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Masstige marketing redefined and mapped

Introducing a pyramid model and MMS measure

Pyramid
model and
MMS measure

1

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Abstract

Purpose – “Masstige marketing” is considered as a market penetration strategy for medium and large enterprises, particularly in foreign markets. The author redefine “masstige marketing” strategy in this paper and map the concept as a new model for brand building. Second, the author examine the effectiveness of “masstige marketing” strategy with reference to marketing mix theory (Four Ps = product, price, place and promotion). The purpose of this paper is to introduce a theoretical model to help the companies to implement “masstige marketing” strategy.

Design/methodology/approach – The author introduce a scale, called “Masstige Mean Score Scale” to measure the mass prestige value of brands. Both secondary and primary data used in this study. The author collected data from 590 young women consumers living in Japan and France to measure the “masstige” value using the new scale developed. The marketing strategy of European luxury sector multinational brand LV, has also been discussed as a method.

Findings – Masstige value is the best indicator of long-term brand value. In other words, higher the masstige value (MMS) of a brand, the higher the likelihood to succeed. The author also found that a brand can create mass prestige with “masstige marketing” strategy by appropriately mixing the four Ps in marketing – Product, Price, Promotion and Place in a distinct and culturally different market.

Originality/value – The author develop a pyramid model and measurement scale for “masstige marketing” as a theoretical framework to stimulate further research and as a tool for practitioners for better decision making. Besides, the author posit that higher the Masstige Mean Score (MMS) of a brand, higher the likelihood that potential customers recall that as a “top of mind” brand. Lower MMS implies that the firm has to go long way in their efforts to build the brand.

Keywords Brand management, Marketing mix, Brand valuation, Masstige marketing, Mass prestige, Pyramid model, Masstige Mean Score

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

1.1 *Masstige marketing*

“Masstige marketing” is considered as a market penetration strategy for medium and large enterprises. The term masstige, short for mass prestige, was defined by Silverstein *et al.* (2008) in their book *Trading up* and in their *Harvard Business Review* article “Luxury for the Masses” (2003). Masstige products were defined as “premium but attainable” and there are two key factors in classifying items as having these characteristics: they are considered luxury or premium products and they are priced



The author acknowledges the comments by Professor Constantine S. Katsikeas which worked as the basis for thinking beyond developing a pyramid model. His suggestion on the first draft of the paper resulted into developing a measure/index for masstige marketing. Comments from Professor Anamary Irizari and Research Assistance from Joely Ramon also acknowledged.

between the middle class and the super premium. With the growing number of middle-class consumers, those who are trading up to higher levels of quality and taste, luxury goods are not only for ultra-affluent consumers but also for mass-market consumers (Silverstein and Fiske, 2003).

Though the concept “masstige marketing” sounds like a buzzword, there is not yet a theory or a measure or a model developed to generalize the idea and to stimulate further research in this area. Therefore, we attempt to put forward a theoretical model and introduce a measure called Masstige Mean Score Scale (MMSS) in this paper to fill the gap in the literature and to help the managers to examine the effectiveness of their marketing strategies in different countries as well as in different regions/states within the same country. In other words, the scope of this paper include contributing to the academic as well as managerial theory by developing a new scale and index with two goals: (a) to measure the success/failure of a brand, in terms of mass prestige value, in comparison to other brands within the same industry in the same region; (b) to measure the success/failure of a brand in terms of mass prestige value in two different regions/countries and understand the market where it has succeeded. This would help the brand managers to rethink on their branding strategies if they have not succeeded in a market, and prepare future marketing plan and actions accordingly. Though data collected for this paper specifically addresses only the point (b) mentioned above, the MMSS and the index introduced could be widely used in all industries and countries.

This paper is divided into seven sections. As discussed above, a brief overview of “masstige marketing” and marketing mix Ps is presented to underline their significance as an important research domain. In the next section, the research objectives (RO) and methods have been elaborated. Thereafter, Section 3 is devoted to discuss the “masstige marketing” strategy implemented by premium and popular fashion goods brands in Japan. In Section 4, we analyse the marketing and growth strategy of Louis Vuitton (LV), the leading European luxury sector multinational firm, to support the purpose of this paper and to draw a theoretical framework, blending “masstige marketing” and marketing mix Ps. We examine not only how a foreign firm established its business model in Japan, but also how it sustained growth for over 30 years. A pyramid model for “masstige marketing” of products is proposed in Section 5 and an instrument with the title – MMSS has been introduced in Section 6 as a measure to assess and compare the masstige value of different brands, on a generalized scientific scale. The paper ends with the conclusion with propositions in Section 7.

