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Identification and Aftermarket Personalization with Durable Goods

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ABSTRACT

Blending elements of the heuristic–systematic model and social identity theory, the authors extend theory by exploring the role of intimacy as a key boundary condition for identification (ID). Specifically, this research illustrates how intimacy affects the relationship between brand characteristics (prestige and distinctiveness) and ID. Further, the authors explore the relationship between ID and aftermarket spending on accessories. In a consumer durables setting, the authors conducted a field study with 1,193 consumers and matched customer perceptions with their actual retail spending on aftermarket goods. The results suggest that an individual's intimacy with a brand may affect how prestige and distinctiveness shape their ID. In addition, results show that the relationship between ID and customer aftermarket spending is moderated by a customer's level of satisfaction. Managerial implications of the findings are also outlined. © 2015 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Marketers have long recognized the benefits of developing and maintaining strong relationships with customers. Relationship marketing can be especially critical in durable product categories (i.e., products that last for three or more years), where aftermarket spending can often generate significant ongoing revenue. Because many consumers see possessions as an extension of the self (Belk, 1988), they often spend surprising amounts of effort and money to personalize products and develop emotional bonds with durable goods over time (Mugge, Schoormans, & Schifferstein, 2009). Thus, in many durable good categories, the initial sale sparks the beginning of what retailers hope is a long-term relationship that is fueled by customer engagement through ongoing personalized aftermarket purchases.

Deeper engagement with brands as illustrated above would seem to positively affect a company's bottom-line sales figures, in addition to providing positive nonmonetary outcomes. For instance, average auto enthusiasts spend approximately US$1800 on aftermarket goods to personalize their vehicles (Staab, 2005). In fact, a study by the Specialized Equipment Market Association reports that nearly 90% of car owners between 16 and 25 years of age customized their vehicles (Miller, 2006). Pimp My Ride, a popular television series based on unique automobile customization, highlights how the enthusiasm for personalization has sparked a vast do-it-yourself (DIY) ecosystem of automobile aftermarket customization.

Aftermarket accessories can include product add-ons such as new mufflers for a car or paraphernalia items such as hats, jackets, shirts, and so on, with the brand logo and/or name associated with them. Such items portray the owner's social identity to the social world (Holt, 1995). In many durable product categories, such as automobiles and smartphones, aftermarket accessory revenue can represent a notable portion of overall company revenue and can be up to five times larger than the original equipment revenue (Cohen, Agrawal, & Agrawal, 2006). For example, smartphone accessory sales accounted for about $20 billion in 2012 (Graziano, 2012). Aftermarket accessories are often high-margin products, and research suggests that aftermarket sales can represent 45% of profits among consumer durable firms (Cohen, Agrawal, & Agrawal, 2006). Moreover, aftermarket accessory customers often become missionaries for the company through their efforts to encourage others to engage with the company. This study uses the aftermarket context to test what drives consumers to continue purchasing brand paraphernalia after the initial purchase has been made.

Prior research in this area has greatly enhanced the understanding of how consumers relate to brands (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004). Specifically, the authors found that a brand's personality (e.g., sincere)

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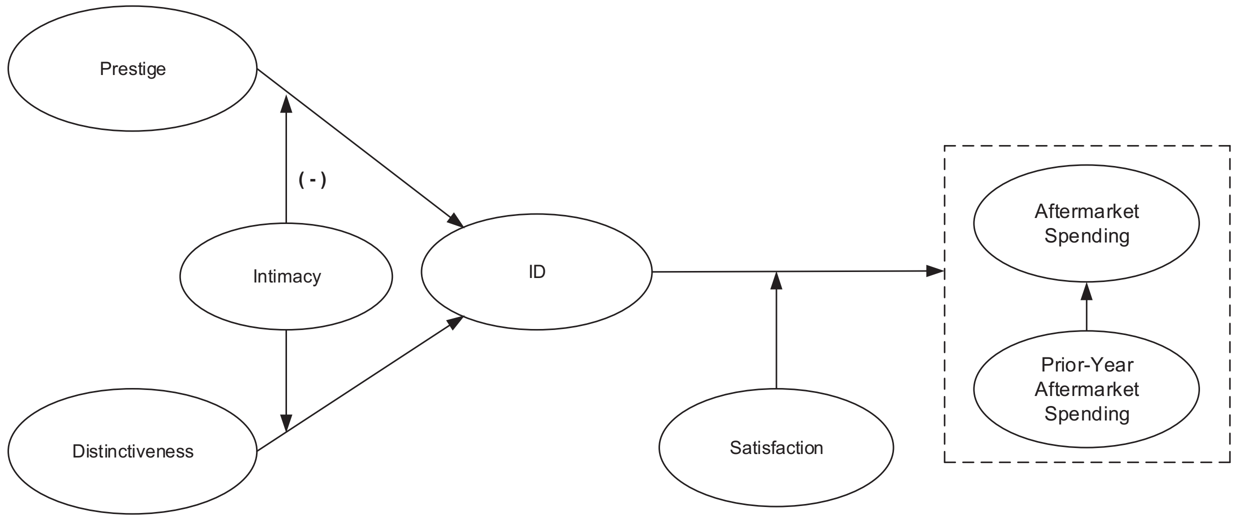

Figure 1. Theoretical model.

affected the relationship between the consumer and the brand. Sincere brands often lead to a relationship similar to that of close friends. Further, the work by Donavan, Janda, and Suh (2006) demonstrates that the more individuals identify with a brand, the more likely they are to purchase and share brand symbols with others. These studies demonstrate that consumers often relate to brands similarly as they do to people in close personal relationships. However, relevant questions still remain regarding what leads consumers to become engaged with specific brands, and what encourages consumers to continue the relationship with the brand over time (via ongoing aftermarket purchases). One key factor that seems central to an understanding of these relationships is a consumer's sense of belongingness or identification (ID) with the brand. The focus of this research, thus, is to establish the boundary roles of key brand characteristics (i.e., prestige and distinctiveness) in affecting ID and in understanding how ID gives rise to desirable brand outcomes (e.g., aftermarket spending). This research also studies the role played by intimacy and satisfaction in this context.

