational traits. However, when such signaling is deemed externally motivated, it is likely to be perceived negatively, casting the sender as inauthentic (Ferraro et al. 2010). Thus, the authenticity attributed to a female's conspicuous consumption can significantly impact male attitudes toward her, particularly when consumption is viewed as a deliberate identity signal.

Our study specifically examines whether high-power males exhibit more negative reactions and attitudes toward the conspicuous consumption of low-power females, potentially because of perceived inauthenticity or strategic manipulation in signaling financial expectations. Such dynamics highlight the complex



**FIGURE 7** | Stimuli: Conspicuous consumption condition and non-conspicuous consumption condition.

interplay between power, mating strategies, and the signaling effects of consumption in shaping interpersonal evaluations and interactions.

### 3.8 | Design Participants

The experiment was conducted online and involved 320 Chinese males recruited via the Credamo platform, each receiving a 6 CNY reward. Online recruitment is a proven method in such studies, as evidenced by Hudders et al. (2014), Wang and Griskevicius (2014), and Sundie et al. (2020). The targeted demographic consisted of males under 50 years of age, in line with previous experimental requirements. University research guidelines were followed, and participant anonymity and informed consent were maintained. Demographically, 21.3% were aged 20–29 years, 43.4% were 30–39 years, and 35.3% were 40–49 years. Relationship statuses were almost evenly split between single (52.2%) and non-single (47.8%). All the participants identified as heterosexual.

### 3.9 | Materials and Procedure

Experiment 2 employed a 2 (male power: high vs. low) × 4 (conspicuous female consumption levels) between-subjects design, resulting in eight subgroups of 40 males each. Participants were assigned to scenarios manipulating male power based on Rucker et al. (2011), where high power entailed being a company boss and low power entailed being an employee. Female power scenarios, adjusted from Rucker et al. (2011) and Sundie et al. (2020), described high-power females as top managers earning 30,000 CNY and low-power females as employees earning 5000 CNY.

Mate-attraction scenarios (Zhao et al. 2017) involve participants imagining attending a party to meet a desired mate and enhance scenario engagement by requiring participants to

list three attraction strategies. For conspicuous consumption, Sundie et al. (2020) guided the presentation of two scenarios differing in the luxury status of cars and brands (Audi and Chanel vs. Honda and COS) represented at the party. We presented participants with one of two random scenarios accompanied by a photo of a female target, asking them to imagine being at a party and meeting the woman in the picture (Figure 7). Among other details about the party, the scenario described the target female arriving at the venue by car, wearing the outfit shown in the picture. In the conspicuous consumption condition, participants read that the woman arrived at the party driving an Audi convertible and wearing a Chanel T-shirt. In the non-conspicuous consumption condition, participants read that the woman arrived driving a Honda Civic and wearing a COS T-shirt.

### 3.10 | Measures

#### 3.10.1 | Male Power

Male power was assessed using an eight-item scale from previous studies, with responses rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (Anderson et al. 2012).

#### 3.10.2 | Female Power

This study also used an eight-item scale tailored to the female power context to measure the perceived power levels of women depicted in the scenarios.

#### 3.10.3 | Mate Attraction

A three-item scale from Zhao et al. (2017) was used to assess the importance of attractiveness and desire to find a romantic partner.

### 3.10.4 | Financial Standards

These were measured using a four-item scale from Sundie et al. (2020); the participants rated the financial expectations of women in the scenarios.

### 3.10.5 | Authenticity

Perceptions of a woman's authenticity were evaluated using a four-item scale developed by Smith et al. (2021).

### 3.10.6 | Interaction

An eight-item scale from Sundie et al. (2020) gauged the participants' anticipated friendliness and interest in interacting with the woman.

### 3.10.7 | Male Attitude

Modified from Weaver and Bosson (2011), this four-item scale assessed participants' attitudes toward women, including both positive and negative sentiments.

Data were analyzed using SPSS 27.0, utilizing t-tests and ANOVA to evaluate the hypotheses regarding male attitudes and reactions based on the manipulated conditions.

## 3.11 | Reliability and Validity

The reliability analysis revealed that all variables exhibited high internal consistency (male power=0.992, female power=0.991, mate attraction=0.792, financial standards=0.971, authenticity=0.968, interaction=0.961, males' attitude=0.976), with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.7, indicating the reliability of the questionnaire items.

For the validity assessment, the factor loading coefficients for the 32 items were all above 0.87, demonstrating strong construct validity. Additionally, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy reported values of 0.625 for the three items, and Bartlett's test of sphericity reached statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), further supporting the validity of the questionnaire.

## 3.12 | Manipulation Check

The power manipulation analysis results showed that the high-power group reported significantly higher perceived power ( $M=6.46$ ,  $SD=0.396$ ) than the low-power group ( $M=1.78$ ,  $SD=0.491$ ),  $t(320)=93.670$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Cohen's  $d=0.446$ . A similar pattern was observed in another session of the experiment, with the high-power group scoring  $M=6.35$ ,  $SD=0.440$  and the low-power group  $M=1.78$ ,  $SD=0.487$ ;  $t(320)=87.001$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Cohen's  $d=0.464$ . These results confirm the successful manipulation of power.

The mate-attraction manipulation scores were high in both the high-power ( $M=5.98$ ,  $SD=0.855$ ) and low-power groups

( $M=5.89$ ,  $SD=0.754$ ), with no significant difference between them ( $t=0.993$ ,  $p=0.321$ , Cohen's  $d=0.806$ ), indicating successful manipulation of this variable.

## 3.13 | Results

ANOVA examined the impact of male power and conspicuous female consumption on perceived financial standards. Significant main effects of male power were noted ( $F=7.074$ ,  $p=0.008$ ), and a significant interaction between male power and female consumption patterns was also observed ( $F=12.704$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

In the conspicuous consumption condition, both high- and low-power males assigned higher financial standards to females, particularly favoring the high-power conspicuous consumption group ( $M_{\text{high-power male}}=6.44$ ,  $M_{\text{low-power male}}=5.95$ ). Conversely, in the non-conspicuous consumption condition, both groups were assigned lower financial standards, with the lowest scores given to the low-power female non-conspicuous consumption group ( $M_{\text{high-power male}}=1.99$ ,  $M_{\text{low-power male}}=2.69$ ). Figure 8 illustrates the association between male power and perceived financial standards in relation to female conspicuous consumption.

The results highlight that high-power males place greater emphasis on the visibility of female conspicuous consumption when judging financial standards than low-power males, who are less influenced by conspicuous consumption displays when assessing potential mates' financial expectations.

## 3.14 | Authenticity

An ANOVA was conducted with four groups: high-power female conspicuous consumption versus high-power female non-conspicuous consumption versus low-power female conspicuous consumption versus low-power female non-conspicuous consumption. The results reveal a significant effect of male power on perceived authenticity,  $F=6.257$ ,  $p=0.013$ . There was also a significant interaction between male power and conspicuous female consumption,  $F=6.143$ ,  $p=0.000$ , indicating that male power combined with conspicuous female consumption significantly affected perceived authenticity.