1.2 Marketing mix four Ps and masstige marketing

Marketing mix originated from the single P (price) of microeconomic theory (Chong, 2003). McCarthy (1964) offered the marketing mix, often referred to as the “four Ps”, as a means of translating marketing planning into practice (Bennett, 1997). Marketing mix is not a scientific theory, but merely a conceptual framework that identifies the principal decision-making managers make in configuring their offerings to suit consumers’ needs. The tools could be used to develop both long-term strategies and short-term tactical programme (Palmer, 2004).

Many researchers proposed a new “P” into the marketing mix since 1980s onward. Judd (1987) proposed a fifth P (people). Booms and Bitner (1980) added three Ps (participants, physical evidence and process) to the original four Ps to apply the marketing mix concept to service. Kotler (1986) added political power and public opinion formation to the Ps concept. MaGrath (1986) suggested the addition of three

Ps (personnel, physical facilities and process management). Vignali *et al.* (1994) recommended the addition of S (service) to the marketing mix. Goldsmith (1999) posited that there should be eight Ps (product, price, place, promotion, participants, physical evidence, process and personalization).

Business executives do not really view the four Ps as being equally important, but consider the price and product components to be the most important (Kellerman *et al.*, 1995). Boone and Kurtz (2013) ranked the four Ps to be of most importance in the following order: price, product, place (distribution) and promotion. Development of marketing mix has received considerable academic and industry attention. The most concerted criticism has come from the services marketing area (Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995). The concept of four Ps has been criticized as being a production-oriented definition of marketing, and not a customer oriented (Popovic, 2006). Constantinides (2006) assessed the standing of the four Ps marketing mix framework as the dominant marketing management paradigm and as theoretical concept and identified two limitations, namely, the model's internal orientation and lack of personalization.

Despite number of criticisms four Ps, product, price, promotion and place have been extremely influential in informing the development of both marketing theory and practice. In spite of its deficiencies, the four Ps remain a staple of the marketing mix (Kent and Brown, 2006). Hence it is important for companies to appropriately mix as part of implementation of “masstige marketing strategy”. In other words, it makes sense to posit that the success of “masstige marketing” to a great extent is based upon how to formulate strategies with reference to product, price, promotion and place. Paul and Ferroul (2013) analysed the case of LV in Japan and found that the brand had long-term success in Japan mainly because of appropriate marketing strategies. However, they did not talk about the term “masstige”.

2. RO, data and methods

This paper aims at developing a “masstige marketing” score scale, to measure the mass prestige value of brands and compared the value to derive insights on the popularity of the brands.

An attempt has been done to introduce a pyramid model for “masstige marketing” to show how a luxury brand can target middle-income consumers. Mass prestige-based business model, introduced in this paper, adapts to a new cultural environment, recommending a course of action for further strategic moves. Effort has also been taken to conceptualize the strategic marketing functions of a multinational luxury brand LV (We choose LV because of its highest brand value, see Table I) in Japan, with reference to four Ps – product, price, place and promotion to support this objective. As a first step, RO are specified, based on the review of literature, following the recent studies, taking into account the gap in the literature with the intention of redefining “masstige marketing” strategy, mapping the concept with a pyramid model and introducing a measure for analysing the effectiveness of masstige marketing strategy. Second, we seek to provide insights on strategic decisions to succeed and sustain in foreign markets. Therefore, the RO are set as:

- to illustrate how to build a “top of mind” brand in a key overseas market by implementing “masstige marketing” strategy;
- to develop a theoretical model for “masstige marketing” strategy, taking into account people belonging into high-income group, middle-income group and low-income group;

Table I.
The leading luxury brands in the world

Rank	Brand	Brand value in USD (m)	Brand value in Euros (m)	Country of origin
1.	Louis Vuitton	21,602	16,718	France
2.	Gucci	8,254	6,388	Italy
3.	Chanel	6,355	4,918	France
4.	Rolex	4,956	3,836	Switzerland
5.	Hermès	4,575	3,541	France
6.	Cartier	4,236	3,278	France
7.	Tiffany & Co.	4,208	3,257	USA
8.	Prada	3,585	2,775	Italy
9.	Ferrari	3,527	2,730	Italy
10.	Bulgari	3,330	2,577	Italy
11.	Burberry	3,285	2,542	UK
12.	Dior	2,038	1,578	France
13.	Patek Philippe	1,105	855	Switzerland
14.	Zegna	818	633	Italy
15.	Ferragamo	722	559	Italy

Source: "Leading Luxury Brands", Interbrand, available at: www.interbrand.com (accessed 5 July 2012)

- to illustrate the complexities relating to managing global operations and the challenges and opportunities in a foreign market and to determine how to use marketing mix four Ps effectively to attain "sustained success"; and
- to develop a Score Scale to measure the effectiveness of "masstige marketing" for different brands.

