Green Pride in Sustainable Versus Premium Brand Decisions

Cecilia Souto Maior and Danielle Mantovani

School of Business, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, Brazil

Diego Costa Pinto

NOVA Information Management School (NOVA IMS), Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal, and

Mario Boto Ferreira

Faculty of Psychology, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

This is the accepted author manuscript of the following article published by EMERALD:

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.
## Abstract:

Green Pride in Sustainable Versus Premium Brand Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal:</th>
<th>Marketing Intelligence and Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript ID</td>
<td>MIP-03-2022-0117.R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript Type:</td>
<td>Original Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keywords:</td>
<td>green consumption, premium brands, pride, choice justification, sustainable consumption, comparative choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Green Pride in Sustainable Versus Premium Brand Decisions

Abstract

Purpose: Earlier research indicates that brand choices may display different identity signals, such as altruism and benevolence for green brands or high status and exclusiveness for premium brands. This research adds to the literature by exploring how opting for green (vs. premium) brands leads consumers to feel authentic (vs. hubristic) pride.

Design/methodology/approach: Three experimental studies were conducted to test the hypotheses related to green versus premium choices (Studies 1-3), public accountability (Study 2), and the underlying process of anticipated judgment (Study 3).

Findings: The findings reveal that choosing a green (vs. premium) brand results in higher authentic pride and lower hubristic pride. However, the green pride effects were only observed when consumers’ brand choices were publicly accountable. Finally, anticipated judgment mediates changes in authentic pride driven by green (vs. premium) brands.

Originality: Our findings contribute preponderantly to the green consumer behavior literature and practice by providing primary evidence that green (vs. premium) branding can trigger distinct patterns of pride in comparative decisions.

Keywords: green consumption; premium brands; pride; comparative choices; choice justification; sustainable consumption.
1. INTRODUCTION

Green brands are an essential part of sustainable consumption and are positioned in the market by praising social, environmental, and economic dimensions (Spielmann, 2020). Although green attributes are widely requested in sustainable consumption (Berger, 2019; Hayat, Jianjun & Ali, 2022), their market prices are often similar to premium brands (Juhl et al., 2017). Thus, consumers often face a trade-off between green and competing premium brands (e.g., organic vs. premium chocolate, green-made vs. limited-edition apparel). While trade-offs are expected during the consumption decision process (Luchs & Kumar, 2017), the choice between green and premium options is an exceptionally particular case of a comparative decision since it may impact consumers’ self-identity (Govers & Schoormans, 2005). Previous research shows that green brands are associated with a virtuous self (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014; Griskevicius et al., 2010; Ladhari & Tchegna, 2017) and that premium brands are more often related to a prestigious self (Dion & Arnould, 2011; Lee et al., 2019).

Extending this literature, we propose that the choice between green (vs. premium) brands might trigger unique dimensions of pride in sustainable consumption. Pride is a self-conscious emotion resulting from the individual belief that something valuable has been done (Bissing-Olson et al., 2016), and it has two main facets (Tracy & Robins, 2007b): authentic and hubristic pride. Authentic pride is based on a sense of genuine self-esteem (“I am proud of what I did) and is related to positive concepts such as achievement, accomplishment, and “self-worth.” In comparison, hubristic pride refers to pride in the self (“I am proud of who I am) and is associated with concepts like arrogance, egoism, and smugness but also elitism, superiority, and exclusivity.

Although research has recently explored the links between green consumption and pride (Ladhari & Tchegna, 2017; Septianto et al., 2021), the present research is the first to examine
specific pride dimensions (authentic vs. hubristic) as identity signals associated with green (vs. premium) brands. Drawing from costly signal theory (Bird & Smith, 2005; McAndrew, 2019; Saad, 2007), this study adds to past research investigating the impact of altruistic behavior on status signaling (Van Vugt et al., 2007; Brooks & Wilson, 2015; McAndrew, 2019). From a managerial perspective, this study demonstrates that companies can also benefit from the comparative decision between green and premium brands.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Green versus Premium Brand Decisions and Pride

Green consumption is the act of purchasing and consuming brands that use sustainable methods of production and services (Lin & Chang 2012). It can be regarded as “the tendency to express the value of environmental protection through one’s purchases and consumption behaviors” (Haws et al., 2014, p. 337). The main goal of choosing green brands is to generate the lowest negative impact on the environment.

