

# The Influence of Self-Esteem in the Relationship of Social Media Usage and Conspicuous Consumption

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## Abstract

To-date, conspicuous consumptions in both developed and developing countries remain on the rise. As a developing country, there is no exception for Malaysia. The luxury goods sector in Malaysia has been growing along with the rest of the world over the past thirteen years. Current research aimed to investigate conspicuous consumption through examining it from social media usage perspectives and the moderating role of self-esteem of consumers in the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous consumption. The framework of this study suggests that social media platform can cause social comparison among consumers, which the comparison domains are, wealth, status and attractiveness. These comparisons can lead to increasing motivation of acquisition of luxurious products and conspicuous consumption. The study also suggests that difference of high and low self-esteem is moderating the proposed relationship of social media usage and the propensity to consume conspicuously. A survey technique was conducted among 387 consumers using mall-intercept method at selected shopping malls to collect required data for analyses and the sample obtained consisted of Malaysian social media users aged above 18. Multiple regression and PROCESS analyses were conducted to test the correlation between social media usage and conspicuous consumption and moderation of self-esteem as proposed in the research framework. The result obtained indicates that social media usage has significantly influenced conspicuous consumption; and self-esteem was found significantly moderating the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous consumption. Overall, this study provides valuable insights on the understanding of conspicuous consumption and related variables that are influencing it such as social media usage and self-esteem. Consumers and authorities can benefit from these results to create awareness regarding the impact of these variables to ensure better purchase decision to be made by consumers.

**Keywords:** Social Media Usage, Self-Esteem, Conspicuous Consumption

## Introduction

Luxury goods are commonly referred to goods with price and quality that placed at the most noteworthy end of the market (Sommer, 2017). The worldwide luxury market has been on an uphill growth in recent years. According to the report from Deloitte on Global Power of Luxury Goods 2017, the top biggest companies in luxury sector around the globe had produced sales up to 212 billion US dollars in year 2015. In order to meet consumers' demand, daily used products are converted into status symbol by luxury goods manufacturers through the branding, superior craftsmanship, and pricing (Sommer, 2017).

To-date, conspicuous consumptions in both developed and developing countries remains on the rise. For instance, the 2017 Luxury Goods Worldwide Market Study conducted by Bain found that the market for personal luxury goods have achieved a record high of €262 billion worldwide (D'Arpizio, Levato, Zito, Kamel, & Montgolfier, 2016). Similarly, recent study has found that consumers in the developing country are now more favourable in purchasing luxurious goods as compared to past years, they are becoming conspicuous consumer although this was not the norm in the past (Ismail, Zakaria, & Talib, 2016). Throughout the years, more premium outlets and the malls for luxury brands, for example the Pavilion, Kuala Lumpur City Center (KLCC), The Gardens and StarHills are fuelling and catering the expanding interest of global luxury products. In fact, Malaysians are becoming more brand conscious (Bagheri, 2014). Moreover, the conspicuous consumptions were not only observed among the wealthy people in developing countries (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2006), further study on the issue suggested that the lower classes especially the poor may more involved in conspicuous consumption (Hamilton & Catterall, 2005; Trigg, 2001; Ismail & Talib, 2016). This condition is seen in Malaysia that according to Sandhu and Paim (2015), women in Malaysia were engaging in conspicuous consumption despite they were having middle and low income.

Meanwhile, conspicuous consumption has been found not only can lead to a fall in saving rate, it can also lead to high level of credit card debt and even financial problems such as bankruptcy (Kapeller & Schütz, 2015). As reported by S&P Dow Jones Indices, among 14 Asian economies, Malaysia recorded the highest personal debt with the rate of 88% of gross domestic product as compared to 60% in 2008. Besides that, as stated by Malaysia's Department of Insolvency, individuals who aged 35 and below that were filed bankruptcy in 2014 are doubled as compared to those in 2005. As indicated by Lim, Ng Chin, and Boo (2014), overspending is the main reason for bankruptcy. Another study (Zhu, 2011) showed that in the family units which record bankruptcy, more than five per cent possess no less than one luxury vehicle and luxury mobile phone and credit card debt is equivalent to a whole year's income. Besides that, research has found that overly engaging in conspicuous consumption limits self-investment (Moav & Neeman, 2012), without sufficient saving and self-investment, the lower income group can never advance economically (Solomon, 1983). Since conspicuous consumption may lead to financial difficulties, conspicuous consumption is important to be investigated.