The proposed model is shown in Figure 1. The next section provides a conceptual framework outlining theoretical insights including prior relevant research and the relationships proposed in this study. The subsequent sections include the methodology, results, and a discussion, including theoretical and managerial implications and ideas for future research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Identification

ID reflects certain aspects of an individual's self-schema. Schemas are frameworks or knowledge networks about a certain concept, which are stored in our minds (Brown, 1992). A consumer may have a schematic set of associations with Zara apparel, for instance, that may include ideas such as Spanish-made, prestigious, youthful, and irreverent.

ID occurs when an individual feels a sense of "oneness with or belongingness to an entity, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the entity to which he or she is a member" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104). ID represents the degree to which an individual believes the organization, retailer, or brand has become a part of the self—in other words, the individual defines him/herself as having similar attributes as the entity (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). When ID is strong, the entity becomes self-referential or self-defining for the individual (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Pratt, 1998; Schneider, Hall, & Nygren, 1971). As Fisher and Wakefield (1998) suggest, when people are asked to describe who they are they often use group associations, such as "Denver Bronco fan," or other groups to describe their identity.

Lam, Ahearne, Hu, and Schillewaert (2010) suggest that customer-brand ID is "a customer's psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing his or her belongingness with a brand" (p. 129). Prior research has primarily focused on what leads consumers to identify with an entity (see Lam et al. [2010] for an exception). The current study extends the understanding of ID by considering the long-term relationship between the consumer and a brand. Specifically, the focus is on consumers who already have some level of ID with a brand. As marketers embrace the relationship philosophy, it is important to understand how ID is affected once consumers are already engaged with the entity. Consumers who are in a long-term brand relationship are still influenced by their information processing mode and brand intimacy (depth of knowledge and understanding of the brand). The next section begins by discussing the two most widely studied antecedents of ID.

Brand Characteristics

Prestige. The quest for prestige has its roots back in the hunter-gatherer age. To gain prestige, hunters sought the largest game trophy rather than relegating themselves to seeking nuts and berries (Diamond, 1999). Consistent with prior work (Davies, Chun, da Silva, & Roper, 2004), prestige is defined as having to do with the consumer's desire for respect and status.

Contemporary marketers inundate consumers with references to prestige (Colarelli & Dettmann, 2003). For instance, many companies incorporate the word "prestige" into their name to send cues to consumers that they offer premier quality and service (e.g., Winn-Dixie Prestige Beef, Avis Prestige Rental Cars, Prestige BMW, Prestige Hotels and Resorts, and Prestige Retail Park). Other firms create prestige categories to create and manage a portfolio of experiences across varying levels of quality (e.g., Accor Hotels describes its upscale hotel, Sofitel, as prestigious). The idea of prestige is particularly well illustrated by the apparel industry. It is frequently noted that Gucci, Patagonia, and Lululemon hold prestigious positions with respect to other specialty apparel retailers, and these retailers are regarded by consumers as symbolic of a higher social standing. The presence of prestige has previously been shown to enhance overall brand equity (Randall, Ulrich, & Reibstein, 1998) and customers are willing to pay higher prices for prestigious brands.

Prior organizational behavior research suggests that prestige always has a positive influence on ID because individuals typically prefer to associate with prestigious entities (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Bhattacharya & Sen, 1995; Colarelli & Dettmann, 2003). For instance, Bhattacharya, Rao, and Glynn (1995) found that perceptions of prestige resulted in increased ID among museum patrons. Recent research also shows that the positive effect of prestige is even greater in online settings as compared with traditional shopping environments (Danaher, Wilson, & Davis, 2003). Moreover, prestige projects a prominence beyond that of other nonprestigious products (Park, Milberg, & Lawson, 1991). Sullivan (1998) suggests that consumers often prefer prestigious brands, while Belk (1988) adds that consumers select prestige to express their self-identity. Auken and Adams (1999) found that firms can create perceived value when one brand is compared to a more prestigious brand in the same product category.

Social identity theory (SIT) suggests that individuals seek prestigious affiliations to improve their social standing; thus, affiliating with entities perceived to possess desirable image-related characteristics (i.e., high degree of prestige) ostensibly enhances their social standing (Baek, Kim, & Yu, 2010; Bodet & Bernache-Assollant, 2011; Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009). Consumer perceptions are partially determined by other people's opinions (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Specifically, brands can help categorize individuals into social categories (Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). Consumers often patronize a retailer in order to gain membership into a social group (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986), and they may perceive their own self-concept as overlapping with the retailer's image (Park, Milberg, & Lawson, 1991). Consequently, customer perceptions of prestige are associated with ID. No formal hypothesis related to prestige and ID is being presented due to the existing literature in this area; that is, the article's contribution is not based on reintroducing prestige as a predictor of ID, but instead discussing the boundary conditions of prestige.