Specifically, both high-power and low-power males assigned higher authenticity scores to high-power female conspicuous consumption, high-power female non-conspicuous consumption, and low-power female non-conspicuous consumption scenarios. However, they assigned the lowest authenticity scores to the low-power conspicuous female consumption scenario. Notably, high-power males rated these as inauthentic ( $M=1.93$ ,  $SD=0.605$ ), compared to low-power males ( $M=2.51$ ,  $SD=0.689$ ), suggesting that high-power males are more sensitive to inconsistencies between a female's power level and consumption behaviors and perceive greater inauthenticity when low-power females engage in conspicuous consumption that does not align with their perceived status. Figure 9 depicts the association of male power with perceived authenticity between female conspicuous consumption.



### 3.15 | Interaction

A 2 (male power: high vs. low) × 4 (female conspicuous consumption: high-power female conspicuous vs. non-conspicuous consumption and low-power conspicuous vs. non-conspicuous consumption) ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of male power,  $F = 17.870$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . There was also a significant interaction between male power and conspicuous female consumption

on male interaction interest,  $F = 44.410$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . High-power males exhibited the highest interaction interest toward high-power females engaged in conspicuous consumption ( $M = 6.02$ ,  $SD = 0.386$ ), supporting H5, and a robust interest toward high-power females engaged in non-conspicuous consumption ( $M = 5.20$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ), rejecting H6. The result suggests a preference for high-status females regardless of their consumption visibility, potentially indicating a reduced perception of

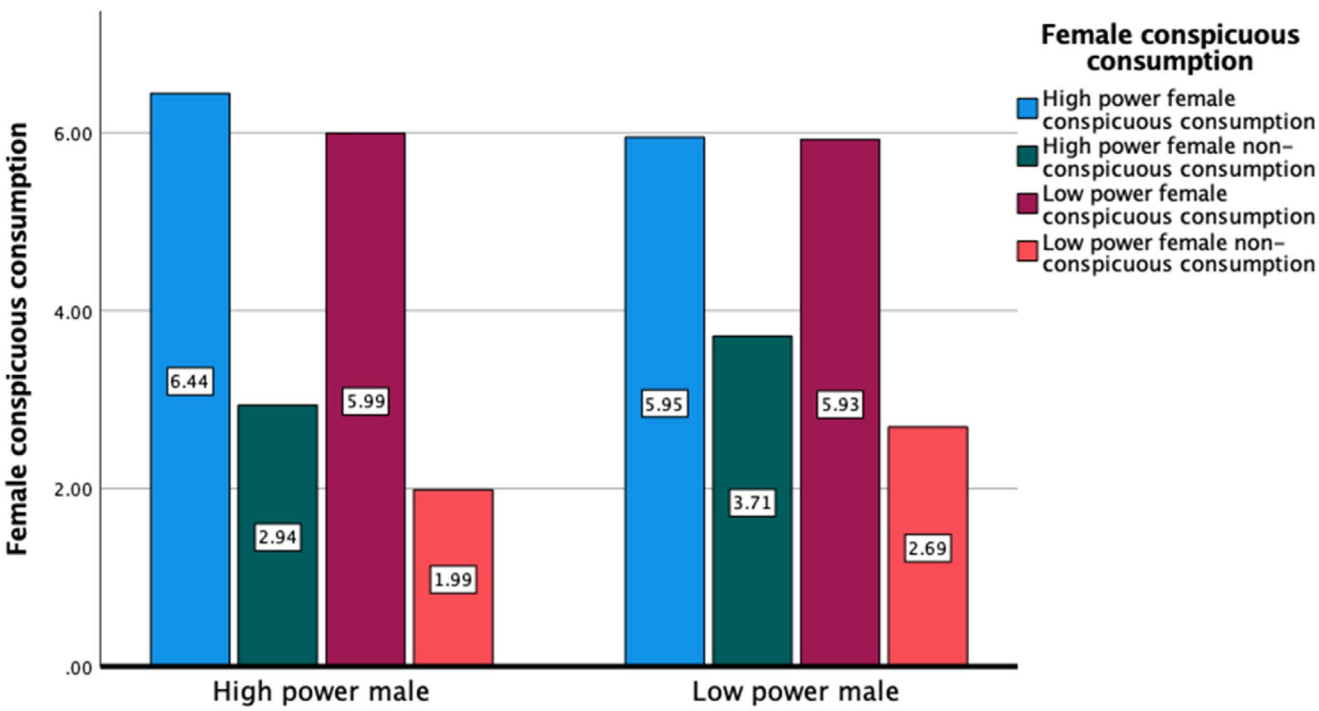


FIGURE 8 | Association of male power with perceived financial standards between female conspicuous consumption.

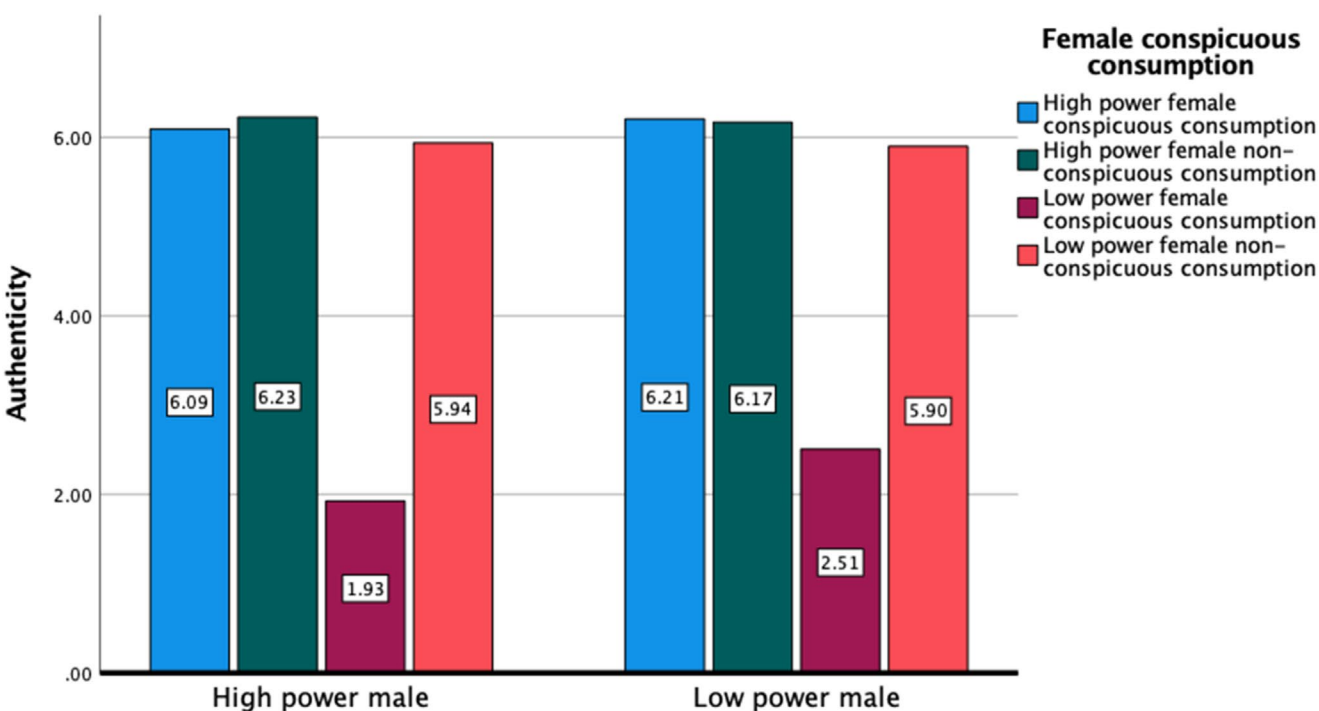


FIGURE 9 | Association of male power with perceived authenticity between female conspicuous consumption.