Furthermore, the evolvement of technology introduces various social media sites for the ease of global social communication, and each of these social media provides different channels for people to engage in the interaction without the need for physical meetings (Gruzd, Doiron, & Mai, 2011). For example: people build social network and develop social image through Facebook, visual stories telling through Instagram, and video sharing through YouTube. The social media sites themselves are intended to be used to expand the networks and assist information sharing of among users in the globe (Madden, Lenhart, Cortesi, Gasser, Duggan, Smith, & Beaton, 2013). However, in recent days, it can be seen that social media

becomes where users showcase luxury owning and lifestyle. In an article, Lehdonvirta (2010) contended that consumers are increasingly to publicly display their material belongings and lifestyle online. Especially when the present-day consumption is not just limited to only food and clothing; entertainment, travel, and property has increasingly become “object” to be displayed through posting of images and check-ins in social media (Arda, 2014). For example, users show photo posts of luxury cars, bags and trips in Instagram, YouTubers posting videos showcasing luxury belongs (luxury hauls, high end make up tutorials), and Facebook users checking in to luxurious trip and restaurants. Such trends can be seen as promoting materialism as those who inherent the needs to display wealth usually live in materialistically oriented culture (Cleveland & Chang 2009).

In addition, self-esteem has directly associated with human behaviour (Singh, 2015). In reality, one of the most significance drives of motivation on consumers’ decision and behaviour is claimed to be self-esteem (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). Self-esteem was found to significantly influence financial problem such as credit card misuse (Omar, Rahim, Wel, & Alam, 2014). Credit card is used for luxury purchases to increase users’ self-worth (Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010). Some researchers have also studied the relationship between self-esteem and conspicuous consumption (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Thoumrungroje, 2014; Wilcox & Stephen, 2012). Nevertheless, this correlation has gathered conflicting outcomes. In spite that self-esteem has been used as moderator in behavioural related studies, scant research takes self-esteem as moderator in consumption behaviour study. Owing to the widely believed of self-esteem occupies an indispensable part in consumption behaviour (Truong & McColl, 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2013) and the suggestion proposed by Thoumrungroje (2014) that the influence of social media usage towards conspicuous consumption can be affected by consumer’s self-esteem, present study aimed to find out the level of self-esteem of consumers and offer to seek confirmation on what extent self-esteem moderate the relationship of social media usage and conspicuous consumption.

Thus, the present study aimed to inspect the influence of social media usage towards conspicuous consumption and further elaborate the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous consumption by considering the potential moderation role of self-esteem.

## **Review of Literature**

### ***Conspicuous Consumption***

Conspicuous consumption is indicated as consumption where the consumers purchase products or services based on the products’ status association (Nguyen, Ngamsiriudom, Pelton, & Dubinsky, 2015). Initially, conspicuous consumption was introduced by Veblen in 1899 referring to those with wealth spend great money on luxurious products in the purpose of displaying their social status (Veblen, 1899). The rationale of this consumption behaviour is individuals are given the impression which they belong to a higher social class (Kaus, 2013; Trigg, 2001). Outer members of the society will pass judgement on one’s social status by his outward display of wealth through conspicuous consumption, and therefore the individual’s social status can further be reinforced through these judgements (Kaus, 2013; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012 Trigg, 2001).

Commonly, conspicuous products are referred to product which can be highly visible, such as fashion, jewellery items, and cars (Han, Nunes, and Drèze, 2010); and McCarthy (2015) stated that conspicuous products commonly referred to luxury goods. While conspicuous consumption has long been associated with luxury goods (Eckhardt, Belk, & Wilson, 2015); it can actually disclose variety meanings such as individual qualities, ethnicity, hobbies, signaling

of values, sexuality, age and other form of identity (Blumer, 1969; Davis, 1992). In contrast, Chaudhuri et al. (2011) distinguished conspicuous consumption from luxury consumption and proposed that conspicuous consumption may not necessarily include buying luxury goods but visible goods that are rare in the economic and cultural capital to convey unique personality.

Since Veblen's theory commenced, the economics study on conspicuous consumption have been consistent. These studies focused on the conceptual or mathematical modelling of the conspicuous consumption (Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2010; Amaldoss & Jain, 2008). Beside economic study, researchers from the consumer behaviour discipline have also investigated the issue of conspicuous consumptions. These studies generally attempt to identify specific, controllable variables related to individual consumers' consumption behaviour. This stream of studies had provided insightful analyses of the relationship between status and luxury under several different conditions (Han et al., 2010; Nelissen & Meijers, 2011; Nunes, Drèze, & Han, 2011; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008). Nevertheless, this stream of research tends to views conspicuous consumption as a homogeneous behaviour and overemphasize on "position gains" (the increase in status) and neglected the "possession gap" (the difference between what one person has and what other people have (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014).