Distinctiveness. A few savvy retailers, such as REI, Trader Joe's, PetSmart, and Apple, have proven to be successful in breaking away from the pack with distinctive customer offerings. Funnel Mill Rare Coffee & Tea (Santa Monica, CA, USA) provides an excellent example of distinctiveness by transforming coffee drinking into a unique experience that includes everything from the creation and presentation of beverages to the coffee house motif. Similarly, Whole Foods Market is frequently cited as having a distinctive merchandising strategy. Distinctiveness differentiates the group to which an individual feels he/she belongs (the in-group) from other groups (out-groups) by creating a salient identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Further, distinctiveness leads to a perception of oneness or belongingness with the brand (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

SIT emphasizes that people focus on distinctiveness by demonstrating how they are different from an out-group and simultaneously profess commonality with an in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). These actions both enhance distinction and build affiliation (Holt, 1995). Consumers demonstrate their in-group and out-group affiliation by showing a "belongingness" with brands that reinforce their social ties, and these social ties can be with the brand itself. As Lam et al. (2010) suggest, ID is a psychological oneness with a social entity such as a brand.

While each brand may have its own distinctive identity, an individual is likely to choose a brand that fulfills his/her desired social identity. Consequently, firms segment the market to satisfy unique consumer needs. Individuals who feel that a certain brand identity is consistent with the desired image of the in-group (and other brands are representative of an out-group) will be more likely to identify with that brand.

These two facets of prestige and distinctiveness have consistently been cited as affecting consumer ID in a positive linear relationship (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). The current study adds to this research by looking at the context-specific nature of these effects. It is proposed that a consumer's deep understanding of the brand (as reflected by intimacy with the brand) will affect how prestige and distinctiveness influence his/her brand ID. A more elaborate discussion on intimacy appears in the following section.

Theoretical Development

The heuristic–systematic model (HSM, Chaiken [1980, 1987]) is now introduced and integrated with SIT to predict interactions. HSM suggests that consumers have two processing modes that may determine their attitudes or social judgments: heuristic and systematic (Chen & Chaiken, 1999). Heuristic processing involves activation of judgmental rules or "heuristics" that require minimal amounts of cognitive processing—in this case, the reliance is on peripheral cues or decision rules learned through past experiences and observations (Chaiken, 1980). When a consumer has very little knowledge of the brand, there is a greater reliance on heuristics to make a judgment (Chen & Chaiken, 1999).

In systematic processing, an individual dedicates substantial cognitive effort to evaluate the message based on the validity and strength of the arguments (Chaiken, 1980; Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). Under systematic processing individuals form their judgments after considering all useful information (Chaiken, Liberman, & Egley, 1989), whereas in heuristic processing individuals take a superficial view of the information (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). Individuals are more likely to use the systematic processing mode in situations where there is a great deal of knowledge or intimacy (Chaiken, 1980).

Intimacy. Intimacy is a psychological "closeness" felt toward another party (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Deep intimacy involves access to the other party's essence (Fromm, 1956) and, as such, implies a stronger and deeper knowledge structure (Fournier, 1981). In the current context, these rich meanings and associations, acquired via experience with a brand, enhance the relationship. In the context of this research, intimacy is defined as the depth of knowledge and rich understanding about a particular brand (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004).

Intimacy is the catalyst to information processing and determines whether an individual will process heuristically or systematically, based on a motivation to enhance one's social identity. An individual with low brand intimacy can quickly gain more from an association with the prestigious brand, because such an association provides instant respect. When a person has low brand intimacy, s/he will likely rely on any available heuristic cue, such as prestige, to make a judgment (Chen & Chaiken, 1999).

SIT can be further tied to this prediction. As stated, prestige has to do with gaining respect. For instance, Janda and Donavan's (2004) phenomenological study found that college students were often attracted to prestigious teams that reflected a sense of gaining greater esteem among peers. SIT suggests that consumers are attracted to brands that enhance social standing. An individual with low brand intimacy has little knowledge of the brand; therefore, such an individual will be more inclined to rely on prestige to help define his or her social identity.

Prestige is a socially construed perception that other people, who are trusted, have a high regard for the brand (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000). Relying on other people's opinions or judgments is a heuristic similar to previously identified heuristics like "expert's statements can be trusted," "length implies strength," and "consensus opinions are correct" (Chen & Chaiken, 1999). Heuristic processing is more likely to occur when individuals have lower intimacy with the brand (Chen & Chaiken, 1999). Consequently, prestige is a rule of thumb that allows an individual with low intimacy to make a judgment about his or her level of brand ID. An example is the "band wagon fan" who begins following a team immediately after a victory (Cialdini et al., 1976). The brand community literature further supports this argument. McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig (2002) suggest that those with low intimacy can increase their level of ID for self-expressive or social reasons, such as an association with a prestigious brand.

To complete the interaction, it is proposed that an individual with high brand intimacy will process the information systematically because high intimacy suggests a deep understanding and heightened relationship with the brand (Price, Arnould, & Tierney, 1995). High intimacy moves an individual to process any information about the brand more deeply. Those with high intimacy have a stronger relationship with the brand and are less likely to be influenced by socially defined cues such as prestige.

To sum this up, individuals with low levels of brand intimacy will use the socially defined and easily accessed construct of prestige to determine their level of ID. High-intimacy individuals, conversely, will be less impacted by prestige as their brand relationship is well developed and, consequently, they do not need to rely on an evaluation that is socially defined. These arguments lead to the first hypothesis.

