Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Current Opinion in Psychology

Review

The effects of consumption on self-esteem

Irene Consiglio[a] and Stijn M. J. van Osselaer[b]

Abstract

Research on the effect of consumption on self-esteem is relatively scarce and related evidence is fragmented. We review articles from the literature on consumption, advertising, materialism, mass media, and social media as they relate – directly or indirectly – to consumer self-esteem. We introduce a taxonomy of eight types of processes through which consumption affects self-esteem: *self-discrepancy*, *self-congruency*, *self-enhancement*, *self-determination*, *compensatory consumption*, *self-verification*, *self-object association*, and *market-mediated relationships*. Based on this taxonomy, we highlight consumption domains and recent consumer trends that impact self-esteem. Moreover, we suggest priorities for further research.

Addresses

[a] Nova School of Business and Economics, Rua da Holanda 1, 2775-405 Carcavelos, Portugal

[b] Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell SC Johnson College of Business, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-6201, USA

Corresponding author: Consiglio, Irene (irene.consiglio@novasbe.pt)

Current Opinion in Psychology 2022, **46**:101341

This review comes from a themed issue on **Consumer Psychology (2022)**

Edited by **Bob Fennis** and **Derek Rucker**

For complete overview about the section, refer Consumer Psychology (2022)

Available online 16 March 2022

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101341

Keywords

Self-esteem, Consumption, Advertising, Materialism, Mass media, Social media.

Introduction

Self-esteem is individuals' own evaluation of their value [1]. It can be relatively stable (*chronic self-esteem*) or fluctuate (*state self-esteem*; [2]) and can encompass the whole self (*global self-esteem*; [3]), or be specific to a particular domain, such as physical appearance (*contingent self-esteem*; [4]). Self-esteem may affect decision-making processes, relationships, health, and well-being [5,6]. Thus, investigating its antecedents is important. Here, we review the role of consumption as an antecedent of self-esteem.

The literature on the impact of consumption on self-esteem is relatively sparse, fragmented, and often does not provide direct evidence of this impact. In our review, we integrate findings that do not provide direct evidence, but that suggest potentially interesting and important effects.

We posit that many consumption-related behaviors can boost or decrease self-esteem, via different processes. We introduce a taxonomy of effects of consumption on self-esteem and highlight key examples, with a focus on recent trends. Our taxonomy delineates eight main types of processes through which consumption affects self-esteem: *self-discrepancy*, *self-congruency*, *self-enhancement*, *self-determination*, *compensatory consumption*, *self-verification*, *self-object association*, and *market-mediated relationships*. We also discuss open research questions.

Processes

Self-discrepancy

The most studied category of effects involves self-discrepancy [7] and social comparison [8]. Self-discrepancy is an incongruity between different parts of the self-concept, particularly between the actual self and an internalized or external standard of comparison [7]. Consumption can induce a self-discrepancy. Mass media and advertising have long been theorized to threaten consumers' self-esteem because they display unattainable standards of beauty, possessions, experiences, and lifestyles, that may make people feel worse about themselves in comparison (e.g., Refs. [9,10]). For instance, materialistic cues such as displays of wealth or luxury in mass media, advertising, and social media can trigger self—discrepancy processes and lower self-esteem [10]. Interestingly, even *owning* luxury items might highlight a discrepancy between the actual self and the inflated self-image projected through luxury [11]; this might damage self-esteem—even though possessing luxury and status items can also benefit self-esteem (see section on self-enhancement).

Social media have become an integral part of people's lives, including adolescents and children. Arguably, social media stimulate comparison to others and expose consumers to others' mostly positive online self-representations [12]. Indeed, upward social comparisons on social media decrease self-esteem [13]. Thus, following people and brands on social media might make

consumers feel inadequate, less than, or unhappy with what they currently have.

Moreover, individuals sometimes construe unrealistic online versions of themselves by selectively displaying positive aspects of their lives on social media, in order to boost their self-views. Ironically, this might also induce a self-discrepancy, and thus backfire. For instance, applying virtual filters that alter natural features (e.g., skin tone, eye shape) to make oneself appear more attractive can induce an unfavorable comparison with one's real self [14] and in turn may decrease self-esteem, instead of increasing it. Of note, certain categories of consumers seem particularly vulnerable to experiencing unfavorable self-discrepancy and lower self-esteem. For instance, people who grew up poor feel more threatened by materialistic cues [15].