Past findings divulged a distinct link between status seeking behaviours and conspicuous consumption, whereas Chaudhuri et al. (2011) focused on different consumers' decisions in conspicuous consumption. It features with consumers' attributes, including social visibility, individualism, self-esteem, materialism and desires for uniqueness as the contributing factors towards conspicuous consumption. According to O'Cass and McEwen (2006), consumers' consumption on conspicuous goods is highly affected by their social networks. Associated with that, conspicuous consumption involved the adjustment of behaviour to gain and maintenance of social status through a selection of appropriate goods after monitoring and noticing the significance influencing role of others in the social environment. This phenomenon can said to be coherent to social comparison theory in the light of the point where according to Festinger (1954), the pioneer of social comparison focused on individuals' need to evaluate their abilities and performance through comparison with social groups, and how they adjust their performance to achieve uniformity with others. Supporting the statement, Christen and Morgan (2005) and Drèze and Nunes's (2009) studies discovered that relative to high income people, low income people more inclined to consume conspicuously in order to socially keep up with others due to the feelings of inadequacy and inferiority result from comparison. Therefore, regardless the settings, social comparison occurs in social network of consumers can potentially lead them to consume conspicuously; especially when nowadays, the social comparison can be found commonly in social media setting.

### ***Social Media Usage***

Social media is referred to an electronic platform which users can build a profile inside a limited framework, to view, peruse and keep in touch with different users with whom they share associations and those of others (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). A social media site, therefore, is the World Wide Web page on which a particular site facilitates the interaction between its various participants.

#### ***Usage Intensity***

Usage intensity of social media use is indicated as the extent to which the participant was actively engaged in using social media (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe 2007). There are many ways to capture usage intensity of social media, including frequency, intensity, and

involvement (Vogel, Rose, Okdie, Eckles, & Franz, 2015); some studies measured social media usage by the quantity of daily visit, friends, wall posts, and social interaction (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010).

The usage intensity of social media has been linked in different study contexts in the past, including consumer related variables such as consumer engagement (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan, 2015; Dijkmans, Kerkhof, & Beukeboom, 2015), materialism (Chu, Windels, & Kamal, 2016); and workplace related variables such as job burnout (Charoensukmongkol, Moqbel, & Gutierrez, 2017), job satisfaction and job outcomes (Charoensukmongkol, 2014). However, only one that is found examining the association of usage intensity and conspicuous consumption (Thoumrungroj, 2014). Nevertheless, differing from current study which looks into explaining the relationship in the context of materialism and self-esteem; this result found in Thoumrungroj's (2014) study was explained in the context of electronic words of mouth. Furthermore, Thoumrungroj (2014) proposed an explanation to this saying that increased self-esteem due to the social media usage can be the cause of conspicuous consumption. When self-esteem increased by social media use, it is more possible to lower a person's self-control; in consequence, causes consumer to purchase impulsively or indulgently (Wilcox & Stephen, 2013). Although self-esteem is proposed to play a role in the relationship, no empirical study was done examining it in the study.

Moreover, conspicuous consumption is also claimed to occur due to social comparison (O'Cass & McEwen, 2006) and social media provides a setting that is best encouraging this comparison (Vogel et al., 2014). Thus, on the off chance that one frequently utilizes social media, she or he will probably to encounter comparison targets and has chances to do comparison with those targets. At that point, it is normal that, as one's usage intensity is high, she or he will probably involve in social comparison activities (Jang, Park, & Song, 2016), regardless the domain of comparison. Therefore, social media will strengthen comparison in the domain of wealth and material possession, leading to increasing motivation of acquisition of luxurious products to show status which is conspicuous consumption.

H1a: There is positive relationship between usage intensity and conspicuous consumption.

#### Absorption

Absorption was defined as an individual's trait where individual are highly propended to utilized full concentration while engaging in an event, and all of the individual's resources are consumed by the object of attention (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974). In the operation of flow experience, absorption is described as total concentration and immersion in an activity (Bakker, 2005). In the context of present study, absorption is referred to the extent of an individual absorbed with social media usage.