authenticity in high-power females not engaging in conspicuous consumption. High-power males showed more interest in low-power females with non-conspicuous consumption ( $M=4.73$ ,  $SD=0.535$ ), supporting H8. Conversely, low-power males demonstrated high interaction interest with high-power females with conspicuous consumption ( $M=4.93$ ,  $SD=0.961$ ), rejecting H9, and the highest toward high-power females in non-conspicuous consumption ( $M=5.81$ ,  $SD=0.414$ ), rejecting H10. This pattern supports the notion that lower-status males value high-status partners, which is likely to enhance their economic prospects (Fisher and Stinson 2020; McClintock 2014). Low-power males also favored low-power females with non-conspicuous consumption ( $M=5.73$ ,  $SD=0.390$ ), supporting H12. Both high- and low-power males expressed the least interest in low-power females in conspicuous consumption, with high-power males showing significantly lower interaction scores ( $M=2.06$ ,  $SD=0.376$ ) compared to low-power males ( $M=2.74$ ,  $SD=0.602$ ), corroborating H7 and H11. Figure 10 depicts the association between male power and male interaction with female conspicuous consumption.

### 3.16 | Attitude

Similarly, the ANOVA for attitude showed significant effects of male power,  $F=22.815$ ,  $p<0.001$ , and an interaction between male power and conspicuous female consumption,  $F=23.729$ ,  $p<0.001$ . High-power males had the most positive attitudes toward high-power female conspicuous consumption ( $M=6.02$ ,  $SD=0.432$ ), supporting H5, and displayed positive attitudes toward high-power female non-conspicuous consumption ( $M=5.47$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ), rejecting H6. These attitudes are consistent with the interaction findings, suggesting that a preference for authenticity is associated with high power. High-power males were more favorable toward low-power female non-conspicuous consumption ( $M=4.75$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ), supporting H8. Low-power

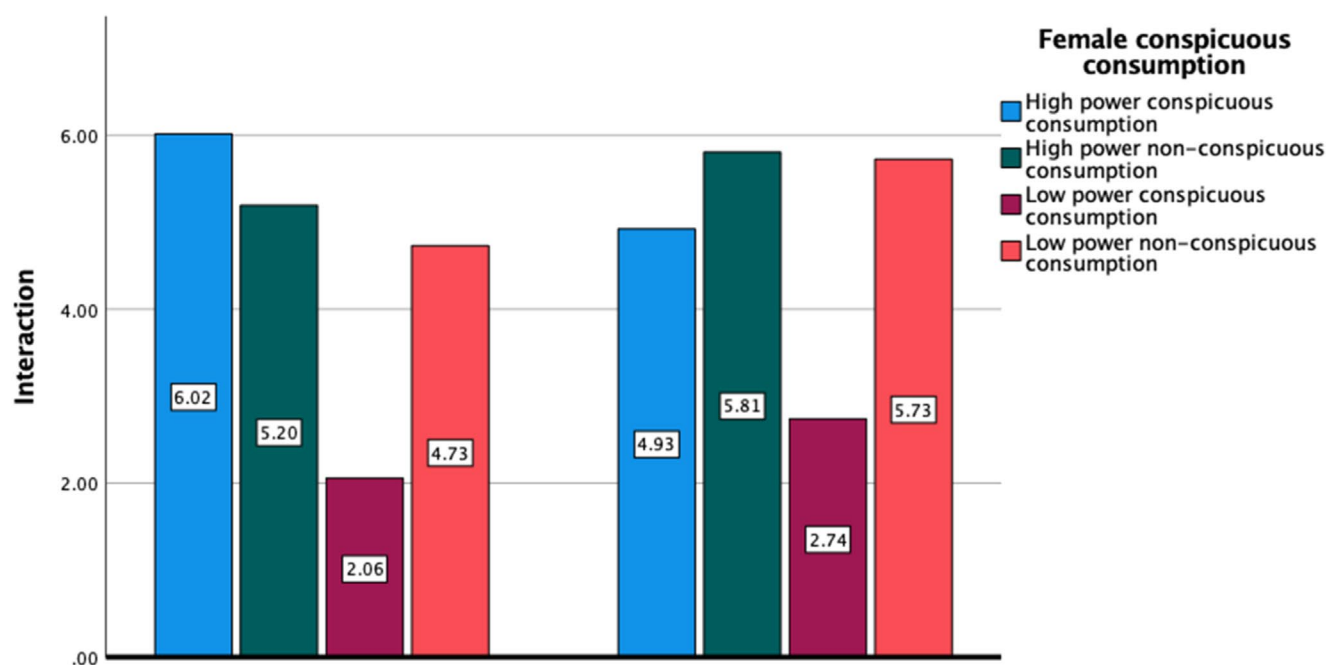
males showed favorable attitudes toward high-power female conspicuous consumption ( $M=5.15$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ) and rejected H9. They had the most positive attitudes toward high-power female non-conspicuous consumption ( $M=6.23$ ,  $SD=0.443$ ) and rejected H10. The result reinforces the trend of lower-status males aspiring to become high-status partners to boost their economic standing. Low-power males also exhibited positive attitudes toward low-power female non-conspicuous consumption ( $M=5.76$ ,  $SD=0.458$ ), supporting H12. Both high- and low-power males displayed the most negative attitudes toward low-power female conspicuous consumption, with high-power males reporting particularly low scores ( $M=1.79$ ,  $SD=0.595$ ) compared to low-power males ( $M=2.59$ ,  $SD=0.694$ ), confirming H7 and H11. Figure 11 illustrates the association of male power with male's attitude toward female conspicuous consumption.