Self-congruency

Self-discrepancy effects are driven by a comparison between an actual self and an ideal standard of comparison, primed mostly by other people's possessions and desired characteristics, or ironically induced by unrealistic self-images that consumers themselves project to others. Self-congruency effects are driven by a perceived (in) congruency between an actual or ideal self-image and a product's image (positive or negative).

Self-congruency theory posits that consumers choose or avoid products and brands based on a perceived congruency between an ideal or actual self-image and the product- or brand-image. Perceived congruency impacts choice—consumers choose brands that are consistent with a positive (actual or ideal) self-image and avoid those that are incongruent with it. However, consumers may not only choose products based on perceived (in) congruency with their self-image, but they might also derive self-information from this perceived (in)congruency [16], with potential downstream effects on self-esteem. Specifically, congruency between a positive product image and an ideal or actual self-image might bolster self-esteem, whereas an incongruency might decrease it. These positive and negative effects on self-esteem could be due to the activation and reinforcement of existing positive or negative self-associations and schemas. For instance, clothing manufacturers use "vanity sizing", that is, the size on the label is smaller than the actual size of the clothing items. Vanity sizing can make people feel better about themselves because a garment with a smaller-than-expected size label is congruent with a thinner ideal self-image—consumers feel thinner [17]. In contrast, larger than expected sizes can reduce appearance self-esteem [18]. Likewise, when a performance brand (e.g., an energy drink boosting athletic prowess) is congruent with a pre-existing positive self-image (e.g., of being an athlete), it reinforces that positive self-view and bolsters self-esteem [19].

Of note, self-congruency effects do not require motivated behavior. In other words, consumers do not necessarily need to seek congruence for these effects to occur, but provided that a product consumers interact with is (in)congruent with a self-image, there can be downstream effects of this (in)congruence on self-esteem. In contrast, other types of processes involve motivated behavior. We review these processes below: self-enhancement, self-determination, compensatory consumption, and self-verification.

Self-enhancement

Consumers are motivated to engage in consumption-related behaviors that allow them to enhance their self-image. Consumption can help consumers fulfil their self-enhancement goals — at least in the short term — thanks to the symbolic and signaling properties of products and brands. The purchase and consumption of products and experiences allow people to convey identity-relevant information [20] and to affirm the self in domains from which they derive self-worth [21]. For example, consumers consume luxury brands and other conspicuous items to signal positive qualities, such as status, to others [22] or to themselves [23], and status goods can boost a person's self-esteem [24].

Technology and social media play an important role in supporting consumers' self-enhancement efforts. For instance, self-enhancement motivates online word-of-mouth behavior [25]. Selective self-presentation on social media may increase self-esteem [12], especially when consumers display positive but realistic information about themselves to close others [26]. However, self-enhancement on social media that relies on unrealistically positive or false self-representations might backfire (see section on self-discrepancy).

Self-determination

Products may not only enhance self-esteem by making consumers *appear* better to others or to themselves. Products may also enhance self-esteem by helping consumers increase *actual* performance and achieve mastery and a sense of autonomy. For example, self-determination theory suggests that people have an innate need to feel autonomous and competent, and that fulfilling these needs boosts self-esteem [27]. Consumption can be directly instrumental to these goals and be a means to actual personal growth. For instance, products and services such as cooking courses, sports gear, and educational apps help consumers build skills in self-relevant domains. Other products and services help consumers self-regulate and reach goals—e.g., fitness and health apps [28].

However, recent consumption trends can also frustrate the fundamental needs of competence and autonomy. For instance, consumers resist automation when it

replaces their own skills in identity-relevant domains [29]. More broadly, artificial intelligence and other technological innovations that make consumers' choices and chores easier have been theorized to undermine consumers' sense of autonomy [30], which might negatively impact self-esteem.