Past researches measuring social media usage have included absorption into usage intensity and measure it together with usage frequency and intensity (Thoumrungroj, 2014; Vogel et al., 2015). However, present study proposes that there is a need to exclude absorption from the measure and distinguish the two measures due to the fact of the difference in their nature. According to Mannell and Kleiber (1997), the absorption in activities or settings can be described as a term in psychological involvement, whereas frequency of activity and amount of time spent in the activity is basically quantity measure (Vogel et al., 2015). Besides that, absorption in an activity involves fully concentration and enjoyment that time is neglected (Tuisku, Virtanen, Bloom, & Kinnunen, 2016). Nevertheless, how far the individual is concentrating or to what extend the individual is enjoying doing an

activity is uncertain by just looking at the frequency or time spent in doing the activity. Concluding the argument above, it can be said that if usage intensity is referred to the quantity of usage, then absorption can be referred as the quality of the usage, since it is more to be viewed as psychological involvement.

According to Youn and Faber (2000), absorption is an interesting construct for consumer research as it can act a part in how individuals react to environmental and sensory cues, including those that impact the purchase decision. There is also research demonstrating the link between absorption and purchase behaviors (Sirois, 2014). Youn and Faber (2000) found that high absorption is associated with the desire to make impulse purchases. Although there is none research investigating the relationship of absorption and conspicuous consumption, Thourmrungraj (2014) believed that conspicuous consumption can be viewed as an impulsive behavior. Moreover, in a study of Bush and Gilbert (2002), it is found that individual who is absorbed with Internet is more inclined to be materialism as compare to individual who is absorbed with newspaper. Since social media is a group of Internet-based applications (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), it can consider as part of internet. In short, these results have provided insights for current study in deducing that positive there is relationship between social media absorption and conspicuous consumption.

H1b: There is positive relationship between absorption and conspicuous consumption.

### ***Self-esteem***

Self-esteem evaluates how ones having opinion on themselves (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004). It was discovered that self-esteem can influence how people behave and act as an encouragement for some of their behaviours (Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Self-esteem was also perceived as the human needs level. Hence, whenever an individual experiences low self-esteem level, he/she will incline to affiliate/conduct activities that can assist to improve their self-esteem level.

Many researches from different fields have discussed the significance of self-esteem in motivating human behaviour. An unfulfilled need for self-esteem attributes to various psychological problems. Indeed, self-esteem is ranked as one of the most expansively studied constructs in behavioural science. Self-esteem has been implicated in a variety of behavioural (McGee, & Williams, 2000; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Wilcox & Stephen, 2012), cognitive (Epstein, 2013) and affective reactions (Luerssen, Jhita, & Ayduk, 2017; Roberts & Bengtson, 1996; Walster, 1965). Marketing managers had claimed the inquiry of self-esteem as one of the most vital motivation in influencing consumers' decision and behaviour; consequently, consumers' decisions are repeatedly made with the purpose to improve or to assure their self-esteem (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). Besides that, Pyszczynski et al. (2004) also stated that self-esteem is one of the self-related personality traits, which can influence the behaviour of individual as well as motivate the behaviours of consumers.

The relationship between self-esteem and conspicuous consumption has also been found in past literature (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Thourmrungraje, 2014; Wilcox & Stephen, 2012). Nevertheless, there are contradicting results found with respect of this relationship. Previous studies demonstrated that aside from expressing identity and signaling status, luxury products can help to improve self-esteem (Wang & Griskevicius, 2013). According to Sivanathan and Pettit (2010), it was found that self-esteem is negatively related to conspicuous consumption. This is line with Tuttle (2010) study, which inferred that the desire driving to conspicuous consumption is simply the need to repair self-threat. In contrast, there are researches proposed that self-esteem and conspicuous consumption are positively

related; which means higher level of self-esteem can lead to the inclination of conspicuous consumption (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Thourmrungrroje, 2014). The rationale is in line to the assumption proposed by Wilcox and Stephen (2012), where raised sentiments of self-esteem can possibly lower a person's self-control, and prompt to more impulsive or indulgent behaviour (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Wilcox & Stephen, 2012).