## 4 | Conclusion and Implication

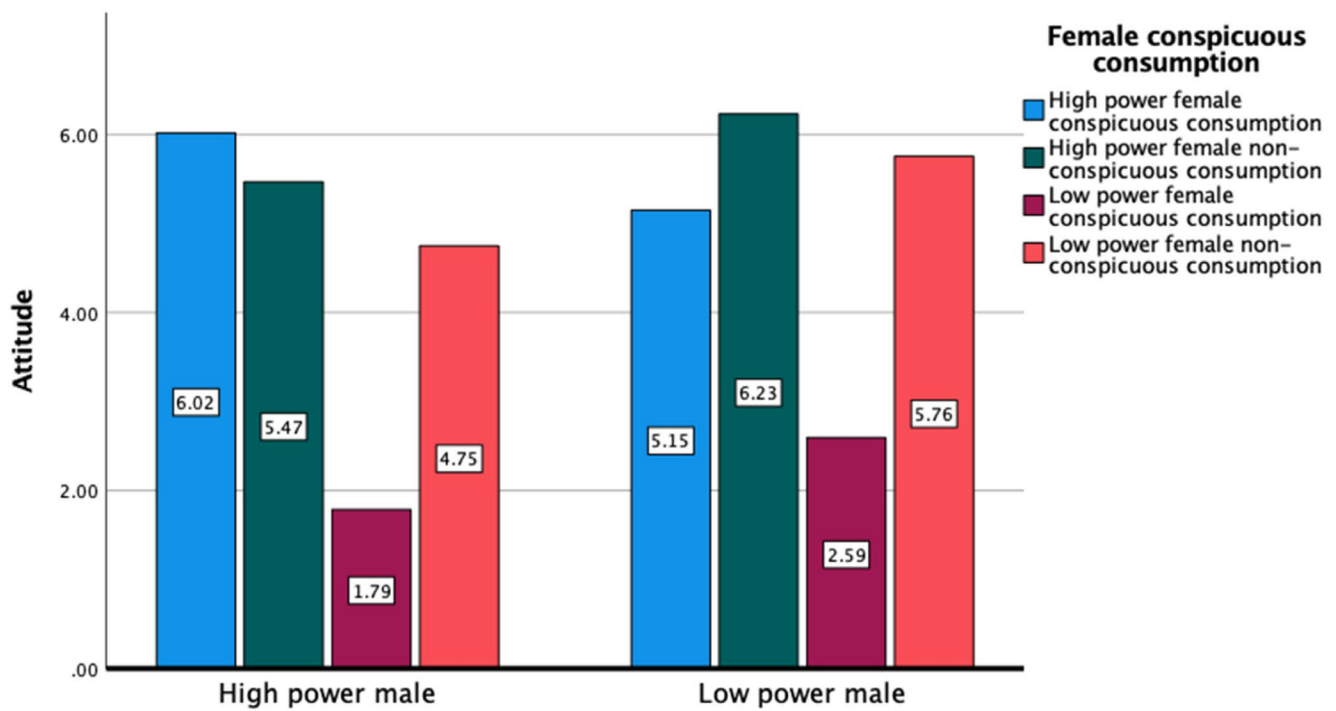
### 4.1 | General Discussion

Our investigation explored women's conspicuous consumption behaviors within the framework of mating goals, specifically mate attraction and mate guarding, and examined male responses to these behaviors from the perspective of evolutionary psychology and human mating strategies. Building on the existing literature that predominantly focuses on conspicuous male consumption to signal status and wealth (Griskevicius et al. 2007), our study extended the discourse by considering the female perspective.

In the first study, we investigated how women's mating goals correlated with their engagement in conspicuous consumption. The findings indicated that women use conspicuous consumption strategically, and it serves to enhance attractiveness and



**FIGURE 10** | Association of male power with male's interaction with female conspicuous consumption.



**FIGURE 11** | Association of male power with male's attitude toward female conspicuous consumption.

facilitate mate acquisition; under mate-guarding goals, it acts as a signal of their current mate's loyalty, thereby deterring potential rivals. Additionally, the influence of women's power (either high or low) modified the relationship between mating goals and conspicuous consumption, suggesting that power dynamics play a significant role in mating strategies. These results echo broader evolutionary motives such as acquiring and retaining mates, where conspicuous consumption acts as a medium for demonstrating power and status (Griskevicius and Kenrick 2013; Rucker and Galinsky 2008, 2009).

The second study assessed male perceptions of women's conspicuous consumption. The results indicated that men inferred that women who engage in conspicuous consumption have higher financial expectations from their partners. Interestingly, the inference about women's financial expectations was consistent across men with different power levels, although higher-powered men assigned greater importance to the financial implications of women's consumption behavior. Furthermore, the study found that the authenticity attributed to women's consumption behaviors by male observers was contingent on the alignment between women's power status and their consumption patterns. High-power men, in particular, are more sensitive to discrepancies between a woman's status and her consumption behaviors, potentially because higher-status individuals place greater emphasis on wealth and status as identity markers (Wang et al. 2020).

The present study revealed men's nuanced reactions to women's conspicuous consumption, providing new insights into how conspicuous consumption is interpreted as a signal of financial standards and authenticity in the context of mating. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between consumer culture and mating strategies in contemporary society.

The current investigation marks the first empirical assessment of conspicuous female consumption in relation to power and mating goals, offering a comprehensive analysis that broadens the application of evolutionary psychology to consumer behavior studies.

## 4.2 | Theoretical Contributions

While conspicuous consumption is traditionally viewed as sub-optimal for women in attracting mates, this perspective may overlook the nuances of female strategies that involve enhancing attractiveness through conspicuous consumption of preferred items (Griskevicius et al. 2007; Hudders et al. 2014). The effectiveness of such strategies in attracting male attention remains underexplored, indicating the need for further research in this area (Sundie et al. 2020). Additionally, there remains a significant gap in understanding how men interpret women's luxury brand signals, warranting further investigation (Sundie et al. 2020).

To address the identified gap in understanding female luxury consumption strategies, our study integrates mating strategies from evolutionary psychology and status signaling theory to examine female luxury consumption as a status or power signal in mate attraction and retention. Our research focuses on female luxury consumption motivations within the framework of conspicuous consumption, which has been understudied (Lai and Prendergast 2019; Sundie et al. 2020). The signaling role of power in females' mate-attraction and mate-guarding through luxury consumption potentially raises two key issues regarding male perceptions. First, males may perceive women's luxury brand use either as an authentic indicator of the women's power/status or as an inauthentic/fake signal attempting to portray power they don't actually possess

(Lai and Prendergast 2019). Second, males may form expectations about the financial costs they would need to incur to create and maintain relationships with females who display luxury brands, based on interpreting this display as part of females' mate screening strategy (Chen et al. 2022; Sundie et al. 2020). The main contribution of our research is to provide an integrated research model within the mating strategies from evolutionary psychology and signaling theory, exploring female power signals and male reactions to these signals. In particular, we consider both males' perceived authenticity of female power signals through luxury consumption and its implications for potential relationship dynamics and costs. This nuanced understanding of male perceptions is crucial in examining the effectiveness and consequences of female luxury consumption as a mate attraction and retention strategy.

The present study's novel contribution is the introduction of power as a moderating factor in the relationship between mating goals and women's conspicuous consumption. From an evolutionary psychology perspective, both power acquisition and mating are foundational motives for conspicuous consumption, each with an adaptive function (Griskevicius and Kenrick 2013). Previous studies have primarily examined the primary effects of power and mating independently, whereas our research suggests that these factors interactively influence conspicuous consumption, offering new directions for future research in evolutionary psychology.

Additionally, our study advances our understanding of how males perceive women's conspicuous consumption in relation to different power levels, which is a relatively underexplored area. Previous research has shown that women engage in conspicuous consumption to enhance attractiveness under mate-attraction goals and demonstrate loyalty under mate-guarding goals (Hudders et al. 2014; Wang and Griskevicius 2014). Our findings contribute by examining how males, as receivers of these signals, interpret women's conspicuous consumption in relation to luxury brand image and their power status. The current approach not only enriches the existing literature but also addresses gaps in how the alignment between luxury brand images and user images affects male perceptions.

Moreover, the present research introduces the impact of male power on the perceptions of and reactions to conspicuous female consumption. While previous research has largely focused on materialism and status acquisition (Kasser 2016; Richins 1994; Richins and Dawson 1992; Shrum et al. 2013), our findings suggest that high-power males are particularly sensitive to the consistency of power and conspicuous consumption. Such sensitivity may influence how conspicuous consumption is integrated into social dynamics and interpersonal perceptions, thus providing a foundation for future studies exploring how power impacts male behaviors, similar to materialism.