> **H1:** The positive influence of prestige on ID will be stronger when intimacy is weak than when intimacy is strong.

The effect of distinctiveness on ID may also be impacted by intimacy. As SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests, distinctiveness creates a more salient definition of the self (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) by separating the "self" from the out-group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Individuals with low intimacy do not have a wealth of knowledge on which to draw (Chen & Chaiken, 1999) and, as such, may not have a desire to separate themselves from an out-group through association with the brand. As brand intimacy increases, individuals may be more motivated to demarcate from the out-group and distinctiveness provides a means to a unique identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

As previously noted, consumers may rely on salient cues when the cues help define their social identity positively. Individuals with strong intimacy with a brand are in a better position to appreciate how the brand's distinctiveness can enhance their social identity. These individuals may have a stronger desire to be seen as distinct from the out-group than those with low levels of intimacy simply because low-intimacy individuals do not comprehend the benefits of separating themselves from an out-group. Experienced owners (i.e., those possessing high intimacy) are more driven to reaffirm ties to an in-group than others (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). Individuals with low intimacy have a weaker relationship with the brand and may not fully appreciate the desire to separate from an out-group through the brand's distinctiveness. Thus:

H2: The positive influence of distinctiveness on ID will be stronger when intimacy is strong than when intimacy is weak.

To sum up the first two hypotheses, it is predicted that intimacy will have a differential effect on prestige and distinctiveness when predicting ID. Specifically, those low in intimacy will be influenced more by prestige and those high in intimacy will be more strongly influenced by distinctiveness.

ID and Spending

In durable product categories, ongoing retail spending on licensed aftermarket accessory goods is a critical outcome of the customer relationship because it moves beyond mere attitudes or intentions. As such, Licensed Aftermarket Accessory Customer Spending (LAACS) offers retailers a quantitative metric for gauging how effectively strategic and operational efforts translate onto the income statement. A strong social bond or association will enhance an individual's relationship with a brand; as such, the individual may incorporate salient features or values related to the brand as part of his/her own self (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Glynn, 1998). This sense of enhanced self-relevance will result in greater time, effort, and monetary resources spent on brand-related activities (Petty, Caccioppo, & Schumann, 1983). Consistent with Oliver's (1999) action loyalty theory, consumers with higher levels of ID purchase aftermarket goods that possess personalized symbols or markers (e.g., licensed aftermarket parts). Individuals rating high on ID should have increased personalization in the form of increased aftermarket spending.

SIT provides a structure for understanding this relationship. An individual's identity is described as a schema, or that which is viewed as distinctive and central about the individual (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Tajfel and Turner (1985) contend that "social identity consists of those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging" (p. 16), and those categories define one's place within the social world. Social categories might be derived from basic demographic groupings, such as age or gender, or from organizational memberships, such as teams, religion, or employment (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995). The characteristics of the categories, in part, make up an individual's social identity (Hogg, 1996; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Pratt, 1998). Further, formal membership is not required to become a member of a category (Carlson, Suter, & Brown, 2008; Pratt, 1998), as individuals can become members by possessing brands associated with the social category (Belk, 1988). Consumers with high ID with an entity are more likely to follow the behavior of the group in making purchase decisions (Madrigal, 2001). Hence:

H3: ID is positively related to spending.

Satisfaction and ID

It has been argued that as a customer's ID level increases, spending should also increase. However, the level of satisfaction may affect the relationship between ID and spending. Bolton (1998) has shown that cumulative satisfaction, based on prior experience with the relationship partner, affects long-term retention. Satisfaction may be important in understanding ID due to its inherent tie to customer lifetime value and repeat-purchase behaviors (Ho, Park, & Zhou, 2006). Specifically, research demonstrates that customer satisfaction strongly predicts repeat purchase behaviors (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Gupta & Zeithaml, 2006), as well as re-patronage intentions, loyalty, and looking forward to visiting the retailer (Jones & Reynolds, 2006).

Customers may have varying levels of ID with a brand. Stronger levels of ID imply higher spending on the brand as previously illustrated (H3). It is further proposed that the positive effect of ID on spending will be enhanced if the customer's satisfaction level with the brand is high. Since satisfaction occurs as a result of prior experience, high satisfaction levels should amplify ID's effect on spending. Similarly, customers with lower levels of brand satisfaction spend less on the brand even though they may otherwise identify. As an example, a car owner may identify strongly with a certain brand (e.g., BMW), but an unpleasant service experience may result in that customer spending less at the dealership on accessories, such as floor mats or headlight covers. Regardless, the customer may still remain a fan of the brand (in this example BMW). The case of automotive specialty equipment is highlighted here as it is estimated that such products accounted for $31 billion in revenue during 2012; by no means a trivial amount (Campbell, 2013).

The interaction between ID and satisfaction can be further predicted with the literature on basking in reflected glory (Cialdini et al., 1976; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Cialdini et al. (1976) found that students significantly increased their behavior of wearing team paraphernalia after a team victory. Arguably, these students already identified with the team, but their satisfaction with the team's performance led to increases or decreases in wearing team gear. Consequently, an individual's level of ID influenced the behavior of wearing team colors (or buying in this study), but this effect was amplified by the level of satisfaction. Thus,

H4: The positive effect of ID on spending will be stronger when satisfaction is high.