The secondary data were collected from public sources, including annual reports of the company, magazines and research papers, a number of books and web sites. We visited the stores of LV, and their competitors such as Gucci, Channel, Hermes, etc., in Japan to get a real-life feel for the prices and products. We collected the primary data from existing and potential customers of LV brand. Interviews were conducted with 295 women from Japan and France (total 590) to collect data. They participated in survey using the newly developed MMSS. We decided to interview only women because of the widespread belief that women constitute the major chunk of consumers of luxury brands such as LV. Based on this, it was decided to introduce a measure to estimate "Masstige Value" which has been termed as MMSS. Besides, we employed "Content Analysis" and "Case Study" methods as research methods to discuss the data and posit a conceptual framework.

3. "Masstige" strategy

The concept of luxury is attractive and fashionable. There are luxury columns in all magazines and journals. There are TV shows on the business of luxury, and on luxury products and services. New words have been recently invented and promoted that add to the complexity: masstige, opuluxe, premium, ultra premium, trading up, hyper luxury, real or true luxury and so on (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). New luxury brand positioning strategies often combine a high-perceived prestige with reasonable price premiums in order to attract middle-class consumers. These strategies are radically different from those implemented by traditional luxury brand owners, who maintain a strict consistency between perceived prestige and price premiums so as to preserve their brand's exclusivity. Although some authors have suggested

the existence of masstige strategies, few empirical studies have been conducted to support this claim (Truong *et al.*, 2009).

Hong *et al.* (2010) analysed how the relationship marketing implement factors of masstige fashion brands influence the trust, satisfaction and repurchase intention of consumers. Their results show that the relationship marketing implement factors of masstige fashion brands were customer orientation, salesperson expertise, communication, brand expertise and inducement. They also found that the trust and satisfaction of consumers influence the repurchase intention in the masstige fashion brands. Masstige brand positioning is critical to success of lifestyle brand extension, which may have synergy effect on achieving strong brand value in both core brand and its extension (Kim and Ko, 2010). Consumers attribute lower value, hold less positive attitudes and express lower purchase intention towards the downscale extensions originating from a luxury car brand than from a luxury fashion brand. At the brand level, the size of the discount does not make much difference in the overall evaluation of the extension. Prestige brands are more sensitive to dilution effects resulting from the vertical extension than luxury brands. However, the larger discount increases the distance between the prestige brands and the extension, reducing the negative impact on brand image (Riley *et al.*, 2013).

According to luxury analysts, the luxury brands succeeded in making Japan as the world's largest market for luxury brands, accounting for anywhere between 12 and 40 per cent of global sales, depending on the market definition (Japan External Trade Organization, 2008; Smith, 2009; Paul and Ferroul, 2010). Successful brands such as Prada, LV or Channel had made the Japanese luxury market the mass market through "masstige" strategy. They created bandwagon effect in Japan for luxury goods applying the theory of "masstige". Masstige marketing based on the cultural and social homogeneity among Japanese society helped the luxury brands from western countries, particularly European brands to capitalize the capabilities that they had created. Oh and Kim (2011) critically analysed the purchasing behaviour of consumers from three selected Asian countries (Japan, South Korea and China) that purchase luxury items and the marketing strategy of LV to support the objectives. They have identified three critical factors that determined the success of LV, i.e. deployment of innovation and tradition at the same time; use of "masstige marketing"; and advertising. Similarly, Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012) examined the impact of a number of psychological factors on consumers' propensity to engage in the "bandwagon" type of luxury consumption. They developed a conceptual model of bandwagon consumption of luxury products. In general, their results show that a consumer's interdependent self-concept underlies bandwagon luxury consumption.

4. Case of LV: from France to Japan

The LV was established in France in 1854 and has grown as one of the oldest French multinational luxury brand over the years, with substantial market share in Japan and North America. LV had focused mainly on building a Japanese clientele in 1970s and 1980s. Japan was one of LV's first overseas markets and has been over the years its main source of revenue. LV Japan has led an aggressive marketing strategy, targeting the high- and middle-income groups. The firm has focused on product development and brand management, while trying to understand and adapt to the Japanese market. To do so, the firm has strongly invested in creativity and innovation, quality control and distribution control. LV introduced newer product categories in the Japanese market, such as jewellery, watches and eyewear. The markets for these products have

grown rapidly, exceeding expectations. LV has redesigned bags exclusively for the Japanese market with a local flavour. The care given to establish the stores at the best possible locations in cities is another factor that has attracted high-income customers LV products. LV has been able to improve its positioning in the market due to constant pro-activity and wise expansion in the tertiary markets. For instance, after land prices decreased in the 1990s and with the global recession during 2007-2010, there were some changes in people's shopping habits and lifestyles. LV reviewed them carefully and reconsidered its line-up of merchandise.