Contrary to traditional views that associate females' conspicuous consumption primarily with mate attraction (Griskevicius et al. 2007; Sundie et al. 2020), our study proposes that women may also use conspicuous consumption to set high financial expectations for potential partners, potentially deterring less suitable suitors. The proposed hypothesis introduces a new dimension of the strategic use of conspicuous consumption in

mating strategies, suggesting future research avenues to explore how women use conspicuous consumption to navigate male mating value.

Finally, our research explores the role of authenticity perception in how men perceive women's conspicuous consumption. Although authenticity perception has been studied in other contexts, its application to conspicuous consumption is novel. We found that conspicuous consumption that aligned with a woman's power level was perceived as more authentic, whereas inconsistencies led to perceptions of inauthenticity. These insights are particularly relevant for understanding how authenticity perception influences male responses and can guide women in adjusting conspicuous consumption strategies to attract partners. These findings align with Lai and Prendergast's (2019) findings.

In conclusion, our study reconfirms the influence of power on female consumer behavior in the context of mate attraction and reveals new insights into how men's perceptions of women's financial standards and authenticity shape their reactions. Notably, we found that males generally reacted negatively to low-power women engaging in conspicuous consumption, contrary to the expectations of these women. This finding underscores the complex interplay between power, mating goals, and conspicuous consumption in shaping consumer behavior and social interactions within the framework of evolutionary psychology.

### 4.3 | Practical Implication

The findings offer significant insights into the development of image-building and marketing strategies for conspicuous brands. These insights can assist brands in crafting advertisements that effectively connect their products with the enhancement of female attractiveness and the demonstration of a partner's loyalty, which are appealing based on mating goals.

First, leveraging the enhancement of female attractiveness in advertising content could be especially compelling for attracting low-power female consumers. The attractiveness-enhancement strategy aligns with the finding that such consumers view conspicuous consumption as a means of enhancing personal attractiveness, thereby aiding mate attraction. However, for high-power female consumers, advertisements should focus on the product's role in safeguarding against romantic rivals, which is consistent with mate-guarding goals.

However, marketers must navigate these strategies carefully, given the evolving roles of women in society. As women increasingly occupy prominent positions and enjoy greater economic independence, the traditional approach highlighting dependency on male approval or financial support may appear regressive and potentially offensive. Such considerations are especially pertinent in light of feminist critiques that argue that emphasizing physical attractiveness in mate selection can contribute to the objectification of women, potentially overshadowing other valuable attributes such as intelligence, competence, and personality (Buss 1996; Singh and Singh 2011; Vandermassen 2005; Wolf 1991).



Therefore, while the evolutionary psychological perspective provides a valuable framework for understanding consumer behavior, the evolutionary psychological insights must be applied to marketing with sensitivity to societal shifts and consumer perceptions. Brands should consider these dynamics to avoid alienating modern consumers, who might view such marketing tactics as reinforcing outdated stereotypes. Instead, brands could focus on empowering messages that highlight personal achievement and self-expression through luxury consumption rather than male approval.

In conclusion, while mating-related motivations behind conspicuous female consumption provide a valuable angle for targeted marketing strategies, they must be balanced with a nuanced understanding of contemporary gender roles and a broader social context. Brands that succeed in the aforementioned balancing act are likely to foster a more positive reception and stronger consumer relationships.

#### 4.4 | Limitations and Future Research

The present study provides valuable insights into the relationship between women's conspicuous consumption and their mating goals. However, several limitations must be acknowledged and addressed in future studies.

The experiments were conducted with Chinese participants, potentially limiting the applicability of the results to other cultural contexts. However, the current focus on the Chinese market is both timely and significant given the current trends in the global luxury industry. The luxury market landscape is undergoing substantial shifts, with Bain and Company (2023) projecting China to become the dominant player by 2030. This trend underscores the importance of understanding Chinese consumer behavior in the luxury sector, as it will likely shape global market dynamics in the coming years. While our findings may not be directly generalizable to all cultural contexts, they provide crucial insights into a market that is becoming increasingly influential on a global scale. Recent research on conspicuous consumption in emerging markets, particularly in developing nations like China, has shown unique patterns and motivations (Barrera and Ponce 2020). Comparative studies have revealed that Chinese consumers place greater importance on social perceptions when making luxury purchases, contrasting with their American counterparts (Jenkins 2016). These cultural nuances highlight the need for targeted research in specific markets, especially one as significant as China. Nevertheless, future research should aim to extend these findings through cross-cultural comparisons and longitudinal studies to capture the evolving nature of luxury consumption across different markets.

Second, Study 1 demonstrated that women associate conspicuous consumption with increased attractiveness and power, suggesting that conspicuous goods serve mating goals better than ordinary goods. These results stem from the comparison of women with differing mating goals and manipulating powers under experimental conditions. However, it remains uncertain whether conspicuous consumption preferences remain stable over time among women who consistently pursue

specific mating goals. Additionally, this study involved a predominantly young population, limiting the generalizability of the findings to older women. Future studies should explore the persistence of consumption patterns across different age groups over time.

Furthermore, Study 1's methodological approach involved assigning participants to fixed scenarios based on power manipulation rather than grouping them based on their actual power levels measured via a questionnaire. The fixed scenario approach may have affected the representativeness of the sample. Future studies should directly assess the participants' power levels to ensure more representative and accurate findings.

Study 2 analyzed the reactions of young males to conspicuous consumption by females of similar ages. The findings from the young adult demographic study cannot be extrapolated to older individuals or those in different life stages who may prioritize long-term relationships and familial bonds over short-term mating opportunities (Ko et al. 2020). As individuals age, their investment strategies and relationship priorities shift, potentially altering their perceptions of and reactions to conspicuous consumption. Subsequent research should consider these demographic variables and examine how they influence responses to conspicuous consumption.

An unexpected finding of our study was the preference of low-power males for high-power females, a result that has not been thoroughly explored within the current research framework. The observed preference of low-power males for high-power females may be driven by intrinsic motivations linked to future financial aspirations, in which low-power males anticipate that high-status partners could enhance their socioeconomic prospects (Fisher and Stinson 2020; McClintock 2014). Investigating the underlying motivations for these preferences could provide deeper insight into the social dynamics of mating strategies.

Finally, although our study focused on the mating context, conspicuous consumption by women may also have significant implications in professional settings. As women increasingly occupy managerial roles and engage in frontline sales and marketing, understanding the impact of conspicuous consumption in these areas could reveal when and why such behaviors are advantageous or detrimental. Future research should extend the investigation of the social consequences of conspicuous consumption to professional contexts to enrich our understanding of its broader implications for contemporary consumer culture.

Moreover, the current study primarily focused on female conspicuous consumption and male reactions. A more balanced examination that includes male perspectives and behaviors in similar contexts is beyond our current research scope but presents an important avenue for future research.

#### Acknowledgments

The authors have nothing to report.