METHOD

Data Collection Procedures and Measures

Procedures. Given the context of ID and ongoing aftermarket retail spending, the authors conducted a field study with motorcycle owners who attended a motorcycle retailer exposition that showcased new models and aftermarket goods and services. Because major motorcycle retailers are bolstering their resources to connect with customers and build lifestyle customer experiences (Greenberg, 2004), this industry provides a relevant setting for a field study. Three tables were set up at various locations around the exposition and attendees were invited to complete a survey about their relationship and overall experiences with the company in exchange for a commemorative event lapel pin. Over a three-day period, 1705 owners were asked to participate, and 1193 completed responses were collected, yielding a 70% response rate. On average, respondents had owned one of this retailer's privately branded motorcycles for 15 years; periods of ownership ranged from less than one year to 46 years. Fifty-four percent of the sample was male, and the average age was 48 (SD = 16.03). A wide range of annual household incomes was represented; approximately 50% of respondents had incomes in the \$60,000–\$90,000 range. Respondents spent an average of \$312 on licensed (branded) aftermarket motorcycle accessories from the retailer during the previous calendar year, with expenditures ranging from \$6 to \$1,175.

Respondent Bias Checks. Two checks were employed to assess respondent bias. First, the sample characteristics were not significantly different from the general customer profile reported by the focal retailer, offering some evidence that the sample is representative of the focal firm's customer base. Second, 243 owners, who shopped at competitors' motorcycle retailers, were surveyed to assess whether respondents were significantly different from other motorcycle consumers. The analysis revealed no significant differences in age, gender, or ID between the study respondents and the comparative sample, offering some evidence that the respondents are representative of motorcycle consumers. These data checks suggest that rating biases are likely minimal.

Customer Measures

The authors used two single-item measures (i.e., 12-month prior-survey spending and 12-month post-survey spending) and five multi-item measures. Four multi-item measures utilized 7-point Likert scales (1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree"), and the last multi-item measure (i.e., Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000) included an 8-point visual representation and a 1 to 7 scaled item. Since the goal was to investigate consumer relationship with brands, the Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel's (2004) multi-item scales for measuring intimacy and satisfaction were chosen. To measure prestige the Mael and Ashforth's (1992) multi-item scale was selected. All three measures have sound measurement properties and have been validated in prior research.

A multi-item distinctiveness measure was developed for this study. The authors created a battery of eight distinctiveness items based on a thorough literature review and findings from a qualitative study utilizing depth interviews. In a pretest, respondents evaluated a brand on these items pertaining to distinctiveness along with four items related to prestige. Scale purification based on this pretest resulted in final retention of three prestige and three distinctiveness items.

Customer Aftermarket Spending. Because aftermarket spending on motorcycles can be a critical part of a manufacturer's overall revenue, and because it captures the type of spending that can signal a personalized brand connection, this study focused on licensed aftermarket accessory customer spending. To collect the spending variable of interest, the respondents' loyalty program numbers were recorded, which were gathered by either (1) scanning their loyalty card or (2) searching the firm's database for the number based on address or phone number information. As such, all respondents had at least one prior purchase transaction recorded with the retailer, which was a necessary criterion for developing an aftermarket spending history. The focal firm's database was queried for the customers' total purchases of company-licensed aftermarket accessories that could be traced back to each respondent's customer record. It is important to note that the aftermarket spending of interest did not include original equipment manufacturer replacement/repair parts that restore motorcycles to factory condition, as those expenses are mostly tied to motorcycle performance rather than to brand expression. Instead, the focus was on licensed aftermarket accessory spending on bolt-on accessories (e.g., custom fenders, seats, backrests, luggage racks, saddlebags, etc.) that offer personalized (and branded) enhancements to one's motorcycle. Data were collected for the two relevant time periods: 12 months of presurvey aftermarket spending and 12 months of postsurvey aftermarket spending. This customer information was corroborated using data checkpoints in the company's database and was deemed reliable and valid. Items for all scales used, as well as the sources of these items, are provided in the Table A1.

RESULTS

Measurement Properties

The covariances among the 16 items were input into AMOS20 to estimate a confirmatory factor measurement model. Consistent with a two-step approach, the objective of this analysis was to assess dimensionality, discriminant validity, and internal consistency among the hypothesized model's constructs prior to estimating the structural parameters (Anderson & Gerbing, 1993). Analysis began with a confirmatory factor analysis on the seven scales: prestige (three items), distinctiveness (three items), intimacy (three items), satisfaction (three items), ID (two items), spending (one item), and presurvey spending (one item). The variables representing spending are directly observable measures (rather than latent constructs) that were captured by the firm and verified by multiple sources. As such, the factor loading and error term were both fixed in accordance with Anderson and Gerbing (1993). The CFA model gave acceptable fit indices: ($\chi^2 = 78.92$, df $= 85$; $p < 0.10$; comparative fit index [CFI] = 1.00; Tucker–Lewis Index [TLI] = 1.00; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = −.001) and all indicators loaded on the appropriate latent factors.

Discriminant validity among the model constructs was supported, as the average variance extracted (AVE) between each pair of constructs was greater than φ^2 (i.e., the correlation between two constructs) for all possible construct pairs (Fornell & Larcker, 1998), and ranged from 0.83 to 0.95. Further, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE estimates indicated strong internal consistency for all multi-item construct measures. In sum, the 16-item, seven-factor measurement model was supported. Table 1 presents a summary of the descriptive statistics.