Compensatory consumption

The functional, symbolic, and hedonic properties of products help consumers cope with self-threats, by replenishing aspects of the self that are threatened, by allowing consumers to affirm the self in other domains, or by allowing consumers to direct attention away from the threat. Much research investigates consumers' motivations to engage in compensatory consumption [31,32]. Less research examines whether engaging in compensatory consumption actually replenishes the self [31] and actually protects or improves self-esteem. For example, if self-esteem in the domain of intelligence is threatened, would buying a science book help replenish it? Interestingly, there is suggestive evidence that some compensatory strategies are more effective than others or might even backfire. For instance, symbolic, within-domain consumption might be detrimental if it does not actually increase competence or performance: when consumers buy a science book after their intelligence is threatened, but do not actually read it, the book might remind them of their lack of intelligence. Thus, when products acquired to compensate self-deficits only remind consumers of their deficits, self-repair is impeded [33] and induce consumers to ruminate about it [34]. However, when consumers do not compensate symbolically but use consumption adaptively to actually address a self-discrepancy [35], this might be more beneficial for self-worth.

Self-verification

Self-enhancement, self-determination, and compensatory mechanisms entail a desire to maintain or boost the positivity of one's self-views. These motives are pervasive and many consumers indeed use products to feel good about themselves. However, consumers may not always be primarily motivated to maintain a positive self-image or self-enhance. Indeed, a competing motive — self-verification [36] — might induce some people to confirm their self-views, even when these self-views are negative, because this allows them to perceive the world as predictable and safe. Thus, some consumers might be motivated to prefer inferior products that keep their self-esteem low. Consumers with chronic low self-esteem are especially motivated to self-verify and may prefer inferior products that confirm their negative self-views [37]. To these insecure consumers, self-verification provides much-needed psychological benefits—a sense of security, predictability, and self-protection. We speculate that the consumption of lower quality products that confirm negative self-views might in turn reinforce or solidify low chronic self-esteem.

Self-object association

Consumers form strong links with their possessions, even to the extent that they may include possessions in their sense of self [38,39]. Such self-object associations may have significant implications for self-esteem. Strong self-object links allow direct transfers of associations between the object and the consumer who owns it. For example, owning an aesthetically appealing product might make consumers feel more physically attractive [40]. Thus, when products' qualities are positive this might boost self-esteem. The opposite may happen when products' qualities are negative. For example, consuming aesthetically unattractive products can decrease self-evaluations [41]. Moreover, when a brand fails, consumers who are strongly attached to it react as if it was a personal failure [42]. Similarly, disposing of a self-associated object represents a form self-threat [43].

Market-mediated relationships

Consumer-firm interactions

Individuals' self-esteem is particularly sensitive to cues of interpersonal acceptance and rejection [44], which can often be experienced in the marketplace. Indeed, the notion that interpersonal processes may apply in consumer—firm interactions and that consumers rely on interpersonal norms as a guide to respond to a firm's actions is well established (e.g., Ref. [45]). Interpersonal processes are particularly relevant in service contexts, which typically involve some degree of interpersonal interaction. Evidence suggests that the quality of consumers' interactions with service providers may impact self-esteem [46]. For instance, poor service may instil feelings that the service provider does not value the customer nor its relationship with the customer [47]. This interpersonal devaluation cue may damage self-esteem [44]. In contrast, when service providers fulfil consumers' essential need to feel respected and valued self-esteem may be boosted [46,48]. Of note, brand relationship theory [49] would predict that similar processes apply not just in relationships with service providers, but also in interactions with products and brands.

Substituting interpersonal interactions

Consumption can also substitute interpersonal interactions [50]. For example, products and brands are increasingly designed to be anthropomorphic in design and function, providing benefits similar to human-like interactions. For this reason, interacting with anthropomorphic brands can mitigate the negative effects of social exclusion in the short term—in fact, interacting with anthropomorphic brands may also serve as a form of compensatory consumption (see section on Compensatory consumption) following social exclusion. However, when consumers are more strongly aware that products do not provide genuine human interactions, these beneficial effects are negated [51]. Moreover, one might

speculate that a persistent substitution of interpersonal interactions is detrimental in the long term. For instance, social networks sites have moved interpersonal processes to online interactions, and recent meta-analyses show that social network usage and self-esteem are negatively correlated [52,53]. It seems possible that meaningful face-to-face interactions are essential for building and maintaining self-esteem and that substituting them with less meaningful online interactions in the metaverse has a negative overall impact on self-esteem.