Individuals can express behaviors perceived as positive and as delivering collective benefits by consuming green brands (Griskevicius et al., 2010; Tezer & Bodur, 2020; White & Simpson, 2013; Berger, 2019). However, not all consumers are willing to purchase a green brand because green brands are sometimes perceived to have lower quality and effectiveness, higher prices, and involve high effort in purchasing (Lin & Chang, 2012; Luchs et al., 2010; Newman et al., 2014).

Furthermore, drawing from costly signaling theory, Brooks and Wilson (2015) showed that consumption-reducing behaviors (although environmentally friendly) might be perceived to be less appropriate for conveying status. Interestingly, past research on conspicuous consumption associates social capital and status with premium and luxury
brands (Han et al., 2010), which are perceived as having high credibility and quality. Premium brands thus often carry meanings that provide consumers with social value and status (Dion & Arnould, 2011).

There are noticeable parallels between the opposing benefits of consuming green versus consuming premium brands and the two facets of pride (authentic and hubristic). The positioning of green brands calls for social-environmental awareness, fair trade certifications, organic brands, and renewable sources. Hence, opting for green brands leads consumers to see themselves and portray themselves to others as contributing to pro-environmental conservation and pro-social outcomes. As such, they are likely to experience authentic pride in the process (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014). In contrast, premium positioning brands often present implicit or explicit claims of not only self-gratification but also signal social superiority and exclusivity (e.g., being among the few able to afford such brands). Such aspects are better captured by hubristic aspects of pride (Dion & Arnould, 2011).

Related research further shows that authentic pride elicits more pro-social behavior than hubristic pride (Wubben et al., 2012). In contrast, hubristic pride is likely linked to downward social comparisons (i.e., showing what others do not have; Tracy & Robins, 2007b, 2014).

Accordingly, we propose that when consumers evaluate green and premium claims, the green (vs. premium) choice is likely to trigger a self-conscious emotion of authentic pride. This authentic sentiment in green consumption relates to the power of green (vs. premium) brands to help consumers build a pro-social (rather than a pro-self) reputation (Semmann et al., 2005; Spielmann, 2020). Moreover, since choosing green entails rejecting the alternative premium brand and thus declining the attributes of exclusivity and superiority associated with the latter, consumers’ hubristic pride should be reduced. Conversely, and for the same reasons, opting for the premium brand (and rejecting the green alternative) should be
associated with lower levels of authentic pride and higher levels of hubristic pride. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Green (vs. premium) choice triggers higher levels of authentic pride, whereas premium (vs. green) preference triggers higher levels of hubristic pride.

### 2.2 The Role of Social Accountability in Feelings of Pride

Comparative decisions are known to be affected by consumers' social accountability (e.g., Huh *et al.*, 2014). According to the process model of self-conscious emotions (Tracy & Robins, 2007a, 2014), feelings of pride involve socially embedded self-representations. It follows that the feelings of authentic and hubristic pride ensuing from comparative decisions should depend on the perceived (or imagined) scrutiny of others. Feelings of pride are thus likely to be amplified when emerging from decisions made in public (Robins & Schriber, 2009).

Choosing a green over a premium brand in a public context where people are more socially accountable is expected to boost authentic pride and reduce hubristic pride since this choice signals the endorsement of moral standards and behaviors toward collective good (Ratner & Kahn, 2002). Choosing a premium brand instead may signal status and superiority towards others (Han *et al.*, 2010; McFerran *et al.*, 2014), reducing authentic pride and enhancing hubristic pride.

However, since private decisions weaken self-monitoring (Huh *et al.*, 2014) when consumers’ choices occur in private settings, the pride facets predicted to emerge from the comparative decisions are expected to be weakened:
H2: The impact of green (vs. premium) choices on authentic and hubristic pride occurs in public contexts and is reduced when the choice is private.

Finally, since people tailor their pro-social behavior based on the expected reaction of their audience (e.g., Chen, 2017; Baumeister & Leary 1995), it is reasonable to expect that the authentic (vs. hubristic) pride stemming from comparative decisions may be at least partially explained by consumers’ anticipation of the judgments of others.

Green brands claim social-environmental awareness, fair trade certifications, organic inputs, recycled materials, and renewable sources of raw materials (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014; Griskevicius et al., 2010; Ladhari & Tchegna, 2017). Premium brands explore high quality, superior performance, seriousness, prestigious, exclusivity, symbols of progress, also luxury (Dion & Arnould, 2011; Lee et al., 2019). Given that in comparative decisions, consumers may anticipate the judgments of others about their own choices, which might impact their emotional reactions associated with such preferences. Specifically, the extent to which consumers anticipate that opting for green rather than premium brands will make people like (or dislike) them is expected to shape their comparative decisions. We thus propose that:

H3: Anticipated judgments of others mediate the effect of green (vs. premium) choices on authentic (and hubristic) pride.