Brand Characteristics, Intimacy, and ID

To evaluate H1–H2, the authors examined the eight-factor (i.e., prestige, distinctiveness, ID, intimacy, spending, presurvey spending, and two control variables: age and gender) structural model. The interaction variables were added as described here. To test the interactions between the brand characteristics (i.e., prestige and distinctiveness) and the variable intimacy, and the interaction between ID and satisfaction, procedures recommended by Little, Bovaird, and Widaman (2006) were followed for testing moderation in structural equation modeling. In doing so, new latent variable interactions were created for the three combinations using residual centering. This created a structural model with 12 constructs, which includes the three interaction constructs, (i.e., prestige × intimacy, distinctiveness × intimacy, and ID × satisfaction). Paths were included from the three interaction terms to their respective outcome variables.

The model, as represented in Figure 1, included the following paths: Prestige, distinctiveness, intimacy, the interactions of distinctiveness × intimacy and intimacy × prestige to ID. Paths were added from prestige and distinctiveness to satisfaction. Paths included were from satisfaction, ID, spending at time 1, and the interaction of ID × satisfaction to spending at time 2; satisfaction to spending at time 1; and finally age and gender to spending at time 2. The error terms on gender and age were fixed. Additionally, since sales data were directly tied to customer loyalty cards, sales at both times 1 and 2 were fixed. The exogenous variables prestige, distinctiveness, and intimacy were subsequently correlated. The three interaction terms (1) distinctiveness × intimacy, (2) prestige × intimacy, and (3) ID × satisfaction were each correlated to their original constructs—for example, the interaction of distinctiveness × intimacy was correlated with both distinctiveness and intimacy as prescribed by Little, Bovaird, and Widaman (2006). The structural model was estimated using maximum likelihood. The results gave acceptable fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 2{,}263.84$, df $= 751$; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.04). Table 2 displays structural model path estimates.

Regarding H1, which predicted the effect of prestige on ID will be weaker when intimacy is stronger, support was found. The interaction effect of prestige × intimacy on ID, H1 (SPE −0.05, $t = -2.03$), was significant. The means corresponding to the two-way interaction effects between prestige and intimacy are plotted in Figure 2. These results indicate that when

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Prestige	3.69	1.96	*0.96*					
2. Distinctiveness	4.79	1.92	0.63	*0.95*				
3. Intimacy	4.22	1.97	0.71	0.67	*0.97*			
4. ID[a]	9.02	3.90	0.73	0.70	0.77	*0.93*		
5. Satisfaction	3.68	2.01	0.71	0.66	0.73	0.78	*0.98*	
6. Spending at time 1 (covariate)	$311.70	$241.60	0.40	0.38	0.38	0.44	0.43	–
7. Spending at time 2	$336.85	$302.24	0.59	0.53	0.57	0.63	0.60	0.60

Note: The *italicized* numbers on the diagonal are the average "composite reliability" estimates of internal consistency. Unless noted, the correlations represent disattenuated estimates from a confirmatory-factor measurement model that account for measurement error.

[a]ID represents a two-item summated score ranging from 2 to 15.

Table 2. Results of Structural Equations Analyses.

χ^2		2263.84	
df		751	
CFI		0.98	
TLI		0.98	
RMSEA		0.04	
Paths	Hypothesis	Std. Path Est.	t-Value
Prestige × intimacy → ID	H1	−0.05	−2.03[a]
Distinctiveness × intimacy → ID	H2	0.05	2.13[a]
ID → Spending	H3	0.37	13.38[a]
ID × satisfaction → spending	H4	0.14	8.59[a]
Other Paths in Model			
Prestige → ID		0.37	13.62[a]
Distinctiveness → ID		0.31	11.58[a]
Intimacy → ID		0.34	12.40[a]
Prestige → satisfaction		0.48	18.09[a]
Distinctiveness → satisfaction		0.38	14.48[a]
Satisfaction → spending		−0.03	−1.16
Satisfaction → prior-year spending		0.43	16.00[a]
Prior-year spending → spending (covariate)		0.74	57.27[a]

Note: $N = 1193$. Standardized path estimates shown. Age and gender were included as covariates to spending. Neither covariate was significant.

[a]$p < 0.01$, [b]$p < 0.05$, [c]$p < 0.10$ (two-tail tests).

intimacy is stronger, the effect of prestige on ID is attenuated. Specifically, individuals with lower brand intimacy were more strongly impacted by prestige than those with high brand intimacy. In the test of H2 that the interaction between distinctiveness and intimacy will have a positive effect on ID, a significant path was found. The interaction between distinctiveness × intimacy on ID was significant, H2: (SPE .05, $t = 2.13$).

H3 and H4 were tested next. ID was positively related to spending (H3: SPE = 0.37, t = 13.38). Further, the path from ID to spending was enhanced when accounting for the interaction with satisfaction in H4 (SPE = 0.14, $t = 8.59$). Refer to Table 2 to view all the main effect results.

Follow-up Test for Mediation

To examine the mediating effects of ID, models were estimated consistent with Baron and Kenny (1986) and Holmbeck (1997). Four conditions for mediation were examined. The first condition is satisfied if the independent variables (prestige and distinctiveness) affect the mediator ID. The second condition is satisfied if the mediator affects the dependent variable (aftermarket spending). Both of these conditions were met by the path estimates in the hypothesized model. The third condition is satisfied if the independent variables (prestige and distinctiveness) affect the dependent variable (aftermarket spending). Thus, a model was estimated with only direct paths from the antecedents to aftermarket spending—a "direct" model (χ^2 = 2,6553.03, df = 751; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.05). The direct paths were significant with t-values of prestige (3.22) and distinctiveness (2.22), thus satisfying the third mediating condition.

