



**Exploring the social effects of
status symbols on the consumer
behavior of students & the working
class living within Islamabad**

BY

Shoaib Ghani

**A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Business Administration
At Bahria University**

ENROLLMENT NUMBER: 01-221111-097

CLASS: MBA 5(B)

SUPERVISED BY: Dr. Syed Ijlal Haider

**SUBMITTED TO: RESEARCH CELL - Department of Management
Sciences at BAHRIA UNIVERSITY**

SUBMISSION DATE: 18th May, 2012

ABSTRACT

This study explores the social effect of status symbols on consumer behavior within the context of Islamabad, Pakistan. The study explores the link between status symbols and social acceptance and whether influencing pressures cause changes in buying behavior. It seeks to understand why people make purchasing decisions based on social conformity and how customers feel about counterfeit products. It explores the reasons and desires of people to be part of a social group and why they make uncomfortable purchases, it explores the changing consumer trends and perceptions within Islamabad towards status symbols. The researcher has followed a qualitative methodological approach by conducting audio taped interviews among university students and working employees within Islamabad, the results obtained have then been transcribed and coded from which categories/themes have emerged allowing the researcher to present the results and make conclusions free from bias. The results show that status symbols affect social acceptance and individuals make purchasing decisions based on social conformity in order to gain acceptance and recognition within a social group. Influencing pressures in the form of family, friends/peers, religion/culture and university/work cause changes in buying behavior. People do not always have a negative image towards counterfeit products. Desires towards social groups differ due to varying perceptions, uncomfortable purchases are caused due to influential pressure and most do not succumb to this. Identifying consumer trends helps researchers and companies to understand, meet and exceed the customer's expectations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start off by thanking Almighty Allah who has blessed me with the opportunity to complete this Dissertation.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Dr. Syed Ijlal Haider for his continuous and unrelenting support, prudent advice and unfathomable encouragement towards guiding me in all aspects related to this thesis.

I would also like to thank Mr. Kashir Asghar for his helpful guidance and credible suggestions regarding all aspects of this study.

I greatly appreciate the generous input provided by each and every interview respondent without whom this research could not have been done.

I am grateful to Bahria University for giving me the chance to write this thesis and providing me with helpful guidelines to carry out this research work.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my parents and my sister for providing me with the resources required to carry out my studies and giving me constant motivation by encouraging me to work honestly and always believing in me.

DEDICATIONS

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my loving parents Dr. Ejaz Ghani and Fauzia Shaheen, along with my younger sister Anam Ejaz, all of whom have contributed towards shaping the person that I am today.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
DEDICATIONS.....	4
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.1 Broad Problem Area/Background...	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.2 Significance/Rationale of the Study.	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.3 Problem Statement.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.4 Theoretical Framework.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.4.1 <i>The Status Symbol Model</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.5 Research Questions.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.6 Objectives of the Study.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.7 Definition of the Terms.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.7.1 <i>Status Symbols</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.7.2 <i>Consumer Behavior</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.8 Limitation of the Study.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.1 Introduction to the Chapter....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.2 Research Methodology.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.3 Research Design.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.4 Type of Research.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.4.1 <i>Data Collection</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.4.2 <i>Researcher's Position & Stance</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.5 Research Approach.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.6 Data Sampling Technique.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.7 Sources of Data Collection.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.8 Data Collection Instrument.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.9 Data Analysis.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.10 Locale of the Research.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.11 Removal of Bias.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

3.12	Chapter Conclusion.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....		Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1	Social Acceptance & Conformity	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1.1	<i>Leisure Time</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1.2	<i>Company/Socialization versus Isolation</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1.3	<i>Group Shopping</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1.4	<i>Social Drivers</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1.5	<i>Comfort Zone</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1.6	<i>Social Access</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1.7	<i>Self Esteem</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1.8	<i>Social Acceptance's Link with Literature</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2	Influencing Pressures	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2.1	<i>Family Influence</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2.2	<i>Friends/Peer Influence</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2.3	<i>Religion/Culture Influence</i> ..	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2.4	<i>University/Work Influence</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2.5	<i>Influencing Pressure's Link with Literature</i> ...	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3	Counterfeit Products	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3.1	<i>Purchase Counterfeits</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3.2	<i>Status Similarity</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3.3	<i>Attitude towards Users</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3.4	<i>Counterfeit Product's Link with Literature</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.4	Psychological Desires	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.4.1	<i>Status Symbol Meaning</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.4.2	<i>Status Brands</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.4.3	<i>Status Image</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.4.4	<i>Income Segment</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.4.5	<i>Status Conscious</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.4.6	<i>Brand Loyalty</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.4.7	<i>Good versus Bad Quality</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.

4.4.8	<i>Status Reputation</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.4.9	<i>Psychological Desire's Link with Literature</i> ...	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.5	<i>Uncomfortable Purchase</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.5.1	<i>External Influence</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.5.2	<i>Cognitive Dissonance</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.5.3	<i>Uncomfortable Purchase's Link with Literature</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6	<i>Consumer Trends</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6.1	<i>Interests</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6.2	<i>Store Ambience/Environment</i> ...	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6.3	<i>Compare Shops</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6.4	<i>Product Expectations</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6.5	<i>Product Mixed/Touching</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6.6	<i>Time/Temporal Perspective</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6.7	<i>Consumer Trend's Link with Literature</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.1	Organization of Chapter	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.2	Analysis of Results.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.3	Recommendations.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
REFERENCES		Error! Bookmark not defined.
APPENDICES		Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 1.....		Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 2.....		Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 3.....		Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 4.....		Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 5.....		Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 6.....		Error! Bookmark not defined.