3. STUDY 1 - Green (vs. Premium) Brand Choices and Pride
3.1 Participants, Design, and Procedure

A total of 89 undergraduate students (55% female, $M_{age} = 22$) participated in this study in exchange for course credit. The design was a single factor 2 (choice: green vs. premium) between participants design, with choice as an endogenously created factor (based on Ma & Roese, 2014). The study was conducted in a lab, and participant respondents were exposed to the scenarios via a computer. Participants were exposed to a comparative decision that involved choosing between a green (Kokoa) or a premium (Thierry) fictional chocolate brand depicted in brand positioning ads. A pretest validated the brand advertising manipulation. Participants’ preferences were coded into binary choices (1 = green choice; 0 = premium choice).

Participants were presented with two equivalent branded brands depicted in fictional positioning ads, each describing four features, side by side, with the left and right positions randomly assigned (adapted from Griskevicius et al., 2010). For instance, “100% organic grains” and “fair-trade label” were green features, whereas “type gourmet-premium” and “exclusive ingredients” were featured for the premium brand (see Appendix A for details). Participants chose one of the brands based on the question, “If you were buying a chocolate, which of these two options would you choose?”

3.2 Measures

Authentic and hubristic measures of pride were collected using the following instructions: “Thinking about your choice, indicate how much you feel each of these emotions” (anchored by 1= Not at all, 7= A lot), adapted from Tracy and Robbins (2007b). Participants then responded to two items for each pride facet, following the procedure used
by Wubben et al. (2012). For authentic pride, the items were: accomplished and satisfied. 
($\alpha=.70$). Hubristic pride was measured with arrogant and conceited. ($\alpha=.75$). Furthermore, 
participants responded to four items concerning the brands’ positioning manipulation check, 
“How green is the brand you have just chosen?” “How environmentally friendly is the brand 
you have just chosen?”, “How exclusive is the brand you have just chosen?” and “How 
premium is the brand you have just chosen?” (anchored by 1 = Not at all to 7 = A lot). Finally, 
demographic measures were collected.

3.3 Preliminary Analyses

Overall, no difference in brand choice was observed, 50.6% ($n = 45$) chose the green 
brand ($\chi^2(1) = .01, p = .92$). Manipulation checks for brand advertising (green vs. premium) 
confirmed that those who chose the green brand indicated higher “greenness” ($r = .97$) of 
their choice ($M_{\text{Green}} = 5.90; SD = 1.55; M_{\text{Premium}} = 2.83; SD = 1.35; F(1, 87) = 98.22, p < 
.001$). As expected, those who chose the premium brand indicated higher “premiumness” ($r = 
.64$) of their choice ($M_{\text{Premium}} = 5.53; SD = 1.33; M_{\text{Green}} = 4.38; SD = 1.43; F(1, 87) = 15.32, p 
< .001$).

3.4 Comparative Choice and Pride

A mixed ANOVA analysis was conducted with choice (green; premium) as a 
between-subjects factor and pride facets (authentic; hubristic) as a within-subjects factor.
There was a significant main effect of pride facets (Wilk’s $\lambda = 0.346, F(1, 87) = 162.560, p < 
.001, \eta_p^2=.651$) such that participants reported more authentic pride ($M = 4.75 ; SD = 1.29$) 
than hubristic pride ($M = 2.51; SD = 1.30$). More importantly, the expected interaction 
between choice and the two facets of pride also emerged (Wilk’s $\lambda = 0.844, F(1, 87) =$
16.121, \( p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .156 \) such that green (vs. premium) brands led to more authentic pride \((M_{\text{Green}} = 5.08; SD = 1.09; M_{\text{Premium}} = 4.43; SD = 1.40)\) but to less hubristic pride \((M_{\text{Green}} = 2.13; SD = 1.04; M_{\text{Premium}} = 2.89; SD = 1.43)\). Simple comparisons confirmed these results. Authentic pride is higher for green choice \((F(1, 87) = 5.86, p < .018, \eta_p^2 = .063)\), whereas hubristic pride is higher for premium choice \((F(1, 87) = 8.29, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .087, \text{see Figure 1})\).