4.1 LV's entry into Japan

The first entry of LV into the Japanese market was through department stores like Mitsukoshi with displays of LV's imported products at specific areas within the stores. The LVMH group offered an interior design that made the purchasing experience special. Once they got entry to Japan's strong departmental store network, the LV management started working seriously on business expansion. In 1977, LV opened its first exclusive retail store in Japan in Ginza, Tokyo and Osaka (Philippe, 2007). By 2007, the LV had over 50 exclusive stores in Japan, however, the LVMH group as a whole controlled over 250 stores in Japan. The parent firm exercised tight control on prices, products and items exported from France to Japan. LV still continues to export its products from Europe to Japan to sell to customers in the country. It does not have a production unit in Japan or neighbouring countries. Even though the cost of transportation is high, this business model still works because the firm charges premium prices for the brand (Paul and Ferroul, 2013). LVMH group generated substantial portion of their worldwide revenue from Japan, i.e., 26, 23 and 20 per cent each in 2007, 2009 and 2011, respectively (see Table II).

4.2 Masstige marketing through "four Ps"

The "masstige marketing" strategy of LV in Japan can be broadly classified into three categories. The first one has been the long attachment of LV to the country and its society, traditions, history, art and many other aspects. The Japanese consumers are mostly loyal clients. LV's strategy has been able to move such shoppers up from the classic tan-and-brown monogrammed bags to newer lines. The firm has always been trying to establish a true relationship with Japanese consumers.

Second, LV formulated a wise masstige strategy in Japan. It came up with the idea of special limited editions for the market. The collaboration between western artist

Table II.
Louis Vuitton
Moët-Hennessy
(LVMH Group),
fashion and leather
goods division
financial statements

	2011	2009	2007
Revenue (EUR millions)	6,010	5,628	5,222
Revenue by geographic region of delivery (%)			
France	8	9	9
Europe (excluding France)	21	20	19
USA	19	20	21
Japan	20	22	26
Asia (excluding Japan)	25	23	20
Other markets	7	6	5
Total	100	100	100

Source: Compiled from Official Financial Reports, LVMH Group, Paris

Marc Jacobs and Japanese designer Takashi Murakami was the starting point of LV's success in Japan. They created a colourful pop version of LV's monogram for the 2003 spring/summer collection. The collection showed the company's attachment to and recognition of the art and traditions of Japan. Following the massive success of the line, LV renewed its collaboration with the Japanese artist, aiming for further success. Third, LV has kept true to the principles of four Ps and believed in the maintenance of high quality while offering new products with local flavour to adapt to changing times and cultures. This process can be discussed as follows.

4.2.1 Product. LV focused on constant improvement of quality and offered lifetime repair guarantees for its customers. The brand had been striving to increase both fidelity and endless desire in its consumers. It was obvious that the more the product range and the higher the quality, the more the customers would come back.

In general, marketers seek "adequate quality", "faintness of use", etc., and too much of quality can be undesirable because it increases the cost. However, LV handbags represented "products of distinctive qualities" and "attention to details". In general the concept of "relative quality" is challenged by the "absolute quality" which has forced customers to a LV or nothing attitude. To back their products, LV has taken action against counterfeiting item by "Enlightenment Champagne, involvement of French trademark authorities", etc., make their product defendable. Partnership with local artist and "limited edition" products has demonstrated that "product line" up and innovation are very strong parts of LV business model in Japan. Newer product categories such as jewellery, watches and eyewear have grown rapidly. Ready-to-wear represents another category to grow. LV's internet business and a foray into children's wear have been among the growth vectors for the brand.

4.2.2 Price. Market demands "Low Price". This can be achieved by reducing costs and off-shoring production to relatively low-cost countries. LV products, on the other hand, are priced high because they are made in western Europe, primarily France and exported to Japan. In essence, the LV's strategy is value creation, not price – this being absolute value, not relative value. LV based its strategy on the loyalty of its consumers and strove to attract more consumers to buy bags ranging from classic tan-and-brown monogrammed bags to newer lines such as the Murakami line, which was priced at \$1,000, and Suhali, a line of goatskin bags priced in more than \$2,000 (based on information collected from LV store in Japan).

With the Yen getting strong, against Euro, LV reduced the prices substantially during 2007-2010 (for instance, in response to the sluggish economy and appreciation of the Japanese yen, foreign luxury brands were lowering their prices. LV and Christian Dior had lowered their prices the week before Christmas in 2008. LV had made a 7 per cent price reduction on leather goods, accessories, ready-to-wear, shoes, watches and jewellery). The decrease in prices was justified by a policy of offering its products at appropriate prices (Socha, 2008). This pricing strategy somehow helped them to survive through the recession phase and earned the trust of the customers.