Conclusions

In this literature review, we presented a taxonomy of consumption effects on self-esteem. We hope that this primer will help guide future research in this important domain. Indeed, even though our taxonomy was based on a comprehensive literature review, many of our specific propositions were necessarily speculative and based on indirect evidence. We hope they inspire empirical research aimed at testing them.

In addition to inviting further investigation on our more speculative propositions, we emphasize three research questions to move research forward. A first priority is to investigate under which conditions we can expect long-term effects of consumption on self-esteem. Due to feasibility and cost, much research focuses on short-term fluctuations in self-esteem. Research that employs longitudinal designs to investigate consumption's long-lasting impact on people's core self-views remains rare ([54] is a notable exception).

Some processes are likely to produce short-lived effects. For example, compensatory consumption might temporarily patch up a self-wound but might leave the consumer in their original state (or worse) if the underlying insecurities are not really treated. Thus, we support the call for further research in this domain [32]. Other processes may affect consumers' self-esteem in the long run. For example, individuals' self-esteem responds strongly to interpersonal cues of acceptance and rejection [44]. Thus, it is possible that negative brand relationships in service industries in which failures are frequent and consumers consistently do not feel respected and valued, have more extreme and longer-lasting effects on self-esteem.

A second, related priority is to identify moderators for long-term effects of consumption on self-esteem. Long-lasting effects of consumption on self-esteem might occur especially among categories of consumers who are particularly vulnerable. For instance, younger consumers, whose self-esteem has not crystallized yet, could be particularly sensitive to self-discrepancy and signals of interpersonal devaluation. Nationally representative surveys of U.S. children and adolescents showed a sudden decrease in self-esteem after 2012, in tandem with a rise in social media usage, and adolescents who spent more time online and less time on non-screen activities (e.g., in-person social interaction) had lower psychological well-being [55].

Finally, in this review we have focused on self-esteem as a consequence of consumption. However, self-esteem is also an important antecedent of consumption. In particular, the interplay between chronic and state self-esteem may determine which types of processes are likely to prevail.

For instance, research suggests that consumers with varying levels of chronic self-esteem react to self-threats and drops in state self-esteem differently. Specifically, consumers with chronic high self-esteem — who are more confident and optimistic in their self-views — might seek to restore their positive sense of self by engaging in targeted compensatory behaviors [56]. In contrast, low chronic self-esteem consumers' behavior might become more conservative and risk-averse in face of a self-threat [47,56]. Thus, these consumers might be more likely to engage in processes that entail less risk of further harm and disappointment. They might address a self-threat indirectly [56] — for instance, by focusing on their physical appearance if their intelligence is threatened — or seek self-verifying information confirming their negative self-views, as a means to find comfort and safety in a predictable world [37].

Moreover, people who developed chronic low self-esteem unfortunately engage in more frequent and extreme upward comparisons [13] and seem to be generally more likely to update their self-views negatively rather than positively [37]. In contrast, people with high chronic self-esteem might be better able to reap the benefits of consumption in terms of positive updating of self-views. In conclusion, our understanding of the link between consumption and self-esteem would benefit from further research on self-esteem both as an antecedent and as a consequence of consumer behavior.

Author statement

Irene Consiglio: Conceptualization, Writing - Original draft preparation; Stijn M. J. van Osselaer: Conceptualization, Writing - Reviewing and editing.

Funding

This work was funded by grants from Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia [UID/ECO/00124/2019, UIDB/00124/2020, UIDP/00124/2020]; POR Lisboa and POR Norte [Social Sciences DataLab, PINFRA/22209/2016] to the first author.

Conflict of interest statement

Nothing declared.

References

Papers of particular interest, published within the period of review, have been highlighted as:

* of special interest
** of outstanding interest

1. Leary M, Baumeister RF: **The nature and function of self-esteem: sociometer theory**. *Adv Exp Soc Psychol* 2000, **32**: 1–62, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(00)80003-9.