## Ethics Statement

Not required, and permission to conduct the experiments for the purposes of this research was obtained by all respondents, who were fully informed about the purposes of this research. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## References

- Anderson, C., D. R. Ames, and S. D. Gosling. 2008. "Punishing Hubris: The Perils of Overestimating One's Status in a Group." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34, no. 1: 90–101.
- Anderson, C., and J. L. Berdahl. 2002. "The Experience of Power: Examining the Effects of Power on Approach and Inhibition Tendencies." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83, no. 6: 1362–1377.
- Anderson, C., and A. D. Galinsky. 2006. "Power, Optimism, and Risk-Taking." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 36, no. 4: 511–536.
- Anderson, C., S. Srivastava, J. S. Beer, S. E. Spataro, and J. A. Chatman. 2006. "Knowing Your Place: Self-Perceptions of Status in Face-To-Face Groups." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 91, no. 6: 1094–1100.
- Anderson, C., O. P. John, and D. Keltner. 2012. "The Personal Sense of Power." *Journal of Personality* 80, no. 2: 313–344. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2011.00734.x>.
- Apaolaza, V., M. C. Policarpo, P. Hartmann, M. R. Paredes, and C. D'Souza. 2023. "Sustainable Clothing: Why Conspicuous Consumption and Greenwashing Matter." *Business Strategy and the Environment* 32, no. 6: 3766–3782.
- Back, M. D., L. Penke, S. C. Schmukle, K. Sachse, P. Borkenau, and J. B. Asendorpf. 2011. "Why Mate Choices Are Not as Reciprocal as We Assume: The Role of Personality, Flirting and Physical Attractiveness." *European Journal of Personality* 25, no. 2: 120–132.
- Bain & Company. 2023. "Following a Record Year, the Stalled Luxury Goods Market Faces a Dilemma Between Catering to Top Clientele and Reaching New Audiences Amid Ongoing Complexities." <https://www.bain.com/about/media-center/press-releases/2024/following-a-record-year-the-stalled-luxury-goods-market-faces-a-dilemma-between-catering-to-top-clientele-and-reaching-new-audiences-amid-ongoing-compl-exities/>.
- Bain & Company. 2024. "Long Live Luxury: Converge to Expand Through Turbulence." <https://www.bain.com/insights/long-live-luxur-y-converge-to-expand-through-turbulence/>.
- Barrera, G. A., and H. R. Ponce. 2020. "Personality Traits Influencing Young Adults' Conspicuous Consumption." *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 45, no. 3: 335–349. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12623>.
- Bellezza, S. 2023. "Distance and Alternative Signals of Status: A Unifying Framework." *Journal of Consumer Research* 50, no. 2: 322–342.
- Borau, S., L. Elgaaied-Gambier, and C. Barbarossa. 2021. "The Green Mate Appeal: Men's Pro-Environmental Consumption Is an Honest Signal of Commitment to Their Partner." *Psychology and Marketing* 38, no. 2: 266–285.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge university press.
- Bradshaw, H. K., C. D. Rodeheffer, and S. E. Hill. 2020. "Scarcity, Sex, and Spending: Recession Cues Increase Women's Desire for Men Owning Luxury Products and Men's Desire to Buy Them." *Journal of Business Research* 120: 561–568.
- Buss, D. M. 1996. "Sex, Power, Conflict: Evolutionary and Feminist Perspectives." In *Sexual Conflict: Evolutionary Insights Into Feminism and the Battle of the Sexes*, 296–318. Oxford University Press.
- Buss, D. M., and M. Barnes. 1986. "Preferences in Human Mate Selection." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50, no. 3: 559–570.
- Buss, D. M., and D. P. Schmitt. 1993. "Sexual Strategies Theory: An Evolutionary Perspective on Human Mating." *Psychological Review* 100, no. 2: 204–232.
- Cheah, I., I. Phau, C. Chong, and A. S. Shimul. 2015. "Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Prominence on Willingness to Buy Luxury Brands." *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* 19, no. 4: 402–415.
- Chen, Q., Y. Wang, and N. Ordabayeva. 2023. "The Mate Screening Motive: How Women Use Luxury Consumption to Signal to Men." *Journal of Consumer Research* 50, no. 2: 303–321.
- Chen, R., H. Shen, and C.-M. Yang. 2022. "Chooser or Suitor? The Effects of Mating Cues on Men's Versus Women's Reactions to Commercial Rejection." *Marketing Letters* 33, no. 4: 659–679.
- China Business News Datacenter. 2019. "China Luxury Online Consumption White Paper 2019." <https://www.cbndata.com/report/2063/detail?isReading=report&page=1>.
- Christy, A. G., R. J. Schlegel, and A. Cimpian. 2019. "Why Do People Believe in a 'True Self'? The Role of Essentialist Reasoning About Personal Identity and the Self." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 117, no. 2: 386–416.
- Cousins, A. J., M. A. Fugère, and M. Franklin. 2009. "Digit Ratio (2D: 4D), Mate Guarding, and Physical Aggression in Dating Couples." *Personality and Individual Differences* 46, no. 7: 709–713.
- Da Silva, J. L. G., T. P. D. P. Costa, and F. N. Castro. 2024. "Tell Me What You Buy, and I Will Tell You How You Are: Luxurious Cars Increase Perceptions of Status, Social Dominance, and Attractiveness." *Personality and Individual Differences* 218: 112–489.
- De Fraja, G. 2009. "The Origin of Utility: Sexual Selection and Conspicuous Consumption." *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 72, no. 1: 51–69.
- Durante, K. M., V. Griskevicius, S. E. Hill, C. Perilloux, and N. P. Li. 2011. "Ovulation, Female Competition, and Product Choice: Hormonal Influences on Consumer Behavior." *Journal of Consumer Research* 37, no. 6: 921–934.
- Edlund, J. E. 2008. "Sex, Lies, and Partner Choice: An Investigation Into Perceived Mate Value and Its Factor Structure, Content, Concurrent, Convergent, and Discriminant Validities: Northern Illinois University."
- Euromonitor International. 2021. "Five Trends Shaping the Global Luxury Goods Landscape." <https://www.euromonitor.com/article/five-trends-shaping-the-global-luxury-goods-landscape>.
- Fast, N. J., D. H. Gruenfeld, N. Sivanathan, and A. D. Galinsky. 2009. "Illusory Control: A Generative Force Behind Power's Far-Reaching Effects." *Psychological Science* 20, no. 4: 502–508. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02311.x>.
- Ferraro, R., A. Kirmani, and T. Matherly. 2010. "Signaling Identity Through Brands: The Role of Perceived Authenticity." In *NA-Advances in Consumer Research*, edited by M. C. Campbell, J. Inman and R. Pieters, 81–84. Association for Consumer Research.
- Fisher, A. N., and D. A. Stinson. 2020. "Ambivalent Attraction: Beauty Determines Whether Men Romantically Desire or Dismiss High Status Women." *Personality and Individual Differences* 154: 109–681.