4.2.3 Promotion. One of the secrets of success of LV, according to Haig (2004), is that the company deploys a mass marketing strategy to achieve mass prestige, which makes luxury items available and appealing to everyone, not just to the wealthy and elite class. For example, the company uses marketing techniques such as celebrity endorsements and sports sponsorships. The strategy is enabled by another secret of success: the ability to control. LV has managed to balance its prestige image with populism, maintaining the connotations of a luxury brand with a mass marketing

mentality (Haig, 2004). By implementing this strategy, LV was able to keep its core luxury consumers, which means still keeping the product's exclusive feeling while making the product available to a mass market.

It is not common to see LV commercial on TV even at primetime. This is not because LV is tight with its advertising budget, but due to the fact that their philosophy is to give in depth details to the customers directly. The most common used advertising medium used by LV is print mass media like fashion magazines, etc. Its brand management and positioning strategy in Japan have also helped it to achieve business volume in Japan. As LV had been going global, the brand was able to develop a successful advertising strategy in line with its global expansion strategy. The advertising strategy of the company remained based on the idea that productivity would not sustain growth. Rather than cutting its ad budget like most luxury groups, the company increased advertisement spending by 20 per cent in 2003. This figure might have seemed very high but in fact it only represented 5 per cent of revenues, half the industry's average (Matlack, 2004).

LV frequently used print advertisements in magazines and billboards in large cosmopolitan cities. The campaigns often involved famous stars like Gisele Bündchen, Eva Herzigová, Sean Connery and Francis Ford Coppola. Lot of customers got attracted to the mind-boggling 90-second commercial advertisement in television with a catchy question, "Where will life take you?" translated into 13 different languages, it helped LV to build brand. The media (communication) department was strategic in choosing the newspapers and magazines to reach out to the higher and middle-income group (Paul, 2011).

4.2.4 Place. In general, the more the number of distribution channels, the higher the sales potential for companies selling normal goods. However, theory could be different in the case of luxury goods. The multinational brand LV had established a global but rigidly controlled distribution network from its headquarters, with exports from Europe to other countries including Japan. In the case of LV – they were selling only through few exclusive stores located at prime locations. LV has always opened up its stores in the prime areas in each city where high- and middle-income groups visit frequently. This seems to have helped the firm to attract the target segments. The location of stores is an important factor for luxury sector brands like LV. A few years ago, LV started online (via web) business in Japan after the new CEO took over the leadership. An expansion of LV's internet business for ready-to-wear could be the next possible approach.

However, they are not distributing LV branded products through other stores. The reason being, it is easy to control one or two distribution channels than many. Control is the key in the business plan of LV, being a luxury brand. Also, LV paid attention to provide the comfort of convenience while offering "joyful" shopping experience at well-decorated showrooms. Since there was demand for opening more franchisees, the management also ventured into opening stores through franchisee mode, with local business people investing capital for franchisees during the last decade.

5. Masstige marketing strategy: the pyramid model

Carefully examining brand luxury and the dimensions and relationships underlying the luxury fashion brand, Miller and Mills (2012) developed a conceptual model called the Brand Luxury Model, by clarifying the confusion evident in earlier brand luxury research, however, their model is not based on the concept masstige. Similarly, Shukla and Purani (2012) compared the importance of luxury value perceptions in

cross-national context. Despite those notable studies, we found that this research area is still in the infancy stage and no measure/index is developed till now. Following Kastanakis and Balabasnis (2012), we felt the need for a theoretical model blending the tradition of mass-market dynamics with the mapping mechanism. Therefore, we introduce a pyramid model for marketing masstige products in this section.

How does a brand that is synonymous with luxury and exclusivity grow while retaining its cachet? The answer is “masstige marketing” strategy. Though LV brand is known as a “class” product, their marketing strategy in Japan was unique. The management tried to position the brand with the appropriate marketing mix principles, i.e., implementing four Ps scientifically and aggressively to position the brand with a focus on the concept mass prestige.

There are two stages in luxury culture – the “show off” stage and the “fit in” stage – and Japan has already passed through the two stages. LV products were sold very well during the “show off” stage in Japan in 1980s. For example, more than three quarters of women in Tokyo of about 20 years of age possessed an item of the brand. This phenomenon was considered normal as luxury goods symbolized membership of the “acceptable” group of society. In the sulphurous book *Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Lustre*, Thomas (2007) reported that 40 per cent of all Japanese owned a LV-monogrammed item. She compared LV’s growth over the past decade to that of McDonald’s, suggesting that the LV logo had become almost as ubiquitous as the Golden Arches. In addition, the repetition of limited editions over the past years had marked a new era for LV – an era characterized by disposable “it” bags with shelf lives of two fashion seasons at most.