Although scant researches tested self-esteem as moderator of consumption behaviour, particularly in the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous consumption, research on other behavioural studies provide some indirect support for the association. Moreover, there are past researches that have supported self-esteem as a moderating variable. Self-esteem had been examined as moderator in behavioural related studies such as counterproductive work behaviour (Whelpley & Mcdaniel, 2016), voice behaviour (Ekrot, Rank, & Gemünden, 2016), drinking behaviour (Rodriguez, Knee, & Neighbors, 2014), and eating behaviour (McFarlane, Polivy, & Herman, 1998).

According to Brockner (1989), individual with low self-esteem is more vulnerable to external influence because they need to depend on social cue to direct them due to the less confident of the accuracy of their thinking and action; as well as they need to have more confirmation from others as compared to individual with high self-esteem. Thus, employing this into the context of current study, consumer with low self-esteem may be more influenced by the usage of social media that exposed them towards various display of luxury to engage in conspicuous consumption, with the purpose to gain confirmation and esteem.

H2: Self-esteem moderates the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous consumption.

## **Methodology**

### ***Sample***

The survey data was gathered through mall-intercept survey in three selected shopping malls (Suria KLCC, Pavillion KL, and Gardens ) located within Klang Valley. According to a report of Euromonitor International, Klang Valley was claimed to be the paradise for luxury shopping as most of the high-end fashion brands only choose to locate their flagship stores in Klang Valley area. This enable the possibility to encounter not only local residents, but also residents from other states of Malaysia which do not offer access to luxury brands outlets and premium outlets.

The respondents consisted of 41.9% male and 58.1% female with age distribution of 39.1% aged less than 25, 23.5% aged between 26 and 30, and 37.4% aged more than 30. With respect to monthly income, the largest income group comprised of income ranging from RM2001 to RM4000 (30.2%), followed by income less than RM2000 (28.2%). For those with income ranging from RM4001 to RM6000 and above RM6000 are accounted for 19.1% and 22.5% respectively.

### ***Measurement of Constructs***

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to collect the demographic background of the respondents. The next section consisted of two parts (usage intensity and absorption). Social Media Intensity scale (four items) is adopted from Ellison et al.(2007). The items included (1) the number of friends or followers in the social media account, (2) frequency of daily social media usage, and (3) the estimated time spent daily on each social media site. Adapting from Bush and Gilbert (2002), absorption with social media is measured using a five measurement items. Third section contained nine measurement items that is

measuring self-esteem using the Rosenberg (1979) self-esteem scale. Last section consisted of twelve measurement items adopted from Chung and Fischer (2001) (four items) and Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, and Ghoshal, (2011) (eight items) to measure conspicuous consumption. All the items of absorption, self-esteem and conspicuous consumption were measured using five point Likert scale ranging from “1” = “Strongly disagree” to “5” = “Strongly agree”.

### **Reliability Test**

The reliability test results of all the sections in the questionnaire was tested through Cronbach alpha with the sample collected (N=387). Hair (2006) suggested Cronbach's alpha coefficient above 0.6 is acceptable. Overall, the instruments used showed satisfied reliability ranged from 0.73 to 0.90 as shown in Table 1. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 was used to analyze data in this study. The descriptive analysis was utilized to uncover information regarding the demographic data of respondents; whereas the multiple regression analysis was used to uncover the relationship between social media usage towards conspicuous consumption, and PROCESS tool was used to determine the moderation effect of self-esteem in the relationship of social media usage and conspicuous consumption.

Table 1

*Result for Reliability Statistic*

Construct	No. of items	Scale	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
			Actual test (N=387)
Absorption	5	5 – point Likert scale	0.80
Self-esteem	9	5 – point Likert scale	0.73
Conspicuous consumption	12	5 – point Likert scale	0.90

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### ***Regression Analysis of Social Media Usage towards Conspicuous Consumption***

Based on the result from multiple regression analysis in Table 2, it is shown that there is a significant influence of social media usage towards conspicuous consumption ( $p=0.000$ ) at the significant level of 0.01. Nonetheless, the result also showed that the proportional contribution of social media usage to conspicuous consumption was low (0.094) with an adjusted R-Square ( $R^2$ ) of 0.090. This means that social media usage able to predict only 9% of the variances in conspicuous consumption. Therefore, it means that there are other factors that contribute more in affecting consumers' conspicuous consumption behaviour.