- Fisher, M., A. Cox, S. Bennett, and D. Gavric. 2008. "Components of Self-Perceived Mate Value." *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology* 2, no. 4: 156–168.
- Freedman, G., and J. Dainer-Best. 2022. "Who Is More Willing to Engage in Social Rejection? The Roles of Self-Esteem, Rejection Sensitivity, and Negative Affect in Social Rejection Decisions." *Journal of Social Psychology* 164, no. 4: 511–530. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2022.2131502>.
- French, J., and B. Raven. 1959. "The Bases of Social Power." In *Studies in Social Power*, edited by D. Cartwright, 150–167. University of Michigan.
- Gelman, S. A. 2003. *The Essential Child: Origins of Essentialism in Everyday Thought*. Oxford Cognitive Development.
- Godfrey, D. K., E. E. Jones, and C. G. Lord. 1986. "Self-Promotion Is Not Ingratating." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50, no. 1: 106–115. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.50.1.106>.
- Griskevicius, V., R. B. Cialdini, and D. T. Kenrick. 2006. "Peacocks, Picasso, and Parental Investment: The Effects of Romantic Motives on Creativity." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 91, no. 1: 63–76.
- Griskevicius, V., and D. T. Kenrick. 2013. "Fundamental Motives: How Evolutionary Needs Influence Consumer Behavior." *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 23, no. 3: 372–386.
- Griskevicius, V., J. M. Tybur, S. W. Gangestad, E. F. Perea, J. R. Shapiro, and D. T. Kenrick. 2009. "Aggress to Impress: Hostility as an Evolved Context-Dependent Strategy." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96, no. 5: 980–994.
- Griskevicius, V., J. M. Tybur, J. M. Sundie, R. B. Cialdini, G. F. Miller, and D. T. Kenrick. 2007. "Blatant Benevolence and Conspicuous Consumption: When Romantic Motives Elicit Strategic Costly Signals." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93, no. 1: 85–102.
- Han, Y. J., J. C. Nunes, and X. Drèze. 2010. "Signaling Status With Luxury Goods: The Role of Brand Prominence." *Journal of Marketing* 74, no. 4: 15–30.
- Havas Media Network (HMN). 2023. "Research Finds Unprecedented Female Spending Power Drives Luxury Transformation." Little Black Book Online. <https://lbbonline.com/news/research-finds-unprecedented-female-spending-power-drives-luxury-transformation>.
- Hill, S. E., and K. M. Durante. 2011. "Courtship, Competition, and the Pursuit of Attractiveness: Mating Goals Facilitate Health-Related Risk Taking and Strategic Risk Suppression in Women." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 37, no. 3: 383–394.
- Hudders, L., C. De Backer, M. Fisher, and P. Vyncke. 2014. "The Rival Wears Prada: Luxury Consumption as a Female Competition Strategy." *Evolutionary Psychology* 12, no. 3: 570–587.
- Hurtado, A. M., K. Hill, I. Hurtado, and H. Kaplan. 1992. "Trade-Offs Between Female Food Acquisition and Child Care Among Hiwi and Ache Foragers." *Human Nature* 3, no. 3: 185–216.
- Jenkins, D. 2016. "Conspicuous Consumption in the United States and China." *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 127: 115–132.
- Kaplan, H., K. Hill, J. Lancaster, and A. M. Hurtado. 2000. "A Theory of Human Life History Evolution: Diet, Intelligence, and Longevity." *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews* 9, no. 4: 156–185.
- Kasser, T. 2016. "Materialistic Values and Goals." *Annual Review of Psychology* 67, no. 1: 489–514.
- Kavanagh, P. S., S. C. Robins, and B. J. Ellis. 2010. "The Mating Sociometer: A Regulatory Mechanism for Mating Aspirations." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 99, no. 1: 120–132.
- Khair, N., E. Lloyd-Parkes, and J. Deacon. 2021. "Foreign Brands of Course! An Ethnographic Study Exploring COO Image Perceptions and Its Influence on the Preference of Foreign Clothing Brands." *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing* 12, no. 3: 274–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2021.1921608>.
- Kirkpatrick, L. A., and B. J. Ellis. 2001. "An Evolutionary-Psychological Approach to Self-Esteem: Multiple Domains and Multiple Functions." In *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Interpersonal Processes*, edited by G. J. O. Fletcher and M. S. Clark, 409–436. Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470998557.ch16>.
- Ko, A., C. M. Pick, J. Y. Kwon, et al. 2020. "Family Matters: Rethinking the Psychology of Human Social Motivation." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 15, no. 1: 173–201.
- Kolofotis, V. 2021. "Sexual Selection of Conspicuous Consumption." *Journal of Evolutionary Economics* 32, no. 2: 531–552. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00191-021-00753-4>.
- Kruger, D. J. 2022. "Phenotypic Mimicry Distinguishes Cues of Mating Competition From Paternal Investment in Men's Conspicuous Consumption." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 48, no. 3: 396–411. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672211007229>.
- Kruger, D. J. 2024. "Men's Conspicuous Consumption Is Associated With Reproductive Strategies but Not Physiological Characteristics." *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences* 18, no. 3: 242–266. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ebs0000346>.
- Kupfer, T. R., and P. Gul. 2023. "Ideological Mate Guarding: Sexual Jealousy and Mating Strategy Predict Support for Female Honor." *Evolutionary Psychology* 21, no. 4: 1–13.
- Lai, S. M., and G. Prendergast. 2019. "How Men Interpret Women's Luxury Brand Signals." *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal* 23, no. 2: 209–223.
- Lammers, J., D. A. Stapel, and A. D. Galinsky. 2010. "Power Increases Hypocrisy: Moralizing in Reasoning, Immorality in Behavior." *Psychological Science* 21, no. 5: 737–744.
- Landis, B., and J. J. Gladstone. 2017. "Personality, Income, and Compensatory Consumption: Low-Income Extraverts Spend More on Status." *Psychological Science* 28, no. 10: 1518–1520. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797617714811>.
- Leary, M., and R. Baumeister. 2000. "The Nature and Function of Self-Esteem: Sociometer Theory." In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, edited by M. Zanna, vol. 32, 1–62. Academic Press.
- Levy, N. 2011. "Enhancing Authenticity." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 28, no. 3: 308–318.
- Li, H., Y. R. Chen, and J. A. D. Hildreth. 2023. "Powerlessness Also Corrupts: Lower Power Increases Self-Promotional Lying." *Organization Science* 34, no. 4: 1422–1440. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2022.1630>.
- Li, Y. J., D. T. Kenrick, V. Griskevicius, and S. L. Neuberg. 2012. "Economic Decision Biases and Fundamental Motivations: How Mating and Self-Protection Alter Loss Aversion." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102, no. 3: 550–561.
- Magee, J. C., and A. D. Galinsky. 2008. "Social Hierarchy: The Self-Reinforcing Nature of Power and Status." *Academy of Management Annals* 2, no. 1: 351–398.
- Mast, M. S., K. Jonas, and J. A. Hall. 2009. "Give a Person Power and He or She Will Show Interpersonal Sensitivity." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 97: 835–850.
- McClintock, E. A. 2014. "Beauty and Status: The Illusion of Exchange in Partner Selection?" *American Sociological Review* 79, no. 4: 575–604. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122414536391>.
- Newman, G. E., and R. Dhar. 2014. "Authenticity Is Contagious: Brand Essence and the Original Source of Production." *Journal of Marketing Research* 51, no. 3: 371–386.
- Palmer, C. T., and C. N. Pomianek. 2007. "Applying Signaling Theory to Traditional Cultural Rituals." *Human Nature* 18, no. 4: 295–312.
- Pass, J. A., S. M. Lindenberg, and J. H. Park. 2010. "All You Need Is Love: Is the Sociometer Especially Sensitive to One's Mating Capacity?" *European Journal of Social Psychology* 40, no. 2: 221–234.