After Marc Jacobs (LV’s star artist) had seen an exhibition by Japanese artist Takashi Murakami at the *Foundation Cartier pour l’art contemporain* in Paris, LV decided to collaborate with the Japanese artist for its 2003 spring/summer collection. Murakami, who was known as the “Japanese Andy Warhol”, re-created a colourful pop version of LV’s monogram in 33 colours on a black and white background. In stores, LV’s handbags with smiling blossom designs turned out to be best sellers in Japan. The strategy appeared to be huge success for the leading luxury conglomerate LVMH, as the Murakami line increased LV’s profits by 10 per cent. The success was not only in the Japanese market but also in the European and American markets, which showed true admiration for Japanese culture (Paul and Ferroul, 2013).

Following the massive success of the line, in 2003 and 2005 collaborations between Murakami and Jacobs resulted in the Monogram Cherry Blossom line, featuring a trendy motif inspired by the fruit of the cherry blossom – Japanese art wedded to LV’s perfection – and the Monogram Cerise line, with a new pattern that gave freshness and cheerfulness to the monogram, i.e., the collaboration between Jacobs and Murakami opened new avenues for LV not only in Japan, but also in the USA. Their collaboration has produced a lot of work, and has been a huge influence and inspiration to many. It has been and continues to be a monumental marriage of art and commerce: the ultimate crossover (Williams and Sharf, 2008). It was indeed “commerce” and strategy, as Takashi Murakami had been instrumental for LV’s success in Japan.

Japan has been LV’s most profitable market, representing almost 30 per cent of its profits, for more than three decades, i.e., “LV” may be French, but Japan has become a land full of “LV” lovers (Paul and Ferroul, 2013). The fact that 40 per cent Japanese adults owned a LV monogram implies that the luxury brand was successful in implementing “masstige marketing” strategy, by targeting middle-income group and upper part of low-income group. LV has certainly succeeded in the middle-income group segment in Japan and has taken efforts to attract the customers, those who belong to the upper part of the

low-income group segment. This can be generalized by introducing a pyramid model for “masstige marketing” (see Figure 1(a)-(d)). The top of the pyramid represent the high-income segment of customers (class market) while the middle-income group can be considered as synonym for the middle of the pyramid. Similarly, it is shown that the low-income group belongs to the bottom of pyramid (mass market). Pyramid 1 (Figure 1(a)) shows three segments of customers. In real life, the firms selling normal goods target all three segments of customers, which are shown in Pyramid 2 (Figure 1(b)) – pyramid for normal goods. Pyramid 3 (Figure 1(c)) – pyramid for luxury goods’ firms is drawn to show the usual target segment (top of the pyramid) of firms in the luxury goods sector. We posit that the firms will succeed tremendously if they follow the “masstige marketing” strategy, by targeting customers as shown in the proposed pyramid model for masstige marketing (PMM) in pyramid 4 (Figure 1(d)) – in nutshell, this model calls for firms, particularly luxury goods’ firms to target not only the top of the pyramid segment, but also every customer in the middle of the pyramid. Firms could sustain the sales growth for long time, if they go one more step forward, by targeting the customers belonging to the upper part of the “bottom of the pyramid”.

6. Introducing MMSS as a measure

As there is no measure available in the literature to estimate and compare the effectiveness of “masstige marketing” strategy in different countries/states/districts/cities, an effort has been taken to develop a scientific scale-based instrument containing ten questions that measure the impact of “masstige marketing” (see the Appendix). An individual’s score range is between 10 and 70 (maximum sum 70) on this instrument. Using this instrument, one can interpret that the higher the score, the more the masstige value. In order to test the masstige value, one has to collect data from a sample of customers or potential customers, calculate the mean score of the responses to each question, compute the sum total of the mean scores to examine the effectiveness of marketing strategy and compare the score in different/countries/regions/states/districts. This measure and comparison help firms to understand the effectiveness of their marketing strategy with reference to “masstige value” for the same brand in different countries. On the other hand, this instrument could be also employed as a tool to estimate the masstige score for different brands in the same industry in different states or districts in the same country. Following the rationale discussed above, the criteria that we posit here can be defined as follows.

The Masstige Mean Score (MMS) over 60 implies that the firm created “top of the mind” brand based on mass prestige.