2. Heatherton TF, Polivy J: **Development and validation of a scale for measuring state self-esteem**. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 1991, **60**: 895–910, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.60.6.895.

3. Rosenberg M: **Self-concept from middle childhood through adolescence**. In *Psychological Perspectives on the Self*. Edited by Suls J, Greenwald A, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum; 1986: 107–136.

4. Crocker J, Luhtanen RK, Cooper ML, Bouvrette A: **Contingencies of self-worth in college students: theory and measurement**. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 2003, **85**:894–908, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.894.

5. Orth U, Erol RY, Luciano EC: **Development of self-esteem from age 4 to 94 years: a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies**. *Psychol Bull* 2018, **144**:1045–1080, https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000161.

6. Orth U, Robins RW: **Is high self-esteem beneficial? revisiting a classic question**. *Am Psychol* 2022, **77**:5–17, https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000922.

7. Higgins ET: **Self-discrepancy: a theory relating self and affect**. *Psychol Rev* 1987, **94**:319–340, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.94.3.319.

8. Festinger L: **A theory of social comparison processes**. *Hum Relat* 1954, **7**:117–140, https://doi.org/10.1177/001872675400700202.

9. López-Guimerà G, Levine MP, Sánchez-Carracedo D, Fauquet J: **Influence of mass media on body image and eating disordered attitudes and behaviors in females: a review of effects and processes**. *Media Psychol* 2010, **13**:387–416, https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2010.525737.

10. Moldes O, Ku L: **Materialistic cues make us miserable: a meta-analysis of the experimental evidence for the effects of materialism on individual and societal well-being**. *Psychol Market* 2020, **37**:1396–1419, https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21387.

11. Goor D, Ordabayeva N, Keinan A, Crener S: **The impostor syndrome from luxury consumption**. *J Consum Res* 2020, **46**: 1031–1051, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucz044.

12. Gonzales AL, Hancock JT: **Mirror, mirror on my Facebook wall: effects of exposure to Facebook on self-esteem**. *Cyberpsychol, Behav Soc Netw* 2011, **14**:79–83, https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2009.0411.

13. ** Midgley C, Thai S, Lockwood P, Kovacheff C, Page-Gould E: **When every day is a high school reunion: social media comparisons and self-esteem**. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 2021, **121**: 285–307, https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000336.
This article provides a comprehensive test of how individuals make and respond to social comparisons on social media. More frequent and more extreme upward comparisons result in lower self-esteem. Moreover, individuals with low chronic self-esteem are more likely to engage in upward comparisons, which further threaten their already low self-evaluations. Downward comparisons are less frequent in general, and do not substantially mitigate upward comparisons' negative effect. Finally, social media comparisons result in a greater negative effect as compared to comparisons made in other contexts.

14. Javornik A, Marder B, Pizzetti M, Warlop L: **Augmented self – the effects of virtual face augmentation on consumers' self-concept**. *J Bus Res* 2021, **130**:170–187, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.03.026.

15. Whelan J, T Hingston S: **Can everyday brands be threatening? Responses to brand primes depend on childhood socioeconomic status**. *J Consum Psychol* 2018, **28**:477–486, https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1029.

16. Sirgy MJ: **Self-concept in consumer behavior: a critical review**. *J Consum Res* 1982, **9**:287–300, https://doi.org/10.1086/208924.

17. Aydinoğlu NZ, Krishna A: **Imagining thin: why vanity sizing works**. *J Consum Psychol* 2012, **22**:565–572, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2011.12.001.

18. Hoegg J, Scott ML, Morales AC, Dahl DW: **The flip side of vanity sizing: how consumers respond to and compensate for larger than expected clothing sizes**. *J Consum Psychol* 2014, **24**:70–78, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2013.07.00.

19. Garvey AM, Germann F, Bolton LE: **Performance brand placebos: how brands improve performance and consumers take the credit**. *J Consum Res* 2016, **42**:931–951, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucv094.