3.5 Discussion

Study 1 provides initial support for H1. As expected, preference for the green brand in a comparative choice setting triggered higher levels of authentic pride, whereas preference for the premium option triggered higher levels of hubristic pride.

4. STUDY 2 - The Moderating Role of Social Accountability in Green Pride

In this second study, we tested H2 by investigating if social accountability moderates the relationship between comparative choice and pride. Self-conscious emotions such as pride involve how we perceive our actions in relation to others; thus, the social context in which the comparative choice is made may influence how authentic and hubristic pride are triggered (Robins & Schriber, 2009). This study manipulated social accountability by creating private versus public settings of comparative choices. We expected to replicate Study 1’s results
pattern in terms of feelings of authentic and hubristic pride in conditions of high social accountability (i.e., public context), but not when social accountability is low (i.e., private context). We also tested these predictions with a different product (jacket) to investigate the consistency of the findings of Study 1.

4.1 Participants, Design, and Procedure

A total of 104 (52.9% male, $M_{age} = 22.5$ years) undergraduate students took part in the study in exchange for course credit and a chance to win one of 8 gift vouchers ($20) to spend at the university coffee shop. This study was also conducted in a lab, following the same procedures as study 1. The study employed a 2 (choice accountability: private vs. public) by 2 (Choice: green vs. premium) experimental design, with choice accountability as a between-subjects factor and choice as an endogenously created factor. A pretest validated the brand advertising manipulation (see the Supplemental Material for detailed results). As per Study 1, participants’ preferences were coded into binary choices (1 = green choice; 0 = premium choice).

Participants chose between a green (Ecolife) or a premium (Inlive) fictitious jacket brand advertised side by side, with the left and right positions randomly assigned. Four features were displayed for each option (see Appendix A for details). Before choosing their jackets, those in the public choice condition were told that they would be asked to publicly provide reasons for their choices afterward: “When back to the classroom, you will be asked to explain the reasons for your choice. Bear in mind that the whole class will evaluate your decision”. Those in the private condition were informed about the privacy of their decisions: “Remember that your choice is private. Bear in mind that your decision will not be evaluated by anyone else.” (adapted from Huh et al., 2014).
4.2 Measures

As in study 1, participants then indicated which of the two brands they would buy, followed by authentic and hubristic pride measures. To check the choice accountability manipulation, they answered the item “Others will evaluate my choice” (anchored by 1= Not at all, 7= A lot). Finally, demographic data were collected.

4.3 Preliminary Analyses

Overall, 57.7 % (n = 60) of the participants chose the green option. There was no difference in choice preferences ($\chi^2(1) = 1.05, p = .30$). As expected, a two-way ANOVA with choice justification (public vs. private choice) and choice (green vs. premium) condition as factors and the choice accountability check question as the dependent variable showed only a main effect of choice accountability, $F(1, 100) = 3.568, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .034$.

Participants in the public choice condition perceived that others would evaluate their choice more ($M_{\text{Public}} = 4.50; SD = 1.92$) than participants in the private choice condition ($M_{\text{Private}} = 3.82; SD = 2.17$). No other effects were observed ($Fs < 1$).

4.4 The Role of Choice Accountability

To test our predictions for H2, a two-way ANOVA mixed design analysis of variance was conducted separately for the public condition and the private condition, with choice (green vs. premium) as a between-subjects factor and the two facets of pride, authentic ($\alpha = .67$) versus hubristic ($\alpha = .64$), as a within-subjects factor. In the public justification condition, there was a main effect of Pride (Wilk’s $\lambda = .287, F(1, 42) = 104.96, p < .000, \eta_p^2 = .713$) such that participants reported more authentic pride ($M = 4.97 ; SD = .15$) than hubristic
pride (M= 2.68; SD=.13). More relevant to our hypothesis there was also an interaction between choice and pride (Wilk’s λ = 0.688, F(1, 42) = 19.09, p < .000, ηp²= .312). Green brands led to more authentic pride (M_{Green} = 5.38, SD = .21; M_{Premium} = 4.57, SD = .23) but to less hubristic pride (M_{Green} = 2.10, SD = .18; M_{Premium} = 3.26, SD = .209) than premium brands. Simple comparisons confirmed these results. Authentic pride was higher for green choice, (F(1, 42) = 6.35, p < .01, ηp²= .016), whereas hubristic pride was more significant for premium choice, (F(1, 42) = 17.68, p < .000, ηp²=.29). See figures 2 and 3 for detailed results.