The fourth mediating condition is satisfied if the direct paths from the independent variables (prestige and distinctiveness) to the dependent variable (aftermarket spending) become nonsignificant when the paths from the independent variable to the mediator (ID) are included in the model (full model). The fit of the "full" model (χ^2 = 2,263.63, df = 749; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.04) was not better than the fit of the hypothesized model, indicating that ID fully mediates the effects of prestige and distinctiveness on aftermarket spending.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

Blending elements of SIT with the literature on heuristic–systematic processing, a field study was conducted that matched consumer surveys to aftermarket spending data to examine key antecedents and consequences of ID. Findings offer new insights into the theoretical relationships among prestige and distinctiveness as related to ID and spending. In addition to enhancing current theoretical perspectives related to ID, the study also sets forth managerially relevant strategies for enhancing ID, and offers a key customer outcome of such strategies.

The findings offer implications for managers and scholars regarding the ways in which widely recognized brand characteristics and intimacy are related to ID. The findings suggest that firms may want to consider level of intimacy when targeting consumers for personalized aftermarket spending. When consumers have high levels of intimacy with the brand, firms may particularly benefit by highlighting the distinctiveness of the brand relative to its competitors. This approach may translate to higher levels of ID with the brand, resulting in higher spending on brand-related aftermarket purchases. Moreover, for consumers who are not as intimate with the brand, an enhanced focus on brand prestige may be a way to build ID and enhance branded aftermarket spending. Thus from a managerial perspective, firms need to consider developing unique communications for various target markets defined in terms of their levels of intimacy with the brand. Such focused communication can be effectively employed via use of social media ecosystems. The

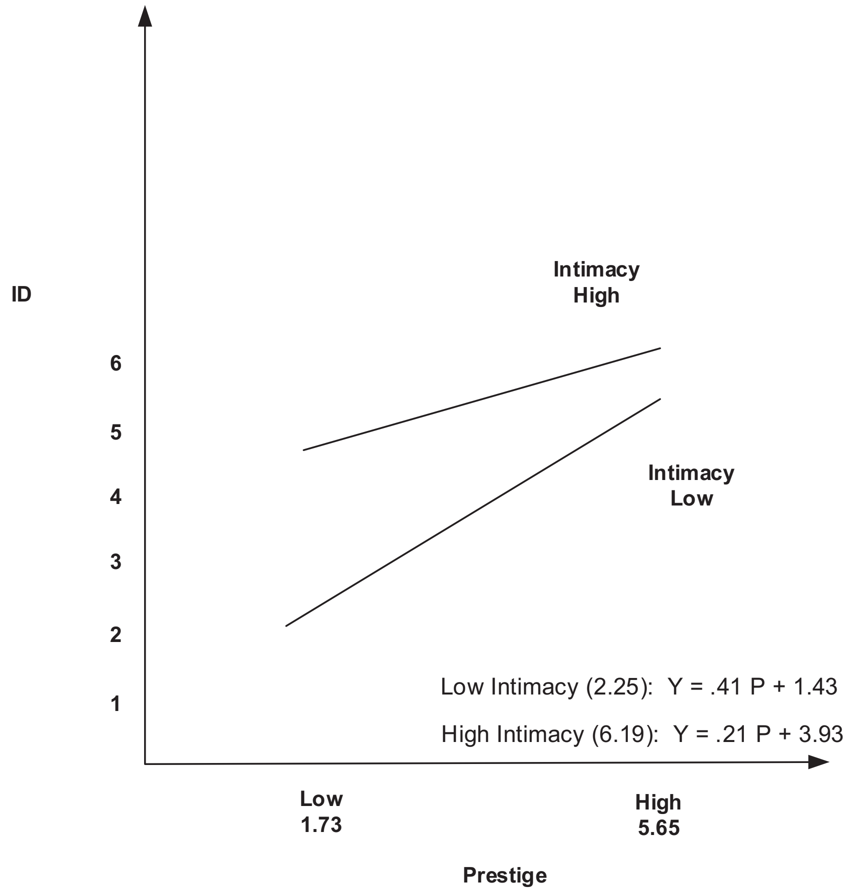

Figure 2. The moderating effect of intimacy on prestige.

results suggest that even when customers have a base level of ID with a brand, firms can still improve outcomes by recognizing that different customer segments are motivated by different brand characteristics. Further, another managerial recommendation is that firms should work to create opportunities for their brand enthusiasts to collect brand symbols. While some industries, such as the motorcycle industry, have embraced this strategy, many firms simply focus on the initial sale.

The study's findings have implications for aftermarket spending. As previously outlined, aftermarket spending is a large contributor to numerous firms' bottom lines. While it appears that many of the firms that benefit from ID, and subsequent aftermarket spending, sell highly conspicuous products, brands can be repositioned to entice more conspicuous consumption. A case in point is Starbucks, Inc. Coffee was once viewed as a commodity with little brand loyalty or ID with the brand. Starbucks changed the coffee landscape and now enjoys a highly identified set of loyal customers around the world. Coffee is now a conspicuously consumed product as many Starbucks drinkers proudly display the logo as they consume. By training the team of baristas in skills for making the perfect coffee drinks and also in providing consistent customer service, Starbucks ensures customers are satisfied. High levels of satisfaction combined with strong ID result in enhanced aftermarket spending over time.