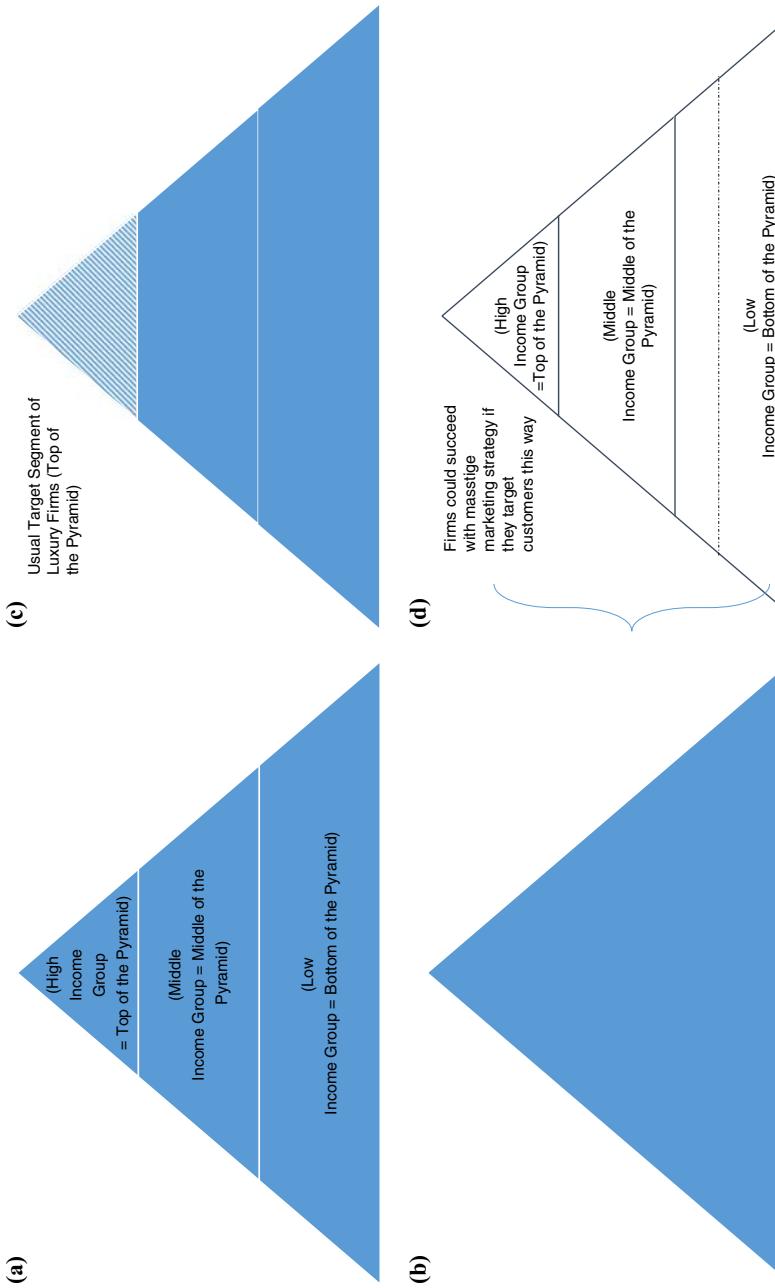
The MMS between 50 and 60 – implies that the firm has succeeded in building brand in that specific market based on “masstige” marketing, but not the “top of mind” brand.

The MMS between 40 and 50 – implies that firm has not yet succeed in brand building based on “masstige” marketing, however, it is possible to do that in long run.

The MMS 30-40 – implies that the brand is not yet accepted well in that market/country.

The MMS between 10 and 30 – indicates that the firm has failed to create mass prestige in that market.

Our sample consists of 590 young women in the age group of 18-33 (295 per country) from Japan and France (as the ladies are the primary customers of brands such as LV) for this study. The questionnaire was administered to those potential customers/customers in, Japan and France in order to determine the “masstige value” score for LV brand in their key market as well as France. We selected Japan as the brand generates maximum revenue from that country, to compare their “masstige value” score in the home country,



Notes: (a) Pyramid 1: basic pyramid; (b) pyramid 2: pyramid for normal goods (normal firms target customers in all three segments); (c) pyramid 3: pyramid for luxury goods' firms; (d) pyramid 4: proposed pyramid for firms to follow "masstige marketing" strategy

Figure 1.
Pyramid model for
masstige marketing

France. The author's stint in those countries facilitated data collection. The results show that MMS for LV is 60.2 and 56.4 in Japan and France, respectively, which implies that LV created a "top of mind" brand based on mass prestige in Japan, whereas the firm has succeeded in building brand in France, their home country based on "masstige" marketing, but not the "top of mind" brand (Table III).

12**7. Conclusions**

Based on the MMS analysis, survey results, the case study of LV and pyramid model, it is worth noting that blending masstige marketing strategy with the principles of four Ps can result into greater market share and rousing gain even in a culturally different foreign market. The conceptual model posited in this paper shows how a firm could create mass prestige with the appropriate targeting strategies time to time.