INSERT FIGURES 2 and 3 HERE

Overall, these results confirm the predictions of H2. When there is no need for explanations, the significant impact of comparative choice on the two facets of pride is not observed.

4.5 Discussion

As predicted, in conditions of high accountability (i.e., public decisions), the pattern of results replicated those of Study 1. However, when accountability was low and the decisions were private, the comparative choice did not affect either of the two pride facets. In sum, authentic pride was reduced for those who chose the premium (vs. green) option, and hubristic pride increased when public scrutiny was anticipated (high accountability).

5. STUDY 3 - Mediation of Anticipated Judgment
In our previous studies testing H1 and H2, choice was an endogenous factor. To overcome this limitation, Study 3 directly manipulated choice to investigate the mediating role of anticipated judgment (H3).

5.1 Participants, Design, and Procedure

Two hundred and ten participants were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk. Twenty-eight participants who failed the attention check were eliminated from further analysis, leaving a sample of 182 respondents (53.3% male, $M_{age} = 39.2$; $SD = 11.9$). The experiment employed a single factor between-subjects design with two conditions of choice (premium vs. green). Participants were randomly exposed to one of the two conditions.

Participants read a short explanation about how consumers often face trade-offs between brands’ features when making a purchase and that it is not uncommon to find similar options between green and premium brands. After that, they were told to imagine that they were planning a holiday trip and needed to buy a winter jacket. They found two similar options. One was the Ecolife brand jacket, a green brand that claims social-environmental awareness, fair trade certifications, and renewable sources of raw materials. The other was the Toplive brand jacket, a prestigious premium brand that claims exclusivity, superior performance, and distinguished style. The two fictitious brands advertised were placed side by side, with left and right positions randomly ordered. The features of the brands are detailed in Appendix A. After taking a moment to read the description of the two jackets, participants were informed that “There are many reasons to opt for a premium or green brand. Most people can remember past occasions when they bought premium brands and other occasions when they decided on green brands. In the present case, imagine that after evaluating the premium and the green options, you decided to buy the Ecolife jacket/the
Toplive jacket”. Participants were then instructed to click on the image associated with their choice. Finally, they were asked to write at least three sentences providing the motivations that could explain why someone would prefer the green (vs. premium) Ecolife (vs. the Toplive) jacket instead of the premium (vs. green) option. They were also instructed to keep in mind that when an option was chosen, the alternative option was rejected.

5.2 Measures

Authentic and hubristic measures of pride were collected by asking participants how they would feel about their decision to choose the Ecolife/Toplive jacket rather than the Toplive/Ecolife jacket (anchored by 1= Not at all, 7= A lot), adapted from Tracy and Robbins (2007b). Authentic pride (α=.94) measurement was composed of seven items (accomplished, successful, achieving, self-worth, confident, productive, fulfilled). The hubristic pride scale (α=.97) was also composed of seven items (snobbish, pompous, stuck-up, conceited, egotistical, arrogant, smug). After that, participants were asked to indicate their agreement with two sentences, one stating that the best winter jacket was the green jacket, the other stating that it was the premium jacket (anchored by 1= Strongly agree, 7= Strongly disagree).

Anticipated judgment was measured using three items (α=.90) based on Chen (2017): “How do you think talking about having chosen the Ecolife jacket rather than the Toplive option will boost people’s impression of you?” (1 = Negatively to 7 = Positively); “Do you think people will view you more or less favorably because you shared your thoughts about having chosen the Ecolife jacket rather than the Toplive option?” (1= Less favorably to 7 = More favorably); “Do you think people will like or dislike you because you shared your thoughts about having chosen the Ecolife jacket rather than the Toplive option?” (1 = Dislike to 7 = Like).
Respondents then answered two attention check questions (based on Peer et al., 2014). Finally, additional emotional reactions were also collected: happiness, dissatisfaction, annoyance, remorse, guilt, shame, pride, gratitude, frustration, and regret, anchored by 1= Not at all, 7= A lot (Soscia, 2007).