20. Reed A, Forehand M. *Handbook of Research on Identity Theory in Marketing*. Northampton, MA: Elgar; 2019, https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788117739.

21. Townsend C, Sood S: **Self-affirmation through the choice of highly aesthetic products**. *J Consum Res* 2012, **39**:415–428, https://doi.org/10.1086/663775.

22. Ordabayeva N, Chandon P: **Getting ahead of the Joneses: when equality increases conspicuous consumption among bottom-tier consumers**. *J Consum Res* 2011, **38**:27–41, https://doi.org/10.1086/658165.

23. Bodner R, Prelec D: **Self-signaling and diagnostic utility in everyday decision making**. In *The Psychology of Economic Decisions*. Edited by Brocas I, Carrillo J, Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2003:105–126.

24. Sivanathan N, Pettit NC: **Protecting the self through consumption: status goods as affirmational commodities**. *J Exp Soc Psychol* 2010, **46**:564–570, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2010.01.006.

25. De Angelis M, Bonezzi A, Peluso AM, Rucker DD, Costabile M: **On braggarts and gossips: a self-enhancement account of word-of-mouth generation and transmission**. *J Market Res* 2012, **49**:551–563, https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.11.0136.

26. Wilcox K, Stephen AT: **Are close friends the enemy? Online social networks, self-esteem, and self-control**. *J Consum Res* 2013, **40**:90–103, https://doi.org/10.1086/668794.

27. Deci EL, Ryan RM: **Human autonomy: the basis for true self-esteem**. In *Efficacy, Agency, and Self-esteem*. Edited by Kernis MH, New York: Plenum Press; 1995:31–49, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-1280-0_3.

28. Mead NL, Baumeister RF: **Do objects fuel thyself? The relationship between objects and self-regulation**. *Curr Opin Psychol* 2021, **39**:16–19, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.07.008.

29. Leung E, Paolacci G, Puntoni S: **Man versus machine: resisting automation in identity-based consumer behavior**. *J Market Res* 2018, **55**:818–831, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022243718818423.

30. André Q, Carmon Z, Wertenbroch K, Crum A, Frank D, Goldstein W, Huber J, van Boven L, Weber B, Yang H: **Consumer choice and autonomy in the age of artificial intelligence and big data**. *Cust Needs Solut* 2018, **5**:28–37, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40547-017-0085-8.

31. Mandel N, Rucker DD, Levav J, Galinsky AD: **The compensatory consumer behavior model: how self-discrepancies drive consumer behavior**. *J Consum Psychol* 2017, **27**:133–146, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2016.05.003.

32. Mandel N, Lisjak M, Wang Q: **Compensatory routes to object attachment**. *Curr Opin Psychol* 2021, **39**:55–59.

33. * Rustagi N, Shrum LJ: **Undermining the restorative potential of compensatory consumption: a product's explicit identity connection impedes self-repair**. *J Consum Res* 2019, **46**: 119–139, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucy064.

This research examines conditions under which compensatory consumption does not effectively repair the self-concept. Specifically, when a product is explicitly connected to a self-threat (e.g., through product names and marketing slogans), self-repair is impeded because an explicit connection induces rumination about the self-threat.

34. Lisjak M, Bonezzi A, Kim S, Rucker DD: **Perils of compensatory consumption: within-domain compensation undermines subsequent self-regulation**. *J Consum Res* 2015, **41**: 1186–1203, https://doi.org/10.1086/678902.

35. Kim S, Gal D: **From compensatory consumption to adaptive consumption: the role of self-acceptance in resolving self-deficits**. *J Consum Res* 2014, **41**:526–542, https://doi.org/10.1086/676681.

36. Leary MR: **Motivational and emotional aspects of the self**. *Annu Rev Psychol* 2007, **58**:317–344, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.58.110405.085658.

37. ** Stuppy A, Mead NL, Van Osselaer SMJ: **I am, therefore I buy: low self-esteem and the pursuit of self-verifying consumption**. *J Consum Res* 2020, **46**:956–973, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucz029.
This paper shows that low (vs. high) self-esteem consumers prefer inferior products because these products confirm their pessimistic self-views. By doing so, this paper demonstrates that consumers not only self-enhance but also have the goal to self-verify (even if their self-views are negative).