Other findings from this study can be summarized as follows:

- (1) The MMS-based instrument introduced in this paper as a measure of "Masstige Marketing Strategy" can be used as a criteria to examine the effectiveness and popularity of brands regardless of the industry and region/country/state. For example, MMS measure could serve as a benchmark measure for comparing the effectiveness of not only the premium brands, but also the normal brands. laptop brands such as Dell, HP, Apple, Acer, etc., and automobile brands such as Toyota, GM, Ford, Honda, etc., would very well fit into the MMS analysis. Similarly, this instrument could serve as a basic measure for market research in different regions/markets for all firms, regardless of their industry and size.
- (2) It is also important to note that the luxury firms cashed in on the opportunities in Japan in with "masstige marketing" strategy. This strategy helped them to capitalize the capabilities created, leveraging opportunities.
- (3) The pyramid model for "masstige marketing" proposed in this paper could add value for business executives, entrepreneurs and researchers looking for thoughtful insights on the strategy and development of a business model for product marketing, particularly in the case of high-value branded products.

Table III.
Masstige Mean Score
(MMS) for LV in key
foreign market and
at home

Sl. no.	Factor	LV in Japan	LV in France
1.	I like this brand because of mass prestige	6.6	6.3
2.	I feel like to buy this brand of mass prestige	6.5	6.1
3.	I tend to pay high price for this brand for status quo	5.7	5.5
4.	I consider this as a "top of mind" brand in my country/state/district	6.5	6.6
5.	Would like to recommend this brand to friends and relatives	6.6	6.2
6.	Nothing is more exciting than this brand	5.5	5.4
7.	I believe this brand is known for high quality	6.4	6.0
8.	I believe this brand is of international standard	6.2	5.9
9.	I love to buy this brand regardless of the price	4.9	4.4
10.	I believe that people in my country/state/district consider this brand as a synonym for prestige	6.3	5.0
	Sum	60.2	56.4

- (4) Since people have to pay premium prices to buy luxury items, many consumers tend to abstain from buying them during recession. One possible solution to overcome this challenge is to open more directly owned stores or franchisees for sales to reach out to a maximum of people. Franchisees can be assigned to local business people that have credentials, subject to quality assurance and collaboration with the parent firm.

Based on the above discussion, elaboration and conceptualization, we posit the following theoretical propositions (*P1, P2, P3, P4*), which could help stimulating future research and improve managerial practice:

- P1.* The higher the Masstige value of a brand, the higher the likelihood to succeed in a distinct market.
- P2.* The higher the brand's market orientation targeting the customers, in the middle and bottom of the pyramid segments, the higher the likelihood of sustaining the success in long run.
- P3.* The better the marketing mix (product, price, promotion and place), the higher the likelihood to increase sales and thereby the MMS.
- P4.* The higher the MMS, the higher the average life of a brand in that market.

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Appendix. Questionnaire to Measure "Masstige" Value (Masstige Score Scale Instrument)

Name (Optional):

Name Your State & Country

What Income group you belong to (in your country)?

A. Low Income Group b. Middle Income Group c. High Income group

Age Group: a. 18 to 25 b. 26 to 33 c. 33 to 40 d. 40 to 47 e. 47 to 54 f. Over 54

Work Experience: Gender: M) F)

Rate the following factors on a scale of 1-7 where 1 is least applicable to you and 7 is highly applicable

Sl. no.	Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	I like this brand because of mass prestige associated with it							
2.	I feel like to buy this brand because of mass prestige							
3.	I tend to pay high price for this brand for status quo							
4.	I consider this as a "top of mind" brand in my country/state/district							
5.	I would like to recommend this brand to friends and relatives							
6.	Nothing is more exciting than this brand							
7.	I believe this brand is known for high quality							
8.	I believe this brand is of international standard							
9.	I love to buy this brand regardless of the price							
10.	I believe that people in my country/state/district consider this brand as a synonym for prestige							

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Justin Paul is currently a Professor at the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, USA. He is an author/co-author of four text books – *Business Environment* (3rd ed.), *International Business* (6th ed.), *International Marketing* (2nd ed.), *Services Marketing* and *Export-Import Management* (2nd ed.) published by McGraw-Hill, PHI, Pearson and Oxford University Press, respectively. He has published in *International Business Review*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Journal of Inter Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *Asian Case Research Journal*, etc. He has also co-authored a book titled *Services Marketing* published by McGraw-Hill. He has taught full courses at the Aarhus University-Denmark, Nagoya University of Commerce-Japan, Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Grenoble Eco le de Management-France, Universite De Versailles-Paris, ISM University-Lithuania, SP Jain-Dubai and has been an invited speaker and trainer at the University of Puget Sound, St Martyn's University-USA, Fudan University-Shanghai, University of San Francisco and the University of New South Wales, Sydney. His case studies and articles have been published by Harvard Business School, Ivey Business School, University of Western Ontario, Canada and by leading newspapers. He has been PhD thesis examiner to four universities including Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and is also on the Editorial Review Board of three refereed journals. His web site is drjustinpaul.com and official page is facebook.com/drjustinpaul. Professor Justin Paul can be contacted at: profjust@gmail.com