5.3 Preliminary Analyses

A mixed subjects ANOVA analysis was performed to show the effect of the conditions on the manipulation check measures for green and premium options. Choice was the between-subjects factor and the two items regarding which jacket was the best option for the winter (green and premium) were the within-subjects factor. As expected, there was a significant interaction between choice condition and the best jacket option for the winter (Wilk’s $\lambda = 0.945, F(1, 180) = 10.52, p < .001, \eta^2_{p} = .055$). No main effect of choice was observed (Wilk’s $\lambda = 0.996, F(1, 180) = .667, p = .415$). Simple comparisons between each choice condition showed that those in the green condition indicated the green brand ($M_{\text{Green}} = 3.41; SD = 1.97$) as a better option compared to those in the premium brand choice ($M_{\text{Premium}} = 4.31; SD = 1.65; t(180) = 1.97, p = .05$). Not surprisingly, those in the premium condition indicated the premium brand ($M_{\text{Premium}} = 3.43; SD = 1.92$) as a better option compared to the evaluation of who chose the green brand ($M_{\text{Green}} = 3.97; SD = 1.92; t(180) = -3.31, p = .001$).

5.4 Comparative Choice and Pride

A mixed subjects ANOVA was performed to examine the impact of green vs. premium choice on the two dimensions of pride. Choice was the between-subjects factor and the two dimensions of pride were the within-subjects factor. There was a main effect of Pride (Wilk’s $\lambda = 0.539, F(1, 180) = 153.70, p < .000, \eta^2_{p} = .461$) such that participants reported
more authentic pride ($M=4.65; SD=1.51$) than hubristic pride ($M=2.58; SD=1.79$). More importantly, the expected Pride x Choice interaction was also significant (Wilk’s $\lambda = 0.928$, $F(1, 180) = 13.889, p < .000, \eta^2_p = .072$). Simple comparisons confirmed that hubristic pride was higher for premium brands ($M_{Premium} = 3.17; SD = 2.01$) than for green brands ($M_{Green} = 2.04; SD = 1.36; F(1, 180) = 19.62, p < .000, \eta^2_p = .098$). However, the difference between green and premium brands was not significant for authentic pride ($M_{Green} = 4.70, SD = 1.48; M_{Premium} = 4.59, SD = 1.56; F(1, 180) = .209, p = .618$).

We also performed one-way ANOVAs to test for the impact of comparative choices on other emotions (annoyance, ashamed, dissatisfaction, frustration, gratitude, guilt, happiness, regret, and remorse), and no significant differences were found ($p$’s > .12). See Table 1 in the Supplementary Material for detailed results).

**Mediation of anticipated judgment.** We performed a simple mediation analysis to test for the influence of anticipated judgment (i.e., how participants anticipate the way others are going to judge them if they choose a green over a premium option) on the relationship between green vs. premium choice and the two dimensions of pride, using the PROCESS macro on SPSS (model 4; 5,000 samples; Hayes, 2018). The green choice was coded as 1, and the premium choice was coded as 0.

When the dependent variable was authentic pride, there was a significant indirect effect of green vs. premium choice on authentic pride fully mediated by anticipated judgment ($\beta = .3324, CI = .1211$ to .5266) as the direct effect of choice on authentic pride was not significant ($\beta = -.2192, CI = -.6274$ to .1890). These results show that the impact of green choice on authentic pride is explained by the consumers’ perception of how others will judge them about their decision.
For hubristic pride, there was no indirect effect of anticipated judgment ($\beta = .1024$, $CI = -.0428$ to .2706), but there was a negative direct effect of Choice on hubristic pride ($\beta = -1.2272$, $CI = -1.7387$ to -.7157). No other indirect effect of anticipated judgment was observed for the other measured emotions.

5.5 Discussion

Study 3 provides additional support for the predicted impact of comparative choice on hubristic and authentic pride in a between-subjects design in which choice was manipulated. However, feelings of authentic pride were not significantly different across green and premium brands (simple comparisons). One possible account for this lack of differences is that authentic pride results from internal, unstable, and controllable attributions. In this sense, the experimental manipulation of participants’ choices may have interfered with the controllability dimension of causal attribution and thus with feelings of authentic pride. In other words, by experimentally manipulating “choice, we might have reduced the degree to which participants attribute having chosen the green or the premium option to factors under their control, thus interfering with feelings of authentic pride. On the other hand, hubristic pride might be less dependent on comparative choices since it results from attributions to internal, stable, and uncontrollable factors (“I am proud of who I am”).

A mediation analysis showed that authentic pride was fully mediated by the anticipated judgments of others. Therefore, the authentic pride stemming from the choice manipulation may be explained by how favorably consumers feel that green brand choices are usually evaluated by others (in comparison to premium brands). In contrast, although greater hubristic pride was associated with choosing the premium rather than the green option, this association was not explained by participants’ anticipated judgments of others,
which means that H3 was only partially supported. Such lack of mediation opens the possibility for other potential mediators of the observed relation between the manipulated choice (premium vs. green) and hubristic pride. We return to this point in the general discussion.