38. Belk RW: **Possessions and the extended self**. *J Consum Res* 1988, **15**:139–168, https://doi.org/10.1086/209154.

39. * Wheeler SC, Bechler CJ: **Objects and self-identity**. *Curr Opin Psychol* 2021, **39**:6–11, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.07.013.
This literature review proposes different types of associations between an object and the self that can shape an individual's identity. By doing so, it provides a framework to understand how the acquisition, ownership, usage, and abandonment of objects impacts identity.

40. Weiss L, Johar GV: **Products as self-evaluation standards: when owned and unowned products have opposite effects on self-judgment**. *J Consum Res* 2016, **42**:915–930, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucv097.

41. Grewal L, Hmurovic J, Lamberton C, Walker Reczek R: **The self-perception connection: why consumers devalue unattractive produce**. *J Market* 2018, **83**:89–107, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242918816319.

42. Lisjak M, Lee AY, Gardner WL: **When a threat to the brand is a threat to the self: the importance of brand identification and implicit self-esteem in predicting defensiveness**. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull* 2012, **38**:1120–1132, https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167212445300.

43. Chatterjee P, Irmak C, Rose RL: **The endowment effect as self-enhancement in response to threat**. *J Consum Res* 2013, **40**: 460–476, https://doi.org/10.1086/671344.

44. Leary MR, Tambor ES, Terdal SK, Downs DL: **Self-esteem as an interpersonal monitor: the sociometer hypothesis**. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 1995, **68**:518–530, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.68.3.518.

45. Aggarwal P: **The effects of brand relationship norms on consumer attitudes and behavior**. *J Consum Res* 2004, **31**: 87–101, https://doi.org/10.1086/383426.

46. You Y, Yang X, Wang L, Deng X: **When and why saying "thank you" is better than saying "sorry" in redressing service failures: the role of self-esteem**. *J Market* 2020, **84**:133–150, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919889894.

47. * Consiglio I, van Osselaer MJ: **The devil you know: self-esteem and switching responses to poor service**. *J Consum Res* 2019, **46**:590–605, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucz001.
This paper demonstrates that poor service signals that a service provider does not value the customer nor its relationship with the customer. This makes consumers with low self-esteem risk-averse in their switching decisions: these consumers prefer to stay with their current provider even when service quality is poor in order to avoid risky new contracts with alternative providers.

48. Willer EK: **Health-care provider compassionate love and women's infertility stressors**. *Commun Monogr* 2014, **81**: 407–438, https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2014.940591.

49. Fournier S: **Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research**. *J Consum Res* 1998, **24**:343–373, https://doi.org/10.1086/209515.

50. Keefer LA, Landau MJ, Rothschild ZK, Sullivan D: **Attachment to objects as compensation for close others' perceived unreliability**. *J Exp Soc Psychol* 2012, **48**:912–917, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.02.007.

51. Mourey JA, Olson JG, Yoon C: **Products as pals: engaging with anthropomorphic products mitigates the effects of social exclusion**. *J Consum Res* 2017, **44**:414–431, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucx038.

52. Liu D, Baumeister RF: **Social networking online and personality of self-worth: a meta-analysis**. *J Res Pers* 2016, **64**: 79–89, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2016.06.024.

53. Saiphoo AN, Dahoah Halevi L, Vahedi Z: **Social networking site use and self-esteem: a meta-analytic review**. *Pers Indiv Differ* 2020, **153**, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109639.

54. Pieters R: **Bidirectional dynamics of materialism and loneliness: not just a vicious cycle**. *J Consum Res* 2013, **40**: 615–631, https://doi.org/10.1086/671564.

55. Twenge JM, Martin GN, Campbell WK: **Decreases in psychological well-being among American adolescents after 2012 and links to screen time during the rise of smartphone technology**. *Emotion* 2018, **18**:765–780, https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000403.

56. Park LE, Maner JK: **Does self-threat promote social connection? The role of self-esteem and contingencies of self-worth**. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 2009, **96**:203–217, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013933.