Table 2

*Regression Analysis of Social Media Usage and Conspicuous Consumption*

	$\beta$	t	Sig.
Usage Intensity	0.162	3.265**	0.001
Absorption	0.234	4.731**	0.000

Notes:  $R=0.307$ ,  $R\text{-square}=0.094$ , Adjusted  $R\text{-square}=0.090$ ,  $F=19.902$ , Sig.  $F=0.000$

\*\* $P<0.01$

For the dimension usage intensity, the result shows that usage intensity is significantly influencing conspicuous consumption ( $p=0.001$ ). Thus, H1a is accepted. The past study done by Thoumrungroj (2014) proved that social media usage intensity is influencing consumers to consume conspicuously. Besides that, the result from Wilcox and Stephen's (2012) study also revealed that the utilization of social media can stimulate consumer spending. Based on these past results, it is supported that the use of social media can cause consumer to consume conspicuously. However, the low beta value (0.162) recorded shows that the influence of usage intensity is small. According to Goh, Heng, and Lin (2013), the contents in social media can influence consumer purchase behaviour. As explained, the more active the consumers using the social media, the more that they are exposed to contents promoting conspicuous spending, which in turn is leading to conspicuous consumption. Nonetheless, among all the contents that consumer are exposed to in social media, not all are limited to only status showing posts and luxurious content; variations of contents available in social media are very diverse. Therefore, the effect of social media usage intensity towards conspicuous consumption is weak.

In addition, for the dimension of absorption, the result also shows that there is a significant influence of absorption towards conspicuous consumption ( $p=.000$ ). The result supports the hypothesis at the  $p<0.01$  level, H1b is accepted. The beta value of this effect (0.234) is slightly higher than it is between usage intensity and conspicuous consumption. This result signaled that the influence of absorption is bigger than usage intensity. This can be explained where only by the frequent use of social media, it is not strong enough to lead to conspicuous consumption unless the user is concentrated and involved in the usage of it. According to the study of Shang, Chen and Shen (2005), cognitive absorption on the internet can lead to online shopping. Besides that, in the study of Bowman et al. (2012), result showed that the complete absorption in an activity can influence individual's consciousness and emotion; thus increases the intention to spend. Since social media nowadays is increasingly used to market luxury brands (Schwedt, Chevalier, & Gutsatz, 2012) and self-promotion through luxury purchases (Taylor & Strutton, 2016); therefore, it is explained that absorption in this kind of social media environment can influence consumers to consume conspicuously.

### ***Moderation Effect of Self-esteem in the Relationship between Social Media Usage and Conspicuous Consumption***

A moderator is a variable that influences the strength or the direction of the relationship between an independent variable and dependent variable (Rose, Holmbeck, Coakley & Franks, 2004). The result from the data output of the analysis shows that, self-esteem is significantly moderating the relationship of social media and conspicuous consumption ( $p=0.007$ ) at  $p<0.01$  level, which indicates that there is a significant interaction effect of social media usage on conspicuous consumption under the influence of the moderating effect of self-esteem. The summaries of the results obtained are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Moderation Analysis Results*

Relationship	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Std.D	Std. E	t	p
Social media usage*self-esteem> conspicuous consumption	.3559	.1267	-.0515	.0192	-2.6770	.007

From the graph plotted for this reaction (Figure 1), it is shown that, self-esteem negatively moderating the relationship of social media usage and conspicuous consumption. Social media usage became a stronger predictor when the self-esteem is low. Consumers with low self-esteem are less confident and more easily affected emotionally (Wang, Lv, & Jiang, 2011), they depend on the usage of conspicuous goods in the process of maintaining their self-esteem (Siu, Kwan, & Zeng, 2016). Therefore they are more easily to be affected by social media as the idealized image posted by public influencers and marketers in social media often signalized prestige and status. Whereas, people with higher self-esteem are less likely to boost their already high self-esteem by depending on certain buying behaviour (Opiri & Lang, 2016). Thus, less likely to be affected by the influence of social media.

The graph showed that the slop of the plotted line for low self-esteem is steeper as compared to high self-esteem, meaning the effect of social media usage is higher on conspicuous consumption when self-esteem is low. Whereas, when self-esteem is high, the higher the social media usage, the increase of conspicuous consumption is less obvious. This result shows support to the comparison of self-esteem on of conspicuous consumption in previous studies which those consumers who are in low power circumstances (Rucker & Galinsky 2009) or the individuals who feel an absence of self-esteem (Sivanathan & Pettit 2010) depend on the utilization of conspicuous goods to endeavor and adjust their status. In such manner, self-esteem is moderating the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous consumption. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