Notably, we found no other effects of comparative choice on any of the remaining emotions. This conclusion indicates that the effects of comparative choices reported across the three studies are likely to be specific to feelings of pride and cannot be subsumed by more general explanations based on the positive effect associated with authentic pride versus the negative effect possibly associated with hubristic pride.

6. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Across three studies, this research reveals that the choice of green (vs. premium) brands leads to higher levels of authentic pride and lower levels of hubristic pride, providing supporting evidence for H1. Following the notion that public recognition is a central aspect of self-conscious emotions such as pride (e.g., Tracy & Robins, 2007a, 2007b, 2014; Webster et al., 2003), these results only emerged under conditions of high accountability in which consumers expected to justify their own choices publicly and fade away when decisions were made privately with no anticipated need to explain their choices to others\(^1\), according to H2.

We also found initial evidence that the anticipated judgment of others concerning one’s pro-social behavior explains the relationship between green preference and authentic pride.

\(^1\) The manipulation of social accountability was used as a way to make the perceived scrutiny of others more salient. However, social accountability is not the same as whether the purchase decision takes place in a public context or not. In particular, consumers rarely need to justify their choices in their actual purchase decision. Future research should thus use other manipulations to generalize Studies 2’s results (e.g., making the comparative choices alone or in the presence of others).
pride but fails to account for hubristic pride. H3 was thus only partially supported.

Apparently, the explaining factors for why green (vs. premium) choices decrease hubristic pride do not include the more favorable anticipated opinion of others.

6.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research advances the current understanding of how consumers respond to comparative decisions involving green brands in three ways. First, it contributes to previous research investigating the identify signals associated with green behavior by suggesting that self-identity associated with pro-social concerns and behavior impact feelings of authentic and hubristic pride. These two facets of a self-conscious emotion play a key role in self-esteem regulation.

Second, previous research has shown that green consumption is associated with altruistic outcomes (Ladhari & Tchegna, 2017) and that pride may influence green brands (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014; Bissing-Olson et al., 2016; Luchs & Kumar, 2017). We added to this research by demonstrating that comparative decisions between premium and green options appear to affect authentic and hubristic pride in opposite directions. These findings allow for a better understanding of the role of self-conscious emotions, specifically, the two facets of pride (e.g., Tracy & Robins, 2007a, 2014) in the context of green consumption.

When consumers choose a green brand instead of a premium option, the consequent sense of achievement attributed to controllable and unstable factors such as consumers’ effort to enroll in pro-environmental consumption are likely to lead to the observed higher levels of authentic pride (Tracy & Robins, 2007a, 2007b, 2014). Also, by rejecting the premium option,
consumers deviate from self-centered attributions associated with an inherent sense of exclusivity conveyed by these brands, which reduces hubristic pride.

Third, inspired by the notion of competitive altruism (Van Vugt et al., 2007) and costly signaling theory (Brooks & Wilson, 2015; McAndrew, 2019), some studies have suggested that altruistic behaviors may be used to signal one’s willingness and ability to incur costs for the benefit of others (Griskevicius et al., 2010; Van Vugt et al., 2007). By engaging in this kind of altruistic consumption, the individual may obtain increased social status and appreciation from peers in public situations. The mediation effect of the anticipated judgment of others on the impact of green brands on authentic (but not hubristic) pride agrees with such a possibility.

Finally, we extended previous findings regarding comparative decisions and how consumers respond to trade-offs between sustainability and other valued attributes (Juhl et al., 2017; Luchs & Kumar, 2017) by demonstrating that both green and premium choices have a positive influence on consumers’ emotional reactions, although they go in different directions.