- Penke, L., P. M. Todd, A. P. Lenton, and B. Fasolo. 2007. "How Self-Assessments Can Guide Human Mating Decisions." In *Mating Intelligence*, edited by G. Glenn and G. Miller, 63–102. Psychology Press.
- Pino, G., C. Amatulli, A. M. Peluso, R. Natarajan, and G. Guido. 2019. "Brand Prominence and Social Status in Luxury Consumption: A Comparison of Emerging and Mature Markets." *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 46: 163–172. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2017.11.006>.
- Policarpo, M. C., V. Apaolaza, P. Hartmann, M. R. Paredes, and C. D'Souza. 2023. "Social Cynicism, Greenwashing, and Trust in Green Clothing Brands." *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 47, no. 5: 1950–1961.
- Raimondo, M. A., E. Cardamone, G. Miceli, and R. P. Bagozzi. 2022. "Consumers' Identity Signaling Towards Social Groups: The Effects of Dissociative Desire on Brand Prominence Preferences." *Psychology & Marketing* 39, no. 10: 1964–1978. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21711>.
- Richins, M. L. 1994. "Special Possessions and the Expression of Material Values." *Journal of Consumer Research* 21, no. 3: 522–533. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209415>.
- Richins, M. L., and S. Dawson. 1992. "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement: Scale Development and Validation." *Journal of Consumer Research* 19, no. 3: 303–316. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209304>.
- Rucker, D. D., D. Dubois, and A. D. Galinsky. 2011. "Generous Paupers and Stingy Princes: Power Drives Consumer Spending on Self Versus Others." *Journal of Consumer Research* 37, no. 6: 1015–1029.
- Rucker, D. D., and A. D. Galinsky. 2008. "Desire to Acquire: Powerlessness and Compensatory Consumption." *Journal of Consumer Research* 35, no. 2: 257–267.
- Rucker, D. D., and A. D. Galinsky. 2009. "Conspicuous Consumption Versus Utilitarian Ideals: How Different Levels of Power Shape Consumer Behavior." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 45, no. 3: 549–555.
- Rucker, D. D., A. D. Galinsky, and D. Dubois. 2012. "Power and Consumer Behavior: How Power Shapes Who and What Consumers Value." *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 22, no. 3: 352–368.
- Rudman, L. A. 1998. "Self-Promotion as a Risk Factor for Women: The Costs and Benefits of Counterstereotypical Impression Management." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, no. 3: 629–645.
- Schlegel, R. J., M. Vess, and J. Arndt. 2012. "To Discover or to Create: Metaphors and the True Self." *Journal of Personality* 80, no. 4: 969–993.
- Schmitt, D. P., and D. M. Buss. 2001. "Human Mate Poaching: Tactics and Temptations for Infiltrating Existing Matships." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80, no. 6: 894–917.
- Sedikides, C., and C. M. Hart. 2022. "Narcissism and Conspicuous Consumption." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 46: 101–122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101322>.
- Shahbe, T., M. Danish, and A. W. Zehri. 2023. "Impact of Social and Personal Factors on Consumer Purchase Intention Using Attitude as a Mediator." *Research Journal for Societal Issues* 5, no. 3: 345–368. <https://doi.org/10.56976/rjsi.v5i3.150>.
- Shrum, L. J., N. Wong, F. Arif, et al. 2013. "Reconceptualizing Materialism as Identity Goal Pursuits: Functions, Processes, and Consequences." *Journal of Business Research* 66, no. 8: 1179–1185.
- Singh, D., and D. Singh. 2011. "Shape and Significance of Feminine Beauty: An Evolutionary Perspective." *Sex Roles* 64, no. 9–10: 723–731.
- Smith, R. K., M. R. Vandellen, and L. A. N. Ton. 2021. "Makeup Who You Are: Self-Expression Enhances the Perceived Authenticity and Public Promotion of Beauty Work." *Journal of Consumer Research* 48, no. 1: 102–122.
- Statista. 2021. "Luxury Fashion—Worldwide|Statista Market Forecast." <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/luxury-goods/luxury-fashion/worldwide>.
- Sundie, J. M., M. Pandelaere, I. Lens, and L. Warlop. 2020. "Setting the Bar: The Influence of Women's Conspicuous Display on Men's Affiliative Behavior." *Journal of Business Research* 120: 569–585.
- Tafari, E., F. Vigneron, A. Azoulay, S. Crener, and A. Zahid. 2024. "The Influence of Culture and Gender in Luxury Brand Consumption: A Comparison Across Western and Eastern Culture Consumers." *Journal of International Marketing* 32: 58–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069031X241235629>.
- Tost, L. P., F. Gino, and R. P. Larrick. 2012. "Power, Competitiveness, and Advice Taking: Why the Powerful Don't Listen." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 117, no. 1: 53–65.
- Trivers, R. 1972. "Sexual Selection and the Descent of Man." In *Parental Investment and Sexual Selection*, edited by B. Campbell, 136–179. Aldine.
- Van den Bos, K., S. L. Peters, D. R. Bobocel, and J. F. Ybema. 2006. "On Preferences and Doing the Right Thing: Satisfaction With Advantageous Inequity When Cognitive Processing Is Limited." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 42, no. 3: 273–289.
- Vandermassen, G. 2005. *Who's Afraid of Charles Darwin?: Debating Feminism and Evolutionary Theory*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Wang, Y., and V. Griskevicius. 2014. "Conspicuous Consumption, Relationships, and Rivals: Women's Luxury Products as Signals to Other Women." *Journal of Consumer Research* 40, no. 5: 834–854.
- Wang, Z., J. Jetten, and N. K. Steffens. 2020. "The More You Have, the More You Want? Higher Social Class Predicts a Greater Desire for Wealth and Status." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 50, no. 2: 360–375.
- Weaver, J. R., and J. K. Bosson. 2011. "I Feel Like I Know You: Sharing Negative Attitudes of Others Promotes Feelings of Familiarity." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 37, no. 4: 481–491.
- Williams, E. F., and M. Steffel. 2014. "Double Standards in the Use of Enhancing Products by Self and Others." *Journal of Consumer Research* 41, no. 2: 506–525.
- Wilson, D. S., and R. O'Gorman. 2003. "Emotions and Actions Associated With Norm-Breaking Events." *Human Nature* 14, no. 3: 277–304. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-003-1007-z>.
- Wolf, N. 1991. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*. William Morrow and Company.
- Zhao, T., X. Jin, W. Xu, X. Zuo, and H. Cui. 2017. "Mating Goals Moderate Power's Effect on Conspicuous Consumption Among Women." *Evolutionary Psychology* 15, no. 3: 1474704917723912.
- Zheng, X., S. Peng, and S. Dai. 2014. "Impact of Social Comparison on Conspicuous Consumption: A Psychological Compensation Perspective." *Journal of Marketing Science* 10, no. 3: 19–31.
- Zhu, X., Y. Geng, Y. Pan, and L. Shi. 2023. "Conspicuous Consumption in Chinese Young Adults: The Role of Dark Tetrad and Gender." *Current Psychology* 42, no. 23: 19840–19852. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03129-4>.