It can be assumed that the relationship between intimacy and prestige and intimacy and distinctiveness goes beyond aftermarket sales. Firms can use prestige to attract new customers as these customers increase their level of intimacy with the brand. Conversely, these same firms may increase ID among their high-intimacy fans by further developing a distinctive brand image.

It would appear beneficial for managers to periodically monitor the levels of both brand characteristics and intimacy and allocate appropriate levels of social media, in-store design, brand events, and merchandising (e.g., store architecture or façades, media, fixtures, flooring, furniture, lighting, and signage) aimed at enhancing brand ID. Managers can add measures of the brand characteristics to ongoing survey efforts to provide a marketing metric tracking dashboard for gauging customer perceptions of the brand experience. Such ongoing tracking efforts can be important for managers as successful monitoring and management of consumer perceptions of prestige, as well as distinctiveness, will likely result in enhanced levels of loyalty (e.g., ID) and a positive behavioral outcome (e.g., aftermarket spending).

One example of a company that seems to be enhancing loyalty by affecting some of these company characteristics is Zappos.com. Zappos is an online retailer that provides free shipping both ways (shipping purchases to customers, as well as shipping returns from customers back to the company warehouse) and will provide this free shipping consistently, even on repeated customer orders (e.g., creating distinctiveness relative to competitors who typically provide free shipping to customers but not for returned items). In addition, Zappos does not provide the lowest prices but emphasizes prestige with stellar customer service (Hsieh, 2010). Through the use of these elements, Zappos seems to be enhancing its distinctiveness and prestige, thus affecting customers' loyalty. Current study findings suggest that if a firm such as Zappos were to assess customers' levels of intimacy and emphasize distinctiveness for those high in intimacy while focusing more on prestige for those lower in intimacy, they may be able to further enhance customer ID and spending.

ID and Customer Aftermarket Spending

This study finds a positive relationship between ID and consumer aftermarket spending. Given that the measures of ID and consumer aftermarket spending were collected from different sources (eliminating common methods biases), this relationship is intriguing and valuable for managers. Resources spent on enhancing ID, as well as working to enhance the strength of their relationship to the company, can trigger increased aftermarket spending. In addition, the results illustrate the pivotal role played by satisfaction in affecting ID's influence on spending. It appears that, for consumers with higher levels of satisfaction, ID has a much bigger effect on spending than those with lower levels of satisfaction. This finding emphasizes the importance of delivering a quality customer experience beyond promotions aimed toward brand building efforts. As such, this study highlights where the "rubber meets the road" by setting forth key retail experience initiatives that translate into increased consumer aftermarket spending.

Contributions and Limitations

Results of this study provide evidence that the positive effects of ID go beyond the context of organizational ID (i.e., identifying with one's employing firm), and into a consumer context. In so doing, the results show that aftermarket spending trends upward as ID increases. This research extends SIT by providing empirical evidence showing how consumers' ID is affected by their processing mode, either heuristically or systematically via intimacy. The findings also provide managerial implications for strategic management.

One limitation is that the current research focuses on a single industry context (motorcycles). To further enhance the efficacy of the findings, future research should investigate whether these construct relationships extend to other contexts—such as people's ID with a company, a sports organization, an educational institution, a celebrity endorser, and other types of consumer brands. For now, this study offers new insights into strategic management by helping managers better allocate precious marketing dollars and providing scholars a better understanding of the key antecedents and longer-term revenue outcomes of ID.

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Table A1. Measures Used in the Analyses

Prestige
It is considered prestigious to be an XYZ customer.
XYZ is considered to be a status symbol.
XYZ is highly respected.
(adapted from Mael & Ashforth, 1992)

Distinctiveness
XYZ is a rare entity.
I feel XYZ is unlike any other motorcycles.
I believe XYZ is very unique as compared to other brands.
(Developed for this study)

Intimacy
I am familiar with the range of products and services "the brand" offers.
I would feel comfortable sharing detailed personal information about myself with "the brand."
The company understands my needs in motorcycles.
(Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004)

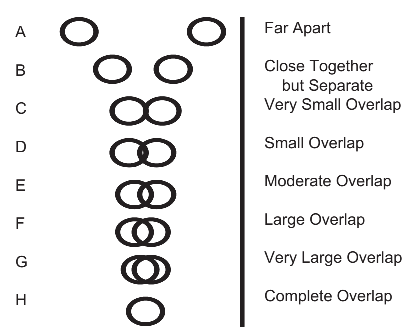
Satisfaction
I am completely satisfied with XYZ.
I am completely pleased with XYZ.
XYZ is turning out better than I expected.
(Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004).

Licensed Aftermarket Accessory Customer Spending
12-Month Post-Survey Spending ($)
(Provided by the partner firm).

Licensed Aftermarket Accessory Customer Spending
Spending at Time 1- Covariate
12-Month Pre-Survey Spending ($)
(Provided by the partner firm).

Identification
Imagine that one of the circles at the left in each row represents your own personal identity and the other circle at the right represents the identity of "the brand". Please indicate the one case (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, or H) that best describes the level of overlap between your identity and "the brand's" identity. CIRCLE only one letter on the following scale:

My Identity ***Brand's Identity***



Question #2. Please indicate to what degree your self-image overlaps with the image of "brand". (1-7 Not at All to Very Much). (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000).