Our findings also provide some practical implications that could help brand managers to increase consumers’ preference for green consumption. For instance, green brands should benefit if they are positioned in contrast to premium options. It is not uncommon for consumers to face trade-offs between a green brand and other competing options (e.g., organic versus premium cookies). In these comparative decisions, premium brands appear as a strong anchor that may influence choices because their prices are similar to green options. For instance, AMMA Chocolates is a Brazilian green brand of chocolate bars that have a price similar to the Swiss premium brand Lindt. Also, Patagonia (a green brand) and The North Face (a premium brand) offer winter jackets of similar style and price.
Although past research shows that some green attributes may generate a negative costly signal (Hoogendoorn et al., 2019), our study shows that the anticipated judgments related to the green preference may increase authentic pride. Therefore, managers of green brands can communicate “green pride” as a way to motivate consumers to choose green brands over premium ones.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

This research focused on investigating the impact of comparative choice between green and premium brands. However, in many situations, the comparison is not as clear-cut as it may seem. For instance, some premium brands also have green attributes, which might be secondary but are nonetheless still present, fulfilling a pro-environment role (e.g., some sustainable luxury brands). There are also situations in which sustainable brands are not as expensive as their premium counterparts (e.g., handbags made of eco-leather). This aspect limits the degree to which our results may be generalized. It is an open question for future research to explore how these central versus secondary attributes will interact and influence consumers’ preferences and emotions.

Another limitation is that all studies were based on a single decision-making (i.e., participants made just one comparative decision). A valuable avenue for future research would be to investigate how sequential choices impact self-conscious emotions such as pride. Longitudinal studies are needed to explore how these emotions evolve (e.g., the intensity of both facets of pride) over time. Such an approach – in many ways closer to real-life consumption – could bring new insights concerning the role of self-conscious emotions as decisions unfold.
Finally, the artificial setting of the experiments is a potential limitation of this research, as well as the fact that student samples were used in Studies 1 and 2. Future studies outside a lab and with a more heterogeneous sample are essential to test the consistency of our findings.

7. Conclusion

Understanding consumer responses in comparative choices is of great interest because the trade-offs during the choice process highlight the identity signals associated with green versus premium preferences. The current research contributes to a novel perspective on how comparative choices between green and premium brands can differentially impact the feelings of authentic and hubristic pride in different ways and with different motivational consequences.

REFERENCES


https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-08-2021-0268

https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.4.015


https://doi.org/10.1086/677315

https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucx052


# APPENDIX

## Appendix A. Brand Features by Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1 – Scenario (Green-Premium)</th>
<th>Study 2 – Scenario (Green-Premium)</th>
<th>Study 3 – Scenario (Green-Premium)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green Chocolate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Premium Chocolate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Green Jacket</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand: Kokoa (US$ 10)</td>
<td>Brand: Thierry (US$ 10)</td>
<td>Brand: Ecolife (US$219)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% organic grains</td>
<td>Taste and exclusivity</td>
<td>Green nylon satin (100% recycled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairtrade certificate</td>
<td>High quality selected grains</td>
<td>Padded with Thermogreen insulation (92% recycled polyester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect environmental standards</td>
<td>Type Gourmet-premium</td>
<td>Vegan-friendly &amp; Cruelty-free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique texture and taste</td>
<td>Fine and exclusive ingredients</td>
<td>Fairtrade resistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75% cocoa</td>
<td>Unique texture and taste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pack with 50 bonbons</td>
<td>75% cocoa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pack with 50 bonbons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green Jacket</strong></td>
<td><strong>Premium Jacket</strong></td>
<td><strong>Green Jacket</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand: Ecolife (US$50)</td>
<td>Brand: Inlive (US$50)</td>
<td>Brand: Ecolife (US$219)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultra-soft waterproof recycled nylon satin</td>
<td>Distinct design, body adjustable</td>
<td>Green nylon satin (100% recycled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermogreen padded (92% recycled)</td>
<td>Special padding</td>
<td>Padded with Thermogreen insulation (92% recycled polyester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total absence of animal source</td>
<td>Limited edition</td>
<td>Vegan-friendly &amp; Cruelty-free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer chemicals and wastewater treatment</td>
<td>Exclusive buckles and straps</td>
<td>Fairtrade resistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairtrade certificate</td>
<td>Strategic utilitarian compartments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super resistant</td>
<td>High technology fabric and seam-sealed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Super resistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Premium Jacket</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand: Toplive (US$219)</td>
<td>Posh design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green nylon satin (100% recycled)</td>
<td>Special padded seam-sealed insulation</td>
<td>Limited collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padded with Thermogreen insulation (92% recycled polyester)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unique zippers and clasps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegan-friendly &amp; Cruelty-free</td>
<td>High-tech fabric</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairtrade resistant</td>
<td>Water-resistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Authentic and Hubristic Pride as a function of comparative choice (Study 1)
Figure 2. Public Justification: Authentic and Hubristic pride and comparative choice (Study 2)
Figure 3. Private Justification: Authentic and Hubristic pride and comparative choice (Study 2)