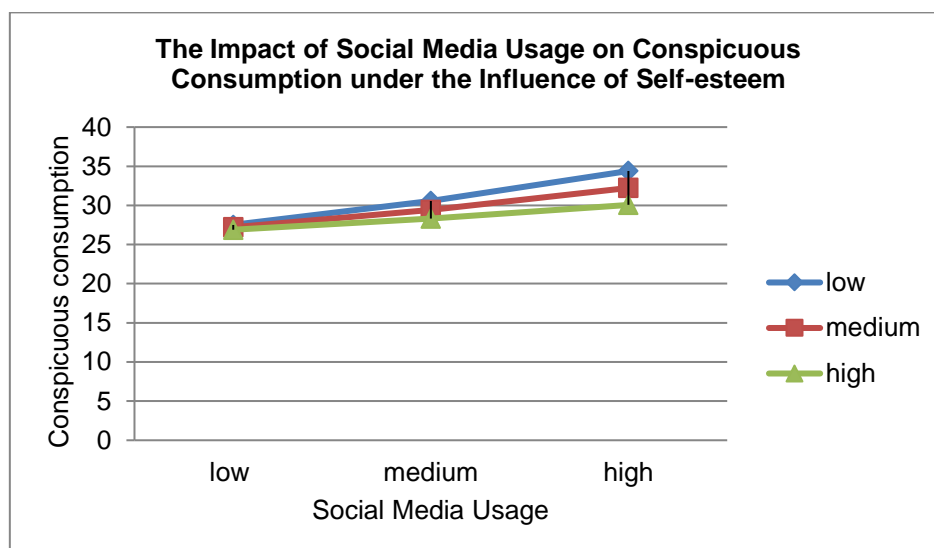


Figure 1: The Impact of Social Media Usage on Conspicuous Consumption under the Influence of Self-esteem

## Conclusion

Based on this study, it can be said that Malaysia portrays a marketplace where the economies are developing and the nations have lately indicated raised in their usage of social media, and the demand of luxury goods. This may due to the rising consumer disposal incomes and the setting up of more physical stores of international luxury brands. Finding indicated that social media platforms can act as a place for consumers to discover and learn about luxury goods and services ranging from fashion, food, entertainment and even travel spots. Through these exposures, consumers are inclined to pick up the consumption styles that are being exposed to. Oftentimes, individuals portray positive message about them in social media knowing that they are under public's eyes, especially their close acquaintances (Thoumrungroje, 2014). Conspicuous consumption is taken as the compensation of consumers' self-esteem because it can in the long run produce positive social well-being through the enhanced self-esteem resulting from the mutual feedback from the positive postings (Ellison et al., 2007). Therefore, consumer with lower self-esteem may experience stronger influence of social media in directing them towards conspicuous consumption.

The results of this study can provide a few implications to the understanding of conspicuous consumption, especially the comprehension in the connection between social media usage and self-esteem. In exploring the moderating effect of self-esteem in the relationship of conspicuous consumption, a new finding has given vital connotations to the theory, as well as to the practice. Current study implies to the literature by showing moderating effect of self-esteem in the relationship between social media usage and conspicuous consumption. It was shown that, with the moderation of self-esteem, the predictability of social media usage on conspicuous consumption propensity changes. This provides some insights to the contradicting results found in past studies regarding the influence of self-esteem towards conspicuous consumption. The findings of current study may have some practical implications by providing recommendations to stakeholders including marketers and consumer in general. The research had found that social media usage can lead to conspicuous consumption. In addition, social media users' characteristic (self-esteem) able to exert an influence on the relationship between social media and conspicuous consumption. These results can suggest great marketing insights for marketers. They can take advantages of social media marketing, as well as formulating suitable marketing strategy through the perspective of consumers' self-esteem.

The results of current study need to be acknowledged in light of a few limitations, and the consequent recommendations are suggested. First, the data collected for social media usage only included frequency of usage, time spent and amount of audience, the activeness of users and the exact activities done in the social media platform was not recorded. Future research can consider looking into such perspectives to get greater insights on how social media activities can influence conspicuous consumption. Finally, the sample of current study may present other challenges in term of generalizability. The sample of current study comprised of consumers who shop in malls located in Klang Valley. Although the location was best fitted for current study, this limited the generalizability of the results to other population which could have had different socio-demographic background. Future studies could explore a broader range of consumers from different location. Besides that, future research can replicate this study with consumers from online as online shoppers are increasing, and the accessibility and affordability of consumers in reaching for different products online may be different as compare to actual shopping at malls.

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